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10-1-1954



Prices for the Roaring 20's

A way to measure PCs' purchasing power

by Glenn Rahman

The early twentieth century is the setting for more than one popular fantasy role-playing game. The 1920s is the prescribed time period in Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*® game, while many scenarios of TSR's GANGBUSTERS™ game, Fantasy Games Unlimited's *Gangster*, and Flying Buffalo's *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes* can be set within that decade. Each of these games provide price guides for equipment that an adventurer might find useful, but in each case the number of different items listed must be restricted because of space limitations and other considerations. This article offers an extensive listing of clothing, tools, devices, and accessories available in stores and by mail order in the mid-1920s. This article is specifically modeled as a supplement to the "Prices and Cash" chapter of the "Sourcebook for the 1920s" in the *Call of Cthulhu* game, but by its nature shall prove useful to any early twentieth-century adventurer.

The sheer number of items manufactured in the 1920's rules out any attempt at a comprehensive listing. This writer has made selections on the basis of what is both inadequately covered in existing price lists and what would potentially prove handy to a gangster or monster-hunter during the period in question. Firearms and other weapons have been omitted because of the degree of attention lavished on them in most existing rules systems. Other things such as farm machinery, silverware, toys, china, infant care items, etc., have been ignored because the space required to treat them cannot be justified by the likelihood of their use in a role-playing scenario.

For many of the listed items, a range of prices is given. Different prices for the same basic item can occur because of differences in size, quality, material, workmanship, and so forth. A table radio may be reasonably priced, while a cabinet-style radio that complements the decor of a room would cost much more. All listed prices, however, may be assumed to represent products within reach of the average consumer. The extra expense of rare imports or luxury items is not considered. Where only a single price is given, this indicates the writer's judgment of what an item of average quality and durability most usually cost in the 1920s. From one locale to another — even one store to another — prices could and often did vary considerably.

Women's clothing & accessories

Coat, winter, high quality \$ 35.00
Coat, winter, ordinary 10.00

Coat, muskrat fur 200.00
Coat, collegiate, opossum 129.00
Raincoat, oilskin 4.00
Raincoat, rubberized 4.00 - 7.00
Rain hat 1.30
Galoshes 1.70 - 3.25
Daytime frock 2.00 - 3.50
Dress, wool 7.00
Dress, silk crepe 17.00
Skirt, pleated 4.00
Blouse, sport 3.00
Hat 1.00 - 4.00
Sweater 2.00 - 9.50
Scarf, winter 1.35 - 2.50
Breeches, riding 3.60
Hose, winter (1 pr.) 0.75
Shoes (1 pr.) 2.50 - 5.00
Purse 1.00 - 5.00
Umbrella 1.50 - 6.00
Gloves (1 pr.) 1.00 - 3.75
Wig 27.00
Stockings, cotton (1 pr.) 0.20
Stockings, silk (1 pr.) 0.75
Wristwatch 10.00 - 50.00
Ring, platinum/diamond, 1 carat . . . 515.00
Ring, 14 carat gold/onyx 8.00
Compact 2.00 - 3.25

Men's clothing & accessories

Coat, winter \$6.00 - 16.50
Coat, fur 38.00
Coat, hunting 3.00 - 5.25
Raincoat 3.75 - 8.00
Hat 2.50 - 8.00
Cap 1.00 - 5.00
Cap, hunter's 0.75 - 2.50
Business suit 12.50 - 25.00
Shirt, dress 1.00 - 2.00
Gloves, dress (1 pr.) 1.00 - 4.50
Pants, dress 6.00
Pants, riding 2.00 - 5.00
Sweater 2.00 - 8.00
Socks (1 pr.) 0.30
Shoes, dress (1 pr.) 4.50
Pants, work 2.25
Shirt, work 1.00
Socks, work 0.15
Shoes, work (1 pr.) 1.75 - 5.00
Boots, cowboy (1 pr.) 11.00
Boots, rubber (1 pr.) 4.00
Slippers, house (1 pr.) 1.00 - 2.00
Wristwatch 3.00 - 50.00
Pocket watch 1.50 - 62.00

Office, study, laboratory

Lamp, table \$2.25 - 18.00
Bookcase, 32 x 54, glass doors 18.00
Writing desk 18.75
Roll-top desk 33.00
Cement, household (3 oz.) 0.20
Paste, paper (7 oz.) 0.30

Scissors 1.00 - 2.00
Fountain pen 1.25 - 4.00
Mechanical pencil 0.50 - 2.00
Microscope, 100x 6.25
Thermometer, mercury 0.50 - 2.75
Thermometer, needle 2.00 - 15.00
Typewriter 40.00
Typing ribbon 0.50
Typing paper (1 ream) 1.00 - 2.00
Envelopes (pkg. of 500) 2.00
Camera, folding 4.50 - 26.00
Camera, box 2.00 - 4.50
Camera, moving picture 90.00
Film (6 exp.) 0.25
Film, moving picture (50 ft.) 3.50
Camera case, moving picture 10.00
Projector, movie 54.00
Screen, movie (30" sq.) 13.50
Magnifying glass 1.00
Scales (25 lb. cap.) 2.00
Measure, steel tape (100 ft.) 5.00
Bottle (24 oz. cap., 1 doz.) 2.00
Towels, paper (150 ft. roll) 0.20

The kitchen

Stove, wood/coal \$ 8.75
Range, electric 80.00
Pail (8 qt.) 0.80
Pitcher, milk (1 qt.) 0.65
Pan, roasting 1.00
Pan, cake 0.15
Pan, bread 0.35
Plate, pie 0.10
Bowl, mixing 0.40
Dutch oven 2.50
Skillet with cover 1.50
Skillet, no cover 0.25 - 2.00
Kettle, cooking (1 gal.) 0.65
Kettle, tea 0.90 - 4.00
Chair, kitchen 2.00 - 3.00
Table, kitchen 3.00
Cabinet, kitchen 30.00 - 45.00
Pail, dinner, tin 0.50
Can opener 0.30
Grill, electric 5.00 - 10.00
Percolator, electric 2.75 - 4.00
Coffeepot 0.75
Toaster, electric 1.75 - 4.50
Vacuum cleaner 20.00 - 30.00
Clothes iron, electric 2.00
Clothes basket, willow stick 1.00

The home

Doorlock, with knob \$0.50 - 7.00
Padlock 0.15 - 2.25
Dining table 18.00 - 45.00
China cabinet 25.00
Chair 2.00 - 4.00
Record player 15.00 - 120.00
Record 0.25
Radio 25.00 - 90.00

Piano	275.00 - 465.00
Violin	10.00 - 50.00
Banjo	6.00 - 29.00
Guitar	4.00 - 20.00
Harmonica	0.50 - 2.25
Accordion	32.00 - 75.00
Trumpet	12.00 - 23.00
Bass drum	13.50 - 23.00
Suitcase	1.80 - 12.00
Trunk	4.75 - 15.00
Tote bag, cowhide	7.50 - 15.00
Wardrobe trunk	25.00 - 30.00
Floorlamp	1.50 - 6.00
Cot, steel army	4.50
Bed, steel folding	7.50
Daybed	30.00
Mattress, single	4.50
Heating stove, wood/coal	6.75 - 15.75
Heater, electric	2.00 - 4.50
Cedar chest (45" x 20")	25.00
Wardrobe cabinet	15.00
Chest of drawers	12.00
Dresser	12.00
Water bottle	2.00
Wheelchair	27.00 - 33.00
Mothballs (1 lb.)	0.13
Insect powder (1 lb.)	0.70
Cloth, gingham (1 yd.)	0.13
Cloth, khaki (1 yd.)	0.25
Cloth, flannel (1 yd.)	1.80
Cloth, wool (1 yd.)	1.75
Cloth, calico (1 yd.)	0.18
Cloth, denim (1 yd.)	0.18
Blanket, cotton	1.75 - 4.00
Blanket, wool	2.30 - 7.75

Pillowcase	0.17 - 1.30
Bath towel	0.35
Pottery, imported decorative	1.25 - 2.00
Birdcage	5.00

Hardware

Keg, oak (5 gal.)	\$ 1.75
Saw	2.00
Fork, barnyard	1.00
Snips, tinner's	1.75
Wheelbarrow	5.00
Pump, outdoor water	5.00
Wrench, pipe	1.00
Blowtorch	4.00
Paint, barn (1 gal.)	1.50
Paint, house (1 gal.)	2.25
Paintbrush	1.50
Trap, wolf	0.70

Miscellaneous

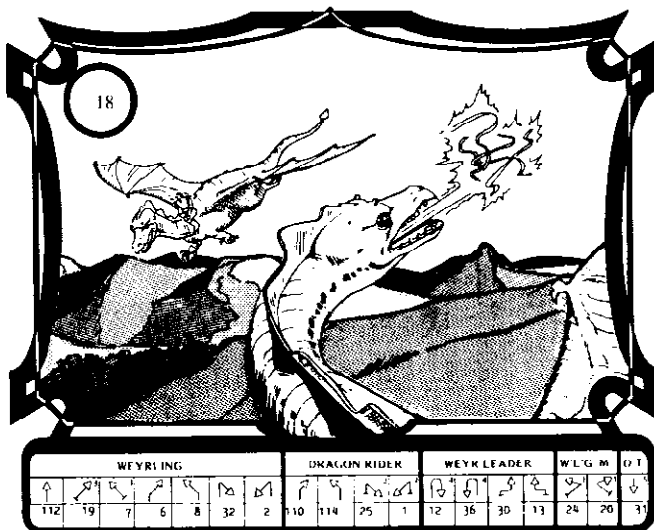
Gasoline engine, 8 hp, mounted on wheels	\$200.00
Gasoline engine, 6 hp, unmounted	122.00
Saddle, horse	20.00
Bridle, horse	5.00
Blanket, horse	2.00
Bicycle	25.00 - 35.00
Skis (1 pr.)	4.00
Ski poles (1 pr.)	1.60
Toboggan	6.00 - 11.00
Skates, ice	6.00 - 9.00
Skates, roller	4.00
Goggles	0.75
Binoculars (8x)	16.00 - 28.00
Field glasses (3½x)	6.00

Field glasses (6x)	14.00
Telescope (45x)	25.00
Telescope (10x)	3.50
Compass	1.00
House, precut unassembled	2,500.00
Lumber, fir (per board ft.)	0.08
Window glass (2x4 ft.)	1.50
Cement mixer	26.00
Shingles, asphalt (25 sq. ft.)	0.75
Wagon, one-horse	60.00
Wagon, two-horse	88.00
Horse harness	37.00 - 65.00
Tombstone	9.00 - 75.00
Lawn mower	8.00
Band saw, foot powered	19.00
Milk can (5 gal.)	2.65
Churn, oak (6 gal.)	5.50
Washing machine	80.00

Write on!

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the POLYHEDRON

newszine

Issue #8



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ENCOUNTERS

by James M. Ward



"Encounters" is a new addition to the POLYHEDRON™ feature columns — it is a one page encounter description of each issue's cover art depicting a TSR role playing game. They may be used by referees to interject something unusual into their games or playtest problems on their players, or by players who want to explore different character classes.

Maria has been with Big Bernie for years and is sort of bored with it all. She seeks situations like this for the thrill of it. She is the most likely one to begin battle, but thinks Tom is cute.

BIG BERNIE — Syndicate Boss (age 32, Irish)
Level 3 Criminal
Record: None
MS:77, AG:46, OB:62, DR:54,
PR:9, LK:06, HP:18
Weapon: .44 revolver in a shoulder holster.

Carries \$3,000 in big bills.

Bernie is holding the tommy gun, but knows there are no bullets in the thing. He will try to bluff his way out of the situation by approaching the policeman from around the fallen car to talk.

LEFTY FINGERS O'MALLEY — Second-in-Command (age 39, Irish)
Level 5 Criminal

Record: Frank O'Malley. Wanted in England and Poland for Extortion, Pillaging, and Dog Napping. Served 5 years in State Penitentiary.

Aliases: Dave the Cracker Johnson, Babyface Jim Drawsinski, and Norvel Thwackerman.

Weapon: .38 revolver in his coat pocket and blackjack in side pocket.

Carries \$95.00 in small bills.

