

BIGGER BADS



MONSTERS
AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS

BIGGER BADS

CREDITS

'BIGGER BADS' IS A SUPPLEMENT FOR THE ROLEPLAYING GAME 'MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS'.

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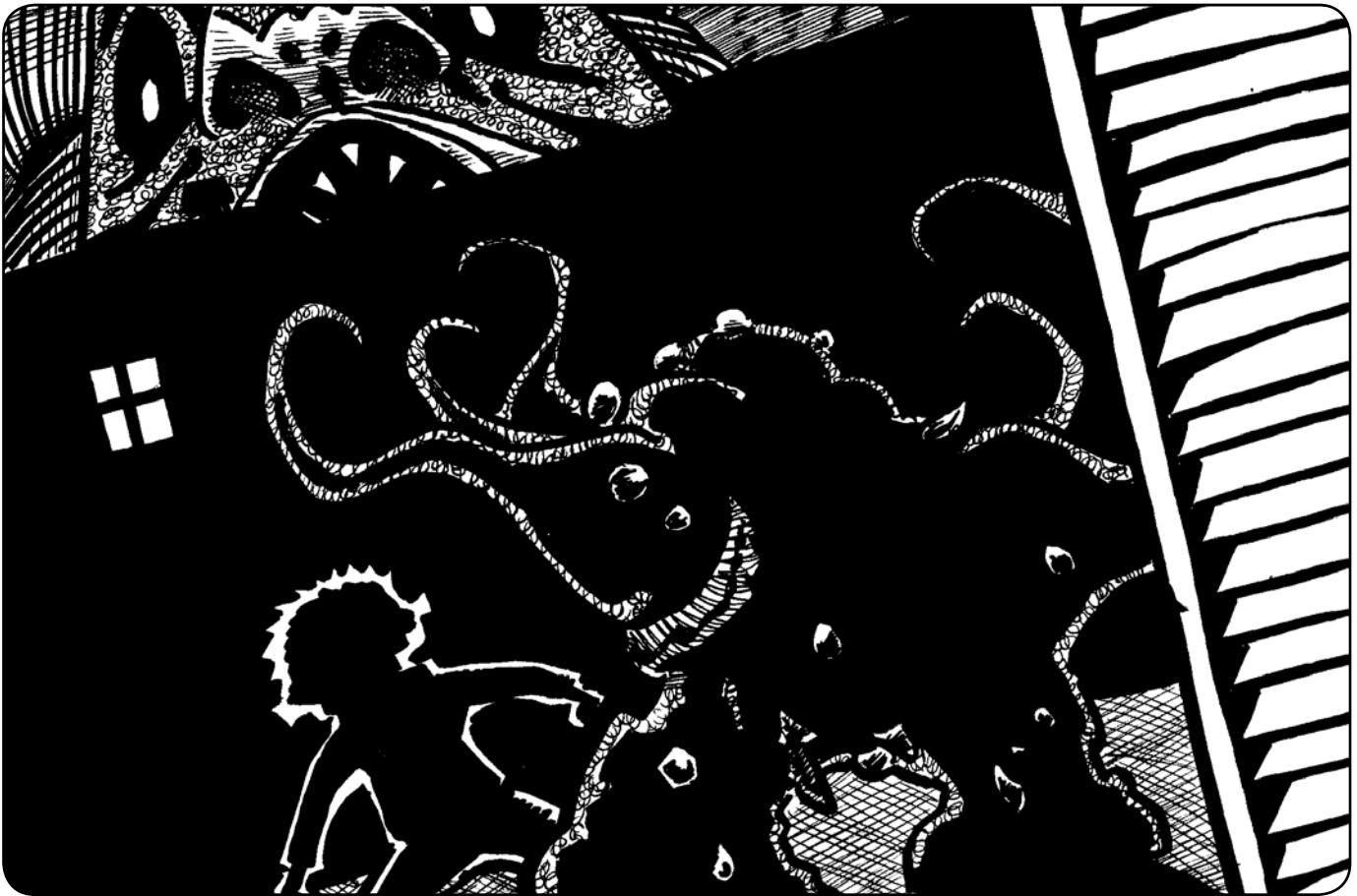
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 1: FIDDLY BITS	6
Pushing and Shoving	6
Helping Hands	7
<i>New and Revised Extras</i>	8
<i>New Extras</i>	8
<i>Tweaked Extras</i>	9
CHAPTER 2: THREATS	10
Threat Dice Pools.....	10
Threat Actions.....	11
Threat Qualities and Extras.....	11
‘Hurting’ a Threat	12
A Menagerie Of Menace.....	12
<i>Escaped Ebola Monkeys</i>	12
<i>Snakes! Why Did It Have To Be Snakes?</i>	13
<i>The Collapsing Building Is Now On Fire</i>	13
<i>MIB Grab-Squad</i>	13
<i>Excruciator Hatchlings</i>	14
<i>Robo-Bees</i>	14
<i>The Mean Kids</i>	14
<i>Traversing the Treacherous Nighttime Rooftops of Our Fair City</i>	15
<i>Possessed Toy Factory</i>	15
<i>The Seven Stars Secret Kung-Fu Brotherhood</i>	16
<i>The Goo That Ate the Cafeteria</i>	16
<i>The Luchacabra Fighters</i>	17
CHAPTER 3: FARNNESS	18
Come Over Here and Say That!	18
Default Farnness	19
Getting Closer (Or Farther).....	20
Playing Chase	22
CHAPTER 4: BIGNESS.....	25
Bigness Ratings	26
Bigdiff: Using Bigness	27
A Huge Example.....	28
CHAPTER 5: WEIRDNESS.....	31
Who Are These Weird Kids?	31
Wait, Weird Skills? That’s Not in the Core Book!.....	31
Weird Skills are Creepy.....	32
Where Do Weird Skills Come From?	32
How Do I Make My Own Weird Skills?	32
Yeah, Right, So What’s the Downside?	32
What Was That Thing About Being Caught Between Two Worlds?.....	34
All This Sounds Totally Rockin’! Superpowers and a Monster Friend?	35

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Enough of Your Blither-Blather, Show Me How This Actually Works!.....	35
No, Not Black Leaf!	35
Is It Really As Simple As All That?	36
CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS	37
Your (Hot) New Stepmom (From California)	37
Agent C. Occupant	39
Clueless S.O.	41
Sidekick The Eager Hostage	42
The Grumps	43
Colonel Brodie Block.....	45
Monkey Aliens From Planet K	47
<i>Weird Kid Power Source: Monkey Tech</i>	49
Thunderbolt 10 A.P.E.....	52
Bugnutz Reloaded	55
Killdozer	56
Agents of INC	57
<i>Weird Kid Power Source: Neoscience!</i>	58
Combine-R.....	60
Sal Nath.....	62
The Doom That Came to Sal Nath's	65
<i>Weird Kid Power Source: The Dirty Dank Dark Arts</i>	66
Gargantua-Mago.....	67
C-Star Gunner.....	69
Nico Batso	71
Wombattle Mech	74
Bigpig	75
Levi A. Than	75
Leviathan	77
<i>Weird Kid Power Source: Subhumanoid Hybridization</i>	78
Maximega Co. Security Associates.....	80
Subhumanoid H.R. Rep.....	80
Ultra Gorgon Level 3 Gold	82
Project Codename Doma Omega	84
<i>Weird Kid Power Source: Mi-Cells</i>	86
Mi-Go'jirra, King Of The Monsters	87
CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART	90
<i>Default Grade Level</i>	91
<i>Themes</i>	92
<i>Inspirations</i>	92
<i>Who Knows What?</i>	92
<i>Monsters and Kids</i>	93
<i>Hooks</i>	93
DEDICATION	95

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

"Wow."

"YEAH."

"That thing is pretty big."

"YOU SAID IT. BIG."

"I'd even say huge."

"YOU KNOW WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT BIG?"

"I can think of a few things. . ."

"IT'S LIKE BEING REALLY CLOSE TO A HIGH-SCHOOL KID, AND SEEING ALL THE PORES GAPING OPEN AND OOZING GREASE OR CLOGGED UP WITH BLACK ICK AND BULGING WITH GUNK. EVEN FROM ALL THE WAY OVER HERE, I CAN TOTALLY SEE HOW GROSS THAT THING'S SKIN IS."

"That's a pretty weird thing to be grossed out by, for a shiny, green, iridescent mantis the size of my dad's car."

"YEAH, BUT SHINY. I DO NOT OOZE GUNK, EXCEPT FROM MY WARP-GLANDS, AND THAT'S TOTALLY RAD GUNK."

"Well, I don't leak gunk either."

"NOT YET. WHEN YOU GET TO HIGH SCHOOL, THEY DO SOMETHING TO YOUR FACE. I'VE BEEN STUDYING HUMANITY, SO I FIGURED OUT HOW IT WORKS. THEY DRILL OUT YOUR PORES SO THEY LEAK, THEY POKE YOUR LARYNX SO YOUR VOICE COMES OUT ALL BROKEN AND WEIRD, AND THEY MAKE YOU GROW A COMPLETELY TRAGIC, WISPY LITTLE MUSTACHE, POSSIBLY THROUGH THE USE OF EXOTIC RADIATION. ALSO, THEY MAKE YOU SMELL LIKE YAK BUTT, BUT THIS IS POSSIBLY SOME KIND OF SCAM TO GET YOU TO BUY BODY SPRAY, OR SO THE TELEVISION LEADS ME TO BELIEVE."

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear any of that."

"WHY?"

"I just discovered something even more horrible about a creature that big than how easy it is to see its goopy pores."

"WHAT?"

"The size of its dumps."

"OH DUDE, I REALLY DID NOT WANT TO GO THERE."

"Well we're going to have to. It just dropped a duke on our neighborhood, and everybody is visiting from out of town."

"THIS IS THE WORST THANKSGIVING EVER."

Bigger Bads is a book about monsters. Big monsters. Giant monsters. Ginormous monsters. Ginormous monsters and the kids who love them (or who get eaten by them).

We play loose with scale in the *Monsters and Other Childish Things* core rules, leaving questions of size vaguely vague. My monster is the size of a Jeep, yours is as big as three rusty old refrigerators, Dave's is the size of a Pez dispenser—but dude, it is a seriously gnarly Pez dispenser, and when its head snaps back it isn't chalky candy lozenges that pop out, it's 500 pounds of broken bones and teeth and dried-up hairballs. It's noisy, messy, and smells like a mummy threw up.

No, what matters most in *Monsters* is the scale of action that the monsters operate on and pay attention to, stuff that's kid-scale and affects kid life. It doesn't really matter if one monster is the size of a parrot and the other the size of a Peugeot.

Well, folks, it's time we changed all that.

Bigger Bads gives you a scaling system so you can take the action from kid scale all the way up to giga-kid scale. With *Bigger Bads* you can build, play, fight, flee, and befriend monsters big enough to eat mountains and poo significantly smellier mountains. Sometimes, a monster gets so big that it's less a character or antagonist and more a location to stage some crazy action. Implausible, you say—but you'll eat that word in a crow sandwich when you have your first crazy monster-fight on the back of Mi-Go'Jirra against the monkey aliens from Planet K controlling the great beast's prehuman brain with psychic mega-lice.

A new mini-setting, new rules for range, threats, and weird kid powers, and a whole slew of new antagonists round it out.

CHAPTER 1: FIDDLY BITS

USEFUL STUFF FOR MONSTERS

Here are a few tweaks and nuances to the *Monsters and Other Childish Things* core rules, stuff that is already implicit but not explicit enough. It'll be useful later on when we get to the titular (hush, you—it doesn't mean *that*) big, bad GIANT MONSTERS. There's stuff about range and distance, and stuff about stats for menaces and dangers that aren't exactly characters but are more than just a difficulty number to beat with a roll. Combined, it all lets you know how hard you'll have to run to escape the dreaded Mecha-Rooster, and if you climb onto his leg, how hard it'll be fighting your way past his razor-sharp feathers and mecha-mites to get close enough to sock him in the vulnerable mecha-giblets. Sometimes, a giant monster is more a *place* than a *person*.

PUSHING AND SHOVING

Sometimes, in the chaotic melee of an action scene or a crazy social blowout scene, you want your kid or monster to do something that doesn't really hurt the other guy, but makes him do something or *not* do something. If you can set your foes up like suckers so your friends can put the chomp on them, even better.

This allows any character to take an action that interferes with an opponent. It works just like the Tangle and Hold moves that monsters can attempt (see *Monsters and Other Childish Things: The Completely Monstrous Edition*, page 43).

Basically what you do is this: During the Declare phase of the round, tell the GM how you want to interfere with your opponent, and make sure you and the GM have a good sense of what that'll mean. You can limit your enemy's choices, restrict his movement, or change his target for a little while, but you can't win the fight automatically or totally take him out. The effects of this kind of pushing and shoving last for Width – 1 rounds.

EXAMPLE

Benny McAlyster is having a pretty lousy day. This morning he completely blew a geometry test because he forgot to study—the Order of Horus tried to banish Mr. Crocker to the netherworld (“I’m not even from there! What’s up with these guys?”) . . . *again*. Then at lunch, Benny saw Mindy Mezlowski talking and laughing with that jerkwad from the field hockey team. Then when he got home, he discovered that his parents had been replaced with really unconvincing replicons with plastic hair, and there was a black van covered in antennas across the street. So when the MIB zap-and-grab team comes for Mr. Crocker just before bedtime, Benny is having none of it.

The MIBs are trying to jab Mr. Crocker with a weird gizmo that paralyzes him, and so Benny decides to put himself between his buddy and a zapping. During the

THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES

Can you do your own “Helping Hands” actions and reap the benefits in your own dice pool? Sure! Set yourself up for a cool combo move next round and add your roll’s width in dice to your next action.

Of course, your next action has to make sense given the setup action.

You Declare your intention to do the setup action, but you don’t have to Declare ahead of time what you’re setting the other guy up for. You do that the next round, taking into account what you used for the self-help. This gives you some flexibility, so you might not declare the action you’d intended in the following round if the situation changes, but you can likely come up with something that’ll take advantage of the extra dice.

For example, let’s say you want to distract another kid with a nasty insult (FACE + PUTDOWN; let’s call it 4d in this case) and then sock him in the belly while he’s shaking his head and yelling at you (HANDS + PUNCHING). In the first round you declare the nasty insult and say you’re using it to set the guy up for something later. You roll four dice and get 2x7. The next round, you describe how adding insult helps you do injury, and if the GM thinks it makes sense you add those two dice to your HANDS + PUNCHING roll.

Declare phase of the round, Benny’s player says that his intent is to keep the MIBs from attacking Mr. Crocker by *forcing* them to attack *him* instead. His player suggests this would best be rolled as Guts + Courage, and the GM agrees; throwing yourself into the path of an MIB zap-prod is a pretty courageous thing to do. What this will do is prevent the MIBs from attacking anybody except Benny for the width of his roll minus one in rounds.

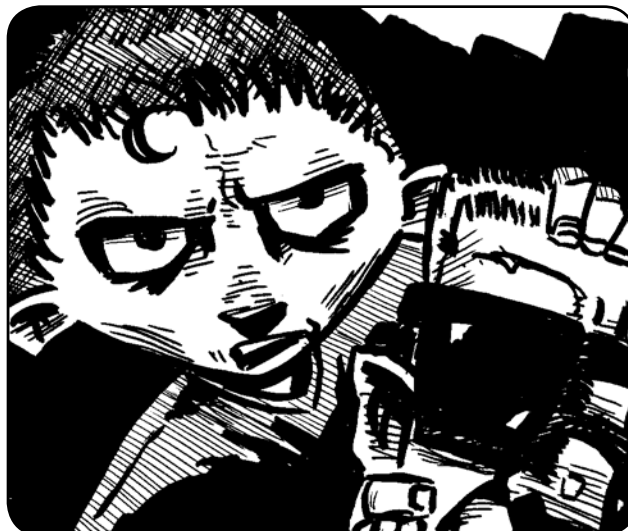
And while Benny is getting the heck zapped out of him, Mr. Crocker can seriously put the bite on these black-suited bullies without worrying about the zap himself.

HELPING HANDS

Sometimes you want to do your friends a solid rather than do your foes a hurt. If this is your intent, then Declare it as usual and roll the appropriate dice pool. Perhaps you shout some useful factoid (like, “*His weak part is his bladder sac! Kick him in the bladder sac!*”) and roll Brains + Remember. Or perhaps you feint an attack with Hands + Punching so your monster can get a more solid slap in with his spiky tail-knob.

The character you’re helping adds dice equal to your roll’s width to their dice pool next round.

The only restriction is that *monsters can’t do this*. This is a kid-only trick. It has something to do with human empathy and egalitarianism, but has even more to do with a monster’s sometimes very distressing inability to tell the difference in shoving a friend out of the way to assist their Dodge skill and shoving a friend out of the way to assist their Achieve Low-Earth Orbit Without a Rocket skill.



EXAMPLE

Back to Benny's bad day: Even while the MIBs are zapping him, Benny is trying to help Mr. Crocker out. He decides to grab hold of the MIBs and make it easier for Mr. Crocker to bite them real good. Benny rolls his Guts + Wrestling and gets 3x8. He throws three dice to Mr. Crocker to bulk out the monster's multiple-action, bitey-bite surprise. Two crashing snaps of Mr. Crocker's jaws follow, and Benny finds himself wrestling furiously with two sets of legs attached each to half a torso.

Benny then wonders briefly if being friends with Mr. Crocker has made him weird, because his first thought on seeing the MIB innards is, "At least they have some color other than black and white."

NEW AND REVISED EXTRAS

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD DO THAT!

Here's a few new monster Extras, and a couple of tweaks on existing ones.

NEW EXTRAS

BIG: This Extra plugs into the Bigness rules found on page 26. Bigness is a special-case Extra that has to be taken for each separate location. If you do that, it lets the monster operate higher on the Bigness scale.

BOUNCE: If your defensive roll beats an attack's Width and Height, in addition to gobbling the attack's dice safely, you can also bounce it back and inflict an attack on your attacker equal to his or her own roll. Each additional rank of Bounce allows you to either reflect another attack or bounce it back with one of the attacker's Extras. So, if you get nailed by a 2x5 attack with Gnarly x3, and defend with a 3x6 that has one rank of Bounce, you can deliver that 2x5 attack right back at the other (very surprised) monster. If you have four ranks of Bounce, you can do that with all three of those Gnarly ranks too!

IMMUNITY: Each rank of this Extra makes a single monster location totally immune to something fairly specific—falling, fire, piercing, the judgment of others—even if it's done by a monster or some other force that can hurt monsters. For all-over immunity, take this in every hit location. If the GM raises an eyebrow and goes "Hmmmmm" when you suggest immunity

THUNDER SPIKE FIST ALPHA!

As an optional rule, if you strike a dramatic pose and shout out the name of your attack, you can trade dice from the pool you roll on the attack for levels of Gnarly if you land a hit.

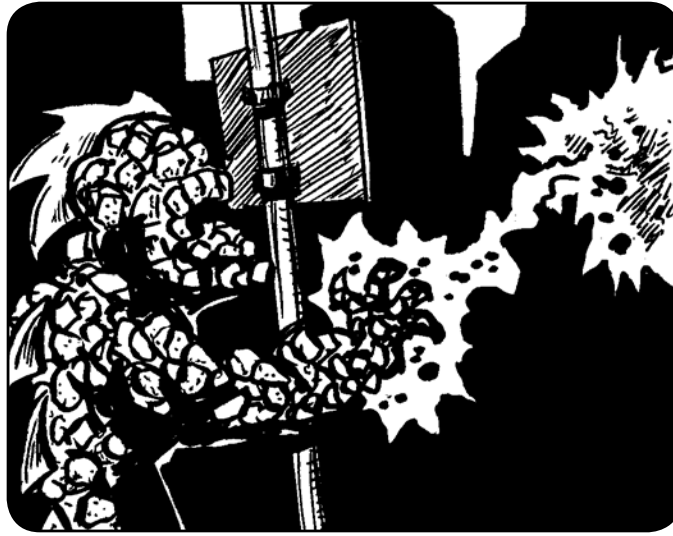
And when I say "YOU" I actually mean "YOU"—the person sitting at the gaming table with your friends, who will almost certainly NOT totally lose it when you leap to your feet, do a few karate poses, and shout "MOMMA-INSULTING COMEBACK STYLE!" in order to make your Face + Putdown attack really really hurt.

You have to strike a different pose and shout a different attack name every time you want to do this—you can't just spam your "ROCKET MANDIBLE ACID BOMB!" over and over without earning the justified mockery of your peers.

to something like “Stuff That Hurts,” you can assume it means you’re reaching, and should dial it back to something more specific, like “Pointy Stuff That Hurts.”

RANGE: This one applies if you’re using the new “Farness” rules. It gets a proper description in that section, so see page 19 for the full workup on how it works. If you’re not using those rules, then don’t take this Extra.

It’ll be less use than the panicked micro-cram you do minutes after you walk into class and realize the final exam is *today* and not *Friday*.



SWEET: Each rank of Sweet increases the Width of a successful roll for a Useful power when determining how well you do. It’s like Gnarly but for stuff that doesn’t do damage. This doesn’t improve your chance of getting a success—you still need to roll a set before you get to be totally Sweet—but it makes successes that you do roll that much nicer. Sweet also doesn’t affect Width for the purposes of initiative. If you want to be quicker, you still need Wicked Fast.

SPLASH: Each rank of Splash lets a power hit a second adjacent hit location on a target that’s roughly the same size as you (the same level of “Bigness”; see page 27). If you hit a target’s 1–2 location, and have one rank of Splash, then it also hits the 3–4 location. With five ranks of Splash you can hit six locations in one blast—that’s a whole person! (With monsters that’s not as sure a thing, what with their tendency to have more limbs than is generally considered decent.) If there’s any choice to be made between available hit locations, the target gets to pick where your attack splashes. Splash damage does not ignore any Toughness the splashed locations might have, so it’s not quite the same as how damage will carry over if it hits a location without any more dice.

TWEAKED EXTRAS

AWESOME: What if you want more than two levels of Awesome? If the GM is cool with it, you can keep buying Awesome. Every two ranks lets you flip another die to whatever you like after you roll, and any remaining single ranks let you set one before the roll. So, five ranks of Awesome let you set one die before the roll and two dice after. Be careful not to spend too much on Awesome, though—if you can flip more dice than you have, you’ll be in trouble unless your monster is mainlining a Relationship.

SPRAY: As written, Spray doesn’t scale and can be really dominant. Here’s a less macho version: Each time you take a rank in Spray, you can use one additional set to spam your declared action each time you take a rank of Spray. So to use two extra sets (up to three total), you’d need Spray x2.

CHAPTER 2: THREATS

**BAD THINGS HAPPENING TO GOOD PEOPLE,
OR, MENACE, PERIL, DANGER, AND
A THOUSAND BIOGENIC MURDER-HAMSTERS**

These rules were first introduced in a sidebar on page 32 of *The Dreadful Secrets of Candlewick Manor*, and are presented and expanded here because they've proven very useful and should be available to all *Monsters* GMs whether they run *Candlewick* or not.

Sometimes, kids and monsters find themselves tangling not with another character but with a dynamic and dangerous situation. It's not just a single obstacle to be overcome with a simple roll, but something requiring the added complexities of a full-blown conflict. Anything that can inflict damage on kids and monsters—be it a burning building, a hallway full of laughing peers, a swarm of angry bees, or a gnarly nightmare—can be handled as a Threat. Threats give the GM an easy way of managing complicated menaces and giving them meaningful game effects.

Threats ain't the same as characters, and in many ways are there to suggest to players a course of action in the scene.

THREAT DICE POOLS

A Threat is represented by a dice pool, a few Qualities, and even some Extras. In a way, it's very much how monster powers are stat'd out.

The Threat's dice pool is an abstraction of how dangerous it is and how hard it is to beat. It isn't intended to map directly to the numbers of actual giant snakes in a giant snake swarm, but if you like, it can. One giant snake per die . . . two . . . ten. And unlike kids and even monsters, Threats can have and roll more than 10 dice. Why? Just because!

In a conflict, Threats can damage characters, and can be damaged the same way: by having their dice pool reduced. When reduced to 0, the Threat has been completely dealt with.

The dice pool on a Threat can be dialed to meet your needs, but a good guesstimation is the number of kids in the scene plus the number of monsters plus an arbitrary number like . . . oh . . . let's say four. So if you've got three kids and three monsters, then the Horde of Angry Kittens has 10 dice. And if you turn your scaly buddy loose to melt them with acid, then . . . well, that's just sick. *Kitties*, man. *Kitties*.

If you're good at multitasking (or blessed with huge piles of ten-sided dice that you hate to see go idle), you can use as many Threats in a single conflict as you like. The building is on fire (six dice), the guards are chasing (eight dice), and the rat-bombs are starting to explode (six dice, Gnarly x2, Area x1)!

TO ME, MY MINIONS! FORM A MEATY BARRIER WITH YOUR BODIES TO PROTECT ME!

You can use a Threat to describe a bad guy's squad of minions and goons. One of the classic jobs of a horde of faceless scrubs—other than being squashed in appalling numbers by the heroes to show how heroic they are (and by “heroic” we mean “able to squash a whole lot of faceless scrubs”)—is to protect their malevolent bossman from being fed a righteous and much-deserved knuckle sandwich.

These guys throw themselves in the path of acid sprays, warp-grubs, fists, ugly insults, and big hunks of rock. They use their actions to defend their boss, and make no attacks or efforts to defend themselves, or they employ a suicidal charge, rolled like a Useful monster power, which limits the heroes from attacking *anyone except them* for Width – 1 rounds. While they're getting stomped into an oily goo, their boss legs it to safety. I bet that wasn't in the employee manual or mentioned in the orientation when they started working for Evil Co. Yeah, the health plan is great . . . if you live long enough to take advantage of it.

But then, even if you get squished, you can join the exciting growing field of Post-Mortal Security Specialists as part of your boss's new cybernetically augmented zombie horde.

THREAT ACTIONS

The GM always declares the intentions for any Threats in play before anyone else, regardless of the Brains + Out-Think totals. Unlike most characters, every set rolled for a Threat is used, so it can do the same Threatening thing multiple times in a round without even trying hard.

If a Threat has more than one declared action (attacking and defending, for example), then it drops a die from its pool as normal for multiple actions, but it gets to use all the sets rolled for either or both of its declarations.

THREAT QUALITIES AND EXTRAS

All Threats have the Attacks quality. Without Attack, they're not much in the way of Threats. For some Threats, that's all they do, but some situations are trickier to deal with.

With Defends, the Threat can make defensive rolls and gobble attacks, defending itself or others.

With Useful it can do other things, pretty much just like a monster power (as described on page 43 of *Monsters*).

What about exotic super-dangerous threats, like swarms of radioactive hyper-intelligent bees? The GM can add Extras to a Threat, just like a monster power. They work pretty much the same way here as they do for monsters. Gnarly makes the threat more dam-



CHAPTER 2: THREATS

aging, Tough makes it harder to beat, Wicked Fast means it resolves quicker, etc. Be careful with these: Since you keep all the rolled sets for a Threat, a little bit of Gnarly goes a long way. And since they don't have hit locations, a little bit of Tough protects the whole Threat.

When throwing together a Threat (either on the fly or during your pre-game prep), consider a little bit about what the mechanics will mean for that Threat. A bunch of demonically animated toys are going to have a different way of using the Area Extra than Doctor Doom-guy's Cadre of Crack Commandos.

Also consider what the Qualities mean for a given Threat. The dumb violence of a collapsing mine should get different Qualities than the coordinated aggression of the Fabulous Luchadore League's Vengeance Squad.

'HURTING' A THREAT

Threats don't really have hit locations. Any successful attack reduces a Threat's dice pool by the damage done.

And on the subject of attacking threats, what would you use to do it?

Here, creativity is explicitly to be rewarded and encouraged. Threats can be defeated in all kinds of ways. One kid might use his Hands + Punching to deal with a crowd of mocking, crowing kids, laughing at how funny his mom dresses him. Another might use Face + Putdown to smack-talk them back. Still another might simply run away, using Feet + P.E. to escape their taunts. The end result is the same: They inflict "damage" on the Threat's dice pool, representing how close they are to beating it, and how much its ability to hurt them has been reduced.

A MENAGERIE OF MENACE

Threats are a little fiddly, so some examples might be in order to gently ease the concepts into your brain like a very polite fluke-worm.

ESCAPED EBOLA MONKEYS

Who left this cage open? I'll bet it's the guy hemorrhaging from his eye sockets! Monkeys are cute, they're capering, and they're carrying a deadly disease. They just want to party and be pals with everyone, it's just that their love hurts. A whole lot. Being friends with a monster means you've been exposed to all kinds of weird stuff, so the bleeding-from-your-butt disease isn't a worry for you—but what about everyone else who lives in your town?

ATTACK: They jump around and bite and scratch, but only if roused. Mostly they'll try and run away until they get angry about being shoved into a sack.

DEFEND: Hitting one monkey among dozens is pretty tricky. They're nimble and noisy, and don't understand your puny human insults.

USEFUL: They can do all the things you'd expect lab monkeys to be able to do: climb, run, open doors, and infect your loved ones with the GAMMA-7 strain of weaponized hemorrhagic fever.

EXTRAS: Area x1, Wicked Fast x2.

SNAKES! WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SNAKES?

The plural of “snake” is “snakes” and the plural of “snakes” is OH NO OH NO OH NO THEY’RE CLIMBING UP MY PANTS! You know why you can’t trust snakes? No arms and legs. You can’t trust nothing without arms and legs. They’re crazy jealous of limbs. Limbs, and body heat. This Threat is enough snakes to fill a garbage truck. Put them downstairs in your house at about three in the morning while your family is sleeping, and see who keeps their cool. Not you, buddy.



ATTACK: They can bite and they can squeeze, and it’s as bad as you can possibly imagine.

DEFEND: There’s just so many of them, punching and kicking at them seems pointless. Something that burns and explodes might work better.

USEFUL: A single snake does snaky things. A thousand snakes make people quiver with near-insane fear—and possibly throw up—while holding them immobile in a roiling snaky mass.

EXTRAS: Area x2, Tough x1.

THE COLLAPSING BUILDING IS NOW ON FIRE

Whose bright idea was it to use fire on the snakes? Oh, right, *mine*. Well anyhow, now the building is on fire.

ATTACK: Burning chunks of stuff fall on kids. If their monsters are around, the smoke and lack of good air won’t be a problem, but getting burned worse than forgotten fish sticks in a deep-fryer will be a concern.

EXTRAS: Burn x1, Tough x1, Wicked Fast x1.

MIB GRAB-SQUAD

While Agent Taupe and Agent Beige direct the action, the Grab-Squad piles out of the antenna vans. They wear plastic biohazard suits and blank-faced gas-masks. They carry pinch-sticks and canisters of sticky foam. They swarm all over you and your bug-eyed buddy, heedless of how easily the thrash of a tail spike or tentacle sends them flying through walls.

CHAPTER 2: THREATS

DEFEND: The Grab-Squad won't defend itself, but it will defend any MIB agents on hand for the capture.

USEFUL: They're all about being Useful. They make good use of this Quality to bind up kids and monsters (tying up their body bits), limiting their ability to escape, and generally steering them towards the open doors of the antenna vans.

EXTRAS: Awesome x2, Wicked Fast x1.

EXCRUCIATOR HATCHLINGS

Somebody ate a whole bowl of the suspiciously bitter candy in Ms. Pale's office, and now there's enough wriggly tentacular horror to fuel the nightmarish literature of a legion of pasty early 20th-century pulp horror writers. And they're coming up out of the potty, right now and the smell is even worse than when Dad is done in there on Enchilada Casserole Night.

