

GWQ3
Adventure

For 3 to 6 low- to mid-level characters

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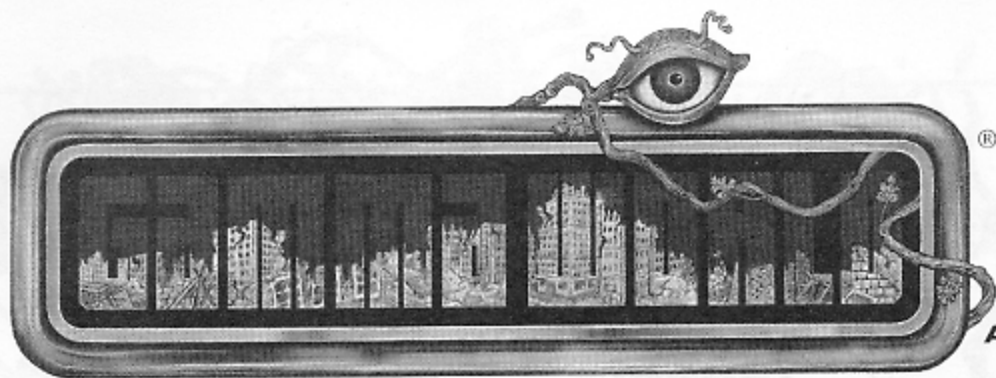
Adventure

Home Before the Sky Falls



By Beach, Bittner, Eastland, and Reigel





**GAME
ADVENTURE**

Home Before the Sky Falls

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Credits

Design: Tim Beach, Paul Riegel, Drew Bittner, Kim Eastland

Editing: Richard W. Brown

Cover Illustration: Brom

Interior Illustrations: Robert Klasnich

Cartography: John Knecht

Typography: Angelika Lokotz

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TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

Introduction

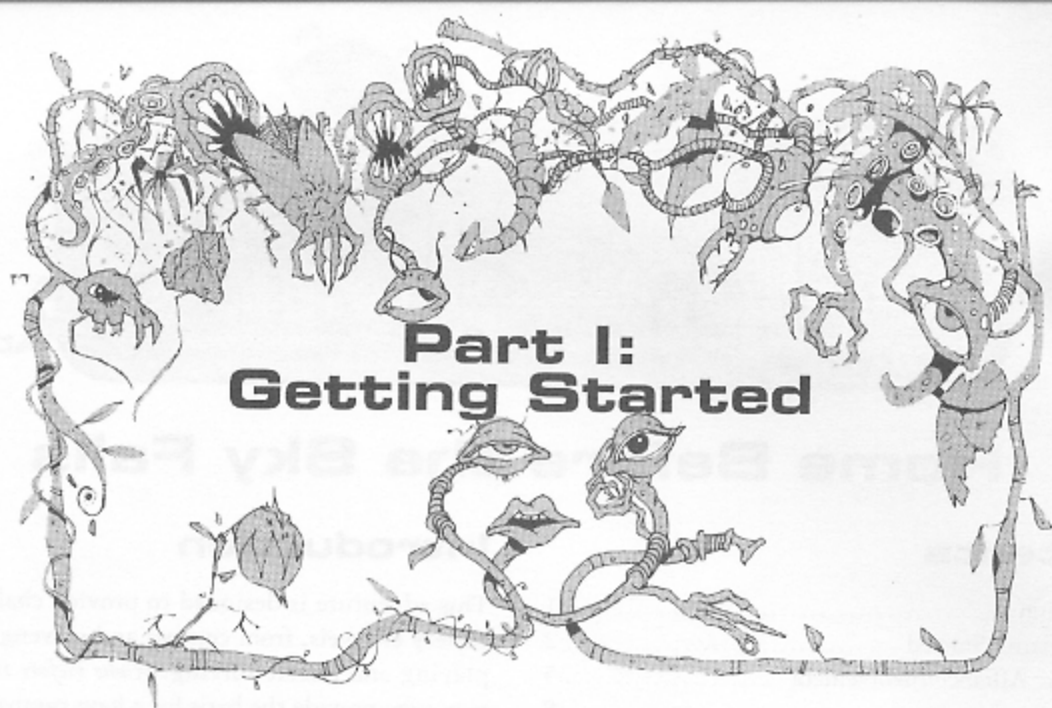
This adventure is designed to provide challenges on a variety of levels, from combat and scavenging to role-playing and puzzle solving. *Home Before the Sky Falls* may even provide the basis for a long campaign.

This module is suitable for any group of player characters who make their homes on Gamma Terra. However, an experienced, balanced group (an esper, an examiner, a scout, and one or two enforcers) is desirable. A group with one or more mutated animals has better chances for success, because the Bonapartists play a major part in the scenario.

Home Before the Sky Falls is split into three sections: the introductory and background material, including encounters that can be used to introduce the adventure; the main adventure, which sets the PCs against an ancient weapon of destruction and its mysterious controller; and follow-up material, including several ideas for expanding the adventure.

The Game Master (GM) should read the introductory material thoroughly before running the adventure, to gain the most benefit from past history. Ideally, the GM would use the suggested setup encounters to best advantage before the PCs start this module. If desired, the GM could get the players started right away, before reading any of the background material; turn to page 8 and start there. The first half of the adventure can be run without much background knowledge, because little of the plot is revealed to the PCs in that section.

The final section includes ideas for turning this module into a campaign. The events described herein have the potential to wreak havoc throughout the "civilized" areas of Gamma Terra. *Home Before the Sky Falls* has an effect on every Cryptic Alliance, every nation, and potentially, every character.



Part I: Getting Started

Adventure Background

More than a century ago, a group of men and women were sealed into "experimental hibernation chambers" — essentially, suspended animation chambers. The chambers were to be placed on a huge ship that could carry humanity to the stars.

The chambers were set up in various locations and periodic improvements were made. Experimentation required putting people into hibernation for as long as ten years.

This operation was conducted mostly at Grissom Air Force Base (now known as Gruesome Afbayz; see the GAMMA WORLD® Game Rules for more information and a map). As a safety precaution, some of the chambers were moved from Grissom to a secret underground hideaway in the innocuous city of Gary, Indiana.

While the experiment was still in progress, the holocaust (the first of many) came, placing the world on the road to becoming Gamma Terra. Many of the hibernation chambers were destroyed immediately; others lasted varying amounts of time. Miraculously, at least one chamber and its occupant survived intact to the present day. The chamber was so well-protected and far underground that it escaped damage from the radiation which covered most of Gary. Recently, an odd power surge (caused by members of the Created in Gary) activated the revival program of the last chamber.

In that last hibernation chamber in Gary was a man named Peter Thornton. Thornton was a lieutenant general in the United Americas Space Command (when there was such a thing); he had volunteered for the

experiment to assure himself a place on a ship to the stars.

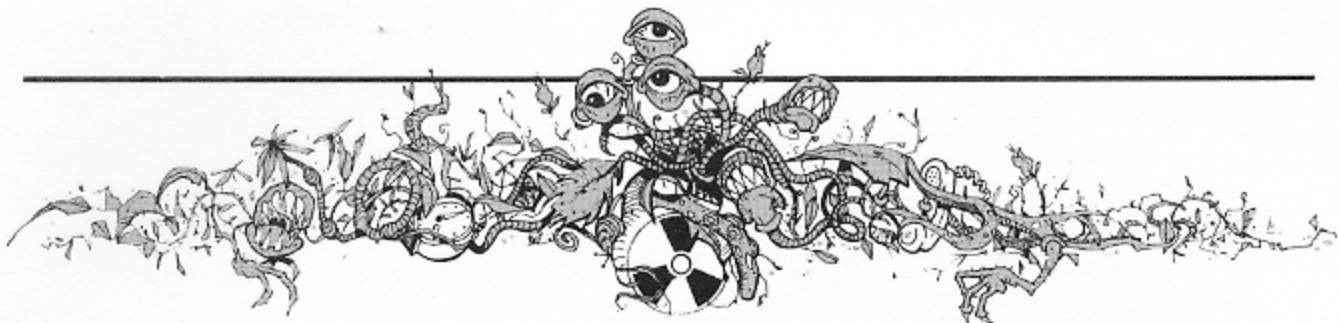
Thornton awoke to a strange world. When he stepped from his hibernation chamber, feeling as if he had slept perhaps a few hours, he discovered the facility in ruins. The other hibernation chambers had been destroyed or damaged, and his fellow "sleepers" were dead.

After a few hours of wandering around the ruined facility, Thornton found his way to the surface. There, he discovered a ruined city. The facility he had been in was now near a lake which had once been miles away. Nothing was familiar.

With nothing left to do but explore, Thornton armed himself and penetrated the ruins of Gary — and encountered what he could think of only as monsters. Thornton fell into battle with armed mutants that searched the ruins for artifacts. After suffering wounds but fighting admirably, Thornton escaped and returned to the facility that housed his hibernation chamber.

After some time, General Thornton managed to restore some of the computer equipment and uplink devices, allowing him to scan the surrounding countryside. The world he saw bore little resemblance to world he had left in sleep; warring factions of mutants roamed vast areas, some primitive, others horrifying caricatures of the humans who had once civilized the area.

Thornton determined that Grissom Air Force Base was still active. He was able to contact HANC, the artificially intelligent supercomputer operating most of the remains of Grissom. HANC told Thornton two important things.



First, some of the hibernation chambers in Grissom were still functioning. HANC could not determine whether the people inside were still alive, nor could he access the programs to reawaken them, due to damage of the computer's systems.

Second, Grissom was guarded by the crafty and insane warbot, RM-1975. The robot had modified its own program and now guarded the base against all biological lifeforms.

Thornton soon decided to go to Grissom to awaken his comrades. He would need transportation to avoid the "monsters" which now roamed the countryside. He also realized he would need a secret way into the base or armament capable of facing several warbots. He knew of a top secret facility located near Lee that might allow him access; however, he could not be sure the entrance still existed.

Thornton's transportation and armament needs were solved all at once when he uncovered a computer link to an Excelsior Class RMV (Robotic Motorized Vehicle). Unfortunately, the RMV was several hundred miles to the west, at the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command in the ruins of Omaha. Further, it was not equipped with antigravity units, so could proceed only by walking. This would take many days as the RMV walked the territory once traversed by Interstate 80—nearly a straight line from Omaha to Gary.

A good portion of the RMV's trip was uneventful; as it crossed what had been Iowa, it encountered a few mutants that decided discretion was the better part of valor, and left it alone. Then the Excelsior reached the new nation of Miacholin.

Here, carrins tried to stop the device, eventually offering heavily armed resistance. Thornton, from his remote base, activated the RMV's systems, using the opportunity to test its armaments against hostile forces. Unfortunately, Thornton accidentally activated an anti-incursion program. The program had been designed to repel invaders who had already secured a foothold within the territory of United America.

The Excelsior was not operating entirely within

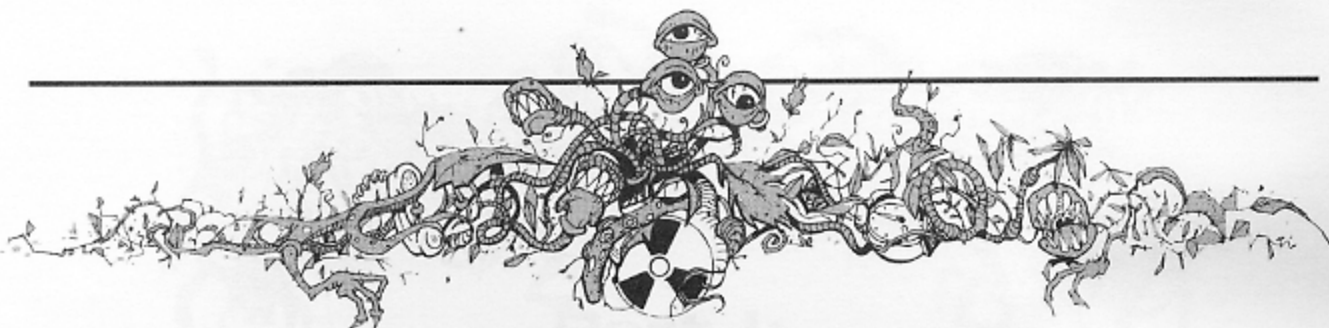
parameters, and began killing every moving thing in range and laying waste to the countryside. Deciding that all life in its path was part of an invasion force, the RMV began sweeping the area in a zigzag motion, still headed toward Gary. Though Thornton was glad for the chance to test the RMV's systems, he did not desire needless slaughter, and was chagrined at his failure to control the RMV.

The Excelsior swept through settlement after settlement in Miacholin and points east, killing everyone it located. It was even able to access a previously undiscovered weapons depot and replenish its supply of ammunition. The RMV continued on its course for Gary, moving eastward about 15 kilometers per day overall, though zigzagging through a greater area. The people of the region—new animal, altered human, and true men alike—panicked and ran. Some moved north, some moved south, and some moved east.

The refugees who moved east are cause for concern in this module. For the most part, the move was simply a flood of displaced, panicked creatures. However, one individual, Achilex, realized that the refugees were moving into inhabited areas, and the people who already lived there might not accept such a flood of new faces. Achilex organized many of the refugees into an army, determined to create a new home by force if necessary.

The flood of refugees generated rumors of invaders, live metal behemoths, mutant armies, armies of true men, death machines, and great flying beasts. The refugees were cause for concern in the lands to the south and east of Lake Mitchigloom, as were the reports of something terrible driving the refugees forward.

Several powers decided to do something about the terror in the midwest. Among them was Bonparr, which dispatched several scout squads. Bonparr was concerned with the balance of power in surrounding areas, and wanted to be appraised of the trouble headed its way in order to prepare.



Probable Adventure Progress

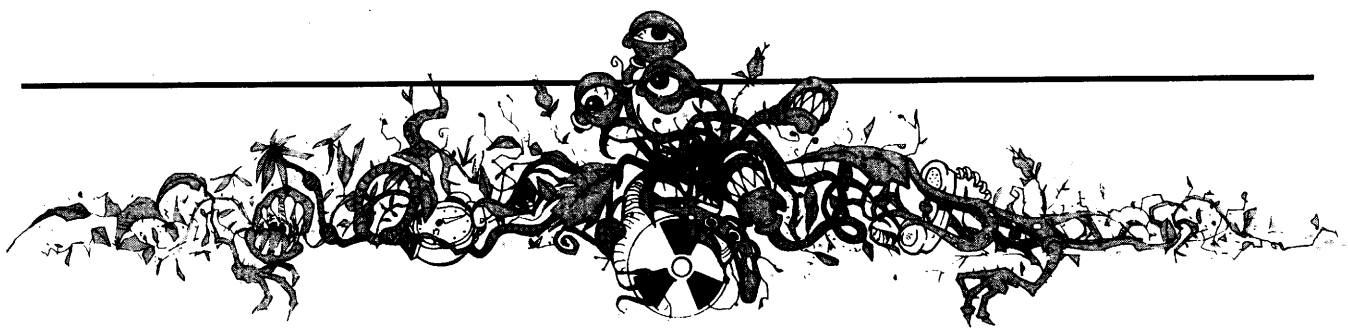
The course of this adventure assumes the Player Characters start in the town of Allenville, near Yrsahl (see map, page 18). For tips on getting the PCs to Allenville, see the section on setup encounters later in Part I.

A trickle of refugees passes through this town, and news of the invading army comes as well. The leader of Allenville, Petkam, decides to build an army of his own to battle the invaders. The PCs are "invited" to join his army. Ideally, they will enlist; what they do in the field is up to them. At some point, the PCs will be approached by Bonparr scouts and asked to join their efforts (assuming the party has some new animals or altered humans in it—if not, negotiations with the agents of Bonparr could be a little difficult—but the Bonparr scouts are so worried that they will work with almost anyone).

The Bonparr folks, led by Maijac, are organized, relatively efficient, and much more reasonable than Allenville with their offers for the PCs. Maijac asks the PCs to warn the invading army against proceeding further, and perhaps negotiate some kind of peace.

On the way to parley with the invaders, the PCs encounter another town which has armed itself—Opry. The PCs gain an opportunity to negotiate with the town's leader, Bobbakar, possibly getting him to join forces with Maijac.

Eventually, the PCs should reach the invading army and its leader, Achilex. The PCs will be able to learn the army's motivation (the very destructive live metal Excelsior); once this is known, they should be able to negotiate peace between the different factions, in order to face the greater threat of the RMV. About this time, the RMV enters Fermee, giving the different factions minor hope of defeating it; however, after a day or so, the RMV leaves Fermee, apparently unscathed.



Ideally, the different factions will join together, probably under the more organized leadership of the Bonparr scout forces. Maijac will recommend his superior, a mutated gorilla named Colonel M'rdeki, as overall commander. M'rdeki has set up headquarters in Lee, and has sent scouting parties out from that headquarters.

Ideally, the PCs will have met Colonel M'rdeki before this adventure and will trust him as a capable and fair leader (see the section of setup encounters). Maijac will ask the PCs to go to M'rdeki in Lee.

In Lee, M'rdeki asks the party to be a special task force. Evidence suggests that the live metal, now on its way to Gary from Fermee, is remote controlled. M'rdeki asks the PCs to find the source of the control and neutralize it before a full-scale assault (which would cost hundreds of lives) is necessary. M'rdeki gives a tracking device to the PCs and organizes the united forces to advance toward Gary and make a stand somewhere in that vicinity.

At this point, timing will become crucial. The PCs need to stop the remote controller before the big battle begins. The GM may have to adjust certain timing elements, such as the speed of the RMV and transportation for the Player Characters.

Eventually, the PCs reach the base from which the RMV is being controlled and they meet General Thornton. At this point, Thornton has little control over the Excelsior. However, he is working to halt the anti-incursion program and to speed the RMV's progress toward him. Thornton hopes that when the RMV arrives, he can deactivate the destructive program and pilot the RMV to Grissom.

Thornton is quite naturally paranoid when he sees the PCs (especially toward those he would consider monsters). However, some negotiation should get the PCs close to Thornton. The Player Characters may be placed in the position of protecting Thornton from the united forces while Thornton works to shut down the RMV.

It is possible that the Player Characters arrive in

Gary too late; in this case, the GM should arrange for them to encounter Thornton piloting the Excelsior on his way to Grissom. If met in this manner, the RMV will be much less likely to fire immediately, and the PCs will be able to negotiate with Thornton.

Once Thornton is found, the threat of the RMV's attack is essentially neutralized. The refugees could return to their homes. However, the refugees have moved once already, and looters have caused chaos; many small confrontations will spring up.

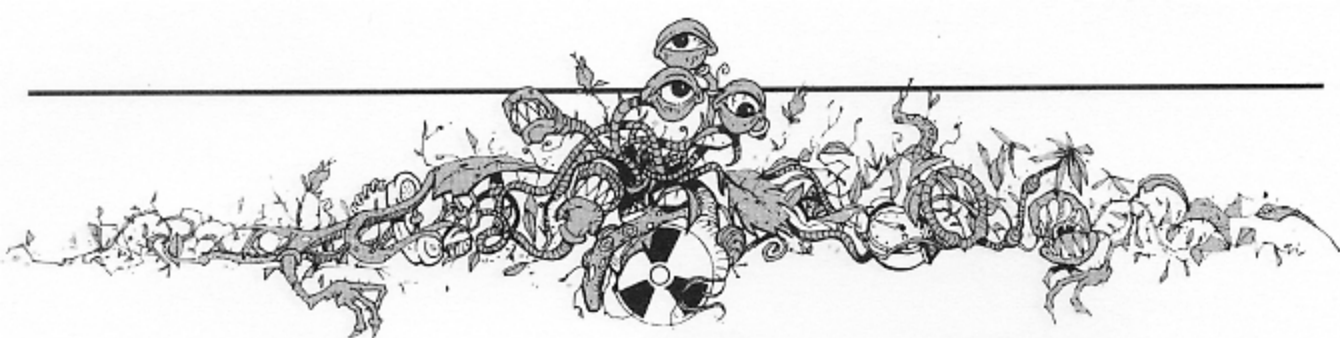
In addition, keeping news of Thornton and the RMV quiet will be impossible. Many factions will want to control one or both, and a number of small squabbles will break out. At this point, what happens is completely up to the GM. The last part of this module contains several suggestions for continuing this adventure as a long-term campaign.

Cryptic Alliance Involvement

As mentioned, many different factions want Thornton and the RMV, not to mention the newly revealed ancient bases and artifacts. It is possible to use these factions to make things more interesting during the course of the adventure, in addition to using them for follow-up encounters.

The Archivists have an obvious interest in the Excelsior RMV. Any Archivist who sees the RMV is likely to see it as an item to be worshipped, once the "evil spirits" which control it have been exorcised (i.e., the RMV has been shut down). Some Archivists will join the fight against the RMV; some might follow it while preaching to the unconverted; others might just wait and see what happens.

In any case, the Archivists will eventually want to cart the RMV off to one of their temples to be worshipped, where they can use the cockpit as a meditation cubicle of the highest order. Since this is the largest bit of live metal seen in recent memory, the Archivists could be very adamant about taking the



machine once it has been deactivated.

The Brotherhood of Thought will also be concerned with the RMV, but for different reasons. They wish to avoid violence. Traditional Brothers might join the fight against the RMV, realizing violence is necessary to stop violence. Reformed radical Brothers will not fight, will resist the draft, and may even stage peaceful demonstrations that interfere with army operations. Many Brothers are smart enough to see the RMV as a potential spark for a major war; they may wish to capture and hide the RMV to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. The Brotherhood will also be interested in talking to Thornton, at first believing him to be a friend of peace, as the Brotherhood's founder was said to be.

The Created also have a vested interest in the RMV. When the machine first appears, the Created may believe it to be a representative of their power, and may try to subvert it to their desires. For traditionalists, this simply means keeping it away from biological lifeforms to determine whether or not it is sentient; reformists could see the RMV as a method for exterminating biological life. Either group will be disappointed, even shocked, to find the RMV was controlled by a human; this could catapult them to a war footing against the infidels who have "enslaved and lobotomized their brother."

The Followers of the Voice, like the Archivists, could see the Excelsior as an item worthy of worship. They will want to get close, and may see the RMV's actions as a divine sign of some sort (indeed, anybody might think so). If the Followers of the Voice find out that Thornton has talked to HANC, they might worship him as well and try to establish him as a high priest — or they might try to find out how to contact HANC themselves, believing that artificial intelligence to be the creator computer.

The Healers probably mobilized as soon as refugees appeared in their areas. They are likely to be available for help if the PCs are extensively harmed. They have no particular interest in the RMV or Thornton,

though they might be able to use the hibernation chambers, and other medical technology may lie in the ruins.

The Iron Society has little interest in the RMV. More traditional members of the society would probably wish to assassinate Thornton before he is claimed as a rallying point for the Knights of Genetic Purity. If the GM has the module *Mutant Master*, a link could be established. The title character of that module, also known as the Blue Man, would surely like to possess the RMV and use it to further his plans for conquest.

The Knights of Genetic Purity will be some of the first people in line to fight the mutant army at the beginning of the scenario. However, many Knights might refuse to fight, letting the mutant armies fight among themselves, then standing ready to clean up what remains; these Knights would actively try to keep the mutant forces from uniting.

The Knights could see Thornton as a symbol for their cause—but upon close inspection, they would be disappointed by his frailties; he simply is not the material of which Knights are made. In addition, Thornton would be appalled at the beliefs of the Knights.

The Purists would also be interested in taking the RMV for their own purposes—wiping out mutants. After all, it has done an excellent job so far. They will be upset if the PCs manage to stop the Excelsior from destroying everything in its path; if the Knights figure out what the PCs are trying to do, they are likely to try to stop them.

The Peace Brigade will be active during the Excelsior's rampage. They will see the RMV as proof that villages need more defenses, and will offer to improve many villages, both during the rampage and after.

The Radioactivists are interested in the RMV only as a possible source of radiation. They would consider Thornton a particularly good subject for radiation exposure; his life or death by radiation would be a powerful omen.



The Ranks of the Fit are greatly involved in this scenario through the activities of Bonparr. The Bonapartists want to stop any potential invasion (such as the RMV) before it gets to their territory, so they will send scouts out for information. If the RMV continues its path toward Gruesome Afbayz, the Bonapartists will try to stop it, because the Bonapartists feel almost as if they own Gruesome (and if anyone explores it, it should be the Ranks of the Fir).

Thornton is an interesting problem; he is human, so is disliked by Bonapartists—yet he is an ancient military leader, possibly with wisdom to impart. This could divide the Ranks. In addition, certain elements in Bonparr could see the general chaos caused by the RMV as a chance to go forth and conquer all the territory they can.

The Restorationists want the RMV, Thornton, and all Thornton's information. Traditionalists would

see the Excelsior as the ideal weapon to control local populations to insure progress. Reformists have an interest in the RMV only as an artifact to be studied—perhaps an artifact that could teach much about ancient systems.

All restorationists would lobby for capturing the RMV relatively intact. They may try to thwart attempts to ruin the machine. Both traditionalists and reformists see Thornton as a great resource; he can lead them to technology, tell them how to use it, and perhaps even help them build new things, all to forward the rebuilding of civilization. Thornton would very likely be sympathetic to this cause.

