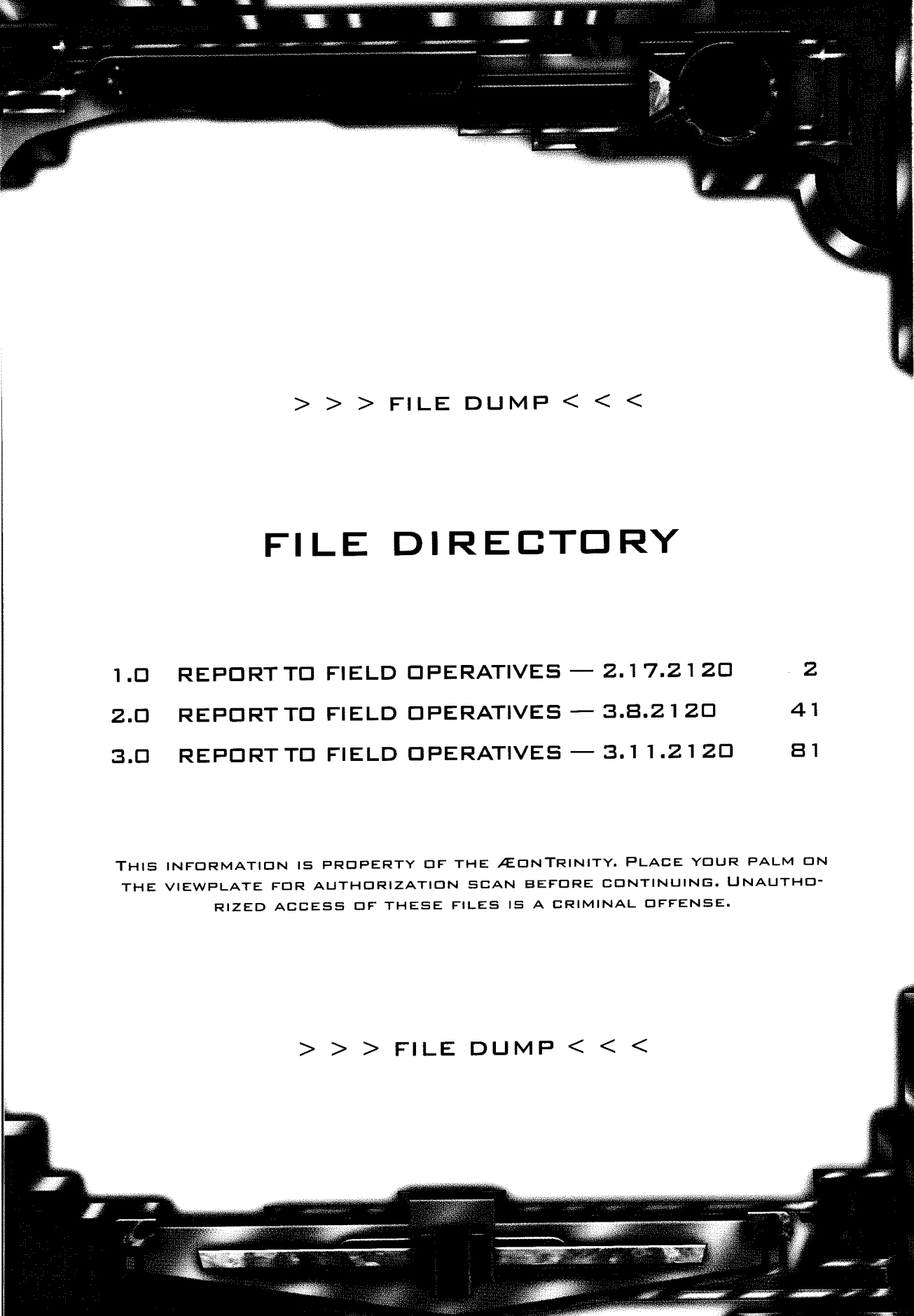




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REPORT TO FIELD OPERATIVES

ÆON TRINITY TRANSMISSION [NEPTUNE DIVISION]

Extraterrestrial Office, Deputy Office Director Giorgios Alekandros Gamemenos

Fellow Trinity members —

We live in tumultuous times. We face a great threat in the Aberrant menace, those horrific beings that attack humanity from the depths of uncharted space. Yet, vigilant as we are against this menace from beyond, we must all watch for other dangers from within.

It is for this reason that recent events on Luna concern us. The Aberrant attack on the mining outpost Cantor Station on the Moon's northern hemisphere, the collapse of Freak Alley in the Olympus colony's Underworld and the growing reports of disappearances throughout Luna's Downside region are isolated incidents when considered individually. However, Triton Division investigations suggest a common link among these incidents: the Æsculapian Order.

We do not yet know the full extent of the Æsculapian's involvement in these disparate situations. However, it is significant that they have a notable presence in each. While I do not suggest that the docs are coordinating some sort of clandestine maneuver, it seems likely that they are involved in activities that the Æon Trinity would do well to learn more about. We must understand all that we can about the psi orders if we are to coordinate our efforts — and theirs — most effectively.

That is why your assistance is so important. Investigate the leads outlined in the enclosed datafiles. Triton Division is not certain how much assistance this documentation will be, but feels that this information offers a promising start to your investigations.

Special Agent Hector Ramirez is your contact to Æon in this matter. He will give you what assistance he can. But, like the datafiles, Agent Ramirez is on hand mainly to provide you counsel. You must trust your own judgment and be able to work independently under most circumstances. Do not hesitate to pursue any possible avenues, should you feel it is warranted. Personal initiative is an important quality that every Trinity agent should cultivate.

I understand that this may be the first intensive work some of you have performed for the Æon Trinity. To that, I have but a few simple words: Do not accept things at face value. Trust in yourself, and pursue the truth no matter where it may lead you.

Regards,

Gamemenos

Extraterrestrial Office, 11:42:13 2.17.2120

Hope Sacrifice Unity

Report of the Committee on the Cantor Mining Station Incident

Section A-4: Cantor-Mockva transmission analysis

[What follows is the recorded transcript of the last transmission from Cantor Station, a mining outpost on the Moon's northern hemisphere, as recovered from station wreckage by Norça personnel on February 8, 2120. Superscripts indicate points of committee expert analysis; see attached findings.]

Cantor Station: Looks like another night of double shifts.

Luna Orbital Station Mockva: What is it this time?¹

CS: Oh, the three new guys all came down sick at the same time.² Must have brought a bug with them.

LOSM: Wager it cuts across the entire operation [static] a week.

CS: No bet, *Mockva*. Plus, the LAMP tube's shut down tonight for repairs. No medicine coming except by hopper.³

LOSM: [static] quarantine [static] word on diagnosis [static].

CS: Easy there, *Mockva*. You're breaking up. Getting close to the horizon?

LOSM: Not due to [static] —clipse for another fo— [static] a sunspot?

CS: Negative, *Mockva*. Sunspot activity's in a down cycle. Might be the teks.

LOSM: [static] teks?

CS: There are Orgotek and Norça troops doing surface maneuvers

• near Harriot Crater. I heard • they're checking up on smugglers or pirates or something.⁴

• **LOSM:** I never heard anything [static] smugglers way out there.

• **CS:** No idea. Maybe they're doing [static] top secret. The less I know, the happier I am. Whoa! [static]

• **LOSM:** You okay there Semyon? [static] —yon! What is it?

• **CS:** Just got an EMP way the hell off the scale. Did you pick it up?

• **LOSM:** Neg— [static]. Wait, correction, yes.

• **CS:** Half the instruments are fried. Optical systems still up, thank God.... *Mockva*, did you get a source on that? Most of my tracking gear swallowed the EMP and died.

• **LOSM:** Semy— [static] originated on a point at [static] but that's impossible! [static]

• **CS:** Station *Mockva*, you're breaking up. I can't read you. Please repeat message.

• **LOSM:** —tinuous transmission. Semyon [static] the pulse was [static] five clicks southeast [static] repeat source of [static] on the Lunar surface [static] of your position and closing.⁵

• **CS:** What are you saying, *Mockva*?

• **LOSM:** —three figures [static] magnification indicates no pressure suits [static] — on't look like VARGs, either. Oh, shit, Semyon, I am so sorry [static].

• **CS:** Talk to me, *Mockva*. Talk to me! What are you saying?

• **LOSM:** [static] —rants, Semyon [static] out by tube if you can [static].

• **CS:** Tube's shut down, *Mockva*. No way out for me. Three of them?

• **LOSM:** Last sighting [static] gone now [static] lost visual one klick.⁶

• **CS:** Shit! Initiating lockdown sequence. [sirens] Attention, this is Cantor Station mining base reporting possible Aberrant incursion from northeast. Requesting assistance from any and all sources. *Mockva*, this is Cantor Station, please bounce signal to nightside.

• **LOSM:** [static]

• **CS:** Olympus, this is Cantor Station. We need help here right now. [Sound of explosions.] Oh Jesus, we've been breached! [More explosions.] This is Cantor Station requesting assistance from Orgotek and Norça commands. We need your help desperately! [Sound of weapons fire, loud blasts.] *Mockva*, anybody —

can you help us? Please, God, somebody help us. [static]⁷

• **LOSM:** Cantor Station! Semyon! Can you hear me? Cantor Station! [static]

SIGNAL TRANSCRIPT ENDS



Analysis of the Cantor Tape

Signatories: Lt. Col. Maria Escobar, Norça liason Inspector Wladislaw Polcovich, Unified Lunar Police Force, External Affairs Derian Carter, Esq., Orgotek legal advisor Dr. Daphne Kelestos, Beaulac Clinic, Department of Psychiatric Medicine Varuni Venkatesan, ISRA public relations director

The commission was called to order at 0832 hours on 2.10.2120 at International Center (Unified Lunar Police Force Central HQ) with all committee members in attendance. Committee member Carter (Orgotek) protested the proceedings immediately, claiming that any results garnered from the proceedings would be inconclusive, based on the incompleteness of the transcript. The motion was voted down three-to-one (Dr. Kelestos abstaining). Mr. Carter asked that a formal protest be made in the record of the committee's proceedings.

It was agreed unanimously that the transcript of the Cantor-*Mockva* transmission, combined with the still images provided by Lunar Orbital Station *Mockva*'s long-range tracking facilities (see attached images 1A through 14A) depict the Aberrant incursion on the Lunar surface that led to the fatal assault on Cantor Station.

Furthermore, the committee cleared the nearby Orgotek and Norça troops of any wrongdoing in the incident by a three-to-one vote (Ms. Venkatesan abstaining). The votes in favor were Dr. Kelestos, Mr. Carter and Lt.

Colonel Escobar. Inspector Polcovich lodged the only dissenting vote. The Orgotek and Norça psions were deployed to Harriot Crater, some 130 kilometers to the southwest of Cantor Station, in response to an ISRA alert that Aberrants might come through a warp point at that location.

The committee states that the psions in the vicinity were not tardy in their response to the station's emergency broadcast, since they were on assignment for exactly that reason, and that any insinuations that there was a deliberate delay on the part of Orgotek or Norça personnel to close with the enemy are flatly untrue.

Ms. Venkatesan qualified her abstention, stating a concern regarding the psions' deployment. She claims that Grenada Connor, a technician on Lunar Orbital Station *Strongsville* who made the initial precognitive sighting, stated that the warp point was at Cantor, not Harriot. However, her priority transmission to the Linma Telcom transfer center on Luna records the site of the warp as Harriot Crater. Connor herself admitted in initial questioning by this commission that she may have said Harriot. The other panel members appreciated Ms. Venkatesan's concern, but pointed out the notoriously nebulous quality of the visions had by inexperienced clairsentients.

Ms. Venkatesan's protest was noted for the record, at her request.

Point-by-point analysis of the Cantor-*Mockva* transcript follows:

¹We already have evidence of a procedural breakdown at this early stage in the transcript. Neither Lunar Orbital Station *Mockva* nor Cantor Control utilizes proper transmission protocols. While this is not damning in and of itself, it does establish a disregard for standard operating procedures on the part of Cantor Station and LOS *Mockva* operations personnel, and may well have been a factor in the station's lack of preparation for the Aberrant assault.

— D. Carter

²The fact that three staff members scheduled for shift were in sick bay, not to mention the personnel diverted to tending them, left the station dangerously short-handed. Aeroc Corporation, the parent firm of the Cantor Mining Co., should be fined in accordance with Lunar Statue 154:46 Subsection 12, for violating safety regulations as regards the number of active personnel required at all times at a functioning outpost of Type 3 or larger.

— D. Kelestos

³The effective quarantine of the station, while admirable in the face of an unknown pathogen, was clearly excessive in this case. The Cantor Station operation is to be criticized for not lifting in Clinic assistance. [Inspector Polcovich notes that a fragmented record of a request for assistance from Beaulac Clinic was filed over eight hours prior to the assault, but this evidence has been discounted due to its incomplete nature and to the lack of corroborating evidence in clinic records.] — D. Kelestos

⁴I object vehemently to the discussion of classified maneuvers by our psion operatives on this clearly unsecured channel, and recommend that immediate disciplinary action be taken against the individual who leaked this matter to the station comm operator. It is only by divine grace that the communication was not intercepted by the incoming Aberrants, leading them to attack the waiting Norça and Orgotek personnel by surprise. This breach of security is unconscionable. — M. Escobar

I hope you're not saying you're glad that they attacked a relatively poorly defended mining station instead of two squads of well-trained psions! — V. Venkatesan

Perhaps the Aberrant plan was to seize Cantor Station, which was, after all, quite isolated, and use it as a staging point for further assaults. Or they figured Cantor was an easier target than 20 armed psions. — D. Carter

⁵At this point, the source of the static was clearly identifiable.

• Mockva control should have notified Norça, Orgotek, ISRA and Olympus commands immediately.

• Failure to do so may have resulted in additional casualties, and is grounds for court-martial.

• — M. Escobar

• ⁶This piece of information, combined with the transmission delay, can be extrapolated into a working movement rate for the three Aberrants. This data could have been used to provide more accurate intelligence on these creatures' incursion capabilities. By not broad-banding this transmission, the Mockva operator deprived Orgotek and Norça troops of valuable information on what they faced. — D. Carter

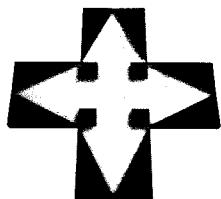
• ⁷There appear to be blast types in the background of the transmission akin to those made by bioware, but they have notably different sound qualities. [Both Lt. Col. Escobar and Mr. Carter go on record as saying that they find nothing anomalous about the explosions, while Dr. Kelestos suggests that the decompression of the station or the poor quality of the tran-

script might produce misleading effects.] — S. Polcovich

• It is the opinion of this commission in a two-to-one vote (Lt. Col. Escobar and Ms. Venkatesan abstaining), that the personnel and management of Cantor Station and Lunar Orbital Station Mockva are guilty of egregious errors in the hours leading up to the fatal Aberrant assault that resulted in the deaths of 39 people and the destruction of over 70% of Cantor Station. This committee recommends that Mockva communications control officer Relaford Santos be stripped of his post and fined ¥15000 for his part in the incident, and that Aeroc Corporation be fined upwards of ¥4M for negligence.

• This committee feels that this investigation is sufficient to resolve matters. The commission therefore moves that, aside from performing standard site clean-up and disposal of the Aberrant bodies, the events leading up to and including this unfortunate incident be closed.





Autopsy Report

Subject: "John Doe" (Real Name Unknown)

Height: 1.905 m

Weight: 82.3 kg

Eyes: Blue

Hair: Blonde

Distinguishing Chars.: See below

Found: Cantor Mining Base 02.08.2120

Approximate ToD: 15:30 hours

Discovered By: César Sweeney ID #231-2211-9 (Norça patrol squad)

Cause of Death: Massive neural trauma concurrent with bioware feedback syndrome. Conclusive diagnosis could not be made as extensive segments of ulnar and other nerves had been excised prior to autopsy.

Notes: Body was found under processing unit by César Sweeney, part of the Norça field team deployed in response to the predicted assault. Discovery was made during retrieval of the bodies of victims at Cantor Base (see attached). Sweeney's testimony indicates that he saw blood boiling away in the harsh vacuum from beneath a half-destroyed processor, which led him to the partially dissected corpse.

Upon removal from beneath the processor, the body was noted to have been operated on previous to its discovery by the search-and-rescue team. Specifically, 12 striated muscles, including biceps, triceps, trapezius and gluteus muscles, were missing. Incisions in the epidermis appear to have been made with surgical precision; best guess is that obsidian or glass scalpels were used.

Note: A check with the quartermaster indicates that we're the only ones on this side of the rock who use these tools, and that it's impossible to keep track of how many we have in inventory.

The muscles were already healed over, despite the fact that they seemed to have been removed with the same tools used on the epidermis. It is my guess that a power similar to vitakinesis was applied to heal the cuts — however, I can think of no reason to do so. Nor can I think of any power besides vitakinesis capable of this sort of cellular regrowth, unless we're dealing with some sort of Aberrant capacity — yet initial tests reveal no sign of taint. There is not enough information to confirm the individual's identity at this time. I can only hypothesize that "John" was one of the guards at the site, possibly a psion using bioware, who was captured and then tortured by the attacking Aberrants before the freaks were driven off by the Norça and Orgotek troops.

Jerzy, we've got to bury this report, or at least delete those last couple of paragraphs. Ship the coroner out to

Phobos ASAP, just to be sure. And make sure that's all Sweeney saw; damn sure can't trust the Norça. I'll run it by our friends in Basel.
— Mangels

Disappearances Baffle Authorities

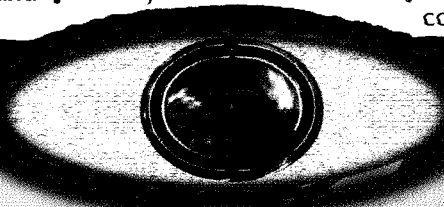
Lunar Officials' Name Coincidence as Primary Suspect

INTERNATIONAL CENTER, OLYMPUS, LUNA — The rash of disappearances in Olympus' Downside sectors has left Lunar investigators baffled. A total of 14 people have been reported missing in the past two months from Yeltsingrad, Yutu Yinchon, Lejanas and even Camelot sectors.

Officials admit that missing persons aren't entirely uncommon in the slum sections of Yeltsingrad, also known as "the Pit," or even in the low levels of Yutu Yinchon. However, the most recent disappearances have been reported in neighborhoods just a few levels be-

low the Lunar surface. These areas are considered safe, middle-class sectors.

"It's a sad fact that many of the people who find their way to the underground slums of Yeltsingrad vanish without a trace," Police Commissioner Monika Richtig said today at a holocaust press conference. "Such occur-



The New Lunar Slums

— David Watson, *The Final Frontier* © 2113

Lunar society has undergone a dramatic reversal from the old days as a subterranean colony to a sprawling surface city of shimmering towers and gleaming domes. This is thanks to the development of shielding that protects inhabitants from harmful cosmic radiation. Mylex, plasteel and bioglass are responsible for the growth of hundreds of domes and towers across Luna in the past five years. Since such construction is by no means inexpensive, the affluent are the only ones who can take advantage of it thus far. Lunar status used to be measured by how far below the surface one lived. Now, the taller the tower you live in, the greater your standing.

Filling the vacuum, the homeless and poor migrate to the now-empty lower levels of Olympus. Once-grand underground estates have become burrows for the destitute and shiftless. Yeltsingrad alone has seen a massive migration of homeless into the now-dark Cenczyk and Mirac complexes. This presents innumerable health hazards to the masses of migrants, who huddle in the dark without power, water or atmosphere hookups.

Not surprisingly, the wealthy and middle-class communities that cling to their lower-level status — a status that seems increasingly outdated — do not appreciate their new neighbors. The influx of homeless has lowered property values on remaining Deep Burrows (also known as "Downside" — with the deepest parts labeled the "Underworld" by incurable romantics and mystery writers), making it increasingly difficult for residents of complexes like Glanowicz and Pale to "move on up" to the surface.

"The situation's reached a crisis level in terms of public health," Beaulac Clinic head Dr. Jerzy Grabowski stated. "It's virtually impossible to track every flight to Luna, and hundreds of people come to Olympus every day hoping for a new start. Unfortunately, most of them end up in Downside. We have no idea how many people are down there, what sorts of facilities they have access to, or how to reach them to provide proper medical care. A highly contagious disease, say, tuberculosis, could spread like wildfire through those warrens — and it's made 10 times worse because the people down there actively avoid 'the authorities.' We have no way of knowing if the entire population of a pirate burrow drops dead — none at all."

Grabowski advocates a drastic solution: "We should seal up a burrow the minute the last paying resident moves out. It's an imperative matter of public safety."

rences are much less common in higher levels of Olympus and the surrounding colony spurs. However, we treat all missing persons reports with the same degree of dedication, no matter where they are reported."

The Unified Lunar Police Force has fallen under criticism, having found no solid leads as yet. Although the body of Constance Duarte, a longtime resident of Lejanas, was found mutilated three weeks after her disappearance, officials refuse to link her to other missing persons.

"No other missing individuals have been found," Commissioner Richtig stated. "We have no reason to believe that the tragic death of Ms. Duarte is in any way related to the other disappearances on file." Legionnaire Victor Marsich, the psion who stumbled across the corpse, was himself assaulted at the scene. He is in stable condition at the nearby Beaulac Clinic.

Anxious citizens are calling for increased Legion patrols and the assistance of clairsentient investigators. Individual psions in the employ of the ULPF and who work independently have initiated investigations. Like the police, however, they have yet to uncover any conclusive information. Commissioner Richtig cautioned against anyone investigating the matter independently, without first consulting the ULPF: "We must all coordinate our efforts. We do everything we can to follow up on any leads we find, and private citizens are encouraged to work with us if they

feel the need to get involved. Operating as vigilantes only serves to make our job more difficult."

Richtig stated further that helpful, organized assistance from outside the police department may be wel-

come. "Olympus is a big place, and our department is limited by its available personnel and resources. We appreciate help, but in the end, you must understand that this is a police matter."

TRITON ARCHIVE

Subject: More Departures

From: Dr. Grabowski

To: Staff

Date: 08:30:06 2.15.2120

It seems like only yesterday that Doctors Mangels and Ashiluna joined us from Earthside rotation, but I now have the sad duty of reporting that both of those worthies will soon be leaving us. Dr. Mangels accepted a position in the Organ Bank Directorate in Basel, while Dr. Ashiluna is on assignment with Orgotek's Qin Bioware Studies facility near Wanjing on Mars.

We should all take a moment to congratulate these individuals, who exemplify the best of both psion and physician, on their promotions and new challenges, and to thank them for their stellar work during their time here. Who can forget how heroically both of these doctors labored in the wake of the collapse of Freak Alley, just a few levels below our own Beaulac Clinic? And surely their research on applying vitakinesis to stimulate nerve growth in damaged limbs will have repercussions far beyond our small clinic.

Friday is the last day for Dr. Mangels, while Dr. Ashiluna leaves on Tuesday. As the recent spate of personnel transfers has left us woefully shorthanded, we will combine their farewell parties into one gala on Thursday at 17:30 in the cafeteria on Sublevel 5. Don't miss this chance to say farewell to a pair of our finest doctors.

Grabowski
JRG/als

BEAULAC CLINIC

— Triton Division File Report

Beaulac Clinic was founded in 2116 by Dr. Desmond McManus, who studied medicine at the Montessor Clinic under Dr. Zweidler himself. Dr. McManus served his internship with distinction on the Ganymede Orbital Station *Lucien* before transferring to Luna to establish the Moon's largest Æsculapian clinic.

The clinic is named after Dr. Alison Beaulac, one of the first Æsculapian psions, who was killed in the *Esperanza* disaster. As a tribute to her service and memory, Dr. McManus dedicated the clinic in her honor at a groundbreaking ceremony. Attendees included Proxy Zweidler, Qin ambassadors and many other representatives of the governments and orders of Earth. ISRA Proxy Herzog also made a rare appearance at the ceremony. The keynote address of the day was given by Dr. Zweidler, transcribed as follows:

"We gather here in a place our ancestors could never have imagined us standing. We are here through the wonders of technology, the imaginations of architects and engineers, and the hard work and dedication of countless men and women. These visionaries have lifted us to the skies almost literally on their backs.

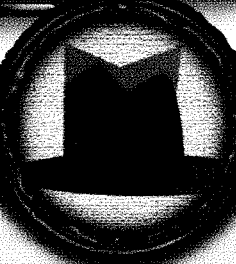
"But we would not be here today without sacrifice as well. The sacrifice of good people, hardworking people, talented people — people like Dr. Alison Beaulac. It would be pointless for me to list the hurts she salved, the lives she saved, the patients she gave of herself to heal. That form of tribute would do her work a

disservice. Instead, I give you the Alison Beaulac Memorial Clinic, the truest form of memorial that can be made to a dearly missed doctor, partner and friend. Here, under the watchful care of psions and doctors inspired by the same spirit that moved Dr. Beaulac, more lives can be saved, more people can be healed — as Alison herself would have done, had she been given more time. Remember her, or someone you know like her, as you enter these doors."

Today, Beaulac Clinic is the largest hospital on Luna, even though the Æsculapian Order still maintains its administrative offices in Yutu Yinchon. Run with the direct assistance of the Montessor Clinic in Switzerland, Beaulac Clinic has over 30 major satellite clinics in every part of Olympus and in surrounding Lunar settlements. The Clinic also sponsors the *Doc Hopper*, a mobile hospital that flies from outpost to outpost all over Luna, providing emergency medical care.

The clinic itself has 11 levels, enabling it to provide care for any sort of illness or injury. Furthermore, its corps of psions and doctors is on call 24 hours a day for on-site or remote work, including rescues, emergencies and counseling. Supported by contributions from patients, the Zweidler Foundation and from the Olympus government, the clinic is able to provide services to the entire Lunar population, and maintains a thriving research wing devoted to furthering the frontiers of modern medical knowledge.

Beaulac Clinic even offers tours for those who want to meet vitakinetics out of curiosity, not necessity. The tours are offered every hour on the hour from 0900 to 1400 LST, Monday through Friday.



20 Questions with Dr. Desmond McManus

— Cori Heisler, *The Painful Truth* © 2120 MMI

Dr. McManus, now living in Basel, founded Luna's largest Aesculapian clinic. A veteran of both off-planet and Earth-based tours of duty, Dr. McManus has seen the best and worst that humanity has to offer, from Switzerland to Ganymede. He has taken time out from his intensive schedule at the prestigious Montessor Clinic's Nerve Regeneration Center to talk via hololink.

PT: Good morning, Dr. McManus. How are you? And let me say that it's great to have you with us.

DM: Thank you, Cori, and fine, thank you. Does "How are you?" count as one of the 20?

PT: Afraid not.

DM: Damn. Well, ready when you are.

PT: Here goes: Why did you feel the need to establish Beaulac Clinic?

DM: Alison was a dear friend of mine, and one of the guiding lights of our order. We used to say that she was the only one who could get Zweidler's ear — by grabbing and twisting. She did a lot of good work, work that hasn't come to the public eye, but which was the basis for many of the advances in medicine the order has made since its inception. This was my way of getting her name in the public eye. She certainly deserved the spotlight.

PT: Why didn't you stay to oversee the clinic's operations?

DM: I got homesick, pure and simple. I've been up there and I like down here a lot better.

PT: Why the old-fashioned underground architecture, even though we have the materials to build on the Lunar surface?

DM: Well, places like Olympian Towers and even Artemis generally have their own private clinics and practitioners. I wanted to make a statement that Beaulac Clinic was there for everyone. It's not as scenic as one of those new-style towers, and it may not be in the glamorous center of Olympus, but that's not the point. It's closer to the people who really need a clinic.

PT: Do you ever look at the way your successor is running things and say, "I could have done better. I could have made that place something really special"?

DM: Now, I think you're doing a disservice to the tremendous job Dr. Grabowski has done up there. Would I have done things differently? Perhaps — I don't know the factors that have gone into his decisions, but I certainly have no grounds to sit here and second-guess. Dr. Grabowski has done one hell of a job. You can quote me on that.

PT: Do you say that, even knowing about the increasingly controversial political stands that Dr. Grabowski has taken on is-

sues like experimentation with taint?

DM: As long as he's a good doctor and runs a good clinic, I don't care if he advocates renaming Luna "The Emerald City" and crowns himself "Emperor Oz the First."

PT: Do you agree or disagree with Dr. Grabowski's stands on matters like working with children diagnosed with Aberrant Syndrome?

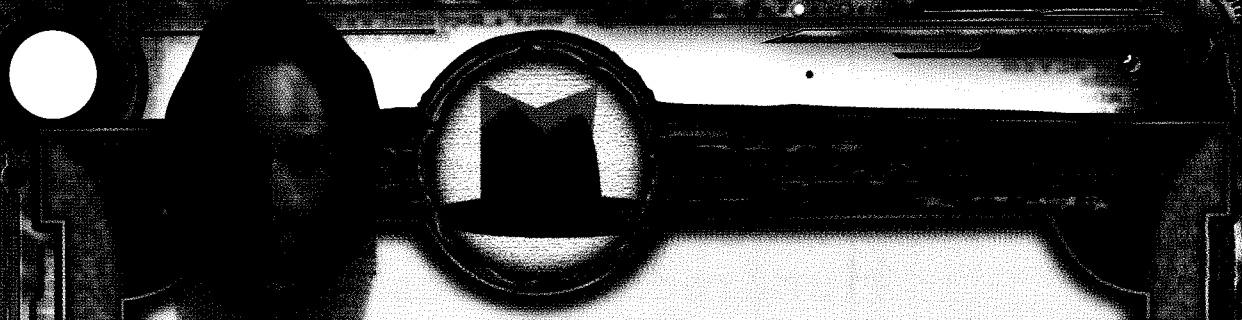
DM: I'd probably have to know what his stands are before saying anything.

PT: Essentially, Dr. Grabowski has been a strong advocate of locating children with the taint and using them, as he puts it, "as a resource for humanity." He claims that there are ways in which studying the taint might prove beneficial in the long run. Do you agree?

DM: Well, we're fools to close off any avenue of knowledge—

PT: So you agree?

DM: Calm down, Miss Heisler. All I said was that we'd be idiots to close off any avenue of knowledge that might be of benefit down the road. On the other hand, there is some re-



search that is too dangerous, or that doesn't promise any real benefit. We should avoid those, and we should look long and hard at any work we do with taint and Aberrant Syndrome. We know what that stuff's capable of.

PT: Do you have any thoughts on these new diseases like D. and Wexler's Disease that seem to be appearing in increasing numbers?

DM: I'm a nerve specialist — if and when one of these new pathogens attacks the nervous system, then I might have an informed comment to make on the matter. Until then, I don't have a clue.

PT: Even though there are rumors that taint is causing these diseases?

DM: That's a damn fool thing to say. One of the things I despise most is people laying everything at the foot of Aberrants and the mutations that cause them. Baseball team didn't win? It's Aberrants. Crops didn't grow right? It's the taint. They've become our societal scapegoats, which keeps us from looking at problems seriously.

PT: Switching gears a bit, what are you working on now?

DM: At the moment, I'm working on some fascinating research with Doctors Huang and Marr about

ways in which we can stimulate regrowth of damaged nerve tissue, and even use vitakinesis to grow new nerve tissue where none had existed before. It's fascinating stuff, and it offers all sorts of exciting possibilities.

PT: Where do you see the psi orders taking the rest of humanity?

DM: I don't see us taking humanity anywhere. I see us going *with* the rest of humanity — we're still humans, after all — to whatever destiny awaits us. You'd have to ask Proxy Herzog about that one.

PT: So you don't see psions having any special destiny?

DM: We're just people, with the same flaws and frailties as the rest of the species. Yes, we can do a few things that maybe you can't, but then again, someone's always been stronger, faster or more powerful than his neighbor. It's a question of scale, that's all.

PT: And Aberrants? Where do they fit in?

DM: You know, I honestly pity them. They're sick, not evil. I just wish we could have found a treatment a century ago.

PT: How do you think the families of those killed in Aberrant attacks would feel about your "pity" for those creatures?

DM: Oh, I'm not denying that Aberrants have committed many monstrous deeds. But they were human once, and might be human now, and I refuse to condemn an entire group of humans based on the

actions of a few, or even a great many. Look at the actions of the Space Brigade, for example — positive angels by comparison.

PT: So if the Aberrants wanted to return to Earth, you'd be interested in seeing them come home?

DM: Well, their attacks seem to indicate that they do want to return to Earth — they just don't want to share it with us. If they could return peacefully, why not? And if we can cure Aberrant Syndrome, eradicate the taint, that may be a possibility some day.

PT: Do you think we can?

DM: I'm a doctor. I'm at least allowed to hope.

PT: Speaking of returns, will you ever return to off-planet practice, or is your research the most important thing to you?

DM: I don't see them as mutually incompatible. Perhaps microgravity will make a difference in my work. Perhaps I'll need to return to Luna or Ganymede, or go interstellar now that we have operational jump ships. We'll see.

PT: Is there anything you wish you'd done differently?

DM: I wish I'd told Alison to get the hell out of France, for one thing. But all in all, it's been a great trip so far.

PT: Any last thoughts?

DM: God, I hope these aren't my last ones. There's still too much to do.

Olympus Tribune 1.29.2120

"The word from the Mount"

Horrifying Accident Claims Hundreds of Lives!

Infamous "Freak Alley" Collapses!

WROCLAW SECTOR, OLYMPUS, LUNA — At least 300 lives were lost at 04:20 LST today when the roof of the notorious pirate warren called Freak Alley collapsed. Most of the squatters who lived in Freak Alley, located in Wroclaw Sector directly beneath Beaulac Clinic, were either crushed or severely injured in the accident.

The collapse apparently came without warning. "We detected no seismic activity, nothing of the sort that

would precipitate a cave-in in that area," said Dr. Raine Bourke of the Lunar Selenological Survey. Survivors said that they were awakened by a sound "like thunder on an Earthside recording" shortly before the collapse occurred. Several witnesses also reported seeing explosions or bright lights across the burrow's roof just before the ceiling collapsed. As yet, investigators refuse to comment on the claim's reliability.

Thousands upon thousands of tons of rock showered down upon the huddled inhabitants of the burrow, burying hundreds alive and crushing dozens more to death. A few survivors by the mouth of the warren escaped when the roof came crashing down, but most of the burrow's inhabitants were killed. Fortunately for the surrounding subsectors and the nearby clinic, the subsidence did not cause fissures on the



FREAK ALLEY COLLAPSE > 1.29.2120 OLYMPUS TRIBUNE

Lunar surface and the region's vacuum seal did not breach. "It was a near thing, though," said one resident. "I swear I could see all the way up to the stars."

Authorities postulate that the collapse was caused by a sudden power surge that overloaded the pirate warren's makeshift supply cables. "There is reason to believe," said Yeltsingrad Deputy Police Commissar Yegveny Kafelnikov, "that the [Freak Alley inhabitants'] jury-rigged systems surged suddenly, in such a fashion that the resultant catastrophic failure caused structural damage to the entire burrow." Not everyone agrees with this report. "I seen Aberrants before, and this looked like Aberrant work!" claimed Mark Csolgosz, the self-proclaimed "Mayor of Freak Alley." Authorities dismissed Csolgosz's claims as hysteria. "It is natural to see Aberrants lurking in every shadow, but we are certain that there was no Aberrant involve-

ment in this incident," said Kafelnikov.

Freak Alley was one of the oldest and best known of the so-named "pirate burrows," subsector complexes abandoned by the rich and colonized by those unable or unwilling to pay for authorized housing. Formerly a Class-E residential burrow, Freak Alley was abandoned seven years ago. However, in the interim, before yesterday's collapse, a thriving underground community had grown up in the darkness where the wealthy once dwelt. In fact, some of the more adventuresome travel agencies in Olympus claim that Freak Alley is an "essential" stop for brave or curious tourists.

Freak Alley had its dark side as well. Police records mention a half-dozen missing persons complaints registered by denizens of the burrow. These may have related to recent disappearances in other Olympus sectors, notably the Downside sections of Yutu Yinchon and

Lejanas, although Lunar authorities have made no significant headway in the matter. [See "Disappearances Baffle Authorities," 1.16.20.] The area also has a sinister reputation as a lair for Aberrant sympathizers, although sweeps by Lunar authorities have not turned up any in the subsector. Yeltsingrad Mayor Leon Ilitch summed up the feelings of many citizens when he said, "Obviously, these pirate burrows are unsafe — something must be done about them."

Heroic Docs Save Dozens

The lone bright spot in the disaster was the rapid response of the nearby Beulac Clinic, under the personal supervision of Clinic Director Dr. Jerzy Grabowski, who coordinated medical-aid operations on-site. In a further gesture of goodwill, Grabowski offered free medical care to all of the Alley's residents, even those who were not harmed in the cave-in.

*contents of journal downloaded from
fragmented subsystem within Beaulac Clinic network*

Day 1

I'll call it Day 1 because I have no idea what day it is, how long I've been here, or really anything else. But this is the first day I'm coherent enough to speak, so "Day 1" it is.

Wherever I am, I seem to have been left this thing for company — a battered old dpad! I miss my minicomputer; I wonder why they didn't leave that here. I need to start worrying about *when* am I, let alone *where*.

Well, let's answer "where" first. I'm alone in a room that's about three meters by four, with a bed, a desk and a dresser with some nondescript gray clothing in it. Everything's gray, in fact. Damn dull. Gravity is Luna-standard, which doesn't mean much except that whoever's holding me here is too cheap to spring for pseudo-gravity. At least I can assume that I'm still home.

There are no windows or doors, and no obvious surveillance devices. On the other hand, who needs cameras when you can plant an ISRAn on the other side of a wall? I've seen old espionage entertainment holos — surveillance stuff is completely pointless now. Between psi and the new tech, we can do anything to anyone. Mess with pseudo-gravity enough and you can induce LAO in a prisoner. Do a little creative morphing holo work and you can show him anything you want to, and make him believe it.

Let me correct myself: You can do all of that to anyone *human*. That begs the question: Who's out there who doesn't fit that category?

I'm definitely suffering from memory loss. No other obvious signs of trauma, though I wish I had a mirror so I could see my face.

Day 2

The food and water were here when I woke up. No sign of an entrance. There's some itching along my arms and legs, right along where the muscle grooves past the bone. It feels like that impossible-to-scratch itching you get when a cut or broken bone heals. Was I operated on and healed in a hurry? That kind of healing takes a seriously high-powered rex, and there aren't that many of us on Luna.

Us. *Us*. Why did I think that? I'm onto something here.

Day 3

I'm sure they're reading this. This morning when I woke up, the dpad was moved, and the recorded text scrolled back to Day 1. The obvious question is, "why?" I mean, why have me record my reactions? Why do this to me?

The only answer I can come up with is that this is meant to be subjective data, to go with the objective data they must be drawing from somewhere else. Inside and outside. I'm the control. At least, that's how I'd do it if I were running this experiment.

Why do I have the feeling I created this protocol? But it was for testing Aberrants, not pions. What am I doing here?

I'm a *doctor*. I shouldn't be a patient. Let me *out*!

Day 4

The itching is worse. It's along my back now, and it's spread to the area along my shoulders. Trapezius muscles. That's what those are called. Bits and pieces are coming

back. I was a doctor. No, I was a *psion*. An Æsculapian.

What was my name?

I wish this infernal itching would stop.

Day 5?

Slept most of the day. I suspect I may be drugged. Itching is worse. Still no mirror. Forgetting what my face is supposed to look like. I know now that it's all part of the protocol. I wish I'd done a less thorough job.

Day 6

Higher dosage. Trazadone? Barely moved today. If I could, I would have scratched until I bled. I suppose they're doing me a kindness.

Day 7

No drugs today. No food or water, either. Heard explosions off in the distance — an invasion? A revolt? Have I been abandoned? I've tried prying at the walls, but it's all ceramic, I think. Can't even get a grip with my nails. If my jailers have decided to abandon the experiment, I'm a dead man. I wish I could remember my name before then. It would make things easier, somehow.

I was one of them. Why are they doing this to me?

Day 8

I'll call it "Day 8," since the previous entry was "Day 7." I really have no idea how long it's been since I was last conscious. Still no food or water. Looks like the power cell in the dpad is running low, but if I don't get some water, it won't matter. Christ, I'm thirsty.

Time to face facts. I'm going to die here. I was a doctor, a *psion*, and I saved lives — and you know what? It doesn't mean a damn thing, because I'm going to die in this hole. Might as well record this so if, God forbid, anyone finds this, they'll know whose bones they're stepping over.

But it's pointless. It's a waste of a good experimental subject; wasting me is inefficient. Maybe I've been captured by Aberrants and they've been defeated, and no one knows I'm down here. That would explain some of the facts. In that case, I've died in a good cause.

The hell with that. I don't want to die. I especially don't want to die in a featureless hole a million kilometers from home. I want to go back home. I want to see my parents again, and go back to Basel, and—

Basel. For the love of God.

Montressor!

I know what's going on now. The Aberrant guess was half-right. I'm in the middle of the Huang-Marr Project. Jesus God! I've been implanted!

My name is...it's Doctor Malachi Ross. I am 44 years old, a *psion* and a doctor trained to serve humanity. I have dedicated my entire life to healing. And I have been betrayed by those I trusted most, and, I suspect, by myself.

The question is, which implants was I given? Even more important: Do the damn things work? Time to find out.

— datafile recovered from
Olympus Tribune archive

Mark — I appreciate the thoroughness of your investigation in following up the Freak Alley collapse, but including this interview in your article will only serve to create panic. This guy may sound sincere, but how come the people you interviewed after their treatment at Beaulac Clinic couldn't corroborate his statements? I don't care if he's a technician instead of a slummer — who says techies don't get drugged up? Check with the guy again after the docs take a look at him and see if he hasn't come off his high by then.

— Carolyn

—fucking thing was an Aberrant or I'm a gorilla. It came up out of the wall right about there — see where the bits are still falling down? The really fucked up thing is that there's nothing back there. No other complexes, no service corridors, nothing. I mean, if you go back far enough, you hit the ass end of Freak Alley, but that's way the hell down there. No, that's supposed to be solid rock — has to be; I hear the clinic's meat locker sits right over it.

Anyway, I'm out here the day after this whole place just drops in on itself for no reason, right? Real safe. S'posed to inspect the lines through here in accordance with the new regs about pirate burrows and unauthorized feeds — even the president, bless her skinny butt, got antsy after Freak Alley came down — and the wall over there just vaporizes. Poof. Looked like something out of the kids' show — what is it? — *Strike Force Psion*. Yeah, that's the one. I'm all the way across the corridor and it's like I'm standing in front of an oven, so I duck and cover, screaming to Jesus the whole time. The heat dies down after a second and I look up like a stupid fucker.

The monster's standing there. Looks human enough, sorta, but it's got these weird swellings in its arms and legs, and its shoulders are hunched over like there's something living in them, trying to claw its way out. Bits of the thing were glowing, too, and wisps of steam and smoke were coming off it. Behind it, the rock looked melted, and the tunnel it'd made went way the hell back and up. Yes, I'm sure — up. No, not quite the same place where the tunnel was collapsed already; sort of around it.

So I start screaming to God again that I'm gonna die, and the thing steps right over to me — and it talks! Tells me to shut up, so I do. And then it looks me up and down, and laughs, and says, "I'm not going to hurt you. Trust me, I'm a doctor." It smiles at me and — this is the unbelievable part — asks me for directions — to the clinic. So I point and say, "Looking for something to make those swellings go down, huh?" 'cause at this point I'm pretty sure it's not going to wax me. The thing looks at me and says, "Something like that." Then it walks back into the hole and the blasting noise starts up again, and I get the hell out of there.

I dunno; when Freak Alley came down, it might've shook something loose from the pits of hell. Maybe it wasn't an Aberrant; didn't have a big squid head like I've seen on the news. I never saw one of the Chittie Bangs — right, Chitra Bhanu — in action; maybe it was one of them. Did they glow, or have weird bumps? Naaah, couldn't have been bioware. This thing was naked and it wasn't toting anything the Devil didn't give it. Whatever it was, I sure hope I never see anything like it again.

FOR STORYTELLER EYES ONLY!

This section covers information for Storytellers to run the first in a continuing series of adventures set in the Trinity Universe. Players should restrict their reading of material to the full-color setting section, letting the secrets detailed below unfold during game play.

What Is This?

Remnants of the Dead is the first episode in the ongoing **Darkness Revealed** adventure series. It serves as an introduction for your players into the universe of **Trinity**, allowing them easy access to the setting as a whole.

