

P E N I C I L L I N

ペニシリン



E C L E C T I C R P G Z I N E / I S S U E 3 / S P R I N G

PENICILLIN ISSUE #3

Written by Blake M. Stone,
Kaylee Rowena,
Thriftomancer, Micah
Anderson, Fiona Maeve
Geist, Chuffed Chuffer,
Brian Richmond, Jared
Sinclair

Layout by Micah Anderson

Images from Kaylee
Rowena (pg. 6&7), Public
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Penicillin is not affiliated
with the original fantasy
RPG or Troika!, The Other
World's Favorite RPG.

ELEGANCE IS SOMETHING WE CAN ENJOY IN A GAME, OR NOT. THE IDEA THAT WE MIGHT TAKE A GAME AND STRIP IT TO ITS BONES, REND THE SKIN AND FAT AND FLESH AND LEAVE ONLY WHATS NECESSARY. THE SINEW AND BONES OF DESIGN. OR THAT WE MIGHT CARVE OFF SOME SMALL ESSENTIAL PIECE AND BURY IT IN THE GROUND AND WATCH IT, SLOWLY, GROW TO FULL BLOOM IN SOMEONE ELSE'S GARDEN. OR THAT WE MIGHT SHUT IT IN GLASS, PUT IT IN THE FIRE AND WATCH IT SHRINK TO THE LEES, STRONGER WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT.

SHALL WE DRINK THEN, YOU AND I? A DEEP DRINK FROM THE WELL OF OUR OWN HUBRIS, DRUNK ON THE IMPLICATION OF OUR OWN EXISTENCE! PICASSO SAID, "ART IS A DRUG." DALI SAID, "I AM A DRUG." I THINK THEY WERE BOTH WRONG. IT IS CREATION THAT IS THE DRUG, AND WE CREATORS THE INEBRIATE DULLARDS PROVING ITS EFFICACY, AS IT PROVES OUR WORTH FOR A TIME.

DOES THE GAME BECOME MORE LIKE US, AS IT PUTREFIES IN THE MOUTHS OF PLAYERS? DOES IT RESEMBLE THE GODHEAD OF THE DESIGNER, DOES IT GIVE THE PLAYERS ACCESS TO THE ETERNAL TRUTH OF THE GAME? OR DOES IT LEAD THEM UPWARDS, AWAY FROM THE GAME, TO THE RAY OF THAT DIVINE DARKNESS WHICH EXCEEDS ALL DESIGN? SHALL WE DRINK, AND SO RENOUNCE OURSELVES AND ALL THINGS, ALL GAMES, AND IN PURENESS CAST ALL GAMES ASIDE, AND BE RELEASED FROM ALL?

PERHAPS THIS ISN'T THE ONLY PATH, BUT IT IS ONE. I AM DREAMING NOW OF A GAME THAT I CAN CONSUME, WHOLE AND RAW. I'D LET IT MINGLE WITH MY SALIVA AND SPIT IT LIKE POISON INTO YOUR EAR. AN ELEGANT GAME, WITH NOTHING UNSPENT. ONLY DARKNESS SURROUNDING.

-JARED SINCLAIR

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THE PERIDEM

By Blake M. Stone and Jared Sinclair

An infernal who feeds on the passion of sentient minds, the peridem uses telepathy to find what their victims consider most attractive, shapeshifting to accommodate that desire. The peridem must engage a thinking being in a consensual act of strong positive emotion in order to feed. This need not be sexual; indeed, sex does not appeal to most of them. Though the myths of incubi and succubi originate from encounters with these beings, such erotic encounters are rare and highly sensationalized. They are much more commonly found becoming an artist's muse, impersonating a popular performer, or befriendng a lonely child by taking the form of a desperately longed-for pet or playmate. In general, it is to their benefit to cause happiness rather than harm.

Those who have been fed on by peridem typically experience lethargy, weakened immune response, muddled thoughts, and a feeling of claustrophobia or immobility. More scrupulous peridem will stay to care for their victims as they recover. The less ethical among them may feed too long, bringing their prey to the brink of death, or beyond. Most are agender, aromantic, and asexual. There are exceptions, who tend to congregate in major cities of the overworld, forming close relationships with others of similar identity. Because of the limitations on their power, they settle into the form most desired by their partners, and are especially susceptible to codependency.

Peridem are not evil by nature, and though of infernal origin, are not true demons simply native to the underworld. They are born when a sapient being dies while experiencing extreme emotion, from the ether offgassed as they pass to the nether-realm.





PERIDEM

Skill 8
Stamina 14
Initiative 2
Armour 1
Damage as Weapon

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SPECIAL

The Peridem has access to Gratify, Amity, Purple Lens, and Illusion. They take double damage from Silver. They will attempt to befriend others, rather than fight, but will defend themselves if necessary. They can speak and understand all languages, except those of the Celestial Host.

d6	MIEN
1	Kind
2	Fawning
3	Smarmy
4	Flirtatious
5	Demure
6	Saccharine

SPELL

Gratify (2): The target must test vs Luck or be filled with beauty and light, overwhelmed with immense pleasure. They are effectively rendered comatose with delight. Each round, the caster rolls 1d6 and saps up to that much Stamina from the target, applying it as they see fit to their own Stamina and/or Luck (up to their maximums). The spell ends when the caster chooses to end it, or when the target experiences something unpleasant (such as being slapped, or hit by a sword).

PERIDEM

(Background)

POSSESSIONS

Handbag full of Various
Hard Candies
A lovely Singing Voice
Medallion Engraved with
an Arcane Sigil
Tattered Notebook with
Pen and Ink

ADVANCED SKILLS

3 Transform Self
3 Spell: Gratify
2 Empathic Insight
2 Spell: Purple Lens
2 Spell: Amity

SPECIAL

You can speak and understand all languages, except for those of the Celestial Host. You do not regain Stamina by eating provisions; instead, you must provoke strong positive emotion in another (up to three times each day). You may test your Empathic Insight to force an opponent to test vs Luck or tell you what in the world they desire most; you could also just ask them, if you think they'd tell you the truth. You have +2 Transform Self when attempting to please another. You take double damage from Silver.

once, this was a normal house. it's something else now. maybe you've heard stories of it: it's the place no kids in town dare to trick or treat, the place high-school-you heard a sophomore got dared to sleep in and turned up dead the next morning. not inhabited but not uninhabited.



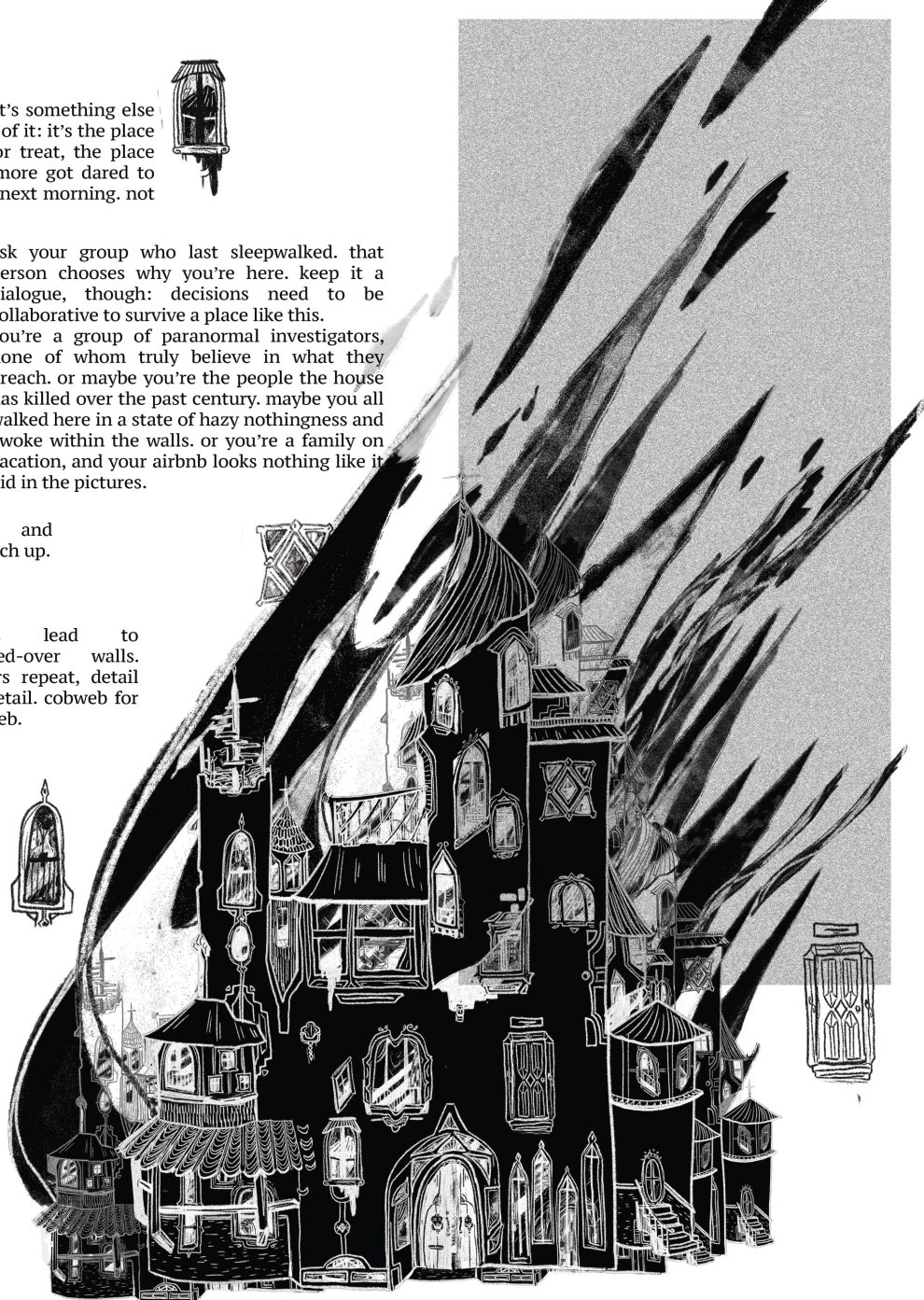
the windows and rooms don't match up.



doors lead to bricked-over walls. towers repeat, detail for detail. cobweb for cobweb.

a game / comic by kaylee rowena.
system agnostic, for at least two players.

the wrong place.



