

G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# ATOMIC HORROR<sup>™</sup>

*Science Runs Amok in B-Movie Adventures!*



By **PAUL ELLIOTT** and **CHRIS McCUBBIN**

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

# WATCH THE SKIES!

Alien invaders! Giant lizards from another age! Flesh-eating zombies! Colossal insects! Mad scientists! Blobs! Only you can defend humanity, civilization, and the American Way from these terrible horrors.

*GURPS Atomic Horror* contains everything you need to roleplay the science-fiction and horror movies of the 1950s. The campaign can be as scary as *The Thing*, as dramatic as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, as strange as *Little Shop of Horrors* or as goofy as *Plan 9 From Outer Space* – the choice is yours. Characters can be square-jawed scientists and military men, heroic explorers, misunderstood teenagers, cold-war spies, G-men, gangsters . . . or just ordinary folks caught up in unearthly weirdness.

*GURPS Atomic Horror* contains:

- ☼ A comprehensive guide to '50s politics, society, and attitudes suitable for any campaign – not just science fiction/horror.
- ☼ Five new alien races, completely described and ready to invade the Earth. In fact, some of them are already here!
- ☼ Guidelines for creating more than a dozen different kinds of movie monsters, from gill-men to carnivorous plants to living human brains in jars.
- ☼ Alternate world campaign ideas, like a '50s where the Nazis won World War II, or a futuristic '50s where our own flying saucers conquer space.
- ☼ A detailed filmography listing dozens of '50s science horror films, from the classics to the turkeys.



*GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised* and *Compendium I: Character Creation* are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. *GURPS Atomic Horror* can also be used as a sourcebook for any roleplaying system.

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G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

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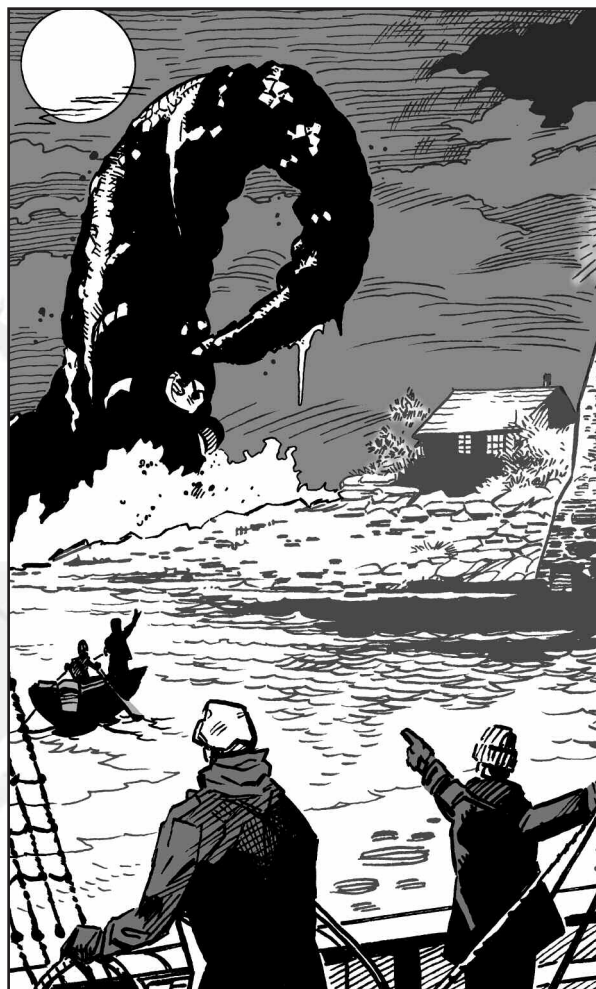
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# INTRODUCTION



*Keep watching the skies!*  
– *The Thing (From Another World!)*, 1951

Horror descends from the stars. It crawls from atomic test sites and slithers from black ocean depths. In the 1950s, the Earth came dangerously close to being overrun by alien entities. *GURPS Atomic Horror* recreates the science-horror movies of the Fifties and puts the PCs in the unenviable position of protecting the Earth from alien invasion. Besides the fear of invasion from space, the people of '50s Earth are threatened by out-of-control experiments, primeval monsters, and astronomical disasters. Not to mention fears of Communist subversion and atomic annihilation.

This campaign setting includes alien races, monstrous menaces, and a plethora of adventure seeds and ideas. The players can be a heroic team of scientists and soldiers, a ring of steely-eyed cold-war espionage agents, or even a gang of happy-go-lucky teens caught up in events beyond their understanding. *GURPS Atomic Horror* is fixed firmly in the USA, but other parts of the world are not ignored.

An expanded filmography maps out the important movies of the decade, and others that are still part of the genre although they were released prior to, or following, the '50s proper – both remakes of classic Fifties movies and new pictures in the same spirit. On whatever level they're appreciated, the films of the '50s are just gloriously *fun*. *GURPS Atomic Horror* seeks to capture this spirit and turn it into a playable, exciting game.

Remember, “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” They're out there, and it's up to freedom-loving humans like you to keep our planet safe for democracy. Good luck, and God bless.

– Paul Elliott & Chris McCubbin

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul Elliott is an amateur game designer, with plenty of works in progress and at least one roleplaying game published on the Internet. After reading *GURPS Illuminati* he started doing some major research and combined his fascination with cults and secret societies with his B.A. in ancient history. Now he writes books on fringe religions, cults, and terror groups for a living. He moved to the east coast of Yorkshire, England, a few years ago where he lives in satisfied seclusion with his wife, Christine, son Bradley, and four carpet-hopping house rabbits.

Chris McCubbin is a Nebraska native and a non-graduate of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, in English. His other books for SJ Games include *GURPS Callahan's Crosstime Saloon*, based on the award-winning science fiction classics by Spider Robinson, and *GURPS Fantasy Folk*, winner of the 1991 Gamer's Choice Award for best roleplaying supplement. He's into good movies, fun books, decent restaurants, alternative rock music, and BBSing. He lives in Austin with his wife, Lynette Alcorn, and the two stereotypical cats, Polychrome and Clipper.

## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

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Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: [rec.games.frp.gurps](mailto:rec.games.frp.gurps).

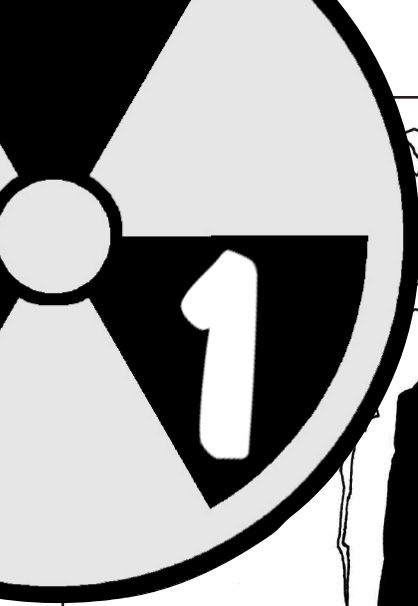
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The *GURPS Atomic Horror* web page is at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/atomichorror/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/atomichorror/).

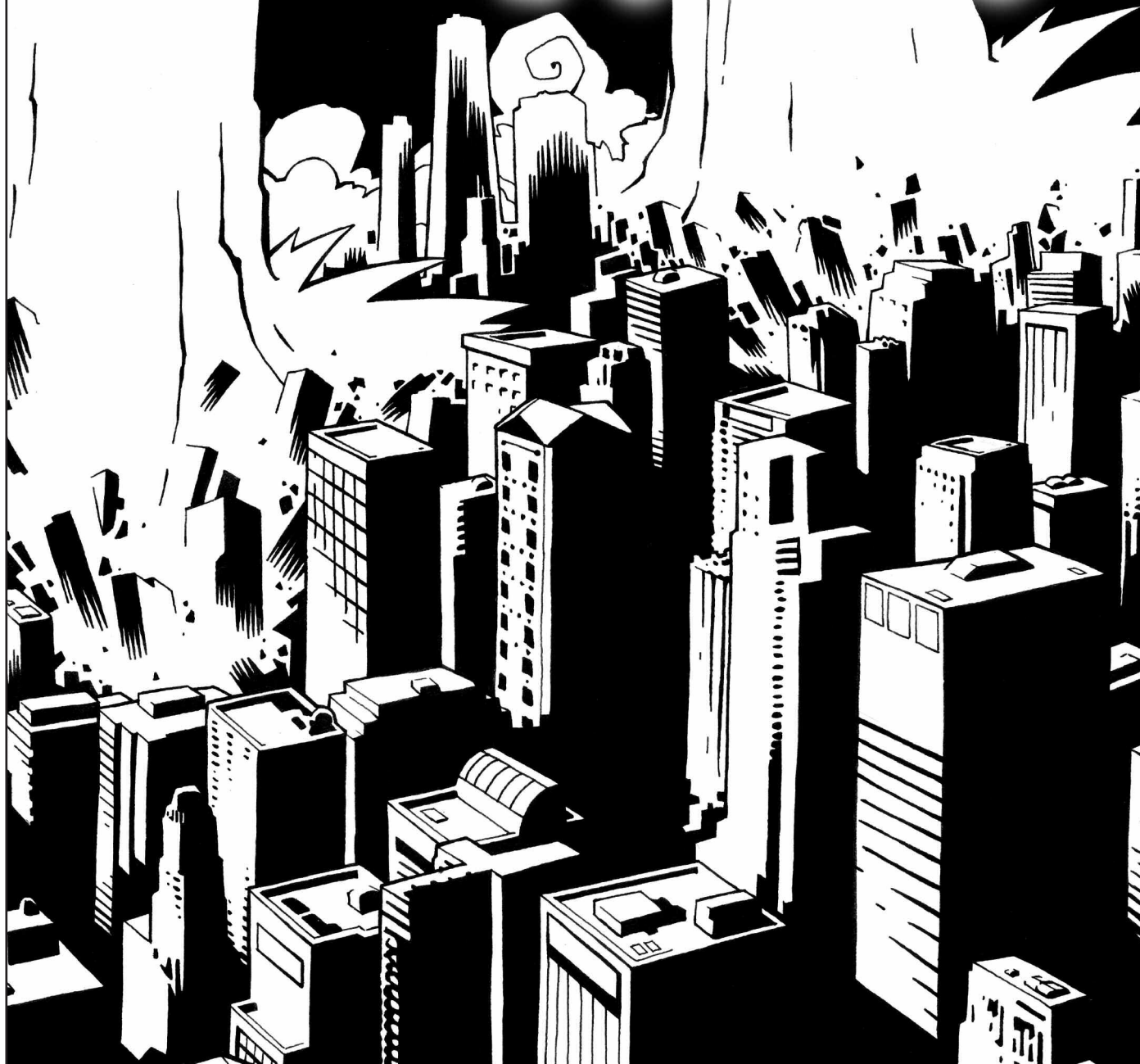
## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are AE for *GURPS Alternate Earths*, CII for *Compendium II*, HT for *High-Tech*, PM for *Places of Mystery*, S for *Space*, UT for *Ultra-Tech*, WT for *Warehouse 23*, WWi for *Who's Who 1*, WWii for *Who's Who 2*, and Y for *Y2K*.

For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).



# LEARNING TO LOVE THE BOMB



## Roleplaying the Films of the '50s



The two decades immediately following World War II were a strange and schizophrenic time in American history. On the surface, Western civilization seemed to be at its zenith – almost a paradise. The American dream was a close, loving, well-fed, and well-educated family, living in a small-but-comfortable house packed with technological luxuries and conveniences in a safe, attractive, friendly suburban neighborhood. For many people, this dream was reality.

Beneath the surface, however, there was a darker side to the '50s. The Cold War cast the shadow of nuclear annihilation across the happy face of civilization. Paranoia ran rampant, officially sanctioned in the name of rooting out Communist infiltrators. Traditionally downtrodden groups like women and racial minorities were beginning to rise, slowly but implacably, to demand equal rights, and this terrified those they were rising against.

This tension between the outward appearance of utopian prosperity and the internal chaos of fear and hatred is what forms the fundamental basis of what can only be called “Atomic Horror.”

## The “B” Movies



The science fiction and horror movies of the '50s were far removed from the mainstream of cinema. The films that got the big money and the serious critical scrutiny were frothy musicals like *Singin' In the Rain* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, historical epics like *The Robe* and *The Ten Commandments*, big-budget Westerns like *High Noon* and *The Searchers*, domestic comedies like *Father of the Bride* and *Desk Set*, or sober dramas like *Sunset Blvd.* and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.

With a few notable exceptions (*Forbidden Planet*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*) the sci-fi horror films were “B” movies – short, cheap, and under-publicized, designed to play as the second feature alongside more respectable fare.

Yet looking back with the advantage of hindsight, it can be seen that the B pictures of the '50s capture the true nature of the decade better than any from the other, more respectable genres. The science fiction movies were one of the few places where the dark heart of the '50s was allowed to see the light of day. Even then, it was cloaked in metaphor and symbolism. ICBMs became ravening flying saucers, Communist subversives became pod people, and the atom bomb became a 600-foot-tall, fire-breathing dinosaur.

Perhaps the most important convention of the sci-fi movie genre was fear of the alien. ETs were *not* lovable, befuddled little gnomes, and super-beings were *not* benevolent, crime-fighting Boy Scouts. They were inimical menaces to society, to be dealt with in the most ruthlessly efficient way possible.

There were exceptions – notably the wise and advanced (but stern and implacable) alien culture hinted at in *The Day*

*the Earth Stood Still* – but more often, those who preached appeasement or negotiation with aliens or monsters ended up like the doctor in *The Thing* – monster chow.

Sometimes the monster movies adopted the trappings of other low-budget movie genres – most often gangster films or teen-age melodrama – merely throwing in a monster or alien menace for flavor. Although the golden age of the Gothic “mad scientist” was past, it was far from dead in the '50s.

Many films were set on some sort of military installation – a base or research station – under the assumption that the military would logically be the ones to deal with any sort of monstrous or alien menace.

Often the settings were remote and exotic (or whatever approximation of “exotic” the producers could manage on a low budget). Many monster movies were set in the desert – probably because the desert around Los Angeles, where most of the movies were made, was the easiest “exotic” terrain for the filmmakers to reach.

## WHO ARE THE PCs?

In '50s science horror movies there is almost always a small group of dedicated experts and brave scientists who solve the mystery and end the threat to the Earth. In many *GURPS Atomic Horror* campaigns, the player characters are those experts. Since many of the horrors are the results of scientific meddling, it falls to the scientists to put things right again. Often, scientists identify the problem, call in the Army and Air Force to wipe it out and, when the results are negligible, begin to look for a scientific solution.

In many *Atomic Horror* campaigns, the heroes are astronomers, physicists, archaeologists, and biologists – the experts called in to tackle the menace. If things get out of hand, the chances are that no one more qualified will be available! This lets the GM build up the tension, since a lot of innocent people are depending on the PCs to save them from some hideous fate.

The Theoretical Science Foundation (detailed in Chapter 3) is a game device to allow PCs from several disciplines to adventure together across the globe. Other methods are available – the group could be funded by a university, or the FBI could have set up a Scientific Advisory Agency (see p. 37) to help the Bureau tackle atomic horrors in the United States.

The TSF also allows the GM to set his adventures anywhere in the world. This is a great advantage, since frequent shifts in setting keep the players interested. Air bases, suburbs, deserts, university campuses, and building sites are all good choices. Another way to keep the game alive is to link the plot into a news item or '50s personality like the ones detailed in Chapter 4. The players will feel as if they are truly participating in the game world.

There are many other ways to design an *Atomic Horror* campaign. The PCs might be teen-agers, gangsters, even ordinary suburbanites. These alternate campaigns will all be detailed individually, but in general these rules regard the campaign built around a team of experts from the TSF or a similar organization as the default for *Atomic Horror*.

## CAMP

There are several different definitions of what makes entertainment “camp,” but for the purpose at hand, something is camp when its defining characteristics are exaggerated to the point where they become ludicrous.

Monster movies are often referred to as “camp classics.” Usually, this means that while they’re not scary or dramatic, the overwrought dialog, absurd costumes and creatures, nonsensical plots, and quaint, outdated fashions and attitudes make them fun to watch and make fun of.

In the ’50s, camp was almost always unintentional. The filmmakers *wanted* to make a tense, frightening film, but due to lack of funds, lack of talent, or simply a general contempt for their audience, they failed. Since then, many have set out to deliberately capture the spirit of camp on film, with varying degrees of success, in films like *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*, *I Was a Teenage Zombie* and the ’60s TV show *Batman*.

It’s easy for an *Atomic Horror* adventure to go camp, if the players get too caught up in the absurdity of the source material. If this is what the GM wants, fine – it can lead to an uproarious evening of humorous roleplaying.

However, camp can be a trap. If the GM wants to present his players with a reasonably serious horror/adventure scenario, nothing will kill the mood faster than a camp attitude. And even in campaigns where campiness isn’t fatal, GMs will often find that a diet of unrelieved absurdity will go stale much faster than a campaign where the mood is more varied.

Fortunately, a happy medium is possible. Just as the best suspense films have moments of comic relief while still preserving a sense of drama and mystery, a good GM can, with care, allow his players to have fun with the attitudes and conventions of the monster movies without allowing his campaign to slip completely into the realm of camp.

## THE ANTIHERO

Contemporary viewers are often amused by the simplistic, black-and-white view of morality presented in the films of the ’50s. Many of these films – particularly those aimed at younger viewers – did tend to divide the world up between heroes and villains, with no gray area in between.

This was not, however, the universal state of films in the ’50s. Even in the ’50s, the antihero was a familiar character type on the silver screen. An antihero was an amoral, sometimes *immoral* man, who was only a “hero” by virtue of the fact that he kept struggling against impossible odds. Antiheroes were most common in the gritty *film noir* crime dramas, and the more adult sort of western, but they occasionally drifted over into the science fiction and horror genres.

For players with no stomach for completely heroic characters – who find the idea of playing a morally simplistic “Boy Scout” dull or distasteful – the antihero is an attractive option. After all, if a flesh-eating monstrosity is on the loose, the gang of cold-blooded gangsters on the run is in as much danger as a team of scientists and soldiers, or a bunch of all-American teen-agers.

## LEGENDS OF THE BS

It is impossible to really understand the spirit of ’50s science-fiction films without some knowledge of at least a few of the remarkable men who made these remarkable films.

### Roger Corman

Roger Corman was the undisputed king of the Bs in ’50s Hollywood. Corman could and did work in any and all film genres – gangster movies, Westerns, comedy, teen pictures, historical costume adventures, and, of course, science fiction and horror.

Corman was legendary for his ability to produce a film with a minuscule budget on a nonexistent schedule. When the U.S. sent up its Explorer satellite in 1958, Corman submitted a proposal for *War of the Satellites* to the studio the next morning, and had the film in theaters within two months. When he shot *The Raven* – the least serious of a series of (relatively) high-budget films starring Vincent Price, based on the work of Edgar Allen Poe – he finished the movie a few days early, so Corman’s crew shot *The Terror* in those three days, while the sets from *The Raven* were being literally torn down around them. The all-time Corman speed record, however, is held by *Little Shop of Horrors*, shot in two days and now regarded as one of Corman’s best films.

Although Corman’s films, particularly his cheapest, quickest films, have their share of absurdity, incoherence, and camp nonsense, taken as a whole Corman’s body of work stands as remarkable. Given what he had to work with, his achievements as a filmmaker are far more outstanding than his failings in comparison to the major releases. At his best, Corman’s pictures are funny, scary, and exciting all at the same time – almost perfect genre films.

As of 2001, Roger Corman is still producing and directing top-quality, low-budget adventure films in many genres.

### Ed Wood

Roger Corman proved how much a talented director with a motivated, professional cast and crew could do with no budget and no schedule to speak of. Ed Wood proved how much a completely talentless hack, with a cast and crew of non-actors, flakes, and oddballs, could do with no budget and no schedule to speak of. Any cult movie buff will tell you that Ed Wood stands unopposed as the worst film director of all time.

Wood had no cinematic vision whatsoever, no identifiable technical expertise and no clue about the concepts of dramatic tension, pacing or on-screen charisma. His only arguable talents were a laughably overwrought writing style and a certain gift for finding memorably bizarre individuals for his films. His regular stable of players included the tragically fallen Bela Lugosi, the imposing Tor Johnson (see below), and Criswell, a TV psychic with a stentorian voice who got to do all the voiceovers.

Wood’s *magnum opus* is the notorious *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, widely regarded as the Worst Movie of All Time. The plot (such as it is) involves humanoid aliens who, having failed eight times to conquer the earth, unleash their final



weapon – resurrection of the dead. Other notorious Wood films include *Bride of the Monster*, an attempt at Gothic horror with Lugosi, Johnson, and a ludicrous rubber octopus (*Bride's* sequel, *Revenge of the Dead*, sat unreleased for 23 years because Wood didn't have enough money to pay to have the film processed), and *Glen or Glenda*, Wood's autobiographical defense of transvestism. In the '60s, Wood turned to soft-core porn like *Orgy of the Dead*, a stripper film with mild S&M overtones.

### Tor Johnson

There's little that can be said about the legendary Tor Johnson, except that he was a big, scary-looking guy.

Originally from Sweden, Tor came to America as a professional wrestler. Eventually, he broke into monster movies. With bald head, bulging, unblinking eyes, pasty-white skin, and the physique of an out-of-shape sumo, Tor was a genuinely frightening presence in even the worst monster movies. And Tor was in many of the *very* worst monster movies, including *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and the unspeakable *Beast of Yucca Flats*.

Tor basically played one of two roles: mutant zombie or inarticulate flunky. There was no difference whatsoever between his portrayal of one and his portrayal of the other.

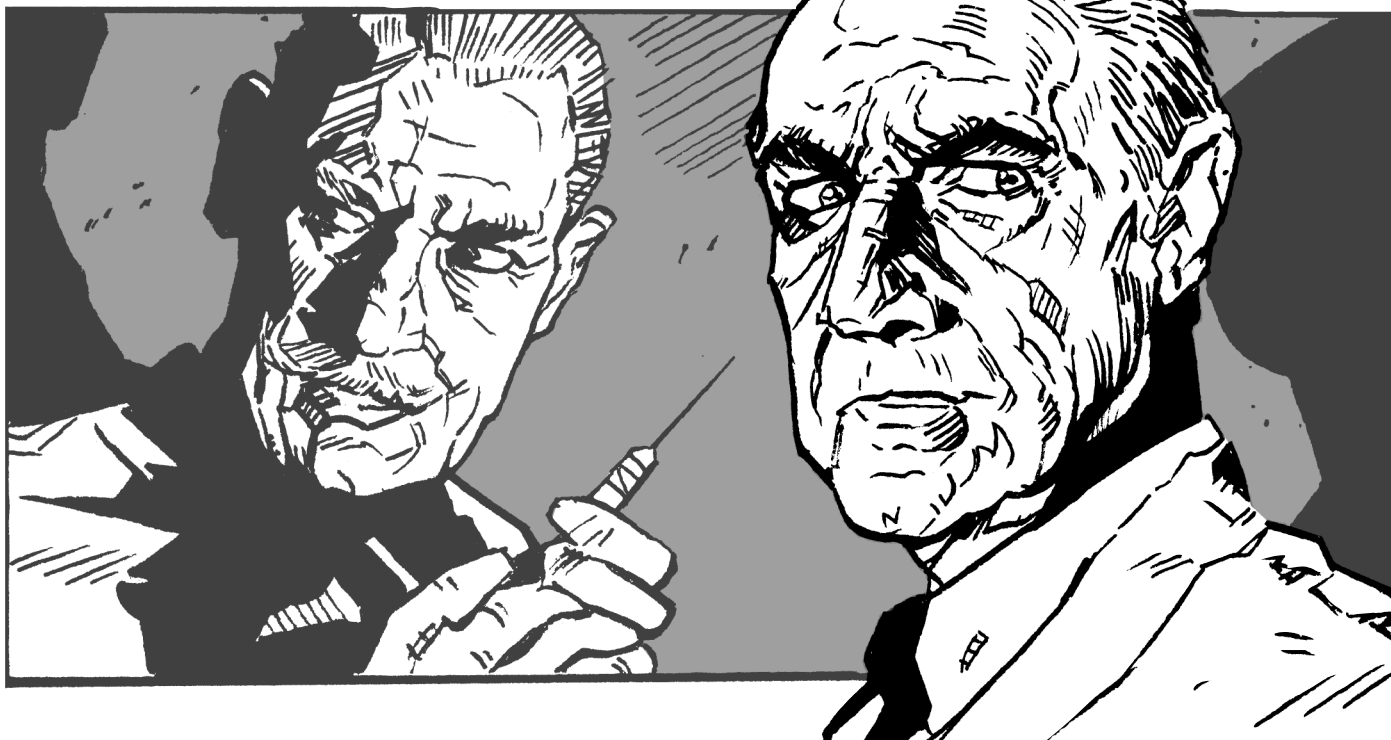
### The Mad Doctors

The "Kings of the Monsters" – Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi – were both still active in the '50s. Inevitably, they played mad scientists. Karloff did several films with Roger Corman, including *The Raven* and its notorious follow-up, *The Terror*. Despite serious health problems, Karloff usually managed to transcend the limitations of the B-movie genre, always maintaining his dignity, and bringing an aura of class to the low-budget films he appeared in.