The **Darkness Revealed** series, of which **Descent into Darkness** is the first book (followed by **Passage Through Shadow** and **Ascent into Light**), draws characters into significant events that change the 22nd century dramatically. Characters taking part in this adventure trilogy have a direct hand in shaping the Trinity Universe. Their actions are central to revealing secrets that shake the psi orders to the very core, and the characters learn shocking details about the dangerous enemies that humanity faces from the depths of space.

This series encompasses events on an epic scale, but gives them a very immediate focus — focusing on the actions that the characters themselves take. However, this is not a rigid plot. The **Darkness Revealed** trilogy is designed as a fluid collection of episodes that you, as Storyteller, may use in any way that you see fit.

The episodes in this book (and indeed, in this trilogy), can be run as either a stand-alone tales or as parts of an interconnected series of plotlines that eventually expose the characters to the secrets of the Trinity Universe. Each episode is also split into two sections: full-color setting and black-and-white rules information. Players should read the setting material before each episode is played since it sets the stage for the scenario and provides initial leads for characters to follow. The rules sections provide details for you to run the episodes, as well as general source

material that you may use in any stories that you tell.

The Plot

The brief plot synopsis that follows describes the events of *Remnants of the Dead*. Later sections cover the details more fully. **Again, if you're not the Storyteller, stop reading now! You don't want to spoil any surprises, do you?**

Overview

As this episode opens, Luna suffers three shocks in rapid succession: Aberrants stage a daring attack against the relatively undefended Cantor Mining Station on the Moon's northern hemisphere, a sublevel in the Olympus colony known as "Freak Alley" collapses mysteriously, and reports of Lunar citizens vanishing continue to pour in to authorities. The Æsculapian psi order makes a brief but notable appearance in each circumstance.

The Æon Trinity feels that there may be something more to the Æsculapians' involvement beyond simple altruism. The Trinity asks the characters to follow a few leads on what Æon considers a relatively unimportant matter, to see what turns up. In the course of their investigation, the characters uncover increasingly bizarre facts that reveal a astonishing conclusion:

A small group of Æsculapians, with the assistance of some electrokinetics, are involved in illegal and unethical bioware research. The Huang-Marr biorg project is an attempt to implant highly experimental bioapps into psion subjects, boosting the individuals' power to rival that of Aberrants. Most disturbing of all, many components of this new bioware require organs from living subjects, and even incorporate minute amounts of Aberrant taint! It seems the rexs involved feel that the loss of a few genetically suitable humans is acceptable in hopes that the new bioware will prove the savior of humanity as a whole.

Unfortunately, by the time the characters uncover these facts, the biorg project is shut down due to danger of discovery. The equipment and personnel involved are transferred from the bowels of Beaulac Clinic to Earth and Mars, and many records

of the project are deleted. Still, the characters may follow one solid lead: the man running the Huang-Marr Project, Dr. Jerzy Grabowski. Amazingly, he's also the head of Beaulac Clinic!

The characters must act quickly to capture Grabowski and try to uncover his secrets. However, before the characters get the chance, an escaped biorg test subject tunnels through the Lunar rock into the captured Grabowski's cell. Security monitors show a bizarre figure — an apparent Aberrant — emerge from melting slag in the wall, kill Grabowski in spectacular fashion and exit, closing the hole behind him.

Although Grabowski dies and the biorg subject disappears, the characters have enough evidence to tarnish the Æsculapian Order's shining image, and to even question Orgotek's possible involvement. This conclusion sets the stage for the next episode, *The Depths of Madness*, or allows you to take events in any direction you wish.

Theme

The theme of *Remnants of the Dead* is simple: Trust and Distrust, each a double-edged sword. If the characters trust what they are told, they find a satisfying solution to their stated mission — and in so doing fail both the Æon Trinity and all of humanity. If the characters distrust what is before them, they uncover useful but painful truths, achieving enlightenment (and perhaps even more, before all is said and done), but at the cost of their trust, their beliefs and perhaps their own lives.

Mood

The mood of the sprawling Lunar colony of Olympus is corruption. Sure, everything *looks* on the level in the corridors of the rich and powerful. The compounds of the orders are gleaming and perfect, new construction goes up every day, and “progress” is the watchword on official holo broadcasts. But when one gets away from the lights and the perimeter of uniformed cops' beats, things take on a different tone — dark, dingy, vicious. Anyone and anything can be bought or sold in the shadows of Luna's Downside. While those elected to authority in Old Town or Yukioshi may or may not know this, the ones who hold the Moon's true power — whether in the gleaming towers on the surface or in the old-money burrows three kilometers down — certainly do.

Luna is a dangerous place. Accidents occur, fatal ones. Money, possessions and people disap-

The Silver Lining

Life on Luna isn't all bad. With Europe and North America still reeling from the disasters of the last century, Luna has become the new Mecca for the rising stars of the Western art world. Low gravity promises long life spans and cardiovascular health to Lunar residents, due to the reduced physical stress the Moon's low gravity applies to the body. Without the limitations of a full gravity or atmosphere, the art of architecture has blossomed on the Lunar surface. Nippon, China, the United African Nations — even the Federated States of America and the moldy European collective — all have thriving cities on Luna.

Though air is carefully conserved and cleaned, food and natural resources are plentiful here — if one has a taste for algiprote synthetics, one can eat like a king, even in the depths of the Pit. And, thanks to incredible technological advancements, including pseudo-gravity grids and Mylex radiation shielding, the average standard of living is higher, the average life expectancy is longer and the cancer rate is lower on Luna than anywhere else humanity exists.

Of course, as with any average, there are those who fall below it. A slum is still a slum for the unfortunates who live on the edge of society, outside the system.

pear. All sorts of strange things happen (or are rumored to happen) in the tunnels where the cops won't go any more; everything from the usual apocrypha about “Lunar cannibals” to darker, more troubling hints of Aberrant worship and surviving quantakinetics or “dark psions.”

The mood of *Remnants of the Dead* doesn't have to be uniform. The characters' first introduction to Olympus can be bright and cheerful, with the latest resources and facilities put at their disposal while they deal with the undoubtedly minor matter that demands the psions' personal attention. Dark undercurrents should be there, of course, but only if the characters peel back the surface.

Once the characters find out that there's an underside to Olympus, both literally and figuratively, the story's mood changes drastically. The friendly and helpful officials in Downside now seem desperate or deluded at best, sinister or corrupt at worse. The seamy side of Luna, with its attendant decay and hint of secrets, should attract and repulse the characters at the same time. They should have an indescribable sense that the steps they take into the darkness here are irrevocable



ones. If the characters choose to follow up on the clues that lay before them, they must leave the friendly, false world of Olympus' society behind and venture into the underworld of the abandoned burrows — and so too do they leave their illusions of safety and normalcy behind.

The Setting

Luna's Olympus is an independent city-state. A collection of cities that sprawls across (and primarily underneath) the Lunar surface, Olympus has grown far and fast from its humble beginnings. While the original colony (often referred to as "Old Town") is still close to the geographic center of the burgeoning new nation, the arms of Olympus shoot out across the landscape like ice crystals on a windowpane. New communities spring up, linked by narrow threads of excavation, spreading across the Moon. Earth-based environmental groups already protest the "visual pollution" scattered over Luna's once-pristine face.

While the intensity of the hard radiation hitting the Lunar surface made the original settlers burrow down as deep as they could, recent alloys

and design advances allow for more-or-less unlimited surface construction. The wealthy and the status-conscious now flock to Luna, drawn by brochures promising spun-glass structures with views of spectacular Earthrises.

Of course, these glittering new structures exist side by side with a half-century's worth of industrial and technological detritus. In the early days of Olympus' expansion, construction consisted primarily of excavation. The rock carved from Luna to make room for new residential and industrial burrows had to go somewhere, and the surface was the logical place. It wasn't like anyone was ever going to *live* up there. Once Luna industrialization hit full swing, sparkling domes and starscrapers sprang up near tumbles of discarded Lunar rock. Skimming across the Moon's surface, one finds enclaves of fairy-tale towers cheek-by-jowl with ravaged scenery reminiscent of the worst of the desolation of Bahrain.

An equally startling dichotomy exists Underground. The rich and powerful once burrowed deep beneath the Lunar surface, leaving the dangerous "shallows" to the poor and transient. Now, however, the wealthy return to the sunlight, leaving

entire sublunar complexes to the dark and cold. After all, there's no need to tear down a hole in the ground — even an expensively furnished one — when the inhabitants leave. Simply turn out the lights and leave it to entropy. Not surprisingly, abandoned burrows have become home to more and more of those dispossessed who, lacking the benefits of advanced shielding and seeking shelter from killing radiation, migrate downward.

The few remaining wealthy Downside communities are often islands surrounded by teeming slums. Luna's middle class keeps to median levels near the surface Mezzanine, where prices are reasonable and protection is affordable. Still, as the underclass continues to swarm downward, not even middle-class levels are as idyllic as they used to be.

The Underworld

Olympus has the feel of one of the Seven Sinful Cities — and the neighboring Pit is worse. While a veneer of law and order is maintained, that image has been worn so thin that it is nearly transparent. Money — and raw power — rule here. The middle class huddles behind its illusions, dutifully electing mayors and funding public works. The multinationals, psi orders and wealthy scions of *soi-distant* Earth have created feudal domains along spurs radiating from Olympus. Official maps barely conform to the true contours of the Underworld's sectors any more, with old burrows abandoned and "pirate" tunnels carved out by tough-minded souls who try to avoid scrutiny. While new corridors and constructs are gleaming and postcard-perfect, the old burrows fall into disrepair or are left to the long dark. Illicit bazaars, where one can buy any good or service imaginable, spring up on the spur of the moment. Crime syndicates, which may or may not have links to more reputable organizations, can be found anywhere.

Running Remnants of the Dead

Getting characters involved directly in the action can be difficult. While the device of the "old man in the tavern who needs some brave adventurers" fits certain idioms, it doesn't hold up well for **Trinity** or this story. There's no telling what sorts of characters your players have chosen, and thus no way to predict what sort of team you are Storytelling. If you craft a detailed motivation for

The Æon Trinity Is Not Your Mom

Yes, Æon has vast resources. Yes, Æon has a vested interest in seeing the characters succeed. No, the Æon Trinity does not shower the characters with a limitless supply of lawyers, guns, money, vehicles or toys.

Why?

Because Æon is not interested in developing operatives who are incapable of functioning without backup. Because the Trinity won't always be there with a helping hand, another gun or a wad of cash when the team gets into a crisis — the Trinity has a lot to handle, and other psions more deserving of support. Characters who keep asking for help are regarded as whiny bastards, and are ultimately ignored by their overworked, underpaid Æon reps.

Of course, matters of game balance have absolutely nothing to do with this assessment.

Norça operatives, but end up with two docs, a Ministry agent and two normal human mercenaries, you're in trouble from the start. Furthermore, the characters need a reason to become involved in events on the Moon; logic dictates that investigations are best left in the hands of Lunar authorities. The characters also need to get from Earth to Luna if they're not already there; an expensive and not necessarily pleasant journey.

The best solution is to use the Æon Trinity to jump-start events. Æon is a universal organization, and psions and normals alike respect its dictates. Furthermore, the Trinity has the resources to get characters where they need to be and the contacts to motivate the characters.

On the other hand, the players shouldn't follow the plot because "it's the plot," or because "Æon is the good guy, and it told us to." The trick is to make the plot enticing on its own, with the Æon Trinity serving to help, not shoehorn, the team into action. The characters should *want* to get involved. When the Trinity asks them for assistance, it should seem like a fortuitous break for the characters.

Authority

The characters are probably psions, and they undoubtedly have some reputation and rank to play with when it comes to giving — or ignoring — orders. Odds are that those whom the characters run into who've never met real-live psions before are awed or impressed by this brush with celebrity, and do what the psions ask — at least for a while. Longtime Lunar residents and other psions are not impressed by young upstarts, though, and may throw around whatever weight they have just to teach snot-nosed punks (in other words, the characters) a few things about rank and privilege.

The characters have about as much pull as FBI academy students would have in our 20th-century world. They can probably count on the cooperation of local police, and can commandeer a vehicle or two in a crisis, but their authority over the citizenry of Olympus is extremely limited. Much of a psion's authority is based on how far others allow him to go — it's an intangible, nebulous form of influence. Someone is always prepared to point out when psions go too far.

Introducing the Characters

This is a possible introduction to *Remnants of the Dead*. Feel free to use a different opening if it suits your series better. Do what you think works best to make this story entertaining and enjoyable for everyone.

Lunar colonies are quite fragile, both physically and psychologically. Aberrants can puncture Olympus' towers and tunnels with relative ease, spilling the guts of the colony to the hard vacuum beyond. As Olympus grows, it becomes harder to monitor every kilometer of terrain properly, and harder to guard against just such a deadly attack. Also, most humans link the Moon inextricably to Earth; an attack on Luna is nearly as devastating psychologically as is an assault on Earth itself. The emotional impact of any threat to Luna is more devastating than the physical effect is likely to be.

Triton Division therefore pays careful attention to any hint of Aberrant activity on Luna. Æon normally disregards the maniacs, murderers, religious fanatics and other unwholesome sorts who pop up on the Moon. However, any hint of truly bizarre — or Aberrant — behavior results in direct Trinity involvement. Characters who work with the Æon Trinity receive the information in the color section of this chapter as a starting point for their investigations. Involving characters who

aren't associated with Æon takes a bit more work.

Luna is a top news story on Earth of late due to the recent Aberrant assault on the Cantor Crater mining operation (see page 3). While most media attention focuses on the attack and its aftermath, this interest leads to increased focus to other Moon-related news that would otherwise be shunted to the proverbial back pages.

Unless the characters were involved in the adventure *The Last Gasp* (see sidebar), this is probably how independent characters first hear of the recent rash of disappearances on Olympus — which Lunar officials claim are unrelated to one another (see page 7). Independent characters might hear news reports about the bizarre corpse found after the Cantor raid (see page 6).

Finding a body on Luna is odd. Most corpses are recycled, spaced or turned over to the docs' organ banks — when bodies are found at all. A dead body, abandoned and mutilated, hints at something sinister. The nature of the mutilation — muscles stripped from the forearms and calves, but with no other apparent physical damage — is even more disturbing. Additionally, the attending rex could find no sign of trauma related to the removal of the missing muscular tissue, though odd burns were noted on the loose skin of the arms and legs, and the autopsy revealed unprecedented nerve and brain damage.

The media services are alive with questions. Who is the mystery corpse? Why was he abandoned? Who mutilated him, and to what end? Does this tie into the other corpse found weeks ago in the lower levels of Olympus, or to the missing persons? And most importantly, who's going to get to the bottom of this?

Using *The Last Gasp*

The short episode in **Hidden Agendas** entitled *The Last Gasp* can be used as an introduction to **Descent into Darkness**. In that story, the characters are directed by the Æon Trinity to look into the rash of disappearances at Olympus. The team's investigation takes a surprising, possibly lethal turn. It's only natural that the characters be brought in to study the events of *Remnants of the Dead*, having already pursued the disappearances. Ramirez can still be their contact in this matter, but he shouldn't need to force the issue given the team's previous experience.

A Foot in the Door

Æon operative Hector Ramirez, Neptune Division, is the characters' introduction to the mystery. Ramirez is a mobile operative with the jurisdiction to draft and relocate others for the Trinity's ends. He is quite capable of plucking the characters from their day-to-day activities — whether they be training, missions, school or commercial pursuits — and molding the psions into a team to investigate Lunar incidents.

Giorgios Gamemenos, Director of Æon's Lunar Affairs, told Ramirez in no uncertain terms that recent incidents, while noteworthy, are unlikely to be linked to Aberrant behavior. Gamemenos rated events a relatively low priority, suitable for investigation by new operatives (the characters). Æon wants someone on the case, but can't be bothered to spare vital resources for what it considers glorified busywork.

How Ramirez contacts the characters depends mostly on the characters. If they've worked with Æon in the past, it's relatively simple: Ramirez gets their files from Triton Division. If not, Ramirez does some legwork. The best way to draw the characters in is to play off their Backgrounds. Ramirez is well-connected; it's not difficult to assume that he hears about a character from her Ally, Contact, Follower or Mentor. This also gives you the opportunity to play up the characters' Backgrounds, helping to flesh out those roles.

You probably want to tailor Ramirez's pitch to best suit each character. He studies up on the characters before he approaches them, to get the best idea of how to draw them into the investigation. Ramirez is a clever person and he uses all the savvy at his disposal to bring the characters on board.

Ramirez wants to use the situation as a test of the characters' capabilities. He therefore avoids telling them how "unimportant" the mission is. Rather, he does his best to play up the uncertainty of the situation, and of how Neptune Division has never run across anything like this before.

Ramirez prefers to use subtle flattery and the promise of the Trinity "owing the characters a favor." He explains that local officials are stumped; the Trinity feels a fresh perspective would help. Ramirez hints that he doesn't quite trust certain operatives on Luna, and that the characters will provide welcome assistance. He implies that he's training the team for a long-term association with

Æon, which could appeal to a gang of psions fresh out of the Prometheus chamber. After all, not everyone has a personal contact in the Æon Trinity. Underlying this flattery, Ramirez peppers comments that such a mission is a psion's duty, and that if the characters don't pursue the matter, who knows what other disasters may befall the Lunar population?

If these subtleties don't work, Ramirez suggests monetary compensation. He offers each character ¥200 a day, plus expenses, to investigate (although they must turn in daily reports — Ramirez doesn't want a bunch of layabouts sponging off his discretionary fund). Characters for whom money isn't a factor have the opportunity to haggle for useful gear or for future assistance from the Æon Trinity. This isn't a swap meet, though; the longer the characters haggle, the colder the trail gets, and Ramirez has better things to do than help psions go shopping.

Behind the Scenes

The full-color setting information hints at a conspiracy that envelops the entire Beaulac Clinic and more. Behind the Scenes tells you what's really happening in detail, and how to run the story.

What seem at first to be a number of unrelated circumstances — an Aberrant attack, a mutilated corpse, missing persons, a cave-in and a cryptic diary — come to have a disturbing connections. The events in *Remnants of the Dead* reveal a secret project that has the potential to change psions — and even all of humanity — to a startling degree. This project could reshape human society and evolution — but in a positive or negative way? The choices the characters make based on what they uncover have a dramatic impact on the universe — but what's the right decision?

(Character templates for key individuals in *Remnants of the Dead* are listed in *Dramatis Personae*, starting on page 39.)

The Huang-Marr Bio-organism Interface Project

The Huang-Marr Project (also called the "biorg project") is the common link that ties everything together. Luna's Beaulac Clinic pursues illicit research under the direction of Dr. Jerzy Grabowski, and with guidance from as-yet-unnamed parties in the upper ranks of the Æsculapian Order.

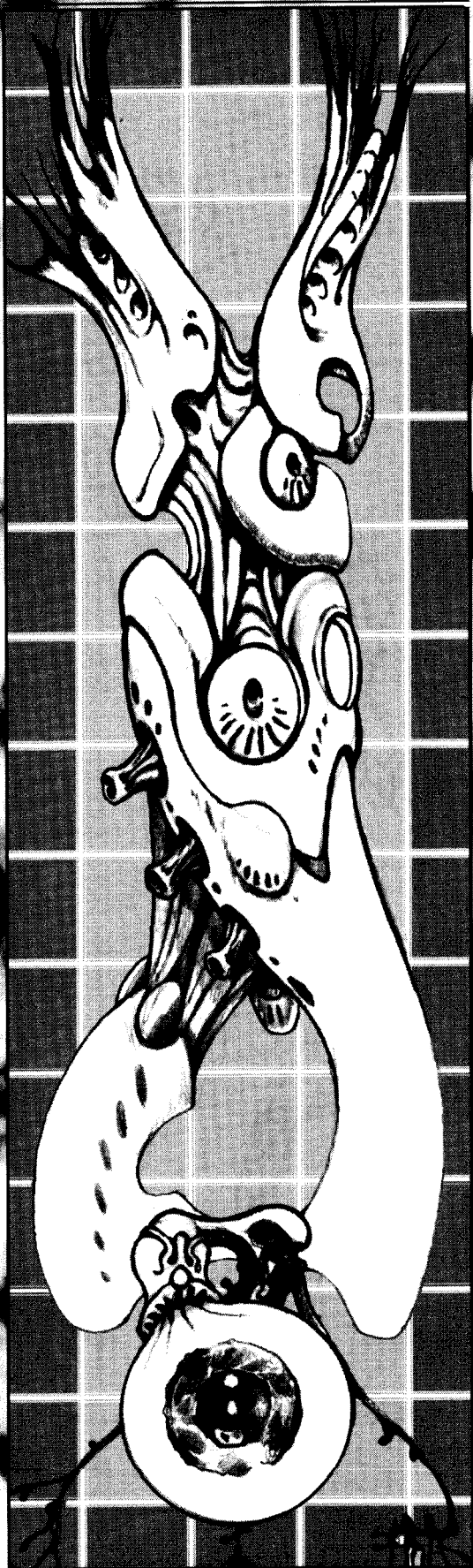
These docs, with the assistance of certain Orgotek psions, have experimented with ways to create new forms of bioware implants for psions — specifically ones that boost psions to Aberrant levels of power. This new biotechnology is not modular or external like regular bioware; it's implanted, grafted directly to the subject's nerves and muscles. Furthermore, this new bioware technology is between one and two orders of magnitude more efficient than conventional biotech.

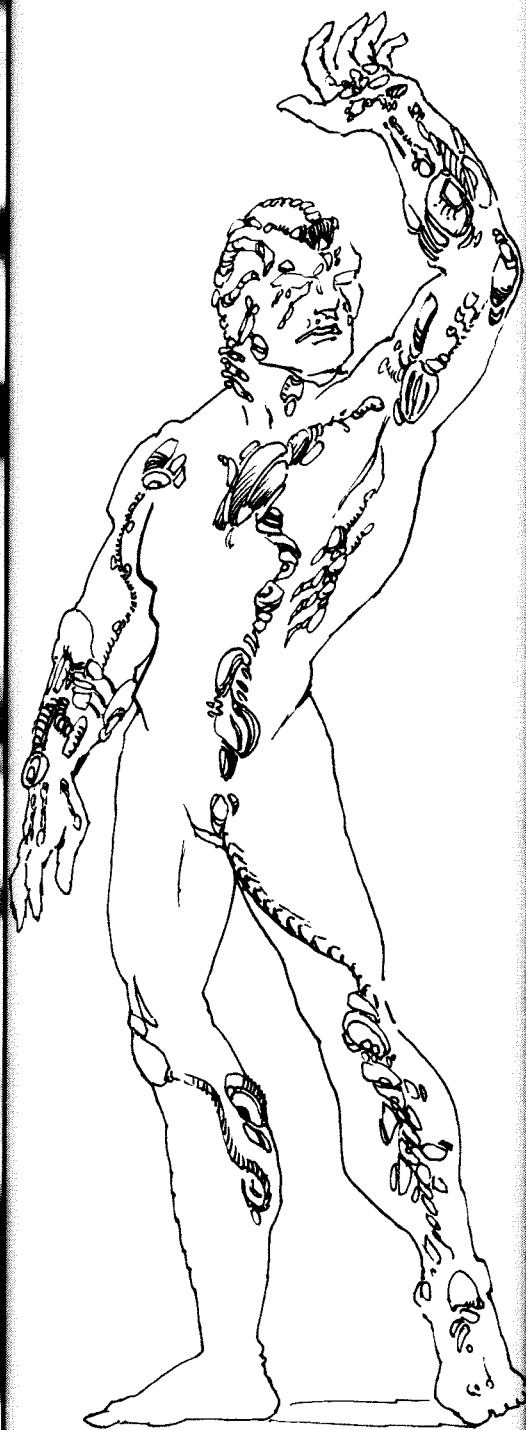
The project has not met with complete success so far. Initial attempts to graft advanced biotech triggered unfortunate physical and psychological side effects in bearers. The test subjects were subjected to as many scenarios as possible before the side effects overwhelmed them. Grabowski and his fellow researchers considered these cases to be necessary sacrifices to achieve victory over the Aberrants.

Lab tests accomplish only so much, though. After a certain point, Grabowski felt it necessary to run biorg subjects through field exercises. Trouble started once out of the confines of the lab. The first field test involved biorgs expanding the space under Beaulac Clinic's basement, thereby collapsing the pirate warren of Freak Alley. This project was intended to measure the biorgs' powers and to make room for a planned expansion of the project. The Cantor Station test was arranged quickly once Grabowski learned of the impending Aberrant attack. Three biorg subjects were put in place to determine how well they would combat Aberrants toe to toe. This test was considered less successful than the first; evidence was left that could reveal the Huang-Marr Project's existence.

Test Subjects

As with other advanced bioware, Huang-Marr bioapps must be formatted to the user to operate at full capacity. The first test subjects were psions fresh from the Æsculapian Prometheus chamber, shipped in stasis directly from Basel to Beaulac. These biorg subjects (complete with special behavior-modifying bioapps to make controlling them easier) initially reacted well to the implants, but degenerated in the same manner as previous subjects. Grabowski attributed the failure to the Æsculapians' lack of psionic training. He determined that more practiced psions would function better with the implants, and used his own vitakinetic skill to "urge"





fellow docs to undergo the procedure.

One of Grabowski's colleagues, Dr. Malachi Ross, was the most recent doc so influenced. A faulty control bioapp combined with red tape enabled Ross to kick the programming. When Grabowski received the command from Basel to shut down the Lunar research site, he ordered Ross moved off-planet along with the equipment. Unfortunately, Grabowski emailed the encrypted command to a subordinate who was too efficient in his job. The technician had already packed up his office in preparation for the trip Earthside and never received the transmission. Ross recovered his memory before he starved to death and used his new, magnified abilities to escape from the test chamber. He now tracks the man responsible for his new condition — Director Jerzy Grabowski.

Disappearances

Psions were not the only subjects used in the Huang-Marr Project. The docs and teks running the experiments wanted to see if their new bioapps would function in non-psions as well.

A holdover from the later years of the Aberrant War, individuals who go to medical facilities for serious treatment often undergo DNA scans. The researchers on the Huang-Marr Project accessed this information from the Lunar clinic network to collect people with similar genetic sequencing. The biorg project therefore assembled a random scattering of neutral humans on whom to experiment — or from whom to draw useful replacement organs, musculature or limbs. Unfortunately for the subjects, no non-psions survived the initial operations, although their biomass proved to be useful in creating more bioware.

Grabowski was very careful in his selection of personnel on this project. He made sure that every member of the Huang-Marr Project was extremely analytical and agreed that individual losses were an unfortunate, but necessary part of scientific progress. In light of contributors' scientific talents, Grabowski chose to overlook the fact that some of them were borderline sociopaths.

It's been a grim business, but one that the people in the program feel is necessary for the survival of humanity as a whole.

Beaulac Clinic

While Cantor Station seems to be the obvious place for the characters to start their investigation, the mining complex is thousands of kilometers from Olympus, on Luna's northern hemisphere. Before studying the site, the team probably wants to visit Beaulac Clinic to look at the mutilated body found at Cantor.

Grabowski wants no one near the body, since it was indeed one of his biorg subjects. Although the experimental bioware was removed at Cantor Station, anyone who looks hard enough at the corpse might raise questions that Grabowski would rather not answer. He would have disposed of the body already, but needs to make everything look like it's on the up and up until the authorities finish their investigation. While Grabowski seems polite and helpful, he uses every opportunity to immerse the characters in red tape and to confuse them with misdirection.

Grabowski encourages his contacts in Orgotek, the Norça and even in the Underworld to keep an eye on the characters, just to make sure they don't stumble across anything useful, even after the team leaves Beaulac. You can use these opportunities to liven things up for the characters, to give them a nudge if they've run out of leads, or to simply heighten the sense of paranoia and mystery. Grabowski makes sure any assailants can't be traced back to him, but if the characters catch a thug, you may want to have him divulge a choice hint to put the team back on track.

General Layout

Beaulac Clinic is built on the old standards of Lunar construction — as a series of levels stacked like boxes below the Lunar surface. A central lift shaft connects the complex's levels, supported by satellite shafts and stairwells at six points around the clinic's perimeter. Each level is dedicated to a specific function or functions.

SubLevel 10 is accessible by only the central shaft and a single stairwell. It also contains the access hatch to the top-secret 12th level, which, until recently, housed the biorg project labs. The entrances to this unlisted SubLevel 11 are now sealed off with poured concrete. The entire level (covering hundreds of square meters) was filled with advanced computer systems, containment vats, test chambers and even a Matrix computer only a few days previously. Now, however, anyone breaking in or exploring the space psionically finds

it empty — no computers, furniture, robotics or even trash. The bare rock walls contain nothing but echoing, dark emptiness. Although as empty as the rest of the level, one narrow, spiraling shaft may be of interest (this stairway was the route the biorg subjects carved out of the Lunar rock on their way down to collapse Freak Alley). Observant players may notice that the shaft's bottom ends very close to Freak Alley.

SubLevel 0, located just a few meters below the Lunar surface on Olympus' Mezzanine level, is the clinic's standard entrance. Beaulac Clinic has its own Luna Automated Maglev Pneumatic transit station, which opens directly into the clinic lobby. Next to the LAMP stop is a walk-in entrance that opens on the Wrocław Sector Mezzanine area. (The Mezzanine is the "middle zone" between an arcology's underground and above-ground levels, and is where major traffic lanes and commercial shops are located.) The clinic also has a landing pad on the surface directly above SubLevel 0, with room for 10 hoppers (Beaulac has seven medical hoppers currently in service). An extension of the central lift shaft services this landing platform.

Operations and Personnel

Beaulac, being the largest Æsculapian clinic on Luna, is a madhouse 24/7. Ambulance hoppers and LAMP trains shuttle through constantly, hundreds of patients check in or check out every hour, and clinic staff rushes around with cool confidence to treat every malady imaginable. Should someone the characters are trying to question not wish to talk with them, it's very easy for him to use a medical emergency as an excuse to move on.

The staff of Beaulac Clinic is separated into three groups. The first is Grabowski's so-called "inner circle" of Basel-trained docs. Most department heads belong to this cabal, as do most senior staff members. A fair number were rotated out recently, diminishing the "inner circle's" numbers, but not its relative power. Inner-circle members have no interest in talking to the characters, and may stonewall them on general principle. The cabal also keeps tabs on whom the characters talk to on staff, and these docs may well have the characters shadowed, committed or even eliminated if questions get too close to the mark.

Port-au-Prince-trained rexs, mostly residents and field doctors, comprise Beaulac's second group. While the resentment these psions feel for Grabowski and his cabal is little more than vague discontent, the delineation between the "ins" and the "outs" is very clear. Haitian-pedigree docs are much more likely to help the characters. Unfortunately, they're also less likely to know anything useful because of the distrust that Grabowski and his people have for anyone not in their loop.

The Staff

Clinic staffers are highly unlikely to get violent under any circumstances short of the return of Divis Mal. That doesn't mean they don't try to get even with uppity psions who come from nowhere and play big shot. The staffers don't think of trying anything dangerous or truly malicious. However, should you feel the characters need to be taken down a peg, Beaulac staffers are a great means to doing it. The following are a few examples of ways in which clinic personnel might throw a wrench in the team's plans.

- "Lose" the characters' paperwork
- Put something in the characters' drinks that makes them mildly ill — forcing them to ask for assistance from the very folks they've been condescending to
- Give bad directions designed to lose characters in the Pit
- Claim that another department is in charge of whatever the characters ask after, and then call ahead to have that department pass the buck to someone else

The third group includes normal humans who work at the clinic. They are almost uniformly fanatical in their loyalty to the facility and to Grabowski himself. The reason for this is simple: Grabowski hires locals at rates well above those paid by any other businesses in Wroclaw Sector. With unemployment soaring in the region, Grabowski's hiring practices make him something of a hero, and his employees brook no besmirching of his name. If the characters get too intrusive or insulting, these staffers may decide to teach offending characters a lesson.

Incidentally, Grabowski has not told anyone of his imminent transfer from Luna, since it's a part of the orders he received to shut down the Huang-Marr Project on Luna. Instead, he's playing his departure as a regularly scheduled trip. Grabowski plans to give word of his transfer once he's safely Earthside.

The Morgue

The body discovered at Cantor Station has been stored here for days. Grabowski protests long and bitterly about storing the corpse; most of the time his people render corpses into the organ banks with admirable speed.

Assuming the characters want to examine the corpse (and there's no good reason they shouldn't), they find Grabowski ponderously unhelpful. He is extremely unhappy at having to let good organs go to waste (the pre-

servative measures used on the corpse make it unsuitable for organ donation), and is displeased about having psions of other orders and cops of all denominations traipsing in and out of his clinic. Grabowski assigns the characters "guides" — a pair of white-uniformed security guards who, on an **Attunement** roll, register as psions, although they don't volunteer of what type. (One is an **Æsculapian**, the other a Norça mercenary.) This pair escorts the characters directly to and from the morgue, allowing no access to other areas of the clinic.

The corpse labeled "John Doe" remains unidentified. He is 190 cm tall, weighs 82 kilos, has curly black hair, a full beard, blue eyes and no distinguishing marks. The body was completely nude when found. Bone structure, muscle attenuation and pale complexion are all consistent with a native of Luna, but "John Doe" matches no missing persons reports from anywhere in Olympus — double-checking recent disappearances (a standard **Bureaucracy** roll to contact the ULPF for information) confirms that "John Doe" does not fit any of the profiles. Using Psychometry on the corpse produces no positive results due to the length of time since the body's recovery.

Grabowski's staff prepared an autopsy report, which lists the cause of death as massive neural dysfunction. The coroner guesses it resulted from bioware feedback, though no bioware was found on the corpse. (This isn't surprising, as bioware can be resold and would have been picked off a corpse in no time flat. The **Æsculapians** off-handedly suggested checking the Norça and Orgotek troops who were at the Cantor attack for the missing items. The docs received veiled threats from the Norça in response, and Orgotek simply ignored them.)

Reading the autopsy indicates that the incisions in the body's skin were made with an obsidian scalpel after the subject died, but prior to the autopsy. However, looking at the areas where muscles were excised makes it seem that (**Medicine** at +1 difficulty) the muscles *never actually existed* — there are no marks to show where they were removed, nor does any tissue remain behind. Still, the exposed skin indicates arms and legs of normal size and volume, which doesn't account for the lack of musculature.

Records

Each clinic level has computer terminals that access the hospital's main and secondary sys-

tems. Like most organizations, the Æsculapian Order guards its system access jealously. The characters have clearance for the basics only: work schedules, extension directories and unrestricted schematics. Patient tracking is both a science and an art at Beaulac, and meticulous records are kept as to when patients check in, which doctors deal with them, and on every other detail of their stay. Every move a patient — or a member of the clinic staff — makes is charted. Searching patient records and other, more sensitive files requires help from someone already in the clinic hierarchy, or through inspired hacking.

Getting a clinic staffer to provide computer access is tricky to say the least; most aren't predisposed to help strangers dig into Æsculapian files. However, the characters may use Abilities like **Savvy**, **Subterfuge** or possibly even **Command** or **Rapport** to persuade a subject to look the other way for a few minutes. A straightforward bribe can also work (although Ramirez won't authorize such as "expenses"). If one of the characters is a Haitian-trained doc or has ties to them, he can find a sympathetic soul (and terminal) in a Port-au-Prince alumni staffer at Beaulac. Getting this access means the character acts as an authorized user, instead of having to hack into the network (standard **Engineering** rolls, just like using the character's own minicomp).

The other option is to find a secure terminal that no one's using. This is harder than it sounds, since secure computers are in only offices and lab areas. Also, without a clinic member to help, the characters must hack into the internal network instead of operating as authorized users (see **Trinity**, page 236, for details on hacking).

Of course, the characters must lose their escort before attempting any of this (relatively easy for a Basel-trained doc since he can claim he'd like to check in with a colleague; trickier for anyone else unless the team conspires to provide a distraction). The two guards are loyal to Grabowski, and can't be bought off (although trickery may succeed where cash fails).

Beaulac Clinic's main computer network has a 7 fail-safe, and is divided into subsystems, one for each level of the clinic. Each subsystem within the main network has a 4 fail-safe (see **Trinity**, page 270, for details on handling fail-safes). After getting in the main network, a character must access each different subsystem listed below to

Docs

If one or more of the characters is an Æsculapian, Grabowski relaxes somewhat. The director is Basel-trained and apparently has the ear of Dr. Zweidler himself. Grabowski is sympathetic to other Basel-trained docs and allows them much greater access to the clinic (such characters don't run into the normal bureaucratic red tape for which rexs are famous). He may even hint, at the Storyteller's discretion, that important research is being done in secure lower labs.

A Port-au-Prince-trained rex receives a cooler welcome at Beaulac; Grabowski does not think highly of Haitian-trained docs. Grabowski may press such a character into service, but he doesn't allow her access to the clinic's files, and he likely monitors any transmissions she makes.

uncover the appropriate data. An appropriately modified **Engineering** roll is needed for each of the following pieces of information.

Surgery, Organ Banks subsystem

- Inventory records show that organ bank receipts are up 27% in the past nine months. There is no information on where the biomass comes from, although there's a close correlation between the time of this increase and the rise in reported disappearances.

Psychiatric subsystem

- Every patient treated in the Freak Alley collapse spent at least four hours on SubLevel 6: Psychiatric. Patients registered as living in Freak Alley are still being brought in, and they're spending time in Psychiatric, too. The significance of this becomes clear when the characters interview the survivors; patients remember absolutely nothing about the collapse, as if their memory of the event was erased (see **Freak Alley**, page 33).

Quartermastering and Storage, Supplies, Personnel subsystem

- Beaulac has made massive Earthside and Mars-bound personnel and equipment transfers starting on the first of February. Indeed, this pro-



cess stepped up noticeably after the Cantor incident. Sending gear off Luna is a huge expenditure — characters who get a standard **Bureaucracy** roll know that returning even rare and expensive equipment to Earth is simply not done. Furthermore, this gear was new, and related mostly to telemetry of psion and Aberrant powers. If the character on the network gets an extra success on the **Engineering** roll, he discovers that some of the gear doesn't even appear on receipt invoices, and that very little of it appears in the clinic budget (this begs the questions of where it came from and who paid for it). This information strengthens suspicions that the rexs are involved in something underhanded, and could spur Æon to intercept one of the shipments.

- A booking agent for an independent e2m (Earth-to-Moon) transport, *The Painted Bird*, received payment for arranging to ship Æsculapian personnel and equipment. The docs don't have their own ships, so they typically use one of the major transport services. Using a single independent shipper seems impractical to say the least. *The Painted Bird* is registered out of the nearby

Wroclaw Sector spaceport. It's easy to determine (a standard **Intelligence** roll) that this ship was probably the one to take the uninvoiced equipment from Beaulac to Earth.

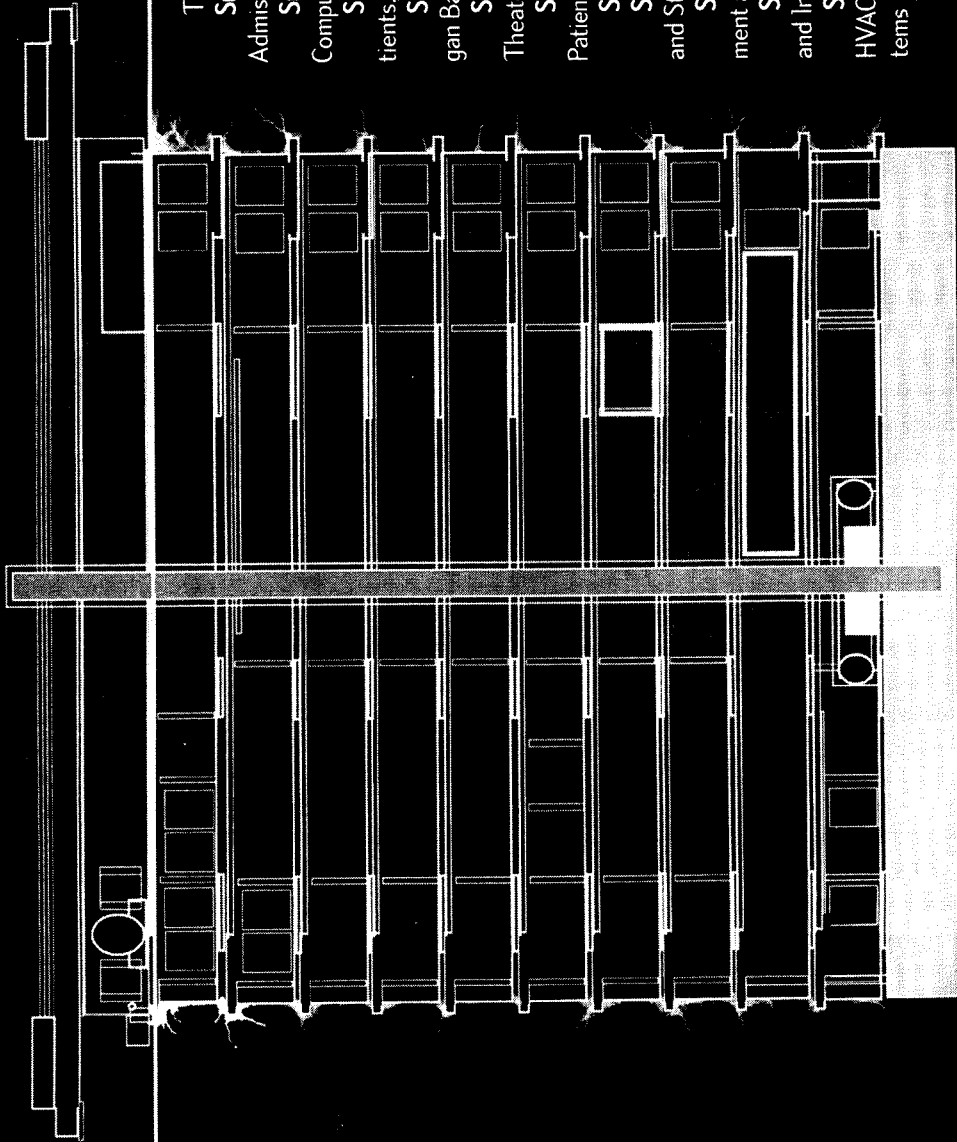
- *The Painted Bird* went to the Lunar Orbital Station *Strongsville* on February 7, 2120, and returned three hours later. There is no information on passengers or cargo for this trip. In reality, Dr. Mangels had some business to take care of (see Cantor Station, page 30).

- Clinic Director Grabowski is scheduled to return to Earth on his quarterly trip to Montessoro. If the character on the network gets an **Engineering** roll with one extra success, he finds a private memo from Montessoro Clinic to Grabowski, indicating that this is actually a permanent transfer. The characters probably don't know at this time that Grabowski is the guiding force behind the Huang-Marr Project, but a hush-hush transfer on the heels of massive equipment and personnel relocations points a damning finger in Grabowski's direction.

Research, Recruitment and Training subsystem

- Every staff member in the recent transfer from Luna had SubLevel 9 clearance, and most

BEAULAC CLINIC



The clinic levels are:

SubLevel 0 — Emergency/Triage, Admissions

SubLevel 1 — Administration and Computing

SubLevel 2 — Residential Inpatients, Chronic and Terminal Wards

SubLevel 3 — Surgery Rooms, Organ Banks

SubLevel 4 — Additional Surgical Theaters, Classrooms, Critical Wards

SubLevel 5 — Serious- and Stable-Patient Wards, Outpatient Clinic, Cafeteria

SubLevel 6 — Psychiatric Ward

SubLevel 7 — Quartermastering and Storage, Supplies, Personnel

SubLevel 8 — Research, Recruitment and Training

SubLevel 9 — Morgue, Quarantine and Infectious Disease Wards, CDC Lab

SubLevel 10 — Central generator, HVAC, ventilation and other support systems

worked in the Research Ward on SubLevel 8 at some point. Furthermore, the outflux of personnel left Beaulac drastically understaffed, and the replacements rotated in are frequently inexperienced. There are internal memos stating that this has already led to some near-crisis situations, which the clinic has barely managed to keep out of the news media. Again, this is quite unusual for the normally very methodical Æsculapians.

- The **Engineering** roll requires two extra successes to learn that Orgotek subsidiary companies have funneled money into Beaulac for assorted research projects, and that there have been inordinate numbers of Orgotek visitors to the Research Ward over the last 18 months, including some from a company called Linma Telcom. This isn't notable in and of itself, although the lead serves to strengthen the link between the *Remnants of the Dead* and *The Depths of Madness*, the next episode in this book.