* instructions throughout the game can be treated as in-character, playing a role, or out of character, if you'd prefer a different kind of honesty. nothing has to be taken literally. this is a gmless game focused on collaborative storytelling. ideally, play sitting around a campfire, a ouija board, or with flashlights under each of your chins in a pitch-black room, or in your own local haunted house, if you're good at sneaking into places.

roll a d20 and add the number of ghosts you've seen in your life.

<10: the room transforms.
>10: one of you transforms. you decide what this means. roll whenever you enter a new area, or when it feels right, the modifier may change as you play.

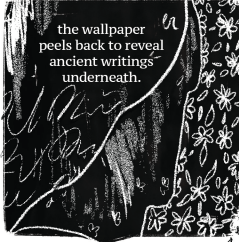


the faces in the paintings remind you of someone.



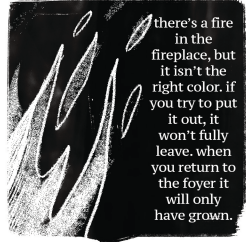
(you aren't sure who.)

the foyer is too large. there is no dust. ask a friend to splash ice-cold water on you while standing outside in a blizzard to experience the feeling of walking into the foyer. your friend should stare at you, unblinking, the entire time they do this, and should not apologize, even when you contract hypothermia; they should not apologize, even when they stand at your grave.

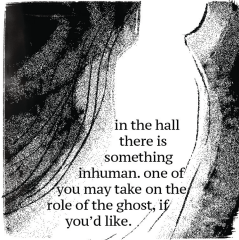


the wallpaper peels back to reveal ancient writings underneath.

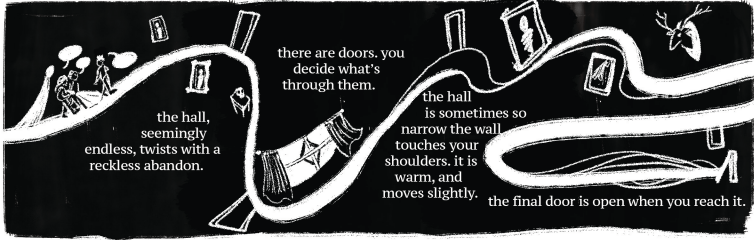
to whoever notices first: if your name starts with a vowel, tell the person next to you the worst thing you've ever done to determine what it says. (if not a vowel, only you can read it, but you know what it says already.)



there's a fire in the fireplace, but it isn't the right color. if you try to put it out, it won't fully leave. when you return to the foyer it will only have grown.



in the hall there is something inhuman. one of you may take on the role of the ghost, if you'd like.

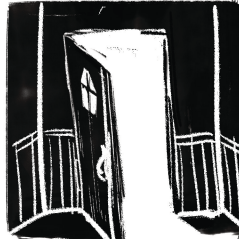


there are doors. you decide what's through them.

the hall, seemingly endless, twists with a reckless abandon.

the hall is sometimes so narrow the wall touches your shoulders. it is warm, and moves slightly.

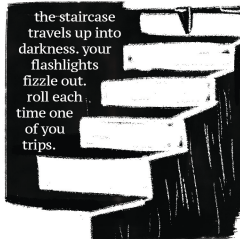
the final door is open when you reach it.



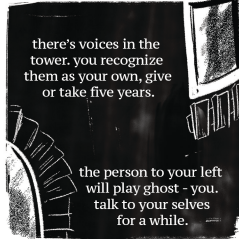
think of when you first discovered the universe would end someday. that deep, far-away fear.



if you aren't ready for the final room, you can turn back, though the story will always end here. if you are ready:

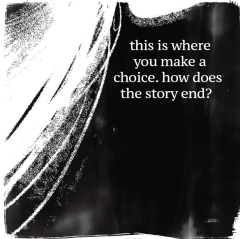


the staircase travels up into darkness. your flashlights fizzle out. roll each time one of you trips.



there's voices in the tower. you recognize them as your own, give or take five years.

the person to your left will play ghost - you. talk to your selves for a while.

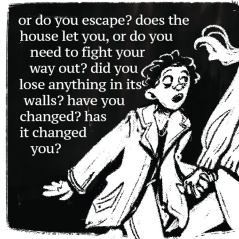


this is where you make a choice. how does the story end?

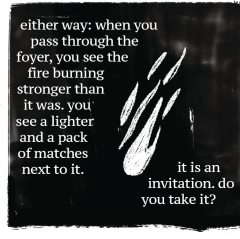


has the house lured you in?

will you become the ghost in front of you, wandering its halls?

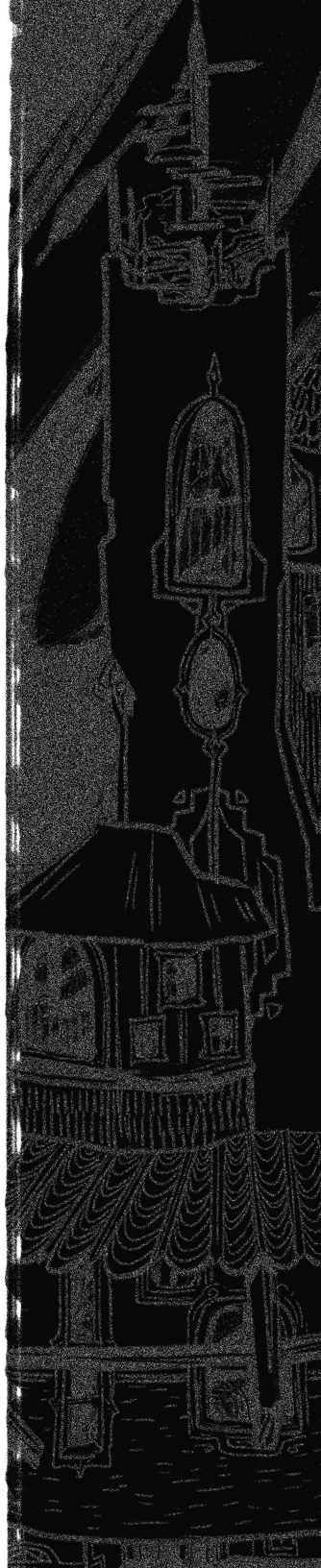


or do you escape? does the house let you, or do you need to fight your way out? did you lose anything in its walls? have you changed? has it changed you?



either way: when you pass through the foyer, you see the fire burning stronger than it was. you see a lighter and a pack of matches next to it.

it is an invitation. do you take it?



オリハルコン 矮人

They grew, long ago, deep in the earth, from a thread of life much different than that of the surface. Their flesh provides no nutrition for predators of the upper world. A beast may starve to death with a belly full of dwarf.

They eat metal. Their skills as miners and engineers come from necessity, the same way early humanity became hunters and gatherers. Dwarfish cuisine is boles of wires and slabs of foil in divergent hues, layers of brass and silver and iron with heavy corners. Supplemented with bacterial mats and fungal blooms and huge eyeless fish. They consume the empty calories to extract the rare trace metals in them, like vitamins.

Common folk think there are three types of dwarf. White Dwarves, impetuous and quick, Black Dwarves, stolid and reliable, and Red Dwarves, slow and thoughtful. These are actually just the stages of dwarfish life. They start off pale and alabaster-white like milky babies. Their flesh cleaves, not tears. The metal a dwarf eats begins to stain their skin and muscles with molecules of iron and bismuth, gold and aluminum. They turn shiny and gunmetal grey. Eventually their metabolism slows down and the metal suffusing their flesh rusts, turning their skins rich russet hues. They cultivate mold blooms and alkaline salt stains like tattoos.

Each person in a dwarf city is a cog or wheel in a greater machine, working together for the betterment of the community at the detriment of anything else. The concept of communism sprung forth from the savant minds of dwarven leaders. They work together intrinsically, nascent fixation on community like underground honeybees of alien flesh. They don't understand philosophy, barely tolerate individualism, and religion is regarded as a thought-virus, punishable by jail-time or even mutilation. Their god is the great god Efficiency, blind and dumb.

Each city is governed by a conclave of 108 councilors or ministers who dictate each aspect of life. Thoughtcrime, neuro-atypical dwarves, secessionists, and possible demiurges are exiled, stricken from dwarfish thought and history, scarred with the parallel mark that lets all dwarves know this one has been made undwarf. They regard the exiles as humans, or at best thick halflings. Exiled dwarves make up most of the "adventurer" dwarves of the surface, but sometimes true-thread dwarves come up and act as if they were exiled, deep-cover operatives to jealously guard the autonomy of dwarfdom.

