# MOONGLOW

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This work is dedicated to my wife, Helen, who has helped me launch quite a few investigations over the years.

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"...there is terror in the sky, for upon the moon hath sunk an eclipse foretold in no books of men or of earth's gods..." - H. P. Lovecraft, "The Other Gods"

### Introduction

Since time immemorial, mankind has cast its curious gaze towards our beckoning moon and wondered, "What lies there?" In the latter half of the 21st century, humanity begins the colonization of space by establishing a permanent manned outpost on the rim of Shackleton Crater, at the lunar South Pole. Cloaked in perpetual darkness, the crater floor preserves a useful bounty of water ice and rare minerals, along with even more precious helium-3 to fuel nuclear fusion reactors mixed in the dusty regolith, which is badly needed to supply civilization's rapidly expanding energy needs. The first, brave explorers who dare to face the harsh, formidable conditions and risk their lives mining these valuable resources hope that they will be richly rewarded.

But they soon discover...we are not alone in the universe.

This scenario concerns the fate of one such crew, an alien menace and the international team of investigators sent from Earth to find out why the moonbase has suddenly gone silent.

### Background

Keepers should familiarize themselves with the following information, in order to explain general facts about the base and its normal functions as would be common knowledge to the characters.

Moonbase Shackleton is operated by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities (ROSCOSMOS) and the European Space Agency (ESA), in addition to private companies such as H-3 Corp. A second base near Peary Crater, at the moon's North Pole, is jointly controlled by the China National Space Administration (CNSA), the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). Both outposts are obliged by multilateral treaty to provide aid and assistance to the other in times of need. However, being over 3,000 miles apart on opposite ends of the moon, in reality there is very little that either can do in an emergency.

#### The Moonbase

The moonbase habitat consists of a large, central Command Dome, constructed mainly from "lunarcrete" over an inflatable core, and a trio of smaller ones connected via short access tunnels like spokes on a wheel (see **Map 2**). These are the Engineering, Laboratory and Greenhouse Domes. The domes are protected from rocket exhaust by a man-made regolith berm on three sides. All metal hatches on the domes have acrylic viewing ports and swing inward to the interior. They cannot be easily forced open in hard vacuum while the dome is pressurized inside.

The Command Dome houses the primary airlock, decontamination area, command operations center (COC) and living quarters. The Engineering Dome has a machine shop with a 3D printer, a control room for the base's power and life support systems, and an auxiliary airlock. The Laboratory Dome holds the biochemical and geology labs, a medical center with an examination/isolation room, robotically-assisted surgery and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, as well as having additional shielding to act as a radiation shelter during times of extreme solar flare activity. The Greenhouse Dome is dominated by an automated hydroponics garden for growing fresh produce and also contains plumbing and filtration/recycling systems for the outpost's main water supply.

Another detached structure, the unfinished Science Dome, lies partially completed and exposed, awaiting parts for a planned astrometric observatory.

Electricity is generated by an adjacent solar farm consisting of many photovoltaic cell panels arrayed in a grid on the lunar surface, using the mostly constant sunlight to continually recharge a bank of advanced flow batteries. In addition, the base has a pair of portable radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) on standby to provide limited backup power. Although radioactive, they are well shielded and relatively safe to work around.

Free hydrogen and oxygen are split from the water collected by the harvesters with a solar-powered electrolyzer stack and stored in a nearby fuel depot for the returning cargo rockets (see Map 1). An insulated hose attached to the oxygen tank can been rigged to temporarily pipe breathable air into the habitat, by way of the control room in the Engineering Dome, in the event of life support failure. A sign posted in multiple languages warns against accidentally connecting the hose to the hydrogen tank by mistake.

A long-range communications tower overlooking the crater ordinarily sends a carrier wave up to an orbiting satellite, for rapidly relaying messages to and from Earth over an open commlink. However, the

tower's laser transmitter has been removed from the high-gain antenna, disabling the signal. The smaller UHF radio aerial, used for communicating to those within Shackleton Crater, is still operational.

#### The Lunar Harvesters

The twin lunar harvesters are semi-autonomous, robotic rovers resembling combine harvesters for grain. An extendable excavator arm in front, guided by cameras on a top-mounted mast, dredges up the regolith and funnels it into an inner processing plant. There, the rock is pulverized, heated and chemically treated to extract water and helium-3 into refillable canisters. Any metallic ores are then separated into a storage bin before depositing the remaining rubble onto the surface like chaff. Once full, the harvesters return back to the fuel depot to be manually unloaded, recharged and reprogrammed (Computer **Use** skill) by an external console for the next run. They may also be remotely controlled (**Operate** Heavy Machine skill) via radio frequency from the COC. Neither of them is in operation at the moment.

#### The Mooncat Rover

The base's mooncat rover is a six-wheeled, truck-like vehicle with an enclosed cab (15 armor) for two people, a front-mounted dozer blade, and a rear winch cable and hook capable of towing a harvester. It has a maximum driving range of 100 miles/day over normal terrain with a top speed of around 10 miles/hour, or about three times as fast as a person can run on the moon. A solar panel on the roof charges the batteries, while a hatchway in the back allows access into the cramped cabin. Although it has on-board life support, the mooncat is typically driven depressurized with **Operate Heavy Machine** skill and wearing a space suit.

### The Demeter Cargo Rocket

An uncrewed Demeter rocket is sent every few months to resupply the moonbase with food, equipment and any parts that cannot be manufactured in situ. Afterwards, it is refueled from the base depot, the exterior cargo modules loaded with helium-3 bottles and containers of unrefined ore by a mobile gantry, and then launched on a return trajectory for Earth orbit where it will be intercepted by a spaceplane. A single rocket can be reused this way to economically make several round trips. Moonbase Peary currently employs a similar transportation system, though the Chinese are building a mass driver to "fire" their shipments back to Earth.

#### The Altair II Lander

The Altair II traces its design back to the original, Apollo-era Lunar Module. It is a multi-part spacecraft, with a cylindrical ascent stage on top housing the four-person crew compartment, communication and navigational systems, maneuvering thrusters, an airlock and a small rocket motor. The octagonal descent stage contains a larger engine, fuel tanks, landing gear and additional cargo space. The crewed, upper stage utilizes the lower one as a launch pad when returning to lunar orbit. The discarded bottom stage can then be dismantled and its components repurposed for a variety of different uses.

#### The Crew Members

The crew of Moonbase Shackleton is comprised of individuals from all three member space agencies and the multinational mining company H-3 Corp. A complete crew list was given to the investigators during their pre-flight briefing (see **Handout 1**). They are skilled, experienced personnel and well-trained for their duty assignments, but none were prepared to handle the threat of a hostile alien being.

#### **Commander Dmitry Ivanenkov**

"Vybachte, I thought you were The Glow."