Morgue subsystem

- Further data on the John Doe autopsy is in a file locked by Dr. Mangels. Looking at the recorded images with a successful **Medicine** roll (standard if the character is a vitakinetic, +2 difficulty otherwise), reveals that the odd truncated effects at the edges of the excised muscles (all voluntary-control muscle tissue), are the results of applying high-level Vitakinesis powers to the areas. John Doe also shows indications of having been operated on multiple times previous to his demise. This suggests that docs were involved in some kind of experiment on human subjects; not enough to take legal action, but certainly enough for Æon to pursue further investigations.

Secure Personnel subsystem

An **Engineering** roll (+2 difficulty) is required to even find this subsystem.

- Partial records of something called the Huang-Marr Project. Most of the data was destroyed, but some bits remain, including:

Telemetry data on advanced bioware (a standard **Engineering** roll indicates that this bioware looks like it's designed to be implanted)

The term "biorg" with no explanation, other than referring to "research subjects" and a "Cantor test"

Partial medical records of some of the reported missing persons (notably DNA scans)

A journal, presumably on automatic download from a dpad (the diary entries from Dr. Malachi Ross, contained in the setting material)

Multiple references to a SubLevel 11

An order to shut down the "Huang-Marr Project" (dated just prior to the equipment and personnel transfers)

When combined with the facts noted in the setting section and with other information pulled from Beaulac's system, this information takes on greater relevance. The characters have uncovered something grim indeed.

Cantor Station

Traveling to Cantor Station isn't quick or easy. The mining station is located on Luna's northern hemisphere, and the closest inhabited site to it is Neper Station, over a thousand kilometers to the southwest. Cantor is normally accessible with hoppers or along a single LAMP line. However, the complex is a wreck; normal operations shut down after the Aberrant attack and ground transit was cut off by the LAMP tube's collapse.

The characters must therefore make the journey in surface vehicles or by short-range flight. They can take a LAMP train from Olympus up to Neper Station and hire surface transport, or they can rent a hopper and fly directly from Olympus. Since Grabowski has a vested interest in keeping the truth hidden, either form of transportation presents excellent opportunities for "accidents" to claim inexperienced characters. If you're so inclined, you could have Grabowski hire muscle from the Pit to waylay or hijack the characters. Pirates are known to prey on unarmed transports from time to time, so such an attack would not be too far out of the ordinary. Grabowski is clever enough to ensure that any assaults cannot be traced back to him.

The team should finally reach Cantor Station unless it suffers an incredible run of bad luck. Cantor was devastated by the Aberrant attack, and will be abandoned entirely as soon as the John Doe investigation ends. Aeroc Corporation, the complex's parent company, decided that re-establishing operations is too costly. Aeroc pushes to close the investigation, having already vacifited out all salvageable gear. All that's left is desolation: body outlines, rubble, bloodstains and shattered equipment.

Beaulac Clinic backs up Aeroc. The clinic's official statement explains that since almost 40 non-combatants, as well as three docs, were killed in the assault, the Æsculapians wish to honor their memory by sealing the mass grave. (In truth,

Grabowski wants to take no chances that investigators will discover the biorg project.)

Two Aeroc employees are at the site, along with two police officers. The Aeroc reps are on hand to offer assistance to the cops, who are finishing their follow-up sweep prior to closing the investigation. This provides the team with a convenient escort through the facility.

The airlock and atmosphere generators at Cantor are about the only things that still work, though the characters notice a huge patch on the complex's dome, presumably where the Aberrants punched through and depressurized the main chamber. Outlines mark the locations where dozens of bodies were found. Most were victims of explosive decompression or suffocation; the remainder were blasted down or torn apart by the invading Aberrants.

Questioning the team's escort reveals that John Doe was found underneath a wrecked ore processor. The "rescue team," in reality a squad of docs from the biorg project, claimed the blood boiling away in vacuum from the corpse led them to the site. A standard **Science** roll confirms that the Sun's heat is surprisingly intense even at this range, more than enough to cause blood to literally boil without the protection of atmosphere or shielding. No one would have found the remains without that sign of trouble.

Examining the site closely (which is discouraged at every turn by the characters' escort, whose only ulterior motive is a desire to get back to civilization as soon as possible) may reveal the following:

- An **Awareness** roll (+1 difficulty) reveals that bone splinters — which a **Medicine** roll (+2 difficulty) identifies tentatively as Aberrant skull material — penetrated the rock walls of the chamber near where one of the Aberrant invaders was supposedly gunned down. A character can conclude with an **Investigation** roll (+1 difficulty) that the fragments' impact pattern is not consistent with a hit from known projectile or energy weapons. Instead, it looks more like the result of an explosion — but originating from *inside* the Aberrant's skull. (The explosion was actually caused by a biorg's bioware-hyped Algeis, although this is virtually impossible for the characters to discover.)

- Blast patterns consistent with the type normally produced by both Aberrant energy and Electrokinetic-based bioware are obvious throughout the combat zone. A standard **Engineering** or **Science** roll is required to reason that the scorch and melting patterns generated by the bioware blasts indicate a substantial increase in yield over known bioware capabilities.

Inspecting the Aberrants

The characters are bound to want to look at the Aberrant bodies recovered from the Cantor attack. They learn that the corpses have already been taken to Earth and are undergoing autopsy. It's standard procedure to ship Aberrant bodies to the Aeon research facility in the Chicago arcology. Trinity members and psi order representatives study the corpses exhaustively to better understand the enemy.

Such research is considered a higher priority than the characters' current investigation. Contact with Ramirez or the Chicago lab confirms that the three Aberrants were of moderate power, and that they suffered lethal physical damage due to applied psionic effects. Little else is learned about the corpses that can be used in the characters' mission.

- A character standing on the place where John Doe's body was discovered can draw line of sight to where several of the amplified bioware blasts struck. It's reasonable to assume (a standard **Investigation** roll if the players don't figure it out for themselves) that John Doe was using advanced biotech to fire highly augmented psionic attacks.

Beyond these items, the site is cold and dead. Further exploration raises the concerned observation from one of the Aeroc representatives that the patch in the complex roof is unstable. The police decide they're finished, and direct everyone to return quickly to warmth and civilization.

The Huang-Marr Connection

Grenada Connor, an ISRA on Lunar Orbital Station *Strongsville*, had a flash of insight that Aberrants would attack Cantor Station (it's rare but not unheard-of for clairsentients to receive such precognitive flashes). She sent a priority report to Linma Telcom, a telecommunications firm that handles many intra-Lunar transmissions, expecting that it would be forwarded like any other priority transmission. However, Grabowski had



contacts at that facility monitoring for just such kinds of information. They alerted him immediately.

Grabowski saw the impending attack as a perfect opportunity to field test the Huang-Marr bioware. He directed a Linma Telcom agent, an electrokinetic, to alter the transmission to state that the predicted attack site was Harriot Crater, and to then forward the message normally. Grabowski contacted Orgotek and Norça associates involved in the Huang-Marr Project and asked them to take command of the deployment to Harriot Crater. Grabowski wanted the psions within striking range of Cantor Station as backup in case something went wrong with his experimental biorgs.

Grabowski's test went off almost as planned. The Orgotek and Norça units nearby were under cover in Harriot Crater at the time of the initial Aberrant incursion. Grabowski's biorgs performed admirably, though all three were killed by the time the psion units arrived. Before their deaths, the biorg subjects managed to kill two Aberrants and to severely wound the third. The 20 psions comprising the Norça and Orgotek troops had little

difficulty mopping up the remaining Aberrant.

Asculapians involved in the biorg project, assigned as medics with the psion squads, used the chaotic aftermath of the battle to track down the biorg corpses. They excised the "hot" bioware from each to get the freshest possible readings on the wear and tear caused by combat. The first two corpses were found quickly, dissected and incinerated with plasma weapons. The third was partially hidden under crushed equipment. The delay in hauling the body out gave César Sweeney, a Norça psion assigned to the maneuvers, time to spot the post-dissection corpse before the medics had a chance to incinerate it. Although Sweeney had no idea what the rexs were up to, his approach called enough attention to them that the rescue team was forced to take the biorg back with them when they pulled out.

Following Leads

Characters can contact Connor easily, if expensively, via broadcast transmission. Doing so confirms that she isn't sure whether she meant Cantor or Harriot. Traveling to *LOS Strongsville* to interview her is a hassle, since there are no

regularly scheduled flights to the research station. The characters must get access to a craft (Ramirez is not inclined to get them one, considering this a weak lead) and go on their own. (If the characters try hiring *The Painted Bird*, they're out of luck; the ship is on a run at the moment.)

Although Connor won't submit to any tests, using **Willfinder** in person perceives that Connor's memory was altered slightly, although not psionically (a **Psi** roll is required, since the alteration wasn't psionic in nature). A telepath must get two extra successes with **Mindwarp** to discover that Connor underwent conventional hypnosis. (Dr. Mangels made a special trip to LOS *Strongsville* at Grabowski's request to tie up this loose end, muddling Connor's memory of her insight and making her forget Mangels was ever there). Further use of **Mindwarp** can restore Connor's memory, confirming not only that she did sense the site as Cantor, but that Dr. Mangels subjected her to brainwashing.

Talking to Linma Telcom reveals absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. As far as their records show, the transmission came through without interference or tampering. Characters won't even be allowed past the receptionist if they go to Boltzmann Station, where Linma Telcom is located. They have to accept the word of Linma's Security Chief, Dennis Feldman, that nothing is amiss (Telepathy doesn't reveal any duplicity on Feldman's part since he's just following orders).

If the characters want to confirm Sweeney's story, they find him on leave in Lejanas sector in Olympus. Interviewing Sweeney (not an easy task since, like most Norça, he's rather secretive) quickly reveals that he has no knowledge of the biorg project. Sweeney was simply in the right place at the wrong time.

Freak Alley

An examination of Beaulac Clinic's admission records, or any discussion with members of the local indigent population, reveals that a pirate warren in Wroclaw Sector collapsed on 29 January, 2120, killing or injuring most of the slummers who lived there. (Anyone up on current events or who lived on Luna around that time should be familiar with the event.)

What isn't known is that Grabowski sealed off Freak Alley deliberately. The space under Beaulac Clinic was marked for the biorg project, and the planned expansion would have tunneled into the

middle of the warren. When rumors of "cultist infestation" and repeated sweeps by Olympus police failed to clear the burrow, Grabowski took a more active hand. He used biorgs to collapse the pirate burrow, assuring the test subjects that the area was empty.

To the biorgs, it was a routine training exercise. To the residents of Freak Alley, it was the end of the world.

Some residents escaped unharmed; most were killed. The injured were taken to Beaulac Clinic, a typical demonstration of the order's goodwill. However, Grabowski instructed that all staff treating survivors question the slummers to see if they remembered anything about the collapse. Victims recalling details were sent to Psychiatric, where Grabowski had the subjects relieved of their memories through a combination of drugs and mundane post-hypnotic suggestion. Grabowski still searches for survivors who remember too much; he won't rest until every bit of evidence from the disaster is eliminated.

(To ensure this, Grabowski hired muscle from the Pit to find — and dispatch — any survivors who didn't undergo treatment at Beaulac. Careful as always, Grabowski shared a drink with the men when he hired them — purely so they would ingest a slow-acting poison. If all goes by Grabowski's plan, the two thugs will die within two weeks, hopefully after finding any other survivors.)

Ironically, the entire operation was a waste. Grabowski didn't have time to begin clinic expansion in earnest before the Cantor catastrophe occurred. His superiors in Basel decided the Huang-Marr Project was too close to being compromised on the Moon. The biorg program was packed up — lock, stock and barrel — and relocated to Earth and Mars. Equipment, data, researchers and most importantly, test subjects, are now gone. Only Grabowski remains behind, seeing to final details. The private transport *The Painted Bird* already took the other docs and equipment, returning to the Wroclaw Sector spaceport to shuttle Grabowski to Basel as soon as he's finished.

Characters investigating the collapse of Freak Alley must head into the depths of the Underworld. Very few people outside the native population know or care about the event, although a character with Contacts or Allies in the media might discover some useful information.

The locals are suspicious of all outsiders. Each extra success on a **Savvy** roll (+1 difficulty) re-



veals one of the following pieces of information. **Interrogation**, **Intimidation** or **Subterfuge** may also be used, but at +2 difficulty. All difficulties are reduced by one if the characters offer a decent payment for each piece of information (around ¥20 apiece).

- The warren that collapsed was the subject of a number of rumors suggesting that it housed "Aberrant cultists eating babies in the dark." (You should feel free to create all manner of bizarre and disturbing rumors along these lines.)

- Few people survived the cave-in. Those who did and underwent treatment at Beaulac Clinic are found easily, but remember very little about the event. The handful who refused hospitalization are quite difficult to track down; it's hard to locate anyone who doesn't want to be found in the chaotic Underworld. Those who are found (by using **Contacts**, successful **Savvy** rolls or bribery) swear up and down that they heard explosions before the warren collapsed (the survivors who were treated remember no such sounds).

- Some of the homeless survivors swear that something is coming after them out of the dark and is hunting them down, one by one. (The truth

isn't far off; Grabowski's hired muscle is still on the job.)

- Some survivors remember that other residents of Freak Alley "disappeared" from time to time, starting about nine months before the collapse.

If the characters want to explore Freak Alley itself, they discover that finding the site is difficult. The pirate warren isn't on any maps, and local officials are notoriously unhelpful in pointing the characters to any "illegal" zones. Oddly enough, no one working at the clinic remembers how to get there, either. A clairsentient could scan the Underworld for the cave-in site (**Farsensing** is the most effective power; **Sensory Projection** would also work, but could take a very, very long time to use). Otherwise, the characters' best hope for finding the place is to hire a guide from the local indigent population, preferably one who once dwelt in the warren.

If the characters force a guide to help them, the local does his best to lead them through a maze of abandoned (and possibly even powered-down) tunnels, and then disappears through a bolt hole. While likely only embarrassing, the situation could become life-threatening; there's not exactly a lot of food,

water or heat down in the abandoned tunnels. On the other hand, if the team *hires* a local (something the Wroclaw Sector cops disapprove of quite loudly), odds are that the slummer leads the characters directly to the mouth of Freak Alley.

Looking around Freak Alley reveals about what the characters expect. It was cut to Residential Class-E warren specs (40 meters wide, 10 meters tall, bare minimum amenities, power, and water and air hookups — though careful examination shows that these hookups were retrofitted). About 20 meters in, the passage halts abruptly at a rockfall. Checking the scene may reveal the following information (standard **Investigation** or **Science** rolls for each point):

- There may have been multiple cave-ins, each new one striking closer to the front of the warren than the last. Two extra successes on this roll indicates that the collapses were triggered artificially, most likely through explosive detonation. Someone seems to want Freak Alley sealed off forever.

- The entire tunnel seems to have collapsed (which also begs the question of Beaulac's stability, since it's directly above the site) or someone has filled it in. If the characters decide to dig through metric tons of solid rock, the local police arrive to stop the excavation — and no amount of pleading or bribery gets the authorities to look the other way. The cops on Pit detail are a short-tempered, humorless bunch. (Not that it's easy to get excavation gear or permits for said equipment in the first place.)

Wroclaw Sector Spaceport

At this point, the characters should be more than ready to interrogate Grabowski. Even if the characters sneak into Beaulac Clinic (not easy to do; Æsculapians take their security very seriously), it's highly unlikely that they get close to the Director's office without Grabowski knowing about it. If nothing else, admissions or security calls him about the characters' approach.

Grabowski has been keeping an eye on the characters since they first arrived at Beaulac to view the corpse, but they aren't his greatest concern at the moment (see *Run, Rabbit, Run*, below). He's already expediting his departure when the characters come calling.

If the characters manage to accost Grabowski before he leaves the clinic, he has security escort them out. If the characters get violent, he has them arrested. As one of the foremost citizens of Olympus, Grabowski has tremendous pull (command of Beaulac's security staff is simply a small part of this influence). Furthermore, Grabowski has Æsculapian

Run, Rabbit, Run

How can Grabowski know that the characters have uncovered enough incriminating evidence to make his life difficult (to say the least)? Grabowski was tracking the characters' investigations, so he has a fair idea of their progress. However, he isn't fleeing from them.

Instead, Grabowski is running from the experimental subject he thought was transported safely to Earth. Dr. Malachi Ross gained sufficient command of himself to realize what was done to him (and by whom). He returned to Grabowski's office (tunneling through the Lunar rock, as he did when he broke out of his cell). Since Grabowski wasn't there, Ross trashed the director's office and departed, sealing the tunnel closed behind him with melted rock.

Grabowski panics the instant he sees the message Ross burned into the wall before he left — a key gene sequence of the bioware-tainted combination involved in the Huang-Marr Project that Ross himself discovered.

The characters discover the condition of Grabowski's office if they bluster past the director's receptionist. The ransacked office, the melted wall and the inscribed gene sequence only further incriminate Grabowski.

It takes some time for Triton Division to determine the gene sequence's full significance, but even a standard **Medicine** roll is enough to presume that it bears a relation to some sort of bioware research.

and Orgotek allies tied to the biorg project who are just as anxious as he is to keep the Huang-Marr Project under wraps.

It isn't easy for the characters to bring Grabowski in on their own. However, if the characters show Ramirez the facts they've uncovered, the Æon operative calls on Taft and Chun, two ULPF detectives associated with the Trinity. The evidence the characters have doesn't prove Grabowski's guilt immediately, but it's certainly enough to enable the ULPF to bring the director in for interrogation.

Questioning Grabowski uncovers nothing useful. He's clever enough to not be tricked by conventional interrogation techniques, and using Telepathy on him has a surprising result. A telepathic probe reveals that Grabowski knows nothing — absolutely nothing — about the Huang-Marr Project, any escaped subjects, collapsed tunnels, or indeed much of anything else. Unwilling to risk compromising the project, Grabowski had himself fitted with an internal bioware wipeout loop that triggers automatically



if any Telepathy Mode rated three dots or higher is used on him. The clinic director is more than willing to accept the erasure of a good chunk of his memory to protect the work he's doing — as well as his superiors and perhaps the human race.

Still, Grabowski's minicomputer contains encrypted files detailing much about the Huang-Marr Project (essentially, the information on the biorg project provided in the Overview, on page 17). Although this evidence would be more than enough to prove Grabowski's guilt, breaking the code would take weeks. The director is confident that his contacts will spring him from custody and set him up with a new identity long before that happens.

Vengeance

Grabowski waits in a holding cell after his first round of questioning. Taft and Chun or other authorities are a bit nervous about incarcerating the director, since they don't have any solid charges to press. Grabowski can be held overnight at best, hopefully long enough to bring in a telepath who can reconstruct the director's memory (assuming there's no such Ministry agent among the characters).

Ross needs only one night to track Grabowski down, though. Crazy by the tainted bioware implanted in his body, Ross operates on a primitive level, knowing only that he must make Grabowski pay. Ross comes through the cell wall the same way he tunneled out of his own cell, and into Grabowski's office. Grabowski screams for help and tries to defend himself. It's futile; the doc can't hope to stand against Ross' tremendously augmented powers. The director dies painfully from a combination of Pyrokinesis and Algesis effects. Ross then leaves the mangled corpse and exits the way he came, closing the tunnel behind him. The attack takes only a few minutes, just enough time for the characters to get to the cell as the hole seals shut. However, the entire attack is recorded on security cameras.

Grabowski seems to be the victim of an Aberrant attack. Yet inspecting the cell confirms that the blast effects were psionic in nature, apparently like those used at Cantor Station. Characters may therefore assume that Grabowski's killer was one of the test subjects. Information that might have been gained from Beaulac's computer network, combined with reported sightings of an "Ab-

errant" that tunnels, may lead characters to conclude that Dr. Malachi Ross has escaped and is still loose.

If the characters never gained access to Beaulac's network, they learn about Ross and his disappearance when Grabowski's minicomp is hacked open.

Conclusions

If you are running *Remnants of the Dead* as part of an ongoing series, the characters have accomplished a significant task. Despite Grabowski's death, they have his minicomp. It's only a matter of time before the details behind the Huang-Marr Project come to light. At that time, the ghosts of Cantor Station and Freak Alley can be laid to rest. Even without Grabowski's files, the few scraps of evidence uncovered here indicate that the Æsculapians deal in something involving Aberrant taint, and that Orgotek has its fingers in the pie as well. And if taint is involved, matters are serious indeed.

From here, the characters continue to the next arc in the story, following up the primary leads on Luna, then Mars and eventually back to Earth. The characters may want to track down Grabowski's killer, but it's not a viable option. Ross has proved how dangerous he is, and Ramirez feels that the characters aren't the ones suited to bringing him in. He informs them that a Proteus team will find the test subject. (Ross makes a dramatic appearance in the next book, *Passage Through Shadow*.)

Still, the characters' involvement in this investigation is far from over.

Aftermath

The Trinity feels it's best to keep as much of Lunar events out of the public eye as possible until more facts become available. Although the Lunar population discovers next to nothing about the Huang-Marr Project, this information is virtually impossible to keep from the psi orders.

Æon's Triton Division has the manpower and resources to piece together the facts (from the characters' physical investigation, John Doe's corpse, the fragmented computer files from Beaulac's Secure Personnel subsystem, the gene sequence from Grabowski's wall and from Grabowski's encrypted files). The gory details of the Huang-Marr Project come out, including the truth about taint being used in prototype bioware, and the use of human subjects as guinea pigs. What

seemed to be a relatively unimportant investigation turns out to be a dark secret of appalling magnitude — one that the characters were essential to uncovering.

The Æsculapians are disgraced to say the least. Dr. Zweidler, the Æsculapian proxy, makes a private commentary to the orders through Æon, claiming absolutely no knowledge of the biorg project and declaring that he'll dedicate his fellow vitakinetics to uncovering all those involved in the program. Despite such a strong statement, the other orders (and, indeed, many Æsculapians) can't help but wonder how high the plot reaches, and if Zweidler is as innocent as he claims. The docs have suffered a serious blow, one that will be felt for some time.

Grabowski was a prominent Lunar citizen and his death is impossible to keep quiet. Unless the characters come up with an inspired cover story, Æon suggests that Grabowski be "the victim of a tragic decompression accident on his scheduled flight back to Earth." However, no effort is made to squelch rumors of Grabowski's corruption. The coverup protects the ULPF's reputation, and maintains the general peace.

The team performed well and Ramirez wants the characters to continue their investigation, following up the most likely leads on Luna: Grabowski's ties to other Æsculapian personnel, as well as transmissions between Beaulac Clinic and a telecommunications center. Both happen to be in the same colony to the northwest of Olympus, in Boltzmann Station. This leads directly to the events of Episode Two: *The Depths of Madness*.

Other Endings

If you intend to wrap things up here, the characters may follow a myriad of paths, some frustratingly short, some exceedingly dangerous, and some pleasantly rewarding.

- **Searching for biorg program escapees:** Dr. Malachi Ross is still out there, recovering his memory and growing used to his new condition. While *Darkness Revealed* has other plans for him, you may have the characters encounter him if you desire. Plus, who's to say there weren't other survivors of the project? This series assumes there weren't, but you're welcome to change things to suit your own story.

- **Cleaning up Beaulac Clinic:** Grabowski's gone, the biorg project is shut down, and the Æsculapian Order must deal with the aftermath. This creates a tense environment in the clinic, with

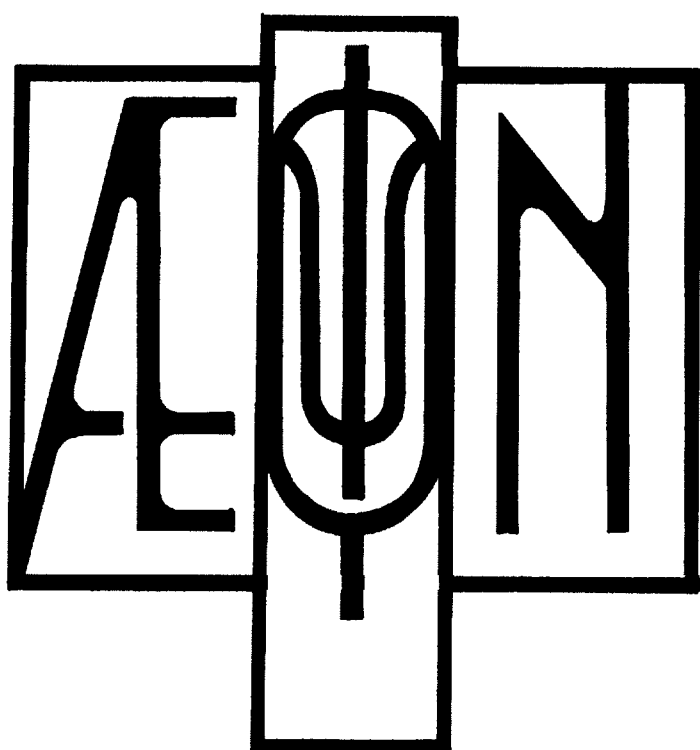
rex investigators interviewing the remaining staff, staffers vying for promotions and docs being nervous about getting linked to the Huang-Marr Project (justifiably or not). Grabowski loyalists might even be out for revenge against the characters for tarnishing the director's reputation. All manner of political and social intrigue awaits.

- **The disappearances continue:** Despite the fact that the biorg project is put to an end, people keep vanishing. Is there a second, smaller program? Have black-market organ traders started abducting donors before they're done with their organs? Is there a serial killer on the loose? Is an Aberrant dispatching key individuals for its own purposes? Such options draw the characters even further into the dark mystery of Olympus' Downside.

- **Pursuit to Basel:** Dr. Mangels, one of the key individuals on the project, was transferred to

Earth. Ramirez assures the characters that Æon operatives Earthside will follow that lead to Basel, but the characters may decide to go there themselves. Unfortunately, the characters make very little headway against the formidable bureaucracy of the Æsculapian Order. Officials claim Mangels never arrived (which is possible, but who's to say it's the truth?). Yet if you choose to skip the next two episodes in this book, this lead provides a convenient introduction to the next adventure book, **Passage Through Shadow**.

- **Journey to Mars:** Dr. Ashiluna, another key participant in the biorg project, was sent to Mars. If you wish to gloss over Episode Two: *The Depths of Madness*, you can send the characters to Mars immediately for Episode Three: *The Downward Spiral*, the last story in this book. The team has fewer leads to go by than if it had gone through the second episode, but staging a segue from the first to the third adventure is not difficult.



Dramatis Personae

The following are profiles and statistics for key individuals involved in the events of Remnants of the Dead

Special Agent Hector Ramirez

Born to wealth and privilege in Santiago, Hector grew up in the lap of luxury. This did not spoil him, though. Instead, it instilled a lifelong determination to prove that he could do as well as his forefathers had.

That ambition led Hector to the finest schools, then college on Luna, and finally to the Trinity. Recruited out of Camelot, Luna's prestigious campus, Ramirez assumed his new duties with confidence. One of the fastest-rising field agents in Æon, Ramirez is considered by Trinity leaders to be a man to watch. He is assigned some of the most sensitive and dangerous cases, as much to see if he'll fail as to see him succeed.

Image: Hector is Hispanic, of average height, wiry, but with a solid build. His dark eyes are sharply intelligent, and these, combined with his close-cropped black hair and practical clothing, give him a very crisp, almost military air. Still, he can blend with the locals, dressing down and slouching to fit with slummers, or getting flashy and loud to roll with the affluent.

Roleplaying Hints: You are ambitious, but not in a dangerous way. Your motive is to excel, and to

be recognized for your excellence, so you perhaps seek the spotlight more often than is necessary. Yet no one would deny that you've earned your moments in the sun.

Your drive for perfection means you never acknowledge your achievements. You have no tolerance for the failures of others, though you can conceal your irritation with them.

Nature: Leader

Allegiance: Æon Trinity

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 4

Stamina 4

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 3

Wits 4

Social Attributes

Appearance 4

Manipulation 5

Charisma 4

Willpower: 8

Psi: 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Citizenship 5, Influence 3, Mentor 4, Resources 5, Status (Æon Trinity) 4

Gear: Fine suit (fiberweave lining), Wazukana DX70 minicomp (DataWarp Friday agent and cellular uplink), Aris SureSting flechette pistol, vocoder (English, Chinese, Russian, Qin)

Abilities

Brawl 4, Might 1

Athletics 3, Drive 3, Firearms 5, Melee 2, Pilot 3, Stealth 3

Endurance 2, Resistance 2

Abilities

Awareness 4, Investigation 3

Academics 2, Bureaucracy 4, Engineering 2, Intrusion 4, Linguistics 3, Survival 3

Rapport 3

Abilities

Intimidation 4, Style 4, Command 4, Interrogation 4, Subterfuge 4, Etiquette 5, Savvy 4



Dr. Jerzy Grabowski

Jerzy Grabowski came from the upper-class neighborhoods of Gdansk with the highest honors in education, and served in the finest hospitals in Poland. His research into nerve disorders eventually led him to the Montessor Clinic in the days before Zweidler's "promotion." Grabowski's potential extended into psi; he was among the first to be triggered by Zweidler.

Zweidler and Grabowski drifted apart over the years. Zweidler's straight-arrow morality clashed with Grabowski's ethical pragmatism. While their friendship lingers, neither confides in the other any longer. Grabowski is not above using his friendship with Zweidler to grab postings that further his own agenda. Truth be told, it's been almost three years since the two last discussed their work. Interestingly, the Huang-Marr Project began two years, eight months ago.

Image: The good doctor is 6'3" tall, with straight graying hair and piercing blue eyes. He always wears formal clothes in classic European styles — modern Brazilian fashions do not appeal to him. Grabowski isn't interested in someone unless she has the proper pedigree, training and contacts. Anyone of lower rank — and Jerzy regards almost everyone to be inferior to him — is liable to receive a full dose of condescension, assuming Grabowski can be bothered to talk at all.



Roleplaying Hints: You are a by-the-numbers, dignified, old-school doctor. Your psion abilities are relatively weak, but you're a top-flight surgeon and administrator. You have been a part of the Huang-Marr team since the beginning, and were instrumental to getting the co-op with Orgotek up and running. You believe the biorg project is the best way to end the Aberrant menace, once and for all. You do or say anything you feel is necessary to protect the program. After all, what's a life here or there when you're working to save an entire species?

Nature: Architect

Allegiance: Æsculapian

Physical Attributes

Strength 2

Dexterity 4

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 4

Wits 4

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 5

Charisma 4

Aptitude: [Vitakinesis] Iatrosis 3, Mentatis 2, Algeis 3

Willpower: 9

Psi: 7

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Citizenship 4, Followers 4, Influence 3, Resources 5, Status (Æsculapian Order) 5

Gear: Traditional European suit, Steinhardt MI-AC II minicomp, vocoder (English, Chinese, German, Nihonjin, Qin)

Abilities

Brawl 1

Drive 2, Legerdemain 5, Pilot 3

Resistance 2

Abilities

Awareness 3, Investigation 1

Academics 5, Bureaucracy 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 5, Science 4, Survival 2

Meditation 1, Rapport 2

Abilities

Intimidation 4, Style 4, Command 4, Interrogation 4, Subterfuge 5, Etiquette 5, Perform 2, Savvy 3

REPORT TO FIELD OPERATIVES

ÆON TRINITY TRANSMISSION [NEPTUNE DIVISION]

Extraterrestrial Office, Deputy Office Director Giorgios Alekandros Gamemenos

We are still evaluating the scope of the Æsculapian scandal that was discovered at Olympus last month. Those operatives who were not involved directly in the investigation should know that there is a dimension to the event that has — so far — been kept from public scrutiny. I shall therefore begin with a review of the events as we currently understand them.

RECAPITULATION: CANTOR BASE AND THE BEAULAC CLINIC

The dozens of lives lost at the Cantor Mining Station were as much the result of human actions as they were due to Aberrant aggression. Dr. Jerzy Grabowski, former director of Luna's Beaulac Clinic, is believed to have tampered with an ISRA alert of an impending Aberrant attack to test highly illegal and morally dubious bioware modifications. He, and possibly other confederates whom we have not yet identified, let the massacre proceed simply to observe the biotech weapons in action.



Neptune Division stumbled on this calamity by accident. This office assigned field operative Ramirez to examine a peculiar, unidentified corpse. Agent Ramirez assigned a novice team to the investigation, and it performed quite well, identifying many recent reported disappearances — and the body of “John Doe” — as subjects of extensive bioware modifications relating to a conspiracy within Beaulac Clinic. Evidence further suggests that members of Orgotek and possibly the Norça may also be associated with this “Huang-Marr biorg project.”

Thanks to the disappearance and deaths of key participants in Dr. Grabowski's scheme, we do not know to what extent — if any — the biorg project was supported from higher up within the Æsculapian Order. Nor do we know how far Orgotek and Norça involvement extends. Proxy Zweidler himself claimed no knowledge of the biorg project, and assured the Æon Trinity that his order would investigate the matter internally. Orgotek and the Norça state that any psions trained in their respec-

tive orders who may have been involved in the Huang-Marr Project were most assuredly working independently.

Æon operatives have heard rumors of "dirty deeds" within the orders — but such rumors have been ubiquitous ever since the unfortunate Chitra Bhanu situation of 2109. The honest investigator puts little weight in rumors without evidence.

Our task is to correlate and interpret the information available to us. We must know the truth of any psi order involvement in illicit acts, and confirm whether such endeavors run contrary to the Æon Trinity's ideals.

ADDENDUM: BOLTZMANN STATION

Boltzmann Station is a Lunar industrial center located a few hundred kilometers from Olympus. Dr. Serevitek Kriko, second-in-command at the Æsculapians' Covenants Clinic at Boltzmann, was a longtime colleague and associate of Dr. Grabowski. It's possible that Dr. Kriko may have knowledge of Dr. Grabowski's research. Further, Triton Division recorded a series of transmissions from Beaulac Clinic in Olympus to the Linma Telcom research and telecommunications complex, also located at Boltzmann. While Æon does not know the contents of these transmissions, it seems prudent to pursue the matter with Linma Telcom — especially since Orgotek purchased the firm shortly before these transmissions began. Æon is also curious why Orgotek retains this facility when it has otherwise sold its holdings on Luna in the past several months.

We feel it is prudent to question Dr. Kriko, as well as Patrice and Andromeda Willom, the heads of Linma Telcom. It's entirely possible that they are not involved in the Huang-Marr Project, but the Trinity feels it best to follow up on all leads.

There is another concern associated with Boltzmann Station: A series of murders has occurred in the industrial center; the bodies were found severely mutilated. While the marks on the bodies do not seem to be related to those made on "John Doe," there may be some connection to the illicit bioware research project.

While we have no actual evidence of illegal or immoral acts in the area other than the isolated murders, we urge the utmost caution. In the event that you discover solid evidence of kidnapping or illegal bioware development, notify Agent Ramirez immediately. Æon will dispatch Proteus operatives, not only for your safety, but to avoid panic and confusion that may result if the public becomes aware of corruption within the orders.

The Trinity Council feels that we must avoid weakening the image of the psi orders. While it is our fervent hope that Grabowski's research was an isolated incident, we must be prepared to deal with further corruption quickly and privately. The council may decide that public accountability for the guilty parties is desirable. If so, this will be established after the fact, presenting the masses with a *fait accompli*.

CONCLUSION

You may find nothing that warrants mobilizing further Æon efforts. Dr. Kriko and the Willoms may know nothing of the biorg project. Hopefully, the person behind the tragic deaths at Boltzmann Station will be apprehended quickly and prove to have no relationship with the psi orders. Whatever the situation, do not let your own hopes and fears regarding this investigation blind you to the truth that lies hidden at Boltzmann.

Regards,
Gamemenos

Extraterrestrial Office, 7:11:45 3.8.20

Hope Sacrifice Unity

B

Boltzmann Station Local News

Urgent Update 3.5.2120

There is a killer loose in Boltzmann Station, and the Boltzmann Security Consortium advises all residents to take extra precautions until the killer is brought to justice.

"The murders appear to be the result of a disturbed individual following the direction of a public transmission sent by someone known only as 'Ancient Master,'" BSC Senior Administrator Sapein Jacobus stated. "We have a number of leads at the moment, but are reluctant to discuss them until we can prove their veracity."

The deaths have been isolated to Boltzmann Residential Sector 2. However, authorities advise caution throughout the area.

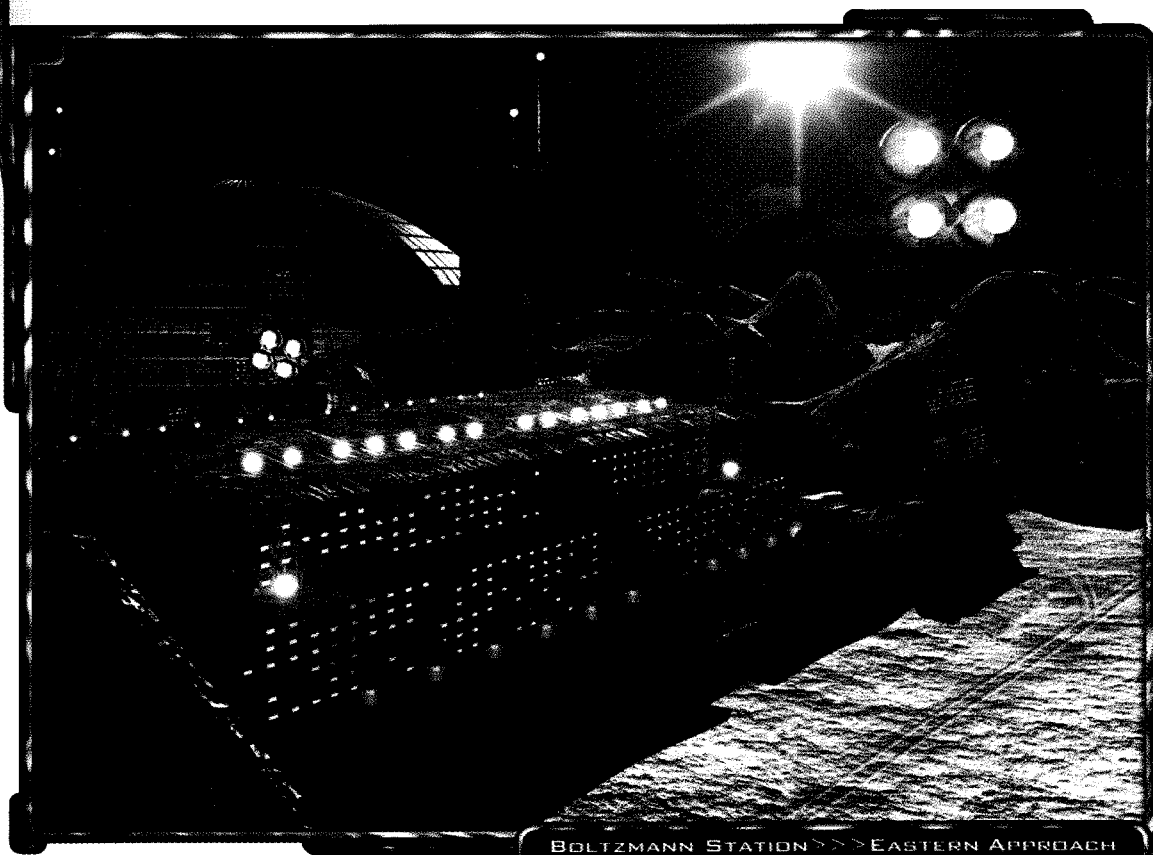
In the meantime, Jacobus advises the following precautions:

- Maintain familiar company. Although the transmission sent by "Ancient Master" urged that the victims be people close to the killer, BSC authorities feel confident that this has little bearing on the true situation.

- Monitor any suspicious activity or signs of violence. If you see anything of this nature, *do not* approach the scene. Contact the BSC office nearest you immediately.

- Report any strangers or unfamiliar people in your area to the BSC office nearest you.

We look forward to the swift capture and conviction of anyone involved in these horrible crimes, and to the return of peaceful life in our communities.



BOLTZMANN STATION >>> EASTERN APPROACH

NET-MAIL DIGEST

Compiled by Triton Division search

>>> transmission <<<

Date: 07:06:05 2.24.2120

From: Concerned

To: >>> alias-list-hidden <<<

Subject: Craig Shergold needs your help!!!

Security: none

Transmission type: textfile

HELLO EVERYONE! I just lerned about some I who really needs U to help him. Craig Shergold is a kid in the elgee labs deep down in Olympus. The rexs say he's got just a few months to live, cause he's got some kind of brain tumor. (Aberrants I bet. Some people say the Aberrants are cool cause of their powers but they're NOT!!!) I here that he's trying to go for a record in the Guinness file for most data-dex entries. So everybody sent Ur data-dex records to Crag Shergold ~ L.G. Main ~ Olympus 2, K? THANKS!!!

>>> end transmission <<<

>>> transmission <<<

Date: 23:15:18 3.3.2120

From: Ancient Master

To: >>> alias-list-hidden <<<

Subject: Secrets of Power

Security: SPE

Transmission type: textfile

For too long the authorities have monopolized the secrets of personal power. Those of you who slave for the secret forces as I once did must know the truth. Politics does not rule the universe. Technology does not guide our destiny. True power comes from the secrets of the gene — cosmic awareness, tremendous magic resides within us all; the pure power of the will. I have decided that the time is right to make these truths known to you, so that you can become your own power.

This chant was recovered from the lost continent of Mu by scientists investigating

the secrets of Aberrant underwater cities. >>> attachment garbled <<< Meditate upon it. Open yourself to the rhythms of power as described in the accompanying translation. Feel the roll of its sacred vowels and consonants in your throat. Learn its place in your mouth. Speak it with authority! When you have committed it to your heart and to your mind, then you are ready for the next step.

Select five sacrificial victims. They should be chosen randomly, but from among people close to you. The ritual draws power from the strength of your emotional investment; sacrificing strangers bestows less benefit. Banish the personal ties from your innermost soul, or base emotions like fear and disgust will weaken the efficacy of the Secrets of Power ritual, while the strong emotions of desire and association heighten the ritual's resonance.

You must liberate the spirit of each of your victims from its prison of flesh in accordance with the following diagram. >>> attachment garbled <<< Lay down the marks in the correct order; otherwise the body will not channel its released energies properly. Chant while you perform the sacrifice, alternating one of the names on the list at the end of this message. Chant the first name while releasing your first victim, the second while releasing the second, and so on. This channels the soul energy of your sacrifice to increase the power of the person to whom you're chanting.

After you sacrifice the five, remove the first name from the list and add yours at the bottom. Then send this message to others. In turn they will chant your name, sending you precious soul energy that you can use for whatever ends suit your will. You shall feel the flood of power and know yourself to be free in ways you could never have imagined.

Join us now while there is still time!

>>> attachment garbled <<<

>>> end transmission <<<

>>> transmission <<<

Date: 11:09:55 3.6.2120

From: System Administrator, Boltzmann Nexus 2

To: >>> junk message recipients <<<

Subject: Apology for recent posts

Security: SPE

Transmission type: textfile

Greetings from the administrative staff at BN2. I'd like to apologize for the pieces of wildly inaccurate and disturbing mail sent recently.

As some of you may know, Craig Shergold was a resident of the United Kingdom who contracted a childhood illness prior to the first emergence of Aberrants. He died over a century ago. Craig Shergold was never on the Moon, and nobody at the low-gravity treatment centers wants your data-dexes. If you haven't sent one, please don't; if you've sent one, please revoke it.

The reward of mystical power through sacrifice promised by "Ancient Master" is the product of a disturbed mind. We caution strongly against anyone performing such an obviously illegal and depraved act. Rest assured that we are in the process of tracking the post back to its source. It is only a matter of time before we find "Ancient Master" and recommend him for treatment at the nearest Æsculapian clinic.

Sorry for letting these transmissions clutter up your doubtless busy mailboxes. We have updated our output filters to check for future urban legend reports and disturbing commentaries. The OpNet is a sensitive tool for commerce and communication, not a frivolous toy.

Thank you for your time.

>>> end transmission <<<

>>> transmission <<<

Date: 08:17:23 2.28.2120

From: The Solar Justice League

To: >>> alias-list-hidden <<<

Subject: Help for those in greatest need

Security: SPE

Transmission type: textfile

You are alone, or you rely on just a few trusted friends. You hide from oppressive authorities on both sides of the "genetic purity line." People call you an Aberrant; Aberrants call you a traitor or retrograde. But you're willing to play your part in human society...if only you could return to it.

The Solar Justice League is here to help you.