Dwarves don't take baths, because their biology fights off what germs their high-proof liquor doesn't kill. It isn't efficient to waste time cleaning yourself when there's work to be done. They're also terrified of water, because their skeletons are made of metal, and they sink like stones. Swimming is an alien concept to them.

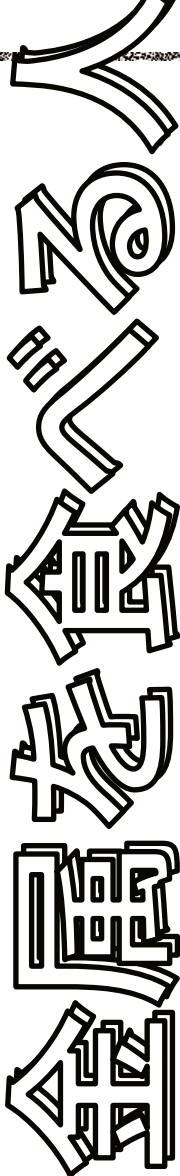
A strange reaction occurs within the gut of a dwarf. The minerals they eat dissolve and disincorporate into molecules, which suffuse their body. Over time, the molecules settle and join with the fractal hooks and spurs of the dwarfish skeleton, forming crystal-latticed structures of alloyed metal. Quicksilver joins to lead, lead joins to gold, gold joins to iron, forming a new material found nowhere else naturally on earth. Refined and worked, it is stronger than steel, lighter than aluminum, more powerful than uranium. Orichalcum.

Dwarves use orichalcum in everything they make. Weapons, work-machines, architecture. A bar of orichalcum is worth a small kingdom on the surface, and many a would-be thief has met their end at the brutally efficient defenses of the mound-cities. They will wait a century or two until all the flesh has fallen off of the bones of a fallen dwarf, then smelt them into raw material to be reused later.

"That's a really nice war-hammer."

"Thanks, it was my grandfather."





METAL-EATING DWARVES in Basic Fantasy Roleplaying Games

REQUIREMENTS: Minimum Constitution 9

PRIME REQUISITE: Strength

HIT DICE: 1d8

MAXIMUM LEVEL: 12

ARMOR: All, including shields

WEAPONS: Small or normal sized

LANGUAGES: Alignment, Common, Dwarvish, Haufin, Undercommon

COMBAT: Dwarves can wear all types of armor. Dwarvish armor is usually comprised of trace amounts of orichalcum alloyed with other metals formed into scalloped rings or segments like an annelid. It looks alive, disconcerting. Due to their stature, dwarves cannot wield large weapons like longbows or two-handed swords. Their weapons are icepick-simple, edged and straight or blunt and weighted with dense gravitron-rich metal.

PERCEIVE ENGINEERING FAULTS: They are built for building and seeing the faults in others' projects. Dwarves have a 2-in-6 chance to detect new construction, sliding walls, sloping floors, and non-magical traps. Poorly-constructed rooms or traps register as a faint to growing migraine. Dwarves exiled to the surface may wish to take specially concocted obstruction drugs to suppress the effects.

ALLOVORE: Dwarves can eat metal along with normal rations. A dwarf that eats high-quality metal (platinum or rarer) may restore 1d6 health per day of natural rest instead of 1d3. Any metal can be eaten as a ration, where one gold equals one ration.

THERMAL VISION: Adapted to the stygian dark of the undercountries, dwarves can see in the dark up to 60' away. Any light above dim disrupts it.

LISTEN AT DOORS: Dwarves have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing strange noises.

LEVEL	XP	HD	THACO
1	0	1d8	19
2	2,200	2d8	19
3	4,400	3d8	19
4	8,800	4d8	17
5	17,000	5d8	17
6	35,000	6d8	17
7	70,000	7d8	14
8	140,000	8d8	14
9	270,000	9d8	14
10	400,000	9d8+3*	12
11	530,000	9d8+6*	12
12	660,000	9d8+9*	12

*modifiers from Constitution no longer apply

LEVEL	D	W	P	B	S
1	8	9	10	13	12
2	8	9	10	13	12
3	8	9	10	13	12
4	6	7	8	10	10
5	6	7	8	10	10
6	6	7	8	10	10
7	4	5	6	7	8
8	4	5	6	7	8
9	4	5	6	7	8
10	2	3	4	4	6
11	2	3	4	4	6
12	2	3	4	4	6

D: Death/Poison

W: Wands

P: Paralysis/Petrify

B: Breath Attacks

S: Spells/Rods/Staves

THE ROSÉ FOUNTAIN, HOME OF THE DYNAMOS NYMPHS

By Fiona Maeve Geist

Layers of scalloped bowls expertly wrought in soft rose marble positively gushing with expensive and savory complex Rosé with corners complemented with the forms of **Three Nymphs** effortlessly flowing from the blushing marble. When beseeched or their Rosé is interfered with they animate, aggressively questioning the intruders intentions, wowing them with raw sexual Charisma and plying them with honied, innuendo laden entreaties.

Rosé: 67GP/bottle to a snob or sommelier, standard wine to others, divisive given faint notes of rubber while bursting with complex flavors of oxidized honey and vanilla supported by the dry grip of floral aromatics.

Three Nymphs: the Dynamos, resplendent in a confounding assemblage of starched Grecian togas and rubber accents in dazzling glitter. They are Donna, Rosie and Tanya—defenders of this precious font of Rosé. They are willing to trade their riches for: men [*Gimme Gimme Gimme (A Man After Midnight)*], gold & jewels and hard liquor. They are capricious, vain and wish to be the focal point of every conversation. They're also givers of surprisingly competent life advice provided they are something approximating sobriety (rare).

Gimme Gimme Gimme (A Man After Midnight): men sacrificed to the nymphs and their fountain cause the Nymphs ages to regress by 100 human years and are transformed into a case of Rosé (36 bottles) as the Nymphs fight over him carnally like a flock of seagulls attacking a slice of waterlogged pizza.

Donna (4+4HD, 30 HP, AC 16, Saves: MU6, sensual ferocity (1dB), SOS; Money, Money, Money; *Mama Mia!*)

The undisputed pack alpha who is occasionally overcome by bouts of wistful sentimentalism and burns herself out attempting to assume all responsibilities of her coven. Her face ages like fine wine, severe and lined yet radiating warmth (18 CHA) and an undeniable and ferocious presence. She uses either SOS or *Mama Mia!* if combat breaks out, using the other when reduced to half HP. She will share a bottle of wine with anyone willing to listen to the stories of her trysts with legendary heroes of old.

SOS: Donna summons her trio of lovers: **Piercing Brosnan** (F4, Kisses of Fire), **Bright Harry** (T3, *The King Has Lost His Crown*) & **Bill of Sweden** (MU 3, *Lovelight*) who step out of the ether and fight ferociously for her attention (Morale 9). **Money, Money, Money** (Aura): Damage dealt within 40' appears as GP equal to damage dealt. Damage dealt by Donna creates 4x GP.

Mama Mia!: Donna and her cohort take 2 turns per initiative and repeated attacks or abilities targeting them are done with disadvantage for 4 turns.

Rosie (3+3 HD, 24HP, AC 15, Saves: MU4, *Dancing Queen, Super Trouper, Take a Chance on Me*) the most eccentric nymph, Rosie collects books and occasionally pens fiction (of the somewhat overwrought literary type). She's shorter and squatter than her cohort but surprisingly nimble and shockingly competent in combat. She primarily trades barbs with Tanya and condescending jibes with pretentious PCs.

Dancing Queen: by making a DC 15 Performance test, Rosie engages in a sensual, menapausal dance that redirects spells and abilities targeting her to a random target. The target gets a Dexterity save against the ability even if one was previously unavailable.

Super Trouper: when reduced to ½ HP Rosie gains DR/3 and regenerates 4HP turn. Recovering beyond her max HP produces a **Cabana Boy** (1HD, cowed).

Take a Chance on Me: when someone loses an opposed test to Rosie she may adjust their position in the initiative order and her next attack against the target is an automatic critical hit.

Tanya (3+3 HD, 24HP, AC14, Saves: MU5, *Voulez Vous; Does Your Mother Know?; The Winner Takes it All*)

The most slatternish of the trio, this boozy floozy is surprisingly nimble (Dexterity 16) for her advanced age and prone to acrobatic, suggestive movements. She moves with the grace of a menapausal panther and strikes like an avalanche of midlife sensuality.

Voulez Vous: if Tanya has the highest HP Total present, everyone's eyes glow with strange light and she suggests an action at the beginning of their turn—a willpower save is required to disobey.

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Does Your Mother Know?: Tanya's sensual writhing evokes Freudian feelings of shame and guilt. The player must confess to an embarrassing tryst (in or out of character) or take 1d12 Shame Damage and become slowed. On a 12 the target is polymorphed into a baby.

The Winner Takes it All: whenever Tanya wins an opposed test with someone, a random piece of their equipment is transferred to her possession.