The Ukrainian Commander Ivanenkov, a member of ROSCOSMOS, is a brilliant electrical engineer and a competent base administrator. However, the tragic events of the past couple weeks have taken their toll on his sanity. He is presently manning the COC, half-drunk on homemade "moonshine" to quiet the voices in his head.

#### **Major Frank Thompson**

The major was the base's Flight Engineer and resident expert on rocket motors. He worked for NASA and considered himself a genuine "Space Cowboy". Frank has a young daughter named Daisy, who lives in Houston along with her mother. The American is already dead by the time that the characters arrive; his space-suited body now a Reanimated Host for the alien lurking in the shadows of Shackleton Crater.

#### **Doctor Nora Weaver**

Dr. Weaver was the English-born Science Officer for the moonbase, acting as both a trained medic and an ESA botanist. She was married to her job. A consummate and thorough researcher, Nora was the first to notice the alien creature, as well as being its first victim. Her lifeless, desiccated remains currently lie under a sheet on a table in the examination room.

#### Specialist René Martel

Specialist Martel is a French citizen employed by H-3 Corp as the chief geologist in charge of lunar mining operations. The junior member of the crew and a confirmed bachelor, reviewing his personal logs unveils René has at least two girlfriends back home in Paris. Unfortunately, he is destined not to survive his initial encounter with the investigators.

#### SALI

"Hello, I am SALI, the System-Assisted Library Interface. How may I help you?"

The moonbase's last "crew member" is not a person at all, but a high-tech computer program. SALI is programmed to answer queries with a perpetually cheerful, feminine voice, providing assistance and knowledge covering a wide range of subject matters, via speakers, microphones and display screens conveniently located throughout the domes. Among its useful functions, SALI can monitor the status of various key systems, keep track of personnel, dim the lights, etc., with the exact limit of its capabilities determined by the Keeper. However, while the communications link to Earth is broken, SALI's library database is restricted to base operations and general inquiries about the moon, its response to most other topics a sincere sounding "I am sorry, but that information is unavailable at this time." Although designed to interact with humans in a friendly, intuitive manner, it is just a collection of machine algorithms and not artificially intelligent.

#### The Alien

The scenario's main antagonist is a dangerous alien lifeform, simply called "The Glow" by the moonbase crew, but more properly known as a Colour Out of Space. It is an immature specimen and varies slightly from the ones detailed in H.P. Lovecraft's story, "The Colour Out of Space" and the Keeper Rulebook. Perhaps there are different types or "shades" of Colours out there, each with their own unique abilities and weaknesses.

The amorphous entity is best described as a sentient being made of cold plasma, though its very existence violates certain physical laws and it is antithetical to life as we comprehend it. The thing can squeeze into tight spaces and pass straight through glass windows or other translucent materials without damaging them. While it has no permanent, solid

body and little mass, the Colour is able to produce temporary "hard" appendages for grappling purposes. It may also focus its light onto a single point, allowing the alien to slowly melt small holes in inanimate objects.

It has a natural affinity for liquid water and will often seek out sources in which to hide. The Colour's presence somehow taints the fluid, causing bizarre changes and reactions in plants and animals that subsequently drink it.

The Colour is completely immune to physical attacks, chemicals, heat, cold, electricity, vacuum and blast effects short of a nuclear explosion. It is weaker in direct sunlight, however, can become trapped by strong magnets, and is affected by electromagnetic pulse (EMP) and the coherent light from a laser.

The being radiates a broad spectrum of constantly changing hues, such that it is impossible to specify exactly what "color" it actually is. If studied carefully, spectrographic analysis (Science (Physics) skill) of the light shows rapidly shifting absorption bands, as if its atomic structure were in a state of flux. This is how the entity communicates with other members of its kind. A closer examination using computational linguistics (Computer Use skill) reveals reoccurring patterns conforming to Zipf's law, indicating intelligence, but lacking a common frame of reference, provides no clues for attempting translations.

Strangely, the creature's immaterial form does not appear on cameras under normal lighting conditions, although it can still be discerned by persons in close proximity. However, it emits a stream of harmless, invisible neutrinos, which may be detected at up to a 20-yard range with appropriate instruments. How the thing perceives its surrounding environment without apparent sensory organs is a mystery.

When in contact with a living organism, the Colour drains vital life forces like a vampire to replenish itself. This particular one can also use its energies to reanimate an intact corpse (expending 1 magic point/hour), utilizing it as a host body. The Reanimated Host may be destroyed by normal means, without causing harm to the creature inhabiting it, and cannot heal damage. The Colour may freely enter or leave a host at will and it animates only while occupied.

The alien absorbs part of the essence of its victims, thereby learning some of what they know. It understands a cargo rocket could transport it to Earth, for instance, but not how to pilot a spacecraft. The Colour desperately wants to go there, so that it may feed, grow and possibly reproduce before departing for the void of space. In its present, larval stage, the creature is too weak to escape even the moon's gravity well on its own.

### **Prologue**

A few weeks ago, one of the harvesters struck a large bolder and jammed while mining the lunar regolith of Shackleton. Specialist Martel traveled down into the crater to repair it and brought back with him what he thought was a fragment from a meteorite that had been lodged in the excavator. While examining the unusual rock in the geology lab, he unwittingly released the embryonic alien contained within an iridescent "globule" embedded in the pallasite matrix, which then promptly hid itself inside the greenhouse water tank. The insubstantial, luminous entity was later observed moving around the domes several times by different crew members, although video recordings from various webcams stationed about the base showed nothing out of the ordinary.

Soon afterwards, the plants in the greenhouse began to show abnormal signs of mutation. They seemed to gently sway back and forth of their own volition and the leaves developed an odd, phosphorescent tinge. The lettuce, potatoes and other vegetables turned bitter and unpalatable. Dr. Weaver suspected that the base's water supply had become contaminated, but analyzing it found no toxins or other substances which could explain the manifestations and the purification systems seemed to be working properly. She had no way of knowing that the water itself had been altered at the molecular level.

Then the crew themselves started to exhibit erratic behavior. Feeling constantly on edge, their moods grew noticeably more irritable or despondent over time. Commander Ivanenkov believed that they were suffering from the effects of stress and overwork, and would likely recover once the next team arrived in a month to relieve them. Nora doubted this conclusion and privately consulted the historical databases looking for answers. Uncovering wild, unsubstantiated accounts about a similar meteorite falling on a small New England farm over 150 years prior only increased her sense of unease.

The situation abruptly came to a head five days ago, while the doctor was inspecting the greenhouse. She saw "The Glow" hovering above the vegetation, draining the life from it. The Colour then attacked the woman and her struggles against an unseen assailant were spotted by Major Thompson watching a monitor in the Command Dome. Rushing to her aid, he discovered Dr. Weaver dead on the floor and the alien exiting through a skylight.