Referee's section

The three will calmly talk to the policeman from their car and claim self defense. They will not allow themselves to be stripped of weapons and will fight it out with the patrolman. The tommy gun is out of ammunition but may be used to bluff. Naturally, help will not come until the referee decides one side or the other needs it.

It is perfectly possible for either party to talk their way out of a direct confrontation; the referee should encourage Maria, Bernie, and Lefty to do so. Tom should avoid battle because of the 3 — 1 odds and hope that help will come.

If all else fails and it comes to shooting, turn to the "Gunfight modifiers table" in your **GANGBUSTERS™** game. We will assume that Tom is behind an overturned car with only his head and gun hand showing. The three are in plain sight, and Bernie is the only one with an unusable weapon.

Because Tom is behind cover, the others must subtract 30 percentage points from their "chance to hit" scores. In the advanced rules, the "Hit location and injury chart" is used. Only those shots that successfully strike Tom and then rolled for the Head, Right Shoulder, Right Arm, and Right Hand will influence the character. All others will miss completely even if a successful strike is made. The Penetration options can be used from page 58 of the rule book if Tom, as the player character, makes attempts at moving out of cover.

In the event that Maria, Bernie, and Lefty are used as NPC's, consider; in the first round of shots from Tom, the referee simply uses his Agility Score for the percentage needed to hit. From then on, the referee must determine what all three of the NPC's are doing. Perhaps in the second round, Maria ducks into the car, making her a -30 to hit. Bernie begins running around Tom's car while reaching for his gun, making him a "Running target" and a -20 to hit. Lefty drops behind the partial cover of the car, making him a -20 to hit. All of these are subtracted from the Agility Scores. In the next few rounds of battle, some or all of the three will fall under the "Hit location and injury chart" if struck.

There are many ways to extend this scene into other aspects of the **GANGBUSTERS™** game rules. They could drive off in a car, necessitating a car chase of some length; weapons could be made available to Tom or the group from cars in the area; police and other criminals could easily be brought into the action, all of which could make for a very enjoyable 30 to 60 minutes.

The scenario

Tom O'Donahur had been a beat cop for two years. He liked the job and he was good at it. There were times, however, when he didn't enjoy the things he had to do. He'd heard the shooting and used a Call Box to send for help, but the Little People alone knew when that was coming. He turned the corner to find wrecked cars all over the place and the three of them sitting calm as you please on a car that had more holes in it than a piece of swiss cheese.

He pulled out his trusty .38, but on one side of the car stood a Tough with a tommy gun and on the other a pretty girl with a derringer in her hand. Using the turned cars for cover, he got as close as he dared and called to them to drop their weapons. This was going to be one of those days...

Characters

TOM O'DONAHUR — patrolman, foot
Level 2 Police Officer
MS:58, AG:79, OB:72, DR:68, PR 3,
LK:50, HP:19

Weapons: .38 revolver in a belt holster, nightstick, whistle

MARIA KIRCHINETTI — Big Bernie's gun moll (age 22, Sicilian)

Level 1 Criminal

Record: None

MS:41, AG:78, OB:38, DR:56, PR:8,
LK:47, HP:20

Weapons: .22 Derringer (two shot)

Getting started in the GANGBUSTERS™ game

by Mark Acres



The GANGBUSTERS™ game, the new 1920's role playing adventure game from TSR, is taking off just as its name implies. The game features a simple system designed for playability above all else. In fact, the system is so simple that an enormous amount of action can be packed into a single gaming session.

Characters generate percentile score for Muscle, Agility, Observation, and Luck. Agility is used for shooting, punching and resolution of difficult movement. Muscle determines a character's punching score and contributes to his/her hit points. Observation helps characters avoid surprise and spot unusual or hidden clues, while Luck is a character's ability to miraculously avoid certain death. Each character also has a Driving Score, the average of Agility and Observation, which allows him or her a percentage chance to do outrageous things with a car or truck, and a Presence score which modifies NPC reactions.

In the game, players have a wide choice of careers: there are three types of law enforcement careers to choose from, as well as careers in newspaper reporting, private investigations, and yes, crime.

Action in the game tends to be fast and frequently fatal for player characters who ignore the advantages of fistfights over gunfights, and running behind cover when the shooting starts! Hit points range from a minimum of 11 to a maximum of 25. A single burst from a Thompson submachine gun could do as much as 20 points of damage to a character, and the unlucky would almost certainly die in such a hail of fire.

Short scenarios, which are fast paced, exciting and sometimes zany fun can be played in as little as half an hour. In that short amount of playing time some characters have managed to rob a bank, participate in a car chase, have shoot-outs with the police, and get to a doctor for some very necessary healing.

Even more exciting, however, is campaign play of GANGBUSTERS™ role playing game. The game literally brings to life a city of the 1920's or 1930's.

What makes campaign play particularly fun is the fact that characters are

not confined to any one setting as they are in some other role playing games. Characters are not "down in the dungeon" with only four corridors to choose from; they are loose in the city, with an entire world waiting for their arrival! Furthermore, characters in even a small campaign do not necessarily know one another at first; each character is free to pursue his own interests.

Here are some tips for beginning players and game judges to help them get started in their own GANGBUSTERS™ campaigns.

Law enforcement characters: Each of the three types of law enforcement characters have a unique set of problems and opportunities. Prohibition Agents, dedicated to enforcing the Volstead Act against the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages have to deal with a very thirsty public, which makes bootleggers rich. Rich bootleggers can buy political protection. Political protection means that the most dedicated Prohibition Agent can have his plans thwarted, sometimes by his own crooked superiors! A very dedicated agent can, however, make a big difference in the campaign city, ruining the best laid plans of the crime lords and drying up their sources of income and thus political support.

Most law enforcement characters, however, begin as beat cops. If your campaign has a good judge, the role of a beat cop can be one of the most exciting and enviable in the game. Within those few city blocks lurk a large number of unsolved crimes and seedy criminals. There are also literally hundreds of NPC business owners, residents, and honest citizens, all of whom are more than likely willing to help you in one way or another. A smart beat cop player would cultivate and use these NPC's to his best advantage, and would in a fairly short period of time build a "tough" reputation for himself. A good job here means recognition, promotion, and chances for even more adventure.

Reporters: In playtest campaigns, reporters have had the funniest, and in some ways most fun adventures. The reporter's goal is to get the story, any story, by

almost any means he or she can. It is not unusual for reporters to impersonate police officers, lawyers, landlords, and almost anyone else to be involved on the scene of crimes, clicking away with their cameras while dodging bullets, and pestering politicians.

To play a good reporter, the player must cultivate sources of information. It is very important for a reporter to make good use of cronies, those lifelong friends who have jobs in mundane places, but who often get good leads and information on what's happening on the streets of the city.

Private investigators: Private investigators like to work alone or in small teams, and a good campaign can be run with only a few players if some are PI's and some are reporters or law enforcement officers. PI's walk a tightrope between the law and the criminal element; to get their jobs done and done right, they often need close contact with both the underworld and its enemies.

If you are the type of player who likes to use your head as well as your trigger finger, you should give serious thought to being a PI. A good campaign judge will give you baffling cases which will require all your mental as well as physical prowess to solve. For example, in a recent playtest campaign, two PI's were hired by two different people to find the same item of stolen jewelry. It took the PI's about two days (and two attempts on their lives) for them to realize they had been hired by competing criminal syndicates who were involved in a deadly gang war. Then they had to figure out how to avoid being walking targets while they pieced together what was really happening!

Reporters would make good use of cronies and other NPC's who may be valuable sources of information.

Criminals: At some time or other, almost every player will want to try a criminal character. Criminals can have some exciting adventures, but only the most shrewd and lucky will survive past first level and make it to the upper levels of the underworld.



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POLYHEDRON™

NEWSZINE

ISSUE 10



GETTING STARTED IN GANGBUSTERS™ GAME

BY
MARK ACRES



If you are judging your first GANGBUSTERS game campaign, here are some tips to help you get started.

A GANGBUSTERS Game Feature

- 1 Be sure you are familiar with the rules for movement, shooting and fistfights. These won't be happening all the time, but if they do it is very important that you run them properly. Play several short scenarios until you are comfortable with handling fights involving several characters, including NPC's. Your players won't mind; they'll be having fun while you sharpen your skills.
- 2 Have some of your campaign setting populated with NPC's before beginning play. Try to give these NPC's as much real personality as possible; this helps players learn about the neighborhood, and it helps them give more personality to their own characters. If you are pressed for time (as are many good referees) or need examples, an excellent source is TSR's module GB 1: *Trouble Brewing*, which provides details on more than 150 NPC's for Lakefront City.
- 3 Don't be afraid of having several different things happening at once. If your players are very immature, it will probably be best if they are all working together. Mature players, however, can easily deal with the fact that you are running a reporter doing an interview, a private eye shadowing a suspect, a beat cop chasing a thief, and a criminal gang attempting to stick up a store all at the same time. The action of the game is interesting enough that they will be glad to wait a few minutes until you can get around to their activities.
- 4 Use common acquaintances or common interests to tie the characters in your campaign together naturally. For example, the private eye might have a crony at a newspaper. This crony would know the PC reporter who works there, as well as the crony of the beat cop who also works at the newspaper.
- 5 Let your players develop their cronies during the course of play. The rules state that each character has a number of cronies equal to his or her Presence score. Don't make the players create these cronies all at once; let them be developed as they are needed in play. This will make for a much better integrated campaign.
- 6 Role play your NPC's to the hilt. You will find that in time your players will have as much fun investigating, questioning, bargaining, and dealing with the NPC's as they do shooting and punching.
- 7 If you find your inspiration for new cases for reporters and private eyes running a little dry, read, read, read! There are countless mystery stories from the period; Dashiell Hammett's are a good place to start.
- 8 Relax. After a few sessions of play, you will find that your campaign will practically be running itself, as NPC's respond naturally to the actions of the player characters, in turn creating new actions. Remember, the game should be fun for the judge as well as the players!
- 9 Don't be upset when characters get killed. The role playing in the GANGBUSTERS game is somewhat different from role playing in other games. If you aren't disappointed when a particularly interesting character gets killed, the player will accept it and be ready to roll up another.
- 10 Be ready to improvise. Your players will, without doubt, come up with things which couldn't be covered in 64 pages of rules. Use your best judgement and plunge ahead. After all, fun is the name of the game!

POLYHEDRON™

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THE HIVE MASTER



by Harold Johnson

This scenario is designed for use with the GANGBUSTERS™ game rules. However, it harkens back to the days of the pulp novels. Here, insidious villains attempt to corrupt science to their own devious, vile goals. Here, every moment is filled with danger and excitement and death is but a shadow away. Mobsters are mere punks to these villains, and only real Crimefighters can hope to stop them!

This scenario is for two to four players. Characters should be limited to handguns; heavy hardware is frowned upon in small towns. Please read the entire scenario before beginning play.

Background

The tires on your sedan beat out a rhythm along the pavement of this

highway to nowhere. It only took a phone call from Arthur Wainscott, industrialist and retired police commissioner, to send you on this little tour of rural America. He had received a call from the deputy of a small burg known as Lyle. It seems his old friend the sheriff had bought a bullet from his own gun and the county was calling it suicide. Wainscott called it murder! Wainscott had pulled your tails out of the fire many times, and now he was calling in his marker.

Cast of non-player characters

Deputy Ed Cartwright

MU: 75	AG: 62
OB: 50	DR: 56
PR: 5	LK: 38
HP: 19	WPN: .45 Rev.

Ed is young, idealistic, upholds the law, and feels that none are above it.

Sheriff Tom Versiter was like a father to him, and Ed has sworn to find his killer. He does not know the professor.

Dr. Clark Savage

Savage is the town doctor and coroner. He likes Ed and doesn't want to see him get hurt. Doc believes the pressure finally got to Tom. Grumpy and slow, Savage feels that youngsters are too hot-blooded.

Mr. Geoffrey Worthy

MU: 45	AG: 70
OB: 60	DR: 65
PR: 7	LK: 45
HP: 17	WPN: .22 Rev.

Owner of Worthy Industrial Chemicals, Geoffrey Worthy appears to be a concerned industrialist. He will be very helpful and provide what aid he can. Actually, Worthy hired the professor

and has fed Melifica's desire for revenge by instigating a plot to defraud the government of half a million dollars to develop a new pesticide.