Piercing Brosnan (4HD, 30 HP, AC 18, Saves: F4, *Kisses of Fire*): a renowned knight well past his prime, he has rugged good looks somewhat softened by his thickening frame and grey streaks in his hair. His field plate is well worn but comfortable and his shield depicts Donna standing atop him. *Kisses of Fire*: when Brosnan strikes a target they take an additional 1d4 Fire Damage (on a 4 they catch fire) and Brosnan may roll an opposed Charisma test to make the smoldering target kiss their ally with the highest Charisma on their next turn dealing 1d4 fire damage.

Bright Harry (3HD, 16 HP, AC 15, Saves: T3, *The King Has Lost His Crown*). A nebbish middle aged man whose loneliness is painfully etched in his features. He wears fine garments and is accompanied by an (elderly, flatulent) basset hound which is a non-combatant.

The King Has Lost His Crown: on a successful attack, Harry may roll a Dexterity Check to do one of the following:

- Turn their helmet backwards, disorienting and blinding them.
- Disarm them, snatching away their weapon.
- Unbuckle their armor, causing it to fall to the floor.
- Trip them, knocking them prone.

Bill of Sweden (3HD, 16HP, AC 12, Saves: MU 3, *Lovelight; Web, Knock, Charm Person, Command, Spiderwalk*). A debonair and distinguished older gentleman who has decidedly given up on maintaining his figure or attire—his robes scream for a mending and his boots are scuffed. Donna is the only exception to his otherwise exclusive attraction to men—hidden amidst his spell books are several muscular pictorials (1d8 of them, depict powerful men in a somewhat compromising frolic, 100GP to an enthusiast or bodybuilder).

Lovelight (Aura): the (visible) opponent with the lowest Charisma must pass a Willpower Save or be commanded by Donna on their turn (with the limitations of *charm person*).



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MEDICINAL AMPHIBIANS

By Thriftomancer

The curandera has you sit, tilt your head back so the light from the window hits your face, and peers into your eyes. She sees what the villagers saw when you stumbled down out of the mountains, bringing your fungal plague into their home. Pale green hyphae thread themselves through the tissue of your bloodshot sclera, twisting around the burst vessels and preparing to fruit.

She checks inside of your mouth and prods your throat, feeling the pea-sized nodules of mycelium that have not yet burst through the skin, then says something to your guide.

"She says 'do not worry, there is still time'."

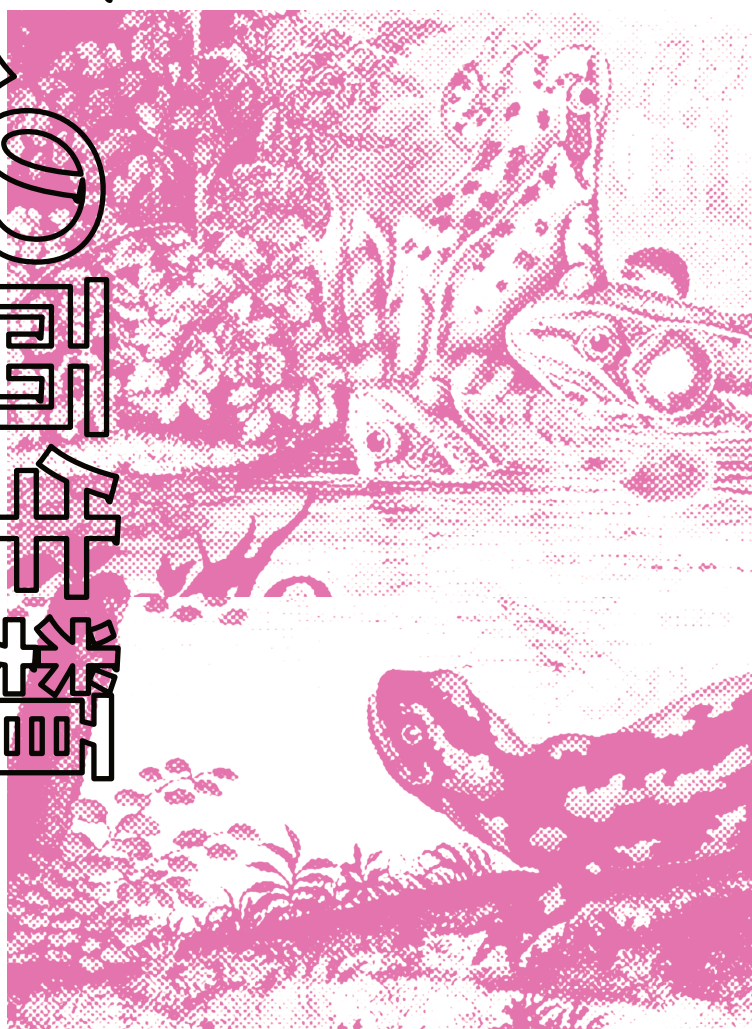
As the boy translates, the healer crosses to the far wall and takes the lid off the tallest of a row of teal-glazed pots sitting around a squat iron stove. She rolls up the sleeves of her blouse and reaches in, slowly, until her arms are immersed to the elbow. Grabs at something. When she straightens and turns around, it's wrapped itself about her forearms, coils glistening like thick bangles of an exotic metal.

Wide-set black eyes stare at you and the frilled lobes of its gills flex, wafting around the base of its neck as if they were still submerged in the tank. You catch glimpses of a pale cream underbelly as it shifts, and black spots scattered along the charcoal skin of its back that explode into a dichroic indigo-sky blue in the sunlight.

She gently unwinds the axolotl from her arms, carefully looping the creature's sinuous body around your shoulders, guiding it to wrap snugly around your neck. There's a subtle fizzing sensation where its damp flesh touches your bare skin, rising to a seeping itch as it tucks itself under your chin. You begin to taste coconut and steel in the back of your throat.

The curandera pats you on the head, smiles, and says something before going to fetch a wet towel to cover the axolotl. Next to you your guide is grinning as he watches the creature, fascinated by the glimmering spots.

"She says 'hold still and don't be afraid, it will heal you.'"



d6	TYPE
1	Frog
2	Toad
3	Newt
4	Salamander
5	Axolotl
6	Caecilian

d6	SIZE
1	Tiny - Fits on fingertip
2	Small - Fits on finger
3	Medium - Fits on palm
4	Large - Fits on whole hand
5	Huge - Need two hands to lift
6	Massive - Larger than a cat

d8	SKIN TEXTURE
1	Smooth
2	Rough
3	Smooth
4	Bumpy/warty
5	Smooth
6	Wrinkly
7	Spiked/horned
8	Dendritic/lacy

d10	COLORATION
1	Dull/earth tones
2	Subtle
3	Bright
4	Brilliant
5	Iridescent
6	Metallic
7	Translucent
8	Achromatic/grayscale
9	Roll twice, combine
10	Roll thrice, combine

d12	PATTERN
1	Solid
2	Countershaded
3	Zones/patches of color
4	Spots
5	Flecks of color
6	Mottled/camouflaged
7	Stripes
8	Single stripe
9	Characteristic symbol/shape
10	Mobile/changing (chromatophores)
11	Roll twice, combine
12	Roll thrice, combine

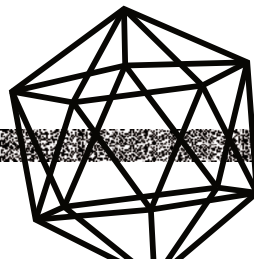
d6	BODY SHAPE
1	Average proportions
2	Slender/skeletal
3	Beefy/solid
4	Round/chunky
5	Stubby limbs
6	Flabby

d8	POTENCY
1	Weak - Need 10 to affect 1 adult human
2	Moderate - Need 1 to affect 1 adult human
3	Strong - Need 1 to affect 5 adult humans
4	Dangerous - Need 1 to affect 10 adult humans
5	Lethal - Need 1 to affect 100 adult humans
6	Increases with exposure - Starts weak and gets 1 degree stronger each time it's used after until it's lethal
7	Decreases with exposure - Starts lethal and gets 1 degree weaker each time it's used after until it's weak
8	Placebo

d12	HABITAT
1	River
2	Pond
3	Marsh/wetland
4	Bog
5	Vernal ponds
6	Stagnant water
7	Forest floor/understory
8	Trees
9	Jungle/rainforest
10	Epiphytes
11	Prairie/grassland
12	Desert



d20	ADMINISTERED BY
H is harmless to the creature, NL is not lethal but stressful, and F is fatal to it	
1	Skin contact (H)
2	Hold to an open wound (H)
3	Press to eyeball (H)
4	Lick it (H)
5	Soak it in oil and mix the oil into food (H)
6	Sit in a sweat lodge/sauna with them and breathe the steam (H)
7	Run on gums/under tongue (NL)
8	Just hold it in our mouth for a while, then spit it out (NL)
9	Wash it in alcohol and drink the tincture (NL)
10	Blotting paper (NL)
11	Eat it (1 whole, 2 raw, 3 dried, 4 powdered) (F)
12	Pills (F)
13	Mixed into tea or broth (F)
14	Snort it (F)
15	Smoke it (1 dried whole, 2 powdered, 3 mixed with resin, 4 shredded) (F)
16	Cut out the parotoid glands and squeeze into eyes (F)
17	Render down the skin, put drops of the liquid in boiling water and breathe the steam (F)
18	Render down the skin, apply liquid to a skewer/needle and stab the patient (F)
19	Roll again x2, the second method is less effective (1 lower potency)
20	Roll again x3, the second method is more effective (1 higher potency), the third method is lethal



