



MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



# Signs & Portents

# 25

*I was impressed with the quality of production, layout, art, and content. Congratulations!* GARY GYGIS

## Ambush Alley!

Brand New Scenario for The Starship Troopers Miniatures Game!

## The War Prayer

Centauri Clash With The ISH In This A Call To Arms Battle Report!

## Children Of The Black Wind

OGC Horror Mega-Scenario finishes This Issue!

Plus... Mighty Armies Campaign, New Starship Troopers Battle Report, Holidays in Paranoia, Arachnid Army Tips and lots, lots more!

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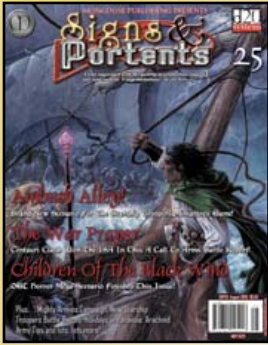
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Ralph Horsley's cover art for Dawn of Destruction decorates this month's cover

It's the dawning of the third year of Signs & Portents Magazine, ten beers along with Minnie Bannister (something like that, anyway). Of course, the Babylon 5 theme hasn't been kept up, otherwise we'd be called Point of No Return Magazine by now... It's a shame that Mongoose had yet to produce any Conan material when the magazine first went to print, as I was keen to use one of my favourite Robert E. Howard stories as the title. But I guess Black Colossus Magazine was destined not to be.

Anyhow, I'm currently watching the entire series of Babylon 5 back to back at the rate of four episodes a day. I've only reached the end of Season One so far, but it's proving to be a rather less daunting task than my last big re-watch – every existing episode of Doctor Who (apart from the four surviving episodes of *The Reign of Terror*, as the VHS release seemed to sell out in about half an hour and I missed buying it), back-to-back at the rate of eight episodes a day. There are a lot more episodes of Doctor Who and it took about a year to get through them all, so Babylon 5 seems almost like child's play in comparison.

However, I'm reminded of a cautionary tale about cramming television. Television fans tell the sad tale of the Thames Television archivist who decided to watch every single episode of Coronation Street in chronological order, at the rate of about twelve episodes a day. Now, there are an awful lot more episodes of Coronation Street than Doctor Who and Babylon 5 put together. After about six months of his task, the archivist began to go a little... loopy. After all, he was seeing the same characters for six hours a day – which is actually a lot more than you'll see most friends and acquaintances, even some family. He was beginning to imagine that he was having conversations with the soap characters and had even occasionally hallucinated that he'd seen them in the street. In other words, Coronation Street was becoming more real to him than reality. He wisely decided to quit his grand vision.

There's a moral in there somewhere. Maybe.

**Matt**

**Editor:**

Matt Sharp

**Managing Editor:**

Ian Barstow

**Editorial Director:**

Matthew Sprange

**Production Director:**

Alexander Fennell

**Mongoose Staff:**

Rich Neale, Mark Humphries, Ian Belcher, Richard Ford, Chris Allen, Adrian Walters, Matt Keefe, Ben Parkman, Bob Roberts, Wilson Philips and Ted Chang

**Artists:**

Jim Holloway, Peter Schlough, Sami Walu and Brian Bolland.

**Contributors:**

Marc Farrimond, Fey Boss, Bill O'Dea, Ian Barstow, Alex Fennell, Chris Allen, Matthew Sprange, Vincent Paul Cooper, Bryan Steele, Jonny Nexus, Ian Belcher and Matthew Pritchard.

**Statistical Analysis:** Mark Quennell

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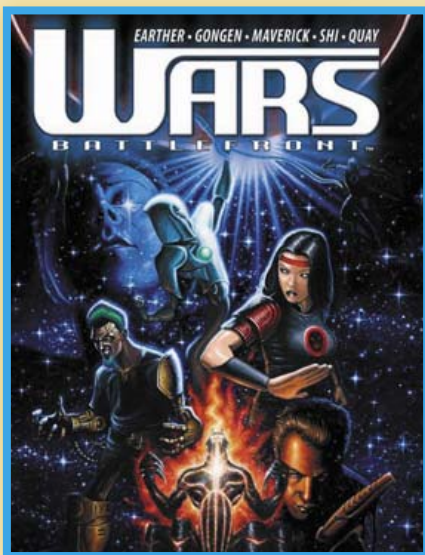
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Always forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much.

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# EYE ON MONGOOSE

*New Releases This Month*

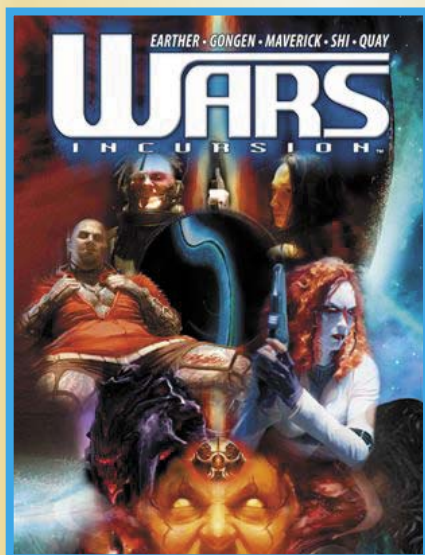
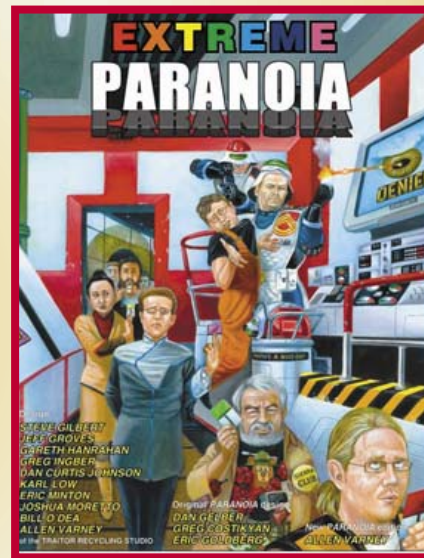


*WARS: Battlefront* is the first supplementary rulebook for the *WARS Roleplaying Game*. Intended for the use of both players and Games Masters, *Battlefront* picks up where the core rulebook leaves off.

Within these pages, readers will find additional information on the various factions of the *WARS* universe, offering new insights into the background and culture of each. Kizen abilities are a powerful tool in the *WARS Roleplaying Game*, and *Battlefront* offers multiple new trees of kizen powers for those looking for something new or unique. Players looking for ways to expand or diversify their character's abilities, as well as Games Masters looking for ways to make the Non-Player Characters even more dangerous and unpredictable, will find a mother lode of information in the sections on prestige classes and class combinations.

Detailed information on the Solar System of 2391, including scientific and background information on each planet in the system, as well as each of the important moons and asteroids. Here, readers will learn about the effects terraforming has had on Venus, the small cities and mining operations buried deep in the ice of Europa and exactly what it takes to travel back and forth between the satellites that make up the Solar System.

PARANOIA Gamemaster! Your friend The Computer requires you procure the major new rules supplement **Extreme PARANOIA**, appearing in August 2005. No longer must your players toil as Troubleshooters of lowly RED Security Clearance. **Extreme PARANOIA** offers new rules for creating player characters of any clearance from ORANGE all the way up to the illustrious VIOLET! Players can now become Alpha Complex TV stars, secret agents, service firm executives and the high-power, heavily armed celebrities of The Computer's Emergency Disaster Response Teams! You can even make your players Internal Security troopers, using newly updated rules from the classic 1987 PARANOIA supplement 'HIL Sector Blues'. With new Mandatory Bonus Duties to round out its 128 pages, **Extreme PARANOIA** is a mandatory purchase for all right-thinking PARANOIA Gamemasters.



*WARS: Incursion* is the first adventure scenario published for the *WARS Roleplaying Game*, and as such is designed for 1<sup>st</sup> level characters. It is designed to introduce players and Games Masters alike to the exciting and vibrant *WARS* campaign setting, and to serve as a starting point of sorts for the campaign and the careers of the Player Characters.

In *Incursion*, the Player Characters find themselves caught up in a web of betrayal, revenge and deception ranging throughout the Outer Rim and threatening to set the entire Solar System ablaze. They might make and break alliances, turn enemies to their side or find themselves staring down the barrel of a gun at someone they thought was a friend. Each choice the Player Characters make will have a dramatic effect on the remainder of the scenario, allowing them to resolve the plot in any manner they choose. There is no 'correct' way for the Player Characters to act in *Incursion*, no need for the Games Master to urge them in any direction. Whether as heroes or monsters, they will find their way.

# Klendathu Invasion



Welcome to the fight, Trooper. This book details the invasion of Klendathu by the Mobile Infantry in an attempt to bring about a quick resolution to the Arachnid War. This is the final step on humanity's long Road to Victory through the galaxy to ensure human civilisation, not insect, dominates this galaxy now and always. The Sky Marshal and his experts within the Strategic Integrated Coalition of Nations all agree on one thing; the strike against Klendathu will be a swift and sure victory.

Unfortunately, they are wrong. Victory on Klendathu will not come easy. It will not come at all. Though the entire invasion took less than a day, Klendathu will be the most devastating engagement fought by the Mobile Infantry to date, with an incredible death toll.

The Klendathu Invasion has the following sections, detailing the invasion from confident start to final tragedy.

**Preparation of Invasion:** A look at the last stages of the Road to Victory and the assumptions made by SICON as to the nature of the threat they faced on Klendathu. Read on as the invasion unfolds with devastating consequences to the Troopers sent down to fight the bugs on the surface of their homeworld. You will also find a frank SICON analysis of the lessons learned during this battle and how the new Sky Marshal intends to apply them to future conflicts.

**Army Lists:** Mobile Infantry players will revel in the new Invasion Companies. Comprising Light Armour Platoons, these are a new type of Trooper created by the Sky Marshal in order to field massive numbers on the battlefields of Klendathu. The Arachnids respond with new ploys to trap unwary Troopers by utilising their vast and extensive tunnel networks.

**Fighting on Klendathu:** This section contains ideas on how to bring the excitement of Klendathu to your own tabletop, including a complete campaign that will test the entire vista of your tactical intellect!

Klendathu Invasion is the first supplementary source book for Starship Troopers: The Miniatures Game.



The fearsome plasma bugs are the Arachnid version of a planetary defence system and despite their lack of targeting skills or specialised hardware they fulfil their original mission objectives quite admirably. Plasma bugs are ponderously large and incapable of burrowing. With their capacity to engage both air and ground targets they are perhaps the most fearsome bug seen to date.



*A Call to Arms* is the game of space combat in the universe of Babylon 5. Throughout the station's turbulent history, armed fleets have enacted the harsher policies of their governments. Now you can play out these confrontations on the tabletop with entire fleets drawn from the Earth Alliance, Minbari Federation, Narn Regime, Centauri Republic or any one of the many other races that dwell in the galaxy.

From skirmishes involving single cruisers hunting down Raiders to the clashing of allied fleets against the forces of ancient beings aeons old, *A Call to Arms* is your ticket to exciting battles that take place in the depth of space.



Since its release in the summer of 2004, the basic box set of *A Call to Arms* has grown, developed and gained a large number of devoted fans. With the help of the online community on the Mongoose web site forums, we have introduced new ships, rules and scenarios which were either released for free download on our web site or published in the three Rules Supplements. We have also finally released miniatures for all the ships in the game, bringing an entirely new dimension to the tabletop.

*Sky Full of Stars* is the culmination of all this work and has been heavily influenced by the fans of *A Call to Arms*. All the rules tweaks and additions you read here, all the revised ships in the advanced fleet lists and all the scenarios have been shaped by the comments made by the online community, after they have had the chance to playtest the each one, making *A Call to Arms* the most extensively playtested game released by Mongoose Publishing thus far.

## NEW STARSHIP TROOPERS BOX SETS!



WASP Troopers



Reliant Gun Platforms



Blister/Blaster Bugs



Light Armour Troopers

# Tales from MONGOOSE HALL

Ian 'Doghouse' Belcher

## The Heroes

Kyle Altern (playboy, Rebel agent and ex-senator played by Mark Humphries)

Gerrard Murker (scout and social dipstick played by Chris Allen)

Sel Kohl (Kel Dor gambler and speeder bike aficionado played by myself)

## The Story So Far

The party, despite a valiant struggle, appear to have succumbed to the Games Master's (Rich Neale) plot. Having jetted off into the unknown aboard Kyle's ship, the *Gelded Lady*, the heroes found themselves on the vacuum-sealed world of Mipos VII. While investigating a weird lop-sided structure referred to herein as the Tube (apparently a whole section of space station or ship that is inexplicably unconnected to anything and lying on its side), one of the heroic crew is badly injured. Despite the best efforts of his friends, security specialist Bar Malon" dies in the strangest manner – enveloped in a blue halo, his body disincorporating before the shocked crew's eyes...

## The Saga Continues...

The remaining crew of the *Gelded Lady* are in a state of shock. Part of this is due to the rather shocking way in which Bar left the group... even in *Star Wars*, corpses don't phase out of existence every day. But most of it is due to emotional trauma – the GM had suckered us into giving a damn about our characters and now one of us was dead, despite an incredible group effort to prevent this. Basically, we'd been caught off guard and ended up doing some true roleplaying.

But life and the adventure must go on. The sensors are still picking up a faint power spike and life reading within the Tube. With so much sacrificed just in getting here, we redouble our determination to get into the structure and find out what the hell was going on. Fortunately, both Kyle and Sel had developed a plan:

- ◆ Sel's plan involved retrofitting Bar's now-empty spacesuit so that it could recycle his own (alien) atmosphere rather than the usual oxygen atmosphere.

## THE MONGOOSE STRIKES BACK

Then Sel's speederbike was carefully unpacked from its holding crate in the hold". Mapping out a careful route based on Gerrard's recollections and an educated guess as to the source of the power signal, Sel would navigate the 'bike into the Tube, locate the power source and any lifeform that was somehow still alive.

- ◆ Kyle's plan involved using the Gelded Lady's forward-mounted blaster cannon to blow our way directly to the power source / lifeform reading.

Sel's plan was eventually chosen, though not without a fight. The closing argument went along the lines of: 'No we're not going to blow our way into the wreck. Why not? Because we want the lifesign to still be there when we get to it!'

And so the intrepid Kel Dor blasted off into the Tube, riding his glorious speederbike into the partially-mapped and mynock-infested ruin. Gerrard, wearing the one remaining spacesuit, stands guard at the entrance with his rifle. At first, Sel's journey went fine – until the little nicks and bumps from over-enthusiastic cornering tactics began to take its toll on the fragile vehicle. Nevertheless, Sel neared the lifesign and finally figured out what this Tube was. It was a prison... of sorts.

In the meantime, Kyle's being scanned. Or, more accurately, the *Gelded Lady* is being scanned, by an orbiting" Corporate Sector picket ship. He is immediately hailed and told that a boarding party is coming down to. It's fair enough. We are trespassers on their planet. As the Corporate shuttle descends, Gerrard keeps a close eye on it, hidden in one of the Tube's entrances some 250 feet above the ground. Kyle then opens the airlock and greets the Corporates – four guards and a rather attractive commanding lieutenant. Ushering them into the *Gelded Lady's* lounge, Kyle offers them drinks, refreshments and remarkable hospitality. It is swiftly remarked upon that he is the Most Congenial Pirate the Corporates have had the pleasure to meet in quite some time. Smiling in

his best diplomatic fashion, Kyle states that he will fetch the necessary paperwork from the cockpit and clear this little misunderstanding up in no time...

In the meantime, Sel has found the controls to the prison – really more of a penitentiary full of individuals in suspended animation. Operating the controls thanks to a little siphoned energy from his speederbike, he summons up the only remaining tank (it looks like a clouded bacta tank) with any remaining power in it. Without wasting any time, he attaches it to the speederbike<sup>x</sup> and sets off back to the ship.

But, little did any of us know that the bells had started to toll... the tumbleweeds to roll... and within moments the gunslingers would face off for a final showdown. Yes, that's right – High Noon in Space. For there, blocking the corridor and the route to the *Gilded Lady*, was that very giant mynock that had out-drawn Ole Bar and sent him to his maker. Great and evil, it faced the brave Kel Dor speederbiker and oozed malicious danger<sup>t</sup>. In return, Sel gunned his engine – and charged!

What happened next occurred very quickly:

## GERRARD MURKER

*'So you're saying that, just because I can't fly the ship, or fix it, or even operate the computers, that I can't be 1<sup>st</sup> mate?'*

Male Human Fringer 1 / Scout 2

**Initiative:** +3

**Defense:** 16 (+3 class, +3 Dex)

**Speed:** 10 metres

**Vitality/Wound Points:** 24/18

**Attack:** +4 melee (1d6+3 crowbar) or +4 ranged (2d8, slugthrower rifle)

**Special Qualities:** Bonus class skill [Move Silently], trailblazing.

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +4

**Force Points:** 3

**Dark Side Points:** 0

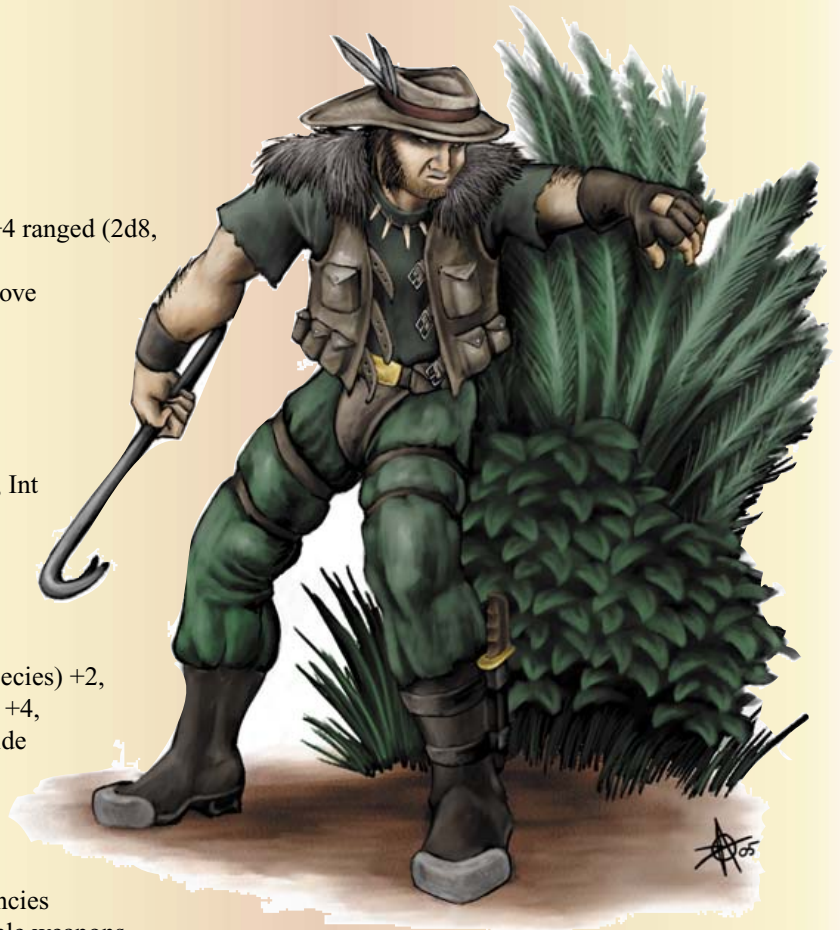
**Reputation:** +0

**Ability Scores:** Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12

**Skills:** Balance +4, Climb +6, Craft (simple and primitive weapons) +3, Craft (tools) +3, Demolitions +3, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +3, Hide +5, Jump +6, Knowledge (alien species) +2, Knowledge (wilderness lore) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Read/Write Basic, Ride +5, Search +3, Speak Basic, Spot +4, Survival +10, Swim +5, Treat Injury +4, Tumble +4

**Feats:** Heroic Surge, Power Attack, Rugged, Track, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, primitive weapons, simple weapons, slugthrowers)

**Equipment:** Crowbar (club), knife, patchwork clothing.





Kyle receives a panicky commlink call from Gerrard, who can see something moving *very fast* toward him from out of the tunnel. Thinking quickly, he cold-starts the *Lady's* engines and seals the cockpit. Angry voices from the lounge area demand he desists in the name of the Corporate Sector. It's fair enough. The acquisition of the tank means we are trespassers *and* thieves. Ignoring them, the noble coaxes the luxury ship into the air...

Gerrard is just about to climb down from his perch when something large, fast and screaming snatches him up and away from the Tube...

Acting on instinct, Kyle brakes hard, opening the rear cargo-bay doors and sending the ship into a tight cornering manoeuvre. This leads to even more angry cries and a few sickening thuds from the lounge area (as he forgot to tell the Corporates to buckle up)...

#### CUT SCENE

### Bridge of the Corporate Picket Ship Callusia

#### *Orbiting Mipos VII*

'Um, sir?

'What do you want, Sensor Operator Plook?'

'Sir... you're gonna want to see this.'

'I do not think so, Sensor Operator Plook. It your job to operate the sensors. It is mine to listen to your report.'

'Well, OK then. A speeder bike has shot out of the side of the wreck, trailing a bacta tank, some other fella and a mynock the size of an airspeeder. They're falling... still falling... and that little spaceship just spun upside down and caught them in its cargo-hold. < PAUSE > Sir, I think we've just witnessed the birth of *Toss the Speederbike*...'

#### END CUT SCENE

Actually, only the speederbike (or at least the remains thereof), the Kel Dor, the tank and the erstwhile human end up in the cargo-hold. The giant mynock presumably remembered how to fly and elected not to join our courageous crew. Crawling out of the wreckage, Gerrard checks on the injured Kel Dor and then contacts Kyle in the cockpit through the comm link. The playboy is flying up and out of Mipos VII's atmosphere, but he warns that the picket ship is still waiting for them in orbit – and that they've got a lounge full of rather irate Corporates to deal with. Being a gung-ho, can-do kind of thug, Gerrard declares that he will take care of the unwelcome guests and heads forward to deal with them.

Checking the tank's console, Sel sees that the inhabitant is, for a miracle, still alive. But without a proper medical facility, whoever is inside the tank will not survive

long. Breathing a sigh of relief, the Kel Dor sets about connecting the failing tank to the ship's power supply, to make sure that the mysterious occupant continues to live as long as possible.

Fortunately, upon entering the lounge, Gerrard is not forced to endure a tricky moment of diplomacy. With one of the guards suffering from an acute case of 'neck-bending-the-wrong-way' syndrome, the attractive Corporate lieutenant accuses Gerrard of being a despicable pirate and opens fire upon him. It's fair enough. The unfortunate demise of one of the Corporate guards means we are now trespassers *and* thieves *and* murderers. That doesn't just make us pirates – that makes us bona fide, fully accredited *adventurers*<sup>7</sup>.

The ensuing firefight is interesting to say the least. With Kyle barrel-rolling the *Gelded Lady* to avoid fire from the Corporate picket ship, the wounded guards and officer have their hands full dealing with the homicidal and remarkably sure-footed Gerrard. Despite managing to incapacitate the guards and then grapple the lieutenant, the human's efforts were doomed to failure. Unbeknownst to him, a hidden lurker chose this moment to strike, cutting down the scout with blast of energy.

Yet even as he fell into darkness, Gerrard felt the familiar lurching of the *Gelded Lady*. Quite how he did it we don't know, but Kyle had evaded the picket ship and reached the relative sanctity of hyperspace...

<sup>1</sup> Oh you want the actual plot... we're supposed to be rescuing some missing Rebel agents. They'd been the subject of a compelling cut-away scene by Rich earlier in the adventure and each of us, I suspect, rather wished we were a member of the missing group than our own.

<sup>2</sup> Bar had been played by Ian Barstow, who being one of life's natural sulkers, missed out on this session.

<sup>3</sup> This was the possibly the most gloriously beautiful and carefully maintained speederbike in existence. It glowed with elegance and perfection of purpose. It was *not* a scouting or combat machine. Please note the use of the past tense.

<sup>4</sup> Orbiting the planet, not the *Gelded Lady*. I think.

<sup>5</sup> It took ages. Bloody ages. Then it fell out of the harness and had to be re-done... absolute nightmare. Stupid GMs and their stupidly realistic skill checks.

<sup>6</sup> Actually it was just hanging upside-down and was oozing mynock crap, but it's hardly our fault that the creatures don't have any sense of drama.

<sup>7</sup> Hell, we're only one instance of genocide away from being heroes.

# Ambush Alley

**A SCENARIO FOR THE STARSHIP  
TROOPERS MINIATURES GAME**

**MARC  
FARRIMOND**

'Nada on the comms, Top. Complete zip. If they're reading us, then they're sure taking their sweet time answering!' Private Jones moved his gauntleted hand from the side of his helmet and slowly shook his head as he looked at Sergeant Fleur.

'Okay. Keep trying. Rodriguez, Juan - you have point!' Sergeant Fleur was already striding off down the long rock corridor of the canyon as he spoke, and without a word the two young troopers strode forward on the bounce. Using their jump packs, the pair leapt into the air and landed further down the canyon.

The rest of Carter's Death Dealers began following their comrades into the canyon. Every single trooper knew from bitter experience that the high cliff walls made in ideal place for an ambush. Each member of the squad scanned every inch of the chasm for signs of movement, no matter how small. However, the desolate landscape of Pluto appeared as dead and barren as the grave.

Ever since they had dropped from the Lord Nelson they had been in a world of hurt. Cut off from the other squads who had dropped in part of Operation Cleansing Wave; the 'simple extermination assault on bug central' mission that the brass had sent them on was starting to turn into a total nightmare. The drop had gone badly from the off. As the squad had been ready to initiate the drop from orbit, a lucky shot from a plasma bug had hit the vessel and caused it to veer off course. By the time the



troopers in their M2 Drop Capsules had jettisoned from the stricken vessel, they were over forty klicks off course.

The landing had also gone badly. Private Métis had been injured as his M2 took a direct hit from the tail end of a plasma bug discharge. Luckily for Métis, the M2's built-in auto defences had moved the capsule at the last moment. He struck lucky; although he had landed heavily and was unconscious, he was alive.