Trudy Melifica

Daughter of Abe, Trudy is concerned about the absence of her father and believes something terrible has happened. She won't believe ill of him. She has a degree in entymology.

Patsy Fallon

MU: 40 AG: 60
OB: 50 DR: 55/65*
PR: 4 LK: 20
HP: 15

Patsy owns and runs Fallon Cropdusting. He is not very talkative or personable. He has been working for Worthy, but doesn't trust him.
(*Flying Score.)

Professor Abe Melifica

MU: 85 AG: 95
OB: 60 DR: 78
PR: 3 LK: 10
HP: 23

The professor is a little, balding man with a twisted spine; one side of his face is scarred, causing a perpetual smirk. He has a barrel chest and a narrow waist, and wears thick, smoked glasses. A brilliant entymologist, Abe has become hateful of a world and university that mocked him. Imbalanced, he seeks revenge by using a breed of harvester bees he created.

Harvester Bees

An artificially created breed, these bees have a very short life span, and the queens are sterile. A swarm can decimate 20 acres of land in four hours. A special solution of sugars and nut proteins is sprayed on crops to cause a feeding frenzy. Their sting is virulent and they do not lose their stingers. A half dozen stings is very painful — two dozen can cause delirium (check MU — no. of stings) and eventually a coma. One hundred stings is fatal.

Event 1: Asking for directions

Nearing Lyle, the characters will notice ravaged crops and several scorched fields (an effort to destroy the bees' supposed burrows). They will get lost and must stop to ask directions.

A farmer with a shotgun is arguing with the professor and Fallon, refusing to let them dust his fields. He doesn't believe in the use of chemicals. Nearby is a pickup truck with

"Fallon's Cropdusting" painted on the side. Fallon and the professor will get into the pickup and drive off as the characters approach. The farmer will provide directions, but will be unpleasant if questioned further.

Event 2: Sheriff's office

Lyle is a small, dusty, country town where most people mind their own business. The deputy will greet the characters at the sheriff's office, and then brief them on Sheriff Tom Versiter's death.

1. Recently, farms have been plagued by swarms of bees that destroy crops and kill livestock. The swarms are sporadic, and the county has kept it quiet to avoid panic while a pesticide is developed. Some farmers have left.
2. Tom was frustrated by his helplessness. He couldn't even stop his sweetheart's family from leaving.
3. Then Tom said he was on to something, and about to blow it wide open.
4. Three days ago he disappeared. He had been dead for two days when his body was found yesterday near Fallon's hangar. Fallon had been out of town when it happened.
5. Tom had been shot, his gun still in his hand. The coroner says the wound was self-inflicted. (It was — while Tom was dying from massive bee stings, he shot himself to provoke an investigation.)

After lunch at Cora's Cafe, the characters can talk to the coroner.

Event 3: Cora's Cafe

Cora's Cafe has a homey feel. The fried chicken and apple pie are especially good. Cora is friendly, but no one else will speak to the strangers. After a while, the professor will enter and sit next to them. He will order tea and pour a lot of honey in it. He has a nervous habit of licking his lips and brushing his remaining hair back.

If the characters don't try to talk to him, he will offer small talk. As they leave, he will give a friendly warning that this is a small town and nosy outsiders aren't appreciated. (He has planted a bee in their car and it will sting someone as they get in.)

Event 4: The Coroner's

Dr. Savage will hesitate showing them the body — it is decaying. If asked to examine the body, the following may be discovered.

1. Except for a single hole where the bullet passed through, there are no other signs of violence.
2. Examination will show powder burns and that it is only a belly wound.
3. The body shows excess swelling and a rash-like condition.
4. A blood analysis will show a high toxic content of venom.
5. Searching his clothes will reveal a dead bee in one pocket.
6. His shoes do not have any mud between the heel and sole.

Event 5: Fallon's Cropdusting

The scene of the shooting is a small barn north of town that has been converted to a hangar.

As the characters drive up, a gray van will pass them. An Observation check may spot one of the following: the van says Worthy Chemicals on it; there is a speaker mounted on top; the driver is the professor.

Fallon will act defensive, and will only let them snoop if he is badgered. He will lead them out behind the barn to where he found the body. Then he'll leave to answer the ringing phone.

The area is muddy. There are no signs of a struggle and the bullet is not here. While investigating, the characters will hear crashing glass. Returning to their car, they will find the rear window smashed and Fallon nearby working on his pickup. The deputy will stop them from doing anything rash, tell them that the town will pay for the window, and get them to leave.

Event 6: Worthy Chemicals

Ed will take the characters to meet the local expert on insects, Geoffrey Worthy, at his plant outside of town. Worthy, a well-dressed gentleman with gray hair, will ask if they are from the government, for he desperately needs the money to complete his pesticide research.

His company expert, Professor Melifica, has not come to work for a week. But the Professor is "eccentric" and unpredictable. He has a daughter in town who might know his whereabouts. If pressed, Worthy will describe the professor and act surprised at what the characters tell him.

The professor's office is on the second floor of the research building. This building has no windows, and the only way in is through steel doors across a skywalk via an elevator which uses special keys. Worthy will take them in via the elevator. The elevator

smells of fresh paint. This is where Tom really died; when he broke into the building bees were let in through the ventilator shaft. Stuck to a screw is half a bee painted white. There is a small patch area at waist height. Tom's bullet is still imbedded here.

Everything in the professor's office is opened and in disarray; the professor is messy. Little will be understood by the characters. Observation checks might let characters notice several mounted rare queen bees from South America in one of the cases. Notes found are unintelligible, though several books have been marked on various subjects: Hymenoptera, text papers in Portuguese on a type of fruit that bees consider a major pest, a book in German on chemically induced mutations, and several books on bee raising.

Event 7: The daughter

Ed will recommend they question the professor's daughter; he arranges for a meeting with her at the boarding house. Trudy will tell the characters that she has not seen her father in a week and is worried. She will talk about how disturbed her poor daddy is, especially since his trip to South America. She will not think ill of her father, believing that everyone mistrusts science.

Her expertise with insects can be tapped to gain the following:

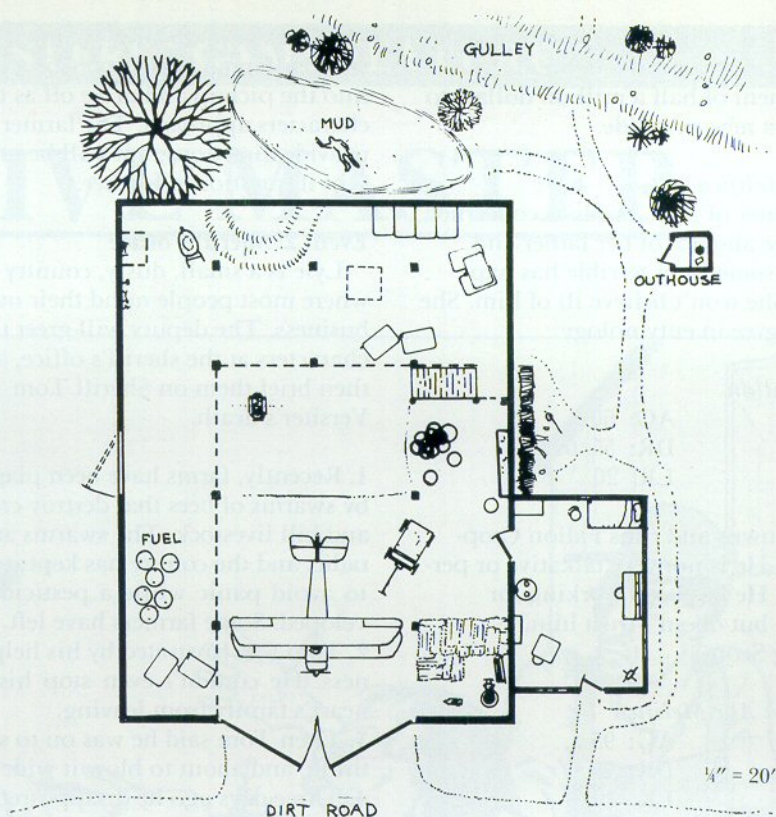
1. Harvester bees are burrowers and build their hives underground.
2. They are most active during the day and when it's hot.
3. They can smell protein and sugar.
4. Cold makes them sluggish, smoke kills them, and subsonics repel them.

At the end of their conversation, the characters will receive a call from Fallon. He feels he's being set up and wants to spill his guts but not where someone will spot him. He wants to meet them at the Detwyler's farm (where they first stopped to ask for directions) at 1 A.M.

Event 8: Trap

An entry road leads up through wheat fields to the main house. It is a warm evening. A windmill and pump with water tank (3' deep and 10' wide) stands next to the barn. In the field stands a shadowy figure. It is only a dummy. The professor's van will pull quietly off of the road into the fields.

A dull droning will be heard, building to the roar of an engine. A biplane



FALLON'S CROPDUSTING HANGAR

will dive at the characters and spray sap onto the crops, also hitting the characters. It will make three passes and then roar away, followed by the angry hum of bees.

Remember the rear car window is broken. The bees will attack in 5 rounds and cause four bruises each round thereafter. Characters may make an Agility check to only take half damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing take half damage. Characters knocked unconscious by stings take double damage each following round. Characters may leap into the water tank to avoid the bees. The bees will leave in half an hour.

Commotion will waken Detwyler and he will not be pleased.

Event 9: Cat and Mouse

The characters will no doubt want to pay Fallon a visit. They will find the front office in shambles and a trail of blood leading into the darkened hangar. Power is out. There are sounds in the hangar. Two thugs are searching the hangar for the hiding Fallon. This event should be played as a cat and mouse game.

The following things should happen, ending with a gunfight and the fire. The door will blow shut and lock.

1. Cat with kittens will startle and may distract characters.
2. Unstable stack of tires will fall.
3. Fallon is hiding in the rafters and may drip blood on those below.
4. Trap door in the loft floor.
5. A bird may flutter up from the eaves.
6. An engine hangs from a chain and may be swung at someone. Several ropes also hang from the rafters.

Once Fallon perceives there are others present besides his stalkers, he will cry out for help. Gunfire will ring out and he will fall. If someone reaches Fallon's side he/she will hear Fallon mumble, "Hurt bad . . . prof crazy . . . bees . . . promise . . . catch him . . . Worthy." Once the message is delivered he will die.

The two thugs will try to escape through the hangar doors. One will dump gas about and light it. His sleeve will catch on fire; he will leap out the door and the other will bolt it.

The characters now have 50 rounds as the fire spreads before it will reach the fuel cans. On round 50, the fuel cans will start to detonate 1 per round causing 4 wounds to anyone in the barn; a successful Luck check reduces damage to half.

The door may be battered down with the plane, and there is a loft door.

Event 10: The chase

The professor's van will be found parked out back of Worthy Chemicals, close to the fence and an overhanging tree (see map). The professor is crossing the grounds to the building. Characters may climb onto the roof of the van and then swing on the branches of the tree to cross the fence. Abe will spot his pursuers and lead them a merry chase. Treat all special actions of the chase as dangerous movement and make Agility checks to see if they succeed. The professor will always succeed.

The scene will go as follows:

1. Up stairs to second floor.
2. To fire escape and up to third floor.
3. Across 100' ledge to drain pipe.
4. Up 15' drain pipe to roof.
5. Vault to higher level of roof.
6. Rotting roof, Luck check or fall and take 1 bruise.
7. Leap 15' gap.
8. Scramble up incline.
9. Slippery roof; avoid skylight or fall and take 6 wounds.

The professor will finally be cornered by the big exhaust fan and surrender when the fan starts up and blows his glasses off, revealing faceted bug-like cataracts on his eyes. He will stumble to the edge of the building and fall, followed by the sound of shattering glass. The characters will find that he caught hold of a flagpole and swung in through a window.