Lugosi was another matter. Lugosi's last major-studio film was *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* in 1948, but instead of spending the '50s in peaceful retirement, Lugosi was forced to take any job he could find to support his addictions to alcohol and heroin. The suave continental actor who had menaced the world in 1931 as *Dracula* was reduced to a pathetic parody of himself in the '50s – a fragile, doddering figure incapable of delivering a coherent line. Watching Lugosi's deterioration takes much of the fun out of otherwise-hilarious Ed Wood films like *Glen or Glenda* and *Bride of the Monster*.

Although billed as "Bela Lugosi's Last Film," *Plan 9 From Outer Space* actually contains only a few minutes of Lugosi, filmed a few days before his death. For the rest of the film, "Lugosi's" character is played by Tom Mason, a chiropractor (either Wood's, his wife's, or simply a friend) with no physical resemblance to Lugosi whatsoever, holding a cape over his face.

Among the mad doctors of the B-movies, though, John Carradine was in a class by himself. Carradine was a character actor of indisputable talent and charisma, who simply had a reputation in Hollywood as an actor who'd work for any director who could pay his extremely reasonable salary requirements, with no ego problems, unprofessional behavior, or undue delays. Consequently, many directors of low-budget genre films turned to Carradine when they wanted to inject a touch of class and menace into otherwise pedestrian productions. Carradine made several hundred films throughout his long career, and can be seen in dozens of '50s science-horror Bs.



# Attitudes and Illusions

After World War II, American society underwent a revolution. The conflict had altered people's roles and attitudes; women had become much more involved in full-time or part-time work. Great turmoil was mixed with a feeling of optimism about the birth of a new world. In Europe the mass destruction had laid waste cities, roads, and railways, and what was left of industry was devoted to the production of war machines. The continent would need huge amounts of money and many years of recuperation to return to normal. Refugees, homeless and poverty-stricken, were an overriding problem in most nations. War widows and the disabled were desperate for assistance. A new philosophy of equal living standards for all developed. In Britain this meant the establishment of the Welfare State. In the United States this attitude led directly to the civil rights movement and the social upheavals of the '60s.

The American economy had been boosted, not broken, by the war, and investment and development from the war industries spilled over into the rest of society. America led the postwar world and could not return to the isolationist policies of earlier decades – the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, and NATO commitments made sure of this.

The mood at the start of the '50s was that almost anything was possible. The potential for great things existed now that the war had ended – the high note was undoubtedly the harnessing of atomic energy, which promised free electricity and isotopes for medicine. Other giant strides included the polio vaccine, the identification of the genetic structure, and the application of the jet engine.

The dark side to all of this prosperity and optimism was a widespread perception that happy days were here, now, and no further progress or struggle was necessary. Sure, there were still malcontents and evil-doers who had to be ferreted out and eliminated from society, but the really big problems had all been solved by technology and the American way.

Consequently, radicals of all stripes were met with persecution and hostility, no matter how just their causes might be. Society at large simply would not accept that the future was anything but sunny. Those who suggested that serious and fundamental problems might remain at the roots of society were regarded as traitors and troublemakers.

## INVASION AS A METAPHOR

It was not coincidental that '50s Hollywood created a movie genre devoted to invasion and the covert actions of alien entities. The newfound comprehension of space travel and space exploration was coupled with the intense fear of Communist invasion – a subversive invasion that would begin *at home*, the invaders *indistinguishable* from ordinary citizens. So it was with the invasion-from-space genre: body invasion, mind manipulation, and shape-shifting impostors were tailor-made to terrify America.

The GM can use this fear in adventures that stress either science horror or espionage. On the surface, the new neighbors in suburbia that act so strange could be Communist agents. Upon closer investigation, they may turn out to be Martian scouts in human bodies. A “Communist plot” to kill the mayor

## WHEN WERE THE “FIFTIES?”

When *GURPS Atomic Horror* refers to the '50s, it usually means the 10 years from 1950 to 1959, but the attitudes and social conventions that defined the '50s transcend the actual decade. In this sense, the “Fifties” can be said to begin in 1945, with the explosion of the atomic bomb and the end of WWII, and to end in late 1963, when the assassination of John F. Kennedy triggered the widespread social and cultural unrest of the '60s.

Likewise, when this book refers to the “postwar years,” it is referring to the two decades immediately following the end of WWII. Any point within this timespan is a proper setting for an *Atomic Horror* campaign, not just the decade of the 1950s. However, the definitive years for *Atomic Horror* are probably the long, tense peace from the end of the Korean War in 1953 to the escalation of the Vietnam conflict in 1964.

of L.A. could be an alien mission. The twin fears can be juggled around by the GM to misdirect the players and keep their curiosity aroused. Communists with ray-guns? An alien invader visiting the Russian consulate? Some players (or GMs!) might be tempted to equate the Communist conspiracy with the alien invasion – aliens control the Kremlin. Alternately, the aliens might use the Russian threat as a cover for their own operations. After all, no one in authority will believe tales of an alien takeover, but *everyone* is willing to believe the Communists are about to overthrow society.

Various anti-Communist propaganda pieces were published or filmed about how Communist Americans in “Smalltown, USA” could take over, killing or locking up the police and local officials, and organize a Communist militia to oppress the citizenry. How close the Communist Party of America came to this level of interpenetration will never be known (it is doubtful such a takeover was even considered, or that the CPA had more than token support from Moscow) but to the Americans of the '50s the threat was real, pervasive, and immediate. Extraterrestrial invaders can carry out their missions in the knowledge that, whether discovered or successful, the authorities and the American people will take their actions for those of Russian saboteurs.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

One of the best examples of the fundamental confusion of '50s society is America's attitude toward women.

During WWII, when waves of men were sent overseas to fight, women took over the maintenance of the economic and industrial infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of women trained for professions that had previously been the exclusive domain of men, from industry to finance to professional sports. But when the men returned victorious, the women were expected to meekly hand over their new-found roles and return to their traditional tasks as helpmate and homemaker.

By the mid-'50s, this had evolved into a strange double standard. Young women were allowed – often encouraged – to seek higher education and professional training, but they were also expected to put all this preparation aside the moment an acceptable husband offered himself.



Some women did manage to break the mold and rise to the top of traditionally male professions. Such women were considered odd, but they were also respected for their ability and tenacity. Even when a woman did manage to crack the male bastions, however, she still was often patronized and stereotyped. Women doctors existed, but they were almost required to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology. Women judges were actually rather common (a gifted male lawyer would likely be made a partner in a prominent law firm, but a gifted woman lawyer would usually end up on the bench), but they were generally relegated to hearing divorce and child-custody cases. Women police officers were meter maids and dispatchers, *never* beat cops or detectives.

And even in the '50s, women still had control of their traditional bastion of power, "polite society." A woman with the right social contacts could make or break careers, or even affect national policy, by opening or closing the doors of society to chosen individuals.

In the films of the '50s, including the monster movies, the gifted professional woman fared better than in reality. Woman scientists, doctors, reporters, or millionaires were seen as exotic and exciting, and thus were excellent choices for memorable, dramatic characters. Therefore, women in the movies were often allowed to be tough, competent, and active to a degree that would not have been accepted in the real world. Of course, these film heroines were also always presented as beautiful, virtuous, and quintessentially feminine, and they were always happy to give up their life of adventure when a sufficiently exceptional hero succumbed to their charms.

As far as *GURPS Atomic Horror* characters are concerned, this means that female PCs of many different types are entirely possible. Furthermore, women as a group are not subject to a Social Stigma (at least, not in the cinematic reality of *Atomic Horror* – whether they'd merit one in the real-world '50s is a completely different question). However, female PCs must be fundamentally different from males. A female PC will have to make constant small concessions to the spirit of the times. Patronizing, over-protectiveness, and even mild sexual harassment must be met with logical argument and cool politeness, not anger or frustration. Physical threats can be met with a violent response only if there are no men around to turn to for protection. Certain stereotypes will be absolutely unavoidable. *Somebody* has to cook, and it was almost impossible for a woman brought up in America in the '50s or earlier *not* to have some knowledge of cooking, housekeeping, and shopping – these skills were taught in the schools, and they were not elective. If these ground rules are followed, female PCs will have certain advantages denied to males – few male PCs will be able to avoid arrest by bursting into tears at a crucial moment. In fact, there are many questions that a polite '50s male would never even think of asking an apparently respectable woman, even in the most suspicious circumstances.

On the other hand, a '50s woman who behaved like a feminist of the 21st century – assertive, competitive, and demanding equal rights and equal responsibilities with men on all levels – would be perceived by society at large as having an Odious Personal Habit of the worst sort, and should be built that way.

## Setting the Scene

Unless the GM is careful, his 1950s science horror game will end up indistinguishable from modern America. Many of the same institutions were in place, and much of today's technology was around in more or less the same form (autos, suburbs, office blocks, telephones, etc.). A little effort is required to really set the scene; without period flavor, the whole genre can fall flat. When players start looking for fax machines or computer hackers and say, "I keep thinking it's a modern game . . ." the GM knows he's neglected to do his work properly.

There are a number of things the GM can do. He might give the players a news briefing before each game. This can include items of interest from the timelines in this book (see pp. 42-47 and 62-69), odd bits of local news, and perhaps even a clue or two concerning the current adventure. In the same vein, NPCs should talk about '50s issues, as well as the rumors and clues they're supposed to supply to the PCs. A bartender might wonder if They are going to drop the Bomb, or complain that he can't control his son anymore, before he gets around to the disappearances down by the old lead mine.

If this approach is too subtle, throw the '50s at your players! Have the FBI take them in for questioning, or get them caught in a mob of screaming fans trying to get to a rock 'n' roll star staying at their hotel. Perhaps the small town they've just entered is running a civil defense exercise, and everyone is inside the bomb shelter. Have Bob Hope or Steve Allen stop the traffic in L.A. while they sign autographs. Ask the players for descriptions of their character's clothing at different times in the game.

The resourceful GM can also make use of pictures and illustrations. Often, '50s magazines can be found in second-hand bookshops, and these could be left lying around. The ads in these magazines convey a lot of '50s flavor. The GM's screen can hold photographs from the period, and classic movie posters look good on the walls!

Music should never be neglected as a way to build a period atmosphere. Compilation CDs of '50s music are easy enough to find, but the music should definitely be kept in the background as a subliminal murmur. The upbeat tone of rock 'n' roll might easily become a distraction, and it contrasts with the horror or paranoia of the game (except, of course, in teen-oriented campaigns). On the other hand, the moodier ballads of Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, and Dean Martin will conjure up a nightclub or cabaret atmosphere, while jazz musicians – from Thelonious Monk to Dave Brubeck – can create a more Bohemian "hipster" ambiance. It all depends on the mood of the adventure, and the players' tastes and willingness to "get into the period."

For a game that doesn't take itself quite so seriously, the GM can use the satirical albums of Tom Lehrer. With songs such as "We Will All Go Together When We Go" and "So Long, Mom (A Song for World War III)," Lehrer's music adds a note of levity to a game – and, often, more than a little acid as well. All his work is currently available on CD, and comes highly recommended.

## “Fuzzy” Science

Modern science fiction RPGs usually stick to established scientific facts and principles to tell a story. Indeed, a certain fact may actually *be* the focus of the plot. In '50s science fiction, particularly in the movies, science was “fuzzier.” Script writers tended to follow scientific principles up to a point, but would not hesitate to add a new law of the universe (“an intense thermal barrier separates solar systems”) or bend the laws to suit the story (“they seem to be using some sort of electromagnetic force field”).

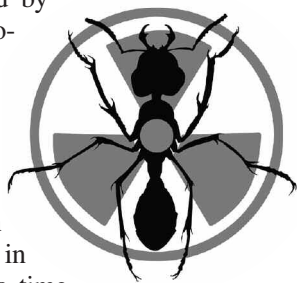
The one rule scrupulously adhered to by script writers, and that should be get just as much respect from GMs, is that the science in the story must *sound* realistic. Some of the PCs will be scientists who need to know enough to combat a menace. “Fuzzy” science lingo helps them do that, without requiring the players to know and extrapolate on obscure or complex scientific theory. GMs needn’t have Ph.D.s in physics to describe the effects of advanced technology; they just paint the principles in broad brush strokes, making it sound authentic however crazy the premise.

For example, if a GM wants everyone who comes within 20 feet of a giant mutant moth to fall ill, he needs to explain (in general terms) why. Is it radiation or bacteria? The difference could make a crucial difference in the adventure – do the PCs need to find the right sort of shielding or come up with a vaccine? Pseudoscientific labels also gave an absurd fantasy idea a ring of truth. Many contactee books, such as George Adamski’s (see p. 109), try to rationalize advanced technology with blatant scientific mumbo-jumbo. An anti-gravity motor works by the power of “resonant sound energy” or “the repulsion of dipolar electrical fields . . .”

Fuzzy science is more than just an excuse for a lack of scientific knowledge on the GM’s or players’ part – it’s an absolutely essential component of the genre. To put it bluntly, the scientific facts of the 21st century have no place whatsoever in *GURPS Atomic Horror*. It’s a universe that can and should be fundamentally different from the one we know today.

In the '50s, research and technology were changing the lives of ordinary people at a pace, and to a degree, never before experienced by humanity. Science seemed omnipotent – nothing was out of the reach of America’s scientists and inventors. Nobody knew what vistas the cracking of the atom would open.

For this reason, *GURPS* tech levels have only limited utility in *Atomic Horror*. The '50s were a time when the growth of human technology was literally unpredictable, and the game should reflect this uncertainty. A man with the right stuff can build a matter transmitter in his basement, or an interplanetary anti-gravity engine in his back yard. All he needs to do is find the key to “gravito-magnetic energy” or “cosmic rays” or good old atomic power.



## Space



Humans have been fantasizing about space travel for thousands of years, but in the '50s man seemed poised to actually make the leap. In 1957 the Soviet Union began putting Sputnik satellites into orbit. In 1959 two Soviet monkeys went into space and returned safely, and in 1961 Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human being to leave the Earth’s atmosphere, closely followed by Alan Shepard of the United States.

The Soviet dominance of the early space race was a very real source of “atomic horror” to America. There was serious concern that the Communists could gain strategic control of space, pummeling the United States with an unstoppable hail of nuclear weapons from orbit. There was more than wounded national pride behind America’s massive space program of the '60s.

The movie makers quickly extended this principle. If the Soviets could threaten from space, so could other, stranger invaders. The sky was the ultimate undefended border. This thought was not new – it dated back at least to *The War of the Worlds* – but in the '50s the threat of invasion from space became tangible in a way it never had before.

As with everything else in the '50s, these paranoid fears were offset by utopian optimism.

In this view, space was the manifest destiny of humankind. Other planets were like ripe fruit hanging in the sky, waiting to be harvested. Just as Western civilization had spread enlightenment and prosperity to the rest of the earth, American democracy – the ultimate product of human social evolution – soon would conquer other worlds. If other intelligent life forms were waiting for us there, they would fall into one of three categories:

*Elder brothers:* Evolved races that had enjoyed enlightened (i.e., American-like) society for millennia. They would eagerly welcome humans into their galactic civilization.

*Savages:* Underdeveloped civilizations that had not yet advanced to the pinnacle of science and culture enjoyed by humanity. Although they might be superstitiously hostile at first, eventually we would show them the way to true civilization.

*Evil Empires:* Benighted cultures that had achieved technological sophistication, but who would not or could not embrace the tenets of liberty and law that define human civilization. These villains must be contained or destroyed, lest they corrupt or threaten civilized folk.

These attitudes seem ludicrous and provincial today. Even in the '50s they were not unquestioned – there was a persistent theme in science fiction that when humanity encountered “elder brother” aliens, the elders might find us dangerous and unstable savages, at best, to be confined to our own playpen of a world until we either destroyed it or grew mature enough to leave it . . . at worst, to be exterminated as a menace to galactic civilization.

Most people, however, found it unthinkable that the shape of the future could be anything other than American democracy. We would conquer space the way we conquered every other frontier. Interstellar tyrants would be crushed the way we crushed the Nazis and the Japs.

## SCIENCE FICTION

There are many reasons why sci-fi movies were so popular in the 1950s – the pro-technology mood created by victory in WWII, apprehension about the atomic bomb, and the UFO craze of 1947 all contributed to the genre’s popularity. And it helped that, while science-fiction films were more popular than ever before, science-fiction literature was at an unheard-of level of sophistication and esteem. Many of the SF books of the decade were years ahead of the films, dealing seriously with social, psychological, and spiritual concepts that movies wouldn’t touch until the late ’60s.

Many superb authors brought their personal vision to ’50s SF, but the following masters are perhaps the most important.

Robert A. Heinlein was the undisputed king of ’50s SF. Most of his novels during the decade were “juveniles,” targeted at pre-teen readers, but they never talked down to their audience; these exciting, innovative novels stand head, shoulders, and chest above 99% of putatively “adult” science fiction. *Rocket Ship Galileo*, Heinlein’s first juvenile, was turned into the important science-fiction film *Destination Moon* by producer George Pal. Another juvenile, *Space Cadet*, inspired the pioneering TV show *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*.

Two other ’50s Heinlein novels are of particular interest to *Atomic Horror* GMs. *The Puppet Masters*, an edge-of-

your-seat adventure novel for grownups, presaged such seminal “enemy within” films as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Day of the Triffids*. *The Star Beast* is a humorous farce about an intelligent but confused space-behemoth who goes on an innocent rampage through future suburbia.

Isaac Asimov’s greatest contributions to the films of the decade were his visionary robot stories, which for the first time dealt seriously with the concept of artificial intelligence. Asimov’s other great opus of the ’50s, his *Foundation* epic, was perhaps even more important to the genre; it was the first major SF work to give “soft” sciences like history, psychology, and sociology equal footing with more technological disciplines. The movies wouldn’t be ready to tackle these concepts for years.

Ray Bradbury did more than any other author to make SF palatable to the masses, publishing many of his stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He also brought a human face to the genre, with tales of robotic grandmothers, happiness machines, and space pilots leaving their families behind for an extended mission. His *Martian Chronicles*, a fantastic and surreal vision of the dying planet Mars, was by turns sweet, sad, and frightening.

John W. Campbell was the legendary editor who nurtured and cultivated all the remarkable talent of the ’50s, and whose dynamic vision of the future shaped science fiction forever. In addition to his editorial contributions to the genre, Campbell wrote “Who Goes There,” the tense novella that was the basis for one of the most brilliant science-horror films ever, Howard Hawks’ *The Thing*.

## THE SHAPE OF THINGS

Aliens in science-fiction movies were usually humanoid. Even the monster in *The Thing* – purportedly a rapacious sentient carrot – was basically humanoid.

There was some rationale for this – who’s to say that when evolution comes up with a design for sentience as versatile and effective as the bilaterally symmetric humanoid model, it won’t reproduce that design, with minor variations, on many different worlds? Of course, most space monsters in the movies were human-shaped because they had to be played by human actors.

There were plenty of exceptions to the humanoid-aliens rule of thumb, though. Some worked better than others. The animated energy creature from *Forbidden Planet* was one of the scariest. *The Blob*, played by a couple of dozen teen-agers under a tarp, still managed to be occasionally intimidating. Roger Corman was the undisputed master of the improbable latex monster, notably the turnip-creature from *It Conquered the World* and the Machiavellian houseplant in the original *Little Shop of Horrors*.



Then there were the ludicrous hybrids. A common trick in the very cheapest monster movies was to add some construction-paper appendages to an innocent lizard or crustacean, then film it wandering over miniature terrain to simulate the rampages of a giant alien monster. The all-time low point of cinematic monster creation was probably the legendary turkey *Robot Monster* – the producers couldn't afford a robot suit, so they rented a gorilla costume and replaced the head with a diver's helmet. The monster's interstellar communicator was made from a Lawrence Welk-style bubble machine . . . complete with bubbles.

Except in the campiest scenarios, the GM should avoid overtly ludicrous space aliens – the players should be able to at least pretend they find the monsters frightening. But to stay in the spirit of the genre, the GM should keep his monsters a healthy mix of humanoids, hybrid creatures, and completely alien monstrosities.

## **THE FLYING SAUCER CRAZE**

When reports of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) began to sweep America in the late '40s, the U.S. Air Force began a Pentagon-approved study of the phenomenon. With strange objects and glowing lights continually being observed by reliable government and military personnel, the Pentagon feared a threat to national security.

The two most important of these early sightings were made by pilots, during a wave of flying saucer sightings. In June 1947, Kenneth Arnold witnessed several brightly lit objects weaving in and out of distant mountain peaks while he was on a flight in Washington state. He later described the objects as winged but tailless, moving like saucers skipping across water. Instantly newsmen dubbed them “flying saucers.” In the first days of 1948, a more alarming encounter took place in the skies over Kentucky. An experienced P-51 pilot, Captain Thomas F. Mantell, crashed while chasing a fast-moving, disk-shaped object of tremendous size. The wreckage seemed to indicate that Mantell's plane had exploded at a great altitude.

The death of Captain Mantell increased the unease of the government and the public. An alien origin, perhaps hostile, was attributed to the unexplainable “flying saucers.”

The Air Force started Project Sign in 1947 to search for an explanation of UFO activity. The project operated out of Wright-Patterson AFB; it decided that UFOs were real and probably extraterrestrial in origin. The Pentagon could not accept this verdict, and ordered all copies of the Sign report destroyed. The project was summarily ended. The Air Force began a new investigation – Project Grudge, which attempted to explain away the numerous sightings of the mysterious flying objects. It was a public debunking campaign, designed to give the government a breathing space in which to figure out what was going on. To do this it set up an ultra-secret government project called MJ-12 (Majestic Twelve). This clandestine group of experts took Project Sign's findings even farther. Project Grudge was upgraded and redesignated Project Blue Book in 1952; by that time it had explained away most of the reports. Project Blue Book cataloged every sighting and analyzed each one individually. In its first year,

## **EARLY UFO SIGHTINGS**

The first sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects this century occurred in a wave across Britain. In 1909, flying objects shaped like dirigibles and emitting beams of light carried out very advanced maneuvers. Some reports mention crewmen aboard the craft, and some were reported to have landed. A similar wave occurred in 1896 and '97 throughout the USA. In Sweden, in the early '30s, there was a wave of sightings known as the “ghost fliers.” The objects appeared to be normal airplanes, but carried out unusual flying procedures (such as circling of a town for hours on end during a snowstorm), seemed to use strong searchlights, and evaded all government inquiries.

During WWII, aircraft pilots on both sides sighted what the Allies called “foo fighters.” These glowing balls of light trailed and executed maneuvers in conjunction with fighters and bombers, causing considerable consternation to crews. German, Japanese, and Allied forces at first thought foo fighters might be secret enemy weapons, but the objects never seemed to offer any real threat to the planes that they “buzzed.”

The last pre-1947 wave concerned the U.S. government enough to dispatch General Doolittle to investigate the reports. Witnesses in Sweden had seen “ghost rockets” that followed flat trajectories and never fell to Earth. The United States feared experimental rockets fired by the Russians from bases in Finland or the captured Nazi rocket site of Peenemünde. Lack of evidence and the strange behavior of the ghost rockets left the situation unresolved.

over 1,500 UFO reports were received. Until it was shut down in 1969, Blue Book made an attempt to investigate UFO sightings, but like the official (and “public”) government projects before it, it never produced any proof that UFOs are in fact alien spacecraft. On the other hand, it found no proof that they aren't . . .

The CIA began to take note of what was becoming a nationwide panic. The UFO scare over Washington in 1952 particularly disturbed the Agency. It warned the government not to tell the press about that interest. The CIA and the Air Force jointly established a scientific committee that met in 1953. The Robertson Panel looked into UFOs in relation to national security and the public awareness of the phenomenon. Interestingly, the panel was not made up of psychologists, photographic experts, and sociologists, but hardheaded physicists and technologists.

America at large, meanwhile, was fascinated by the thought of flying saucers. While the government was concerned about secret military aircraft from hostile governments, the popular imagination was caught up with the idea of alien visitors. In no time, cartoonists and humorists had created a whole folklore of flying saucers and “little green men.” It was not long before movie directors tapped into this mythology.

Today UFOs are still seen, and they – and their hypothetical pilots – remain just as enigmatic as they were in 1947.



# CHARACTERS



Most *GURPS Atomic Horror* player characters will fall between 50 and 150 points, with no more than 40 points of disadvantages and 5 points of quirks. The teen-age motorcycle gang member is probably a 50- to 100-point character, but the astrophysicist who used to be a fighter pilot and football hero would be worth considerably more.

An interesting mix of people populated the '50s science-fiction films, ranging from pacifistic academics, to war-mongering Army colonels, to ordinary housewives grimly trying to protect their families from alien horrors. Between these archetypes are a wide variety of useful roles, filled by people flexible enough to react to the unknown without constantly resorting to simplistic fight-or-flight responses.

In the movies, there was often friction among the protagonists. This can lead to interesting adventure possibilities. If the military commander wants to kill the monster eating downtown Dallas, and the scientist wants to try to communicate with it, who will prevail?

If all the adventurers work for the same patron organization (like the Theoretical Science Foundation – see Chapter 3), then they must cooperate – with the organization's policies, if not with each other – and any differences will be subordinate to the mission. However, if they're brought together by circumstance, interpersonal conflict could become much more important in the adventure.

Players designing '50s characters should always remember that World War II ended only a decade earlier. Whatever their present occupation, characters may have served as soldiers, civil defense wardens, resistance fighters, spies, or in many other roles that would have given them experience handy in an *Atomic Horror* scenario.