Quickly arming themselves with hand tools and a satchel of survey charges, Frank and René donned space suits and pursued the deadly creature into Shackleton Crater. Their attempts at fighting it proved unsuccessful, however, and the major was killed in the process. Horrified by the lethal confrontation, the Frenchman retreated back to base alone.

Having lost half of his people, something inside the commander snapped. Instead of informing Mission Control on Earth about what had transpired, Dmitry recalled one of the lunar harvesters, the other not responding to commands. He disconnected the laser from the comm tower, upgraded the capacitors and jury-rigged it to the rover's camera mast to create a makeshift weapon turret.

Commander Ivanenkov and Specialist Martel then both took shifts anxiously patrolling the moonbase perimeter or standing watch in the COC, defending the outpost against the predatory alien presence...

# The Mission (to be read aloud to the players)

The characters are all members of the relief mining crew for Moonbase Shackleton. They consist of the Mission Commander, Science Officer, Flight Engineer and Mission Specialist who work for various national and corporate space agencies. Each has been trained for a six-month tour of duty in space.

Everything was going according to plan until their departure date was unexpectedly moved up by two weeks. The following day, the team's Flight Engineer was mysteriously replaced under direct orders of the UNOOSA. Later, the crew received word that communications with the base had been lost.

A low-level pass made by an observation satellite revealed the pressure domes appeared to be undamaged and still have power, and recent activity on the surface suggested the problem was probably only a temporary technical malfunction. The crew's transport rocket subsequently proceeded to launch on schedule.

Now, the characters have almost completed their long journey. Disembarking their automated Orion spacecraft and leaving it behind unmanned overhead in lunar orbit, they board an Altair II lander and begin their descent down to the moon, bringing with them a spare comm laser and emergency supplies like oxygen candles in the cargo hold. They already know, though usually continuously illuminated by sunlight, due to orbital mechanics the base will soon experience a brief period of darkness lasting for several Earth days shortly after the crew's arrival.

### Five By Five

The lander's final approach vector takes it directly over Shackleton Crater. Peering into the darkened crater below, the investigators do not see the floodlights from any operating harvesters. Taking a closer look, the characters can glimpse a fleeting glow, which is simply a reflection of the Altair's engine exhaust. Up ahead, the blinking lights of the defunct communication tower eventually come into view.

While the main comm channel remains inactive, their short-range radios suddenly crackle into life. A man's terrified voice, identifiable by his French accent as belonging to Specialist Martel, warns the incoming flight to immediately abort the landing and return to orbit. He does not explain why, neither does he reply to questions, merely repeating the same urgent demand over again.

The players only have a minute to decide what to do next. If they continue on, the automatic controls bring their spacecraft down behind the berm near the sites of previous landings. They will receive an unpleasant welcome (see **Collision Course**).

Should the players choose to abort, they must quickly drop the descent stage and ignite the ascent rocket motor in mid-flight. After the ride back up, the investigators successfully dock with the orbiting vessel, but they have no way to return to the moon. Their mission ends in failure (see **Epilogue**).

They could also attempt a risky manual landing somewhere else. The lander can be piloted by either the Mission Commander or Flight Engineer, or the two of them working together in tandem assisting each other. It requires rolling against **Navigate** skill to plot a new course and **Pilot (Spacecraft)** skill to touch down safely.

If they succeed on both rolls, the characters manage to land the Altair on the desolate lunar plain beyond the base. They are safe for the moment, but still have to make a long, arduous climb up to the plateau-like crater rim.

If a roll is failed, they may still abort as above or push the roll. Failing a pushed roll will result in running out of fuel, or misjudging speed and distance to the ground, respectively. The lander crashes on the surface, wrecking it and injuring all aboard. They each take 2D10 damage and must also make a Sanity roll (O/1D6). Any survivors are now stranded on the moon.

### **Collision Course**

Assuming the characters landed on the crater's edge, they must exit their vehicle and go for a short moonwalk to reach the base proper. However, once the first investigator leaves the Altair's airlock, they witness a fast approaching mooncat heading straight for them. Starting a countdown of ten, ask the players what actions they take each round. The Keeper may allow an **Idea** roll to realize that they are in danger and should run.

At the end of the countdown, René suicidally rams his rover into the parked lander fearing that the Colour could use it reach Earth. The impact kills the driver and ruptures the Altair's fuel tanks, causing a silent but energetic explosion. Anyone still inside the spacecraft when it is destroyed, or who foolishly stood in the path of the oncoming rover, is dead. Those caught within a 40-yard range of the blast make **Dodge** skill rolls or suffer 1D10 damage (2D10 damage at 20 yards or less) from shrapnel, then have them roll for 0/1D6 Sanity loss.

If the lander did not set down near the outpost, Specialist Martel is still doomed. Overcome with guilt by what he considers to be his fault for all that has happened, the man removes his space helmet and promptly expires in the airless environment.

### **Small Steps**

After having made it this far, the characters must still enter the moonbase itself.

As they walk along the rim of Shackleton, investigators who observe their surroundings carefully (**Spot Hidden** skill) spy a shimmering light in the vicinity of the man-made ramp of compacted regolith leading into the crater. It is gone before they can investigate. Unknown to them, it was sunlight gleaming off the Reanimated Host's helmet visor as the alien curiously watched the characters arrive from a distance.

When the investigators finally round the protective berm, they are confronted by the sight of a lunar harvester guarding the Command Dome, its camera mast pointed in their general direction. Unless they think to radio the base in advance, anyone who steps forward will be shot at by the mounted laser (30% base chance to hit, 1D10+2 damage, 5 shots before depleting battery). The fragile weapon will be knocked out by any successful attack (rolled at Hard difficulty level) made by the investigators, or if the trigger-happy Ukrainian in the COC is contacted, they can convince him (Fast Talk or Persuade

skill) to hold his fire. The characters may then come in through the main airlock door unchallenged.

Optionally, they could also decide to go the long way around and try to gain entry via the Engineering Dome.

### Crazy Ivan

After cycling through the airlock, the investigators next enter the decontamination chamber. They only find two space suits stored there, the one's belonging to Commander Ivanenkov and the late Dr. Weaver. Beyond this area is the central COC, where a bleary-eyed Dmitry awkwardly waits for them. He has obviously been drinking alcohol.

If asked to explain why they were fired upon, the commander apologizes and says that he mistook them for "The Glow", an elusive alien force that has already killed half his crewmates. As for the inexplicable actions of Specialist Martel, he offers no excuse. Interrogating Commander Ivanenkov further (Intimidate or Persuade skill), the man can only tell them what he knows (see Prologue).

The Keeper is free to use the unstable base commander as a wildcard in this scenario. If sobered up, Dmitry could prove to be a valuable ally. He has already correctly surmised that the Colour can be hurt by a laser beam and might figure out its weakness to magnetism. However, if the Altair lander is still functional, the Ukrainian may also betray them and try to steal it, leaving the characters to deal with the creature on their own.