We've provided legal assistance to those in greatest need for 150 years. Our founders helped new arrivals to North America wade through the tangle of permits. Today, we feel that the psi orders' genetic bigotry shouldn't be an obstacle to those of you whose genetic structure varies from the human "norm." What is "normal," anyway? Aren't these psions also changed by the powers they gain? And who is truly behind the orders? Are they as trustworthy as they claim?

Contact the Solar Justice League. We can help you take the steps necessary so that you may return to the society you (or your parents) left behind. We are dedicated to providing highly confidential services at very reasonable prices.

>>> end transmission <<<

Welcome to Boltzmann Station!

Information for the Visitor and New Resident

A production of the Boltzmann Security Consortium, who wish you a happy and successful stay.

Welcome!

Boltzmann Station is one of the most exciting places on the Moon today! We're constantly expanding the frontiers of Lunar industry and science, and making bold new developments in the quality of life for all the people who call Boltzmann home.

A Little History

The first people to live and work in Boltzmann Crater were miners seeking raw materials in the crater's rich network of lava tubes during the dark years of Aberrant occupation. Operations expanded after the Exodus, drawing more ore from deeper in the lava tubes. Boltzmann's increased productivity linked more railway lines to Olympus and established more sophisticated launch facilities. The complex also attracted the interest of medical research, communications technology and other science centers.

Boltzmann Today

Boltzmann Station is the center of a vibrant array of industries. Thirty thousand people call Boltzmann home on a permanent basis. Temporary work crews, refugees and others add another 10,000 to 50,000 at any given time.

The Boltzmann Security Consortium acts as our community's government. BSC was founded in 2071 to deal with the first crimes committed in the crater. Since then we have expanded our scope and quality of services. We attend to your security, not just to protect you from crime, but to ensure that you have the services you need for

physical well-being and the mental freedom to pursue whatever goals brought you here.

So when you have questions, come to BSC! We're here to help!

Boltzmann Center

The administrative heart of the Boltzmann Station community is the Boltzmann Security Consortium offices, located on the crater's central peak. Nasipak Tower rises high enough to see past the crater wall and to survey the surrounding Lunar landscape, while Watt Ring provides an elevated view of everything within the crater. Visitors are welcome to stop by during normal business hours to enjoy the remarkable view.

Domelen Terminal



The Luna Automated Maglev Pneumatic routes running between Olympus and Boltzmann Station meet the crater wall at Domelen Terminal. Some of the largest cargo haulers north of the Olympus sprawl operate here around the clock, transferring ore and refined-mineral loads. Supplemental lines run from the crater wall to Boltzmann Center, and another line loops just outside the crater, acting as a feeder for the various complexes in outlying regions.

Boltzmann Industrial Launch Systems

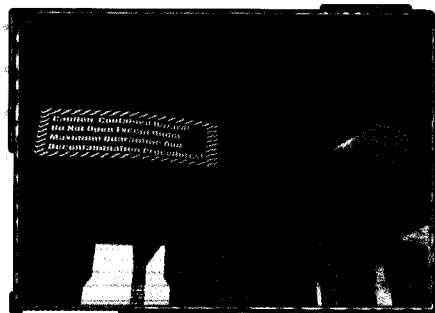
Visitors heading into the crater from Domelen Terminal see two

striking views: Nasipak Tower, and the catapults of Boltzmann Industrial Launch Systems. BILS is the linchpin of the Boltzmann economy. From here we send out the refined ores, various chemicals and other products manufactured in and around the crater to Earth as well as to the stellar colonies.

From the summit of Nasipak Tower, you can see the other half of the Launch Systems complex: the five-kilometer-long magnetic braking tracks that catch raw materials sent to Boltzmann. Ships hauling mineral-rich asteroid loads and the like from other sites on Luna, the Asteroid Belt and from even Jupiter's moons launch their cargo with precision at BILS. Powerful electromagnetic fields lock onto the loads and act as emergency brakes when cargo strikes the braking tracks. BILS thus brings a cargo to a halt where surface-transport crews await to take the materials away for processing.

Watching the launching and braking systems from the safe vantage point of Nasipak Tower is exciting! You'll never get so close to the beat of a Lunar city's industrial heart.

The "Toadstools"



Every new arrival asks, "Why are there giant toadstools all over the place?" These "toadstools" are

Aberrant Veneration: A Cult of Death

— Lectures of Professor Solomon Pringle, Proteus Division

In every age, there are designated social enemies. And in every age, there are skeptics, those who question the conventional wisdom. In many cases, this skepticism is warranted. Whether it was Jews in Europe, overseas Chinese in southeast Asia, or any other unfortunate victims, too many societies through the centuries have picked scapegoats who were wholly innocent, but became the victims of others' rage, jealousy and other base emotions.

But sometimes there really are enemies.

The European and North American powers of the early 20th century ignored the threat of Nazi fascism for too long, and millions died. They didn't respond appropriately to the real threat of the Marxist-Leninist regimes of that time either, and millions more were killed. Sixty years later, their grandchildren failed to respond to the first signs of the Aberrant menace, and even more people died.

Mark that well. There was and *is* an Aberrant menace. With their return in the modern era, the Aberrants have proved themselves to be even more brutal than they were in the previous century.

In every age, youth must dissent. This is necessary and important to becoming independent adults. But when modern youths display the images of prominent Aberrants past and present, talk about Aberrants as "the spirit of freedom" and as being "misunderstood," and even try to link psionics to Aberrant powers, we must speak out. Rebellion has its place, but we have the moral duty to not endorse monsters.

If you want to make heroes of rebels against injustice, human society offers countless examples. Choose ones who aren't responsible for billions of deaths and untold suffering.

Boltzmann's surface-support facilities for lava-tube operations.

You're probably used to the usual surface signs of underground development: huge mounds of excavated dirt and rock, with paths carved through them. But lava

tubes, the legacy of the Moon's adolescence when molten rock flowed across Luna's surface, mean that we don't have to dig tunnels. We simply cap off the ends of lava tubes and pump in air. Add airlocks, waste-disposal systems, atmo-

Date: 07:13:24 5.19.2105

From: Captain Eira Patrice

To: United Nations Central Command

Subject: Alte Jerusalem

Security: DSE

Transmission type: textfile

As noted in my previous report, regular personal breathing systems were unable to filter out the toxins that flood Alte Jerusalem. I have since performed the sad duty of contacting the families of officers Larkin and Montrose to report their deaths.

Vacuum-environment suits did prove effective against the toxins. Upon entering the complex, we discovered the inhabitants were all in advanced stages of decay, presumably a side effect of the biochemical agent. We sealed the bodies and performed a mass vacuum burial to avoid further chance of contamination.

Further readings indicate that the toxins have embedded themselves in the stone walls of the complex. I estimate that the cost and effort involved in decontaminating Alte Jerusalem would be equivalent to building a new tube complex. That being the case, I recommend we seal off Alte Jerusalem.

On a personal note, I suggest that if we find any members of the Lunar Rational Front, we put the bastards in there. Let's see how they like choking to death while their innards turn to soup!

spheric generators and emergency power grids at the openings and — *viola!* — you've got ready-made underground facilities!

Boltzmann residents take great pride in making good use of the opportunity to live on — and under — Luna's surface, while leaving little waste. Please help us in our ongoing efforts to preserve the splendid landscape in which we live.

Silent Corridor

Special Report: Remembering Many Covenants

— Warren Shaw, *Retrospective* © 2107 OBC

Two years ago, humanity witnessed one of the great tragedies of Lunar history, as the gentle cult of Many Covenants fell to the Lunar Rational Front, extremists who promoted rational thinking as their own religion.

Few had heard of Many Covenants prior to 2105. The group was an effort to syncretize elements of Judeo-Christianity with post-Christian doctrines like Baha'i, Third-Wave Confucianism and Jamiesonism. The followers of Many Covenants came to Luna from the ravaged Federated States of America. They lived and worked for three years in the underground community of Alte Jerusalem, on the fringes of Boltzmann Station.

There was little that was distinct about them beyond their good cheer in the face of great adversity. The positive attitude the members of Many Covenants showed in spite of coming from the harsh tumult of Nordamerican conflict was notable, but certainly not momentous. Some were touched by their generosity, or benefited indirectly from their role in construction and maintenance work. Others scarcely knew they were there. Many Covenants was just one of sundry religious groups on Luna.

Olympians have a temperate skepticism regarding religion, and with good reason. Their ancestors often suffered under theocratic regimes on Earth, and history shows the evils often done in the name of the divine. But some Selenites take their concern regarding religion further, distrusting — even fearing — the divine. A handful of them act on their dislike, becoming violent. The most violent of the anti-religious crusaders in recent memory was the Lunar Rational Front.

The Lunar Rational Front claimed that the "evils" of religion, as recorded throughout history, warranted the same response given to pandemics: eradication by any means necessary. In 2100, the LRF began assassinating Lunar religious leaders. Over the next half-decade, they also bombed various religious structures and harassed proselytizers. In 2105, the Lunar Rational Front went even further.

During the standard Luna night-cycle on May 12, LRF fanatics forced open the main airlocks to the Alte Jerusalem complex that housed the followers of Many Covenants. The intruders placed containers of homemade proto-organic toxins that were timed to open after the anti-religious radicals had left the complex. Alte Jerusalem's ventilation systems swept the toxins through the complex, killing every inhabitant within seconds.

The Lunar Rational Front disappeared completely after claiming responsibility for the Alte Jerusalem tragedy. Intensive inquiries failed to identify or bring a single member of the group to trial. The LRF is presumably still out there, but if the group continues its war against organized religion, it has adopted more secretive weapons.

Alte Jerusalem remains sealed, its cheerful inhabitants lost to us forever. The complex is a grim reminder that humans can be monsters greater than any that come from beyond the stars.

Olympus Tribune 1.3.2119

"The word from the Mount"

Alte Jerusalem Restored

BOLTZMANN STATION, LUNA —

Psions once again showed their benefit to humanity today as the Æsculapian Order unveiled the results of its efforts to purify Alte Jerusalem. The underground complex was quarantined in 2105 after the fringe group known as the Lunar Rational Front flooded Alte Jerusalem with a toxic agent. The attack resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 members of the Many Covenants religious sect. [See "Tragedy Strikes Boltzmann Station," 5.13.05.]

Upon his arrival at Boltzmann Station last September, Æsculapian representative Viktor Renko announced that he hoped to provide tangible evidence of what his order could do for the people of Boltzmann. While the vitakinetics assisted in maintaining the health and well-being of Boltzmann residents, speaker Renko implied that this was only the beginning.

Renko later revealed that a specialized team of docs worked for three months to break down the toxins that remained in the Alte Jerusalem complex. The process apparently involved breaking down the biological agents into harmless base components. These components were then removed by normal decontamination processes. Health inspectors have certified that Alte Jerusalem is now fit for long-term human occupation.

The complex will be the new Æsculapian clinic, with Renko as its director. It will follow the standard Æsculapian format, providing medical services for those in the area. Additionally, Renko stated that the site is well-suited to new research on treating LAO (Low-gravity Aggravated Osteoporosis).

"Alte Jerusalem has been given a second chance," Renko said. "It is our promise that the New Covenants Clinic shall be known as a place of healing and safety for all."

This story is part two of the **Descent into Darkness** series. The preceding color pages should be shared with players as background to the episode.

Overview

As this episode opens, the Æsculapian Order has suffered a major scandal. Members of the organization, who the Æsculapians claim worked independently, were involved in the Huang-Marr biorg project, an illegal bioware research program. This project used human subjects as guinea pigs to test experimental biotech implants that actually incorporated Aberrant taint into their genetic matrix.

The program was shut down and the man in charge, Doctor Jerzy Grabowski, was killed by a test subject gone rogue. Still, some leads remain. The characters are assigned to Boltzmann Station, an industrial colony near Olympus, to investigate two possible ties to the Huang-Marr Project: Doctor Serevitek Kriso and Linma Telcom.

Kriso works at Covenants Clinic in Boltzmann and is a colleague of Grabowski's. Æon thinks Kriso may have more information on the biorg project. Kriso does, indeed, know about the program — he's involved in an aspect of it being conducted in the nearby Linma Telcom facility.

Linma Telcom is, on the surface, a telecommunications relay and research installation headquartered at Boltzmann Station. Unknown to the public, Linma's directors Patrice and Andromeda Willom (electrokinetics employed by Orgotek) run a branch of the biorg project. However, the project in Linma involves working with actual Aberrants! Two Aberrants, Anders Nash and a creature known as Fiore, assist researchers in taking the biorg research even further than was achieved at Beaulac Clinic.

Fiore escaped recently and killed five Boltzmann residents, technicians who worked for Linma Telcom. Linma Telcom's Security Chief Dennis Feldman (also an electrokinetic) created a cover story linking the deaths to a bizarre ritual. Feldman acted quickly enough that only he and the now-comatose Fiore know the truth behind the murders. However, Feldman needs to find a scapegoat. This is complicated by the fact that his superiors, the

Willoms, have brought in Option-8, a clandestine group that works for Orgotek. Option-8 is on hand to protect Linma Telcom against the arriving characters' investigation, and the sudden murder of five Linma employees doesn't make their job any easier.

Although the characters are assisted by Boltzmann Station's Chief Administrator Sapein Jacobus, and by Covenants Clinic's Director Dr. Viktor Raskolnikov Renko, they're up against formidable opposition in their investigation. Kriso and the Willoms are prepared for scrutiny, and would likely weather this storm relatively unscathed if not for the murders. However, the deaths add an element of uncertainty to the proceedings, since no one's sure if they have anything to do with the secret project. Furthermore, Feldman suffers increasing instability due to the pressure of dealing with Aberrants. His growing mental imbalance threatens everything the researchers have worked for.

The characters must move quickly to find the key facts that bring them to the depths of Linma Telcom, before Option-8 destroys those leads. The characters uncover further details regarding the biorg project, but the Willoms, Kriso and the Aberrant Nash escape to Mars, leading directly to the dramatic conclusion of **Descent into Darkness** in the third episode.

Theme

The Depths of Madness is about control. Loss of control causes the problems that attract the characters' attention, yet the characters are in danger of being overwhelmed by enemies if they are not certain of their own capabilities. The characters should understand the importance of preparing for and responding effectively to a crisis. They must know when to seize the initiative and when to let events unfold around them.

The Æon Trinity begins to show its importance here as well. The characters should start to appreciate the assistance Æon can bring to bear, not only in the task at hand, but in the future.

EPISODE TWO: THE DEPTHS OF MADNESS

Mood

The mood of the bustling research and mining colony is one of naive hope tainted by terror. The residents are bright and optimistic; dreams of success and security are foremost in their minds. There are dark forces in the universe — larceny, duplicity, murder — but Boltzmann is peaceful and quiet.

This great confidence shatters when the Linma technicians are killed. The trust people had in one another is broken; friends wonder just how much they really know about each other, co-workers speculate to themselves about what others do in their time off. Boltzmann operates in blissful ignorance no longer.

The Setting

A growing halo of independent industrial, scientific and small-scale installations surrounds Olympus, up to hundreds of kilometers away in any direction. There are countless reasons why an individual or group might exist in this isolation, rather than in one of the close Olympus spurs — from working with toxic or hazardous materials to wanting tight security.

Many of these distant sites exploit lava tubes. These facilities were created long ago as liquid lava formed a solid crust on its surface while still flowing hot within, creating a smooth tunnel or tube. On Earth, such tubes are a few meters across and a few hundred meters long. In the Moon's low gravity, and without water to weaken the lava's minerals, the tubes are hundreds of meters across, kilometers long, and dozens of meters below the surface. Of course, these tubes are quite old; Luna's volcanic activity ceased about three billion years ago.

It's easy to make the lava tubes into underground facilities — simply install airlocks at any openings, flush out the dust and pump in air. Lava-tube settlements are also perfect for conducting hazardous experiments, from medical toxin research to military weapons testing. When a program is finished, the complex's entrances are sealed over and the site is simply abandoned. Small, but distinctive markers scatter the Lunar landscape, exclaiming in Chinese and English: "Caution: Contained Hazard! Do Not Open Except Under Maximum Quarantine and Decontamination Procedures!"

Some other abandoned tubes bear no mark-

ers. Their entrances have been destroyed or their tunnel mouths have caved in. For every tube that outlives its usefulness and shuts down, another is opened for an entirely new purpose.

Boltzmann Crater

Boltzmann Crater is located on the far side of the Moon at 74° South, and is 76 kilometers in diameter. A vast network of lava tubes extends beneath the site and up to 50 kilometers across the surrounding Lunarscape. These tubes made the crater ideal for settlement, and the region has become an industrial and technological center.

There are a number of businesses and research facilities at Boltzmann. Significant establishments — like Boltzmann Security Consortium and Linma Telcom — that relate directly to the events in *The Depths of Madness* are discussed under Behind the Scenes (see page 52). A few other notable facilities are described here, in case you want to incorporate other elements of Boltzmann Station into your series.

Olsen-Danguy

Olsen-Danguy Development established a cluster of research centers at Boltzmann in the 2070s; a host of other organizations joined it in the 50 years that followed.

Pierce Olsen and Clobako Danguy were survivors of the Space Brigade occupation of Luna. After the Exodus, the two young men were determined to exploit the Moon's chaotic social climate for their own advantage. After the turn of the 22nd century, Olsen and Danguy devoted themselves to medicine and biotechnology, particularly longevity research. They succeeded brilliantly.

Today, many Olsen-Danguy facilities are no longer used for the intensive development that they were devoted to in the post-A aberrant era. These facilities now contract services to Earth-based companies that are interested in privacy or Lunar conditions (or both) and that don't want to invest time or money in extraterrestrial construction.

Olsen and Danguy are still alive; each is over 100 years old and suffers from LAO. Danguy has compensated for the effects of LAO through the unusual process of cyborging. He is almost completely machine, apart from his irreplaceable organs. Olsen favors biological regeneration, and is a generous patron of the Æsculapians.

The two aging entrepreneurs-turned-historical figures play no part in *The Depths of Mad-*

ness. However, they are prominent Olympians who can be introduced to your series as benevolent philanthropists, brooding masterminds, enigmatic puppet masters or friendly patrons.

Boltzmann Industrial Launch Systems

In the 2080s, a unique, small-scale launch facility was constructed along the north rim of Boltzmann Crater and is still in operation 30 years later. It typically deals with raw materials sent from the Asteroid Belt and refined ores being transported to installations in Earth, Moon and Mars orbits. Lunar businesses turn to Boltzmann Industrial Launch Systems as a cheap alternative to conventional Olympian shipping. BILS therefore cooperates with Olympian authorities in regular safety inspections, striving constantly to maintain its spotless record. If BILS' quality control were to slip, its customers would take their business elsewhere.

Six tracks for unmanned catapult launches run up the northern wall of the crater, and are capable of flinging cargo canisters into Lunar orbit at hundreds of Gs of acceleration. Two laser-launch platforms lift small manned rockets into orbit to slow arriving canisters for collection (BILS also provides rescue services to disabled ships when necessary). Beyond the crater, magnetic braking networks gather canisters that are catapulted to Boltzmann from space.

Bins are fired into space regularly, and are recognizable by a telltale glow as massive energy-cell matrices discharge during propulsion. The arrays that generate the fusion power and massive electromagnetic fields necessary to operate the launch systems are off-limits to nonessential personnel.

Materials fired into space and canisters pulled down from it are large, heavy and move quickly. There's an element of danger to being in proximity to the BILS.

Xuanzong Omnigenetics

In 2099, the owners of Xuanzong Omnigenetics, a leading biotechnological research firm of the pre-psion era, underwent a religious conversion to Revived Taiping Christianity. The corporation felt the urge to provide for the needy of Luna and offered some of its unused lava-tube installations to the Moonbeam Charitable Fraternity. Moonbeamers were

Revived Taiping Christianity

In the mid-19th century, the Taiping Rebellion tore southern and central China apart. The Tien Wang, a Chinese nobleman, proclaimed himself the brother of Jesus Christ and rightful heir to the Chinese throne, sent to purify China and usher in a new era of prosperity. His movement was crushed and his followers were scattered. Millions of combatants and innocent bystanders were slaughtered.

In the early 22nd century, Bai Beishi, a minor functionary in the Chinese government's Shanghai office, experienced a series of visions in which he discovered that he was a member of the 300-year-old divine family, and was fated to usher in the long-postponed era of prosperity. This time, Bai decreed, there would be no bloodshed; the Kingdom of Heaven would be built through persuasion and unification, or not at all. (This path spared Beishi execution or imprisonment by the state security police.) Bai retired from his government post and now travels the world, preaching his gospel of Christian harmony under Chinese rule.

Bai has attracted many followers off-planet, though he has yet to leave Earth himself. His converts are typically dissatisfied with the artificiality of life in space. A number of rich and influential figures have become adherents, and are dedicated to showing others the truth of Bai's teachings by example of the superior lives they lead.

(and are) successful business people who contributed to relocating refugees from Earth to Luna and who assisted new arrivals in establishing lives off-planet. The XO installations, including those in Boltzmann Crater, were converted for housing and schools. Although sparse and cramped, the lava-tube facilities were still better than the squalor of Earth's contested zones.

XO also paid for the members of Many Covenants, a minor post-Judeo-Christian denomination persecuted bitterly in North America, to come to Luna and work on document translation. The Lunar Rational Front, a group of Olympian, militant, anti-religious radicals made increasingly violent efforts to drive Many Covenants back to Earth. A cell within the LRF finally created a biochemical weapon — originally used in the Aberrant War — and set it off in the XO-sponsored complex of Alte Jerusalem. The facility was sealed afterward, a grim testament to humanity's barbarism and cruelty even in the 22nd century.

In 2119, Æsculapians purified and reopened a number of sealed tubes across Luna in a public relations effort on behalf of all of the orders. The docs began with Alte Jerusalem, eradicating toxic residues embedded in the tube walls. The facility became Covenants Clinic, a hospital dedicated to Luna's outlying colonies (and a convenient place to dispose of Port-au-Prince-trained rexs). The Æsculapians' symbolic act helped reinforce psions' image as humanity's helpers.

Running *The Depths of Madness*

If the characters went through *Remnants of the Dead*, Special Agent Ramirez wants to continue working with them — and evaluating them. He assigns them to speak with Dr. Serevitek Kriso, to look into Linma Telcom, and to determine if the deaths in Boltzmann Residential Sector 2 have anything to do with the biorg project.

Bypassing *Remnants of the Dead*

While this story is designed to follow the events of the previous episode, you can fit it into your own series or even use it as the first episode in a new series. One or more of the murder victims found in BRS 2 could be related to the team in some way, and thus the characters investigate.

Assume that Ramirez pursued events in *Remnants of the Dead*, uncovered Grabowski's corruption and tarnished the name of the Æsculapian Order. Ramirez's relationships with Basel-trained rexs is therefore strained at best, and possibly outright hostile. He does, however, have the appreciation of people from Freak Alley, for whatever it's worth, for uncovering the truth of the tragic cave-in.

Ramirez now follows Trinity orders to see if there is any more psion-related corruption on Luna. He seeks allies to assist with his investigation at Boltzmann Station. Ramirez's primary efforts involve interviewing Dr. Kriso and checking out Linma Telcom, but his path is bound to cross that of characters investigating the bizarre deaths. Ramirez tells the characters enough information regarding the events of *Remnants of the Dead* (specifically, the disappearances tied to illegal research) to imply that the murder of Linma employees may not be an isolated incident, and that everyone would benefit from working together.

Behind the Scenes

The illicit research discovered on Luna did not end with Grabowski. Psions working secretly in Boltzmann Station delve even further into how to combine taint with bioware, ostensibly to be used against Aberrants.

The vitakinetics and electrokinetics working on the Huang-Marr Project in the basement of Linma Telcom are certain that their research is vital to humanity's survival. However, this scientific pursuit crosses the line, involving actual Aberrants.

Night and Day

Boltzmann Station, like almost every other place on the Moon, observes the standard Lunar time cycle. This is synchronized to Greenwich Mean Time on Earth. Most facilities control lighting to indicate the passage of time. This practice has little bearing on light or darkness on the Lunar surface, but few people care about any apparent contradictions.

Thus, "night" and "day" refer to an imposed 24-hour schedule, not to the Moon's own month-long cycle of day and night, unless specifically indicated otherwise.

(Character templates for key individuals in *The Depths of Madness* are listed in *Dramatis Personae*, starting on page 72.)

The Psi Orders

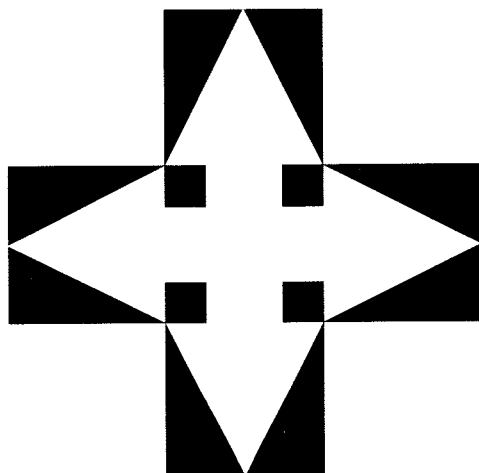
Æsculapians

The rexs fall into two groups: those driven to understand everything about their psi abilities (who are recognized as Basel-trained docs), and those who seek to use their abilities to help others (considered the Haitian-trained docs). Both groups benefit the Æsculapian Order through their efforts. However, some Basel rexs have compromised their morals in searching for ways to defeat the Aberrants. They have been drawn in by the very forces they seek to destroy.

Basel docs at Boltzmann work with select Aberrants who claim to want to stop their invading brethren. The docs study these creatures,



searching for weaknesses and ways to use the enemies' own powers against them. Covenants Clinic's Basel docs pay lip service to the healing arts. Their main duties are to serve as contacts between those working on the Huang-Marr Project in Olympus' Beaulac Clinic and here in Linma Telcom's Vacuum-Industrial Complex 20. When not bustling around officiously, Basel-trained docs conduct research and transport crucial supplies to the bowels of VIC 20.



DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

Most of Covenants' staff consists of Port-au-Prince-trained rexs who aren't interested in the conspiratorial networking practiced by the nastiest of the Basel faction. They dedicate themselves to caring for the health of others, out of sight and out of mind of Zweidler and his ilk.

Orgotek

Orgotek wants it all. Proxy Cassel has a vision, and every move his order makes is dedicated to making his dream a reality. Cassel's followers are therefore up to many things "for the good of humanity." One of these egalitarian (and, for Orgotek, potentially highly profitable) endeavors is the re-invention of the OpNet.

The current OpNet structure is considered a necessary evil. Keeping computer networks isolated from one another seems the most effective way to prevent further Aberrant attempts to initiate widespread data-wipes like the one Mungu Kuwasha triggered during the Aberrant War. Cassel knows that unifying and protecting Earth's insular, fragmented computer networks would be a tremendous boon to humanity — and an enormous coup for Orgotek. Cassel therefore created the

Orgotek and Olsen-Danguy

In 2119, Orgotek took advantage of unused Olsen-Danguy installations (called Vacuum Industrial Complexes, or VICs) that were scattered across Luna and constructed a series of Comm Restoration research centers. These facilities were intended to gather, store, relay and clarify communications around Luna. They were also intended to investigate new, safe means of networking all computers together in a new and improved OpNet.

VIC 20 houses Linma Telcom, the Comm Restoration facility in Boltzmann Station. Linma ostensibly performs its communications functions, but is secretly used to pursue the Huang-Marr Project.

Comm Restoration Initiative, where Orgotek labs throughout settled space pursue the development of Aberrant-proof means of communication. Much of this work is done openly, to the approval of the public at large.



The Lunar divisions of the Comm Restoration effort are run by the order in a hands-off fashion. Requests for extra resources must be justified by status reports on recent progress, but otherwise supervisors have virtually unlimited authority. This autonomy has allowed some sites to push the boundaries of their research. Linma Telcom is the most extreme example of this. The facility's research is dedicated to the Comm Restoration Initiative in name only. The program heads Patrice and Andromeda Willom learned of the Æsculapians' illicit biorg project from Dr. Serevitek Kriso, and decided that researching

Aberrants themselves had merit in protecting the OpNet — or at least, that's how the Willoms justified their involvement. In truth, the couple is less concerned with discovering a viable means of Aberrant-proof communication than it is with understanding Aberrant powers themselves.

Very few people within Orgotek know the full story behind Linma Telcom. If word that Orgotek — or even a splinter group of electrokinetics — cooperates with Aberrants ever leaked, the order would be ruined.

The Comm Restoration Initiative

A key pursuit in Orgotek's effort to create powerful, tamper-resistant communication systems involved developing carbon nano-tubes. These thin, strong cables transmitted vast amounts of data, but creating them was an extremely delicate, manual process. Mass production required automation, and Orgotek realized that it could not achieve this goal alone.

Orgotek is the recognized master of biotechnology. However, the other orders create their own highly specialized bioware. Cassel himself approached the Æsculapians about using vitakinetic bioware to breed semi-organic tending systems

Carbon nano-tubes

The carbon nano-tube was one of the most anticipated developments in information technologies since experiments began on it in the mid-2090s. Formed from lattices of carbon atoms a few micrometers wide and of almost any theoretical length, carbon nano-tubes have greater tensile strength than diamond and can carry tremendously high bandwidths. The tubes have significant limitations, though. Producing them is difficult, time-consuming and expensive. Each tube must be extruded through a multi-stage catalyzation process, which is prone to collapse, causing threads to unravel rapidly to their roots. Only short lengths of carbon nano-tube were commercially viable before psions appeared.

Electrokinesis introduced dramatic improvements in nano-tube creation and use. An electrokinetic could manipulate chemical reactions in the medium in which tubes were generated. Two years after its first experiments, Orgotek developed standard "recipes" for growing long carbon nano-tube fibers. These light, durable lines have several applications, from use as mooring cables to creating thin yet tough armor weave.

Unfortunately, even electrokinetic contributions to the process involve slow, painstaking efforts to create fibers, and will continue to do so until a breakthrough is made....



that could monitor the nano-tube extrusion process. The orders' combined efforts resulted in some successes, but the process still required extensive supervision.

That changed when the Willoms learned of the Huang-Marr Project. After discussing options with a few superiors in the Comm Restoration Initiative, the Willoms worked out an arrangement with the docs in the biorg program. The Willoms planned to take biorg and nano-tube research a step further — by involving actual Aberrants in the processes.

A select few Aberrants were captured or bodies were obtained and sent to Covenants Clinic under the guise of routine medical transfers. The subjects were then slipped over to Linma Telcom. The dead Aberrants were studied for information, while the few living ones were interrogated or threatened into providing assistance.

After introducing taint research to the development process, the Willoms made breakthroughs at a furious pace. Their most recent creation is a microbial substrate that makes it possible to produce nano-tubes quickly and almost entirely reliably. Unfortunately, the system fails

from time to time. As the nano-tubes unravel, they interact with the tailored microbes used in the process. Toxic gases are released. Thus far, facility filters have failed to compensate for the gases, resulting in the deaths of attending staffers. Full vacuum environment suits are now required, or victims die within seconds of asphyxiation and connective tissue disintegration.

After the first of these unfortunate accidents, the Willoms had the bodies of unlucky technicians disposed of, and instructed workers involved in Linma's biorg project to wear vac-suits in the basement lab.

While there were other outgassing incidents, there were no more fatalities until the night cycle of March 5, 2120. The nano-tube extraction system failed while a team of docs and teks was testing a new method of injecting Aberrant genetic material into the process. The research chamber imploded. Three psions were killed and the Aberrant in their care was wounded. The Aberrant, known only as Fiore, escaped confinement and fled the facility.

The Willoms and Linma Telcom's security chief, Dennis Feldman, arrived on the scene mo-

ments later, but the damage the chamber sustained made assessing the situation difficult. It was some time before all the bodies were accounted for — or confirmed missing. While the Willoms contacted Kriso to dispose of the research team through Covenants Clinic's morgue, Feldman was ordered to recover Fiore.

Tragedy Strikes

Fiore escaped Linma Telcom through the hidden rear exit, his Aberrant physiology protecting him from immediate death in the vacuum of space. The explosion had wounded him grievously, though. In a haze of pain, Fiore came across Boltzmann Residential Section 2. He encountered a maintenance squad inside that was headed for duty at Linma Telcom. Fiore lashed out reflexively, killing the five people within moments.

Unlike most Aberrants, Fiore can't emit energy; his physical form is altered significantly, instead. His arms end in a pair of large pincers; his thumbs are long slashing blades. Each forearm has a row of two dozen lash-like tendrils that Fiore uses for fine manipulation. He attacks by grabbing a victim by the throat with his pincers, while a thumb-blade slashes downward along a victim's torso. The tendrils strike randomly as well, stinging a target. Fiore's victims were decapitated, gutted and covered with strange marks.

Feldman found the Aberrant virtually comatose in the BRS 2 corridor, staring blankly at the five corpses. Feldman, already terrified of dealing with Aberrants, was horrified by what Fiore had done. He escaped with the unresisting Aberrant back to Linma Telcom. As luck would have it, the Willoms were gone, assisting Kriso in the disposal of their dead researchers. With Fiore secured, Feldman returned to BRS 2 only to learn that the Aberrant's victims had been discovered by facility residents. Feldman desperately created a public email that seemed to account for the deaths, to distract investigators from the truth.

Covering the Tracks

Security Chief Feldman covered for the deaths with a chain-letter exhortation to murder, based on a series of more mundane chain letters he'd received recently in his email. He created a fake message from "Ancient Master," and then used his psionic abilities to access Boltzmann's network to time-stamp the letter with a date previous to the deaths.

Instead of drawing attention away from Linma Telcom, Feldman's feint attracted it as investigators wondered if one of the technicians' co-workers followed the advice of the "Ancient Master." Fiore never regained consciousness and Feldman never told anyone where he found the Aberrant. Doing so would have revealed a flaw in Linma's security, and (as Feldman sees it), in its security chief.

Feldman is therefore the only one who knows the true cause of the deaths in BRS 2. He understands that he should tell the Willoms the truth, but can't bring himself to admit to his own incompetence. Feldman is determined to take care of this mess on his own, but has degenerated severely. He panics constantly, jumps at shadows and is terrified that someone will discover his secret. The Willoms don't understand Feldman's behavior. They suspect it might have something to do with the accident, and they wonder if he is the psychotic who killed the five people.

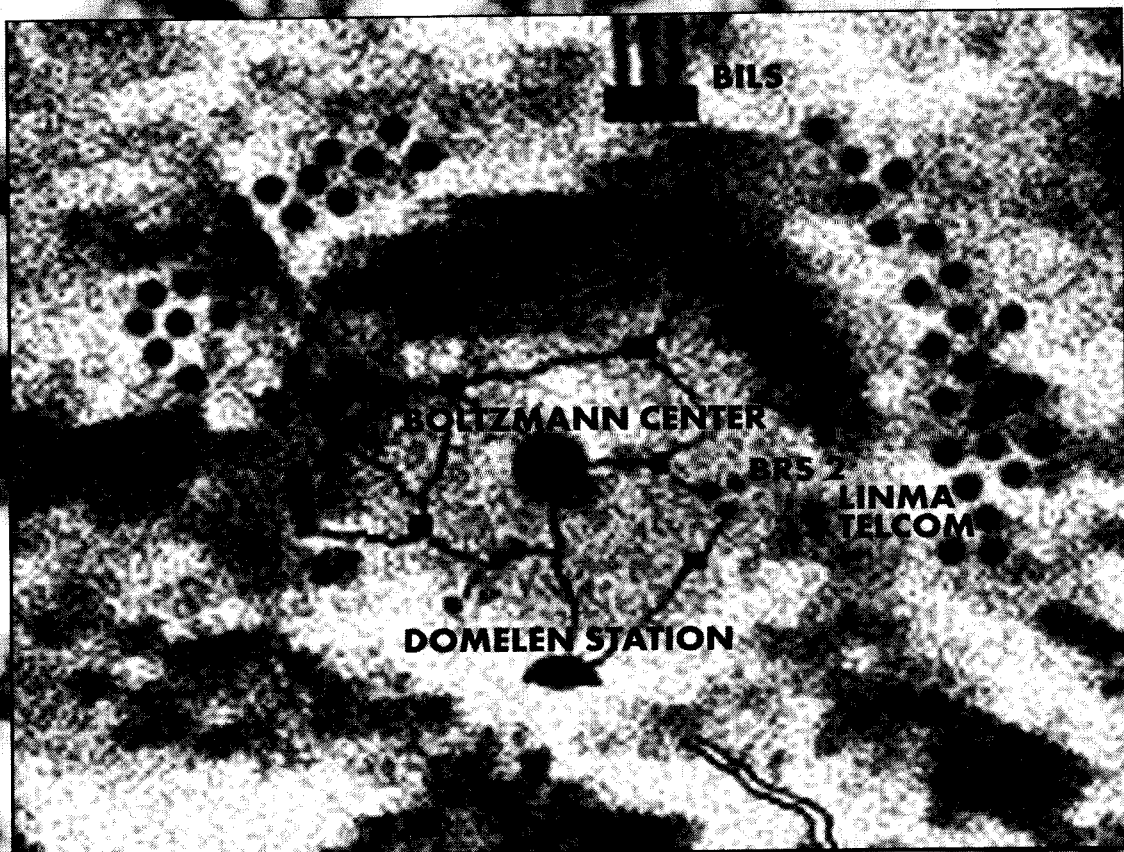
Feldman is a low priority to the Willoms, though. They're worried about fallout from the discovery of the Huang-Marr Project in Olympus, and about Grabowski's death. The Willoms and Kriso assume that whomever uncovered the biorg project is sure to sniff around Boltzmann Station, checking up on Grabowski's connections to the crater.

The Willoms aren't corporate espionage experts, so have called in Option-8, Orgotek's covert security force. Option-8 agents have a scary reputation within the order, and they cultivate it. They wear black uniforms, often have shaved heads, and use a complex jargon in personal conversations. Option-8 arrives two days before the characters do, intent on eliminating all ties between the biorg project and Linma Telcom.

The mysterious deaths of five Linma employees only makes the operatives' job harder, by attracting even more attention to the Orgotek facility. Security Chief Feldman's almost fawning offers of assistance are irritating as well. Option-8 has made it clear to Feldman that they are in charge of security until the conclusion of the project. That, in turn, worries Feldman, who fears that Option-8 agents will discover the truth of the murders.

Arrival in Boltzmann

The murders at Boltzmann are the ideal cover for the characters' arrival there. They can pose as Æon investigators who search for any Aberrant



involvement in the crime, and can look into the local Æsculapians and electrokinetics in the meantime. Ramirez suggests this plan if the players don't propose it. He suspects that Kriso and whomever Grabowski was in contact with at Linma Telcom are probably on guard. (If the team is not involved with Æon at this time, BSC has contacted them about the death of someone close to them, and request that they identify the body.)

The characters' probably approach Boltzmann from Olympus during daytime, along a LAMP line (built by XO-sponsored refugees). The surrounding landscape is cratered and scattered with boulders. Low mountain ridges are visible to the north. Boltzmann Crater looms dead ahead as a menacing gray-black line of jagged rock. The rail line leads through a tunnel, down through the crater wall; there's a moment of darkness before returning to day- or starlight.

Nasipak Tower rises into space near the crater's center, and is topped by blue and green beacon lights. The BILS catapults are on the other side of the crater from Domelen Terminal, where the characters' rail car comes to a stop. A flash of light appears above the catapults every few min-

utes as another cargo pod shoots into space at hundreds of gees of acceleration. Maglev rail lines link major installations within the crater, and small vehicles run off-road as circumstances require.

Signs of lava-tube installations are scattered across the crater walls: prefab airlock units dot the cliff faces, and are surrounded by cleared ground for vehicle parking. Bins and small dump piles contain wastes that generator/recycler units can't process efficiently.

Characters who are familiar with extraterrestrial life sense that something is amiss at Boltzmann: There are virtually no piles of rock slag or debris. Using lava tubes as housing meant that only minor excavation had to be done when Boltzmann was settled, and much of the debris that was created was piled atop catapult canisters and above-ground structures as shielding. Boltzmann is nearly pristine.

Some lava-tube installations bear warning signs (primarily for radiation or structural instability). Local maintenance crews, supplemented in recent years by XO-sponsored refugees, redirect roads around these closed sites. It takes a deliberate effort to reach a closed tube, and gaining



entry is virtually impossible without using explosives.

Traffic in the crater is light, but steady. There's always someone out, except during the worst solar flares. Cargo haulers drag ores received from space to tube facilities for processing, and transport finished products to launch sites or secure them in locked enclosures on the crater's south side for retrieval by Olympus-bound haulers. Most tube installations have living quarters located close to work areas, minimizing travel. Yet a number of people — doctors on call, security on patrol, businessmen and women — cross Boltzmann Station.

Domelen Terminal

Domelen Terminal is a small central dome set into Boltzmann Crater's south wall. The facility also contains loading docks and offices. Rapid turnaround is essential to Boltzmann's profitability. Each of the several maglev trains that goes through the terminal each hour carries two to three dozen people and 10 to 40 tons of miscellaneous cargo. Station handlers hustle passengers into the public terminal carved into the crater wall, while automated lifters transfer cargo bins.

Boltzmann Security Consortium speaker Agatha Kreviaz waits for the characters at Domelen Terminal. Her BSC "uniform" consists of an armband displaying the consortium's logo, and an ID tag (worn around the neck, as a headband or attached to a pocket). Most BSC staff, like Kreviaz, favor rugged coveralls.

If the characters don't announce their arrival, and launch right into an independent investigation, they're reported quickly to Boltzmann Security as potential murder suspects (citizens take BSC's email seriously). Security agents approach the characters and request that they accompany the escorts back to Boltzmann Center to determine the strangers' business. After an initial round of questioning, the characters are led upstairs to Senior Administrator Jacobus. After going through events outlined under In the Center (page 59), Jacobus assigns Kreviaz to escort the team around the crater.

Kreviaz greets the characters pleasantly. She is prepared to show the characters the murder victims and to act as a general guide. Kreviaz has limited authority and has been instructed to refer any unusual requests to Jacobus.

Kreviaz has a Mashindano Explorer that she uses to shuttle the characters around. They take an access road across the Lunar surface from Domelen Station to Boltzmann Center. The trip gives the characters a chance to orient themselves to their surroundings and to question Kreviaz. She knows only public information about Covenants Clinic, Dr. Kriso and Linma Telcom, but can provide information on the murders. It takes a little prompting to learn the following information. (No rolls are necessary; this should be roleplayed. However, you may call for standard **Etiquette** tests if the characters are unruly or confrontational.)

- The murder victims were discovered in a corridor near an access bay in Boltzmann Residential Sector 2. No other bodies have been found since. BSC speakers are hopeful that it was an isolated incident. They are investigating the "Ancient Master" transmission, but are unwilling to assume that someone was inspired by the message.

- The victims were hired as support staff for Linma Telcom, a communications firm handling Lunar transmissions and doing research into beamed power systems. (Kreviaz is not aware that Orgotek purchased Linma Telcom recently, but senses nothing sinister about the news if the characters mention it.)

- Linma Telcom is in one of the Olsen-Danguy Vacuum Industrial Complexes, just outside the crater itself (complex 20, to be exact). It's a short LAMP-line run from Linma Telcom to Boltzmann Residential Sector 2.

- The murder victims all knew each other professionally, and socially to varying degrees. Roughly 30 people had fairly close associations with them. BSC investigators are interviewing each of these leads and reviewing associates' activities on the night of the murders.

- If the characters were not involved in *Remnants of the Dead*, they learn that the Aeon Trinity's Extraterrestrial Office expressed its regrets for the losses. BSC Senior Administrator Jacobus accepted Aeon's offer to send a field operative, Hector Ramirez, to assist in the investigation.

In the Center

Boltzmann Center is a cylindrical building with 20 floors beneath Nasipak Tower, near the crater's center. The ground-level entrance includes Barrett-Blackmoor Station, and executive office suites take up most of the building's levels. Nasipak Tower rises two-thirds of a kilometer further,

houses the Boltzmann Security Consortium offices, and is topped by the Watt sensor ring. Four elevators run the entire length of the tower, with observation decks every 200 meters that offer a view of Luna's Farside.

Barrett-Blackmoor Station marks the northern end of a pair of surface maglev rail lines that run to Domelen Terminal at the south crater wall. Other rail lines and shuttle services extend from here to other facilities in the crater wall and beneath the crater floor.

The characters must pass through Barrett-Blackmoor Station on their way from a parking structure to the offices of the Boltzmann Security Consortium. The station's central placement was designed to encourage human interaction, and the inhabitants of Boltzmann took to it immediately.