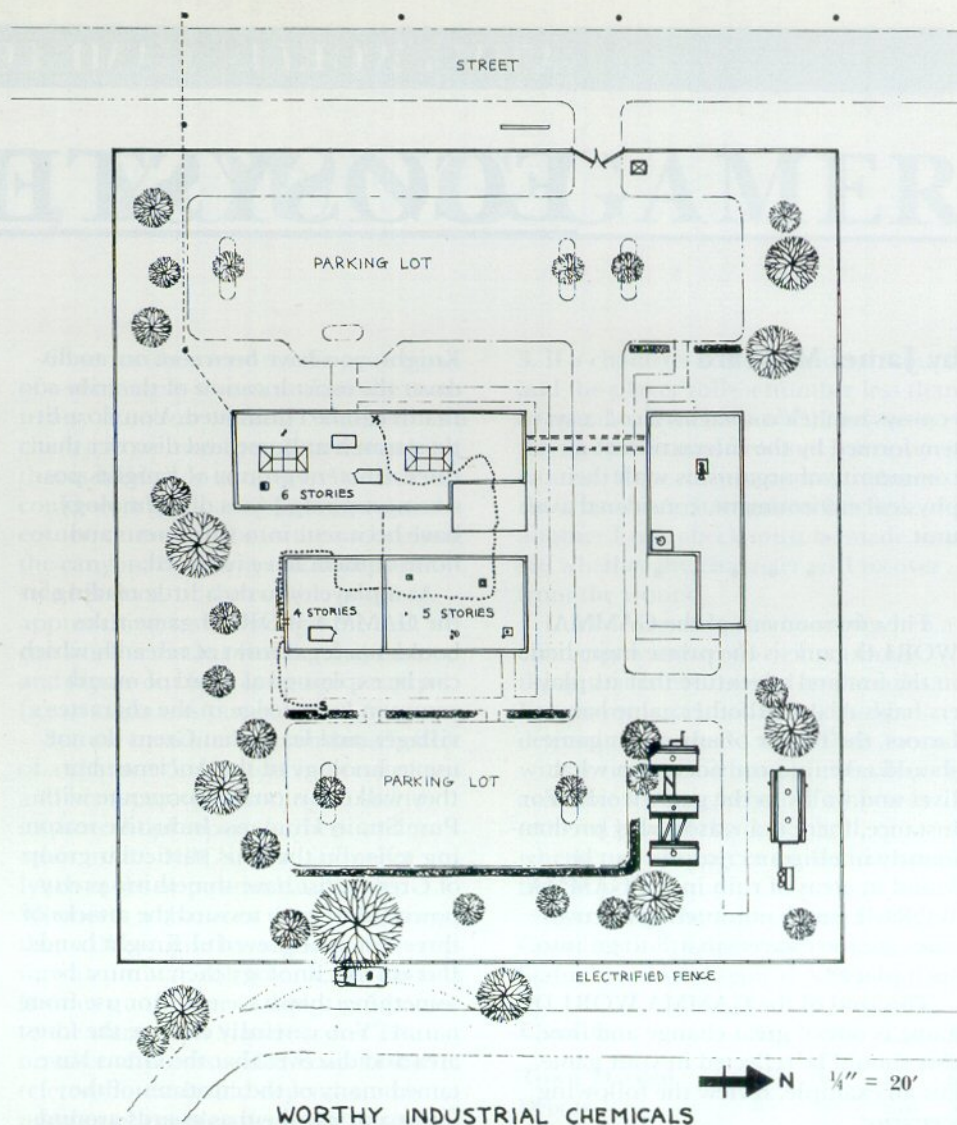
Event 11: The end?

Characters will have to break the roof door open. They can hear footsteps running down the stairs ahead of them. The door to the third floor is just swinging closed. If they listen they will hear raised voices. The sound comes from Worthy's office. Two shots will ring out. When the characters break into the office they will find a shaken Worthy standing over the bleeding body of the professor. He will claim that the professor threatened him; he (Worthy) wrestled the gun away and accidentally shot the professor.

The deputy will be satisfied that justice has been done, and will call the coroner to take the body away. Worthy will act relieved that the madman has finally been stopped; he only wants to get the money to perfect his pesticide.

Event 12: The truth comes out

Worthy will call Security to clean up and escort the characters out. When the



guards arrive, one wears a bandage on his right arm from a burn and will do a double take when he sees the characters. A fight should follow when the characters figure out that the guards were the thugs who murdered Fallon. Worthy will flee through a side door.

Event 13: Finale

Worthy has fled across the skywalk to the research building to destroy evidence. The door is locked, but one of the guards has the keys. There is a ventilator shaft on the roof.

A light is on in a lab in the northeast corner of the floor. Inside are several cloudy glass hives; the bees are dying from ammonia poisoning. The smell of smoke drifts from an attached office where Worthy is burning notes. He has a small glass hive of the bees with him. He also has a .22 revolver with 4 shots left and a canister of tear gas. He will shoot first and then cover his escape with the gas. There is lots of cover behind the lab benches.

Worthy will make it to the elevator and apparently escape as the gagging characters watch on (-40 modifier to hit). He chuckles as the door starts to close. Suddenly, he cries out in pain and slaps at his arm. The doors muffle the sound of breaking glass and the angry hum of bees.

* * * * *

Epilogue

The warm autumn wind brings the bittersweet odor of the city to you, and the gray haze promises new battles with evil. Geoffrey Worthy is dead, a victim of his own ruthless greed. Tom Versiter's murderer has met an ironic justice. But this brings no sweetness of victory, only an empty, hollow feeling at the thought of how close you came to facing the Reaper yourself. At least you feel that you're not fighting the battle against crime alone. There must be a greater power with it own sense of justice watching over you. ☹

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THE VESPER INVESTIGATION

by Antonio O'Malley

This short GANGBUSTERS game scenario shows that not all action in the game need involve machine-gun battles against Lakefront City bootleggers. The adventure is designed for a small group of private investigators, one to three being best.

Player's Information

In late autumn, the characters are contacted by a well-to-do young woman from Lakefront City, Elissa Dane. She calmly asks that nothing she is about to reveal to the characters be told to anyone, including the police, for any reason. Before continuing her story, she will settle financial matters with the characters, offering an extraordinary sum of money (\$1000) to ensure their silence and cooperation.

The woman tells the characters that her uncle, Robert Dane, moved from Lakefront City to a home in central Iowa one year ago. He formerly worked as an accountant for a small firm in town; since he moved to Iowa, she has heard little from him and has no idea of what he's been doing.

Two days ago, she drove out to his home for a surprise visit but found no one there. The house had apparently been ransacked. She became afraid and fled back to the city; now she wants the characters to investigate the house and discover her uncle's whereabouts. Miss Dane will accompany the investigators to Iowa on the case. She wishes to leave at once.

Elissa Dane

Muscle: 38
Agility: 78
Observation: 75
Presence: 8
Driving: 77
Luck: 42
hp: 17

Referee's information

Investigators will probably get the idea that Elissa Dane is withholding informa-

tion, but she will not admit this if questioned. Why is this investigation so secret? She gives only vague reasons about "protecting the family name" and a distrust of police in general.

Investigators might start by checking Lakefront City for information on Robert Dane's past. His old apartment was a small one-room place in a lower-class neighborhood. His place of business, Barber & Associates, closed eight months ago. There are rumors that the firm did accounting work for one of Lakefront City's crime mobs, and that it was closed when the mob discovered their funds were being embezzled. An undisclosed sum was reported lost, supposedly in the six-figure range.

Day

It is a day-long drive to the little house her uncle owns. Set out in the open plain, miles from any other residence, it is a two-story wood structure about 35' square, with four or five rooms per floor (referees can sketch out floor plans as desired). There is an attic above the second floor and a littered cellar with a wood pile in one corner. The floors are wooden, except in the dirt-floored basement. A

wood-burning stove is in the first-floor living room, and another one in the kitchen.

The nearest town is Vesper, a small farm community with little more than a few stores, a church, a school, a sheriff's office, and no hotel. Inquiries about town will produce the information that Robert Dane, though rarely seen, was known as a big spender who was always looking for expensive knickknacks.

Arriving at the house, the investigators will notice that the front door has been broken in by force. A new expensive car, with ownership papers in the name of Robert Dane, is parked out front; it appears to have been searched and vandalized. The house has been ransacked as well. Furniture has been damaged and smashed, and drawers have been emptied on the floor.

An investigation of the house will turn up curious things. Whoever ransacked the house did a very a "professional" job of it. Mattresses are split open, stuffed furniture has been torn apart, and the wallpaper has even been cut away in places. Investigators who have done police or FBI work may feel this is the work of an organized crime syndicate.

The portrait of Ellisa Dane, at right, by a highly-recognized Lakefront City portrait painter, was completed at about the time of her graduation from high school, approximately four years ago. Ellisa Dane comes from a socially well-to-do family, the result of wealthy maternal grandparents. Ellisa professes to know nothing concerning her uncle's activities, but is she telling the truth?



In the kitchen there is old food on the table, partially eaten. A chair has been knocked over, and there are other signs of a hasty departure from the table. It will be noted that the kitchen window faces the road outside; a thorough check of the grounds will turn up some tire tracks not belonging to Mr. Dane's car. Someone seems to have driven up within the last few days.

Anyone who goes through Mr. Dane's papers, contained in a desk in his study, will find careful records kept of his expenses. He apparently spent over \$30,000 in the last year, but there are no records of any income during that time. In the attic may be found copies of accounting ledgers dated up to a year ago; anyone making an accounting roll against Mr. Dane's skill level of 80% will know that over \$240,000 was embezzled from a syndicate account. There is nothing to indicate where the money went, however.

There are some curious things about Robert Dane's possessions, too. His bedroom upstairs has an expensive table clock, satin sheets, and numerous other amenities that are generally beyond the reach of most people. His clothes (most of which lay about the floor) are well-tailored and of expensive cut. Other expensive odds and ends may be found around the house as well.

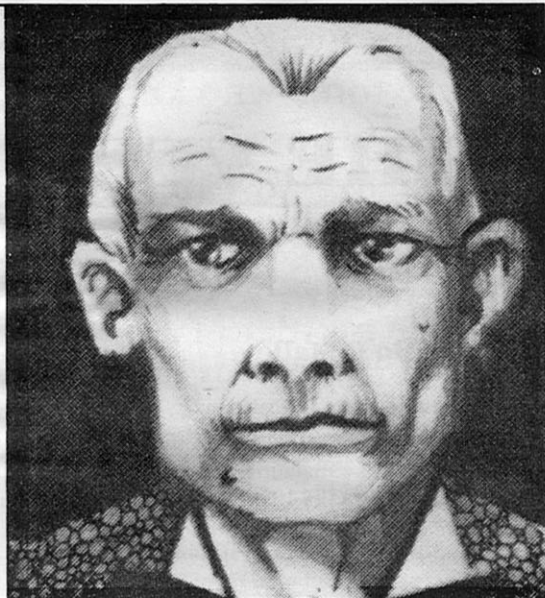
The wood-burning stove in the living room is full of dust-covered ashes, and obviously hasn't been used in a long time. Someone who climbs the roof will find an old bird's nest clogging the chimney. The kitchen stove works well, however, and the chimney for it is clear.

An investigation of the cellar will reveal, if an observation roll is made, that the woodpile was recently moved from one side of the cellar to the other. The floor seems recently swept and a broom sits by the staircase. In one corner is a footprint; the shoe size is not that of Mr. Dane.

It may become apparent to the investigators that people do not move large woodpiles for nothing; if the wood is cleared aside and someone digs down under the ground of the cellar, the remains of Robert Dane will be uncovered. He has been beaten and shot. The time of death may be estimated at some four or five days ago.

If confronted with the evidence of Robert Dane's theft from the mob, Elissa Dane will confess that she was aware that her uncle worked for the syndicate. She fears now the syndicate has gotten him back for the embezzlement, though she

This identification card photo of Robert Dane was taken in the latter days of his employment at Barber & Associates. To those who knew him in Lakefront City, the "late" Robert Dane was the epitome of the shy, retiring accountant type. The residents of Vesper, Iowa, saw a totally different Robert Dane. Which one was the "real" Robert Dane?



has no idea if the stolen money was ever recovered.

Night

If possible, the GM should have the characters arrive at the house in the late afternoon. A search of the grounds will last into the evening, and it will be then that the investigators encounter something far outside of their normal experience.

The characters will find it advisable to stay at the house at night; the weather is very cold at night and there is no hotel in Vesper. The Judge should carefully play up the emptiness of the house, the horror of Elissa when her uncle is finally discovered, and the overall feeling of a deserted and heavy atmosphere.