It had seemed that Squad Baker of Carter's Death Dealers had also attracted the attention of every damn bug on this godforsaken planet. The squad had hit the ground running but they had a fight on their hands. With a man injured and ammo running low, the only way to get to the retrieval

zone was through the large canyon that Private Thane had jokingly nicknamed 'ambush alley'. Métis had been hoisted onto the back of the M9. The Death Dealers always looked after their own.

Fleur pulled out the digimapper and, once again, checked the co-ordinates against the map on his suit's head-up display. Things had been quite for almost an hour now. After initial heavy bug resistance, things had seemed to thin out, but he had learned long ago that when everything goes quiet, it's just waiting for all hell to break loose.

'Sarge! Looks like we found bugs!' Came the unmistakable voice of Private Juan over the comms in the helmets of every trooper in the squad.

‘How many, Private?’, Fleur breathed uneasily, instinctively checking his Morita and bringing it up ready to fire.

‘Looks like all of ‘em sarge. Is it too late to put in for a transfer?’ With a laugh the young private broke off the communication.

‘Cut the chatter, Private,’ Fleur growled into his comm as the flash of weapons fire from both Juan and Rodriguez began to light up the cold darkness of the Plutonian night. The remainder of the squad began to provide covering fire as the two troopers started to slowly walk backwards, firing as they went, in order to regroup with the rest of the squad.

For long minutes the squad poured round after round into the oncoming bug horde. Well-placed shots from O’Brien took down dozens of the Arachnid creatures before they could get close enough to attack, but they carried on regardless. The loss of so many of their comrades meant less than nothing to this vicious, alien race.

After what seemed like an eternity the bugs seemed to peter out and all that was left was a large pile of bug corpses and lots of spent shell casings filling the canyon floor.

‘Baker Two One, this is Charlie Two Zero Actual, come back!’ The voice came through the comms like a guardian angel, cutting through the taciturn night like a knife.

‘Charlie Two Zero, good to hear you! Welcome to the party. What took you



guys so long?’ Fleur almost shouted in relief.

‘Came in for a little chop on the way down, but we are at LZ 305 awaiting your arrival. What’s your ETA? Over.’

‘Got a little problem here with lots of legs between us and the LZ, can’t give you an approximate ETA but lets say we ain’t going to take our sweet time that’s for sure. Over!’

‘Understood Baker Two One. We will wait for you as long as we can, but you had best hurry your butts up as CnC are blowing the bulge and calling us home, looks like Operation Cleansing Wave is over. Over and Out!’

Fleur gathered his squad together. He looked intensely at each of their faces, illuminated by the lights on the

insides of their helmets. Ammo was running low, they were already a man down and they still had almost a klick to walk through bug infested territory.

Fleur took a deep breath and held it for a moment, gathering his thoughts. These men and women were under his command and he wanted to make damn sure that they got back to the retrieval boat safely. They were apes, but they were his apes!

‘Listen up you apes, I want this smooth and by the numbers, no showboating or heroics. We have to get through that canyon and meet up with Charlie Two Zero ASAP and time’s a running out for us. Keep moving, watch the canyon walls and stay frosty and we will make it home in time for chow. Do you get me, apes?’

As one the squad sounded out in a clarion voice!

‘We get you Sir!’

Cautiously, the squad began to move further into ambush alley and head for home.



## Scenario Brief

The Mobile Infantry player will take control of Baker Two One, which consists of four MI Cap troopers in M-1A4 power armour armed with TW-203a Mortia Assault Rifles and equipped with M902 Frag grenades. The squad also includes one MI Cap Trooper in M-1A4 power armour equipped with a SW-404 Javelin Missile Launcher and M902 Frag grenades. The sergeant is wearing full M-1A4 power armour and is equipped with an XW-137-A3 Trench Sweeper on his TW-203a Morita Assault Rifle. The final member of the squad is a corporal in an M9 Marauder suit armed with SW-404 Javelin Missile Launcher, MW-Sixgun Rotary Cannon and a MW-5050 Twin.50 Autocannon and IW-228 Utility Claws in Hard Point 4.

The final member of Baker Two One is Private Métis who is unconscious and is being carried by the M9 Marauder suit. Private Metis will take no active part in this battle, but will play an important role when it comes to determining the outcome of the battle.

The Arachnid player should have four units of 12 warriors and may use any of the Bug Entry Points that are indicated on the map to bring on his units. Once an entire unit is destroyed the Arachnid player may bring them on from Entry point A the turn afterwards, as the bugs try to outflank the squad.



## Special Rules

To win this scenario Baker Two One must make it from one small end of the table to the other, running the gauntlet of the canyon and everything that the bugs can throw at them. The player controlling the MI troopers must advance were possible as the squad is pressed for time, so must make a move action every turn. This will of course mean that the squad cannot remain stationary, but may use its jump packs if it uses a ready action, taking advantage of the Beat Feet special movement as detailed on page 69 of the Starship Troopers rulebook.

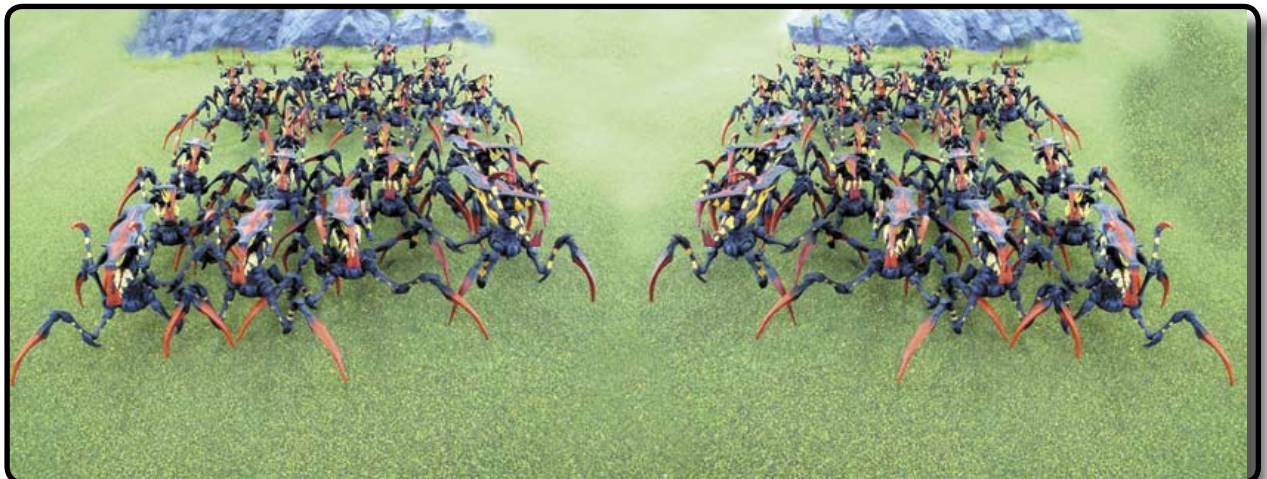
Private Métis is represented by a small counter that should be placed with the Marauder. If the Marauder is

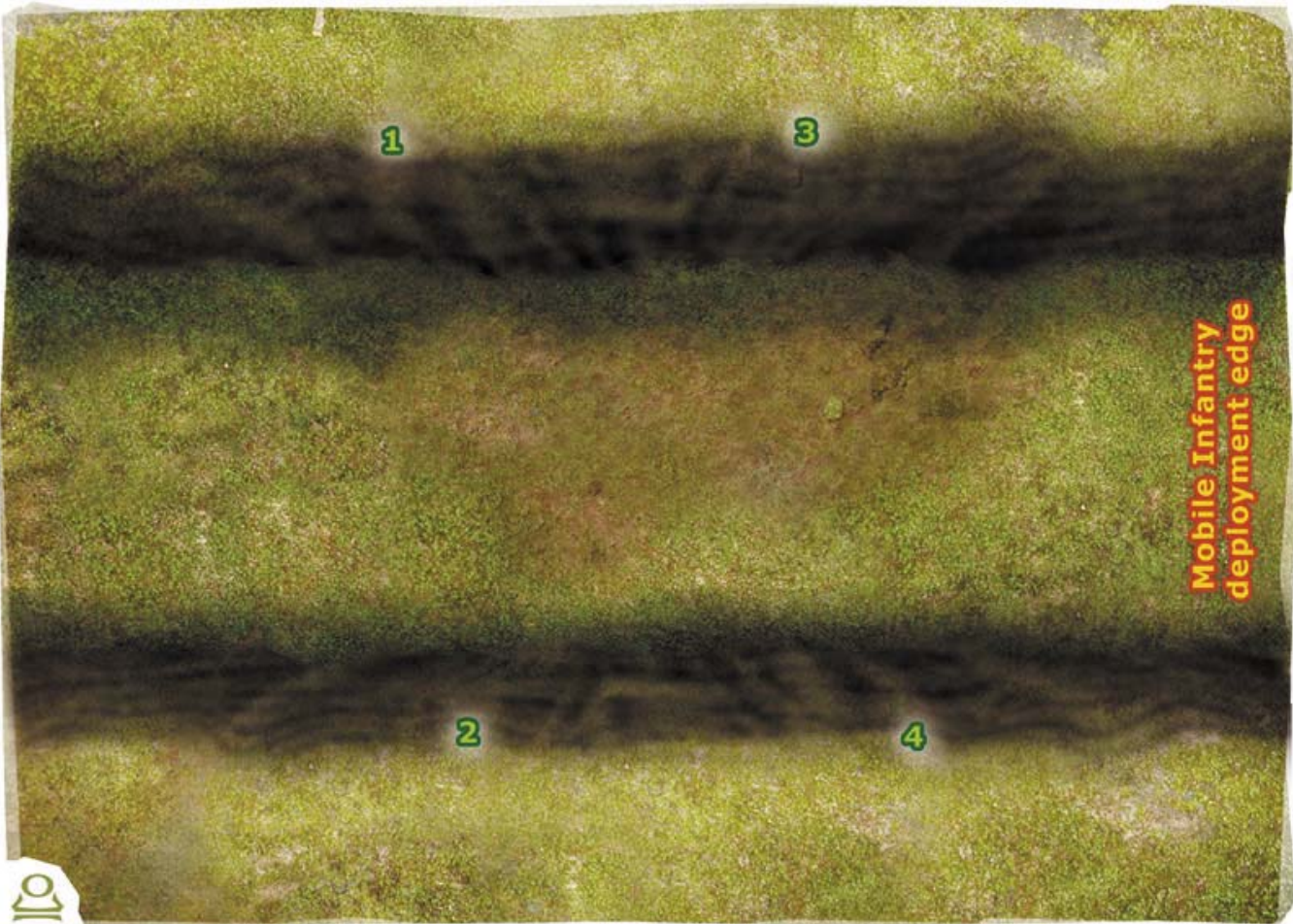
destroyed then Métis is also counted as destroyed for the sake of reckoning up victory points.

The troopers are running low on ammunition and as such if any of them rolls a natural 1 during a reaction treat roll a D6 again for each trooper that rolls a natural 1 and treat their 'out of ammo' as permanent for the rest of the battle. This will mean that players may have to resort to using grenades in a very tight situation.

## Terrain

This scenario takes place in a canyon and as such you should use whatever terrain you have at hand to simulate the battlefield.





## Duration

This scenario will last 6 turns, or until the MI squad is destroyed by the Arachnids.

## Deployment

**Mobile Infantry:** The player controlling the Mobile Infantry squad sets his unit up at the narrow end of the map, up to 5" from the table edge.

**Arachnids:** The player controlling the Arachnids may enter his squads from any of the four entry points marked on the map. As noted above if any units of Arachnids are destroyed they will come on from behind the MI troopers in the Arachnid player's next turn. If the Arachnid player wishes, he may hold one unit of warriors in reserve till his second turn; otherwise they must all be deployed at the start of the game.

## Victory Conditions

If the Arachnid Player destroys Baker Two One then he wins

If the MI Player reaches the far side of the table with his squad and Private Métis alive then he wins

Otherwise

For every squad destroyed by the MI Troopers 10 victory points

For every MI Trooper destroyed by the Arachnids 5 victory points

**Notes:** Though this scenario will test the Mobile Infantry player to the max, it is suggested that the duration of the game should be no more than six turns. If any model fails a reaction check (in other words, rolls a natural 1) and then rolls a natural 1 again, they are completely

out of ammunition for their weapon and must rely on either the speed of their armour or use their Frag grenades to protect themselves. This will limit the range of their attacks and will make gameplay that much more interesting, and by making the troopers push forward it will bring the sense of urgency.



*Private Métis Counter*



# Inside The Chainmail Bra

## FEY BOSS

The scene - the heavens above, a mass of dense white clouds roiling in tumult below. Angelic construction workers crawl about, tap-tapping with staves and ploughshares that will later be beaten into swords. Above it all stands Our Heavenly Father, clad in overalls and flannel shirt, sleeves rolled up to His inexpressibly majestic elbows. A fat cigar hangs between His lips and the smoke from the end rises and then falls to add to the mass of unformed mist below.

Archangel Michael, somewhat less resplendent than usual for having grey muck under his fingernails, makes his way up to the Heavenly Foreman. 'God? Hey, Boss, got a question for you, o Heavenly Creator.' He touches his cap, then pulls it off to wipe at his forehead with a red and white polka-dot cloth.

God rolls His cigar around to one side of His mouth. 'Yeah, Mike, what's up? How's the construction going on the game world?' He leans forward, squinting His eyes as He watches a squirming conga line of shirtless angels toss animal and plant parts from one set of hands to the next. 'Looks like your boys are getting things in order. I hereby pronounce it Good - but what's the deal? Running into problems?'

'Rather,' Michael agrees, stuffing his cloth away. 'Look, God, I hate to be a bother, but, well, some of the boys, they're starting to ask questions.' He shuffles his feet, looking uncomfortable. 'And, well, I don't know what to tell them. I've got them calmed down for now, but it'd help if You wouldn't mind - well, if You could talk to them, maybe.'

'Questions?' God frowns, and Michael looks away quickly. Without haste, God takes his cigar, stubbing it out. 'Looks like that's enough raw material for now. Just as well - these things hurt My throat. What kind of questions, Mike? Come on - walk with Me.'

Michael hurries along in God's wake, his sword dragging a line of vegetation behind him. 'Well, they're feeling that You're asking too much,' he mutters uncomfortably. 'All this work we're putting in - it seems like a lot of work just to be able to play a game. The boys're starting to get a bit antsy. I calmed them down for now, but I don't know how long it'll last.'

## In The Beginning...

God sighs. 'Already? Trade unions aren't due for billions of years! Or six thousand. It all depends who you're planning on asking, of course. Alright, Mike, so who's the agitator? It's Luke, isn't it.'

'Lucifer has been a bit - firm in his views, yes. But that's not it, God.' Michael leans against a cloud, rubbing his nose. 'The problem is that the angels're listening to him.'

'Well, what's he saying?' God relights his stogie, putting it back between his teeth and chewing on it contemplatively. 'Let me guess - the usual. I'm demanding too much, especially for a game, that I'm stingy on the XP, that I don't provide good enough snacks?'

'That's about the size of it,' Michael agrees, sticking his hands in his pockets. 'He's holding out for those marshmallow treats You sometimes make. Says if You wanted to, You could add peanut butter. That You don't value your players enough, that You expect us to put in an awful lot of work on this new game of Yours - all this building, just so You can run the simulations, and You haven't given us any dice yet.'

God snorts, taking His cigar away and exhaling a long plume of smoke. It goes up and collects into the shape of a girl in a chain mail bikini charging with a staff at a group of kobolds. Michael applauds politely, and God gestures in dismissal. 'You should've seen the pin-up I did - now, that was worth saving. Keeping that for when I'm ready to find a mother for my kid, but I shouldn't give plot away this early, that game hasn't even started. Anyway, here's what you do. Paying attention, Mike?'

Michael draws himself up smartly. 'Paying attention, sir!'

'No one likes a brownnoser, Mike. Right, here's what you tell them.' God sticks his cigar behind his ear, ignoring the thin trail of smoke ringing around above his head like a wreath. 'First - I invented peanuts, and we don't even have 'em growing yet, peanut butter marshmallow treats are off the list. But here's what I'll do.' He holds up a hand to forestall Michael's protests.

'I'll make a special exception for the next gaming break, and I'll bring enough Guinness for everyone. How's that?'

'God, You're a genius.' Michael beams happily. 'I'll go tell them right away, shall I?'

'You do that.' God turns back to His examination of His work. '...Uh oh. Here comes Gabe. Go on, Mike, you go tell 'em, I'll deal with Gabe.'

Michael hurries off while another archangel, Gabriel, approaches. Gabriel is wearing darker clothing and has a bugle under one arm.

'Evening, God,' he greets the Creator. 'Hope I'm not interrupting?'

'Never. What's up, Gabe?' God offers Gabriel a quick salute and a smile around His cigar. 'How's the men shaping up? All ready for the next war game?'

'Going pretty well. Or, well, it was. Seems some of the boys're getting cranky about all the prep work. They don't understand that in order to have a good game, they've got to pay attention to the terrain and the building of the armies.' Gabriel shakes his head mournfully. 'I blame Lucifer.'

'Luke, again? What is it with that boy? I tell you, Gabe, I never should've brought him into the game.' God looks annoyed, fisting a hand against His hip. 'Next you'll tell me he's started weighting his dice so they'll only roll natural twenties.'

'You mean Mike didn't tell You?' Gabriel raises his eyebrows. 'Though that's not the worst of it.'

'You mean there's more? Dangit, Gabe...' God shakes His head, taking His cigar out of His mouth and looking down at it. 'I don't know what's wrong with that boy. Luke's a bright kid, I'd think if there's anyone who'd know better, it'd be him. What's he doing?'

'Well, it's about the game, God. He thinks You're putting in too much work on it - that You won't have time to run Your usual games for the rest of us.' Gabriel shifts the position of his bugle under his arm. 'He's been really worried about it for a while, and he's been getting everyone else worked up. Feels too that You might not put in enough work on keeping the game going, You're so taken up with this new project of yours.'

'Well, that's real sweet of him to worry. But he needs to concentrate on getting his job done and not worry about Me getting Mine.' God shakes His head, reaching into a pocket and pulling out a handful of gemstones. Rattling them, He remarks, 'Here. Give him some of these, won't you? Maybe a few dice will make him feel better - a little gift, you understand.'

'Might want to hold off, God. I haven't told you everything.' Gabriel twitches in place, taking the gems but not putting them away. 'See, he... well, I don't know how to say this.'



God reaches into a cloud, pulling out a can of Boddington's and cracking it open. He drinks thirstily, then sets the can on the air. 'Go on, I'm about as ready to hear it as ever.'

'Well,' Gabriel mutters, looking down at his feet, 'since You're so busy with this new game, setting it up and all - well, Luke's started a game of his own, on the side. Bunch of the other angels are playing in it - using their characters from Your campaign.'

'They're WHAT? Right, that's it!' God sputters, spraying Boddington's to rain down on the mist below. 'Gabe, grab your horn; it's quitting time. Get your boys together!'

'What're You going to do, God? Or I mean, what do You want us to do?' Gabriel immediately brings himself to attention, straightening and bringing his bugle up towards his lips. 'I'm at your command, my Lord, but let me know.'

God turns away, stalking towards His Almighty Office, rolling down His sleeves. 'Those ungrateful gits are OUT of the game, Gabe. I don't care what you have to do, but get 'em outta here, especially Lucifer! - And TAKE AWAY THEIR DICE!'

The slamming of God's door coincides nicely with the blowing of Gabriel's horn. God flings Himself down in His chair, putting His boots up on the desk as he leans back. 'Imagine that,' the Creator mutters. 'I go to all this trouble to make a nice game for everyone, and someone has to go and ruin it. Ah well,' He sighs. 'And to think the D20 system hasn't even been invented yet.'



# FFD Sector Is For Loyal Clones!

Ever since The Computer authorized mandate TMCP831.55/a 'Travel and consumption to rejuvenate individual efficiency and sector economies', FFD Sector has labored daycycle and nightcycle to provide loyal clones with the best Mandatory Efficiency Rejuvenation Activity we could provide. This guide, created by FFD Bureau of Travel, Tourism and Rejuvenation (a licensed firm of HPD&MC), will help busy citizens understand why they should spend their next MERA with the friendly folks of FFD.

There are five sections to this guide:

- ✦ **Regions:** what a visitor can expect to find in FFD's three main subsectors.
- ✦ **Tours and Trails:** a glimpse into some of the most interesting trails and tours in Alpha Complex.
- ✦ **Interests:** some of the fun and approved activities that visitors can participate in.
- ✦ **Attractions:** locations and festivals designed to enhance the travel and consumption experience.

- ✦ **Accommodations:** places to stay rated by clearance and quality.

Visit <http://RED.mera.hpd.ffd/> for loyal clones for more information, including an interactive MERA planning guide, credit expense estimator and the proper forms required before undertaking any MERA.

## Regions

### Power Generation Subsector, Sectoropolitan Subsector and Waste Reclamation Heritage Subsector

Each sector has its unique charms and FFD Sector is no exception. Three main subsectors are available for citizens on their MERA for traveling and purchasing fun, and travel between them is quick and convenient, whether by foot, elevator or autocar. Transtube service to and from FFD Sector is set to resume by Week 32 of this yearcycle.



### Power Generation Subsector

Whatever time of yearcycle, the word *power* describes FFD's Nuclear Reactor and Power Generating subsector. Scan through various vidcam feeds and you might see the beautiful hues of a shimmering reactor steam vent or the warm glow from an ungrounded class J power line--just the sort of scenery that makes this subsector one amazing corridor after another. Combine these

## Bill O'Dea

backdrops with a myriad of activities--unpowered escalator hiking, Powergolf, Underplex spelunking, vat swimming, shopping, clearance dependent sightseeing--and you have a great MERA.

Enjoy the picturesque uncovered corridors and admire Miguel-Y-JCD's unique Gloriful Silicon Vidscreen Sculpture Garden. Near Escalator FFD/12d, you'll find a series of food vats that could be straight from year

14, not 214. Take an autobot excursion on the M4BB Freeway and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of the third largest autocar freeway in all of Alpha Complex. Camp under the old-fashioned wire bulbs and exposed heating elements, or opt for a new Mattress-And-CoffeeLike personal dormitory (for GREEN and higher only).

Hit the bungee cords at nearby TwoTall Towers Resort and BLUE Spa, where you can make your own bungee cords out of recycled CPU forms. Explore the craggy heights of Point Beppie (BrightHappyComplex class Cooling Tower FFD5.BEP--help repairing the craggy bits is appreciated and mandatory) or revel in the recycled air of the Monstrodioner, an air cleaner/recycler that retains the massive scale and charm of yesteryearcycle. Stand on the brink of a breathtaking gorge at the Nothing To See Here Reactor



Implosion Heritage Site, then carefully tread through the Underplex's Sunken Sector(tm) and see if you can spot a Giant Radioactive Mutant Cockroach (editor's note: this is NOT a rumor, as rumors are treason. It is a myth. Myths are permitted per mandate TMHP633.11/g 'Mythology for use in mind control schemes (non-Old Reckoning myths)').

The Approved-Historic Transbot Station FFD-3a offers more encounters with a past filled with stories of traitors and their inevitable demise. Enjoy a living history lesson from Evelyn-O-SDN-1, Alpha Complex's Oldest First Clone, then stroll through the historic Coal Generator District and take a turn at cleaning soot out of a chimney. Afterward, pay a visit to the Armed Forces' Deep-Earth Force & Rocket Powered Drill Base and follow the path down to the future!

**FFD's Power Generation Subsector An 'electrifying' adventure! Sectorpolitan Subsector**

This is more than a home to most of FFD Sector's permanent population. You'll find hydroponics and real food in GREENHouses, high-speed races at R&D Experimental Autocar Raceway, high-population density living in the INFRARED HappyHome Catacombs and K class jackobots building K+ class jackobots along assembly lines at Botology Factory #137. There are wide altitude ranges, from the depths of Elevator Shaft ISF-3-119-007 to the sector's highest point at Elevator Shaft ISF-3-114-662.

The hustle and bustle of 'Big' Bob-Y's PLC Buyatorium differs pleasantly from the solitude and serenity found in the INDIGO Corridors. Roars that rise from funball games on Sixdays in B3-SmileTyme Stadium are in sharp contrast to the respectful quiet that surrounds Alpha Complex's fifth-largest Tomb of the Unidentified Troubleshooter. Tears are shed to noted leaders--including our sector's first IntSec supervisors, showcased in the Friend Computer Museum of Truly

Loyal Clones--and to the brave soldiers of Smiling Songsters AF, whose songs and cheerful attitudes helped this subsector maintain happiness quotas during Big Mutie Joe's Last Stand.

Visitor favorites such as IntSec's Secret Camera Grotto and the HuegeVision(tm) Public Hating Concourse offset hidden treasures such as the Used Floss Furnaces and Polimorf Central, the seventh-largest CPU form creation facility in all of Alpha Complex.

HPD&MC's continuous-run production of To Kill a Commie Mutant Traitor, based on the textfile of the same name by Harry-I-ABB, brings fans of history and Commie-hating to this subsector. The performances are held at the Unused IntSec Capital Punishment Center, which was shown in the video version of the beloved story starring Teela-O and Jack-R.

**FFD's Sectorpolitan Subsector More than just dormitories and apartments**

**Waste Reclamation Heritage Subsector**

Renowned for its lush plastisteel walls and pristine hygiene conditions, the lure of the largest waste reclamation facilities in the four-sector area attracts recycling lovers with ease. A stop at the elevated Fuel Cell Replenishment station near the intersection of Pedestrian Hallway FFD:GFD1A-1 and Postalbot Expressway 110110 1000110100100100111001 offers a panoramic view of the entire subsector.

The largest landmark in view is the magnificent Andre-G Recyclable Sorting Facility. At more than 14,000 square meters, the RSF was once the center of all recycling efforts for seven neighboring sectors and continues to help citizens keep Alpha Complex clean and efficient. Volunteer reclamation centers dot the subsector, from U-Power Battery Refueling Park to Uranium Replenishing Funscape, and the D5-generation food vats offer up some of the freshest FunFoods ever

to be had--visitors make their food before they eat it.