d60	TOXIN EFFECT		
1	Analgesic/numbing	31	Immunosuppressant
2	Anesthetic	32	Vertigo (balance disruptor)
3	Sedative	33	Irritant/inflammatory
4	Soporific/hypnotic	34	Capsaicin analog (just pain/burning)
5	Serene (decreases aggression)	35	Menthol analog (chemical frostbite)
6	Choleric (induces aggression)	36	Blistering/caustic
7	Oneirogen (dream-producing)	37	Necrotizing
8	Narcotic	38	Neurotoxic
9	Hallucinogenic - Psychedelic	39	Antibacterial
10	Hallucinogenic - Dissociative	40	Antifungal
11	Hallucinogenic - Deliriant	41	Antiviral
12	Stimulant	42	Antiparasitic
13	Depressant	43	Antimiotic (disrupts cell division)
14	Orexigenic (appetite stimulant)	44	Paralytic
15	Anorectic (appetite depressant)	45	Hyperactive nerve conduction
16	Emetic	46	Hypoactive nerve conduction
17	Laxative	47	Antispasmodic
18	Vasodilator	48	Muscle relaxant
19	Vasoconstrictor	49	Anxiogenic (increases anxiety)
20	Hemorrhagic	50	Increased suggestibility
21	Anticoagulant	51	Induces insomnia
22	Coagulant	52	Eugeroic (promotes wakefulness)
23	Antipyretic (fever-reducer)	53	Nootropic (enhances memory/thought)
24	Anti-inflammatory	54	Euphoriant
25	Antihistamine	55	Entheogen (induces spiritual experiences)
26	Diuretic	56	Roll twice, combine
27	Contraceptive	57	Roll thrice, combine
28	Conceptive	58	Roll four times, combine
29	Aphrodisiac	59	Roll five times, combine
30	Anaphrodisiac (decreases libido)	60	Placebo



ADAM

THE

BOOK

真珠層

Nacre

City of the Squid and the Snail

BY MICAH ANDERSON

HIRELINGS UNDERGROUND

Thom Thumb. Short and nearly wide as he is tall. His propensity for cutting off and eating the thumbs of his victims is legendary. Carries around a silver waning-moon flensing knife.

Gorgeous Tylwyth. One of the poison people. Incredibly bad at fighting, but no one wants to pierce his containment suit and release his natural neurotoxins.

Greta Hurl. Has a glass eye, hook hand, and a wooden leg. She ate her limbs once when she was trapped under a rockfall. Cold-blooded.

Buzzby. A throngman, sentient collection of bees in the shape of a man. Polite, speaks in a hushed buzz. Can sting anything to kill it instantly, but he dies afterward.

The Coal-Trap Gang. D6 urchins, interchangeable as long as you remain in the city. Dirty and smug, pugnacious to a one. Will cut anyone's purse, or throat.

Dunston McHale. Nervous, twitching, still acclimating from the surface. Has a few dangerous spells, but isn't great at choosing on the fly. Cracks jokes and puns at super inappropriate times.

THE TURGID CRUST OF OLD EARTH BREAKS BEFORE US, deep into the loam and and rock, around twists of metal and the bones of worlds more ancient, their sleeping toys and buried weapons. Down, deeper below, below the worms and the roots where moisture seeps into echoing caves and cathedral spaces. Down, into a realm of perpetual night and echoing clicks of predators in the darkness.

Down and out, into one of these caves, the floor interrupted with signs of habitation, disturbed dust and voices instead of cool air and silence. Follow this trail, for hours, for days, until the signs grow clustered and unignorable. We are reaching civilization, one half alien and half familiar. People, pale and strange, but wearing clothes recognizable if out of date. Farming fungi, protected by bales of razorwire and searing light. The road is now just that; a road, lined with bioluminescent limnlight lanterns, following the twists and turns of the rock.

The maps here are three dimensional. Nonrepresentative. "Up at the stalagmite like a pipe organ, along the cleft slimy like a frog, right and downward at the bones of old Yuselius."

Along the spiderwebbing way the farms quickly give out. Not much sustenance to be drawn from plant and biofilm here, but enough. The predations of underground fauna preclude all but the most desperate or foolish from eking life out here.

And with that you realize there is an "out here" even in the "down here". Our torqued path has brought us here, along with a thin but impressive mob, to a huge slab of iridescent white. Soldiers in heavy cobbled armor and black tabards stand guard outside, bald men with intricate head tattoos move among the crowd scribing fastidious details on black parchments of living fungal paper, and troubadours port heavy cargo of food and weapons and esoteric trade to and fro. Bored into the white, which soon enough you will discover is a titanic shell of a long-dead beast, a gate embroidered in a thousand years of bas-relief carvings and ragged strips of cloth opens up, after a twenty-pace passage, into the Black City, the City Beloved of the Squid and the Snail. Nacre.

Inward. We follow our path, inexorably, downward too, away from the Nessus Gate. A slight decline of the road, cobbled like the cities above. You are helplessly lost underground, but this strange city seems almost transplanted from the surface. And it has been, in a way, over time and piecemeal by the inhabitants and settlers lost here just like you. They brought parts of their homes with them, in their minds, painstakingly recreated out of the resources around. There, see, the Holy Towers of Killbuck, slightly truncated and foreshortened because of the bonelike arch of the ceiling above, rendered in priceless jade

that the people here seem to use without thinking. And there, the reflecting pool unique (or so everyone thought) to the Travertine Ziggurat in Mol Vern Dass, inverted and filled with sludgy oil.

Above you, in the Third and Second Spirals, are the homes of politicians and theologians, palaces made of marble and baroque, biologic ornamentation. And above them, the state religion grows in the First Spiral. One monolithic compound, of fractal passages and timeless obsidian rooms dusty with ages past. Patrolled by speechless guardians inhuman and weird. Where the Priest-Kings of the city reign and discern the will of the Twin Gods, Mother Squid and Father Snail. They pass out interdictions and baffling laws to the thinkers below, who parse their instructions and relay to the city at large.

But you can't know that yet. Eventually, after assimilating, you will learn the ins and outs of Nacre almost as well as a native. But for now we will continue downward, with the crowd, away from the palatine terraces of the upper echelons. Ebbing and flowing like something alive, the mob surrounds you. You feel almost comforted, dirty, shoeless, cold and hungry as you are. You might've had grand ambitions upon entering the cursed ground, but you've lost them along the way, along with most of your things. Now you just want to rest.

The familiarity is pierced in places. The people here are sallow and harsh, bones standing out in the skin with frank forwardness. Covered in moisture, some in outright slime. And you see why; everything is covered in snails. Little ones like gravel, big ones the size of dogs, smooth ones, ridged ones, spiny ones, deadly ones. They cover the lower reaches of the buildings like barnacles on a pier. And there—a person, completely nude under a layer of snails, convulsing on the ground as their radula scrape away his flesh a microscopic bit at a time. The crowd pulls back at the sudden ferocity of the snails, but their eyes are bored and focused on other tasks.

The man lets out a final scream, then whimpers and shakily gets up, careful to not dislodge any of his shelled passengers. He begins walking unsteadily away as the crowd claps politely and goes back to their business.

The snail-worshippers are not the only strange things here, although they are the majority. Red-robed emissaries of the vampire cities of Carcinost are here buying and selling human chattel, pampered servants tending to their undead masters' whims. The vampires move with fluid grace, their skin desiccated and beautiful like leather and mahogany, eyes glittering in their mask-like faces like anthracite. And there are the poison-salt folk in their hermetic metal suits. You've heard of them; deadly to all life, they come from a world of poisonous elements and harmful airs. They have a city here underground,

THINGS YOU CAN BUY IN NACRE

Currency in Nacre takes the form of perfect circles of soapstone carved by scores of tactile-craftsmen in black factories beneath the streets. The coins are called denarii.

Caged Starlight (36 d.) - Lacquered cages of delicate quicksilver and glass. In the center, a sliver of a star, trapped with special mirrors and imported at cost from the surface. Angry. Acts as sunlight to undead.

Solemn Eel (5 d.) - Trained amphibious eels that emit light from their organs. The light is very dim while alive, but if you kill and skin one the light is as bright as a torch and lasts just as long. Considered a pest in Nacre.

Hunter Squid (23 d.) - Captured and brought back from the Secret Sea. Can be bribed with food to glow brighter. Watches your every move; might communicate your weaknesses in Morse code to other squid.

Needler (45 d.) - Looks like a slim flintlock with a wheel in place of a hammer. Sparks trapped inside magnetize a thin rod of metal and throw it out the end of the barrel at near-sonic speeds. Does 1d8! damage, exploding on a 6 or above.

Autocarriage (5 d. Base) - A horseless carriage that will drop you off anywhere along the Spirals, provided enough hazard pay.

Squidmeat Rations (1 d.) - Chewy and faintly chemical. Squidmeat jerky and fungal bread with roots for fiber. Earns you the enmity of any Hunter Squid you have.

Messenger Snail (5 d.) - Well trained and intelligent for a snail. About the size of a house cat. Will deliver messages and letters tied to its shell, fairly quickly. Can climb vertical surfaces.