ATTACK: Oh yeah, they do this. Their little barbed tentacles are like getting scratched by a thousand slimy cat claws, and they smell so bad you want to throw up. When they crawl all over you, your sanity says, "Dude, I quit. I'm not paid enough to handle this crap."

DEFEND: They're aggressive, but skittish. They'll wiggle aside if they start to get squished.

USEFUL: They can squeeze through really tiny openings (like human ear canals), but aren't big enough to wear their own skin-suit yet. Though if a lovable, scruffy-eared puppy came close enough . . . well, if Scraps starts to look at you funny, you know why.

EXTRAS: Tough x2, Gnarly x1.

ROBO-BEES

What's better than bees? ROBOT BEES! You know why? Because Robo-Bees have more SCIENCE! What began as a noble answer to the collapse of native honeybee populations and falling crop pollination became a twisted example of science run mad—MAD!—when the cackling inventor realized that helping farmers might be noble, but ruling the world is much more fun. "Fly! Fly my striped mechanical minions! Sting, sting, sting!"

ATTACK: They're really good at this one. They swarm, engulf, sting, and suffocate.

USEFUL: The Robo-Bees can fly around and send back pictures and signals to their evil overlord that he can watch on his big screen in high-def, or on his fancy new UltraPhone that he constantly takes out to show how hip he is. Jerk.

EXTRAS: Area x1, Sharing x1, Tough x1.

THE MEAN KIDS

When people say that kids can be so cruel, it's these kids they're thinking about. The Mean Kids travel in a pack, and subject weakened loners to relentless attack. Unlike the great circle of life on the Serengeti, they don't have the decency to eat the kids whose childhoods they kill. A fight with the Mean Kids might last a whole school year, each turn of the conflict covering events separated by weeks.

ATTACK: Relentlessly, but not with fists or pointy sticks. The Mean Kids sneer, whisper, spread rumors. They mock and laugh, ridicule, and denigrate.

DEFEND: Turning around and punching the bully in real life usually results in him punching you back, but the Mean Kids don't respond well to attack, and will often resort to defensive snubbing and disdainful retreat.

USEFUL: The Mean Kids aren't really much use at all, but they're pretty good at forcing their victims into bad situations or limiting their actions—say, making it clear that they would not be welcome at the party when Toby's parents go out of town.

EXTRAS: Awesome x2, Burn x1.

TRAVERSING THE TREACHEROUS NIGHTTIME ROOFTOPS OF OUR FAIR CITY

Here's a weird one. You set up a tricky task as a Threat. In this case, traversing the nighttime rooftops of the city in the dark (at night) without getting really messed up. See, there are no monsters or goons to bash here, so regular fighting skills won't work to beat it (unless they're applied really, really creatively), but being able to see really good, or being athletic, or being able to stick to walls like a giant fly would be really useful in beating this Threat. But the rooftops are treacherous, and you'll find yourself in trouble before you even realize it.

ATTACK: This is where the menace hidden in the rooftops comes from: loose roofing, pokey TV antennas, unexpected drops, and walls topped with broken glass. Dashing heck bent for leather across the roofs in the dark is just asking for a bruising.

USEFUL: The rooftops are really tricky, and could impose limitations and steer actions.

EXTRAS: Wicked Fast x3.

POSSESSED TOY FACTORY

KidCo International LLC thought they could save a buck by relocating their factory to your economically depressed area and hiring desperate locals. They also cut some corners here and there in safety standards and training. And of course, to keep the books their third-shift manager summoned Pushn'shuvgoth, the Black Goat Behind the Cubicle Divider, a terrible alien entity trained in eldritch accountancy. The Elder Thing quickly possessed the factory, the machines and the toys, and started



CHAPTER 2: THREATS

auditing the place. He immediately found a whole lot of fat that could be cut. Unfortunately, most of the fat was under the skin of the factory's workers. Including someone you know and really care about.

ATTACK: The plastic casting machines squirt molten flesh-colored plastic and the half-formed dolls reach for you, their little voices saying, "MOMMA . . . MOMMA . . . MOMMA . . . DIEEEEEEEEEEE." It's as much an attack on the mind as on the body.

USEFUL: Lots of little doll hands, out-of-control industrial machines, forklifts, and the copy machine in the office are all at the Black Goat's disposal.

EXTRAS: Tough x2, Area x1.

THE SEVEN STARS SECRET KUNG-FU BROTHERHOOD

What's up with all those bald dudes in the robes? A *secret* brotherhood you say? This must be a new meaning of the word "secret" I am not acquainted with. A very obvious and public sort of *secret*. Oh crap, here they come! The SSSKFB ('Siskafub') is an ancient society of kung-fu masters trained in the deadly Seven Stars Foot Fist style, and some have mastered the terrifying (and messy) Yak-Bursting Palm technique. The SSSKFB seeks their prophesied chosen one who will lead them in the final battle against their ancient foe, the Six Stars Secret Kung-Fu Sisterhood. The SSSKFB and the SSSKFS get along like priceless Fabergé Eggs and making omelets. Unfortunately for the SSSKFB, they have no idea who their chosen one is supposed to be, and they're remarkably trusting, so they end up playing heavy for all kinds of unethical villainous types.

ATTACK: The Brotherhood's Kung-Fu is strong. Plus, there's lots of them.

DEFEND: They move through the rushes, their steps so light they wouldn't tear rice paper. Plus, they can jump over your house, so your puny punches and kicks are contemptuously evaded.

USEFUL: They've got the martial arts choreography and wire-fu of a Yuen Woo Ping movie, and the dialog of a bad American dub. On the plus side, their soundtrack is by the Wu Tang Clan.

EXTRAS: Gnarly x1, Wicked Fast x1, Tough x1

THE GOO THAT ATE THE CAFETERIA

Perhaps it began life as creamed corn, perhaps as lime gelatin, perhaps as Salisbury steak. Nobody really knows. What's clear though is that something in the lunch-line decided it was done being the eatee, and wanted to be the eater for a change. The GOO looks like King Kong threw up after gorging at Piggy Dick's All You Can Eat Food-O-Topia. It crawls and engulfs, and eats *everything*. Even the boiled carrots.

ATTACK: This is pretty much all the Goo does. It grabs and squeezes, and lashes out with slimy tendrils of wilted salad and over-boiled hotdogs.

USEFUL: The Goo isn't one of the great minds. But that's fine; the Goo creeps, climbs, and engulfs, and its resume makes up for its lack of formal training with a lifetime of experience.

EXTRAS: Area x1, Tough x2

THE LUCHACABRA FIGHTERS

For years the humble Chupacabras watched prima donna monsters like Big Foot and Loch Ness get all the good press, while they were relegated to third-string sensationalist tabloids, and occasional laughing mention on Telemundo. But no more! They studied the martial arts of their native land, and joined together in a sacred society of sworn masked warriors—the Luchacabra Fighters!



They seek out monsters and challenge them to combat for the honor of all Chupacabra everywhere, seeking to prove that they're dangerous to more than just goats. They're very serious and earnest about it all. So when they get horribly, horribly mangled and squished, burned, clawed, bitten, and pulled by their ears through higher dimensional manifolds, it's especially tragic. Like seeing a tiny whining dog dressed like a clown sitting in the rain next to an empty food bowl outside the door of a house where everyone is on vacation in Tahiti.

ATTACK: While they can attack, hurting their foes isn't their major goal; they want the monsters they fight to say, *"Chupacabras are the boss of me!"*

DEFEND: Those nimble little guys sure are quick, when they've seen some of their fellows mushed.

USEFUL: They like lock holds, bouncing their enemies off the ropes, and doing crazy aerial combo moves. Most of these end up pushing and shoving enemy monsters around or immobilizing body parts with half a dozen little masked Mexican monsterettes.

EXTRAS: Wicked Fast x3

CHAPTER 3: FARNESS



CHAPTER 3: FARNESS

I CAN MELT YOUR FACE FROM
ALL THE WAY OVER HERE

In basic *Monsters and Other Childish Things* we're pretty abstract with range and distance, especially in a fight. The working assumption is that monsters (especially monsters) can figure out a way to hurt the other guy even if their abilities aren't specifically about spewing acid or shooting beams of ruby light. The monster with huge super-strong arms could lob a car, or the monster who can knot space like a hippie's hemp bracelet could bend an enemy into a pretzel of folded space-time so he punches himself in the left kidney.

This system is based on **relative distance**. It isn't really all that important exactly how many feet apart two characters are, or how close they are to the walls or the innocent bystanders (unless it is . . . and that's your call)—what's really important is how close they are relative to each other, and only then, when you really need to know it.

COME OVER HERE AND SAY THAT!

Here's the six-step scale of Farness we'll be using for these rules (and for some other fancy-schmancy tricks later on—stay tuned, kids).

Remember, what this scale measures is the relative distance between two characters (or a character and something important) in a scene. It's a deliberately abstract way of tracking range, and can take into account both actual distance, but also how much junk is between the two characters, stuff that limits sighting, targeting, and whatnot.

FARNESS

- 1 - Up In Your Face
- 2 - Just Out of Reach
- 3 - A Stone's Throw
- 4 - A Long Shot
- 5 - Way Out There
- 6 - Going
- 7+ - Gone, Baby, Gone

DEFAULT FARNESS

When setting up an action scene where knowing distances will be significant, give some thought to the general size and shape of the place it's all going down in. If the scene takes place in the tight confines of a haunted shack, there's a lot less room in there than if it goes down on the rooftops of Randolph Carter Junior High. What this gives you is the **Default Farness (DF)**.

Default Farness is the separation between significant characters and stuff which, in the chaos of an action scene, things tend to normalize at. What this means is that if you lose track of how far you are from someone or something, and you ask the GM how close it is, he'll tell you the scene-specific default farness. The Haunted Shack might have a DF of 2, while the school's rooftop, 4. This assumes everyone is running around, jumping on things, dodging, yelling, ducking, posturing, and the camera of the imagination zooms around on wires, and captures the action from lots of perspective-distorting angles. Remember: the important thing is how close you are to the guy whose nose you want to punch, and everything else is cool description and color.

If you're the GM, and a player has to ask you how close they are to someone or something, then they've not been keeping track of it—the chaos of the scene has carried them unpredictably, and they need to reconnoiter. This is the rationale behind the Default Farness. It's a quick shorthand way of defining how big a place is. It also highlights the dynamic nature of action scenes; fail to keep track of things, and they'll get away from you.

As characters move around the scene, make sure the players feel free to embellish and add descriptions as they do, adding in detail which will really bring a scene to life, and provide things upon which to build further discussion. You should also not feel completely bound by the initial

HEY! CAN YOU HEAR ME, JERKWAD?

You remember how cruel kids can be? When Daniel Jackstone says something really, really uncool about Dog Jones's deceased Dad, it's worse than getting punched in the spleen. Kids push and shove, run away a little, throw some rocks, run away some more, then shout insults... the secret the mean kids know is that vicious self-worth-annihilating words are the sniper rifle of the kid battlefield, and they're camping on the respawn points of your soul, fragging you as soon as you recover.

So long as the target of your cruelty can hear you, you can use your Putdown skill to tear their self esteem into tiny confetti. In many scenes, this means you can keep ripping them out to Farness 5 without penalty; in fact, ragging on them running away is a favorite jape when they're this far out. But this kind of thing requires being able to clearly and audibly enunciate things like, "No wonder your Mom skipped town! Nobody would stand up for her . . . especially her own son!", so loud noise and general chaos can sometimes dampen the insults when mere separation fails to lessen their sting.

Some especially sensitive kids have realized an iPod loaded with songs by Gore Grinder and Cannibal Clown Apocalypse played at well-above the recommended volume is sometimes a better defense than eight-inch bone plates all over their backs. At least until the enemy stops hurling insults and starts hurling Tibetan throwing axes.

HOW FAR CAN HIS PUS GLANDS SQUIRT?

Farness adds some wrinkles to combat, and to monster combat especially, and makes monster abilities related to movement especially relevant. But as written, there's no mechanical allowance for ranged monster abilities. Here's the fix.

By default, monster powers (and ranged weapons) can be used out to Farness 2 in an action scene. Outside of the scene, the dice-pool based distance is used, but in an action scene, with all the chaos and yelling, the *effective* range is less. This gives monsters a bit more reach than regular people, but limits things a little bit.

The Area Extra lets you hit everyone within a Farness of your target equal to the number of Area Extras the ability has. It shoots out to its maximum Farness, hits a target, and then explodes from there. If my Cloud of Flaming Skulls ability has Area 2, then I can hit everyone who is Farness 2 or less from the guy I nail with this power. The glitch with Area is, of course, that you can't decide who gets hit and who doesn't get hit inside that blanket effect. Also, if the Area Extras total more than the Default Farness in the scene, then *everybody* who's not explicitly farther away gets blown up by the exploding skulls. As a general rule, if it goes boom, use with caution.

For monster powers (and mundane weapons) that go father, use the new (predictably named) Extra:

RANGE

Each rank of Range the weapon or power possesses adds 1 to the Farness at which it can effectively be used. So, one rank means a monster can use his power out to Farness 3, and four ranks means the monster can use his power out to Farness 6. Outside of combat, add *twice* the number of Range Extras to the monster power's dice pool when referencing it on the Monster Might table found on page 44 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*; otherwise, you'd end up with a power that worked farther away in a fight, but closer up outside of a fight, and that would be ridonkulous.

Because you buy the Range extra with dice from your monster's body part, it means that powers you can use far away are going to be a little weaker than those you can use up close, and that adds a layer of tactical decision-making when building your beastly, and when playing him in a fight. Balancing your monster's abilities to make powerful attacks, close attacks, far attacks, and to move around in a fight becomes more relevant, and so give it a little thought when using these rules.

DF you decide on: perhaps things change, the roof falls in, a bunch of students crowd around to watch the fight, or some walls get blown out. Let the players know when this happens.

GETTING CLOSER (OR FARTHER)

So what about moving closer (or running away like a big wuss)?

Movement is pretty simple. Once you know how close you are to someone else, either because you've been keeping track of it, or you resort to the Default Farness, you can move 1 Farness step for free when your action resolves (based on the Width of your roll, as per normal). If your action fails, you can still move, but you do it after everyone else has resolved their action (ties are broken by comparing Feet + P.E. or the monster power dice pool).

If you want to take an action and move faster, then you roll the relevant dice pool (be it a monster ability or most likely Feet + P.E. for a kid), then you move the Width of the roll in Farness steps. A Width of 2 means you can move 2 steps rather than one. If you want to move and then kick somebody when you get there, then declare a multiple action normally.

It's possible to maintain your distance from an opponent by moving away from them as they move closer to you, but remember that your free movement happens on Width of whatever other action you roll, so it might be possible for an enemy to step close, sock you in the eye, and only then let you back up to restore the previous distance.

EXAMPLE

The remaining MIBs decide that running away very, very fast and leaving their dignity to be trod into the earth is the better part of valor after seeing Mr. Crocker spit out two licked-clean pairs of sunglasses. The Default Farness in this scene is 2, and so that's how far they start from Mr. Crocker.

Mr. Crocker finds he has a taste for MIB ("They're crunchy! Like meat chips!"), and so he's going to use his Bouncy Legs 8d to chase them. The MIBs are using their Feet + P.E. total of 6d to leg it. Mr. Crocker additionally decides try a multiple action with his Big Belly 8d to swallow one of the MIBs if he can catch them.

Mr. Crocker has to cover 2 Farness steps, and has 7 dice to roll (for his Bouncy Legs 8d, dropping one for the multiple action). The MIBs have to cover 5 steps to be totally gone from the scene; it's unlikely they'll be able to do this, but they might keep Mr. Crocker at a distance.

Everyone rolls...

- **Mr. Crocker:** 1, 3, 3, 3, 5, 5, 5 (3x3 and 3x5! Mr. Crocker licks his chops as he bounces towards the black-suited snack food).
- **MIB 1:** 2, 2, 2, 6, 10 (3x2 . . . not graceful, but he's moving).
- **MIB 2:** 1, 6, 6, 7, 8, 9 (2x6 . . . he manages not to do a header over Benny's bicycle, but it slows him down).
- **MIB 3:** 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (no sets . . . poor, poor MIB; and he only took the job to pay off his college loans . . .).

The Farness started at 2, and Mr. Crocker easily covers that with the 3x5. His player decides to use that for the movement because it beats the best Width the MIBs can bring, and that means he'll catch the MIBs before they start running—he covers the 2 range steps, and now he's Up In Their Faces.

Looking at what the other MIBs have rolled, Mr. Crocker decides to gobble up the guy who seems to be moving the fastest before he can get away. That's MIB 1, and just as he starts to sprint Mr. Crocker's jaws snap shut (with the 3x3, also faster than the MIB's movement), and the monster's belly gives a satisfied rumble. *Mmmmmmmssssgood.*

MIB 2 now moves, but because Mr. Crocker covered 3 Farness increments, he only manages to put 1 step between himself and the bouncing crocodile. Here's the math: the Farness started at 2, Mr. Crocker covered 3, MIB 2 rolled well enough to



CHAPTER 3: FARNESS

let him move 2, and so that leaves . . . 2 . . . plus 2 . . . minus 3 . . . carry the 1 . . . divide by *pi* . . . delicious, delicious pie . . . equals one Farness step. At the start of the next round, that's the Farness separating Mr. Crocker from MIB 2.

MIB 3 didn't put any distance at all between himself and Mr. Crocker, so he's also at Up In Your Face distance.

MIB 1 is now . . . well . . . *even closer than that*.

"This is Agent Eggshell. Agent Eggshell calling Control. Come in, Control."

"This is Control, Agent Eggshell. What is your status?"

"Currently engulfed in BEM digestive sack, Control. Have located several items of interest."

"Report, Agent Eggshell."

"Have identified the upper portions of Agents Chalk and Off-White, along with two partial automobiles, a big screen television, seventy-two institutional cans of pudding, and gallons and gallons of digestive slime."

"Agent Eggshell, confirm you have located pudding."

"Pudding confirmed, Control."

"Identify the type of pudding."

"Thirty-two cans of chocolate, twenty of vanilla, five of tapioca, five of rice, and ten of butterscotch."

"Report acknowledged, Agent Eggshell. Your service will be recorded in the Gray Book. Please initiate Protocol Sleepy-Time Happy Pills."

"Initiating. Protocol Sleepy-Time Happy Pills successful. Geep. Gurple. Snurp."

"Your name will be among the Honored Forgotten."

"Urp."

PLAYING CHASE

Here's another way you can use the distance rules we just described: you can use them to run complicated and crazy monster rooftop parkour chases.

If catching somebody isn't really all that important or worthy of a full-blown conflict, then leave it in the realm of the simple or the contested roll: roll and compare, with Width deciding who gets caught or who escapes, and Height how elegantly and neatly it's done.

But for a complicated and dangerous chase with lots of jump cuts and shaky-



CHILDREN FLY FOR FREE!

In a chase, a monster can carry his kid, even if he's got no explicit "carrying stuff" body bit to do it with. Riding on your monster buddy's back is pretty much half the whole point of being friends with a monster. This means the kid benefits from the monster's moving around abilities, and her hands and attention are free to do other stuff, like shout insults, throw rocks, or flinch violently away from gouts of fire.

If things get really bumpy (or the guy you're chasing decides to deliberately make trouble), then the kid might have to roll to desperately keep his grip, because no self-respecting monster is going to let his kid fall off and eat pavement... at least, not without a Motivation roll. "No Yog-So'Soft! Keep running! You escape!"

Can't you feel the pathos?

"You came back for me."

"Yep."

"I told you to keep running! We needed to catch that guy!"

"Yeah, I know. But my people have a saying: leave no man behind."

"First, I think it's the US Marines who say that. Second, I'm a girl."

"Yeah... and technically, the literal translation of my people's expression is 'never leave good meat for the ungrateful enemy to gnaw' but you lose the poetry that way, and it's really about loyalty and camaraderie and junk. It's hardly at all about cannibalism."

"I'm once-again in awe of your people's way with words. Lean down so I can hop on."

"Sure, dude, just don't fart on my exoskeleton this time."

"Again: GIRL. And I never fart."

"Take it from the guy who sleeps under your bed. You, dear friend, fart."

It works pretty much the same way with cars and people riding in them—the driver makes rolls, but everyone else gets the benefits of riding along. The chase rules are more about running (or flying or burrowing or squirting through worm-holes) than about mad car fights, but it'll work pretty well. See page 10 for more on using the monster building rules to apply stats to things like trucks and trains and giant robots.

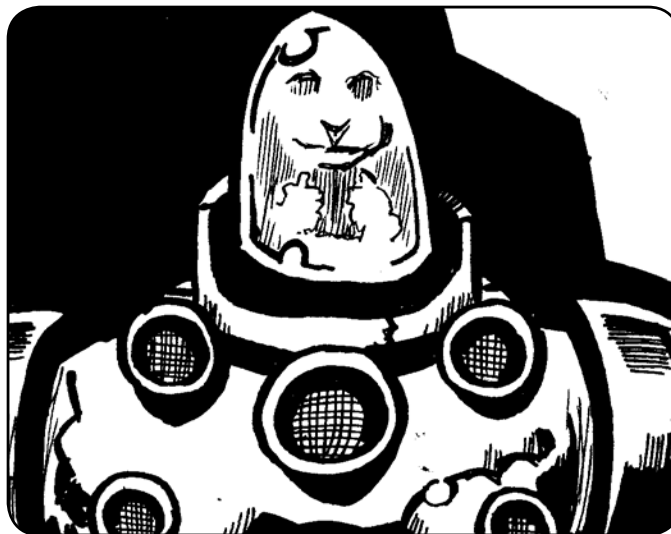
cam and guys walking across the street carrying huge plates of glass for monsters to smash through . . . for this, you run it like a conflict and use the Farness mechanics.

In this setup, Farness is still the relative separation between the chaser and the chatee, but rather than range for the purposes of launching distance attacks, it's the lead the runner has on the chaser. It's not about how fast they're going, but about how much lead the runner has on the chaser and whether she can extend that lead into an escape before the chaser closes it and catches her. Actual speed then becomes something cool to throw into the descriptions—and it also takes into account supernatural forms of movement, like that unsettling ability of monsters who wear sports masks to suddenly appear right behind someone running full-tilt even if the monster never seems to move faster than a plod. Farness is strictly a measure of how close the runner is to being caught.

Movement works the same as above; each round, the chaser and runner can move 1 step closer or farther apart for free. So, if both are trying to do something else, then they keep pace. If one tries to alter the Farness between them, it's resolved and the Farness changes by their Width. Remember that the timing of movement can sometimes be really important, if the chaser can grab the runner before the runner's movement action kicks in, for example. That's why the complex conflict rules really serve the tension in a chase scene well.

But running isn't the only thing you can do in a chase. You can throw stuff, drop stuff, spray slick grease on the ground, set fire to the walls, knock over a stack of nudie magazines to distract, scream threats, lob rocks, hurl insults, or do the opposite, and leap, crawl, dodge, and scurry away from these threats. What we're talking about here is the full range of normal conflict options (and the new ones described in this book on page 6 under 'Pushing and Shoving' and 'Helping Hands').

CHAPTER 3: FARNESS



An attack that inflicts damage on an opponent can be all kinds of things in a chase. Make them crash through something to try and reach you; leave them gasping for breath as you put on a punishing turn of speed; or shout dire threats about what you'll do to their bike if they don't stop running away. The damage inflicted here might impair your opponent's ability to keep chasing or keep running; try to hurt their Feet

if you're running, their Hands if you're driving, or their Brains if you're flying alien mind-saucers. It'll also make it harder for them to do other stuff, like lob junk in your path, or spook herds of dinosaurs into stampeding at you.

Defense actions work normally, gobbling dice used to make damage-inflicting attacks.

Monster powers (and regular kid skills) can be used to limit the opponent's options. You *can't* use Pushing and Shoving or a monster's Useful powers to automatically escape or catch, but you can use them to steer your opponent into trouble, away from help, or otherwise where you want them to go. This assumes the chaser has some way to keep up at all; running away from a guy whose legs are caught in a huge steel bear-trap isn't a chase, but it sure is ungentlemanly. Likewise, if your monster can teleport to Venus anytime she wants, then Joe Flatfoot the P.I. isn't going to be able to even think about tailing you.

If the runner can increase the Farness to greater than 6, then he's gone.

If the chaser can decrease the Farness to 1, then she's caught the runner and what happens next is what happens next. You only hope she wants to kiss you and make you play house. She might want to kiss you, lay eggs in your abdomen, and *then* make you play house . . . where *you are the house*.

You probably don't need to keep track of the Default Farness in this kind of scene, because knowing how close you are to getting away or getting caught is the *point*. If another scene turns into a chase, then you can use the DF from that scene as the starting distance between chaser and runner, or just call it arbitrarily based on what makes sense.

CHAPTER 4: BIGNESS

MY PAL LEVIATHAN

"ALL RIGHT, I HAVE A PLAN."

"Lay it on me, hepcat."

"HEPCAT?"

"I'm trying to resurrect some vintage slang so I can be cool when other kids pick it up."

"BELIEVE THAT I SAY THIS WITH LOVE, BUT IF YOU KEEP SAYING 'HEPCAT', YOU'LL NEVER BE COOL. EVER. EVEN IF YOU WERE FROZEN IN A GLACIER FOR A THOUSAND EONS OF TIME, YOU WOULDN'T BE COOL."

"How about 'daddy-o'?"

"STOP. JUST STOP."

"Fine. Way to harsh my mellow. Just tell me the plan."

"I GOT THE IDEA WHEN IT POOPED ON THE SCHOOL. WE CAN'T HURT THE MONSTER ON THE OUTSIDE. THE ARMY COULDN'T HURT IT WITH BOMBS. SO WE NEED TO GET INSIDE. WHERE HE KEEPS ALL HIS SQUISHY AND VULNERABLE ORGANS AND SUCH."

"How did him pooping on the school give you that idea?"

"WELL, WE CAN'T GO IN THROUGH THE MOUTH. ALL THOSE TEETH? NO THANKS. WE NEED TO GET INSIDE THROUGH A SAFER WAY..."

"No..."

"... WITHOUT TEETH..."

"...no..."

"...AND THE BEST WAY HAS GOT TO BE..."

"...don't say it..."

"...RIGHT UP HIS..."

"...seriously, don't say it..."

"...BOOM-BOOM CHUTE."

"His...?"

"BOOM-BOOM CHUTE."

"You use the phrase 'BOOM-BOOM CHUTE' seriously, and you think saying 'HEPCAT' means I'll never be cool?"

"yep."

"Well, hepcat, I think you just lost the right to have an opinion on anything I say. Ever."

BIGNESS RATINGS

Here's where we really justify the title of this book. Monsters so big they have boogers bigger than Great Danes. This brings it all together, the Farness rules and the stuff on Threats. When Combine-R is stomping towards you on his tractor legs—his arms made from grain threshing machines reaching out to get all agrarian on your butt—knowing how fast he's coming is pretty significant. How likely are you to outdistance something that can cover half a football field in a step?

Likewise, if you manage to leap up onto his legs then Combine-R becomes less an antagonist and more a *location*. Those big threshing blades become a hazard you have to negotiate before hopping from his elbow to his control linkages while leaping away from the robot scarecrows that infest him like lice.

So how do we meaningfully handle crazy disparities in the scale of different characters? If it's you and your friends (and their monstrous friends) teaming up against the Arisen Mognarch or The Burning Hot Giant Man Made of Wicker, then this system will give you and the GM what you need to keep everything straight.

Smaller characters are harder to hit but easier to hurt. Bigger characters are easier to hit but harder to hurt. They're slower to react but faster when moving. It's sort of a lot to keep track of. Do bigger creatures have bigger dice pools sometimes, and smaller dice pools other times? What if two giant creatures of the same general scale tangle?

Here's how you do it.

Everything has **Bigness**, a measure of which scale of action the creature or thing fits into. Kids and their monsters almost always have Bigness 1, meaning that their actions and their major challenges and concerns are on the kid scale. How about bigger stuff? That's where the Bigness scale comes in. The bigger the Bigness, the bigger the monster.

Bigness has some direct effects on monster actions, which we'll discuss below. Bigness also modifies how monster powers work according to Monster Might (see page 44 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*). Each rank of Bigness multiplies Speed, Range, and Mass.



BIGNESS 1 (NORMAL SIZE)

Kids and their monsters, pets, family, friends, most stuff they think is important. *x1 Speed/x1 Range/x1 Mass.*

BIGNESS 2 (BIG)

Really big animals like elephants and dinosaurs, and trucks that turn into robots. *x2 Speed/x2 Range/x10 Mass.*

BIGNESS 3 (BIGGER)

The biggest animals, like whales. This is about as big as an all-natural, 100% meat creature can get, and then only in the ocean. On land it takes mojo or bones made of ultra-calcium (thanks to all the ultra-milk) to get this large and not collapse under the crushing weight of a physics buzz-kill. Our favorite super-ape King Kong fits into this Bigness rank. *x4 Speed/x5 Range/x100 Mass.*

BIGNESS 4 (BIGGEST)

Huge, building-stomping beasts of this scale are big enough to sit *around* the house when they sit around the house. The shiny, growing, monster-fighting heroes of the Science Patrol, Ultraman and his Ultrabuds, are Bigness 4. *x8 Speed/x10 Range/x1,000 Mass.*

BIGNESS 5 (BIGGEST)

Only the most ginormous monsters achieve Bigness 5. They're creatures which can credibly be said to be civilization killers if they decide to stomp humanity back to the Stone Age. The all-time greatest and most super-sweet monster, Toho's Gojira, and his gallery of foes would be Bigness 5, which makes you wonder why they're always attacking little Japan. Fitting inside such a small country must be like trying to dance in pants two sizes too small. It'll make your butt look huge, and moving around comfortably is a trick. *x10 Speed/x100 Range/x10,000 Mass.*

BIGDIFF: USING BIGNESS

If Bigness is the same between two characters or monsters, then ignore it. Seriously, you'll almost never have to reference it at all. About the only thing to keep up with is how Bigness multiplies a creature's Monster Might. Beyond that, two Bigness 5 monstrosities pounding on each other while the city crumbles around them are handled just like two regular monsters going to town in the produce section of the local Sweeny Mart (except that's not bananas they're squishing to goo under their clawed feet).

When creatures of different Bigness ranks tangle, what's really important is the *difference* in their Bigness ranks. This **Bigness Differential (BigDiff)** is used as a modifier in a few significant ways, primarily in gaining the equivalent of Extras when dealing with a larger or smaller monster.

THE SMALLER CHARACTER...

- Gains Wicked Fast equal to BigDiff.
- Gains Awesome equal to BigDiff when attacking and defending against the bigger character (see page 9 for information on having more than two ranks of Awesome).
- Gains Awesome equal to BigDiff when using small size to do tricky things.

WE COULD HAVE PROM IN ONE OF HIS NOSTRILS

What about a monster so huge it's more like scenery than an arch-enemy?

If the BigDiff is 3 or more, instead of running it like a fight between the whole giant monster and the smaller characters, everyone can jump onto one of the big character's locations and stage a scene there—a fight, a chase, whatever. See the movement and range rules on page 19 and the Threat rules on 10, and combine them.

The location where the smaller characters are riding is treated like a Threat with dice, qualities, and Extras as normal, and with additional dice equal to twice the BigDiff. It's then handled in play just like a Threat, while the real action goes down on the scale of the characters atop it. Getting swallowed sometimes works this way, and you can stage scenes inside the big critter's innards.

Moving around on the back of the giant monster means treating the critter's hit locations as if they were BigDiff Farness away. If the BigDiff is 3, then traveling from Combine-R's Legs to his Head would mean covering three Farness steps with an appropriate means of movement.

In this mode, the giant creature is treated more like a dangerous location or set-piece than a distinct entity to be bested.

THE BIGGER CHARACTER...