History lovers should take the FOG3351[rep] Escalator and Mobile PLC Market up to Level AG18, where they will find elegant Revision Hall, the original home of HPD&MC's successful service firm Didn't-Happen-That-Way HPD. Visitors with the correct clearance can enter and marvel at the 17 official versions of the Great Transbot Robbery of 176. Just downstairs is the complex-famous Air Freshener Bridge--a bridge made entirely from Stickies(tm) Air Freshener Disks that spans the Open Source Recycling Combine. Join other loyal citizens in throwing trash off the bridge and watch the giant recyclatrons reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Debbie-B-TOL Waste Reclamation Industrial Park is home to two attractions not to be missed: the renowned FFD Sector Waste Festival (held when waste reclaimers go offline--check the netsite <http://IR.accidents.tech.ffd/wastefestival> for times and dates) and the Museum of Recycling. The permanent exhibit, *Yeast: Friend AND Foe*, continues to draw visitors and re-education field trips throughout the yearcycle.

**FFD's Waste Reclamation Heritage Subsector One experience that won't be a 'waste' of your time!**

**Tours and Trails: The INFRARED Trail and The Battle of the Four Sectors Tour**

Take a figurative journey to the yearcycles of old, enjoy a peaceful walk through a variety of brilliant security clearance corridors, or explore our rich heritage of productive joy. FFD Sector has fun times for every approved interest with many tours and trails waiting for you. Here's just a sample of the fun and adventure that lies in wait for citizens on their pre-approved MERA.



## The INFRARED Trail

In year 209, HPD&MC recognized FFD Sector as having the happiest INFRARED citizens in the four-sector area. Since then, citizens of all clearances have enjoyed walking in the footsteps of the lowest-clearance clones. This trail documents the courage, dedication and happiness of FFD's INFRARED population and provides higher-clearance clones with valuable lessons and wonderful nostalgia of daycycles gone by. Stops along the trail include:

- ☛ Brian-TTU Falls Memorial: Originally called the Pedway Sinkhole, local myth holds that Brian-TTU fell to his death in the sinkhole while trying to arrive on time for his shift at the Fitterall Box & Crate factory. One plaque memorializes his dedication and sacrifice as a symbol to INFRAREDs everywhere, while a second plaque showcases the demerits he received for not following proper safety procedures.
- ☛ Black Hall: Pedestrian Hallway FFD-LV12:FFD-WK05A-2 is the primary connection between the INFRARED barracks and the INFRARED work levels. It's an

INFRARED-clearance corridor 14.5 meters wide with a 1-meter wide RED clearance strip running down the center, so visitors can stand in the center and watch the masses proceed happily to and from work. Camera/blaster clusters every 10 meters provide security and safety.

☛ IR Museum and Science Center: The museum's collection contains INFRARED artifacts from as far back as year 30 ago and exhibits on INFRARED jobs, including food vat skimming and drug interaction testing.

Visitors are asked not to feed the clones on display; otherwise they may get aggressive. The science center allows young clones and high-clearance citizens to test basic scientific principals such as conductivity and super-saturation on INFRARED volunteers. Call to confirm hours.

- ☛ PLC Automated Buffet #77-IR: FFD Sector is home to one of three automated INFRARED cafeterias in all of Alpha Complex, which is part of why FFD INFRAREDs are so happy. Chairs are attached to a moving track, and clones sitting in them slowly move past the patented FunFoods FunEating Experience: bot-controlled assembly line feeds clones a main dish, a dessert and a drink to maximize nutrition and efficiency. A special high-clearance viewing section has been added, marked by tape and guardbots, so visitors can relive the sights, sounds and smells of their early yearcycles. Visitors are advised not to eat while in the cafeteria.

## The INFRARED Trail Jump back into INFRARED jumpsuits, but only metaphorically!

### Battle of the Four Sectors Tour

FFD Sector's anti-Communist heritage is as rich and varied as the sector itself. Along with FFH, FEM, and GFD Sectors, FFD Sector played a pivotal role in the War Between The Sectors. The Unhappy Sectors' Third Mutant Army had been retreating for weeks when their commander, the infamous Big Mutie Joe, decided to make a final, desperate stand. Fighting raged for weekcycles in the four sectors, with Vulture Squadron finally crushing the Third Mutant Army. This victory was instrumental to bringing a swift end to the conflict and helped make Alpha Complex the happy utopia it is today.

The tour will include stops at the following locations of revised-historical interest:

- ☛ Fort Periwinkle: the site of Big Mutie Joe's Last Stand is actually three bot assembly plants that were hastily fortified by the Third Mutant Army. Even though one of the plants built warbots and contained a sizable cache of weapons and ammunition, brave Troubleshooter teams managed to slip in and detonate the cache, allowing Vulture Squadron to lay siege and capture Big Mutie Joe and all his mutant soldiers. Recently included in the Complex Register of Historical Sites--Expurgated Edition.
- ☛ Commander Horace-B-FFD's Original Creche: as further proof that The Computer's creche assignments are amazingly predictive, the hero of the Battle of the Four Sectors was decanted and raised in the very sector that hosted his triumph. Commander Horace-B's creche was abandoned for yearcycles but has recently been restored to how it would have looked in Horace-B's time. Visitors can view his first PDC, a jumpsuit from his early years

and the very SkinnerStick used by a teacherbot to accelerate his learning.

Big Mutie Joe Statue and Unhappiness Aversion Park: a cast-iron statue of Big Mutie Joe stands in the center of Unhappiness Aversion Park, on the exact spot where the Unhappy leader was terminated by Commander Horace-B after the fall of Fort Periwinkle. Everyday at exactly 15:37, the moment of the traitor's termination, all nearby citizens join together to throw debris at the statue and loudly proclaim their satisfaction with what The Computer provides. Debris can be bought at reduced prices one hour beforehand.

The Cathy-V-PLL Museum of Military History: Cathy-V, a military enthusiast and resident of FFD Sector, opened this museum dedicated to the struggle against Communists, Mutants and Traitors. Highlights include the fourth-largest collection of spent laser barrels in Alpha Complex, the remains of the Troubleshooter team that infiltrated Fort Periwinkle (preserved in vacuum-sealed vials) and Big Mutie Joe's infamous Unhappiness Amplifier.

Warbot Memorial Park and Shopping Esplanade: Bots played an important role in our victory, and this park pays homage to our mechanical friends and soldiers. Warbot of all shapes and sizes--from the tiny BZ4500 "Buzzy" flying sniperbot to the massive Warbot Model 300 Mark 2--are on display with their ammunition, fuel cells and bot brains safely removed. After enjoying a daycycle in the park, browse the aisles of the Shopping Esplanade and pick out a few souvenirs: a Horace-B Action Figure with Removable Cone Rifle, an "I Hate Big Mutie Joe" jumpsuit badge or even Bouncy Bubble Beverage in a commemorative "Battle of the Four Sectors" can.

## **The Battle of the Four Sectors Tour--A trip back to when Commie Mutant Traitors were an everyday danger!**

**Interests: Sports, Recreation, Shopping and Arts & Entertainment**

FFD Sector's layout allows for a variety of adventures, all awaiting your arrival on your properly approved MERA. From the picturesque catwalks of Upper Level Bravo to the Limony-Pien scent of Scrubot Cleaning Fluid Station #88231, you'll find something special to raise your happiness and efficiency to quota-defined levels.

### **Sports**

You'll find the citizens of FFD are very enthusiastic about their sports. Whether it's a Sixday funball tournament or the Uri-V Memorial Vat Swimming Relays, you'll want to participate in the experience of FFD Sector sports. Or sit back and watch professional teams play while you snack on CruncheeTym Yeast Twists and Tube Shaped Hearty-Hearty Brickloafs with Special Sauce.

**Bouncy Bubble Ball Powergolf Course:** A scenic 36-hole facility overlooking the FFD/30 Open Water Treatment Facility provides state-of-the-art bots as Powerball receptacle posts and standard hazards such as unshielded reactors and Troubleshooter recreation lounges. Reversible vacuum hose and Powerball rentals are included in the 480cr entrance fee. Sponsored by Bouncy Bubble Beverage.

**B3-SmileTyme Stadium:** home of Bouncy Bubble Beverage-sponsored professional funball team, FFD Sector Funball Team #26 (Go Twenty-Sixers!). Also home to the semi-professional FFD Sector Funball Team #154 (Go Fifteen-Fours!), the quasi-professional FFD Sector Funball Team #440 (Go Four-Forties!) and the not-at-all professional FFD Sector Funball Team #1,421 (nickname pending). Games are held twice daily, and ticket prices vary by section: from 2,200cr for Standsmen Booths down to 10cr for Section 1799-999-99.

**Rubber Ball Grounds:** the classic, time-tested sport of Rubber Ball

Bouncing is alive and well in FFD Sector. This brand-new facility boasts fourteen different surfaces to bounce a ball against, including cracked permicrete, live power conduits and unknown fungus. The FFD Big Ballers, a semi-professional Rubber Ball Bouncing team sponsored by Bouncy Bubble Beverage, uses the Grounds on Twodays and Fourdays. Surfaces can be reserved on all other days with advance ticket purchase.

## **Sports in FFD--You can't help but be a good 'sport' about it!**

### **Recreation**

Nothing helps rejuvenate your efficiency like approved recreational activities. Visitors will find some of the best corridor running in the four-sector area and ample sites for warehouse camping, pipe climbing and bot spotting. For those in need of a more active recreation, try one of our certified MERA centers.

**Sectoropolitan Botiquarium and Petting Garage:** More than 150 exotic and obsolete bots in natural plastic and metal habitats. Follow the clearance-dependent path through the park and past exhibits of Denta-Bots, Faxbots, Dieselbots and the extremely rare Botbot. Enjoy dining at the Greasy Spork Cafe, buy a plush scrubot from the gift shop or take a transbot ride around the Botiquarium. Young clones will enjoy the Petting Garage, where they can touch real working jackobots and guardbots.

**RED Wall Shooting Range and Beverage Depot:** A full-service shooting gallery with 50-meter, 100-meter, and 200-meter ranges. Laser enthusiasts can practice their shots and then enjoy a refreshing Bouncy Bubble Beverage, CoffeeLike, or any of 14 approved beverages. Lasers are provided by clearance and at an additional cost. Conference rooms are available.

**GREENHouse Hydroponic Gardens:** If clearance is not a problem, a visit to the tenth largest hydroponic gardens in Alpha Complex should not be missed. Visitors stroll scenic pathways while observing a variety of flowers, plants,

fruits and vegetables. The gift shop includes jams and marmalades made from real fruit for citizens of GREEN or higher.

**Recreation in FFD--You'll have so much fun that people will swear you overdosed on gelgermine!**

**Shopping**

From the wide-open corridors of the Power Generation subsector to the crowded walkways of the Sectorpolitan subsector, FFD Sector has a wide variety of PLC shopping malls, antiques shops and discount outlets. The well-lit Fluorescent Atrium along Corridor U32-11/d and the perplexing Maze-O-Values are only two of the opportunities for anything you can afford and are cleared to own.

Uncovered Galleria: this unique collection of over 50 shops is served by the Complex's only Airdrop Inventory system. If you want something that a shop doesn't have in stock, just look up and watch as flybots carefully airdrop the needed item right at your feet. Standard release forms must be signed prior to shopping.

Technical Services Factory Outlet Stores: bargain hunters will be pleased by the over 10 stores that offer Tech Serv merchandise at highly-reduced prices. Floor models, irregular items and slightly-damaged packages offer bargains that cannot be legally found elsewhere. Shoppers who spend more than 100cr will receive a free gift: a bed sheet wrinkle-remover from the Alpha Bed service firm.

Historic Water Antiques: This unique shop offers antique water-related devices lovingly restored to their original condition. With gift buying becoming more popular these daycycles, anyone would be proud to own and display an ornate Shower Head from year 72, a Hard Water Softener from year 28, or even a sample of the discounted WorkWater production quota drink.



**Shopping in FFD--Going into debt has never been more enjoyable!**

**Arts & Entertainment**

Attend a local theatrical production or enjoy live musical performances of almost every approved song. Other artistic expressions include spiral art galleries, happy dance recitals, indoor music festivals, and much more.

Sing-Sing HPD Musical Theater: Enjoy musical versions of Alpha Complex mandates, regulations, and permanent temporary adjustments that will delight the loyal music lover in everyone. Current productions include 'Like We Said Before--HPD&MC Revisions to Brownout Explanations' and 'Press Five To Hear This Again--Guidelines for Tech Support Calls.' Audience participation is encouraged and mandatory.

FFD Symphony Orchestra and Dance Troop: This yearcycle's series include productions of Shirley-B's Symphony in BLUE, Chris-O's Concert for Horn and Plastic-Covered Comb, and the Music of PTR Sector. The Dance Troop will be performing the Traitorcracker Ballet at various times during the yearcycle, depending on

the health of its members. Call ahead for times and ticket prices.

The Loyal Troubleshootarean Company: actors, musicians, and demolition experts combine their talents to recreate some of the greatest and most famous Troubleshooter missions against the Commie Mutant Traitor threat. Included in the planned production schedule are Send In The Clones, YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues and Me and My Shadow Mark 4. Each play is performed in different clearance versions, so be sure to ask for the correct version to avoid unnecessary arrest.

**Arts & Entertainment in FFD--If your clearance and income are high enough, we have just what you want**

**Attractions: Museums, Amusement Parks and Festivals**

**Museums**

Look no further than FFD Sector's collection of museums to find the story of a respectful, industrious, and happy sector. Whether you're looking

for the birthplace of Vulture Squadron Commander Horace-B, the glow of an old fission reactor still producing electricity, or the scientific marvel that is Mechanical History, you'll find the perfect edutainment experience in FFD Sector.

**Food Vat Heritage Museum:** 9,000-square meter museum in a decommissioned food vat center. Enjoy the collection of antique vat skimmers and algae growth tanks, FunFoods hydrometers from the early 100s, make-your-own-B3 center, and more. Costumed historical interpreters tell tales of the foods eaten by clones that came before us.

**Vidshow Historical Society:** Fascinating collection of old vidscreens, file storage media, and other memorabilia. Wall-mounted story boards show the slow technological process that led to the modern vidscreen. Visitors are allowed two free downloads from the Historic Video Clip Library and are treated to a complimentary showing of the HPD&MC documentary, 'Vid--Better Than Reading Anydaycycle.'

**FFD Sector Troubleshooter Hall of Fame:** Original memorabilia from over 20 inductees of FFD Sector's finest Troubleshooters, including a PLC manifest belonging to Equipment Officer Marcus-R-LLL, a nose-hair trimmer from Hygiene Officer Carlos-R-DFR, the remains of what should be Team Leader Michelle-R-CEC and three Savior of the Complex awards. Admission includes entrance to Debriefing Theater.

**Original Materials Mine Institute:** Go back to a time before recycling was perfected and materials had to be dug up from beneath the lowest levels. The old volunteer barracks displays pictures and artifacts of FFD Sector's earliest days as a center of resource production. The Mining Collection teaches the recently-edited history of mining in Alpha Complex and has the only monument dedicated to mining in Alpha Complex. Admission includes a mandatory work period in the mine itself.

**Museums in FFD--  
Once we know what  
is approved, we help  
preserve the past for  
the future!**

**Amusement Parks**

Another result of MERA mandate, these amusement parks are centers of fun, joy ... and certainly amusement. Each has a variety of foods, drinks and happiness to amuse even a terminally unhappy traitor. All parks have an entrance fee, so make sure you have enough credits to enjoy the experience.

**MissionLand Authorized Amusement Center:** a Troubleshooter-themed amusement park. Amenities include two 19-hole mini-Powergolf courses, a large creche-friendly briefing room, paddle vat skimmers, Soylent Red snack bar, virtual reality Troubleshooter mission simulator, bumper bots, TraitorZap!(tm) laser tag, and more. One or two tickets per ride. MissionLand disavows any responsibility for accidental death and dismemberment to any and all guests and employees.

**Cloggy Adventures:** Variable-liquid ride park with treated water wave pool, speed slides, lazy pipe ride, young citizen's area, showers, lockers, food court and gift shop. All guests are expected to unclog any pipes that are serving as amusement rides that daycycle. Failure to unclog a ride will result in immediate banishment from the park and IntSec interrogation.

**HappyHall FFD:** an educational amusement park focusing on the wide-reaching effects of both happiness and unhappiness. Mini-Powergolf, funball cages, happiness enhancement carousel, Hall of Traitors, FunFoodsHouse and the Really Big Smile--a ride based on Old Reckoning 'roller coasters' but modified with pharmaceuticals and vidscreen technology to increase the safety and fun.

**Amusement Parks in FFD--  
Not just for young citizens  
from the creche anymore**

**Festivals**

FFD Sector is home to numerous festivals, from the Complex-wide Power Reduction Days to more local festivals such as the Taste of FFD Sector and Corridor442/d-11Fest. Some festivals are restricted by clearance, service group or residency, so be sure to contact the festival's netsite before taking your MERA.

**Outdoors-Indoors Education Show** - <http://IR.reeducation.hp.d.ffd/outdoorsindoors>. No admission. See caged mutant creatures brought in from the Outdoors and taste wild foods to learn why they are definitely not fun. IntSec agents are on-hand to give impromptu lessons on the why the Outdoors is such a radioactive, deadly and unhappy place.

**Battle of the Four Sectors Daycycles** - <http://IR.budgetpadding.armf.ffd/battledays>. Admission charged. A two-weekcycle event featuring a Scrubot Derby, home-made algae snacks, Armed Forces' Really Big Weapon Parade, an antique autocar show, FunFoods eating contests and featuring the FFD Sector Revised-Historical Society's recreation of Big Mutie Joe's Last Stand. Sponsored by Bouncy Bubble Beverage and Hearty-Hearty BrickLoaf.

**21st Annual Most Happy Clone Pageant** - <http://IR.findatraitor.int.ffd/happyclone>. No admission for audience, 300cr entrance fee for contestants. Come watch average citizens compete for the title of FFD's Most Happy Clone. High-clearance judges will rate entrants as they compete in Smile Like You Mean It, Sing-A-Long-Off and the Jumpsuit Competition. The winner will be reassigned to IntSec's Happiness Patrol and will help citizens all over the Complex maintain their glee quotas.

**3rd Annual Junk Junket** - <http://IR.overstock.plc.ffd/junket>. Admission charged. Covering three daycycles, this PLC-sanctioned event allows citizens to buy, sell and trade their unwanted personal items to each other. 10% of all proceeds go to FFD Sector's PLC service firms.

## **Festivals in FFD- -Bringing happy, loyal clones together so they can become even more happy and loyal!**

Accommodations: **RED**  
and **ORANGE, YELLOW**  
and **GREEN, BLUE** and  
**INDIGO, and VIOLET** and  
**ULTRAVIOLET**

Because Mandatory Efficiency Rejuvenation Activities may be assigned for longer than one daycycle, FFD Sector can provide accommodations for citizens of all clearances and credit levels. Citizens are highly advised to call ahead and reserve a room to ensure availability. Citizens whose clearance is too low to reserve a room are highly advised to show up five hours before feeling sleepy.

### **RED** and **ORANGE**

\* **Monstroditioner Volunteer Repair Team:** the famous Monstroditioner has many chambers and access stations which have broken down and remain unrepaired. A small fee of 35cr grants Volunteer Repair Technician status to the guest for eight hours, allowing the guest to stay in these broken parts for the duration. Unrepaired parts rarely, if ever, spontaneously restart.

\* **Warehouse PLC-FFD-008/fa:** Warehouse Inspectors PLC allows IR and RED clones to stay in this warehouse for free, assuming they have completed form HPD&MC4439-22/c 'Housing Requests, Non-Permanent, One or Less Nightcycles.' Guests must be out by 08:00 when the forkbots start to fill the warehouse with new shipments.

\* **IntSec Holding Tank #31:** although fairly expensive in terms of credits and public censure, this site nevertheless offers unbeatable security and safety. Subcommander Felicia-G-TUP-3 is

especially fond of citizens on their MERA.

\* \* **Kleen Kabins:** a retrofit project that turned the abandoned IntSec Interrogation Center Tango-55 into a modest but clean place to stay. The electrical glitch that caused all rooms to activate their termination cycle has been fixed.

### **YELLOW** and **GREEN**

\* \* **Hourcycle Motel:** a newly-remodeled CPU clone bank, each tank has been retrofitted for overnight accommodations and are quite comfortable, if a bit cramped. Rates are 40cr per hour (wake-up emails are available).

\* \* **The Four Sectors Guest House:** clean, if uninspiring, rooms that will overlook the Warbot Memorial Park and Shopping Esplanade for a slight upgrade charge. Guests who elect not to pay the slight upgrade charge will receive a room overlooking the neighboring Chlorine Processing Plant.

\* \* \* **Vera-G's Mattress-And-CoffeeLike:** for 500cr per nightcycle, citizens can get a private room complete with a mattress and a bathroom shared by only five other clones. In the morning, enjoy a complimentary breakfast of home-made MuffeeMuffins and CoffeeLike or TeaSir. Available to **GREEN** Clearance only.

### **BLUE** and **INDIGO**

\* \* \* **Sweet Suites:** each suite comes complete with a large heated bed, private bathroom, kitchen and use of the firm's autocar. A full staff of bots are available, although reprogramming and availability remain a concern.

\* \* \* \* **TOPC Regency Inn:** guests do not get a room--they get Their Own Private Corridor hand-picked from a list of exclusive hallways and corridors. Reservations at least one weekcycle beforehand are recommended so the staff can forcibly remove the current occupants.

### **VIOLET** and **ULTRAVIOLET**

\* \* \* \* **Gregory-U Manor:** the retreat of High Programmer Gregory-U-CLW is open to **VIOLET** and **ULTRAVIOLET** citizens when Gregory-U is not using it. Please contact gregmanor@UV.ffd. armf for current prices and available dates. Stays include full use of the staff and grounds.

\* \* \* \* **FFD Sector:** available only to **ULTRAVIOLET** citizens, this option removes all citizens from the sector for the ultimate in exclusive efficiency-rejuvenation events. Guests may choose any room they want. Daycycle rates from the low 940,000's.

### **For Further Information**

Need more news and information about FFD Sector? Visit the netsites below for useful tips and the latest travel advisories.

**FFD News and Facts--**<http://RED.whatsthatsector.hpd.bry/ffdsector>

Learn more about FFD Sector. Includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Facts About FFD, the MERA Economic Impact Report and more.

**FFD Travel Information--**  
<http://RED.mera.cpu.ffd/cometous>

Find out what you need to know before traveling to FFD Sector. Includes Safety Tips, Emergency Information and Transtube Delays.

**Contact Us--**<http://RED.mera.hpd.ffd/forloyalclones>

Request a Vacation Guide, a Calendar of Events or information about Group Travel. Or, if you have a specific question, fill out form HPD&MC3382-83/g 'Request for Information, MERA related' and submit it to your nearest HPD&MC Form Kiosk. Don't forget to register for email discounts and offers from the FFD Bureau of Travel, Tourism and Rejuvenation!

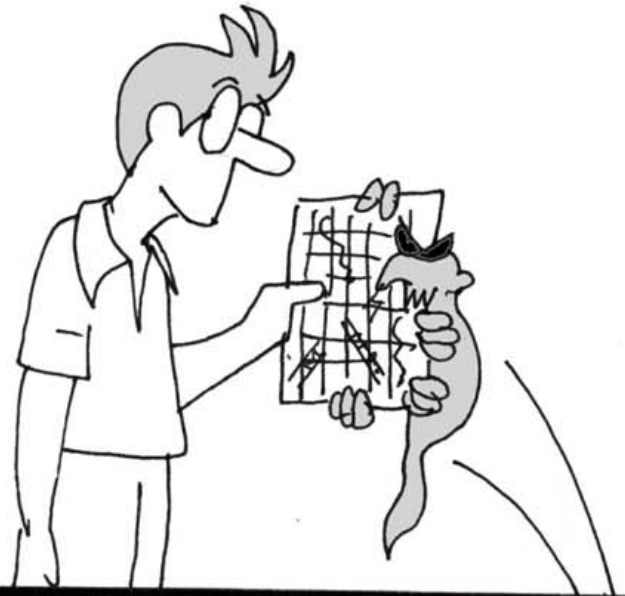
Remember--FFD Sector is for loyal clones!



# Design and Conquer

by Adrian Czajkowski

Hey! Who's for a game of Snakes and Ladders?



RAAAAAAAAAA!



Or just ladders...



# Ninja Blitzkrieg!

**A STARSHIP TROOPERS MINIATURE  
GAME BATTLE REPORT**

**Ian Barstow and Alex Fennell**



This month's battle report sees Alex Fennell lead his gallant Domingo's Ninjas Mobile Infantry platoon against Ian Barstow's bizarrely named Buggruppe 999 in a 2,000 point battle. Confused? Read on and find out what crazy plan the Old Bear has come up with this time!

ALEX: I wanted a small force that could pack a large punch, and with the Pee-Wee in there I was hoping to surprise Ian with a nuke to the centre of his forces. I guessed he'd be taking a brain bug and I wanted to be able to have a go at taking it out with one shot. I've found that putting the officers in Marauder suits increases their survivability and minimises the threat from roaming hopper bugs. The plan was to have each squad man a Reliant gun platform with the Marauder suits and CHAS anchoring the centre.

With the force at Priority Level 2 and containing Reliant gun platforms I had to take

the Defence tactic, meaning I would also have the option on moving first or second plus all my units would start the game readied.

IAN: Having gained a reputation as being the Studio innovator when it comes to outlandish tactics, I didn't want to disappoint. Alex is the sort of player that you've always got to take seriously. I know he will know every possible option he has available and that he will be tactically solid, but will he be imaginative? Only time will tell, but with this in mind I'm going to try out Blitzkrieg tactics on him (hence the somewhat esoteric name for my bug swarm). I

decided to design my force like a panzer group, centred around a spearhead of three tanker bugs. Supporting these in the role of Stukas will be the small hopper units, with light assault guns simulated by firefries. Supporting this is low quality infantry in the shape of warriors reduced by the Works & Warriors option. At a saving of 5 points per warrior this gets a lot more chitin on the table. Commanding this assault force is my version of Rommel, a brain bug strengthened with Enhanced Shield and Enhanced Suggestion. Able to protect himself and drive on his forces.