The place is bustling. Staff from BSC and surrounding complexes rush by on important business. Citizens with complaints or information requests jostle their way through the crowd. Tourists loiter at the small shops that line the station's outer edges. The characters are struck by the number of people engaged in debate throughout Barrett-Blackmoor.

People gather here to discuss issues of the day, as they did in town squares of centuries past. The station brings much-needed color and social interaction to the sterility and loneliness of Lunar life. Characters overhear subjects of discussion such as the innate evil or possible rehabilitation of Aberrants, the pace of Jacobus' current investigation, whether Luna can continue to afford a policy of open immigration, and what the jump ships will find when they return to the extra-solar colonies.

In stark contrast to Barrett-Blackmoor's noisy, vigorous environment, the Boltzmann Security Consortium offices are a model of quiet efficiency. Kreviaz escorts the characters through the main reception area and up to the 20th floor where she hands them over to Jacobus' receptionist.

After a short wait, the receptionist ushers the team into the senior administrator's office. The chamber overlooks the north side of Boltzmann Crater; occasional flashes from cargo bins rocketing into space punctuate the conversation. Jacobus greets the characters politely, but some tension is evident in his manner. (This is due to the stress of recent events, not guilt, but let the characters assume what they will.)

(If the characters didn't take part in *Remnants of the Dead*, they find operative Ramirez with Jacobus. Ramirez is introduced as a liaison with the Æon Trinity involved in investigating the bizarre deaths. Ramirez offers to go with the team when it views the bodies or to get involved in any other investigations they undertake.)

After initial small talk, Jacobus gets down to business. He is genuinely grieved that murders were committed in his jurisdiction, and doubly so that they were committed for such an apparently senseless reason as some "ritual sacrifice." Jacobus admits that BSC has very few facts at this point. He contributes the following information (no rolls are necessary to gain this unless the characters are being especially problematic).

- BSC does not know who the murderer is, but it has ruled out half of the immediate suspects (those with known ties to the victims)

- BSC has not identified "Ancient Master," but its network specialists are tracing the bogus routing used to send the message

- It will take no more than two days to finish interviewing the remaining suspects, by which point Jacobus is confident they will make an arrest

- BSC doesn't know anything about any conspiracy among the psi orders. If the characters mention the recent events at Beaulac, Jacobus becomes more agitated and plans on speaking to the officials at Covenants Clinic immediately.

- The characters are welcome to visit the quarters of the victims they knew; forensic teams have already made their sweeps. If the characters are here on official Æon business, Jacobus grants them access to the quarters of all five victims.

- The characters are free to contact Jacobus at any time if they have information or questions

After covering these details, Jacobus expresses a strong desire to hear any information the characters have, whether now or later, that might help solve the mystery. He also offers to have Agatha Kreviaz escort the characters to Covenants Clinic to view the victims' remains.

(If the characters are not here on official Æon business, Jacobus is reluctant to allow them to run their own investigation. He insists that the characters not act as a bunch of vigilantes out for justice, and that they should let BSC handle its own investigation. However, Jacobus doesn't tell them flat out that they can't snoop around.)

Æsculapian Politics

Half a dozen rexs, divided evenly between Port-au-Prince and Basel training, work at Covenants Clinic, and are led by Dr. Viktor Renko or Dr. Serevitek Kriso, respectively.

- Renko is favorably inclined to any rexs in the team who conform to the Port-au-Prince philosophy. He is also sympathetic to those who played a role in uncovering corruption in the Æsculapian Order (if the characters didn't go through the first story arc, Renko extends this view to Ramirez).

Renko suspects that local Basel docs are involved in some sort of underhanded dealings with local manufacturers; perhaps black-market trading. However, Renko has no idea of Orgotek's ties to the conspiracy, or that the docs are really working on the biorg project. Renko has already begun probing in hopes of learning more.

- Dr. Kriso does not suspect the depth of Renko's distrust, and is convinced that the elder rex is fooled completely. Kriso's primary concern right now is covering any ties to the biorg project.

Kriso did work closely with Grabowski for some time in Olympus. The two drifted apart, though, when Kriso transferred to the VIC 20 biorg site at Boltzmann. They have since contented themselves with emailed correspondence on their latest research. Any questions the characters ask regarding the Huang-Marr Project send Kriso to the Willoms at his first available opportunity.

Covenants Clinic

Since the characters are "officially" at Boltzmann to check into the murders, the obvious first step is to look at the victims. Dr. Viktor Raskolnikovich Renko, Covenants Clinic's director, meets the characters in the hospital lobby. Like Jacobus, Renko is genuinely grieved by the tragedy and extends his sympathies to characters with personal ties to the victims.

Renko cautions that the bodies are an unpleasant sight as he shows the team down to the morgue. Dr. Serevitek Kriso is in the morgue when the characters arrive with Renko. Kriso is second in command at Covenants, and is in charge of forensics. He greets the characters more coolly than did Renko, and tension is obvious between the two docs. This stress derives from philosophical differences, but you imply that the men know more about current events than they're telling.

Kriso makes no move to show the bodies until directed to specifically by Renko. Kriso answers questions on any topic with a minimum of detail. While not outright hostile, he makes the characters work for every bit of information. Kriso doesn't know that Fiore caused the deaths, but is concerned that the characters will stumble across the Huang-Marr Project research facility in VIC 20. The Willoms have therefore given Kriso a small bioapp designed to fit inside a vocoder casing. This device sends out "psychic static," making it difficult for telepaths to get a decent read on him (see t-blocker, page 108).

Both docs are surprised at any questions regarding Dr. Jerzy Grabowski and/or the Huang-

Marr Project. They knew Grabowski — Kriso even worked with him for some time — but they don't seem to understand Grabowski's relevance to the current situation. Kriso feigns ignorance if the characters ask about the biorg project. (Kriso's thoughts betray momentary surprise to any monitoring telepaths or vitakinetics, but his t-blocker masks any specific concern.)

The Victims

The bodies are stored in separate stasis bags. The characters may look at the grim contents of each, but the evidence differs little from subject to subject.

The wounds Fiore caused are very unusual. Although the cuts are the result of random lashings, they are strange enough that, combined with Feldman's "Ancient Master" email, investigators won't discount that they're part of a ritual sacrifice. That's still one theory of many; BSC investigators pursue all leads. The facts below are evident from cursory examination. Some evidence is obvious to the naked eye, and some requires medical skill to recognize (as indicated below). The characters may also want to visit the murder site to learn more.



- Each victim was decapitated, the head left lying haphazardly nearby, and the torso chopped open.

- Symbols were carved into the bodies by a strange kind of blade. It's impossible to tell for certain what the cuts represent. An **Academics** roll (+1 difficulty) suggests that some look vaguely like fragments of signs of the Zodiac or a mix of historical or mythological works. There appears to be no discernible pattern to the carving choices or placements.

- A standard **Medicine** roll reveals that there are no signs of poison or secondary injuries. Each victim was killed almost instantly through decapitation, with the gutting and marking done quickly thereafter.

- The autopsy file indicates that the murderer left no fingerprints, traceable body fluids or other useful clues behind. It is possible to determine his (or her) approximate height (slightly over two meters), but little else. (Characters can confirm the murderer's height with a **Medicine** roll at +2 difficulty.)

- Clairsentience isn't much help. There were no clairsentients in the area at the time of the murders, and even if one of the characters is a seer, she has a difficult time learning anything. The bodies were stored for four days; psi prints have weakened already. Furthermore, the traumatic nature of the deaths makes it difficult to discern the immediate pre-mortem situation. The few recollections that can be gathered from the corpses — a chaotic flurry of movement, and bizarre shapes — aren't much use. The murder scene may reveal more details.

- Vitakinesis reveals a little more information. A **Kirlian Eye** roll (+2 difficulty) reveals an extremely faint residue of Aberrant taint in the wounds. If the characters mention this, Kriso steps forward briskly, ostensibly to verify the discovery (players can even make Attunement rolls to confirm that Kriso focuses a Vitakinesis effect). Kriso actually uses **Antitoxin** to cleanse the taint residue. Any further **Kirlian Eye** attempts (even those performed by Renko) fail to register any taint.

Boltzmann Residential Sector 2

The Boltzmann residential sectors occupy a series of lava tubes that curve gently along the eastern crater wall. Each strip is more than 100 meters long, dozens of meters deep, and is divided into six levels with artificial flooring, including

pseudo-gravity grids. "Toadstools" are located every 30 meters. The westernmost toadstool of each tube connects to a separate maglev rail line that runs from the Olsen-Danguy VICs into the Boltzmann LAMP network. Each residential level consists of a main tunnel with rows of identical 12-meter-square apartments on each side. Hallways located every 30 meters allow access to more identical apartments. Luxury and spaciousness was never an issue in BRS design — the quarters are intended to be safe and easy to maintain.

The crime scene in BRS 2 is taped off and guarded by a BSC agent. Characters on *Æon* business and in the company of Kreviaz gain access without too much trouble (if the characters aren't on *Æon* business, Kreviaz resists bringing them here, but Ramirez exerts his influence if the characters are unable to persuade her). A handful of bystanders passes by to gawk for a moment, but the shock of the moment has passed for most residents. A service crew inspects maintenance systems nearby.

There is little to see at the site any more. Blood splatters lie under a protective gel that isolates them from atmospheric contamination. The places where the bodies were found are clearly identifiable by smears left in the blood. There are a few bloody footprints, but Feldman had enough presence of mind to ensure that he and Fiore left no physical trail to the exit.

Unfortunately for clairsentient investigators, the sheer violence that took place makes it difficult to get a clear picture of what happened. A seer using **Static Memory** confirms the fury of the event, but little else. **Flashback** or **Envision** have trouble cutting through the violent impressions (Psi rolls are made at +2 difficulty). However, success confirms that the murderer seemed to be an Aberrant. Three extra successes on this roll allows the clairsentient to recognize that another figure approaches after the violence ends, but the newcomer is unidentifiable. The two then leave, heading for the westernmost toadstool.

An Option-8 agent of indeterminate sex keeps an eye on the crime scene (see Follow the Leader, page 63). He or she tries to act nonchalant and unobtrusive, but this is difficult for someone conforming to the black-leather, shaved-head, generally menacing Option-8 standard. He or she skulks off if noticed (a standard **Awareness** roll). Characters may follow the agent with two **Stealth** rolls (+1 difficulty; Option-8 agents are well-

trained in this sort of thing). In that case, see Follow the Leader, below.

If the characters report the lurker, BSC surveillance systems keep an eye out for similar people, but fail to find any (Option-8 is tapping BSC internal networks and transmitting artificial feeds in locations where their agents are working, so no other agents register anywhere). The characters fail to find any other Option-8 agents (until events lead them to Everything Falls Apart, that is).

Jacobus is alarmed if told about the apparent Aberrant attacker. After asking if the psions are certain of this, he communicates the information to his staff. Jacobus refuses to make a general announcement about an Aberrant intruder until the suspicion can be confirmed. The characters can certainly go Aberrant hunting, but they discover nothing. In the end, the characters are better served to return to their primary investigation in hopes that BSC staff will uncover any lurking invaders.

Should the characters return to Covenants Clinic with information about the Aberrant, Kriso is nowhere to be found. Dr. Renko is extremely concerned about the possibility that Aberrants might be involved, and promises to investigate matters thoroughly from his end. In the meantime, he suggests that the characters speak with the residents of BRS 2 and the nearby Linma Telcom complex to see if they have noticed any strange activities.

The Quarters of the Deceased

Characters who use their status as Æon investigators can gain access to the dead technicians' quarters. Those drawn into events because of personal ties may officially check out only the flats of individuals whom they knew.

Each victim lived in one of the small apartments in Boltzmann Residential Sector 2. Each door is maglocked shut, but Kreviaz can get a nearby BSC agent to come down and disable a lock. The dead person's computer shows recent email (if the characters weren't briefed by Æon, you can take this opportunity to show them the messages listed in this story's setting section). There is a basic wardrobe of clothes, perhaps with a few fashionable items for off-hours recreation, and a collection of mainstream music and vid-stories. Possessions also represent any interests that victims shared with the characters. Otherwise, investigations reveal no useful information.

If the characters didn't encounter the Option-8 agent at the crime scene, they may see one lurking in the vicinity of the victims' residences (**Awareness** at +1 difficulty due to better places to hide). The team can follow the agent with two successful **Stealth** rolls (+1 difficulty).

Follow the Leader

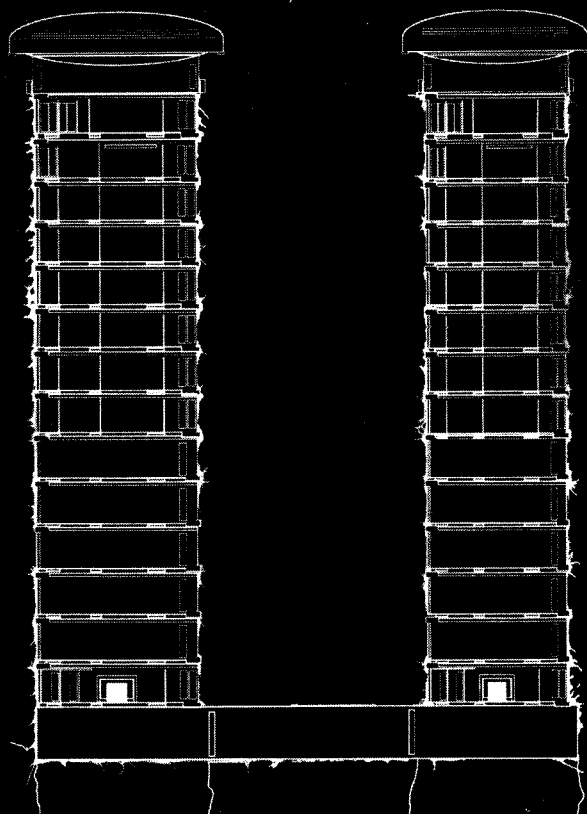
The Option-8 observer (who has a gender of your choice, but it's difficult for others to confirm without a strip-search) takes a train from BRS 2 toward the VIC complexes. She leaves the train at VIC 19 and goes to a corner of the terminal. She pulls out a disposable vacuum suit from a pouch and, donning it, goes through a maintenance hatch onto the Lunar surface. Unless the characters are already equipped with vac-suits (highly unlikely — plus, it bears reminding that even the most highly skilled biokinetic cannot survive in hard vacuum), it's impossible to follow the agent. They see the figure crest a ridge a few hundred meters away, and disappear (the agent heads to VIC 20's east hatch, a few hundred meters beyond the ridge).

If the characters accost the Option-8 agent before she exits the maintenance hatch, she acts surprised, but takes no violent action (except to defend herself). She refuses to answer questions and tries to turn the tables on the characters as quickly as possible, inquiring if they are law-enforcement officials, asking for ID, demanding that she be let go if she's not under arrest. Option-8 trains its personnel well in both resisting interrogation and in legal maneuvering (see the template, page 80, for details). She may certainly look and act suspicious, but the characters have no reason (nor legal right) to detain the agent.

If the characters somehow get BSC authorities to take the agent in, she goes along quietly. A bland-looking person in a suit arrives at Boltzmann Center a short time later to take her away (this is another Option-8 agent in disguise). The characters never receive an explanation as to what the agent was up to or who collected her. BSC isn't at liberty to say anything other than that the paperwork was entirely in order, and that there was no reason to withhold the suspect.

Linma Telcom

Olsen-Danguy Vacuum Industrial Complexes 11-21 cluster together a kilometer-and-a-half outside the Boltzmann Crater wall, due east. Olsen-Danguy maintains a separate rail line that connects with Boltzmann Station's LAMP system. The au-



Linma Telcom's west shaft is laid out as follows:

Sublevel 0 — Reception

Sublevel 1 — Supply storage, first-aid office, security office

Sublevel 2 — Dining area, rest rooms

Sublevel 3 - 8 — Office levels

Sublevel 9 - 13 — Telcom research laboratories

Sublevel 14 — Maintenance and security checkpoint

Basement — Secured sensitive-research area

The east shaft is unfinished and contains maintenance and construction equipment.

tomated trains travel from the loop to the VICs in a matter of minutes.

Linma Telcom, which occupies the entirety of VIC 20, has a legitimate history reaching back to the 2070s. The corporation never hit the big time, but was responsible for some patents bought by China and the United African Nations for their defense networks. As far as the rest of the universe knows, Linma Telcom is involved in "improving the efficiency of small-scale, beamed power networks." The local media runs Linma Telcom's occasional requests for engineers to work on "feasibility studies on small generation installations for use in areas removed from central power grids." Nobody is actually hired for these positions, though some applicants are interviewed to maintain appearances.

It's not public knowledge that Orgotek purchased Linma Telcom recently, or that the company's traditional broadcast research was curtailed severely to make room for the Comm Restoration Initiative.

Inside VIC 20

VIC 20 occupies a vertical, almost U-shaped tunnel. A toadstool caps each end, and they are

located 200 meters apart on the Lunar surface. The western toadstool, closer to Boltzmann Crater, handles all public access. The eastern toadstool, situated behind a ridge, is allegedly for cargo transfer and waste disposal. The ridge makes the eastern hatch useful for surreptitious entrances and exits.

A sign on the maglev platform displays the complex's name and current occupants: "VIC 20, Linma Telcom." About four dozen people enter the facility while a similar number leave at shift changes (12 A.M., 8 A.M. and 4 P.M. LST). There is virtually no traffic at other times.

Fifteen levels extend beneath each toadstool. The elevator doors for the west shaft (also called the "near shaft") point north and south and open onto circular hallways. The stone shafts are smoothed to a uniform 18-meter diameter, with the space around hallways divided into one or more rooms on each level. The east, or "far," shaft contains equipment. Levels are often distinguished by only mesh platforms on which maintenance crews can stand. An emergency stairway runs up the outer edge of each shaft, making a quarter turn at each level.

The lift from the rail platform stops automatically at Sublevel 0, Linma Telcom's reception area, unless the proper access code is used to descend further. The characters can try to bypass this code by hacking into the elevator system with **Engineering** or psionic **Interface** (Linma Telcom's network has an 8 fail-safe). Doing so alerts Option-8, which monitors the entire network. Even if the characters hack into the system and direct the elevator to bypass reception, Option-8 re-routes the elevator to dump the characters off at Sublevel 0. A receptionist sits behind a desk in the single large room. The remaining space is taken up by a series of storage panels that contain vacuum-environment suits, and by a dynamic arrangement of hologram projectors that tout the wonders of Linma's wares and the delights of business association with Olsen-Danguy.

Option-8 has commandeered the security office on Sublevel 1 from Feldman, and taps into the BSC transmission network. The group monitors internal transmissions without interfering, but static immediately overwhelms any compromising calls made to outside Boltzmann Center (say, calls for Proteus Division agents).

Each office level has eight work areas that contain computer stations for administrative and simulation work. Anywhere from 10 to 20 people work on each floor at any given time during the first or second shifts; only three people work on each floor during third shift. The Willoms' offices are on Sublevel 8.

The lab sublevels are a series of single, open rooms, divided by chest- and head-high partitions as needed for particular experiments. Between two and 12 scientists and research assistants work here around the clock.

Sublevel 14 contains secondary systems that support the toadstools' life support and power apparatuses. Emergency breathing gear and dozens of vac-suits are stored here as well. However, the level's primary function is to limit access to the basement tunnel. Option-8 has taken over this checkpoint as well, and uses it as a primary field office.

Linma Telcom's "basement" is a single, open, horizontal cavern that connects the near and far shafts. The floor is smooth, but the walls and ceiling have been left in their natural state. This is where primary research is done on interfacing taint with biotechnology — and is where Anders Nash and Fiore, the two Aberrants, are located.

There are three separate, enclosed rooms in the basement, each holding a nano-tube extrusion system that undergoes testing. A pair of Orgotek's finest electrokinetics staff each, with four more non-psions monitoring each experiment (all wear vac-suits). An opaque cluster of containment bubbles houses Fiore and Anders Nash when they're not helping efforts to stabilize various experiments.

Running the Gauntlet

The characters undoubtedly arrive at Linma Telcom intent on checking into possible ties between the company and the Huang-Marr Project, and/or checking into the deaths of friends who were Linma employees.

The receptionist's attitude never changes from impeccable politeness, no matter what topics the characters discuss. The receptionist is quite professional; she is not inclined to provide information of any kind. (Not surprising, since she knows nothing of what's really going on down below.)

If the characters persevere and aren't rude or abusive, the receptionist contacts the Willoms. Patrice and Andromeda are their usual completely emotionless selves, providing whatever answers seem most likely to get rid of the characters while causing themselves a minimum of trouble down the road, regardless of the actual truth. Using **Telepathy** is as difficult against them as it was against Kriso; the Willoms wear t-blockers as well. However, even marginal **Telepathy** or **Vitakinesis** successes, or **Rapport** or **Subterfuge** rolls, confirm when the Willoms are lying. If their fabrications are called into question, the Willoms act shocked and demand that the characters leave immediately.

The Willoms allow the characters access to Linma Telcom's lower levels under no circumstances. (If the characters force their way through, go to Everything Falls Apart, below, but have the upper Option-8 group move to intercept the characters). In the end, the Willoms ensure that the characters exit Linma Telcom (the characters have no legal right to stay or investigate further into a private installation without the support of BSC).

The characters understand (with a standard **Bureaucracy** roll) that Linma Telcom's mid-level officials should have been adequate to speak with visitors, but the Willoms came up instead. It seems

highly irregular for important and busy people like the Willoms to make time for visitors.

If the characters share information with Jacobus (that the Willoms are probably lying and are taking personal interest in greeting relatively undistinguished visitors), he decides that BSC will talk to the couple and see what's going on.

Connecting the Dots

The characters should understand that they must return to Linma Telcom, this time for some real answers. Hopefully, the characters come to this conclusion on their own during the course of their investigation. However, if the characters try entering the facility again without legal support, they are turned away easily.

The team should notify Jacobus of what they've learned, if they haven't done so already. It is Jacobus' jurisdiction, after all, and BSC is inclined to accept Linma Telcom's side of things if the characters use force without any legal backup. Ramirez recommends a legal course of action if he's with the characters. Jacobus agrees that the psions' discoveries should be followed up on immediately; things sound too fishy for his comfort, especially if there are Aberrants on the loose.

Jacobus heads for Linma Telcom with a pair of BSC security officers to bring various people in for questioning. The characters may join him given their (or Ramirez's) Aeon ties, but as observers only.

Everything Falls Apart

Option-8 broke BSC encryption as soon as the group arrived at Boltzmann, and has been monitoring all transmissions regarding the characters' investigation. Option-8 is alerted when BSC security and the characters arrive at Linma Telcom. A flurry of activity erupts within the facility.

- The Willoms want to flee and blow the whole place. They don't think they can keep the authorities from finding out what's going on in the basement. (Destroying the facility also takes care of pesky loose ends like the characters.)

- Kriso and Anders Nash don't want to lose their research. Like the Willoms, they want to run and blow the place, but they want to take project information with them.

- Option-8 likes to keep things simple, and is confident that it can cover up the Huang-Marr Project. The agents decide to make Security

Chief Feldman the "Ancient Master" scapegoat. Their story: Feldman, a nervous man at best, snapped and committed the atrocious murders, and finally killed himself in his own office.

- Feldman, his grasp on sanity slipping quickly on its own, realizes that the best scapegoat is the one who caused the problem — Fiore. The Aberrant is still comatose. Feldman believes he can kill Fiore and present himself as a savior and Aberrant-killer.

Play by Play

Feldman leaves his office at this point, wearing field armor and carrying a pair of Voss laser carbines, and a Banji Thunder shotgun slung over his shoulder. He's headed to the basement lab to kill Fiore in spectacular fashion (in his current frame of mind, it doesn't occur to Feldman that showing the authorities a dead Aberrant in the middle of a secret, illegal research facility could bring on its own problems).

The Option-8 personnel in the security monitoring station, located below reception, see how Feldman is equipped and assume that he's on to their plan. Option-8 agents from both security points move to take him out. A firefight breaks out one level beneath the receptionist's office, so arriving characters hear the conflict.

The Willoms start destroying evidence. Kriso grabs what data he can and makes a break for the far exit shaft. Nash decides it's time to go as well. He bursts from his containment bubble and lashes out, shattering the lab system in hopes of wiping out every human in VIC 20 with the toxic gas that is released.

Shoot First...

This conflict is intended to be run in a free-form manner; the chaos of events and unpredictable player actions make detailed planning difficult. Go with the flow and feel free to adjust the events described here for the sake of a more interesting scene.

However, there is a time limit to events. Jacobus sounds a full alert when the shooting starts. Every BSC agent in Boltzmann Station who can lay hands on a weapon shows up within 20 to 30 minutes, commandeering transportation as need be. BSC eventually delivers overwhelming firepower, and anyone still in VIC 20 surrenders or goes down fighting.

Here's a quick review of what happens on each level.

- The receptionist is just as startled as the characters are to hear faint screams and what sound like shotgun blasts coming from the lower levels. She offers token resistance should the characters charge to the lift or the stairwell.

- The security office holds half as many Option-8 agents as there are characters (round up). They currently engage Feldman near the stairwell, but attack anyone who acts aggressively toward them. Employees on this or any other level have any number of responses (screaming, running for exits, hiding under desks, crying).

- Feldman has cover and holds off Option-8 as he heads for the stairs. He calls out for support from Jacobus and the characters as soon as he sees them; in his cracked view, Feldman assumes the psions know he's here to save the day and that they are present to lend a hand. That's all it takes for Option-8 to assume that Feldman told BSC the truth behind Linma Telcom, and to declare all intruders the enemy. Option-8 revises its plan and coordinates an organized retreat to the basement

and out the far shaft. (Unfortunately for them, the Aberrant Nash's actions seal off the basement.)

- Another group of Option-8 agents (again, half as many as there are characters) is at Sub-level 14, the only access point to the basement complex, waiting for Feldman (or anyone else) to come to them. Once sensors detect toxins released by Nash (see below), a triple airlock system engages here, sealing off access to the basement tunnel. Only careful computer hacking (**Engineering** at +2 difficulty) or explosives (inflicting eight Structural Levels of damage) open the lock before 30 minutes pass (the minimum time before sensors detect a return to sufficiently pure air).

- The basement itself is in a tumult. The Willoms destroy hard-drives and refuse to answer questions. Kriso grabs any disks he can. Faint sounds of combat come from above, and Anders Nash lashes out with his Aberrant powers. Human technicians respond much like those on the floors above, fleeing to the nearest available safety.

- Once Nash shatters the experiment-containment shielding, the airlock system seals the basement off from Sublevel 14. The Willoms react



instantly. They aren't wearing vac-suits, so use Electrokinesis to stun two technicians and appropriate their suits. The Willoms might take the time to bring along a key researcher, but their own survival takes top priority.

The Far Shaft

Only sublevels 4, 9 and 14 on the far shaft have complete floors (with pseudo-gravity plates), walls and ceilings. Cameras, monitoring equipment, vac-suits and first-aid kits are located at each. The other sublevels in this shaft merely have mesh gratings and access to air-recycling, power-generation and waste-management units. The east shaft does have an operational lift and functional stairs.

Kriso and Nash reach the shaft first, but the elevator is at the surface. Kriso presses the call button, but grabs a vac-suit and resorts to the stairwell to escape from the toxic gases. Nash follows him at a more leisurely pace. The lift is at sublevel 14 by the time the Willoms reach the shaft. The couple takes the elevator to the surface before Kriso or Nash emerge.

The east toadstool requires elaborate authentication codes for access from the outside, but the door is easy to fling open from the inside. Linma designers assumed there might be need for a hasty exit. Twenty wheeled service scooters, each capable of no more than 20 km/h, are lined up near the surface toadstool. Each vehicle can carry two people safely, or up to four at +1 difficulty to **Drive** rolls.

Some BSC agents who arrive at Linma remain on the surface. They (or characters who've left the facility through the near shaft) can make **Awareness** rolls (+1 difficulty) to see scooters heading northwest, along the crater edge. Distance and obstacles allow for only a single turn's worth of shots at fleeing vehicles (+2 difficulty due to range and cover modifiers). Those at the near shaft are not in a position to cut off people escaping from the far shaft. At best, they can take whatever ground vehicles the BSC agents have and give chase.

Characters inside the facility can try to gain access to the basement and travel up the far shaft. However, the fugitives are out of range by the time the characters get to the surface.



Exeunt Omnes

Linma Telcom Departures

The Willoms have made arrangements with BILS mechanics to prepare a special catapult canister that can carry six people, plus special programming for the catapult to reduce launching power just enough for passengers to survive the massive acceleration. Even so, it won't be a pleasant ride — the velocity likely breaks bones, bruises organs and causes other physical injuries. Yet such harm can be repaired, and the Willoms feel it's preferable to capture or death.

The Willoms don't know that Nash broke into their coded personal files and discovered this contingency. Neither do they know that he made arrangements to build a second such canister.

The Willoms (and the one or two valued researchers whom they may have bothered to bring with them) head to BILS, calling ahead on a cell line for their canister (there's no way to monitor such a call unless the characters have scanning equipment operating). Kriso and Nash race to the same destination. It's a 40-kilometer drive from VIC 20's far shaft to the BILS catapults: roughly five minutes to VIC 18's service site, three kilometers away, where service vehicles are appropriated, and then 15 minutes by rover going flat out over the dangerous terrain.

The players can make standard **Investigation** rolls to determine where the fugitives are headed. Warning the BILS technicians serves little purpose, since the techs are in the Willoms' pocket. Alerting BSC to secure the BILS puts guards there at about the same time as the characters arrive.

The BILS area is not safe given the massive electromagnetic flux that the braking tracks and catapults generate. Standard **Drive** rolls are required to maintain control in the midst of magnetic fields, and all Aptitude use is at +1 difficulty due to minor disruptions that the fields cause in the brain's electrochemistry.

Once the Willoms arrive, it's a matter of seconds to load and launch their special canister. Four people are optimum to operate BILS; however, only two of them are the Willoms' lackeys. The two technicians would handle the escape without their colleagues' awareness if they could, but that's virtually impossible. Instead, the techs subdue the others (through threats if possible, and violence if absolutely necessary) and lock them in storage closets. The technicians then program the firing

instructions and either join the Willoms in their canister or flee through maintenance tunnels and head back to Olympus for fresh identity papers. They also set up Nash's canister, since they receive a similar call from him, but leave firing the container to the Aberrant.

The two techs refrain from helping the Willoms if BSC or another credible force is at the site and imposes its authority. The BILS staffers aren't deterred by phoned-in threats of impending justice.

Kriso and Nash arrive a few minutes after the Willoms' canister fires. It's simple enough for Nash to re-start the automated firing process; the two climb in the second cargo bin and shoot after the Willoms. It's important that the Willoms, Kriso and Nash escape if you plan to continue on to the next episode in this book.

Checking the BILS' automated-launch information indicates that the canisters were fired on a trajectory toward Mars. Considering that the special cargo bins were accelerated at over 30 Gs, the Willoms, Kriso and Nash have quite a head start on any pursuers (the safe acceleration limit of spaceships is 3 Gs). Aeon requests that Phoenix Squadron patrol craft plot an intercept course, but no bins are found; the incredible velocity that the bins travel at makes them difficult to track, and they may have even been picked up by another craft. The passengers will certainly be in serious need of medical attention wherever the bins end up.

It's virtually guaranteed that Feldman doesn't survive the firefight. If he does by some miracle, he babbles about Aberrants lurking in the depths of Linma Telcom, and how he must stop them before they kill again. Checking with Sense Emotion or Mind's Eye makes it clear that Feldman has lost his grip on reality.

Even if Feldman doesn't survive to point the way, the characters inevitably find Fiore in the basement facility. The Aberrant was wounded in the initial gas explosion, was comatose after his attack, and doesn't survive his second gas exposure. The characters find a dead Aberrant (along with a number of equally dead technicians), whose pincerlike arms and razor-sharp tendrils seem to have been used to kill the people in BRS 2.

Option-8 Retreats

Any Option-8 agents with an opportunity to flee do so after at least half of their number are down (dead, seriously injured or captured). Their

prospects for escaping arrest are not good; by the time they head out, BSC reinforcements are on their way. The operatives must suit up, get out of VIC 20 (either past Jacobus and the characters up the west shaft or through the triple-sealed basement hatch and up the east shaft). It's then a three-kilometer trip to VIC 18's service garage or a 10-kilometer trek to one of the Boltzmann residential sectors (whose inhabitants are willing to put on straight faces in exchange for cash or valuables, although Telepathy is sufficient to draw the truth from them).

Getting past the BSC authorities is obviously difficult, and a number of Option-8 personnel are probably captured. The characters can interrogate captured agents, but learning anything from them is unlikely. The Option-8 agents refuse to divulge information. Telepathy verifies that the agents were involved in covering up the biorg project in Linma Telcom (which the characters learn all too much about once the toxic gases clear from the basement). However, not even Telepathy can confirm that they work for Orgotek, despite the fact that the agents are all electrokinetics.

Option-8 agents who escape to civilization are almost impossible to catch. They excel at disappearing — buying or intimidating others into hiding them, and then accessing networks to procure new documentation and calling in special transportation to slip through the BSC dragnet.

Æsculapian Departures

As soon as Kriso's involvement in the Huang-Marr Project is discovered, his subordinates try to get away. The other Basel-trained docs must match wits with BSC (and the characters) to make it out of Boltzmann Station and to the anonymity of Olympus. This requires avoiding capture, or playing dumb if apprehended. Captured rexs can confirm that they were working on taint-bioware interfaces, that Kriso and the Willoms were in charge, and that others in the Æsculapian and Orgotek Orders know of the project. The docs don't know who these individuals are, though.

Renko is smitten with despair at his fellow vitakinetics' actions in these matters. He dedicates himself to cleaning up VIC 20, and offers his assistance to the characters in the future, should they require it.

Æon Departures

If the characters work for Æon and contact Ramirez at Olympus with what they've learned (see

Conclusions for specifics), he is pleased with their success, and appalled by the scope of the Huang-Marr Project. He directs the characters to follow the fugitives to Mars as quickly as possible.

If the characters did not take part in *Remnants of the Dead*, Ramirez intends to contract them now. He is impressed by the characters' resourcefulness, and hopes that they are as outraged by what they've learned as he is. Ramirez asks the characters to trail the Willoms to Mars, to see things through to the end. If need be, Ramirez plays upon a possible desire for revenge against those (indirectly) responsible for the deaths of the characters' friends.

This is a crucial moment: Ramirez is confident that the characters have demonstrated the courage, intelligence and spirit of cooperation that Æon values, and offers them employment as Æon Trinity operatives. If the characters decline, they can still proceed to Mars and hunt the escapees, but Ramirez is determined to make them Æon agents and tries to recruit them again from time to time.

Conclusions

The Huang-Marr Project is no more. Its principle players have fled Luna, leaving deaths and questions behind.

The Willoms wiped out as much information as they could, and Kriso fled with even more, but investigators still find damning evidence in the contaminated lab, as well as in the Willoms' offices and in Kriso's apartment. The characters learn the real story behind Beaulac Clinic's research and Linma Telcom's endeavors — that psions were involved in extreme bioware research with the direct assistance of Aberrants. The Æsculapian and Orgotek Orders' reputations hang by a thread.

Aftermath

Information on the project is far too explosive to reveal to the public. Ramirez calls in (and comes with, if he's not there already) a Proteus squad that meets with Jacobus, Renko and the characters. The first order of business is to create a cover story. Encourage the characters to come up with a plausible scenario for events at Boltzmann. If they can't or choose not to, Ramirez proposes a story of Aberrant-worship in the midst of a laboratory whose members became too isolated for their own good. The murders and "An-

cient Master" are tied into this. There is no mention of any psi order, or of the presence of actual Aberrants. The cover story also claims that most crucial records were lost in a fire and explosion (the Proteus squad takes the data and the dead Fiore).

The role of BILS personnel in the villains' escape isn't revealed, either. Jacobus believes it would be best to keep BILS' reputation clean, and creates a story of bribery and malfeasance on the part of the two BILS technicians to justify their disappearance.

The Aeon Trinity won't divulge details of discoveries at Boltzmann to the psi orders at this time, as it did in the aftermath of the Beaulac investigation. Anyone in the Aesculapian or Orgotek Orders who was involved in the Huang-Marr Project probably has an idea of what has happened, but Aeon plays dumb for now.

Any Aesculapian or Orgotek characters are scrutinized by Aeon, but the psions' direct involvement in uncovering local corruption indemnifies the characters. The Trinity keeps a close eye on such individuals, though.

Characters may dispute the Trinity's decision to cover up the truth, but they are pressured to remain quiet. Aeon believes it will be easier to discover the depth of corruption in Orgotek and the Aesculapians if there is doubt about how much is known. Ramirez further points out that revealing information to the public at this time will do more harm than good. Jacobus also wants to avoid making Boltzmann Station seem like an Aberrant haven.

Aeon understands that a coverup means deceiving the friends and loved ones of the murder victims. The Trinity believes that this sacrifice will be justified if *all* of the guilty parties are brought to justice.

One major lead stands out above all others at this point: tracking down the escaped masterminds behind the Huang-Marr Project. It seems that the canisters made it to Mars; Phoenix Squadron did not find the bins, nor did it detect other traffic in Earth space along their route. Even if a ship picked

up the cargo, the passengers would need medical attention. Mars is the only installation with medical facilities of note in that direction. And, in the end, there must be a reason why the Willoms would be willing to sustain such injuries to get to Mars. Many mysteries remain on the Red Planet, and the characters are sure to want to solve them.

Other Endings

This story does not have to end as described above. There are a number of directions that it can take.

- **The Willoms are captured:** Patrice and Andromeda aren't trained fighters, but they are skilled electrokinetics. They fight for their freedom unless the odds are overwhelmingly against them.

- **Anders Nash and Dr. Kriso are captured:** The characters arrive just after the Willoms make their escape, but find themselves facing an Aberrant! Nash is a formidable opponent, more than able to take on a half-dozen psions at once. The characters are in for the fight of their lives. If the psions fail, Nash and Kriso escape in their canister.

- **The characters face the Willoms and Nash at once:** This could be devastating for the characters, but you could give it a try if you're feeling malicious. The villains escape in their canisters if they win the fight.

- **Spilling the beans:** The characters might decide that the universe should know what happened at Boltzmann Station. Broadcasting this damning information could bring the wrath of two powerful psi orders and even the Aeon Trinity down upon the characters. Do they have the strength to withstand such pressure?

- **Looking into the Aesculapians and/or Orgotek:** Perhaps the characters feel it's important to pursue those who directed the Willoms. The secrets of those behind these projects aren't disclosed until later in the **Darkness Revealed** series, but you're welcome to draw the characters into dangerous layers of intrigue as they search for the truth.

Dramatis Personae

The following are profiles and statistics for key individuals involved in the events of
The Depths of Madness

Patrice Willom

Patrice is a Franco-Swiss sociologist whose initial research efforts have taken a back seat to handling administration. His studies in human behavior led him to the woman who became his wife — Andromeda Boule. Patrice's research stemmed from intellectual curiosity, not through any real interest in others' well-being. Surprisingly, Andromeda held similar beliefs. It was inevitable that the two should be drawn to one another.

Patrice never considered undergoing the Prometheus Effect, even though he'd tested as latent when he was an undergraduate student. He finally succumbed to Andromeda's urging on the matter, and after the two were married they signed on with Orgotek.

Orgotek was glad to recruit two skilled scientists and strong latents, and provided the couple with training and choice placement. Patrice showed a knack for management (although he almost always deferred to Andromeda's judgment), and worked at getting them both increasingly important administrative assignments.

He feels no loyalty to Orgotek or its ideals, but membership involves him in fascinating projects to which

Patrice would not otherwise have access. Patrice is dedicated to his wife and to the Huang-Marr Project, in that order.

Image: Patrice is well over two meters tall, extremely skinny, and has bright-red hair and sharp, blue eyes. He favors drab, functional clothing; fashion would serve only to impress others, but nobody else's impression matters to him. Patrice makes no effort at facial expression, except for the occasional covert smile to his wife.

Roleplaying Hints: Dispassion is the key to Patrice Willom. You seldom worry. Your universe is a pool of test subjects. You are the classic mad scientist, without the gloating or maniacal laughter, leaving only the amoral pursuit of knowledge behind.

Nature: Scholar

Allegiance: Huang-Mar

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 3

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 5

Wits 1

Social Attributes

Appearance 1

Manipulation 4

Charisma 1

Aptitude: [Electrokinesis]

Electromanipulation 4, Photokinesis 3,

Technokinesis 3

Willpower: 9

Psi: 6

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Cipher 3, Devices (t-blocker) 4, Followers 5, Resources 4, Status (Orgotek) 4

Gear: Coveralls, lab coat, Steinhardt VirtuX minicomputer (Bill v5.0 agent and cellular uplink), vocoder (Qin)

Abilities

Sidearm 2

Resistance 3

Abilities

Awareness 1

Academics 4,

Bureaucracy 4,

Engineering 2,

Linguistics (Chinese,

German) 2, Science 4

Abilities

Intimidation 2

Command 1



Andromeda Willom

Andromeda Boule met Patrice Willom doing post-graduate work in Zurich-Geneva. Already skilled at manipulating others (primarily out of abstract curiosity), she was quick to note that



Patrice held a similar interest in toying with human behavior.

The pair soon combined their research efforts to good effect. Andromeda wanted to go further, however. She understood that becoming a psion offered greater potential for scientific study and career advancement. She encouraged Patrice to experience the Prometheus Effect, and finally the two sought out Orgotek and offered themselves for recruitment.

With Patrice at her side, Andromeda pushed aggressively to pursue ever more experimental projects. It was only a matter of time until they came to the Huang-Marr Project.

Like her husband, Andromeda cares not for Orgotek's goals. She is fascinated by the biorg project due to its scientific potential, and doesn't consider the moral ramifications of working cheek-to-jowl with Aberrants.

Image: Andromeda is 1.5 meters tall, stocky, with closely cropped brown hair and dark eyes. She shares her husband's tastes in fashion and expression.

Roleplaying Hints: You are as cool and appraising as your husband. You see others as tools and experimental subjects, caring not for their feelings. Still, you are aware that one must abide by certain conventions in society. You're careful to stay within these social confines when necessary.

Nature: Scholar

Allegiance: Huang-Mar Conspirators

Physical Attributes **Abilities**

Strength 2

Dexterity 3

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 4

Martial Arts 4, Sidearm 2

Resistance 1

Abilities

Investigation 1

Academics 3,

Bureaucracy 5,

Linguistics (Chinese) 1,

Medicine 1, Science 4

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 3

Abilities

Intimidation 2

Command 4,

Subterfuge 1

Charisma 1

Aptitude: [Electrokinesis]

Electromanipulation 3, Photokinesis 2,

Technokinesis 4

Willpower: 8

Psi: 7

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Cipher 3, Devices (t-blocker) 4, Followers 5, Resources 4, Status (Orgotek) 4

Gear: Aris SureSting flechette pistol, Coveralls, lab coat, Steinhardt VirtuX minicomputer (Bill v5.0 agent and cellular uplink), vocoder (German, Qin)

Dennis Feldman

Dennis has risen to his level of incompetence. His psi potential is weak, but he has something of a gift for ingratiating himself with superiors, so he has risen rapidly through the Orgotek ranks. The Huang-Marr Project involves duties he isn't prepared to handle. Neither is he prepared to admit this and face demotion. He's therefore in gradual breakup and decline, making paranoid plans to flee, which leads to only further neglect of his work and pressure on him from both above and below.

Image: Dennis is male, 30 and of average height and build. He exploits cosmetic treatments to their fullest, trying out a vast array of appearances. At the moment, he favors Polynesian skin and hair tones, and bright-purple eyes. He always wears the latest fashions.



Roleplaying Hints: Ordinarily, you are calm and genial. The stresses of the last few weeks have driven you to the brink of collapse, though. Your demeanor is a rigid coldness patterned after the Willoms'; when that image cracks, fear emerges.

Nature: Bureaucrat

Allegiance: Orgotek

Physical Attributes

Strength 2

Dexterity 4

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Intelligence 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 4

Charisma 2

Aptitude: [Electrokinesis] Photokinesis 1, Technokinesis 3

Willpower: 5

Psi: 4

Backgrounds: Cipher 2, Contacts 3,

Resources 3, Status (Orgotek) 3

Gear: Banji Lightning taser baton, business suit (reinforced jacket and trousers), Wazukana 300E minicom (Chris agent), handcuffs, vocoder (Chinese, German)

Abilities

Drive 2,
Martial Arts 2,
Sidearm 3

Abilities

Awareness 3,
Investigation 3
Bureaucracy 4,
Engineering 3, Science 2

Abilities

Style 2
Command 3,
Interrogation 2,
Subterfuge 3
Savvy 3

Sapein Jacobus

Sapein is a beneficiary of Xuanzong Omnigenetics charity, which he seeks to repay through his work as chief of the Boltzmann Security Consortium.