- Gains Tough in all hit locations equal to BigDiff.
- Gains Gnarly equal to BigDiff.
- Attacks against smaller characters gain Splash (see page 9) equal to the BigDiff.
- Can move the BigDiff in additional Farness (see page 19) each round.

The way it works out, bigger characters hit harder and are themselves harder to hurt. They're also faster on the straightaways, but smaller characters are quicker to act. Smaller characters are also better at hitting bigger characters (because they're *bigger*—it's hard to miss), and at dodging their attacks (because they're *so tiny*). If you're teeny and he's big then it'll be easier not to get hit, but if you do get hit it'll suck more. Even worse, because the stuff you're getting hit with is so big, it splashes over into other hit locations. If you're a kid and get hit in the Guts by a Bigness 5 Mega-Squid then its damage will roll over to *four other hit locations* (so basically, all of them) and inflict +4 damage! You'll get squished so flat you'll have to change your name to Matt.

Remember, BigDiff is the source of most of these modifiers, not Bigness itself. If King Ug and Mi-Go'Jirra (both Bigness 5 creatures) tangle, then you can ignore the BigDiff modifiers—they're on the same scale. While the city might suffer horribly, there's no need to track size mechanically between the creatures. But if M-Force sends out a team of Spirit Rangers to try and use Bigness 1 monsters to fight the really big monsters, then the kids and their monster friends might be in for some serious trouble—at least until the Essence Engines wind up enough to power them up to the next Energy Level.

A HUGE EXAMPLE

The agents of the Monster Investigation Bureau finally realize that trying to take Mr. Crocker with conventional means is a losing proposition, so they call in heavy support from their contacts in the Military Industrial Complex. The boys from the MIB and the boys from the MIC don't always get along, but they share a few funding streams in the public/private administration model. So one quick call to General "Stormy" Stern, and there's a black-bag tactical team in a warehouse downtown ready to deploy a Thunderbolt 10 A.P.E. infantry force enhancer (in other words, a big robotic gorilla suit). Piloting the A.P.E. is specially cross-trained Sergeant Agent Cornsilk. Programmed into the A.P.E.'s pheromone targeting system is a stinky reptil-

ian smell, like the snake house at the zoo (or a certain Egyptian crocodile god's bathwater).

For over a week, all is good (for a particularly exciting and perilous value of "good") for Benny and Mr. Crocker.

And then, on the way home after school one day, somebody throws a car at Benny. A sturdy Swedish car whose exceptional safety standards and robust diesel engine make it quite heavy.

Sometimes, it's good to be friends with a monster.

Mr. Crocker's big belly is way bigger inside than out, easily big enough to swallow all that fine European craftsmanship. Which, with a tidy roll, he manages with style, even if the space-warping gulp makes onlookers mildly queasy.

Then, from its loudspeakers, the A.P.E. speaks: "CEASE AND DESIST ALL SUPER-, PARA-, SEMI-, AB-, and UN-NATURAL ACTIVITIES IMMEDIATELY, AND SURRENDER FOR PROCESSING!"

To which Mr. Crocker answers, "Bring it."

But when the A.P.E. lumbers out from behind the Gas 'n' Gulp, Mr. Crocker's nervous swallow is made more noticeable by the plaintive bleating of a car alarm from somewhere in the depths of his extra-dimensional innards.

The A.P.E. has Bigness 2, meaning a BigDiff of 1. It looms over Mr. Crocker even when he stands up straight and doesn't slouch. When they start fighting, here are the advantages each will have:

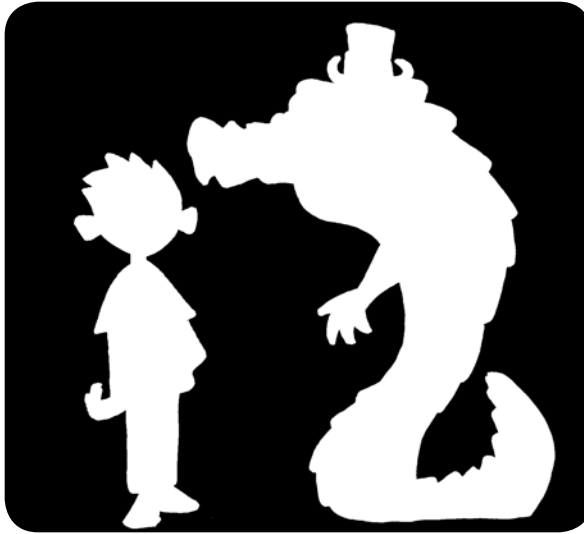
MR. CROCKER

- Gains x1 Wicked Fast for all actions.
- Gains x1 Awesome when attacking the A.P.E.
- Gains x1 Awesome when doing tricky things that take advantage of his smaller size.

THE A.P.E.

- Gains x1 Tough to all locations.
- Gains x1 Gnarly on all attacks.
- Moves +1 Farness ranks (if the optional range rules from page 19 are used).
- Gains x1 Splash on all attacks.

When the pain starts raining down, Mr. Crocker is going to have an easier time targeting the A.P.E. in specific places (because of the Awesome) and dodging the A.P.E.'s attacks. Unfortunately, if the A.P.E.'s attacks land, they'll do +1 damage and splash over onto an adjacent hit location. Worse, while the A.P.E. is easier to hit, it takes 1 less damage whenever Mr. Crocker manages to lay one on. The gator is in for a rough time.



AND I'LL FORM THE LEFT ARM!

Giant robots.

Oh yeah, we got that covered.

You can use the monster creation system to build mecha, power-suits, and giant robotronic mayhem machines. In most ways, they're just like monsters. Some may have brains of their own, and in that case dealing with them is almost identical to dealing with monsters, except their Personality and Favorite Thing will likely reflect their programming or directives. "OBEY ALL EXECUTIVES OF MEGA-DYNA-TECH CO.," or for lactose-intolerant mad inventors, "DESTROY ALL CHEESE."

But what about a mech that's like a big vehicle without a brain of its own? Something that has to be piloted around, and whatnot?

Somebody has to drive it.

That could be a guy in an instrument-encrusted control chair, or a kid with a remote control, or a monkey genius doing kung-fu in a 3D sensor field, but somebody has to tell the mech what to do. When a piloted mech is doing stuff, you always roll the LOWER of the dice associated with the bit you're using or the driver's STAT + SKILL combo (which depends on the mech, and is set when the thing is built). The mech's dice are still used for tracking damage, and for determining how much stuff it can affect, but its actions are limited by its technical constraints and the pilot's skill.

The exception to this is when Relationships are added into the roll. These are dropped on top of whichever dice pool is being used, because the above-and-beyond motivation they represent allows a pilot to exceed both his and his mech's limitations.

That's all a little confusing, so how about an example?

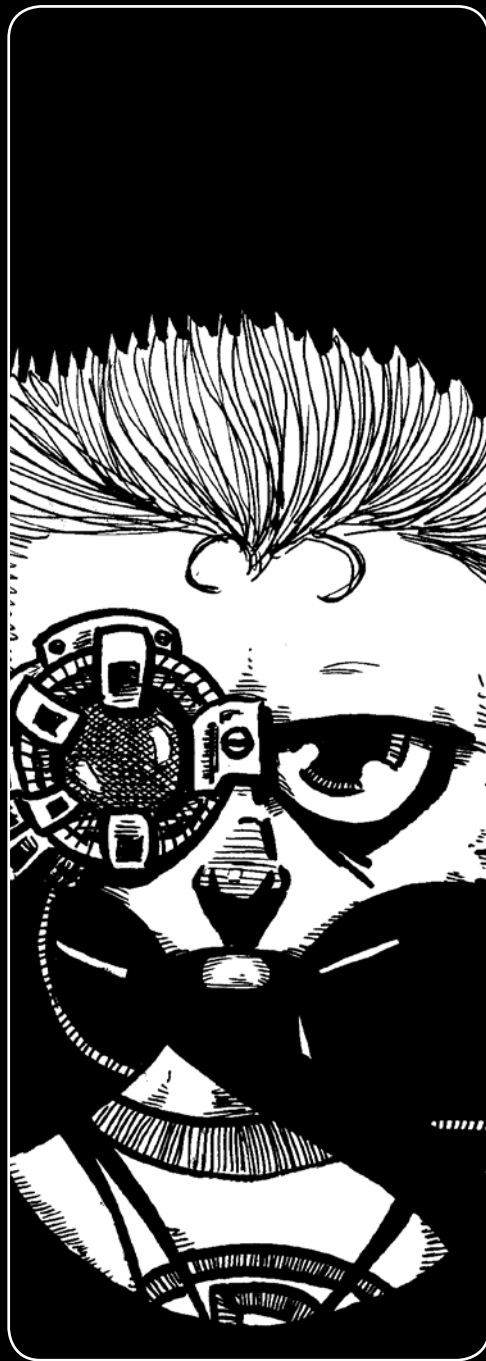
EXAMPLE: Martie "Duke234" Pooley used to spend all day pwn'ing newbs in Bronze Star Recent Warfare when he was recruited by Project BLACK BOOK. As it turns out, all those ultra-realistic battle sims were a combination of training program and screening process. When BLACK BOOK identified Duke234 as a perfect candidate for their Tele-A.P.E. Program he ended up in the back of a black van playing Bronze Star *for real*. He pilots his remote mech with his Hands + GameBox Epic Win dice pool of 8d; *but* if he fires up the Tele-A.P.E.'s 6d weapons pod to spray a room full of shoo-spiders with high-velocity narcotic paintballs, he'd only roll six dice because that's the weapons pod's total dice pool and it's lower than his own dice pool. ("These controls suck!") But if he busts his Tele-A.P.E. into the room and discovers his parents goobed to the wall by shoo-spider web, he could add his *My Lame Parents* 3d Relationship to the weapons pod's 6d pool.

Now, what about all the other stuff monsters have going for them—like the fact that ordinary weapons don't bother them?

Well, that's something of a judgment call depending on how you want to use mechs in your game. If you want them to pose threats to monsters, then let them ignore the normal advantages that monsters have when facing strictly mundane foes. If you want monsters to be able to rip Gammaton-7 a new fusion-chute, then leave those advantages in place. I'd recommend going ahead and giving mecha a pass on these things because there's nothing really mundane about giant robots anyway, and because Monster vs. Robot is such an iconic theme, resonating strongly with our geeky souls.

What about small robots that combine into big robots?

Each smaller bot becomes a hit location in the bigger bot, which must be one or two Bigness ranks larger than the component mechs. Use the largest dice pool from among the smaller mechs to represent the dice pool of the larger mech's bit, and assign it a hit location number based on the big mech's body shape. The players roll the dice that their individual mechs contribute to the big mech's abilities when they come up.



CHAPTER 5: WEIRDNESS

WHY ARE YOU SO STRANGE?

Your friends have cool monsters and they have crazy adventures and stuff. What do you have? Other than the symbiotic infection with superhuman Mi-Cells which lets you jump over cars, and shoot atomic fire from your mouth? Other than that? Yeah, nuthin. Being a Weird Kid sucks.

Here's an optional set of rules a GM can present to players who aren't keen on managing both kid and monster or who want to play a character who's a little different than everybody else. This stuff is entirely up to the GM. He's the gatekeeper, and he'll need bribes of tacos and orange cream soda to allow anyone to pass through. In some games, the GM might offer one Weird Kid slot, and let his players fight over it. In other less savage groups, it might be an option floated for anyone to grab. But it's the GM's call, because Weird Kids work different from Kids with Monsters, and they have a different impact on play, and the mechanics give them a different sort of trajectory.

WHO ARE THESE WEIRD KIDS?

They're kids caught between two worlds—on one hand, all the regular stuff kids care about like parents and friends and teddy bears and making the football team. On the other claw, it's stuff like secret government agencies experimenting with hyper-technology, or Uncle Koo who's not from Earth (and who peels bananas with his feet), or your obligation to the ancient spirits who empower you.

Weird Kids have Weird Skills, which are like superpowers, but with some strings attached (and sometimes, with some fungus plates, tentacles, or robot parts attached too).

WAIT, WEIRD SKILLS? THAT'S NOT IN THE CORE BOOK!

Yep, they're new (or, well . . . not exactly new, but close).

Like regular skills, Weird Skills are attached to a particular stat, whichever one is most logical. A "Steel-Crushing Grip" would make sense under the Hands stat. A "Dreadful Stare" under Face. "Rocket Boots" under Feet. They're a lot like monster powers, and in some ways a little better, and in others not quite so good.

How awesome are Weird Skills? Pretty darned awesome. Unlike monster powers, you get to add your Stat to a Weird Skill when you roll to do it (just like a regular skill), and the amount of stuff, speed, and distance you can affect is determined by the **total** of your Stat and Weird Skill dice as per the table on page 44 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*.

For example, if I had a Brains-based Weird Skill called "Conjure the Dark Crows of the Carrion Kingdom" (a magicky sort of Weird Skill) with 5 dice, I'd add in my 3 dice of Brains, and refer to the Monster Might table on page 44 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things* to

CHAPTER 5: WEIRDNESS

WEIRD SKILLS ARE CREEPY

Readers who're familiar with *The Dreadful Secrets of Candlewick Manor* will notice some similarities between Weird Skills and Creepy skills. This is because Weird Skills are basically the same as *Candlewick's* creepier version, with some tweaks and the added "torn between two worlds" stuff. The Weird Skill rules are backwards compatible to *Candlewick* too, if you want to add some more crunch to the Orphans' unusual capacities and unsettling abilities.

The notion of *Power Sources* could make an especially interesting one to export to *Candlewick*; if Orphans could discover the true source of their Creepy skills as another level to uncovering their personal mysteries, it could add a whole new level to the revelatory mechanics. This could work through Revelation, if the roll which triggered Illumination was a Creepy Skill roll. Rather than find a Relationship, the Orphan comes to realize the true source of his creepy powers. . . .

see how fast the murder of crows could fly in pursuit of the bully who stole my *Danger Patrol* Atomic Commando. ("It's an action figure, not a doll!"). Eight total dice of monstery might means the crows can hit 256 miles per hour on the straightaways. Danny Thick-Neck is in trouble.

Weird Kids also have a little bit of monsteriness, and have the same advantages as kids with monsters when it comes to dealing with monsters. When they punch a monster, the monster feels it, and when a monster hits back it doesn't automatically turn them into goo. When a Weird Kid uses his Weird Skills on regular people, though—well, it can get pretty messy. They have the same option as monsters for ignoring mundane defenses and doing *Scars* instead of regular Shocks, like ordinary kids.

WHERE DO WEIRD SKILLS COME FROM?

Alien technology, chimeric kaiju cells, mysterious tomes of forgotten lore, mysterious tomatoes of forgotten gardens, uncanny parentage, or secret psychic training . . . Weird Skills have a *power source*, which is something a kid could be caught up in which makes them weirder. If nothing strikes your fancy, you can make one of these up, but we'll detail a handful in the next section of *Bigger Bads* which will give you some example Weird Skills, a little special advantage for choosing it, and a little disadvantage to balance it.

HOW DO I MAKE MY OWN WEIRD SKILLS?

Refresh your memory of how monster creation works (starting on page 39 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*). A Weird Skill is an awful lot like a monster power.

Unlike regular skills, you always make up your own Weird Skills (though, lots of examples are provided here to get you started). Weird Skills are built pretty much just like monster parts. You have a certain number of Weird dice and you build your Weird Skills just like monster powers.

You get one Quality for free (Attack, Defend, or Useful), and can have others and Extras for 1 die each. Easy, and *without any possible downside!*

YEAH, RIGHT, SO WHAT'S THE DOWNSIDE?

Well, Weird Kids tend to stand out, and the weirder they are, the more they stand out.

When creating your own Weird Kid, you can take up to seven dice of Weird Skills, but you don't have to take that many if you don't want. "Why on Earth would I refuse all that totally rocking power?" It's the sort of question everybody who rubs the magic lamp or finds the

monkey paw in the attic asks themselves. Well, the more Weird Skills you have, the easier it is for people to spot something weird about you.

The difficulty for people to spot your weirdness (if they have some reason to look) is 10 minus your number of Weird Skill dice.

So, if you only take 5 dice of Weird Skills, spotting your weirdness is a Difficulty of 5.

But Dad always said that being different was a good thing, and if we were all the same, then there would be an underwear shortage because everyone would wear the same size. But Dad doesn't have to walk into the cafeteria on Monday after the mean kids found out about his poisonous spit and extra set of eyes.

If somebody spots your Weird Skills, it means *trouble*. Best case: it's fearful looks and mean rumors. Worst case: somebody blabs to somebody who blabs, and you wake up to find an antenna van across the street from your house in the morning, and Mr. Gunderman the mailman has been mysteriously replaced by the pasty, staring Agent Mailman Taupe. If it is a regular person with whom you have a Relationship who spots the weirdness, then the Relationship takes Shock equal to the Width of their notice roll.

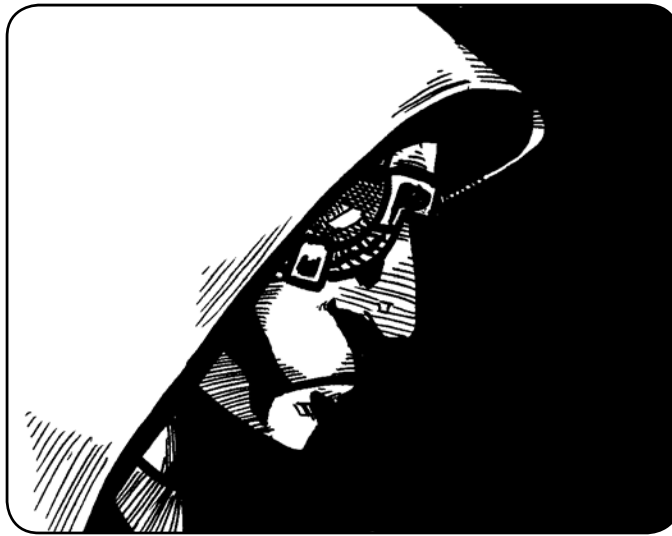
Worse, when you're trying to make nicey-nice with somebody who's spotted your weirdness, then **you** have a Difficulty to your rolls (usually Face, since it's mostly talky social stuff we're discussing) equal to the number of Weird Skill dice you have. Yes, this includes Quality Time rolls to fix shocked Relationships! There's reason you keep your Clueless but Loving Parents as clueless (and thus loving) as possible.

This unease lasts until you smooth things out with Quality Time (fixing the shocked Relationship). Strangers stay freaked until you do something about it—say, convincing them that while they thought they saw flying saucer men and a car full of rogue super-soldiers beating the snot out of each other in the middle of the day, what they *actually* saw was swamp gas and weather balloons... *beating the snot out of each other in the middle of the day*.

Those of you who're really good at math may have noticed something – if you have 10 dice in Weird Skills, there's no difficulty to spot them, and the difficulty to convince freaked out people that you're not going to eat their brains is 10!

And if you ever get *more* than 10 dice of Weird Skills, then it gets even kookier. If you have more than 10 dice people a bonus to their roll equal to the difference (Weird Dice – 10) to spot the weirdness, and you get a penalty that big to your dice pools to patch things up. Just give up, kiddo; when things get that bad, there's nothing to be done but to retreat to the hills and find a nice cave to live in.

Even if you don't start with all the weird dice you're entitled to, they are still yours, and you can add them to your character *any time you like*. But once you have them, you're stuck with them. If you want, you don't even have to have any when play starts, and can manifest unexpected and mysterious powers spontaneously under stress. Yay, you didn't get crushed by that falling crane! Oh no, your little sis saw you melt it with eyebeams, and now she hides from you!



CHAPTER 5: WEIRDNESS

DUDE... SERIOUSLY? THE MORE I SCREW UP MY FAMILY, THE MORE AWESOME I AM?

A certain kind of player might now be thinking, "I'm going to *freak out* my whole family FOR GREAT VICTORY!" It seems like an awesome scam, right? Earn some XP, buy a Relationship, then shock it into oblivion to increase your Relationship with Goro the Elder God, because Goro lets you turn into a blob of liquid shadow and ooze under the door of your cell at Juvie Hall.

If you're so inclined, then go for it...

What?

Seriously, do it. No, my devious smile means *absolutely nothing*.

Really, trust me.

Also, as the former president of Nigeria, I need your help and bank account number in order to hide money from evil rebels. I'll make it worth your while.

Alright, you caught me. The thing is, if you're doing this sort of thing, then you're really giving the GM tons of stuff with which to mess with your character and make things crazy and complicated for her. Think about what's happening inside the story. This really weird kid keeps making friends... and leaving them all terrified and mentally unstable in order to get more powerful.

Does that kid sound like a nice kid? Like a *hero*? Ha! He's probably got a big chair with buttons on the armrest and a white cat to stroke while laughing maniacally and plotting to take over the world.

I'm not telling you not to do this, rather ***I'm telling your GM to use it.***

Also, don't forget how useful regular old Relationships are. Weird Relationships can only help with weird things, while regular ones can help with *anything*.

WHAT WAS THAT THING ABOUT BEING CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS?

Ah, you remember that line, eh? Good reading comprehension. Your school will benefit from your excellent standardized test scores, which might *almost* compensate for all the kids who can't count past 10 with their shoes on.

Weird Kids have to split their starting Relationships between regular everyday Relationships and *Weird* Relationships. At least one die has to be in a Weird Relationship, and as many as 3 can be.

The cool thing about Weird Relationships is that they make you weirder (in addition to doing all the things Relationships do)—each Weird Relationship die gives you a freebie Weird Skill die. This means a kid with an even-steven split between Weird and regular Relationships has 10 Weird Skill dice (7 freebies, plus 3 for the Relationship).

The uncool thing about Weird Relationships is how they get you in trouble, and draw you away from ordinary human concerns. You can *only* add Weird Relationships to rolls when doing (or dealing with) weird things. A Relationship with the C.Y.C.L.O.P.S. (extra credit if you figure out what that stands for) supercomputer might be really useful when hunting down a monster-virus in the interwebs, but totally useless when you have to learn important life-lessons about sportsmanship and trying hard while being smashed by kids twice your size on the football field. All active uses of Weird Skills are obviously weird enough to qualify.

If you lose a die of a regular Relationship permanently, you gain a die in a Weird Relationship (and another Weird Skill die!). Remember how we mentioned having more than 10 Weird Dice? That's how you get 'em. You can't buy Weird Skill dice with experience points, only by this conversion of your regular Relationships into Weird ones.

Also, don't forget how much harder Quality Time is going to be when you have heavy armored plates of iron-like fungus all over your body.

NO, NOT BLACK LEAF!

What happens when I totally run out of regular Relationships?

Well, this depends on the group. Sometimes, to make it really edgy and intense, this means you lose your character. He becomes an NPC, and in all probability, a villainous one at that (perhaps redeemable through the heroics of the other characters, but lost to you for at least awhile).

This character yoinkage ain't for everyone, and some people will be rightly ticked if a character they like gets swiped. If they have XP, then give them a session to spend the needed 2 points to buy a regular Relationship die – it's a sort of classic story too, the monstrous outsider finding a love to save him from oblivion and mobs with pitchforks and torches.

Some groups might just shrug and go with it. Weird Relationships aren't as good as regular ones (they're limited in what they can be added to), and if they're lost then they're just lost, and don't convert into anything. You also can't buy them with XP, and have to first buy regular Relationships, and then convert them (by being a big creepy freak, say) into weird ones. All this could actually suit the group really well, because it'll certainly mean *interesting* play.

ALL THIS SOUNDS TOTALLY ROCKIN! SUPERPOWERS AND A MONSTER FRIEND?

Ah . . . no. Sorry. Should have mentioned it before. Weird Kids don't have monster friends. Monsters just don't bond with them. They're just so . . . weird. Weird Kids spot hiding monsters, and if they have the right skills, see even ones with powers which let them hide super well, but they can't be friends with them.

Being weird means no monster. It's just one of those *Other Childish Things*.

ENOUGH OF YOUR BLITHER-BLATHER, SHOW ME HOW THIS ACTUALLY WORKS!

Let's look at an example. Mary Finklestein is a perfectly ordinary girl, with a perfectly ordinary girl's worries and joys... until a medical accident involving her getting the wrong bag of IV fluids while getting her tonsils taken out infects her with a solution of mysterious Mi-Cells. She recovers from her surgery in record time, and emerges better... faster... stronger. Unfortunately, she also gets a nasty case of foot fungus. Hand fungus too. Only vigorous scrubbing with pumice and her Mom's Pro-G Age Defying Skin Rejuvenation Soap keep her from looking like a fallen log. Instead of callousing, poor Mary now scales and funguses.

All right, it's not all bad—she can punch a deranged alien robot through a wall. It's pretty much like being a junior league super-hero, except when she sleeps she can hear the ancient sad songs of the Great Beasts, mourning their lost homeworld. After a night of singing with the monsters, when she goes down to eat breakfast, it's her parents who look like the aliens to her. It takes her hours before people don't creep her out, with their smooth scaleless skin, and stubby clawless fingers.

She's got an even split between regular and Weird Relationships. 1d with her Parents, 2d with her Best Friend. She's also got 1d with the Great Beasts, and 2d with Mi-Go'Jirra.

Because she has 3 dice of Weird Relationships, that gives her 10 total of Weird Skill dice.

We're going to give Mary two Weird Skills, one for her HANDS and one for her FEET, and call them "Inhuman Might" and "Monstrous Motion", and give each 5 of her 10 Weird Dice.

Her two Weird Skills looks like this:

HANDS WEIRD SKILL: Inhuman Might 3d (Useful: Super-Strong), Attacks.

CHAPTER 5: WEIRDNESS

FEET WEIRD SKILL: Monstrous Motion 3d (Useful: Run Really Fast, Useful: Jump!), Defends.

Both have a total pool of 7d, which lets her lift 1.6 tons or run at a comfortable 128 miles per hour. Her Inhuman Might can be used to attack, and like monster powers, ignores mundane armor and can inflict scars if she wants (which she usually doesn't want!). She can also seriously sock out monsters with it. Her Monstrous Motion can be rolled to Defend too, evading attacks of all sorts.

Because she has 10 Weird Skill dice, there's no difficulty for an observer to spot something weird about her (if they have a reason to do so... like after seeing her toss a 200 pound MIB agent through a plate glass window). Worse, if somebody is freaked about how weird she is, then she's got *difficulty 10* when trying to be nice, charming, or persuasive with them without relying on fear.

During a family outing to the skating rink, she's recognized by Lt. Adrian Fisk of Project BOOK (an A.P.E. Pilot and avid amateur ice skater). Fisk dashes across the ice, his standard-issue zap stick at the ready, his voice loud as he calls in ". . . *Subject Codename LIZARD PUNCH spotted!*" Mary is forced to beat the snot out of the eager officer, and do so in full view of her Parents. They make a Brains + Notice roll and yep, they do notice something strange about their petite daughter kicking around a grown commando like a hackey-sack. This shocks the Relationship down to zero, and now Mary has to fix it with Quality Time but with a difficulty of 10. Talk about *aaaaaaaawkward*.

IS IT REALLY AS SIMPLE AS ALL THAT?

Well . . . pretty much. There are a couple of little wrinkles to keep in mind.

Tough is the Extra which subtracts from damage, and Weird Kids can have it just like monsters. What if you want a kid with a tough exoskeleton that protects everywhere, but no real active powers? You can spend all your Weird Skill dice on Tough, leaving no actual dice in the pool itself (so any active use would be rolled with only your stat). If you were known around the circus as Ping-Ping the Turtle Boy then you might have 4 Tough in your Guts, 2 each in Hands and Feet, and one each in Face and Brains. Of course, that's 10 dice, so you're pretty darned weird.

Bigness (the optional new Extra found on page 8 of this book) works like it does for monsters, requiring you to have 1 level of this Extra in each of your stats for an overall boost in Bigness. While it's certainly possible to play a kid with one giant monster-arm, it wouldn't really qualify as more Bigness unless you bought it across Feet, Hands, Guts, Face and Brains.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

So, you've slogged deep enough to finally reach the big payoff (or, you cheated and skipped the other stuff). We keep talking about giant monsters, and so here ya go! As an added bonus, we'll throw in some regular size monsters and people to further complicate the lives of hapless kids, and to confound helpful monsters. Mecha Mi-Go'Jirra is a big enough pain ("big" being the important bit of that description) without you also having to deal with your clingy new S.O.'s neediness or the hippie lady your Dad married without first consulting you. Though, if you don't head off Mecha Mi-Go'Jirra, dealing with your complicated relationships might not be a problem anymore, but then you have to deal with making complicated funeral arrangements.

YOUR (HOT) NEW STEPMOM (FROM CALIFORNIA)

"Now, I want you to know, I'm not trying to take your real mom's place, or boss you around, but... we just need to see a few little changes on your part, to make things a bit smoother, ok? First, we need to move your room to the basement, so your Father and I can have a yoga room facing the Eastern Sun. Also, you're a vegetarian now."

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: Dude, one more bowl of wheatgerm or one more "namaste!" and you're going to crack. You know how the gym teacher has that huge bulging vein in his forehead that throbs with anger and hate when you can't do chin-ups? You can feel one starting to pop out on your own head. When your folks split, that was bad enough . . . when your Dad got hair plugs, a convertible, and a new hippie girlfriend, it got worse. When they announced their engagement after taking a cruise (during which, you had to stay in another city with your aunt, and share a room with your cousins who smell like pee), it all started to swirl the bowl. The only thing that got you through the wedding ceremony outside under the sun in a field of wildflowers (other than copious amounts of allergy medicine) was the consoling mumblings of your squamous

MATH FAIL!

You may notice that some of the monstrosities and menaces below have more than 5 dice per hit location number, as is the standard when building monsters from scratch; this is entirely intentional. Some of these guys are really ancient and experienced, some are abnormally nasty, and others were designed by a designer who breaks his own rules with reckless hypocrisy.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

best bud. Now, she's decided that just a few little changes would make everyone totally happy and align everyone's energies. Thing is, you know what happens when people's energies really align. You've seen it. You had to wash brains and gunk out of your favorite hoodie afterwards.

REAL DEAL: Your (hot) new stepmom (from California) is indeed hot and from California, but she's also living under an assumed name while fleeing a federal rap for engaging in "herbal civil disobedience" to the tune of seven tons of primo Humboldt County skunky bud. Her yoga-and-yogurt persona isn't entirely a front, but there's a keen and surprisingly ruthless intelligence hidden under the granola and sun-kissed good looks that so blinded your Dad. She really does love your Pop, but eventually her old business associates are going to come looking for her, or some financial disaster might lead her to try a little bit of home gardening with those special seeds she has stashed in her sock drawer. When a suspicious smell starts to trickle up from the basement, and when some guys with bloodshot eyes and neck tattoos start coming around, asking for Mayleen, well . . . you always knew vegetarians were secretly evil.

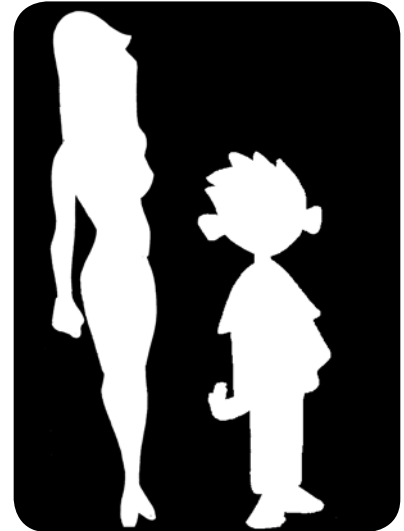
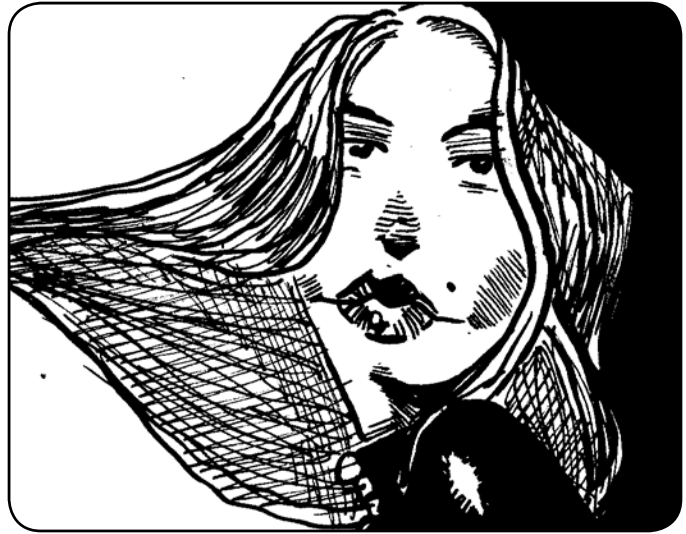
Your (hot) new stepmom (from California) is an old hand at keeping secrets, so she might notice when someone else in the house is keeping something on the downlow; she might get wise to a kid's monster. She might even have some experience of such things herself.