The Seekers definitely regard the Excelsior RMV as forbidden technology. If possible, they will seek to destroy it, and they will interfere with any plans to capture the RMV or use any part of it. Some especially radical members might see Thornton as a representa-



tion of the evil that destroyed the world (and in a way, they are correct, as even Thornton would admit) and would seek to kill him.

For the most part, the Seekers are likely to just avoid the RMV and suggest that all people either avoid it or seek to destroy it.

The Zoopremists would not be at all disappointed to see the Excelsior march through Bonparr. To this end, they may try to prevent the PCs from disabling the RMV. If possible, the Leftist Zoopremists would very much like to capture the RMV; it would be the perfect instrument of terrorism. Neither the Left nor the Right have much interest in what Thornton might have to say; Leftists would probably try to kill the Ancient. Zoopremists, according to their strictures, must avenge threats or discrimination toward animals; this would include killing Thornton. In addition, Zoopremists are obligated to stand in the way of the Ranks of the Fit, and would therefore be spreading misinformation and rumors and taking other actions designed to cripple the defensive efforts of Bonparr.

Setup Encounters

Ideally, the GM should introduce this scenario to the players slowly. The GM could offer hints and foreshadowing; the Player Characters might meet prominent characters who appear in the main scenario. It would be a good idea for the PCs to encounter M'rdeki before the module begins.

This section offers tips on linking this scenario to other GAMMA WORLD® Adventures, introducing major characters, and getting the PCs into the right place at the right time. The GM should feel free to add any other encounters desired.

Starting the PCs Outside Allenville

As previously noted, this module assumes the Player Characters start the adventure in the town of Allen-

ville. Bonparr or Ascension are also possible starting points, as is a town of the GM's choice.

If the Player Characters are in Bonparr when the adventure starts, they could be sent out as a scouting party once the refugees and reports reach Bonparr. This option gives the PCs a little more foreknowledge of the desires of Bonparr, plus they are likely to be acquainted with Maijac and M'rdeki, perhaps even accompanying them to the frontier. Any town along the way could attempt to draft the PCs, or locals could beg them to help organize forces against the invasion.

To get the PCs into the main body of the module, use the suggested draft and startup, perhaps slightly modified, or have the PCs meet NPCs who have been drafted in their place. In this case, the PCs play the part of the scout group that takes informants to Maijac. The PCs could play a more active role in negotiations and later maneuvers.

If the PCs start in another town in the Allenville area, simply use that town as a starting point rather than Allenville itself. The town leaders decide to build an army and begin drafting anyone and everyone.

If the Player Characters are west of Lake Mitchigloom when the adventure starts, they might encounter the RMV well before the events of the module take place. If they do not encounter the RMV themselves, they surely encounter many refugees fleeing the scene, and might even find themselves in the wake of the RMV. In this case, they would likely follow the wave of refugees, possibly as part of the invading mutant army.

The GM should approach such a scenario from a different angle—the PCs encounter opposition forces in the lands they enter, and must get word of the RMV to someone who can fight it, or face war. If the PCs are part of Achilex's army when the army hits resistance, Achilex sends the PCs to negotiate with the united bands who face them.

If the PCs are in Ascension or some other place off the beaten track at the beginning of the module, they could easily be sent to Allenville on a rumor. See the

following section for notes on using Allenville as a starting point.

If the PCs are not anywhere near the location of this adventure, the GM will need to get them moving or move the adventure locations to a place more suitable for the PCs.

The Allenville Adventure

Unless the GM has different plans for using Allenville, use the following.

A small Ancient base has recently been discovered near Allenville. The people there have seen the opportunity for tourism, and though the site is really nothing special, the locals have spread rumors across the countryside, trying to attract people to their town to boost trade and income.

The site was once a house, built as a sanctuary for a rather wealthy Ancient. The main building was underground and consisted of several rooms. The upper building, really just an entryway, was destroyed long ago, and the rest of the mansion forgotten.

Recently, a farmer was trying to dig a well when he discovered the roof of the mansion. After a few hours of excavation, he discovered the entrance and reported it to Petkam, who devised the idea for marketing the site.

Allenville is a small town with perhaps 100 inhabitants in the village and another 300 in outlying farms. The marketing of the Ancient site has taken off. All the locals are willing to sell maps to the Ancient site; some of the maps are even correct.

The GM should stick Player Characters with one or two incorrect maps leading to a created site with a few used and broken artifacts scattered about, or to the lair of an animal that the locals wish to have slain, or to a place that has been the site of much recent digging. At any false location, the PCs could encounter a group of NPCs who have claimed the site as their own.

While they search for the real ruins, the PCs may see a few refugees traveling through the wilderness.

This should not seem suspicious—simply a few people headed south and east. If the PCs stop some refugees, the folks will tell only that they suddenly decided to move; if asked why, they will nervously make up some lie about bad crops, too many roaming animals, and so on. Nothing about them is suspicious.

The Player Characters should eventually find the real Ancient site. Other people—locals and wandering adventurers—have already been there, but have found little of value. The entrance at ground level leads to what was once a living room. It once held an entertainment center, but most of it is gone; perhaps only a remote control remains, hidden under some debris. A reclining chair with massage attachments could be an interesting find for the PCs.

The PCs should be able to find a concealed door to another room or two, such as a kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. Other possible rooms include a dining room, an exercise room, and an underground swimming pool. Something may be living in the pool. The machines in the weight room are automated, and should seem to attack the PCs if they get too close.

There should be enough minor artifacts and puzzles at the site to keep the PCs in Allenville for a few days. These include toys and diversions, and a few kitchen utensils usable as weapons, but nothing very destructive or exciting. Meanwhile, refugees continue to pass by, and rumors eventually hit town. A group of NPCs may arrive as competitors for the artifacts at the site.

While in town, the PCs should meet (or at least observe) Petkam, the leader of the village. Petkam is a pure strain human who is very charismatic and assertive. He is a retired adventurer who helped found the town as it now exists. Petkam is jovial on the surface, but hard underneath. He wants “his” town and “his” people to prosper. If the PCs cause trouble, he will deal with them personally, trying gentle persuasion with the hint of threats.

Petkam will certainly notice the PCs, and might try to convince them to stay in town as guards. It should come as no surprise that, in response to the rumors,

Petkam wants to create an army, and he wants the PCs to be in it.

The PCs may also meet Petgra and Levcle while in town (refer to the first section of the adventure for more information on these two altered humans). The GM should feel free to add any other NPCs who seem fun.

Several possibilities exist for interesting NPCs showing up here; they could be used later to help convince the PCs to join Petkam's army, or could show up later in the adventure serving some other purpose. For instance, the PCs could meet Aglaj, an old tinker. Aglaj was an examiner in his early days, and a good one. However, he is well past his prime, and he simply putters with any old artifacts he can find, trying vainly to fix them. He suffers from poor eyesight, a lack of proper tools, and a lack of repairable artifacts.

Aglaj would be happy to talk to the PCs about his past, regaling them with stories of death machines and regiments of hoops. Aglaj is basically harmless, and should be used to involve the PCs in role-playing. He can recognize many artifacts and describe their function.

Later in the adventure, Aglaj could return. By that time, he will have been contacted by the army of Bonparr and some sleeths working with them. Aglaj has been given eyeglasses, tools, and a new lease on life. Once nothing more than an inefficient tinker, Aglaj could now be vital support for the adventure. He could show up at the right time to save the characters, or could provide them with a vital clue for stopping the RMV ("you know, I think the battery packs for those thingies have a connection behind the knee; I'll bet a careful shot could knock out a leg"); then again, Aglaj could accidentally mislead the characters, placing them in a dangerous spot.

Other characters could be used for various purposes if the GM desires.

Linking with Other Modules

The module *Mutant Master* introduced a character called the Blue Man, who wanted to build a mutant army for conquest. If the PCs played that module, there are several possibilities for using the events presented there. If the Blue Man lived, the PCs could track him to the area of Allenville. The Blue Man could be in charge of the invading mutant army. Alternately, the Blue Man could be one of the "good guys" this time, building a group to resist the invasion and the RMV; negotiations with him would certainly be interesting. A clue found in Sagow Enstoot could lead the PCs to Allenville, to put them in place for *Home Before the Sky Falls*. See the notes of the Iron Society in the section on Cryptic Alliance involvement for more ideas.

The accessory *The Overlord of Bonparr* describes Bonparr and the lands around it. That accessory is already heavily linked with this module. If the GM does not have *Overlord of Bonparr*, it may be necessary to create maps and adversaries for Gruesome Afbayz.

Bonparr is basically on a warlike footing, not quite ready to go to war, but of a mindset to do so. Use the notes in this module and in the GAMMA WORLD® *Game Rules* to create the parts of Bonparr and Gruesome needed for the campaign.

The module *All Animals Are Equal* is about concentrated political intrigue in the zoo in Jospeen. Though its events do not directly affect *Home Before the Sky Falls*, it may be possible to use some NPCs from *All Animals Are Equal*, or even to use it as a starting point for PCs.

Encountering Major NPCs

One of the major NPCs in this module, Colonel M'rdeki, should be known to the PCs before the mod-

ule begins. Knowledge of other NPCs could help the Player Characters in negotiations.

Maijac

Maijac is a mutated wolf, a sergeant in the army of Bonparr. In this adventure, he leads a squad of scouts that has gone far to the west of Bonparr. He is proud of his long career as a noncommissioned officer. Most of his men consider him to be reasonable and fair, and Maijac tries to live up to their expectations. Maijac is pleasant in a somewhat crude way, always ready with a bawdy story or a rude comment to keep morale high among his men. Maijac is never seen wearing anything but camouflage fatigues. When not in the field, he prefers to wear an ascot at his throat.

Maijac can be introduced to the PCs before the adventure in a variety of ways. If the PCs go to Bonparr, they could meet him there as a recruiting officer, a drill sergeant for recruits, or simply at a local tavern; between field assignments, Maijac serves in various capacities in the cities of Bonparr.

Outside of Bonparr, Maijac acts as a scout, sometimes alone, sometimes with a small squad under his command. The suggested method for the PCs to meet Maijac is to find him either imprisoned or in a dangerous situation (or both, perhaps imprisoned in an ancient still-sort-of-functioning dog pound which has caught Maijac, locked him up, and holds him for execution). The PCs should be enticed to rescue Maijac, perhaps because he looks helpless, perhaps because he offers money. In any case, it is hoped the Player Characters do something to earn Maijac's respect.

Whatever the PCs do with Maijac, he will remember and treat them accordingly when he encounters them in this scenario.

Bobbakar

This altered human runs the town of Opry with an iron fist. He is not charismatic like Petkam in Allen-

ville; Bobbakar runs his town by fear. He is a tough man, used to getting what he wants. He uses enforcers to bully the people of his town, and is not above stealing what he desires.

Bobbakar is a traditional Archivist, a worshiper of artifacts. The Player Characters could meet Bobbakar in the wilderness as he searches for artifacts to take back to his temple. In the wilderness, Bobbakar will be accompanied by an apprentice examiner and at least one enforcer. He will attempt to bargain for any artifacts the PCs may have, allowing several bits of Archivist rhetoric and dogma slip into his conversation ("allow me to save you from that evil laser gun; I will put it in a place of safekeeping").

Under no circumstances will Bobbakar reveal his alliance, except to a fellow Archivist. Another Archivist would be shocked by Bobbakar's lack of discretion regarding the Archivists; he is much too vocal about his feelings to keep his alliance a secret.

If the PCs meet Bobbakar in Opry before the module begins, Bobbakar may try to indoctrinate them into the Archivists, starting slowly at first, and building if the characters seem at all responsive (if they give up artifacts, espouse a desire to eradicate robotic life, and so forth). Visiting Opry before the module might allow the characters a glimpse of the secret artifact temple in that town; they will have little opportunity to do so during *Home Before the Sky Falls*.

If the PCs met Bobbakar or visited Opry before the adventure, Bobbakar will not remember them unless they did something extraordinary (like robbing the temple). If the PCs remind Bobbakar of their previous meeting, Bobbakar will pretend to remember, then call the PCs by incorrect names. Even if he does remember the PCs, he probably will not remember why. He is too wrapped up in the holiness of artifacts to remember unimportant names of sentient beings.

At the end of the adventure, Bobbakar will surely be one of the archivists who tries to capture and disable the RMV; he wants "the god Excelsior" in his temple in Opry.

Achilex

This mutated plant leads the army that invades the civilized lands, in response to the RMV's destruction on its path east.

Achilex is a handsome ivy, almost human in appearance, with a green complexion, leaves instead of hair, and a variety of helpful mutations. He grows large leaves on his torso; these serve as "clothing" and make him appear modest to humans and near-humans. Until the coming of the Excelsior, Achilex was a peaceful farmer, raising a few innocuous plants and animals on a small plot of land near the rambling woods territory near Miacholin.

The RMV blasted lands to the west, and refugees trampled Achilex's lands; some tried to kill him or eat him. When a refugee paused long enough to tell Achilex what was wrong, Achilex packed a few

belongings and left his home, headed *west*—determined to see the engine of destruction that had caused such a panic. Achilex did see the device, and he headed south and east with other displaced people, the RMV pursuing behind.

Achilex arrived in a small town with a few other refugees; they were met with pitchforks and worse. Starting with his fellow refugees, Achilex began building an army so that he could take new lands by force if needed.

If the PCs meet Achilex before the adventure, it should be in a relatively unimpressive encounter. The PCs might pass Achilex's farm, earning his wrath if they harm anything; or the Player Characters could meet Achilex in a small town where he has set up a booth to sell produce. Achilex should seem harmless, not very trusting, and very devoted to his farm.

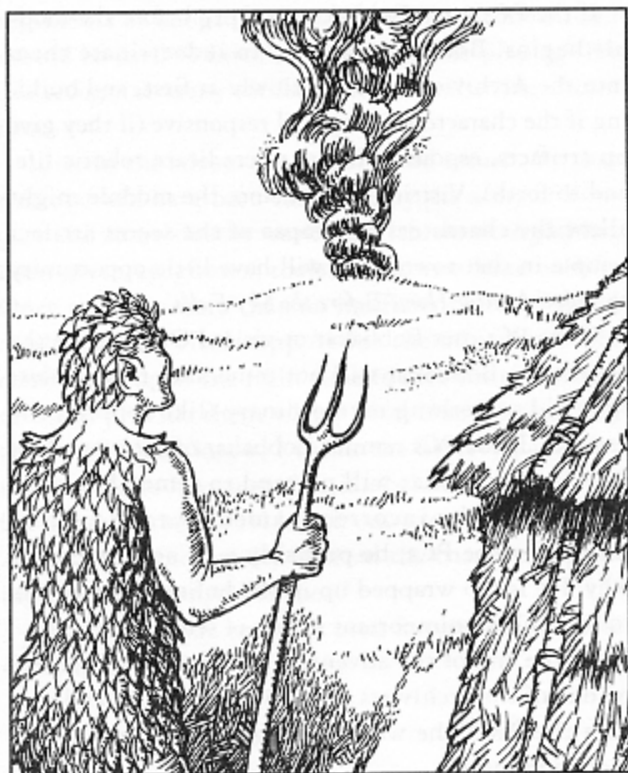
Toward the end of the adventure, Achilex will want to return to his farm. If the PCs have been fair with him, he may ask for their help in rebuilding what he has lost. The other mutants who followed Achilex will demand that he help them build a town, and the small town of Achilex will take shape near the former site of Achilex's farm.

M'rdeki

This mutant gorilla is a tough person. He is very fair, and every inch the officer and gentlemen, but he expects respect from his subordinates and usually gets it. When in the field, he is a consummate actor, able to assume the role that will get him into the places he wants to go, and get him the information he needs. At heart, M'rdeki is honest and honorable; he is a deep thinker who is concerned about the future of Gamma Terra.

It is important for the PCs to trust M'rdeki when they encounter him in this module. This trust should be earned, so ideally, the PCs will encounter M'rdeki before *Home Before the Sky Falls*, possibly several times.

The PCs' first encounter with M'rdeki should be





outside of Bonparr, with no evidence that M'rdeki is an officer in Bonparr's armies. Let the Player Characters get into a tough situation; perhaps they are ambushed by members of the Knights of Genetic Purity. M'rdeki comes to their rescue, zapping one of the Knights at a critical moment. After the incident, M'rdeki will be willing to talk with the PCs, but expects no thanks and no payment. At this time, he refuses any offers to join the Player Characters on an adventure.

At the first meeting with the PCs, M'rdeki will make small talk: "nice weather," "is anyone injured?," and "pretty rotten world we live in, isn't it?" M'rdeki tends to address all other intelligent beings as equals, calling them "sentients" to avoid discrimination. He treats the PCs as friends and shows them respect (though he will not allow himself to be fooled or mistreated by them). M'rdeki is intelligent and thought-

ful; he will ask probing questions about how the PCs feel about the world in general, almost as if he is interviewing them for a later job, but subtly. The PCs should be left with feelings of good will for the gorilla.

Later, the PCs may meet M'rdeki again, perhaps between adventures, or as one is just beginning. If the PCs ask the gorilla to accompany them, he will agree; if they do not ask, M'rdeki offers, perhaps even bringing news of an adventure waiting to happen. If the GM runs *Mutant Master*, that adventure would be a fine time for M'rdeki to appear, since he would want to keep any would-be conqueror from becoming too powerful.

Sometime during the course of the adventure, M'rdeki lets the Player Characters know that he is a commander in a special unit of the army of Bonparr. He apologizes for his possible duplicity at their first meeting, explaining that he was on a secret mission then, and did not know the Player Characters well enough to trust them. Now, he is on another secret mission (up to the GM, possibly related to the PCs' adventure), but he feels the Player Characters are worthy of being told the truth.

M'rdeki treats the Player Characters as comrades in arms, offering advice when asked and fire support when needed, but will neither overshadow a PC leader nor carry the brunt of an assault. He will share the burden with the PCs. Note that this is especially true if he is of a much higher level than the PCs (consider him a 7th-level enforcer at this meeting).

M'rdeki's habit of looking after the men in his command should extend to the Player Characters for the course of the setup adventure. By the time the PCs encounter the gorilla in Lee during *Home Before the Sky Falls*, they should respect and trust him.



Another Quiet Day

This town had seen its share of quiet days in the last few months—despite rumors of masses of mutants and humans supposedly flooding the region. But the sleepy town saw nothing of the kind, and many doubted that such an event could exist to rout the populace from their homes.

On the dawn of yet another quiet day, everything changed. The warning was the chicken. It was a human-sized, mutant chicken with full vocal capacity. It ran screaming into the center of the tiny town. "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" it squawked ceaselessly.

The townspeople were roused from their sleep to witness the bizarre sight. As folks gathered on front lawns to stare, a young man suddenly pointed beyond the city limits to the outlying hills. A black smear poured over the tops of the hills in one solid flow. Those with enhanced eyesight could make out human and human-like forms flooding to the east as quickly as the terrain allowed.

The chicken stopped its frenzied scrambling and darted headlong out of town, screaming its warning as it fled. Citizens were drawn to the edge of town, where they could watch the swarming mass of mutants and humans. Then a sinister, black shadow crept over the bewildered folk.

The massive, black shape that loomed in the sky above the gathered townspeople resembled an enormous metal man. Before anyone could even absorb the horror of the situation, laser blasts wreaked instant havoc and destruction. A few citizens made a panicked rush for the nearby

ravine and riverbank. A couple of quick laser bursts later, all but a very few were blasted out of existence. The massive metal beast set to destroy everything in its path. Buildings, people, animals, and even the wounded were targets. Soon there was little left except for a shallow, charred crater and some smoldering buildings.

Off in the distance, the mass of refugees still advanced like a plague.

Allenville

Allenville is a quiet town of several hundred inhabitants. The locals have successfully established small farm fields, rendering the town mostly self-sufficient. Life in Allenville is dull, with people finding little to do other than make a living.

Recently, rumors have surfaced of a massive invasion of mutants entering the region. The tales speak of entire towns destroyed in the refugees' wake and various atrocities committed by the panicked mobs. The folk of Allenville have been on edge in recent weeks, and have gathered any armaments they can find to defend their homes from the invading hordes.

The Characters' Introduction

If the PCs begin the adventure in Allenville, they are likely living a quiet existence between adventures, or were attracted there by rumors of a great artifact that surfaced in the area. The locals are pleasant but reserved, and some are downright nervous at any display of weaponry.

On the second day after the PCs' arrival, the first of the refugees are spotted passing outside the town. At first, the passersby are only a trickle, mostly humans, keeping their distance from the town and the fields. These refugees are clearly in a hurry and are not willing to stop to talk.

By noon of the PCs' third day, the trickle of refugees is a flood of humans, assorted mutants, and beasts. As the mobs increase in size, the refugees grow bolder. They move closer to the fields, even trampling the crops, despite the objections of the townspeople. In their haste, the refugees care nothing for the havoc they wreak. The townspeople who stand in their way are pushed aside, but are otherwise unharmed by the refugees.

Should the PCs try to stop any refugees, they will find that the fleeing folk are terrified of everything. They attempt to get away at the first opportunity, and only if they are physically restrained will they answer any questions.

A refugee who is interrogated will provide one of the following rumors.

2d4 Roll Rumor

- 2 A massive mutant army is massing near Port Alar.
- 3 An ancient horror is on the loose near the Fix River.
- 4 The mutant army has control of a devastating artifact capable of destroying entire towns.
- 5 Mutant army scouts have been seen in the Snake River area.
- 6 Bonapartist forces have been repelling refugees, by force if necessary.
- 7 Bonapartist forces have been taking over towns because of their fear of the mutants.
- 8 Fermee is a ghost town, the result of fear of the mutants and their artifact.

Any refugees who are questioned do not know exactly what they are running from. They know that a

mutant army follows behind them. Allenville residents will remember a chicken shouting, "The sky is falling," but they will break down and beg to be released since they have no more information for the group.

The townspeople abandon their fields and prepare to defend the town from any assault by the refugees. Such an assault never comes, and the townspeople slowly relax. The flood of people continues without interruption for most of the day. About an hour before dusk, the flood ends and a strange silence falls over the town.

Town Meeting

When the mobs disappear, Allenville's leader, Petkam, calls all the townsfolk together in the center of town. Any who are a bit reluctant are encouraged to attend the meeting by the Enforcers (see below).

Petkam tells the citizens that a mutant invasion is taking place. He says that it is the patriotic duty of every able-bodied person not directly involved in food production to join for the defense of the community. A cheer goes up for Petkam.

Petkam directs the people to the town hall, a two-story structure near the center of the village. There, humans and mutants alike line up in front of a long table set up outside.

Petkam: Pure Human; Enforcer; Level 7; PS 12; DX 11; CN 13; MS 13; IN 15; CH 18; SN 8; THAC melee 0; THAC ranged 0; AC 12; HP 50. He is always dressed in a clean, white jumpsuit and a wide black leather utility belt.

Petkam always carries a dagger, and today is wearing his revolver. This revolver is well known by the townspeople, as he uses it as an intimidating force when needed. Only Petkam knows that the revolver has only four shots in it. The other bullets that were found with the revolver were used to prove the usefulness of the weapon to those who forced Petkam to use it.

Hard Decisions

Should the characters simply sign up for military service, they will have placed themselves on track for the rest of this adventure.

Should the players try to evade the draft line, they will be rounded up by the Enforcers. The Enforcers are a group of humans and altered humans established by Petkam to keep order and serve as personal thugs.

Enforcers (2): PSH; Enforcer/PCs' level+2; AC 13; MD 11; HP 85+level bonus; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 12; St +1; RU 0; UA 0; RR 20. PS 16; DX 14; CN 17; MS 12; IN 10; CH 11; SN 6.

All Enforcers dress in dark blue coveralls, which act as leather armor, and all carry long swords and bolas.

Enforcers (6): AH; Enforcer/PCs' level+2; AC 12/17; MD 12; HP 40+level bonus; THAC +3 (0); #AT 2; Hth 14; Spd 12; Per 12; St 0; RU 0; UA 0; RR 16. PS 17; DX 12; CN 10; MS 8; IN 10; CH 6; SN 12.

These Enforcers have four arms, and each has a large carapace protecting its back. They have infravision and regeneration. In addition, they have the capacity to generate fear.

Their large bodies strain the dark blue coveralls which were made for humans, but with two extra arm holes. Each carries two long swords and three bolas.

The Enforcers are totally loyal to Petkam and are well paid by him. They are under orders to ensure that all nonessential persons sign up for service, especially those from out of town.

The Enforcers will try to subdue the PCs if they try to resist the draft. If the PCs gain the upper hand, the locals and even Petkam will join the fray.

Should the characters manage to evade the Enforcers, they will still be reported to the Enforcers. The Enforcers will round them up (by force, if necessary), later that evening.

Should the players leave town, they will encounter a patrol (two members per PC) from Allenville that will attempt to subdue them.

Patrol (5): PH; Enforcer/PCs' level; AC 12; MD 11; HP 40+level bonus; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 12; St +1; RU 0; UA 0; RR 20. PS 15; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 10; CH 11; SN 12.

All wear leather armor and carry long swords and bolas.

Patrol (1): AH; Scout 5; AC 12; MD 14; HP 56; THAC 0 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 12; St +1; RU 0; UA 0; RR 20. PS 12; DX 14; CN 12; MS 15; IN 12; CH 10; SN 15.