As night falls, things will start to happen. Investigators will now and then feel that someone is watching them, or that they see someone out of the corner of their eyes (turning, they will see no one around). People will hear the faint sounds of furniture moving in the living room when no one is there, but an investigation will show all is in order.

At random times one of the characters will feel unusually cold, even if bundled up. The cellar and living room will seem particularly cold, much more so than one would expect.

If Robert Dane's body has not been discovered before nightfall, other events will begin taking place. Tapping sounds will be heard on the door to the cellar, though no one is there. Someone in the cellar after dark will feel an overwhelming sense of fear, and will think they hear wood being moved on the woodpile.

The referee should make it seem as if these events could possibly be natural,

but leave room for doubt about it as well. There will be one last phenomenon, however — dreaming.

Anyone who sleeps in the Dane house after dark will experience continuous nightmares. They are full of half-formed images: a car driving up outside, seen through the kitchen window; faceless men laughing at the character; a gun being lifted and aimed at the character's head; darkness and a sensation of great pressure on one's chest. All of these dream fragments will be accompanied by feelings of dread and impending doom, as well as an intense feeling of cold.

Attempts at seances, ghost-contacting, and so forth may be made if characters wish. Events like these will produce the furniture-moving sound in the living room (again, with nothing actually being moved) and will also produce great cold in there as well. It will seem coldest near the non-functional stove. A character with *Finding Smuggled Goods* skill may make a roll to notice that the floorboards under the stove are loose and may be pried up easily. Beneath the floor is a suitcase containing some \$200,000 in \$20 bills. If anyone but Elissa Dane touches the money, they will suddenly feel intense cold as if something invisible passed through them; this will cause a loss of 5 points of both Muscle and Luck, which will be recovered at a rate of one point per hour afterward. This effect will only occur twice. No other poltergeist-like effects will occur after the money is found, if Robert Dane's body is buried properly, as Elissa will insist upon. If not, the Dane house may gain a nasty reputation in years to come . . .

To be continued . . .

CASIN' THE JOINT

Idea material for your GANGBUSTERS game

By Dave Cook

DO THESE PROBLEMS BOTHER YOU?

- Continual reappearance of names like O'Malley and Antonio?
- Constant action in a large city that bears a striking resemblance to a large city (unnamed) in the Midwest?
- Nothing to do but bust up gin joints and illegal breweries?
- A gasp of amazement from players: "I didn't know that existed (or didn't) in the 20s?"
- A general lack of new ideas?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you may have the dreaded *GANGBUSTERS Game Void*. This affliction can strike any unprepared *GANGBUSTERS* game player, but it's particularly fond of referees. Though not fatal, this affliction can have a crippling effect on any *GANGBUSTERS* game campaign, as players and referees thrash about trying to find a cure.

But all of this is unnecessary, for *GANGBUSTERS Game Void* can be cured. It takes reading and patience, but *GANGBUSTERS Game Void* need not kill your campaign. The following information provides good reading cures that you can use in the privacy of your home.

The best source of stories and novels about the 1920s and 30s is the writings during this time. For exciting action, hard-boiled detectives, gangsters, and daring reporters, nothing is better than the "pulp."

The pulps (as they are nicknamed) were the magazine entertainment of the time. Printed on a combination of cheap paper and bright covers, pulp magazines sold for a nickel or a dime and were packed with stories having titles like *The Emperor of Death*, "Madam Murder and the Corpse Brigade," or "The Brothers from Hell." Stories were often fantastic and outright unbelievable — of little use in a *GANGBUSTERS* game. Furthermore, pulps are hard to find and often expensive today.

Fortunately, the best writing of the

pulp is still available — stories dealing with tough detectives and the like.

Perhaps best of all is Dashiell Hammet. Master of the tough detective story, his novels and stories are all worth reading. Read: *Red Harvest*, *The Dain Curse*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Glass Key*, and *The Thin Man*. Of his short stories, get the anthologies *The Continental Op* (about an unnamed detective agency man) and *The Big Knockover*. As an ex-Pinkerton man, Hammet knew what he was writing about.

Raymond Chandler is the second master of hard-boiled writing. Although his novels are set in the late 30s and 40s, read *The Big Sleep*, *Farewell my Lovely*, and *The Lady in the Lake*. He also wrote many hard-to-find short stories.

Although Hammet and Chandler were masters of the hardboiled story, John Carrol Daly created the style. His P.I., Race Williams, was as tough and two-fisted as they come. Daly's novels are harder to find, but read *Snarl of the Beast* and *Murder from the East*.

There are also several good collections of short stories from the pulps. Again these mainly deal with tough cops, P.I.s, reporters, and adventurers. Most recent are the *Hardboiled Detectives*, a collection of stories from the best detective magazine of the period and *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulps*. Other collections include *The Hardboiled Dicks* and *The Hardboiled Omnibus*. These collections will give excellent ideas for a cure for *GANGBUSTERS Game Void*.

Okay. So much for the serious stuff. The pulps were also very lighthearted. Stories of fantastic adventures (*I Found Cleopatra*) and amazing heroes. By far

the most famous and successful of these were *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*.

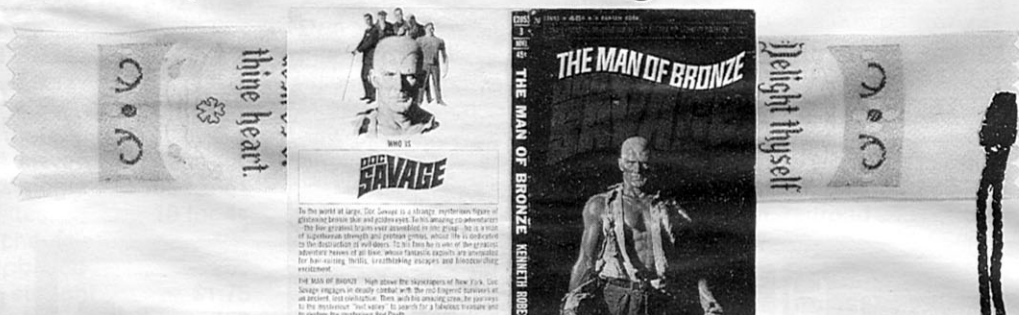
Doc Savage was an amazing heroic adventurer. His deeds formed a series of more than 200 novels, many of which have been reprinted in paperback form. *Doc Savage* stories do not have a great deal to do with reality. However, they do give lots of information about life and society in the 1930s.

The Shadow novels (also reprinted in paperback), although about a character equally amazing, deal with slightly more realistic situations as *The Shadow* tracks down and foils the grand schemes of big city gangsters. The novels provide colorful pictures of the dives and underworld life of the 1920s and '30s.

In addition to these notable heroes, there were scores of the less famous — *The Phantom Detective*, *The Whisperer*, *Operator #5*, and *The Spider*. All had some gimmick or other that made them special. All were able to do amazing feats, and all became involved with criminal masterminds. But again, the stories provided an excellent feel for the mood and surroundings of the time.

These lesser-known characters are hard to find, but some small companies do take the time and trouble to reprint them. Keep a sharp eye out, and their titles just may be found on a dusty shelf of a new or used bookstore.

Many of the novels named can be found in the public library. Nearly all the others can be found or ordered in paperback through a local bookstore. Many other pulps collections and novels also exist and can be found with a little searching. With this prescription in hand, you should have no trouble defeating *GANGBUSTERS Game Void*. 



OCTOBER

64

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Cthulhu vs. Lakefront City!

The GANGBUSTERS™ Game Meets Call Of Cthulhu

by Dale A. Donovan

Imagine you're a beat cop, tramping out your life while trying to keep the docks safe from the underworld lowlife. Gangsters, bootleggers, hit men—you've faced them all. But none of them have prepared you for what you'll face tonight—because what you'll face tonight isn't human! What you'll face tonight is—Cthulhu himself!

With the 1990 release of TSR's revised GANGBUSTERS™ game, the role-playing opportunities and background material concerning the Prohibition era (1920s and early 1930s) has never been greater. Another great game set in the same era is Chaosium's Call Of Cthulhu. Although the two games deal with different subject matter, it only makes sense to combine them for a little inter-game fun.

Taking characters from one game system to another is not a new idea. The AD&D® game's first edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* gives conversion methods to transform your AD&D game characters to the GAMMA WORLD® game and original BOOT HILL® game. This article follows in that tradition.

The Basics

The first step is to convert one game's character statistics into a form that is usable with the game you wish to play.

The GANGBUSTERS system is unusual in that a character's statistics are not all on the same scale. Three statistics (Muscle, Agility, and Observation) are on a weighted percentile system, and a character's other statistics use at least three other scales. This can make conversion a difficult job, but if you follow the steps below, you shouldn't have a problem. The following paragraphs break down a GANGBUSTERS game character by statistics and demonstrate how to convert each statistic into the corresponding Call of Cthulhu statistic.

Note: You will come up with fractional numbers. It is up to the game master to determine if any rounding of the numbers generated is allowed. I recommend GMs allow players to round up any fractions of .5 or higher, and round

down any fractions of less than .5. Also note that no Call of Cthulhu statistic is allowed above or below the normal range for that ability. Check the Cthulhu rule book for the dice rolled (and hence, the ranges) for each ability.

Muscle: This statistic will be used to determine the Cthulhu statistics of Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), and is a major factor in determining Size. To convert this percentage score to Cthulhu's STR and CON, divide by five and roll once on the Statistic Modifier Chart below for each Cthulhu statistic.

To determine the Cthulhu statistic of Size, take the character's STR, and add the GANGBUSTERS game's Punching statistic. This is the Cthulhu character's Size.

Agility: This statistic, after being divided by five and modified by one roll on the Statistic Modifier Chart, becomes the Cthulhu statistic of Dexterity.

Observation: Divided by five (but not modified by a roll on the Statistic Modifier Chart), this statistic becomes the Cthulhu statistic of Intelligence.

This Intelligence statistic is then modified by one roll on the Statistic Modifier Chart to determine the Cthulhu statistic of Education.

Presence: Add 1d4 + 4 to this statistic and you have the character's Cthulhu statistic of Appearance.

Luck: Divide this ability by 2.5, round off according to the GM's instructions, and roll once on the Statistic Modifier Chart to determine the Cthulhu statistic of Power.

Driving: For simplicity, this percentage becomes the Cthulhu driving skill.

Punching: As mentioned above, add this to the character's Cthulhu STR score to determine the Cthulhu statistic Size.

Hit points: GANGBUSTERS system characters tend to have pretty good hit points when compared to Cthulhu characters, and I suggest using this statistic as is to represent Cthulhu hit points. After all, when confronting the Cthulhu mythos, your GANGBUSTERS game characters are going to need all the help they can get.

To convert Cthulhu characters to GANGBUSTERS, merely reverse the above procedures—multiply where I say to divide, etc.

Completing The Conversion

Now that you have all the basic Cthulhu statistics, use them to determine such secondary characteristics as Sanity, Magic Points, etc., as per the Cthulhu rule book.

Skills: If you converted moderate to very experienced GANGBUSTERS game system characters, then you can use their skills as Cthulhu skills. If, however, your GANGBUSTERS game characters are inexperienced (three or fewer skills), you may want to assign the player characters skills appropriate to their GANGBUSTERS game professions. Find a similar Cthulhu profession (note there are optional gangster and policeman Cthulhu professions) and either allow the players to roll skill levels, or assign the characters skill levels yourself.

Weapons: Since both of these games are set in the same era, just use the Cthulhu versions of your characters' weapons, or your best guesses about the weapons your GANGBUSTERS system characters regularly use.

Spells and mythos knowledge: Since GANGBUSTERS game characters have never encountered the Cthulhu mythos before, they will have a 0% Mythos knowledge score, and have access to no mythos spells.

You should now be ready to play. Enjoy the game, and the expressions on the faces of your players once they realize just what that big creature rising out of the lake really is!

Sources & Resources

Whether you prefer to play the GANGBUSTERS game or the Cthulhu system, the other game book has plenty of background information that can enhance your 1920s or 1930s campaign.

The GANGBUSTERS game book has extensive information on the law, law enforcement, Prohibition, and many crimes. Another great aid to any Prohibition-era campaign is the setting, Lakefront City. The GANGBUSTERS book has a large map of one of the city's districts, a ward map of the whole city, and cardboard counters to help visualize car chases, shoot-outs, etc. There is also

Continued on page 31

GAMMA WORLD® Game Lives

Continued from page 7

player rolls randomly to determine how many are physical and how many are mental. This puts all mutated characters on an equal footing—while still producing a random mix of mutations.