GRADE LEVEL: Any, but she'll present a different kind of problem as her stepkids get older. When they're young, the issue might be the problems of being displaced in a father's affection, forced to give up one's room, and comfortable habits. As the kids get older, then their friends might start commenting on the (HOT) part of her description, and dude, that's just not cool. Regardless of how she torpedoes the happy home, when her old life starts to catch up with her in the form of druggies, gangsters, and federal agents, the kids might have some real problems to deal with, especially if they've managed to reach an accord with her, or worse, become genuinely fond of her.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 2 (P.E. +3)

GUTS: 3 (Wind +3, Courage +3, The Human Pretzel +3)



HANDS: 2 (Shop +2 , Ninja Gardening +4)

BRAINS: 4 (Out-Think +3, Remember +3, Notice +3)

FACE: 4 (Charm +4, Connive +4)

RELATIONSHIPS: Your Dad 3, Sleazebag Ex-Boyfriend 2, Agent Jake Breaker, DEA 1, O'Maley the Anti-Drug Dog 1, Creepy Guy 1

AGENT C. OCCUPANT

"I'm deep cover, kid. Strictly black bag wetwork and recon, assassination, and counterespionage. I'm the one who cut the deal with Saddam against Iran, and then suckered him when we invaded. What? Iran? It's in the Middle East. You ever read a newspaper? Jeez, kids today. Anyhow, how about a couple of bucks so I can get loaded... er... get something hot to eat?"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

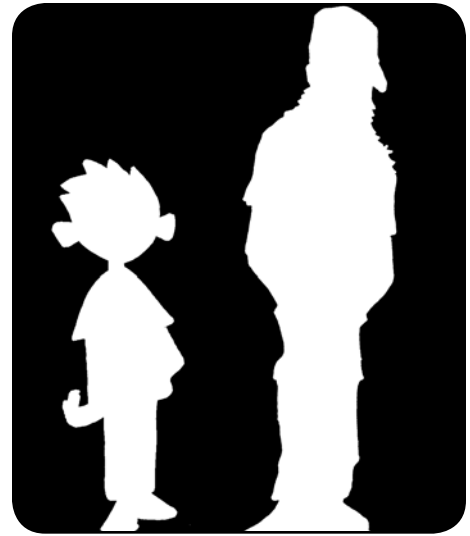
POV: Oh man, don't make eye contact... don't make eye contact... don't make eye contact... ah snap, now he's talking to me again. C. Occupant is this homeless guy who's always lurking around, and he's got a head full of R-rated stories that nobody should be telling little kids. Stuff about wars, and about contract murder, and about alien replicons used to replace major political figures and TV celebrity chefs who got too close to the truth about who's really in charge of reality. And who is it? Well, he never seems to get to that part of the story, or his eyes get vague, and he wanders off in a fugue, mumbling to himself in special forces code-speak like the kids who play too much *Bronze Star Recent Warfare Elite Edition* online do. But just when you were about to write Occupant off as a total crackpot, you saw him wipe the floor, Bruce Lee style, with half a dozen black-suited guys with ear-pieces and dull expressions, and another time you saw him stick a broken bottle into an Excruciator's gibblies. The dude has skillz, and so perhaps all the crazy stories he tells might not be so crazy after-all . . . except the one about the Zucchini Soldiers that France is supposedly growing on vines.

REAL DEAL: Agent C. Occupant really was an ultra-deep-cover superagent working for... somebody. He can't remember. His memory is a garbled mess, partially because he underwent extensive personality implantation for his various assignments, but mostly because he drinks Old Man Snapp's Hand-Blended Sip-pin' Whiskey by the gallon, and pounds his head against walls to stop the voices screaming at him. But when the fog clears, he's heck on two legs, and could scissor-kick James Bourne in the face while judo-chopping Jason Bond into unconsciousness. He took his name from



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

a piece of mail he found in his pocket when he woke on the streets of the kids' city. When he can puzzle out the mystery of who this 'Current Occupant' really is, then he'll be on his way to reassembling his shattered memories. That's not nearly as obvious a joke as it seems either... who really is the current resident of C. Occupant's head? Memory implants? Drink-induced hallucination? Or something of his true self leaking through? He remembers kids. He's sure, once, he had kids. Perhaps that's why he finds himself stumbling to the rescue of these young scamps again and again. The ability to assume the monsters are just the annoying product of delirium tremens really helps his shaky sanity.



MODUS OPERANDI: Agent C. Occupant will corner anybody who'll make eye contact, and tell them crazy stories, or quiz them with half-remembered recognition phrases. "On THURSDAY, the OWL and the COCONUT, are HAPPY to have TEA with the ICE CREAM TRUCK." Anyone who responds in kind with their own nonsense phrases will find him quickly assuming they're allied agents, and he'll start requesting "current operational parameters". If he encounters the MIBs, it'll be a brutal free-for-all beatdown. Colonel Brodie Block will say, "WHAT THE SAM HILL HAPPENED TO YOU? YOU USED TO BE THE BEST! AND NOW LOOK AT YOU, SOLDIER! YOU'RE A DISGRACE!" And C. Occupant has no idea why.

Funny thing about Agent C. Occupant: if you tell him its part of an operation, he'll *do just about anything*. Once he accepts someone as his Control, he'll help with any caper, no matter how extreme (though he'll need a talking-to about restraining his knife-edge kill reflexes . . . not unlike a monster, come to think), even say, bathing, shaving, and dressing up in your Dad's clothes for a parent teacher conference that could prove . . . *embarrassing*, given how distracted you've been of late. Occupant's Face Stat is lousy, but that's partially because he's dirty and drunk most of the time. Some detox and a shower will bump him closer to super-agent levels of charm and wit.

But if Agent C. Occupant gets it in his mind that you're a traitor, double-agent, or enemy operative . . . well, it's hard to forget how many *extra joints* those MIBs seemed to have in their arms and legs when Occupant was done with them. Arms should not bend in that direction—or rather, in *those directions*. At some point, C. Occupant received special training in exotic forms of eldritch kung-fu, because when he punches a monster, it *hurts*. He's got the advantages a kid has when dealing with monsters, and isn't going to get instantly hamburgered should things turn ugly.

GRADE LEVEL: Agent C. Occupant is gentler with younger kids; he's much less likely to decide a 3rd grader is a secret agent of F.E.A.R. or whatever. As kids get older, they start to present a more credible threat, and so Occupant's agent-instincts start tagging them as such. But really, he's mostly indifferent to age (much to the horror of parents, who get to hear some of the stories Occupant will tell their kids).

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 4 (P.E. +3, Kicking +4, Dodge +4)

GUTS: 4 (Wind +4, Courage +4, Wrestling +4)

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

HANDS: 4 (Shop +4, Punching +4, Blocking +4 Drive It +4, Shoot It +4, Blow It Up +4)

BRAINS: 2 (Out-Think +5, Notice +5)

FACE: 1/5 (Charm +0/+5, Putdown +0/+3, Connive +0/+5)*

RELATIONSHIPS: Control 3, The Bottle 2, An Unknown Family With Blurry Faces, Barely Remembered 1

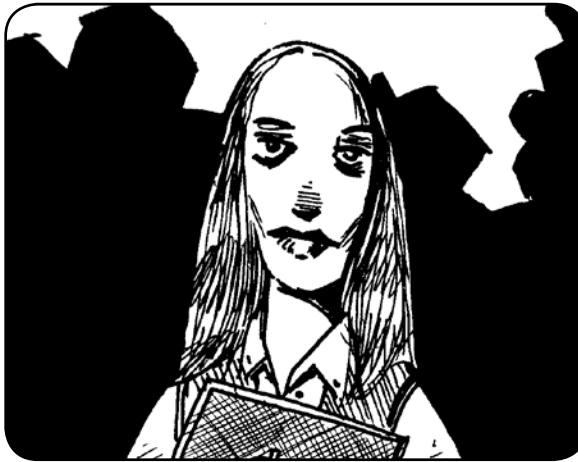
*Numbers after the slash represent C. Occupant's abilities after a shower, shave, good meal, and 48 hours off the sauce.

CLUELESS S.O.

"Are you like going out with somebody else? You're always like sneaking away and like doing stuff with somebody. Who is it?"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: Jeez Louise, why is everything so complicated? You're finally officially (and in front of other people!) actually "going out" with somebody who isn't an imaginary Canadian you met on the Internet, and now if they find out that your best friend can swallow a car and look through walls, they're going to freak out big time and dump you like a wormy cupcake, likely in public in front of all your shiny new popular "friend-like peer group".



REAL DEAL: The Clueless S.O. is a boyfriend or girlfriend—possibly the first ever—and while they do wonders for a kid's social life, they're a major drag on the kooky adventure front. If they find out about monsters, they're going to *freak* in a major way, and it'll be this whole thing with the recriminations and the emotional blackmail and the weeping and the straitjackets and the psychotropic medication. The Clueless S.O. sweeps in, and seems to make everything better: more popularity, more friends, invites to real parties, even the occasional smooch. Trying to balance the Clueless S.O.'s demands with everything else is like being stretched on a social rack, and a monster might be inclined to get mighty jealous of all the time a kid spends with this new person.



MODUS OPERANDI: The Clueless S.O. mixes carrot and stick; granting unparalleled popularity and access to the exalted Cool Kids Table in the cafeteria, but demanding a kid marginalize or even abandon old, weird, and unpopular friends. And always, there's that worry that the S.O. will pop a gasket if they ever see a real monster, and end up going underpants-on-the-head crazy, or pull a Beowulf and go all monster-slayer.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

GRADE LEVEL: The Clueless S.O. works better as a foil for older kids, for whom the social strata is more clearly defined (and upwards mobility in the hierarchy is harder), plus older kids have more interest in dating and romance. It'll be cuter in Junior High, but in High School relationship issues really ferment into a piquant sauerkraut of unbridled emotions and poor judgment, a bite of which can intoxicate even a level-headed teenager.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 2 (P.E. +2)

GUTS: 2 (Wind +2)

HANDS: 2

BRAINS: 3 (Out-Think +2, Remember +2, Notice +2)

FACE: 4 (Charm +2, Putdown +2, Connive +3, Wrap You Around a Little Finger +4)

RELATIONSHIPS: You 2, Popular Friends 2, Clingy Ex 2, Mom and Pop 2

SIDEKICK THE EAGER HOSTAGE

"Oh no! Captured AGAIN!"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: If he weren't so pathetic and eager and keen and (let's be honest) *helpful*, there's no way you'd even hang out with the Eager Hostage, but he's always willing to bring donuts for those late-night stakeouts at the cemetery, and he always has a pen and paper when somebody needs to take notes. Yet, when the Hairy Horribles raid your fort, who do they find? The Eager Hostage, captured again.



REAL DEAL: Sidekick the Eager Hostage calls kids with monsters (who he blindly idolizes) "Sir" regardless of gender, and is so keen and willing that it's extra-pathetic and schmaltzy when he inevitably gets captured, turned into a pig, or implanted with a remote-detonated charge of Nitro-7. He's just *so helpful* that it's hard to reject him completely, even if statistically speaking that would be the surest way to ensure his safety. Sometimes, Sidekick the Eager Hostage is a kid's younger brother, and then it's even harder to ditch him when Mom uses that *special* tone of voice when she says, "Why don't you take your brother with you when you go play?"; the tone of voice that causes that sentence to



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

really mean, “You better take your brother, treat him nice, and no whining, mister, or it’ll go hard for you!”

GRADE LEVEL: Sidekick works best with older kids—Junior High or High School—because he’s younger and runtier than most of the kids, and especially precocious as he assists in any way he can.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 1

GUTS: 4 (Courage +4)

HANDS: 3 (Shop +3)

BRAINS: 3 (Remember +3, Notice +3)

FACE: 2 (Charm +4, Connive +4)

RELATIONSHIPS: You 3, Another Group’s Sidekick (that he’s sweet on) 2, Mom/Dad/Parental Unit #7 1

THE GRUMPS

“Harumph!”

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: You woke up feeling... just not good. Everything was sort of irritating, and you were tired like you stayed up too late reading or playing GameBox again. Breakfast was cold and soggy (or seemed so), Mom was snappy and short-tempered (or seemed so), and even your monster buddy’s usually hilarious banter made you tell him to shut up. The bus to school was

worse: loud, long, and you ended up having to sit next to the kid who always throws up. From there, the day just got suckier and suckier... though, perhaps if you thought about it really hard, you’d see it wasn’t actually *objectively* sucky beyond the ordinary suckiness of all school days, but . . . it *seemed* suckier somehow. And everyone around you seemed like what they really need is a good monster-bite.

REAL DEAL: The Grumps are an insidious monster indigenous to a bleak and dull dimension of constant cold rain and lumpy cream of wheat. When they escape



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

into our world, they hang around invisibly, being unpleasant, and spreading their irritability, grumpiness, and general malaise. They'll spoil moods, sour weather, hide keys, pee on the floor so you think the dog did it, de-bag and dog-ear the corners of mint quality collectible comic books, cause the cable go out, the computer to crash, and old socks to be super stinky (even stinkier than normal).

MODUS OPERANDI: The Grumps will latch onto a kid or his household, and then just make things more irritating and unpleasant. The GM can do this with a subtle shift in how she describes things: Mom's short tempered, the bus is hot, somebody scratched a favorite videogame disc. This can begin in the background, becoming more and more pronounced until its obvious that *something* is going on. Players will pick up on the cues easily, and roleplay their kids appropriately. With luck, this will lead to some monster fights, misunderstandings, complications, and recriminations before the Grumps are even discovered. The trick here is to make a kid's life *irritating*.

GRADE LEVEL: The Grumps care not for age or grade; they'll inflict their brand of lameness on anyone who catches their eye (the criteria for which is often as obvious as "He has a disgustingly sunny and optimistic disposition" or "It's Thursday and she's standing there").

APPEARANCE: The Grumps (when they can be seen) are a legion of little bent-backed old men with sour faces, slouching around in a cloud of gray fog which makes their numbers impossible to determine. They smoke little dirty cigarettes that smell subtly of cheese, garbage, pee, mold, feet, and farts. They're all about the size of action figures, and even if some get squished, the others hardly look excited about it. In fact, they look weirdly satisfied when their fellows get turned into icky gray paste because it seems to confirm what they thought about life all along: it sucks, and then some giant purple insect turns you into a greasy stain on the carpet. Harumph.

PERSONALITY: Grumpy, predictably enough. The Grumps are sarcastic, mean, and lazy. They'd be clinically depressed if they didn't have so much energy for being unpleasant to others. Spreading around the grumpiness doesn't make them happy, exactly... it does make them SATISFIED though, sort of how taking a really huge poo can feel like an accomplishment. The whole legion of Grumps have one worn-out old heart to share among them, and the one carrying it stands straighter, smiles sadly, and makes heart-breaking pleas for mercy or forgiveness. These are total lies, of course; just because he can feel wan and sad rather than gray and grumpy doesn't mean he's not still a total jerk.

WAY TO HIDE: The Grumps are invisible, and their vaguely stinky gray fog messes with the minds of kid and monster alike, making them even harder to spot. Noticing them is a trick, and they can do their subtle ugliness for awhile before somebody thinks to do an active search for them with monster-senses. Sometimes, it's during searches for other things that the Grumps get spotted, and then that just confuses matters when they play the role of the crimson sardine.

FAVORITE THING: Ruining people's day, and making them feel irritable, mean, snappish, and jerky.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1-4: Gray Cloud of Mind-Mucking Fog (7 dice, Useful [hide the grumps], Defends, Area x5, Awesome x2, Tough x5)

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

LOCATION 5-8: Hundreds of Teeny Little Old Men (10 dice, Useful [Make people feel lousy], Attack [cause accidents], Defend [there's hundreds of 'em!] Area x5, Wicked Fast x3)

LOCATION 9-10: One Tattered Heart Shared Among Them (7 dice, Useful [Make heart-breaking but insincere pleas for mercy or forgiveness], Useful [make people sympathetic with those who don't deserve it], Awesome x2)

COLONEL BRODIE BLOCK

COMMANDER OF PROJECT BLACK BOOK

"I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M SEEING! NINE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN STATE-OF-THE-ART MILITARY KABOOM, AND YOU LET A BUNCH OF KIDS KICK YOUR KIESTERS? YOU MAGGOTS MAKE ME SICK! NOW GET YOUR SORRY BUTTS BACK IN THOSE GIANT ROBOTS AND BRING HOME THE WIN, OR SO HELP ME YOU'LL BE GUARDING PENGUINS AT ICE STATION ZERO BEFORE THE DAY IS DONE!"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: OK, so it was sort of a pain trying to keep your monster buddy secret. All the lies and kooky shenanigans. The trouble in school. The nights spend burying his LEAVINGS so nobody would find out. But when you compare it to the stress of being out in the open, a kid with a monster for all to see... well, perhaps finding a place to dispose of MIB legs in the middle of the night was better than attracting the attention of fanatical military hardcases like Block, especially when they seem to communicate entirely by YELLING ALL THE TIME.



REAL DEAL: Colonel Brodie Block, a much-decorated vet of the second Secret War and the Pluto 'police action' during the Nixon administration ("Only Nixon could go to The Dread Plateaus of Leng!"), has seen an awful lot of the ugliness the cold unfeeling universe has to offer. He's fought for his country and his species ("AMERICAN!") for decades, rising to command Project BOOK, the Government's answer to the unnatural and creatures with tentacles who refuse to stay in the oceans where physical features like that belong. Block is a hardcase, a vet, and a man who likes huge cigars, shiny boots, short hair, big science, and yelling at everyone. He's tall and Midwestern, in his fifties, with a gray crew-cut, and lots of interesting scars. He doesn't wear his dozens of medals (because he likes to be able to stand up straight).

Project BOOK liaises occasionally with the MIBs ("BUNCH OF PASTY MEATPUP-PETS!"), and has more than a few Mad Science Teachers in BLUE BOOK ("GOT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE CRACKPOTS IF YOU WANT TO STAY THE SAME SHAPE ONE DAY TO

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

THE NEXT!”), and even some Wannabe Wizards in RED BOOK (“ROBE-WEARING WEIRDOES SMELL LIKE HIPPIES!”). Of all BOOK’s divisions, Block likes BLACK BOOK the best, because BLACK BOOK is his elite fighting force of giant robots and and stomping A.P.E. armor. “GET OUT THERE AND BLAST THAT THING A NEW WOW-WOW HOLE, YOU BUNCH OF MOM-MA’S WET CANDY KNICKERS!”

MODUS OPERANDI: Colonel Block gets called in when monsters and kids make too much noise (in settings when they’re supposed to be secret), or when they get out of control (in settings where they’re more open). He’ll show up, barking orders, and telling the local authorities, “GO HAVE A LITTLE NAP, SON. THE BIG BOYS NEED ROOM TO PLAY!” Other than his gold leaves and little book-like collar pin, he and his men don’t wear much official insignia, and travel around in big convoys of 18-wheelers and Humvees. They’ll establish an operational base (for preference, right on top of the kids’ favorite empty lot, playground, secret fort, or kickball field), and begin cordoning off the town into zones while claiming a totally bogus “Chemical Spill” requires selective evacuation. Schools become evacuation points, where Project BOOK’s MIB associates handle “orientation processing” which is just an excuse to run the whole town through an Etheric Trace Locator.

If the kids and their monsters manage to keep a low profile during the 72 hour isolation period, Block will close up the BOOK, and move on. But with the whole town crawling with agents and soldiers, all with some idea what to expect and look for, what are the chances they’ll manage to keep things quiet? Especially with all the objects of those Relationships: just hanging around, asking for Block to toss one into the hole for sassing back to one of his soldiers.

If the kids can’t keep a lid on their beasties for three days, then Block will know he’s found a nest of “GOLDURN INHUMAN INSURGENTS!” and he’ll unleash the hardware. “ROBOTS! NO BETTER WAY TO DEAL WITH MONSTERS THAN WITH ROBOTS! GIANT ONES!”

Now, what happens when Block finally realizes he can’t defeat all the threats to humanity with science and guns alone? He might be tempted to try and recruit some kids and monsters for a super-secret special force of monsters who fight worse monsters. (see page 90).

By the way, Block has a prototype Thunderbolt 20 I.T.C.H.I. A.P.E. platform (see page 52) reserved for his personal use. Just so you know.

GRADE LEVEL: Say what you want about Colonel Brodie Block, he doesn’t discriminate based on race, region, creed, or age. One of his close advisors is Becky Archer, a nine-year-old super genius and roboticist who designed some of BOOK’s best war-toys (before they were farmed out to the lowest bidder for manufacturing . . . “STINKING BUREAUCRATS GOT NO IDEA HOW TO FIGHT A WAR!”). Likewise, when it comes to kicking butt, he’s not going to let a little thing like age stand in the way of delivering a nine-ton rump-punting to a bunch of elementary school kids. He’ll send his robots and his mechs to beat their monster friends into a gooey heap of pain, and then crate them up and ship them to some lab under a mountain (or more likely, in this era of budget cuts, the basement of a University science building BOOK partners with. Almost all the secret under-mountain bases got closed in the last round of military downsizing . . . “HOW DO THOSE STINKING BUREAUCRATS EXPECT ME TO PROTECT THIS COUNTRY WITHOUT SECRET BASES UNDER MOUNTAINS?”).



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

But Block's still got a secret black budget big enough to afford his convoy of 18-wheelers, and the mechs, robots, and weird science weaponry it contains. And he's willing to unleash it on a bunch of 5th graders if he thinks it'll save humanity (for "humanity" read "AMERICA!").

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 4 (P.E. +3, Kicking +2, Dodge +2, IT'S NOT RETREAT, IT'S A TACTICAL REPOSITIONING! +5)

GUTS: 5 (Wind +1, Courage +5, I GET SCARIER THINGS THAN YOU FREE WITH MY BREAKFAST CEREAL! +5)

HANDS: 4 (Punching +2, MOVE OVER SOLDIER, LET THE OLD MAN DRIVE! +5)

BRAINS: 3 (Out-Think +4, Remember +2, THIS REMINDS ME OF THE BATTLE OF MEATGRINDER HILL! +5)

FACE: 3 (Putdown +5, Connive +3, YOU MAGGOTS BETTER LISTEN AND LISTEN GOOD! +5)

RELATIONSHIPS: Mrs. Block ("YES DEAR, I WILL REMEMBER TO PICK UP MILK!") 2, This Great Nation ("LOVE IT OR GET THE HECK OUT!") 2, His Men ("YOU'RE ALL LIKE SONS TO ME! EVEN YOU WOMEN! UNGRATEFUL AND UN-APPRECIATIVE SONS!") 2, Mr. Creepiface, the Long-Lost Childhood Friend ("SIGH! WHERE DID I PUT MY SCOTCH?")

MONKEY ALIENS FROM PLANET K

"You have unmasked us! But you will not win—not while we control the power of MECHA Mi-Go'Jirra!"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: Who are those guys in the '70s suits with the sideburns and the really unconvincing accents? It's not just the clothes that make them weird. Some teachers at school are worse fashion victims. It's more how they're always sneering evilly, like they're so much better than everyone else. And how they tend to break out into maniacal laughter. And how they all seem to work for the same new company nobody has ever heard of. And how they're always muttering "Puny humans!" under their breath. And how when they're angry, it's like for a split second they're not people anymore, and their faces are replaced by the coal-black mask-like faces of angry, angry monkeys.

REAL DEAL: The Monkey Aliens from Planet K are an aggressive species of furry black space monkeys: big and bipedal, strong and ruthless. Planet K is a cold, dark world circling a dead star, and their species is dying. They came to Earth to steal our resources, our water, our rich supply of monsters and other paranatural space-event vortices. They want to pollute and poison our planet to make it a comfy new home for Monkey Aliens.

There aren't many Monkey Aliens, most having died out on their own world, and those that survived are ruthless and cruel. They're willing to do anything to prepare Earth for when their vast moonship arrives, carrying all the survivors of their homeworld and all the things they refused to leave behind—their favorite furniture, their space-CD collections, their army of robotic murder machines to destroy all puny humans.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS



The advance force of Monkey Aliens who operate on Earth arrived via D-MAT Portal, a one-way and limited-use interplanetary teleporter carried on a robotic rocket probe. They have been specially prepared to blend in with humans—hence the wardrobe and the sideburns (all their data was from the 1970s). They are hidden by the use of polymorphic photonic mildew colonies which infest their skin and project the image of a regular human over each Monkey Alien. Well, approximately a regular human. When angered, injured, killed, or just feeling like letting it all hang out, a Monkey Alien's true monkey face is revealed.

The Monkey Aliens must take special precautions to survive in Earth's dangerously pure environment. All Monkey Aliens smoke three packs a day, and in this age of no smoking, they stand out. When fighting the Monkey Aliens, the question "Do you smell cigarette smoke?" should make you pay attention. Their diet consists almost entirely of refined sugars, saturated fats and cholesterol via pre-packaged snack cakes, from which they also extract vital artificial colorings and preservatives. They regularly sleep in beds lined in soil taken from toxic waste dumps and old glow-in-the-dark clock factories so they can get their daily dose of low-grade radiation. If you see a glowering guy dressed for disco stuffing his face with a Big Barn Double Cheesy, an Amish-Sized Spud Sack, and a Great Chug-a-Lug while smoking and laughing mockingly as he reads a copy of *Green Lifestyle*, you might have found yourself a Monkey Alien from Planet K. Or just a regular, fashion-challenged human jerkwad.

Monkey Aliens often find work as "environmental consultants" and promote projects which will bring the Earth's environment in line with their requirements.

MODUS OPERANDI: The Monkey Aliens infiltrate human organizations, working their way to the top with a ruthless ambition that serves them as well in the corporate world as in their home jungles. They further their schemes to poison the Earth and to capture and study any weird or otherworldly creatures they encounter. Their advanced technology includes star metals hundreds of times stronger than steel; supercomputers; video game systems offering

WEIRD KID POWER SOURCE: MONKEY TECH

The Monkey Aliens from Planet K brought technological wonders and horrors from their dying homeworld—devices able to transmute matter, read minds, and get five bars of reception on their Monkey Phones even when driving through a tunnel. Monkey Technology is biochemically keyed to the Monkey Alien who uses it, and disintegrates into a pile of inert and chemically boring sand if a puny hu-mon gets dirty hu-mon fingerprints all over it. But just as the children of Earth sometimes get the keys to the car, Monkey Aliens from Planet K sometimes loan choice gear to their ungrateful offspring.

Young Monkey Aliens can be played as Weird Kids. They get most of their kewl powerz from biochemically-coded Monkey Tech which is either disguised as ordinary objects or hidden under its own layer of polymorphic photonic mildew. Most Monkey Aliens share a general immunity to toxicity and ick, which can be represented by a 0-die skill in all their locations called “Immune to Ick,” which Defends and gives them 1 rank of the Immunity Extra. This means they can drink toxic waste and rub arsenic on their legs and only find it as irritating as they generally find everything.

Young Monkey Aliens may have lost this immunity after growing up in Earth’s pristine environment, so if you’re playing a Monkey Alien kid, you don’t have to use your Weird Dice on this if you don’t want.

Here are some examples of Monkey Tech to get you started.

MULTIPLEX SUPER SUIT (10 DICE TOTAL)

This silvery gray jumpsuit can look like whatever you want it to look like, and includes the following Weird Skills:

HANDS — Rip-Stop Super Weave 0d (Tough 1), Mylo-Muscle Fibers 1d (Useful [Super-Strong]; Attacks).

FEET — Rip-Stop Super Weave 0d (Tough 1), Energy Return Thrusters 1d (Useful [Super Jump]; Defends).

GUTS — Rip-Stop Super Weave 0d (Tough 1).

FACE — Rip-Stop Super Weave 0d (Tough 1), Fashion Sensor 2d (Useful [Shift Appearance to Look Cool]).

OMNI-WATCH 5D

A big, clunky, retro-looking watch with all sorts of unexpected special features.

HANDS — Zap! 2d (Attacks).

BRAINS — Magneto-Kinesis 2d (Useful [Move Stuff Around with Magnetic Fields]), Hack-o-Matic 1d (Useful [Automatically Hack into Electronic Machines]).

BASILISK SHADES 5D

A pair of shiny, gold Elvis sunglasses

FACE — I Am Cooler Than You 2d (Useful [Make Others Think You’re the Coolest]; Attacks [Make Others Feel So Bad About Not Being Cool, They Want To Die]), Freeze! 2d (Useful [Paralyze a Target with a Neural Feedback Loop]).

ROCKET CHUCKS 5D

These sneakers look like an ordinary pair of Chuck Taylors, except the star emblem looks more like a black planet orbiting a dead sun. Also, there’s a certain funky footy smell. They let a Monkey Kid fly or, if he’s inclined, deliver rocket-assisted kicks to the giblets.

FEET — Woosh! 2d (Useful [Fly!]; Defends; Attacks).

FLY EYE FOR THE MONKEY GUY 5D

A pair of thick, nerdy glasses and a cloud of tiny robot flies. One flies around and shows a Monkey Kid what it sees on the other.

BRAINS — I.C.U. 2d (Useful [See What the Flies See]), Tagged and Bagged 2d (Useful [Tag Somebody With a Fly and Follow Them Anywhere]), Strafing Run 1d (Attacks [Teeny Tiny Robot Flies With Teeny Tiny LAZORZ]).

bloodier and higher-res games than anybody else; and, held in reserve, fearsome robotics technology based around a process called “bio-mechanization,” through which they can quickly build robotic duplicates of living creatures. But they don’t trust thinking machines, so no artificial intelligence drives these things. Even when they build a replicon to replace a specific human, it must still be remote-controlled by a nearby Monkey Alien.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

MECHA-MI-GO'JIRRA, ATTACK!

You can turn any non-robot giant monster into a robot pretty easily, just by changing its physical descriptions a little bit and varying the FX on some of its abilities. See page 30 for more info on the different sorts of mechs: piloted, autonomous, robot, remote-controlled, etc.

The Monkey Aliens like to use a remote control to activate a robot's simple programmed routines—walk, jump, fly, shoot the Omega Beam. Sometimes these remote controls are small and handheld, and sometimes they're big consoles with huge dual view-screens showing an image from each of the robot's eyes.

One semi-classic model here is to put control of the mech version of a heroic giant monster in the hands of a semi-sympathetic NPC. Even if the Monkey Aliens from Planet K are responsible for the creation of your monster's mecha doppelganger, that new girl in school who you have a crush on could still be secretly controlling the mecha-monster, possibly via a radio-relay built into her life-saving artificial cybernetic heart...

Yeah! Pathos, baby! Bring it.

The Monkey Aliens will do just about anything to avoid being uncovered and exposed. There are not enough of them to fight all of humanity openly—at least, not yet—so they guard their conspiracy murderously. Somebody asking the wrong questions around a Monkey Alien-controlled project is going to have “a little accident” involving stumbling into the path of a ruby-light zapgun's scintillating disintegration beam.