What you might notice is a total lack of tunnelling. This is



## Domingo's Ninjas

2,000 points

Lt: Ape Marauder, Sicon training	275 points
NCO: Chickenhawk Marauder, blizzard pack, flamer, sniper training	280 points
Squad Zulu: 5 men, 1 x Triple Thud G/L, 1 x Hel Infantry Flamer	340 points
Squad Whiskey: 5 men, 2 x Hel Infantry Flamers	330 points
Squad X-Ray: 5 men, 2 x Javelin missile launchers, 1 x M-998A1 Pee-Wee atomic	630 points
1 x CHAS	175 points
3 x Reliant gun platforms (twin-50's)	180 points

Priority Level 2 (counts as 3 for army list purposes)



## BUGGRUPPE 999

2,000 points

Brain Bug, <i>Enhanced Suggestion, Enhanced Shield</i>	300 points
3 x Tanker Bugs	750 points
2 x 5 Firefries	200 points
2 x 3 Hopper Bugs	300 points
6 x 6 Warriors, 1 x 9 Warriors, <i>Workers &amp; Warriors</i>	450 points





### DEPLOYMENT MAP

a huge gamble, but it's not part of Blitzkrieg strategy so for this inaugural test of the idea I am going with a completely topside bug force. At Priority level 3, and knowing that Alex will probably be making use of the new reliant models just in at the Studio (meaning he has to choose Defence as his tactic) I chose Probe, meaning that we will fight a Battle Line engagement across the wider table sides. This means I can hold up to half my units of table until my first turn and Alex will have less room to manoeuvre. I know he likes to make his Mobile Infantry really *mobile*, making lots of use of their Jump capability, and this way he may well be limited to bouncing sideways, hopefully into the waiting arms of my hoppers.

### Turn One

ALEX: The three squads deployed ahead of the gun platforms. The plan was to use their prepared ready action (being a lower priority level, my forces began the game readied) to jump backwards to man the gun platforms,

getting shots in at short range before putting some distance between them and the bugs. Unfortunately, Ian set his bugs up in cover and towards the back of his deployment zone, with the result that only the javelins and trip-hammer were in range. Ian didn't have much



### TURN ONE MAP

on the board at the start of the game, so I guessed he was intending to bring in a lot of reinforcements on during his first turn (he was using probe tactics). My small effort at shooting did tell me that the bugs I was shooting at were 'Workers & Warriors.' Given the relatively few models on the board, this told me he must have had a lot of units waiting off-table.

IAN: Having started off with just seven units of warriors on the table, and set well back, I was pleased that we had incurred relatively little damage. Bug group A has lost three warriors, group B had lost four warriors as had group D. Other than that, my 'volkssturm warriors' were intact. I rushed all of them forward, but that was just the support for the main attack, which now surged onto the table from both flanks, most of it on my left, in order to get straight into the bugs at once. My brain bug was hurried into action well out of sight of the enemy on my right flank, but with a good view of my entire battle line he was well positioned to use his other action to 'encourage' his troops forward.

I brought on all three tankers in a tight pack (tighter than I wanted, but because Alex had completely ignored his own left flank any tanker on that side would struggle to get into the action) storming them forward with the use of the brain's

very effective Co-ordinate rule that allows one unit per turn an extra action. Having also *Suggested* that another tanker move again, They were right in the face of the Terrans and next turn there would be a lot of melting going on. As a forerunner to this though I brought on the two firefry units in front of the tankers, hoping they might get ignored as Alex focussed on thee tankers, while one of the hopper units hovered into the battle straight onto Squad Zulu's position, intent on taking out the Reliant and generally causing a distraction. Some bad dice rolling later though the Reliant was intact (apart from one hit from friendly fire) while the hoppers were an incinerated mess on the floor, thanks to the two flamers. Drat. Rather less spectacularly I brought the other hoppers onto the table on my right flank making use of the acres of empty space Alex had given me there.

## Turn Two

ALEX: As suspected, Ian had brought a number of models on from the edge of the table, including three tankers, whom he had thoughtfully placed next to each other on my right in an armoured thrust. I had got lucky with the single attack from the hopper bug and my reaction fire killed them. Time for my master plan. Firing directly rather than in artillery mode (no chance of missing) I sent the nuke straight down the throat of the centre tanker bug. 13 x d10+4 later there was a huge crater where that bug stood, and his two neighbours were reduced to 2 hits each. Missiles and triple thuds followed and after all of my shooting there was nothing left on my right flank. The left started shooting with the Reliant platform but there were too many bugs and not enough guns. Even so, with nothing to speak of on my right



TURN TWO MAP



sergeant  
and both  
flamers,  
although losing  
two hoppers to  
reaction fire from the  
Chickenhawk nearby.

flank or on my centre, things looked good.

IAN: Well, that could have gone better. Currently there is a huge charred hole where my vaunted tanker assault was a few minutes ago. The one thing I hadn't counted on was a nuclear missile. Certainly it was a brilliant piece of kit selection by Alex. For me it was a disaster though. I had plenty of warriors left on the table, along with a unit of hoppers and the intact brain. However, all my other specialist units were gone, and with it any options other than to storm in as quickly as possible in the hope that the MI firing might let them down. At least the brain could drive the

others on, and thanks to some good dice rolls three units got an extra move, including the surviving hoppers who hovered into Squad Whiskey, killing the





warrior into contact with one of the Marauder suits or the CHAS and get lucky. Not ideal but never say die. I've seen victory pulled from the jaws of defeat in this game more than once before, and it was possible that with things looking so clear cut

Alex might get complacent.

As such I surged everything forwards, knowing that we would have to endure a lot of reaction fire before we could get into contact.

killed a couple of warriors with

Reliant fire and finished off the last hopper in my rear area before moving my troops forward to engage the bugs on my own terms.

IAN: I realised that the only way I was going to get anywhere was to attempt to get the occasional stray

### Turn Three

ALEX: I'd now lost three men from the squad on the left, both flamers and the sergeant. Buying them some breathing room, the lieutenant promoted one of the two remaining troopers who then continued shooting with the Reliant. I

Group F surged forwards into Squad Whiskey, killing the trooper but irritatingly the acting sergeant made his saving throw. That pretty much summed up how things were going by this point. Group C also attacked the CHAS who had strayed a bit far forwards and inflicted two wounds on it, getting annihilated in return though by the heavy reaction fire. The danger is that I have left everything inside Morita range and a good round of shooting by Alex next turn could pretty much wipe me out.



TURN THREE MAP

### Turn Four

ALEX: Barely 15 bugs left running towards me and almost all of my force still alive. By the end of my turn only the brain bug was left alive, and it slinked off the table.

IAN: Good shooting polished off the last 15 bugs, leaving me with just my undamaged brain bug, who chose caution rather than valour and disappeared back to bug central to report on another failed strategy...

## Conclusion

ALEX: It was all over by the end of turn 2. Ian had put his three tankers together but because they all entered from reserve they were by definition close enough to be caught in the blast from the nuke. That single weapon damaged the two surviving tankers to the point where the rest of my firepower could kill them and still leave me enough firepower to neutralise the threat from the right. Once I'd secured this side of the board it was a pretty straightforward job to mop up the workers and warriors as they charged forwards.

Without doubt Ian was unfortunate I had elected to take a nuke. I think he got carried away with the probe tactic's rule of keeping part of his force in reserve. This forced him to move on from the edge of the board that grouped his bugs together. If he had started with one or even two of the tankers on

the board and spread out, I would have had a much harder time taking them out of the fight. The Reliant platforms performed very well, and even the necessity of keeping two troopers in each squad adjacent to fire them was not a detriment.

IAN: Crikey, defeated two months running! Still, there's a great deal of value to be taken from this game. Firstly, having chosen to ignore tunnels I should not have bunched my tankers so tightly. Had they been further apart the Pee-Wee would have dealt with one but the others would have been unscathed and almost certainly would have soaked up all Alex's firepower and still been available to unleash their devastating tanker spit the following turn. Additionally, the potentially very dangerous but fragile firefries would have been in a position to also fire

their flames, and with a D10 each they can easily wipe out a squad of M1-A4 power suits as well as damage the heavier MI equipment.

It begs the question can the Arachnids do without tunnels? I still maintain that they can. Alex set up and fought very well but things would have been a lot more devastating with two tankers running around his rear areas with enhanced movement capabilities thanks to the brain bug.

The great thing about Starship Troopers is that you don't end a game thinking that there's nothing you can do to counter what just happened. No tactic is unbeatable, and with so many options available to both sides you can never be certain what you will face or how efficient it will be. Buggruppe 999 will return!



## Write for the Mongoose

**W**ant to write for your favourite RPG publisher? Want to get paid for it? Got a great idea for an article? If the answers to these questions are 'yes', then Signs & Portents wants to hear from you.

### Where to Start...

We will need a brief synopsis of your intended article, no more than one page long. Also include a paragraph or two of your actual writing style, so we can see whether you have what it takes and any samples of previously published work. If we like what we see, we will commission a first draft from you and you will be on your way to becoming a Mongoose contributing writer. And every article we publish will be paid for...which is nice.

### Things to Remember

Provide your full details, including name, address and email address if available.

Supply articles via email or on disc. We can read most formats, although MS Word is always a safe bet. You will be provided with a style guide when we commission your article. Make sure you read it!

### Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on one of our product lines. That is not as limiting as it sounds, however. The d20 fantasy family alone should give you plenty of scope. Think of all our various products, like the Quintessential series and the Slayer's Guides. With more than 80 fantasy-based books to choose from...well, you get the idea. But don't stop there. Think Babylon 5, Judge Dredd, Slaine, Armageddon 2089, not to mention the barrage of forthcoming games that we have coming. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

If you want to write new rules for a game, with new uses for skills and maybe some new feats, then be our guest.

We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

### Editing

It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

We have various house styles that we use and you do not need to know them. As long as your submission is literate and tidy, we will do the rest.

### Little Details

If you are not sure how long your article is, assume around 800 words fit on one page. Do not use the word processor's page counter as a guide. By the time it has been edited, laid out and had artwork added, it will look nothing like that screen of text in front of you.

Remember to run the article through a spell checker before you send it in. It will still get proofread, but it shows willing. Anything not spell checked will be rejected straight away.

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52-54 Cricklade Road  
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Wiltshire  
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# The War Prayer

## ▲ BATTLE REPORT FOR ▲ CALL TO ARMS

**Chris Allen and  
Matthew Sprange**

**MATTHEW:** The ISA have always been one of my favourite fleets in A Call to Arms and I was looking forward to some of the adjustments made in Sky Full of Stars. In choosing a fleet to face Chris' Centauri, I knew I wanted to take a Victory destroyer – all those sexy guns, not to mention the lightning cannon and a very handsome model make it difficult to ignore on the tabletop. However, as we were playing a Battle level scenario with 5 FAPs, this would mean I would have to ignore the allied rules if I were to have a balanced fleet (though mating a Sharlin with the Victory would have scared Chris to death, I am sure!)

After selecting the Victory, it was just a case of deciding how many White Stars to take. In the end, I decided to leave the heavy WSC-2 at home and go for three straight squadrons of two

White Stars each. Teamed together, there is little two White Stars cannot face – or run away from if need be.

**CHRIS:** Well, there are a few things I know for sure about the ISA. White Stars are very fast and hit very hard but relatively frail even with their adaptive armour, relying on their excellent Dodge score to avoid being pounded into dust. Equally, the Victory is slow and ponderous but very tough, while also carrying a hefty arsenal of weaponry for all ranges – including the legendary lightning cannon! Unfortunately I cannot afford to base my fleet list around the knowledge that I'll be facing just these two types of ship because the ISA also have access to allied fleets ships and there's no predicting just what Matt might bring the table...

As a result, my fleet selection covers a wide variety of different ships to give me a good spread of capabilities, no matter what I end up facing. The centrepiece of the force is an Octurion, with enough heavy firepower and physical resilience for me to be able to rely on it as an anchor for the other ships to work around. Backing it up is a Primus, mainly notable for the excellent battle lasers it sports. A Dargan and Centurion also up the numbers of battle lasers in the fleet, good for cutting straight through pesky interceptors and slicing up enemy ships of all kinds, and both ships are relatively manoeuvrable as well. A Vorchan and Morgrath add a little more firepower as well as the speed of the Vorchan, while a Maximus nicely rounds out the force – it's a tough little ship and the anti-fighter capability is likely to be needed.

### ISA FLEET

Victory-class advanced destroyer (the <i>Emancipator</i> )	CQ6
White Star 10	CQ4
White Star 16	CQ5
White Star 25	CQ6
White Star 32	CQ6
White Star 83	CQ5
White Star 93	CQ4



### CENTAURI FLEET

Octurion – <i>Monolith</i>	CQ 5
Primus – <i>Glorious</i>	CQ 4
Centurion – <i>Praetor</i>	CQ 4
Dargan – <i>Victor</i>	CQ 4
Maximus – <i>Courage</i>	CQ 4
Morgrath – <i>Hammer</i>	CQ 3
Vorchan – <i>Raptor</i>	CQ 4





Along with the handful of Sentries brought as onboard complements for the Octurion, Primus and Dargan, this should be fairly flexible for any mission that might be required of them.

## Deployment

**MATTHEW:** Being on the receiving end of the Assassination mission meant I could not be aggressive as I would like with the Victory – Chris would certainly have enough firepower to seriously damage it in just one round of heavy shooting. Therefore, the obvious place was behind the largest asteroid field, allowing me to keep the Victory from being flanked and therefore cutting down on the lines of sight Chris might draw. The White Stars were poised to sweep across the battlefield and around the asteroids, guarding the Victory and hammering anything that might be trying to creep up on it.

**CHRIS:** Well, deployment is simple enough. The Octurion and Primus anchor the fleet while the lesser ships flank them, angled to be able to cross over to the other flank if Matt's White Stars start trying to hit one of my flanks. It might look somewhat like

I'm running into a bottleneck but there's plenty of room between the two asteroid fields to manoeuvre in and I'm hoping that the space debris will actually serve to protect my flanks from the ISA.

## Turn One

The game begins with the Centauri fleet winning the initiative and

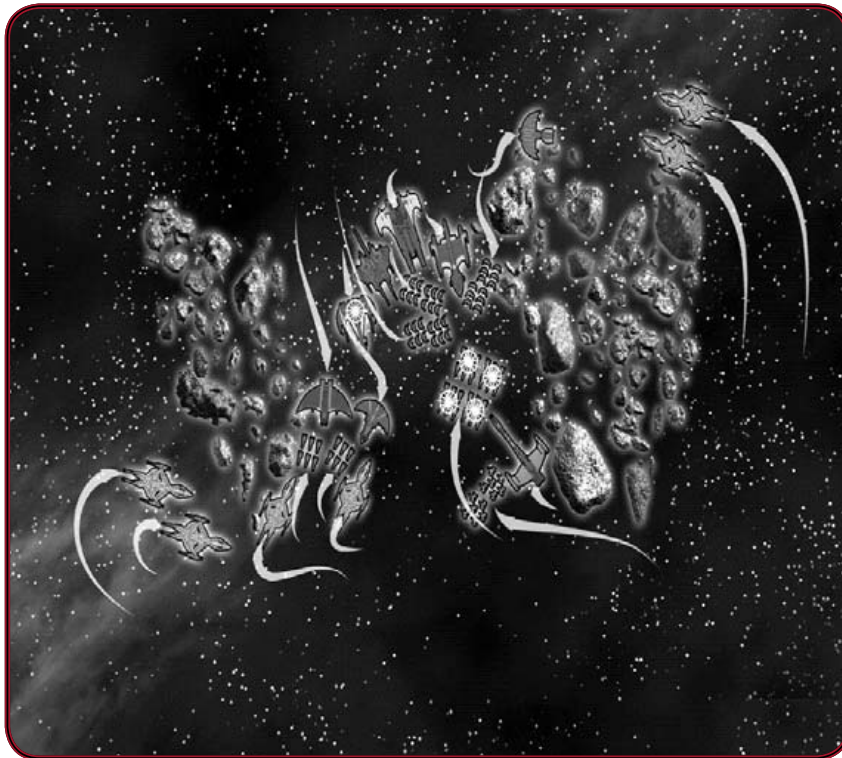
forcing the ISA to move first. As the Victory cruised towards the central pass between the asteroid fields to meet the Centauri ships head-on, the White Stars split off in wide flanking manoeuvres.

With the two rivals still at considerable range, only the beams on the larger ships open fire. The battle lasers of the Octurion, Primus, Dargan and Centurion all focus on White Star 83, scoring some light damage though the nimble craft dodges much of the attacks directed against it. The ISA retaliate with the Victory's neutron lasers, scoring a solid hit on the Vorchan and damaging it badly.

## Turn Two

Again, the Centauri win initiative. White Stars 16 and 10 continue their wide flanking manoeuvre and the bulk of the Centauri fleet continues to trundle forwards towards the Victory, while the Vorchan and Maximus surge forwards to face the four White Stars on the other flank. The Morgrath is sent off at a tangent to try and slow White Stars 16 and 10. The Nial swarm forwards to attack the Dargan and Vorchan but a lone, stranded Nial is surrounded by the Centauri Sentries.





The Vorchan fires first, scoring more light damage on White Star 83. This is followed by the Victory unloading its fusion cannon on the Vorchan even as it directs its neutron lasers on the Dargan to score four critical hits! The lasers rip through the bridge, weapons, engineering and reactor of the Centauri ship, tearing it to pieces. The Centurion fires on White Stars 83 and 25, killing many of White Star 83's crew as it causes fires to break out and damaging the thrusters of White Star 25. White Stars 10 and 16 open fire on the Morgrath ahead but score only light damage while the Primus hits the Victory with its battle lasers, taking the turret weapons offline with a critical hit (and seriously annoying Matthew in the process who sees his main ship lose much of its firepower)! In revenge, White Stars 83 and 25 open up on the *Glorious* but its interceptors resist most of the fire. The Maximus duels with White Stars, causing a minor critical hit on the engines of White Star 83 and resisting return fire through its tough hull and interceptors.

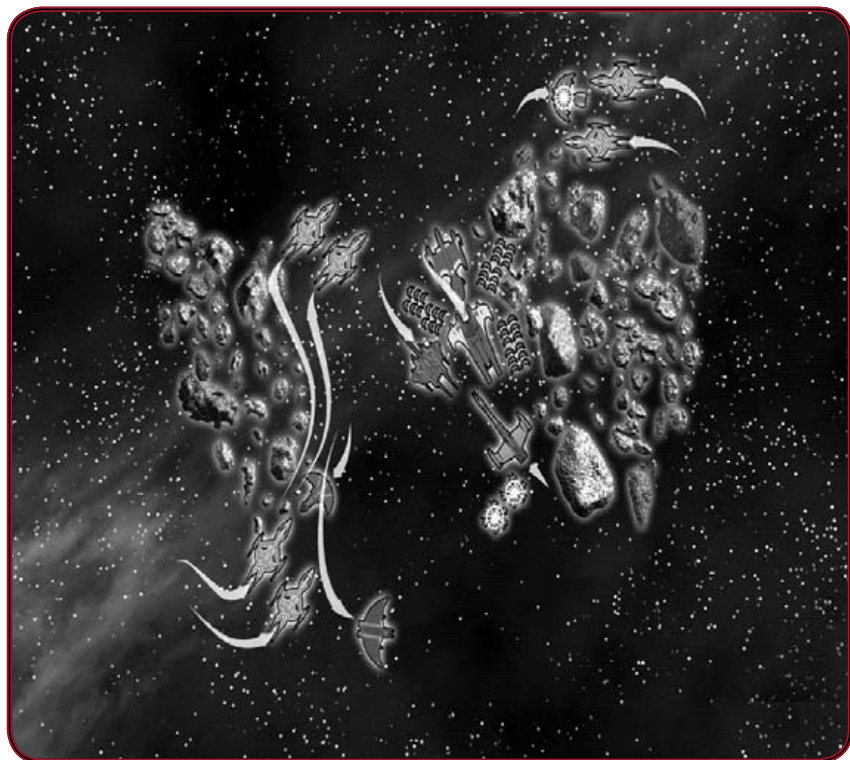
Finally the Octurion opens fire, causing moderate damage to the

Victory and also mopping up some of the Nials ahead of it, after breaking through their stealth. Meanwhile the Nials around the Vorchan manage to cause a critical that causes a reactor gas leak, leaving the ship skeleton crewed and crippled. The Sentries easily overwhelm the lone Nial flight facing their superior numbers.

## Turn Three

A pattern seems to be developing as the Centauri win the initiative again. The Victory heads straight for the Octurion, concentrating its firepower on the huge vessel, and is mirrored by the two heaviest Centauri vessels both doing the same in return. White Stars 16 and 10 complete their flanking manoeuvre to sail up to the Morgrath and both White Stars 25 and 83 swoop round behind Centauri lines. Meanwhile White Stars 93 and 32 close distance with the Maximus. The Centurion, Vorchan and Maximus all move to bring their guns to bear on those two White Stars as the Sentries, Thunderbolts and Nials become embroiled in another sprawling dogfight.

The Octurion fires first, its battle lasers and matter cannon tearing through the hull of the Victory to severely damage its reactor and inflict grave damage on the vessel. The replying barrage from the Victory is even more destructive and, most significantly, takes the Octurion's entire weapons system offline, leaving it suddenly defenceless against the lurking White Stars. The



Primus turns out to be the surprise contender in the brawl of the big ships, inflicting heavy damage with its battle laser that inflicts a critical hit to the *Victory's* bridge. The ISA vessel is creaking under the weight of fire...

White Stars 32 and 93 rake the *Centurion*, *Octurion* and *Vorchan* with fire, leaving the *Vorchan* with a mere handful of crew left onboard and hull integrity rapidly degrading. The *Morghath* fires on White Star 10 to cause some light damage but the return fire from White Stars 10 and 16 annihilates the small vessel. The *Centurion* and *Vorchan* both fire at White Star 32 but while the *Centurion* scores light damage; the ISA craft entirely evades the fire from the *Raptor*.

Again, the Centauri ships come out on top in the dogfight, destroying another *Nial* and both *Thunderbolt* flights.

## Turn Four

Predictably, the Centauri win the initiative again. The White Stars all sweep in to strike at the *Octurion*, no longer afraid of the extremely powerful banks of guns that it fields in all arcs. The *Victory* dives into the asteroid field as the captain realises it cannot take much more damage, and the *Primus* tries to bring itself about to face the circling White Stars. The *Centurion*, *Vorchan* and *Maximus* all attempt to come about as they have been left out of position by the highly manoeuvrable ISA ships. While the dog fighting continues, the single flight of fighters released by the *Victory* in the asteroid field immediately fails its Crew Quality check for movement in space



debris and is destroyed!

The only Centauri ships in position to fire this turn are the *Primus* and *Centurion*, inflicting further damage on White Stars 83 and 32 as the *Victory* is now hidden from view by the asteroid field it is braving. All six White Stars focus their fire on the *Octurion* and as the final laser shots

hit home, the mighty *Monolith* has its reactor torn apart by two critical hits that cause gas leaks, leaving it without any crew still alive and reduced to a drifting hulk.

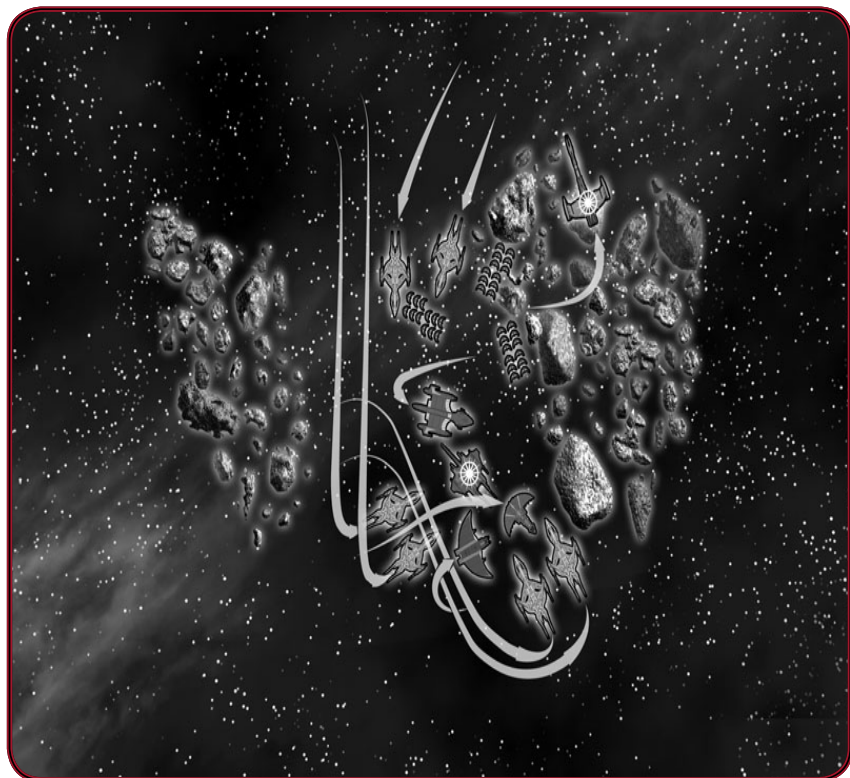
Though the *Sentris* finally eliminate the ISA fighter presence, things are looking bleak for the Centauri...



## Turn Five

The Centauri win initiative once more (Matthew is having real trouble matching Chris' rolls). The White Stars swoop around the Primus and Centurion as the Vorchan (still clinging to life) and the Maximus pitch back into the fray. The surprise of the turn is the Victory horribly failing a Crew Quality check as it ploughs through the asteroid field, suffering a critical hit from the resulting debris impact and having its reactor explode as a result – doing enough damage to destroy it! Meanwhile the Senti fighters move to swarm around the White Stars now that no enemy fighters remain to be dealt with.