# Don't Drink The Water

Unknown to even the commander, the moonbase's water system has been compromised by the Colour. Unless a player specifically states otherwise, assume an investigator drinks from the contaminated cistern, either directly or in reconstituted food. Consumption of the altered water has a deleterious effect on a person's psyche.

Beginning with their second day on the moon, and for each following one while they continue to imbibe the water, have the players roll for 0/1D3 Sanity loss without explaining the reason for it. On a failed roll, in addition to reducing Sanity, the character feels a moment of panic or dread, has strange compulsions, or experiences auditory or visual hallucinations.

A potential source of untainted water is available at the base's fuel depot, if they want to go outside the domes to retrieve it.

### We've Had A Problem

Should the investigators desire to alert Earth about their current predicament, they can either reconnect the communication laser to the tower antenna or radio up to the orbiting Orion spacecraft, using its more powerful transmitter to boost their signal and relay messages. How the authorities respond depends on what the characters choose to tell them.

If the situation appears to be under control, with the Colour contained or destroyed, then another rocket is dispatched to rescue them all in six weeks' time. The investigators will have to hold out for the duration.

However, if circumstances are dire and the alien still poses a threat, then UNOOSA places the moonbase under quarantine until either conditions improve or they are all dead. A salvage crew may be sent sometime later, or else they might decide to cut their losses and nuke the entire site from orbit, just to be sure.

### **All Your Base**

As the investigators begin to explore the lunar outpost (see **The Moonbase**), they can find additional clues and possible ways to defeat the Colour. While in the domes, investigators may ask SALI to play the video log files from any of the previous crew members. It will take many hours and multiple **Library Use** skill rolls to review them, but they include details regarding Specialist Martel's finding the meteorite and Dr. Weaver's suspicions concerning the water (see **Prologue**). In addition to informing the characters more about what happened at the base, they also record the progressively deteriorating mental states of the crew.

#### The Command Dome

The launch controls for the Demeter rocket are accessible from the COC. They were locked to prevent unauthorized access, however, by the American major, who was beginning to suffer from paranoia. The password is "DAISY", which could be deduced from what they learn about the man with an **Intelligence** roll or a lucky guess made by the

players. The rocket can be programmed (Computer Use skill) to fly directly to Earth or, if it is still there, to rendezvous with the Orion waiting in orbit (see **Coming Home**). It cannot go to the other moonbase without the proper landing instructions, which the Chinese will not give if they have been quarantined. Should they override the safety protocols, desperate investigators could even fire the rocket at their own base like a missile, destroying the outpost, but merely inconveniencing the Colour.

Investigating the crew's quarters can give some insights into the personalities of the former base inhabitants. Commander Ivanenkov's are in complete disarray and it is apparent that he has not slept in them for some time. A thorough search (Spot **Hidden** skill) of Major Thompson's room finds a digital crayon drawing of a man wearing a cowboy hat and riding inside a rocket ship, signed "Daisy, age 6" (see **Handout 2**), amidst his scattered personal effects. Specialist Martel's messy room has a French flag hung on the wall next to a rather risqué calendar marking off the days until he is scheduled to be relieved. In contrast to the rest of the living quarters, Dr. Weaver's are comparatively tidy; though they provide little in the way of information about her.

### The Engineering Dome

The 3D printer in the machine shop is capable of fabricating replacement parts for most things less complicated than a microchip and that do not require exotic materials. By adding various circuit boards and other components from a supply cabinet, the characters could build whatever they want here within reason, given enough time and a combination of Electrical Repair, Electronics and/or Mechanical Repair skill rolls, as deemed appropriate by the Keeper. A large apparatus, constructed from a discarded Altair pressure tank and some copper tubing, is setup in the back of the shop to distill vodka from potato mash.

Among the safety equipment stored in the control room is a suitcase-sized neutrino detector (Education roll to recognize), which would be useful for tracking down the Colour (see Who Goes There?).

The secondary airlock is the closest one to the fuel depot.

### The Laboratory Dome

The biochemical lab has water samples taken from the Greenhouse Dome. All tested negative for any contaminants. The lab's computer terminal holds the results of database searches made by Dr. Weaver, including records about a "blasted heath" west of

Arkham, Massachusetts, dating from the 1920s (Library Use skill to locate).

The characters can find the weird meteorite that caused the trouble still in the geology lab. It is metallic, but also highly malleable, almost plastic, and noticeably warm to the touch. A smooth, spherical cavity only a few inches across is hollowed out of one side (Spot Hidden skill to notice). According to the geologist's notes, written in French, the rock has magnetic properties, defies chemical analysis and has measurably shrunk in size since its initial discovery. Although not conventionally radioactive, the man speculated that once the meteorite was exposed to the atmosphere inside the domes, its atoms began to decay...into dark matter. This theory could have earned René the Vetlesen Prize, if he had lived long enough to publish his findings.

Unless unprepared beforehand, those who view Nora's cadaver in the isolation room do not need to roll for Sanity loss. An examination of her dry, ashen flesh uncovers no wounds or injuries to establish the exact cause of death.

When utilized by a trained professional, either locally or via telepresence commlink, the robotic surgery could perform even complex medical procedures. Using it can remove any major wound condition with a successful **Medicine** skill roll, in addition to healing 1D3 hit points or stabilizing a Dying character.

The door to the area containing the MRI prominently displays a sign warning not to bring metal objects inside while operating the machine.

#### The Greenhouse Dome

All of the plants in the greenhouse are dead, their brittle leaves crumbling into grey dust. The hydroponic system appears to be in perfect working order, however.

There is a faint trace of ozone lingering in the air near the automatic plumbing control valves (Spot Hidden skill to detect), although none of the electrical wiring shows evidence of a short.

If the environmental sensor logs for the dome are checked, the characters notice that they report an unexplained burst of neutrinos at the time the female scientist was slain (**Library Use** skill to access).

### The Science Dome

There is nothing of particular interest in the uncompleted Science Dome, unless the Keeper wants to stage an encounter here.

### Who Goes There?

The players may decide to go hunting for the creature instead of waiting for it to come to them. The most likely location for it to be found is deep within Shackleton Crater.

As the investigators search the sunless crater floor, they come across the dark shape of the second lunar harvester. The Colour has burned out the power control circuits, rendering the rover inoperable. The thing also infiltrated the harvester's water collection system before it froze, contaminating this reservoir tank as well. The space suit containing the deceased Major Thompson rests inertly nearby propped up behind some rocks (**Spot Hidden** skill to find).