The scout is dressed in leather armor and has a short sword and short bow.

Should the characters approach Petkam, he will make arrangements to meet the characters privately, after they enlist.

This should be enough to get the characters involved in the campaign. Unless the GM is willing to be extremely inventive and creative, the PCs must be pressed into service.

Once the PCs are enlisted, they are marched off to a large warehouse on the edge of town.

The PCs, being strangers, are segregated from the local folk out of the townspeople's fear.

The warehouse is simply a large, empty building whose windows are boarded up with planks. The floor is covered with straw and the roof sports several large holes. Inside the single large door, two enforcers stand guard.

Over the next hour, small groups of townspeople are selected and lead out of the warehouse. The PCs are specifically excluded from these groups, even if they volunteer. The Enforcers simply say, "Petkam has something special for you."

This continues until the characters and the two Enforcer guards are the only people left in the building. A short time later, the doors swing wide and Petkam and his escort enter.

Petkam is cool and cordial to the characters, who he has selected for a special mission since they are not native to the town. He needs a squad that knows how to

survive an overland trip. In addition, he secretly needs persons who would not be missed should they not return. Petkam also hopes that persons of the characters' status are reasonable individuals with whom he can make a deal.

Petkam wants the characters to find the mutant army and obtain the artifact he thinks they have. He also desires their support against the Bonapartist forces.

Petkam explains the situation as he wants the characters to see it. He tells them that a large mutant army is gathering someplace in the north. He has heard rumors (actually, a town patrol has seen evidence in that area) that the army has scouting parties as far east as the Snake River. He wants the characters to contact them.

He thinks the mutants have an ancient artifact capable of laying waste to entire towns. He knows that the Bonapartists have had units sweeping up small towns to the east, using the threat of the mutant army invasion to take over without a shot. Petkam thinks he should be a major power, and he thinks that this artifact will make him a major power in the region.

Petkam will start by trying to appeal to the PCs' fears, telling of the great atrocities this mutant army may wreak. Petkam will have Ru (an alcoholic beverage of local brew) and food brought in for the characters.

If appealing to their fears fails, Petkam will try to buy the characters' allegiance. He can offer each PC up to 1,000 domars to complete the mission—as much as half of it up front. If this fails, Petkam will place the money on the table and will attempt to intimidate the characters by bringing in as many Enforcers as necessary to threaten them.

Enforcers (6): AH; Enforcer/PCs' level+2; AC 12/17; MD 12; HP 40+level bonus; THAC +3 (0); #AT 2; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 12; St 0; RU 0; UA 0; RR 16. PS 17; DX 12; CN 10; MS 8; IN 10; CH 6; SN 12.

These Enforcers have four arms, and each has a large carapace protecting its back. They have infravision and regeneration. They also have the capacity to generate fear.

The Mission

Once the characters agree to the mission, Petkam tells them that one of his patrols has encountered a scout group of the mutant army in the region of the Snake River. Patrols have not located the main body of the army, so he suggests that the scout group is the best place to start.

Petkam tells the characters that he is sending two people along to help them. Levcle was one of the original scouts to track the mutant army scout group. Petgra is a good warrior with useful mutations.

Levcle: AH; Scout 6; AC 12; MD 13; HP 60; THAC 0 (+2); #AT 2; Hth 15; Spd 13; Per 13; St +1; RU +2; UA 3; RR 18.

PS 12; DX 16; CN 14; MS 12; IN 11; CH 6; SN 18.

Mutations: chameleon power, energy absorption, heightened balance, ultravision, confusion.

Levcle wears black coveralls that serve as leather armor. He carries a short sword, dagger, and long bow.

Levcle is a quiet person who keeps to himself. He is very good at scouting and has been compensated well by Petkam in the past. He is a mercenary who can be bought. If overwhelmed, he will change sides freely. He will notice that the group is being trailed as soon as it leaves town, but will not mention this fact unless he switches from Petkam's employ to the characters' employment.

Petgra: AH; Enforcer/PCs' level+3; AC 12; MD 12; HP 75+level bonus; THAC +3 (0); #AT 2; Hth 14; Spd 14; Per 13; St +1; RU +2; UA 3; RR 18.

PS 18; DX 11; CN 15; MS 9; IN 5; CH 6; SN 12.

Mutations: heightened speed, night vision, blinding gas generation via mouth, horns, displacement.

Petgra always wears leather armor and carries a long sword and spear. In addition, Petgra has been given a bolt action rifle with 4 shots for tight situations.

Petgra is a large, altered human who owes his total loyalty to Petkam. He was raised from birth by Petkam. He will fight to the death to complete the mission that

the group has been given. He knows nothing of Petkam's other plans.

Petkam's Other Plans

Petkam does not trust the characters, so he is sending out a patrol to follow them. The patrol has orders to ensure that Levle and Petgra are not dumped by the PCs once they get out of town.

In addition, the patrol is under orders to ensure that the characters recover the artifact. Once the artifact is recovered, the patrol is to steal it and return it to Allen-ville. This is not to say that Petkam will not pay the characters, but he does not trust them to hand over the artifact; indeed, he fears that they may use it against him.

Petkam would like the mutant army's support against the Bonapartists. He has given Petgra a letter to ask the mutants to join his army against the Bonapartists.

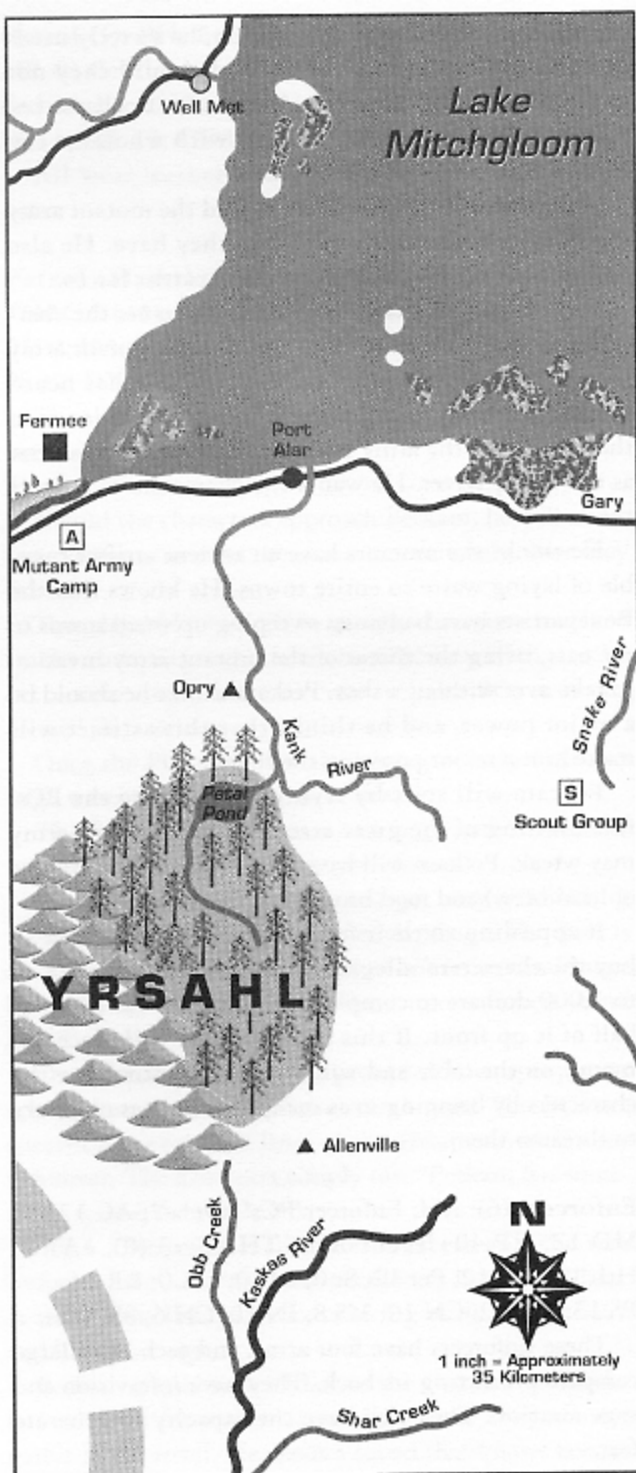
Petkam does not expect the characters to return (nor his patrol, for that matter). But he feels that he must make an attempt to ally, or he will be descended upon by two hostile armies, both of which could easily defeat his small forces.

Patrol (5): PH; Enforcer/PCs' level; AC 12; MD 12; HP 40+level bonus; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 12; St 0; RU 0; UA 0; RR 20.
PS 15; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 10; CH 11; SN 12.

All wear leather armor and carry long swords and bolas.

Patrol (1): AH; Scout 5; AC 12; MD 14; HP 56; THAC 0 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 12; St +1; RU 0; UA 0; RR 18.
PS 12; DX 14; CN 12; MS 15; IN 12; CH 10; SN 15.

The scouts have leather armor, short sword, and short bow.



A Trip into War

Petkam invites the PCs, Levcle, and Petgra to join him for dinner at his home. The group can discuss details of the mission before leaving in the morning. The PCs may spend the night in the warehouse, if desired. The two Enforcers maintain their posts all through the night.

The night passes quietly, but the flow of refugees outside town increases after dark. Before dawn, the party is awakened by shouting outside the warehouse. They hear a squawking voice screeching, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" If the PCs look outside, they see a human-sized mutated chicken running in circles, shouting its warning. This continues for several minutes. When an Enforcer appears to investigate, the bird runs off, obviously empowered with enhanced speed.

If the mutant chicken is captured, it squawks, attempts to escape, and continues to scream its warning. Should the chicken be asked specific questions, it can give broken answers, telling of an ancient terror that fills the sky and kills everything in its path. The chicken gives no details of the object, other than that it is powerful and it flies.

Petkam jokes with the party. "Well, we'd best get you out and back home before the sky falls." Then he suggests that the group make preparations to leave. Petgra and Levcle lead the group out of town, proceeding to the northwest, through the parade of refugees.

The Long Walk

Levcle will notice Petkam's spy patrol within a few hours of leaving Allenville. He will not say anything about it as long as Petgra is alive.

The GM should roll twice per day for encounters on the following chart.

D20 roll	Encounter
1	Sudden storm
2	Arks
3	Blood birds
4	Grens
5	Hawkoids
6	Horl choos
7	Kai lins
8	Lils
9	Mantas
10	Obbs
11-13	Refugees
14-20	No encounter

Sudden storm: A storm whips up without warning and engulfs the party in 40-mile-per-hour winds and biting dust particles. The party has 2-7 rounds to find cover before the storm inflicts 4d6 damage to each PC.

Arks (1-6): Per 15; St +2; AC 15 (11); MD 12; Hth 12; Spd 18; Level 2; Hit Dice 9 (32); THAC +2; #AT 1; Bite 1d6; Weapon +2; Int Low; Morale 11; Size L; XP Value 270; *telekinesis* (13), *life leech* (11).

Blood Birds (1-4): Per 17; St +1; AC 16; MD 25; Hth 11; Spd 6 (Flying) 32; Level 1; Hit Dice 3 (11); THAC +1; #AT 1 or 2; Bite 1d4, Spur 1d4; Int Animal; Morale 7; Size S; XP Value 120; *radioactive flesh* Intensity 15.

Grens (1-8): Per 12; St +5; AC 16; MD 12; Hth 12; Spd 12; Level 2; Hit Dice 7 (25); THAC +2; #AT 1; Weapon 0; Int Very; Morale 8; Size M; XP Value 120.

Hawkoids (1-3): Per 15; St +2; AC 13; MD 13; Hth 13; Spd 3 (Flying) 40; Level 3; Hit Dice 5 (18); THAC +3; #AT 1 or 2; Bite 1d4; Weapon +1; Int Average; Morale 17; Size M; XP Value 650; *fear generation* (12), *levitation* (18), *repulsion field* (14), *duality*.

Horl Choos (1-2): Per 14; St +3; AC 15; MD 14; Hth 14; Spd 3; Level 4; Hit Dice 12 (42); THAC +4; #AT 1; Quill 2d6; Int Low; Morale 12; Size L; XP Value 650; *dissolving juices* (12), *poison*, *quills* (7), *quills and spines*.

Kai Lins (1-4): Per 12; St +3; AC 14; MD 13; Hth 13; Spd 12; Level 3; Hit Dice 11 (39); THAC +3; #AT 3; Bite 1d6; Claw (2) 1d6; Int Low; Morale 12; Size L; XP Value 120; *attractive odor*; *electrical generation* (16), *radiating eyes* (14), *dissolving juices* (6), *immune to radiation*.

Lils (1-20): Per 15; St +3; AC 14; MD 15; Hth 12; Spd 2 (Flying) 14; Level 3; Hit Dice 4 (14); THAC +3; #AT 1; Weapon 0; Int High; Morale 6; Size T; XP Value 650; *energy reflection* (15), *size change*, *wings*, *dual brain* (*mass mind* (16), *telepathy* (14), *total healing* (12)), *anti-life leech* (11), *empathy* (16), *force field generation* (14), *illusion generation* (18), *telekinesis* (9), *light generation*.

Mantas (1-2): Per 15; St +6; AC 16; MD 16; Hth 16; Spd 24; Level 6; Hit Dice 13 (46); THAC +6; #AT 3; Bite 5d6; Claws (2) 3d6; Int Low; Morale 16; Size L; XP Value 1400; *heightened speed*.

Obbs (1-4): Per 18; St +12; AC 12; MD 16; Hth 16; Spd 3 (Flying) 30; Level 6; Hit Dice 8 (28); THAC +6; #AT 3; Claws 2d6; Int Average; Morale 14; Size M; XP Value 4,000; *radiating eyes* (19), *immune to radiation and heat* (including IR and fire).

Refugees (3-30): Refugees are always in ragtag groups including both pure humans and altered humanoids. They are always in a hurry and will not stop to talk to the party unless physically confronted. If confronted, they try to get away. They know little except that the sky fell on their homes and they want to get out of its path.

Refugees can provide the following rumors.

2d4 roll Rumor

- 2 A large mutant army is forming southeast of Fermee.
- 3 Bonapartist forces have been moving through the area.
- 4 Mutant forces are operating in the Snake River area.
- 5 The Bonapartists have been taking over many small towns to the east.
- 6 The Bonapartists are raising an army to fight the mutant army.
- 7 The mutant army is mostly composed of women and children.
- 8 The mutant army is not occupying territory; it seems to be running from something, too.

Petgra will insist on pressing on and leaving the refugees alone, as he sees no value in speaking with them.

Encounters

Following are encounters that the PCs will experience at certain points of the journey. Throughout the trip, the PCs continually see evidence of the passage of refugees.

The PCs encounter a group of Arks on an expedition to locate food and equipment. They attack the party.

Arks (5): Per 15; St +2; AC 15 (11); MD 12; Hth 12; Spd 18; Level 2; Hit Dice 9 (32); THAC +2; #AT 1; Bite 1d6; Weapon +2; Int Low; Morale 11; Size L; XP Value 270; *telekinesis* (13), *life leech* (11) They carry spears.

The arks fight to the death. If any are captured, they will admit knowledge of the mutant scout team, but know nothing of the artifact or the RMV.

The Trail

Levele spots the tracks of a quickly moving, light force of mutants. It travels as an organized group rather than

a retreating mob. Levcle observes the tracks exactly where Allenville's scouts had reported the army's scout group. The trail leads directly to the camp of the scout group.

Tracking the group is easy, since it is leaving markers for the main army. Levcle believes the scout group to be ahead of the PCs by at least a day. He thinks four to six mutants are in the scout group.

Encountering the Scout Group

Levcle, who prefers to scout ahead, will rejoin the party and report that the mutant scout party is at the edge of a nearby woods. He suggests that the group wait until dark, then attack.

The scouts are not much of a fighting force. Their job is to avoid contact with hostile groups, but to report them to the army. This group lacks motivation and good leadership. They have made little progress over the past week, moving only five miles in that time.

Should the PCs attack the scouts before dark, they will encounter the following group.

Mutant Force Scout Group

Leader (1): PH; Enforcer 5; AC 14; MD 14; HP 64; THAC +1 (0); #AT 1; Hth 14; Spd 14; Per 17; St +1; RU +3; UA 3; RR 20.

PS 14; DX 11; CN 13; MS 13; IN 15; CH 18; SN 8.

He wears ring mail armor. He carries a spear as a missile weapon and a long sword for melee combat.

Scouts (3): AH; Scout 2; AC 12; MD 11; HP 65; THAC 0 (+2); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 14; St +1; RU +1; UA 2; RR 18.

PS 10; DX 16; CN 15; MS 13; IN 15; CH 18; SN 17.

These scouts wear leather armor and carry long swords and short bows.

Mutations: heightened sense, size change, ultravision, illusion generation, beguiling.

Warriors (2): AH; Enforcer 4; AC 12; MD 13; HP 95; THAC +3 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 12; St 0;

RU 0; UA 2; RR 18.

PS 17; DX 14; CN 15; MS 13; IN 15; CH 18; SN 17.

They wear leather armor and carry long swords and short bows.

Mutations: regeneration, infravision, electrical generation, horns, life leech.

This group will fight only if trapped or attacked. They fight until half their number or their leader is incapacitated or slain, then they surrender. If attacked without being surrounded, they defend themselves and attempt to escape.

Should the party simply confront the mutant scout force, the scout group attempts withdrawal if outnumbered. They negotiate only if trapped. If they outnumber the PCs, the mutant force will attempt to negotiate, without revealing anything about their mission or anything about the army.

If not surrounded when confronted, the scout group attempts to keep an escape route open (preferably into the woods) by spreading out slowly in a nonhostile manner. Should the PCs show hostility, the scout group defends themselves and attempts to escape into the woods.

Should the PCs offer themselves to the mutant scouts as recruits (over Petgra's objections), the scout leader will interview them. The leader will attempt to ensure that the PCs are truly interested in joining the mutant army. Once that is concluded, the leader will quiz the PCs for information they may have about terrain or other groups in the area. The scouts will ask the PCs to accompany them for the next few days, before rejoining the mutant army.

Petgra will be a major obstacle to this approach. It will take extreme persuasion by the characters, or outright force to get him to participate in this plan.

If the characters try to join the scout group and Petgra is no longer with the PCs for any reason, the spy patrol trailing the party will attack the mutant scouts and the PCs.

If any of the scouts are captured, they can be forced to talk. They will confirm the fact that a large mutant army is on the way. The scouts will reveal, under threat

or for a price, that the mutant army has little in the way of ancient technology weapons. They also tell that the army consists mostly of refugees, including many women and children. They are looking for a safe haven away from their former homes but free of outside control.

The mutant scout group will reveal under extreme duress (or if the characters have befriended them) that a huge creature is following the army. The beast has the capacity to lay waste to entire towns.

Only if the scout leader is captured will the scouts reveal that they were chased out of their own homes and are little more than refugees themselves. The scout group's orders, known only to the leader, was to locate a way for the army to safely march through the Bonparr forces.

Choosing Sides

The party now faces a major decision. It can elect to continue with the scout group, in which case the next move is to head for the mutant army's camp and learn more about the RMV, then return to Allenville (the only way the PCs can make money in this deal).

The party can otherwise elect to return to Allenville. If Petgra is still alive, he will be opposed to returning to the point of physical confrontation with the group. Levele will back up Petgra if it comes to a showdown.

The party might elect to simply strike out on its own. In this event, it will be confronted by Petgra and Levele.

In either of the last two cases, if a fight ensues, the spy patrol following the party will join Petgra and Levele in attacking the PCs. Statistics for the spies are found earlier under *Petkam's Other Plans*. The spies will sweep in on the party's trail, surprising the PCs.

Meeting the Bonparr Army

The 5th Bonparr Reconnaissance Regiment is located on the far side of the woods from the mutant scout

group. The Bonapartists observe the PCs' interaction with the mutant scouts. They wish to recruit the characters to aid them in negotiating with the mutant army.

Shortly after the PCs encounter the mutant scout party, they are approached by the 5th Bonparr Reconnaissance Regiment. The manner of this meeting depends upon the PCs' interactions with the scout group.

If the party plans to continue with the mutant scout group, the Bonapartist forces will attack the Allenville spy patrol within earshot of the PCs. When the party investigates, it will find the town patrol dead and the Bonapartist force with one dead and one wounded. The party will be greeted cordially and welcomed.

Should the PCs decide not to continue with the mission and the spy patrol is drawn into combat with them, the Bonapartists will arrive after the third round of combat. They will attack the spy patrol members as well as Petgra and Levele. They will restrain or subdue the party members if necessary.

5th Bonparr Reconnaissance Regiment

Leader (1): Mutated Bear; Enforcer 8; AC 13; MD 126; THAC +1 (0); #AT 2; Hth 16; Spd 13; Per 16; St +2; RU +2; UA 2; RR 16.
PS 13; DX 12; CN 17; MS 13; IN 15; CH 17; SN 8.

He wears a bulletproof vest and carries a bolt action rifle with 12 rounds, a long sword, and a dagger.

Mutations: heightened sense, new limbs (arms), infravision, illusion generation, heightened intelligence.

Scouts (3): Mutated Deer; Scout 5; AC 12; MD 11; HP 80; THAC 0 (+2); #AT 1; Hth 14; Spd 18; Per 17; St +2; RU +2; UA 1; RR 16.
PS 10; DX 16; CN 15; MS 13; IN 15; CH 18; SN 17.

The scouts have natural leather armor. They carry long swords and short bows. *Mutations:* heightened sense, new limbs (arms), infravision, illusion generation, heightened intelligence.

A Deal to be Made

The characters now face the Bonparr regiment. The members are cordial, as they are interested in the PCs' aid.

The Bonapartists want the characters to act as emissaries to the mutant army. They hope to convince the army to join the Bonapartists in their conflicts with various towns.

To this end, Maijac, the regimental leader, steps forward to personally negotiate with the PCs. Maijac knows of the characters' mission from Petkam, as he has spies everywhere. Maijac offers double what Petkam is paying the PCs, and he attempts to convince the characters that it is in their best interest to join him. He is extremely gracious toward the PCs.

If the PCs agree to negotiate with the mutant army as agents of Bonparr, Maijac will allow the PCs to conduct the negotiations on their own (he has many other duties).

Maijac wishes to confirm or deny the existence of a

mysterious ancient artifact that is smashing towns all over the region. If it exists and the mutant army has control of it, he wants the mutant army on his side even more.

If this artifact is not under the mutant army's control, then he wants the characters to confirm its existence, powers, and location so that it may be captured or destroyed. Maijac tends to believe the rumors due to the flood of refugees he has seen.

The Bonparr Plan

Bonparr is using the threat of invasion by the mutant army as a sledgehammer over independent towns on the frontier. It is moving troops forcibly through many towns. Most are not putting up a fight because they fear the mutant invasion more than they fear becoming part of Bonparr.

Bonparr is not looking to battle the mutants; its forces are spread all across the frontier, busy sweeping



independent towns into the Bonparr camp. Considerable effort would be needed to gather the forces in order to defeat the invaders.

Bonparr would like nothing more than to absorb the mutant army into Bonparr forces. This would further reinforce Bonparr's army and eliminate any threat to its control.

Further, Bonparr is reluctant to withdraw troops from towns, as it may prompt them to revert to independent status. Also, removal of the mutant threat would eliminate any reason for the towns to subjugate themselves to the Bonparr forces.

Go West

The party must travel west to locate the mutant army and parley with its leaders. The GM should roll encounters as explained earlier, with a few additions.

Refugees: The PCs' first encounter is a group of 20 refugees. They are similar to any other refugees, but these folk know of the mutant army, its location, and a situation in Opry, a town in the PCs' path westward.

The refugees report that the people of Opry are extremely hostile to all strangers. Residents killed ten refugees before the rest of the group managed to escape.

The refugees also know that a mutant army is gathering, but the last they heard about it, the army was near Fermee. That rumor is several days old, but the refugees do know that the mutant army is still to the west.

Storm: The party runs into a sudden storm as described earlier in the Encounters section.

The storm leaves the party a bit battered. This threat is followed by a group of Mantas looking for food.

Mantas (1-2): Per 15; St +6; AC 16; MD 16; Hth 16; Spd 24; Level 6; Hit Dice 13 (46); THAC +6; #AT 3; Bite 5d6; Claws (2) 3d6; Int Low; Morale 16; Size L; XP Value 1400; Heightened Speed.

After the PCs crest an area of rolling hills, the town of Opry comes into view. If the characters conduct a reconnaissance of the town and its outlying areas, they

are ambushed by a group of Grens, who were actually waiting to ambush people from the town.

Grens (1-8): Per 12; St +5; AC 16; MD 12; Hth 12; Spd 12; Level 2; Hit Dice 7 (25); THAC +2; Attacks 1; Weapon 0; Int Very; Morale 8; Size M; XP Value 120. They carry flintlocks and short swords.

The commotion caused by the combat brings out a patrol from Opry. They aid the characters in destroying the Grens, but once the Grens are eliminated, the patrol tries to capture the party to determine the reason that they are there.

Leader: Mutant Snake; Enforcer/PCs' level+3; AC 13; MD 14; HP 40+level bonus; THAC +1 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 14; Spd 14; Per 14; St +2; RU +1; UA 1; RR 16. PS 14; DX 14; CN 16; MS 12; IN 10; CH 17; SN 12.