So far I have only mentioned the raw power of the character, which usually measures his ability to destroy things or to control a situation. However, because this is a role playing game, power is only one element to a campaign.

The roles assumed by the players should be the heart and soul of the game—not the die rolling and monster killing.

Campaign Trail

Another unfortunate omission from previous GAMMA WORLD editions was the "campaign." TSR did not provide an

existing campaign environment for the game master. For the AD&D game there is the vast and rich FORGOTTEN REALMS™ world, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ campaign, and the DRAGONLANCE™ setting.

Since Gamma World is our future earth, past editions assumed detailed campaign information was not necessary.

I think that was a false assumption.

The fourth edition of the GAMMA WORLD game will have a detailed campaign ready for the game master. Of course, you can still build your own realms if you wish.

We'll also be expanding the Cryptic Alliances. In previous GAMMA WORLD game editions, the Alliances were a fascinating, but ill-used, part of the campaign.

Each alliance was established as a fanatic group of individuals devoted to a single cause—such as killing all mu-

tated creatures everywhere, or restoring machines to their rightful place as lords of the earth. These Alliances make wonderful tools for building NPCs and a campaign.

In the fourth edition the player characters will have the option to join an Alliance. The Cryptic Alliances available will not be as narrow in their view or as harsh in their goals as before. Like alignment in the AD&D game, a character's Cryptic Alliance will say a lot about his personality.

The GAMMA WORLD game could be a great place to begin for someone just getting into role playing games. The new gamer will have a lot of tools to help him role play the character.

I intend to have a blast writing the new edition. I'll offer you a unique role-playing experience, and I guarantee you'll have fun.

Join me. The new Gamma World awaits.

Cthulhu vs. Lakefront City *Continued from page 19*

Conversion Chart*

GANGBUSTERS game statistic

Muscle
Agility
Observation

Presence
Luck
Driving
Punching
Hit points

Formula

divide by 5 and roll on Statistic Modifier Chart
ditto
divide by 5
divide by 5 and roll on S.M.C.
add 1d4 + 4
divide by 2.5 and roll on S.M.C.
none
add to Strength
none

Cthulhu game statistic

Strength, Constitution
Dexterity
Intelligence
Education
Appearance
Power
Driving skill
Size
Hit points

*No Call of Cthulhu statistic can go below or above the normal range for that ability. For example, Cthulhu Strength is normally rolled on 3d6, that gives the number range of 3-18. Hence, no converted Strength score could be below three or above 18.

an appendix in the back with book and movie bibliographies.

The Call of Cthulhu rule book has a time line of the 1920s, biographies of famous people of the era, prices, travel times and distances, as well as information on prisons of the time, vehicle chase and combat rules, and statistics of many common animals.

If you are running, or are planning to run, a campaign set in the Prohibition era, both of these books are excellent sources for background material and for adventure inspiration. If you take advantage of the information in both of these books, your 1920s or 1930s campaign can only improve.

Statistic Modifier Chart

1d6 roll	effect on Cthulhu statistic
1	-2
2	-1
3-4	no effect
5	+1
6	+2

The Living Galaxy

Continued from page 24

DRAGON issue #118 ("A Hero's Reward"), and this idea can be adopted into any role-playing game with some experimentation. These points are intended for use in avoiding outright death, usually substituting some miraculous escape at the last possible moment ("That laser shot bounced right off the tiny pocket mirror in your wallet"). Luck points also

can be floated for use in avoiding potentially dangerous situations by giving the PC a sixth-sense warning ("I've got a bad feeling about this!").

If you use luck points, make sure they are limited, or else the PCs (and players) won't care about danger at all and will get cocky or bored. The old TOP SECRET game's fortune points, for example, are few in number and also nonrenewable; once they're used up, they're gone forever. If a PC's luck runs out, he may die. But if he's been careful with his luck, maybe

he'll live a little longer.

Last Words

In space, no one can hear you call for divine intervention. But a considerate GM can always set up a way for his players to keep their characters for just a little longer, though the players might never know how kind he has been to them. After all, just because you aren't going to kill the characters doesn't mean they don't have to suffer a little.

Ares

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WORLDKILLER

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Gangsters

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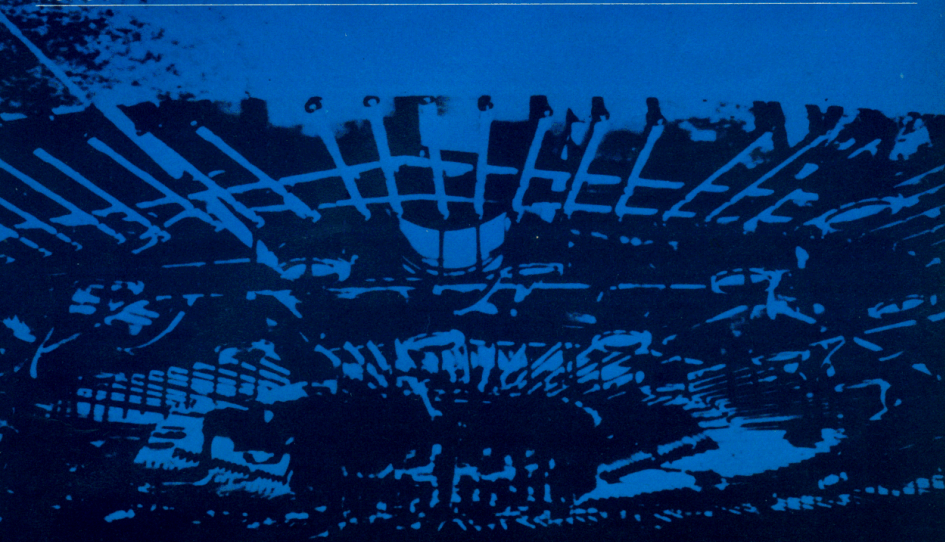
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Gangsters

by Henrik Nordlie

Photo illustration by Redmond A. Simonsen

As he walked through the noise and disorder of the crumbling tenement block, his eyes moved down the street to the narrow alleyway that led to the loading dock of his loft building. He swore under his breath. A yellow van blocked the access from the street. The damned stupid baker had parked his delivery truck in "his spot" again. Ever since moving into the long unoccupied building, he'd had trouble with the old baker and his van. The man had the habit of parking in the loft building's driveway while he ate lunch or drank wine at the small walk-down restaurant across the street. Even though it was a posted "No Parking" zone, the truck never got a ticket. Time after time he'd confronted the old man and commanded him to move his vehicle. There were always protests and comments to endure. Patrons in the restaurant and children in the street would jabber and catcall while the same words and arguments would again be exchanged by the tall, strange man they called "the artist" and the baker, Peretti:

"Your truck is illegally parked in my driveway!"

"Relax. It's not so bad. I always park there. Before you own the building."

"Move your truck, now. I expect a delivery."

"Look. I deliver too. See, but now's lunch; nobody delivers. Relax."

"Move it or I'll move it for you."

"Now don't touch my van. Soon, you'll see. Relax. Have something while you wait. My son, he got me that van. It's nice, hah?"

"Move immediately!"

"Don't lose your temper to me, now."

With that admonition the baker would usually wipe his hands on his shirt and slowly move outside towards the van. His little creased face would grin broadly as the children would chant some insult in a language the artist wasn't supposed to understand. Peretti would turn and make eye contact with several of the adults on the sidelines, all of whom would laugh in turn at the shared secret joke they were having at the strange one's expense. An elaborate ceremony would ensue in which the old man would solemnly select the door key from a large ring he had produced with a flourish from his coverall pocket. Climbing in, he always needed to adjust the mirror carefully while the engine slowly warmed. One of the stoop sitters would stand to direct the departing maneuver with all the complexity of gesture of a carrier flight deck signalman.

The whole calculated-to-be-infuriating act would be stretched out for at least ten minutes (particularly if the baker had finished eating).

There was no time for this neighborhood ritual in this latest instance. The artist could see his expected delivery truck stopped for a light less than two blocks away. Once in the past when the alleyway had been blocked, the truck driver had paused for a few moments while the ceremony was going on and then had pulled away, claiming the press of other deliveries. It had almost seemed as if the truckdriver was glad to be part of the artist's humiliation.

The delay of the final shipment of circuits could not be tolerated. He put his bags of groceries on the step of the loft entrance and ran to the restaurant door.

"Move your van immediately!"

"Relax..."

The artist didn't wait to hear the usual litany. He quickly recrossed the street and worked at the handle of the yellow van's door.

His mouth still filled with food, the old man grunted a protest from the steps of the restaurant. To the surprise of the baker the van door opened. The engine gunned as the tall figure grasped the wheel. Peretti squeez-

ed his coveralls and felt his key ring as the yellow vehicle bucked forward out of the tight parking space. Three carlengths up the street, the artist recklessly swerved the baker's truck into a vacant spot. The van lurched as it stopped and a parking light crunched into the car ahead of it. Jumping out, the artist slammed the van door shut just as his delivery pulled into the alley.

"Hey criminal, you break my door. You break my light. Come back," Peretti complained as he bent to look at his vehicle's front end.

The artist ignored the shouts of the red-faced baker as the crates of circuit boards were loaded on a dolly by the truckman. He signed the bill of lading and swiftly rolled the shipment through the freight door, banging it shut behind him.

As the angry baker rushed to the front door of the loft building and raised his fist to hammer on it, the artist appeared in the entrance. He held ten twenty dollar bills in his hand and had his face fixed in a cold smile.

"For your damages. Relax, it's not so bad." Then he laughed in a staccato barking noise as he threw the money down the steps past the wild-eyed Peretti.

The artist was delighted at the way the old man unthinkingly scrambled for the airborne bills. The usual street audience was struck silent by this humiliation of the gasping, confused baker. Never stopping his yips of laughter, the artist picked up his grocery bags, slammed shut the metal clad front door of the loft, and threw its bolt with a thunk that announced the end of this round of confrontation.

Methodically he placed the crates near each appropriate subassembly of his "sculpture." Although he was vastly excited, he didn't rush or tear into the shipment before it had all been initially placed. His strong fingers easily pried open the steel packing bands and pulled apart heavy copper industrial staples on the first case. He reached inside carefully and with deliberate slowness extracted the first slim corrugated container. His sharp nail neatly slit open the top and revealed a glistening froth of plastic bubble-packing individually wound around each of four heavy anti-static envelopes. He undressed the rightmost envelope and pried open its self-sealing end.

The pale green board slid out into his large, long-fingered hand. The silvery circuit tracings glinted in the work lights that were hung all around. Little chips and brightly colored resistors ornamented the surface of the incredibly complex board. Lovingly, he slid the unit into the brass colored frame of the first subassembly.

"Step one of the last phase," he announced to no one.

His voice echoed in the large, circular working space he had cut out of the first three stories of the old, cement floored building. Bright new insulated structural stringers sprung from the exposed steelwork of the lofts. They connected and supported a spidery cylindrical framework that rose some 15 meters, up through the layers of the building. The old baker's slightly mangled van could easily have been driven between the vertical supports and parked within the circle of the base.

The cylinder and its supports occupied the center third of the whole building. Cinderblock walls separated its space from the front and rear on each floor, and each of these walls had but a single steel clad door in its center.

The artist had supplemented the already muscular electrical lines with several connections of his own devising, made without benefit of Con Edison's approval. The main cables ribbed the ground floor and connected to step-up transformers and voltage regulators located near the base of each of the cylinder's four main vertical structural members.

When the time comes, he thought, the lower half of this island is going to black out — which itself was part of the plan.

As he completed the ceremony of inserting the first circuit board, he breathed a sort of sigh and massaged the tense muscles of his neck in an almost human gesture.

"Time for a little justifiable self-indulgence," he said aloud, leaving the boards of the open packing crate, he walked through to the freight elevator. It thrummed down into place as he released the switch on his remote controller. The lights shining through its gate strobed across his features as he rose into the gloom of the sealed third-floor segment of the shaft. He slid aside the safety gate of the car and faced the cinderblock-sealed portal. Taking off his electric wrist watch, he reversed the expansion band and pressed all three control studs at once. Something hummed behind the wall, and the cinderblocks emitted a soft blue glow, becoming transparent as they did so. The artist walked through the glow into the space beyond.