Unless the characters are forewarned by its neutrino emissions, the alien will surprise them from out of nowhere. On its own turf, the Colour makes a nimble and terrifying adversary, able to fly overhead or slip into fissures in the ground, only to reappear elsewhere. Seeing the thing in action for the first time requires a Sanity roll for O/1D4 loss (or 1/1D8 if watching it reanimate a host body).

The creature will show no mercy in combat and anyone it kills may become a new host. However, it might allow a fleeing investigator to get away, as the Colour knows it needs someone left alive to launch a rocket. If the investigators demonstrate that they can seriously hurt it, by wielding the laser or another weapon (see **Defeating The Colour**), then the alien will intelligently retreat and remain hidden, maybe by playing "dead" inside a corpse.

### The Moon Is Dark

At the start of the third Earth day, night falls on the moonbase. Without sunlight for the solar arrays, the base personnel must shut down all non-essential systems to conserve battery power over the next 72 hours, until the sun rises above the lunar horizon. They should not have to do this again for another month. During this time, devices can still be recharged by using an RTG, but it will take twice as long.

There is plenty of oxygen in the domes and they are insulated against the cold, so the characters do not have to worry about suffocation or death by freezing. A bigger danger is the alien Colour, which might choose this opportunity to prowl around the darkened outpost in incorporeal state looking for someone to eat.

### A Frightful Messenger

If the characters do not attempt to escape the moon on their own, then the creature may take additional actions in order to convince them. It will enter the Command Dome through the airlock using a space-suited host. The suit's biometrics show no life readings and examining the person up-close unmasks the Colour glowing behind dead eyes, resulting in a Sanity loss of 1/1D8.

Unless the investigators intervene, the thing sits down at a computer console in the COC and shines its alien light into the camera. As if by unspoken command, SALI responds and begins to display different views of Earth: blue oceans, green forests and golden fields. Lastly, the monitor will present several pictures of flowers...all daisies.

This done, the Colour leaves the base in peace, but stops to sabotage the power lines to the solar farm on its way out.

### **Coming Home**

Assuming the lander they arrived in has either been destroyed or stolen, and that the UNOOSA does not send help, another way for the characters to return home is by the Demeter cargo rocket waiting on the far side of the base.

While not rated for human transportation, it is fairly reliable. However, the rocket lacks any crew accommodations, including life support and manual flight controls, and only has primitive communications for sending telemetry data or receiving course correction instructions. Although nearly ready for flight, its internal launch control software has been password protected to prevent liftoff.

If the investigators can solve these problems, it will take three days to reach Earth, but only a few minutes to attain lunar orbit. The investigators would then have to rendezvous with another spacecraft and make a dangerous spacewalk over to it. Roll against **Dexterity**, unless tethered or using some type of maneuvering unit, to avoid being lost in space.

None of these are issues for the Colour, which could ride along quite comfortably in a cargo module during the whole voyage. The alien takes no actions to interrupt the launch preparations, but will then try to conceal itself on board before takeoff and pounce on the characters when they least expect it.

### **Defeating The** Colour

Although the Colour is a powerful and cunning opponent, the thing has two weaknesses that can be exploited in order to defeat it.

One is its vulnerability to lasers. The alien takes half damage from the ad-hoc laser weapon, but only after subtracting the amount inflicted to any Reanimated Host it may inhabit at the time.

The other is the creature's susceptibility to magnetism. Once this becomes known to the investigators, they could manufacture hand-held electromagnets powered by their space suits, which are strong enough to do 1D3 + DB damage with Fighting (Brawl) skill. They might also be able to construct a single-use EMP bomb (2D6 damage with a 10-yard range increment, effects the Colour only). Roll **Luck**, with failure indicating the crude device short-circuits and does nothing when activated.

Another option is to somehow lure the alien into the room containing the MRI and then switching on the power. The intense magnetic field will trap it there, preventing it from leaving even within a host body, while the machine remains functioning.

Players may devise alternative solutions that also prove effective in combatting the Colour, at the Keeper's discretion.

### Conclusion

This scenario ends once the investigators have either escaped or defeated the Colour, or have died trying. Any survivors of the mission are each awarded 1D8 Sanity. Award an additional 1D4 Sanity, if they defeat the creature. The characters eventually return to Earth and are debriefed before a board of inquiry, then sworn to secrecy. There are some things the world is not yet ready to know (see **Epilogue**). Even if they all perished on the moon, the players could still consider it a success, if they managed to stop the alien from reaching Earth.

Then again, who is to say that there was only one?

### **Epilogue**

Following the tragic loss of so many of its crew members, UNOOSA conducts a thorough inquiry into the unfortunate events that occurred at the moonbase. After months of serious effort, however, the international committee in charge of the probe ultimately decides not to release the findings to the public. Their final report is classified and the investigation closed, with Moonbase Shackleton officially decommissioned due to "unspecified technical problems".

Though no exact reason is given, there are many wild rumors. Some people assume the base was abandoned because of an unknown contagion amongst the crew, while others, closer to the truth perhaps, suggest it was caused by a meteor impact. Sensational stories about the failed moonbase at Shackleton Crater soon fade from the news and are largely forgotten except by historians and conspiracy theorists.

Two years later, the CNSA, along with their Asian partners, announce the completion of the new lunar mass driver. During the celebratory festivities at Moonbase Peary, a video camera coincidentally captures footage of a lone figure in a space suit shambling into the outpost.

Shortly thereafter, all contact with the base is lost...



### **Statistics**

## COMMANDER DMITRY IVANENKOV, age 46, Base Commander

STR 65 CON 80 SIZ 50 DEX 50 INT 60 APP 45 POW40 EDU 60 SAN 20 HP 13 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 8 Luck: N/A

#### Attacks per round: 1

Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D3 Mounted laser 30% (15/6), damage 1D10+2 Dodge 25% (12/5)

**Armor:** none or 5-point Mark V space suit. **Skills:** Computer Use 25%, Credit Rating 50%, Electrical Repair 70%, Electronics 40%, Firearms (Handgun) 40%, Navigate 50%, Operate Heavy Machine 60%, Other Language (English) 50%, Own Language (Ukrainian) 60%, Pilot (Spacecraft) 41%, Persuade 60%, Science (Physics) 21%, Survival (Space) 10%.

### COLOUR OUT OF SPACE, Glowing Alien

STR 15

CON equal to POW SIZ equal to POW

POW 75\* DEX 95

\*Base amount, which then increases as the Colour

feeds.

Hit Points: 15\*
Damage Bonus: N/A

Build: 0\*

Magic Points: 15\*

Move: 12 pouring/20 flying

#### **ATTACKS**

#### Attacks per round: 1

The Colour attacks by grappling and then draining characteristics and hit points. This attack bypasses armor. However, in direct sunlight, the victim rolls a bonus die to defend against both.