## Character Templates

A wide variety of characters appear in the B movies of the 1950s, but certain types are nearly ubiquitous. Here are some of these.

### ACADEMIC/SCIENTIST 80 POINTS

This template presents the archetypal character for the *Atomic Horror* campaign: a person with expert knowledge in some pertinent scientific field. The differences between an academic and a scientist are relatively minor – an academic is usually a theoretician and expert, perhaps working for a university, or for a government agency or independent group such as the Theoretical Science Foundation. A scientist is more often an engineer or researcher that deals with practical applications of new technologies; in the 1950s, the most glamorous of these are rocket scientists and atomic physicists. Scientists are often the “golden boys” of their nation or organization, well-fed and well-paid to prevent their defection.

An academic will often (but not always) be older; frequently, they have young and beautiful daughters or nieces to take care of them (an Ally, or occasionally a Dependent). The scientists of the movies were “sound of mind, sound of body.” They weren't wimps or nerds! A scientist will usually be in excellent health, used to an outdoor life, and often familiar with fisticuffs and common firearms, all reflecting military

training, wilderness expeditions, or collegiate boxing. The optional bonuses to ST, DX, and HT and choices of background skills reflect these possibilities. A scientist or academic should choose a specialty; the most common (and the skills involved) are rocketry (Physics and Engineer (Vehicles)), atomic energy (Physics and Nuclear Physics), electronics (various specializations of Electronics), computers (Computer Programming, Electronics (Computers), and Electronics Operation (Computers)), and metallurgy (Metallurgy).

The GM should urge scientists to be inventive, and let them know that just because some breakthrough did not take place in the historical '50s, there is no reason it cannot take place in the game. If it looks like the only way to dispatch the 30-foot spider is with some sort of sonic weapon, then a scientist should have a chance of building one. The Science! skill and the Gadgeteer advantage will be handy in such cases.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 30 points chosen from Ally (Daughter, niece, or assistant) [Varies]; Eidetic Memory [30]; Gadgeteer [25]; Language Talent [2/level]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Patron (University or government agency, 6 or less) [10] or (9 or less) [20]; Reputation [Varies]; +1 to ST, DX, or HT [10]; or +1 to IQ [15].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -30 points chosen from Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Age [-3 per year over 50]; Bad Sight [-10]; Code of Honor (Personal) [-5 or -10]; Compulsive Behavior (Usually concerning science) [-5 to -15]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Dependent (Usually daughter or niece) [Varies]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Lamé (Crippled leg) [-15]; Obsession (Area of research) [-5 to -15]; Odious Personal Habit [-5 to -15]; Reputation [Varies]; or Sense of Duty [-5 or -10].

**Primary Skills:** Any two of Agronomy (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-17; Anthropology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Archaeology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Astronomy (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Biochemistry (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Botany (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Chemistry (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Computer Programming (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Diagnosis (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Ecology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Economics (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Electronics (Any) (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Engineer (Any) (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Forensics (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Genetics (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Geology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Linguistics (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Mathematics (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Metallurgy (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Meteorology (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-17; Naturalist (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Nuclear Physics (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Paleontology (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Physician (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Physics (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Physiology (Usually, but not always, human) (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Psychology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-14; Science! (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-12; Surgery (M/VH) IQ [8]-14; Veterinary (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; or Zoology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16.

**Secondary Skills:** One of Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-14, Teaching (M/A) IQ [2]-14, or Writing (M/A) IQ [2]-14; and 8 points in any of the skills in the above list.

**Background Skills:** A total of 5 points in any of Area Knowledge (Either home city or some exotic destination for the



expedition) or Savoir-Faire (M/E); Administration, Bard, Survival (Any), or Writing (M/A); Brawling or Guns (Any) (P/E); Driving (Any) or Piloting (Any) (P/A); or a Language (Usually M/A).

**Customization Notes:** A “mad scientist” or villainous scientist will likely have one or more of these disadvantages: Delusions [-5, -10, or -15]; Fanaticism (Self or about theories) [-15]; Megalomania [-10]; or Overconfidence [-10]. A more realistic scientist will lack the Science! skill; reduce cost accordingly. A scientist connected with an academic institution will almost certainly have the Tenure [5] advantage.

## **COP/FED 75 OR 80 POINTS**

Policemen – both local and federal – were respected in the '50s. The B movies usually portrayed local law enforcers as good guys, ready to give their all to protect the citizens (there were exceptions – the ignorant, cowardly, or crooked cop was an established film villain, even in the '50s).

The hero cop in the '50s usually had a position of some authority – a detective sergeant or lieutenant, in an urban setting; or a sheriff or chief of police in a rural or small-town environment. He could also have one or more subordinates under his direct authority. These additional cops could be PCs or NPCs, and they could provide comic relief, real aid and backup, or even both.

As soon as they receive reports of strange events, the government will probably send out special agents to investigate the disturbance, and determine whether it represents a threat to national security or the work of America's enemies. Federal agents can represent the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, military intelligence organizations, or other, super-secret agencies.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Legal Enforcement Powers [5 or 10\*]; and 20 points chosen from Administrative Rank 1-3 (5/level), Alertness [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts (Any; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact], Empathy [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], Intuition [15], Patron [Varies], Sensitive [5], Single-Minded [5], or Strong Will [4/level].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (to force or agency; 9 or less) [-5]; and a total of -20 points from Addiction (Tobacco) [-5], Cannot Harm Innocents [-10], Code of Honor (Personal) [-5 or -10], Curious [-5 to -15], Duty (raise to 12 or 15 or less) [-5 or -10 more], Enemy (Criminals; 6 or less) [-5], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10], Intolerance (Criminals or Strangers) [-5], Overconfidence [-10], Sense of Duty [-5 to -15], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Home area or beat) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14\*\*; Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and a total of 4 points in Brawling (P/E), Fast-Draw (Pistol) (P/E), Guns (Shotgun) (P/E), or Shortsword (P/A).

**Secondary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Criminology (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; one of Shadowing or Tracking (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; three of Interrogation, Intimidation, Leadership, or Streetwise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-

12; one of Detect Lies or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; and one of Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX [2]-12 or Motorcycle (P/E) DX+1 [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in First Aid (M/E); Armoury (Rifles and handguns) or Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A); Animal Handling, Forensics, Law, or Tactics (M/H); Guns (Light Automatic, Rifle, or Shotgun) (P/E); or Boxing, Riding (Horse), or Wrestling (P/A).

\* 5 points for local police, 10 points for feds with national jurisdiction.

\*\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** Less noble cops can choose from Bad Temper [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Odious Personal Habit (“Authoritarian”) [-5 to -15]; or Secret (Corrupt) [-10].

## **EXPLORER 75 POINTS**

In the monster films of the '50s, a professional explorer is usually a mercenary, combing the wilderness for fame and fortune. He can either be a corporate flunky, looking for specific resources for his company to exploit, or a wildcatter, trying to get rich quick in the wilderness. If he can't make his fortunes through mineral wealth or scientific discovery, he'll settle for capturing something odd enough that people will pay to see it. The monster-movie image of the explorer-as-huckster began with *King Kong* in 1933, and still held firm in the '50s.

Despite his flaws, an explorer is often a good person to have around. In the wilderness his expertise and competence are valuable, and in the city his quick tongue and street smarts can come in handy. The explorer will appeal to players with little patience for the black-and-white morality of the '50s.

A specialized type of explorer is the big game hunter, out for the bag of a lifetime in the form of aliens, giant bugs, dinosaurs, or some other totally new kind of game.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 12 [20].

**Advantages:** 25 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5]; Alertness [5/level]; Animal Empathy [5]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Disease-Resistant [5]; Fit [5]; Language Talent [2/level]; Patron [Varies]; Very Fit [15]; Wealth [Varies]; or +1 to ST, DX, IQ, or HT [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Duty (Usually to a Patron) [-5 to -15]; Glory Hound [-15]; Greed [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Obsession [-5 to -15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; or Unluckiness [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+3 [2]-14\*; Survival (Any) (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; and one of Navigation (M/H) IQ [4]-12 or Orienteering (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Two of Cartography, Merchant, Prospecting, or Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-12; one of Administration, Fast-Talk, or Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12, or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; and one of Cartography (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Anthropology, Archaeology, or Naturalist (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** Area Knowledge (World or some far-away place) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; and a total of 4 points in Language skills (M/A or M/H); Cooking, First Aid, Gesture, or Scrounging (M/E); Guns (Any) (P/E); or Boating, Climbing, Driving (Any), or Riding (Any) (P/A).

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

## INDUSTRIALIST 75 POINTS

In the years following WWII, “military-industrial complex” had not yet become a dirty word. In the movies, the industrialist was seen as prosperous, powerful, and altruistic, using his wealth and power for the good of society at large. The industrialist would consider it a duty and a privilege to sponsor expeditions in the interests of science, and would probably accompany them personally. (There were exceptions to this ideal, like the vicious and pathetic millionaire in *When Worlds Collide* trying to buy his way out of Armageddon.)

Sometimes the industrialist’s explorers or researchers let the genie out of the bottle, unleashing some force that menaces society. If so, the industrialist would consider it his personal duty to clean up after himself and his employees.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Status 1 [0]; Very Wealthy [30]; and 25 points chosen from Charisma [5/level], raise wealth level to Filthy Rich [20]; Single-Minded [5], additional Status [5/level], Strong Will [4/level], or +1 to IQ or HT [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Age [-3/year over 50]; Bad Sight [-10]; Code of Honor (Merchant’s) [-5]; Duty (Nonhazardous) [-5 to -10]; Enemy [Varies]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-15]; Honesty [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Overweight [-5]; Sense of Duty [-5 to -15]; or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; Merchant (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-15; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+2 [0]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Economics (M/H) IQ [4]-12; Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 5 points in Area Knowledge (M/E); Armoury, Bard, Prospecting, Research, or Surveying (M/A); or Architecture, Chemistry, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Engineer, Law, or Shipbuilding (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** For the truly rich, raise wealth to Filthy Rich and add levels of Multimillionaire [25/level]. Choose Background Skills to reflect the character’s particular industry.

## JOURNALIST 55 POINTS

Journalists will always strive to be where the action is, and the TSF (see pp. 30-40) often hires ex-journalists because of their research skills and talent for dealing with the public. A few may have been war correspondents in World War II or the Korean conflict, and most will be willing to follow up any story, no matter how dangerous or bizarre.

Freelance journalists have erratic incomes, but are able to choose the stories that interest them. Reporters on the staff of a newspaper, magazine, or radio or TV station will have a steady income; however, a staff reporter will find himself unemployed if he frequently ignores regular assignments.



Most PC journalists will be in print or radio. The newsreel and TV reporters, with their bulky camera equipment, will mostly keep to the background.

From Lois Lane to Brenda Starr to Hildy Johnson in *His Girl Friday*, the spunky female journalist was a familiar personality in the '40s and '50s, and makes an excellent choice for a player who wants an active, competent female hero.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 25 points chosen from Alertness [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Contact (Any area; skill-15, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [2/contact]; Empathy [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Luck [15]; Patron (Publisher) [Varies]; Reputation [Varies]; Serendipity [15]; Single-Minded [5]; Strong Will [4/level]; or Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points from Code of Honor (Journalist’s: “Get the story out”) [-5]; Cowardice [-10]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Duty [-2 to -15]; Enemy [Varies]; Jealousy [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (“Pushy,” “Aggressive,” etc.) [-5 or -10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Poverty (Struggling or Poor) [-10 or -15]; Reputation [Varies]; Stubbornness [-5]; or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** One of Bard, Photography, or Writing, all (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; or Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Area Knowledge (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; one (not chosen as Primary Skill) of Bard, Photography, or Writing (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and two of Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14, Fast-Talk or Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Detect Lies or Psychology (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, or native language skill at IQ+2 [2]-15.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in Brawling, Guns (Any), or Typing (P/E); Driving (P/A); Acting, Criminology, Disguise, Holdout, Shadowing, or Speed Reading (M/A); or Accounting, Diplomacy, Economics, Forgery, History, Law, or Literature (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Choose Background Skills to reflect the journalist's particular "beat."

## **KID/TEEN-AGER 15 POINTS, LESS THE POINTS IN YOUTH**

Kids 7 to 12 years old were often the heroes of '50s science fiction (most notably in *Invaders from Mars*), and teen-agers ruled unchallenged in their own subgenre. Movie teen-agers appeared in two broad categories. The all-American kid had good teeth, athletic letters, and decent but not spectacular grades; he was known for saying "Golly" and "swell" – a lot. The juvenile delinquent was either a misunderstood victim of social prejudice or a genuine bad seed – though their misbehavior usually confined itself to cutting classes, drag racing, and smoking.

Younger kids would typically notice some significant detail that the grownups were too busy and unimaginative to see. Finally some competent and sympathetic adult would listen to the kid's story . . . but by then it would be *almost* too late. Kids and teen-agers were also often brought along, inexplicably, on very dangerous expeditions to lost worlds or even outer space. The teen-ager of the '50s is probably interested in dating, cars, the home team, dancing to (or performing) rock 'n' roll music, and, of course, going to monster movies.

Note that the template totals 15 points before the Youth disadvantage is taken into account; thus, actual cost will be lower. Also note that kids 14 years of age or younger have starting attribute levels lower than 10, and do not receive points for these reductions; see p. B14 for more information. Finally, see p. 23 for a slight change to the Youth disadvantage in *Atomic Horror* games.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 10 [0], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points chosen from Alertness [5/level]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Danger Sense [15]; Intuition [15]; Luck [15]; Musical Ability [1/level]; or +1 to DX or IQ [10].

**Disadvantages:** Youth [-2/level]; and a total of -15 points chosen from Curious [-5 to -15]; Honesty [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Reputation [Varies]; Social Stigma (Second-class citizen) [-5]; or Unluckiness [-10].

**Primary Skills:** One of Climbing (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; Dancing (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; Driving (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; Mechanic (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Musical Instrument (M/H) IQ [4]-10\*; Singing (P/E; HT) HT+2 [4]-12\*; Sports (Football or Baseball) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; or Throwing (P/H) DX [4]-10.

**Secondary Skills:** 2 points in another skill from the above list.

**Background Skills:** 4 points in Area Knowledge (Home city or region) (M/E); Brawling (P/E); Stealth (P/A); or any other skill listed under Primary Skills.

\* Increase skill level by levels in Musical Ability, if any.

**Customization Notes:** Teen-agers can be built on more points; points in skills can be increased, allowing them to choose additional Primary or Secondary skills, and perhaps allow a +1 to one attribute [10]. In certain campaigns, much higher attributes (particularly DX) may be appropriate.

## **LONER 60 POINTS**

The romantic drifter has always occupied an important spot in American culture, and represents all the alienated outsiders that roamed the films of the '50s – even the simplistic world of the sci-fi films. Some loners adopted the trappings of the beat generation, spending their time in the murky depths of jazz clubs. Others were more-or-less hoboes, wandering aimlessly, trying to make a living any way they could. Wherever the loner goes, he will be viewed with suspicion by the locals. But when the going gets tough, he'll always turn out to have unsuspected reserves of competence and moral fiber.

Often, the loner's background is completely mysterious. When his history is discussed, he's frequently a disgruntled veteran – but his background could be almost anything. Particularly in youth-oriented films, the loner often carried a guitar and tended to burst into song; thus, Musical Ability is common.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from Alcohol Tolerance [5]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Charisma [5/level]; Composed [5]; Cool [1]; Disease-Resistant [5]; Fashion Sense [5]; Luck [15]; Musical Ability [2/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; or +1 to ST, DX, IQ, or HT [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points from Addiction (Tobacco) [-5]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Loner [-5]; Mistaken Identity [-5]; Poverty [-10 or -15]; Sense of Duty (Companions) [-5]; Social Stigma (Second-class citizen or minority) [-5 or -10]; Stubbornness [-5]; or Unluckiness [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Streetwise (M/A) IQ [4]-13 and one of Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13, Motorcycle (P/E) DX+2 [4]-14, Musical Instrument (Any, though guitar and harmonica are common) (M/H) IQ [4]-12\*, or Singing (P/E; HT) HT+2 [4]-12\*.

**Secondary Skills:** Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [2]-13; Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-12; and two of Carousing (P/A; HT) HT [2]-10, Dancing (P/A) DX [2]-12, Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Mechanic (Any) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, or Sex Appeal (M/A; HT) HT [2]-10.

**Background Skills:** A total of 5 additional points in Area Knowledge (M/E); Gambling, Holdout, Poetry, or Survival (Any) (M/A); Diplomacy or Tactics (M/H); Singing (P/E; HT); Bicycle, Guns (Any), Knife, or Swimming (P/E); Climbing or Stealth (P/A); Sleight of Hand (P/H); or any Primary or Secondary skills.

\* Add any levels of Musical Ability to skill.

**Customization Notes:** Given many loners' mysterious background, almost any background skills could be justified (though some might well require an Unusual Background!).

## MILITARY MAN 90 POINTS

Other than the academic, this is probably the most important character type in *GURPS Atomic Horror*. Any branch of the service might be represented, but the high-tech, glamorously new Air Force was unquestionably the most popular.

In the postwar years, the United States was acutely conscious that it needed to maintain the shining image of the military. Consequently, uniformed military officers in the movies were seldom portrayed as anything but paragons of virtue and patriotism. This template reflects this.

Most military characters in the movies were officers; thus, the template has a minimum Military Rank of 3. Enlisted characters (like the grizzled NCO or the fresh-faced recruit), if they appeared as anything but victims, were usually adjuncts to the commissioned hero – often comic relief or faithful sidekicks. Some would even qualify as Dependents. General officers will often appear, but usually as NPCs or Patrons.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** Military Rank 3 [15]; and 15 points chosen from Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], additional Military Rank [5/level], Reputation [Varies], Strong Will [4/level], Toughness (DR 1) [10], Very Fit [15], Voice [10], or +1 to IQ; Air Force pilots can also choose from 3D Spatial Sense [10], Absolute Direction [5], Acceleration Tolerance [10], or Acute Vision [2/level].

**Disadvantages:** Duty [-15]; and a total of -20 points from Chummy [-5], Code of Honor (Officer's or personal) [-5 to -15], Fanaticism (Patriotism) [-15], Honesty [-10], Intolerance (Enemy nationality or culture) [-5], Odious Personal Habit ("By the book") [-5], Overconfidence [-10], Post-Combat Shakes [-5], Sense of Duty [-5 to -15], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-14\*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-14\*; NBC Warfare (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; and choose one specialty and its skill package from below [10]:

1. Air Force pilot: Aviation (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors); Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Gunner (Cannon or Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15\*; Gunner (Guided Missile) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14\*; Parachuting (P/E) DX [1]-13; and Piloting (Heavy Airplane, High-Performance Airplane, or Light Airplane) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14.
2. Armor: Armoury (Vehicular Weaponry) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Driving (Tracked) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Forward Observer (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Gunner (Cannon) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15\*; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14\*; Mechanic (Diesel engine) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Orienteering (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; and 2 more points in Tactics, giving Tactics (M/H) IQ [4]-12.
3. Artillery: Armoury (Artillery) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Driving (Tracked or Heavy Wheeled) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Elec-

tronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Forward Observer (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Gunner (Cannon) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15\*; and Mechanic (Any) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

4. Engineer: Demolition (M/A) IQ [1-1/2]-12\*\*; Driving (Construction Equipment or Tracked) (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-11; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ [6]-13; Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H) IQ-2 [2]-11; and Traps (M/A) IQ-1 [2]-12.
5. Infantry: Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Armoury (Rifles and handguns) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Climbing (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-11; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14\*; Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-14\*; add 1/2 point to Guns (Rifle), giving Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-15\*; Hiking (P/A; HT) HT [2]-11; Orienteering (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; 2 more points in Tactics, giving Tactics (M/H) IQ [4]-12; and Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11.

**Background Skills:** Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; and a total of 5 points in Brawling, Guns (Any), Jumping, Knife, or Swimming (P/E); Boating, Climbing, Driving, or Spear (Any) (P/A); Judo (P/H); Armoury (Rifles and handguns), Electronics Operation (Communications), Orienteering, or Survival (Any) (M/A); Strategy (M/H); or additional points in specialty skills.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

\*\* Bought up from Engineer-3 default.

**Customization Notes:** Former military personnel wouldn't have the Military Rank or the Duty. Enlisted personnel would have Military Rank 0-2.

## MOBSTER 70 POINTS

Criminals were not always the bad guys in the films of the '50s. A mobster might be trying to escape from a life of crime and go straight. He might be an ex-con who's paid his debt to society. Or he might be a Robin Hood type, living outside the law, who never victimizes anybody who doesn't deserve it. On the other hand, he could be a real hard-case villain – but when an alien menace threatens, he chooses to stand with his fellow humans, even though they might be his deadly enemies under more ordinary circumstances.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 30 points chosen from Appearance [5 or 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts (Street; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Danger Sense [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Luck [15]; Patron (Crime boss; reasonably powerful, 9 or less) [15]; Reputation [Varies]; Wealth [10 or 20]; +1 to ST, DX, IQ, or HT [10]; or +2 to ST [20].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Addiction (Tobacco) [-5]; Bad Temper [-10]; Callous [-6]; Code of Honor (Pirate's, "stays bought," or personal) [-5]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Compulsive Gambling [-5 to -15]; Compulsive Lying [-15]; Enemy (Law enforcement) [Varies]; Greed [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Loner [-5]; Reputation [Varies]; Social Stigma [-5 to -15]; or Unluckiness [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Streetwise (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; and one of Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13 or Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-12; Guns (Any) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14\*; and any three of Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX [2]-12, Forgery (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Gambling (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Holdout (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Lockpicking (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Pickpocket (P/H) DX-1 [2]-11, Running (P/H; HT) HT-1 [2]-9, Shadowing (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-12, or Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** Carousing (P/A; HT) HT [1]-9; and a total of 4 additional points in Scrounging (M/E); Acting, Disguise, Mechanic (Any), Merchant, or Survival (Urban) (M/A); Fast-Draw (Any), Guns (Any), or Knife (P/E); Climbing or Driving (Any) (P/A); Sleight of Hand (P/H); or any Secondary Skill.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** Pick Secondary skills to create a crime specialty. For example, a getaway driver might take Driving (Automobile), Shadowing, and Lockpicking (to procure “disposable” cars).

## PRIVATE DETECTIVE 75 POINTS

Professional investigators have many skills which are useful in an *Atomic Horror* scenario. Many will have gone into the business after serving on the police force, the armed services, or both, and their attitude and personality will reflect this.

The movie detective is traditionally a tough guy used to the seamy side of life, who knows how to handle the criminal fraternity. He may be a closet idealist, a cynic, or just plain rotten! If the PC previously served with the police department, the player should consider why he left. Was he retired, injured, or fired? If he was fired, was he guilty . . . or framed? Does he hold a grudge?

The PI might be introduced to the adventure by a young lady worried about her elderly uncle, who vanished shortly after his return from his last expedition to the Arctic. Or he might be retained by a mysterious stranger to locate some unusual object which he does not wish to bring to the attention of the authorities.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 25 points chosen from Alertness [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts (Any; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Danger Sense [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Intuition [15]; Strong Will [4/level]; or Toughness (DR 1) [10].

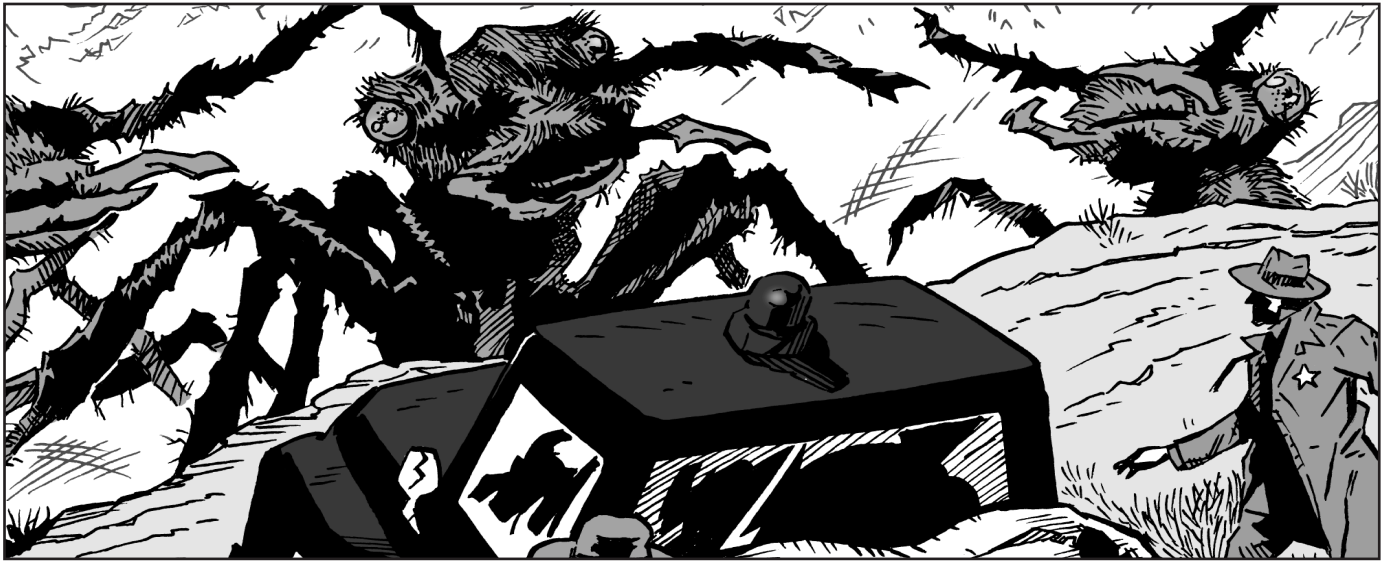
**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Addiction (Tobacco) [-5]; Alcoholism [-15]; Bad Temper [-10]; Bully [-10]; Code of Honor (Personal) [-5 or -10]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Enemy [Varies]; Flashbacks [Varies]; Greed [-15]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sense of Duty [-5 to -15]; Unluckiness [-10]; or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [2]-13; Criminology (M/A) IQ [4]-14; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14\*; and Streetwise (M/A) IQ [4]-14.