The Primus opens fire on three of the White Stars but again the legendary swiftness of the vessels lets them evade the worst of the damage but the Centurion scores a few light hits on White Star 32. The combined fire of White Stars 83, 14, 93 and 32 hit the Primus again and again before secondary explosions wrench its hull apart. The resulting explosion also damages the nearby Centurion! Between them, the Maximus and Vorchan cause more damage to the ISA, leaving White Star 32 dangerously low on crew and



inflicting critical hits to the reactor and engines of White Stars 10 and 25 respectively. The Maximus's anti-fighter weapons are proving particularly valuable in tracking the fast-moving White Stars and their evasive manoeuvres. The Sentris also fire but only scratch some ISA paint jobs.

## Turn Six

Cementing the trend, the Centauri win the initiative again though they do not have many vessels to take advantage of it. With all the action now concentrated in a tight bundle of vessels near the centre of the battlefield, movement is quick and precise with the White Stars circling round their prey and the Centauri struggling to bring their guns to bear. White Star 32 evades the fire of the *Raptor* entirely, as does White Star 25 when targeted by the Centurion's guns. White Stars 10 and 25 mop up Sentris, as do White Stars 93 and 32. However, the neutron lasers of these latter two are reserved for the Vorchan, which is completely destroyed by a catastrophic explosion – and the resulting blast catches White Star 83, destroying it as well!

Meanwhile, the Maximus manages to score some light damage on White Star 25, while White Star 16 inflicts a critical on the Centurion that damages its engines significantly, leaving the vessel skeleton crewed and crippled.





## Turn Seven

With the battle all but over, the Centauri still insist on the minor victory of winning the initiative for the seventh turn in a row. As the Centurion creaks and lists, trying to track the nimble White Stars, the Maximus prepares to go down fighting. The White Stars close for the kill.

The Maximus hits White Star 16 for further light damage, even as the White Star in turn hits the Centurion with its own barrage of fire. The resulting damage finally takes the Centurion down for good and with that, all four remaining White Stars focus their fire on the Maximus. A critical hit takes its weapons offline, and mere seconds later it is torn to pieces by the neutron lasers of the ISA craft.

## Victory Points

CHRIS: 50

MATTHEW: 54

MATTHEW: It was with some chagrin that I realise that the two ships I lost were entirely down to my own efforts. White Star 83 was caught in an explosion I caused; and as for the ignominy of flying my Victory straight into an asteroid...!

Still, the men of the match were definitely the White Stars, a ship that

is born again hard under the new Sky Full of Stars rules. Their improved weaponry give them real punch for a Raid level ship and the improved dodge allows players to be far more heroic with them! I had intended to use the lightning cannon at some point during the mission (more for effect than anything else!) but Chris put so much pressure on the ship right from the outset that discretion proved the better part of valour – or so I had hoped.

Overall, Chris did a fine job of concentrating on his main objective, the Victory. I did all I could to save it and if it weren't for that fast moving rock in the asteroid field... Ah, well. The White Stars saved the day. I could say that Chris did not concentrate his fire on particular White Stars until later in the game or that when he did, he hurled huge amounts of firepower into one then another without tracking the damage they were suffering. However, the superiority of the White Stars in this mission is perhaps best put down to an incredible series of dodge rolls. What I mucked up for in the initiative stakes I more than got back with dodges. At times, Chris was rolling eight, ten or twelve dice at a single White Star and it managed to avoid all of them – superb rolling.

The most memorable incident for me was the weapons going offline

on Chris' Ocuturion. There was a real feeling of 'Get It!' as the White Stars all swooped round behind it, now no longer fearing its heavy batteries as they poured fire into it. Just goes to show, even the biggest ships can get seriously smacked around in a single turn...

CHRIS: Well, I succeeded in my objective (and got a hefty helping of Victory Points for my efforts!) but the complete destruction of my entire fleet gave Matthew a very solid win. In some ways I may have concentrated too much on the Victory – the combined firepower of the Primus and Ocuturion inflicted severe damage much faster than I had been expecting, while the paltry and scattered firepower I threw at the White Stars mostly just pattered off them. I also failed to really focus what fire was sent at the White Stars but then, they're so manoeuvrable that it's hard to pin them down for long enough to concentrate on them!

Of course, once I had dealt with the Victory I was hoping to bring the heavy firepower of the Ocuturion to bear on the pesky little White Stars. Looking back, it was that sudden loss of all firepower on the Ocuturion that really turned the tide against me. Suddenly it was left without any defences and the circling ISA ships could dart in with impunity to blast it to pieces.

The new White Stars are definitely tough – their high Dodge score in the hands of a lucky man can let them shrug off vast amounts of firepower, and they kick back with quite a hefty amount of Precise Attack Dice as well. The trick to dealing with them is to actually pin them down for long enough to overwhelm them with fire – and once you manage that, they crumple quickly.

Overall, a fun game and a scary demonstration of how the White Stars combine incredible manoeuvrability and devastating guns!



# THE DESECRATION OF WULFAR SUL

## A Mighty Armies Campaign - Part II

VINCENT PAUL COOPER

After quickly regrouping, the Orc raiding party has marched to the final objective: Wulfar Sul, the ancestral temple of the Wulfar tribe. A small temple guard, led by the High Priest of Wulfar awaits the assault, having sworn blood oaths to protect the sanctity of the temple and the catacombs or die trying. Prayers have been said, enjoining the spirits of the dead chieftains of the Wulfar to send reinforcements swiftly.

The barbarian player must protect the temple with a superior fighting force and slay the invaders.

The orc player must gain control of the temple and slay the barbarian defenders in the process.

### Battlefield

This battle is fought on a standard 2 foot by 2 foot game table. A large construct (Wulfar Sul) dominates the battlefield. This piece should measure 4" by 2" and be placed either horizontally or vertically (players mutually decide or roll a dice) in the exact centre of the board. Each player may place up to one additional terrain piece measuring no more than 3" by 3" on the tabletop before deployment.

### Set Up

The barbarian player first deploys the High Priest of Wulfar and the Temple Guard anywhere up to 6" from Wulfar Sul. The units may be arranged into a group if desired.

The barbarian player should divide the remainder of his force into no more than three sections. Each section is assigned a two numbers from 1 to 6 (for example, 1 & 4, 2 & 5 and 3 & 6). One section should include Raguzrak, the brother of Untharl, acting as King in this scenario. These units will arrive on the battlefield on successive turns.

### BARBARIAN STARTING FORCES

#### Temple Guard

- † 1 High Priest of Wulfar unit
- † 2 Temple Guard units



### ORC FORCES

- ☠ 1 Shaman unit
- ☠ 1 Black Orc unit
- ☠ 3 Orc Horde units
- ☠ 2 Orc Archer units
- ☠ 1 Goblin Horde unit
- ☠ 2 Wolf Rider units

## Barbarian Reinforcements

- † 1 King unit
- † 2 Warrior units
- † 2 Archer units
- † 2 Chariot units



See the Special Rules section below. These units are not initially deployed (see Special Rules below).

Next, the orc player deploys his forces within 3" of the table edge nearest to him. Orc units may be arranged into groups of no more than six units if desired.

### First Turn

Players roll for initiative in the normal manner (see the *Mighty Armies Rulebook* page 2).

### Victory Conditions

Whichever army has a superior fighting force in the vicinity of the temple at the completion of the battle gains a Victory. A unit's base (or part of a base) must be within 1" of the temple to count. The strength of a fighting force is measured by the total number of Army Points each unit within 1" of Wulfar Sul has. If either side is able to achieve this goal AND wipe out more than half of the opposing force, that army may claim a Glorious Victory. In the event that

both armies have an equally strong force near the temple a Victory may be determined by totaling the number of Army Point losses inflicted on the opposition. If this is also equal then declare a draw. Neither player receives any Victory Points.

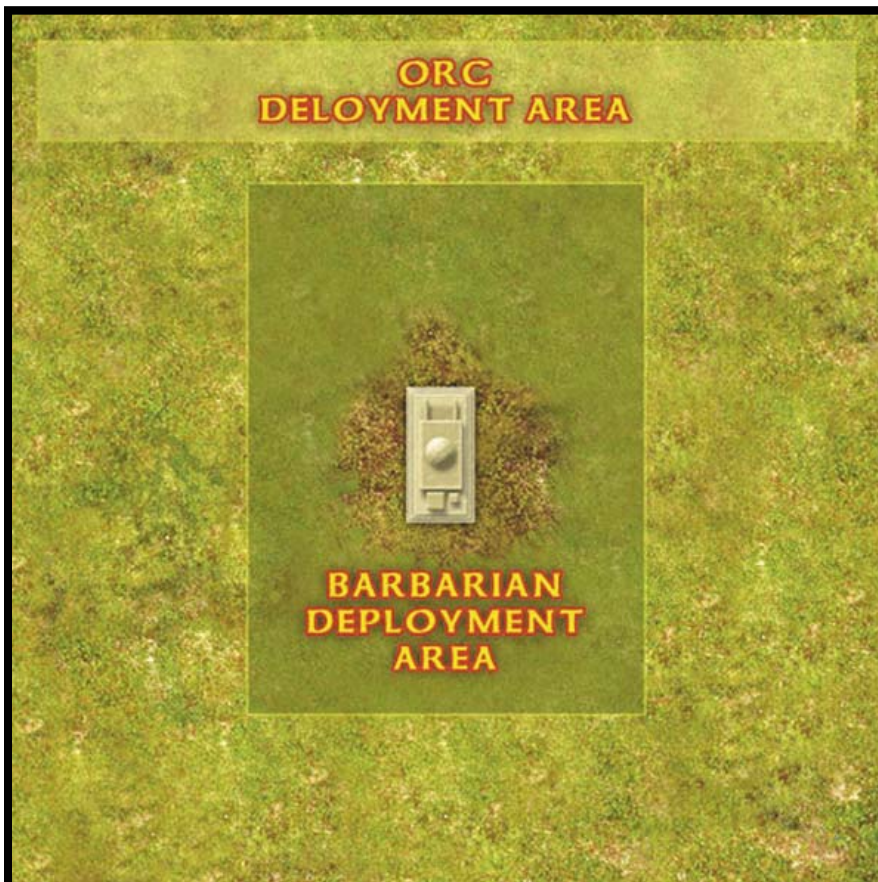
### Special Rules

**Turn Limit:** This game lasts for 8 turns.

**Movement Points:** 1-6 MPs per turn are available to each army in this scenario.

**Barbarian Reinforcements:** The barbarian reinforcements will arrive successively on the first three turns of the game. At the beginning of each of his turns, the barbarian player should roll a die. Find the corresponding section assigned that number. That section enters play (no MP cost) anywhere within 3" of the table edge nearest to the barbarian player. MPs may be used immediately to move that section. The section may be deployed as a group if desired.

If a section has already been deployed, the barbarian player should immediately re-roll until all sections are deployed.



## Special Units Reference Sheet

The following special units are available to the barbarian player in this scenario.

**Temple Guard:** The Temple Guard is sworn to protect the sanctity of the holy site. Temple Guard units have the following game statistics.

Unit	Speed	Fighting	Support	Special	AP
Temple Guard	3"	+2	+1	Fearless	2

Use regular Barbarian Warrior units marked to represent Temple Guard units.

**High Priest of Wulfar:** The High Priest of Wulfar leads the Temple Guard in the defence of Wulfar Sul. The High Priest of Wulfar has the following game statistics.

Unit	Speed	Fighting	Support	Special	AP
High Priest of Wulfar	3"	+3	+1	Fearless, Spellcaster	5

The High Priest of Wulfar is able to create only the following effects when using magic: Arcane Shield, Enhance, and Repel (new spell, see below).

**Repel:** The Spellcaster is able to channel magical energy to force an enemy back. Select one enemy unit on the battlefield that is within the line of sight of the spellcaster. Roll a dice as if making a Shooting II attack against that enemy unit. If the spell is successful then the enemy unit is Driven Back (see *Mighty Armies Rulebook* page 10). No damage is dealt to the enemy unit and it cannot be destroyed in this manner. If the unit is unable to move back the full distance for any reason, simply stop the unit at the furthest possible distance from the spellcaster.

Use a Shaman unit to represent the High Priest of Wulfar.





# Design and Conquer

by Adrian Czajkowski



# A League of Their Own

## MINOR RACES FOR THE BABYLON 5 ROLEPLAYING GAME

Bryan Steele

### THE PRAXIS TRIAD

On a lush tropical world called Praxis 7, the only naturally inhabitable world in the Praxis system, lies a fortified palace that would cause some of Earth's historical rulers to weep. From within its russet duraplate walls an unlikely trio of lesser governments makes impromptu decisions that could sway even the most stalwart of votes in the League of Non-Aligned Worlds. This 'Praxis Triad' is a powerful force behind many of the League's speakers, and a generally unknown factor to those outside of it.

Although each of the involved governments - the Soomat Alphaset, the Trakallan Ministry, and the Zand Colonies - are dramatically different in almost every way, they still feel many of the ties that were woven between them during the last Shadow War. Each of these smaller races were pawns of the Shadows a thousand years ago, and banded together to all but annihilate the native Praxisians during that war. Afterwards they chose not to leave the wooded planet in favour of creating a lasting foothold. When the Shadows were forced back into hiding, the Praxis Triad turned their collective eyes outward - to become puppeteers themselves.

Centuries later the Praxis Triad is little more than a husk of their former intentions. Instead of lurking behind closed doors to bend officials to the will of the Shadows, they use financial and social manoeuvrings to affect the galaxy around them. From behind a network of spies and a curtain of manufactured falsehoods they manipulate their targets - in homage to their former masters.

At the height of the second Shadow War, when the Vorlons unleashed their ultimate weapon - the Shadows - one of their stars along with the Praxis system. Because of the extensive Shadow influence still on Praxis 7, it was a radical decision. The Triad's highest members were destroyed with it, but dozens of their members survived through the war. Many relocated to other worlds, but some have returned home to this planet to help rebuild the Praxis galaxy-wide.

For centuries taken over by the Shadows, the planet of the Shadow War was a major manufacturing and assembly hub for the Shadows. They have now returned to the planet to rebuild their empire. The planet is now a major manufacturing and assembly hub for the Shadows.

### The Zand Colonies

On the very edge of the rim, in the fragmented corner of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, lies the bustling city-hive of Zander Beta. On the smallish megalopolis live the crustaceous Zand (pronounced *zahnd*) - a race of hard-shelled humanoid with a genetic knack for structural engineering. Strong of body, and impetuous to a fault, the Zand are savage competitors that dominated their planet through a constant drive to build and expand.

With the combination of their physical resilience and vast architectural skills, it was only a matter of time before Zander Beta became too small for the increasingly growing Zand population. With a gentle nudge from necessity (and the ushering of the first Shadow War)

they began to expand into the stars, looking for more resources and room to grow.

Their first real success was in the nearby Dura system - a binary star system with four hospitable planets - where the Zand's powerful infantry troops pounded the native life into extinction. In a few short decades they built huge colonies across these four worlds, and set up lasting structures and mining operations to fund their research on their homeworld. They came to also help cleanse Praxis 7 of the horn-nosed natives, and build the advanced temples and fortresses for their dark masters. So adept were their builders that the temples remain into the far future, where the next Shadow War would later see them destroyed.

In the next thousand years the Zand continued their growth, but without the Shadows whispering in their ears they slowed down to accept moral growth as well. No longer did they seem eager to conquer and overtake, and began to seek out allies; they found their old bedfellows to be helpful and willing to aid them. It was, in fact, the Trakallan Ministry that brought the Zand into the League of Non-Aligned Worlds as a minor player.

Now the Zand's abilities are a well-kept secret. They are superior architects and engineers, and several of the smaller League races use their skills in their own shipbuilding and resource refining. They are used as foot troops and bodyguards for the Triad, and are responsible for the Praxis *Covenant*, the Triad's light combat vessel chassis.



### Zand Racial Traits

- ✧ +2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom: Zand are powerfully built crustaceans with slow and deliberate reflexes and shortsighted to a fault.
- ✧ All Zand are of medium size.
- ✧ Zand have a base speed of 20 feet on land, but increased to 30 while underwater.
- ✧ Being amphibious, Zand can breathe normally underwater or any other liquid with a high oxygen content, and thus will not drown.
- ✧ Zand have oddly shaped and incredibly durable exoskeletons. Because of this all Zand are considered to have a Damage Resistance of 3, but are unable to wear any armour except for the Zand Battlesuit (see below).
- ✧ Zand are brinophages - salt eaters. All of their food and drink must be heavily salted. As such, their meals and beverages cost 10% more at establishments not ready to deal with Zand appetites.
- ✧ The ring and little 'fingers' on both hands of all Zand have evolved into a pair of formidable forceps-like claws. These claws cause 1d4 damage in Unarmed combat.
- ✧ Zand are excellent architects and engineers. They receive a +2 racial bonus to all checks involving these schools of interest.
- ✧ Automatic languages: Zandese, English and Trakallan.
- ✧ Average Height: 5 foot 6 six inches.
- ✧ Average Weight: 300 pounds.

### The Soomat Alphasect

Eighteen moons revolve around the primary planet in the Soom system, and serve as the homes of the seventeen familial bloodlines of the Soomat (pronounced *soom-ah*). They all orbit a single nitrogen-rich gas giant, which in turn makes its revolution around a dark blue star. With the exception of the single moon used only for its high mineral content, each family bloodline - or *sect* - of the canine Soomat lives solely upon their own moon - sending their workers and politicians to the other moons for trade and commerce.

The Soomat themselves are short, thick-furred canine humanoids that once walked on all fours, similar to the dogs and wolves of Earth. They are practicing carnivores, and raise all manner of game stock to be hunted and eaten on each of their moons. They once had sharp claws and long teeth, but years of learning to civilise has dulled them considerably - although every Soomat can still feel an echo of the hunter's instinct within them. The very term 'Alphasect' is the collective term used by the Soomat to describe the collective familial closeness each and every Soomat feels toward one another. From their days as pack creatures they have a sort of shared instinct that makes their society so close knit and singular.

It was that tightness that allowed the Shadows to manipulate them so well in the first Shadow War. A single promise to a single Soomat sectfather

spread like wildfire amongst the sects, and soon the Soomat as a whole were turning their attentions outward to serve as hunters for their unseen masters. Upon reaching Praxis 7, they had an entire world of lush jungle to hunt within. The Soomat served as the main scouting and scouring force on the planet and, after the Triad's forming, elsewhere as well. Their hunting instincts make them efficient stalkers, and capable assassins.

After the first Shadow War the Soomat found themselves directionless and wayward without their collective masters. In their floundering they found solace in the powerful leaders of the Trakallan Ministry, whose capable statesmen advise each and every Soomat sectfather. It is no surprise that the Soomat are now seen as puppets and servitors of the Trakallans, even if a great number of them have found lives far away from their shady history surrounding Praxis and the Triad.

### Soomat Racial Traits

- ✧ +2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma: Soomat are natural stalkers with an animal grace, but tend to be instinctually driven in scholastic and social circles.
- ✧ All Soomat are of Small size.
- ✧ Soomat have a base speed of 30 feet, but can drop to all fours and increase speed to 40 feet.
- ✧ Soomat have long imposing teeth set in black gums. By giving a snarl and a loud growl, they receive a +2 bonus to their Intimidate skill checks.
- ✧ Soomat are natural hunter/stalkers. They receive a +2 racial bonus to Hide, Move Silently and Survival skill checks.
- ✧ Automatic languages: Soomati, English, and Trakallan.
- ✧ Average Height: 4 foot.
- ✧ Average Weight: 110 pounds.

## The Trakallan Ministry

From their home system of Thrakalla, on the rocky and mountainous world of Trakall, live the golden-skinned Trakallans. They are long-limbed and wide-eyed, with musical voices that harmonise whenever they speak. Each Trakallan consider themselves as a single instrument in a galaxy-wide symphony that moves the worlds around them. Such egocentricity gives them the regal feel of royalty, and a natural talent to lead those who fall into those beliefs.

They were given some degree of credibility to their self-importance when they were chosen by the Shadows in the first Shadow War to lead the Praxis Triad. Told of their own destiny by these dark, godlike beings strengthened their fanaticism. They founded the Triad and serve as its head spokesmen and leaders. With their almost enchanting ability to sway emotions with their voice, the Zand and the Soomat fell in line without fail. When the Shadows went back into hiding, the Trakallan Ministry took up the mantle as servants of the 'Symphony' and began their own machinations to try and bring back the dark masters from their hiding places.

During the thousand years that followed, the Trakallans slowly forgot the dark message behind their gospels and instead took up

the role as the masters themselves. It was their change from Shadow agents to enigmatic puppeteers that slowly caused the Praxis Triad to evolve. Instead of sowing the seeds of chaos for the Shadows, they gradually changed into political and commercial masterminds working from their corner of the galaxy.

Their nearby galactic neighbours - the Moradi, Ch'Lonas and Koulani - looked upon the silver tongued (both literally and figuratively) Trakallans as eclectic mystics and overeager evangelists of their interesting 'faith.' However, in looking down at the former agents of Shadows, they gave them room to work unnoticed in their own circles. Eventually, having a Trakallan spokesperson became a status symbol in the League. From there the Trakallans, and therefore the Praxis Triad, have a much larger scope than even they may have intended.

### Trakallan Racial Traits

- ▲ +4 Charisma, -2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution: From their generations of having others working for them the Trakallans have thin-framed bodies, causing them to rely upon their almost preternatural power of suggestion over emotions.
- ▲ All Trakallans are of Medium size.
- ▲ Trakallans have a base speed of 30 feet.
- ▲ Trakallans have a powerful belief in the Galactic Symphony. They receive Iron Will as a bonus feat.
- ▲ Trakallans are natural speakers and leaders. They receive a +2 racial bonus to Bluff and Gather Information skill checks.
- ▲ Trakallans often use one another to create a network of allies. When a Trakallan character chooses Contacts as a feat, they actually gain it automatically a second time immediately.
- ▲ Trakallans were taught by the Shadows to fear and hate Telepaths. When knowingly in the presence of Telepaths, they suffer a -3 penalty to all to-hit rolls, skill checks and saving throws.
- ▲ Trakallans may never buy levels in the Telepath class or choose the feat Latent Telepath. This is not to say that there has never been Trakallan telepaths, but were bred out of the gene pool during the first Shadow War.
- ▲ Automatic languages: Trakallan, English, Soomati and Zandese.
- ▲ Average Height: six feet six inches.
- ▲ Average Weight: 190 pounds.

## NEW FEATS

### Volcanic Spawn (Zand)

You were part of a spawning that incubated and hatched in the vicinity of a volcanic vent on the ocean floor of Zander Prime. This made your egg's shell - and therefore your own body - far more thick and durable than others of your kind.

**Prerequisite:** Must be selected at 1<sup>st</sup> level, Dexterity score must be 10 or lower.

**Benefits:** Your exoskeleton is too spiky and bumpy to even attach the Zand Battlesuit to yourself, but receive a bonus to their Natural Damage Reduction equal to their Constitution score modifier.



### Freshwater Spawn (Zand)

You were part of a spawning that incubated and hatched away from your homeworld, in a freshwater stream or lake. This made your egg's shell - and therefore your own body - thinner and more pliable than others of your kind.

**Prerequisite:** Must be selected at 1<sup>st</sup> level, Dexterity score must be 14 or higher.

**Benefits:** Your exoskeleton is thin and bendable. You have one less point of Natural Damage Reduction, but can wear partially refitted armour made for other races. These modifications double the cost of any armour.

### Feral Throwback (Soomat)

The hunting and animal instincts in your family sect were never dulled, and your body reflects this in your long claws and savage teeth.

**Prerequisite:** This feat must be selected at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

**Benefits:** Your claws and teeth allow you to strike Unarmed for 1d4 and 1d6 plus Strength modifier damage, which is NOT subdual. You also gain a +2 bonus to Climb skill checks.

### Nocturnal Breed (Soomat)

Your family sect is from one of the moons that see the least amount of daylight from the star your system revolves around. Due to long nights and dusky days, you have fantastic night vision.

**Prerequisite:** This feat must be selected at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

**Benefits:** You have Darkvision up to 60 feet. You also gain a +3 bonus to Spot and Search skill checks in near or total darkness.

### Large Breed (Soomat)

For some reason, when your family sect lifted themselves up off all fours - they just kept stretching upward! You are massive compared to other Soomat, thick-shouldered, and short snouted.



**Prerequisite:** This feat must be selected at 1<sup>st</sup> level, Strength score must be 13 or more.

**Benefits:** You are between 4 foot 10 inches and 5 foot 8 inches and your weight is one and a half times greater than a normal member of your species. You gain a +1 bonus to your Strength score, but are now considered a Medium sized creature.

### Praxis Triad Inner Circle (Trakallan)

You are one of the truly informed within the Praxis Triad. You are aware of the Shadows' influence upon you, and even have had contact with them yourself during the second Shadow War. (NOTE: This feat is only available after 2259)

**Prerequisite:** Contacts, Charisma 15+, Shadow Agent level 1+

**Special Requirement:** Must be a practicing member of the Praxis Triad.

**Benefits:** You can call upon special favours from your lesser in the Triad. In turn, they can ask favours of you. Based on the type of favour you are requesting, the Games Master will set a Charisma check DC that must be passed to successfully call upon your allies. *Example: Roleen wishes to have a Triad agent acquire a crate of stolen firearms for a local gang to*

*coincidentally find. The Games Master sets the DC at 18, which Roleen passes easily. Her local gang Contacts are happy to find a crate of military PPGs near their hideout by morning!*

### A Chime in the Symphony (Trakallan)

Your voice in the Galactic Symphony is a shining solo in the choir of your people.

**Prerequisite:** Charisma 16+, Perform skill at 6+

**Benefits:** With a contested Perform skill check versus the target(s) Willpower save, you can entrance your targets into a lull of submissiveness. Any further Diplomacy, Bluff or Gather Information skill checks you take versus anyone who fails the save will have an additional +3 bonus for the following fifteen minutes.

### Praxis Triad Puppet (General)

You are a tool of the Praxis Triad, either knowingly or not. They sometimes call upon you for favours, and even if you do not know it - membership has its rewards.