**Characteristic Drain:** When the Colour is feeding, the victim must make an opposed POW roll. If the Colour wins, it permanently drains 1D10 points each of STR, CON, POW, DEX and APP from the victim, and costs him or her 1D6 hit points as well. Each point of POW so drained increases the Colour's POW. Once completely drained of a characteristic, the victim dies.

Fighting 60% (30/12) damage Grapple only Grapple (fighting maneuver) damage Drain Drain Opposed roll: victim's POW vs. Colour's POW, damage 1D6 + characteristics loss Dodge 47% (23/9)

**Armor:** none, but invulnerable to physical attack, except by lasers (half damage) and strong magnetic fields, EMP, etc., which can imprison or damage it. **Skills:** Stealth 60% (30/12).

**Sanity Loss:** 0/1D4 Sanity points to see a Colour Out of Space.

### REANIMATED HOST, Spacesuited Horror

STR 80 CON 80

SIZ 65 POW 05

DEX 35 Hit Points: 14

Damage Bonus: 1D4

Build: 1

**Magic Points:** 1

Move: 6 (4 in space suit)

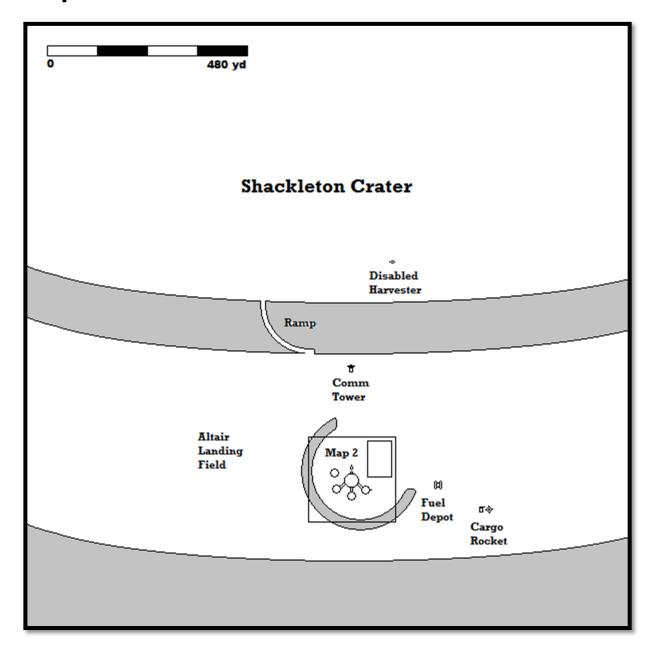
#### **ATTACKS**

#### Attacks per round: 1

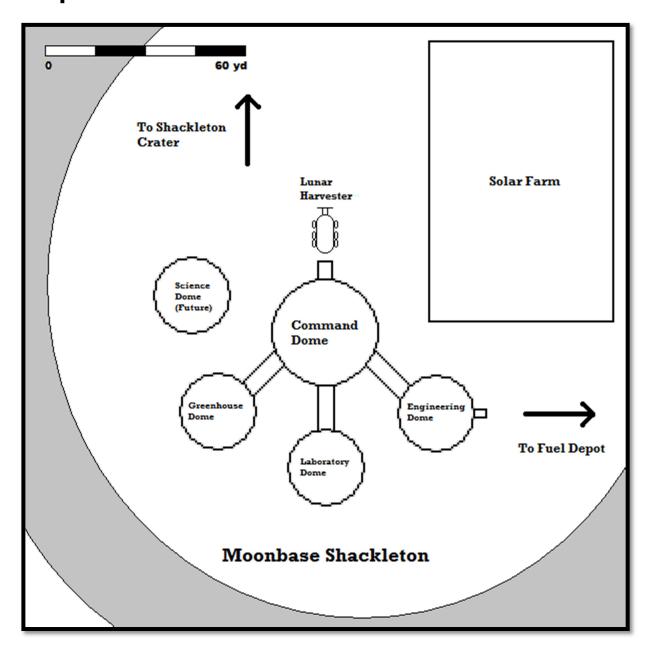
The Reanimated Host attacks with its hands. Fighting 30% (15/6), damage 1D3 + 1D4 Dodge 17% (8/3)

**Armor:** 5-point Mark V space suit. Immune to falling unconscious due to a major wound. **Sanity Loss:** 1/1D8 Sanity points to see a Reanimated Host up-close.

### Map 1



### Map 2



### Handout 1

#### Moonbase Shackleton Crew Members

### **Commander Dmitry Ivanenkov**

Position: Mission Commander Affiliation: ROSCOSMOS Nationality: Ukrainian

#### **Major Frank Thompson**

Position: Flight Engineer Affiliation: NASA Nationality: American

#### **Doctor Nora Weaver**

Position: Science Officer

Affiliation: ESA Nationality: British

#### Specialist René Martel

Position: Mission Specialist Affiliation: H-3 Corp Nationality: French

### Handout 3

### **New Skill Specialization:** Survival (Space) (10%)

Characters with this skill at 10% or more know how to survive the vacuum and microgravity conditions of space, such as in orbit or on the lunar surface, while wearing a space suit. Knowledge includes safety techniques, environmental hazards and special medical problems like hypoxia caused by oxygen deprivation. Characters do not normally need to roll for this skill, except under unusually difficult or dangerous circumstances.



### Handout 2



### Investigator Characters

The following investigator characters are suitable for play as the replacement crew for the moonbase. The characters have specific roles on the team, listed as their occupations, and are trained to handle their assigned duties in space. They carry tools, repair kits or other equipment as appropriate for their jobs, but unless otherwise noted, none of them are armed. In addition, they all wear the latest-generation Mark V space suit, with differently colored armbands to identify the suit's owner.

Far more durable and easy to move around in than those worn by the Apollo astronauts, the Mark V suits are still exhausting to work in for long periods even in microgravity and reduce the wearer's Move by two. The outer layers of the suits are electrostatically charged to help repel moon dust. Their backpackmounted batteries and life support systems have a 10-hour charge (recover two hours per hour spent recharging). They are reinforced to resist tears and punctures, and made from special self-sealing composites, providing an additional five armor to the wearer. They also come equipped with built-in biometric sensors, two-way radios, live-stream body cams, helmet lights and photochromic visors that automatically darken in bright sunlight.

The players need to choose an investigator's name and gender, as well as determine any personality traits for role-playing purposes. A blank character sheet is provided for use by those who wish to create their own original crew members (see **Handout 3**).

#### Commander Jack/Jacqueline Cortez, Mission Commander

"I have a bad feeling about this mission."

Commander Cortez works for NASA, the American aerospace agency. In addition to being in charge of this mission, you have the most experience in space, having previously served a tour aboard the Deep Space Gateway station positioned at the L2 Earth-Moon Lagrange point. Unknown to the rest of your teammates, you once had a brief but torrid love affair with Dr. Nora Weaver, the British Science Officer now at the moonbase, when you two met at a science symposium in London a few years ago. Though your romantic relationship has ended, you will be very troubled if anything bad has happened to her.