**Secondary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Local area) (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX [1]-11; Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; three of Interrogation, Intimidation, Research, or Shadowing (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Detect Lies or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and two of First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-12, Fast-Draw (Pistol) (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11, or Guns (Any) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13\*.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in Armoury (Rifles and handguns) or Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A); Forensics, Law, or Tactics (M/H); Guns (Any) (P/E); Boxing or Wrestling (P/A); or any Secondary Skill.  
\* Includes +2 for IQ.



## SPORTS FIGURE 80 POINTS

Sports heroes were idealized in the '50s just like scientific and military men. Professional athletes who might show up in the campaign include baseball or football players, boxers, race car drivers, or even rodeo cowboys. Sports figures were mostly seen as amiable, talented individuals worthy of imitation, but some were portrayed as vain, patronizing, or extremely dense.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

**Advantages:** Fit [5]; and 20 points chosen from Appearance [5 to 25], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Extra Fatigue [3/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Reputation [Varies], Toughness (DR 1) [10], upgrade Fit to Very Fit [10], Wealth [Varies], or +1 to ST, DX, IQ, or HT [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Bad Temper [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Clueless [-10]; Code of Honor [Varies]; Compulsive Behavior (Exercise) [-5]; Glory Hound [-15]; Gullibility [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Oblivious [-3]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Sense of Duty (Teammates) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; or -1 IQ [-10].

**Primary Skills:** One of Boxing; Driving (Race Car); Riding (Horse); or Sports (Baseball or Football) (P/A) DX+1 [8]-15.

**Secondary Skills:** Tournament Law (appropriate sport) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-12; and one (in support of the chosen Primary Skill) of Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-11, Lasso (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13, Mechanic (Gasoline engine), or Throwing (P/H) DX [4]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in Bicycling, Brawling, Jumping, or Swimming (P/E); Boating, Climbing, Driving (Automobile), or Wrestling (P/A); Lifting (P/H; ST); Running (P/H); Intimidation or Performance (M/A); or Animal Handling (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Other sports beyond those listed here are possible, of course. *GURPS Martial Arts* could be useful for boxers who want an expanded repertoire of techniques.

## SPY 70 POINTS

The G-man or fed's opposite number is the foreign spy. He (or she – the exotic *femme fatale* often appeared in '50s movies) might serve as an added complication for the heroes, an ally (or the source) of an alien or scientific menace, or even as a reluctant ally of the heroes, putting aside petty national squabbles for the good of all mankind.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 30 points chosen from Administrative Rank [5/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Alternate Identity [15]; Appearance [5 or 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Collected [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Diplomatic Immunity [20]; Empathy [15]; Imperturbable [10]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Luck [15]; Military Rank [5/level]; Security Clearance [2 or 5/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; Voice [10]; +1 to ST, DX, or HT [10]; or +1 to IQ [15].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (To agency; 9 or less) [-5]; Secret (Spy) [-5]; and a total of -20 points chosen from Curious [-5 to -15], Duty (Increased frequency, up to Extremely Hazardous Duty) [-5 to -15], Enemy (Enemy agents; 6 or less) [-10 to -15], Fanaticism (Nation or agency) [-15], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Lecherousness [-15], Light Sleeper [-5], Nightmares [-5], Overconfidence [-10], Paranoia [-10], Secret (With increased consequences) [-5 to -15], Sense of Duty (Nation) [-10], or Trademark [-5 to -15].

**Primary Skills:** Acting (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; one Language (often English) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and one of Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14 or Sex Appeal (M/A; HT) HT [2]-10.

**Secondary Skills:** Any four of Camouflage (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Demolition (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Disguise (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Electronics Operation (Any) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Guns (Any) (P/E) DX+3 [2]-14\*; Holdout (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Lockpicking (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Shadowing (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-11; or Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-10; and a total of 7 points in Administration, Cartography, or Politics (M/A); Cryptanalysis, Cryptography, Economics, Forensics, Forgery, History, Law, Poisons, SIGINT Collection/Jamming, or Strategy (M/H); Brawling or Guns (Any) (P/E); Climbing (P/A); or any other Secondary Skill.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** The basic template presumes a low frequency for the Duty and relatively minor consequences for the Secret (deportation or the like). Increased frequency and/or consequences are provided as options, for those spies with more demanding masters or more dangerous assignments.

## YOKEL

## 65 POINTS

This is a colorful, rural salt-of-the-earth type – a cowhand, farmer, hunter, hermit, hillbilly, etc. Often the yokel exists only as a victim or comic relief, but he could also be a tough, no-nonsense sort who knows how to take care of himself and knows the back roads inside and out. The two heroes of the movie *Tremors* (possibly the best '50s monster movie the '90s produced) are excellent examples of heroic PC yokels.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5]; Alertness [5/level]; Animal Empathy [5]; Fearlessness [2/level]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Toughness [10]; or +1 to ST, DX, IQ, or HT.

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points from Alcoholism [-15]; Appearance [-5 to -20]; Bad Temper [-10]; Callous [-6]; Hidebound [-6]; Illiteracy [-10]; Intolerance [-5 or -10]; Obdurate [-10]; Odious Personal Habit [-5 to -15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Semi-Literacy [-5]; or Uneducated [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Home area) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Guns (Pistol, Rifle, or Shotgun) (P/E) DX+3 [4]-14\*; and one of Animal Handling (Dogs, Horses, or some other animal type) (M/H) IQ [4]-10/16, Naturalist (M/H) IQ [4]-11, or Tracking (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Pick any three of Camouflage (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Carousing (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Cooking (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Fishing (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Guns (Any) (P/E) DX+2 [2]-13 (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Hiking (P/A; HT) HT [2]-11 (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Mimicry (Animal sounds or Bird calls) (P/H; HT) HT-1 [2]-10 (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Orienteering (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-11 (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Survival (Any) (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Traps (M/E) IQ [2]-12; Weather Sense (M/A) IQ [2]-11 (M/E) IQ [2]-12; or 2 points in another of the Primary skills.

**Background Skills:** 4 points in Brawling or Swimming (P/E); Climbing, Driving (Automobile), or Riding (Horse) (P/A); or Running (P/H; HT).

\* Includes +1 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** Some yokels (especially those in comic-relief or victim roles) will often have a lower IQ, making this template less point-efficient.

# Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills



Most advantages, disadvantages and skills that apply to the *Atomic Horror* setting already appear in the *GURPS Basic Set* or *GURPS Compendium I*. Due to the time period of *Atomic Horror*, many advantages and disadvantages should be handled in a slightly different manner, and many skills will be unavailable because of the setting's tech level.

## ADVANTAGES

**Acceleration Tolerance** *see p. CI19*

This is the ability to withstand for short periods the sudden, high G-forces of extreme acceleration. It is most useful for astronauts, fighter pilots, and test pilots who commonly perform high-G maneuvers. This advantage provides a +5 to HT on any roll to avoid the effects of acceleration.

**Administrative Rank** *see p. CI19*

Most U.S. espionage agencies have their own system of rank, and will use this advantage for their agents. Many foreign powers assign Military Rank to their agents instead; see that advantage, below, for more information.

**Appearance, Charisma, and Voice**  
*see pp. B15, B19, B23*

Heroes were idealized in the '50s. They were usually presented as attractive, charismatic people, and portrayed by attractive, charismatic actors. These advantages are extremely appropriate to any *Atomic Horror* PC.

**Gadgeteer** *see p. CI25*

The inventor working out of his own garage, cobbling together a spaceship – or an alien-zapping laser – is a staple of '50s SF and horror. The 25-point advantage is appropriate to any but the grittiest, most realistic games; the 50-point version is suitable for cinematic games only.



**High Technology** *see p. CI26*

High Technology normally allows up to +3 TLs, for 100 points. *Atomic Horror* extends this; each additional +1 to TL doubles the cost (i.e., 200 points for +4 TLs, 400 points for +5 TLs, and so on).

**Immunity to Disease** *see p. B20*

If the menace is an alien virus or fungus, this advantage can be vital. On the other hand, if the character is the only person in Los Angeles not suffering from the effects of the alien plague, then the authorities are going to be *very* interested in how his body works.

*Luck* *see p. B21*

Heroes in the monster movies were often saved only by remarkable strokes of luck – the cynical might charge that this was due to sloppy screenwriting, but even so this advantage is an integral part of the genre.

*Military Rank* *see p. B22*

The CIA is a civilian organization, but ranks in both the British MI6 and the Soviet KGB correspond to army ranks. Rank usually applies to field agents, who will earn more important missions, better backup, and higher pay the farther up the promotional ladder they climb.

*Musical Ability* *see p. B22*

Particularly in movies for the teen-age audience, the hero tended to break into song (usually formulaic, forgettable rock 'n' roll) whenever a guitar, piano, ukelele, or washboard was handy.

The musical hero was seldom a professional entertainer, but those who knew him would inevitably call for a performance at any social gathering. A very appropriate quirk for *Atomic Horror* would be “Gives impromptu musical performances whenever asked.”

*Patron* *see pp. B24-25*

The Theoretical Science Foundation is a custom-made Patron for a science-horror campaign, providing the PCs with cases to investigate, technical support, and a means of earning a living while attempting to save the Earth. The TSF is worth 15 points as a Patron and, while not essential to an *Atomic Horror* game, will provide a legitimate excuse to involve the PCs in virtually any type of scenario, no matter where it's set.

In a spy campaign, an agent's intelligence agency is a Patron (25 points).

*Status* *see p. B18*

Status can be very important in convincing the authorities that the area (or even the planet) is in danger. If someone's status is sufficiently high, then he may actually *be* the authorities!

<i>Status</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Weekly Salary</i>
-2	Convict, known homosexual or Communist	\$30
-1	Juvenile; Hobo; Poor; Racial Minority; Underworld Figure	\$60
0	Citizen	\$120
1	City Councilman; Lawyer or Successful Businessman; Sheriff; Priest; Ph.D.	\$240
2	Mayor; Doctor	\$480
3	Army General	\$800
4	Big City Mayor; U.S. Representative; Bishop	\$1,200
5	Millionaire Industrialist; Governor	\$1,600
6	U.S. Senator	\$2,000
7	U.S. President	\$4,000

*Unusual Background (Alien)* *50 points*

An *Atomic Horror* campaign is, by nature, human-centric almost to the point of xenophobia. It's *us* (humanity) vs. *them* (various alien menaces). For this reason, it is recommended that any player who wants an alien PC pay the above Unusual Background cost. It is further recommended that alien PCs not be available at all at the start of the campaign. For instance, a PC should be allowed to play a Loi (pp. 47-51) only after the party as a whole has become aware of the Loi alliance through roleplaying.

For details on the various alien races, see Chapter 4.

## EXOTIC ADVANTAGES

In the '50s, psionics, “superpowers,” and other exotic abilities were *not* considered blessings. Even in the comics, superheroes were out of fashion. Instead, noble heroes faced adventure using only their God-given fists and brains. Strange powers were reserved for their unnatural enemies.

Inhuman powers carried a horrible price in the '50s. Anyone who acquired a special ability could expect it to drive him mad, turn him into a monster or both.

Of course, if the GM wishes to break genre and throw powerful psionic or super PCs into an *Atomic Horror* campaign, he's free to do so – he should just be aware that he *is* breaking genre.

Temporary exotic powers, on the other hand, definitely have their place in the campaign. If, for example, a PC is injected with a mysterious substance that gives him super strength and telepathy while it slowly transforms him into a Komodo dragon, that could be the basis of an interesting adventure, as the person uses his unwanted powers in his quest to regain his ebbing humanity.

## DISADVANTAGES

*Bloodlust* *see p. B31*

With so many “normal” men now integrated into civilian life after witnessing, or even part of, the violence and despair of WWII, Bloodlust may be a common disadvantage. War veterans with Bloodlust are everyday peace-loving citizens, but when they are provoked to fight, their wartime instincts return and they will try to dispatch their foes as quickly and with as much force as possible. Such a person may well be horrified by his own actions after the event.

*Delusions* *see p. B32*

The government-sanctioned paranoia that has gripped the Free World can manifest itself in this disadvantage. When people adopt rumor and hearsay as normal states of mind, they can suffer from any of the following Delusions:

*Quirk:* Strangers with funny accents are probably Russians. Red is a sign of Communism.

*Minor Delusions:* All strange lights in the sky are flying saucers. Communists control the government. Aliens control the government. The Earth is flat. My boss is a colonel in the KGB.



*Dependents* *see pp. B38-39*

An extremely common disadvantage – wives, children, beautiful nieces, and teen-age assistants were forever being drawn into the thick of danger.

*Intolerance* *see p. B34*

A war veteran has plenty of reasons to despise foreigners – he could hold a personal grudge against a particular nation or against all of the ex-Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). Someone who is intolerant may also be a vehement anti-communist, white supremacist, or even a crusading atheist who lost his faith at Iwo Jima or Normandy.

Adult NPCs in a teen-oriented campaign will often have Intolerance (Juveniles).

*Paranoia* *see p. B35*

The historical '50s were indisputably a time of rampant international paranoia. However, if society within the campaign really *is* riddled with spies and saboteurs from foreign powers or alien worlds, being instinctively aware of such things cannot properly be called a disadvantage.

*Social Stigma* *see p. B27*

There are several groups of second-class citizens in '50s America. They include homosexuals, members of the Communist Party of America, and virtually all nonwhite racial minorities. Jews were in a period of transition in the '50s – they do not get an automatic Social Stigma, but they will probably have to confront anti-Semitism eventually. A person who is part of a stigmatized group will face discrimination and may suffer verbal or physical abuse. GMs who do not wish to impose the ugly reality of social bigotry on their campaigns should feel free to ignore this disadvantage, but should be aware that their games will be ahistorical as a result.

In teen movies, teen-agers were frequently portrayed as second-class citizens, repressed or ignored by an uncomprehending adult population.

*Youth* *see p. B29*

In the *Atomic Horror* setting, it is entirely appropriate to have small children adventuring right alongside the adults – indeed, the kids are often the ones to solve the mystery! As such, the Youth disadvantage should be allowed to be “open-ended”; that is, a child of 12 adventuring in a society where the age of majority is 21 would have 9 levels of Youth at a cost of -18 points. Each time you age a year, you must buy off one level of the Youth disadvantage.

## SKILLS

*Brawling* *see p. B50*

A pervasive skill in *Atomic Horror*. Virtually every male character, and a good portion of the females, should have some knowledge of “the manly art of self-defense.”



*Engineer/TL (Rockets)* *see p. B60*

This is the skill of designing and building chemical rockets (TLs 6 to 8). Rocket designers in *GURPS Atomic Horror* should be given more leeway in a historical '50s campaign – the GM should allow the possibility of manned missions to the moon, Mars, or the asteroids! TL6 rockets are purely experimental sub-orbital models, but TL7 designs are man-carrying and capable of reaching space, reaching orbit, landing on planets, or acting as reusable “rocket planes.” The fertile design concepts of the '50s can become experimental reality in the game and provide projects for NACA, NASA (founded in 1958), or the TSF. The skill prerequisite for Engineer (Rockets) is Mathematics.

*Forward Observer/TL* *see p. C1151*

This is the skill of directing fire from artillery or aircraft onto a target. It is taught only by the military. It includes the use of map, compass and terrain features to locate targets and the tactical skill of matching ordnance to the target for best effect.

*Gesture* *see p. B55*

When dealing with aliens unable to communicate with Earthmen, this skill may be the only way to get across ideas and concepts. In fact, several self-proclaimed alien contactees of the '50s claimed this is how they conversed with alien travelers. Obviously, it is mainly of use when dealing with humanoid extraterrestrials such as the Loi or Alphans, at -2 because of their unearthly origins.

*Judo* *see p. B51*

Although the martial-arts craze was decades away, the Oriental martial arts were not completely unknown to the West – or to western filmmakers – in the '50s. As early as 1945, James Cagney was playing an American student of the Japanese martial arts in *Blood on the Sun*. By the end of the '50s, the U.S. military had made martial arts maneuvers an integral part of all hand-to-hand combat training.

Oriental martial arts will almost always be referred to as judo (bought as the Judo skill) or jujitsu (bought as a combination of Judo and Karate). Karate was very obscure to '50s America, and kung fu, tae kwan do, and similar styles even more so.

An American or European character can learn the martial arts (he probably picked them up during the war), but the GM would be within his rights to require a small Unusual Background in conjunction with this skill.

*Nuclear Physics/TL* *see p. B61*

This one skill, more than any other, epitomizes the world of *Atomic Horror*. Nuclear energy was the symbol of progress and civilization in the 1950s, and any new advancement (in the films of the decade, at least) had to include “atomic power.” Nuclear Physics can be used to design or shut down an atomic reactor, build an atomic bomb, or study the sun’s radiation.

The weird mutations and fantastic side effects that dominate the genre can also be studied and perhaps treated with this skill.

## Piloting/TL (Rockets)

see p. B69

This skill covers all TL7 and TL8 rocket capsules or rocket planes that are flown manually by a pilot. Vacc Suit is a prerequisite to Piloting (Rockets) in most cases. The skill is not a common one – a handful of test pilots will be trained to fly a rocket that has been built by an organization and skill rolls for the first flight should be at a penalty of -3. No one said these rockets were safe!

## Science!

see p. C1158

Science! is a cinematic skill, and is inappropriate for use in realistic campaigns. It is intended to simulate the movie scientist who knew a little – or a lot! – about *everything*.

You have a general acquaintance with the fundamental techniques and theories of virtually every branch of laboratory and theoretical science. You're equally at home monitoring a chemistry experiment, excavating an archaeological dig, or expounding on a sociological theory. You're "Mr. Know It All."

Examples of characters from fiction with the Science! skill include Prof. Challenger, Dr. Van Helsing, the Professor from *Gilligan's Island*, and Dr. Quest from the cartoon *Jonny Quest*.

## Sample Characters

### PROFESSOR WILFORD MANN 159 POINTS

Age 39; 6'1"; 170 lbs.; sandy blond hair and blue eyes.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 12 [20].

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 6.

**Advantages:** Appearance (Attractive) [5]; Charisma +1 [5]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Reputation +2 (As brilliant physicist; among the scientific community; all the time) [5].

**Disadvantages:** Addiction (Pipe tobacco) [-10]; Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10]; Dependent (Nephew, 9 or less) [-12]; Sense of Duty (to science) [-10].

**Quirks:** Never seen without a tie; Secretly fond of rock 'n' roll. [-2]

**Skills:** Administration-13 [1]; Brawling-13 [2]; Computer Operation-20 [2]; Driving (Car)-12 [2]; Electronics Operation-16 [6]; Electronics-15 [8]; First Aid-14 [2]; Guns (Pistol)-14 [1]; Leadership-14 [1]; Mathematics-19 [6]; Mechanic-13 [1]; Nuclear Physics-17 [20]; Physics-15 [6]; Piloting (Fixed-Wing)-13 [1]; Powerboat-11 [1]; Research-16 [6]; Savoir-Faire-14 [1]; Science!-13 [4]; Survival (Jungle)-13 [1]; Swimming-13 [2]; Teaching-14 [2]; Writing-13 [1].

**Languages:** Chinese-11 [1]; English-16 (native) [2]; Latin-13 [1]; Spanish-14 [2].

Professor Will Mann has devoted his life to unscrewing the inscrutable. He believes that unraveling the mysteries of the universe is humanity's sole reason for existing. One of the most highly respected physicists in the world, Mann's field is

the detection and analysis of radiations from outer space. Mann has personally supervised the construction of cosmic-ray detectors in Formosa and Central America.

Born to a Midwest farm family during WWI, Mann was always the most intelligent child in his classes, never wanting to be anything but a scientist. When America joined World War II, Mann interrupted his graduate studies and joined the Marines, seeing action several times in the Pacific theater. After his discharge, he resumed his studies and rapidly completed his degree.

During his years as a scientist, Mann has seen many strange things, and gotten involved in several tight situations. There's very little that can make him lose his composure. He's outwardly a handsome, amiable man, though he tends to seem a bit distant in social situations, since he's probably mentally wrestling with one or more scientific problems while he's socializing. A compulsive reader, Mann keeps abreast of the journals of several scientific fields, not just his own.

About three years ago, Mann became the legal guardian of Bonnie and Andy Dean, his niece and nephew, after his sister and her husband were killed in a plane crash. Mann usually carries a Colt Python revolver (see p. HT110).

### BONNIE DEAN 109 POINTS

Age 17; 5'7"; 125 lbs.; curly blonde hair and blue eyes.

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 6.

**Advantages:** Appearance (Beautiful) [15]; Charisma +1 [5]; Intuition [15].

**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Always be ladylike – dependable, dutiful, and polite) [-10]; Dependent (Brother, 9 or less) [-12]; Youth (Age 17) [-2].

**Quirks:** Lets her little brother talk her into trouble; Loves music and dancing; No time for boys. [-3]

**Skills:** Accounting-13 [4]; Acrobatics-13 [4]; Brawling-12 [1/2]; Bow-14 [8]; Climbing-13 [2]; Cooking-13 [1]; Dancing-14 [4]; Driving (Car)-12 [1]; First Aid-13 [1]; Guns (Rifle)-14 [1/2]; Research-14 [4]; Savoir-Faire-14 [2]; Sex Appeal-12 [4]; Survival (Jungle)-12 [1]; Swimming-14 [2]; Writing-12 [1].

**Languages:** English (native)-13 [0]; Spanish-12 [1].

Bonnie takes after her uncle – she's attractive, personable, and very bright. Now 17 and an early high school graduate, Bonnie frequently accompanies her uncle on his travels, acting as his secretary, lab assistant, and general *aide de camp*. An incorrigible tomboy during her childhood, she's matured into a beautiful young woman, but she's having too much fun to be tied down by romantic entanglements – she's interested in boys primarily as an excuse to attend dances. Bonnie's an enthusiastic fan of rock 'n' roll music, and her uncle has lately come to share her tastes – a fact he'd never willingly admit in public. Uncle Will has taught Bonnie the rudiments of self-defense and marksmanship, but Bonnie prefers a short bow to a rifle – she's been practicing archery since junior high. On the rare occasions when she does need a rifle, she uses a Winchester '94 (p. HT114).

# ANDY DEAN

# 51 POINTS

Age 12; 5'6"; 120 lbs.; crewcut sandy blond hair and blue eyes.

**Attributes:** ST 8 [-15]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 9 [-10].

Speed 4.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 6.

**Advantages:** Alertness +1 [5]; Animal Empathy [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Luck [15]; Rapid Healing [10].

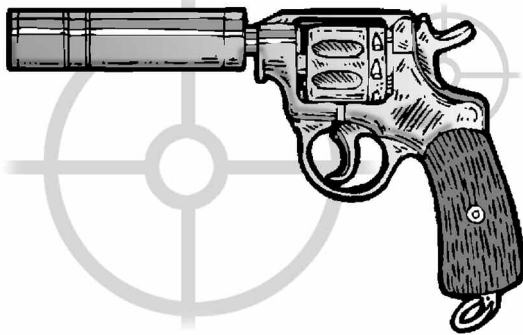
**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Never cheat; never rat on a friend; never back down when you're right) [-5]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Truthfulness [-5].

**Quirks:** Fascinated by wild animals; Soccer fan. [-2]

**Skills:** Acrobatics-10 [4]; Bicycling-11 [2]; Brawling-10 [1]; Climbing-10 [2]; Escape-8 [1]; First Aid-11 [1/2]; Fishing-11 [1/2]; Jumping-11 [2]; Naturalist-9 [1/2]; Running-9 [4]; Savoir-Faire-11 [1/2]; Stealth-9 [1]; Survival (Jungle)-10 [1/2]; Swimming-10 [2]; Throwing-10 [4]; Tracking-10 [1/2]; Zoology-9 [1/2].

**Languages:** English (native)-12 [0]; Spanish-10 [1/2].

Andy, age 12, is a healthy, inquisitive, all-American boy. He loves baseball. If allowed, he will clamber all over anything in sight. He often accompanies his uncle on trips when it doesn't interfere with his schooling. While visiting his uncle in Central America, Andy found a passion for professional soccer which has almost replaced his love of baseball. He loves wild animals, and has already decided he wants to be a zoologist when he grows up. Andy is insatiably curious, and has an almost diabolic gift for embroiling his sister in situations she'd normally be much too smart to get into.