Now he was contained in a room filled with intense, deep blue light. Floor joined wall seamlessly and undetectably, making the space seem vast, even though it was no more than six meters square. In the center of the room was a transparent, green, hexagonal column rising almost to the ceiling. One face of the booth-like column had many gleaming, glassy planes intersecting its surface along its entire height. Striding to that side, he reached into one of the seemingly sealed facets and withdrew a slender tool about the size and shape of a dental mirror. The disk on its end glowed orange when he put it to his forehead. His mask fell off and made a flopping noise as he caught it with his other hand. He flashed a delighted expression as he glimpsed his reflection in the cabinet.

"Good to see you again," he joked, making the barking noise. Quickly he stripped off his clothes and, in turn, the pseudo-human skin and appliances underneath until he was completely himself.

Standing before the plain, semi-transparent side of the cabinet, he admired his image: pure white, translucent skin tinted blue by the light; a fine tracery of purple veins moving and pulsing just under the surface. Powerful dark cords of muscle rippled in his long arms and legs.

Fingers and toes flexing, he peeled back his lips and hosed out his dark, toothless mouth with a little, flexible spigot he drew from the green glassy structure. A black liquid sluiced out the side of his mouth; a

hacking and blowing noise came from the flapped slit between his orange eyes as he sucked in.

Turning sideways, he struck himself in the middle of his torso and whispered to his reflection, "Even with all of the chem-change and bio-tailoring you could still kill a friend or two in an Endgame."

He spat and then stepped into the booth-like half of the cabinet, reaching overhead to hit its ceiling. The panes of its opening closed in one smooth, practiced motion. Fans producing a mini-cyclone blew pumice and sand against his body while he groaned in satisfaction. Reaching up again, he switched off the grit and buffeted his body with air at 90° C. Stepping out into the relative coolness of the room, the large white being reeled a wire from the side of the cabinet. He clipped this to a wattle that hung from his lower belly just above his featureless crotch. As he squatted on the floor, his eyes glazed over and his mouth hung open loosely. He remained in that state for exactly 104 minutes before he was awakened by the intruder alarm.

A LDO BARONE LOOKED UP OVER his half-glasses at the two large young men who stood in front of his marble topped desk. The marble top was one of Aldo's few concessions to conspicuous consumption. In his personal behavior, and in most of his business dealings, he was conservative, fair, and not given to rashness and temper. He was displaying a little temper now, however.

"This very day my mother's brother was pushed around — disgraced! And in our own neighborhood!" He swept a hand towards the window of his third floor office. Placing both his be-ringed hands on the desk top with elaborate care, he lowered his voice to almost a purr. "I want the man responsible informed of to whom he should show respect. I want this man to publicly apologize to Carlo Peretti and give his solemn word never to cause any trouble in the neighborhood any more."

"How much difficulty should he have in learning this respect, Mr. Barone?" asked the larger of the two young men.

"You be careful and smart, Johnny. I don't want this artist to be hurt unnecessarily. Absolutely no rough stuff except a bend of the arm to show you're serious — and that only if this guy is as stupid as they say. No repeats of that laundry number."

Johnny tried to look embarrassed and contrite. A commercial laundry owner had resisted Mr. Barone's business offers with regard to his restaurants, and Johnny stuffed the man into one of his own machines. The big young man figured that Barone liked him for it in spite of what he said, knowing it to be a sign of the tremendous loyalty Johnny Case felt for the low-key leader of the small organization. As a gesture of recognition of his temper problem, Case asked, "You want us to go see him naked, Mr. Barone?" He held out his heavy pistol butt-first as if making an offering.

Barone took off his glasses and came around the desk to hug his two employees around the shoulders, drawing them almost into a huddle. "No, no, no. Georgie, Johnny, you two I trust. You're my best.

God took away my Julio to give me two sons in his place."

Barone coughed and pinched his nose, overcome with his own sentiments. "Go, go," he said, "and be careful yourselves. Maybe this guy's nuts, huh?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Barone," nodded George, "an' if we're through by ten, we'll stop by personal and let you know the score."

Their well-made shoes clicked down the old tile hallway, and they ran down the steps instead of waiting for the building's sluggish elevator.

IN THE BLUE OF THE ROOM, the stillness was broken by a small pinging noise as the wattle clip released in response to the alarm. With amazing speed the naked, pale creature re-entered its man-suit while activating the molecular doorway to the elevator. Maybe some more of those ignorant children want another score, he thought as he rode down the elevator, tossing his head back to seat the teeth and mouth-wall appliance. In the past when the outer perimeter of his building was violated, it had always turned out to be children or young adults showing off their courage to friends outside. A shout or a beam of light had usually sufficed to scare them away. The freight entrance was where they usually broke in. This time it was in the front.

On the ground floor, he dimmed the work lights and activated a viewing screen that showed him the front-third of the building — the part that contained his mock living quarters. The wide spectrum screen showed two large adult males dressed in business suits and topcoats. Under their suits, the screen showed an outline he recognized. Projectile guns. Unsophisticated weapons, but deadly in close fighting. The men looked physically strong as well. The taller was only half a head shorter than he.

The manner in which they stalked through the darkened quarters made the artist uncomfortable. They were professional. Calm, but alert. Could it be that the native police suspected him of some sort of illegal activity? Had the paper camouflage covering his industrial theft been penetrated? Telling himself to stop assuming the worst, he entered through the false back of the closet just before the taller human opened it.

"You're in clear violation of the law," he declared, stepping out into the room. The young man lost his composure only momentarily.

"We come to talk to you about community relations and like that," said Johnny Case, jabbing a gloved finger into the artist's chest.

"Get out of my building or I'll call the police."

"No, I don't think you wanta do that," George said from across the room. As the artist faced the speaker, he noticed the first one move behind him. He felt his upper arms being grabbed as the man across the room came towards him.

"Now here's what you are gonna..." The artist kicked out and caught the speaker between the legs. Simultaneously, he jabbed his elbow backwards into the

chest of the man holding his arms. Both blows were extremely powerful in human terms. For an instant, he thought he'd put both of them down for good, but no, the one he had elbowed came up from the floor, swinging his fist at the artist's head and bringing his left knee up into the groin.

The blow to the head jarred him but the knee simply pushed him further out into the center of the room. The artist reached down, easily picked up George Aletta from the floor and simply threw the man at the other intruder. Johnny was knocked back into the closet, falling onto a heap of clothes. He saw George's head lifelessly looking at him from top of an obviously broken neck. Even Mr. Barone would use his gun now, thought Case.

In the hyper time of his fighting mode, the artist saw the large pistol being drawn out of the tangle of the big man's coat. To ruin the aim, he made a rapid horizontal move. Two shots smashed into the plaster behind him. He sprang and caught the gunman by the throat with one hand and by the wrist with the other. Johnny Case made a little noise of regret and died.

Rocking back on his haunches, the victor cleared his lungs and consciously adjusted his body chemistry from fighting mode. His hands were spasming slightly, something that they would normally never do, had he not been altered somewhat to survive on this world. Picking up both intruders, one under either arm, the artist activated the main door to the inner chamber. He dropped the bodies near the framework and considered the situation. If he finished the first stage of the final assembly now, he'd have a field into which he could drop the bodies without a trace. Happy to have a goal, he hummed a passage from one of his native atonal schemes as he set to work.

"Well, I knew you had something going down, Mr. Barone," the phone voice said, "an' I saw your guys go in...n I heard these shots an' nobody comes out." Aldo Barone just looked at the phone in his hand with disbelief. "An' I figured, you'd wanta know right away, Mr. Barone," said the little voice. "You there?"

Barone hung up.

THE FOUR MEN PLAYING CARDS in the back of the restaurant rose quickly as Barone approached.

"I have an order that needs to be filled immediately," he said.

"What style you want this Mr. Barone?"

"The old style, all the way. I want you to bring the merchandise out to me in the street and I'll take delivery personally."

The men at the table stared at each other in wonder. Aldo Barone? Personally? But they recognized the look on the older man's face and nodded.

"Right away, Mr. Barone."

Two of the men trotted down the steps to the basement while the others shooed out the lingering diners at the front tables. Barone filled in his staff with what had apparently happened to George and Johnny.

"All due respect, Mr. Barone, but I always said Johnny Case had a habit of going into things half-cocked, kinda." When he saw the stony glare that greeted this ap-

praisal, he quickly added, "But don't you worry, we'll make it good for Johnny and George. Nobody's gonna get away with nothin'. You'll see."

The two men came up from the basement and opened heavy cases on two tables. Inside were four straight-clip Thompson sub-machine guns and two Walther P-38 automatic pistols.

"Best one's for you, Mr. Barone," said the staff man as he handed him a loaded Walther butt first.

"Let's make it quick and no mistakes," ordered the aging gang leader. The five men matter-of-factly walked out to the waiting limousine, making little effort to conceal the weapons.

He had only to install and check two more boards on the last column before power could be put into the grid and the bodies dumped. There were still many hours of work left before the gate could be tuned accurately enough to link with its twin twenty light years away, and more days of testing before full power was applied. Only then could members of his consortium transfer along with their heavy weapons. Once the 380 shareholders had come across, this world would fall in a matter of days.

We'll only need to hold it hostage for two years before the Council meets, pays the ransom to our accounts and allows us to dissolve as a group. What a relief to be unburdened of the obligation of administration. He'd personally invested most of his eco-group's positive funds in designing and purchasing the equipment and energy for this initial landing. The years of his life he'd wasted in dormancy, getting here in a normal-space body capsule, arriving virtually naked on a hostile world. Too bad that the nearest gate was so far away and the sublight payload cost was so high.

The irony was, once they got through the ransom period, the inhabitants of this world would be accepted as provisional citizens and allowed to build their own accounts in combat against organized forces. With the pugnaciousness of these people, it would take only three or four major losses before they'd gain enough experience to win a few money yielding skirmishes. They'd be able to pay off, recover, and fit in, most likely. Of course, they'd have to trade population for time, but that's the way it always was when some minor race entered the mainstream.

He and his group of protectors wouldn't get any real thanks, of course. Not that they did it for the glory. It was the money and the relief from Endgame challenges that it brought. Still and all, one would think that a ransomed race would show some gratitude every once in a while. Look at the wonderful automated metal and semiconductor plants he'd given them! Of course when the L'cleth entities bound into the software matured and began to fabricate themselves, there might be a few difficulties — but doesn't everything have a consequence and a price? And, he had to fund his stay here somehow, didn't he?

He hummed as he slid the last board into place and applied the checking matrix. Perfect. Nothing like a plant driven by a L'cleth fetus for accuracy. The urge for

perfection and consequent assurance of a properly fabricated birth found its way into every aspect of the factory's function. Were it not for the severe drawbacks of coming to term, Cleithro would be routinely used on civilized worlds.

He should credit the natives too, he reluctantly admitted. It was their semiconductor and metals technology that lured his group here in the first place. The long-scan had shown that the little beings were damn clever in some things. Oddly enough, they were nowhere near the theoretical basis for travel by scan gate. And their power generation systems were laughable. Actually, in most areas they were losers and they deserved to be oppressed for a couple of years.

The application of partial power to the grid resulted in a satisfying discontinuity in the center of the latticework cylinder. It was in a random roll of course, drunkenly scanning all over hell-and-gone for a hundred light years or more. But it was more than adequate for waste disposal. One at a time he picked up the dead bodies of Aldo Barone's best boys and flung them into the galaxy. After punching up a check run on the test control board, he left the gate under power and went to the front of the building to clean up the signs of the disturbance. A weapon filled his right hand as he made his rounds through the gloom. He spotted the day's groceries sitting on the hall table. Taking them to the kitchen, he traded them for the ones on the shelves and in the refrigerator. The "old" food was opened and flushed down the toilet. No sense getting careless this late in the game, he thought.

"GILLY, YOU AND TOMMY GO ROUND THE BACK — Vinny an' me will go in front. I give ya 'til thirty to get back an' go." Aldo Barone watched his men move silently towards their jump-off points. He sighed and sat back in the limo's plush upholstery. The heavy Walther came to his hand, and he pulled back and released the slide to jack the first round into the chamber.