#### Doctor Oleg/Olga Pavlenko, Science Officer

"Dlya nauk! For science!"

Dr. Pavlenko of ROSCOSMOS, the Russian space agency, is the designated Science Officer and second-in-command of this mission. You hold advanced degrees in both physics and chemistry along with a basic medical training. You have heard rumors circulating that René Martel, the French Mission Specialist from H-3 Corp, has discovered something extraordinary at Shackleton Crater. Exactly what he has found is a mystery, but whatever it is could prove to be a breakthrough for space science, as well as make the career of whoever publishes the research first.

#### Captain George/Georgia Stafford, Flight Engineer

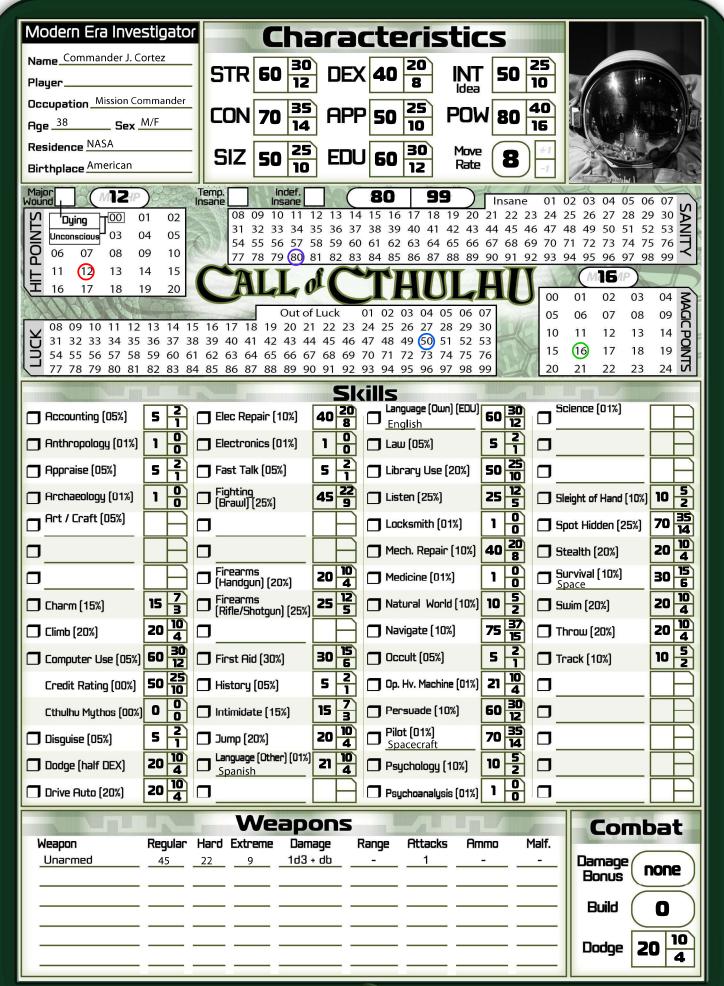
"That's on a need-to-know basis."

Captain Stafford is assigned by ESA, the European Space Agency, as the Flight Engineer for this mission. Although a qualified spacecraft pilot, you were not picked for your technical skills, but because of your past work for the British Secret Intelligence Service. The Science Officer at Moonbase Shackleton, Dr. Nora Weaver, recently made some peculiar inquiries that caught the attention of people higher up and you are ordered to investigate the situation. Suspecting possible espionage by the Chinese or another party, you are secretly armed with a hold-out pistol (1D10 damage, 10 shots), which can fire normally in a vacuum. However, you must take a combat round between shots to adjust your aim while in less than Earth gravity or else suffer an extra penalty die.

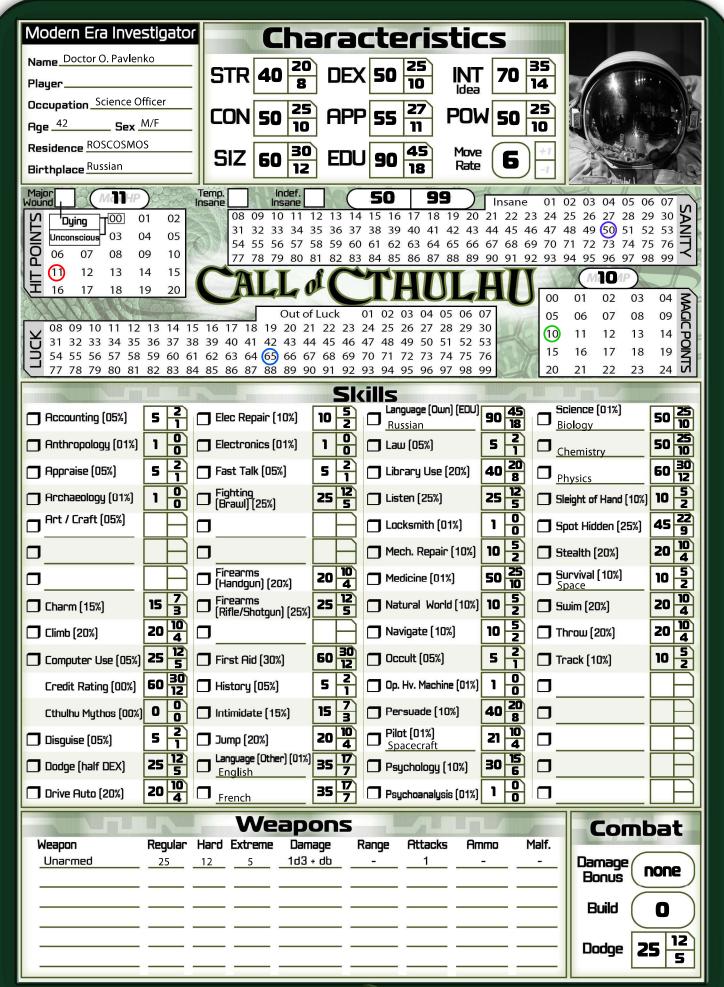
#### Specialist Erich/Erika Hofmann, Mission Specialist

"Use the right tool for the job, Ja?"