The *Esperanza* calamity destroyed his home, nestled in the Pyrenees. With his family and lover dead, he went wandering in search of some new sense of purpose. He decided to start a new life on the Moon, almost at random. Although he had done security work for Basque factories, he was hired and promoted primarily for his excellent management skills. In his two years at Boltzmann, he has become very well-known and respected by BSC, and by most of the general public whom he deals with.

Jacobus bears a secret grief for the death of his lover, whom he never discusses. He considers Olympus' gay scene too flamboyant. Jacobus hopes to find a partner with whom he can share his life, but doesn't expect to find anyone.



Image: Sapein is middle-aged. His ancestors are a mix of Basques and Spanish Jews; he looks more like a Highlander, though; he's a towering, red-haired bear of a man.

Roleplaying Hints: You are gruff with anyone with whom you don't feel comfortable. You have a strong sense of duty and hope to do credit to your superiors.

Nature: Judge

Allegiance: Lunar government

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 2

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 3

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 3

Charisma 3

Willpower: 8

Psi: 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5,

Influence 3, Resources 4, Status (Boltzmann Station) 5

Gear: Alchemy Bulldog bioflechette, business suit (reinforced jacket), Steinhardt P-CC minicomp (Bill v5.0 agent), vocoder (Chinese, Qin, Spanish)

Abilities

Brawl 3, Might 2

Athletics 3, Drive 2,

Pilot 1, Sidearm 3,

Stealth 2

Endurance 2,

Resistance 1

Abilities

Awareness 2,

Investigation 4

Bureaucracy 4,

Engineering 1, Intrusion 2,

Survival 3

Abilities

Intimidation 2

Command 3,

Interrogation 3,

Subterfuge 3

Savvy 1

Viktor Raskolnikovich Renko

Viktor is driven by a duty to put his powers to service, willing to work long hours and endure much hardship for the sake of others' well-being.

For Viktor, the Æsculapians are practically life itself. He was born in one of the Russian zones of civil disorder; he spent his first five years in the midst of constant combat, until docs helped his family escape to India and peace. He feels that a lifetime of service is no big burden, since without the docs he wouldn't have life at all, or at least would have a life of ongoing misery. He went through the Prometheus Effect as soon as they'd allow him to.

He is the veteran of half a dozen medical missions to troubled areas. Covenants Clinic is his first assignment off-Earth, and he feels himself a special ambassador of goodwill to soothe the widespread distrust Lunar people feel toward anything as suggestive of Aberrants as psions are. He will do almost anything to promote health and happiness in those around him. His staff alternates between admiration for his dedication and frustration at

his lapses in assuming that others share the full measure of his zeal.

Image: Viktor is 39, dark complected, of average height and build. He cultivates the appearance of a Russian patriarch: black beard, traditional long shirt and pants he weaves himself, with designs combining Orthodox iconography and biological symbols.

Roleplaying Hints: Dedication to the order and its mission are the whole of your life. You are a man for whom the relief of suffering is paramount. In the midst of difficult situations, you consider whether unnecessary harm is being inflicted, or whether some good might be done. You aren't humorless — indeed, you pay attention to good jokes and save them for later use — but you are driven.

Nature: Caregiver

Allegiance: Port-au-Prince Æsculapians

Physical Attributes

Strength 1

Dexterity 3

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 4

Abilities

Athletics 1, Drive 2

Resistance 3

Abilities

Awareness 3

Academics 2, Bureaucracy 2,

Engineering 2,

Medicine 4, Science 4

Arts 1, Rapport 4

Abilities

Command 2

Etiquette 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 2

Charisma 3

Aptitude: [Vitakinesis] Healing 4, Mentatis 3

Willpower: 8

Psi: 7

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Followers 2, Resources 3, Status (Æsculapians) 3

Gear: Traditional clothing, Wazukana 300E minicomp (Chris agent), vocoder (Arabic, English, Chinese, German)

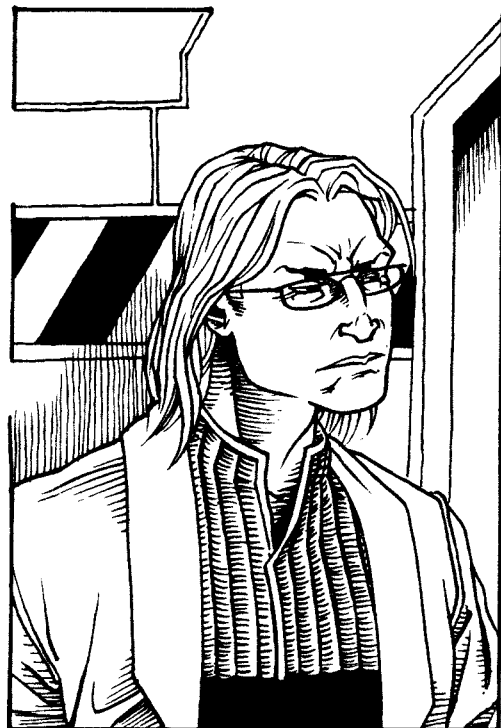


Dr. Serevitek Kriso

A second-generation native of the Moon, Serevitek is the grandchild of Aberrant-sympathizing Europeans who came to Luna in hopes of striking it rich under the Space Brigade regime. When the Aberrants left, the elder Krisos hit bottom. It was a perpetual struggle for Severitek's parents. The Prometheus Effect was a welcome bolt from the blue for Kriso, a chance to be a part of the next big thing. His resentment of Aberrant-fighters made him a ready recruit for the rexs' secret Aberrant collaborations.

Image: Kriso is a small, wiry man in his early 30s. His eyes require constant corrective treatment due to a degenerative condition that rexs have been unable to identify. He blinks a lot and must squint to focus clearly. His long hair is whatever color he feels like wearing that day.

Roleplaying Hints: You resent all the wrongs that have been inflicted upon you on your road to success. Your immediate superior Renko is a deluded fool; your underlings on the clinic staff are sheep. Edginess and condescension dominate your approach to the universe.



Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: Huang-Marr conspirators

Physical Attributes **Abilities**

Strength 2

Dexterity 2

Athletics 2,
Martial Arts 2,
Sidearm 2, Stealth 1
Endurance 2, Resistance 1

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Abilities

Awareness 2,
Investigation 2
Academics 2,
Bureaucracy 4,
Engineering 2,
Medicine 3, Science 3
Rapport 1

Intelligence 3

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 4

Abilities

Intimidation 3, Style 1
Command 2,
Subterfuge 3
Etiquette 1, Perform 1,
Savvy 2

Charisma 3

Aptitude: [Vitakinesis] latrosis 2, Mentatis 4,
Algesis 4

Willpower: 7

Psi: 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Cipher 2, Contacts 2,
Devices (t-blocker) 3, Followers 2, Resources
4, Status (Æsculapians) 3

Gear: Quality suit, Wazukana 300E minicomp
(Evita agent), vocoder (English, Chinese)

Anders Nash

Nash returned to Luna from beyond in an Aberrant raid staged in the early 22nd century. He hid out in a forgotten chamber of the Pit, where he accessed the Lunar computer network and relayed important information to his Aberrant compatriots. One of his taps resulted in the Colony learning of and destroying the Æon Trinity's secret jump-ship base orbiting the Moon.

Orgotek discovered the tap too late to stop the Colony, but tracked Nash down to his lair. Loyal to himself to the end, Nash gave up the location of his Aberrant cohorts to save his own skin. In return, Option-8 took the Aberrant underground for "intensive

research," instead of turning him over to Æon.

Nash was put in the Willoms' care when Orgotek became involved in the Huang-Marr Project. Suspicious members of the project believed that Nash was chosen because he would be disturbing to the humans with whom he would work. They were correct, but he also had superb qualifications in both electronics and microbiology. He had no loyalty to the project or Orgotek, though, and remained involved only out of personal curiosity for the work being done.

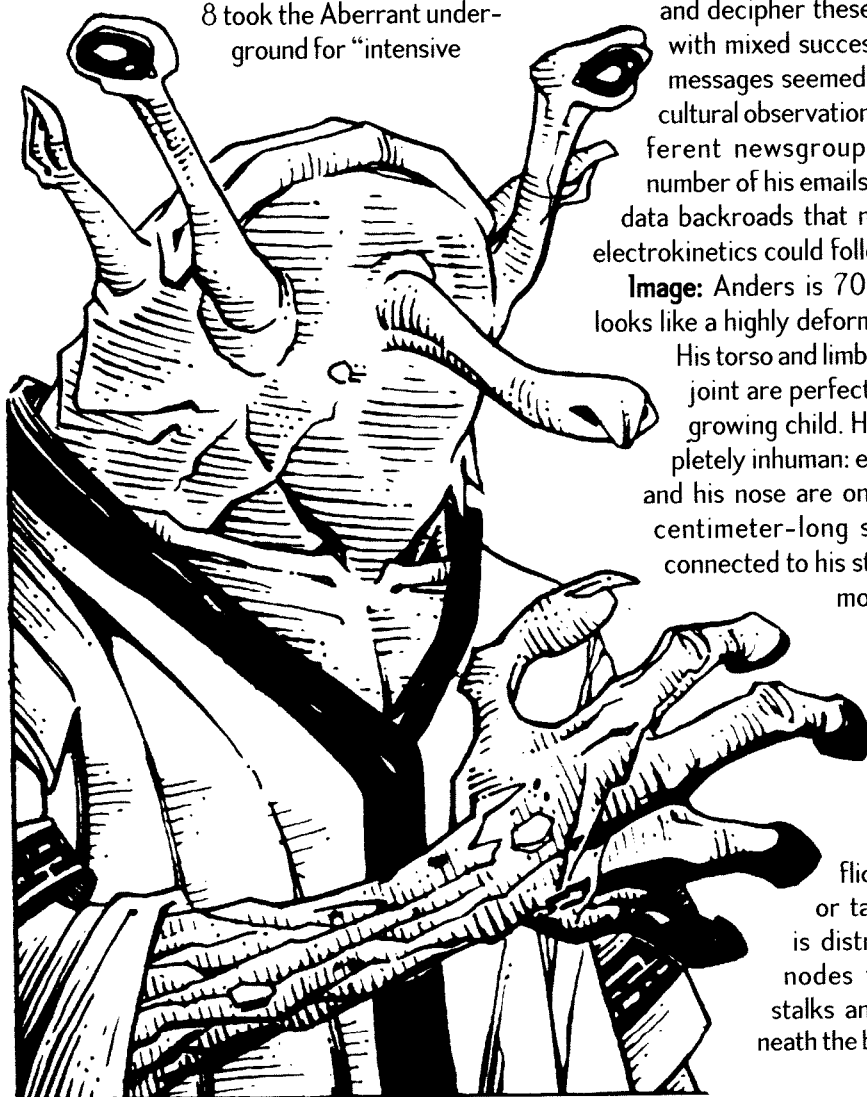
In private, he wrote extensive messages routed into the OpNet through encryption and fake addressing. Orgotek efforts to intercept and decipher these messages met with mixed success. Many of the messages seemed to be innocent cultural observations posted to different newsgroups. However, a number of his emails vanished down data backroads that not even skilled electrokinetics could follow.

Image: Anders is 70 years old, but looks like a highly deformed 12 year old.

His torso and limbs out to the first joint are perfectly formed for a growing child. His head is completely inhuman: each eye and ear and his nose are on separate, 20-centimeter-long stalks that are connected to his stumpy neck. His

mouth opens vertically, and is fringed with gill-like folds that allow him to breathe

without conflicting with eating or talking. His brain is distributed in small nodes throughout his stalks and in a ring beneath the bony collar of his



neck. The lower portions of his arms and legs are also nonhuman; vaguely crustacean, with a hard carapace covering tissues that are moved by fluid pressures. Small, pumping glands give his hands and feet a cartoonish, puffy appearance.

Roleplaying Hints: You aren't calculating, cruel or anti-social, just oblivious to others as individuals. People are merely specialized tools, like waldoes or proton microscopes. Efforts to engage you in conversation are useless; confine yourself to purely descriptive reports and queries. When you do bother to interact with others, it is out of curiosity, not because of some rapport or camaraderie. When provoked, unleash a torrent of extremely erudite and cruel sarcasm at the one who bothered you, and at anyone else in earshot.

Nature: Analyst

Allegiance: Huang-Marr conspirators; Aberrants

Physical Attributes

Strength 4
Dexterity 5

Stamina 4

Mental Attributes

Perception 3

Intelligence 5

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 0
Manipulation 1

Charisma 1

Abilities

Brawl 3
Athletics 4, Pilot 3,
Sidearm 3
Endurance 4,
Resistance 4

Abilities

Awareness 3,
Investigation 2
Academics 2, Bureau-
cracy 3, Intrusion 3,
Survival 4,
Technology 4
Meditation 3

Abilities

Intimidation 5
Command 1, Interroga-
tion 2, Subterfuge 4
Etiquette 2

Powers: Nash does not possess Aptitudes (see **Trinity**, page 303, for details). He does, however, have the following abilities:

Regeneration: This requires Nash to absorb living biomass — a living person — inflicting one Lethal Health Level for each Health Level that he regains

Tentacles (head): These offer no great advantage, but look bizarre

Molecular Disruption: Nash can focus on a target and tear apart the molecular bonds that hold it together. Roll **Taint** in a resisted action against the target's **Resistance**. Each extra success received is a Lethal Health Level sustained by the victim.

Enhanced Reflexes: Nash can move twice as fast as a human being; he can take two separate actions each turn

Heightened Constitution: Nash is quite hardy, despite his odd appearance. He has two of each Health Level (two Bruised levels, two Hurt levels, etc).

Aptitudes: Although Nash doesn't technically have psionic powers, he possesses Aberrant powers that produce some similar effects. The following Modes are listed for ease of reference: Electromanipulation 5, Psychomorphing 4, Babel Effect. (Substitute Nash's Taint score for Psi when using Aptitudes.)

Willpower: 9

Psi: 0

Taint: 7

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 3, Resources 3, Status (Æsculapians) 2

Gear: Coveralls, Steinhardt M1-AC 11 minicomp, static generator

Option-8 Operatives

This group is one of Orgotek's darkest secrets. Option-8's goal is to protect the integrity of Orgotek, and it follows this directive at all costs. Its existence is mostly rumor to the universe at large. Even the Aeon Trinity has no definite proof of its presence. Operatives appear quietly, do their jobs efficiently, and vanish without a trace.

Option-8 operatives also make sure that they leave no definitive proof of their existence. They are masters of disguise, able to insert themselves in almost any organization. They use whatever means of subterfuge and misdirection are necessary to extract or eradicate any of their group who fall into unfriendly hands.

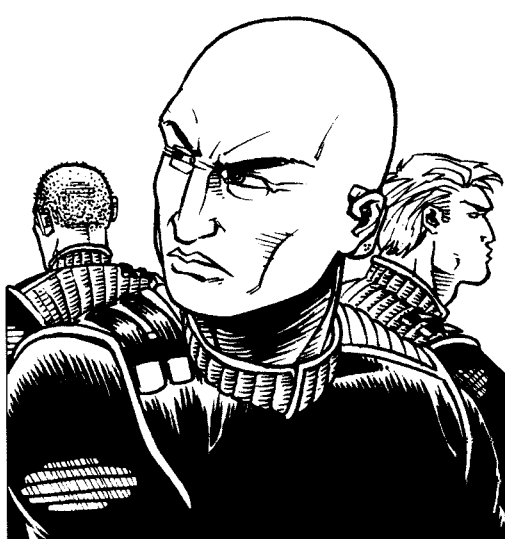


Image: The standard Option-8 operative of both sexes has a shaved head, and wears nondescript black clothing. This uniform is often worn under a disguise of some sort. Such disguises can be as simple as a heavy overcoat or as involved as a wig, tinted contacts and costuming. Virtually all Option-8 operatives are in their late 20s or early 30s and are of diverse ethnic backgrounds. They generally appear as physically nondescript as possible (even to the point of androgyny).

Roleplaying Hints: Option-8 operatives are consummate professionals. You are efficient, silent and meticulous. If you have a sense of humor, it's so off the norm that it's unrecognizable (although some whisper that you dress as you do as part of some elaborate joke).

Nature: Follower

Allegiance: Orgotek

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 3

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Intelligence 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 2

Charisma 2

Aptitude: [Electrokinesis]

Electromanipulation 1, Photokinesis 4,

Technokinesis 2

Willpower: 7

Psi: 4

Backgrounds: Cipher 5, Resources 2, Status (Orgotek) 3

Gear: Orgotek MiniPulse-L laser gauntlet, Orgotek Wasp II pulse laser, reinforced coveralls, Wazukana DX70 minicomputer (Chris agent, beacon), vocoder (Arabic, English, Chinese, Nihonjin, Qin, Portuguese, Swahili)

Abilities

Might 1

Athletics 3, Drive 2,

Firearms 3,

Martial Arts 3,

Pilot 2, Stealth 3

Endurance 2,

Resistance 2

Abilities

Awareness 3,

Investigation 1

Intrusion 3, Survival 3

Meditation 4

Abilities

Intimidation 3, Style 3

Interrogation 3,

Subterfuge 3

Perform 1, Savvy 3

REPORT TO FIELD OPERATIVES

ÆON TRINITY TRANSMISSION [NEPTUNE DIVISION]

Extraterrestrial Office, Deputy Office Director Giorgios Alekandros Gamemenos

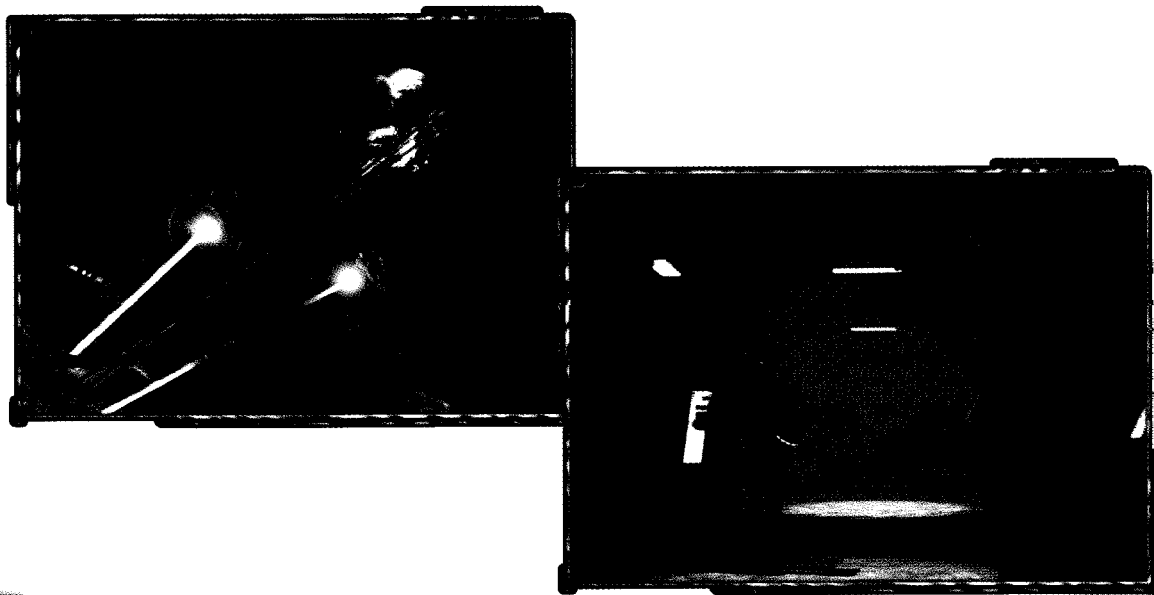
Recent events on Luna, from the attack on Cantor Station to the Aberrant “cult” at Boltzmann Station, have received considerable attention from the media. However, the Æon Trinity always endeavors to bring its operatives the most complete information possible, so I shall begin this transmission with a review of the matter: An appalling conspiracy between members of at least two psi orders underlies events on the Moon.

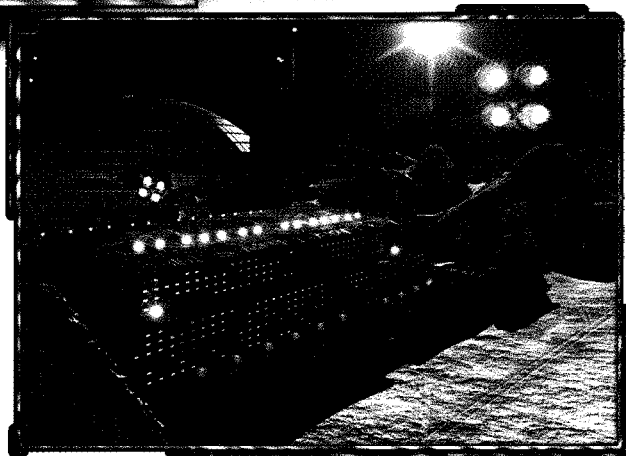
RECAPITULATION: HUANG-MARR PROJECT

Æon investigators have uncovered Æsculapian and Orgotek involvement in a series of programs researching the combination of biotechnology with Aberrant taint. The conspiracy is known as the Huang-Marr Project. Aside from the legal and ethical concerns regarding use of taint, it’s clear that the individuals behind this project were more concerned with the results of their efforts than with the safety of their test subjects or of humanity itself.

The fact that two psi orders were involved in extreme organic research concerns Æon greatly. What other endeavors do the orders pursue without our knowledge?

We also wonder about the extent to which the two psi orders as a whole are aware of these secret programs. Field operatives uncovered those Æsculapians and electrokinetics who were directly involved in the project, but who among these orders’ leaders or administrators is involved. Trinity investigations along these lines have proven inconclusive so far. Æon has details of the project under tight wraps for the time being, but we cannot keep the facts from the orders much longer. The proxies themselves have asked for a full account of events on Luna. It’s up to our operatives in the field — you — to find the true movers behind this plot.





ADDENDUM: MARS

We have reliable information on the whereabouts of Doctors Patrice and Andromeda Willom, Dr. Serevitek Kriko and other support staff involved in the Huang-Marr Project who operated at Boltzmann Station on Luna. There is also suggestion that a living Aberrant is involved and associates with these suspects. These people fled Luna and escaped our agents with specially designed transport canisters; the bins were fired at incredibly high-G acceleration on an intercept course with Mars.

You are charged with pursuing these individuals to Mars, confirming the identities of any others who escaped with them, and discovering any other Mars-based collaborators. Æon must understand the parameters of this conspiracy and shatter it before events become public, which could trigger a wave of anti-psion sentiment that would undo everything that we have accomplished. We cannot afford to lose face if the Aberrants are to be defeated once and for all.

In truth, it's impossible to estimate the extent of corruption within the vitakinetic or electrokinetic orders — or within any of the other orders, for that matter. Triton Division analysts speculate, based on profiles of the personnel involved in the Huang-Marr Project, that there may be only a few active conspirators. Be aware that not every individual you investigate is guilty; we hope that our current suspects are the only ones, and that this conspiracy ends with them.

The Trinity's limited resources are stretched very thin on Mars. You're on your own there; the few operatives that we have on the planet are already committed to their own investigations. Æon operatives are few and the troubles we face are many.

CONCLUSION

Again, I must emphasize the importance of a timely resolution to this matter. The Æon Trinity cannot stall the proxies indefinitely. The sooner Æon can present reliable information — good or bad — the sooner the Trinity will put this grim matter to rest.

Regards,

Gamemenos

Extraterrestrial Office, 21:40:05 3.11.20

Hope Sacrifice Unity

THARSIS BULGE AND OLYMPUS MONS

The Tharsis Bulge on Mars is a rough plain, in the midst of which is located the Chinese colony of Wanjing. The bulge itself is so vast as to be detectable as such only from orbit or with the most sophisticated geological instruments.

Numerous Tharsis Montes volcanoes dominate this plains region. Each one is as tall as the volcanoes that comprise the Hawaiian islands of Earth, though no ocean disguises the great heights of the Martian formations. Mount faces are composed of typical red rock, combined with black soil, a legacy of ash and glass left by the millennia-old volcanoes.

The undisputed lord of the Bulge is Olympus Mons. It rises 24 kilometers above baseline elevation. The foundation of Olympus Mons is so expansive at that proximity that it dominates the horizon. Only its upper half reaches a great enough distance that it takes on a distinctive shape of its own, filling the western sky when viewed from one of the Wanjing settlements.

Mars' thin cloud cover — a testament to the great strides made in terraforming the planet — don't even come close to reaching the summit of Olympus Mons. Only hemisphere-sweeping storms extend high enough to affect the crest.

ACCESS TO THE THARSIS REGION

China lays claim to the Tharsis region (and to entire planet, for that matter), although Brazil and the United African Nations challenge that statement. Yet the Asian power's control of Tharsis is practically absolute; all craft entering or leaving the region are monitored by the control tower at the Shihuang military base, north of Wanjing. Ships must follow proscribed approach and departure vectors or are subject to waylay, boarding and

THE NEW FACE OF MARS

— Dazyl Grenich, *Lifestyles* ©

2120 MMI

It's time once again for the greatest science fair of them all, kids. That's right, the Annual Terraforming Conference on Mars is upon us once again, held this year at the marvelous new Summit Center. I know, it's not something that normally gets your blood pumping; a week of lectures on "ecological modifications" and "increased millibars." Let me tell you something, though; actually being here on Mars, and seeing firsthand the dramatic changes that they've made in only 11 short years — I can't help but be excited!

Just think: A decade ago, Mars was a frigid, dry wasteland with atmosphere too thin to even breathe. Yeh, sure, it's still cold and arid, but the talented folks on the Mars Terraforming Project have done some incredible things. I mean, there are actually clouds in the sky! You can go outside in arctic gear and a respirator instead of a vac-suit!

All this may not sound like much, especially to those of you living in luxurious climate-controlled orbital stations, but it's pretty astonishing if you take a moment to think about it. We humans (with a little help from those inscrutable Qin, sure) are changing the very surface of Mars! It's amazing what we can do when we put our minds to it, yeh?



possibly even commandeering. China's Martian officials ensure that everything within their influence is controlled.

This authority applies to travel within the Tharsis region as well, although not quite as strictly. China considers the Tharsis Montes volcanic plains — and Olympus Mons in particular — to be protected landmarks. Access to the sites via public transportation is endorsed fully, while independent access is subject to approval. Most visitors travel to the gigantic mountains on regularly scheduled hopper flights or maglev trams.

Scientists are interested in all of the volcanoes. Tourists come primarily to see Olympus Mons itself. China acknowledges tourism as an unfortunate necessity that supplements expensive colonization and terraforming. Thus, when the architectural firm V.I. Mhula Associates approached the Chinese government to construct an spectacular facility atop Olympus Mons, the Chinese government agreed. The newly completed Summit Center is a marvel of architectural engineering, and it draws a steady — yet carefully monitored — tourist trade to the Tharsis region.

REACHING SUMMIT CENTER

The train ride to the top of Olympus Mons passes a variety of terraforming experiment sites, both enclosed (in pressurized domes) and open (in ravines and other protected terrain features). These research areas take advantage of proximity to Wanjing's workers and equipment to explore new terraforming techniques. Once tested, these methods are applied to the larger terraforming projects across Mars, such as

in the depths of the Marineris Valley. Passing by test sights, one might see technicians working with bio-engineered exotic plants and animals, in an effort to create viable flora and fauna that can exist in the thin, cold Martian air.

The main maglev line runs up the steep eastern slope of the big plateau on which the volcano rests. An observation station was constructed halfway from Wanjing to Olympus Mons to cater to travelers. Looking to the north and south, the viewer sees some of the biggest mining centers on Mars — dozens of shafts sunk at a variety of angles. Automated cargo haulers weave their way among the customized machines that plumb the plateau. Sometimes explosives are used to assist mining efforts; piles of rubble and debris stand here and there like grave markers.

Looking upward from the observation deck, the viewer sees Olympus Mons in all its glory. The base is 550 kilometers across; the scarp along the foundation reaches up to six kilometers high. The slope between scarp and summit is gentle, but very, very long.

The maglev route continues through a tunnel under the scarp line to emerge on the slope above. Wanjing has constructed other observation decks every five kilometers up this slope. Each one offers an increasingly dramatic view of the Martian terrain.

However, no vista is more dramatic than the one seen from Summit Center itself. Despite the fact that the facility was designed by a Nordamerican decades ago, and was constructed by an African architectural firm, China considers the new Summit Center yet another testament to its supremacy.

Architecture for a New Humanity

Architecture defines society. The buildings in which we live and work influence our daily existence simply by their design and function. To see where a society is heading, look at the works of its up-and-coming architects. They lay the foundations on which dreams are built.

Whether it's the anti-organic designs of Speer or LeCorbusier, the environmentally sensitive yet elite theories of Wright, or the working-class sophistication of Hejjeke or Fasitum, the new structures that emerge in a society prelude political and economic changes.

Summit Center

Summit Center was the first of what V.I. Mhula Associates calls its World Havens series. In the words of V.I. II:

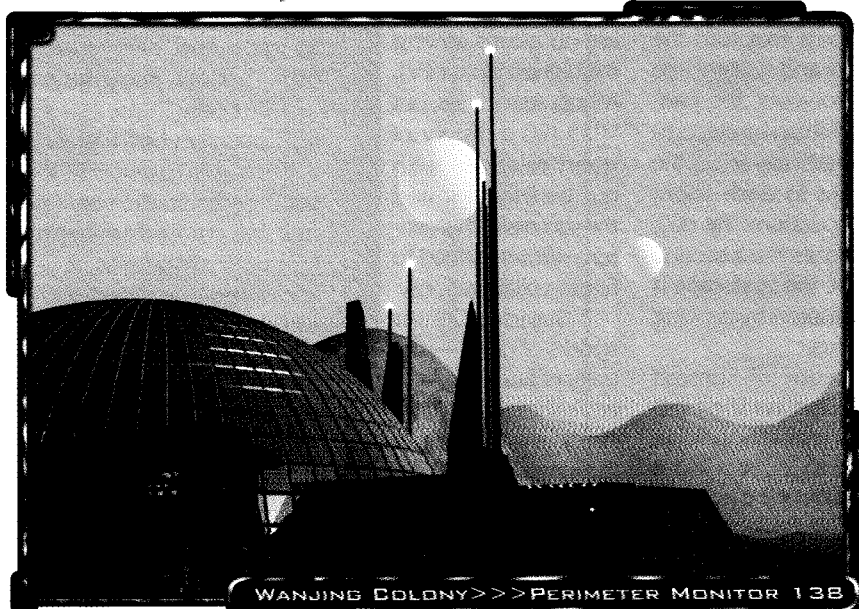
"My grandfather emphasized the value of direct experience with nature. As we see in space, nature is a harsh mistress, but on Mars we can provide as much of the experience of nature as humanly possible. Sum-

mit Center is a unique synthesis. It draws on the latest technologies of space colonization and the incredible new opportunities inherent to biotechnology to actualize a wondrous vision."

The center is literally the jewel of both Mhula's career. Its heart is a 20-story-high "jewel" composed of three-layer biosynthetic crystal. The default condition of each crystal panel is translucent, but each half-story facet can be made transparent, colored, opaque or mirrored. As each day passes, the center's computers compensate for glare and other lighting conditions to maintain pleasant illumination within. Every three stories, walkways extend to a ring that encircles the jewel by a dozen meters, with only the near-vacuum of Mars' atmosphere in between. The structure is reminiscent of an early model of the atom; the walkways play the parts of electron paths orbiting the nucleus of the center itself.

Summit Center stands, as its name suggests, at the top of Olympus Mons, the solar system's highest volcano. The transformations imposed by Martian terraformers have had little impact at this altitude — the planet's greatest stratospheric storms are little more than passing gusts here. The stars shine hard and bright at the summit; the Martian atmosphere is still too thin to diffuse their light.

But Summit Center doesn't just sit still and offer an incredible view — it moves along the rim of Olympus Mons! The whole center is mounted on a heavy magrail track adapted from machinery used to move heavy rocket cargoes at major spaceports. The facility completes a counter-clockwise revolution once each Martian day, starting at the east at dawn, facing west at sunset, and coming around to repeat the cycle at the end of the day. As Summit Center revolves, it also rotates, completing a turn about



its own axis each hour. The observer within the center thus has a perpetually changing view of the Martian landscape.

The first glimpse one gets of the center, traveling to it up the slope of Olympus Mons, is breathtaking — literally. Humans can stand exposed on the lowest of Martian elevations, with only lightweight respirator masks. But Olympus Mons reaches far too high to afford such comfort all the way to the top. Visitors travel in pressurized magtrains to any of 12 transfer stations (whichever is closest to Summit Center's current position), and then on trams to the center itself. Transfer airlocks ring the base on which the center stands.

What makes all of this possible? Careful engineering. The crystal that comprises the majority of the center is very lightweight. Yet delicate balancing and adjustable counterweight masses are required to move the center.

The colors of the center are indescribable. Not even the attached visual links do justice to the experience. The center is a maze of prisms that turn the harsh sunlight and starlight into rainbows. However, the panels of the jewel can be customized. Individuals may adjust the color of light in each room across the spectrum. By day, the center blazes like a second sun. By night, the landscape is lit up for kilometers by dancing reflected lights.

The interior of Summit Center also displays the fresh architectural marvels that we have come to expect from Mhula. The axis of the building is an open shaft through which power and light is piped from collectors around the center.

“Light pipes” illuminate every corner, and can be adjusted to simulate any condition of day or night, as the individual chooses. Doorways fit seamlessly, or nearly so, into surrounding walls, and are distinguished by only the control panel next to each. Some walls can be disassembled and repositioned, to make rooms larger or smaller as circumstances demand; a delicate network of servos performs all of the maneuvering.

Psions and psionic energy were central to Summit's construction. Electrical manipulation was critical to creating the very substances from which the center was built. Biotechnology makes wall customization possible. Indeed, without psions, the center would not exist. There are no psions among the highest ranks of V.I. Mhula Associates, but V.I. II has a history of good relations with our benefactors, and the success of this venture will surely lead to future collaborations.

Summit Center speaks of unity — the unity of humanity and environment, of artificiality and nature, of the temporary and the permanent, of mechanical and biological, of psion and humanity, and of tradi-

tion and innovation. Based on the vision embodied here, we are poised on the brink of a wondrous new era.

A Brief Look: V.I. Mhula Associates

— Miku Nikuma, special correspondent to *New Architectural Digest* © 2119 OBC

The work of the innovative architectural firm V.I. Mhula Associates is one of the defining examples of the social aims of the United African Nations, and has been since the Aberrant Exodus. From humble beginnings during the Crash, V.I. Mhula and his partners gained universal acclaim from their vision of a new social order. Today, scarcely any major city of the UAN lacks facilities or complexes that reflect Mhula's love of organic and geological motifs. His fractal paths system is as characteristic of the modern African city as geometric and radial grids were of other nations in centuries past.

But only in the last decade has the firm's current head, grandson V.I. Mhula II, been able to chase its founder's greatest dreams. In the years before the Exodus, V.I. created conceptual designs for fantastic structures, even though he knew they required technologies that did not exist in his time. These fanciful creations were all but forgotten until V.I. II discovered them a few years ago in his grandfather's archives. The elder Mhula's plans still pushed the boundaries of architectural design half a century later, and V.I. II was determined to make the dreams reality.

SHIP'S LOG

Recovered from Banji Falcon-class hybrid transport *Freya* datafile

Date: 08:02:27 3.25.20

Captain Royce Paxton: Just completed long haul through the Belt, coming back with a good selection of mineral-rich rocks. Was going to sell them on Mars, but ran into *Seville*, a freighter doing one last sweep before returning to Earth. Offered us competitive rates for our cargo. No big deal for them, since their percentage goes up for each metric ton they bring in, but saves us the trouble of haggling later. Did a deep-space transfer. Went off without a hitch.

Might've gotten better rates on Mars, but the crew thought it was worth it. Considering how long we've been out and the way the market's been, I agree. Have to talk to them about getting into another line of work. Tourist trade to Mars is picking up. Maybe we could do independent runs. Think about it later. For now, need to run a diagnostic on the ventral engine array.

Date: 07:48:02 3.29.20

Captain Royce Paxton: Sensors picked up something headed our way from in-system. Not too big — maybe eight cubic meters. No transponder code or propulsion system. Could be anything — all sorts of crap comes through the solar system. Still, most everything heads *in*. Can't argue with gravity, yeh? Strange that this is going out. Since we already made our wage, decided to divert and take a look. Should add maybe a day to our return.

Date: 21:39:19 3.29.20

Captain Royce Paxton: Object tentatively confirmed as being a standard cargo canister. It started transmitting an automated message when we were 500,000 clicks out. Must be a proximity beacon. Message was coded, but that doesn't mean much to Larena. She cracked the code a few minutes ago. Turns out it's an official Orgotek transmission — calling "Horatio" for pickup.

Heard of a hybrid operating out of Mars called *Horatio*. Parks agreed, and is pretty sure it's a corporate registry. So the canister probably belongs to Orgotek. Means no salvage, though we could squeeze a recovery fee out of them. Crew agrees that we might as well pick the thing up.

Date: 01:14:57 3.30.20

Captain Royce Paxton: Visual ID confirmed — the object is a cargo canister. Parks ready in the dorsal cargo bay to bring it in. Glad we can get this over with; could use some shut-eye.

Christ! Parks? What the hell's going on?

>>> muted <<<

Aboulaye! Larena! Get to the dorsal cargo bay now! Parks may be in trouble. Wait! Security cam is picking up some—

Oh, God! Aberrant on board! I repeat: Aberrant on board! It's heading straight for the bridge. Aboulaye, Larena, get to the escape pod! Get out while you can! I'll alert Mars—

Second speaker; voice unidentified: Step away from the console.

Captain Royce Paxton: God! Get the hell off my ship, you fucking—

>>> unidentifiable; possibly compressed-gas projectile weapons fire <<<

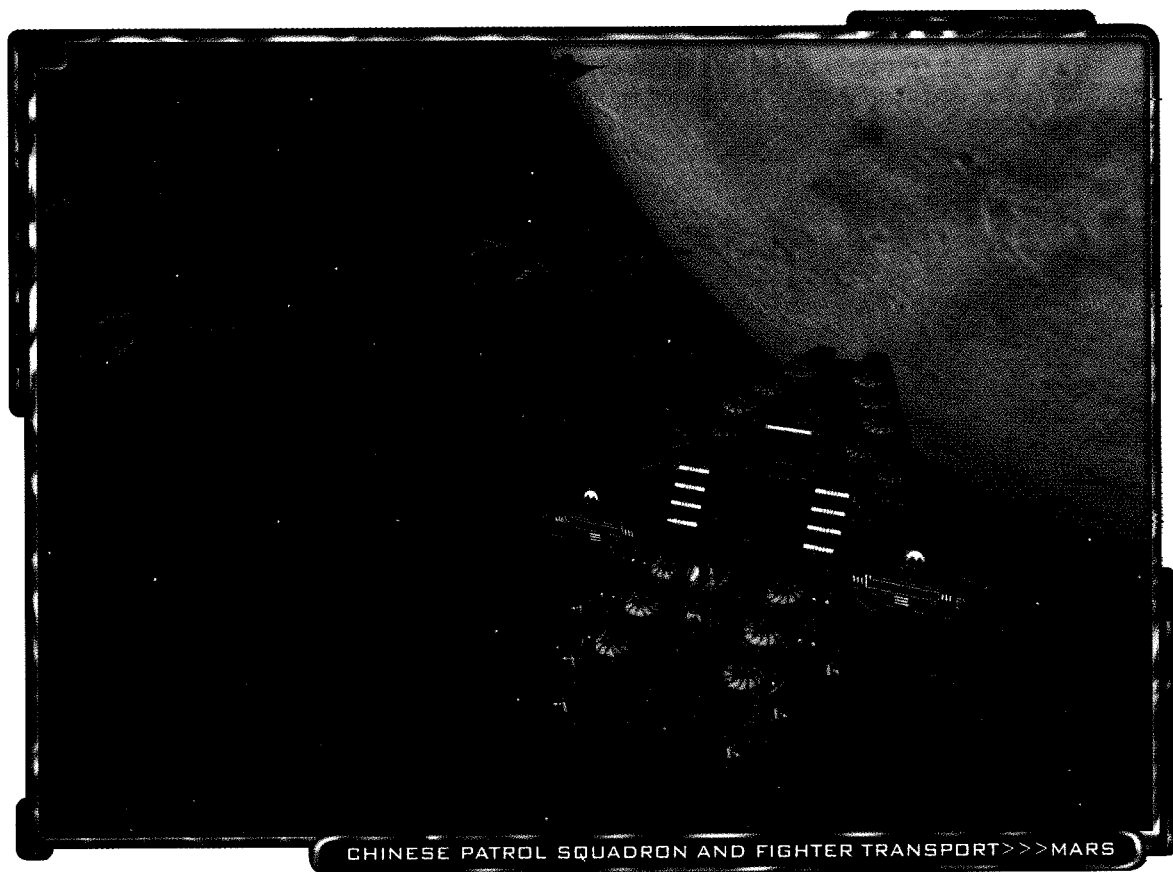
Date: 10:26:04 4.1.20

Engineer Glynis Larena: Accessed the ship's log from an engineering terminal. Don't know why I bother; it's not like anyone's ever going to find us. Okay, stick to the facts.

An Aberrant got on board the ship — just over a day ago? I tried to hack into the communications systems, but the freak was already in there. Almost tracked me down to the terminal I was at. Damn thing's good with computers. Shouldn't even be on right now, but I don't think it'll bother checking the ship's log. Got to leave this, in case somebody finds us.

I think Captain Royce Paxton, Senior Technician Walter Parks and Technician T'kumbe Aboulaye are dead. I haven't seen them, and no escape pods have fired.

I felt the ship change course and increase velocity a few hours ago. Don't know where we're headed, but the freak wants to get there fast. I guess it's up to me to make sure it doesn't make it. I'm on my way to the hyper-fusion generators. I'm going to put the engines at critical. Let's see if this thing can survive a thermonuclear explosion....



CHINESE PATROL SQUADRON AND FIGHTER TRANSPORT>>>MARS

The Downward Spiral is the third episode in **Descent into Darkness**. The preceding color pages should be shared with the players as background to the story.

Overview

The *Æon Trinity* follows up on the shocking revelation that factions within the *Æsculapian* and *Orgotek* orders are involved in illegal bioware research.

The operation was shut down, but the individuals in charge — Serevitek Kriso and Patrice and Andromeda Willom — escaped. The Willoms fled Luna in a cargo canister designed to shoot toward Mars. Kriso followed in a similarly equipped container — along with Anders Nash, an Aberrant involved in the Huang-Marr Project.

The characters follow the canisters' flight path to Mars, in hopes that they might find the fugitives. It's a slim possibility, considering the velocity at which the bins traveled, but the *Æon Trinity* wants to make sure all avenues are covered.

Unknown to the characters, the Mars-based *Orgotek* transport *Horatio* picked up the first canister. *Horatio* dutifully returned to Mars with the Willoms, who demanded to be taken (quietly) to Summit Center for immediate medical treatment by Dr. Doris Ashiluna, an associate on the biorg project.

The characters come across the transport *Freya* only a few thousand kilometers away from Mars. The craft runs on full power and is headed for the Red Planet, but doesn't respond to hails. In fact, the comm channel is open, but no one is online. Boarding the craft, the characters find no crew or passengers — they are all dead, and whatever killed them now hunts the psions!

The characters learn that *Freya* happened across the second canister, containing Kriso and Nash. The second bin overshot Mars due to trajectory miscalculations. The container might have been lost in the depths of space if *Freya* hadn't stumbled across it on the way back from the Asteroid Belt. The Aberrant on board was injured by the severe acceleration of the takeoff from Luna, but was still able to dispatch *Freya's* crew.

Nash planned to take the captured ship to Mars, but the characters' arrival demands a change of plans. Nash decides to hunt down

the team, then take whichever ship is better, and continue on. (Kriso hasn't fared as well as Nash has. The *Æsculapian* lies in *Freya's* small sick bay, exhausted from using his Vitakinesis powers to heal the damage he sustained in the high-speed flight from Luna.)