Globe Lighter (10 d.) - Commemorative brass spherical lighter. The top hinges outward and produces a small steady flame. The outside is etched with a precise (if a bit outdated) map of the known world.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE SHELL CITY

d12	ENCOUNTER
1	A man in front of you suddenly collapses, sprouting snails like sweat.
2	Someone being shanghaied to one of the squidding boats on the secret sea.
3	An escaped victim of the Culling, pursued by a group of nobles.
4	Delegations of the olm tribes from the canal-lands. Blind and tattooed.
5	You've been targetted for assassination. Ordered by a merchant? Or a Priest-King?
6	Street children, hunting a rat. 50% chance they pickpocket you.
7	Warparty on the march from the mercenary camps on the Fifteenth Spiral
8	Squid-saint covered in twining tattoos, proselytizing.
9	A new batch of shaken surface dwellers, cajoled or ignored by the citizens.
10	The road collapses, revealing a new lacuna full of mother-of-pearl.
11	Approached by a minor slumlord to courier a package with a severed finger.
12	Assaulted for a moment by alien memories of the primordial past, echoes of the nautilus's dead mind.

somewhere. Dwarves, heavy boned and snacking on homeward metals, cart in dangerous xenobiological life from their communist councilships. The markets ring with calls the surface could never imagine.

Further. Keep going. Down, down, down. The residential Spirals. Tenth Spiral, Eleventh Spiral, Twelfth Spiral. The houses and buildings becoming more and more spacious, intricate, nouveau riche as you descend, but in disrepair. The arcades are empty, families huddled in single rooms. Bandits, thieves, cultists, black alchemists and surgeons all flourish here, in the liminal space between poverty and wealth, the palaces-turned slums. Lights here are sporadic, cooking fires and radiators mixed with captured starlight and biolimns in dirty water. Things crawl in the blackness, somehow darker than surface black.

Down. The Twentieth Spiral. The Twenty-First. The city near abandoned. But wait—more lights up ahead. The crowd has thinned like blood in water until none were left but us. Walking on discarded snail shells and broken glass. The lights up ahead reform into another gate, crisscrossed iron lattice with black subterranean lichen growing like fur. A tall brick wall. Guards posted up front. Like a miniature of the outside. You are barred entry, kicked at and sneered at. From between the bars we can see an estate built along the slight curve of the shell. Music and laughter echo along the ribs above, distorted by space. A soiree is being held here, miles beneath the surface. Along the road, further—another estate, even more palatine than the last. And so it goes along the Twenty-Second Spiral and the Twenty-Third; the wealthy elite of the city vacillate between striving for the surface and spurning it, every thirty years or so. In another generation these homes will be abandoned again, making room for more squatters and comen to hide from the draconian laws of the City Above.

Here, in the depths of the city, people are less human. Less human, but more than human sometimes. They are grafted with gills and sensory receptors alien to the human mind as cosmetic enhancements, webbed fingers and delicate tendrils like catfish. They are born with transparent flesh, daubed slightly with emphasizing makeup ground from the walls of the city itself. Their tastes are epicurean and cruel. Bloodsport and masked orgies are common, as are duels over the smallest slight. Quiet civil wars have been waged over the Metasurrealist interpretation of a Gouvain painting instead of the more traditional Impact school.

Down, one more level. Please, you must come. You must see.

You acquiesce. As we walk, I tell you about the ways the city sustains itself. Fungal and bacterial farming can only go so far, after all. Firstly, through secret byways and channels, Nacre has etiolated trade with

the surface. The Priest-Kings supposedly have their own ways back up, but for some reason have elected to stay here. Secondly, the shell of the city rests partially submerged in a vast, black sea. Unknown where; the location of the docks, like the trade routes up, are a jealously guarded secret. Only native-born can find them. Allegedly under some sort of dislocation hex or glamour. This sea is where the second half of the ruling gods of Nacre comes from. Mother Squid, also called Kraken, lives deep in the stygian dark, away from light and heat. Her children, the giant squid and other teuthic beings, flash conspiratorial semaphore to each other with bioluminescent chromatophores and obscure tentacular movement, hunting the squiders of Nacre even as they trawl the secret waves in heavy iron boats. And finally, through a ritual performed every year, called the Culling of the Squid, wherein a suitable vestal sacrifice is brought into the domed edifice of the Priest-Kings and given over to the Twin Gods. No one knows what goes on inside, mutation or surgery or transubstantiation, but the result is a marriage of mollusk and human, grotesque, swollen abominations. The offspring of this poor creature, once released from the see, are hunted and eaten by the citizens in a six-day festival.

You look disgusted. I tell you we are nearing the end of our journey. Down, finally. The ground beneath our feet is harsh bedrock once more. We are in a place like an amphitheater, carven, rough hewn stone around us in low buildings and decorations. In the center of the depression, a huge hole, twenty cubits in width, going downward. There is blood around the opening, old, old, so ancient. This is where the head of the beast was before it rotted away, I say. Those, pointing into the hole, were its arms. Where the Messiah of Shell and Skin shaped the world, the perfect union of Squid and Snail that the priests are trying so hard to recreate. In those tunnels are unholy magics, blasphemed temples built eons past by disgraced hands, none of which were human. In those tunnels are the successfully escaped progeny of a thousand years of Cullings, creatures who yearn for parental touch, grown huge and quiescent with time. It is said if you follow the tracts of the great tentacles, you will find your way back to the surface, or even deeper, down into Hell.

Perhaps they are the same.

LANDMARKS IN THE BLACK CITY

The House of Red and Gold - Famous brothel on the Fourth Spiral. People from all over the Undercountries come to visit Madame Tomie and her barbed wit and vivacious women and men. Many a trade deal or holy war has been sealed or averted in the silk-draped halls and balconies of the House.

Tachyon Square - Stately plaza in the middle of the city, close to the Ophidian Gate. Steady stream of pilgrims come to placate the Backwards-Moving Gods whose shrine adorns the central fountain. The Priest-Kings tolerate the worship of foreign gods, even though they don't endorse it.

Nacre State Botanical Gardens - Glass and black iron wings that hug the spiral surround a central building. Contains samples of nearly every poisonous, carnivorous, or otherwise deadly plant of the Undercountries.



"Oh, no - don't got any of that **TRASH**, son. But I'll tell you what now, I've got somefin' **JUST A SMIDGE BETTER** now, you hear? Get some **BLOOD** in you, boy, and you won't ever come 'round here sniffin' for Rage again or I'm not the eighth born son of a rot gut whore and a bilge rat.

"No, boy - you know I'd never lie to you! It's **BAD SHIT**, little booger, **BAD SHIT**. Take you a squirt or so of **GHOUL SPIT** and boil 'er up in some **GATOR BLOOD** until the shit turns black and tarry like the **STICKY DEATH** they gotta clean up off the floor of the pits.

"See, I **ALREADY DONE THAT**, so you just take this and warm 'er up in some water - not too hot now, she's goin' **IN YOUR ARM** and you're gonna feel it, let me tell you.

No, arm only, maybe a leg if it's down low! **NEVER** the high leg, **NEVER** the neck, and I mean **FUCKIN' NEVER**.

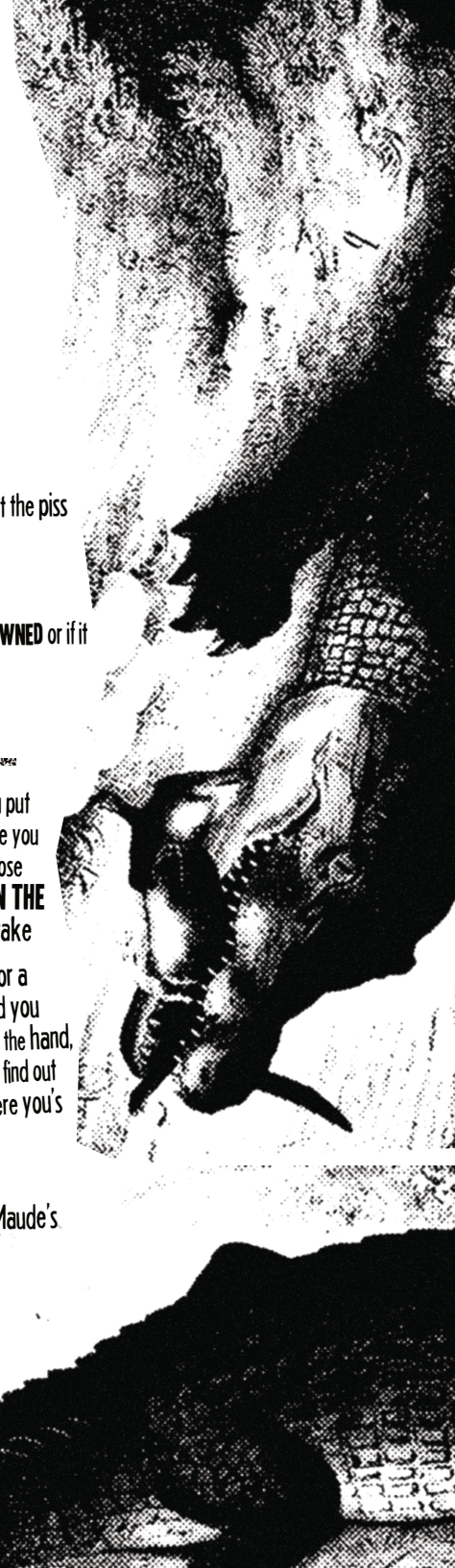
"You fightin' boys come 'round here for that Rage, get all **JUICED UP**, mad as a **BAT OUTTA HELL** and go down to the pits to beat the piss and blood outta each other, but **BLOOD** ain't like that, no sir. **BLOOD**, well **BLOOD** goin' have you calm... still...like a **GATOR** waitin' to **STRIKE**. And boy, let me fuckin' tell you, **WHEN YOU STRIKE** . . . whooo boy. You ever seen a gator **GRAB** somefin' in his mouth and start rolling around underwater and **SLAMMING** the **EVER LOVIN' FUCK** outta that animal so bad you can't tell if the damned thing **DROWNED** or if it just got its **BRAINS** beat to **MUSH** and its neck **BROKE**? Well, it's about like that . . . 'CEPTIN' YOU AIN'T A GATOR.