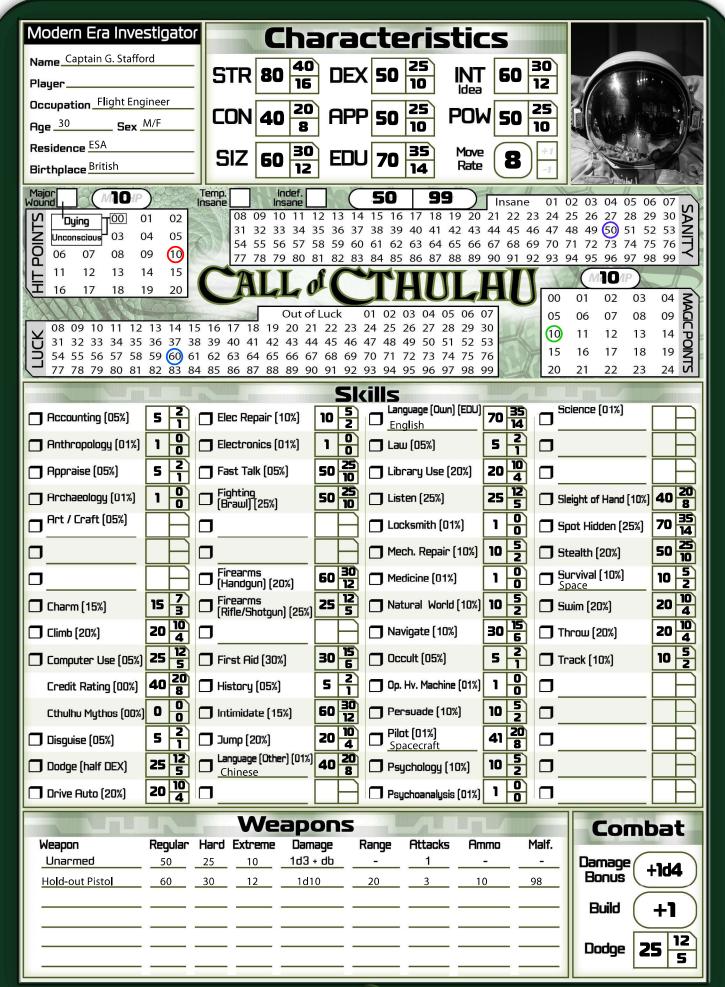
Hofmann is a German engineer working for the multinational mining company H-3 Corp. You have been contracted to replace the existing Mission Specialist at the moon, René Martel. You believe the young Frenchman may be too inexperienced to properly handle the responsibilities of the position, and that your corporate superiors should never have sent a scientist to do an engineer's job. They have offered you a bonus of triple your regular base salary, if you can get the helium-3 shipments to Earth back on schedule.



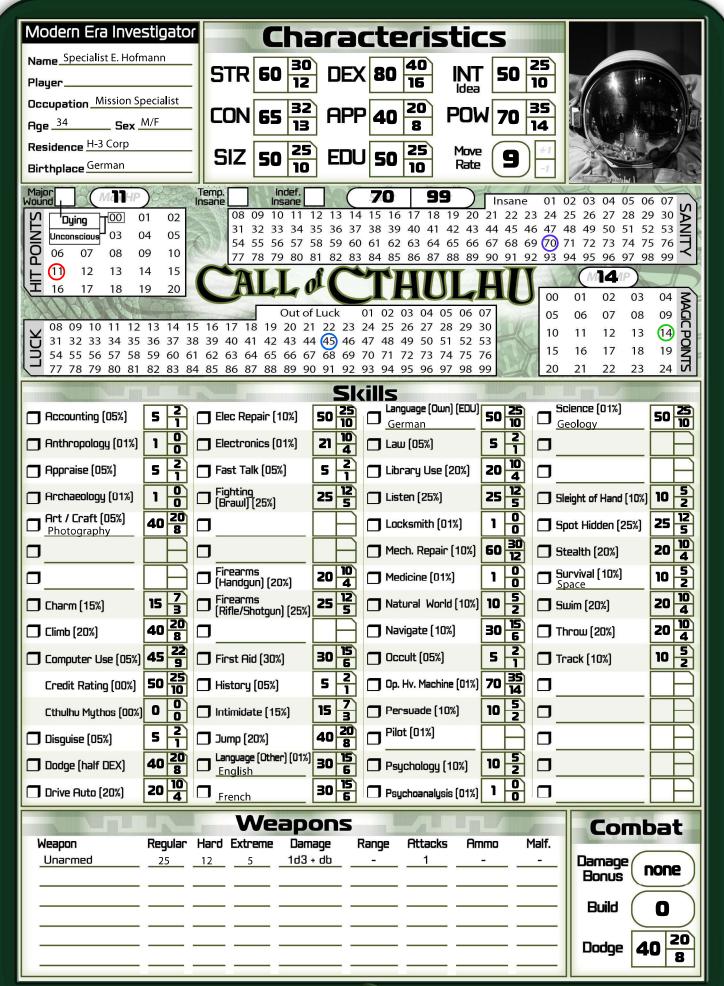














Modern Era Investigator Characteristics			
Name	STR DEX NT		
Player	Idea		
Occupation   Sex	CON APP POW M		
Residence	CIZ Move		
Birthplace	SIZ EDU Rate		
Major Wound Max HP	Temp. Indef. Start Max Insane 01 02 03 04 05	06 07	
	08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	3 29 30	
Unconscious 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10	54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74	1 52 53 <b>2</b> 4 75 76 <b>7</b>	
Lange   Column   Co	77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97	7 98 99	
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. , 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15	5 16 17 18 10 20 21 22 24 25 26 27 28 20 20	03 04 MACIC POINTS  18 19 15 23 24	
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54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84	01 62 63 64 63 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 73 76	23 24	
	Skills		
Accounting (05%)	Elec Repair (10%) Language (Own) (EDU) Science (01%)		
Anthropology (01%)	☐ Electronics (01%) ☐ Law (05%) ☐		
Appraise (05%)	Fast Talk (05%) Library Use (20%)		
☐ Archaeology (01%)	Fighting Sleight of Hand [10] Sleight of Hand [10]	[0%]	
Art / Craft (05%)	Locksmith (01%) Spot Hidden (25%	%]	
	☐ Mech. Repair (10%) ☐ Stealth (20%)		
	Firearms [Handgun] (20%)  Medicine (01%)  Survival (10%) Space		
☐ Charm (15%)	Firearms [Rifle/Shotgun] (25%) Natural World (10%) Swim (20%)		
☐ Climb (20%)	☐ Navigate (10%) ☐ Throw (20%)		
Computer Use (05%)	First Aid (30%)		
Credit Rating (00%)	History (05%)		
Cthulhu Mythos (00%)	Intimidate (15%)		
☐ Disguise (05%)	☐ Jump (20%) ☐ Pilot (01%) ☐ ☐		
☐ Dodge (half DEX)	Language (Other) (01%) Psychology (10%)		
☐ Drive Auto (20%)	Psychoanalysis (01%)		
Weapons Combat			
	Hard Extreme Damage Range Attacks Ammo Malf.	IDBC	
Unarmed	<u>1d3 + db</u> <u>1</u> <b>Damage</b> (		
		$\bowtie$	
	Build (		
	Dodge		
/			