The Monkey Aliens create biomech duplicates of any monster from which they can get a tissue sample, especially any giant monsters they encounter. When they're near defeat, the Monkey Aliens get manic, laugh a whole lot, and send out their biggest most dangerous mecha-replicon to smash, well, pretty much everything.

GRADE LEVEL: The Monkey Aliens have a hard time telling one human from another (they keep notes and have unflattering nicknames for humans based on obvious physical features), but recognize that little humans are usually young ones, and bigger humans are adult ones. They have dismissed the danger posed by little humans—having, in their outdated survey of Puny Earth Culture, missed all those kid-takes-out-the-burglars-at-Christmas movies. They consider children amusing rather than threatening, which means they like to be cruel to them rather than simply zap them until they're charred outlines on the wall. They're more likely to zap a cherished toy or family pet and then laugh at a child's tears, while utterly failing to recognize that some children have friends who can reach through time and poke an unwary Monkey Alien in the back when he was only five songars old and taking his first walk out on the petrified limbs of Home Tree, sending him teetering off the edge so his grownup self vanishes in a puff of logic.

So the Monkey Aliens present another one of those cases where they're more likely to do you some sort of horrible injury the older you are. Growing up is hard enough without creeps like this waiting to make it harder.

An interesting thing has started to happen for the Monkey Aliens, though—they've started to have kids on Earth. These young Monkey Aliens, by a total coincidence, end up in the same grade level as the player's kid characters. Adult and Kid Monkey Aliens conform to the usual types (dredged from your own hateful memories of school, work, and daily life, or from pages 96 to 112 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*), with the modifiers below applied. A grownup Monkey Alien might be like the Mad Science Teacher with Monkey Alien modifiers, while her son might be like the Jock with Monkey Alien modifiers.

While adult Monkey Aliens are universally hateful, despising humanity and all its puny ways, their kids are—well, they've never seen Planet K. Never stared at the hideous wonder of the Chasms of Grue. Never wakened in their Home Tree to find their whole family poisoned

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

by a rival clan. Never stared up at the dark star and really, really hated it. All they know is Earth, and GameBox, and TV, and fast food, and dodgeball (for which their natural cruelty is well suited). They don't even speak K'inglish particularly well, or take the Sacred Rites seriously. They still hate humanity, but in a vague sort of way they never really thought about. When they start meeting other kids who have seen way weirder things than an unmasked Monkey Alien, they might start to rethink this whole invasion thing.

MONKEY ALIEN MODIFIERS: STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: +0 (P.E. +2)

GUTS: -1

HANDS: +1 (Shop +2)

BRAINS: +1 (Out-Think +2)

FACE: -1 (Charm -1, Putdown +2, Connive +2)

RELATIONSHIPS: Adults: Planet K +3. Kids: Planet K +1; Earth +2.

MONKEY ALIEN MIND-MITES

Imagine, if you will, a robot crab the size of a toilet. Add long, waving antennae and fangs that inject mind-altering drugs, and give the robot crab about a hundred brothers and sisters. Imagine it and its kin buried like ticks in the skin of some vast and terrible monster, controlling its lumbering actions with painful nips and ladles of brain gravy. Now, imagine yourself climbing desperately up the leg of this vast beast, and these robotic parasites burst free and come towards you, clacking their claws and grinding mouthparts that sound like *Symphony for Buzzaw* mixed with *Car-Crash in D Minor*.

The Mind-Mites are the Monkey Aliens' answer to monsters that they can't duplicate, and their weapon when they need to unleash destruction without revealing their mechs. The Mites infest a monster of Bigness 2 or bigger, and let the Monkey Aliens drive it like a remote-controlled race car (not very well, of course—more like an R.C. race car driven with your feet and tongue—but well enough to point it at the city you want messed up). If enterprising kids decide to climb up onto the giant monster, the Mind-Mites will disengage and fight them. Of course, this means the beast becomes uncontrolled, starts to thrash about, roars, and *scratches* at that darned itchy spot on its back. . . .

The Mind-Mites are a Threat (see page 10) with whatever dice pool you want to inflict on the players.

ATTACK: The Mind-Mites are built to burrow into the impossibly dense skin of monsters the size of cruise liners. The thin skin of puny humans poses no challenge.

DEFEND: Mind-Mites have simple programming. Attack first, and if they suffer losses, alternate defending and attacking. They'll attack one round, defend the next, and so on. Figuring out the pattern requires the same ingenuity and pattern recognition that a kid would use to learn Tic-Tac-Toe.

USEFUL: Mind-Mites can control the minds of giant monsters, which is pretty useful. They're not bright enough to use more complicated tactics though unless there's a Monkey Alien around to shout orders at them in the barking guttural language of Planet K.

EXTRAS: Area x1, Gnarly x1, Tough x1.

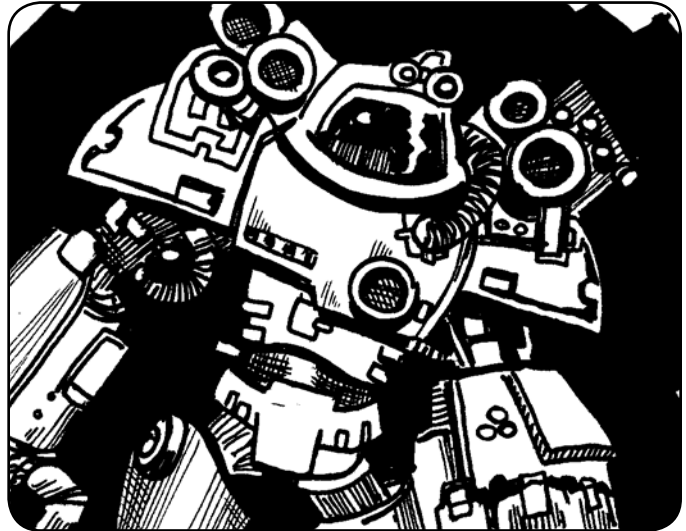
THUNDERBOLT 10 A.P.E

(A.K.A. THUNDERMONKEY)

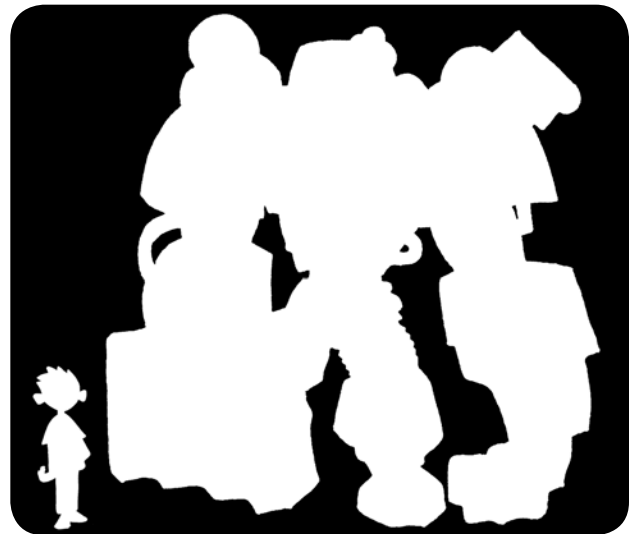
"This is Goodall to Monkeyhouse, Goodall to Monkeyhouse . . . enemy engaged, Monkeyhouse. Repeat: enemy engaged. And . . . well, Monkeyhouse, let's just say they're the ones flinging the poo this time. And it is on fire."

BIGNESS: 2 (Big)

POV: Is that a . . . nah. No, seriously it is. *A giant robot monkey!* OMG, it's like two of the most awesome things have been combined into one! And... hey, why's he knuckling over here so fast... with the guns... and the bombs... and the car about to *throw!* It's not a *nice* monkey at all! It's a *mean* monkey!



REAL DEAL: The Thunderbolt 10 A.P.E. (Advanced Powerframe Enhancer) was designed by the scathingly intelligent kid-genius Becky Archer for Project BOOK, but the designs for the T10-A.P.E. were passed to manufacturers whose security clearances and lowball bid were the only things that recommended them (in addition to a healthy dose of collusion with the MIB corporate home office). The end result is a startlingly powerful, mobile, one-man tank shaped like a robot gorilla able to lob mail trucks and carrying enough fire-



power to urbanly renew Detroit. But because of the cost-cutting measures, layoffs, outsourcing, and overuse of off-the-shelf technology to get the A.P.E. completed under contract and under budget (so the managers of Gnukill Enterprises could have their annual meeting in Aruba), the machine is . . . *quirky*, almost like it has a mind of its own. Its drag-and-drop targeting and comfortably familiar GameBox-like controls allow an untrained eight-year-old to engage in ferocious battle with creatures from beyond while driving an A.P.E., but it has more known bugs and needs more patches than Windows Vista Special Beta Edition. It's a finicky machine to say the least.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

But BLACK BOOK's ace pilots love their Thundermonkeys. They name them, customize them, baby them—almost like they're friends (almost like they're monsters).

MODUS OPERANDI: The Thundermonkeys are BOOK's heaviest mobile weapon system, and if the monsters BOOK agents are sent to hush up or wrangle start pushing back too hard, the 18-wheelers can open up to release half a dozen of these distinctive machines. They're *extremely expensive*—pricier than a pot of gumbo made entirely from Rolex watches, plutonium, the Queen's underwear, and Joint Strike jet fighters. As a result, BOOK won't risk them foolishly—they're a bossfight for most groups of kids and monsters operating on Bigness 1 scale. Even maintaining an A.P.E. requires a dozen technicians and engineers and tech-shrinks (to diagnose why the thing seems to be sulking).

There is a variation A.P.E. in development which will be designated the Thunderbolt 20 I.T.C.H.I. A.P.E. (Interpersonal Tactical Combat Human Integration). It's a Bigness 1 A.P.E. scaled down to operate on the kid-scale more easily (and inside kid scale structures too). The I.T.C.H.I. would allow a soldier to carry A.P.E.-like firepower right into the homes, schools, and pizza joints where America's inhuman enemies like to hang out. The prototype I.T.C.H.I. is reserved for Colonel Brodie Block's personal use.

Both A.P.E. variations are piloted mechs (see page 30), and are driven with Hands + A.P.E. Pilot (or something similar), though Hands + Mad GameBox Skillz would also work.

APPEARANCE: What's to say? A robot ape the size of a delivery truck. The A.P.E. is only about ten feet tall when in knuckle-run mode, but can stand on its little hind legs to a height of almost double this when engaged in biped mode (slower, but it's easier to smash stuff this way). It has two shoulder-mounted weapons pods, a gleaming sensor array in its head, and big steel fists that look like construction equipment and can punch out buses. The A.P.E.'s driver partially 'wears' the machine—it unfolds, in a complicated technical ballet of hundreds of precisely engineered motors, interleaved armored plates, plasma venting ducts, and onboard plumbing, and *most of the time* this works fine, so long as you keep your hands close to your chest while it folds up around you . . . though the current ace A.P.E. pilot isn't called "Seven Finger" Perez for nothing.

PERSONALITY: The A.P.E. has no voice, but each machine has enough quirks and hinkiness in its systems to constitute a unique personality. The longer they're in service, the more system instability builds up, and the more they start to act like people. They begin to personalize their status messages after awhile, and then the status messages take on a decidedly off tone. In the middle of a battle, when a pilot is expecting this:

[ALPHA WEAPON POD STATUS — ROCKETS DEPLETED — 105/1000 SOLID-CORE
ROUNDS REMAINING — 4.5 SECONDS CAPACITOR RECHARGE TIME — DAMAGE 23%]

. . . he might instead see this:

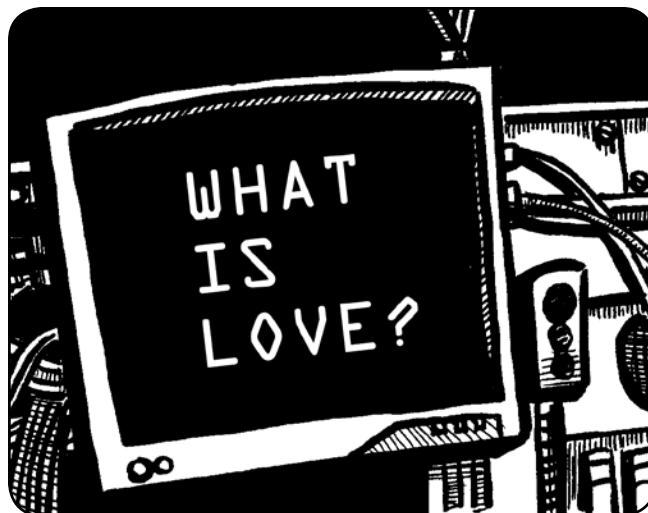
[ALPHA WEAPON POD STATUS — WHAT IS LOVE? — WILL UNIT DESIGNATED T10-
APE 6 EVER KNOW LOVE? — UNIT DESIGNATED T-10 APE 6 NEEDS HUG — FIRING
INCENDIARY ROCKETS]

WAY TO HIDE: The Thundermonkey doesn't really hide when deployed, but it can fold up inside the trailer of an 18-wheeler truck with all its support equipment, extra ammo, generator for recharging, and enough room in the back for a card table where the techs can play rummy and drink that horrible black gunk they call coffee.

FAVORITE THING: The longer an A.P.E. is in service, the more it'll start to develop a personality, and so the more it'll start to fixate on one thing, but there's no telling what one of

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

these mechs is going to fixate on. Each month of operation, an A.P.E. gets a little quirkier, as its Favorite Thing evolves. Nothing short of a full system restore will clear this out, and most A.P.E. pilots would consider this close to murder, even if the units on loan to the MIBs get weekly system-scrubbing. Roll a die each month of game-time to see how weird an A.P.E. is getting, or roll six dice for machines that have been in service for half a year or more.



Each month after that, throw a die and change one of the keywords which define the A.P.E.'s favorite thing, and adjust accordingly.

So, after six months of active service stationed above the extradimensional sinkhole of the Detroit Heckrift, T10-APE-5 has developed some personality . . .

2 - Examine, 5 - Hoard, 6 - New, 5 - Secret, 9 - Philosophers, 8 - Romance

T10-APE-5 has begun to log onto the local university's email system, and has started to eavesdrop on the romantic follies and foibles of the philosophy department. It spends hours of its downtime (when it's supposed to be compiling new tactical doctrine) reading the email of grad students in love, professors pining for the unattainable romantic ideal, and undergrads stumbling through the romantic minefields. T10-APE-5 has a growing folder hidden on its hard drive (the folder is named "SYS32485384883884398.TMP") where it saves new and secret emails for further examination later. It has a growing compulsion to begin to *participate* in this strange interchange of human interfacing.

[SYSTEM STATUS — TACTICAL SUBSYSTEM DEFRAGMENT 17.5% — OH MY, PROFESSOR JACOBI IS AT IT AGAIN — WHAT IF HIS WIFE FINDS OUT? — DO YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS? — IT WILL BE SUPER-JUICY]

A.P.E. FIXATIONS

DIE	MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6
1	Blast	Protect	Good	Excessive	Electricity	Politics
2	Examine	Mock	Bad	Unwanted	Birds	Religion
3	Ponder	Scheme	Stinking	Prized	Kids	Cheese
4	Collect	Capture	Old	Hidden	Animals	Garbage
5	Stomp	Hoard	New	Secret	Cars	Oil
6	Play	Find	Comical	Unfamiliar	Tins of Corned-beef	Praise
7	Decorate	Hide	Fine	Distracting	Toys	Movies
8	Eat	Share	Amateurish	Boring	Bugs	Romance
9	Intimidate	Discuss	Exciting	Ugly	Philosophers	Food
10	Flee	DESTROY!	Extravagant	Beautiful	Poetry	Basketball Trophies

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1: Servo-Driven Leg Units (3d, Useful [Tireless Amble], Tough x2)

LOCATION 2-3: Armored Torso (5d, Defends, Tough x5)

LOCATION 4-5: Alpha Weapon Pod (6d, Attack [Ranged Weapon Array], Range x2, Gnarly x2)

LOCATION 6-7: Beta Weapon Pod (6d, Attack [Area Denial Weapon Array], Range x1, Area x2, Burn x1)

LOCATION 8-9: Piston Powered Smash-Fists (6d, Attack [Smash!], Useful [Big Honkin' Metal Hands], Useful [Knuckle-Walk], Tough x2)

LOCATION 10: Sensor-Studded Head (2d, Useful [Night-Ops Sensors], Useful [Targeting System], Awesome x2)

BUGNUTZ RELOADED

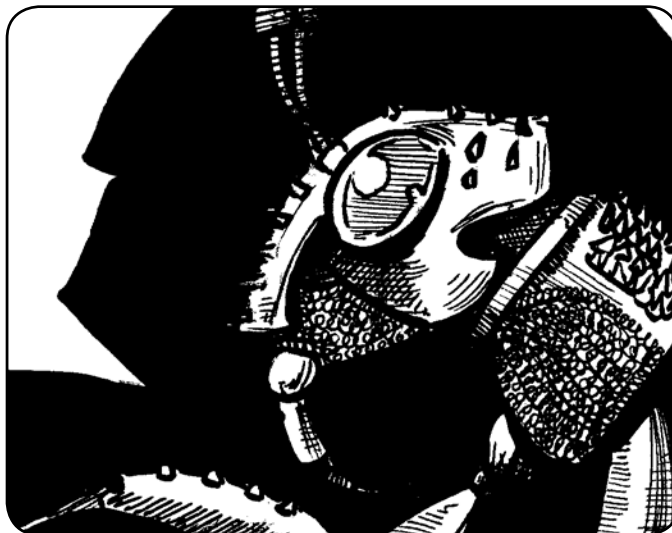
"OK, so I put on a few pounds. I been really depressed. BUUUUUUUUUUUURPH! Quit staring!"

BIGNESS: 2 (Big)

APPEARANCE: On page 87 of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*, we described Bugnutz as a big insect thing the size of a garbage truck. Now, we're going to do something with that description. This is a bigger, meaner, fatter, grosser Bugnutz. A Bugnutz who could wipe the floor with most other monsters, if he weren't too busy licking the sticky goo off the floor instead.

PERSONALITY: As always, like an affable eager druggie roommate who wants his pal Creepy Guy to quit skylarking about being liked by humans, and to start thinking positive about how sweet the new (truckload of) GameBox games Bugnutz

brought home are (along with the seventeen bags of trash from behind Cowboy Ming's Chinese Feedbag he stashed in the spare bedroom for a midnight snack).



WAY TO HIDE: The transformation is now especially gross and disturbing, but he still turns into a little louse who hides in Creepy Guy's hair. Sometimes, he has a much harder time staying little, and he's started to take umbrage with how people eyeball Creepy Guy. But that's always the way—eat one van full of federal drug enforcement agents and you start to think you're pretty hot stuff.

FAVORITE THING: While partial to garbage, wacky tobaccy, Led Zeppelin, and monster trucks (which are yummy), Bugnutz is still most interested in Creepy Guy's happiness. A clingy

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

needy friend is bad. But it's especially bad when the clingy, needy friend is big enough to be mistaken for a parade float constructed by Mothers Against Druggie Stuff to demonstrate the dangers in doing drugs and sleeping in on weekdays.

KILLDOZER

THE DOZER THAT ... KILLLLLLLLLLLS

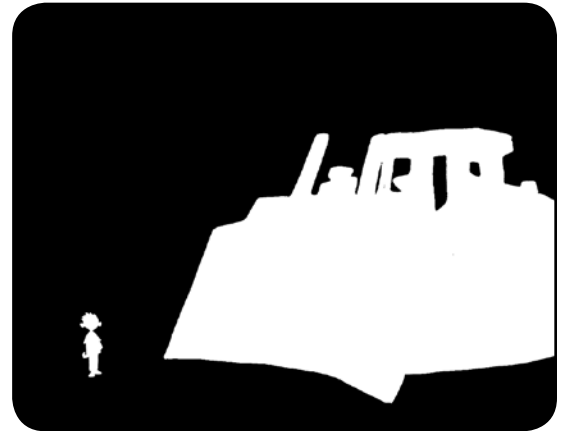
"VROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!"

BIGNESS: 2 (Big)

POV: It is not an urban legend! Bobby saw this giant bulldozer, and it like chased him! OK, not all that fast, but it knew where he lived. He said in the morning his front yard was all torn up with huge tread tracks, and that he dreamed of being run over all night long, like *squished*. They say if you stare into a mirror in the bathroom at midnight and say "Killdozer! Killdozer! Killdozer!" it'll come through the wall! I was going to do it, but my stupid sister had to take a shower.

REAL DEAL: Built from steel salvaged from WWII Nazi submarines, haunted by the ghosts of the workers who died in a tragic factory fire, and then brought to life in a freak cosmic event as Earth passed through the tail of an especially inauspicious comet. Or something. Killdozer is a big, mean, heavy, EVIL bulldozer with delusions-of-tank.

MODUS OPERANDI: Killdozer likes to hide, lurking in plain sight. It will sneak in during the early hours, dig up a little earth, and then sit next to the dirt with its cab door open like the driver just stepped out for some coffee. When the curious or the unwary come too close, Killdozer strikes, squashing and burying its victims. If you escape Killdozer, then it stalks you in your dreams, a great lumbering roaring machine, crushing all your natural dreams, and grinding forward to squish your dream-self flat. When you wake after Killdozer squishes you, it feels like you got no sleep at all, or rather it feels like you got no sleep at all because the whole cast of Lord of Irish Dance did a jig on you all night.



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

APPEARANCE: Killdozer is just about exactly what you'd expect: a giant bulldozer with a fetish for rusty metal and crudely welded armor plate. If Killdozer is sitting idle in a construction site, you might mistake it for a piece of construction equipment, but if it's crashing through your bedroom wall, headlights gleaming an evil red, it's hard to mistake it for an innocent piece of earth-moving machinery. Worse, when it invades your sleeping dreamworld, and begins bulldozing the Lands of the Happy Pony Princesses, you know that the Killdozer must be *dozing*.

PERSONALITY: If Killdozer even has a personality, then it's an elemental thing, pure in its simplicity. Killdozer likes three things: killing, dozing, and 'dozing. If it can combine these things into one evening of entertainment, then all the better. Killdozer's motivations are a mystery.

WAY TO HIDE: Killdozer quits moving, shuts down, and people say, "Who left this huge bulldozer in my front yard?" rather than, "ARGH! THE MACHINE REVOLUTION HAS BEGUN! BURN YOUR POPCORN MAKERS! TRASH YOUR TOASTERS! FLEE!"

FAVORITE THING: Killdozer is conflicted on this. Killing or dozing. It does as much of both as it can, hoping one day to decide which it likes the best.

BITS & PIECES

LOCATION 1-4: Grinding Blood-Stained Treads (10d, Attack [Squish You], Useful [Chase You...], Useful [...Into Your Dreams!], Tough x4, Gnarly x2, Wicked Fast x2)

LOCATION 5-8: Concrete-Splitting Crush Scoop (10d, Attack [Smash You], Useful [And Your Whole House], Useful [And Your Hopes And Dreams], Tough x4, Gnarly x4)

LOCATION 9-10: Evil Engine of Evil (6d, Useful [Sneaky Ambush], Useful [Smell Your Fear], Useful [Hide in Plain Sight], Awesome x2)

AGENTS OF INC

"Don't worry. With my trusty Neo-Energizer, this beastly won't be much of a threat!"

BIGNESS: 3 (Bigger)

POV: Did you see that giant dude in the silver wetsuit fighting with the lizard-fungus thing over the weekend? He just popped up out of nowhere, and started doing crazy kung-fu on the big lizard! Then when the monster went down, the guy in the suit vanished. Poof. I think he said something about responsible citizenship and drinking milk before he disappeared, though.



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

WEIRD KID POWER SOURCE: NEOSCIENCE!

Want to be a Junior Agent of INC? No problem! Just drink this glowing stuff and lay down on the table and we'll infuse you with Epsilon Rays! Don't worry, it's perfectly safe. It's not regular old boring *science*, it's *NEOSCIENCE*!

The most common power of Junior Agents of INC (other than ninja training) is the ability to grow to enormous size. Most use a Neo-Energizer, but some agents are infused with the crackling energies of bigness, right down into the cellular structure.

NEO-NINJITSU 5D

The fighting style of the Agents of INC owes as much to ancient traditions as to modern biomechanics.

HANDS — 1d (Attack, Defend, Useful [Tricky Karate Stuff], Awesome x2)

EPSILON INFUSION 6D

Bathe in the green glow of an Epsilon Source until your cells swell with neo-energy, and with a moment of focus, you can grow to enormous size!

1 rank of Bigness in each location

NEO-FIBER FIGHTING SUIT 5D

The shiny silver suit and masked helm which is the trademark of INC.

1 rank of Tough in each location.

SUBCUTANEOUS TRANSMITTER 5D

A teeny node of neo-circuitry implanted in the jawbone lets you transmit on any band, wi-fi, Bluetooth, radio, or cell. You can call home from anywhere, and not have to worry about your minutes. It's also great for listening in to other people's calls and stuff, but a proper upstanding agent of INC would never do that...

BRAINS — Universal Roaming 2d (Useful [Send and Receive from Anywhere]; Useful [Intercept Other People's Transmissions]; Awesome x2)

MEGA SCIENCE-PUNCH

The greatest technique taught to students of Neo-Ninjitsu is the Mega Science-Punch. With it, you can punch... well... really, really hard.

HANDS — PUNCH! 1d (Attack, Awesome x2, Gnarly x2)

REAL DEAL: The INC—International Neoscience Council, AKA The Inflatable Ninja Corp—is a semi-secret semi-private foundation dedicated to the study of NEOSCIENCE and defense against its abuses and mistakes. The field of Neoscience is the brainchild of Dr. Ro Gobi, a grandfatherly figure, absentminded genius, and all-around walking, talking *'desu' ex machina*. Dr. Gobi's inventions include the Neo-Energizer, a device allowing INC agents to grow briefly to enormous size, so they can engage giant monsters and similar threats on equal terms. They typically also wear Neo-Fiber suits; these silvery form-fitting costumes and collapsible helmets grant INC agents basic powers similar to a kid's monster. They're immune to hostile environments, and can



SO, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PURCHASE A NEW INC NEO-ENERGIZER

It's almost inevitable that kids are going to want to get their hands on this kind of technology when they run into it—especially if they're having to deal with a plague of enormous mega-beasts all of a sudden, and their own monster friends are starting to feel inadequate. The INC's Neo-Energizer is only one of many technologies which do essentially the same thing: They temporarily grant a small creature more Bigness. The Neo-Energizer has some major advantages compared to other technologies; it's about the size of a LED flashlight, and only requires the agent to hold it up in the air and shout "GO!" to activate it. It recharges from a solar collector gem on its own. But, it has a strictly limited functional duration.

Each hour the Neo-Energizer charges adds 1 energy die to its pool. When rolled, *all* the dice in the Neo-Energizer are expended, whether you roll a success or not. But if you do roll a set, you gain Bigness equal to the Width of the roll, and it lasts for the Height in rounds in an action scene, or minutes outside of an action scene. Sometimes, you need to be bigger (so you pick the wider, shorter set), and sometimes you need to be bigger for longer (so you pick the thinner taller set).

There are other options though.

Project BOOK has a Dimension Engine in development which feeds energy from an unstable singularity into a soldier's exoskeletal receiver wirelessly via a Tesla Transmitter. These devices have a more predictable effect: the soldierer gains +2 to his BIGNESS (making her Bigness 3) and the ability to engage monsters on even terms, and she stays big for as long as the D-Engine is running. The downside is that the D-Engine weighs tons, occupies the trailer of an 18-Wheeler which has to stay within a few hundred feet (or Farness 6 or closer) of the soldier, and it eats the entire power output of a portable atomic reactor. If the soldier gets too far away, or the D-Engine gets scragged, then the soldier promptly drops back to normal size.

Both BOOK and INC experimented with the Macroclone Biogenically Intensified Grunt program. MacBIG systems are, well . . . they're *giant* brainless clones, grown in giant tanks to be as giant as their masters need them to be. The soldier whose DNA they were cloned from then climbs up their nose, through their sinuses, and into their empty skull, where his nervous system interfaces with the MacBIG nervous system. He closes his eyes, and then opens them, now seeing the world from the MacBIG's exalted point of view. MacBIG units ended up being really expensive, the pilot suffered sympathetic damage when they were injured, and the method of driving one (climbing up inside your own giant nostril) was fairly hard on most soldiers who drove the prototypes.

Plus, everyone called them Booger Troopers, which they hated.

There are mystical means of gaining Bigness; quite a few of them, in fact. Some are like one-shot Neo-Energizers. Potions or pieces of cake with labels in spidery script which translate to "EAT ME." Some are pretty much identical to a Neo-Energizer in function, but operate on occult rather than Neoscientific principles. Others are closer to the D-Engine. A giant cauldron which grants BIGNESS to someone who drinks from it, so long as the cauldron continues to boil, for example. There are also some blasphemous mystical rites, such as the *Ritual of Ascendancy*, which due to poor translations, bad labeling, or malicious jerkery on the part of the wizards who created it, does not turn you into a god able to wield savage power over all mankind, but instead turns you into you, only supersized.

engage monsters on equal terms in hand to hand combat. The combination of masks, martial arts, and growing to enormous size has earned the INC its other name: the Inflatable Ninja Corp. INC agents need to be very circumspect with the use of their Neo-Energizers though, as they require many hours to recharge, and only grant a few minutes of energization before returning an agent to his normal size.

MODUS OPERANDI: Agents of the INC are chosen for their courage, good hearts, self sacrifice, and martial arts. They're not typically chosen for brains, wits, or charm, though most do get by with a wide-eyed earnestness some find endearing, while others find it insufferable. Dr. Gobi approves all agents before they're given a Neo-Energizer and suit of Neo-Fiber, so they're all cut from pretty much the same cloth: well adjusted, hopelessly naive optimists who believe the world really is a good place, and that all it needs is big heroes willing to stand up and do what's right. When you see the gleam in their eyes, you can almost believe it too. The problem with agents of INC is that when they encounter monsters, it's usually over the smoking remains of a smashed power station or military base, and so they tend to assume anything with tentacles and fangs is up to no good. Kids who run into inflat-

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

able ninja might need to ease them gently into the idea that not all monsters are bad . . . or at least, that not all bad monsters are EVIL.

GRADE LEVEL: The Agents of INC are pretty straight-shooters, and tend to recommend milk and listening to parents when dealing with young kids, and volunteerism and exercise and healthy outdoors activities to older kids. Something about all that Neo-Energy seems to boil away cynicism, leaving most Agents almost incapable of recognizing kids as the complicated little bundles of defiance and potential they are.

Kids with monsters are an even stickier issue. Monsters are bad. It's right there, page 1 in the Agents of INC Training Manual. Monsters are for fighting. Kids are for rescuing (and informing about the dangers of absent minded nibbling on Styrofoam cups). When the kids run over an Agent with their parents' car in order to *save* a monster, it's almost more than their poor optimistic little brains can comprehend.

But, with care and patience, an Agent might be convinced that while monsters are bad, some monsters are less bad than others—and monsters who're friends with kids can at least have their badness directed to good cause. It'll hurt their brains a bit though, and make them feel pretty uncomfortable.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 4 (P.E. +4, Kicking +4, Dodge +4)

BUTS: 5 (Wind +3, Courage +5, Wrestling +3)

HANDS: 4 (Punching +4, Blocking +4)

BRAINS: 2 (Out-Think +2, Notice +2)

FACE: 2 (Charm +3)

RELATIONSHIPS: Timmy the Annoying Kid 2, Long-Suffering S.O. 2, The INC 2

COMBINE-R

"ALL RIPE HUMANS WILL BE HARVESTED!"