"Now, I told you - I **WON'T LIE TO YOU**. This is **BAD BOOGERS**, boy. Bad fuckin' boogers and you **BETTER BELIEVE IT**. You put this shit in your arm and after a few times ridin' that calm, you're gonna see some **BLISTERS**. Little nasty yellow fuckers, look like you got a **LITTLE PISS FARM GROWING ON YOU**. You leave 'em alone, they won't **HURT** a bit, but whooo boy; you pop one of those assholes and you'll be **BEGGIN' FOR DEATH** until it dries up and I ain't kiddin'. You pop one of those boys and it'll put your **DICK IN THE DIRT!** And what's more, you pop 'em and it **CHANGES** somethin' 'bout your **BODY** - next time you get you some **BLOOD** it's goin' take **TWICE AS MUCH**.

"Boy, I know it, and it **JUST GETS WORSE**. You leave them blisters alone like I tell you and they'll **HATCH!** Ain't blisters, not for a second, no boy, **THEM'S EGGS!** You got a **GOOD EYE**, you'll see little **GATORS WRIGGLIN'** down your arm, size of a flea. And you **BEST SQUISH 'EM QUICK NOW**, because these gators **BITE** and they got that **GHOUL SPIT** in 'em so when they bite you on the hand, they'll **NUMB A FINGER**. Don't seem like too big a deal, 'til you realize you got about **FIFTY** of 'em crawling on you and you find out that **VENOM DON'T WEAR OFF**. No sir, this venom just **KILLS YOUR SKIN**. After a few days **IT'LL TURN BLACK** right where you's bit and start weeping yellow pus **UNTIL YOUR SKIN FALLS RIGHT OFF** and scabs over.

"Now, I know that sounds like a **HELL OF A RIDE** I'm tryin' to sell you on here, son, but she's cheaper than an hour with one of Maude's ugliest girls. **FIVE COPPER** get you **TEN DOSES** of this shit.

"**WHATTA YOU SAY, SON?**"



So You Contacted an Outer Horror

By Brian Richmond
& Micah Anderson



Beings drawn and skinned like shadows over reality. The world is gossamer and water ripples to them. Mirror-thin and easily breached, as a crane spears a fish unknowing of the threat looming. Their true forms are incomprehensible; our minds don't work in that many directions. But their voluminous projections become whole and predatory.

In what terrible form is it glimpsed?

1. A gigantic lithe form, vaguely humanoid and coated in naked, sagging flesh. Its head is conical, as if painfully pulled to form something one can only dare associate with the snout of a mole or the beak of a heron.
2. A crumpled thing, crooked; white, as if constructed from all manner of bleached teeth. The closer one looks the more can see that each fragment of the entity is another of the entity, from the grandest scale to the most microscopic. Its mouth changes places, the only bit of it one can conceive of being flesh.
3. A storm-wrapped nioh figure, imposing and masterful; the apex of its race and gender. Its gaze infantilizes and shakes the will, coloring every insecurity with the idea that the viewer is a mockery of this perfect form.
4. In the corner of your eye, at the precipice of vision and the edge of physical space; it lingers, almost in human form but not--the flesh is wrong, like molded papier-mache, its orifices bleed black bile. It moves softly when you look for it, vanishing away.
5. A swirling chaos of evolution, a miasmic cloud from which one can see the silhouette of the eurypterids, ordovician horrors, maimed gigantopithecus, cubish modern man, and then forms stranger and newer still.
6. A morphing Mandelbrot set, curving and twisting; swirling immediately into a perfect cube, into churning pyramids; all black, all colors feel present but overload into sensory numbness. It feels visible only in the frontal lobes, as if projected into the mind than occupying space.

What did it represent when it was worshipped in strange cons?

1. Hunger, that terrible hunger that sees a belly distended in mockery of corpulence or pregnancy. That terrible hunger that cares only for satiation.
2. The unknown black tapestry which swathed the world in darkness, revealing only in starlight motes the hope for a new dawn.
3. The reasoning sought by grieving spouses for the death of a mate while birthing a child; a terrible hope for a purpose in such trauma.
4. Numbing cold, the type of deadened nerves that come only from coveting fire or seeing ambition fall from vaunted heights into agony.
5. Hope, for a better tomorrow, for a better life for those who would know it. Hope to see children grow fat and old, to cleave the world in a more perfect image.
6. The endless vastness of the wild, which curves forever onward beyond the horizon such that man can never hope to catch it and make it his own.

How can the entity be called to?

1. Stitch a viper into the quartered throat of a virgin, such that the serpent might whisper lies through blackened blood which will rouse the ire of the entity. With anger enough, any bond can be broken.
2. The last images held in the mind of those falling to their death are conveyed to the entity; it is merely a matter of arranging the appropriate message, and making it known you desire its emergence.
3. Bleak meditation upon the futility of ego, performed deep below the earth after imbibing a phial of fermented ayahuasca. The entity will appear inverted in being, capable of speaking but not hearing.
4. By speaking in a hidden ultraterrestrial cipher while in supplication within a house of worship to false deities. The entity will hear again the thrum of the atman and its heralds will begin to seek the faithful.
5. Only by carving out the heart of one you've betrayed and hearing the numeric code of the heart's drumming final beats can one receive messages from the entity in its current form. It speaks a divine number of truths and letters before the heart dies, cold.
6. It can be glimpsed in the first rain upon a battlefield where the bodies of young men, lied and left asunder, are found. It will witness those who come to such a charnel place, and if impressed by dark rites, will slither a sliver of itself into their nightmares.

What dark powers may it provide for mortals?

1. It will bring back the dead, changed; a mockery, a torment to all but those who wished the dead back to life. To them, it will be an

opiate; a joy that is unceasing.

2. Its voice reverberates in the throat of the one it will make its herald. Those weak of will, of common ignorance and blessed normalcy; bend to the herald's words.
3. It brings joy, blessings, all that is desired to the one who will open the way. It will give them all they thirst for, at the cost of the world and those around them.
4. Rage and power, such anger that every slight against them, every wrong ever done to them, will be returned in kind at a magnitude none dare imagine.
5. It offers foresight of the world to come, glimpses of its arrival fetter into the vision, but until such a time the viewer will know the date and the hour of all they desire to know; so as to work it to their will.
6. Translocation and the gift of portals, such that any doorway, any threshold; will open to where the mortal so desires. If the mortal looks behind, if they linger in a place between places; madness will follow.

What will it take for such boons?

1. Slowly but surely those in contact with the entity will lose their grasp on reality, finding their mind operating in multiple parallel realities out of harmony with their bodies. Their animal instincts will try to pilot the body and reunite with the mind, but it knows not how.
2. Those in contact will find themselves reborn, their flesh taken in bloody sloughed off affairs so as to make them more palatable to the views of the entity. The pain of skin loss becomes pleasurable, and there is a desire to share such bliss.
3. The entity needs blood to contribute its boon; each being slain in its name bleeds into another reality, slowly coagulating into a stillborn form which might help open the way into this mortal world. It will not succeed here easily, it needs more blood than there is to shed in this world.
4. In exchange for power there must be acknowledgment, not mere supplication upon a baleful altar but a societal acceptance that a change is to come. Hope must be snuffed out, innocence hardened into cruel hearts.
5. For all the entity offers it steals away in kind, robbing those it grants power to of sensation and emotion. It takes away the ennui at first, then other painful things; but it will hunger for joy, for love, for everything that makes someone a person until they're nothing but a husk of a fleshed automaton.
6. The entity takes away memories, not merely snuffing them from the mind but devouring that moment in temporal reality such that what comes before it is left tattered in the void and that which comes after is cut off from causation. By the time it is noticed, it is far too late.

What horrid plane does it come from?

1. It is imprisoned at the dawn of all things, in the infinite blackness of what was before. Its howls and visage are but echoes of a fixed point in time.
2. It leaks into this existence from a plasmatic realm beyond the ordinal, granted form to see and to commune with by virtue of reality collapsing around its essence.
3. It comes from the first inkling of fear ever dreamed by progenitor mortals, it has lingered long in the ether seeking succor and influence.
4. It inhabits the groaning death rasp of the dying, emerging into this reality for an attosecond when life is snuffed away.
5. It hails from an inverted world in a stillborn timeline left derelict on the edge of the multiverse. It is the chill of loneliness felt in isolation.
6. It dwells beyond the veil of time, at the vanishing point of existence when all things will become one and then none and then all again.

How can it be released?