## Personal Equipment

### '50s PRICE LIST

#### Weapons

Revolver (.38)	\$50
Revolver (.357, .44)	\$75
Automatic Pistol (.45, 9mm)	\$80
12G Shotgun	\$60
Submachine gun	\$80
Garand M-1	\$45
Lee-Enfield .303	\$60
Assault Rifle (AK-47, FN-FAL)	\$250
M-2 Carbine	\$100

SKS Carbine	\$100
Tokarev T-33	\$75
Walther PPK .32 ACP	\$40

#### Transportation

Cab fare, per mile	\$0.30
Bus fare, per mile	\$0.10
Train fare, per mile	\$0.01
Used car	\$100 and up
New car	\$1,200 and up
Fancy new car	\$5,000 and up
Gasoline, per gallon	\$0.20
Beechcraft 18 twin prop	\$16,000
Piper Cub single prop	\$9,000
Airfare, per hundred miles	\$10

#### Communications

Walkie-talkie (2 mile range)	\$15
Transistor radio (1954)	\$4
Television	\$20
Newspaper	\$0.15
Domestic letter	\$0.07

#### Services

Fast food meal	\$0.50
Average meal	\$1.50
Excellent meal	\$5
Bottle of whiskey	\$2
Haircut	\$1.50
Cheap hotel, per night	\$4
Nice hotel, per night	\$8
Luxury hotel, per night	\$20

#### Clothing

Hat	\$2
Shoes	\$10
Suit of average clothing	\$10
Suit of good clothing	\$15
Suit of formal clothing	\$50
Walking boots	\$8

#### Other Equipment

Crowbar	\$2
Rope (50')	\$2
Shovel	\$2.50
Handcuffs	\$10
Shoulder holster	\$3
Camera	\$70
Binoculars (5x magnification)	\$50
Flashlight (needs 2 batteries)	\$2
Battery	\$0.20
Crocodile-skin briefcase	\$9
Microscope (20x)	\$15
Toolkit	\$170
Trunk	\$4
Swiss Army knife	\$5
Wristwatch	\$10
Complete camping kit (tent, backpack, pans, etc.)	\$40

## USEFUL TOOLS

*GURPS Atomic Horror* is a game of scientific investigation, and players will need access to items of equipment not usually employed by *GURPS* characters. The list below provides a few examples:

**Biology Lab:** This includes test equipment, microscopes, refrigerators, lab mice, cultures, and other items. Can be used to test blood, analyze tissue, or grow bacteria. Cost \$3,000.

**Chemistry Lab:** Compounds, test equipment, a stock of chemicals, microscopes, furnace, and other items are included. Can be used as a forensics laboratory to analyze fibers and powders and identify bullets. Cost \$3,000.

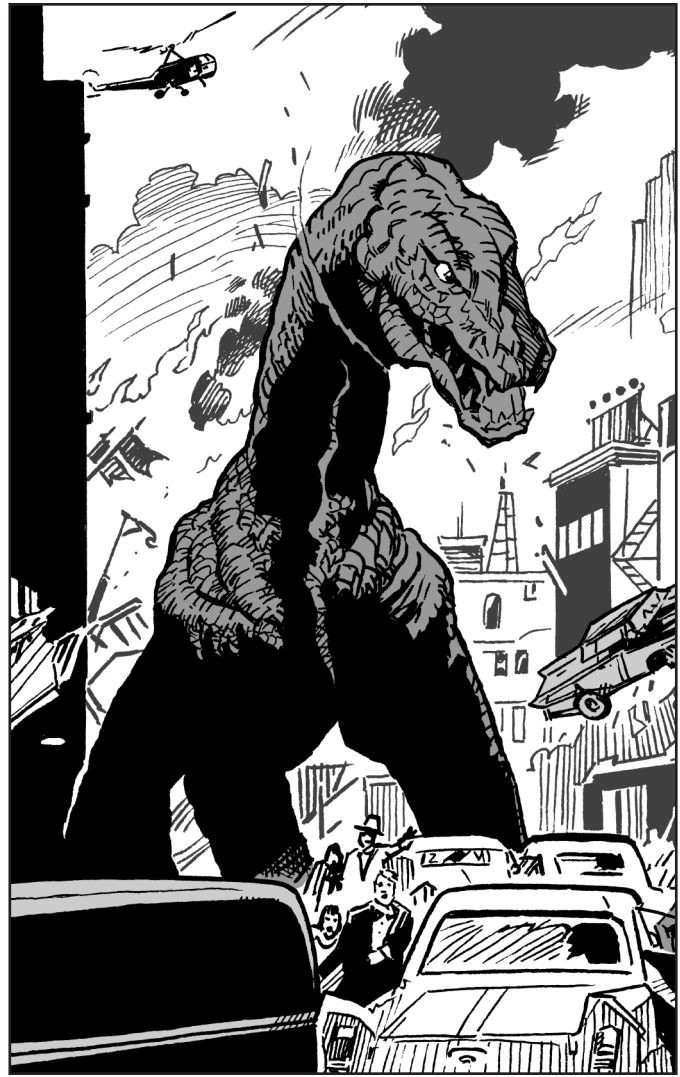
**Forensics Kit:** This field kit allows someone to gather evidence for a forensics examination. A Forensics skill roll is required (at +2) to discover and record or collect bullet trajectories, spent cartridges, fibers, blood stains, fingerprints, and strands of hair. If analyzed in a Chemistry Lab the next Forensics roll is without modifier; if using just this kit and a Microscope, roll at -4. A successful roll gives some clues as to cause of death (or whatever). Cost \$45. Weight 12 lbs.

**Geology/Soil Test Kit:** Used by geologists, soil scientists, and mineralogists, this kit allows a complete analysis in the field of rock type, mineralogical composition, and the origin of the soil type. A Geology skill roll is needed to interpret the findings correctly. A variety of things can be gleaned from the samples: previous volcanic activity, harsh winters, the type of vegetation previously native to the area, and the possibility of rare minerals. Cost \$15. Weight 15 lbs.

**Geiger Counter:** This hand-held instrument is composed of a main body and a detector connected by a cable. The Geiger counter measures the amount of background radiation (this is natural radiation from the Sun's cosmic rays and that given off by granite rock formations and radioactive elements), as well as other sources. It will only give readings of strength, not direction or distance. To properly interpret the readings, characters should make an IQ roll, or a Nuclear Physics roll at +3. Cost \$75. Weight 4 lbs.

**Handling Arm:** This manipulator is a metal arm with simple gripping mechanism for picking up and handling radioactive isotopes without having to touch them. This makes it possible, for instance, to load an isotope into a weapon or transfer it into a new container. It is wise to use a radiation suit as well . . . Cost \$55. Weight 35 lbs.

**Library:** Scientific experts need a scientific library. They cannot retain all the information on their chosen subjects in their heads, but they cannot continually "pop in" at the local university or government research facility, either. A scientific or technical library (although other libraries are possible) should be rated according to how much money has been invested in it. Every \$350 spent on books, journals and papers provides a +1 rating to the library and will cover another wall of a typical study/household library. When the PC wants to consult his books to improve a skill roll, he must make a Research roll for six hours of study. If he's successful he gains +1 on the skill roll when it is made (and if he has his notes with him) and may continue with another six hours' worth of study to gain a further +1 until he has reached the maximum



positive modifier for that library. Each Research roll after the first has a cumulative -2 penalty, no matter how many different libraries are consulted (there's only so much information available . . .). A home library is typically rated at +1 or +2, a public library at +1 for a local branch up to perhaps +5 for the Library of Congress. A technical library devoted to a specific subject may range from +4 for a small regional university to +6 or +7 for Cal Tech or MIT.

**Microscope:** A high-resolution 600x to 1,000x complete with slides, additional lenses, and camera attachment. Cost \$200. Weight 10 lbs.

**Movie Camera:** This is a hand-held movie camera capable of shooting 30 minutes of footage. Changing reels takes 20 seconds and changing lenses takes 6 seconds. Cost \$200. Weight 40 lbs.

**Radiation Lab:** This includes detection gear, isotopes and shielding, test materials, and associated gear. Cost \$90,000.

**Radiation Suit:** Necessary protective clothing if isotopes are to be handled or an area of high background radiation must be negotiated. Rad suits must be decontaminated after use and even then have a limited lifespan. They have a PF of 2 (see p. 79). Cost \$120. Weight 10 lbs.

**Tape Recorder:** This is a reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder on a carrying strap. A reel lasts for 90 minutes and

changing reels takes 30 seconds. A directional microphone plugs into the side of the recorder. Cost \$50. Weight 20 lbs.

*Telescope:* This is a large reflecting telescope with a tripod and an equatorial mount, as used by amateur astronomers to view the surface of the Moon, satellites of Saturn and Jupiter, and nebulae. Cost \$250. Weight 50 lbs.

## '50s FIREARMS

There are several weapons in the *GURPS Basic Set* suitable for '50s characters, but when faced with a horde of 15-foot-long radioactive critters something more powerful is required. Most of the weapons below will be brought in by the Army to allow the players time to come up with a grand solution or just to wipe out what the PCs have uncovered . . .

*Bazooka:* Officially known as the M6A3, this is the famous World War II anti-tank rocket launcher. A two-man crew is needed, one to carry the launcher and aim and fire, the other to carry the ammunition and load the bazooka. Anyone in a 30-degree cone behind the bazooka (out to 5 yards) as it fires suffers 5d crushing damage from the back blast. This has a minimum range of 8.

*Browning Automatic Rifle:* Since 1918, this has been the Army's portable machine gun. It has a bipod and is carried into battle by the squad machine-gunner.

*Browning M-1919A4 .30-06 LMG:* This is the standard light machine gun of the American forces, fitted to some jeeps, all tanks and on bipods and tripods for use by soldiers. The weapon is very heavy and fires .30-06 bullets on a 250-round belt.

*Browning M-2 .50 BMG:* Not to be confused with the carbine (below), the Browning .50 M-2 is a huge, belt-fed machine gun mounted on tanks and some jeeps. It is useful against airplanes, bunkers and unarmored vehicles. *Cannot* be carried.

*Flamethrower:* This is a back-pack flame projector; the standard U.S. model is the M2A1-7. Roll 3d when a victim is hit; on 16 or less he is on fire! See p. B129. To put out the flames (by rolling around or having friends beat out the flames) takes 5 seconds and a 1 on a 1d. The weapon requires Gunner/TL6 (Flamethrower) skill.

*M-2 Carbine:* WWII recruits found the recoil of the M1911 too harsh, so the M-1 carbine was designed for NCOs and second-line troops (drivers, etc.), as was this automatic version, the M-2. A handy gun but underpowered. The M-1 version has a ROF of 3.

## FIREARMS TABLE

Weapon	Malf	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	AWt	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost
Bazooka (2.36 in)	Crit.	6d×2 (10)	16	9	100	200	8	2	1/5	1	–	–	\$300
Browning Automatic Rifle (.30-06)	Crit.	7d+1	17	11	800	4,700	21.5	2	6*	20	13B	-2	\$2,500
Browning M1919A4 (.30-06)	Crit.	7d+1	20	12	1,000	4,700	31/45	9	8	150	19T	-1	\$250
Browning .50 M-2 BMG (.50)	Crit.	12d+	20	16	1,200	5,000	84/128	30	8	100	39T	-1	\$1,000
Flamethrower (M2A1-7)	Crit.	3d/s	14	7	–	50	68	–	4	10	–	-3	\$200
M-2 Carbine (.30 Carbine)	Crit.	2d+2	12	8	300	2,100	6	0.57	12*	15+1	9	-1	\$50
M3A1 SMG (.45)	Crit.	2d+1	10	6	180	1,750	9.5	1.3	8*	30	10	-2	\$80
M-14 Assault Rifle (7.62mm N)	Crit.	7d	14	11	1,000	4,600	11	1.7	11*	20+1	11	-2	\$900
Simonov SKS (7.62mm S)	Crit.	5d+1	13	8	400	3,000	9	3	10	30+1	11	-2	\$100
Sterling L2A3 SMG (9mm)	Ver.	3d-1	10	7	160	1,900	6	1.5	9*	32	10	-1	\$350
Tokarev T-33 (7.62mm T)	Crit.	2d+1	10	1	140	1,800	2.25	0.29	3~	8+1	8	-1	\$250

*M3A1 SMG:* This submachine gun is nicknamed the "grease gun" because of its primitive appearance; it replaced the Thompson SMG in U.S. service at the end of the war.

*M-14 Assault Rifle:* This heavy rifle replaced the M-1 Garand, and was the standard service rifle of the U.S. Army until the introduction of the M-16 in the Sixties. Many are set at semi-automatic only and these versions have a ROF of 3.

*Simonov SKS Carbine:* This is the standard rifle of the Eastern Bloc nations before the introduction of the AK-47 in 1957. It is semi-automatic with a folding bayonet permanently attached to the muzzle. The gun has been exported to Communists worldwide since 1945.

*Sterling L2A3 SMG:* Designed in the late 1940s to take over from the simple Sten Gun, the Sterling has been used by the British and Commonwealth nations since 1953. Some are able to take a small bayonet.

*Tokarev T-33:* The standard Eastern Bloc pistol, used by armies and police forces, it could be called the Soviet version of the American M1911. Exported to Communists worldwide. It has no manual safety; if it is dropped or struck sharply while a round is chambered, it will fire on a roll of 3 or 4 on 3d.

## Typical Vehicles

This is far from an exhaustive look at the vehicles of the *Atomic Horror* era, but these are some of the more common vehicles the investigators can expect to see and use.

## AUTOS

'42 Ford V8. \$780. Very cheap, popular car. Smallish auto with a broad, low grille. It has a sloping back.

'51 Buick Roadmaster. \$2,000. Post-war "bombsight" hood ornament. Vertical bars in a broad grille. Prominent bulging hood – a common post-war feature.

'51 Oldsmobile 88. \$1,970. Rocket hood ornament. Popular car, best seller. Fast, used for NASCAR racing. Big, heavy bumper. Simple lines.

'53 Corvette. \$3,512. Fiberglass-bodied sportscar. No bumper.

'55 Ford Fairlane. \$1,606. Cheap car with clean lines and a wrap-around windshield. Long, thin grille.

'56 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz. \$6,501. Sumptuous convertible. Large, detailed grille. Graceful lines, long and sweeping. Large tailfins.

'56 *Thunderbird*. \$3,155. Classic two-seater sportscar. Modest design. Fast, with half-covered rear wheels.

'57 *Chevrolet Bel-Air*. \$2,464. Definitive automobile of '50s America. Solid, stylish, cheap car. Large fins, a combined grille and bumper. "Bombsight" ornaments on hood.

'57 *Dodge Custom Royal Lancer*. \$2,881. Paired twin headlights, angry-looking teeth in the grille. Big fins and a swept appearance. Twin rocket hood ornament.

'57 *Imperial Crown*. \$5,406. Luxury car. Two-tier bumper with dual headlights that have "eyebrows." Sloping trunk with spare wheel bulge.

'57 *Mercury Turnpike Cruiser*. \$4,103. Gaudy, elaborate car. Hooded and paired headlights. Chromed side panels that extend into the wings.

'57 *Plymouth Fury*. \$1,899. Sleek car with huge fins. Classic automobile of the decade with paired headlights.

'58 *Edsel Corsair*. \$2,519. Horse-collar central grille, named after Henry Ford's son. A financial disaster, described as looking "like an Oldsmobile sucking a lemon." Paired headlights.



## PLANES

*Beechcraft Model 18*. The most popular twin-engined light transport of the '40s and '50s. Twin tailfins. Seven passengers. Range 1,530 miles and speed 220 mph.

*Bell Model 47*. This tiny, bubble-cockpitted helicopter will be used a lot by *Atomic Horror* PCs. Range 250 miles and speed 84 mph.

*Boeing B-47E Stratojet*. Took over from the B-36. Medium-range swept-wing jet bomber. Work horse of Strategic Air Command. Range 3,600 miles and speed 630 mph.

*Boeing B-52F Stratofortress*. Replaced the B-47 at the end of the '50s. Massive bombload carried long distances. Eight turbofan engines. Range 8,500 miles, speed 650 mph.

*Convair B-36J Peacemaker*. The bomber of the Cold War with 6 propeller engines and 4 turbojets. Never used in anger. An awesome plane, the largest in the world to see service. Range 6,800 miles, speed 435 mph.

*Douglas C-47 (DC-3) Dakota*. Medium-range airliner, very famous, twin-engined plane used for freight, passengers and airdrops. Crew of 3, 36 passengers (or 6,600 lbs. cargo), range 2,125 miles and a speed of 230 mph. Designed and constructed in the mid-Thirties.

*Lockheed F-94 Starfire*. All-weather interceptor without guns. Uses rockets. Scrambled in Korea and America against UFOs! Range 1,200, speed 585 mph.

*Lockheed Super Constellation*. A 72-passenger airliner. Four engines and three tailfins. Speed 321 mph and range 4,600 miles.

*Martin B-57B Canberra*. A two-seat jet tactical bomber. A British aircraft with two jet engines. Speed 580 mph, range 2,100 miles.

*North American F-86 Sabre*. Greatest post-war jet fighter. Saw action in Korea, developed as the Super Sabre in the late '50s. Speed 675 mph, range 850 miles with extra fuel.

*Piper Cub*. High-wing single-engined private plane. One of the most popular private planes ever built. Range 300 miles, speed 87 mph.

*Sikorsky S-55*. Heavier helicopter with a two-man cockpit over a cabin with a large side door. Range 300 miles and speed 106 mph. Used by the military and by civilian operators.

*Other Planes*. The Douglas DC-4 and DC-6 are four-engined transports. The Douglas C-124 Globemaster is a heavy four-engined transport with a tiny nose radome. The C-97 Stratofreighter is a bulbous freighter designed from the B-29 bomber.

## Economics, Jobs, and Wealth



Average starting wealth in the 1950s is \$3,000, but much of this – about 80% – should be used in paying for a home, a car, clothing, and savings. In a TSF campaign, with most people beginning the game with a well-paying Patron, there is little need for fabulously wealthy characters in the game.

If the GM is using the Theoretical Science Foundation as a patron, then the players need not outfit their characters with every conceivable scientific gadget. When called upon to perform certain kinds of missions, the Foundation will provide the troubleshooters with the necessary equipment. The drawback is that they will want it back once the adventure is at an end, so any piece of equipment the investigator needs to have access to on a regular basis will need to be purchased privately.

The monthly cost of living is included on the Social Status Table, and involves expenditures on food, insurance, clothing, fuel, etc. If party members wish to take out a loan with which to buy more equipment, assume the interest is 1% per month, to be paid out of monthly income.

## BRITISH COINS

When TSF investigations move to Great Britain, their agents will discover an old-fashioned system of coinage quite different from the U.S., or modern Sterling, decimal system. By the mid-fifties, \$3 was equal to about £1. There are 20 shillings to every pound and 12 pennies to a shilling. Shillings (also called "bob") are the most common coin, and when written down are abbreviated to "s"; pennies are abbreviated to "d." The smallest banknote is for £1; there is no £1 coin as there is today.

Other coins are the florin, worth 2 shillings; the crown, worth 5 shillings (and stamped with a crown); and the sixpence, worth six pennies.

# Job Table

The Job Table lists common occupations for the 1950s. Most have skill or advantage prerequisites.

At least half a point must have been spent on a skill prerequisite. Default values are not permitted. "LJ" stands for

Lost Job, the "d" indicates dice of damage and an "i" indicates the loss of a single month's income. When two entries are separated by a "/", the second result is only used when a natural 18 is rolled.

## Job (Prerequisites), Monthly Income

## Success Roll Critical Failure

### POOR JOBS

Farm Worker (ST 9+), \$60	12	LJ
Gang Member* (Streetwise 10+, any combat skill 10+), \$65	Worst PR	-1i, 2d/-1i, 6d

### STRUGGLING JOBS

Hustler* (Streetwise 11+, Merchant 8+), \$120	Worst PR	-1i/-1i, arrested
Manual Laborer (ST 10+), \$120	ST	LJ/4d
Taxi Driver* (Driving 10+, Area Knowledge 12+), \$140	Worst PR	LJ/6d
Thief* (Streetwise 11+, DX 11+), \$160	Worst PR	-1i/-2i, arrested
Waiter (Savoir-Faire 12+), \$120	PR	LJ

### AVERAGE JOBS

Bank Teller (Accounting 11+), \$260	PR	LJ
Clergyman (Theology 12+, Status 1+), \$340	PR	moved to smaller parish
Clerk (Accounting 10+), \$180	PR	LJ
Foreman (any Craft skill 13+, IQ 10+), \$320	Best PR	LJ/LJ, 4d
Journalist (Photography or Writing 12+), \$360	Best PR	LJ
Mechanic (Mechanic 11+), \$300	PR	LJ/LJ, 4d
Police Detective (Criminology 12+, Law 11+), \$400	Worst PR	3d/6d
Police Officer (Law 11+, Guns [Pistol] 12+), \$300	IQ	3d/6d
Private Eye* (Streetwise 12+, Brawling 11+), \$240	Worst PR	-2i/-2i, 3d
Skilled Laborer (any Craft skill 12+), \$280	Best PR	LJ/LJ, 3d
Teacher (Teaching 12+), \$280	PR	-1i/LJ
Telephone Operator (IQ 11+, Voice 11+), \$180	IQ	LJ

### COMFORTABLE JOBS

Advertising Executive (Propaganda 12+, Administration 10+), \$600	Best PR	-1i/LJ
Author* (Writing 13+), \$400	PR	-2i/-5i
Doctor (Physician 16+, Diagnosis 16+, Surgery 14+), \$800	Worst PR	-2i/-10i
Engineer (Engineer 12+), \$800	PR	-2i/LJ
Government Spy (Guns 12+, Acting 13+, Fast-Talk 11+), \$900	Worst PR-1	-1i, 2d/captured, 4d
Lawyer (Law 13+), \$600	PR	-3i/-10i, disbarred
Manager (Administration 12+, Leadership 11+), \$700	Worst PR	-1i/LJ
Musician (Musical Instrument 13+, Singing 12+), \$600	Worst PR	-2i/-4i, LJ
Pilot (Pilot 12+, Navigation 13+), \$400	Worst PR	-1i, LJ/LJ, 6d
Professional Athlete* (Sports skill 15+), \$500	skill	LJ/-5i, LJ
University Professor (any Scientific skill 14+, Status 1+), \$700	PR+Status	-2i/LJ

### WEALTHY JOBS

Army General (Leadership 12+, Tactics 12+, Military Rank 7+), \$1,000	IQ-1	-2i/-4i, LJ
Bank President (Economics 13+, Administration 11+, Status 4+), \$1,600	Administration	-3i/LJ
Cold War Scientist (Research 14+, Engineer skill 15+), \$1,200	Best PR-1	-1i/-3i, LJ
Corporate Executive (Administration 14+, Status 4+), \$1,600	PR + Status	-2i/LJ
Idle Rich (Status 2+, Very Wealthy), \$2,000	IQ	allowance cut by 20%
Movie Actor* (Acting 11+, Charisma 2+), \$1,200	Best PR-2	-3i/-10i
Politician (Politics 12+, Fast Talk 13+), \$1,400	Worst PR	-2i/-4i, LJ, -2 Status
Underworld Boss* (Streetwise 13+, Administration 12+, Leadership 12+), \$1,200	Worst PR	-4i, arrested/-20i, 20 years jail
Wall Street Trader (Economics 15+, Merchant 13+, Status 2+), \$4,000	Economics-3	-5i/-20i, 10 years jail

\* Indicates freelance jobs.



# THE THEORETICAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION





This chapter provides a fully detailed organization as a framework for an ongoing *GURPS Atomic Horror* campaign. The Theoretical Science Foundation is a campaign tool, a perfect patron for the PCs.

The TSF is a fictional body that investigates “the unknown” and therefore gives PC employees a motive to start the adventure. The GM simply tells the players that the TSF has been hired to investigate some minor mystery. In the course of the adventure, of course, the mystery turns out to be something more than minor . . .

If the GM chooses not to use the TSF as a patron, the FBI can serve as an excellent alternate. Details are given on p. 37. The TSF can also serve as a mystery to be investigated (see p. 40).

## History

A retired Air Force colonel named Ryan Oakland (see below) was one of the members of the Robertson Panel (see p. 12 investigating UFO sightings. His experience with aviation and with his own organization, the Theoretical Science Foundation, earned him the government’s ear. However, other members of the Panel were less enthusiastic about his theories; *their* conclusion dismissed extraterrestrial activity.

Oakland had used funds from his prosperous drug company to establish the TSF in 1947. The organization espoused Ryan Oakland’s publicly declared desire for “the unexplained, the mysterious, and the alien to be scientifically investigated for the betterment of Mankind.” Although Oakland died mysteriously in 1953, the Theoretical Science Foundation had already become a small-but-strong organization of scientists, academics, and trained investigators. The TSF soon found its skills and resources in frequent demand.

## FACT VS. FICTION

Some of the people, events, organizations, and places mentioned in this supplement are fabrications, and some only *sound* made up.

The comet Arend-Roland is real, as are the Biefeld-Brown effect and Townsend Brown. All the contactee cults exist or existed. Majestic Twelve and Projekt Saucer were functional during the ’50s. Apparent ruins of buildings, as described for the Atlantean sunken city (see p. 48), have been photographed. However, the existence of Fort Streeter, mentioned in the television series “War of the Worlds,” proved impossible to corroborate . . .

As far as could be determined, the Army Air Corps never included a Foreign Technology Division; the Navy never had a vessel called the *USS Prometheus*; and no atomic reactor was built at a site called Oak View.