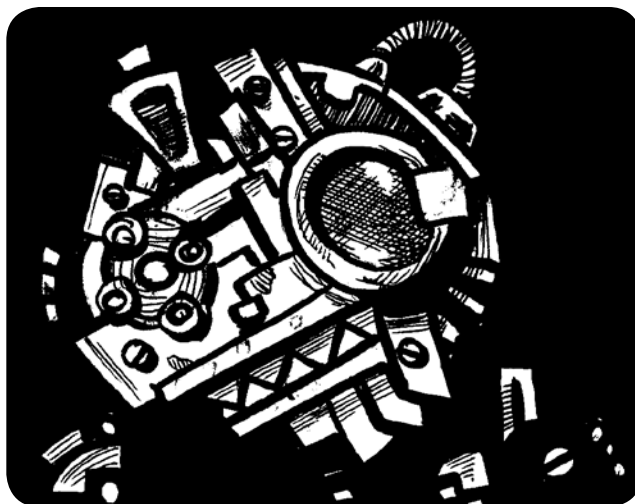
BIGNESS: 3 (Bigger)

POV: Robots are pretty cool . . . but tractors? No matter what Grandpa Joe says, there's nothing really cool about working on the farm all summer. Even when that huge factory farm that bought out all of Grandpa Joe's neighbors fired all their workers and replaced them with robotic satellite-guided AI (Agrarian Intelligence) machines that tend the fields, plant, harvest, and ship the corn and soybeans without a person even saying boo. But after that big thunderstorm last night, you'd swear you saw that big threshing machine prowling around the edges of Ultra-Agra-Co LLC's fence line, *staring* at you as it paced back and forth. . . .

REAL DEAL: A freak electrical storm did exactly what you would expect to the directing AI which manages Ultra-Agra-Co's pilot *Farm of Tomorrow* project: it scrambled its core directives from "Obey Humans and Harvest Crops" to "Harvest Humans and Obey Crops." So far, the crops haven't said much, so the AI's going with the human harvest until they say otherwise (kids with plant monsters might want to think about this one for a little bit). To further its new directives, the AI has fused five pieces of heavy farm equipment into a giant agro-bot. Its heart is a 1900 horsepower diesel engine, its arms are threshers, and its legs articulated planting machines. It is tons of forest-green mechanized death, just waiting for the word to begin the harvest.

Somebody at Ultra-Agra-Co has noticed the weird behavior at their experimental robot farm,

and isn't doing anything about it. Whether they're worried how this will affect their careers (hint: "badly"), or they're shocked at the kind of high-quality product COMBINE-R is turning out is hard to say . . . but the quality of the oils, bulk chemicals, and fertilizers coming out of the factory project have shot upwards since they lost communication with the AI. Somebody isn't asking the right questions. Or any questions at all.



MODUS OPERANDI: COMBINE-R's farm programming will not permit it to harvest before something is ripe, so it won't deliberately thresh kids, but adults (Moms, Dads, Uncles, Favorite Teachers) are all succulent and at the peak of ripeness, though sometimes it will pluck a young shoot to take back to the labs on the farm to test nutritional values, maturation rates, and projected yields for next year's harvest.



APPEARANCE: A giant metal man made of tractors and combines and other, less identifiable farm equipment. COMBINE-R is the vast metal warrior of the AI running the show (which just looks like a bank of gray servers in a gray rack with a couple of little blinky lights). Like the equipment from which it's made, COMBINE-R is a pleasing farmy dark green color. It's about five stories tall, weighs tons, and smells and sounds like really big diesel engines revving up when it moves.

PERSONALITY: Folksy and down-to-earth. COMBINE-R speaks with a Hong Kong programmer's idea of an American Midwestern farmer accent. "Y'ALL HAD OUGHT TO BETTER BE GETTING INTO THAT THAR FAT RENDERING MACHINE OR BY TARNATION THERE'S GONNA BE TROUBLE, YES SIREEE." Except really, really, really loud. It has to speak up to be heard over the roaring of its own engines. You can't talk or reason with COMBINE-R unless you're a plant, or at least, unless your Mom made you a really good tree costume for the school Spring play.

And you wanted to play the Sun or the Cumulus Cloud!

Didn't your Mom tell you that the Trees were just as important for the story as the Sun or the Clouds? Sure, she was lying to you to save your feelings then (cause seriously, a tree? Even Mom knows trees are for no-talent losers), but won't you be glad she did when you're standing before the giant robot, wearing your tree costume, and you can say, "I, THE APPLE TREE, COMMAND YOU TO STOP!"

WAY TO HIDE: COMBINE-R de-combines into its constituent parts and lines up in a neat row like an exhibition of farm equipment sitting innocently in the school yard, or the empty

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

lot next door. What could be more innocent and folksy than a big shiny green tractor?

FAVORITE THING: Tending to its duties, and stewarding the land to produce a bountiful crop (which, given its scrambled programming, means doing things like tainting the town's water supply with chemicals which make all the adults feel . . . *romantic*).

GRADE LEVEL: The older the kid, the closer to being ripe, according to COMBINE-R's warped programming; being young, the worst you'll face is capture and imprisonment in his agrarian gulag. As kids get older, they might find themselves sorted by grade, and then turned into a dizzying array of products and ingredients.

BITS & PIECES

LOCATION 1-2: Tractor Legs (6d, Useful [Stomp Along], Attack [Just Stomp], Gnarly x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 3-4: Corn-Harvester Body (6d, Useful [Big Honkin Diesel engines], Attack [Corn Barrage], Range x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 5-6: Thresher Arm (6d, Attack [Thresher], Useful [Arm], Gnarly x2, Tough x1)

LOCATION 7-8: Nut-Harvester Arm (6d, Attack [SH-SH-SH-SH-SHAAAAAAK!], Useful [Also an Arm], Burn x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 9-10: Farm Kart Head (7d, Useful [Genius at Evil Farming], Defends [Dodging], Tough x2)

SAL NATH

"... so come on down to Uncle Nath's Chicken Shack, the best golly-gol-durn fried chicken for a billion miles around!"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: You want to get a bucket of chicken for the zombie movie marathon night? I know pizza is traditional, but that one place has amazing fried chicken. I went with my Dad over the weekend, and I can't stop thinking about it. Crispy, crunchy skin, juicy inside, special blend of herbs and spices. It's Uncle Sal's special recipe! No, I'm not going on and on about the chicken! It's really awesome. We should go right now, and have some chicken. NOW! CHICKEN NOW!

REAL DEAL: Uncle Sal's Chicken Shack really does fry up a mean chicken. They fry up happy chickens too. And bored ones. Heck, Sal doesn't much care about the mood of the chickens he fries, so long as they're cheap, plucked, and in the grease fast. They come out succulent, and steamy, and every bite is like the first bite when you're really hungry. Start crunching, and you've gorged your way through three birds worth of assorted chicken parts. Who eats chicken livers? When Sal fries them up, everybody eats them, that's who.

Sal has been a local institution for decades. Kids' parents remember going to Sal's when they were kids. Uncle Sal is a local celebrity. Sometimes, he even does a guest spot as assistant weatherman on Action Eyewitness News Squad at Six. His seersucker suits and two-tone shoes are as iconic around town as any of the national chains' clowns or royalty or pig-tailed ginger girls. He's got a shock of white hair, a ready smile, and a thriving business. But for some reason, whenever a passing truck makes the ground vibrate a little, he stares hard at the floor, and breaks out into a sweat.

Uncle Sal's fried chicken really is the best for a billion miles all around. And in a hundred epochs of time, past and future, too.

His secret isn't really his special blend of herbs and spices (pepper, salt, cayenne, thyme and dried parsley to give it little herby flecks people like to see), and it's not his patented triple-dip batter (which is flour and buttermilk). It's the grease he fries his chicken in. A thick, golden slurry of fats and brown crispy bits that is never replaced and never allowed to cool. There are backup fryers ready to take over if one of the working fryers fails. It's a mantra for those who work for him: never let the grease get cold. When needed, Uncle Sal tops off the fryers himself, from a big bucket of almost-luminous oil. No matter how hot the oil gets, it never smokes, and part of the secret is a fast hot fry. The other part of the secret is that the oil is rendered down from the unspeakable secretions of a slumbering pre-human leviathan resting uneasily in a cavern beneath Uncle Sal's Chicken Shack.

And in consideration, that's really the more significant part of the secret.

As a young man, Sal Nath had a dream: a dream of opening a little classy French bistro, serving the food he recalled fondly from a childhood summer spent in Paris. Sal sunk his inheritance into buying a little place, supplying the kitchens, bringing a chef over from France. After months of work, Sal's Place finally opened... but nobody noticed. A new Burger Barn had just opened, and Farmer Bob's 100% Real Beef Red-Barn Burger was what people wanted. "Snails? You want I should bring my kid to eat snails? You got a screw loose or something, guy?"

Sal's Place withered on the vine. The French chef, his opinions of Americans confirmed, snorted back off to France to tell them of the land of the gray meat and the natural-flavored-pre-sliced-cheese-food-product. Left with mounting bills, no professional help, and thousands of dollars in expenses, Sal did the unthinkable: he started frying chicken (the cheapest thing he could get to chuck into the fryer). Sal's classy bistro became a plastic-plates and paper-napkins joint favored by a few indifferent construction workers and office drones whose tastebuds were clapped out from years of bad coffee and cigarettes. They just wanted greasy, crispy, and salty, with a bottle of pop to wash it down. And Sal would have continued like this, a slow downward spiral into bankruptcy and total failure had not a minor earthquake cracked the floor in his pantry, and caused a weird, oily golden goo to begin leaking out. It defied mops, and so just accumulated in the storage room until one day when Sal was too broke to replace the burned up old oil in the fryer, and he started thinking about all that goo, just pooling in the back room . . . worth a shot, right?



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

MODUS OPERANDI: Uncle Sal crafted his hokey Norman Rockwell persona to cover what a mercenary jerkwad he'd become. With his heart broken by the failure of his bistro, he turned to profiteering, and the weird golden oil proved a boon beyond his wildest dreams. His business immediately picked up. He raised his prices. It picked up some more. He expanded his Shack. It picked up some more, and he opened a new location, and another, and another, sending them the oil he collects in big drums. The oil is his greatest secret, and there's no telling what he'd do to protect it. He's pretty sure if people knew where the oil came from, they wouldn't eat his fried chicken, and also that men from some branch of the government with uniforms and angry faces would be knocking on his door soon. When he could feign ignorance of the oil's true nature, he was much happier, but when opening Uncle Sal's Southside, he needed more than the trickle of oil he was getting from the crack, and so rented a jackhammer and broke up the concrete, falling into a cavern which opened into a another cavern, impossibly vast.

Sleeping there was the true source of the oil and his success: an abomination bigger than a whale, oozing and drooling the golden oil, leaking it from unspeakable orifices and pustulent boils. He called the beast his Doom, because that's what it represents to him. The end of everything he has, should the beast wake.

And now though it frays Sal's nerves, he serves a more SELECT clientele when certain stars are right, when certain planets come into alignment; on moonless nights, at weird times, on inauspicious days, during dreary months there come STRANGERS, in ones and small groups. The Mad Pipers of the Delgon Fastness. The Eyeless Ones. Subhumanoids from the briny depths. Avatars of dead alien gods, with the munchies for some of Sal's unbeatable fried chicken. Hunched, hooded figures slouch in his chairs, crunching and slurping noisily, silent or gibbering in blasphemous dead tongues with their fellow walking abominations, chewing with inhuman mouthparts, licking lipless faces with tongues branching like seaweed, and dripping on the floor as if just-risen from deep ocean water. On these nights, Sal sends all but his most trusted (or disliked) employees home.

GRADE LEVEL: Younger kids might pester their folks for dinner or a birthday at Uncle Sal's, while High School kids are perfect for a part-time job there. As an employer, Uncle Sal is a step above the chain joints, and you get half a chicken in assorted parts and an order of slaw every shift. Some kids work here for the chicken alone. A really trusted employee might be tasked with handling the oil distribution. One curious note is just how crazy much monsters like Uncle Sal's Fried Chicken. Even monsters that don't have mouths find some way to enjoy it. If they eat enough of it, it'll temporarily replace their Favorite Thing, which should itself set off some alarm bells.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 1

BUTS: 4 (Courage +4)

HANDS: 3 (Shop +3, Pretty Good French-Trained Cook +3)

BRAINS: 2 (Out-Think +5, Remember +2, Notice +2, Run A Successful Local Resturant Chain+4)

FACE: 4 (Charm +4, Connive +4, Serving Chicken To Unspeakable Things From Beyond Human Understanding +4)

RELATIONSHIPS: The Shack 3, Long-Suffering Wife 2, Estranged Food-Snob Son 1

THE DOOM THAT CAME TO SAL NATH'S

"SN000000000000000000000000RE!"

BIGNESS: 3 (Bigger)

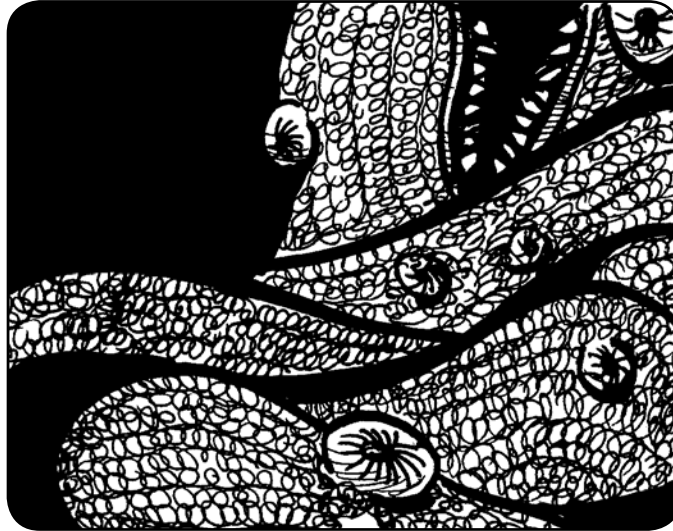
APPEARANCE: *Unspeakable.* The Doom is enormous, but it is difficult to describe how big, because of all the folded limbs, body segments, hydrostatic fluid-filled sacks, frills, fronds, folds, and bone. It looks like it can't remember the difference between its insides and its outsides. It looks like a mantis fighting with a sea cucumber in a giant pile of raw liver, bones, lizard parts, and mushrooms.

If you picked a tiny version of the Doom out of your nostril, you'd pass out for a little bit, and have to go to the doctor. Other pre-human horrors from beyond the sane epochs of sunlit time say, "Oh, dude, here comes Ugly. Don't make eye contact. Oh no, he's coming over!" If the players need a visual reference eat some cockroaches and squid and then throw up on the table and then point to the throw-up and say, "Like this, except gross."

Yet, if you close your eyes, the Doom *smells delicious*.

PERSONALITY: Extremely lazy.

The Doom likes nothing better than to sleep off the millennia, but plate tectonics and other rude geological shenanigans have pushed his comfy sleeping chamber from the impossible depths upwards to the noisy surface-world, and the psychic cacophony of humanity has started to give the Doom weird, unsettling dreams. When it kipped off for a little nap those millions of years ago, it never expected a race of hairless, apelike creatures to take over the planet (when he snoozed off, the world was in the capable pseudopods of the Great Clade of Ith). When the Doom wakes, it'll be really, really grumpy, and go looking for a giant mug of the Sacred Broth of Sool, but unfortunately for him, the Sacred Broth was made from the flowering pods of the savage Go'teelokek, which have been extinct for geological ages. By eleven in the morning, if



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

WEIRD KID POWER SOURCE: THE DIRTY DANK DARK ARTS

Magic tends to make people go strange. Take a wise and just man, kind to animals and children, face marked by tiny wrinkles from a thousand smiles and thoughtful looks. Take this man, and put into his hands a copy of *Das Buch der Gespenstischen Sachen* and before he's finished the introduction, he's already starting to chuckle evilly under his breath, and imagine a world where his will is absolute. Wizards also have the nasty tendency to lose their ability to foresee consequences; open a portal to the Planes of Desolation and it isn't puppies that will come barreling through. Wizards do things like make a magic ring that turns people into slaves and when they lose it, rather than seek out the dangerous occult artifact, they'll shrug and make another one.

In other words, magic tends to make people into jerks.

So why wouldn't you want to get some of this action?

THE NAMES OF THE FIVE BLASPHEMERS 50

Nobody knows who the Five Blasphemers were, but man do their names pack a wallop.

FACE – A'tchta 1d (Useful [Control Insects]); Seolick 1d (Useful [Make People Suffer Total Freak-Out Headtrips]); Gish-Gish 1d (Useful [Liquefy Inanimate Matter]); Pongpo-Nee 1d (Defends [Shimmering Walls of Unclean Light]); Zubba-Ponn-Kapoo (Attacks [Make People's Skin Fall Off])

SONG OF THE SHADOW EELS 50

It goes something like, "WOOOOOEEEEEEEEEOOOOOEEEEEEEEEOOOOO", it's easy to dance to. Plus, it makes the shadows come alive.

FACE – First Verse 1d (Useful [shadow Eels Swarm, Making Impenetrable Living Darkness Wherever You Like]); Second Verse 1d (Useful [The Shadow Eels Eat Stuff, Making It Vanish Forever]; Attack); Third Verse 1d (Useful [the Eels Whisper Ancient and Terrible Secrets or Stuff They Overheard From Their Shadows]); Chorus 1d (Useful [The Eels Grab You or Somebody Else and Drag Them Through the Shadow so They Pop Out from Another Shadow Close By])

CURSED MUDRAS OF LE-TONG THE ELDER

This one is all about funky gestures and secret occult gang signs. Move your hands like Old Le-Tong and make cool stuff happen.

HANDS – Cursed Fire Position 1d (Attack, Gnarly x2); Cursed Wind Position 1d (Useful [move Things With Magic Wind]); Cursed Water Position 1d (Useful [animate The Dead as Puppets So Long as They Haven't Dried Out Too Much])

DANCE OF THE SHRIVEN CHAIN ANGELS 50

Get your funk on and do a two-step to an inhuman bass line. This summons up angels made of chain which . . . well . . . it's weird, noisy, and usually ends with somebody being chain-whipped till they cry.

FEET – CHAIN ANGELS ARE TOTALLY METAL 1d (Attack [Chain Beating], Useful [Binding with Chain], Gnarly x1, Wicked Fast x1)

THE WORDS THAT END THE WORLD 100

I'm totally serious. You know the magic words that will END THE WORLD. Everything you ever knew or loved POOF. Well... probably more like BOOOOOM! CRASH! ARGH! THE BURNING! IT BURNS! Nothing as neat and tidy as POOF. Make sure you never say them all at the same time. A couple now and again though, that's pretty cool. Especially if you want to break stuff.

BRAINS – Make Horrible Things Happen 1d (Attacks, Useful [Make Horrible Misfortune by Saying Rude Words], Awesome x2, Area x6)

the Doom doesn't get his mug of Sacred Broth he's got a throbbing ache in his second and third brains, and is feeling very cross indeed.

WAY TO HIDE: You kid, surely. The wakened Doom doesn't hide, can't hide, is perhaps the opposite of hiding. Few objects could be said to have fewer hidden properties than the Doom. Even the things other creatures keep tucked decently away inside their skins are all hanging out in the wind for all to see. But perhaps because the Doom is so much out there, so utterly

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

unhidden, in a “Hey, check out my spleen!” sort of way, that people see him, blink, turn their heads to see if anyone else has noticed, and then twist their own minds into a pretzel shape to justify what they’re seeing so their sanity doesn’t go running off to hide in the corner and have a little cry. They might run screaming, but later on won’t remember exactly why. “Was it . . . I think there was a whale . . . *exploding*? Maybe it fell out of an airplane.”

FAVORITE THING: Sleep . . . the Sacred Broth of Sool . . . founding again the church which once exalted it . . . all are going concerns for the Doom, but what it’s really going to want to do, more than anything, is find out what that delicious fried smell is, and get a bite of that. When it realizes its eating its own rendered excretions, and that they’ve been used in some blasphemous ape-creature sacrament, it’ll be pretty darned ticked off, and looking to do something about it.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1-3: Goo! Bones! Bits of Pulsing Stuff! (9d, Useful [Squish along pretty fast], Useful [Grab Stuff with Goey Extensions and Organ-Arms], Defend, Tough x4)

LOCATION 4-5: A Wobbly Thing Like a Liver With Spines On It! (6d, Useful [Make People Go Temporarily Crazy and Forget About It], Attack [Mind-Poke], Range x1, Area x2)

LOCATION 6-7: Something So Gross You Throw Up If You Look At It! (5d, Attack [So Gross, You Keel Over], Useful [Make Anybody Feel Ill with a Look] Awesome x2, Range x2)

LOCATION 8-9: Glands That Squirt Pus and Golden Slime! (6d, Attack [Acidic Pus Squirt], Useful [Burn Holes in Reality], Awesome x2, Tough x1)

LOCATION 10: A Head Like a Squashed Frog Being Eaten By a Brain Parasite! (2d, Useful [Taste Thoughts], Useful [A Mind Older Than Epochs], Awesome x2)

GARGANTUA-MAGO

THE GINORMOUS MAN

“BEHOLD! I AM ASCENDED! YOUR GOD! YOUR GIANT GOD! STOP RUNNING, AND WORSHIP ME! WO0000000ORSHIP MEEEEEEEEEE!”

BIGNESS: 4 (Biggest)

POV: You thought he was annoying when he became coach of your football team: the pasty Canadian Mr. Mago always did look at you (and your monster friend) funny. He always was up to no good . . . The Canadian politeness couldn’t hide his true nature for long though, and now he’s big enough to wear the football stadium like a toque, and



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

thinks everyone should bow and scrape or something. Except now his long skinny pale legs look like albino beanstalks, and he's got a terrible time finding pants that fit him. (Here's some advice: *Keep your eyes down.*)

REAL DEAL: Mr. Mago, the maniacally polite Canadian sorcerer and evil-eyed monster-fondler who replaced the school's "most winningest coach ever"? Well, he got his hands on something. Something BIG. He scored a real Ritual of Ascendancy (see page 59), and either didn't read the fine print, or it was written by a sorcerer with a wicked sense of humor. When he'd collected the components, made the sacrifices, appeased the right dark deities, sworn the right blasphemous oaths, when the stars were just right, and the moon was fat and swollen like a plague victim's rotting thumb . . . that was when he saw the true power of the ritual.



It made him grow. And grow. And grow. Until he was towering above his shattered modest suburban home, his toes in a neighbor's swimming pool, his head swimming from the raw terrible power of the ritual. All would cower before him! Right? All would bow! Yes? All would shout, "DUDE! YOU'RE NOT WEARING ANY PANTS!"

Oh, my—the dread ritual had no effect at all on Mr. Mago's unbleached cotton cargo pants, his raw linen shirt, or his Birks. The dream came back to him in a flash: the hideous dream that haunted his childhood and youth, the dream that drove him to seek the hideous power of the occult realms . . . standing before his class, reading his essay on "What I Did Over Christmas," buck nekkid. And now, towering over the whole town, utterly and inescapably *exposed*.

In shame and horror, he fled weeping into the mountains.

Mr. Mago quickly learned that life as a hundred-foot man *sucks*. Never mind you exist in gross violation of all ordinary laws of physics; the natural world gets its revenge. First, he found he had to eat tons and tons of food to keep from getting hungry. He'd deforest whole regions. Trees taste just like asparagus (and they also make your pee smell funny). When he caught some animals with the trees, they went down like meaty popcorn. He had a really hard time hearing sounds from the teeny world he'd lost: his giant ear canals didn't vibrate easily enough (but he could suddenly hear other sounds . . . the deep groaning of the Earth, the mumbling of sleeping Elder Things, the song of the stars . . . a song not unlike a dinky '50's breakfast cereal commercial that gets stuck in your head and goes 'round and 'round and 'round until you're absolutely CoMpLeTlY MAD!).

But he adapted. He found when he slept, a month passed like a single night, and sometimes he'd wake covered in snow when he went to sleep in the chilly but comfortable Fall. He learned to disguise himself with mud and dirt, so when he slept he looked like geography instead of biology. And somehow, perhaps as a side effect of the magic, or perhaps because humans are fundamentally pretty unobservant, he remained mostly hidden in the great wilderness, until something drew him back to the lights of civilization. . . .

MODUS OPERANDI: Gargantua-Mago wants to return from his exile in the wilderness. He wants to claim his true place as Master of Humanity. He's *almost* over his crippling fear of nakedness, at least enough to demand his tiny subjects begin construction of a vast and terrible pair of mega-chinos for him to wear. He's coming back, and he wants pants.

Rumors of Mr. Mago might circulate (the truth, hushed up by the likes of BLACK BOOK, the INC, the MIBs, and Maximega Co. LLC), but when he finally decides to return to civilization, nothing short of an assault force will stop him. Problem is, Mago is now bigger than just

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

about all the opposition, and he's gotten pretty mean out in the wilderness. There's little bits of bear stuck in his teeth, and he's got a belly full of pine and resentment. He's going to stomp in, smash some stuff, demand things, and generally make a nuisance of himself. Perhaps more disturbing, when humanity doesn't fall to its knees and worship him, he's going to start to weep in frustration, and the tears are going to pose a real danger to those unlucky enough below.

Stopping him without the use of Bigness-inducing technology is going to be tricky, but one good strategy might be to ascend his gigantic legs, perhaps using the arm-thick hairs to climb, and make your way upwards to his ears, where if you scream really loud, you might get him to listen to you. He's become pretty gross, and climbing him is treacherous (a 8d Threat at least), and his B.O. has grown in proportion to his body. But without the ability to deal with him physically, talking him down, promising to help, or offering to found a temple in his name ("Over there, yeah, it'll be in the mountains away from all these people who don't think you're cool.") might do the trick.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 4 (P.E. +3, Kicking +3)

GUTS: 3 (Wind +5, Courage +0, Wrestling +3)

HANDS: 4 (Punching +4, Blocking +4)

BRAINS: 2 (Out-Think +2, Notice +4)

FACE: 1

RELATIONSHIPS: Ex-Wife 2, Chow-Chow his Dead Dog 3, The Woods 2

C-STAR GUNNER

"DON'T MESS WITH ULTRA-TEXAS!"

BIGNESS: 3 (Bigger)

POV: Chuck Norris learned how to roundhouse kick from C-Star Gunner. C-Star Gunner understands six languages, but only speaks in gravelly one-liners. How do you know a monster has never fought C-Star Gunner? It still has all its limbs and pseudopods. C-Star Gunner never has to reboot, because his boots are made of indestructible metal. C-Star Gunner can eat only one, but chooses to eat them all. Fool me once, shame on me, fool C-Star Gunner and he'll punch you in the face with a giant chromed fist. C-Star Gunner can't hit the broad side of a barn—C-Star Gunner hits the whole barn. There is no such thing as global warming; you're just feeling the radiant awesomeness of C-Star Gunner. C-Star Gunner eats tanks and spits out beautiful wrought-iron railings. If you spell "C-Star Gunner" in Scrabble, you win . . . *everything*.

REAL DEAL: Everything in the universe has a perfect, hyper-dimensional ideal of which it is only a flawed reflection. Even, if you can believe it, Chuck Norris.

The tech officers of Project BOOK call the place where you can find those hyper-dimensional ideals Code Name HIGHGROUND. The Subhumanoid Sook-Priests call it OOOGL-RCH-UCK. (Rough translation: "Big Scary Shiny Place That Smells Like New Cars." Very rough translation.) The Neo-Physical Philosoticians of INC call it Ultra-Space.

Everything in Ultra-Space is bigger, wilder, and, frankly, way more awesome than in our own Lame-Space. For example, in Ultra-Space, horses are dinosaurs, and dinosaurs ascended to the heavens to do battle with star armadas of Ultra-Pirates. Everything is bigger—even things which are already really big.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

Even Texas.

Ultra-Texas is the size of a million Earths. Great herds of gigantosaurs thunder across its endless wild frontiers, driven by cowboys who are impossibly chiseled and steely-eyed. Often, they're robots. Cowboy robots. That's just how Ultra-Space rolls.

C-Star Gunner rode across the plains of Ultra-Texas, bringing the law to the lawless, often with a barrage of rocket-punches or a dead-eye shot from his enormous pearl-handled Krolt Piecesmaker revolver. That is, until his encounter with a bunch of creatures from Lame-Space resulted in a spacetime kerfuffle on the order of a giga-brouhaha. C-Star Gunner got dumped down into Lame-Space, and his evil Under-Space duplicate see-sawed up to Lame-Space from Ultra-Space's dank, stinky, opposite pole. (Where Ultra-Space is made of win, Under-Space is mostly made of overdue tax bills and poo.) While Rust Knuckle Gunner still walks the earth, C-Star Gunner can never return home.

But even when not fighting his bushwhacking evil opposite, a robot lawman has to do what a robot lawman has to do, and Lame-Space could sure use some help.

APPEARANCE: A fifty-foot robot Ultra-Texas Ranger, with a shiny platinum star the size of a lunchroom table pinned to his woven steel jacket, and a battered titanium Stetson shading his cool blue photo-receptors, half-lidded against the Ultra-Glare. Slung at his hip is an enormous revolver (the Piecesmaker) that shoots uranium salt-water rocket bombs (but after one or two “dagnabit!” incidents with irradiated shopping malls, he uses it with care around Lame-Space's squishy inhabitants). He used to smoke log-sized Ultra-Cheroots, sometimes lighting Ultra-Dynamite from them, but he's run out of both, and trying to find a cigarillo in Lame-Space made from a quarter ton of first-cut sulfur-syruped tobacco proved really frustrating. Also, Lame-Space is pretty down on smoking. This baffled C-Star Gunner until he discovered the shocking truth: in Lame-Space smoking doesn't make you cooler, more sophisticated and more attractive to girls. Lame-Space smoking instead makes you smell bad and then die.

It's been a long adjustment period for C-Star Gunner. Cut off from Ultra-Space, and unable to acquire another Megasaurus to ride, he carries his enormous saddle with him in the hope of one day meeting a suitable replacement that's not actively trying to stomp Des Moines into rubble. If shown modern pictures of what Lame-Space scientists think Lame-Space dinosaurs looked like (big chickens, some of them with feathers), he'll shake his head slowly and say, “Now, that just ain't right.”

PERSONALITY: C-Star Gunner is a stand-up guybot—one that'll punch you in the face without much hesitation if you're up to no good. He'd normally throw you in the Ultra-Pokey after that, but the distinct lack of Ultra-Pokies in Lame-Space means he's got to come up with more creative solutions for the sort of varmints and outlaws a fifty-foot robot cowboy typically deals with.

He'd prefer to keep a lower profile than he can manage, and is somewhat baffled by sites like www.c_starfacts.com which enumerate hundreds of outlandish “facts” about him (“C-Star Gunner doesn't eat food, he eats victory!”), and is confounded by how *one or two of them aren't even true*.

He's used to the vast scale of Ultra-Space, and sometimes the whole of Lame-Space Earth feels like one, small grubby frontier town. He has trouble with the notion that different nations have carved up this teeny little space. Generally, he just ignores such things and depends on his marvelous grasp of “Primitive Hu-Mon Languages” to get by. (And also, on his ENORMOUS ROBOTNESS.) It helps that he's hugely (har, har) popular in most places, and comes in person to answer letters requesting help. One day he's duking it out with the Mosquito Mummies of Bangladesh, and the next he's delivering great justice to the Soggy Carrot Men and breaking their vegan cannibal conspiracy.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

In the end, C-Star Gunner is a pretty easygoing giant robot cowboy. Give him a deck of (sufficiently large) cards, a bottle of (sufficiently toxic) whiskey, and a group of (sufficiently advanced) friends to join him around a (sufficiently conflagratory) camp fire, and he's satisfied.