His skin is equal to a bulletproof vest. He carries a revolver, fully loaded, 12 additional rounds of ammunition, and a short sword.

Mutations: wings, size change (to mansize), additional limbs (arms), heightened intelligence, infravision.

Warriors (6): AH; Enforcer 3; AC 14; MD 12; HP 44+level bonus; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 13; St 0; RU 0; UA 2; RR 18. PS 16; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 11; CH 11; SN 12.

All wear ring mail armor and carry flintlocks, long swords, and bolas. All have the following *mutations: partial carapace, energy reflection, night vision, regeneration, mental blast.*

Altered Human (1): Scout 5; AC 12; MD 14; HP 56; THAC 0 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 11; Spd 13; Per 14; St +2; RU +1; UA 2; RR 16. PS 12; DX 14; CN 12; MS 15; IN 12; CH 10; SN 15.

The scout is dressed in leather armor and has a short sword and flintlock.

Mutations: chameleon power, size change, heightened sense, displacement, illusion generation.

The patrol's objective is to capture the PCs.

Into Opry

Opry appears to be an old town of several hundred inhabitants. It consists of many unoccupied concrete buildings that are no longer safe to inhabit. Opry includes numerous recently constructed buildings near the center of town. Large piles of rubble surround the newly constructed buildings, and even more rubble and dirt have been used to form a wall around the town.

The characters notice that there are relatively few fields plowed for a town this size. They see that a few fields have been burned, and only a handful of inhabitants are out tending the crops. The PCs also notice a large number of people working in older buildings. If the PCs query the patrol, they get nothing but silence in return.

The current residents of Opry are not the original inhabitants of this town. In fact, they are merely searching the old buildings, and have no intention of remain-

ing in town once their search is complete (probably no more than several days). These folk, unknown to the party, are Archivists in search of the robot. They plan to capture it and return with it to their central temple.

The party is taken into a large, poorly maintained concrete building. The interior consists of several crumbling walls and is devoid of any furnishings. The PCs are held here under guard. Their equipment is held in a pile near the guards.

The PCs see small groups of mutants and humans being held in one of the other rooms. Alert PCs notice that one group is definitely being held against its will; the members are not only chained to rings in the floor, but they are gagged and several show open wounds. Should the party attempt to communicate with or go over to the other group, the guards will intervene to stop the PCs.

The PCs can also see that one of the rooms is set up as some kind of temple, with piles of old junk scattered



about the altar area. Any attempt by a PC to get into the temple or even closely examine it will be met with appropriate force to keep the character away.

After about a quarter of an hour, a large altered human enters the room, followed by four enforcers. The human walks around the party, looking at them as if examining a prize catch. He finally speaks. "I am Bobbakar, and this is my town. What brings you here?"

He listens to the PCs' answer, using his telepathy to determine if they are lying to him. He does not take kindly to the PCs if they lie. If the players tell the truth, he continues to pump them for information.

Bobbakar is extremely interested in the activities of the Bonapartists. If the players tell of being followed by a Bonapartist regiment, he abruptly ends the interview and leaves the building. He orders his people to send out an ambush patrol to intercept the Bonapartist force. After about an hour, the remnants of this force return with numerous casualties, their mission unsuccessful. The only result was the weakening of both forces.

Bobbakar waits to see if the PCs mention anything about an ancient artifact with the ability to lay waste to an entire town. Should the characters reveal the rumor that this item may be following the mutant army, Bobbakar becomes extremely interested in what the party has to say. The more they tell him, the more Bobbakar wants to keep the characters alive.

If the PCs reveal all they know, then Bobbakar proposes what he terms an "unholy alliance." He suggests that the party continue with its mission and that he and the Bonapartist force combine resources to support the PCs.

Bobbakar knows a lot more about the robot than he is revealing. If this robot is the one he believes it to be, it will take every person that can be mustered to assault it and eliminate its threat.

Bobbakar: AH; Examiner 7; AC 12; MD 14; HP 60; THAC 0; #AT 1; Hth 14; Spd 12; Per 14; St +2; RU +2; UA 4; RR 18.
PS 11; DX 12; CN 13; MS 13; IN 17; CH 15; SN 8.

Mutations: heightened sense, beguiling, levitation, telepathy, total healing.

Bobbakar is the leader of the Archivists in Opry. He is a large, bald-headed human with no body hair. He wears leather armor under long, flowing robes. Around his neck he wears a gold chain bearing an I.D. card.

Bobbakar releases one of the characters and sends him or her out to negotiate with Maijac. This character learns that the Bonapartist force was hurt badly by the ambush.

Maijac is reluctant to join the force that just attacked him. The PC (or PCs, if the DM wishes to send more than one) will be required to perform skillful negotiating to win him over. Maijac could care less about a robot or an artifact—he only wants to stop the mutant army without being forced into another fight.

Maijac is won over if it is pointed out to him that a larger force would be much more convincing in dealing with the mutant army. Once the negotiations are concluded, the remainder of the characters are released and their equipment is returned to them.

The party is assigned quarters for the night. The next morning, after breakfast, the players are returned to the room they were held in.

The building is the same except for two significant differences. The PCs notice that the people who were held in the other rooms are no longer there; apparently, they were released during the night. The prisoners were simply refugees captured for any information about the mutant force.

The other change is that the temple has been packed up. The room in which it stood is now totally empty. Should the PCs mention the temple, they are rebuffed; Bobbakar indicates that they must have confused some litter for something else.

In the empty room, Maijac and Bobbakar await the PCs. They tell the party that they have learned the location of the mutant army, and they will allow the characters to continue with their mission. Bobbakar wishes to add to their mission; he wants to know more about this "robot" (as he calls it).

To Meet the Army

The party should then set out with a dual mission. The final part of the trip requires a march to the northwest.

The PCs continue to encounter small clusters of refugees. They attract a horl choo in search of food.

Horl choo (1): Per 14; St +3; AC 15; MD 14; Hth 14; Spd 3; Level 4; Hit Dice 12 (42); THAC +4; Attacks 1; Quill 2d6; Int Low; Morale 12; Size L; XP Value 650.

Mutations: dissolving juices (12), *poison, quills* (7), *quills and spines*.

Toward evening on the first day out, the party is attacked by kai lins.

Kai lins (1-4): Per 12; St +3; AC 14; MD 13; Hth 13; Spd 12; Level 3; Hit Dice 11 (39); THAC +3; Attacks 3; Bite 1d6; Claw (2) 1d6; Int Low; Morale 12; Size L; XP Value 120.

Mutations: attractive odor; electrical generation (16), *radiating eyes* (14), *dissolving juices* (6), *immune to radiation*.

When the characters arrive within three miles of the mutant army, they will be stumbled upon by a mutant patrol. Should the PCs notice the patrol first, they can hide if they wish to avoid the patrol, or they can set up an ambush. If the PCs elect to reveal themselves to the patrol, the patrol will treat them as surrendering enemy forces, take them into custody, and lead them to the army.

Should the mutants spot the party first, they withdraw quietly, then send a messenger back to the army while the rest attempt to shadow the PCs without being noticed.

This patrol fights only if surprised, attacked, or confronted, and then only long enough to successfully withdraw.

Warrior (1): AH; Enforcer 1; AC 14; MD 12; HP 45; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 12; St 0; RU 0; UA 2; RR 18.
PS 16; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 11; CH 11; SN 12.

He wears ring mail armor and carries a flintlock and a long sword.

Mutations: partial carapace, energy absorption, night vision, regeneration, telepathy.

Scouts (5): AH; Scout 1; AC 12; MD 14; HP 56; THAC 0 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 13; Spd 12; Per 14; St +1; RU 0; UA 2; RR 18.

PS 12; DX 14; CN 12; MS 15; IN 12; CH 10; SN 15.

The scouts wear leather armor and carry a short sword and short bow.

Mutations: chameleon power, infravision, heightened sense, total healing, illusion generation.

Should a messenger reach the mutant army, reinforcements will be dispatched to meet the PCs.

Warriors (4): AH; Enforcer 3; AC 14; MD 13; HP 55; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 13; St 0; RU +1; UA 2; RR 18.

PS 16; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 11; CH 11; SN 12.

They wear ring mail armor, and each carries a flintlock and long sword.

Mutations: partial carapace, energy absorption, night vision, regeneration, telepathy.

This group is led by Achilex. They attempt to surround the PCs, then confront the party. After any combat is resolved, negotiations can begin.

Achilex is a reasonable man, but is wary of the Bonapartists, and for that matter, any armed persons outside his own forces. He knows that his army is viewed as a threat to Bonparr, but he really does not want any trouble. He actually wants to be left alone, but realizing himself to be in the center of the situation, he will side with the best deal.

He knows that he has only a small force composed mostly of weak, untrained warriors with inferior weapons. He has seen what the huge machine can do—he was in one of the devastated towns. A large part of his army consists of women, children, and those unfit to move fast enough to keep up with the other refugees.

Achilex wants land set aside for his people before he will agree to join the army. He also wants a guarantee of safe passage for the noncombatants in his army in their journey to safety.

Should the characters manage to drive off or evade Achilex's patrol, the PCs will locate the main mutant army camp within a day. It is surrounded by an earthen wall and has various huts within.

A lookout will notice the PCs' approach and an alarm will be raised. Warriors will take up positions at the wall. Many of the women and children will move to a large hut near the center of the camp.

Should the characters approach without weapons drawn or under a white flag, the warriors hold their fire until the PCs are close enough to be heard. Achilex comes to the wall to determine their intentions. When he learns that they want to negotiate, he will invite them into the camp.

Should the characters approach the camp in an overtly hostile manner, the warriors will defend the camp and patrols will be sent out to capture the PCs.

Once the PCs are in the camp, Achilex listens and bargains with the characters in an intelligent manner.

Shortly after the commencement of negotiations, a scout enters and whispers to Achilex. Achilex reveals to the characters that the robot has been spotted outside Fermee.

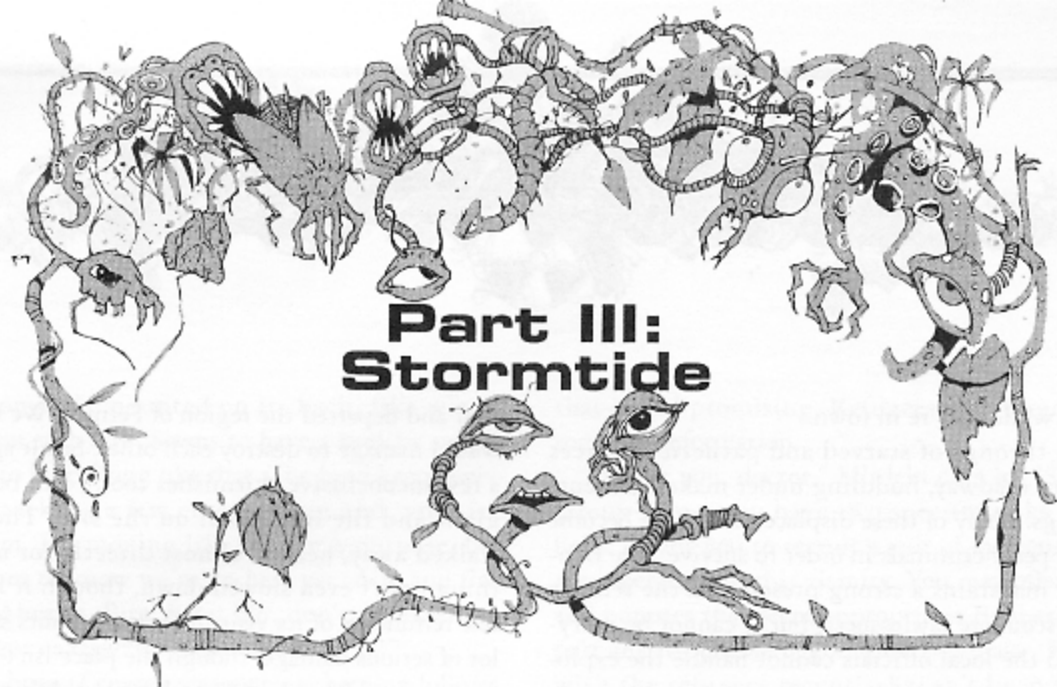
Achilex: AH; Enforcer 3; AC 14; MD 14; HP 75; THAC +2 (+1); #AT 1; Hth 14; Spd 12; Per 13; St +1; RU 0; UA 1; RR 18.

PS 16; DX 13; CN 16; MS 12; IN 11; CH 11; SN 12.

He wears bulletproof armor and carries a flintlock and long sword.

Mutations: partial carapace, energy absorption, night vision, regeneration, telepathy.





The PCs already know the reason for the unrest and mass exodus away from the sparsely-inhabited western stretches of Meriga: the onslaught of the enigmatic war machine. The characters are to undertake a mission to stop the machine without directly confronting it in combat; the device might be stopped with sufficient firepower, but it would exact a hideous toll in PC lives.

There are better ways to handle this assignment. The PCs must find those ways, or the continent (and their lives) faces the greatest danger it has ever known.

The movement of the RMV can be adjusted to suit the GM's needs. It is likely to travel about 15 kilometers per day, as a result of stopping to blast dangerous wildlife and hostile primitives. The robot's appearances should be timely enough to keep the players guessing as to its real capabilities, however.

Introduction: Red Sun at Morning

Although the threat of warfare between the armies may have been averted, a grave danger still confronts the nations east of Lake Mitchgloom—the metal monster that makes its way east.

The PCs find themselves on patrol on the borders of Bonparr. Their foray into the realm of diplomacy, seeking to negotiate with eastward-bound refugees, has earned them the favor of their superior officers, but few tangible rewards.

Such is life in the army.

However, the officers have recently settled on a use for these newly-minted heroes. . . .

A scout locates the PCs and delivers a summons from the Field Command Base in the garrisoned, "protected" town of Lee. The PCs are to report to Colonel M'rdeki, a mutant gorilla just returned from a tour of mercenary duty in Ascension. M'rdeki is now attached to the Special Operations Command, a group that has the ominous nickname of "Suicide Command" due to the extraordinarily dangerous missions they undertake.

The scout explains that the PCs have been conscripted into the Suicide Command for "the duration." They'll find out more when they get to Lee.

GM's note: Inform the PCs that one or more of them have met and worked with M'rdeki previously. They know him to be a rock-solid, reliable individual who has demonstrated an unusual loyalty to his men, as well as a liberal and casual attitude toward his superior officers.

Lee is now the forward staging area for the Army of Bonparr. Stripped of its independence, the town has been garrisoned for its own protection, according to a decree issued by Ursal himself back in Jospeen. As "a region of particular strategic interest," the town houses over a thousand soldiers and their officers. The townsfolk resent the intruders, though they are careful not to show their hostility openly.

PCs will find they cannot buy anything in the town, as merchants mysteriously have no merchandise (even if it's in plain view). Anything they manage to purchase (through successful Charisma rolls, for instance) is priced triple or quadruple the price listed in the GAMMA WORLD® Game Rules. Maybe the locals can't kick out Bonparr, but they can make the enlisted

folk suffer while they're in town.

Worse, throngs of starved and pathetic refugees choke every roadway, huddling under makeshift tents and awnings. Many of these displaced folk have become beggars or petty criminals in order to survive. The Bonparr army maintains a strong presence in the refugee areas to discourage lawlessness, but it cannot be everywhere, and the local officials cannot handle the explosion of crime throughout Lee.

More than one voice is heard to mutter, "Better that the Silver Giant kill us all than endure more of this."

The PCs are escorted through Lee to a large, semi-permanent structure patrolled by gun-toting animals. Although Lee is crumbling under the strain, this area has all the sharp discipline of a proper military camp. M'rdeki rules here, and slackness is intolerable.

The characters are checked over by guards at the door to the command center, then ushered inside for their meeting with M'rdeki.

Storm Warning

The PCs can feel the tension in the War Room, thick as molasses, filling the atmosphere of the dark, crowded room from wall to wall. If the mood is any indication, this is a suicide mission.

The surest indicator of impending disaster is Colonel M'rdeki himself. He is chain-smoking large, foul-smelling cigars, leaving trailing clouds of brown-black smoke wherever his heavy-booted feet carry him. M'rdeki only smokes when the world is ending, which hasn't happened (by his lights) since the Iron Society and a handful of barbarian tribes united to attack Fort-ain a few years ago. Even then, it was only half a stogie.

He's smoked this one down to the end.

With General Ursal and his staff mustering the army back in Bonparr, the vanguard of that military leviathan is assembled in this very room. The task of briefing the PCs falls to the colonel, who plunges in with very little enthusiasm.

"Sentients, the situation is bad," he announces to the PCs. "The war machine causing this ruckus has passed

near and departed the region of Fermee. We hoped they would manage to destroy each other, but it appears that a few inconclusive skirmishes took place between the giant and the live metal on the site. The machine walked away, headed almost directly for us. Blasted thing hasn't even slowed down, though it left quite a few reminders of its visit in Fermee; scouts say there's a lot of serious damage, though the place isn't broken, by any means. Heh, blasted machine couldn't even do that much for us. As for survivors in neighboring towns, those that didn't flee this way aren't likely to.

"Here is the kicker—and the reason I called you in from the field. I've been given the job of stopping this thing before it hits Bonparr. You're what I've got to work with for this mission. We tried to launch a pre-emptive strike on the thing, with the heaviest-armed team we could field, but they lost. It was a very short fight. We have a tape recording of the encounter, delivered by a scout who died shortly after returning to base." He turns to a lieutenant. "Play the tape."

His assistant, a dabber, brings up a boxy reel-to-reel recorder, lays the tape in place, and hits the button. There is a hiss as the tape starts, then a voice begins, partly garbled by what sounds like static. There is a low moaning noise in the background, akin to several voices singing off-key. The recording is riddled with indecipherable passages.

"... recording? Good. Bonparr Command, this is Captain Rakshasa. My group is lying low amid some chorushrubs we found near our chosen battle-site. We've got the laser rifle ready to go—just have to hope we have enough ... rgy to kill the live met ... Hear it? Those booming sounds are the ... chine coming closer. Now half a klick away and we can ... slaughter. Got it just below us in a rocky valley, can't overrun us too easy. By Kong, it's big! Tall, almost tree-tall. Silver skin, some dents and burns. Somebody hurt it some ... along the road."

The tape hisses for a second, then starts again more clearly. The clarity of the tape reveals Captain Rakshasa's hopelessness; he is looking at an enemy he can't imagine defeating.

"Weapon pods mounted on its back, like wings. Weapons on each arm. Seems to have a healthy supply of energy, to keep firing like that. The head keeps swivelling—tracking a few creepervines and, yup, it's blasted 'em. It's moving like it's got a purpose, but doesn't seem to know we're up here yet. Aim and fire, Sergeant Ahragh. Fire. Fire! No, don't throw the—blast! It's got us targeted! Fall back! Fall . . .!"

A shrill buzz of energy weapons discharging follows, and the recording ends. The dabber shuts off the tape and disappears with the machine.

"That's as much as we got," M'rdeki says, after a moment of silence. "As far as we can verify, Special Ops Group One was killed to the last man by that thing. The bad news, for you, is that you are Special Ops Group Two."

After the muttering dies down, he continues. "We don't have any hard information to give you on the machine's capabilities. All that's certain is that this is an Ancient device of tremendous offensive power, and it's headed this way at 15 clicks a day.

"Your mission is to find some way of slowing, stopping, disabling, or otherwise incapacitating that machine before it becomes a direct threat to the security of Bonparr. Ideally, we'd like it neutralized intact, so that we can use it ourselves, but if it must be destroyed—do it!"

"Colonel? If I may?" An elderly sleeth steps forward to address the PCs. He is Doctor Slenkl, an expert on Ancient weaponry. "Sentients, I have a theory regarding this device. Mind you, it is only a theory. Most weapons of this nature, the manlike robots, are really huge suits of armor. Most of them contain a human pilot. I suspect, however, that this one does not."

He shoves his thick spectacles further up his nose as he warms to his topic. "The machine's reaction times are surprisingly slow. Further, though it is thorough, it does not take even elementary steps to avoid ambush. This indicates it may be remotely controlled. If this is the case, maybe some information in the field can help us achieve our objective—stopping the machine, that is. I would urge you to follow up any leads you unearth

that sound promising. Refugees may be an excellent source of information . . ."

"Thank you, doctor," M'rdeki cuts in. "Special Ops Group Two—you have two specific tasks out in the field. I want you to recruit a pair of mercenary companies operating in this vicinity. You may offer them pay and bonuses that seem appropriate; Bonparr will support any reasonable negotiation you make. Your efforts with the refugees recently haven't been forgotten! When the companies join up, they'll form our Home Guard for Lee, in the event your second mission fails.

"The second mission is to locate an individual we've caught word of through underground sources," M'rdeki says. "There's an altered human out in the wastelands to the west of here who's called 'the Listener.' We don't know much more than that nickname. He's supposed to have some kind of mental power that responds to live metal. We're hoping that if we find him, he could be our secret weapon against the machine. Uncovering information on the Listener is the second—and more important—component of your mission. I have a gut instinct that, if you find him, you'll be able to stop the machine. And that's our overall goal. Any questions?"

M'rdeki answers any questions the PCs pose, but has no useful information beyond what's already been given. He provides a map of the region (identical to the map in the GAMMA WORLD® Game Rules book), along with any Tech Level III armaments the PCs choose. He also furnishes a treasure of the Bonparr army (another indication of the importance of their mission): a functioning man-portable radio transceiver. This bulky, backpack-mounted and solar-powered device weighs 5 kg. and is operated by making a successful Use Artifact roll. Two of the PCs are given short but intensive training on the device, giving them a +2 to their rolls. A broadcast from as far as Port Alar can be received in Lee with no difficulty. If the PCs accomplish nothing else, they are firmly ordered not to discard this artifact or trade it; it must be returned at mission's end. (This will discourage players from cutting corners when bartering with the mercenaries later.)

The PCs are to check in with the base each day at sunset. Failure to signal, M'rdeki says, will mean that Special Ops Group Two is "nonfunctional."

For transportation, each PC is provided with a horse broken for riding. Each horse has a minor mutation: horns, an unusual color, rabbitlike ears, and so forth. Other than these features, they are ordinary steeds. Each is equipped with riding gear and saddlebags with a week's provisions.

Before riding out, M'rdeki gathers the PCs in front of headquarters for a short speech.

"This is possibly the hardest mission I could assign," he tells the group. "Recruiting a bunch of mercenaries—well, almost anyone could do that—but you've got a rep among the refugee groups now that should help you. The first part of your mission won't be hard. But looking for the Listener and stopping the machine—that's the tough one. I wish I had more than encouragement to offer. Best of luck, team—I hope I have the honor of seeing your faces soon."

He waves, then watches as the group rides for the edges of Lee and their destiny.

Colonel M'rdeki: MA; EN 8; AC 14; MD 11; HP 97; THAC +6 (+6); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 bite; Hth 15; Spd 13 (brachiation 6); Per 15; St +5; RU +1; UA +1; RR 13.

PS 21; DX 15; CN 16; MS 12; IN 14; CH 12; SN 13.
Mutations: hands of power (13; +1 MP physical); heightened precision; regeneration (10); mental blast (14).

Class Skills: combat leadership 13; makeshift weapon/armor 13; size-up opponent 12; ride 12.

Equipment: Ring mail, battle axe, war hammer, ordinary (though very large) riding horse.

M'rdeki is a mutant gorilla approaching middle age. He has impressive muscles under his ring mail, despite the graying fur at his temples and along the edges of his limbs and shoulders. He has many scars criss-crossing his torso, and one or two on his face. He has a solid reputation among his men, having been in trouble for them several times, and is not widely approved of by the Ranks of the Fit hierarchy. They believe he doesn't have their best interests at heart. (In truth, M'rdeki is

preparing to sell out Bonparr on behalf of powerbrokers in Ascension, holding an impromptu auction for the robot once it's been immobilized.)

Distant Thunder

The road out of Lee is paved and in surprisingly good condition, allowing the group optimum movement (approximately 78 kilometers per day on horseback). The PCs see refugees, alone and in groups, stumbling along the roadside, headed in the opposite direction, and eyeing their horses hungrily. Each hour, roll 1d6; on a roll of 1-5, 2-5 refugees are encountered. Some of them ask the PCs for information: Are people being allowed into Bonparr? Are travelers really being enslaved or put to death? Is there any safety to the east?

Most of the refugees are pitiful, carrying their worldly possessions on their backs. Their only useful commodity to the PCs is information.

The PCs discover that the refugees have heard of them, and thus earn +1 on their Charisma rolls when conversing with all refugees. This advantage is lost completely if any threats, intimidation attempts, or outright bullying is attempted. By making successful Charisma rolls (modified by +1d6-2 if the PCs offer to barter food for knowledge), refugees relate that mixed bands of human, animal, and even plant raiders have been spotted during the long walk.

The group most recently spotted by refugees were mostly on horseback, though a few were astride loud, buzzing pieces of live metal that moved on wheels (motorcycles). Refugees refer to these objects as "vroombrooms," after the sound they make. These riders were seen within two dozen kilometers of the PCs' current position.

None of the refugees have heard of the Listener, though some will make up outrageous lies if food is offered. The PCs can see right through these fibs, however (no Intelligence check is required).