The TSF, Oakland Pharmochemical, the Anne Brody Institute, Cyclops, FELON, NATAC, Industrial Services, Sherman Theater, Encounter Investigations, Brendon’s bar, the Albany and the Square Club, *Visionary*, Palaestra, and possibly the *L.A. Times* are creations of fiction. Any similarity to actual persons or organizations is purely coincidental . . .

## RYAN OAKLAND

Born in July 1896, Ryan Oakland had a remarkable childhood. Possessed of a keen mind and mature outlook, he excelled in his studies and showed interest in all aspects of science and technology. His disappearance for six months in 1909 caused concern; he returned without being able to account for the lost time.

When given the chance to fly, he took it, serving in Europe as a fighter pilot in World War I. He rose in the newborn Air Corps at a remarkable pace, earning some important friends in the War Department. In World War II, Oakland (by then an Air Corps colonel) took control of the elite Foreign Technology Division. It assessed foreign aviation technology and experimented with new weapons and propulsion systems for use in the war effort. The exact nature of the projects organized by the FTD is still unknown. One unsubstantiated report from 1940 claims that Oakland handed off several turbojet designs to another division of the Air Corps so that he could pursue more “revolutionary” projects. It is still not clear what projects these were.

The FTD was moved to Wright-Patterson AFB in 1946. Many of its findings and incomplete projects were shelved, destroyed, or given to a select new project called

Majestic Twelve (MJ-12). The government’s new darlings were Wernher von Braun and the Peenemünde scientists, who accepted the protection of the U.S. Army following Germany’s fall. Oakland left the Air Force and began a series of undocumented trips to Britain, Australia, South Africa, and Hawaii. His newly acquired chemical company produced amazing new advances in plastics and fibers, which funded Oakland’s travels and researches.

In 1949 he established the Theoretical Science Foundation (which annoyed Air Force generals, who knew the sort of information he had access to). It seems to have been the culmination of Oakland’s expertise, his researches, and his inside knowledge of the Foreign Technology Division. Is it his own version of the FTD, or something more bizarre?

His life was far from normal. Alien intelligences may have contacted him in his youth and later career. How else can we account for his lost six months, his prodigious genius, or his grasp of technologies far beyond those of the present day? Almost certainly he met, and perhaps worked for, the Loi Alliance. And his body was never recovered from the wreckage of his Grumman Bearcat in the Gulf of Mexico. Is he really dead . . . or has he simply “disappeared” again?

While Project Blue Book continues to file away (and explain away) reports of UFOs from across the country, the TSF seems intent on finding direct evidence of flying-saucer activity and determining the intentions of their occupants. Unlike the Air Force or the CIA, the Foundation is amassing a body of “undisclosed” evidence that seems to point to an ominous conclusion. The Foundation also helps governments and individual researchers deal with bizarre occurrences that fall outside of mundane science. With a growing reputation as international scientific trouble-shooters, the Foundation experts continue to gather case histories and weird tales. Rumors of flying saucer landings, unusual medical symptoms, lost scientific teams, and unexplained events all provide steady work for TSF investigators.

No one is entirely sure why the Theoretical Science Foundation was *really* established or what its long-term goals are. Some doubt that it has proper goals at all, believing that its directors are frittering away the Oakland Trust on badly thought-out expeditions with little return. The present director, Gene Driscoll, maintains the Foundation’s low profile. Few laymen have heard of the group, and many academics are only vaguely aware of it. The generally accepted view is that the TSF is a group of second-rate scientists chasing ridiculous theories. Because of this, Driscoll believes that it would not benefit a great deal from publicity. But when the news does involve the Foundation, his public relations skills come in handy.



## GENE DRISCOLL 100 POINTS

Age 57; 5'9"; 196 lbs. Tanned complexion, short (thinning) hair, and small, clear blue eyes.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 8 [-15].  
Speed 4.75; Move 4.

Dodge 4.

**Advantages:** Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (U.S. Senator, 6 or less) [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Necrophobia (Mild) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Brags about writing career) [-5]; Overweight [-5]; Reputation -3 (As crazy pseudoscientist; to scholars, all the time) [-7].

**Quirks:** Favors bow ties; Fears chickens and fowl; Has an insatiable curiosity; Puts a blind faith in the Holy Bible and the crucifix; Tends to sweat a lot. [-5]

**Skills:** Anthropology-16 [10]; Archaeology-14 [6]; Artist-12 [2]; Bard-15 [6]; Diplomacy-14 [6]; History-17 [12]; Hobby (Collecting antique shotguns)-15 [3]; Literature-13 [4]; Occultism-14 [4]; Research-16 [8]; Writing-18 [12].

**Languages:** Arabic-16 [8]; Egyptian-16 [8]; English (Native)-17 [4]; Greek-16 [8]; Hebrew-15 [6].

Gene Driscoll was a pulp writer in the '20s and '30s. A world traveler (to South America, Europe, Egypt, and Britain, where he was missing for four months), he always claimed his stories were based on real events. In the Middle East, he was always accompanied by his friend and servant Ahmed, a simple Egyptian thief.

Driscoll began writing second-rate history texts in the '20s. With books like *An Early History of Egypt, Jerusalem – Past and Present*, and *The Mysteries of Classicism*, he made his name as a writer-scholar who sensationalized to sell books. His theories were wild and unsubstantiated, his sources undisclosed.

As the '30s rolled by, his theories entered the realm of science fiction and gained a popular following. *The Lost City of Belize, San Francisco Dies Again!*, and a series of articles titled “The Desert Terror” mixed archaeology with tales of alien visitation and extraterrestrial intelligence. The six months Driscoll spent in a Sacramento asylum did nothing to enhance his prestige. He also began writing an exposé, quickly suppressed, concerning a Boston senator. To obtain information, Driscoll broke into the senator’s country house but was chased away. When Ahmed was seriously wounded in the flight, Driscoll abandoned him. Driscoll has not seen Ahmed since that night, and he fears that his former servant has turned against him. He’s certain that the senator has made several attempts to discredit him professionally, and is worried that more physical threats may be forthcoming.

Driscoll met Ryan Oakland in Britain in the late '40s when both were engaged in research with the Anne Brody Institute. Oakland was impressed with Driscoll’s knowledge and direct methods (Driscoll skirmished with the Special Branch in Scotland, Norfolk, and London!).

Now in his late fifties, Gene Driscoll is the chairman of the Theoretical Science Foundation, taking over from Ryan Oakland. He has inherited all of Oakland’s power and responsibilities.

# Organization and Strategy



The TSF is bankrolled by the Oakland Trust, a fund sustained by the corporation Oakland Pharmochemical. The Foundation has facilities in a few remote parts of the world, but its headquarters are in Los Angeles. There, Gene Driscoll coordinates the American branch's activities and the Foundation's worldwide public relations from his office. A sister facility in London is virtually identical, a large building with offices for each department, a library, laboratories, workshops, guest rooms, and lecture rooms. Nonmembers may consult the library by appointment, and periodic science seminars are open to interested members of the public.

## DEPARTMENTS

The London and L.A. offices both divide their staff into the following departments: Administration, Archives, Education, and the five research departments of Archaeology, Astronomy, Biology, Engineering, and Sapientology.



## ALIEN ARTIFACTS

The TSF's Engineering Department examines, and tries to fathom, alien technology and equipment. The department very rarely allows captured equipment to be used in the field; artifacts are locked away in places that resemble the world's best bank vaults.

Multisensors may be taken for some kind of weapon; anyone attempting to use them needs to be able to read the alien labels. Guns are very powerful . . . while they have power cells. An identification lock based on a palm print (or the equivalent) may be a standard safety feature, denying use of the weapon to humans. The GM can assume that power emissions of any particular device can be tracked by aliens of the race that developed it, resulting (for instance) in a frantic game of hide-and-seek . . . in downtown L.A. . . . with particle-accelerator blasters!

See p. B185 on using higher-tech devices; all such rules apply here. When describing alien equipment, don't be precise. Telling players that the humanoid carries a multisensor and a disruptor and wears a cybersuit does a lot to demystify the alien. Alien technology seems a lot less alien when you know what it does and how it works.

If the Foundation ever learns the secret of the warp drive, it may attempt to construct a flying saucer of its own. Whether it makes any progress is up to the GM, who must be aware of the tremendous effect such an invention will have on the game world. More likely several spectacular accidents will occur before it is destroyed (or sabotaged?).

## Administration

Gene Driscoll leads this department, along with his executive council and administrative office staff. Policy decisions for the Foundation are made jointly by the council and the president, with the departmental heads involved as advisors to the council. The Administration Department communicates with the other TSF facilities, governments, colleges, and Oakland Pharmochemical. It handles the accounts and controls the allocation of money for facilities, personnel, and expeditions. This department is also responsible for the hiring of personnel.

## Archives

The Archives Department maintains the immense TSF libraries, a compendium of orthodox books and the Foundation's own findings. Some of the material requires a special security clearance and is not open even to regular members. The department also accumulates artifacts gathered from around the world by Oakland and the Foundation's investigators, from meteorites to ancient texts to bits of unidentifiable machinery. Like the library, parts of this collection are off-limits to most employees.

## Education

This department, the smallest, disseminates TSF views to universities and schools. It organizes seminars and speaking engagements for TSF authorities.

## Archaeology

Perhaps the most obscure in the Foundation, this department looks at the material remains of long-dead cultures, historical records, and ancient myths and legends to piece together the *true* history of the world. Did alien intelligences visit mankind in the dim and distant past? What was the missing link? Were the pagan gods merely alien travelers?

## Astronomy

The department searches for life among the stars, monitors the orbit of the Earth, updates its star maps, and observes the other planets of the solar system. Large reflecting telescopes in Hawaii and on Mount Palomar, California are run by this department, as is a small radio telescope on Britain's moorland.

## Biology

Medicine, biochemistry, zoology, botany, and paleontology all receive a large amount of attention from this department. Its staff examines mutations in Earth-type plants and animals and will be on the scene quickly should such variations be discovered.

## Engineering

Involved with rocketry, atomic science, and physics, Engineering is not devoted to any one subject. It encompasses a variety of technical projects, many derived from Oakland's work in the Air Force's Foreign Technology Division. Any alien technology recovered by investigators automatically comes to this department for analysis and testing.

## PROJECT JANUS

One of many possible projects for the TSF Engineering Department is Janus. Janus was a Roman god of doorways and gates, exits and entrances, and transitions – Project Janus is a method of time travel.

The GM may decide whether Janus is one of the TSF's pet projects and whether it works. A working time machine can create a whole series of new adventures for the PCs; the GM may wish to take a look at *GURPS Time Travel*, which examines all aspects of the procedure. Trouble-shooters can be sent into other times for research and investigation purposes; they will receive ample help from the Archaeology Department in the form of costumes and pertinent local information.

An effective use of Project Janus is as a parachronic project. This reduces the problems associated with time travel. A parachronic campaign has an infinite number of universes, each slightly different in some way. Janus can travel into these paratimes at any point in their histories, but cannot enter its own past. Whatever the travelers do, they cannot alter the history of their own universe. (This defuses bungling or destructive players!)

Project Janus may have originated from the wreck of a flying saucer, from a secret Nazi lab, or from stolen records from the Philadelphia Experiment. Alternatively, Janus may be the device behind the mysteries of Oakland's life. His disappearance, his grasp of technology, and his development of the super-scientific TSF could all point to time displacement. Was he kidnapped by time travelers? Did his researches all aim at constructing his own time machine? Was *he* from another time? Perhaps he gained his technological head start by using Janus to travel back in time to Atlantis to meet the Loi mutants. Perhaps he is a Loi outcast; he may even be Lauranis.

Invading aliens may attempt to steal the secret of Janus, or perhaps cover it up by destroying both the plans and the designers of the machine.

## Sapientology

The newest TSF department, Sapientology melds linguistics, anthropology, and psychology to examine the nature of intelligent life and the possibility that such life exists elsewhere. When aliens are encountered, the Foundation will have specialists ready to work with them and learn from them.

## DEPARTMENTAL FACILITIES

Apart from the Astronomy Department's telescopes, the public is generally unaware of the nature of the Theoretical Science Foundation's facilities. The Biology Department runs a large examination and decontamination lab in cooperation with the Sapientology Department. (Some reports claim that this is hidden beneath an experimental crop farm in Montana, complete with its own airstrip.) The Foundation also owns a small airfield in Virginia, which may conceal a series of nuclear shelters for senior TSF staff. Its landing strip is flanked by two large, unused hangars. On occasion the Engi-

## EXPERIMENTATION

It was not only the stressed-out corporate executives and "yes men" of the '50s that were duty-bound to work for "the good of the company." Corporate scientists, too, had to forgo any thought of abstract knowledge or service to mankind. Their job was to create salable products, better and more efficiently than their rivals. *Atomic Horror* company researchers may be innocent dupes of big business, but just as likely they've "sold their soul" to the company. With huge grants and extensive facilities, most scientists are happy to go along with the corporations.

A great market in technical innovation has opened up, allowing scientists to really stretch their imaginations and skills to provide new products. Power sources, materials, electronics, and medicines are being revolutionized constantly. The corporations may lack high moral standards when it comes to research. An evil research manager may trick an unwary scientist into testing a new substance on *himself* as an accident rather than wait for months of animal testing! Likewise, an unscrupulous Board of Directors might calculate on manipulating the market to accept their product before it becomes available. (GMs can use this last scenario idea either as a propaganda and strategy exercise, or as a way to get a mind-control ray or chemical into the game!)

Important fictitious West Coast corporations include:

*Agricorp International*: Research into insecticides and new crop strains. One aim is to produce "giant" strains of wheat and cattle. Experiments with hormones, drugs, and genetics.

*Cathay Petrochemical*: Interested in chemicals, drugs, and new molecules. Designs batteries, industrial chemical plants, and plastics. Space research is also on their agenda.

*Erebus Corporation*: A huge engineering firm with close ties to the military. Oil and atomic power. Interested in producing new forms of weaponry. Drills for oil in Gulf of Mexico, Texas, Alaska, and Southern California.

*Monthermer Corporation*: A "benevolent" company producing food, medicines, clothing, and consumer goods. Major TV sponsor.

neering Department off-loads canvas-shrouded shapes from DC-3s into the hangars. These objects may be prototype rock-ets, or even crashed flying saucers!

## COLD ROOMS

The Theoretical Science Foundation is rumored to have collected a range of alien artifacts that, if revealed to the public, could cause mass panic. These may include actual flying saucers, or the bodies of extraterrestrials (dead . . . or alive). These rumors (true or not) started as impressive cold rooms were being constructed in 1950.

The TSF cold rooms are located beneath the L.A. and London buildings and also under the crop farm in Montana. Run by the Archive Department, these cold storage facilities can hold a diverse array of life-forms. Alongside the cold

rooms are whole complexes allegedly devoted to study of alien visitors. The government has its own cold rooms, similarly stocked with flash-frozen specimens.

Each cold room is a series of sterile vaults lined with freezer drawers and storage lockers. Security procedures resemble those of a prison, keeping unwanted people out – and frozen aliens in!

Pathology labs adjacent to the cold rooms carry out research, collecting information to be used later. Organisms can be kept in the cold rooms, either to deny public access to them or to prevent them from escaping. Some members of the TSF executive council worry about the consequences for Earth of keeping aliens captive. Returning captured aliens to their homeworlds could be disastrous. However, holding an alien hostage could bring a fleet of flying saucers to the rescue! Because of this, the fewer people who know of the cold rooms and their occupants, the safer mankind should be.

## Working for the TSF

The Administration Department recruits for the TSF as a whole. Because the Foundation undertakes so many tasks, its requirements are diverse. Besides scientists and academics willing to work on “pseudoscientific” theories and projects with little hope of peer recognition, a whole range of employees are needed. Security guards, private investigators, pilots, drivers, technicians, secretaries, librarians, managers, and

accountants all work for the TSF. A number of investigative teams act as scientific trouble-shooters. These teams generally have a wide range of scientific, detection, and security skills among them. A troubleshooting group is not involved in paperwork, teaching, or research, and can be made up of staff from any of the departments, to ensure a balanced mix of skills in the field. The group travels to the scene of a mystery to conduct on-site research and interviews.

The heroes can be members of such a group. Highly independent, mobile, and adequately equipped, they must resolve the problem and return to the TSF with relevant data and, with luck, material proof. Later, when the mystery is brought to the lab, an expert team will get to work on it, dispassionately examining the evidence and calculating any benefit to humanity.

One way to introduce the heroes to the Theoretical Science Foundation is by involving a random group of people (the PCs) with science horror for the first time. At the end of the first scenario, they are approached by someone from the Foundation wishing to recruit them. Or, the GM may choose to assume that the PCs have been hired by the Foundation only recently, and will soon be assigned their first case. Employment depends to a large extent on background checks and on skills and abilities. A typical trouble-shooting group may include ex-servicemen and ex-cops, hired as guards, drivers, and investigators; journalists, ex-detectives, and even criminals, used as investigators; and scientists and academics that fit a speciality as research staff, or transferred to the group for exciting and dangerous “field work.”

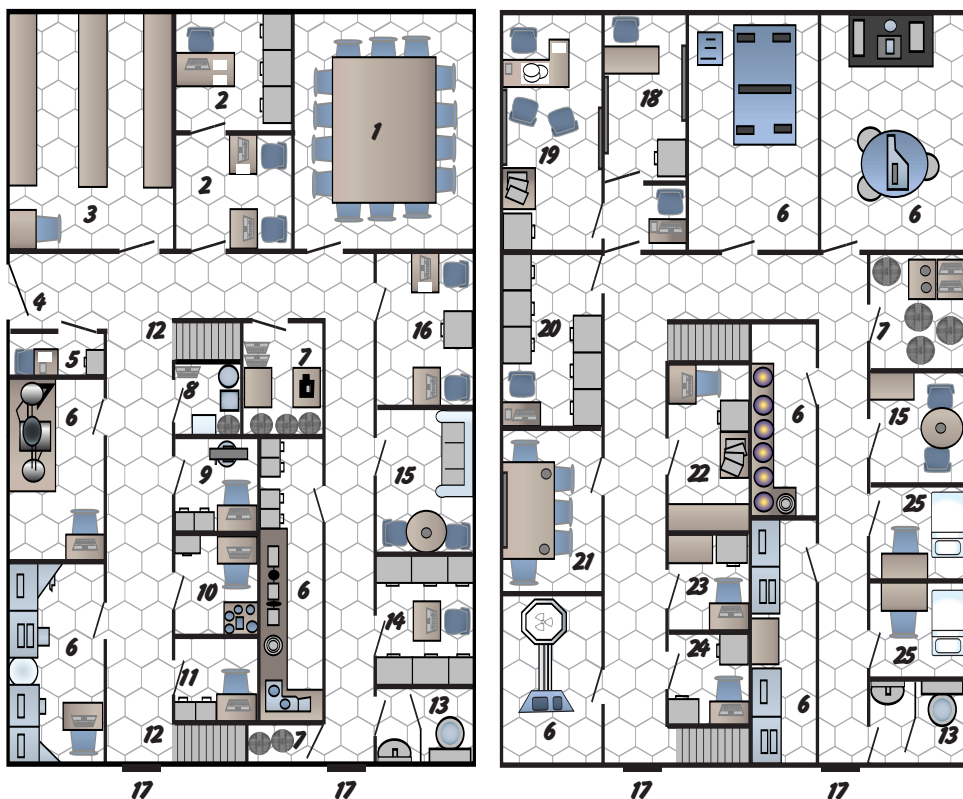
## LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF THE TSF

FIRST FLOOR

N →

SECOND FLOOR

1 HEX = 1 YARD



- |    |                         |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1  | Seminar room            |
| 2  | Accounts office         |
| 3  | Library                 |
| 4  | Main doors              |
| 5  | Reception               |
| 6  | Laboratory              |
| 7  | Store room              |
| 8  | Janitor's room          |
| 9  | Astronomy office        |
| 10 | Sapienology office      |
| 11 | Biology office          |
| 12 | Stairs                  |
| 13 | Rest room               |
| 14 | Archive office          |
| 15 | Lounge                  |
| 16 | Personnel office        |
| 17 | Fire escapes            |
| 18 | Vice President's office |
| 19 | Driscoll's office       |
| 20 | Files                   |
| 21 | Boardroom               |
| 22 | Archaeology office      |
| 23 | Engineering office      |
| 24 | Property office         |
| 25 | Guest room              |

## ON THE CASE

A typical case begins with a request for the PCs to come in for a briefing. They will receive all the information supplied by the client (such as maps and background history) and check out equipment that may be of use. Rarely will all of the trouble-shooters be armed; those with combat skills (and up-to-date licenses) will be allowed to take handguns and, if necessary, rifles or shotguns. The GM should curb excessive reliance on weaponry. He should make it clear that the party members are (ostensibly) civilians, without a need for weapons of any kind. The Foundation does not have great powers at home or abroad (at least that is the official line . . .) and all of its employees must obey the law. However, if the investigators are acting on behalf of a government client (such as the CIA, NACA, or U.S. Air Force), they may be given official dispensation to take certain actions that would normally be illegal.

Because this team has been called in to solve a problem, there is no one for *them* to call in. The team must rely on its own ingenuity to solve the dilemma. At times they may legitimately summon organizations ranging from the local police to the Air Force or Army to destroy the menace that they have uncovered. This may be the plot resolution the GM designed; but if instead he planned a more scientific end to the threat, then he must somehow stop the police, Air Force, or whomever from saving the day. The military may not be prepared to mobilize in less than six hours; there is too great a risk to civilians in the area; the commander is unwilling to commit manpower to something so bizarre and unlikely; or the area has been cordoned off and the *only* people allowed in are the investigators. The GM should be creative and merciless! If all else fails, the heroes can watch in horror as the alien menace mercilessly destroys the “cavalry” as it comes over the hill.

Any data or samples brought back are sent to the Theoretical Science Foundation’s secure laboratories for examination. To encourage investigators (and, by extension, players) to keep records and physical evidence, the TSF provides bonuses dependent on the size and quality of the evidence or data gathered – but never a fortune!

## CUSTOMERS OF THE TSF

The TSF is responsible for only a small part of the total research into exotic phenomena conducted across the world. The rest is carried out by governments, armed forces, universities, mining companies, and dozens of other bodies. In most cases, an accident or freak encounter results in bizarre circumstances that their researchers are totally unprepared for. Usually such organizations find it safer to call the self-appointed “experts.” In many cases, they call the Theoretical Science Foundation, the only scientific organization on the globe that openly takes the paranormal seriously, to unravel some mystery that defies logical explanation. In return the TSF receives payment for successful resolution of the problem and ownership of any scientific knowledge gained. The TSF relies on these organizations for its economic survival.

There are times when the TSF is asked to work with investigators from the sponsoring organization, but it is far more usual for the client to back away and let the Foundation investigators do their job. The Foundation may also be asked to watch a facility if the facility’s managers are concerned that something inexplicable may be going on in the vicinity.

International and corporate politics being what it is, though, the TSF often finds itself in competition with other research teams at the site of an unexplained phenomenon. Sometimes these rival teams are from a hostile government; sometimes they’re from an organization that might have hired the TSF itself, if the circumstances were slightly different; and sometimes, much to the annoyance of the TSF researchers, the intruding team is from the organization that *did* hire the TSF to look into the matter.

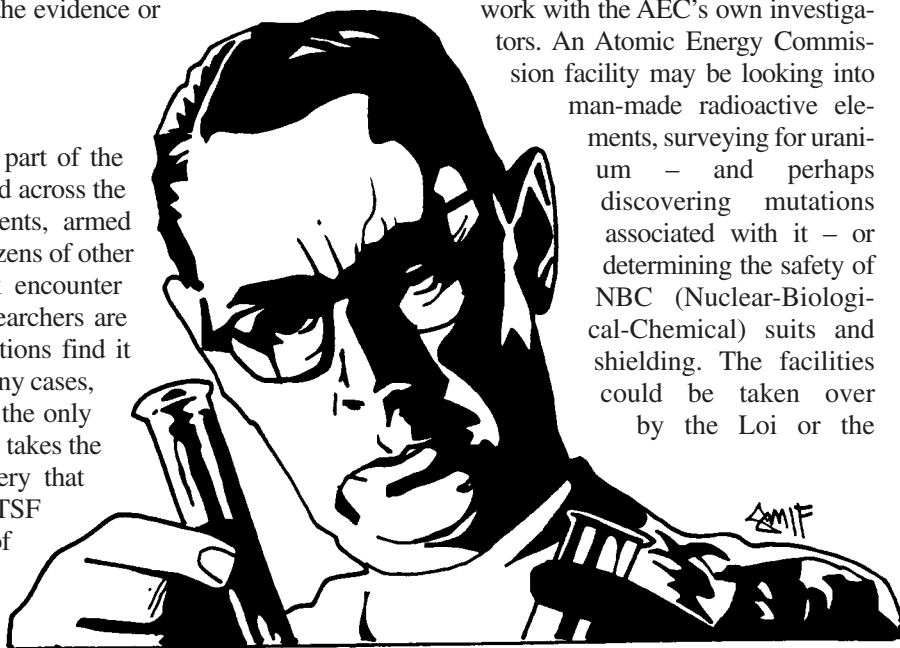
The most significant customers of the Theoretical Science Foundation are listed below. Most nations can boast similar groups, each with a hierarchy of managers, workers, and red tape appropriate to its size.