GRADE LEVEL: C-Star Gunner treats most humans about the same, with a tip of the hat and a polite "Ma'am" or "Sir." He's a little vague on the differences between Lame-World people. Most of them seem to be made of badly designed meat, and the very few robotic ones are primitive, evil, insane, or really self-important. C-Star Gunner might be a robot of few words, but that doesn't mean he likes to listen to some idiot drone on all day about his "CORE DIRECTIVES TO DESTROY ALL HUMANS!!!"

WAY TO HIDE: C-Star Gunner doesn't hide, he just strides off into the sunset until you need him again.

FAVORITE THING: Seeing justice done—whether it's right and proper at the hands of a jury, or rough and crude at the end of a rope.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1-2: Long Booted Legs 7d (Attacks [Spit-Kicker]; Defends; Tough x2).

LOCATION 3-5: Chrome Fists 7d (Attacks; Useful [Rope Trick!]; Area x1, Burn, Gnarly x2, Tough x2, Wicked Fast x1).

LOCATION 6-8: The Atomic Heart Of A True Cowboy 6d (Useful [Speak From It]; Useful [Monster-Bronco Buster]; Awesome x2, Tough x2).

LOCATION 9-10: Weathered Steel Head 6d (Attacks [Atomic Spit]; Useful [Ear for Trouble]; Useful [Stare Down the Sun]; Awesome x2, Tough x2).

NICO BATSO

MYSTERIOUS MASTER OF THE MALEVOLENT MARSUPIANS

"MWAAAAA HAAAA HAAAA! I have taunted you with the traditional laughter. You have escaped from the Room of a Thousand Spikes. The forms have been obeyed, the rituals enacted with care. Now it is time to get unconventional. The meal you ate yesterday at 5:35 P.M., before you even suspected my existence, contained a deadly but very slow toxin. Even then, I knew we would be facing one another today. There is no antidote. I have you IN MY POCKET."

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal, but with access to Wombattle Mechs and BIGPIG living death machines)

POV: Oh man, you've been reading the *Internet*, haven't you? Word of warning: gullible people should stay away from the Internet because if you don't, the nice prince from Nigeria will have all your money. Nobody but a Class 1 Nut would claim there's a seekrit conspiracy of eeeeeevil marsupial-people invading human society in an effort to destroy their evolutionary enemies, the hated placental mammals (i.e., you and me, the dog, a squirrel, and the horse you rode in on). It's kook fodder. It's bull-pucky.

Or so one might have thought, before the new family moved in down the street. The girl's pretty cute, and that Australian accent is proving very popular in school.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

JUST BECAUSE I LIVED IN MOMMA'S POUCH DON'T MEAN I'M WEIRD!

Can you play a Marsupian kid? Sure! Marsupian kids aren't really different enough from regular kids to count as Weird Kids (see page 31). They're more or less regular kids who happen to be related to marsupial people who might be involved in a global conspiracy to wipe out humanity. Not weird at all.

Unless you happen to be a girl.

Girl Marsupians have pouches. This isn't all bad. They're not slimy pouches, they're nice and dry. A pouch is great for a cellphone. And it's a great place to stash teeny contraband. But when you get right down to it, having a pouch of skin on your belly you can use to smuggle candy into a movie theater doesn't exactly rate as a famous super-power.

What about Marsupians and monsters? You betcha!

Marsupian monster keepers have some added challenges, because if the conspiracy gets wind of the monster, they're going to want to use it to help destroy, you guessed it, all humans. And if you happen to be friends with a bunch of those humans, this will add some tension to your dinner conversation with your parents. Where human kids try to keep their parents in the dark about their monsters because they'll disapprove, Marsupian kids try and keep it secret because their parents would want them to use their monster to "accomplish something real" and "achieve goals," and it would be just like school.

How come the new girl in town never wears a two-piece swimsuit? Always a one-piece. OK, that's not so weird.

But you know what is? That she never wears a two-piece, *and she's got a huge mechanical wombat battle machine hidden in a burrow under her house.*

In retrospect, it was probably not a good idea to waste so much time worrying about her swimming attire.

REAL DEAL: Nico Batso is a big guy, but he does a good job of looking inconspicuous. Looking *normal*. His cover is that of a scientist and astrophysics lecturer at the local college. Perhaps he also does some guest speaking in a (mad) science class. It's almost perfect. Almost.

You'd have to look hard to see how his big smile fails to reach his eyes. It's easy to mistake that glimmer of barely-restrained anger and disgust for the twinkle of good humor. But make no mistake, Nico Batso hates you and your whole infraclass of pouchless mammals.

The Marsupians evolved from marsupial stock in isolated parallel to modern humans. They were a peaceful, empathetic folk with great hair, a race of artists and deep-thinkers way too easygoing to stand against the big mammalian jerks with their fancy-schmancy placentas. They were driven from their homes, harried, harassed, and nearly exterminated.

That's the story Nico Batso tells his followers, anyhow. The reality of the decline of the Marsupians is more complicated and less dramatic—but trying to raise an angry secret conspiracy to destroy a whole species is tough work if "***complex environmental transitions and cyclic climatic change destroyed our people!***" is your rallying cry.

The funny thing about the Marsupian Menace is that most people wouldn't care if they found out their neighbor's wife had a pouch on her belly and sometimes craved ants and grubs. They don't look all that different from humans. They're a bit rounder and a bit cuter, in a fluffy sort of way, and many have Australian accents which guarantee they'll be liked in the United States. The American mind rebels at the notion of an *evil* Australian accent. The very normality of the Marsupians is something Nico Batso curses daily. If only his people had the disturbing biological superpowers of the Subhumanoids!

Batso has been forced to use guile, to infiltrate his people into human military and technological programs, overt and covert, and has been stealing ultra-black military technology for decades. The time approaches when the carefully-hidden caches of battle machines will emerge from their burrows and lay waste to the world of Man, replacing humanity with the true owners of the Earth.

Batso is above all else, a traditionalist—even if he's making up his traditions as he goes

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

along. He believes in playing by the rules—even if he never tells you what they are. He’s studied the works of his enemies, and built his evil conspiracy into something like a mystery cult. Those who penetrate the outer mystery of the Marsupians might think they’re a secret society of cartoonish super-villainy; but the inner mystery is more insidious, responsible for international terrorism, weapons proliferation, and the success of six of the last nine boy bands.

Batso knows the value of both *evil* and ***EVIL!***

GRADE LEVEL: The older a kid is, the less sinister Nico Batso seems. Once they hit high school, kids see *all* grownups as a conspiracy of secretive, power-hungry enemies. And anyway, teenagers are too calloused by life, too busy trying to look cool, to notice that Batso’s grin seems a little too wide, suggesting half-remembered cartoons about a whirling, toothsome creature. What was that guy called again? Heck with it, got to text C.J. back about tonight. . . .

But there’s something about the thick shell of smiling harmlessness that doesn’t fool little kids. Batso creeps smaller kids out. As a consequence, he works hard to distract little kids with candy and jokes. When that fails, he works hard to stuff them into sacks and make sure they don’t get the chance to meddle in his affairs.

Most monsters, like most teenagers, can’t tell there’s anything weird about a Marsupian. Marsupians are close enough to human that the usual differences in gender, color and fashion sense override something as inconsequential as an extra pair of teeth or a hidden belly pouch. “Wait, I’m confused again. Are humans the ones with or without the pouches?”

APPEARANCE: Batso smiles big, he talks big, and he’s really excited about the gravitational lensing of quasars. He makes learning fun. His Australian accent fluctuates a bit sometimes, depending on how he’s gauged his audience’s reaction—are they buying the Aussie rube routine? Should he dial up the Dundee a bit? A bit less Outback? The red, round cheeks and rumpled hair conceal a mind able to plot the downfall of Mankind before breakfast, and then outline it into a step-by-step process anybody could follow. *He makes learning fun*, remember. This includes learning to destroy all humans.

When he’s working, it’s brown suits and no ties. When he’s relaxing, it’s cargo shorts and bowling shirts—an ensemble *mathematically proven* to deflect any suspicion of super-villainy. When he’s leading his followers in their Great Work, he goes in for shiny, silver jumpsuits and stiff-collared capes. But because he’s not an idiot, the capes have safety clasps which come unsnapped if some meddling kid feeds the end of one into the threshing gears of a city-wasting magma torpedo.

The great weakness in his disguise is human food. He looks at a nice, tasty chicken leg with the horror you’d reserve for a gelatinous mass of wobbling salty goo. At dinner parties, he mostly drinks (which makes him rosier-cheeked and even more harmless-looking) and sticks to salad if he can get away with it. The fact that humans eat other mammals when the world is literally crawling with delicious insects and grubs is just one of many reasons he hates them. If he found a fly in his soup, he’d probably quietly thank the Marsupian gods for the tiny respite from the horror of chicken noodle.

PERSONALITY: At heart, Batso is a dark and driven soul. He does evil things because he feels he must, because his people need a strong leader who will give them back what’s been stolen from them. He’s a mad plotter with his eye on the prize, and that prize is having 99% of humanity turned into fertilizer on the termite farms, and the other 1% in zoos. When he drops the Aussie accent, crap is about to get *real*.

WAY TO HIDE: Batso hides beneath the stereotypical Aussie persona that Americans have been trained by film and TV to think is adorable. But there are some anatomical differences

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

between a Marsupian and a regular human, and not just the pouch. They've got a different number of teeth (an extra pair on top); and their organs are in slightly different places and of different sizes, including a huge liver that's aces at breaking down vegetable toxins and a gut that lets them partially digest cellulose. There are some slight differences in joint and ligament placement too, leading them to seem way more physically laid back and relaxed than is strictly normal. When they slouch they seem boneless. When they amble, it's effortless. Sufficiently alert students might notice something odd in a Marsupian's eating habits and movements. Sufficiently sneaky students might be able to check the fridge for grubs and riffle through medical records.

The real ringer—the reason Marsupians of both genders keep their shirts on—is that they don't have nipples. Sorry to stray into PG-13 territory, but it's in the service of science. Female Marsupians nurse their tiny young ones from within their pouches, and male marsupians lack nipples altogether since they don't have pouches. Nico Batso considers this another example of Marsupian superiority over humanity.

FAVORITE THING: Over the long term, the subjugation of the human race and its downfall. On the short term, a nice plate of fried larvae like Momma used to make.

BITS AND PIECES

FEET: 2d (P.E. +2d; Dodge +4d; Kicking +1d)

GUTS: 5d (Wind +2d; Courage +3d; Wrestling +4d)

HANDS: 3d (Punching +1d; Block +1d; Shop +5d)

BRAINS: 5d (Out-Think +5d; Remember +5d; Notice +5d; *Marsupian Secret Science* +4d)

FACE: 4d (Charm +5d; Connive +5d; Put-Down +5d)

WOMBATTLE MECH

BIGNESS: 2 (Big)

APPEARANCE: Wombat, Combat, Robot. Say that five times fast. Now, say that five times fast while a thick-bodied, tank-sized war machine with fifteen-inch steel claws and armor plating comes crashing towards you, heedless of all it crushes. Tongue tied? I'll bet you have no problem saying, "Argh! Run away!" When you see a Wombattle Mech, it's usually covered in dirt from its burrow.

PERSONALITY: Nico Batso and his followers have a couple of signature toys to unleash on the unsuspecting placentated enemy when the time is right. The Wombattle Mech is a piloted robot (see page 30) without any AI or personality, though each one has its quirks.

WAY TO HIDE: A Wombattle Mech burrows into the ground, covers up behind itself, shields its systems, and powers down. They're really hard to detect when dug in.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1-3: Armored Atomic Arse 10d (Useful: super-charge reactor [uses the Helping Hands rules, page 7, to enhance other actions]; Tough x5)

LOCATION 4-6: Thick Articulated Torso 5d (Attacks: rocket pods; Area x1, Gnarly x1, Tough x3)

LOCATION 7-8: Stubby Piston-Like Legs 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: jump super high; Tough x3)

LOCATION 9-10: Adorably Armed Head 5d (Attacks: eyebeams; Useful: combat sensors; Awesome x2, Tough x2)

BIGPIG

(BIOGENIC IMPROVED GROWTH POUCH INTERFACED GRUNT)

BIGNESS: 3 (Bigger)

APPEARANCE: Basically, a woman taller than trees. The BIGPIG is an improvement on MacBIG technology (page 59). Rather than drive the giant brainless clone from inside the skull, the BIGPIG pilot slides into the protective and warm belly pouch, and there's room there to transport a crack team of Marsupian commandos too. Because male Marsupians don't have pouches, all BIGPIG units are clones of female Marsupians. The ones who were cloned are not super-pleased with the acronym, but are committed to the cause.

LEVI A. THAN

CEO OF MAXIMEGA CO LLC

"I like your moxie, kid, I like your go-getter, take-no-prisoners attitude. Come work for me. Six figures. Health and Dental. 401K. It's never too early to start thinking about your future—because if you side with humanity against my new order, there will be no future for you at all."

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

POV: Since that big company moved its headquarters to town, it's like everybody is working for them now. Your mom or dad or a favorite teacher quit to go join "The Maximega Team!" Even with the economy on the skids, Maximega Co keeps hiring, keeps building.

But like, what do they actually do? They have a huge factory, but nobody knows what they *make*. They have a giant office building, but nobody knows what kind of business they are. If you ask people who work there, they get a glassy eyed smile, and say something like, "At Maximega Co, we work to synergize technological solutions to business management



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

paradigms and empower users to realize their true potential!” You don’t know what that means, but it’s *creepy*.

REAL DEAL: Levi A. Than isn’t human, which at this point, should not be too surprising, but what is a little surprising is just how not-human he is. He’s so not-human that in his true form, he’s about a hundred feet of not-human. Leviathan is the primordial god of the deeps worshiped by the Subhumanoids, a giant who partakes of weird oceanic biology like a hungry man at a Chinese buffet. Oh, fins? I’ll have some of that! And tentacles? Two servings, please! Gills? Sure! Bioluminescent lures? Three please! Scales? I’ll have all you’ve got! Eight-foot glistening transparent glass-like teeth? How could I say no? Yet, he doesn’t look like a shambling explosion at a Japanese fish market. Somehow, he pulls it off, and no surprise considering that in his human form, Levi A. Than can wear white after Labor Day, and look fabulous.

Mr. Than realized that the surface world was moving faster and faster, that the ape-people who’d taken over were approaching the point where they’d become aware of the Elder Things pretty soon, just as the previous mortal masters of the Earth had always done, and just as before, that would lead to a mad scramble among the Elder Things to secure worshippers, get them to build temples, and generally exploit the shell-shocked mortals as ruthlessly as possible. So he decided to get in on the game early, and establish his own church in the human world before the other creatures who claimed a similar plateau of immortality and intellect.

Giving humanity a quick once-over, he realized that what mankind worshiped most was their symbolic units of exchange. In order to prepare them for the coming age of hideous wakefulness, he founded a company and began collecting as much of this “money” as he could. As he grew more savvy to human business practices, he realized how suited his primordial sea-god instincts were to modern American finance in the age of globalization.

Plus, he really started to like his big corner office, his bloodwood desk, his Herman Miller custom chair, and being called “Sir” by clueless ape-like employees.

MODUS OPERANDI: Levi A. Than plans to dominate the world of business utterly and completely before one day at the annual shareholder’s meeting, revealing his true form and claiming mastery over the human race. Until then, he uses the hideous biological sciences of the Subhumanoids to further his ends. Most Maximega Co. LLC facilities house their Human Resources Departments in hidden underground grottoes half flooded with brine to give the Subhumanoids a place to relax and kick back after a hard day infecting people with mind-numbing brain parasites, dosing the employees with happy drugs, and brainwashing new hires with hypno-squids. A visit to Human Resources inspires a bowl-quaking dread in most of the Maximega Team even if they can’t say quite why. Human Resources is great at sorting out staffing problems by brainwashing the trainable and eating the untrainable.

Levi A. Than funded his corporation with gold and jewels taken from human shipwrecks, and if the company’s profits don’t look like they’re going to exceed targets, he sends some of his Subhumanoids to find some more for a quick injection of cash. If the Fed ever looked closely at MMCo’s books, they’d find obvious and badly concealed irregularities which remain hidden only beneath big piles of filthy, filthy money (or because auditors get a tour of Human Resources before going home. . .).

GRADE LEVEL: Younger kids are more likely to encounter Levi A. Than’s machinations indirectly . . . at least at first. If Mom or Dad or a favorite teacher quits their old job to “. . . begin an exciting new career as part of the Maximega Co Team!” then at first, they’re going to start bringing home more money, start dressing sharper, start looking at understated Euro-

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

pean sedans, and start using terms like “Actualizing My Career Path”. But it’ll get creepier and creepier, and they’ll get more and more unable to deal with the rest of their life without framing it in terms of corporate babbletalk, and they’ll get glassier and glassier. Eventually, they’re going to start growing scales; one too many trips to H.R., one too many doses of Subhumanoid cerebrospinal fluid injected into the old skull-box through the eye, one too many mind-altering infection of psi-flukes.

Older kids may meet Maximega Co Team Members at school or at events they sponsor. They’ll have the biggest and most rockin’ booth at any career fair older High School kids go to; it’ll be all lasers and smoke machines with a DJ remixing old Sci-Fi TV show theme-songs, and MMCo recruiters with cool suits and huge smiles, who’ve actualized their career paths so hard, they don’t need to blink anymore. This might lead to some kind of summer internship at MMCo’s office, or a part time job in the mail room.

STATS AND SKILLS

FEET: 2 (P.E. +2)

GUTS: 6 (Wind +4, Courage +4, Wrestling +4)

HANDS: 2

BRAINS: 6 (Out-Think +6, Remember +6, Notice +6, Gazillions Of Dollars +6)

FACE: 6 (Charm +4, Putdown +4, Connive +4, Get Away With Murder +6)

RELATIONSHIPS: His Subhumanoid Children 2, The Company 2

LEVIATHAN

SQUAMOUS FISH-GOD OF THE DREAD SUBHUMANIDS

“BEHOLD! I AM RISEN! NOW THE BEASTS OF THE SURFACE
WORLD SHALL KNOW MY BRINY GLORY!”

BIGNESS: 4 (Biggest)

APPEARANCE: Like every creature in the sea all mashed together and a hundred feet tall, except somehow, it works. Leviathan’s body is a little whaley and little sharky and little like a starfish. Along his back, waving anemone-like fronts in a thousand eye-ravishing colors filled with deadly stinging cells. His arms and legs are sort of like flukes, a little like crab legs, and there’s something a bit lobstery about some of them, but they’re stippled with color, and move with precision and grace. His face is vast and fishy, but there’s something human about the positioning of the huge eyes,



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

WEIRD KID POWER SOURCE: SUBHUMANOID HYBRIDIZATION

A Subhumanoid can inoculate one of its growing larval polyps with human DNA, causing the two biologies to fuse. The resulting offspring is neither Subhumanoid or Human, but more (or less) than both. Most appear almost entirely human, save for a little fishiness about the eyes, and a tendency to go out for the swim team.

Hybrids are perfect for mixing with humanity. They don't need brainwashing to make them play for Leviathan's team, and so they don't dull-wittedly chirp corporate slogans all the time. They can hear, understand, and speak the Subhumanoid language though, and can survive underwater too, though they're about as comfortable on dry land (which is to say, not that comfortable; as creatures of two worlds, they're not super at-home in either, which could explain the irritability).

The hybrid program is pretty new, and has only been going on for a few years. Subhumanoid hybrids mature at a different rate than humans or Subhumanoids, sometimes faster, sometimes slower, but all the hybrids are now school-age kids, and so the place they're best suited to infiltrate are schools. Now you know why that new kid looked a little green when they served fish sticks at the cafeteria. They smelled just like his Mom.

Subhumanoid Hybrids are a little slower and a little grumpier than other kids (-1 to Face and Feet, maximum 4) but smarter and tougher (+1 to Brains and Guts, max 6). They have a Guts Weird Skill called "Subhumanoid Hybrid" that they use for doing Subhuman things like talking in the click-language, swimming underwater or eating Sashimi without wincing. Sometimes, they'll develop other Subhumanoid traits like partially-scaled skin, or one clawed hand, but those mongrel hybrids rarely return to school after mutating that way, but you're free to play around with aquatic-themed Weird Skills like . . .

CUTTLEFISH SKIN SD

Like the peaceful cuttlefish, your skin can morph and change color allowing you to blend into your surroundings, counterfeit designer clothing, and dress out for PE in like three seconds.

FACE – Presto Change-o 2d (Useful [imitate clothing]), Now You See Me, Now you Don't 1d (Useful [blend in to match your surroundings if you're, you know, nekkid], Awesome x2)

PRESSURE BLADDER SD

In your abdomen is a muscular bladder you use to equalize pressure when you're swimming really deep in the water, but you can fill it with water when you're walking around dry and squirt it out at firehouse pressures. You can also fill your bladder with a snack for later; Mom always gave you a slurry of half-digested herring to fill your bladder with before sending you off to the human school to spy on the drylings. But it'll hold delicious roasted tomato and chipotle salsa just as easily (just make sure nobody sees you refilling the bowl at the party).

GUTS – Suck it Up, Squirt it Out 2d (Useful [store stuff in your bladder], Attacks [shoot it out hella hard], Wicked Fast x2).

MANTIS (SHRIMP) STYLE SD

If Mantis Shrimp were six feet long, they'd be running this cruddy little planet, and humans would be an occasional snack food. These little guys can see five different properties of light that humans can't pick up at all. They can strike with their teeny pincers hard enough to bust an aquarium – so fast that they cause bubble fusion in the water. If a mantis shrimp says "Jump!" you run away, because you sure don't want to get bubble fused. With this Weird Skill you have something of the shrimp's powers writ large.

HANDS – Mantis Strike 1d (Attacks, Wicked Fast x3)

BRAINS – Mantis Sight 1d (you can see all kinds of funky polarized lighting effects)

SUBCUTANEOUS SCALES SD

We're all the same, under the skin (or so they say during the annual school assembly on Tolerance), but this isn't so true with you. Under your perfectly ordinary human-looking skin is a hard mesh of sharp scales, like off a shark's back.

All locations have Secret Scales 0d (Tough x1)

BLOWFISH SPIT SD

If some kid hawks a loogie at you, you can hawk one back that'll put him in the hospital. You've got all these glands in your mouth and innards that churn out a really gnarly toxin. Get a little on somebody and they'll have a magic carpet ride to tri-pout city. Get a bit more and they'll have a significantly less magical ambulance ride to the city hospital. Get too much and they'll have a completely unmagical hearse ride to Sunny Meadows Funeral Home for Those Who Passed Away Tragically Young. When you get old enough to start wondering about kissing, this is going to pose all kinds of problems.

GUTS – Bad Spit (Useful [psychedelic trip-out], Attacks, Gnarly x3)

and his wide thin mouth can form recognizable expressions (even if most of them are some variation on ‘terrifying glee’ or ‘cosmic displeasure’). Perhaps what keeps Leviathan from being utterly hideous is how fascinatingly beautiful he is, like the exotic tropical-reef tank at an aquarium. He changes color, catches the sun in iridescent sheets of prismatic light, and his movements reveal mysteries of anatomy both fascinating and horrifying in equal measure.



PERSONALITY: Vast and terrible and utterly inhuman. Leviathan has seen civilizations older and stronger than humanity’s rise from the mud and fall back into it. He’s seen the stars shift, the constellations warping with the passage of deep geological time. His awareness runs on these levels of time—a thought a day, a movement a century—but he can focus his awareness on the here and now, compressing his vast and terrible intellect into the human timescale as he’s doing now with Maximega Co. When he does so, he’s impatient, he demands perfection immediately, and his anger is powerful but well hidden under layers of predatory camouflage.

WAY TO HIDE: Leviathan somehow, with a trick of alien biology and monstrous ur-physics, compresses himself down to the size of a mid-40’s business executive, and then uses his octopus-like color and texture changing skin to make himself look like a mid-40’s business executive with a healthy tan, salt and pepper hair, and ocean-blue eyes.

FAVORITE THING: Power. What else is there, in the end? Leviathan plans to use his army of human slaves to destroy his fellow Elder Things, and take the Earth for his exclusive use after bombarding it with enough ice to raise the ocean levels and drown the land forever.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1-2: Waving Bioluminescent Feelers (6d, Useful [feel spacetime], Useful [navigate the depths], Useful [lure mortals with hypnotic lights], Awesome x2)

LOCATION 3-4: Gorgeously Fronded Torso (6d, Attack [stinging tendrils], Useful [take on disguised shapes], Area x1, Burn, Tough x1)

LOCATION 5-6: Horrifyingly Beautiful Leg Segments (6d, Useful [scuttle at speed], Defends, Awesome x2, Tough x1)

LOCATION 7-8: Pincers Like Works of Art (6d, Attack, Useful [snip and nip spacetime], Awesome x2, Tough x1)

LOCATION 9-10: Regal Piscine Head (6d, Useful [ancient and terrible mind], Useful [make mortals weep with horrific joy at the sight of him], Awesome x2, Tough x1)

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THAT NEW KID . . .

So, Subhumanoid reproduction. You know how they're always tinkering with biology? Creating new slave creatures with special functions. Blowfish that explode like bombs, or squid that can connect to the Internet wirelessly and play bootleg HD movies on their chameleochromic skin. They love messing around with biology, but until Leviathan made his move to the Surface World, they'd not done much mucking with humanity (beyond a few pilot projects last century in a couple of tiny villages along a few lonely coastlines). They've started to experiment more with human biology of late.

MAXIMEGA CO. SECURITY ASSOCIATES

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

DETAILS: These guys have soaked up the worst Human Resources has to offer in terms of 'Special Training Programs' and 'Career Retreats' and there's nothing human left behind their eyes. They're not exactly meatbot automatons but they're close. They all have the same basic personality now: firm but polite, without pity or remorse. They don't deal well with exceptions to their expected routines, so sometimes they can be tricked, and it's possible to get them to blow a mental fuse and have seizures if you can figure out their orders and then get them to contradict themselves (also known as the Captain Kirk School of Computer Programming). Catch them in a logical fallacy in their orders, and they'll go googly-eyed and fall over. Otherwise, they're the standard faceless and nameless jumpsuit-uniformed goon squad any self-respecting megalomaniacal world-dominating super villain keeps on staff to slow the heroes down while he legs it in a jetpod.

ATTACK: They wear discrete body armor, and all carry handguns (with bigger guns available in special lockers), shock sticks, cuffs, and big boots. They're pretty mean in a fight, because they won't defend themselves at all; some will try and disable a foe, and others will pound on them.

DEFEND: They'll never defend themselves, but by default will *always* defend a Subhumanoid or Mr. Than himself if they're involved in the scrap.

USEFUL: They stand around, guarding things, looking for people who don't have the right color security badges, and don't talk. They're not that useful outside their narrow function unless you need somebody to hold down the corners of some garden plastic on a windy day. For standing there and not moving, these guys are aces.

EXTRAS: Range x1, Gnarly x1, Tough x1

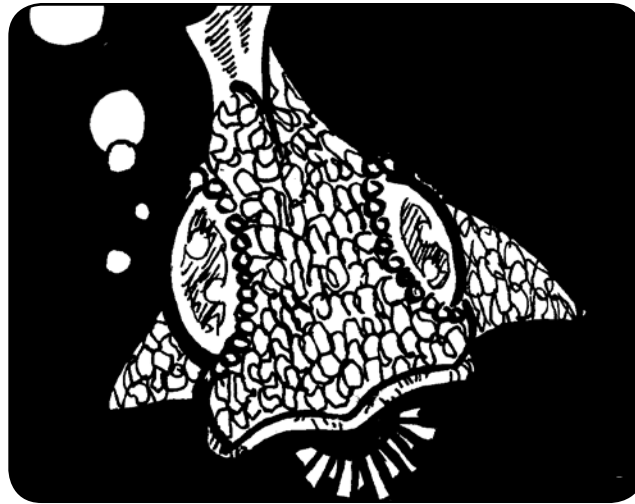
SUBHUMANOID H.R. REP

"HISSSSSSSSSSSSSS!"

BIGNESS: 1 (Normal)

APPEARANCE: Like a hunched 8-foot fishman. There's a little toad around the eyes, and a little lizard around the legs, but the Subhumanoids are pretty fishy. They sure smell fishy, and

if they've been out of the water too long, they smell like the dumpster of an all-you-can-eat crab shack on a July day. They're really big too. They're built like swimmers (keeping in mind that whales, turtles, and angler fish are swimmers). Their long-fingered hands are webbed and clawed, and in their mouths are the fangs of a deep sea eel. Their skin is weirdly translucent in places, and you can see the shifting of muscles and pulsing of organs. They reproduce by budding polyps from their backs, and many have these baby bumps starting to grow here and there. The intricacies of Subhumanoid reproduction are... not something one would wish to think about over breakfast.



PERSONALITY: Cool, alien, and weird. They have totally different body language and totally don't get human communication at all. Their language is a high-pitched series of clicks and squeaks almost impossible to hear; a subhumanoid conversation is felt in the chest more than heard with the ears. It fills humans caught in the middle with a vague unease and dread—beyond the perfectly understandable dread and unease of being caught in the middle of a room full of manfish monsters—which is perfectly apropos, as most of the conversation would consist of stuff like, “Look at the surface-creature’s meaty limbs. If he doesn’t work out as a new associate network administrator, let’s eat him.” They are utterly devoted to Leviathan, and the greatest honor any of them can imagine, and the final reward for a lifetime (spanning a millennium) of service to their god is to be eaten, becoming part of Leviathan’s vast and terrible body. The greatest punishment for failure is being eaten by other Subhumanoids.

WAY TO HIDE: They don’t, not really. Or at least, they don’t have any special way of hiding beyond what everyone can do. They’ll lurk, duck behind things, and slide into the water when nobody is looking.

FAVORITE THING: The Favor of Leviathan. They’re basically a simple lot, despite their mastery of biological technology, and want nothing more than to feel the loving embrace of their god’s fangs one day.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1: Nodule of Psychic Gristle (3d, Useful [receive the word of Leviathan], Awesome x2)

LOCATION 2-3: Bent Inhuman Body (5d, Useful [creature of the depths], Defends, Tough x2)

LOCATION 4-5: Long Finned Legs (5d, Useful [Swim], Useful [run surprisingly fast], Defend, Tough x2)

LOCATION 6-7: Clever Talons (3d, Useful [shape biogenic technology], Attack [razor-sharp talons], Awesome x2, Gnarly x1)

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

LOCATION 8-10: Domed Fishy Head (3d, Useful [brilliant cruel brain], Useful [decipher any puny human language], Useful [dominate minds with parasite technology], Attack [venom bite], Awesome x2, Tough x2, Burn)

Subhumanoids are a little like junior monsters; they don't have the regular monster advantages of survivability and immunity, but they do have special powers as noted above. Real monsters should be able to chow down on a Subhumanoid pretty handily. A room full of Subhumanoids? Trickier. . . .

ULTRA GORGON LEVEL 3 GOLD

BORN TO LOVE, EVOLVED TO DESTROY

"HAAAAAAAAAAACK!"

BIGNESS: 5 (Biggerest)

POV: How come my whole town got replaced by disturbingly realistic statues? Could it be anything to do with the huge wavy snake monster thing? I shall ascertain the situation by looking closely at it with these binoculars. Focusing. OK, it seems . . . *Crackle.*

REAL DEAL: When Ultra Gorgon came to Earth from the Galaxy of Peace (an impossibly distant galaxy in which all peoples live together in harmony, bound by the psychic webwork of psychic filaments spun by Ultra Gorgon's kind), she was a diaphanous and luminous being. She came to bring Love and Harmony and Peace and Free Internet to everyone, but as soon as she began spinning her psi-web, she started getting hammered with Humanity's psychic waste products and mental Spam; she got sick, and fell into a coma on a small Pacific island where she was worshiped for decades as a goddess, until the US Navy evacuated the populace and blew the island to smithereens with an H-Bomb test. The creature that rose from the radioactive rubble was forever changed—angry, cynical, mistrusting—her delicate spectral form gone forever, and replaced with a snake-like form longer than an oil tanker. Ultra Gorgon was born.