The refugees give the PCs a cross-country heading and tell that the riders are no more than a half-hour away by horse. Some of the refugees urge them to

destroy the riders, saying they've plundered many helpless wayfarers and deserve to be exterminated.

Going cross-country, the PCs can spot several varieties of dangerous flora and fauna, but since the ground is level and clear, visibility is superb and they are able to avoid any dangerous encounters by making a single successful Sense roll among them. Half an hour later, a broad, flat area of trampled ground is discovered along the route, bearing all the signs of having been a campsite for a large number of sentients. A Scout can use Tracking skill to learn that the group includes over a dozen horses, then can track them south about four kilometers. In this way, the PCs catch up to the Band of the Scarlet Claw.

The Band is a post-holocaust descendant of 20th-century biker gangs. Violent mercenaries, they are as dangerous to their employers as to their enemies, but they have training, firepower, and mobility. **GM note:** These advantages should definitely be emphasized for the PCs; they don't have to like the allies they make in wartime.

The leader is Scarlet Claw, a carrin with his talons and quills enamelled red. He is under a sun canopy, surrounded by three blood bird followers who eye any strangers with extreme suspicion. If the PCs approach the Band with weapons readied, the Band shoots first and forgets about questions later (a policy that's worked well for them in the past). If a white flag of truce is shown by the PCs, the Band is combat-ready but won't start any trouble; they must have a way of meeting prospective employers, after all.

Scouts can roll against their Intelligence at this point to see if they know anything of the Band's reputation. On a successful check, they know that the group has a fondness for "high tech" weapons or gadgets (anything above Tech Level II), which they confiscate even from potential employers as part of their pay.

Scarlet Claw allows one or two PC spokesmen up close after they are searched for hidden weapons.

"We are often hunted by soldiers from Bonparr and Lee, but those fools couldn't find their own feet without help," the carrin cackles hoarsely. "They think to trap or ambush us, and we laugh at them. I can see you are not

of Lee—you appear to be from Bonparr. What would you Firlings seek among us poor folk in such troubled times?"

The PCs are encouraged to state their case briefly. They can make Charisma rolls to persuade the carrin to agree. Allow modifiers from +1 to +5 based on the generosity of the offers they make (GM's discretion). The PCs can pardon any crimes committed within the limits of Bonparr, offer grants of land for settlement, or meet reasonable demands for money.

GM Note: Feel free to make outrageous demands, in the role of the Scarlet Claw, but remind the players that Bonparr does not have a limitless treasury. Reprimands, demotions, and possibly jail time will be handed down if the PCs are too generous with these mercenaries.

If the negotiations are settled to the Claw's satisfaction (i.e., he makes a pile of money for himself), he demands complete information on what his group is expected to do. Mention of the approaching war machine re-opens negotiations immediately; in other words, the honest approach doesn't work very well in this instance. PCs who feel the need to be foolishly forthright can check their Intelligence once to see if they come to their senses on time.

Asking about the Listener piques the Claw's interest. He admits to having heard of the altered human. If a good reward for information is offered (500+ domars cash), he reveals that the Listener is reputedly a Follower of the Voice. He has been known to live to the north or west somewhere.

"Possibly near Yrsahl, but there is more talk of him around the Snake River area," the Claw tells them. As far as anyone can determine, with skills or mental mutations, he is being truthful.

If the PCs are fully successful with their negotiations, the Band of the Scarlet Claw pledges to aid Bonparr and promises to head for the staging area around Lee. The Claw offers a bonus tidbit of information as the PCs depart.

"There might be other free companies to the north of here, Firlings," he caws roughly. "Best you be circumspect in how you approach them. They are not such rea-

sonable gentlebeings as we, eh? Best to be cautious."

Scarlet Claw: MA; AC 13; MD 19; HP 60; THAC +9; #AT 1d4; Dmg 1d4 (quills); Hth 19; Spd 8/21; Per 9; St/RU -1.

PS 10; DX 12; CN 9; MS 14; IN 17; CH 9; SN 11.

Mutations: telepathy (17); quills; poison (in quills—intensity 12 debilitating, carrins are immune to their own poison).

Skills (as per Enforcer): combat leadership 11, makeshift armor/weapon 12, size-up opponent 11.

Scarlet Claw is as described above. The Band follows him because of his superior intelligence, not his fighting ability. His reputation among carrin is especially bad, because he doesn't appear to share his race's aversion to personal combat.

Blood Birds: MA; Per 17; St/RU +1; AC 16; MD 25; Hth 11; Spd 6/32; Lvl 1; HD 3, HP 11; THAC +1; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg bite 1d4, spar (2) 1d4; Int Animal; Morale 7; Size S (1m); XP 120.

Scarlet Claw is served by three blood birds, none of whom are ever more than 40 meters from his person. They get +2 on morale checks if defending Scarlet Claw.

Band of the Scarlet Claw

Fourteen sentients are in this band. Eight are mutant animals, five are altered humans, and one is a sentient plant (a kai lin). At any given time, seven have flintlock rifles with powder and ammunition at the ready, while the rest have long swords and wooden shields. Among them, they have one member with force field generation (18); two with telepathy (10); one with life leech (12); three with immunity to life leech; one with intuition (12); one with kinetic absorption (15); two with infravision and claws (a pair of catlike mutants); and one with heightened strength (+18, for a total of PS 29). Additional mutations can be added at the GM's discretion.

The band has horses for each member, though the two catlike mutants usually ride on rebuilt electric motorcycles (recharged through a solar capacitor-blanket which the Claw uses for his sun canopy). Their collective loot is 3,400 domars (with an additional 2,700 domars hidden in a false-bottomed foot locker owned

by the Claw); five pieces of tarnished silver, though one piece is actually a chrome hubcap; a flashlight (non-functional—used as a lucky talisman and symbol of the Sun God); and a handful of .38 calibre shells (1d12+3, 1d4 functional).

If provoked, they fight until their opponent(s) is dead. Only the Claw can call them off once a fight has started. They are actually somewhat loyal to their employers, and have a group Morale of 11 as long as they are paid and fed.

Storm on the Horizon

Once away from the Band of the Scarlet Claw, provided with leads to take them north, the PCs find that the countryside turns rough and hard to travel. The landscape has been scoured and savaged, with plantlife stripped of foliage, and no sign of small animals anywhere. Refugees have scavenged every last edible object, leaving this desolation behind them.

After two hours in the saddle, PCs notice the aftermath of a large fight all around them. Corpses litter the ground, broken weapons at their sides, and dead riding-beasts of different sorts lie not far distant. Three of the dozen corpses in evidence are hoops, while the remaining nine are diverse races, including a few altered humans, a couple of mutant animals, and two pure strain humans. A check against a Scout's Tracking skill reveals that at least three riders on jackalopes (see page 152 of the Game Rules book) departed toward the north. A failed roll exaggerates this number by +1d6.

Should the PCs study the bodies, they discover that every body other than the hoops has been rifled for possessions. Further, each nonhoop's clothing sports a patch with a sidewise number 8 on it (Intelligence check at +3 to identify infinity symbol, used by the Brotherhood of Thought). These members of the Brotherhood apparently weren't absolute pacifists, but defended themselves (albeit unsuccessfully).

As the PCs discuss the scene of carnage, allow a Sense roll to see if a faint sound is detected over their conversation. It is a groaning cry for help not far away. A brief

search turns up a mortally wounded dabber (see page 148 of the Game Rules book), who wears the Brotherhood patch.

“We—we didn’t want to fight,” he coughs feebly, “but we had no choice. They wanted slaves . . . raw meat to trade up north of here. We just wanted (cough!) to get to safety . . . perhaps in Bonparr. Now so many lie dead, and Helica is their prisoner . . .”

Asked about Helica, the dying dabber says, “Helica Matiz. She’s a genius—an Examiner who’s got a talent for Ancient things. They said she was pretty enough to net them a fortune in the slave marts north and west, with or without her talent.”

The dabber doesn’t have much time left.

GM Note: This encounter should be timed; the dabber has exactly three minutes of life after giving his first speech. Pauses to consider questions count against this time-limit. Attempts at healing are unsuccessful—the dabber’s been poisoned and wounded mortally.)

If asked about the Listener, he says, “You mean old Tez? Tez the Listener? Yes, we knew him—not well, but who can know such a one?” He describes Tez as a thin old man, pale from a life spent indoors among his beloved machines, and somewhat fearful of strangers though sometimes willing to help close friends.

“Helica knew him best,” the dabber coughs. “She studied with him. Probably the only one he . . . would . . . help . . .” With those last words, the dabber dies.

The hoops’ trail north is plain to follow. They followed a dirt path headed vaguely toward Cover, on the Snake River. Enforcers and Scouts can roll against their Intelligence to see if they know of an underground slave market near Cover; this is the most likely destination of the hoops. With the upheavals, the market is surely doing a thriving business.

As they travel, the path becomes a more formal road, with broken-down wooden signs pointing toward towns that cannot be seen from the road. Pursuing any of these signs leads nowhere, as the towns are gone, razed by passing groups of refugees. None of these towns are more than a kilometer off the road; none are inhabited, even by squatters or squeakers.

The trail seems to be empty of sentient life, though slightly animated plants are visible outside the first two of these towns (and can be easily avoided by making a Sense roll). These plants do not have statistics, as they suffered too many injuries from passing refugees’ weapons to be effective in combat. Successful Tracking rolls keep the PCs headed north for the rest of the day.

That night, the only available place to camp is a stretch of relatively dry ground amid a swamp not far from the Tipped Canoe River, just north and east of Lake Shay. About midnight, a Sense roll is required of the PC sentry on duty; success reveals the nearby passage of several creatures trying to be quiet. Investigation of this sound turns up the presence of three hissers. Two of them carry a pair of dead dabbers strapped to a pole; the other is scouting, with no weapons in evidence. The hissers detect the sentry with a successful roll of their Perception against the sentry’s Stealth, promptly deploying for combat once the sentry is detected. If the sentry is not detected, he can awaken his comrades and gain surprise over the hissers, or let them pass without fighting.

Hissers: Per 12; St/RU +5; AC 13; MD 19; Hth 19; Spd 9; Lvl 9; HD 13 (46); THAC +9; #AT 2; Dmg bite 1d6, +3 wpn; IN Avg; Morale 14; Size L (3m); XP Value 4000.

Mutations: energy reflection; lasers (16); sonic blast (14); mass mind (16); telepathy (11); and one additional.

The hissers use fairly simple tactics. One uses telepathy to read the sentry’s mind, learning as much as possible about the PC group and sharing it with the other hissers through their mass mind. Another uses a sonic blast on the sentry; the third prepares to use his laser ability against the sentry if the sonic blast fails. If the hissers seem overwhelmed by superior numbers, firepower, or both, they go to all-out attack, choosing the weakest-looking member of the party to concentrate fire on, then moving to the next weakest, so that they can kill at least a few enemies before falling themselves. Should one fall, the others must make Morale checks to



avoid running; the third runs automatically if two are killed.

The hissing possess 1,300 domars, plus a handful of junk “amulets” (radiation badges that have burned out), and a melted stack of five gold coins that proves to be somewhat radioactive (Stage II high-level toxicity). The nugget is in a small lead box.

The hissing are not actively hunting, but they take poorly to trespassers in their swampland home. If combat is avoided, they demand to know the PCs’ business in their territory. A successful Charisma roll, along with profuse apologies and perhaps a small gift to smooth ruffled scales, can allow PCs to skirt a fight with the reptilians. If the roll is a 20, the hissing volunteer the information that a party of hoops rode through with a humanlike captive less than six hours ago, heading north across the Tipped Canoe River. In any event, the PCs are “encouraged” to saddle up and move out of the swamp (a distance of three kilometers or so) before re-settling for the night.

If gunfire is part of the combat, there is a 20% chance that 2d8 more hissing will hear it and hurry to join the battle.

As the sun appears on the eastern horizon, the PCs catch up to the hoops. The adventurers are emerging from a lightly forested area when a group of mutated animals comes into sight. A Sense roll spots this group 200 meters ahead, before the hoops spot them; the PCs have the opportunity to make Stealth rolls at this point to continue avoiding detection.

A closer look shows that this is not a random stop for the hoops. The five mutant rabbits (with a small, white-robed shape in their midst) are facing a group of eight badders, who are armed with stone-tipped spears and a couple of bows. However, this doesn’t appear to be a hostile encounter; they seem to be negotiating the sale of the captive.

PCs can either charge into the middle of this meeting, losing any surprise advantage and having to fight both groups of mutant animals, or they can wait until one group rides off with the captive (resolve with 1d12: 1-7 hoops have captive, 8-12 badders have her).

If the PCs choose to attack only the group with the captive, they are accused of being henchmen of the other party, sent to steal their “rightful property” and cheat on the deal. The girl doesn’t seem to be interested in the PCs’ arrival; she appears to be nearly catatonic.

Hoops: Per 11; St/RU +2; AC 15 (11); MD 15; Hth 15; Spd 18; Lvl 5; HD 13 (45); THAC +5; #AT 1; Dmg +1 wpn; IN Avg; Morale 7; Size L (2.5m); XP Value 975.

Mutations: mass mind (15); telepathy (12).

Special Powers: Soften metal by touch.

The hoops have Helica Matiz, the altered human girl, plus 2,100 domars, swords and spears for weaponry, a weeks’ rations, and traveling gear. They also have a small collection of battered metal objects strung on leather thongs; careful inspection reveals that they were originally stainless steel chessmen. Now they are “lucky soldier-tokens,” according to any surviving hoops, and denote status among their tribe.

They have one jackalope apiece (see page 152 of the Game Rules book). Each jackalope is trained for riding but not for combat; they bound off if the rider is unseated, moving at their usual Speed of 25 to get 50+ meters away, then use their chameleon power to hide until the fight is over. If the hoops are slain, the jackalopes remain camouflaged, then depart once the PCs are gone.

These hoops are slave traders and are not especially disposed to fighting well-armed opposition. They will try to bargain with a party that seems stronger or better-armed, but won’t surrender their captive simply to save their hides. They also won’t sell the girl on credit, or for less than 2,400 domars in cash or equivalent goods (they have good appraisal sense, and won’t accept junk).

Business is business, after all.

Badders: Per 16; St/RU +3; AC 16 (11); MD 11; Hth 14; Spd 10; Lvl 4; HD 7 (25); THAC +4; #AT 1; Dmg bite 1d6, +1 wpn; IN Very; Morale 13; Size M (1.5m); XP Value 420.

Mutations: night vision; empathy (11).

Special Powers: Battle fury (-2 to NPC enemy morale).

Without the girl, the badders have 2,700 domars (300 domars if they just bought her), the afore-mentioned Tech Level II weaponry, rations and water for about half a day (they're very close to home) and various souvenirs and decorations, including hood ornaments from diverse 20th-century cars. The leader carries a hood ornament with the letters "DNU" (or something like that) inscribed in the metal; he calls himself 'Deenoo' out of respect for this family heirloom. The chief badder also has a UV laser pistol with five charges (damage 3d8) that he holds in reserve until things look really bad.

The badders are on foot.

Helica Matiz: AH; EX 9; AC 10; MD 16; HP 78; THAC +1 ranged; #AT 1; Dmg by wpn; Hth 10; Spd 12; Per 16; St +2; RU +2; UA +7; RR 16. PS 9; DX 14; CN 12; MS 16; IN 18 (22); CH 14; SN 15.

Mutations: heightened intelligence (+4); telekinetic flight (14); total healing (14); phobia (crowds).

Helica Matiz is five feet tall, slim, and dressed in a simple white shift. She has light grey skin (bruised darker grey on one cheek), large, jet black eyes, and fingers that are unusually long and slender. Her long black hair is in elaborate braids coiled around her head, many of which have come undone from the rough treatment she's received from the hoops. She is very quiet and intensely shy, avoiding conversation when possible. If asked questions directly, she gives short, polite answers; she may even volunteer information, though the GM might roll against her Mental Strength for her to overcome her shyness even temporarily.

She is a brilliant examiner, with an uncanny knack for comprehending machinery. Her natural shyness keeps her from "upstaging" a PC examiner, but she'll contribute her skills if necessary or she is asked.

She tells, when questioned, that she was heading toward the home of Tez the Listener, her first teacher, when the hoops attacked. When she left the Followers of the Voice to become one of the Brotherhood of

Thought, she and Tez parted ways, but they have seen each other in the years since then.

"He can hear the Song of the Tronic," she explains softly. "The whisper of the Holy Static echoes in his mind night and day. He is truly a holy man."

Gradually, the PCs can piece together Tez's ability to listen to transmissions of all sorts. If he can *bear* radio signals, he might be able to *manipulate* them—and if the Silver Giant really is remotely controlled, he could take it over!

Unfortunately, she says that Tez has undoubtedly heard the song calling forth the Silver Giant and probably is on his way to meet it. Since he is old and not very formidable, he might be in grave danger even as they speak.

"I fear he is walking to an old plex made by the Ancients," she says. "A place of old-metal and wire and glass, before the Blessing of the Live Metal and the First Animation." She won't elaborate on what these cryptic events were, though they appear to be part of her personal religion. "It would lie near the Way of the Giant, if your paper map shows true paths."

She points to a spot north and west of the Snake River, west even of the ruins of Gary. "There."

Directly in the path of the robot.

Lightning Strikes

Traveling north, the PCs come to the Tipped Canoe Ferry, a huge barge paddled by a mutant elephant named Elphaz. He is a bulky, albino biped whose tremendous mass can only be supported on two feet for short periods of time. The rest of the time, he sits in a modified rowing chair that allows him to move the entire barge, even loaded with several tons of merchandise or passengers. Elphaz is usually chewing on a handful of grass or new-strain alfalfa, or picking clean one of his gold-inlaid tusks with a silver knife.

"Passage is five domars apiece, seven for each riding animal," he tells the PCs. "Take it or leave it."

The map indicates to the PCs that riding to the nearest ford, somewhat south of Lake Shay, would take too

much of their time. The rowing chair is built for Elphaz's unique body, so even a strong character couldn't fully work the barge alone (PS 25 is needed to attain half-speed of 10, and two characters can't fit in the chair together to coordinate an attempt). Elphaz's size also makes him somewhat resistant to any effort at intimidation.

"Glad to do business with you," he mumbles amiably when the PCs pay. He clambers into his chair. Soon afterward, the barge is practically racing across the river, bound for the opposite shore. The entire journey takes only about twenty minutes. There are no encounters while on the river; most riverborne monsters know to steer clear of Elphaz's barge.

Once across the river, the trip across the plain is across clear terrain and takes about four days. According to Helica, the location of the hidden sanctuary used by the Followers is almost directly west of the ruins of Gary. With the mass migration of refugees, the countryside is mostly deserted and barren (making foraging very difficult; assess a -3 penalty to Hunting and Wilderness Survival rolls). Encounters occur only on a roll of 1 on 1d6 (roll twice per day).

When the Snake River is reached the day after taking Elphaz's barge, it is surprisingly low and can be forded without difficulty. A ferry-barge like Elphaz's lies abandoned in the low, muddy water; there are no possessions aboard.

During this time, provided the PCs make their regular radio check-ins, they learn that M'rdeki has found someone who might be able to help them. He won't say more over the radio, as someone could be listening in, but advises the PCs to expect some assistance in the near future. No further information is available about the robot, except that it appears to have increased speed and is less than two days' walk from Gary, at present. It seems to have deviated from its path slightly. However, Lee and Bonparr are still on full war alert.

On the fourth day of the trip, a small cluster of run-down buildings comes into view along what had been a major Ancient highway. Only one of the buildings seems habitable, but it is so deteriorated that a sensible

PC would think twice before using it for shelter.

The facility has a broken sign out front that reads ELECTRIC RSEA H. Helica confirms that this is their destination.

The first room is a lobby, fronted by large, shattered windows. Tracking reveals the presence of faint footprints on the dusty floor, trailing through a doorway to the left.

Inside, the darkness and silence are tomblike. Old emergency lights flicker, filling the hallways with fitful and unreliable light (+2 to Stealth rolls), while ancient air filters struggle to clean the dust-laden air. Occasionally, a housekeeping robot lurches into view, limping along on twisted wheels. It runs away (speed 15) if PCs try to chase it.

Helica ignores all these things, leading the way through a maze of dim corridors until the party reaches a door marked "SPECIAL PROJECTS: DO NOT ENTER." She pushes the heavy, unlocked door aside, kicking up a small cloud of dust in the process.

"This is very strange," Helica says. "Tez should be in this room. What could have happened?"

"He fell down an elevator shaft, and he's trapped down there now," says a timid voice, hiding under a metal cabinet. "I tried to get him out, but there were sounds of creatures moving around outside. I hid, not knowing what they were." An old woman stirs, crawling out from under a cabinet tipped over in one corner. "Helica? I thought it was you! It's Emereth, child, remember me?"

Emereth: AH; EX 3; AC 12; MD 12; HP 36; THAC +1; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 knife; Hth 12; Spd 12; Per 14; St/RU +5; UA +3; RR 17.

PS 10; DX 11; CN 12; MS 13; IN 15; CH 12; SN 12.

Mutations: shapechange (10); stunning force (15).

Class Skills: jury-rig 12; read schematics 12; repair artifact 13.

Equipment: Heavy leather overcoat; survival kit (blanket, tinderbox, etc.); 217 domars; dagger.

The old woman is Tez's sister, and his sole companion in this ruin. Tez is trapped seven meters down an eleva-

tor shaft. He is not buried in rubble, but Emereth is too weak to lift him out with a rope. She can't persuade the scatterbrained housekeeping robots to help, so she's only been able to lower food and water to him for the past two days. She leads the PCs and Helica to where Tez is trapped.

Tez is uninjured, but is getting a touch delirious from his captivity.

"Greetings, pilgrims," he says to the PCs. "You have come to heed the word of the Voice? That is well. So many of my students are gone, you know . . . the barbarians hurt them. Now I'm alone here with my sister."

Helica whispers to the PCs, "He hasn't had students in years. He is feverish, and must be reliving his past."

If the PCs don't have ropes, they can reach Tez by climbing down the shaft on power cables torn loose from the wall. The old man lies on a crushed antigravity platform, cushioned by mounds of garbage thrown into this shaft by careless former occupants. The smell is hideous.

Tez raves a bit more, while Emereth urges the PCs to hurry and get him out. When the PCs begin the rescue, though, Tez startles and says, "No, Darkmetal! No! I won't work for you!" He seems to concentrate, and the sound of antigravity floaters is clearly heard coming near. Two police robots round a corner once one or more of the PCs are in the shaft.

"Halt, intruders!" they announce, their voices scratchy and worn. "You are in violation of municipal laws. You have ten seconds to put down your weapons or we will fire." Their built-in UV laser pistols begin to track the remaining PCs.

Police Robots: Per 20; St/RU +10; AC 20; Force Field 15; Spd 75; HP 150; THAC +13 (+7); #AT 2, hand 1d4+8, UV laser 3d8, +8 wpn; PS 25; DX 15; TL VI; CPU Rational; Size M (2m); XP Value 8,000.

Resembling motorcycle officers without legs, the robots have been reprogrammed by Tez to guard the Followers' facility. They are programmed not to fire at Emereth, but have no restraints regarding the PCs. ID cards can be used to override their Tez-imposed orders,

however. If the PCs don't set down any obvious weaponry they carry, the police robots start firing.

Bringing Tez out of the shaft causes the police robots to break off their attack immediately. Tez can order them to depart if he is in sight, but his shouts from the elevator shaft won't be effective (their programming demands that they see him).

Tez the Listener: AH; ES 10; AC 10; MD 20; HP 24; THAC +0; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 knife; Hth 8; Spd 9; Per 20; St/RU +5; UA +4; RR 16.

PS 7; DX 9; CN 9; MS 17; IN 25; CH 9; SN 15.

Mutations: bear radio (15); broadcast radio (14); heightened intelligence (+10); phobia (crowds).

Class Skills: hypnosis 12; identify mental power 14; photographic memory 11; sense mental powers 13.

Equipment: Clothing (robe).

Once he is free of the shaft, Tez calms down. His head seems to clear enough to understand that the PCs are not his enemies. "It is hard to trust, in these times," says the grizzled old man. "Violence everywhere. Wait! That sound. The song! The song of the Holy Tronic! I couldn't hear it, down in that hole, but now it sounds . . . it . . . is close! Right here! Come! Come with me and witness the visitation!"

Ominously, the ground begins shaking as Tez hurries down the corridor and out through a red emergency exit. He points excitedly and says, "There! The visitation! All glory to the Holy Voice! All glory! I hear the song rise from the ruined place—could it be the broken land of Gary? It descends on us in the person of its most holy servant!"

Smashing through a small woods, the Silver Giant strides into view. It is a monstrous humanoid robot standing five meters tall. It has huge arms, short legs, and winglike weapon pods on its back. The featureless head swivels from side to side, taking in the rundown facility and the small group of sentients.

Suddenly, a motorcycle bursts onto the scene. The rider is a rough-looking character toting a shotgun.

"Get out of here!" the biker shouts. "This thing's a killer! Move it!"

As if in a daze, Tez walks toward the machine, struggling hard or evading attempts to restrain him. "I greet you, most holy servant of the Voice! I greet you! All praise the holy servant!"