They could see where Johnny and George had wired the bolt on the front door and jimmied the cylinder lock. Only the knob lock was engaged and that was easy to defeat. They entered in complete silence. The barrels of their submachine guns gleamed dully in the half-light from the door.

"Vinny?" he whispered.

"Joy?" came the reply in the dark.

"I'm goin' round in here," he said softly, "and you go in..."

Both men froze as they saw the tall shape watching them from the central room at the end of the hall.

The night blazed and thundered as each squeezed a burst from his weapon. A terrific cloud of dust, debris and smoke kicked back into the hallway. Joey and Vinny peered from the doorframes of the rooms on either side of the hallway.

"He down?"

As if to answer, a white and purple beam struck Vinny in the upper thigh and burned a hole right through, setting the doorframe smoldering.

"Ah Shees!" he moaned, rolling and clutching his burning leg.

Another beam lanced out at where Joey had been. It was quick — like an electric spark, but perfectly straight. It made a sharp cracking sound when it passed through the air. Joey popped out low in the doorframe and threw a burst down the hall, then skipped across to where Vinny lay cursing his pain.

"Shut up. You're alright," he lied. "Get back in action."

"What is it, Joey? — I ain't never faced nothing like that — hah?"

"Look," he whispered, "you gotta put some heat on that doorway while I move up."

Vinny made the heavy submachine gun speak. Joey advanced like the well-trained infantryman he was — weapon up, body flat against the wall until he got to the cover of the center doorframe. For a few seconds it was quiet except for the distant hammering of the two men at the back of the building. Joey looked back and saw Vinny's sweat covered face gleaming like a sickly moon. He signalled him to withdraw into the doorway of the side room. With a racket of firing Joey burst into the center room and dove onto his belly.

There was no one there.

"You hear that, Gilly? They're having a goddamned firefight up front." Tommy was terrifically excited at the prospect of actually using the submachine gun, and was desperate to find some way out of the apparent dead-end storage space that the freight entrance led to.

"Gilly, com'on, the elevator."

It made no sense but both men wanted to do something and so they got in the elevator and pushed the lever towards "UP." They found the second floor to be a duplicate of the first, and the steel door in the forward wall was apparently barred from the opposite side. Back in the elevator they continued their ascent.

"Look at that, a sealed floor." Tommy reached out a hand to touch the cinderblock of the third floor. It was hot.

The unused fourth floor was completely dark. Gilly struck one of the big kitchen matches he liked to carry for his panatelas. As far as they could see, the floor was empty except for heaps of old packing material and empty crates. Walking to the far end of the eerily creaking floor brought them to a dead end.

"Hey, watch the matches! This place could go up like a tinderbox, hey."

"Would you care?" said Gilly as he flipped the dying match to the floor.

Both turned as they heard a deep clunking noise. The elevator was leaving without them.

"How the hell...that's a manual elevator!" complained Gilly.

"Put a cork in it! Get over against the other wall an' be ready. I got a feeling we're going to have company on the fourth floor."

The two men took up separate positions, each about five meters from the elevator shaft.

"What if it's the other guys?" whispered Gilly.

"Then don't shoot, idiot."

The space they were in was almost completely black except for the faintest of light

coming up the shaft. They both heard the metallic clicking sounds and the whine as the elevator reversed and began to climb back to the fourth floor. They sensed the coming bulk of the car and readied their weapons. The cage of the elevator appeared, dully illuminated by the one weak bulb in its ceiling. It stopped before it was level with the floor.

Gilly was the first to stand up. "There ain't nobody on it. Tommy! It's goddamned empty for chrissake!" He turned to face Tommy with hands indignantly on hips, gun held loosely under his right arm.

Two quick purple beams sprang from the top of the elevator, taking off the top of Gilly's head and burning a hole through Tommy's stomach; his Thompson seemed to fire itself at the top of the cage, continually until it jammed. The elevator descended.

One of the bullets had grazed his face and most of his mask was hanging off. More seriously, another round had shattered his left shoulder and the arm was hanging uselessly. Worse yet, he had to go up front to make sure he had gotten both of the other assault troops that he'd seen on the screen. He tapped the controller with his thumb and the elevator settled to the ground floor again.

IN THE LIMOUSINE, Aldo Barone was very concerned. All that firing. It meant that it was going wrong again. Was this guy indestructible? Did he have help? Five minutes I give it and I'm going in myself, he vowed.

Joey felt along the wall of the windowless center room for any place that the big man might have passed through. He risked his pocket flash light to examine the floor and there he found a trail of scuff marks and stains that led to the closet. Secret doors yet, he thought. This is the craziest thing I've ever done. Inside the closet he noticed nothing. Why be subtle, he shrugged, and cracked the back wall sharply with his gun butt. It immediately swung out into a huge, well-lit space containing a kind of gleaming metal tower in its center.

But in the middle of the thing was this weird black space filled with constantly changing flecks of light. It made him sort of sick to his stomach to concentrate on the strange rolling mass inhabiting the framework. Whatever it was, it must be important to the guy he was trying to nail. Experimentally, he smashed his gunstock into some of the more delicate looking parts of the lattice work. He heard sounds like little drops of water on a very hot skillet. Yellow sparks showered down and the thing began to make a deep thrumming sound. Joey backed away, feeling scared and looking about nervously almost as if he feared to be blamed for what he had done. He took up a position on the far side of the framework, behind a heap of crates and bubble packaging.

He sensed more than heard the approach of the loft building's owner. Joey was good at remaining absolutely still, a technique he'd acquired on ambush missions in the war. He nevertheless almost flinched when he saw the face of this thing. Its skin was hanging off and what was underneath made Joey's stomach heave. In the thing's right hand was a silver wand with

a loop on the end — like those wire rings kids blow bubbles with. The left arm looked like somebody had scored a hit.

"Freeze, asshole!" he shouted, standing up from the crates. The artist stopped in mid-stride. Absolutely still, except for the slight twirling motion his fingers imparted to the wand in his hand. Joey kept the big piece trained on him as he came out around the framework.

"I got him, Mr. Barone. Vinny!" he called over his shoulder.

The shaft of purple white light hit Joey squarely in the neck. His spasming fingers fired one round into the hip of his killer, and sprayed the remainder of the clip into the complex framework running up one of the main supports of the cylinder. Joey slid down against the base of the framework, and his upper torso teetered into the strange black space and vanished, leaving behind his legs and hips.

The space inside the lattice was gyrating even more wildly and some of the bright spots resolved themselves as stars before zooming away. The now crippled creator of the lattice staggered through the opened closet and into the central front room. His clouded vision resolved the form of Vinny lying unconscious on the floor, and he beamed him through the head to make sure. I've got to secure and shut down, he thought. Get to my room, repair.

Barone waited more than five minutes after hearing the last shots. For the first time in a long while he was truly terrified. He looked at the dark, hateful building standing isolated on the corner and contemplated the ruin of his orderly, business-like world of routine extortion and bribery that was signalled by the ominous quiet. I need help, he thought.

Even though he was old, the thin little man in Brooklyn came quickly awake at the sound of the almost hysterical voice on the other end of the phone.

"Calm yourself, calm yourself, Aldo. Tell me again, more slowly."

He listened and grew concerned. In all the years he had known Aldo Barone, he had never heard a lie or exaggeration come from his lips. If anything the man was usually guilty of understatement. So he listened patiently and credulously.

"You just stay near your car and watch, Aldo. I'll take care of everything."

He owed Barone a great deal — tonight it would all be paid in full. Thanking the Mother of God for touch-tone phones, his arthritic fingers quickly punched several numbers and woke many young men.

The wall glowed and he staggered into the room, almost crashing against the green booth. In pain that was just barely controllable in his body's fighting mode, he peeled off his damaged outer coverings. What did these people want? The credentials he'd taken off the last one told him nothing. Probably not police after all. They behaved like a group in an Endgame.

Have to change chemistry to repair, the blurred thinking ran in his throbbing head. Little yellow lines of light were spreading across the green translucent plate that

swung down over his long bleeding form. Lying on his back, he willed the metabolic changes that would slow his body functions and enable the mechanism to repair his body. Before his eyes the blue in the room deepened to black and he lost consciousness.

Sixteen men jogged up the stairs of the old tenement building. Even though they all carried long heavy cases, they moved easily. They were all young and strong, well trained by both the legal and illegal governments of their country. The tenants had already been moved out by some of the organization members in the neighborhood. They had all obeyed unquestioningly, knowing that whatever was to be done that night was for their own good. And they knew it was to be directed against the tall strange artist who owned the loft building next door. They had all smiled at that part.

Most of the men had served together or had been in similar units. When they had been told that the work was to be done from the outside exclusively, they knew what tools to bring and how to proceed. Half of the men went to the roof and used an ingenious folding contraption to make a little aluminum bridge to the other building. They set the black cylinders at precise intervals, carefully throwing the little levers on top as they did so. The tar of the roof cracked under their boots.

In admiration, Aldo Barone watched from behind the wheel of his car. He saw four ropes fly out from the roof on the street side of the building and men seem to hop down them as if flying. Every few meters they stopped and stuck something to the side of the building, paying particular attention to the bricked up windows. On the alley side, the others reached out with telescoping aluminum poles to stick things to the windows that looked like black coffee cans. In a short while the loft was dotted with them. Not once in all this time did a patrol car, or any other vehicle for that matter, pass by the scene of all this silent activity.

SOMETHING WAS DRASTICALLY WRONG. The tearing pain in his hip and arm told him that the medical unit was not yet finished, yet it was interrupting its work and shutting down. He saw the pulsing of the lights and heard the shrill rhythmic beeping of the intruder alarm. They're all dead...I got them all. More? Why do they keep coming?

He saw an image form on the far wall. Against the deep blue, an iridescent green schematic of the building appeared. At regular intervals it glowed with brilliant red spots, and cloudy orange shapes that moved and left new red spots. Extended the field, he thought. Get downstairs. Make a weak expansion outside the frame to neutralize the humans and their devices. Might kill me but only chance. Hurry.

Spikes of excruciating pain stabbed through him as he lumbered against the wall. He fumbled with the controller as he saw more bright red spots form on the schematic.

The man in the alley waved a penlight at the watching faces in the windows. They all withdrew in unison. Feet could be heard running down the creaky steps of the old apart-

ment house. Shortly, all the men were in the street carrying their now lightened load cases. The man with the penlight walked over to the car and handed Barone a little black box with an aerial on it.

"Your good friend in Brooklyn said that you wanted to do the honors, Mr. Barone."

"No wires? Aren't we too close?" asked the worried voice from the dark limousine.

The young man smiled patronizingly. "Now, it's by radio see — and all the force goes inward. I could stand on the steps with my mother's teacups an' be alright. Relax. You'll see! Just turn it to the right and make a wish."

All of downtown Manhattan went black.

"Christ, what's with the streetlights. Hit the switch, Barone. Hit it."

"...three..."

Barone goggled as the walls of the building seemed to turn to black glass and shine with points of rose and purple light.

"...two..."

The young man wrenched Barone's hand on the switch.

"...one..."

A tremendous stillness accompanied the visually spectacular detonation of the shaped charges. The explosions bloomed with red-white heat from all sides of the now weird looking building, but at first no sound was heard.

Then there was a rushing noise and a strong wind built at the backs of the awe-struck men in the street. The shape of the loft was filled by fiercely white lines radiating from the center. Trash on the gutter lifted up into the shape. A dynamo sound whined towards the unhearable range.

"Run!" the demolitions leader shouted over the roar of the air disappearing into space. Barone started the car. Some of the men seemed to rise into the night, silhouetted against the mad lights of the thing across the street. Random shafts of black wavered out of the mass. Barone felt sick to his stomach. Dizzy. Weightless.

The heavy Cadillac whirled like a leaf and disappeared into black with a dull booming noise.

The three men who had escaped turned at the noise and saw a tall, iridescent figure seemingly suspended in the space where the building had been. The radiating lines had dulled to red. They heard a deep grating noise and felt a shuddering vibration through the street. The brilliance snapped out, and a prolonged loudening hiss rose up, followed by a climactic thump like the slamming shut of a gigantic book.

A ragged smoking hole had taken the place of the four story building. The adjacent tenement was in ruins.

In downtown Manhattan, the lights went back on.