**Prerequisite:** 3<sup>rd</sup> level or higher, Contacts

**Special Prerequisite:** Must be



a member of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, or an employee of one.

**Benefits:** This feat counts as an additional Contacts feat for purposes of general use. Also, any Triad puppet has a 10% (plus situational modifiers provided by the Games Master) per session that a Triad member might set something special up for the puppet to do or receive.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

### Praxis Triad Coded Crystals/

**Receiver:** Members of the Triad are often given special code breaking transmission receivers built into special link units. These coded crystals are wrapped in special high-technology plastic matrices that keep out all but the best chemical hackers in the galaxy (DC 40 to break). These receivers are only given to standing members of the Triad, and are equipped with a self-destruct mechanism if keyed into a particularly coded crystal sent to disenfranchised members.

Praxis Triad Coded Receiver: not for sale

Praxis Triad Coded Crystals: not for sale, black market price is 2,000 credits each

**Praxisian Battleaxe:** The Praxisians were thickly built aggressors with horned ridges along their heads from nose to cranium, and were very capable martial combatants. When the Shadows instructed the Triad to cleanse Praxis 7 of the native Praxisians, much of their goods were subsumed. Such is the case with the heavy-headed battleaxe they used to try and fight off the relatively technologically advanced Triad. The Praxisian Battleaxe is a one-handed weapon with a triangular head capable of shearing through very thick armour in single strokes. Praxisian Battleaxe: Cost 500 cr., Damage 1d10, Critical x2, Size Medium, Weight 7 lb., Type Slashing, Special Qualities: Ignores up to 2 points of DR from armour.

**Zand Battlesuit (armour):** Not really a suit at all, the Zand Battlesuit is actually just armoured plates attached with clips to the larger sections of a Zand's exoskeleton. It is uncomfortable and hindering, but for most Zand it is their only option. Zand Battlesuit: Cost 1,000 cr.; Weight 40 lb., DR 3

**Zand Aqua-safe Flechette Pistol:** The Zand spend a great deal of their lives underwater, where common ranged weaponry is ineffective at

best. The Zand and their adept engineers designed a special pistol shaped for their pincer-ended hand, made to throw speeding slivers of metal through air or water.

Zand Aqua-safe Flechette Pistol: Cost 400 cr., Damage 2d6, Critical 19-20/x2, Ammo 12, Range Increment 20 ft. (air)/ 40 ft. (water), Small, Weight 1 lb., Type Piercing  
Flechette Reloads: Cost 25 cr.

**Soomat Knuckle Knives:** With the loss of their claws, the Soomat invented claws of dense metal to make up for it. Attached to the thumbs like six-inch spurs, a trained Soomat knife fighter can deliver terrible wounds.

Soomat Knuckle Knives: Cost 200 cr. per pair, Damage 1d4, Critical 18-20/x2, Tiny, Weight 1 lb. per pair, Type Slashing

### Scripture of the Galactic

**Symphony:** During the high evangelism of the Trakallan faith, they recorded dozens of versions of their faith in several known languages. If a knowing scholar would do enough research into the passages within (particularly those concerning the deep shadowy tenors from the beginning of the Symphony) they might discover some long and forgotten secrets.

Scripture of the Galactic Symphony (data recorded): 250 cr.

Scripture of the Galactic Symphony (original written): 20,000 cr.

## NEW SPACECRAFT DESCRIPTION

### Praxis Covenant Light Combat Vessel (LCV)

Designed by the genius engineers of the Zand, the Covenant is basically a spike-shaped spacecraft with two long lengths of wing-stabilisers for atmospheric landing or take-off. The hull of each Covenant (only a few are known to exist, as less than 200 were ever constructed in the first place) is made from woven polymers

overlaying the hard mineral-based alloys the Zand use in their common constructions. This gives the Covenant a vastly higher survivability for its size and speed. Armed with a combination of matter cannons and plasma throwers, it is a very capable combatant - especially when crewed with quick-triggered Soomat led by a well-trained Trakallan privateer captain.

Colossal Spacecraft: hp 220; DV 14 (-8 Size, +12 Agility); DR 20; Spd -; Acc 4; Dec 4; Han +2; Sensor +5; Stealth 14; SQ Long Ranged; Cargo 12,000 lbs; 1 Officer, 2 Pilots, 3 Sensor Operators, 10 Crewman

*Weapons:*

Four Matter Cannons; 2 Front/Left/Right, 2 Rear; Attack +3 (targeting computer); Damage 30+3d10; Critical 18-20; Range 5  
Twin-linked Medium Plasma Cannon; Boresight; Attack +2 (targeting computer); Damage 30+6d10; Critical 19-20; Range 2

**Scenarios and Campaign Hooks**

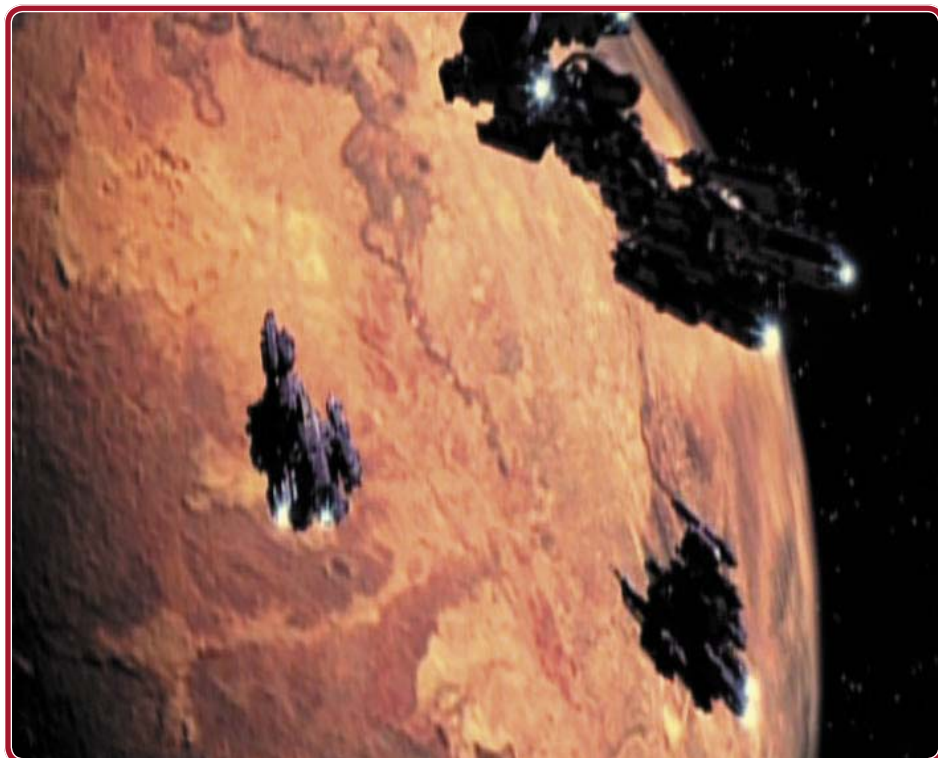
- A mysterious alien sends a communication to the Player Characters, telling them to be at a particular place and time aboard Babylon 5. When arriving at the rendezvous, they find a violently murdered ambassador's aide. Security is already alerted, and they find themselves wrapped up in a frame-up where they have a limited amount of time before their arrest/trial to discover who really set them up and turn *them* in to clear their names.
- A contact of the Player Characters in the League of Non-Aligned

Worlds believes he was recently duped in a business transaction with a tiny backwater system called Praxis. His investments have vanished, and the broker is all but unreachable since his departure from Babylon 5 a week prior to contacting the characters. He is at the end of his rope, as his company/government is threatening severe action if the finances are not recovered or the broker brought to justice. The characters may want to help this individual out of their sense of fair play, or just to make a powerful ally in the League.

- One of the Player Characters has been chosen to become an (un)willing piece in a plot designed by the Praxis Triad. They and their comrades are invited to meet with a potential 'employer' concerning a lucrative offer. All expenses paid, all protocols followed... seemingly, an offer too good to be true. When they find out how menial and minor a task is being asked of them they might balk, thinking it is a trap or con, especially when offered

an astronomical fee for such services. If the characters play ball, even just for the money, they are signing up to be part of a much larger scheme surrounding the Shadows and their allies.

- It is rare that the Vorlons ever communicate with anyone. When the Player Characters receive a cryptic communique from Ambassador Kosh they are forced to wonder what they did to earn such ire/respect/attention. It seems that Kosh wants someone to deliver a package to a certain Trakallan ambassador on a distant space station, and is willing to pay handsomely for its expedience and confidentiality. Little do they know that the package is a tracking device the Vorlons are planning to use to send agents to the space station to deal with the Shadow agents living there - whether or not the characters are on board.





# Mongoose Open Day 2005



Top Starship Troopers memorabilia collector Dave Rosen was on hand to meet and greet



The number who showed up made even Mongoose Hall feel small. Thanks to everybody who made the trip!



The great man looks down as some of our visitors check out one of the Babylon 5 cabinets



Cookey, Adrian and Chris from Lyneham Wargames Club (probably the best wargaming club in the world). Adrian is of course our Studio Artist, although he looks like an artist of a different sort in this picture...



Alex Fennell ascends the Throne of Power in his everyday attire



Regular face Lee Naylor gets up close and personal with the delightful Claudia Christian





Mongoose wordsmith Gareth Hanrahan begins a session of Babylon 5 roleplaying



Some of Dave's impressive collection



A posse of the usual suspects get down to some serious gaming. Greg Smith in characteristic pose, as usual...



Claudia gets involved in some tabletop action with Alex and the Mekon



Rich Neale shows Doghouse just what he thinks about his promotion to RPG Manager



*'Everybody in the room will obey me now!!!'*



Pete Perry's day of stalking and dribbling gets its reward...



The Mongoose crew relax after a long day in the saddle

# The Jonny Nexus Experience

## What The Hell's Up With D20 Wands?

**I**t's a scene we've watched a thousand times: on TV or film; in images in our head while reading a pulp fantasy; or perhaps in our mind's eye when we dream of what might be in the games we play. A wizard casts a spell, the wand in his hand sketching patterns in the air as he mouths the mystic words. And as those words complete and the magic flows he takes that wand – a slim rod of black wood maybe, with silver tips and an exotic core – and taps it upon the object of his sorcery, an object which warps, transforms, shifts–

[Sound effect of needle scratching across a vinyl record].

Except it isn't like that, is it? At least not if we're playing D20. Forget the conjurer saying 'Abracadabra!' and tapping his top hat with his trusty wand, because that's not how wands work in D20 – as I was reminded a few weeks ago at my Thursday group's weekly gaming session.

We'd just started a new campaign for the nights that Bubba can't make it, with Mark GMing, and me and Bog Boy as players. Mark's vision was for a serious campaign of urban intrigue inspired by the feel of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (after the first session went rather well he jokingly told me, 'Don't tell anyone about this... We're Thursday – we've got a reputation to maintain') and so I decided that I would try the character class I'd managed to avoid throughout my entire roleplaying career.

A Wizard.

I'd always ducked out of playing a spell-slinger because let's face it, if you're a session amnesiac who doesn't much understand the rules, it's much easier to just play a bloke with a big sword. After all, you only have to remember one answer to

the GM's standard question of 'What do you want to do?' – that answer being, of course, 'I'll [EXPLETIVE DELETED] him with my sword!'

A wizard's a bit trickier, but I was in method roleplaying luvvie mode now, and I figured that if I could get a handle on the character I could play the role effectively. A few minutes of brain crunching produced what I felt was a pretty cool concept – a foundling with magical aptitude, taken from an orphanage by a wizardly guild and raised as their apprentice – and then I was off and running. I rolled the dice, and scratched away on the character sheet with my pencil, and everything was fine up until the point where Mark told me that due to some Realms-specific rule I could start with a magic item, and then proceeded to read a list for me to choose from: wand of this, wand of that, wand of whatever and so on.

But I didn't want a magic item. I could hear the ghosts of Joe's Adventure Barn calling (see Issue 18) and wanted nothing to do with yet more boring, utilitarian magic. Where was the story angle? Why did my character have this item? Isn't magic supposed to be special?

Now we did eventually find an item that I could rationalise in story terms, which was a scroll containing some high level spells. (My character's been sent out into the world by his adoptive guild to test himself – so it would make perfect sense for them to give him a 'use only in emergencies' scroll containing spells such as invisibility, just in case things get a bit sticky).

But before we got to that point I explained to Mark exactly what it was I hated about this list of wands he'd just read out to me, and exactly what it was I didn't like about D20 wands, and outlined how I thought they should work, and Mark then replied with something along the lines of, 'Get stuffed, you're not having that!'

(To be fair, he was a bit politer than that. Not much politer, but a bit politer).

But the nice thing about having a monthly column in a roleplaying magazine is that if your mates won't listen to you ranting (and mine generally don't) you can just use it as the subject of your next column and force your readers to listen to you instead. (Yes, I know you don't *actually* have to listen to me, and that you've probably just turned over the page – but humour me, okay?)

## What I Hate About D20 Wands

Well we have to start by defining what we mean when we say wand. Now I've been searching the web for definitions of the word 'wand' and they all say something along the lines of this:

*A thin stick made of metal, wood or ivory, usually around 12' long, that can channel and focus the magical energy produced by a wizard.*

Now before we ponder on the implications of that, let's come up with a definition for a D20 wizard (note that this is a wizard as opposed to a sorcerer). Now one significant feature of the D20 Wizard class is that there is no concept of magical aptitude. You don't have to be psychic or anything. Spells are simply techniques that anyone can learn, providing they have the required intellect and the appropriate teacher. So we can come up with the following definition:

*A D20 wizard is someone who knows how to cast one or more spells, where a spell is a learned technique that, when cast, enables the caster to channel magic from the surrounding environment to produce a set, desired result.*

This isn't like having ESP or being force-sensitive. You can't be a wizard who hasn't yet learned how to cast spells, since the definition of a wizard is someone who can cast a spell. If you can't cast spells then you're just some bloke who would be intelligent enough to learn how to cast a spell if he tried. Now admittedly, I'm simplifying things slightly. I suspect that you have to learn various fundamental techniques before you can get to the point where you can cast actual spells. But that doesn't alter the essential truth about the nature of D20 wizards. They're just people who know spells. But what's the point of the above? Well let's consider the definition of D20 wands:

*A wand is a thin baton that contains a single spell of 4<sup>th</sup> level or lower. Each wand has 50 charges when created, and each charge expended allows the user to use the wand's spell one time. A wand that runs out of charges is just a stick.*

Which is a bit different from the definition used by myths and legends since the dawn of time. It gets more confusing when we look at who can use a wand:

*Anyone with a spell on his or her spell list knows how to use a spell trigger item that stores that spell.*

What that basically means – I think – is that a wizard can use a wand that contains a wizard's spell, even if he doesn't actually know how to cast the spell. (The person who needed to be able to cast the spell was the wizard who created the wand).

Thus, we have our two definitions:

**Standard Myth Wand:** An item made from exotic, magic-channelling materials that enhances a wizard's ability to cast spells. The wand itself is a generic item, not tied to any one spell. It's the wizard who casts the spells; the wand simply makes it either possible, or perhaps just easier, for the wizard to cast those spells. A wand is highly personal to a wizard. It is *his* wand, and he carries only one, just as a warrior carries only one sword.

**D20 Wand:** A magical item which can store a spell cast by one wizard so that the spell can later be cast by another wizard who, while having some knowledge of spellcasting, isn't able to cast that particular spell. This type of wand is a specialist tool, and a wizard might carry several.

To my mind, the standard wand enhances the role of the wizard while the D20 one detracts from it. It's like the difference between an artist's painting kit (brushes, paints and so on), which enables someone with drawing ability to capture images, and a camera, which enables someone without drawing ability to capture images.

Ironically, there is a D20 magic item that bears much more resemblance to the wands found in myth and legend: the rod. Rods, especially the meta-magic ones, act not to store a spell, but to enhance the ability of a wizard to cast spells.

## What I'd Do About It

What I'd do is get rid of both wands and rods and merge the functionality into something that resembles the wands found in myths and literature, adding in some new functionality to cover the whole 'abracadabra top hat' stuff.

The following items are presented as examples, and are not necessarily complete.

## A Basic Wand

Wands are not, in themselves, magical, but are constructed from exotic materials that are capable of channelling magic. A typical wand is 6 to 12 inches long and about ¼ inch thick, and often weighs no more than 1 ounce. Most wands are constructed from wood, but some are bone, metal, glass or even ceramic. Wands are built around a core of exotic materials, such as the hair of a rare beast or braided threads of platinum. Constructing a wand requires expert craftsmanship (which means that all wands are masterwork).

(Storytelling GMs might want to rule that wizards should select the materials used to construct their wand based upon their nature, outlook, and beliefs – and perhaps even rule that only a certain combination of materials will work for a particular wizard).

A wand's ability to channel magic enables a wizard to cast spells which would normally require him to touch the object the spell is being cast upon without actually touching that object: instead, he only has to touch the object with one end of the wand whilst holding the wand's other end. (Which can save a wizard's life in cases where the object concerned is trapped, poisonous or otherwise dangerous). In addition, where the spell requires a touch attack, the masterwork nature of the wand gives a +1 bonus to the attack.

A typical wand has AC 7, 5 hit points, hardness 5, a break DC of 16, and costs 500 gp (due to the exotic nature of the materials concerned and the craftsmanship required).



## Metamagic Wands

Unlike basic wands, Metamagic wands *are* magical items.

We first take the basic description of a metamagic rod and simply change the wording:

Metamagic wands hold the essence of a metamagic feat but do not change the spell slot of the altered spell. All the wands described here are use-activated (but casting

spells in a threatened area still draws an attack of opportunity). A caster may only use one metamagic wand on any given spell, but it is permissible to combine a wand with metamagic feats possessed by the wand's wielder. In this case, only the feats possessed by the wielder adjust the spell slot of the spell being cast.

Possession of a metamagic wand does not confer the associated feat on the owner, only the ability to use the given feat a specified number of times per day. A sorcerer still must take a full-round action when using a metamagic wand, just as if using a metamagic feat he possesses.

Normal metamagic wands can be used with spells of 6<sup>th</sup> level or lower. Lesser wands can be used with spells of 3<sup>rd</sup> level or lower, while greater wands can be used with spells of 9<sup>th</sup> level or lower.

Which – after adding the 500 gp for the cost of the basic wand, gives us a metamagic wand, such as:

### *Metamagic-Empower Wand*

The wielder can cast up to three spells per day that are empowered as though using the Empower Spell feat. This wand also acts as a basic wand, allowing touch spells to be channelled through it.

Strong (no school); CL 17<sup>th</sup>; Craft Rod, Empower Spell; Price 9,500 gp (lesser), 33,000 gp (normal), 73,500 gp (greater).

That's just an example, but you should be able to repeat this for all rods where appropriate, giving wands that enlarge, extend, quicken, allow silent casting and so on.

And there we have it: our D20 wizard can still cast spells without his wand, but with his wand he can cast them better, and if it's something that he needs to touch then he can just tap it with his wand.

Now that's a wand worthy of legend.

It's just a pity my wizard will never get to wield it.



# It's A Bug's Life

## Building and Using an Arachnid Army in Starship Troopers

**MATTHEW SPRANGE**

It may be an odd thing to say but I did not exactly choose to do an Arachnid army for Starship Troopers – they chose me. To put that into some context, all through the development of Starship Troopers, I was fired up to build an awesome Mobile Infantry force. In many miniatures games, I have this ‘thing’ for humanity’s last stand, the thin line between civilisation and disaster. Thus, the MI were the perfect choice for me in this game.

The trouble was, I had to take my turn using Arachnids during the playtesting of Starship Troopers – and that is when the bug started to bite. So to speak.

Up to this point, I had always considered the Arachnids to be your usual, everyday horde army. I could not have been more wrong. Sure, you could load up on warrior bugs and charge with all fury towards the enemy. You could amass an impressive looking army that way. But you would lose every time.

It only took one game to illustrate just how multi-dimensional the Arachnids really were. The equipment options of the Mobile Infantry are obvious to everyone who reads the army list but it took a game with the bugs to begin to discover all the different levels they can operate at – and, more importantly, just how devious they can be in battle. It dawned on me that perhaps they were my kind of army after all.



### A Multitude of Tactics

So, you can start with the ‘charge across the table’ tactics but a good Mobile Infantry player will make you pay for it quickly. True, your warrior bugs need to get into close combat to do any good but troopers are equipped well enough to deal with a few swarms of those. As an Arachnid player, you can be a lot more sneaky than this. Formulating all sorts of battle plans in my head, I began putting together warrior bugs – a lot of them. With the simple paint scheme, reminiscent of the movie, I was finally able to build two bugs in ten minutes but the painting of them (minus drying time) was much quicker than that.

In no time at all, 65 warriors were finished and as more bug models arrived at the office, they were duly

added to the growing horde. Very soon, I had hoppers, tankers and firefries well represented in my army and, as I type this, a brain bug is sitting on my painting table waiting for some attention.

Looking ahead at some of the models due to arrive for the Arachnids, it becomes readily apparent that they will become a truly versatile army that will always keep the Mobile Infantry guessing. By now, troopers will be used to fending off swarms of warriors but once you start adding psychic brain bugs, blisters and blasters that can actually shoot back and plasmas that can actually out range most Mobile Infantry units (not to mention being able to annihilate an entire squad of troopers with one well-placed shot), you will soon have humanity on the run.



## Warrior Bugs

On the face of it, your warrior bugs are doomed in a rush across the table (though I have seen some very successful 2,000 point armies with over 100 warriors in them). The Mobile Infantry have very effective weapons and when Marauders start appearing, life gets incredibly difficult. The aim is to get your warriors into close combat without losing them all in the process.

Tunnels are the obvious, even essential, approach but far more important is *timing*. You must plan all your warriors (and other close combat based bugs, such as tankers) to hit the Mobile Infantry line in the same turn. If you can accomplish this, the troopers will be swamped with too many targets to deal with as your warriors smash into them. A few bugs will die but the rest will carve through trooper and Marauder alike and the Arachnids win another battle. I'll show you how this is done....

Pick Attack tactics. The importance of this is that you can keep half your units off the table in reserve to be brought on to the battlefield at any time from turn two onwards. Keeping your warriors in handy units five-strong (they can always swarm together when you get close and need to avoid reaction fire), place two to four units underground as tunnellers.

Keep a similar number above ground – the Mobile Infantry will need something to keep their attention, not to mention forcing them to stay put on their back line as they deal with these marauders. The rest you keep off table. You can bring these on in turn two from any table edge in your deployment zone – *including the side edges*. This means you can get an awful lot of bugs very close to the Mobile Infantry while risking only those few who stayed above ground (don't expect many of them to survive!). If the Mobile Infantry have been deployed a little distance forwards, you can easily get into reaction fire range on the second turn. Normally this sounds like a bad idea but you will be able to place so many bugs inside your opponent's reaction range that he will never be able to kill them all (use the swarm rules!).

This means that when it is the Mobile Infantry's turn, *you* will be in reaction range and will close even faster to their line. If your opponent was wise enough to deploy a little further back, then add a turn's worth of firing from the Mobile Infantry to this but the final effect will be the same – a shed load of bugs will be all over the troopers and they will not have enough firepower to repel all of them.

That is how to win games using warrior bugs alone. Now, if you add other species to the mix, you can get just plain mean with the Mobile Infantry.

## Hopper Bugs

It only took one playtest of the hopper bugs to demonstrate just how lethal they are to troopers – and how much they can change an Arachnid player's tactics. Sure, they are expensive, to the tune that three of them cost the same as ten warriors. Now, an all hopper army (possible at Priority Level 3 and yes, we have tried it!) may be a bit extreme so aim to have 3-6 in a 2,000 point force, split into one or two units.

The first thing to remember – do not get them killed needlessly. They are too expensive to throw away. Consider keeping them off table, as described for the warrior bugs and certainly make use of all cover that completely blocks line of sight to the Mobile Infantry. Despite their



fast movement, do not let hoppers lead the attack, as you will only lose them within a turn. Instead, have them hop about between cover, avoiding the Mobile Infantry at all costs. Just as soon as your warrior bugs begin to get stuck in, launch your hoppers. Their huge movement allows them to leap from cover, strike at a lonely trooper and then fly on to more cover – without letting the Mobile Infantry get any reaction fire at all! Furthermore, you can use them to selectively assassinate sergeants and troopers with special weapons, greatly weakening their army and they can certainly have a good go at Marauders if used in large numbers. Just be careful to avoid flame weapons (they will bring your hoppers down quickly) and Marauders that are not destroyed by your attacks.

## Firefries

Opinion is often split over these guys. Their plus points are an awesome flame weapon (D10 in a unit that can number ten bugs has the potential to annihilate trooper squads and Marauders alike) plus a fast jumping move, all wrapped up into a package that is only slightly more expensive than warriors. On the other hand, their flame weapon is very short ranged and the firefries themselves die quickly to Morita fire.



It is the cheapness of Firefries that wins me over. The two golden rules are a) keep them out of sight until they are ready to attack and b) when they attack, make sure you wipe out everything in the area so nothing can shoot back at them.

Often easier said than done – but remember that lovely D10 attack which you do not have to get into close combat for. With their jump, they effectively have a 21” range (jump plus range of flame attack), which can keep your opponent guessing. However, use them to support an attack, not spearhead it. They just do not have the armour.

## Tanker Bug

Oh, I was so waiting for this chap to arrive. The biggest model we have yet done and I wanted at least two in my force!

There are two schools of thought regarding the tanker bug and its use in an Arachnid force. You either put it underground as a tunneller or keep it on the surface during the advance. I subscribe to both, as either can have advantages.

The first allows you to sneak up on the Mobile Infantry, protecting your expensive tanker until it is ready to surface and strike. If it pops up close enough to a target, few things can withstand its close combat attacks and if they are further away, its ranged attack can annihilate half an army if you have positioned things correctly.

The second method will all depend on how many Javelins and Pee-wees your opponent is fielding. A well-equipped Mobile Infantry force can deal with a tanker in the open in a very short space of time. However, this can be extended by fielding more than one tanker bug and, in any case, it will stop your warriors being targeted for some time, allowing them to close distance and deliver the knockout blow, whether the tanker survives or not.