1. When the institutions of the world are brought low, mired in corruption and filth such that civilization is viewed only in mockery by the last mortal to hold innocence and hope for the future; it will step down through a place between places during an eclipse of the sun.
2. With the alignment of distant stars and the churning of the cosmic sea it will find release from its plane; but it will only be drawn to our world when a heavy heart compels a hateful hand to snuff out new life.
3. Only by breaking long-forgotten seals deep beneath the earth will the entity be roused from its shackles and achieve its rightful place. Tectonic plate shifting has already seen them weakened, and if the entity can manipulate a war for oil or a fracking venture, it will emerge from its planar prison.
4. The entity nearly emerged a few hundred years ago, prevented at the crucial moment when its herald was slain. The slayer of this tale was forever tarnished, and like radioactive fallout, the whole of their line carries the weight of this slaying. Once all in the family line are killed, the entity's new chosen herald will bring it forth.
5. When the world is engulfed in conflagration, when the ice atop the earth boils into the sea; when all the songs of sea life cease to silence the summonings of the entity; it will return in blight and in famine.
6. When old, true magic is reintroduced to the world; it will be the entity that guides it. All sacred rites, all blessed words, every baleful portent will aid in loosening its chains; link by bloody link. It will make its herald the mightiest of such beings, and make them unwitting to its plots.

What truth is there to its form?

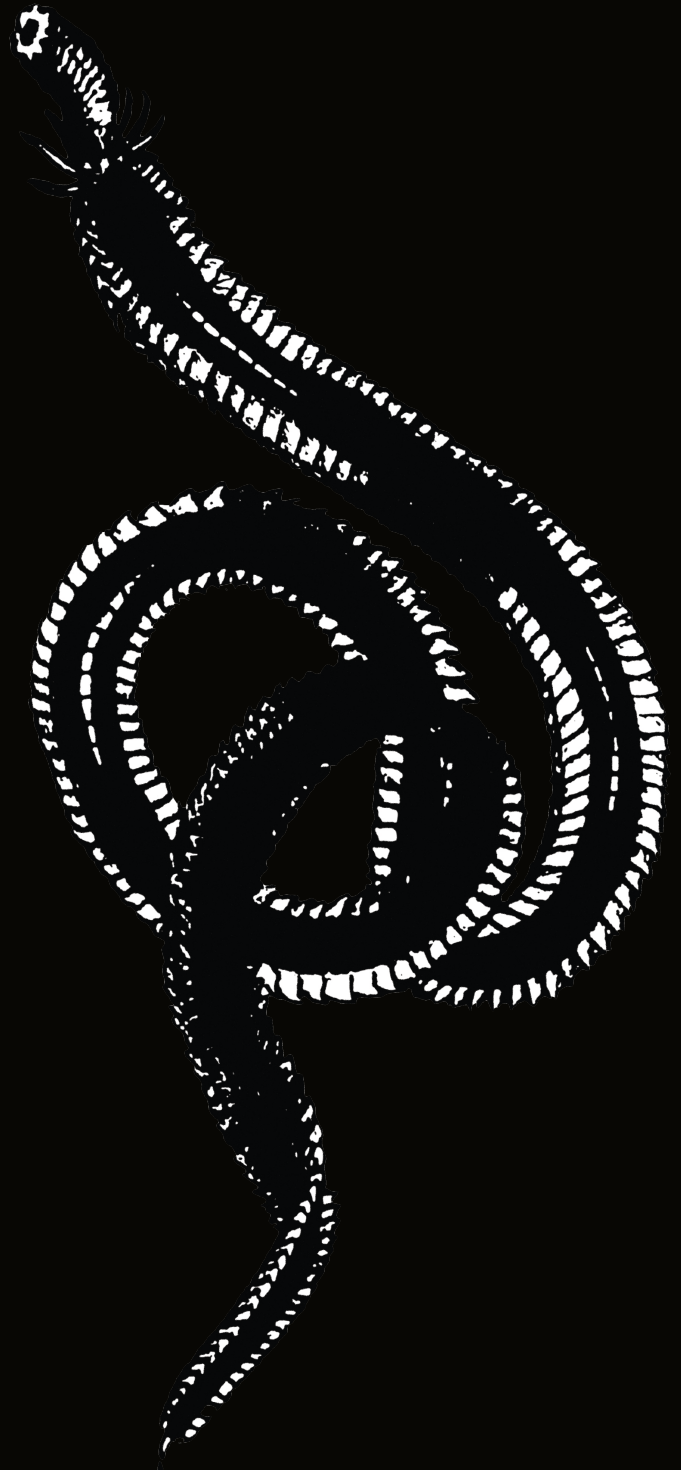
1. Its form is but a mockery, chosen so as to grant it obfuscation enough to torment the mortal world rather than render it into immediate oblivion.
2. It is bound to this form by ancient rites that tore asunder the progenitors and drove them to atavistic insanity. It seeks to revert to what it was in those times.
3. Its form is all mortal life can hope to process of it, for it is conceptual; its original form built off memory and essence. No two beings see its truth the same, but neither are wrong in what it is they may have seen.
4. To gaze upon its true form is to have ones head shattered, imploding like a dying star until it reaches some entropic point where such a being can be conceived of. It exists in this false form as the collective unconscious of mortal life is a bulwark against it.
5. The form in which it is glimpsed is true, though it longs to ascend from something that can be bound in flesh into a shape more befitting the apotheosis to which it is destined.
6. The form it inhabits is true, but nascent. First it must inhabit the flesh of its herald, usurping the mortal mind and wearing its flesh as a pupa, until eventually it can be born fully into this dimension.

What does it draw power from?

1. It draws its power from the nature of its existence beyond this reality, wielding profane energies from beyond the veil with ease.
2. It holds power only equivalent to fears held by mortal beings. In a dimension without life it would be a powerful husk.
3. Born of darker, elder things that none dare remember or dream to contact; this entity draws power from its birthright and lineage.
4. Its powers come from this reality, as it is in truth; far more malleable than anyone would ever dare admit.
5. The source of its power comes from its chains; having naturalized to this dimension it draws in energies it could not possess had it been slain or banished to some other realm.
6. Potential energy predestined and demanded by fate has been gathering for the entity to wield for this allotment of time, until it fulfills its destiny or is fettered into nothingness.

What oblivion would follow in its wake?

1. The end times, as written of in allegory since the earliest days of major religion. The world will be consumed in fire and a grand tribulation between the forces of law and chaos will render the mortal realm asunder; such that any victor inherits only a destroyed world.
2. Society will suffer a grand humbling and a true upheaval to the foundations of civilization that will see those of potent blood in service to the entity rewarded with hegemonic power while all others are made lobotomized and devolved into little more than beasts.
3. The sun will be blackened and distant, further and further each hour for ten thousand years of darkness; until all that reminds of this blighted rock is eternal night and the endless cold of the void.
4. Like a witch curdling milk, the entity will bring with it a pestilence that renders all material upon the world rotten and inedible. True sustenance will be born from the flesh of those who scorn the entity, forcing cannibalism and terrible instinct upon the survivors of this world.
5. The dead will rise from their graves, unable to cease spasms and seizing unless drowned in the blood of the living. Twitching masses of lost digits, dust storms of the cremated, all detritus of that which once was will seek to consume that which still lives.
6. The end of the world will come slowly but painfully, as those who will inherit this world from the mortal races will evolve quickly and usurp humanity with a brutality far worse than any ever inflicted before. Humanity will be scourged from the earth and the coming race will worship at the altar of the entity, their savior and opener of ways.



VULTURES

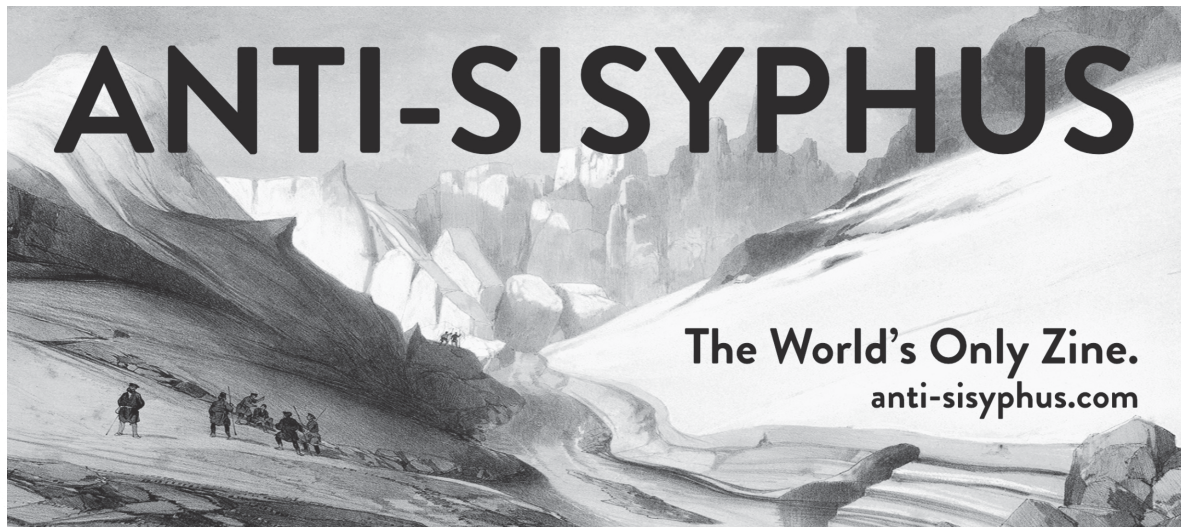
A SciFi TTRPG by John Battle
johnbattle.itch.io/vultures

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Have A Nice Day