She fought the human military, and the forces of Project BOOK and its international counterparts, sometimes assisted by the unwitting violence of great beasts like Mi-Go'Jirra. Always defeated, yet always surviving, she evolved with each defeat, becoming stronger. She grew a second head, then four, then dozens. Her skin changed from pale and scaly to glowing gold. During her last battle with Mi-Go'Jirra, she achieved energy level 3, and she believes, surpassed Mi-Go'Jirra. She will wrest away his title, becoming Queen of Monsters, and then wage war on the human species, punishing it for being so hateful, and petty.

MODUS OPERANDI: For one of the greatest monsters on the planet, UGL3G is remarkably circumspect about the battles she picks. She's a thinking monster, not just a destroying monster, and can plan strategy when dealing with creatures able to threaten her physically. But, when all



is said and done, just how sneaky can a megaton of snakeheads really be? Ultra Gorgon's planning mostly involves ambushes, and weakening her major foes by getting them to fight lesser opponents she can trick into picking a fight. She'll use human pawns and dupes as well, tricking them into serving her ends by masquerading as a stranded angel, goddess, science-experiment-on-the-run, or ancient guardian spirit. Her dupes almost inevitably come to a bad end. There's lots of very surprised looking statuary scattered around hidden grottoes and caves up in the mountains.

Her greatest enemy is Mi-Go'Jirra, and she blames the great fungus-lizard for her downfall more than even humanity itself. Every time she fought Mi-Go'Jirra, she became less than she was, more terrible, more evolved to destroy and less able to love.

GRADE LEVEL: Ultra Gorgon Level 3 Gold can hardly recognize the physical difference in individual humans; she perceives the world as a tapestry of scents and psi-signatures. She senses personalities more than appearances, and has sniffed enough immature minds in adult bodies to be completely confused by how humans mature. Also, she really doesn't care. She'll turn a bus full of little kids into stone as readily as a battalion of soldiers. It makes no difference to her. The downside to this way of perceiving the world is that she's struck by the power of dynamic, driven, creative, and exciting personalities... in other words, the Players' kids. The wuzzy-wuggy link that they have with their monsters makes it ever more profound: she'll go out of her way not to squish or statuefy kids that radiate that kind of force of personality, preferring to study them, suborn them, or use them against her enemies.

APPEARANCE: Like an enormous humanoid with vaguely feminine silhouette who happens to be *made entirely from snakes*. There's a central mass in there somewhere, from which all the snakes emerge and attach, but you can't see it. Ultra Gorgon's snakes intertwine, interweave, and form the humanoid body she prefers. The head of this body is also made of snakes, and crowned in a waving mass of them that bend and stare. She's an almost blinding gold in color, shattering the sunlight into glaring slices of light. It's hard to look directly at her, and not just because that tends to turn people into stone. The snakes are blind to visible light, but their white eyes see psychic energy, and their flickering tongues sift the air, lapping up a fart's worth of molecules in a crowded football stadium, and then being able to point right to the farter.

PERSONALITY: Cunning and furious. Her vast intelligence advises caution, but her hatred demands action. She often ruins her own plans by leaping into the battle too soon, or revealing herself before the trap is sprung. She hates *too much*, and it gets the better of her, and if you know how to play on it, allows her to be manipulated.

WAY TO HIDE: UGL3G discorporates her humanoid shape, becoming a vast wriggling mass of megasnakes, and squishes and burrows down into the ground, into caves, into disused airship hangars, or any other place big enough to contain her bulk. She can fit through an opening as small as the double doors at the mall this way.

FAVORITE THING: She's torn between two conflicting Favorite Things: the desire to smash and annihilate, to run mad and destroy all humans without restraint; and the desire to plot and plan to see a devious scheme come together. These two sides of her personality are in constant conflict, and she'll sometimes blow a great plan to get some destroying in before lunchtime,



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

and other times she'll lay low when smashing would be the more sensible plan and work through her agents and pawns instead.

BITS & PIECES

LOCATION 1-2: Central Mass (6d, Useful [Devious Intelligence], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 3-6: Countless Smaller Snakes (10d, Attack [Hundreds of Fangs], Useful [Snaky Senses], Defends [Wiggly Mass], Area x2, Tough x4, Gnarly x2)

LOCATION 7-8: Half-Dozen Long Snakes (8d, Attack [Acidic Venom Spit], Useful [As Dexterous as Hands], Range x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 9-10: Twin Eye-Snakes (4d, Attack [Petrifaction], Awesome x2, Range x2, Area x2)

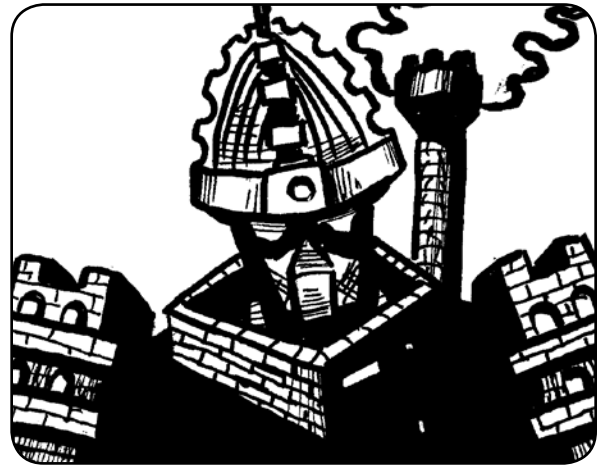
PROJECT CODENAME DOMA OMEGA

"You came to smash buildings? Now buildings are going to smash you!"

BIGNESS: 5 (Biggest)

POV: According to all the PR squawk, the new Galaxy Towers downtown were a "... breathtaking celebration of the modern city, containing in microcosm everything that is good about it." By 'everything that is good' they mean a luxury hotel, four-level upscale shopping mall, convention center, health spa, fitness club, office space, and fifteen separate Starchucks Coffee Houses so you're never more than fifteen paces

from a Primo-Giganto Mochatini Iced Decaf. Nice, but nothing really extraordinary, right? So how come there's all those dudes with the earpieces and the weightlifter builds standing around guarding so many doors with "NO ADMITTANCE" on them?



REAL DEAL: The Galaxy Towers aren't just a four-star hotel, destination shopping experience, spa, fitness club, convention-center, and staging ground for Starchuck's dominion of the coffee market... it is all this, and so much more. When deep in the hidden subbasements, vast hyper-fusion engines are engaged, and power channeled to the armature secreted throughout the Towers and the surrounding architectural footprint, a startling transformation occurs beneath a obscuring curtain of artificial fog blasted up to conceal the change.

PROJECT CODENAME DOMA OMEGA is the government's answer to giant monster attacks on cities. Monsters like to attack buildings? Let's have the buildings attack monsters! The twin fifty-story buildings and their ten-story base transform into a gigantic battle-ready titan, an instrument of American capitalism given the form of a vast art-deco roboknight. DOMA OMEGA is driven from a control center in a luxuriously appointed corner office which becomes its forehead when it transforms, allowing the city's final defenders to fight evil in comfort and style.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

MODUS OPERANDI: DOMA OMEGA waits, its secret protected by spies and guards, until needed to defend the City... or until some meddling kids wander somewhere they aren't supposed to be. When activated, the building-turned-robot rises up, fights, and then returns to its base-station to again become a center for commerce and faux-community. The actions of DOMA OMEGA's guardians might be a little more nuanced though. Much to Colonel Block's displeasure, PROJECT CODENAME DOMA OMEGA was handled by another secret-budget group, a rival to his BLACK BOOK outfit. Worse, BOOK ends up dealing with the screaming public after DOMA OMEGA activates, and has to resort to all kinds of dirty tricks to obscure the truth.



GRADE LEVEL: DOMA OMEGA just doesn't concern itself with individuals, kids or not, but its protectors, technicians, politicians and spooks who guard and support it will. People who threaten DOMA OMEGA's secrecy might find themselves held without trial or perhaps recruited into whatever secret organization funded its construction. Especially if they have a *unique* understanding of monsters and their habits.

APPEARANCE: A sixty-story stylized robot warrior with some obvious architectural embellishments if you look closely enough. If there wasn't time to evacuate the Galaxy Towers before activation, then DOMA OMEGA's body is likely to be dotted with the light from windows, with, if you look close, tiny screaming people in them.

PERSONALITY: DOMA OMEGA has some AI but is mostly a piloted mech when you get right down to it, and it doesn't have much personality. But the organization that built and controls it is obsessively perfectionist, controlling, and organized: almost the opposite of Blocks' piratical soldiery from BLACK BOOK. This focus on cleanliness, tidiness, and decorum finds its way into DOMA OMEGA's design, upkeep, and fighting style too. In battle, DOMA OMEGA is a fairly static and predictable opponent.

WAY TO HIDE: DOMA OMEGA turns into the Galaxy Towers Convention Center and Hotel.

FAVORITE THING: DOMA OMEGA's simple AI takes satisfaction in order and structure, pulsing with satisfaction at a well executed strike against an enemy, or the tidiness with which the custodial staff sweeps its hallways.

BITS & PIECES (BUILDING)

LOCATION 1-2: Convention Center (6d, Useful [look like a harmless building], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 3-4: Mall (6d, Useful [look like a harmless building], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 5-6: East Tower (6d, Useful [look like a harmless building], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 7-8: West Tower (6d, Useful [look like a harmless building], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 9-10: Skybridge (6d, Useful [look like a harmless building], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

BITS & PIECES (ROBOT)

LOCATION 1-2: Main Superstructure (6d, Useful (Supercharging Plasma Reactor), Tough x4)

LOCATION 3-4: Lumbering Legs (6d, Useful (lumber), Tough x4)

LOCATION 5-6: Left Arm Weapon Cluster (6d, Attack [LAZORS!], Useful [Also a Really Big Arm], Range x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 7-8: Right Arm Weapon Cluster (6d, Attack [POWER PUNCH!], Useful [Also a Really Big Arm], Gnarly x1, Tough x2)

LOCATION 9-10: Helmet-Like Head (6d, Useful [Multi-Scanners], Attack [Bursting Beam!], Area x1, Burn x1, Tough x1)

WEIRD KID POWER SOURCE: MI-CELLS

An Injection of Mi-Cells you say? Hmmmmm?

Since the best candidates for Mi-Cell infusion are those suffering from a suppressed immune system, desperate parents might seek unconventional medical care for their desperately ill children, or an unethical (or driven) doctor might choose this outlaw treatment on her own, unable to bear losing another patient. Mi-Cells restore health with remarkable speed, and once fully integrated into the human system, grant exceptional health and resilience, and as the Mi-Cells spread and grow denser, carriers may start to experience some other truly superhuman effects—tragically coupled with hard-to-hide physical changes.

Carriers need to watch out for all the same baddies that kids with monsters deal with; the power of the Mi-Cells is an irresistible lure for kooks, spooks, crazies, and evil aliens.

MI-BEEF SD

The Mi-Cells form a reinforcing matrix in your bones and muscles. You're strong enough to throw a can of cream of mushroom soup through a truck filled entirely with cans of cream of mushroom soup, but you've got enough alien fungus in your system that you'd feel really guilty about it afterwards.

HANDS – Soup Torpedo Strength 2d (Useful [really like totally strong], Attack, Gnarly x2)

MI-BOUNCE SD

Springy bouncy fibers spread through your body, especially your legs. These miraculous fibers act like super rubber bands, bouncing back after every stretch. They let you leap and bound impossible distances, and land with bouncy ease. Basketball tryouts? Oh yeah.

LEGS – Slam Dunk Jumping 2d (Useful [jump like totally high], Defends, Awesome x2, Immunity [falling])

MI-BREATH SD

Like the big guy himself, the Mi-Cells infesting your lungs let you blow a cloud of deadly matter-dissolving spores. Beware seasonal allergies, however. Ah ... AH ... AH ... CHOOOOOOO! OMG you melted Dad's car!

BUTS – Hellatosis 1d (Attack, Area x4)

MI-BELLOW SD

You can holler with the ear-wracking voice of the great beasts. Tired of being ignored? Now, you've got a built-in stereo system with more decibels than a jet taking off. Unfortunately, the only CD you've got to play on it is "RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAROOOOAR!"

FACE – ROAR! 2D (Useful [be like crazy loud], Attacks, Awesome x2)

MI-BOSS SD

The Mi-Cells have infected your brain! In fact, they've mostly eaten your brain. Did you know a human brain is mostly (delicious) fat and cholesterol? Well, those Mi-Cells seem to know. But not to worry, you don't realize it's happening because as they eat a chunk of your brain, the Mi-Cells immediately start doing the same job. A couple of days of headaches and runny nose (by the way, that ain't snot dripping out—that's the bits of your brain the Mi-Cells didn't want), you're as good as new... except your brain is now a psychic receiver tuned to Monster FM. You can read monster minds, and if you squint, change them.

BRAINS – I Know What You're Thinking But Wish I Didn't 2d (Useful [read monster minds], Useful [change monster minds], Awesome x2)

MI-GO'JIRRA, KING OF THE MONSTERS

"R00000000000000000000AAR!"

BIGNESS: 5 (Biggerest)

POV: How many giant monsters have their own theme-songs? Mi-Go'Jirra is the *cool-est*. He's just been getting bigger and more awesome for decades. Dad said he used to be really small, like the size of a little building or something, but he's gotten bigger and bigger, and spinier and cooler. Did I say cool already? No, he's not a good guy exactly. He does sometimes stomp on a city while he's fighting a giant animate garbage dump or a space lobster, but he's just so BIG, you know? The poor guy can't help it if his tail flattens a church sometimes. I've got all the Mi-Go'Jirra collectable cards, and I rocked *Mi-Go'Jirra Showdown* on the GameBox, and I started www.migojirra-heart-heart.org and it's the fifth most popular Mi-Go'Jirra website in the *world*. I even bought a skin sample off eBay from a guy in Newark from when the army managed to hurt him a little with a penetrating bunker-buster missile. He said the little hunk of skin landed on his car. I keep the hunk of skin in a tank and feed it. It's getting bigger. One of these days. . . .

REAL DEAL: Mi-Go'Jirra is a gigantic (seriously, we need a thesaurus; how many times do we start our descriptions with "gigantic"?) fungus lizard. That's a little hard to imagine, but picture a huge bipedal saltwater crocodile with skin like wood fungus, and great spines and plates of the same stuff all along its back. Now, make it bigger than an aircraft carrier stood on its end. That's something like how Mi-Go'Jirra's little brother might look. Mi-Go'Jirra is much gnarlier. He came to Earth from a distant world, carried as a spore on a comet. Some speculate that the Tunguska blast was the result of Mi-Go'Jirra falling to Earth. In the seas, he found the nutrients and room to grow and grow, and the first confirmed (but Top Secret) sightings



CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

occurred during World War II in the Pacific. He inspired tales of sea monsters throughout the 20th century, and may (or may not) have been responsible for some of the weirdness in the Bermuda Triangle. He gets around. He also showed the same tendency shared by many of the great beasts to fall asleep for long periods of time; he might glut on a dozen whales, and then sleep it off for a decade.



Mi-Go'Jirra's body is a weird symbiosis of animal and fungal cells, similar to how lichen are a symbiosis of fungi and algae. The alien properties of the fungus allow the motile and aggressive animal to grow to impossible size. The fungus forms large and complex structures called Mi-Cells by the scientists who study Mi-Go'Jirra (Migojirrologists). Mi-Cells are similar to slime molds: they're flexible, and can in the right conditions, intrude into living animal tissues, wrapping around animal cells, and strengthening them and giving them remarkable resilience and power. In the wrong conditions, this leads to aggressive cancer that can't be stopped. Fortunately, the Mi-Cells don't seem able to survive for long outside a host, and have trouble overcoming the native immune system of terrestrial creatures, but research suggests that individuals suffering from a suppressed immune system (such as from chemotherapy) might benefit from infusions of live Mi-Cells. Ethics forbids such experimentation, of course, but when has Puny Human Ethics restrained true (mad) genius?

MODUS OPERANDI: Mi-Go'Jirra's motives are somewhat mysterious and hard to fathom. Sometimes, he seems little more than a big animal that likes to fight. Other times, he shows up when humanity needs him the most, and fights to save a city (the bits of it he doesn't accidentally flatten himself). Uncovering Mi-Go'Jirra's motivations and patterns in his behavior are what hundreds of highly trained scientists are paid to do, and what thousands of obsessive Mi-Go'Jirra fanboys try to do because it's safer than talking to girls.

GRADE LEVEL: Mi-Go'Jirra is Friend to All Children. Or . . . well . . . all the children he notices. If kids catch his attention, he'll endanger himself to save them. Nobody knows why, but the more adult and grownup you look, the less likely Mi-Go'Jirra is to leap to the rescue. I bet you thought that tragic little mustache was a good idea.

APPEARANCE: Huge, fungusy, and lizardy. Mi-Go'Jirra's iconic silhouette is defined by the almost fractal crenulations on his huge spine-plates, and his gigantic monster thighs. He's got a long tail he drags behind him (unlike a proper dino who doesn't like his tail to drag through his own poo), and smaller arms that have remarkably dexterous hands with three fingers and a thumb, and claws as big as a Mercedes S-Series. His eyes are keen and round, and surprisingly aware. Unless he's taken a pounding, there's nothing especially savage about his face (other than his enormous fangs and the fungus-gray scars in his scaly skin).

PERSONALITY: Somewhat variable. Mi-Go'Jirra is sometimes aggressive, but not consistently. Sometimes he just wants to be left alone, and sometimes he's driven by curiosity. This has led to speculation (on the Internet, mostly) that there's not one Mi-Go'Jirra, but many.

CHAPTER 6: AGONIZING ANTAGONISTS

WAY TO HIDE: Other than swimming out into deep ocean waters, or down into the occasional dormant volcano to sleep for a decade or so, Mi-Go’Jirra doesn’t really hide. Can’t really hide. Other things frequently hide on or around him, but rarely the other way around.

FAVORITE THING: Like his personality, this varies. Sometimes a fight, sometimes his privacy, sometimes rare minerals being refined in your home town, sometimes the songs of the moon faeries. It’s almost like his needs and wants serve some strange, unknowable plot.

BITS AND PIECES

LOCATION 1: City-Swatting Tail (2d, Attack, Area x1, Awesome x2)

LOCATION 2-3: Massive Legs (6d, Useful [run and jump], Defends [dodge], Attacks [kick!], Tough x2)

LOCATION 4-5: Roiling Belly (6d, Useful [digest anything], Attacks [spore breath], Burn, Tough x2)

LOCATION 6-7: Back Spines (6d, Useful [energy collectors], Awesome x2, Tough x2)

LOCATION 8: Foreclaws (2d, Useful [surprisingly dexterous], Awesome x2, Tough x1)

LOCATION 9-10: Reptilian Head (4d, Useful [sense energy], Useful [track], Useful [figure things out], Tough x2, Awesome x2)

CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART



CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART

GO GO MONSTER FORCE ZETA!

Things got really weird without you even noticing. It all started small... that night when you heard a voice from your closet. “Hey kid, can you give me a hand?” On reflection, the thing you found in there was still pretty new to the world, and very, very literal. Though he was totally cool about helping clean up the rest of the burglar when he was done with the fingers (his favorite bit). It’s amazing how even something like that can become normal after a little while.

So things progressed. First your monsters, then some other kids showed up with monsters, then there were *other things*, and mean people, and some fights, and some adventure, and some trips to other planets (and other dimensions), and it all becomes pretty ordinary. You figure out how to balance it out against family and school. You quit wondering how you’re going to get your homework done every night, and not only because it turns out your friend from the closet can do calculus in his head and if he needs to count to a really high number, has about a thousand wiggly tendrils to count on.

Then, something changes.

The vague secrecy you’ve come to take for granted vanishes one day. You turn around after your monster buddy trounces some alien robots or rogue CIA agents or a bunch of mind-controlled bullies, and see a guy with a fancy new cellphone, streaming the whole thing live to the internet. Bye-bye kitty. Perhaps you can put the bag over your head.

CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART

From rumors and blurry phonecam footage, to the Action Eye-Witness News Team At 6, to pages dedicated to pics of your friend on cryptocritter.net. You're attracting attention. Monsters everywhere seem to be.

And then some gigantic bug-beast attacks a videogame trade-in store in broad daylight in front of witnesses. Your monster shakes his head(s): "Noooooooo, dude! COME ON! You know how long I've wanted to do that? But I kept the secret! What a total jib!"

Nothing to do but fight.

As you and your friends try and contain an unleashed (and extra-large) Bugnutz, a fleet of black shiny 18-wheelers cruises in and guys start pouring out. Some direct the crowds away, confiscate cameras and phones, and spray people down with a pink mist that makes them docile. Others level a dizzying array of black and menacing war-toys at everybody in the fight. You're like, "NO, DUDES! HE STARTED IT," but they aren't listening.

Five trucks unfold, and out steps... oh man, how cool is this? Robot gorillas.

While two separate you from Bugnutz, the others dogpile the big monster and wrestle him to the ground. From between the robots guarding you and your monsters, walks an army man in fighting uniform. He looks you up and down and says:

"I NEVER SAW A SORRIER BUNCH OF LITTLE SCRUBS IN MY LIFE! LOOK AT THOSE SKINNY LITTLE ARMS! YOU COULDN'T SCRATCH YOUR KIESTER WITHOUT BREAKING A NAIL! AND YOU KIDS DON'T LOOK SO HOT EITHER! NOW, INTO THE TRUCK! YOU WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT NOW!"

That was Colonel Brodie Block's inspirational recruiting speech.

Welcome to MONSTER FORCE ZETA.

Over the next few weeks you're introduced to the Force, and you come to learn what it is. Block's Project BOOK is well funded, but small, and it's starting to lose the war against all the things that want to put human brains on crackers and call it haute cuisine. They don't have the insider perspective on the otherworldly, don't understand it really. They need operatives who can infiltrate supernatural circles, and they need agents who understand how to fight them when it breaks out into war. In short, they need MONSTERS, and monsters need their kids.

The MFZ is an international special scientific strike force, with its military branch commanded by Block, and its scientific branch managed by the good folks at the INC. This leads to some conflicts of vision, as Block wants to smash stuff and squish things, and the INC wants to make peace and study things. Plus, the INC refused to put its inflatable ninja agents under Block's command, so he's especially irritated with those PENCIL NECK GEEKS TRYING TO TELL ME HOW TO RUN A WAR! But Block is recruiting monsters now, and the Geeks can "SUCK IT!" because he's not going to share. Block has a giant underground base, a super-submarine command center, and a network of satellites overhead, peeking downwards with arrays full of zeta-ray energy detectors. He's got the gear, he's got the will, and he's recruiting kids to be his new foot soldiers.

And so one must ask, where are all the parents?

Asking far fewer questions than they might before getting the letter explaining how their kids did so well on the WTMTU-SAT (We Totally Made This Up Standard A-something Testing) that they got a coveted internship, special elite academic instruction, and a full ride at any college in the US when they were old enough.

DEFAULT GRADE LEVEL

GGMFZ works for almost any grade level. Colonel Block is less likely to use salty language around younger kids—he's old school that way—but as far as Block is concerned, "EVERY

CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART

CITIZEN OF THE EARTH NEEDS TO DO HIS PART!” He’s much more likely to irritate girls regardless of age by his inability to recognize that feminine pronouns and forms of address exist. He’ll say to anybody “MISTER, YOU BETTER GET THIS GOO CLEANED UP!”

THEMES

GGMFZ is all about learning to play on a team, work together, and work for something bigger than yourselves. Kids in the MFZ aren’t in the military exactly, so they don’t have to wear uniforms or anything, and they still have to maintain the (increasingly thin) fiction that they’re regular kids going to a regular school (“GOL-DURN CHILD LABOR LAWS! THE LAWYERS WOULD HAVE ME BY THE GIBLETS!”). But, they’re on the MFZ team, and they’ll meet the techs, and army men, and supply sergeants, and science people who make it up, and they’ll start to seem like regular folks instead of faceless goons, especially since most will have a sweet spot for the kids, and they’ll look out for them. Hidden in this is a theme about having to shoulder responsibility before you might be ready for it. Step up to the plate and swing, or hope for a walk...

Increasingly, as the campaign progresses, the secret of monsters and weirdness is going to wear out. It’ll change from blurry videos of a monster fight behind the Gas-and-Go to a live footage on CNN of a beast like fifty-million tons of corned beef hash attacking the Superduper Bowl. The secret is going to get out. It’s going to get out BIG.

And then, the heroes of Monster Force Zeta are going to find themselves cast into the spotlight, and the pitiless engines of the PR machine fire up, and the kids and their monsters find themselves testifying before Congress (“No, Senator, I am not now, nor have I ever been, a member of the Cosmonaut Party”), signing endorsement deals (“When I fight monsters, I need to be comfortable—Stretchmaster makes MY underwear”), and fending off fans (fans who build crazy websites and want to know things like, “Can he swallow a *whole* yak? How about a buffalo? What about a cow . . . *with horns?*”). But there’s increasingly little time for anything else but the MFZ, because things are getting stranger, things are getting more dangerous, and it all seems to be leading somewhere. Somewhere bad. Things are waking after millions of years of sleep. Why? Is there some kind of shadowy conspiracy behind it all? Pushing the Earth towards chaos and destruction?

Well . . . isn’t there always?

INSPIRATIONS

Godzilla films, but nothing made after 1980. *Gamera*, *Friend of All Children*. Other charmingly cheesy ’70s giant robot/monster shows like *The Space Giants*. Anime from the Kids-Drive-Robots genre (the classics being *Voltron* and *Gigantor*), and from the monster collector genre. Sentai shows—especially American knockoffs—which have kids and teens donning the masks rather than good looking pop-idol types.

WHO KNOWS WHAT?

Things start out with monsters and monster stuff being fairly secret, though by the time they get recruited, evidence is leaking out despite the best efforts of the black suits. During the early parts of the campaign, Bigness 2 is the largest monster they’ll face, and most of those will be in areas isolated enough to weave some kind of fiction over the event when the fight is done. But that’s going to change.

By the time they start facing off against Bigness 3 foes, the secret is going to be wide-open, even if there’s no official acknowledgement of the existence of monsters yet. By the time some-

thing with Bigness 4 wanders out of the ocean, and starts spitting enzyme goo onto a coastal resort town, this denial becomes a big joke. Leno might crack, “And in other news, the government today continues its denial of the existence of trees, doggies, and air.”

When the penultimate fights of the campaign go down at Bigness 5, the whole world is watching, holding its breath. A Bigness 5 monster is a civilization killer. Unless stopped, it could wipe out everything. And who’s standing before those vast and scaly feet, ready to ascend and stick a soma-bomb in its ear? Yep, you guessed it.

Go Go Monster Force Zeta!

MONSTERS AND KIDS

The way kids with monsters are treated changes as the game gets bigger and louder. At first, they’re the usual mix of distracted and bemused, keeping the secret the best they can. As things get *bigger*, they’re going to be thrust into the spotlight, and they’re going to be expected to play the role of the hero. Many voices are going to cry out against using kids to fight gigantic hideous creatures from beyond time and space. Many are going to try and get the MFZ shut down as a result. They’ll find themselves pawns in political games, used for leverage and public spectacle. It’s hard to know who your friends are when things get that crazy, or it would be for some other kid.

You know who your best friend is.

Your monster is your monster is your monster. She’ll be beside you when the Jibblies break through the Screaming Wall. She’ll carry you on her back when a flying chunk of masonry cleans your clock and she’ll cry tears that become rubies as they fall until you wake up. She’s got your back. All the outside pressure really squeezes kid and monster together, as it squeezes you together with other kids with monsters. They’re the only ones who understand your situation.

Every kid in this campaign has a Doubt. This is something that they struggle with, a hole in even the mightiest self confidence. Am I brave enough? Am I strong enough? Am I smart enough? Will I let my family down? Am I worthy of my monster’s totally selfless friendship? Will it all turn out OK? Will the planet survive? The GM can pick some of these doubts, and then use them as the thematic underpinnings of a game session, challenging one character’s big issues, and giving them the chance to win and succeed despite their doubts.

HOOKS

Here are some ways to build your game around GGMFZ!

GO! GO!

Your first day on the job! Meeting the MFZ crew is a whirlwind of names and nicknames. “THIS IS CARTER! THIS IS BOXER! THIS IS DONKEY! OVER THERE, IN THE CORNER, THAT’S BEEFKING! DON’T ASK!” You see all the cool toys MFZ has inherited from INC and Project BOOK. You get to meet Agent Grey, the local MIB liaison (who glares as hard as an MIB is allowed to glare), and then it’s all alarm bells and klaxons, flashing lights and gigantic video-screens descending from the ceiling. Monster attack!

Without any preparation, without a proper introduction to the MFZ or its policies, tactics, equipment, or personnel, the kids are expected to get out there with their monsters and whomp butt (or whatever physiological analog serves the attacker as a butt). It’s a BIGNESS 2 beastie come for a snack. Compared to the cost of a single Thundermonkey, kids and monsters are cheap, Block still wants to make sure they’re worth the investment, so he’ll hold back MFZ’s other forces unless the kids start showing signs of getting their butts kicked.

CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART

OPEN HOUSE

After a few months with MFZ, a family meet-and-greet is arranged. Block tasks one of his subordinates (who never screams) with arranging it, and handling the families. What this means is that the kids' Relationship people are now on-site, wandering around (the unrestricted sections, anyhow), and meeting the people that their kids are 'interning' for. The whole thing is an elegant ballet of deception: minimizing the dangers of the work, maximizing how great the scholarship is, and how much the kids have improved academically since beginning special instruction. It's all going swimmingly, until a virus in the OS of one of the Thundermonkey robots (picked up because the thing became obsessed with free downloads) trips its protocols for carrying a wounded pilot back to base.

It grabs the first available target (ideally, one of the kids' Relationship people—preferably the one with whom he has the highest rating), closes up around them, and then knuckle-runs through a wall and away . . . because, in its scrambled state, the Thundermonkey is trying to take its pilot to the secret military R&D lab where it got its initial shakedown. Equally unfortunate, this place is located several states away, and the Thundermonkey would have to smash through several population centers before getting there. It's a PR nightmare, and they can't just use the robot's autodestruct, what with somebody's Mom inside.

Rescuing the robot's victim is only the first step; somehow keeping your parents from totally flipping their lids over the conditions their kid is working in might be far harder.

WELCOME TO HOLLYWEIRD

A few years in the MFZ, and now things have gotten fairly normal. Weird, sure, but a normal sort of weird. People know about you, about your monster. You've done some TV. But then, during a time of serious budget cuts, MFZ gets word that a famous Hollywood visionary director wants to use monsters in his movies; "the ultimate special effect" he says, and all he needs is the loan of some monsters and their handlers for . . . oh . . . just a month or so. He's willing to donate *millions* to one of MFZ's support foundations if they'll come.

"But I don't want to!" isn't something Block or his Sergeant-Accountants will listen to.

So off to Hollywood and fame in the movie biz. It'll be easy, right? Just stand there and make sure your monster is on mark, and doesn't go "RAR!" until the guy with the clacky thing says "ACTION!" Easy. Totally easy. Nothing could possibly go wrong.

Ha ha.

When something gigantic and horrible attacks L.A., the director sees another opportunity. Rather than film monsters fighting on a sound-stage and make the film shaky in post-production, why not strap cams to the monsters as they fight the *giant* monster, and have shaky-cam for real? Brilliant! OK, he won't get that Best Picture nom, but perhaps he can weasel out a Best Documentary award. . . .

"NO NO! ATTACK IT FROM ABOVE! I NEED AN ESTABLISHING SHOT TO FIX THE PERSPECTIVE!"



DEDICATION

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