The immense war machine looks down at the old man and brings a massive energy blaster into line.

"Speak to me, servant! Give me your wisdom!" Tez cries.

Unless the PCs hurry and succeed in grappling Tez, he is blasted by the machine and killed. Alternately, the biker might have a chance of grabbing the old man, but he is more interested in getting the PCs to safety.

A trio of police robots emerge from the building to cover the PCs' getaway, sacrificing themselves to protect and serve their masters' friends. The RMV has Perception of 15 to pit against the PCs' Stealth attempts, if they attempt to hide among the buildings until it passes. If anyone is injured, Emereth reveals that a fully-functional Medibot is in the building from which they emerged, not far from the elevator shaft where Tez was trapped. Regardless of the outcome of this encounter, the biker urges all of them to ride almost due east, directly ahead of the monster, as soon as they are able.

"I've got my reasons!" he bellows if anyone asks. "You want to fight that thing, you'll listen to me!"

Reaping the Whirlwind

The biker urges the PCs into a headlong flight cross-country, away from the giant robot. If they comply, the machine is safely behind them an hour later, and the biker finally lets them slow down, now willing to explain himself. His gentle, courteous speech belies his rough, almost savage appearance.

"I am Kogen, sentients," he begins. "My services as a wilderman are at the disposal of a certain colonel in the well-warded town of Lee. He bid me hither to put an item of ancient manufacture at your command, albeit briefly. Our mutual employer could not pay me enough for this little gadget." He produces a small plastic box from one pocket of his weatherbeaten leather jacket.

"This object hears the song sung by the live metal, much as the Listener does. It cannot sing the song, but it can hear where the song is loudest to the metal folk—and it can lead us to that destination. It takes but a moment to assemble the necessary paraphernalia."

Without further explanation, he unpacks a tiny satellite dish, along with a few other battered but functional metal boxes. Meanwhile, if Tez has survived, he is disheartened and miserable, but says, "The song whispered 'Gary' over and over. It cannot be those ruins to the north and east—there is no song there! There hasn't been for generations! No, it must be a false trail . . ." He won't say much more.

Kogen's device is ready within a few minutes. Adjusting some of the dials, he reads the machine's digital counters for a second before asking to use the PCs' communication gear to speak with the headquarters in Lee. He makes contact quickly, then reads off the numbers from the counters. A minute or so later, the voice on the other end provides a map coordinate.

"Many thanks, operator friend," Kogen says in farewell. He consults the PCs' map. He jabs his finger down right on the outskirts of Gary, the ruined city on the southern edge of Lake Mitchgloom, and smack dab in the middle of no-man's land.

"That is where the song of the Tronic emanates—the song being heard by that gross pile of living steel behind us," Kogen says grimly. "I'm convinced it is not ridden by a living man, as some have suggested. That attack a few moments ago is all the proof I need. Did you notice how the machine seemed to pause, uncertain, before aiming its weaponry at Tez? It had to await instructions—and those instructions were slow in coming, meaning they had to be sent from far away. These are all guesses, mind you, but I've got a strong feeling about such things."

If any members of the group are injured, it is possible to circle back and try to use the Medibot (which is still intact, though much of the Followers' building is smashed to pieces), or to speed ahead to Gary (which is roughly half a day ahead, assuming there are no delays). Once a decision is made, Kogen decides whether or not

to stay with the group; if more than half the team is injured, he'll see them to Gary. Otherwise, he leaves.

Kogen: PH; SC 6; AC 17/10; MD 12; HP 98; THAC +2/+1; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 sword, 4d6 shotgun; Hth 13; Spd 12/120-335 (motorcycle); Per 20; St/RU +7; UA +2; RR 20.

PS 15; DX 13; CN 18; MS 12; IN 13; CH 12; SN 15. Mutations: None.

Class Skills: detect ambush/trap 12; hunting 10; navigate 10; tracking 13; wilderness survival 11.

Equipment: Chain mail vest; motorcycle; shotgun w/12 shells; survival kit (blanket, tinderbox, etc.); 325 domars; daggers (3).

Kogen appears to be a rough biker-type, but demonstrates excellent manners and good humor in conversation. He exemplifies the saying "You can't judge a book by its cover." He has a bit of technical know-how, most of it gleaned from examiners he's known over the years. Although congenial, he's usually ready for trouble when out in the wilderness, and has seen too much to entirely lose that edge that makes scouts interesting people (and able to collect retirement pay).

If the PCs try to check in with M'rdeki that day, he affirms that he sent Kogen to triangulate coordinates from that location.

"We don't have much choice," Tez finally groans. "The Silver Giant is not the savior we were led to expect from the Hidden Writings. We must see if we can find a way to stop it from destroying all that lives. No, not a savior—but a merciless engine of destruction. We were so busy waiting for salvation, we forgot the other possibility in our blind pride." He wobbles unsteadily and looks around. "Shall we go?" (GM Note: If Tez is dead, Emereth can deliver this speech.)

Fire and Rain

The PCs make surprisingly good time cross-country, even if they ride to skirt the robot's path (direct to Gary) and stop to rest. They can estimate that they have five or six hours before the robot appears (in fact, the

robot's speed has increased; they have less than one hour. The GM must keep track of time at this point).

The source of the transmissions becomes apparent as Gary hoves into view in the distance. A former military base of some kind, surprisingly compact, lies just outside the towering skyscrapers of broken Gary; its satellite dishes move, turning against the wind. This isn't an accident; something sentient is in control of the facility.

The local flora appears to be inanimate and presents no difficulties as the PCs approach. They might discover a reason for this; defoliants and other chemical agents have been extensively used, killing many of the mutant plants closest to the base's deteriorated walls. Rad counters read very little background radiation, although there are pockets of stronger areas, apparently where miniature nuclear weapons were detonated in the not-so-recent past.

If the PCs scout the area, they notice that a handful of live metal sentinels patrol the perimeter. Most of these units are in terrible shape, but show evidence of recent patchwork repair. They are generally equivalent to the police robots listed earlier, though their UV laser pistols do 1d8 less damage; these robots' power sources are running very low and cannot recharge completely (battery exhaustion after hundreds of recharges).

The PCs also discover indications of a very strong war party in the vicinity. If the party's scouts make successful Tracking or Hunting rolls, they learn that about thirty enemies, most of them on foot, had been in this immediate vicinity no more than two hours ago.

The only interesting local terrain features, well away from the base's walls, are what appears to be a hill or mound of thorny brambles (a Lil enclave) and several clumps of tall grass along the road to and from the base. These clumps seem to weave back and forth hypnotically (see Hypnograss) whenever sentients come near.

Hypnograss: MP; AC 10; HP 2 per stalk; THAC melee +3; #AT 2d4; Dmg 1d4 per attack (grassy whip); Hth 5; Spd 0; Per 7; St 0; RU 0; IN Animal; DX 9. *Mutations: allurements (12); diminished senses (all except smell); life leech (9); spore cloud (10).*

Hypnograss appears in clumps of 30-50 stalks; each clump is a collective entity. When prey is sensed, the hypnograss uses its allurements power to draw the prey close, then life leeches its energies. As it decomposes, the dead body further nourishes the plant. If prey proves resistant to life leech, the grass launches a spore cloud to seed itself on this hardier prey. Usually, a victim so attacked staggers some distance before either dying or shedding the grass seeds, thus propagating the species.

Hypnograss is a particularly nasty weed, and is ruthlessly destroyed by most sentients whenever it is found. Gren and most other plants aren't bothered by it, however, and squeakers find it a delicacy.

If the PCs choose to scout the base and overcome the police robot guardians, they find themselves in a small, well-organized compound comprising six three-story buildings, each 30 meters on a side, and arranged to form a rough box around a central courtyard. All of the buildings look long-since abandoned. Little remains in them but junk and rusty, once-useful equipment (in other words, virtually nothing of value).

In this central courtyard are two smaller, two-story buildings that box in a low mound, like a pitcher's mound made of concrete. A metal door is set into this mound.

When the players reach this point, they quickly learn that a warbot is in reserve among the live metal defenders of this facility. The warbot remains close to the bunker door (which is not in plain sight from the PCs' initial vantage point; the base must be entered to locate the bunker) and hovers defensively before any intruders who seek to cross that threshold.

A camera and sensor assembly are visible near the bunker's entrance. A Use Artifact roll determines that this is some kind of eye, through which the PCs probably can be seen by anyone inside. If the PCs choose to attack and force their way inside, the warbot attacks until it or the PCs are dead. Tez will not help disable this live metal, as he doesn't believe it is an enemy.

If the PCs have some other way of controlling or manipulating high-tech machinery, they can use the

warbot to open the door before the Ancient inside can countermand access, thus allowing the PCs inside.

Warbot: Per 20; St/RU +5; AC 30 (D); FF 50; Spd 50; HP 250; THAC +13 (+7); #AT 2, Dmg 1d4+8 hand, 3d8 UV laser, +8 wpn. PS 25; DX 15. Tech Level VI. CPU Analytical. Size H. XP 15,000.

If the PCs attack and destroy the warbot, they find that the door is card-controlled, but the motors are disabled and interlocks are in place to keep it shut. The door itself is duralloy, being AC 40 and having 400 HP. No exposed air vents or other means of entrance can be located, even by the most diligent search.

At this point, the occupant (Peter Thornton, the Ancient) will wait out the PCs, knowing that the RMV will arrive soon. When it has killed or driven off the PCs, he'll emerge and depart inside the robot (giving the PCs a new set of problems).

Should the PCs try a "diplomatic" approach, their best bet is to throw down their weaponry and hail the bunker. At that point, an external communicator (with a holographic projector) slides from a recessed door to converse with them.

"Who are you intruders?" a voice from inside demands. "You are trespassing on the property of the United States of America. If you don't have a good reason for being here, you must depart or risk severe consequences."

The holographic projector comes to life and the PCs see the Ancient. He is a slender, middle-aged human who is (incongruously) wearing glasses! The GM can stress this point as unusual, as true men have very few physical defects. The man has a laser pistol holstered at his side, and the implication is that he is well armed and capable of defending himself.

"Well? If you are able to understand me, then identify yourselves and your reasons for being here," he insists. "If you are scavengers or technology-raiders, depart at once. I will give you no other warning."

When the PCs identify themselves, the man studies each of them intently. If they explain their mission—stopping the rampages of the giant robot—he looks

serious, and perhaps a bit troubled.

This situation requires some role-playing on the GM's part. If the PCs show that they want only to take over the robot, the Ancient will not trust them. If they appear to be genuinely interested in the defense of their homeland, then Thornton will react to this and react positively toward them. A Charisma roll can be made based on whatever modifiers the GM chooses, based on the PCs' motives and their conduct while on the base.

"I am Lt. General Peter Thornton, U.S. Space Command," the Ancient tells the PCs. "Are you claiming that you represent civilization, or what passes for it in these times?"

Thornton is guarded and wary; he isn't going to be a pushover if the PCs try to gain his trust. Although he might be ignorant of these times and creatures, he is an Ancient, and knows what his technology can do. If the PCs anger him, it is possible that he has more destructive things under his command, waiting inside the bunker.

"The robot warsuit is coming here at my command," he finally tells them. "It is operating on automatic, defending itself from potential threats. If any 'sentients,' as you call yourselves, have been injured or killed, it is likely because the machine was attacked first."

He considers, then says, "I wish to go to Grissom Air Force Base. The warsuit will take me there—hold a moment." The image fades, then comes back online. "Something has gone wrong with the warsuit's overrides. It is very near, but it is not transmitting authorization codes to accept a human pilot. I must face it in person and override it through an emergency failsafe." He stares at the PCs warily. "Now is your only chance to prove your good faith. You will guard me as I go forward to stop the machine in person. The sensors report that at least a dozen primitives have invaded the base behind you—they appear to be doglike creatures like the ones you fought before. Oh, yes—I saw that fight with my cameras and spy-eyes. If you protect me in good faith, we will discuss my terms for visiting with your government. If you try to double-cross me, you

will certainly be destroyed by the warsuit. Do you agree?"

Thornton offers this arrangement only if he believes the PCs are being honest with him; otherwise, he waits for the giant machine to arrive and kill or disperse the intruders (which means the PCs most likely fail).

The PCs should become keenly aware that this man is a living storehouse of knowledge about artifacts they can only tinker with; endangering him or allowing him to step into danger is a fantastically bad idea. Unfortunately, according to his own explanation, there is no other way to stop the warsuit/robot. Once an agreement is made, Thornton comes out.

Lt. General Peter Thornton (U.S.S.C.): Human; EX 15; AC 10 (50); MD 11; HP 40; THAC 0/+1; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8 (UV laser pistol, either built into battlesuit or in hand); Hth 10; Spd 13; Per 16; St +1; RU +2; UA +5; RR 20+; PS 10 (20); DX 13; CN 10; MS 12; IN 16; CH 13; SN 14.

Mutations: None.

Class Skills: avoid artifact disaster 16; jury-rig 12; read schematics 19; repair artifact 12.

Equipment: Battlesuit, UV laser pistol, tool kit, hovercraft, remote control headband for warsuit.

Peter Thornton is a youthful man standing 1.7m tall and weighing 98 kg., with short, sandy-brown hair, a trim build, and glasses over green-grey eyes. Under his battlesuit he wears gray fatigues. His manner of speech is somewhat formal (a symptom of his nervousness). Everything about Thornton says "military" to a practiced eye, though his expertise is primarily technical.

He has an ID card with the highest-level military access, allowing him to commandeer any U.S. military robotic/computer system. RM-1975 at Gruesome is probably immune to this card's effect, having modified itself extensively over the years.

Thornton has been in contact with HANC, the AI that controls Gruesome, but he won't reveal this information to the PCs. He envisions his future as being "the Wizard of Gruesome"—the technology expert whose

services are sought by all and given to few. It is possible that megalomania will overtake his good sense eventually.

He emerges from the bunker wearing a battlesuit (see modified attributes above; provides him with AC +40 and PS 20, with UV laser pistol built into arm and self-powered with 20 charges per power cell; he has ten power cells on hand).

"Let's go, shall we?" he invites the PCs, amused at the surprise on their faces. "You didn't think I wasn't going to protect myself, did you? C'mon. The warsuit should be here any minute."

As the PCs walk away from the bunker, a band of seven arks appears, skulking from around the corners of the building. They are armed with Tech Level II weaponry and suffer from the "incurable madness" (an advanced form of rabies).

They are wild-eyed, twitchy, and ready to go berserk at the slightest provocation. One, larger and stronger than the others, steps forward, trembling, and tries to focus his eyes on the PCs. He wears a collar and a tag that reads "Rover-Boy."

"You are in oooooour lands," the leader howls at the PCs. "What . . . no, no, *why* . . . why are you here? I demand to know, now! Now! Do you hear?" He shakes his head as if deafened by sounds only he can hear. "It matters not at all. Noooo matter! Kill them!" The seven bound forward.

Arks: Per 12 (from sickness); St/RU +2; AC 15 (11); MD 8 (from sickness); Hth 9 (sick); Spd 18; Lvl 2; HD 9 (32); THAC +2; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 bite, +2 wpn; IN Low; Morale 13 (sickness); Size L (3m). XP Value 320 (boosted due to berserk state).

Mutations: telekinesis (13); life leech (10).

These arks are unhealthy and unclean. Their fur is matted and filthy; their eyes are bloodshot and roll wildly; and they are frothing at the mouth. Their colors, now tattered, are those of the Throatripper pack, which prowls near the Mad Zone but sometimes raids as far as Cover. Their statistics are modified (above) due to the mind-damaging effects of their disease. At present, they

are not infectious and cannot be cured.

If combat goes badly for the PCs, 1d6 lil take note of the battle and come to help, attacking the rabid dogmen from a distance with their bows and arrows. Due to their berserk state, the arks get +2 to resist the sleep venom used by the lil.

At least one of the lil sustains a forcefield. Another uses illusion to keep the arks at a distance. The rest coordinate their attacks on whichever ark appears to be weakest. If the lil are attacked directly and one is killed, they retreat to their mound; there is a 25% chance that 2d6 lil then emerge to kill the arks; otherwise, they stay in their brambles and ignore the rest of the fight.

Lil: Per 15; St/RU +3; AC 14; MD 15; Hth 13; Spd 2/14; Lvl 3; HD 4 (14); THAC +3; #AT 1; Dmg 0 (sleep poison); IN High; Morale 6; Size T (.2m). XP Value 650.

Mutations: energy reflection (15); size change; wings; dual brain (mass mind (16), telepathy (14), total healing (12)); anti-life leech (11); empathy (16); force field generation (14); illusion generation (18); telekinesis (9).

Special Powers: Light generation (dim illumination).

Lil are tiny, fairylike creatures. A complete description is on page 155 of the Game Rules book.

If the PCs are having an especially easy time in this combat, four more arks show up from an unexpected direction—they charge right over the mound of the bunker! These arks remained in hiding while the others launched a frontal assault; they may be crazy, but they aren't stupid!

When the combat is ended, the ground begins to shake. Striding between the buildings, the giant robot approaches. The arks, if any are left, are stricken with panic and flee. Thornton steps toward the robot, much as Tez did, and begins calling out identification information. The robot looks down at him, aligns its weapons . . .

. . . and stops.

"It's safe to approach," he tells the PCs. "It's locked onto defensive mode right now. Anything that attacks me or the machine itself will be shot. I guess you can be

trusted, to a point. So I'll meet with your leaders—that won't take too long. Come with me."

He clicks the controls on his battlesuit's wristplate, and a metal door slides open in one of the buildings, exposing a "bubble bus" which was formerly used to move platoons from location to location. The vehicle appears to be in sound condition and can hold the entire party (but not their animals). "Hop in. We can be in Fort Lee in less than an hour in this thing," he tells them. Before long, the engines are warmed up and the flying minibus is coasting up into the sky.

Bubble Bus (U.S.S.C. Military Transport TX-1): Seats 10; Cargo 4,500kg; Max Speed 400/900; Maneuvering Class C; Hit Points 90; AC 40; TL VI, 18.

The bus includes two heavy anti-personnel weapons equivalent to high explosive missile-launchers (page 109 of Game Rules book) and stocks enough supplies for ten men to survive in a nuclear wasteland for two weeks.

A Bright, Sunny Day

On the way to Lee, Thornton agrees to use the bus's radio to contact M'rdeki. The colonel is overjoyed at the PCs' extreme success, but urges them to divert away from Lee. "The town is nearly in a riot," he explains. "I cannot guarantee your security here, even with all the troops we've got. Divert to five miles north-northwest of town. I will meet you there."

When the bus lands (having been avoided by most flying creatures as a dangerous-looking unknown), M'rdeki is there. Thornton is suspicious; he doesn't know the gorilla and is not eased by claims of his reliability.

M'rdeki is impressed, even humbled by this display of Ancient technology.

"Sentients . . . milord Ancient," he says in greeting, his expression blank. "I must come clean with you, now that events have taken this turn. I've been operating under false pretenses. My allegiance does not lie with

Bonparr, nor has it for some years. No, I serve a faction of Restorationists who work in the town of Ascension. We are attempting to build a better society than the vicious evolutionary-chauvinism and racism of Bonparr. To do that, we must be able to protect ourselves. We had hoped that a computer would be discovered—a machine we could reprogram to do our bidding and make the war machine our invincible protector. As long as it never walked through Bonparr, the upper command would have decided the machine wasn't worth the bother of capture and analysis; we would have won a great victory very easily.

"Now, however, you turn up a genuine Ancient—a man whose knowledge is the mightiest strategic asset any political body could possess! No offense intended, sir, but you are the most powerful weapon alive right now."

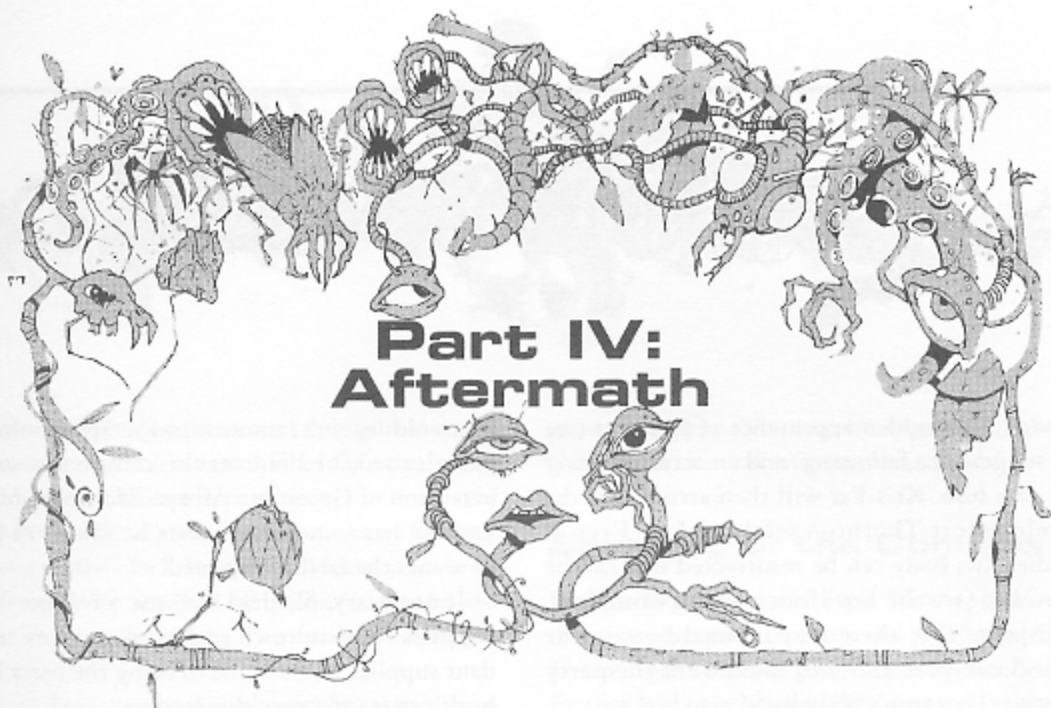
Thornton nods thoughtfully, eyes narrowed.

"I won't attempt to take you captive, sir—nor are you men suddenly 'too knowledgeable' to live," M'rdeki assures the PCs. "I value my troops, who are among the best in the world, and I value my cause—but I value liberty above all, which in the end is why I could not serve Bonparr. But I do ask all of you: would you consider working for a society that seeks to better this world, with the tools and knowledge it can scrape together? Or will you serve a military establishment that perpetually teeters on the edge of coup and violent insurrection?"

The PCs have the opportunity to support or oppose M'rdeki's intentions at this time. They can make their own decision about what they want to do, and M'rdeki will let them leave in peace. Thornton, intrigued, will accept the gorilla's offer.

"If this is where our paths part, then I'm sorry about that," Thornton says. "Good luck to you all."

If they accept M'rdeki's offer, Thornton smiles and says, "Hop in. Looks like we've got places to go."



Part IV: Aftermath

With the player characters' arrival in the village of Lee, the adventure could be close to its conclusion. However, certain variables must be resolved.

The Excelsior RMV's Fate

If the RMV has not been destroyed or brought under control by the time the party reaches Lee, trouble might still be in store for the PCs. The RMV will pass through Lee on its way to Gruesome Asbayz. Any attacks on it will result in a volley of fire from the RMV, using whatever options remain (depending on its previous use of missiles, grenades, and ammunition). The RMV's intent is only to pass through Lee, not reduce it to rubble.

The PCs must try to stop the RMV, if they have not located Peter Thornton. If they are not in Lee when the RMV passes through, the GM could see to the machine's destruction. The GM can state that M'rdeki and his troops in Lee were assisted by others who were also trying to find Thornton.

The leader of this force is Kris-Pat (see the campaign suggestions following this section). One member of the group carried a one-shot artifact that sliced the RMV in two: a monomolecular wire bazooka. This Tech VI device cast a molecule-wide wire across the RMV's path, anchored to a nearby structure (cliff, tree, building, etc.). When the RMV walked through the wire, it was sliced in two at the waist (such is the deadly nature of monomolecular wire). The RMV has ceased most of its functions, but the communications systems inside the cracked canopy still seem to be operating. In this

manner, the party could be led to Thornton's position so it may accompany him to Lee.

If the RMV is still roaming around (e.g., Thornton has lost control of it or it has not been destroyed) and the GM does not want it stopped, it will proceed to Gruesome Asbayz, where it will initially look for Thornton's friends, but soon will be commanded to join in the defense system there (such orders issued by either HANC or the rogue RM-1975). For more on Gruesome's ongoing internal power struggle, see the GAMMA WORLD® accessory, *The Overlord of Bonparr*.

If the RMV has been neutralized or destroyed, there are still many, many valuable parts and weapons on board. An extension of this adventure might involve M'rdeki sending the PCs to the site of the downed RMV, along with some trusted technical assistants and mounts, to salvage as much as possible from the wreckage and return it to M'rdeki.

In any case, this Excelsior Class Alpha RMV should not be allowed to wander around aimlessly or out of the characters' concern unless the GM has specific plans for it in the future. And the GM should *never* allow the RMV to be taken intact and used by a PC. If that danger exists, the GM should add the self-destruct mechanism normally used in the Beta type (see the Excelsior Class RMV description at the end of this book).