### Air Force

Advances in aircraft technology have brought the Air Force to prominence. As an organization at the cutting edge of science and technology, it will often encounter bizarre situations. Besides aircraft incidents (particularly involving flying saucers), scenarios could revolve around an Air Force base, especially in a spy campaign. Weird accidents may plague a base commander; could they be caused by aliens attempting to neutralize the site? If so, what secret does it contain? Will the Air Force turn against the PCs if they probe too deeply?

### Atomic Energy Commission

Established by the government to organize the construction of nuclear power stations and atomic bombs, the AEC is a powerful sponsor. Its massive research and development program holds many opportunities for the intervention of Foundation trouble-shooters. These will have to work with the AEC’s own investigators. An Atomic Energy Commission facility may be looking into man-made radioactive elements, surveying for uranium – and perhaps discovering mutations associated with it – or determining the safety of NBC (Nuclear-Biological-Chemical) suits and shielding. The facilities could be taken over by the Loi or the



Metarans, who will use the secrecy at the base to their own advantage. And what about radioactive waste? We're familiar with the real-life problems associated with its disposal; what happens if it is illegally launched into space, or if it contaminates subterranean monsters or meteorite-borne microbes? One thing is certain: with the AEC as a client, *lots* of people will want to pack Geiger counters!

## Corporations

Big business always has something to hide, and some of the large industrial or mining companies may have secrets too hot to handle. Mining companies may stumble across caverns containing superhuman ancestors (see p. 100) or Lost-World

creatures deep within forbidding wastelands. A mine may suffer sabotage or obscure murders . . . the cause may prove to be a subterranean horror, or a mutating gas seeping from the rock. Has the mine encountered a crack deep into the Earth's core? If so, what is down there?

Industrial companies may attract the attention of the Loi, or may pump toxic waste into rivers and unused mines. Inevitably in this setting, the pollution creates mindless zombies, intelligent spiders, destructive mutant amoebae, or even worse.

If an alien race took over a corporation, it would have contacts, buildings, and advertising at its disposal. The human race could be manipulated through the product line!

## THE FBI CAMPAIGN

If the idea of the TSF seems too bizarre or unrealistic, the GM can run PCs as FBI agents. FBI agents may have a scientific background, and can carry out the same investigative missions, but scenarios will be limited to the United States and slanted toward crime, not science. Most standard FBI adventures will be criminal cases involving federal jurisdiction. Criminal activity crossing state lines, involving drugs, kidnapping, or foreign espionage, is typical. Ingenious GMs can tie almost *any* scenario into an FBI campaign. Missing government officials, attacks on federal property, and crimes involving federal funds or the National Guard are examples.

**GURPS Atomic Horror** G-men could instead be agents assigned to the SAA (Scientific Advisory Agency). This fictitious FBI department concentrates on scientific espionage, federal crimes involving science, and unsafe experiments. This option fuses scientists and investigators.

The SAA concerns itself with the "dangers to America of the misuse of science and technology." This sweeping statement covers all manner of research projects, strange occurrences, rumors of alien activity, mutations, or danger to America or the globe. Maybe this is one of several mysterious federal task forces assigned to seemingly everyday cases that are not even in federal jurisdiction.

The Federal Headquarters Building is in Washington, D.C., and there are field offices in cities across the nation. Its director is J. Edgar Hoover; to the agents across the country, he is almost a deity. In the mud-slinging '50s, Hoover was never once accused of being a Communist, a subversive, or anything but a model American. Building his organization's reputation on the pursuit and conviction of gangsters and bootleggers in the '20s and '30s, Hoover went on to counter Nazi spying attempts and, now, Communist spies.

Each federal agent wears a suit and hat. He carries credentials, a pair of handcuffs, and a .38 revolver. He can use cells in police stations and city courthouses to hold prisoners until trial. Since the 1940s a whole branch of the Bureau has been dedicated to uncovering Communist spy rings in the United States. Spies use several legitimate Soviet organizations as covers: the Soviet embassy in Washington, Soviet consulates in large U.S. cities, Tass (the Soviet press agency), World Tourist Incorporated, and the Soviet Government

Purchasing Commission. Agents know the top people in these organizations and watch them continuously.

### Federal Agents

The Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are always armed, and *must* have either Law-14 or Accounting-14. In all other respects create them like police detectives (see p. 15). Some agents, recruited in the '30s to help Hoover tackle bootleggers, were hard-bitten gunfighters. A few of these are still around in the 1950s, and are tough and streetwise.

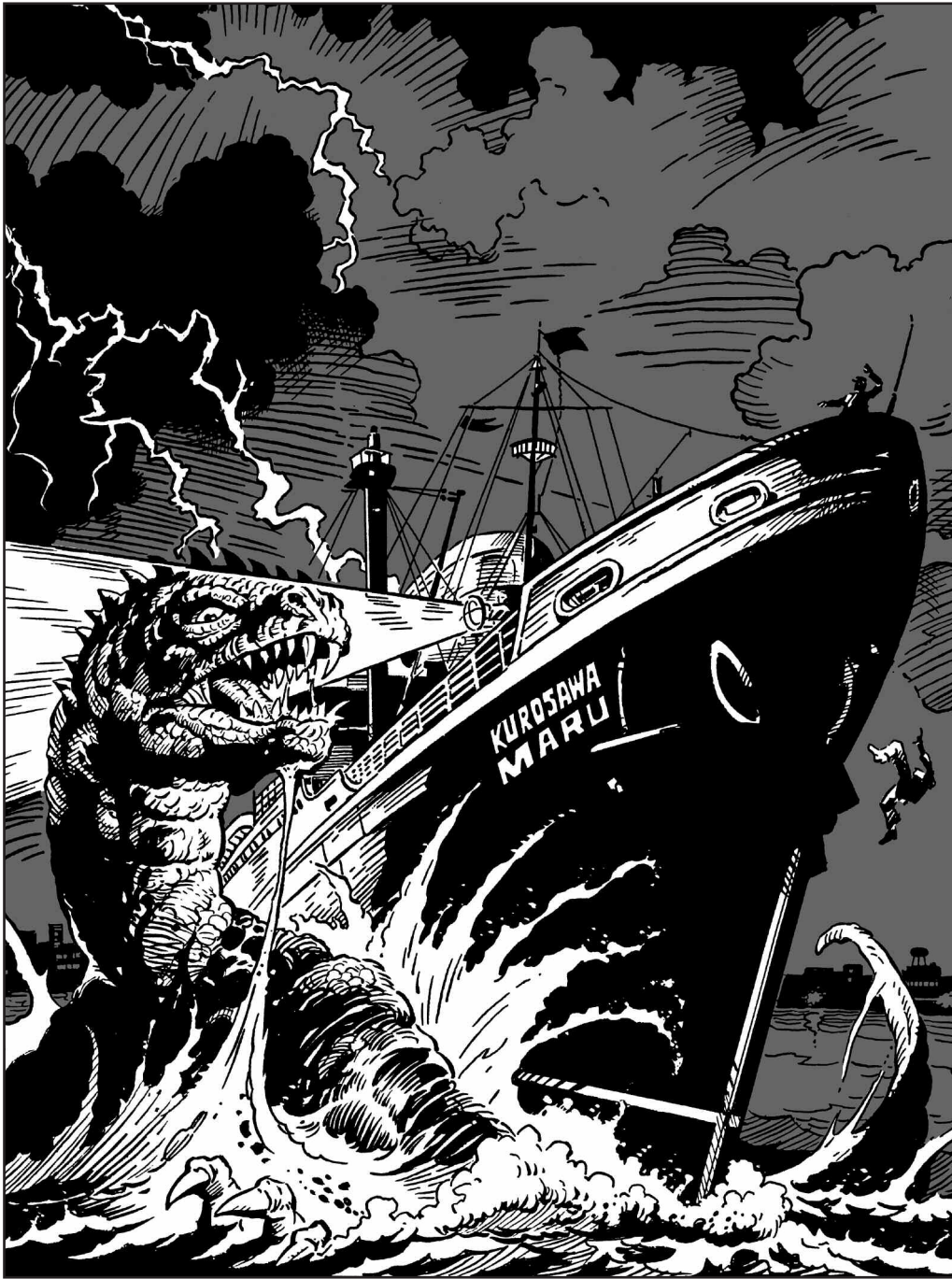
An agent's boss is the Special Agent in Charge (SAC), who runs anything from a small office with half a dozen agents to a hundred-man special project in L.A. A SAC is in control of a specific operation and will be replaced by a more capable SAC if the case gets too big.

### Working With Other Feds

Federal marshals are loosely organized and largely underworked in the '50s. A marshal is appointed by the president to work for a federal court. There are few requirements for the post (making it an option for law-abiding characters!) and the new marshal hires deputies to help him serve court papers, attend court, and hunt fugitives. Marshals work with the FBI and can pursue criminals across the United States (and even into Mexico or Canada).

Although FBI agents will be more concerned with interstate crimes and counter-espionage, they are also involved in policing federal organizations and installations. They may be called into investigations on Indian reservations, national parks and monuments, military bases, and Atomic Energy Commission facilities.

Special Agents might work with the investigators of the AEC to solve a scientific mystery, or expose a spy ring. They may also have to battle atomic horrors discovered (or created) by two federal agencies: the Department of Agriculture and the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Plant and insect mutations, chemical sprays, and experimental fertilizers may all unleash menaces onto America, while the CGS could easily stumble upon a marine horror for the Feds (or the TSF) to tackle.



A stranded group of aliens might try to build a new flying saucer by taking over an airplane company. Money and profits will mean nothing to such creatures; there will always be some deeper motive for corporate domination.

### *Department of Defense*

As part of the government apparatus, the Department of Defense is a powerful organization and thus a prime target for invading aliens. The investigators may be hired by the DoD to find a missing expert (who vanished under strange circumstances . . .), or to look at some artifact the Department has found. The DoD may also act as a rival to the TSF, instead of a backer. While the PCs may want to recover an item (or person), the Defense Department may want to destroy it, or, more ominously, to recover it for their own ends. If the DoD is

crawling with invaders, then it will be at odds with the TSF as well as just about every other branch of government!

### *Intelligence Agencies*

The American CIA, the Russian KGB and GRU, and the British MI6 are all covert intelligence agencies. Since they assess threats to the national security from external sources and then neutralize those threats, the agencies will oppose alien invaders if at all possible. This may bring the TSF to their attention as a potential ally. Suspicious (and unearthly) activity at a military base, defense installation, or other government facility may warrant TSF investigative help. Of course, the team members will be watched *very* carefully.

Strange things washed up on the beach or bizarre radar traces are valid reasons for the agency to involve the Foundation. If a secret agent dies mysteriously on a mission, was he about to report the invasion of Earth? Can the Foundation explain an obscure message just decoded? Bits of letters, documents, and equipment that have been stolen or seized by the intelligence agency will need identifying and following up. The agency may actually provide the team with enough information to get the job done . . .

### *NACA*

NACA (National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics) is a government-run organization that conducts research and development into high-speed and high-altitude aircraft. Eventually re-formed as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958, it is an experimental research bureau that may call on the TSF frequently. Since there are no established space agencies, NACA test pilots are about to brave the vast unknown of space. The observers may be brought in to examine a pilot who has been contaminated by some exotic form of radiation (see p. 103). Or they may accompany an expedition into the desert or jungle to locate a crashed rocket, brought down by flying saucers or sabotaged by rivals. Lucky (or unlucky!) investigators may join a space



mission and may even live to regret it. Space shots can bring back alien creatures that attack the base personnel, and can invite trouble from flying saucers.

Although the historical NACA only carried out the “X” plane flights that set new aviation records (such as the Bell X-1’s breaking of the sound barrier), the GM can invent his own space program for it to carry out. One-man shots into space, into orbit, or around the moon are likely. So are landings on the moon or small space stations, or a trip to a comet or another world. All of these flights should be experimental and dangerous. NACA operates wholly from Edwards Air Force Base in California, while Cape Canaveral, traditionally associated with space missions and NASA, is still the property of the U.S. Army. The British equivalent, based at Farnborough, is the Royal Aircraft Establishment, although its space shots would originate from the Woomera test site in Australia.

### *Navy*

The Navy floats on, and swims in, the next-to-last “final frontier.” The oceans are far from fully explored; the sea beds of the world’s ocean basins are only now being mapped by deep sonar. Who knows what surprises Navy explorers and surveyors will find at the bottom of the ocean? A flying saucer, still in one piece, or a “living fossil” from the time of the dinosaurs are two possibilities. If a sub is lost in such an area, investigators may learn how to operate a submarine or bathyscaph. The Navy may also find a living fossil trapped in the polar ice; if they inadvertently release it, it will of course wreak destructive havoc. Strange mineral deposits or an area of gas emissions or quake activity may attract Navy (and TSF) interest. The reasons behind such strange phenomena could range from bomb tests or radioactive waste dumping to deadly space monsters.

### *News Service*

When a journalist or news service picks up a good story that leads to some enigmatic conclusion, then the Theoretical Science Foundation may be the organization to turn to. This may involve the PCs in a mystery that someone would rather not have them investigate. The news service can provide an initial briefing, or simply chase rumors and stories without a definite problem to be solved. The journalist may have been warned away from a government project or have come across a tantalizing snippet of information about an invasion plan. Of course the Foundation should be careful not to grant the news service access to everything it uncovers. After all, man may not be ready to hear that society is infested with alien invaders plotting his downfall.

### *Police Department*

The local police department is understaffed, underfunded, and overworked. When trouble strikes from the skies (or the ocean depths), the county sheriff or city cop will quickly find himself out of his league. Police chiefs have learned from experience to call on experts when the bizarre shows its face. Perhaps a murder victim witnessed part of an invasion, or served the alien invaders, only to be killed once he outlived his usefulness. The victim may be the first of many hideously mutat-

ed humans. If some menace takes up residence in the subway or the park, the police department will need the Foundation’s help to keep the city from being caught up in hysteria.

### *United Nations*

Formed in June 1945, the United Nations has several departments or divisions that conduct their own scientific investigations. They often commission independent groups like the TSF to conduct research for them. A problem that crosses international boundaries or faces the world community as a whole will involve the fledgling United Nations. If one nation accuses another of infringing on its airspace, for example, the U.N. might ask the TSF to determine the true cause of the dispute. Of course, if the truth is saucer-shaped, the Foundation will find itself tracking down an alien base on the border . . .

When the world faces a catastrophic end, the U.N. will try to coordinate some sort of solution. It is likely to turn to the Theoretical Science Foundation for technical expertise. There are plenty of astronomical dangers that the U.N. may be forced to tackle (see p. 105). Unified use of A-bombs to blast incoming meteors and the construction of space “arks” are typical United Nations solutions, hopefully made possible with TSF support . . .

### *Universities*

Most academic and scientific trouble-shooters will have been educated at a university. These centers of research and learning have the funds and experience to organize their own expeditions and ground-breaking technical projects. The GM should note that – at least in *GURPS Atomic Horror* – many university researchers fall foul of the mysteries of ’50s pseudoscience. Pushing the envelope of scientific thought can be risky. It may involve uncovering part of the *real* history of the Earth (see Chapter 4), cross-breeding to create weird life-forms, investigating flying saucers, or anything else that the university deems fundable. With a university as a client, the case may begin with a lost expedition, a worried Dean, and a stack of wildly improbable research notes!

## ***The TSF Campaign***

The TSF works best in detailed, linked scenarios where concepts and ideas will recur and can be saved by the Foundation until needed. It can also simply serve as a mechanism for channeling the PCs into adventures. Adventures can start with groups who approach the TSF for advice and help, with independent research projects funded by the organization, or with a secret TSF investigation (from greed, concern, or conceit) of someone else’s project.

Just because a GM uses the Foundation doesn’t mean that he should spoon-feed information to the adventurers. The investigators can look into a (seemingly) bizarre case only to discover a mundane solution. They can also carry out very boring routine analysis that is interrupted by a threatening mystery. If an alien has infiltrated the Foundation staff, the PCs may not even realize there *is* a scenario until one of them is threatened. The Theoretical Science Foundation is just one option, and GMs should never feel compelled to use it.

Most of the organizations listed previously could easily employ their own scientific investigators to look into affairs. All that is needed is an organization with access to labs and libraries and with enough motives for pursuing widely differing types of investigation. The TSF does this by being international and multi-disciplined.

An organization can help the GM keep investigators together, or the heroes can meet as a group of friends, instead. Brought together by their first scenario, the friends earn a reputation for a willingness to work on weird projects.

*The Real History of the Earth* (Chapter 4) can generate several adventures that are linked or stem from some related theme. The ideas behind the scenarios will give the TSF investigators the impression that with each event they are delving deeper and deeper into the plot. Each scenario can be a TSF case with clues left over (“too many loose ends . . .”) that point to a new danger or aftereffect. The climax exposes the overall connection.

The Game Master can also run a campaign in which rival TSF factions pursue hidden agendas. As well as doing battle with atomic menaces, the investigators must also fight internal threats. Department heads and members of the Executive Council may “buy off” or otherwise gain control of individuals who must obey not only the commands of the Foundation but those of their secret masters. TSF employees may be required to steal information, prevent another investigator from carrying out tasks for a rival faction, gain contacts for their own faction, or discredit a rival department. The GM can increase the number of potential coalitions by including the FBI, KGB, AEC, Air Force, or other independent groups. The Establishment could easily see the TSF as a threat to the traditional scientific, technological, and political status quo.

## SECRETS OF THE FOUNDATION

Feeding adventures to the players week after week is a fine beginning, but the TSF is full of potential. A GM can (and should) think about the long-term ramifications of his campaign. The TSF doesn’t have to be the magnanimous and altruistic organization presented here – it may be a sinister alliance to be investigated and exposed. While the team may solve mysteries at the beginning, their employer may eventually prove the biggest mystery of all.

The broad framework of this concept should be worked out first, before scenarios are written. The TSF is an excellent vehicle for popular ’50s conspiracy theories. It may be manipulated, or even owned, by an organization that wants its researches kept secret. If, for example, the federal government believed in UFOs (which it must; Majestic Twelve is a real organization . . .), it would be more likely to set up some sort of “independent” research organization for further studies than to admit the presence of alien intelligence with indefinable powers from an indefinable location. In this way Washington can avoid accusations that they are keeping something from the public. Perhaps the TSF was instituted by the U.S. Air Force, which uses it to gather information, allowing the Air Force to explore the “fringe” without looking foolish or unscientific. The KGB could have set up the Foundation as a scientific advisory body that has the confidence of America’s leading technological groups. By trouble-shooting for the

## SPACE ARK

The Foundation may initiate a space ark project designed to take a number of colonists or refugees to another world with animals, crops, tools, etc. Perhaps the Earth is in imminent danger of destruction. The TSF will not be the only group to take warnings seriously, but will be one of the first to construct a space ark.

Building such an ark is not easy; there are important problems to overcome. If disaster seems imminent, doubters will suddenly see the use of the project and converge on the launch site in hopes of securing a seat. The Foundation will need a small army to keep these desperate people away. Only a few people will be privileged to make the journey, perhaps chosen by merit or by lot. The successful launch of the space ark brings a *Atomic Horror* campaign to an abrupt end. The establishment of the new colony and the survival of the first generation in an alien environment and in competition with other colonies is beyond the range of *Atomic Horror* and moves into the scope of *GURPS Space*.

armed forces, government, and industry, the TSF gains access to a wide range of restricted information.

The Loi Alliance (see pp. 40, 47) may have established the organization with the intent of policing Earth’s technological disasters. When a toxic spill creates radioactive rats or heat-controlling superhumans, the Loi can clean up after mankind and help the planet progress. The Loi would state their purpose in controlling the TSF (if anyone exposed their participation) as a mission “. . . to aid the development of humankind, monitor its advance, and warn its leaders of the imminent doom that may await them all . . .” Or the Alphans (pp. 53-55) could be behind Gene Driscoll and his advisors. In keeping with Alphan philosophy, they would use the TSF purely as a means of collecting information, test results, and scientific samples for the evolution of their own race. Finally, it might be controlled by the exiled Loi mutants still living on Earth (p. 48). If this is the case, then Lauranis, the leader of the outcasts, must have been Oakland, or perhaps Gene Driscoll. Perhaps he intends to provide the scientific community with the data it will need to combat the Alphans, Arendians, or even the Alliance.

If none of those appeal to a GM, Driscoll might turn out to be a megalomaniacal pseudoscientist-cum-prophet. He must control all wisdom in his lust for unearthly power and the fulfillment of his crazed writings and wild theories. Or is he a KGB colonel, a Communist sympathizer, or a grand wizard?

Whatever secret lies behind the Foundation, the GM must carefully consider its goals, how it maintains a perfect cover, and how it will eventually achieve world domination or a global science monopoly. Scenarios may seem to be typical ’50s fare, but each will throw more light on the TSF and its goals. The climactic confrontation with Gene Driscoll will bring the PCs into direct opposition with him or those for whom he works. This final scenario may not be an investigation but a straightforward battle. If the TSF survives it will probably do so under new management . . .



# THE REAL HISTORY OF EARTH



The aliens are coming! But why . . . and who, exactly, are they? This chapter presents an array of alien civilizations and “lost worlds” suitable for use in any *GURPS Atomic Horror* campaign.

The GM does not have to use all the different aliens described in this chapter in his campaign. But if he does, he’ll find that a large variety of aliens makes it easy to keep even the most knowledgeable PCs guessing. Are the strange events in Midville the result of a benign Loi intervention, a strange Alphan experiment, a fiendish Metaran plot, or a “natural” earthly phenomenon?

## GURPS Space



It is possible to view the *Atomic Horror* universe as a *GURPS Space* campaign set around a marginal backwater world incapable of star travel (Earth). Theoretically the PCs could rocket around the galaxy as a Loi saucer crew, fighting Alphans and establishing new colonies. However, since the Loi and other aliens are designed as “good guys” or “bad guys” to fit a ’50s SF setting, they will take a lot of development to become fully developed races.

*GURPS Space* can be used by the GM, though, to add detail to the alien technology and settings. Wholesale duplication of the worldbook is unnecessary, because PCs will rarely (if ever) get to build a saucer or fight in zero-G. If *Space* is available, the possibilities are always there, though. The following are essential crossovers from *GURPS Space*:

**Choosing Technology:** All drives are warp drives (see p. 33); common power plants are antimatter; FTL radio is instantaneous (although limited to about 40 light-years). A scout ship is roughly 350 cy, a mother ship probably 20,000 cy. All vessels have tractor beams and stealth suits.

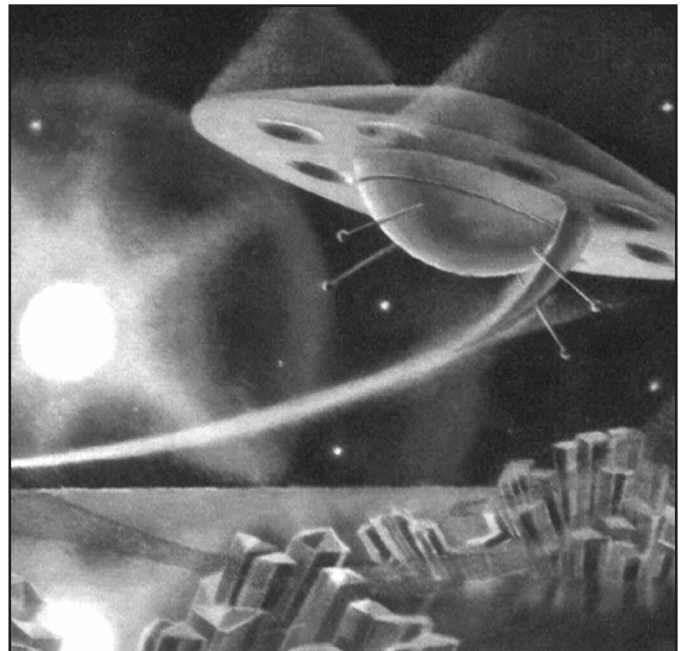
**Multiscanner:** This handheld scanner detects energy, chemical elements, and life forms, and includes a small computer for detailed analysis and a data recorder for later reference. See p. S70.

**Implant Communicator:** This radio is placed in the base of the skull, and is used by crew members to communicate with each other. Its range is 10 miles. See p. S63.

## ALIEN PCs

If the GM allows the PCs to play undercover aliens, it is recommended that he charge at least a 50-point Unusual Background for extraterrestrial origins. Alien PCs should probably be disallowed at the start of the campaign, when the party has no idea that there’s anything out of the ordinary.

Alternately, the GM can plant a ringer in the party from the very start, privately approaching one of the players and arranging for him to play an alien agent among the humans. The other PCs should have no idea that they have an alien in their midst until they deduce it from events within the campaign.



**-65 million to -1.6 million**

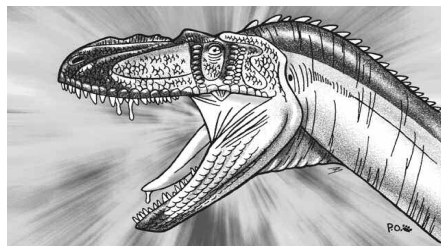
## THE REAL HISTORY OF THE EARTH

This purely fictional timeline has been provided to rationalize the ancient reports of UFOs, and to put the alien races in historical perspective. Scenarios may point to some of the secrets in this history, but players should not really be allowed to learn more than bits and pieces. The concept that our gods were aliens and that man *was* made in his god’s own image should come as a surprise!

The timeline can just add background color to a game, or can be the springboard for an exciting adventure with a plot that began 2 million years ago. When the players have lost their cozy grasp on reality and their acceptance of history as always “true,” they may become wary of accepting *anything* as the truth, questioning right and wrong, loyalties and motives . . .