The characters must defeat Nash, take Kriso into custody and stop *Freya* from plummeting into Mars (or, more accurately, regain control of the transport before the Chinese defense patrol blows it to bits).

The Chinese ships escort the characters to Wanjing, a Martian colony. Chinese officials hold the characters to confirm the details of their recent adventure on *Freya*. The characters' story has spread throughout the colony by the time they're released. The psions are minor celebrities, which makes tracking down the Willoms covertly that much more difficult.

Initial investigations on Mars lead the psions to Summit Center on the peak of the Olympus Mons volcano. The characters must find the Willoms (they're under the care of Doris Ashiluna, a researcher on the Huang-Marr Project who recently relocated to Mars) while avoiding assassins sent by *Æsculapian* and *Orgotek* enemies. As if that isn't enough, the team must try to stop Option-8 assassins from killing the Willoms in an effort to wipe out evidence of the Huang-Marr Project, and the characters must deal with an accident that sends Summit Center tumbling down Olympus Mons!

If the characters survive, they may learn the truth of the Huang-Marr Project, and discover that the conspiracy doesn't end with Kriso or the Willoms. There are more powerful figures in the *Æsculapian* and *Orgotek* orders at work here. The stage is therefore set for **Passage Through Shadow**, the next book in the **Darkness Revealed** series.

Theme

The Downward Spiral is about consequences. The characters should be eager to bring those who defy morality and the law to justice. It's not an easy task, though; the characters' own morals are tested. They must be careful not to cross the same line as did those whom they pursue.

Mood

The mood on Mars is delicacy and caution. The planet is in the midst of massive terraforming changes, its atmosphere thickening and climate warming slowly to create a viable human environment. The slightest miscalculation could destroy what's taken a decade to create. Summit Center is similarly vulnerable; though structurally solid, the facility is at the mercy of its environment and the politics that are integral to its existence. The characters witness what can happen when that balance is tipped.

The characters themselves are in a delicate situation on Mars. They are beyond Æon's support. They must rely on themselves now more than ever, advancing carefully in a truly alien environment. The success of not only the team's investigation, but its very survival hangs in balance, as assassins advance to exterminate all those with knowledge of the Huang-Marr Project — including the psions.

Setting

The Downward Spiral concentrates on the area of Mars known as the Tharsis Bulge. Mars is considered the last civilization before the so-called inner frontier (human settlements on the edge of the solar system). The Red Planet isn't as dynamic as Luna is, with its commerce and diverse population, but Mars is a mining and research center. Its main focus is terraforming, a vast project designed to make the planet habitable by humans without the need for pressure domes or vac-suits.

Brazil and the United African Nations have a presence on Mars, but China is the strongest force on the planet. Chinese hybrid craft handle almost all of Mars' defensive patrol duties, and Chinese laws and commerce influence even small, independent settlements. Just as Nordamericans were the first to land on the Moon and dominated Luna thereafter, so too did the Chinese establish control of the Red Planet upon colonizing three-quarters of a century ago.

Yet there are a number of North Americans on Mars, thanks to the efforts of Orgotek. The biotech company is a major player in the Mars Terraforming Project (in cooperation with China, Brazil, the United African Nations and those Qin who remain in the solar system), and Orgotek has introduced many Nordamerican workers in the

past decade — and other Western entrepreneurs have followed. Orgotek's Martian headquarters in the Tharsis settlement of Wanjing employs over 20,000 Nordamerican transplants (of which a significant number are psions of various kinds). Furthermore, the dozens of Orgotek terraforming facilities scattered across the planet each have a staff of 100 or more.

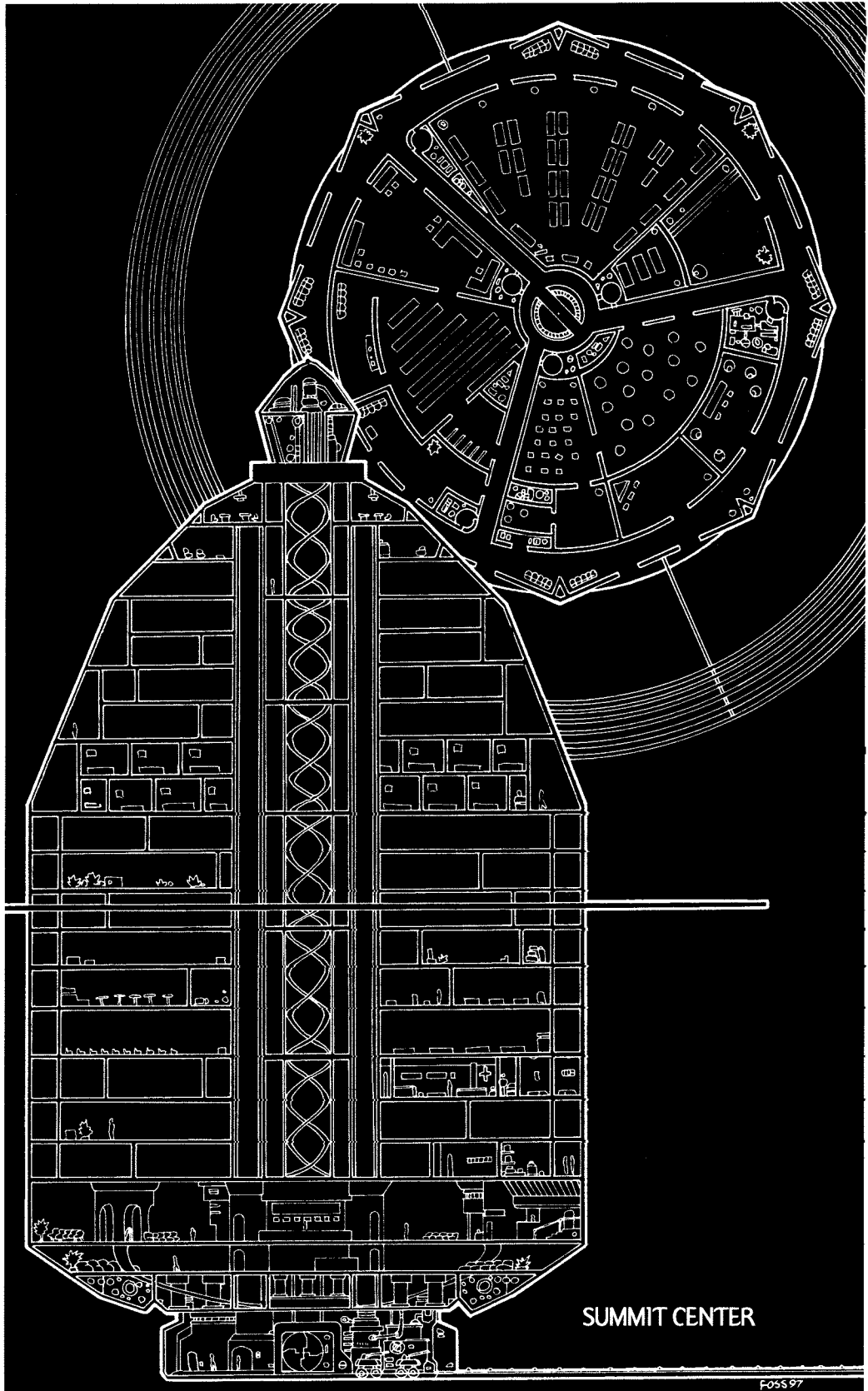
China's Martian officials are not pleased with the constant influx of immigrants from Earth's Western Hemisphere, and the Asian power's UN representative lobbies to restrict Martian colonization. China has tremendous influence over the United Nations, but the pro-immigration bloc led by the UAN, Brazil and the Federated States has kept colonization open. China is patient though, and seems determined to make Mars a purely Chinese province, no matter how long it takes.

Summit Center

The Tharsis region is the focus of Chinese settlements on Mars. Blocky complexes and small Mylex domes cluster near the tremendous Olympus Mons volcano. The newest addition to Wanjing is Summit Center, a marvel of modern technology and architectural design. Summit Center is one of a handful of incredible achievements by V.I. Mhula Associates. See **Hidden Agendas** information on the firm's other creations.

Summit Center seems to be a 20-story-high, multi-faceted jewel, with balconies and arching bridges. The rings surrounding the structure house walkways and trams, and provide external support and balance for the station itself. Summit Center rotates on its own axis once every hour, and derives enough power from a beamed relay system to glide around the peak of Olympus Mons on a magrail track. Each revolution takes one Martian day; the center is at the easternmost point of the rim at dawn, and at the westernmost point at sunset.

The structure looks far more fragile than it is. The synthetic crystal used in its construction is a variation on the clear bioglass paneling used in deep-space designs. The material is as thin as glass, but as tough as diamond, and is supported by a complex network of struts that distribute the structure's mass. Each bioglass panel also contains photochromic chemicals that allow patrons to make the walls of each room mirrored, tinted or colored. The panels default to a smoky translucence when not in use.



SUMMIT CENTER

FOSS 97

Despite its breathtaking aesthetics, Summit Center suffers from a major practical concern. Keeping the facility upright and fully functional demands a vast amount of power; not even an advanced hyper-fusion generator system can fulfill all of the building's needs. The center draws upon Wanjing's power system from time to time, particularly when major dust storms blow through, subjecting Wanjing to brownouts.

The Summit Center Management Board plies the Chinese with donations and investments to compensate for the inconveniences that the center causes, but the center's power demands are still taxing for the stern Chinese. SCMB is quick to point out that Summit Center helps to turn Mars' former tourist trickle into a veritable flood. Mars (and, more importantly, Wanjing) benefits from this increased tourism trade, so China's Martian officials "begrudgingly" consent to continue supporting Summit Center.

Running *The Downward Spiral*

Characters who went through *The Depths of Madness* have a clear motive to continue into this third episode. The main suspects behind the Huang-Marr Project — Patrice and Andromeda Willom and Serevitek Kriso — fled to Mars aboard specially designed, high-G transport canisters. The characters must track down the suspects if they hope to learn who else is involved in the conspiracy.

Bypassing *The Depths of Madness*

If the characters played through *Remnants of the Dead*, but skipped the second episode, the characters probably follow Dr. Doris Ashiluna and some equipment from the Huang-Marr Project to Mars. Special Agent Ramirez accomplishes the deeds in *The Depths of Madness* while the characters are in transit. He contacts the characters via emergency transmission before their arrival on the Red Planet, alerting them to recent events and asking them to check out the canisters' flight path. This leads the characters directly into the events of *The Derelict* (page 94).

Bypassing Episodes One and Two

If you decide to start fresh with *The Downward Spiral*, you have to explain why the characters head to Mars. They may be considered the most suitable Trinity agents to pursue the Willoms and Kriso (or simply the closest ones). The char-

acters may also be:

- Scientists or engineers on their way to the Annual Terraforming Conference
- Completing a mission on Mars on behalf of an Earth- or Luna-based business
- New colonists, either general laborers or specialists of some sort
- Journalists, artists or even observers reporting on Martian development

Ramirez comes to Mars on his own to search for Kriso, Nash and the Willoms in any of these instances. The characters are thus drawn into the events of **Darkness Revealed** when they encounter Nash and Kriso on *Freya*.

Behind the Scenes

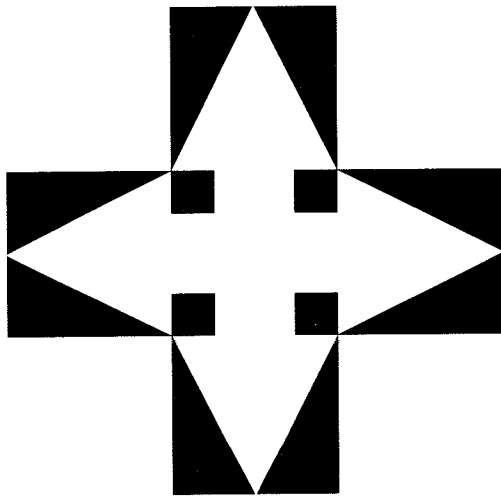
Patrice and Andromeda Willom and Serevitek Kriso are running scared; the Æon Trinity knows of their complicity in the biorg project. The characters must reach the fugitives before assassins hired by the Willoms' superiors do. If the characters fail, they may never learn who is truly behind the Huang-Marr Project.

(Character templates for key individuals in *The Downward Spiral* are listed in *Dramatis Personae*, starting on page 111.)

The Psi Orders

Æsculapians

Ranking members of the Basel faction involved in the Huang-Marr biorg project are terrified by recent developments. They cannot afford to let word of dealings with Aberrants get out; it could result in a repeat of the Chitra Bhanu purge, this time at the Æsculapians' expense. Fortunately,



the Æon Trinity and the rest of the Æsculapian Order wants to avoid another public crisis if the situation can be resolved quietly.

Docs involved in biorg research use this opportunity to have investigators — the characters — and compromised coworkers killed. The masterminds instruct Doris Ashiluna to coordinate the assassinations. They assure her that they will eliminate any data trails leading to the project, but insist that she eliminate the psions on her trail. Ashiluna's superiors direct her to Kurt Hills, a mercenary on Mars with no discernible ties to the order.

(If you're telling this story independently of the preceding two episodes, make Ramirez the assassin's target. Just be sure that the characters are near Ramirez during the attempt on his life. This shouldn't be difficult; Ramirez seeks out the characters after learning of their encounter with Nash.)

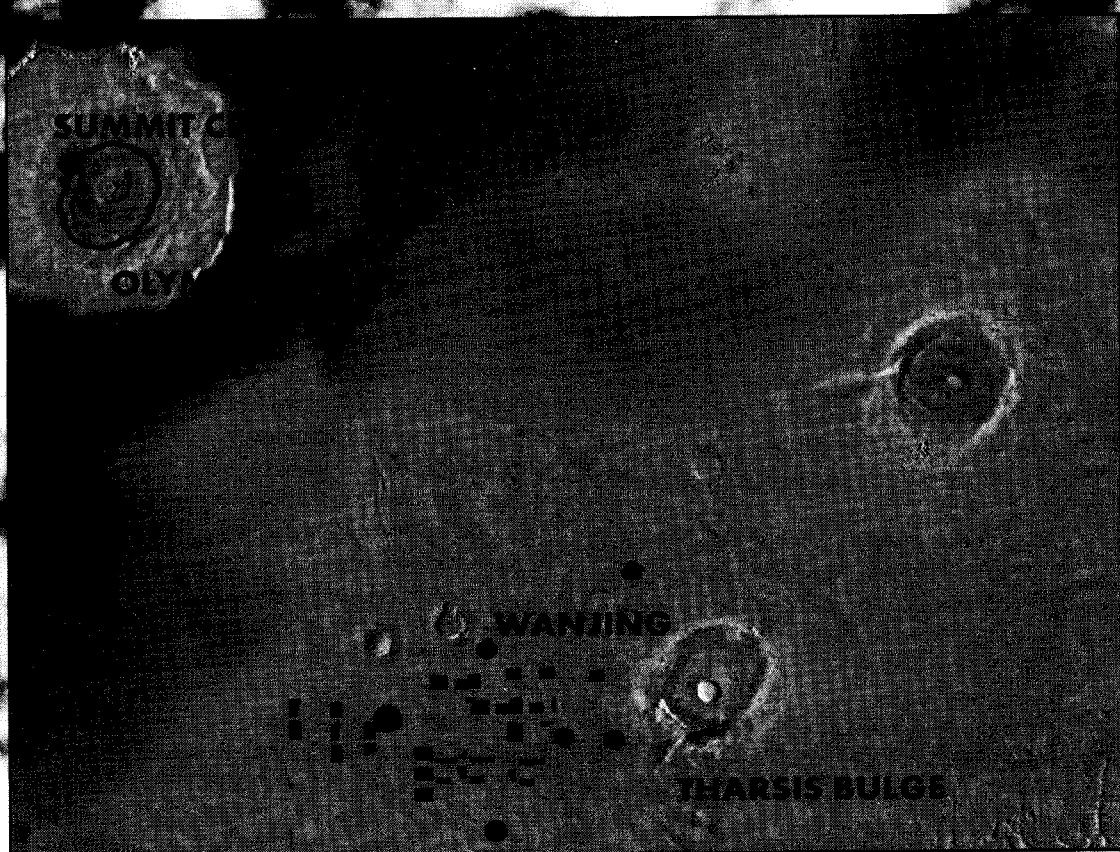
Orgotek

As far as the Willoms know, they are to recuperate after their strenuous high-speed trip to Mars, and wait for an Option-8 team to collect them.



Regular Orgotek personnel on Mars are oblivious to what's really going on, but some are suspicious. For instance, the crew of the Orgotek cargo hauler *Horatio*, which picked up the Willoms, determined where the canister came from simply by tracing back its trajectory. The Willoms refused to answer any of the crew's questions.

In truth, the Option-8 team intends to make the couple scapegoats for the biorg project. The



Bringing in New Characters

If the characters didn't go through *Remnants of the Dead* or *The Depths of Madness*, encountering Kriso provides the perfect opportunity to update them on recent events. Kriso reveals many details of the Huang-Marr Project in an effort to clear his conscience before Nash attacks, providing the characters with a wealth of disturbing information.

Ramirez, having performed the investigations of the previous two episodes by default, has come to Mars to follow up. He is very interested to learn what the characters know. He approaches them after they run the media gauntlet, presenting himself as an Aeon Trinity operative working on the biorg affair. Based on what the characters tell him and the evidence of Nash's defeat, Ramirez tries to bring the group on board (see *A Foot in the Door*, page 22, for how Ramirez handles this).

Willoms are supposed to be assassinated in what looks like a murder-suicide, with a note and damning evidence left on the scene to prove the couple's guilt (and to "confirm" that the project ends with them).

Getting to Mars

If the characters have been through the preceding episodes, they need to get to Mars. Scans by a Phoenix Squadron patrol failed to discover the fugitives' cargo bins, so Ramirez recommends that the characters follow the canisters' path instead of heading directly to Mars. There's no telling where they could be between Luna and the Red Planet, and any ship could have intercepted them.

Characters who have their own craft can leave immediately. Otherwise, they need to hire a transport. Taking a regular commercial ship is not an option; it won't follow the flight path the characters must travel, and will be too slow for the characters' needs.

Ramirez would rather that the characters provide their own transportation (hiring an independent ship to fly the characters to Mars

costs four dots). However, he grudgingly provides a ship if they psions are unable to arrange travel. Ramirez doesn't just hand over a craft, though; the characters are passengers on *Yellow Horse*, a Banji Raven II piloted by Karel Annis. The captain is a freelance trader who works for Aeon from time to time, but he isn't a full member of the organization.

In March of 2120 (when the episode takes place), Mars is located almost on the other side of the Sun from Earth. The fugitives' canisters weren't fired in a straight line to Mars; doing so would have brought them close enough to the Sun that its massive gravity would have thrown them off course. The bins described an arc through space instead, using a combination of their own momentum and the Sun's gravitational pull to arc toward Mars (a total distance of over 2 AU). Traveling this route takes the characters about three weeks. You can use this downtime in a number of ways: to allow the characters to train in skills, to go over details they've uncovered in their investigations, or to read up on Mars. Alternatively, you can fast-forward to their approach to the planet.

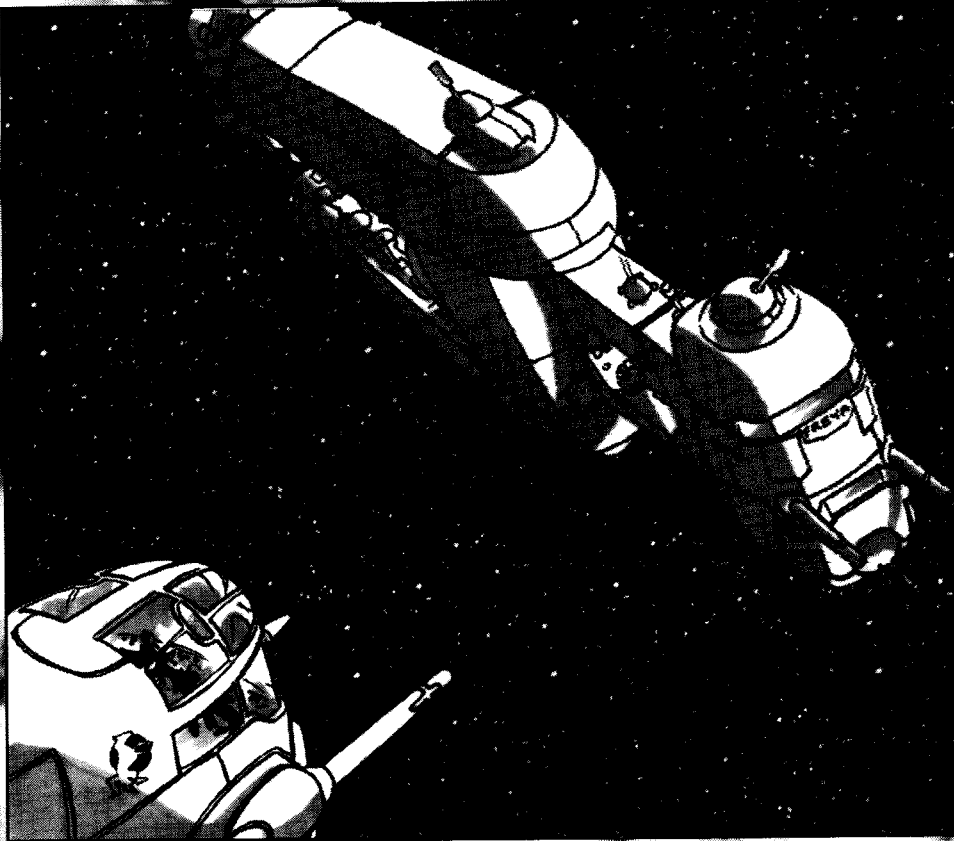
The Derelict

The characters do not find the canisters *en route* to Mars. Since Phoenix Squadron did not find them either, nor any other ships along the canisters' path in the vicinity of Luna, the characters may assume that the fugitives have been picked up closer to Mars and perhaps are already on the planet. That means altering course and traveling straight to Mars as well.

Normally, a ship starts slowing down about 100,000 kilometers from its destination. The longer a pilot waits before slowing, the more abrupt the change of speed, the greater the stress on the craft, and the higher the chance of injury when he does decelerate. The characters may choose to delay applying reverse thrusters on their approach to Mars to save time, but the tactic buys only a few hours at this point — after weeks of searching for their targets.

The ship picks up a faint transponder signal whenever the characters start braking. The signal is from *Freya*, a commercial cargo transport with a Federated States registry.

Commercial craft transmit transponder beacons that allow ships to identify each other and navigate safely. It's not unusual to pick up such



signals when approaching a planet. It is strange, however, that *Freya's* signal indicates that it travels toward Mars at a dangerously high speed at such a short distance from the planet. Those familiar with space flight (a standard **Intelligence + Pilot** cross-matched roll) know that at the rate *Freya* travels, the craft will crash unless retrothrusters are fired hard and soon. Hails to *Freya* illicit no response (although they seem to be received without problem). It's likely that something has happened to the ship's crew. The vessel will plummet to the Martian surface if the characters don't board and get her under control.

Boarding

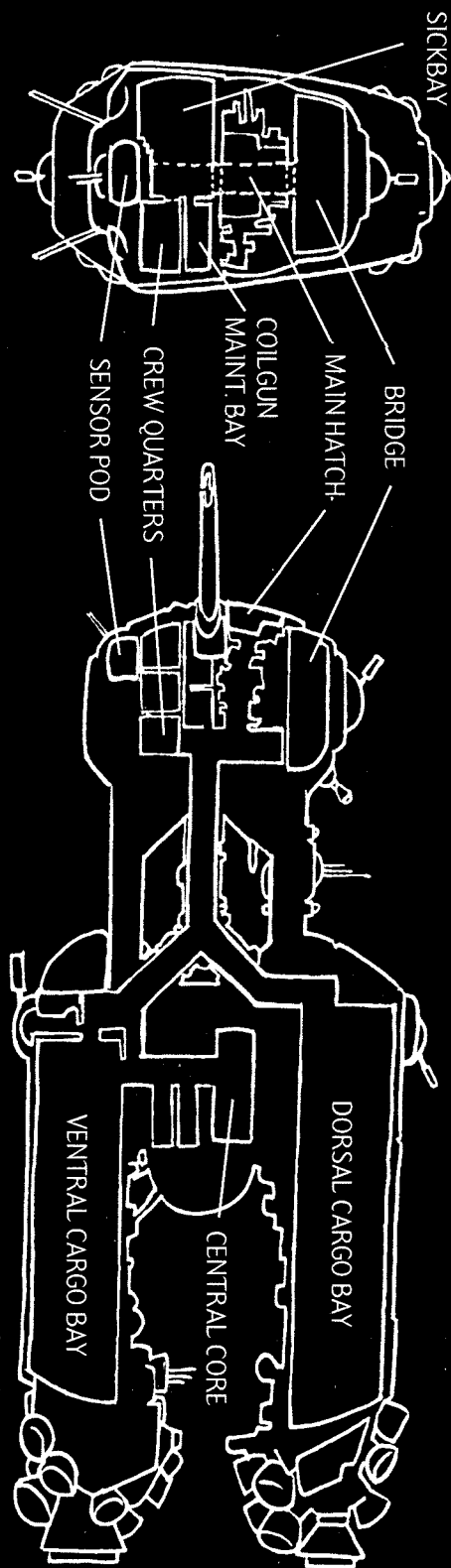
The characters probably gain access through *Freya's* main hatch, at the front of the craft. The only other likely entry point is through the cockpit's emergency hatch. The exterior cargo hatches are too large to dock with, unless the characters want to connect using their ship's own cargo hatch. Entering through cargo bays also involves passing through *Freya's* locked double hatch between its cargo hold and forward section — not terribly practical.

It's easiest to scoot up the tube from the main hatch to the cockpit. The derelict runs smoothly; the engines

are at idle (the ship doesn't lose momentum traveling in vacuum), life-support indicators are all green, pseudo-gravity grids are online, the comm channel is open (although not transmitting), and interior lights are at standard setting. There's just one thing missing: the crew.

A closer look around the cockpit reveals the first evidence of something terribly wrong. There's a disgusting pool of grayish-pink paste on the floor beneath a chair by the comm-station panel. White, hard things, tufts of hair and ragged bits of fabric stick out of the puddle. A standard **Medicine** roll confirms that it was once a human. You can call for **Resistance** rolls for the squeamish to resist vomiting at the sight, if you feel nasty.

At that moment, Anders Nash finally tracks down the last remaining crew member in the dorsal engine room. Nash was badly injured in the high-speed launch from Luna. The only way he could heal himself quickly was by absorbing living biomass. (He needs Kriso to go to ground on Mars, so didn't consume the doc.) The *Freya's* crew was the perfect resource. Nash has already killed three crew members (one on the bridge, one in sick bay, another in a cargo bay), and now closes on the last one. The intercom is on throughout the ship, and characters hear the horrific screams of the last member as Nash absorbs her body. The scream reverberates throughout the ship



Basic Layout: *Freya*

The transport is a modified Banji Falcon (see *Trinity*, page 285). The cockpit and cabins are located at the front of the ship. The main hatch is on the deck below the cockpit, and above the crew quarters. It opens directly into the ship's central "intersection," where tubes to various parts of the craft — cockpit, crew quarters, sick bay, cargo bays, maintenance tubes — converge. The small sick bay, located on the Falcon's starboard side, can function as an escape pod. It can be fired automatically from the cockpit, or manually within sick bay. There is also an emergency hatch on the roof of the cockpit.

Floor panels in the forward section are equipped with pseudo-gravity grids, but the tubes and cargo bays are not. This speeds travel through the tubes and makes moving cargo easier.

The craft's hold is bisected, with service tubes running the interior length of each bay from the forward section to the engines. Each cargo pod has interior hatches at both ends, opening onto the ship's forward section and the engine area, respectively. Each bay also has a large, exterior hatch for unloading cargo. Pods can be detached (or jettisoned, if need be) from the rest of the ship, allowing the Falcon to exchange full cargo loads for empty ones without having to take the time to unload the contents.

Freya also has armaments, to defend against pirates and other attackers. The ship has front-mounted, dual, light coilguns (total Accuracy: +1, Damage: 6d10 [10] L); two dorsal, light laser cannons (each has Accuracy: +1, Damage: 5d10 [5] L); and a ventral, heavy laser cannon turret (Accuracy: +2, Damage: 8d10 [5] L). The coilguns and light laser cannons are controlled from the bridge, but the heavy laser cannon must be operated from the turret.



for several seconds — a horrendous sound unlike anything the characters have ever heard. It almost seems as if the woman's soul is being ripped out.

The application of Aberrant power in this way, combined with the crew member's hideous death, causes a psionic shock wave. Each player must roll permanent **Psi** as a Bashing damage effect against his character. Armor offers no protect against this, but **Stamina** may be subtracted from any Bashing attack. (See **Trinity**, page 192, for more details on psionic backlash.)

The Last Survivor

The last murder victim's scream should startle the characters, to say the least. Don't give them a chance to recover. As the echoes die down, the characters hear the faint cries of a man over the intercom: "No, please! Stop! What are you doing?!" This is the exhausted Kriso calling out to Nash. Kriso has witnessed Nash's absolute lack of conscience firsthand. Time spent in the canister with the Aberrant opened Kriso's eyes to what he's really been dealing with on the biorg project.

The characters can't identify where the voices originate, but they find out quickly enough when they search the ship. Kriso — pale, gaunt and obviously

terrified — sprawls on one of the two beds in sick bay. (Another pool of biopaste is near the door.) Kriso does not appear to be a threat in any way. The doc is ecstatic to see the characters; he trips over his words in his haste to tell the characters how he came to be on *Freya*.

Kriso feels certain that his usefulness to Nash is close to an end. Kriso is willing to take his chances with the *Æon Trinity* if it means saving himself from whatever the Aberrant has planned. Kriso finally understands how criminal the biorg project was, and is prepared to face justice. Yet only he understands the danger the group faces with Anders Nash on board; the doc recognizes the characters as his only hope for survival.

Kriso babbles that he and the Aberrant seemed to drift forever before being picked up by *Freya*. Nash was injured, but was able to absorb the crewman who opened the canister. Nash then set out after the rest of the crew to restore his health. The Aberrant took out the pilot in the cockpit (after the victim opened a comm channel, but before he could actually transmit an SOS). A third crew member was killed in sick bay, before the escape pod could be fired. The last hid

from Nash for some time, but was finally caught shortly after the characters arrived.

Kriso was left on his own throughout the hunt. The doc could do little but crawl to sick bay and use the facilities to heal himself (his latrosis abilities aren't advanced enough to have healed the five Lethal Health Levels he sustained on takeoff from Luna).

Kriso divulges that individuals involved in the biorg project are staying at Summit Center on Mars until a lab facility is completed. Indeed, Kriso knows that when Nash cracked the Willoms' system and arranged to have his own canister made, the Aberrant also found information on contacting Dr. Doris Ashiluna, a rex transferred from Beaulac Clinic to Mars. The Willoms have undoubtedly set out to find Ashiluna, and that's what Nash plans to do as well.

Enter the Aberrant

Nash heard Kriso's cries over the intercom, too, and has listened in on the doc's panicked relation of recent events. Nash bears down on the sick bay, hoping to take the characters by surprise. A clairsentient with active **Danger Sense** may recognize the imminent threat, giving the characters two turns to prepare for Nash's arrival. A character who keeps watch in the tube outside sick bay sees Nash swarm forward, but has time to alert the team (allowing all players a standard **Initiative** roll). Nash gets a free turn to attack by surprise if there's no acting clairsentient in the group, or if no one was on guard.

This fight should be dramatic and terrifying. The psions face an Aberrant, probably for the first time. To make matters worse, characters are trapped in the sick bay or in the two-meter wide corridor beyond, with Nash between them and the rest of the ship. The characters must also be careful of the weapons they use; slugthrowers and lasers could cause serious structural damage to the ship (Nash can't survive in a vacuum, either, so he's just as interested in maintaining *Freya's* integrity). Play up the close confines, the dramatic speed with which Nash moves, and Kriso's panicked screams. The characters should know that one wrong move will mean the death of them all.

The characters are meant to win the fight against Nash, but don't make it easy on them. Kriso lends a hand if things are going badly for the characters. He has just enough psi reserves to use **Lacerate**, which should give the psions an opportunity to rally and finish the Aberrant off. The characters could also retreat into the sick bay and launch the escape pod; Nash would be sucked into

the hard vacuum of space. This leaves the characters adrift, but the pod's automatic emergency beacon attracts Chinese rescue teams within 30 minutes. The characters should win in the end, but should know how close they came to defeat.

Final Approach

As the characters catch their breath after the battle, they hear a voice broadcast over the ship's intercom. It proclaims in Chinese (Cantonese, to be exact), and then in English (since the ship has a FSA registry): "Attention approaching craft. You are on a terminal trajectory. Alter course immediately or you will be destroyed. You have one minute to comply." The message repeats every 15 seconds, offering fewer seconds before destruction. A look out a porthole confirms that multiple Chinese attack craft pace *Freya*, and were presumably scrambled to intercept the transport after picking up its transponder signal.

A character who receives a standard **Command** roll knows that the Chinese don't take chances with this sort of thing. Mars' atmosphere is not substantial enough to burn up a ship traveling at *Freya's* velocity. Impact with the planet is as devastating as triggering a fusion warhead, and the ship is on course for a terraforming station near Mars' equator. The Chinese patrol is fully prepared to destroy the craft before it enters the Martian atmosphere.

(If the characters are in the escape pod, they don't hear the patrol's warning. The psions are picked up by a Chinese military transport supporting the fighters. The characters cannot stop the destruction of *Freya* or their own ship.)

The characters must respond to the warning and change course in the time remaining or the Chinese ships (six in all; use the stats for the Bakuhatsu E-15 Fighter in **Trinity**, page 284) open fire. The re-routing pilot must battle against the ship's tremendous forward momentum and Mars' gravitational pull. A **Pilot** roll (+3 difficulty) is required to change course before the ship exceeds the Chinese safe-approach limit. Two characters can also use Teamwork in this roll, acting as pilot and co-pilot. All other characters must make **Athletics** rolls (+1 difficulty) to keep from being thrown off-balance when the ship changes course (no rolls are required for characters who are buckled in).

Changing *Freya's* course is also difficult because of the massive object — the characters' ship — that's still attached to it. If that vessel is detached, rolls to control *Freya* become easier (+2

difficulty). Of course, both ships become targets for the Chinese if they exceed the safe-approach limit. The characters could also return to their ship and let the patrol crafts target *Freya*. Getting out in time with Kriso and Nash's body is challenging, but possible.

The characters might even decide to open fire on the Chinese ships, but doing so is suicidal. The characters are outgunned, and even more patrol craft arrive to support the first squadron.

If the characters pull *Freya* (and/or their own craft) out of the dive, the Chinese patrol keeps them in near orbit until officials learn the details of what happened aboard the derelict. Word of an Aberrant, alive or dead, brings a squad of heavily armed and armored Chinese soldiers on board *Freya*. Both ships are searched thoroughly before either craft is allowed to land.

Yellow Horse

If the characters traveled on the *Yellow Horse*, Annis stays on board the entire time. He is prepared to cut loose and leave the characters to their fate if it looks like an Aberrant may get on board his ship, or if the characters jettison in the escape pod. Annis isn't disloyal; he simply under-

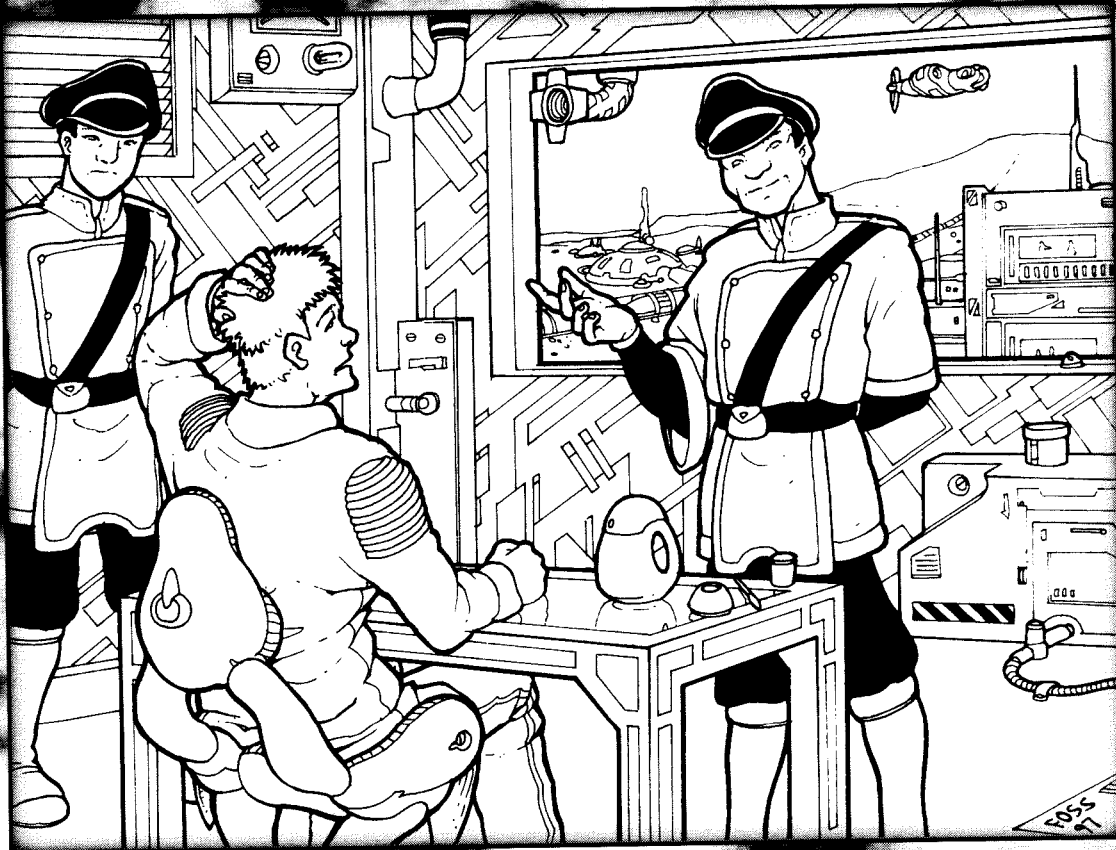
stands the dangers that an Aberrant represents. He also makes the piloting rolls for *Yellow Horse* (Pilot 8).

Landing

The ships are escorted to Shihuang Base near Wanjing. Chinese military officials are on hand to question the characters extensively. Shihuang personnel want to know where the Aberrant came from, what happened to it, and if there are any others lurking around. Having Nash's corpse is a point in the characters' favor, and Kriso supports any story the characters tell (the doc hopes for leniency from Æon and the psi orders down the road).

This scene should be roleplayed, but not to the point of tedium. A series of officers in uniform — but without rank insignias — bombard the characters with questions, attempting to trip them up on inconsistencies. There is a telepath present, but she is directed to scan for what the characters know about Aberrants.

The Chinese don't know the characters are pursuing leads to the biorg project. However, the Ministry telepath may stumble across the project since Aberrants are directly involved in it. Chinese



knowledge of events on Luna does not damn the characters, although the military takes Kriso into custody if it learns of his involvement. (He's never heard from again.)

The characters spend an uncomfortable, though not torturous night in bare security cells. The Chinese feel that they've uncovered the pertinent details of the situation by the next morning, and let the characters leave Shihuang Base. Officials make it very clear that characters should expect to be under scrutiny, and should expect to be expelled for any hint of reckless adventurism or other wrongdoing. The Chinese appreciate the death of an Aberrant, but don't like loose cannons.

Welcome to Mars

The characters now have some very useful leads. The trajectory of the Willoms' canister led to Mars, but almost anyone could have picked up the container. Martian officials claim to have no information on any suspicious canisters, so it's likely that someone was waiting for the Willoms. The characters learned back in *Remnants of the Dead* (and more recently from Kriso) that Dr. Doris Ashiluna was transferred from Beaulac Clinic to Mars' Summit Center. She is the best lead the characters have.

The obvious step is to head for Summit Center. The facility currently hosts the Annual Terraforming Conference, which should provide ideal cover for the investigators. However, the characters discover media reps waiting for them when they leave Shihuang Base. Freya's arrival was dramatic, so it's only natural that the media wants to find out what happened. A few well-placed bribes among the Shihuang staff turned up the word "Aberrant." The media is hungry for details from the characters: Did they actually defeat an Aberrant? How did they encounter it? What was its intent? Are there more around Mars?

The characters are under no obligation to answer questions, but they need to get used to the limelight — the reporters don't let up. This is a major event on Mars, and the characters are treated like minor celebrities over the next few days. Their faces are all over the local news, people congratulate them on kicking Aberrant ass, or ask them what it was like to face the enemy. In short, all this attention makes it impossible for the characters to maintain a low profile and stage a quiet investigation; the Willoms know the characters are closing in.

Reaching Summit Center

There are two ways to get to Summit Center: by maglev train or by hopper. The former is much more scenic, but takes longer; the latter is fast, but has its own limitation. Summit Center is always on the move, so the facility has no landing platforms of its own. Hoppers drop off travelers at the next magtrain terminal along the center's route. People then hop in trams that run along the heavy magrail track, hooking up with the center's docking ports. (Independent hopper flights to Summit are absolutely not permitted.)

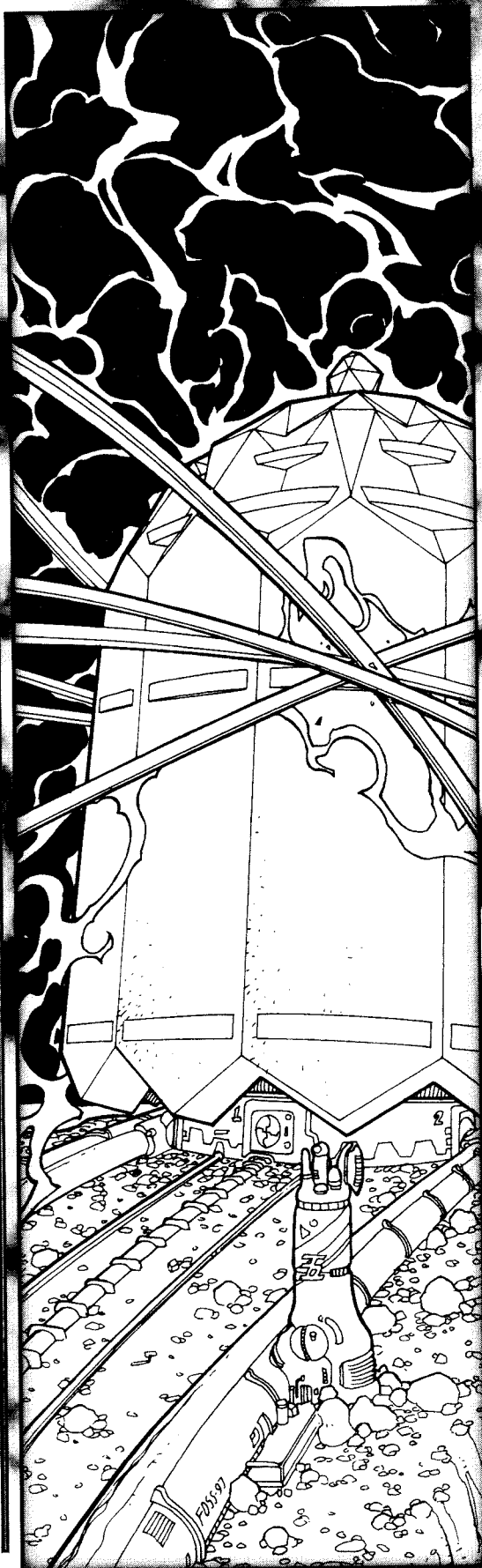
Maglev trams run from Wanjing up Olympus Mons. The ride lets characters see the sights along the way. The rail line passes terraforming test sites on the lowlands between Wanjing and Olympus, and then enters a two-kilometer-long tunnel through the scarp at the foot of the mountain. The rail re-emerges atop the scarp and enters a series of switchbacks all the way to the top of the volcano. There are scheduled stops along the way should characters wish to see the landscape or listen to Chinese recordings that tout the glories of humanity's achievements on Mars (no one other than Chinese contributors are mentioned).

It takes four hours to get to Summit Center if the characters don't dawdle. The trip takes as much as eight hours if the characters decide to see the sights. The team arrives at Summit Center around noon if it acts quickly. Travel time can be used to introduce Ramirez or to allow the characters to make plans.