The Fate of Peter Thornton

Preferably, Peter Thornton is brought to Lee alive. If, somewhere earlier in the adventure, Thornton is criti-

cally wounded, the sudden appearance of Kris-Pat (see Campaign suggestions following) and an accompanying Healer can save him. Kris-Pat will then accompany the party to help escort Thornton safely to Lee. Even if Thornton dies, his body can be resurrected if it can be delivered to Lee (see the Lee Underground Complex). M'rdeki suspects that there may be medibots in the underground complex and will make sure the party knows to bring Thornton's body back.

If Thornton is irretrievably lost, then the party should find a recorder among his possessions that will allow M'rdeki and his masters to gain Thornton's information on how to contact Gruesome Afbayz's HANC so they can open negotiations with it.

As mentioned, the best option is to bring Thornton back alive. Even if the party never finds him, Kris-Pat and some of his followers will see him safely to Lee, where M'rdeki will be waiting for him.

Thornton's fate beyond this depends on whether the GM wants to expand this adventure.

To Expand or Not to Expand

The GM must decide whether he wants to continue this adventure. The decision will probably be based on whether he has a future campaign in mind for his GAMMA WORLD® player characters.

If desired, the GM can stop the adventure in Lee. The characters will have either brought Thornton or his information back to M'rdeki, or they will have failed. Stopping the RMV was their first priority, but they understood that M'rdeki wanted the person controlling it brought back too. If they have accomplished this, if they cannot find Thornton, or if he is dead, then the mission is over. However, M'rdeki will try to talk them into helping him in his secret work for Ascension (see campaign suggestions following).

If the GM wishes, he can expand this adventure to include the Underground Complex beneath the village of Lee. M'rdeki has known of this facility for a few years.

From old legends, rumors, and scraps of information he has gleaned, he believes the complex is somehow an extension of Gruesome Afbayz. Now that M'rdeki is in Lee and has some adventurers he knows to be capable, he wants the facility explored.

If necessary, M'rdeki will use a refugee Healer who happens to be in town and his mercenary unit's abundant supplies of medicine to bring the party back to full health so it can brave this facility.

If Thornton is in Lee (and alive!), M'rdeki will enter into private, intense discussions with him. If the GM is using the Kris-Pat campaign option (described later), the orlen will also be involved in the discussions.

These talks will end with M'rdeki knowing that this underground complex is definitely a way into Gruesome Afbayz. He will be determined to clear it out so Thornton can use it for passage back to Gruesome. He will offer the party lavish rewards for helping in this endeavor (definitely enough to entice most parties). If the party decides not to help M'rdeki in this venture, regardless of the rewards, they should be reminded that M'rdeki *does* have loyal troops with him, and he could have the PCs executed as traitors. If possible, though, the PCs should join this mission of their own free will. M'rdeki would not want the complex sabotaged by resentful renegades.

If the GM likes the expanded adventure and campaign concepts, but currently has other plans for the party, he can always return to this expansion later. He could bring the party, M'rdeki, and Peter Thornton (possibly even Kris-Pat) all together at a later time to complete this adventure.

Gruesome's Sanctuary

Long ago, when Grissom Air Force Base was being upgraded into a vital defense center, it was decided that a small facility would be added to act as a secondary command post in case of war. Because of the nuclear threat of widespread devastation, the complex would be located far away, deep underground, but be accessible from both the surface and from Grissom. The base

would have complete computer and communications backup systems, and could control all of Grissom's awesome military might stored in emergency underground launch bunkers. The remote complex would be well defended around the clock by special Military Security Robots, and would be powered by nuclear plants buried even deeper beneath the earth. This facility lies below the village of Lee.

Access from Lee into the complex is through a pneumatic elevator located in an ancient building, now being used as a local Archivist temple by some villagers. The GM must decide how to handle the Archivists. They can be surly and stubborn, refusing to allow anyone into their temple to use the ancient "Door of the Gods," or they can be more open to negotiations, leaving the PCs a chance to talk their way into the temple and elevator. The GM might even wish to completely design the building/temple complex, complete with armed Archivist community, and have the party try to secure the elevator through force.

Complex Specs

The facility is still operational in many respects, but is in "lock-down" emergency red alert condition. A decade ago, a large opening was punched in the facility by a land killer whale (like a land shark, only much bigger and nastier and capable of diving to tremendous depths in the earth). Strangely, the facility's sensors did not pick up the breach right away, so many underground creatures and "things" penetrated the facility. Eventually, the breaches were noticed and the facility went on red alert. It has been on red alert ever since, because no one has neutralized or overridden the condition.

The pneumatic elevator can be accessed and used only through a special military access card or security I.D. card. The cards are carried by the temple's chief Archivist. The elevator is a 4-meter cube, operates silently, and has no other opening except for its large doors (which face south). The cards must be used every time the elevator is entered (unless the doors are propped open). Lighting in the elevator is a normal

glow cube type. The trip from ground to complex, in either direction, takes 4 minutes.

Specifics of the Complex

Walls, floors, and ceilings. Two types of walls are in this complex: normal walls and reinforced block walls. The normal walls are glazed ceramic bonded onto plastic tiles laid over bricks. They are in good condition and require little maintenance. These walls are AC 18 and sustain 100 hit points before being breached. The reinforced block walls have metal lattice worked into concrete block assembly. These are covered with a hard plastic coating. Block walls are AC 20 and sustain 200 points before being breached.

The ceilings and floors are also made of the reinforced block. The ceilings throughout the facility are 3 meters high.

Doors. Three types of doors are in this complex: normal, security, and blast. The normal door is a hinged, hollow metal door (AC 20, Hp 50) with a handle and a simple key lock. These are about 1 meter wide and 2.4 meters tall.

Horizontally-sliding security doors (AC 23, Hp 100) with cardlocks provide access to sensitive areas. Most of these cardlocks recognize military and security cards of all types, even common ones. The pneumatic elevator access doors and Shuttle Bay access door both require an override card, similar to the one found in the Archivist temple. These two general access cardlocks have malfunctioned over the years. The security doors open and close silently. Security doors are 2.4 meters tall.

The heavy blast doors (AC 25, Hp 200) drop from the ceiling. They can be lifted only if the computer negates the red alert or if they are manually cranked up. A small hatch is located in the wall to the lower right of each blast door. Behind the hatch is a metal handle that can be swung out and cranked. Only two human-sized people can crank at one time. A combined STR of 32 is needed to operate these old mechanisms. A door stays up if it is cranked up, so it is possible to create low openings instead of raising the whole door.

Lights. The only lights operating are the strobing red emergency lights in each corridor and room. (These lights do not burn out.) The lights make it very difficult to see details clearly, and almost impossible to see anything red. Apply a -2 THAC modifier to any combat that takes place under this lighting.

If the party can somehow cancel the red alert, the lights revert to their normal condition. All corridors and the shuttle bay are always lit. If normal lighting is turned on, the GM can either assume that all other rooms are lit as well, or can mark on the map which rooms are in the dark or have lights burned out.

Shuttle Bay. Access between the complex and annex is difficult due to the malfunctioning security door cardlock (see Doors, above). The shuttle bay contains a poured concrete platform leading into a tubular tunnel running out of sight to the east. The curved walls in here are reinforced concrete and show no signs of deterioration. The shuttle is a metal "bullet" with a door (AC 20, Hp 30) on each side and hardened plastic roller collars fitting the shuttle so snugly into the tunnel that it seals the tunnel tight. The only windows in the shuttle are in the doors. When activated, huge air jets surrounding the shuttle propel it forward, thus the misnomer "pneumatic" shuttle. The shuttle can easily be activated by sealing its doors and pushing a few buttons inside it. Though many stops could be made on the way, the shuttle is currently programmed to travel directly to Gruesome and back.

Common Artifacts. Many artifacts are found throughout the complex. Most common are the computer terminals found in almost every room, and large numbers of terminals in important locations. These are internal computers only, linked to a CPU, primarily used for intra-complex communications, data processing, monitoring, and so on. It is impossible to reach the outside world through these computer terminals.

Fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, light and thermostat control devices, built-in heat-activated water sprinklers, and built-in envirolyzers are also in each room.

GM Note: This complex is designed to be small and simple. But a creative GM might expand it outward and add new levels. Perhaps this complex was designed not as a small base, but as a holocaust refuge for all the forces at Grissom. Perhaps creatures broke into other sections and traveled here through the shuttle tunnel to start a community. This complex could be developed into an entire "dungeon" setting for an adventure, or might be connected to other sites through use of the shuttle. The possibilities are unlimited.

Rooms and Encounter Descriptions

Room titles in quotations (such as "Elevator") indicate words that appear on the door to a room.

A. Pneumatic "Elevator"—Complex Level. The elevator opens into a corridor with numerous security doors exiting in all directions. The first thing PCs notice is the blinking red lights outside the elevator. The red-lettered greeting on the wall, "Welcome to Grissom Annex" will not be evident while the red lights flash. Note that R and T encounters are here also. (If the GM wishes, this T could also have a military supervisor pass card.)

B. "Command Center". The decayed remains of Lt. "Slade" Handsome lies just inside this room. He was one of three technicians in the complex when the Cataclysm began. Unfortunately for them, the base was not fully operational and they did not have the required cards to operate either of the malfunctioning exits (see Doors, above).

Handsome appears to have been shot in the head. The only items on him that have not decayed are his plastic I.D. badge, his common military I.D. card, and a Tech IV tool set in a plastic case.

C. Command Center "Security" Room. This room contains desks, chairs, and a 4-by-5 meter cell at the east end. Keys to the cell are in a desk drawer. A card-

locked adamant cabinet also stands here, holding the security firearms cache. Soldiers transferring here had their firearms confiscated upon arrival; the weapons were kept in one of these storage areas. This cabinet contains four assault rifles with 1,000 rounds of ammo, a grenade launcher with 10 grenades (five stun, five tear gas), two machine pistols with 200 rounds of ammo, and four revolvers with 50 rounds of ammo each.

Since these firearms were kept only in case of emergency (in case the Military Security Robots broke down or malfunctioned), the GM may justify reducing the cache to adjust the amount of firepower introduced into the game).

D. Command Center “Communications” Room. Fantastic communications equipment of all types is set up here. All is operational, though highly technical. None are currently switched on.

E. Command Center “Operations” Room. A large table occupies the center of this room, and numerous overstuffed chairs are scattered about. Hundreds of maps litter the table, all scrawled on in ink, pencil, marker, and even some black-red substance (ancient blood). The scrawls are pretty weird and make no sense—some are even childish. A successful Challenging INT Check will yield the theory that someone went mad and spent a long time defacing these maps. Few are usable, though some may be valuable if the GM wants to include future adventure material at this point.

F. Command Center “Computers” Room. The CPU for the complex’s self-contained computer system is here, as well as an extremely powerful computer used to assist communications and run the complex’s everyday utility and environmental tasks. Another massive computer has numerous terminals that link to HANC at Gruesome Afbayz. This computer provides the link by which Col. Thornton can contact HANC.

Another security door in the west wall leads to a large storage room full of software and hardware. The

value of this material may be enormous, and Kris-Pat would definitely recognize its importance.

Unfortunately, a Military Security Robot (see S) is also here. It can hear anyone who enters the Command Section (B—F). It considers this area the most important in the complex, and will summon other Sec-bots to this location when it notices any intruders and receives no reasonable explanation for their presence. Only the three Sec-bots that are not hindered by blast doors will respond, but all others are aware of a confirmed intruder alert.

This robot is capable of dumping, then shutting down the base’s computers, but PCs should be given all possible chances to stop it from doing so.

G. Barracks. The large room houses male personnel and the smaller west room houses female personnel. Both barracks contain endless three-tiered bunks, bedding, trunks, and stored duffle bags. It will take the PCs at least an entire day to search this area thoroughly. It is up to the GM whether anything useful or valuable is found here. Bathing and toilet facilities are also in each barracks.

Ribbon snakes (R) have made their way into the living quarters.

A huge storage space is accessed through the east wall of the men’s barracks. Inside is a secure door that accesses a metal ladder leading up and down. This is the only way to the plumbing and electrical lines below and above the complex, and also the nuclear plant far below. If the GM has created other levels, this may be an alternate passage to them.

H. “Officers Barracks.” This room is subdivided into nine cubicled living spaces. The partitions offer no real barriers; they just block vision. None of the cubicles have ever been occupied. Each has a bed, trunk, desk, chair, and lamp, as well as private shower and bathroom facilities.

I. “Medical” Facilities. These three rooms comprise the base hospital. The east room has two desks and a

wondrous machine that at one time created medicines on demand. Now it is corroded and useless.

The middle room is a cubicle examination and treatment area. Fully functional medibots are at the east and west ends. The medibot to the east has been munched on by ribbon snakes, and thus will harm patients rather than help them. The medibot on the left functions properly. Basic first aid materials are in this room's cabinets, but the medicines are deteriorated and possibly dangerous.

J. Hospital Ward. This room is filled with beds. One bed bears the remains of a human (she died of cancer). Her body bears nothing of value. The beds here are the best in the complex.

K. Exercise Rooms. These three rooms contain numerous exercise machines and floor mats. All the machines are mechanical and are operational. The GM can have fun describing these incredibly shiny machines that move smoothly, but go nowhere. Not so funny are the human remains strapped to one of these machines. Perhaps these were devices of torture! The remains look as if the victim wore little clothing; he has no valuables on him (he had a heart attack while exercising).

L. "R & R." This oddly-shaped large room, divided into three areas, contains different artifacts for rest and relaxation. These include video, sound, and feelie systems, and computer terminals for reading. Unfortunately, ribbon snakes found their way here a long time ago, and all technical items are nonoperational.

M. "Mess & Housekeeping." This section usually open and unlocked. To the west are rooms used for storing food, cleaning supplies, and sundry items. Huge, complex machines in here reconstituted the unusual synthetic uniforms worn by the complex's inhabitants. There is also a dangerous (warning symbols everywhere) machine that disintegrated trash. The machine looks intact, but is good for only one disintegration before it falls apart.

To the east are the dining and food preparation facilities. Notice the unusual switchback layout from M to N. There is no obvious reason for it, and the GM should try to intrigue the players with it, even though it is just a fluke of construction.

N. "Mess." This large room was once the dining hall, but now has a bizarre appearance. It contains a number of folding tables that have been collapsed and stacked against the northeast corner. In the middle of the room, scores of chairs have been balanced, jammed, and even glued together into some bizarre pyramid. (This is the work of the looney in E, who believed to be designing a super antenna in here.)

O. "Kitchen." The food processors, sanitizers, and robotic preparation machines have all broken down into junk. The plumbing is still intact and, surprisingly, the water is still drinkable after it is allowed to run for about 5 minutes. Perfectly good stainless steel utensils, pots, and pans are in the cabinets. No edible foodstuffs remain here or elsewhere throughout M.

P. "Shuttle Bay" Access Door (see **Doors**, above). This door has not been opened since the Cataclysm. It has suffered much abuse and looks like someone pounded on it until their hands bled, and even shot it with bullets. Scrawled on the door in black marker are the ancient words "Heaven is on the other side!"

Q. Shuttle Bay. The shuttle stands here, just where it arrived a day before the Cataclysm. A simple pressure plate on the shuttle door (inside and out) will open it. The inside is dark until the shuttle door is opened (the lights inside automatically turn off after 4 hours). Anyone entering the shuttle, closing the door, and playing with the buttons will end up headed for Gruesome Afbayz (E.T.A. about 3 hours). The shuttle will be met by a large squad of Military Security Robots.

R. Ribbon Snakes. AC 9 (20 if red lights are on); MD 8; HP 20; THAC +2; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (bite); Hth 10;

Spd 20 (can slither on any surface); Per 10 (18 in red light); St/RU 4; ML 9; XP 400 each if simply encountered and killed, 1,000 each if they have had a chance to "chomp" any technical devices.

Mutations: Numerous physical; passive mutations allow them to eat wiring and microcircuitry; smell circuitry (13); poison (12).

Ribbon snakes are so named because they are 10-20 cm long, fantastically thin like a ribbon, and bright red. They are so thin that they can crawl through any crack, even those surrounding the sealed security and blast doors. Millions of tiny suction cups line their bodies, allowing them to slither up walls and across ceilings, which is where they are usually encountered. They bite only in self defense, and there is a possibility (roll of 1 on 1d6) that the bite has poisonous saliva (Intensity 10, debilitating).

Ribbon snakes most often present more of a danger to technological items, which they can smell, slither into, and munch on the circuitry. If allowed more than a minute in a character's backpack or on gear, the snake has entered an item. The GM must roll for the ribbon snake's damage. Use the repair table on page 79 of the GAMMA WORLD® Rules to determine the amount of damage. The longer a ribbon snake roams, the more damage it can cause and the more items it can damage.

Each site marked R on the Underground Complex map identifies a nest of 3d4 ribbon snakes (usually in the walls or nearby machinery). It is almost impossible to see the snakes in the red blinking light, and even in normal light, they simply look like red warning stripes painted on a surface until they move.

S. Military Security Robots. These military versions of the Security Robot (page 125, GAMMA WORLD® Rules) differ in that they are painted military colors and have some improved statistics and alternate weapons. The statistical alterations include: AC 28; Hp 175; THAC +5 vs. everything; and a "blinking" kinetic force field like the Police Robot, but with a factor of 50 (5). Its weapons include a built-in VL Laser Rifle and a

grenade launcher with three grenades (one each of tear gas, tangler, and frag).

A fully operational Military Security Robot waits wherever an S appears on the map. They obey only Security or Military Override cards because the red alert has been in effect so long. These robots have similar mission statements to their civilian cousins, but can react with more lethal force to the presence of "dangerous elements," such as any moving entity that does not resemble a human, normal animal (unarmed and in normal posture), or normal plant (unarmed and in normal posture).

T. Trashed Robots. These were once Military Security Robots, but they have fallen prey to the ribbon snakes. Not only have normal operations been destroyed in these bots, but some of the "chomped" circuitry and damage is so severe that there is a 1 in 6 chance that if a bot is searched or disturbed in any way, a short, discharge, or explosion will occur. Damage may be the result of an energy weapon discharging, the robot's power source shorting out, a grenade's rusty pin finally snapping, etc. The GM should have fun with these encounters and should select the type of damage that results, though killing a cautious character because it accidentally bumped a trashed robot is not a good idea. If a 6 is rolled on the d6 check, the robot is completely safe, though the PCs will not know this.

U. Ultraviolet Fungus. AC 05; MD 01; HP 10 each; THAC 0; #AT 1 per adventure; Dmg, a blast damaging as UV Laser Rifle in a 4 meter radius; Hth 12; Spd 0; Per Special; St/RU N/A; ML N/A; XP 2,000 each.

Mutations: Ambient energy absorption, storage, and blast release (16); heat and motion sensing (18); immunity to all energy forms.

Ultraviolet fungus is unique to ancient underground facilities. It usually resembles the normal rust stains seen on walls or ceilings of most ancient places. The fungus is like a slow energy sponge, sucking up what little energy exists in the atmosphere over the decades. When it senses motion within 5 meters or warm-

blooded creatures, it waits, then unleashes its energy in the form of an area affect UV blast (4 m. blast radius, but usually waits until the target is 3 meters away). It can do this once during the adventure.

An ultraviolet fungus grows at every place marked U. A -10 modifier is applied to detecting the fungi when the red alert is in effect.

V. Voltage Squares. Each square marked V indicates a shorted power cable conduit that has contact with the metal latticing in the walls, floors, and ceilings. It delivers an electrical shock of 2d6 to anyone walking on or touching the surfaces. This damage is doubled for robots and characters wearing metal armor. These areas cannot be neutralized.

Encounters W-Z. These areas are reserved for the GM to add encounters. Possibilities include traps set by the ancient looney Slade (see B), new races or creatures that have entered, or information the GM wishes the PCs to find.

Campaign Suggestions

A follow-up campaign can be launched from many points in the aftermath of the adventure. The GM can create a massive underground complex beneath Lee instead of the small annex described here. An entire underground campaign might result from this expansion.

Another underground adventure possibility is the discovery of an entirely new race of subterranean creatures that the PCs stumble upon and must pursue through the dark, labyrinthine tunnels and caverns to discover a cache of weapons and computer programs that were taken from the complex. Underground creatures abound here.

If the RMV was not defeated, an entire campaign could be built on tracking it down and eliminating the robot, the faction that controls it, or a faction that is trying to gain control of it. Perhaps a quest is in order for a powerful ancient artifact that will render the RMV

useless, such as the monomolecular bazooka mentioned earlier.

The remains of the RMV leave other possibilities. There are a number of artifacts to plunder from it, and a small campaign may be built around different Alliances or factions fighting for possession or trying to get the precious devices to their bases.

A long campaign needs a strong, clear focus behind it and a tremendous amount of ingenuity to keep everything balanced. There are many pitfalls into which a GAMMA WORLD® campaign can fall. A few warnings, first:

- Never base a campaign on a war footing—that is, placing characters in a war or continuous battles between Alliances. This becomes monotonous and deadly, and puts characters at risk of being cannon fodder. Any wars that occur should always be on the fringes of the PCs' adventures.
- Always mix plenty of puzzles, intelligent challenges, diplomatic role playing, tricks, and traps into encounters. Nothing escalates the power of the game (you want to avoid a quick escalation of fire-power) or bores players as fast as heavy “slash and burn” play. Challenge them creatively.
- Provide a core group or organization to which the PCs can belong; this may help them when things get rough. Such an organization should not save the PCs every time there is trouble, but sometimes a GM can miscalculate and provide the party with an unobtainable goal. They need occasional backup for advice, healing, figuring out devices, and, in the worst cases, providing flanking fire.
- A party with a chaotic nature usually does not last long. Players tend to do stupid things because they have no one to answer to and no one they can trust. Characters would easily start making enemies who fear and hate them. A party should have an underlying “good” and helpful nature; otherwise, the theme of the campaign is only “Survive until the characters die,” with little else accomplished.



The Kris-Pat Campaign

The purpose of this section is to provide an established campaign background for future adventures, including a basic beginning, a new Cryptic Alliance, and a new NPC who will set everything in motion. The campaign hook is that the characters will be in on the ground floor of a new Cryptic Alliance at a time when Gamma Terra needs one. If the PCs belong to a different Cryptic Alliance, they may wish to convert or they may believe that they are helping their own group by helping the New World Order.

Background

This campaign is designed for groups based in the geographical areas mapped out in the GAMMA WORLD® 4th Edition game and covered so far in the recent GAMMA WORLD products. It has its roots in the adventure described in this product. The background begins with these facts (which the GM can alter for his own campaign):

- A) M'rdeki, while posing as a commander of a mercenary unit, is actually a deep-cover agent for the open city of Ascension, a relatively non-aligned power dangerously close to Bonparr.
- B) Bonparr is an expansionistic power recently ruled by an aging, popular leader. Most folks believed they knew who was to inherit the Bonparr throne. They were wrong. A relatively unknown lieutenant who excelled in subterfuge and cryptic politics has successfully staged a coup upon the sudden death of the leader. Many loyal agents of the old regime have been rounded up and shot (placing any PC Bonparrians in serious jeopardy). It looks like a return to the bad old days as most of the military is solidly behind this usurper. It appears that Bonparr will wage war on its neighbors within a year. The question is *where* it will start.
- C) Many times in the past, different groups have tried and failed to take over Gruesome Afbayz, an

ancient site full of awesome machines of destruction. It is Ascension's desire to create a buffer zone between itself and Bonparr. To this end, they seek Peter Thornton or his information on how to contact HANC, the Gruesome Afbayz computer. Thornton is fighting his own battle with the rogue RMV-1975 for control of Gruesome.

GM Note: No Alliance should ever be able to take over Gruesome. Such power will unbalance the game, and Gruesome serves better as an uncontrollable force. In addition to the many warbots there, Gruesome also has two Excelsior Class Beta RMVs stored in deep bunkers.

- D) Thornton, or his information, has somehow reached M'rdeki, (preferably with aid of the party). Thornton (or M'rdeki, if Thornton is not around), somehow gets into the Lee Underground Complex, where he contacts HANC through the computers and sets up a deal. The deal is that Ascension will provide HANC with help while HANC and Gruesome Afbayz use their resources to create a buffer zone. This zone will limit Bonparr's expansion to the west and force it to spread east. The buffer zone extends from Naples in the south through Gruesome, up to River Bend. Along with the northern elements of Huush and Bastion, this should stop Bonparr. Thornton will go to live in Gruesome, where he becomes known as The Wizard of Afz.

Enforcement of the zone against Bonparr occurs through military strikes by Afbayz forces, reinforced by mutant ground forces. Bonparr cannot begin to repel these. Even RMV-1975 is in favor of punishing Bonparr for past incursions into Gruesome.

- E) A new NPC, Kris-Pat, has had a hand in all this and will soon be known as the person who saved these lands from a horrible war. He will act as negotiator with Bonparr so it will understand that it must spread east. Kris-Pat wants to enlist the aid of the noble adventurers (PCs) who aided this campaign of peace.

The PCs are never to be sent into direct combat with Bonparr forces; they are too valuable. M'rdeki will also enlist their aid. These two powerful NPCs, along with Thornton, believe that the key to stabilizing the lands is the protection of Ascension.