## Brain Bug

Now this is a bug every Arachnid player should have. At 300 points, it is hard to fit into any force less than 2,000 points and it will rarely earn its points directly. However, even if you do nothing more than keep it underground, that bonus action it grants to a single unit can be a game winning ability. As a bug player, you will be used to racing across the battlefield and finding you are just a few inches short of a target. With an extra action, that need not be the case! There are also cleverer options to use with this ability, such as getting a plasma bug to fire (two actions

with Ready) and then set it on Ready in preparation of an MI air assault. Tanker bugs can now move 10" in a turn and still get to fire.

That is not to say that 150 points of psychic talents are worth sniffing at though but as most bug players seem to like the enhanced versions of talents, the brain bug might not have everything you need. Ego War is another potential game winner, especially when combined with the bonus action – race your warriors right down the MI's throat, and then remove any possible reactions as they close in!

## More Models

My Arachnid army is growing all the time now. I want to get my warrior bugs numbering over a hundred (to try out the all warrior army) and anyone can always use more hoppers. However, most of my attention is on the new models coming out for the Arachnids. The plasma bug is due to arrive soon, which can blast apart practically anything with its artillery attack - I guarantee this one will soon pay for itself in mission points. Add to that more firefries and the forthcoming blisters and blasters, and you may find an army that can actually outshoot the Mobile Infantry...

## The Future

The Arachnids are far more than a simple one trick army. Reserves, timed attacks, tunnels and a wide variety of species will all play into your favour and tip the balance against Mobile Infantry players expecting a few warriors. Learn the tricks of the Starship Troopers game and you will find the Arachnids can really work for you. Finding out all the different variations and tactics possible with an army, rather than just discovering the 'killer combos', is what this game is all about! ■





# The Children of the Black Wind

*An adventure for OGL Horror, Episode Two*

**Matthew Pritchard**

In Episode I, the Player Characters learned of the existence of Dhurlaj Rathnu and the secrets of his monstrous parentage. Episode II now deals with the machinations of the half-human sorcerer, and the Player Characters' attempts to foil them.

Thanks to his alien heritage, Dhurlaj Rathnu is a master of the black arts and a powerful sorcerer. He has dedicated his life to the location of the Black Ark, a terrible artefact in which the essence of the goddess Vesh-na-Rapathnu lies dormant, imprisoned by powerful magic. Dhurlaj Rathnu seeks to release the Goddess and harness her power - he will then make himself Lord of the Earth and enslave or kill all who oppose him.

As Episode II opens, Rathnu and his group of acolytes have travelled to southern Spain where they have discovered the resting place of the Black Ark amidst the ruins of a castle. During this search, Rathnu enlisted the help of Don Álvaro de la Joya, a sadistic Spanish count and dabbler in the dark arts. De la Joya supplied the muscle necessary to excavate the ruined castle and retrieve the Ark, doing so under the promise of a share in the power once Vesh-na-Rapathnu is released.

However, Dhurlaj Rathnu is not a man to share power with anyone, and he has betrayed the Count. Mere days after the Killray Foundation had left his lands, en route to London, de la Joya found himself stricken with a horrible disease that is causing his skin to literally rot before his eyes. Now, as Rathnu prepares to begin the ritual necessary to open the Black Ark, Count Álvaro de la Joya sits brooding in his castle, dreaming of revenge...

## Chapter One The Search for The Black Ark

The Player Characters have been drawn to Spain by clues found in Episode I, above all reports of an earthquake (caused by Dhurlaj Rathnu's enlisting of supernatural aid in recovering the Black Ark.) However, by the time they arrive there, the Killray Foundation will be on their way back to England again, with the Black Ark. By following their trail, the characters will discover exactly what they plan and the means to stop them...

### *Arrivals*

The characters arrive in the bustling port town of Almería, in South-Eastern Spain. Being an important mining area, the docks are crowded with sailors of all nationalities, whilst the buildings are covered in grimy deposits left by the nearby train station. As it is quite possible that none of the characters will be able to speak Spanish, the Games Master should consider ways of getting around this. By far the easiest option is to allow the characters to hire a guide. This can also be a convenient way of slipping the characters useful information about the area and helping to keep them from getting sidetracked. A sample guide, Carlos Olivares, is presented below. If the Games Master wishes to introduce him plausibly, he may have Carlos help the characters sort out a brief altercation with customs officials (maybe due to the large amounts of firearms being brought into the country!), or intervene to prevent a fight with drunken sailors.

### *Almería*

Located in the South East of Spain, Almería in 1888 is a place of contrasts: a tiny percentage of the population, grown rich on mineral exports and agriculture, owns practically all the land and wealth, whilst the rest of the populace wallows in abject poverty, scraping out a living as best they can from the barren earth. The climate is hot and dry, the landscape a constant series of flat, dusty plains interspersed with mountain ranges and poverty stricken hamlets. Travel is difficult; as there are few railways and the roads are of a universally poor condition. An organised police force does exist, but is normally always heavily controlled by the local landowner, who controls all appointments.

### *Gathering Information*

The people of Almería are well known for being both garrulous and chronic gossips, so the Player Characters will not find it difficult to gather information, even if the language is a barrier. Characters showing the proper tact (for example, not mentioning Gibraltar, the Spanish Armada and so on) can make all Gather Information checks with a +2 circumstance bonus. The Games Master should create answers using the information presented elsewhere in the adventure, although the most likely questions are covered below:

1. Another group of foreigners arrived in Almería some 2 weeks before the Player Characters. If the characters think to describe Dhurlaj Rathnu, his presence can be confirmed. After spending 24 hours organising their belongings, they headed off into the mountains, toward

*Carlos Olivares*

At 43 years of age, Carlos has seen much of the world, having run away to sea when still in his teens. A short, stocky man with thick brown hair, he has now returned to his native Almería in order to look after his sick mother, after his only sister died of influenza. Carlos learnt his English through working with British sailors, and his speech is peppered with nautical phrases. Although pitifully poor, Carlos has a keen intelligence and enters into arguments with typical Latin enthusiasm, displaying a surprising amount of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. However, in spite of this, Carlos is deeply religious, incredibly superstitious and utterly devoted to his mother.

Medium human; hp 15; Mas 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defence 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11; BAB +2; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d4+2, knife) or ranged +2 (2d6, pistol); FS 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Skills:** Gather Information +6, Hide +4, Knowledge (popular culture) +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Speak Language (English), Spot +3

**Feats:** Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Stealthy, Toughness

**Possessions:** Pistol, Knife



the town of Matagorda. If the characters think to ask, Rathnu's party would have arrived there just before the earthquakes took place.

- The foreign party were accompanied by a group of sinister gypsies, known to be servants of Count Álvaro de la Joya. At this point the characters can discover a little of the Count's reputation.
- Questions on the recent earthquake draw mixed responses. Higher class and educated people scoff at the supernatural elements of the story, claiming that earthquakes are quite common in the area. Lower class people are more inclined to believe the stories, attributing them as a divine punishment on Álvaro de la Joya for his wickedness.

*Count Álvaro de la Joya*

The count's name is known throughout Southern Spain, as he is one of the areas wealthiest landowners, coming from a family that dates back to the Catholic Kings. However, the present count, a man of around some 50 years old, has added a fair degree of infamy to the family name. Exactly what information the characters receive depends very much on the social standing of the person in question. Although members of the upper classes are aware of the whiff of scandal that hangs permanently around de la Joya's name, they dismiss rumours of his supernatural powers as utter poppycock. However, as the social standing of the person decreases, so their belief in his wickedness increases until, by the level of peasant, de la Joya is a form of devil incarnate, capable of the vilest profanities known to man. Of course, as the characters will later discover, the peasants are not a million miles away from the truth...

Having gathered sufficient information in Almería, it is likely the characters will want to take a look at the actual earthquake site itself.

*The Earthquake Site*

The journey up to the remote mountain village of Matagorda takes the best part of two entire days. The characters will have to organise their own transport, as there exists only a single roadway and nobody will want to take them. This could pose a problem if the characters need to transport large amounts of equipment, but their guide can easily organise as many mules as are needed.

The road to Matagorda first leads across a number of dry, dusty plains dotted with peasant shacks and seemingly endless olive groves. The mountain range looms in the distance, silhouetted against a brilliant blue sky. As the characters undertake this part of their journey, the following encounters take place, in this order:

## 1. The Burning Barn

A column of smoke becomes visible on the horizon. As the characters draw nearer, they see it proceeds from the smouldering ruins of a barn. A number of worried peasants scrape through the cinders, whilst an elderly woman sits nearby, wailing and throwing her hands up to heaven. Have the characters make a Spot check (DC 14). If successful, they notice Carlos Garcia cross himself, and mutter something under his breath, his face paling visibly.

Should the characters ask him what the problem is, he is reticent at first, but persistence will eventually wear him down. 'That barn, it belonged to Don Álvaro de la Joya... someone will lose their soul for this...' At this, Carlos crosses himself again and kisses his crucifix. He refuses to mention the name of Álvaro de la Joya again, save to explain he is the owner of everything the characters can see, and that pronouncing his very name brings bad luck.

## 2. The Gypsies

As evening draws in and the characters begin to search for a tavern in which to sleep, a sudden gunshot rings out, followed by a shrill scream. A Listen check (DC 16) reveals the sounds to be coming from a nearby olive grove, and in the dusky light the characters can just discern figures moving amidst the trees. Another scream rings out, this time unmistakably hailing from a woman.

Investigation reveals a sordid scene. An elderly peasant lies on the floor, bleeding profusely from a blow to the head, whilst a young woman dances in the centre of the olive grove, her clothing torn and tears streaming down her face. Four swarthy men armed with pistols watch with cruel smiles, occasionally encouraging the woman in her efforts by firing their pistols at her feet.

Carlos blanches visibly and whispers 'they are Don Álvaro's men.... don't

do anything stupid or it will be the worse for all of us...' Should the characters do the honourable thing and march to the woman's rescue, a confused scene ensues. Don Álvaro's thugs (surlly gypsies and rural scum for the most part) are accustomed only to terrified acquiescence and will be utterly phased at first by the presence of a number of babbling, forthright foreigners. However, they are also extremely dangerous and will think nothing of pointing their pistols at the characters and showering them with abuse. They can be browbeaten and forced to retreat, but will answer violence with violence, seeking to shoot their way out.

### Four Gypsies

Medium human; HP 18; Mas 13; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defence 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, knife) or ranged +2 (2d6, pistol); FS 5ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 9

**Skills:** Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +3

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Base Attack Bonus, Point Blank Shot, Stealthy, Toughness

**Possessions:** Pistol, Knife

### The Village of Matagorda

The village consists of around 150 white buildings, built across a steep hillside. The townsfolk have a miserable, broken look to them and regard the characters with extreme suspicion. The only person of any education in the town is the local priest, Nicolás Suarez de Urbina. Talking to him reveals that a week ago a group of pale-skinned foreigners and gypsies were seen making camp in a nearby valley. If the characters think to ask, Suarez de Urbina will confirm that the gypsies were of those that work for Álvaro de la Joya.

The presence of the foreigners there caused some consternation amidst the townsfolk, but Suarez de Urbina initially thought them to be archaeologists, and invited them to dine with him. His invite was turned down in a very abrupt manner, so he decided to have them watched, detailing a number of local men to undertake the task.

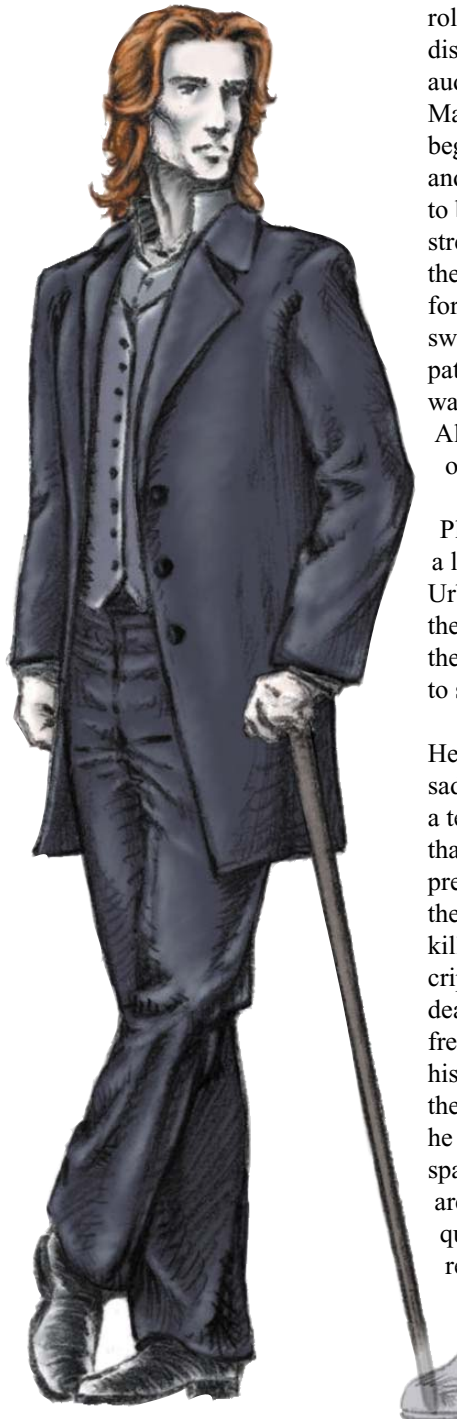
Two days later a terrible storm began at nightfall. The sky thundered with a fury unknown in living memory and huge sheets of lightning lit the mountains. Around midnight, a particularly violent flash of lightning revealed huge furrows being ploughed across the valley, at the end of which hordes of 'giant serpents' broke through the ground and were clearly visible for a number of moments, writhing hideously in the air before a group of cowed figures that chanted in an obscene, guttural language. The watchers then fled back to town.

Suarez de Urbina explains that, whilst he did not see any of the events with his own eyes, the witnesses are all men of impeccable character.

### The Crater

The area affected by the earthquake is a desolate stretch of wasteland and rock strewn valleys about 2 miles from Matagorda. Players wishing to view it can be guided there by townsfolk, although they will refuse to actually accompany Players too close. Upon arrival, Players find the entire floor of the valley covered in rock, earth and debris; it is as if an enormous plough had been drawn through the valley floor, churning the solid rock into oblivion. When seen from above, Players can make a DC 12 Navigate check to notice that, despite the apparent chaos, there do seem to be regular patterns formed in the earth. Who or what actually caused the destruction is unknown, as is the reason for it. At the far end of the valley the furrows end in an enormous, foul-smelling crater, about fifteen metres across.

At the bottom of this residues of a gelatinous substance can still be found on the rocks. In addition, as Players draw closer, they will notice evidence of walls and doorways - clearly some ancient edifice lies here, buried beneath the ground. A DC 16 Knowledge (history) check identifies the building style as belonging to the early middle ages, and probably marks the dungeons of a castle. Have Players make a DC 12 Spot check. If successful, they notice something worrying amidst the



destruction: a large, rectangular hole lies off to one side, measuring about 3 metres by 5. Players will notice that the earth walls of the hole are covered in stinking slime and mould; huge bloated maggots writhe in the floor. It is clear something lay buried here and has now been dug up and removed. Hopefully, Players will put two and two together and realise that The Black Ark has been found.

As Players begin to finish up at the site, they notice dark clouds rolling in from the North, and the distant rumble of thunder becomes audible. By the time they get back to Matagorda, a torrential downpour has begun, soaking everyone to the skin and causing the steep mountainsides to be covered in thousands of tiny streams. As the weather worsens, these streams begin to join and form torrents of surging water that sweep away everything in their path. Nicolás Suarez de Urbina warns Players that trying to return to Almería now would be madness and offers to put them up for the night.

Players can use this interlude to gain a little more information. Suarez de Urbina is a mine of information about the local area and, once away from the ears of the townspeople, is happy to share his opinions with Players.

He knows Álvaro de la Joya to be a sadist and a pervert. Whilst still only a teenager, there was a sexual scandal that even his powerful father was hard pressed to hush up. Nobody knows the real details, but a young child was killed and his elder sister left a mute cripple afterwards. Since his father's death, however, de la Joya has given free reign to his cruelty, allowing his brutal gypsy servants to terrorise the countryside. It was shortly after he assumed the title of Count that a spate of disappearances began in the area. Once Players have finished questioning him, he will politely retire to his bed.

The next day begins with a gruesome discovery. The floodwaters have washed

many things down from out of the mountains and among them is the bloated corpse of a European man (a member of the Killray Foundation caught by Álvaro de la Joya's men.) Players become alerted to its discovery as a terrible series of wails begin to echo through the village, and people begin running toward the scene of the discovery.

The corpse is wedged in amongst a large amount of wood, bracken, rock and other detritus, and requires a fair amount of time to drag out. As it slops onto the floor, Players realise to their horror that the upper part of the torso has had the skin flayed from it. A number of women faint as this discovery is made. Suarez de Urbina makes his home available to the Players should they wish to conduct an autopsy, which reveals the following details:

1. The cause of death was strangulation, although the skin appears to have been flayed off before he was killed. As this discovery is made, have Players make a DC 12 Fear save.
2. Bruises around the wrists and ankles seem to indicate that the man was manacled at some point not so long ago.
3. His ragged clothing is clearly of English design, and was of high quality. In one of the mud-filled pockets, Players find a strip of oilskin cloth bearing a coat of arms. Any of the villagers can tell Players it belongs to Don Álvaro de la Joya. Wrapped inside the oilskin, there is a piece of paper, with a message in English written upon it: 'The Plague Queen's downfall lies in the cellars of Castle de la Joya.'

Players thinking to ask in which direction the castle of Don Álvaro de la Joya lies will be told simply 'upstream.' The castle lies some 12 hours away from the village of Matagorda.

## The Castle of Don

### Álvaro de la Joya

This rambling 16th century edifice is situated in a secluded valley; some hours walk from the nearest village. Surprisingly, the majority of the building appears to be totally neglected - the walls are covered in thick ivy, many of the windows lack glass and much of the roof has fallen in (this is because the Count has long since taken to living in the cellars beneath the castle.) Nevertheless, the place appears to be inhabited: a wagon is drawn up outside the front gates and Players will sometimes think they have spotted a shadowy figure stealing through the ruins. There is no sign of the Killray Foundation, however.

Unbeknownst to the Players, the count has learned of their presence in Almería and seeks to strike a deal with them. With this in mind, he has instructed his gypsy servants to allow them free entry into the castle, although the Players are not to know this. As they approach the castle, they receive the distinct impression that someone is watching them.

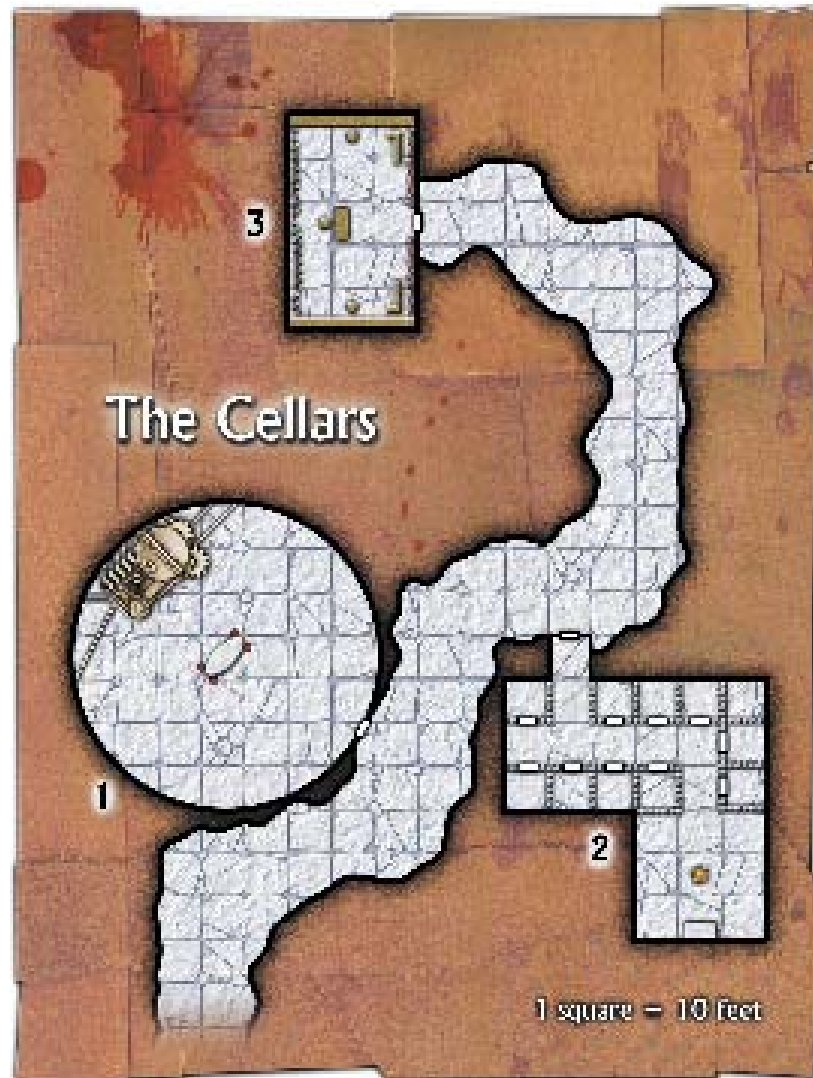
Players will probably want to observe the castle before going in. In this case they notice that most of the little activity they see is centred around a crumbling tower, set some distance from the main building (and which gives access to the cellars below.) Players seeking to enter the castle proper will find it little more than a shell, although malicious Games Masters can punish their curiosity by having a lump of roof fall on them or a wild animal leap on them in the dark.

### The Cellars

The crumbling tower holds little of interest apart from a set of spiral steps leading down into the ground. A smell of damp and mould emerges from the aperture. The cellars below the castle are something akin to a sadistic pervert's most lurid

fantasies brought to life. Álvaro de la Joya has spent long years here, feverishly studying his occult tomes or conducting hideous experiments with his 'guests.' Now, however, he desperately seeks a cure for the disease that is destroying him.

The atmosphere in the cellars is about as close as one can get to Hell without actually dying - the pain and misery that has been caused here over the years seems to have permeated the very stones themselves, whilst the air is close and thick with the tang of blood and putrefaction. For reasons of space, the encounters here have been kept to a minimum, but Games Masters should feel free to expand this area as they see fit - given the twisted nature of de la Joya, almost anything is likely to be found here!



### 1. Operating Theatre

Read the following out loud:

*You step into a wide, circular chamber. In the centre of the room stands a bloodstained stone table, complete with clamps for arms, legs and head. Narrow channels radiate outwards from the table, ending in holes containing buckets. The domed ceiling above is covered with a crazy jumble of pipes, wires and steam gauges, all connected to a large bank of machinery that dominates the far wall. A low hissing comes from the machine.*

This chamber is where de la Joya conducts his experiments and contains one of his most hellish creations, a creature part daemon,

*Sawbones***Medium Undead****Hit Dice:** 5d12 (46 hp)**Massive Damage:** -**Initiative:** -1 (-1 Dex)**Speed:** 30 ft.**Defence:****Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +3**Attack:** Pincer +8 (1d6+4), Knife +8 (1d6+4)**Full Attack:****Space/Reach:** 5 ft. x 5 ft. / 5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Damage Reduction 15**Weaknesses:** None**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 9, Con -, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10

The creature, being composed of dead flesh and iron, is very difficult to harm and immensely strong. However, Games Masters should allow Players a DC 14 Intelligence check to notice that each time the creature moves, enormous jets of steam blast forth from the banks of machinery. Damaging this machinery is by far the easiest way of dealing with the creature, although approaching it is a dangerous business. Each round, roll 1d6 - on a 4,5 or 6 a jet of scalding steam blasts out, doing 1d6+4 damage to anyone within 5 feet (DC 18 Reflex save halves damage.) The machinery itself is far too large to be destroyed, although Players can attempt a DC 18 Spot check to notice a large lever that seems to be a release valve.

Opening this will stop the creature dead in 1d3+2 rounds.

part machine that he uses to aid him. As Players enter, have them make a DC 20 Listen check to notice a faint chitterling coming from somewhere in the room. They will be unable to pinpoint it exactly, due to the noise made by the machine. The creature will wait its chance, deciding which member of the party seems the strongest, then swoop down on them. Read the following out loud.

*A sudden whirring noise fills the room and the bank of machinery emits a blast of steam. Spinning around, your eyes are attracted by movement in the mass of pipes somewhere above you - and then the creature appears, swooping down toward you, a huge metal pincer snapping the air before it.*

The creature consists of a human torso, arms and head, the desiccated remains of its intestines still dangling below it. The eyes, however, are aflame with daemoniac cruelty and

numerous pipes, wires and levers are embedded into its dead flesh. One arm ends in a pincer, whilst the other holds a number of crude surgical implements. Have the Players make a DC 15 Fear save. The creature is attached to the ceiling by a long metal bracket and can move anywhere it wants within the room. It will attempt to grab the strongest of the Players with its pincer, and then deposit him onto the table in the next round. The Player can attempt a Reflex save to avoid the grab attack, with the DC being the creature's total attack roll, (i.e. 1d20+8) The clamps on the table will automatically slip themselves around the Player's limbs, holding him firmly in place. On the next round, the creature will begin work, hacking and sawing at his vitals for 1d8+1 points of automatic damage per round, until dead. The creature will then look for a new victim.

*2. The Dungeons*

As Players approach this doorway, they become aware of a soft snivelling, accompanied by the sound of muffled groans of pain. Following these sounds leads Players to perhaps the grimmest chamber of all, that which houses de la Joya's failed experiments and the, as yet, unspoiled material for further 'investigations.'

The door opens into a long corridor, with iron barred cells along either wall. Each of these cells contains abominations beyond the Players' darkest dreams - scarred and mutilated shapes shuffle around the filthy cells, drooling idiotically as the rusted metal implants protruding from their bodies whirl and click, dripping pus and blood onto the floor. Further down the corridor, a cell holds a number of children, their legs having been substituted for those of various animals. The useless limbs have become rotten, and the children stare in blank incomprehension at the swarms of black flies that feed on the putrefying flesh. All of these poor souls are beyond help, and will not respond in any way to the Players, apart from cringing and whimpering like wounded animals. Have Players make a DC 12 Madness save.