Inside the Center

There are always small groups of people throughout Summit Center, from tourists to architecture students to scientists. Meeting halls are also available for any number of functions. The Annual Terraforming Conference currently meets, and events are just getting underway as the characters arrive. The event draws about 600 people, mainly Chinese and Orgotek officials, with a selection of Brazilian, UAN and even Qin representatives. Minor functionaries from the psi orders, scientists, engineers and political observers from many Earth nations with terraforming ambitions also attend.

The atmosphere is intense, but friendly. Most people most consider themselves partners in the effort to change the face of Mars, regardless of individual affiliations. They jockey for position and prestige, but not at the expense of the work itself.



Most conversations overheard around the lobby and in every public area are far beyond the technical grasp of most characters. They deal in the minutiae of terraforming and other related, scientific endeavors.

The Annual Terraforming Conference occupies Summit Center's lobby and conference areas, the latter of which are arranged in a triangular pattern around the center's axis. *Ad hoc* gatherings take place in smaller rooms or guest rooms, located on the upper floors. Many conventioners take the time between meetings to gawk at the structure or at its breathtaking view. There are crowds around the windows constantly, holding conversations that range from "Wow!" to "This reminds me of Kaldesko's theory about primordial-stratosphere seeding...."

Bystanders

Another large group of people at the center is a contingent of 50 students and a half-dozen chaperones who examine Summit as part of architecture and social-management classes. They're a happy, excited bunch, enjoying a rare change of pace from the drudgery of life in Wanjing.

The students' life experiences are quite limited — Wanjing is large, but not a teeming metropolis like the cities of Earth. The characters' recent escapade makes them subjects of adolescent curiosity. Characters willing to answer questions and tell stories acquire loyal followers.

About half of the students are Chinese. The other half are a mix of Europeans, central and southern Africans, Indians, Latinos, and perhaps a token Nordamerican or two. The chaperones are all graduate students or junior engineers; all staid, Chinese males.

Disaster

Kurt Hills, the mercenary whom Ashiluna has hired, inadvertently destroys Summit Center when he stages his assassination attempt. Hills follows the characters to Summit Center (he rides in the same tram car as they do) and decides to strike in a public place, where he can escape easily. He's dealing with multiple targets, so decides to strike quickly rather than precisely — by firing a grenade into the characters' midst. Ashiluna would not condone this act, but has no idea of what Hills plans.

(Hills decides to include the characters in the explosion if Ramirez is the true target. He hopes to make the attack look like the work of Aberrant sympathizers; Ramirez just "happens" to be caught in the blast.)

Caring for the Wounded

The center's clinic is on the sixth floor. It's staffed by an Æsculapian (Basel-trained, but not associated with the biorg project) and human physicians. The vitakinet and two medics rush down to the lobby, arriving eight turns after the blast goes off. They apply first aid, and take any wounded back to the clinic if emergency surgery is required. Characters may use their own medical training before the medics appear, but the Æsculapian takes over once he arrives.

The attack occurs shortly after the characters arrive at Summit Center, when they're near the central shaft that conducts energy throughout the place. Designed as part of the lobby's overall aesthetic, the vertical power core draws visitors' attention almost immediately. There are any number of reasons why characters would be near it; the shaft is in the middle of things, and a map display of the center is located nearby. This display, less than a dozen meters from the core, has an interactive schematic and holograms describing the facility's history and innovative design aspects.

Hills has been on Mars for a few months and has been to Summit a couple of times, so he's reasonably familiar with its layout. He slips up to a fourth-floor balcony that overlooks the cavernous lobby. He sets up behind a structural beam, takes out his miniature grenade launcher (see Technology, page 108) and fires.

However, as Hills pulls the trigger, the constantly turning structure rotates just enough to reflect sunlight into his eyes. The fragmentation grenade goes wide, exploding only a few meters from the power core — roughly five meters from the characters — among scientists discussing terraforming theories. The scientists are probably killed. Roll damage for the grenade as normal (see **Trinity**, page 265) to determine if any of the characters are caught in the blast.

The place erupts into pandemonium; people scream, alert klaxons sound and crowds scatter, trampling individuals. It's difficult to determine where the grenade came from (**Awareness** roll at +2 difficulty to trace the firing arc, and then another **Awareness** roll in a resisted action against

Hills' **Stealth** 8 to spot the attacker). The assassin heads to a maintenance shaft and then to Ashiluna's room on the 12th level, where the Willoms are also staying. The characters may spot Hills, but must decide if pursuing takes priority over helping blast victims (chasing also involves pushing through dozens of panicking innocents and finding a way up). Characters don't have a clear shot at Hills given all the confusion.

Two Pan-Martian Security Corps officers (each equipped with reinforced clothing, an armor vest and a taser pistol) search for the source of the blast, and spring into action if the characters point out Hills. It's best to run this scene as a series of combat turns, complete with Initiative. Combat plays out until Hills is dead, stopped or escapes.

Chasing characters lose sight of Hills when he enters a maintenance shaft that runs along one of Summit Center's bands. There are exits from the shaft at every level of the facility, so Hills could (and does) leave the shaft at random and continue up through another shaft, by stairs or even in an elevator.

It's unlikely that the characters find the Willoms at this time, but all is not lost. Center management calls for assistance, which arrives within 30 minutes via hopper from the main security office inside Olympus Mons' crater. All exits are sealed until that time. The characters' celebrity status makes trouble once again; officers request that they help search Summit Center for what's believed to be some kind of terrorist.

Status Check

Technicians check out the central power core, but don't look as closely as they should due to the noise and distractions of panicked civilians. The blast damage looks cosmetic, mostly scorching and a slight dent (characters who take a look with **Engineering** come to the same conclusion). That is the only damage — at that time. However, hairline stress fractures expand due to minor fluctuations within the power core and due to Summit's slight shifting as it moves along its rail line.

The power core operates for a few more minutes and then explodes. The characters undoubtedly spend time leading up to the explosion trying to track down the "terrorist" or trying to find the Willoms and Ashiluna.



Meanwhile...

Ashiluna is outraged by Hills' botched attempt (the mercenary isn't too happy himself), and is even more upset that Hills came straight to her quarters. Hills is confident that he wasn't followed, or that anyone saw him. The Willoms, healed but still tender after their trip, side with Ashiluna. Tensions mount as the group bickers.

Four floors down, the surveying Option-8 team sent to liquidate the Willoms takes advantage of this opportunity. The force is led by Bey Si-Janule, who saw and recorded Hills' assassination attempt firsthand. She decides that Hills shouldn't be allowed to live, either. She orders her team (which consists of as many agents as there are characters) to move, intending to strike, plant evidence of the Willoms' guilt, and depart with center visitors on the approaching security hoppers.

However, an almost inconceivable disaster occurs before this dramatic confrontation takes place.

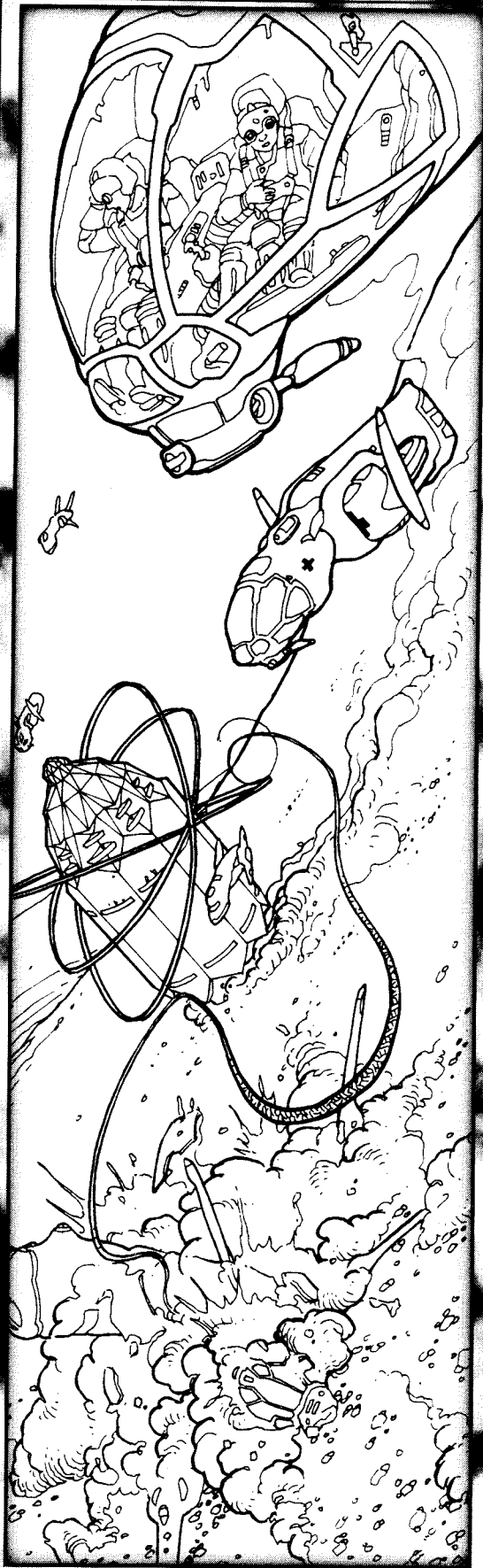
The Center Cannot Hold

The hairline fracture in the power shaft rup-

tures and the system explodes. Lights flicker throughout the center. Color-customized walls revert to normal appearance. Floors shudder in time with the power core's fluctuations. The entire structure wobbles under the strain. Curious students approach the core. Plasma outgassing shoots up the shaft and immolates them.

The explosion also shatters one of the center's support bands. The whole structure teeters for a moment, tips and then plunges down the side of Olympus Mons. The interior of the center remains relatively upright due to the gyroscopic effect of the facility's bands, but the exterior breaks away in large chunks; it's only a matter of time before the whole place shatters and everyone is killed. A successful **Athletics** roll (+1 difficulty) must be made for everyone in the facility to avoid taking one Bashing Health Level of damage when the center begins its descent.

Within moments, half of Summit's pseudo-gravity grids go offline. Automated systems like elevators and sliding doors shut down. Communications, climate control and security systems fail and reactivate as backup power systems struggle to activate.



Add to all of this a thundering noise as Summit tumbles, the strobe-light effect of sun- and starlight reflected throughout the structure, and the screams of the frightened and wounded.

Escape is virtually impossible. The building interior shakes unpredictably. Exterior bands rotate with increasing speed, buckling under the weight and stress. Some break and whip about like giant garden hoses. Shards of rock shift loose and rumble down after Summit Center. Jumping from the structure is suicide.

Chaos Ensues

Si-Janule's team is a few meters from Ashiluna's apartment when Summit goes over the edge. The power brownout turns the walls translucent, giving each group a clear view of the other. The Willoms' initial relief at seeing the familiar black-clad Option-8 figures turns to terror when the group hauls out weapons and rushes toward the door. Hills responds instinctively, his combat training coming to the fore. The mercenary draws a large autopistol and fires through the wall at Option-8. (Resolve Hills' fire as you will; if you think the characters have sufficient time and strength to take on a full Option-8 squad, as well as Hills and the Willoms, shots fired shatter walls but do little further harm. Otherwise, Hills can take out some of the attackers.)

The characters should be searching for their targets when disaster strikes, which is followed by the sound of gunfire. It takes characters a few turns to take the stairs to the 12th floor, where they see the Option-8 crew taking cover behind a support beam at the opposite end of the corridor (Si-Janule has pulled the team back to regroup). The Willoms, Ashiluna and Hills take cover during the chaos.

The situation gets very complicated, very quickly. Option-8 is under orders to tie up all loose ends, including the characters. The Willoms know the characters are pursuing them, and assume that the team is working with Option-8 (at least until the characters and Option-8 start shooting at each other). Ashiluna is just a scientist and wants no part of violence (the irony of this, considering her recent research, escapes her). Hills doesn't have a clue what's actually going on, and just wants out. Summit security personnel can also be drawn in if you want to make matters really difficult. They might be the support that characters need to win the day — at least before the building comes to a crashing halt.

Everyone except Ashiluna reacts violently toward the characters. The doc has no problem with being taken into custody; she doesn't want to die. The Willoms might consider siding with the characters, given the choice between Option-8 and the potential lenience of the Æon Trinity. Si-Janule sends one of her agents down the stairs on her side of the corridor to sneak over and behind the characters if she feels she can get away with it. She orders a full retreat down the stairway if the Option-8 team faces defeat.

The characters have a reasonable chance of capturing Ashiluna and the Willoms alive (Hills' never-say-die attitude probably gets him killed). Option-8 agents are consummate professionals and they use their skills to try to retreat from the characters and escape Summit Center.

All this occurs while the entire building tumbles recklessly down the mountainside. The interior structure's constant shifting, the debris shaking loose, and the thunderous crashing sounds of the descent create an especially chaotic environment in which to attempt combat. All Physical-based rolls are at a minimum +1 difficulty, and characters cannot sprint. Further, some wall panels change surface tone spontaneously, going from translucence to reflective mirror (or vice versa). This makes sneaking up on targets frustrating, if not potentially suicidal.

The Sudden Stop at the End

Summit Center comes to a crashing halt when it hits a plateau that juts from the side of Olympus Mons. This should be the climax of the characters' battle with the Willoms and Option-8.

Each player should make one last **Athletics** roll (+2 difficulty) as the whole place shifts 90°. Characters tumble and debris flies everywhere. Bioglass panels shatter and structural supports snap, creating a shower of crystal and metal. A failed roll inflicts three Bashing Health Levels. Many people are killed outright.

Evacuation begins as soon as the survivors come to their senses. Rescue vehicles land in swarms. Two lifters drop cutting crews to burn holes in the upper sections of the structure, enabling those near the "top" (what was the lobby a short time ago) to get out without having to drop through the remains of the building. Survivors and the injured are rushed to nearby Wanjing.

Use this opportunity to stage one final chase if characters haven't had enough. Si-Janule, an-

other Option-8 agent, or perhaps even the Willoms escape custody and try to escape. The chase is surreal; characters pass through sideways corridors, and possibly even out onto the harsh Martian surface.

The atmosphere is dangerously thin; rescuers rush protective gear and respirator masks to survivors. Brief exposure to the Martian air — for a number of minutes equal to a character's **Endurance Skill Total** — does no lasting harm. It's not unlike being on the top of a high mountain on Earth, where the air is so thin that strenuous activity can cause blackouts. A character who breathes Martian air longer than his **Endurance Skill Total** in minutes takes one Bashing Health Level for each subsequent minute until he gets a respirator mask or dies.

In the aftermath of the crash, the characters encounter Chinese officials again at Wanjing. The officers aren't interested in whom the characters have captured, other than to take surviving suspects into custody pending interrogation. The characters aren't arrested immediately, but are subjected to a new round of questioning.

The Martian officials eventually confirm that the characters weren't responsible for the destruction of Summit Center. The characters are free to leave, with no mention made of what happened to anyone whom the characters captured. Soldiers ignore characters' efforts to plead, cajole or threaten to gain access to the suspects. However, a Ministry agent arrives and asks the characters to follow him.

The telepath introduces himself as Robert Wei, an affiliate of the Æon Trinity. He claims to have been involved in another investigation, and just arrived. Wei apologizes for the characters' incarceration, but invites them to sit in on the interrogation of their suspects. The characters may argue that they have jurisdiction, that the suspects should be turned over to them, but Wei doesn't bend. Æon has no true jurisdiction, and the telepath is not at liberty to turn potentially dangerous individuals over to private citizens. He recommends that the characters and the Trinity are best served by cooperating with Martian officials.

Conclusions

Serevitek Kriso, Doris Ashiluna and Patrice and Andromeda Willom are the only ones who know anything of substance about the Huang-Marr Project and what has happened since. Hills knows

only that he was hired by Ashiluna to kill the characters (or Ramirez) for ¥500,000 a target. Captured Option-8 agents say absolutely nothing. They can be turned over to the Ministry, which is bound to learn something useful from them, but the order might not share with the characters.

It's quite likely that a number of prominent antagonists — most notably Hills and the Option-8 agents — are killed in combat or the crash. In that case, characters may learn what they need to know from dead enemies' minicoms.

Æsculapian Reveals

The characters learn the full details of the Huang-Marr Project from either (or both) of Serevitek Kriso or Doris Ashiluna. Kriso needs little urging to divulge details; he acts like a man in confessional seeking absolution for his sins. Ashiluna is a little more pragmatic. She bargains for protection from further assassination attempts, and for leniency for coming forward (of course, she really only "came forward" because she was captured...).

The characters learn that the biorg project involved implanting psion subjects with advanced internal bioware. These bioapps were designed to boost psionic powers and even enable subjects to utilize other psi abilities (as generated by the bioware itself). Aberrant taint was incorporated into the biotechnology, and more recent experiments involved living Aberrants who helped design biotech devices. Not many docs know of the Huang-Marr Project; it was handled with utmost secrecy. Estimations of the numbers of docs involved range from 100 (Kriso) to 1,000 (Ashiluna). The only projects known to be off-planet were the two on Luna; Ashiluna was supposed to establish a new one on Mars. No one can say if more experiments are being conducted on Earth.

Neither Kriso nor Ashiluna ever met their superior, having dealt with her entirely via computer agent. The agent itself appeared as Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom. This "Minerva" gave the docs their orders and supplied them with the resources necessary to work on the initial biorg project. "Minerva" was also the one who established contact with members of Orgotek. Apparently computer agent orders were transmitted from Earth, although neither Kriso nor Ashiluna can say from where.

Orgotek Reveals

Patrice and Andromeda Willom seem more afraid of the people they work for than they are of the Chinese government or the Æon Trinity. The two are virtually impossible to crack — even telepaths have a tough time getting a read on them until their t-blockers are discovered.

Even then, breaking the Willoms requires rigorous questioning, drugs and telepathy. When they do crack, their information is frustratingly incomplete. They confirm that select individuals in Orgotek were brought in to develop the Huang-Marr Project. Apparently an electrokinetic named Horace Meeks recognized the viability of incorporating Aberrants into the program. As far as the Willoms' know, Linma Telcom was the first site to explore this possibility. They claim that Meeks established the Linma site and then relocated to the Great Lakes District of North America. (This lead introduces the events of **Passage Through Shadow**, the next book in the **Darkness Revealed** series.)

Option-8 proves a very tough nut to crack. There are no records on it, and information gained from captured members, even by use of Telepathy, is sketchy. The characters learn that the organization is secret and associated with Orgotek in some way. It doesn't seem to have been involved directly in the Huang-Marr Project. Its purpose is to take care of problems....

Aftermath

The characters emerge from interrogations with many answers, but with new and greater concerns. Someone powerful is behind the Huang-Marr Project, and there are still others out there who know about it. How far does the conspiracy reach?

The Æon Trinity wants to know more, but is pleased with the characters' successes thus far, and wishes to reward them. Compensation could range from money to significant favors. The Trinity encourages characters to choose the latter, but you can negotiate a cash settlement for each psion if they're so inclined. This is a perfect opportunity for Ramirez to give a fresh pitch to encourage characters to join Æon if they haven't already.

It's impossible to cover up the destruction of Summit Center. Chinese authorities assume control of the investigation immediately. They confirm that an explosive device ruptured the structure's power core. Officials claim that the



explosion was set by Kurt Hills, a disgruntled Nordamerican who performed an individual act of terrorism against the Chinese people and their allies. The statement stands no matter how or to whom the characters protest. Ultimately, the truth has little direct bearing on China, the Wanjing colony or Summit Center itself, and stating the truth to the public would bring undue attention to Mars. China doesn't want the Red Planet to be associated with rogue psions or secret conspiracies.

It's virtually impossible to contain news of corruption among the psi orders. Indeed, Æon leaks the details to the other orders, although any inquiries the characters make into the other orders meet with polite denial.

The Æsculapian and Orgotek orders are the focus of a major scandal. Both make outraged statements proclaiming their innocence, and dedicate themselves to discovering those responsible. However, it's obvious that there is more to events than the work of a few fringe extremists. A number of people scrutinize the two orders; it seems only a matter of time before the truth comes out. What that will do to two of the largest psi orders is anyone's guess.

Æsculapians and Orgotek personnel are divided in their responses to events. Some appreciate the characters' role in rooting out a great evil. Others hate the characters for intruding, and believe that the truth could have been uncovered less destructively. Still others bear personal grudges against the characters, having lost friends, partners or lovers in the roundup.

The public at large doesn't learn the full truth of psi order conspiracies, but leaks occur in many places. Rumors spread of corruption within the orders, of bizarre new psions with incredible powers, of conspiracies to take control of the UN, of plans to subjugate humanity itself, and even that psions have joined forces with Aberrants.

The characters win a bitter victory. They've set off a powder keg. Corruption among the orders could turn psion against psion, human against psion, and even human against human. The characters must now address the consequences of the biorg project, but also of their actions in uncovering it. Time will tell if humanity can recover from the grim truth the characters have unveiled.

Other Endings

You are free to end this series here rather than continue on with **Passage Through Shadow**. The following are a few options that may be used to

draw events to a close.

- **The hidden base:** The new research facility on Mars is operational. The characters must track it down and round up those who are involved. This could be handled as a straightforward raid, or the characters could go undercover to gather as much information on the project as possible.

- **The Willoms as masterminds:** The conspiracy ends with Patrice and Andromeda. The two used their own resources and connections to draw

in like-minded scientists. Some underlings may have escaped, but the characters have captured the ones behind it all.

- **Spilling the beans:** The characters may believe that humanity deserves to know the truth about the Huang-Marr Project. After all, is revealing the truth any worse than allowing rumors to run rampant? Do the characters have the nerve to stand against the combined power of the psi orders and the Æon Trinity, who all seem to want to keep the truth under wraps?

Technology

- **L-K MiniLauncher:** This compact, one-handed grenade launcher is perfect for the mercenary on the go. The MiniLauncher fires grenades effectively up to 175 m distant, but must be reloaded after each use. Tech: Ω, Mass: 2, Cost: ••

- **t-blocker:** This device is an experimental bioapp designed by Orgotek that triggers low-level psionic dissonance around the user. The blocker makes it difficult for telepaths to get a decent read on a subject (+3 difficulty to all Mindshare effects against the wearer). The t-blocker requires the wearer to expend one Psi point to sustain the dissonance each time a Mindshare power is used against her. Tech: Ψ, Mass: negligible, Cost: not available commercially

- **Huang-Marr Experimental Bioware Implants:** Huang-Marr implants are highly illegal internal bioware that provide the user with significantly boosted psionic powers. The implants are grafted directly onto nerve and muscle, and incorporate components of Aberrant taint that supposedly cause no harmful side effects. These implants must be formatted to the user to function.

Huang-Marr bioware can do anything that standard bioware can, only better. The average piece of this advanced bioware adds four dice to the user's Psi rolls (effectively acting like +4 Psi), and gives the user access to an additional level of psi power than he possesses on his own. The character can channel psionic effects of one level higher than his natural ability, since the bioware effectively raises all of his current psi Modes by one. The bioware also has a current Psi reserve of 10.

However, after the bioware bonds to the user (anywhere between two weeks and four months), it supplants the user's own Psi with its own. Make a resisted Psi roll between the character's own Psi

rating and the bioapp's 4 Psi for each week that the user retains the bioware. If the bioware scores an extra success in any week, a point of the character's own Psi converts over to the bioapp. So, the character's overall Psi Dice Pool (character's Psi + bioware Psi) remains the same, but his permanent Psi is reduced by one. This loss is permanent, even after the implants are removed. Once the character is reduced to 0 Psi, he goes into catatonic shock and dies. The bioapps can be removed at any time before this, but at a difficulty to the **Medicine** roll equal to the number of converted Psi points (so doctors operating on a character who has lost two Psi to the bioware roll **Medicine** at +2 difficulty).

- **Bakuhatu Lunar Surface Hopper:** This surface-to-surface transport unit has a range of 4000 kilometers, but doesn't pack enough thrust to leave even Luna's weak gravity well. The basic model seats six, plus the pilot, comfortably and has both VTOL and direct-thrust capabilities. The hopper has six equally spaced, spiderlegged landing legs.

A modified, military version like that used by the Boltzmann Security Consortium and the Pan-Martian Security Corps is also available, which has two ventral-turret mounted, light coilguns and double layers of armor over the passenger section.

VT: Hybrid

Tech: Ω

CS: 400 km/h

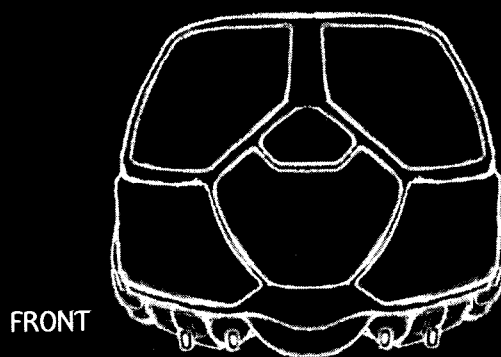
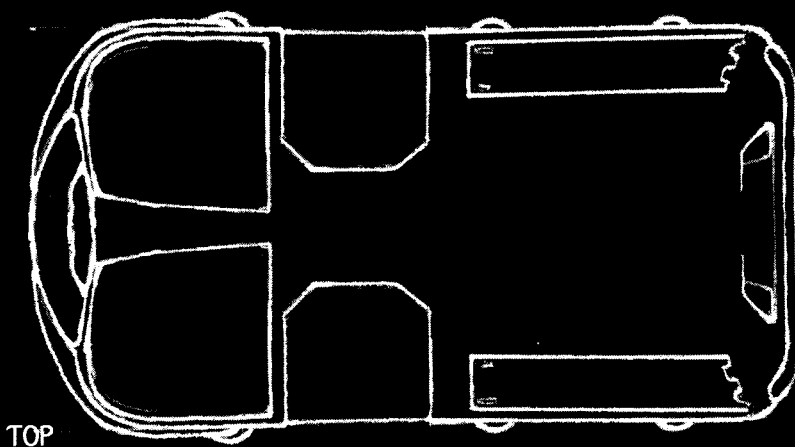
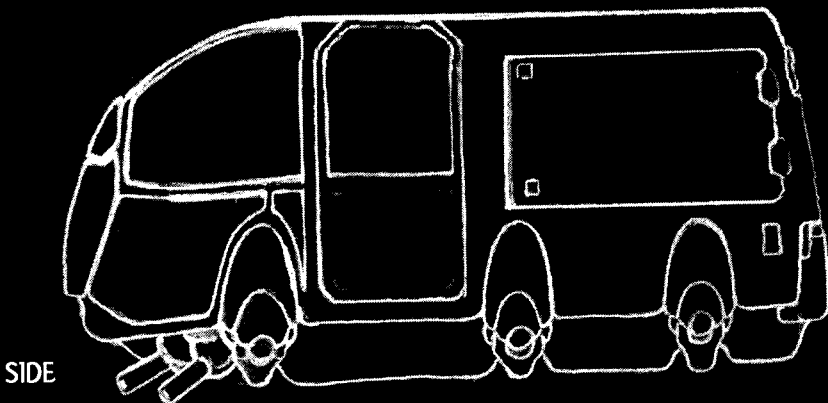
TS: 500 km/h

Handling: 0

Mass: 30

Cost: ••••• • (civilian; military version isn't available commercially)

SURFACE HOPPER



Armor: 3 [10] (military version only)

Weapons: Two light coilguns (Accuracy: 0, Damage: 5d10 [10] L) (military version only)

• **Mashindano Explorer:** This tracked transport vehicle was designed to compete with the popular Orgotek Cicada in the colonies. The cabin has two control seats (although it requires only one driver), with up to eight retractable passenger seats (if those seats are folded in, this area can hold up to eight cubic meters of cargo). The Explorer also has a detachable cargo sled with a 20-cubic-meter capacity. The Explorer can be

equipped for use in vacuum environments (like the Moon) for an additional cost of •.

VT: Track

Tech: Ω

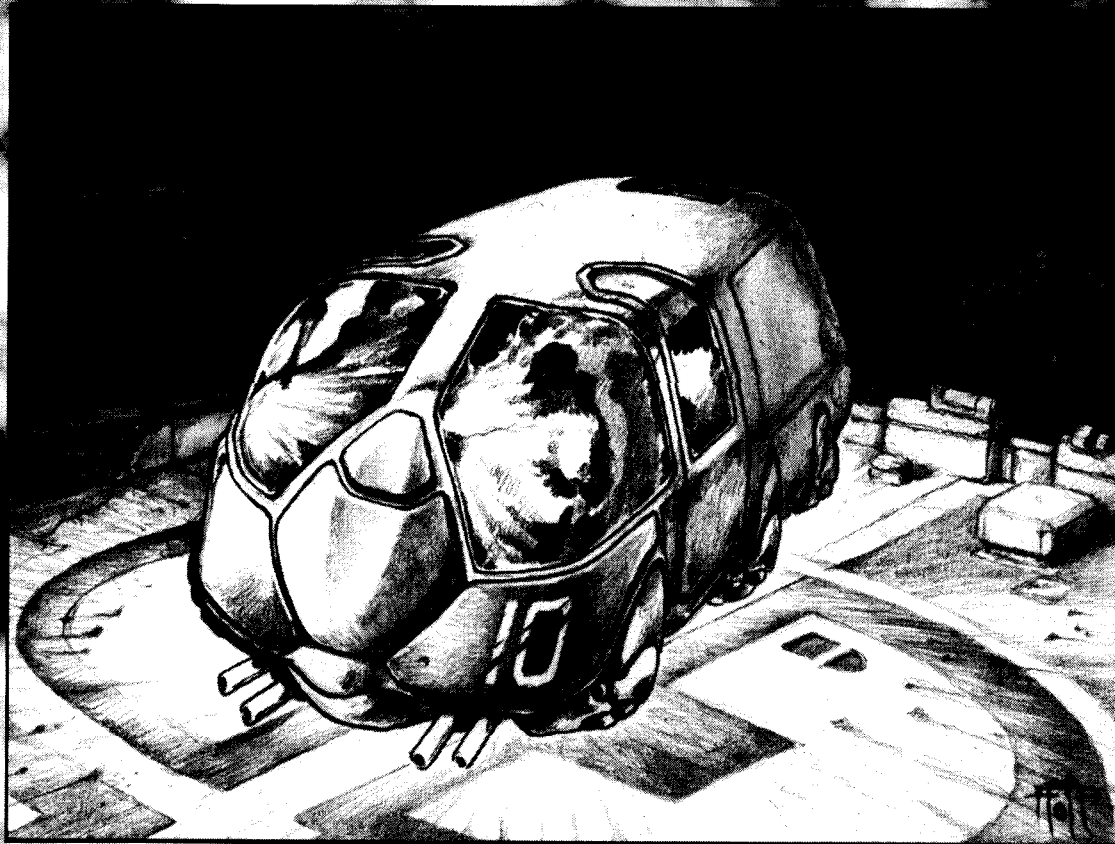
CS: 100 km/h (without cargo sled), 80 km/h (with sled)

TS: 150 km/h (without cargo sled), 95 km/h (with sled)

Handling: 0 (without cargo sled), -1 (with sled)

Mass: 3 (without cargo sled), 5 (with sled)

Cost: ••••



Dramatis Personae

The following are profiles and statistics for key individuals involved in the events of
The Downward Spiral

Bey Si-Janule

An Option-8 operative saw Bey in a rumble on the streets of her native Vladivostok and was impressed enough to offer her work. Bey proved her worth quickly, and also registered as a latent. She was offered a dunk in Orgotek's Prometheus tank multiple times, but resisted. However, she finally realized that she would never achieve the power and control she wanted if she didn't agree to undergo the process. She remained leery of psions even after becoming one herself. Bey requested her transfer to Mars — she visited once shortly after becoming a psion, and thought the Red Planet reminiscent of eastern Siberia in winter — and performs various industrial espionage assignments.

Image: Bey doesn't follow the traditional Option-8 mold. "Nondescript" is her byword. She has grown her hair to shoulder length and dyes it brown. She also wears dull-brown, tinted telescope con-

tacts (they reduce Perception difficulties due to long distance by two). She gets her wardrobe largely from charitable donations, or orders clothes made to match what she sees in charity wards.

Roleplaying Hints: You are borderline autistic, and display no emotion except under the most extreme of circumstances.

Nature: Judge

Allegiance: Option-8

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 5

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 3

Intelligence 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 2

Charisma 2

Willpower: 7

Psi: 3

Aptitude: [Electrokinesis] Electromanipulation 4, Photokinesis 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Devices (contact lenses) 1, Contacts 3, Resources 1, Status (Orgotek) 3

Gear: Orgotek MiniPulse-L laser gauntlet, Orgotek Wasp II pulse laser, reinforced clothing, Wazukana DX70 minicomp (Chris agent, beacon), vocoder (Arabic, English, Chinese, Nihonjin, Qin, Portuguese, Swahili)

Abilities

Might 1

Athletics 3, Drive 2,

Martial Arts 4, Pilot 3,

Firearms 3, Stealth 4

Endurance 2

Abilities

Artillery 2, Awareness 3,

Investigation 4

Bureaucracy 1, Intrusion 3,

Linguistics 2, Medicine 1,

Survival 3

Abilities

Intimidation 2

Command 1,

Interrogation 3

Savvy 3



Doris Ashiluna

Doris is middle-aged, and one of the older psions in existence. She was a medical technician for decades before coming to the attention of the Æsculapian Order. Her latency was minimal, but combined with her existing medical training Doris made a suitable psion applicant.

Already in her late 40s by the time she underwent the Prometheus Effect, Doris was emotionally shaken by the experience. This mental instability was imperceptible at first, but as her attunement grew so did her psychosis.

Doris came to the attention of the Huang-Marr conspirators — Jerzy Grabowski, to be exact. They felt that with the proper guidance she could provide significant contributions to the biorg project. Grabowski relied on Doris to carry out his orders without worrying about morality.



While this doesn't help her instability any, Doris has proven to be a benefit to the Huang-Marr Project.

Image: Ashiluna's background is a mix of Sri Lankan and Ethiopian: She has an almost jet-black complexion, with dark-brown eyes and black hair. She is scarcely more than a meter-and-a-half tall, and has a wiry build.

Roleplaying Hints: You have a calm manner. Others gradually realize that you *never* show signs of excitement, and become worried — not for you, but for themselves.

Nature: Scholar

Allegiance: Huang-Marr conspirators

Physical Attributes

Strength 2

Dexterity 2

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 5

Abilities

Athletics 1

Abilities

Awareness 3

Bureaucracy 4,

Engineering 2, Linguistics (English, Chinese, Latin) 3, Medicine 4, Science 4

Meditation 3

Abilities

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 2

Charisma 2

Command 2

Etiquette 1

Aptitude: [Vitakinesis] Healing 3, Mentatis 3, Algesis 2

Willpower: 7

Psi: 6

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Mentor 3, Resources 4, Status (Æsculapians) 4

Gear: Business suit, Steinhardt P-CC minicomputer (Evita agent), vocoder (Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Swahili)

Kurt Hills

Three generations ago, the Hills family was part of the American elite; fabulously rich and well-connected. The Aberrants wiped all that out. None of the subsequent generations have forgiven the world for their problems, and have sought revenge through a variety of means. For most of Kurt's family, that meant getting involved in politics or industry as part of the Federated States' military-corporate complex.

Kurt enlisted in the Federated States Military. He didn't take well to following orders, however, and was fast on his way to courtmartial. His combat skills came to the attention of the Central Security Agency, the FSA's premiere espionage organization. They felt Kurt's temperament was well-suited to what they were looking for.

Kurt took easily to being an assassin, but his rebellious attitude proved to be a problem even within the CSA. After a few years he sensed that

his usefulness to the company was almost up. Kurt "retired" to Mars, beyond the reach of the CSA — or so he assumed. In truth, the CSA doesn't consider him worth pursuing at this point. Kurt tried briefly to pursue legitimate work as a security guard, but old habits die hard. He simply couldn't take having a boss, and returned to work as an independent hitman.

Image: Kurt is an aging Bostonian aristocratic, with haughty features and perfect presentation.

Roleplaying Hints: You are extremely difficult to work with. You would be struggling for contracts were it not for your significant abilities as a killer.

Nature: Leader

Allegiance: None

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 4

Stamina 4

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 3

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 4

Charisma 3

Willpower: 8

Psi: 1

Backgrounds: Cipher 2, Contacts 5, Resources 2

Gear: L-K Avenger 11 mm, L-K MiniLauncher (see below), bandolier of six frag grenades and two flash grenades, reinforced clothing, binoculars, emergency kit

Abilities

Might 2

Athletics 4, Martial Arts 4,

Firearms 4, Stealth 4

Endurance 3, Resistance 3

Abilities

Arts 2, Awareness 4,

Investigation 3

Academics 2, Bureau-

cracy 3, Engineering 2,

Intrusion 4, Linguistics

(Chinese) 1, Survival 4

Abilities

Intimidation 3, Style 4

Interrogation 3,

Subterfuge 3

Etiquette 5, Perform 2,

Savvy 3



Foss 97

Ministry Agent Robert Wei

Robert led a relatively uneventful life for his first 15 years in Xianggang. He often rode with his older brother on Joseph's taxi routes as a sort of good luck charm — Robert often had a feeling for which fares might be trouble or try to skip out of paying.

Robert's life changed forever when his brother picked up a Ministry agent. The agent, Chan, sensed Robert's potential and took him to the Ministry of Psionic Affairs headquarters for testing. After Robert's latency was confirmed, he underwent extensive training for two years before experiencing the Prometheus Effect, followed by three more years as a junior agent. Robert's record was exemplary, his telepathic skills acceptable but his investigative abilities impressive. Robert became a field agent for the Office of Semiotics, and encountered the Æon Trinity on his first assignment.

Although dedicated to China and the Ministry's agenda, Robert was sympathetic to Æon's goals. He began assisting Trinity investigations in those instances where they did not compromise his loyalty to the Ministry. The Ministry chooses to overlook Robert's extracurricular activities for the time being.

Image: Robert is Chinese, rather tall, solidly built and attractive. His quiet, pleasant demeanor is balanced by a strong force of will. Although Robert dons

civilian clothes for appropriate investigations, he wears the official Ministry uniform with great pride.

Roleplaying Hints: You are confident in your abilities, but humble enough to know your limitations. You've encountered those who take offence at such self-assurance in one so young, so you tend to downplay it with quiet amiability. Still, you have no problem asserting your authority should the need arise.

You take your responsibilities seriously as a Ministry agent and defender of the Chinese people. While you think the Æon Trinity's goal of unity is admirable, you see no reason to forsake Mother China and all she has given you.

Nature: Judge

Allegiance: China

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 4

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 4

Intelligence 3

Wits 4

Social Attributes

Appearance 4

Manipulation 4

Charisma 3

Aptitude: [Telepathy] Empathy 2, Mindshare 3, Psychobending 1

Willpower: 7

Psi: 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Influence 2, Resources 3, Status (Ministry) 3, Status (Æon Trinity) 1

Gear: Ministry uniform (reinforced lining), Wazukana DX70 minicomp (DataWarp Friday agent), Banji Spark laser pistol, vocoder (English, German, Russian, Qin)

Abilities

Might 1

Athletics 3, Drive 3, Firearms 4, Legerdemain 2, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4

Endurance 2,

Resistance 4

Abilities

Awareness 2,

Investigation 4

Academics 2,

Bureaucracy 4, Engi-

neering 2, Intrusion 2,

Linguistics 3,

Medicine 2

Arts 1, Meditation 3,

Rapport 3

Abilities

Intimidation 4

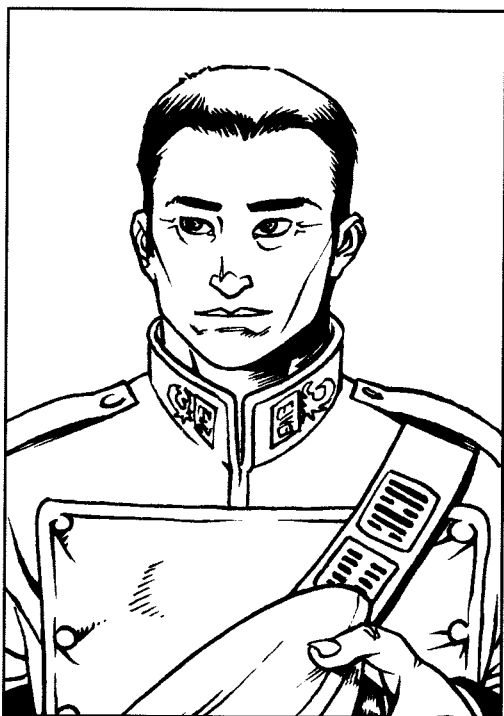
Command 4,

Interrogation 2,

Subterfuge 4

Etiquette 3,

Perform 1, Savvy 2



DARKNESS REVEALED

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

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Credits

Writers: Bruce Baugh and Richard E. Dansky

Developer: Andrew Bates

Editor: Ken Cliffe

Vice President in charge of Production: Richard Thomas

Art Director: Aileen Miles

Cover Art: William O'Connor

Front & Back Cover Design: Richard Thomas

Layout and typesetting: Richard Thomas

Artists: Jeff Holt, Langdon Foss, James Crabtree, Scott James, Henrik Bengtsson and Andrew "How many pages?" Bates

Special Mention

The last couple of months have been a blur (mainly due to alcohol and lack of sleep). I was in Europe when **Trinity** released — what's that? Vacationing at the White Wolf villa on the Riviera? Not quite. The Essen Game Fair and Winter Fantasy conventions hit around the game's release date. A couple of White Wolf's European compatriots (read: translators and distributors) sent out the call wondering if I'd like to wing my way over. I thought about it long and hard for all of five seconds before packing my bags.

Europe is pretty cool. There's lots of foreign-type people there and old buildings and history and stuff. Go if you get the chance. I'd say more, but there just isn't room here. Buy me a drink the next time you see me and I'll tell you all sorts of drawn-out, meandering stories.

There are a few people in particular whom I want to thank for showing me a fine time overseas:

The gang at **Feder & Schwert** in Germany. I'd like to tell you why, but since I'm sober right now, good taste shall prevail. Suffice it to say that those Germans sure know how to enjoy themselves. Oh, and it's *not* a cactus; Mike just has no artistic taste.

The folks at **F.P.O.** in Belgium. Speaking of good taste, I still don't know what the hell to make of those damn bitterball things. They give me the willies. And thanks for the effort with the petition, guys; I didn't get an office, but I do get an extra spoonful of gruel each day. Tasty!



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, CA 94002
USA

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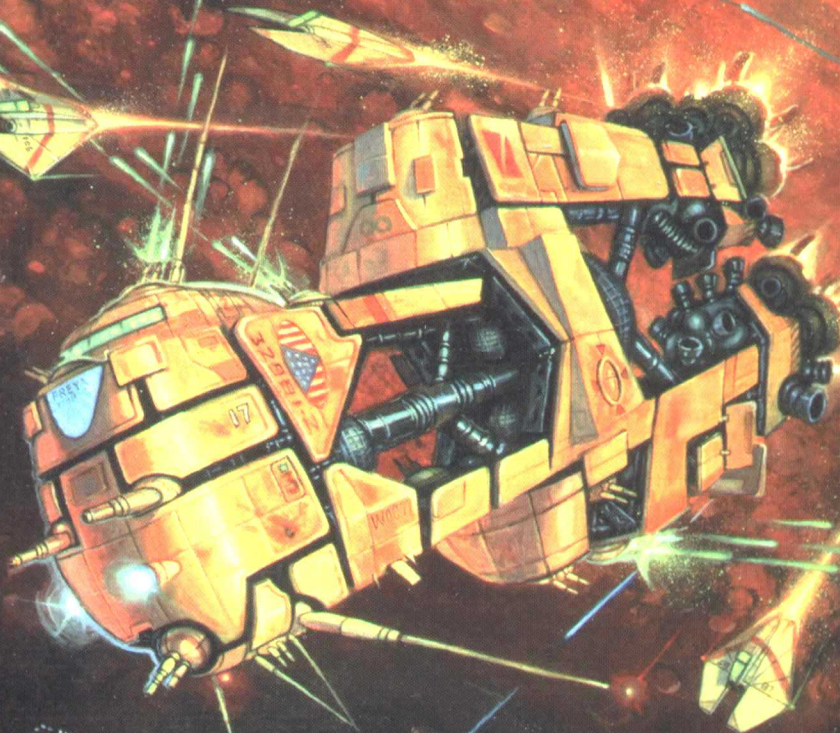
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DARKNESS REVEALED

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS



An Adventure Series Sourcebook for Trinity

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DARKNESS REVEALED¹

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

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