The PCs are now hip deep in plans. Kris-Pat will "encourage" them if necessary. The GM needn't forcibly convert them into Newos, but they must be shown why their help is important. Healers and Restorationists are openly in favor of the plan. What is needed is to start sending forces out on secret missions to further Ascension's (actually Kris-Pat's) plans on how to contain Bonparr. This is where the party comes in.

The first adventure can be based on the Restorationists' desire for their own base. They want to move their operations from Ascension to Kayzoo, where they can set up trade with the Faremen of Lake Mitchgloom. Kris-Pat and M'rdeki want the PCs to help them reach Kayzoo (and spy on whom the Restorationists have in mind for allies, and how the Faremen react).

Future plans for the party include spying on the Purists in Bastion, diplomatic missions to Huush to bring them into this buffer zone alliance, and the exploration of Napless. The next big target, though, is Bastion!

Kris-Pat, The Great Compromiser

Exceptionally Mutated Orlen, Cult Leader

PS	18	THAC melee	+7**
DX	16	THAC ranged	+7**
CN	20	Health	17**
MS	21	Mental Defense	17**
IN	16	Use Artifacts	2
CH	21	Robot Recogn.	14
SN	13	Perception	18*

Hit Points	90		
Armor Class	15	Speed	21*
Damage Bonus	+3	Carry	90 kg
Remain Unseen	+2	Stealth	+2
Attacks	2*	Size:	2.7 m

Staff Damage 1d8+3/1d8+3 or 3d8+3*

* = See Special Skills below for unusual scores

** = Racial modifiers explain these unusual scores

Mutations

Dual Brain (Harmony+ (28), Life Field Generation+ (17)); Multiple Limbs; Hermaphrodite+; Telekinesis (18); Telepathy (20); Will Force (18)

+ = see below for these new mutations

Appearance

Kris-Pat is an extremely attractive male/female orlen, which should be shocking to player characters and non-player characters alike. (For the sake of simplicity, Kris-Pat is referred to as "he" and sometimes as "they," but the GM should remember that Kris-Pat has a female persona as well.)

Both heads have shoulder-length hair bound back by a headband. The male head wears a close-cropped beard. Kris-Pat wears studded leather armor under flowing robes. Within those robes are hidden his technical equipment and shotgun, while a simple pack and canteen are visible outside the robes. He carries two large

(3 meters long) staves, each capped on one end and banded in the middle with steel. The two headbands, the backpack, the canteen, and the two amulets around each of Kris-Pat's necks bear the symbol of the New World Order.

Kris/Pat's manner is calm, quiet, and confident. Their voices are soothing and, it is rumored, can remove the weariness and hatred from one's heart and mind.

Special Skills: Instead of normal class skills, Kris-Pat has a number of special skills he learned during his years as a nomadic monk.

Zen Martial Arts—Staff. This rare skill automatically provides one additional block move per turn that acts as a +4 AC modifier vs. unarmed and melee combat. The skill also increases the staff damage to 1d8. In the case of an orlen, the two normal strikes may be altered into one, aimed strike causing 3d6. (The type of strike must be declared by the player before any attack is rolled.)

Improved Constitution—Movement. Kris-Pat has improved his endurance when running or walking. This skill allows him to increase his Speed by 50%.

Improved Perception. Kris-Pat has learned to open his senses to the world around him, making him very aware of his surroundings. The result is an additional +3 modifier to his Perception.

Determine Alliance (16). This is probably Kris-Pat's most amazing skill—the ability to determine another character's Cryptic Alliance allegiance. He performs this by talking to a character and observing the reaction to his carefully prepared “off-hand” comments. Kris-Pat suspects this skill may be enhanced by his powerful telepathic mutation, but he is not certain of this and will never mention it. If the GM feels a character being examined has been extremely careful in hiding his true Alliance allegiance, then this skill score is halved.

Equipment

Studded leather armor, two steel-shod staves, one shotgun (hidden among robes) with a box of 25 shotgun shells, glow cube, envirolyzer, communicator

Kris-Pat is probably the most astounding orlen the player characters will ever meet. What little is known of him is that he has lived what can only be described as a wandering monk's life for over two decades. No one really knows whether he belonged to a specific religion or Cryptic Alliance. His travels carried him through more harsh and desperate lands and tribes than most people encounter in their entire lives. He has seen much: warbots devastating vast countrysides and whole societies in their never-ceasing battle to carry on the hatred of the Ancients; vast herds of beasts thundering across mutated plains in frantic and futile attempts to escape huge schools of land sharks; armies of mutants clashing in a vast canyon, battling for the desires of their warlords; companions dissolving in a toxic stream rendered so in centuries past. Such sights should drive even the peaceful mind barbaric!

But Kris-Pat will tell of meeting a few Ancients in his travels, and through these chance encounters, he was changed forever. The Ancients' overwhelming grief and despair at the knowledge that their kind helped destroyed the world made more of an impact on Kris-Pat than anything else he saw in his travels. He saw in their sad eyes the neverending future of his planet if things were not somehow changed.

Through the years, Kris-Pat has acquired much knowledge of eldritch philosophy and wisdom from many different cultures. He can speak and read over a dozen languages, many of them ancient ones. Through these scholarly studies and communion with Ancients did he learn his unique skills. And he formed an all-consuming desire to establish the ultra-cryptic New World Order anti-Alliance. Peter Thornton was the last Ancient Kris-Pat met, and something he said one night before going to sleep has haunted Kris-Pat's dreams and crystallized his yearning.

“Why do you want to go back to your old Albayz so desperately?” Kris-Pat asked one night, as he watched the poor human tiredly bed down.

“Nothing is the same out here anymore,” he mumbled, shaking his head. “That's home for me. I just want to go home before the sky falls.”

Home before the sky falls! That described the way most people on Gamma Terra felt most of the time. It was that night that Kris-Pat dedicated himself to stopping the lunacy of divisiveness in these lands.

New Mutations

Harmony

Physical & Mental; Activated (special)

This rarest of mutations can force characters into harmony with both themselves and the world around them, whether they want to or not. Once Kris-Pat begins talking to another character, the GM quietly makes this mental attack roll (since Kris-Pat's mutation power score is 30, his MHAC is +8). Kris-Pat receives an additional +4 modifier if a character does not truly believe in the Cryptic Alliance to which he or she belongs, or in the hatred that he or she supposedly holds in their heart. If successful, the character no longer has any animosity toward others. For instance, a member of the Knights of Genetic Purity may still be glad that he is human and will feel more comfortable living in an exclusively human enclave, but he will no longer have any desire to persecute nonhumans.

The range of this power is the reach of the clear sound of Kris-Pat's voice, so it would be possible for him to convert entire groups of people at once, though he has not tried that yet. This mutation would work with technological apparatus enhancing or duplicating it (like microphones, loud speakers, video tape, and so on).

If unsuccessful, Kris-Pat is allowed to try this power again on the same subject after 12 hours, suffering a -4 modifier. He can continue these attempts every 12 hours, compounding additional negative modifiers, until the GM determines that it is impossible for him to sway the listener(s) at this time. He may try again later at his normal chance (at least a week must pass before a new attempt is possible). Otherwise, there are no restrictions on how often or on whom he may use this power.

This harmony does not take away a character's common sense with regard to defending oneself or the will

to survive. Only prejudices and hatred toward others are affected. This mutation cannot work on robots without biological brains or low intelligence animals.

To have an effect, a subject must be able to understand Kris-Pat. This is one of the reasons he has learned so many languages.

This mutation has a special defense aspect to it. Anyone harboring a hatred toward Kris-Pat (e.g., because of his interference with the Cryptic Alliances or because he is an orlen) automatically suffers a harmony attack every turn that they attack, torture, or otherwise try to harm Kris-Pat (as long as he can speak). If the harmony attack is successful, the victim cannot continue to harm or plan to harm Kris-Pat, and may even try to help him escape.

No one but Kris-Pat knows that this is a mutation power requiring activation. Usually, others believe he is just talking common sense, or, if a victim is unaffected, that Kris-Pat is a blithering idiot. Many members of the New World Order view this ability as a messianistic power. Kris-Pat is quite selective in the use of this power—for example, he has never used it on a member of the Healers or on a lil.

Once a character is "harmonized," he remains that way even if Kris-Pat dies or is somehow portrayed as something other than a righteous philosopher and/or prophet. Only a traumatic event in a character's life (such as seeing his village wiped out by Reformed Machinists) can again cause him to blindly hate a specific Cryptic Alliance, race, creature, etc.

Hermaphrodite

Physical; Automatic, No MP

This status ordinarily means that a creature or plant is biologically male and female, but this is as yet an unheard-of condition for an orlen. Kris-Pat's right side is obviously male and the left side is obviously female, though the two sides of the body are of similar height and size. This is consistent with other orlens, as there is not much difference in size between normal male and female orlens. The two voices are different, as are the mannerisms of each side, but they seem to co-exist just as happily as normal orlens. If anything, this rare dual-

ity offers Kris-Pat a unique, all-encompassing view of the world, being able to understand both masculine and feminine views, mannerisms, and quirks.

Life Field Generation

Mental; Activated & Automatic (Special)

This mutation has two forms: active and passive defense. Kris-Pat can consciously generate a life field (just like a mental attack) once every seven days. The field is on all living things within 10 meters, plus 1 meter x MP modifier (in Kris-Pat's case, that means a 13 meter radius). Any creature (friend or foe) successfully hit has all but one hit point restored (the power works automatically on Kris-Pat). This includes all characters who are not dead, even though they may be unconscious. All normal plants, small animals, and other simple life forms are assumed to be attacked successfully and are equally healed. As with the mutation Death Field Generation, germs and other microscopic organisms are unaffected.

Using the activated form of this power weakens Kris-Pat severely, halving all his normal scores for purposes of any other attack or checks he may have to make. This exhaustion lasts 1 x MP hours.

The subconscious passive defense form automatically kicks in when Kris-Pat is successfully struck by Death Field Generation, even if he has used the active power less than a week hence. The defense power heals just as the normal life field generation does, but occurs within a second of the attack—so fast as to prevent him from dying if the Death Field was fatal. This defense mechanism only occurs once a week, and is recorded separately from the active form of the power. If Kris-Pat wishes to consciously activate the Life Field (if it has been over a week since he actively used it), he may do so even if the self-defense form has gone off during that time, but he may not use the normal MP when rolling the "attack."

Double use of this power through active and passive defensive modes (more than one Life Field being generated within a seven day time span), will cause Kris-Pat to pass out after the healing is completely rolled, for around 10+MP hours. Nothing can wake him during that time.

Remember, at no time can Kris-Pat use this power more than twice within a week, and then only when using one active and one passive defensive mode within that time.

The New World Order: A Cryptic Alliance A-borning

This newest of Cryptic Alliances refers to itself as an "ultra-cryptic anti-Alliance." Founded by the phenomenal orlen monk, Kris-Pat (see previous section), it is dedicated to two ideals; its public ideal of total tolerance, and its ultra-secret private goal of bringing about world peace through completely destroying the "Old World Order."

The public goal of the NWO is to accept most of the other Cryptic Alliances, nations, and organizations as necessary (even as necessary evils) and work toward keeping everything in balance so no single faction is so strong as to wage war. This image of being a balancing neutral factor attracts many followers who are tired of being forced out of one home after another due to constant warfare and other holocausts.

Members (called Newos) are more than willing to follow the directions of their leaders in trying to balance all factions, even participating in attacks or rescue missions aimed at non-Newo areas in an attempt to bring about balance. This crusade mentality makes the Newos very loyal and perfect for the secret purposes of New World Order.

The NWO's private agenda, as decreed by Kris-Pat, is to weaken most of the other Alliances until they collapse under their own lack of support. This weakening shall be accomplished through a combination of attacks (though not all-out warfare inviting widespread retaliation), aiding other factions at the right moment, infiltration of their ranks, and even support for the more moderate wings (such as Reformed Restorationists and Traditional Healers).

The short-term NWO goal is to erode the more violent factions as quickly as possible, such as Leftist Zoopremists, Reformed Radioactivists, and Traditional

Purists. The long-term goal is to eliminate all destructive factions of the "Old World Order"; i.e., any Alliance, nation, or organization that promotes divisiveness, hatred, cruelty, or persecution of others. Only the most loyal members of the NWO know of its true mission. Its activities are so easily cloaked by the obvious NWO public mission that it is impossible to detect that more is going on than what NWO publicly states.

The NWO welcomes humans, mutants, mutated animals and plants, and even sentient machines. Public NWO policy states that only by embracing all of life can one gain peace with oneself and others. This does not mean that the NWO is an ultra-pacifist organization. Quite the contrary; most of its new members are willing "to fight the good fight and die for the cause of right." Loyalty is so high that infiltrators or traitors are easily discovered and removed from the membership. Their ultimate fate depends on who they are spying for and what they know.

NWO representatives are everywhere, and word of it is spreading at an unbelievable rate, especially due to the waves of refugees caused by the events in this module, and possibly by the campaign elements suggested in the previous Campaign section. This flood of immigrants is also allowing NWO undercover agents to penetrate other Alliances as individuals return to their villages after the threatening RMV is destroyed.

Though no pure NWO communities have sprung up yet, high concentrations of members are gathering in some cities, especially Ascension. Most other Alliances are allowing members to live nearby, seeing them as potential ambassadors in case they need NWO's aid.

The greatest flurry of NWO activity takes the form of the adventuring parties being sent out by Kris-Pat in the belief that knowledge is the greatest treasure still to be gleaned from Gamma Terra. These teams are all assigned different missions, including exploration, punitive action, and covert information gathering.

Traditional & Reformist Movements: The NWO is so new that other movements within the Alliance have not had a chance to form. Given the super-secret nature of the NWO's true purpose and the extreme loy-

alty of its members (partially due to Kris-Pat's persona), it is doubtful that any new movements will start soon. When Kris-Pat eventually passes on, though, it is quite feasible that a schism could form within the Alliance.

Symbol: The openly worn NWO symbol is a basic yin/yang circle, but with an eye set in each side so it looks like two weird eyes swirling together. The symbol is never worn on covert missions. Passwords are used extensively by Newos.

Benefits: All members receive a +2 bonus to Charisma in any attribute check when trying to negotiate or defuse a situation involving sentients. Adventuring members can expect reasonable support from the organization with regard to supplies, weapons, transportation, and the like. Members who are extremely loyal and are on ultra-cryptic missions may even receive artifacts "on loan" from the Alliance.

Restrictions: Members are not always aware of the true purpose of their mission, but are required to complete it nonetheless. All artifacts and information obtained by a member must be reported to the Alliance. This Alliance requires a character to be a real "team player."

Experience Point Bonus: NWO PCs are entitled to a 100-point bonus to experience points per current level. This bonus is allowed each adventure, as long as a PC obeys his mission orders and does not somehow embroil the NWO in controversy or an unwanted conflict.

Notes: Newos always travel with a partner. They prefer their own exclusive parties, but are free to join a mixed Alliance adventuring group, since most Alliances accept them as possible help in the future.

GMs should always welcome and reward NWO player character initiatives at attempting to balance injustices in the world. This may prevent them from making strong ties to other, non-NWO members, but they normally won't be attacked by others for their beliefs, either. No Newo, whether a public or private member, can stand cruelty and persecution of others. Even if he cannot alleviate the situation immediately, he will try to get back to it as soon as possible and set things right. Healers, Traditional Peace Brigadiers, and

Reformed Restorationists always will welcome members of the New World Order into their midst.

Other Campaign Directions

There are several possible courses open to the GM who does not wish to follow the suggested story line in the Kris-Pat campaign. Several are detailed here, but the GM should feel free to pick up any other plot threads left dangling in the scenario.

The Hibernation Experiment

As mentioned in the adventure background, Peter Thornton was part of an experiment to test hibernation chambers that would be used on a great ship; the ship proposed would carry humankind to the stars. At the GM's option, one such ship may have been completed, with General Thornton knowing the location of a shuttle that could be used to reach it. Such a campaign would involve getting to the shuttle and learning to operate it; Peter Thornton would probably be necessary to explain the operation of the shuttle, because it would be no easy task. Such a campaign could branch in one of three directions, as follows.

1. The Player Characters could use the shuttle to get to another place in their own solar system. The GM may assume that earth had colonies on Mars and the moon at the time of the devastation. If earth is messed up, imagine what it is like in those other places. A series of articles in DRAGON® Magazine described some off-world areas; though the articles might help, the GM could also invent flora and fauna for a bubble city on the moon, or a terraformed area on Mars. The Cryptic Alliances would necessarily be different, as would civilization in general. This could be used as a short series of adventures (ending with the PCs blasting off in a hurry to avoid destruction), or such an area could become a new home to the Player Characters (if the shuttle is damaged, for instance).

2. The PCs could take the shuttle to a generation

ship in orbit. The ship may or may not be operational. It could be a drifting hulk filled with the mutated remnants of the crew and anyone in sleeper chambers. Dozens or even hundreds of Ancients could still be preserved intact, ready to be revived; this could change the face of Gamma Terra if they are returned there. The ship should be huge, able to support many people for generations.

The ship could also be mostly intact, ready for a journey to another solar system, waiting only for the last shuttle (the PCs') to dock before starting automatic sequences. Alternately, the PCs could be given control of the ship's systems.

Some good resources for such adventures include the *Metamorphosis Alpha* Game (currently out of print, but still available in some places); the novel *Starship* by Brian W. Aldiss; and the novella *Universe* by Robert E. Heinlein. Self-contained, post-apocalyptic civilizations can also be found in other fiction.

3. The shuttle was not designed to carry people to a generation ship, but was designed to travel to the stars itself. On the way, it could catch up with a generation ship, possibly giving a severe shock to its (normal, mutated, or now uncivilized) passengers and crew.

If the shuttle is intended to reach another star system, it might be large enough to carry 50 to 100 people, possibly in hibernation chambers. The characters could possibly transport a whole colony to another star system, facing dangers unique to that planet (and up to the GM using fictional resources). Perhaps other colonies are already there (from earth or elsewhere), or perhaps there is an indigenous civilization.

An intact long-range shuttle could also launch the Player Characters into a space exploration campaign. Imagine mutants armed with battle axes and laser pistols encountering a starship from a famous movie or television series.

Thornton's Comrades

One of the reasons Thornton wanted to reach Grissom (Gruesome) was to revive other people who were still in

hibernation chambers. What happens when they are revived?

The other sleepers could include virtually anyone: an average businessman, military genius, artist, even the last President of the United Americas. How would these folks react to being awakened (possibly by monsters) to a ruined world? The GM should decide exactly who lies in hibernation, how they react, and what their plans may be. The involvement of several Cryptic Alliances is recommended.

Suppose a former government leader is taken in by the Knights of Genetic Purity, and suppose she agrees with their ideals. Suppose a military officer has been tipped over into megalomania and is approached by the Bonapartists. Suppose an artist who does not know how to operate any of the dangerous artifacts in the world is captured and questioned by a Cryptic Alliance. The artist might give them incorrect information, or manage to convince her kidnappers that she does not know anything about the technology, or might create a new Cryptic Alliance of people studying the world and doing things for "artistic" purposes (like blowing up a town to make a painted landscape more interesting, or giving tattoos to mutants).

This campaign option can take many directions, which could affect PCs directly or only peripherally.

What Happened to the RMV in Fermee?

So far, this is a mystery. What if the Excelsior was co-opted by the machines in Fermee, or what if it infected Fermee's artificial intelligence with its destructive program?

If the Excelsior is taken over by the A.I., it could be programmed to accept the Ancient's orders. This might allow it to get to Gruesome without being destroyed, putting Fermee in touch with Gruesome.

If the Excelsior RMV's anti-terrorist program is downloaded into Fermee, the A.I. there could send its robots out on destructive rampages, backed by Followers of the Voice. This could lead to several adventures,

possibly ending with an assault on the A.I. in Fermee; this should be possible with many of the supercomputer's protectors out on maneuvers.

What About the RMV and RM-1975?

If the Excelsior reaches Gruesome intact, the security system there, RM-1975, will try to take over the RMV's systems. If this occurs, the Excelsior would allow RM-1975 to extend its power base. Bonparr and other nations could become involved in an all-out war with Gruesome, calling for secret missions and deadly combats. As suggested in general campaign notes, however, the GM must be careful to use a war only as background that could lead to adventures for the PCs.

The Control Center in Gary

This is an Ancient site of no small interest. It has computer links with many other places including SAC Headquarters far to the west and HANC in Gruesome Afbayz. In addition, there is one intact hibernation pod, plus materials to build or repair others. Medical, communications, transportation, and weapons technology could all be available. The race for these materials could turn into a series of squabbles, and the PCs could be drawn into the middle of things.

More RMVs?

If the GM wants to introduce *Gamma Knights* to the campaign or use other RMVs as opponents, this is the perfect opportunity. This may involve a trek across the countryside to the ruins of Omaha, taking the characters into many totally unknown areas.

Even if more RMVs are not intact, the trek across the country allows the GM to invent new campaign areas, new cities, new Cryptic Alliances, and much more. The PCs could become explorers, missionaries, or negotiators. Civilization could spread to the former heart of America, or it could be there waiting for the PCs.

Excelsior Class-Alpha RMV

Percept: 20 Stealth/R.U.: +10
AC: 30 (D) Force Field: Kinetic field- 150
Speed: x 4 wearer's movement, 60 as a warbot
Hit Points: 500
THAC: +15/+10 Attacks: 5
Fist: Dmg 5d12
Grenade Launcher (with bolt of 15 grenades attached to left shoulder): Dmg varies, Rng 40 m
Grenades Loaded: 2 chemex, 4 flare, 3 fragmentation, 3 tear gas, 3 smoke
Laser Rifles (one each built into right forearm): Dmg 4d6, Rng 60 m
Mark XII Blaster: Dmg 8d10, Rng 50 m
Micromissile Launcher (with rack of 50 micromissiles built into top of head): Dmg varies, Rng 60 m
Micromissiles Loaded: 3 chemex, 6 ECM, 2 fission, 6 fragmentation, 5 gravity, 6 high explosive, 4 photon, 6 poison gas, 4 stun, 6 tangler, 2 torc

Carry (kg): 5,000 (unburdened), 10,000 (burdened)
PS, DX: 30, 20
Tech Level: VI/40
CPU: Deductive (14) when acting as a warbot or used to support pilot
Size: H (5 m)
XP Value: 25,000
Classification: Military
Territory: Normally in or near military installation

Mission Statement: If acting as a normal warbot, it has the typical mission statement (see GAMMA WORLD® Rules pg. 125). The mission statement for the RMV in this adventure is to act as a scout for Peter Thornton. The RMV's orders are to travel to the site of the old Grissom Air Force Base to see if it is still functioning, and to try and determine if any ancients are there, as HANC has led Thornton to believe.

Description: All Excelsior Class Robotic Motorized Vehicles resemble large power suits. They can operate as

preprogrammed or remote control warbots, or can be piloted by an onboard operator. A capsule/cockpit located in the front of the RMV's trunk is where the pilot is housed; otherwise, this area is empty. The operator gains access to the RMV through a hatch on the chest which lowers a motorized ladder. The hatch will only open and the device can only be made operational by use of a military access card. The operator then pilots the RMV by using viewscreens and sensor arrays contained within the capsule.

The Alpha model stands 5 meters tall, is bipedal, has two arms ending in lethal looking "hands," bristles with weapons, and has a terrifying appearance.

Standard Equipment: Excelsior Class RMVs have the following standard equipment: a Medikit, a life support system with 72 hour oxygen supply, communications systems, a dehumidifier, external broadcast system (hearing and speaking), internal gyroscope (indicates direction), environmental protection systems (vs. cold, radiation Int 10 or less, underwater [recycles air supply by breaking down water molecules], and even the vacuum of outer space), rust proofing (even in deep sea conditions), Sensor array (includes IR, UV, Radio, Sound, and Motion), kinetic force field (completely surrounds the RMV; takes 10 minutes to restore after it collapses or is turned off).

Excelsior Class-Beta Equipment Notes: The Excelsior Class-Beta RMV does not appear in this adventure. The only differences are the addition of an anti-grav flight unit and a death-activated self-destruct mechanism on the Beta model.

Reactions: When operating as a standard warbot, the Excelsior Class RMVs react as normal warbot (see GAMMA WORLD® Rules, page 125).

Bonparr, secure in its legacy of military power and just rule, has alarming news. Refugees are streaming eastward, driven forward by an apparently unstoppable war machine which is attacking and destroying everything in its path. Perhaps the army of Bonparr can stop it, but not without help.

"Volunteers" are needed, especially those with experience at dealing with ancient devices and who can supply their own heavy weapons. In short, Bonparr needs mercenary adventurers, and it will do almost anything to get them. Everyone knows you can't fight Bonparr . . . but can you survive fighting for Bonparr?



Adventure

The fate of Bonparr hangs in the balance . . . and the key to the past is within reach!

- ▼ Characters are drafted into the army of Bonparr for a special mission to investigate stories of a terrifying war machine that is devastating the lands to the west.
- ▼ Not only must this formidable machine be defeated, but the PCs must discover its origin and the reason behind its rampage. In fact, that may be the only way to stop it;
- ▼ The adventure can easily be positioned in any GAMMA WORLD® campaign;
- ▼ This 64-page adventure includes data on the awesome Excelsior Class RMV battlesuit and previously unknown information about the fate of Grissom Air Force Base;
- ▼ The adventure is usable by characters of low to mid levels.

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TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



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