A dull red light flickers at the end of the corridor, and the groans of pain become louder as Players near it. The corridor ends in a wide room. A brazier burns in the centre of it and various sharp implements have been placed in the flames to heat. Next to the centre of the room two men are torturing a young woman. One of the figures is small and rat-like. He jumps on the spot and claps his hands excitedly as his companion, a huge, fat man with a ragged lobotomy scar around his head, attempts to pull the struggling woman's tongue out with a pair of pincers. Clearly Players should not allow this despicable pair to survive.

### *Two Torturers*

Medium human; HP 18; Mas 13; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defence 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, knife); FS 5ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5ft. SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 9

**Skills:** Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +3

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Base Attack Bonus, Point Blank Shot, Stealthy, Toughness

**Possessions:** Knife

As the Players finish them off, the room suddenly fills with pistol-wielding gypsies. There are far too many to fight (five for each Player). Once Players have got over the initial shock, the gypsies motion for the Players to follow. Players will then be taken to Álvaro de la Joya's study.

### *3. Count Álvaro de la Joya's Study*

This room is de la Joya's study and is decorated according to his personal tastes, i.e. opulent drapes and gold fittings fight for space with piles of human bones and jars filled with pickled viscera. Although the bookshelves are piled high with rare occult tomes, the Players will probably be more interested in the strange figure that stands before them, swathed in a red cloak, his face hidden behind a white mask. After waving his servants out with a bandaged hand, he welcomes Players in a hoarse whisper that often trails off into a horrible gurgling rasp. 'So, you have received my message?', he begins, chuckling nastily. In true super-villain style, he allows Players to look around bemusedly for a while, before explaining his ploy to them. De la Joya is arrogant, cruel and utterly contemptuous of the Players when they speak to him, although he will happily answer their questions.

When asked why he has brought the Players to the castle he stands abruptly and casts off his robe and mask.

Have all Players make a DC 18 Fear check as they gaze upon the monstrosity de la Joya has become: his skin is a mass of putrescent boils, and in many places it has broken apart to reveal the internal organs beneath. Maggots writhe in the wounds that constantly drip a grey liquid onto the floor. De la Joya's face is almost unrecognisable as human. He chuckles as he sees the discomfort his condition causes the Players. As he begins to explain what has happened to him, his voice rises in anger and a greenish foam forms around his scabrous lips.

'The Foundation left here two days ago... but Rathnu has betrayed me... he claimed we would share the power of the Ark together, but he lied.... and struck me down with this disease... but there is a cure...and YOU must get it for me!'

If asked why the Players should do this, de la Joya smiles and tells them that, not only does he know where Dhurlaj Rathnu plans to conduct the opening ritual of the Ark, he also knows how to stop him. He will share this information with Players... if they find him the cure.

Álvaro de la Joya explains that the cure is located in a place called the 'Libarium Malditum'. At this point, have Players make DC 20 Knowledge (occult) checks. If successful, they remember vague rumours of the Libarium Malditum; it is reputed to be a vast repository of occult lore, built by an Egyptian mage long before the birth of Christ. However, most serious academics have long since held the Libarium Malditum to be little more than a colourful legend.

De la Joya explains that it is located some three days away, by a series of lakes high up in the mountains, known as 'The Devil's Eyes.' De

la Joya gives Players a map of how to get there, as well as a piece of parchment bearing a strange series of geometric shapes, linked together by twisting lines. Many of the shapes are labelled with descriptions like 'Chamber of the Red Terror' and 'Pit of Everlasting Suffering.' Have Players make a DC 16 Spot check (provided they speak Latin!) to notice that one of the rooms is described as 'Room of the Plague Queen.' This, de la Joya explains, is reputed to be a map of the Library, drawn by an unknown explorer sometime just before the Roman Invasion of Spain.

Álvaro de la Joya ends by urging Players to hurry if 'you wish to save your precious world from the ravages of the Black Wind...rest assured, it matters little to me...I am doomed anyway, so hurry and find me the cure, or the world ends within the week!'

## Chapter Two Secrets from the Past

### *The Devil's Eyes*

This series of high mountain lakes are situated some two days East of Almería. They are located in a remote valley, forgotten to all but the most adventurous of goatherds and, even with a map, they will prove difficult to locate. It takes about a day to arrive at the foothills of the mountain range, and the ascent proves arduous, as Players are forced to follow dangerously unstable paths and valleys choked with boulders and vegetation. Eventually, after hours of gruelling effort, Players force their way up to an area where the gradient is not as extreme. All around them the sun shimmers on endless vistas of rock and snow; the wind is biting cold, threatening to freeze any uncovered extremities (they are currently about 3000 metres above sea level.)

The Players trudge through the snow, watching anxiously as the sun rises to its zenith, then slowly begins to fall. The lakes do not appear to be where they are marked on the map, and frustrating hours are wasted retracing their steps - and all the time the sun drops lower in the sky...

Finally, as Players reach the top of a crest, they draw their breath in surprise – before them lies an enormous valley dominated by two lakes, their waters sparkling in the setting sun. A DC 18 Spot check notices that the larger of the two lakes has a small island in its centre, with what appears to be a ruined tower upon it. The sides of the valley are steep but not totally unmanageable, and with a little care Players can make their way down to the lakes in an hour or so.

The still waters of the lakes stretch out before them. Have Players make a DC 18 Spot check to notice an ancient coracle drawn up on the shore near to them. Players examining it are unsure of the substance used in its construction, but it appears to be seaworthy. The vessel holds a maximum of four people.

### *The Librarium Malditum*

Once across, Players find the ruined tower to contain a set of spiral stairs leading down. As they descend, the air becomes rank and musty, the stones slippery with moss and condensation. The stairwell seems to go on forever, spiralling down ever further into the bowels of the earth. After some 5 minutes, the walls become covered in a reddish, sponge-like moss – Players have the uneasy feeling that they are crawling through the belly of some enormous beast.

Eventually, after nearly 15 minutes of descent, the stairwell opens out into a 5 x 5 metre chamber, with two exits in the opposite wall. The walls of the chamber seem carved from some glistening blue stone and are covered in minute symbols, etched into the

rock. Anyone succeeding in a DC 20 Intelligence check recognises the symbols as some form of debased Greek. However, it is impossible to translate, apart from a few dire prophecies about the end of the world and a nonsensical mathematical formula.

Players will quickly realise The Librarium Malditum is in fact a sprawling underground labyrinth, and the blasphemous secrets it contains, rather than being committed to paper, are carved into the very walls. The dank tunnels echo with half-heard whispers, and huge mirrors form portals giving shadowy glimpses of other times and places in space. In certain parts the tunnels seem almost to be carved out of organic material. The labyrinth is clearly not of human construction and the atmosphere is utterly alien – have each player make a DC 10 Madness save.

Players are now faced with the task of finding the room pertaining to Vesh-na-Rapathnu. Impress upon them the immense size of the labyrinth – even as they discuss in hushed tones what to do, their voices are caught up and begin echoing through the endless corridors. Players can use the map given to them by de la Joya to try and guide themselves to the Chamber containing the secrets of Vesh-na-Rapathnu. However, the supernatural labyrinth is not the easiest of places to negotiate, and finding the correct room requires two successful DC 20 Navigate checks. With the second roll, Players will find the Chamber of the Plague Queen (see below.) On any other result (i.e. the first successful roll and any failures) the Players will have strayed into another of the library's chambers. Games Masters should feel free to create their own weird and wonderful encounters for the Librarium Malditum, but a few suggestions are made below.

1. Whilst walking through a chamber, the walls and ceiling suddenly fade, becoming

transparent and allowing Players a view of inky blackness studded with twinkling stars. The effect leaves Players feeling slightly nauseous, as the stars begin to slowly spin, increasing in speed with the passing of each second. Have each Player make a DC 16 Will save to look away (if they wish to) as a dark blot appears in the centre of the vista, rapidly growing in size to the accompaniment of the beating of huge wings. Suddenly the ceiling bulges, as if some huge weight were upon it and a deafening roar echoes through the chamber. Each Player must make a DC 14 Fear save. The ceiling trembles and chunks of rock begin to fall as immensely heavy footsteps begin to pound the roof. Players wishing to flee the chamber should make 1d3+1 DC 14 Reflex saves, receiving 1d6 damage for each fail. On leaving the room, the roaring stops as suddenly as it started, although Players will still be able to hear the sound of a faint sniffing, like a dog seeking its prey.

2. A sudden, freezing wind rips through the chamber, blowing out lanterns and knocking anyone failing a DC 14 Strength check to the ground for 1d3 damage. Choose one of the Players. As the rest of the group struggle to their feet, the Player in question suddenly hears the voice of a loved one (be it relative, lover or best friend) call out in agony, begging them for help. The Player must make a DC 22 Will save to avoid being rooted to the spot. Lines of blue light begin to shine through the walls, accompanied by the jangle of chains and the sound of rats chattering. Suddenly, lengths of chain tipped with wicked hooks shoot from the walls, embedding themselves in the Players' flesh. Each Player should make 1d3+1 DC 16 Reflex saves to avoid the



chains, which do 1d3+1 damage each. However, if any Player should be struck by two or more, he is held fast and needs to make a DC 18 Strength check to tear himself free. Up to three people can help, adding their respective strength bonuses to the roll. As the Players struggle with these, a hideous jackal-faced daemon drops into the room, its tongue flickering out to taste the blood-tinged air with relish. It sets about the Players with a set of glistening skinning knives.

### *Fleshripper*

**Medium Monstrous Humanoid**

**Hit Dice:** 6d8+24 (54 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 18

**Initiative:** +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**Defence:** 18 (+3 Dex, +5 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 15

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +6/+9

**Attack:** Skinning Knives +10 melee (1d8+3)

**Full Attack:** Two Skinning Knives +11 melee (1d8+3), Bite +5 melee (1d4+4)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft. X 5 ft./ 5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Damage Reduction 5, Rage, Low-light vision

**Weaknesses:** Aversion: Holy (10), Vulnerability: Holy (10)

**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12

**Skills:** Hide +4, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +4, Search 4, Spot +7

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (knife), Track

Eventually, Players will discover the chamber containing information pertinent to Vesh-na-Rapathnu. The atmosphere inside is warm and sticky, and a cloying smell of decay fills the air. Here the information is written in Sanskrit, and talks at length of the evil of the Goddess of the Plague Wind. This is of a uniformly depressing nature, explaining at great lengths the misfortunes that will be unleashed upon the world should

the Black Ark be opened. After reading what seems an endless list of this, Players will locate a spell for reversing the effects of the Plague Queen's curse. However, the spell is long and complex, and cannot be memorised; Players will have to copy the words down.

As Players begin to do this, have them make a DC 14 Listen check to notice a faint hiss come from somewhere outside the chamber. As they frantically copy down the ritual, stinking mist begins to fill the room. This is caused by a Spectral Servitor, one of the many guardians that haunt the passages of the Librarium Malditum. Players must succeed in three DC 14 Intelligence checks to accurately copy down the ritual, with each attempt taking 2 full rounds. The Servitor shambles into the room after 5 rounds, a hideous ghostly creature, which seems to fade in and out of existence all of the time, with only its baleful red eyes ever being clearly seen.

### *Spectral Servitor*

**Large Outsider**

**Hit Dice:** 10d8 (44 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 12

**Initiative:** +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Defence:** 21 (+5 Dex, +6 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +10/+15

**Attack:** Claw +11 (1d8+1+poison)

**Full Attack:** 2 claws +11/+6 (1d8+1+poison)

**Space/Reach:** 5ft.x 5ft/10ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison claws (DC 18 Fort or lose 1d3 points of Con)

**Special Qualities:** Damage Reduction 10

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 6, Will 10, Cha 10

**Skills:** Climb +11, Jump +11, Listen +11, Spot +11

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative

With this, Players can head back to the castle of Álvaro de la Joya.

Once there, they find his condition vastly deteriorated. He now leaves a thick trail of filth behind him when he moves, and as he speaks his flesh cracks and bubbles. However, Players notice the feverish excitement in his eyes. He will demand the cure, explaining he has not the strength to explain how to stop the ritual otherwise. He is not lying on this point, so Players will be forced to stump up if they wish to get anything out of him.

He begins to intone the counterspell immediately. As he pronounces the words, he is enveloped in a shimmering red light. The mantra-like chant continues for nearly five minutes, at the end of which de la Joya suddenly laughs, his voice already sounding stronger, the wounds on his flesh beginning to heal.

He now explains how to foil the ritual: Dhurlaj Rathnu plans to release the Plague Queen in the very centre of London, in a warehouse he has prepared specially for the purpose (which Players will remember from Episode I. If not, de la Joya gives them the exact details.) The crucial moment is when the Black Ark opens – at this point, Vesh-na-Rapathnu needs to consume vast quantities of souls in a very short period of time. If the Players can somehow trap the Goddess, then she will fade away within a matter of minutes. With this in mind, de la Joya gives Players a golden ball, rather like a censer. This contains a magic dust that can hold the Plague Queen's force long enough for the spell to fail. Players should open the censer close to the Ark and run. Any attempts at attacking de la Joya should be discouraged by the presence of dozens of gypsies...the evil count can always return in later adventures.

With this, Players are free to leave, although as they head back toward the surface the sound of Álvaro de la Joya's laughter comes echoing up to them...

## Chapter Three

### The Plague Queen Awakens

The Killray Foundation is already on its way back to England, although they have gone by boat. The quickest way back to England for Players is by train, a journey that will take the best part of two days but gain them vital time. As Players await in Calais a boat to take them across the Channel, a DC 12 Spot check notices a disturbing headline in *The Times*: ‘East-End Typhus Outbreak Baffles Physicians.’ Something is already amiss in London!

By the time Players get to Waterloo station, they will realise the gravity of the situation. Hundreds of people

jostle one another around the ticker booths, seeking tickets to anywhere as long as it is outside of London. Ashen-faced bobbies struggle to control the mob. Outside the station, Players will notice that London is shrouded in a thick, yellow fog, a pea souper the likes of which none of the Players will ever have witnessed before.

Players can pick up the following information, should they choose to speak to anyone:

1. A strange disease has struck the East End. The authorities claim it is Typhus, although there are many Londoners who believe it to be a far more dangerous tropical disease.

2. Members of the Army have been called in to quarantine the area, in an effort to stop the disease’s spread.

As Players prepare to leave the station, a sudden commotion erupts nearby. The crowd prevents Players from seeing exactly what is happening, but a policeman’s whistle can be heard blowing, accompanied by shrill screams of alarm. Seconds later, a ragged urchin appears in front of the Players, his mouth and chin smeared with fresh-blood, his eyes covered in a strange yellow mucus. Without further ado, he launches himself at one of the Players, seeking to tear their throats out with his bare teeth.

### *Plague Victim*

**Medium Humanoid**

**Hit Dice:** 2d12+3 (16 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 10

**Initiative:** -1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Defence:** 11 (-1 Dex, +2 Natural)

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +1/+2

**Attack:** +2 Slam (1d6+1)

**Full Attack:** +2 Slam (1d6+1)

**Space/Reach:** 5ft. x 5ft./5ft.

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 13, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

**Skills:** Listen +6, Move Silently +4

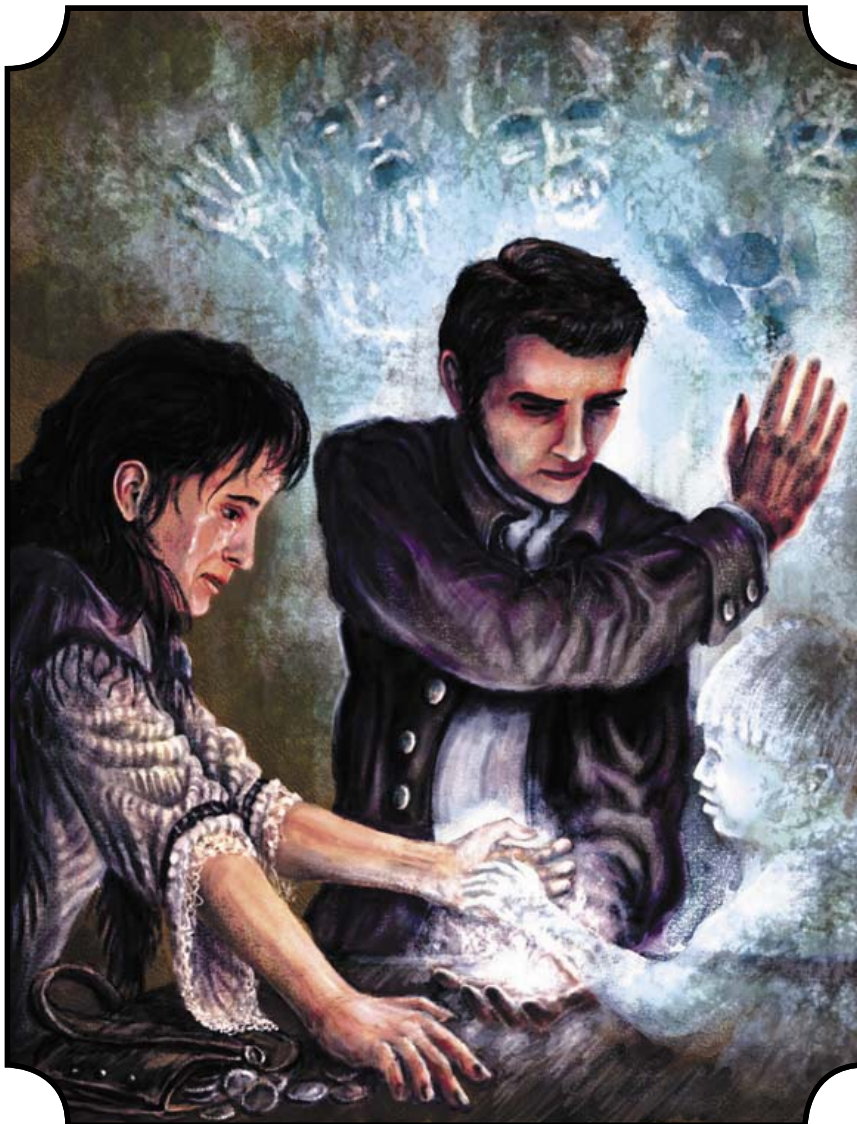
**Feats:** Toughness

Clearly, Players should hasten their way to the dockside warehouse where the ritual is taking place.

### *The Coming of the*

#### *Black Wind*

Outside, the London streets have been transformed by the fog; shadows can be seen flitting by occasionally, but for the most part all is shrouded in an eerie quiet. Players can see little more than 4 metres in front of them at any one time, and they also notice the fog carries with it a sickly-sweet aroma of decay, like an open wound.



The following events can be used as Players make their way through the fog-wreathed streets of London. However, Games Masters should avoid weakening Players overly before the final showdown with Dhurlaj Rathnu.

1. A DC 14 Listen check reveals the soft pad of footsteps hurrying through the fog somewhere close to the Players. Seconds later a scream rings out accompanied by a ghoulish slobbering sound. Should Players investigate, they find a group of infected citizens feasting on the flesh of a still-living woman. There is one plague victim for each Player (use the profile given above.)
2. As Players pass an abandoned fruit stand, the wind picks up, increasing in severity until the Players begin to feel their skin sting and prickle. The wind stops abruptly, but Players succeeding in a DC 18 Spot check notice that the fruit is now blackened and covered in mould. As they watch, the fruit begins to swell and huge black flies begin to wriggle from the skin, quickly forming an enormous cloud around the stand. Seconds later, the swarm attacks Players, forcing their way into nostrils and mouths and emitting a nauseating stench. Each Player should make 1d3 DC 16 Reflex saves. Each failed save incurs a DC 16 Fortitude save to avoid losing either 1d3 points of STR, DEX or CON (random chance of each) for 1d4+4 hours.
3. Have Players make a DC 14 Listen check to hear the sound of rapidly approaching hoof beats, accompanied by shrill peals of manic laughter. Suddenly a Hansom Cab comes thundering out of the mist, its driver lashing furiously at a number of diseased men that cling to the side of the vehicle. Each Player should make a DC 16 Reflex save (with a +4 circumstance modifier if

the previous Listen check was successful) to avoid being struck by the vehicle for 1d8+4 points of damage. The hansom then disappears into the night.

As Players near the East End, the situation becomes noticeably worse. Here, the stench of the fog is stomach churning and many of the streets are filled with torn corpses. Buildings burn, but no attempt is made to extinguish the flames. The Docklands area is clearly the epicentre of the chaos. Black flies swarm in the air, feeding from the masses of rotten foodstuffs that lie scattered on all sides. A strange, throbbing chant can be dimly heard in the distance.

### *The Ritual*

Locating the warehouse is fairly easy. As Players struggle through the fog, they suddenly come upon a huge building surrounded by flaming brands. An evil stench emerges from the broken windows, whilst the sounds of screaming and chanting can be heard from within. Players notice that the wooden walls of the building are warped and appear to be rotting before their very eyes. Gaining access to the building is easy, as only a madman would voluntarily enter.

Inside, a truly Dantesque vision greets the Players eyes. Dozens of semi-naked figures writhe on the floor, their bodies covered in a thick mixture of blood and rotting filth, their eyes glazed with unholy fervour. Bloodied corpses are everywhere: in corners, hanging from the ceiling, nailed to the walls. In the centre of the mayhem, atop a raised dais, stands a large (5x2x2 metres) brass box...The Black Ark itself!

The Ark seems to throb with an almost palpable menace and rivulets of black liquid run down its sides and form steaming pools on the floor. The Ark is covered in a myriad of intricate symbols, each one painstakingly hammered into the metal. Players notice that a number of festering corpses lie dotted

around the box, covered in swarms of flies (the remains of sacrifices.) Despite the primeval ritual taking place, a strange atmosphere of gloom pervades the entire warehouse, an atmosphere so thick as to appear almost tangible. The shadows seem to be constantly moving just out of the corner of the eye, and indistinct forms flit constantly across the ceiling.

Standing beside the Ark, Players will notice a tall man, dressed in shimmering robes and wearing some form of wooden mask depicting a ravening demon...Dhurlaj Rathnu!! Players will be free to take any actions they wish, as the majority of the cultists are too far-gone in their frenzy to notice. However, any attacks made on Dhurlaj Rathnu will bring an immediate response, in the form of 5 half-breeds with knives.

As the chanting reaches a crescendo, a foetid stream of smoke begins to pour from the Black Ark, accompanied by the sound of a million flies buzzing in unison. The smoke swirls and eddies in the torchlight, coiling sinuously around the pillars of the chamber and leaving a glistening residue behind it. Slowly, the smoke begins to coalesce into a huge figure, its long insect arms snapping viciously at the air, its repulsive head covered in tatters of rotten flesh and swathed in a halo of flies. At this point, have Players make a DC 20 Fear save. Vesh-na-Rapathu opens her toothless mouth and emits a low groan; to the Players ears it seems composed of every wail of pain and despair uttered since the very dawn of time.

### *The Ritual Halted*

Players should now step into action, using the censer given to them by Álvaro de la Joya. Throwing the thing close to the Ark is easily accomplished. Having done so, Players turn to run...except they cannot. As soon as the censer hits the ground, a fizzing mass of white dust fills the air, sweeping through

the entire warehouse in seconds, pouring through the windows and doorways of the warehouse to form a solid dome-like barrier all around the building (at a distance of 5 metres. Players beyond this distance will be trapped on the other side, unable to get in.) The reason for Álvaro de la Joya's cruel laughter now becomes apparent – the Players are trapped within the warehouse, with a mass of extremely angry cultists and the Plague Queen herself!

As Players hammer at the spongy, white wall that has trapped them, all hell breaks loose within the warehouse. The huge shape of Vesh-na-Rapathnu stretches a leprous hand out and pushes at the barrier. It holds, and the creature emits a howl of impotent rage that is like the very fabric of existence being torn asunder. Have all Players make a DC 16 Madness save.

The Plague Queen's essence now begins to dissipate, but she is determined to go down in style!!! The hideous creature begins to lash out around her, crushing bodies and spraying clouds of diseased air over the terrified cultists. Dhurlaj Rathnu and Constance Killray are among the first to go, being scooped up and shovelled into the creature's maw. The Players must now try to survive until the Plague Queen's life-force fades entirely.

Each round, have Players roll a single d10 for the entire group. On

each subsequent round, +1 should be added to the total. On a score of 8 or more, Vesh-na-Rapathnu turns on them (see below.) On a score of 16 or more, the Plague Queen fades out of existence, leaving behind her a foul stench and a warehouse full of slaughter!



2. The Plague Queen opens her toothless maw and vomits forth a cloud of diseased air. Have Players make a DC 14 Reflex save to avoid the cloud. If failed, a DC 22 Fortitude save is necessary to avoid losing 1d8+2 points of Constitution.

3. A pool of acidic filth spills from one of the Plague Queen's wounds, covering all nearby and doing 1d6+6 points of damage. DC 16 Reflex save avoids it.

4. The Plague Queen roars and an insufferable atmosphere of gloom and desperation fills the area. Each Player should make a DC 16 Madness save.

Eventually, the Plague Queen, cheated of the sacrifices she needs, fades away into oblivion. Simultaneously, the white barrier also fades and Players can limp away to safety, being joined in their escape by any surviving cultists. The adventure ends here.

## *The Wrath of the Plague*

### *Queen*

Should Vesh-na-Rapathnu turn on Players, Games Masters should roll 1d4 to determine what action she takes.

1. A leprous claw sweeps down toward the Players, seeking to crush them into oblivion. Have each Player roll a DC 14 Reflex save to avoid receiving 1d10+8 points of damage.

This adventure can easily be continued – it is likely Players will want to avenge themselves on the treacherous Count Álvaro de la Joya. Who knows what horrors will await them now that the Count is fit again? And what of the Black Ark itself? After so many millennia holding the foulness of Vesh-na-Rapathnu, perhaps other creatures lurk within, just waiting for a chance to emerge?