### -65 million

Most dinosaurs die out due to massive volcanic activity, but some survive in isolated pockets; humanoid amphibians survive in some lakes and ocean areas.



### -5 Million

Advanced race on Mars becomes extinct.

### -2 million

Loi discover the stardrive and establish colonies, possibly including colony on Earth.

### -1.65 million

Loi encounter the Alphans and interstellar war ensues, lasting for 500,000 years. Hypothetical Earth colony is lost.

### -1.6 million

Alphans attempt to contaminate the Loi race by genetically manipulating a number of them; the plan is exposed and the mutants are cast out of the Loi Alliance – their strange powers are a threat. The outcasts seek refuge on Atalan, fifth world of our solar system, but soon move to Earth.

# The Arendians

The Arendians were threatened with extinction when their homeworld faced imminent destruction from a supernova. Several of them calculated that a large, nearby comet would be thrown clear of the system; to save their society, the Arendians colonized this comet. When the star exploded, the comet was catapulted deep into space. That was 20 million years ago . . .

The Arendians could not live normally on the comet; it produced harmful radiation and had such low gravity that they became disoriented. So they cut a complex of caverns into the nucleus to shield their bodies, equipment, space capsules, and computer libraries, and went into hibernation. An automated life-support system would awaken them when they came within the life zone of a warm yellow main-sequence star – a star like our own.

In 10,000 B.C., the comet entered our solar system. As it passed the Earth, key Arendians awakened to observe our world carefully. Although the planet was perfect for colonization, the Arendians needed host bodies to function. Since possessing a human body caused it to deteriorate rapidly, even millions of human beings were too few to support the hundreds of thousands of Arendians in hibernation for the length of time needed to rebuild a civilized society. To remedy the situation, several hundred Arendians were sent down to live among the human tribes and teach them the skills of farming and civilization. When the Arend-Roland comet returned in 12,000 years, the rest of the aliens could take human host bodies and feed on the millions of humans around them . . .



The Arendians did not know of the Loi presence on the planet (see pp. 47-51). As the tribes gave up their hunter-gatherer existence to settle down on farms and in villages, the Loi tried to understand why. The passage of the Arend-Roland comet had, however, added some greenhouse gases to the Earth's atmosphere, causing the planet to warm up. Before the Loi discovered the cause of the agricultural revolution, the Ice Age had come to an end. Sea levels rose, coasts flooded, and Atlantis was swamped. The Loi scattered across the Earth, and the Arendian pioneers began living parasitically within the new communities.

However, the Loi soon learned of the presence of these alien creatures. They built pyramids, powerful electromagnetic generators, to trap the immortal Arendians. The Loi banished the Arendians to these prisons across the globe. The Sumerians, Egyptians, Aztecs, and Mayans all built pyramids, later forgetting their original use. In legends, the Arendians were the "pretenders" to the thrones of the gods, and tried to teach man how to fend for himself: in Greece, they were Prometheus and the Titans; in Egypt, Apep and his demons.

Inevitably, some Arendians escaped from their prisons. Moving from body to body, they usually remained hidden, though their presence sometimes came to light. Stories about these soul-demons that

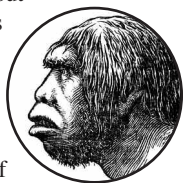
lived inside host bodies and fed on the human spirit became myths about vampires and demonic possession.

When Arendians possess a body, they absorb the human mind, which is gone forever. Its former IQ becomes the maximum IQ the Arendian can use while in that body. The voice becomes a flat monotone, and the person's body language changes – the victim may start using a different hand, forget nicknames, or dress differently.

## -1.4 million to -10,000

### -1.4 million

Alphan scouts destroy Atalan, believing it to be the home of the mutant outcasts; the planet becomes an asteroid belt and the gravitational tides cause catastrophes on Earth: the atmosphere begins to cool, resulting in the start of the Pleistocene Era.



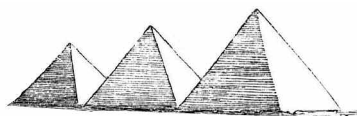
Loi mutants come out of hiding and tinker with the genes of *Homo habilis* to create *Homo erectus*, the first true man; the outcasts plan to hide among this new species.

### -47,000

Metaran ships land in China to survey for uranium; local Neanderthals record the visit in carvings on a granite mountain.

### -35,000

The outcast Loi establish an island home. Named after their first world, Atlantis is a mountain chain in the mid-Atlantic. The leader of the civilization is Lauranis. The immortal exiles revive old technology to create breathtaking cities, towering pyramids, flying saucers, and modern man.

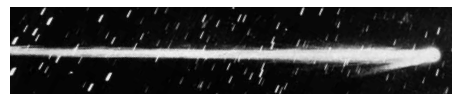


### -12,000

Loi seer Irinda foresees downfall of Atlantis. With 700 human followers she builds a space ship and establishes a colony in the jungles of Venus. The civilization they create is a peaceful agrarian matriarchy.

### -10,000

Comet Arend-Roland passes close to Earth on its 12,000-year cycle, and frozen aliens on the comet awaken to study Earth. They see possible hosts (humankind), but in too few numbers; Arendians decide to "cultivate" the human species for harvesting on the next return of the comet (sometime in the 1950s). Several hundred Arendians travel to Earth to teach agriculture and civilization with the aim of increasing the population. At the comet's closest approach the tail releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere; the Earth heats up, the Ice Age ends, Atlantis floods, and coasts drown; the Loi scatter across the world.



## ARENDIANS

502 POINTS

**Attribute Modifiers:** IQ +10 (Limited to host body's IQ, or 3 with no host -40%) [105].

**Advantages:** Body-Hopping (Permanently displaces host mind +70%, retains skills and memories +30%, touch only -20%) [144]\*; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Flight [40]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Insubstantiality (Always on -50%, can affect substantial world +100%) [120]; Psychic Vampirism 12 (Touch only -20%) [29]\*\*; 360-Degree Vision [25]; Unaging [15].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-6]; The Draining (Affects host's HT only +20%, happens every other day rather than every day +20%) [-6]; Disturbing Voice (Flat monotone) [-10]; Secret (Alien parasite invader) [-30]; Unliving (Only against damage taken from The Draining -50%) [-25].

**Skills:** Drain IQ (Link +10%, permanent drain +300%) (M/H) IQ [17]-20\*\*; Steal Energy (Link +10%, restores HT lost to The Draining +100%) (M/H) IQ [9]-20\*\*.

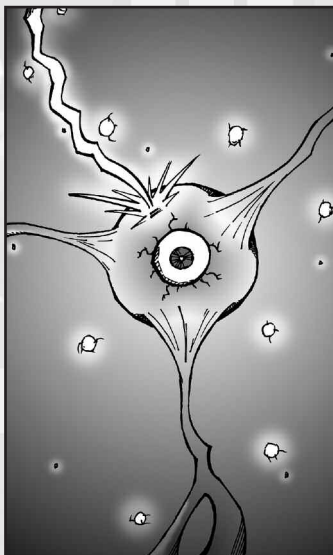
\* The Arendian must win a Quick Contest between its (current) Will and the victim's Will +3. The Arendian retains the host's memories, though the voice becomes a flat monotone, and the possessed's body language will change (the victim may start using a different hand, forget nicknames or pet names, dress differently, etc.) The possession continues

until the Arendian abandons the host or the host reaches 0 HT – in either case, it spontaneously combusts shortly after!

\*\* Roll a Quick Contest of Drain IQ vs. the victim's Will; if the victim loses this contest, he permanently loses 1 point of IQ (to a minimum of IQ 1). Roll a second Quick Contest of Steal Energy vs. the victim's Will; if the victim loses *this* contest, he loses 1d points of fatigue (or hit points, if he has no fatigue points left to lose). The Arendian recovers one hit point lost to The Draining for every 3 fatigue points drained.

**Notes:** The Arendian's host body will lose 2 HT every other day; to regain that HT, the Arendian must use its Psychic Vampirism power to drain fatigue and IQ from another victim. When the body is down to half its original HT, sores, bruises, burn marks, and blisters become visible. These get worse until the host "dies" (when HT drops to 0), at which point the body collapses and in a matter of minutes burns away as if from a great internal heat.

If the damage to a host body is too great, or if humans suspect the Arendian possession and plan to kill the body, the alien will transfer to another host, via the Body-Hopping power; any host body left behind will burn as described above. Since an Arendian cannot, practically, die (between its immunities and the setting's lack of any weapons capable of harming it directly), an alien that is still in a body at the time of death returns to its natural state – an opalescent fog seemingly illuminated from within. The alien's IQ when bodiless drops dramatically, to only 3, and it roams around looking for a host. It may take generations for an Arendian to move up from animal to animal until it has a host with enough IQ to enable it to possess a human.



## -3000 to 400



### -3000

Agricultural civilizations are well established; humanity is prolific. Loi with their mutant powers have become the gods of the new cultures and try to eradicate the Arendians who feed off the people. The Arendians, who cannot be killed, must be entombed within special electromagnetic fields emitted by Loi pyramids; the Loi "gods" trap Arendians under pyramids across the world.

### -2500

Irinda mysteriously vanishes. Matriarchy on Venus begins to devolve into barbarism.

### -1700

Seeing the dangers of godhood, the Loi give up their positions and decide to fade into the population.

### -1500

Alphan scouts arrive on Earth, inspect the culture of Egypt and recognize the Loi pyramids. Thinking Mankind is descended from a Loi colony, the Alphans take great interest in its genetic make-up.

### -650 to 350

The Loi mutants begin a 1,000-year campaign to civilize humanity. Loi influence civilizations around the world. Famous Loi from this period include Confucius and the emperor Kao Tsu in China, the emperors Asoka and

Samudra Gupta in India, and Quetzalcoatl in Central America. Laurantis takes a special interest in Greek and Roman civilizations – his alter egos include Solon, Aristotle, Cato the Elder, Cicero, and the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Constantine the Great.



### -592

Alphans begin abducting humans, beginning with the prophet Ezekiel.

### 400

Sometime this century, the women of Venus expel the increasingly savage men from their ancient cities.

## HOMEWORLD

The comet Arend-Roland is the new homeworld of this alien race. Like most comets, it is composed of an icy methane nucleus surrounded by a hydrogen halo. When near a star, it generates a long plasma tail that points away from the star; Arend-Roland's plasma tail contains an unusually high concentration of greenhouse gases

The Arendian city is a fully automated underground installation built around a fusion reactor. The supercomputer that monitors the sleeping aliens – and that awakened the scouts in 10,000 B.C. – also controls an army of servant robots to carry out maintenance tasks. People who go there (perhaps to sabotage the city before the Arendians can colonize Earth) see a collection of silvery domes on the surface with entrances leading down into the complex. The computer's sensor array is a tall central spire surmounted by a globe; it will alert the computer to the intruders' arrival. Arendian spacecraft are nothing more than one-man capsules fired from a deep launching tube coming from the hibernation chambers.

The reactor will fascinate engineers; the fabulous hibernation cells will intrigue biologists. Like bees working in hives, iridescent mists churn and flow within the hexagonal chambers laid out side-by-side in vast halls. These are slumbering Arendians awaiting release.

Servant robots will attack intruders with stunners. If the humans are knocked out, they will be used as hosts for some of the sleeping Arendians, who will try to prevent the Earthlings from disrupting the invasion and will return to Earth in the team's ship!

## TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

The Arendian culture is roughly TL9. Arendian technology should not figure prominently in a scenario; the aliens will invade without equipment. Only when their invasion is complete will they begin constructing stunners, blasters, fusion

## PCs WHO LOSE THEIR MINDS

A PC might become the victim of Arendian possession, Alphan duplication, or Vortun brain transplant. Normally when this happens, he is considered dead. There will be exceptions – the original of the Alphan duplicate might be kept in suspended animation, or the Vortun transplant might be restored to its original body through the kind of lucky improbability that so often graced the endings of '50s B movies. But in general, a player whose hero is possessed, duplicated, or transplanted will have to design a new character.

But perhaps not immediately.

The GM can allow an imaginative, versatile roleplayer to stay in the game, playing the part of the alien who's taken over his former character's shape. His goal would be to subvert the rest of the party, carrying out orders from his alien masters.

If the secret alien PC is good enough at his job, he could end up "converting" the whole party. If so, the GM could just turn the campaign around from one of humans vs. aliens to one of aliens vs. the Earth. Such a turnabout campaign could provide an interesting change of pace, as the party steals secrets, subverts communities, and undermines the society of the primitive humans. If the novelty wears off, the players can always start from scratch – perhaps encountering their old characters as NPC foes.

plants, and robots. The aliens will need these to build "amplifiers," which house their misty forms. Once in an amplifier, they can communicate with the computer and control the robots, effectively giving them powerful hands and eyes.

The possession of humans is a survival skill that limits the Arendian IQ to that of our own feeble minds. In an amplifier the Arendian IQ soars to its natural level (much higher than human IQ). Several caretaker Arendians in heavily shielded amplifiers could be available for communication in the comet.

## 800 to 1909

### 800

Alphans active in France; Charlemagne threatens torture and death for those who report seeing the aerial ships. Panic and distress throughout the land results in mobs attacking abductees newly returned from Alphan flying saucers.

### 1484

Failure of many Loi to keep their powers hidden results in the papal bull of Pope Innocent VIII denouncing witchcraft; the hunt for witches becomes a European obsession with thousands of victims.

### 1587

Alphans abduct the entire British colony at Roanoke, Virginia for experimental purposes.

### 1750

Lauranis becomes the confidant of Louis XV; as the Comte de Saint Germain, his agelessness and outstanding scientific knowledge impress many. He later helps Catherine the Great to power in 1762 and warns Louis XVI of the approaching revolution.

### 1872

*Mary Celeste* is discovered adrift east of the Azores. Crew and passengers are missing, victims of a Vortun experiment to snatch bodies from the past to use as hosts in the future.

### 1896-1897

Scouts from the Loi Alliance visit Earth and observe man's progress with fascination; they are greatly interested in the United States.



### 1898

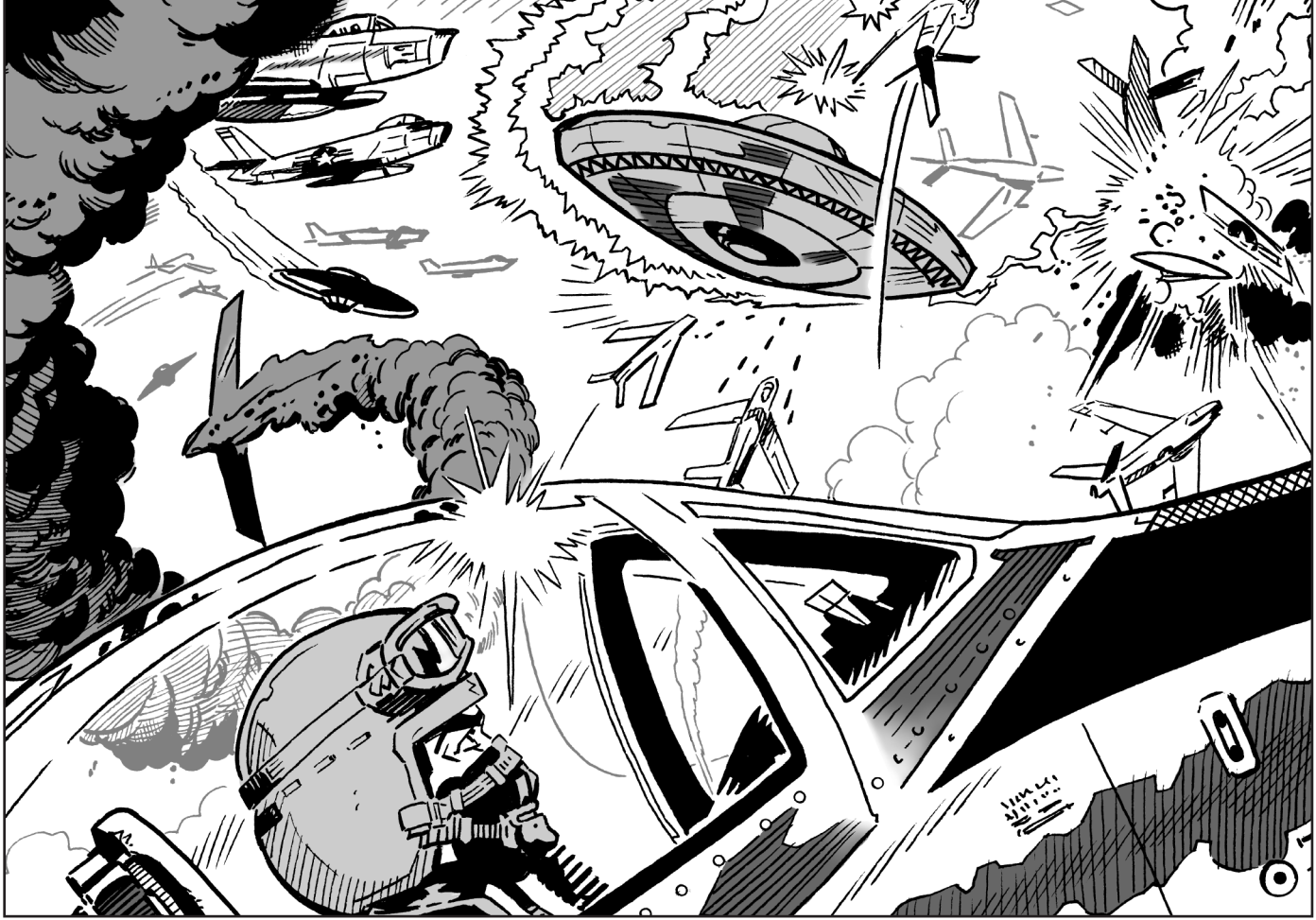
The Alphans destroy the American battleship *Maine* after the Loi send investigators aboard to analyze it in Havana harbor.

### 1908

A Loi mother ship is attacked by the Alphans and enters the atmosphere above Tunguska, in Siberia, exploding before impact. Alphans realize the Loi Alliance has a serious interest in Earth and begin more covert activities.

### 1909

More Loi vessels arrive to inspect the technology of Great Britain.



Arendian spacecraft are glowing ovoids roughly 10' tall and 4' wide at their thickest part. The craft are unarmed, and are equipped with slow warp drives which enable them to make incredible maneuvers and high-speed turns. Once an Arendian has located a host (probably out in the backwoods, where there will be no witnesses), it can hover above the target and transfer. If the Arendian is transferring from a ship, it's treated as having an IQ of 14 for purposes of possession, and

the victim does not get the +3 to his Will roll to resist possession. The vessel destroys itself in a bright flash of light.

## TACTICS

The Arendians long to abandon the comet that has held them prisoner for so many millions of years. An invasion can take place when the comet is closest to Earth. With an orbital period of 12,000 years, it will be in Earth's vicinity

## 1916 to 1947

### 1916

Lauranis, the leader of the Loi mutants, is "killed" again, this time by Prince Yusupov in Russia; Lauranis abandons his identity as Grigori Rasputin and travels to the USA.

### 1918

The Vortun open a *permanent* gateway from the year 6000 A.D. to the year 1918, in the vicinity of what is soon called the Bermuda Triangle. Their aim is to capture bodies to house Vortun minds in the future.

### 1930

The 1,200 inhabitants of Lake Anjikuni village in Canada and the dead of their cemetery disappear without a trace. They are taken into the future by the Vortun as host bodies for super-minds.



### 1939-1945

The Loi Alliance watches man's world war with horror as it becomes clear how close atomic annihilation is for the planet.

### 1945

Vortun snatch planes and aircrew of Flight 19 *en masse* while on a routine training mission off the tip of Florida.

### 1947

Kenneth Arnold makes the first post-war sighting of Loi flying saucers over the Cascade Mountains in Washington state. The Loi are on a mission to make contact with the United Nations and convince the Russians and Americans to use science for peaceful purposes.

A few days later, near Roswell, New Mexico, a rocket from the White Sands Missile Range goes off course (perhaps due to Alphan sabotage) and collides with one of the Loi saucers, killing the occupants; the craft and the Loi corpses are taken to Edwards Air Force Base.

The Loi think the accident was a deliberate attack and realize that the Loi Alliance could be in danger from these violent savages with toy rockets and A-bombs. U.S. Air Force sets up Project Sign.



throughout the '50s. This will allow several attempts; each time they are foiled, the heroes will learn a little more about the Arendians.

Initially the sentient computer will send out scouts to judge Earth's defenses and progress since Arend-Roland's last visit. In the bodies of human victims, the Arendians will carry out spying operations and then construct a TL9 long-range communicator with which they will relay information back to the comet.

Such examinations may pave the way for the invasion, either by trying to locate the survivors of the 10,000 B.C. invasion force or by taking over important individuals who might hinder the attack. Generals, physicists, biochemists, and politicians are all dangerous to an alien army. The Loi mutants (see p. 48) may already know about the impending attack and try to warn the authorities (with predictable results) or contact the PCs. A Loi will not want to give too much away, however. The investigators may never know he is an alien himself, that he possesses fantastic powers, or that he is 1.5 million years old. Loi NPCs will be invaluable, since they have fought the Arendians before. They can reconstruct the devices built to detain the Arendians the last time they were here.

## The Loi

The Loi are completely humanoid, and may in fact be the ancestors of the human race. Their civilization invented the warp drive 2 million years ago, which they used to explore nearby stars and set up colonies on other worlds. Some believe that the Loi established a colony on paleolithic Earth, and that *Homo sapiens sapiens* either resulted from genetic experiments by the Loi, or are the descendants of the colonists themselves. As these colonies flourished and began trading, the Loi encountered the Alphans. A series of violent interstellar wars brought about the Loi Alliance, and the Great Council of Worlds which oversees it. The wars lasted for millennia, and in that time any record of the hypothetical Loi colony on

Earth was lost. At one point the Alphans intended to destabilize Loi civilization by genetically manipulating some of the Loi. The superpowered freaks that resulted were discovered by the Great Council and exiled forever, branded threats to the balance of Loi life.

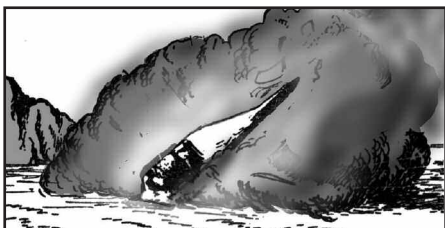
Today, the Loi Alliance is a peaceful union of five important worlds: Loi, Alomar, Archon, Metanor, and Raldor. Each is a self-governing planet, of high ideals and developed culture, that sends representatives to Loi to sit on the Great Council. The Council is concerned with all interstellar matters that have a bearing on the Alliance.

One of these matters is the newly discovered planet Earth. In the 50 years that have passed since its discovery, Earth's people have gone from gliders and steam engines to rockets and atomic energy. Recent attempts to contact the leader of the most powerful nation, America, failed when the Loi scouts were killed by an American missile.

The Council, and the force of flying saucers that do its bidding (the "Eye of the Great Council"), are intent on maintaining the balance of power on Earth. Having learned how primitive the humans are, they believe mankind may destroy itself. The Loi realize that if Earth sends out rockets, it could well discover the Loi, putting them in danger from atomic bombs and germ weapons. It is the job of the Eye of the Council to pacify Earth, either by persuasion or by force. The Eye patrols Loi worlds and is the only militarized aspect of Loi life. It is authorized to make its own decisions; a saucer commander is judge and jury.

A Loi is human-sized, with a deep tan and a high forehead. They are very attractive to humans and often have long blond or red hair. Crewmen from saucers of the Eye wear blue jumpsuits with matching boots. Individual Loi worlds have their own preferred colors: Alomar is silver, Metanor is light brown, Archon is an austere black, Raldor is a vivid green, and Loi itself is vivid gold. Independent missions to Earth are not illegal, but any findings must be taken to the Great Council.

1948 to 1960



**1948**

The Loi begin an "invasion." It is actually an intensive study into human society to ensure no one nation gains too great an advantage over the others.

Captain Mantell pursues a Loi saucer in his P-51 over Kentucky; as a warning to America the saucer blows him out of the sky.

The dying race of the Metarans begins sending scout ships to Earth, in search of uranium, but above all, of a new world to occupy.

**1952**

F-94 jets intercept Metaran flying saucers over Washington, D.C. President Truman is concerned. The Metarans realize that they will not be able to overcome Earth's defenses in an overt invasion.

**1953**

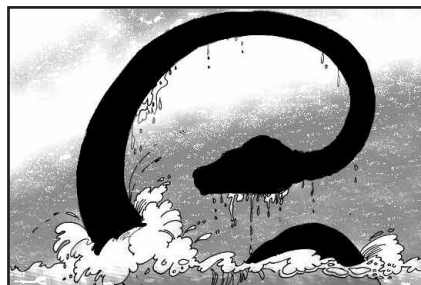
A second Loi saucer crashes at Kingman, Arizona. The saucer and alien bodies are removed to Edwards AFB.

**1954**

President Eisenhower visits Edwards Air Force Base on February 20 to see the remains of a crashed flying saucer and its Loi crew.

**1957**

On November 2 – just a few hours before the launch of Sputnik 2 and Laika the dog into orbit – there is massive Loi activity around Levelland, Texas, as well as at an unused bunker at White Sands, 200 miles away. The bunker is one of those used in the first atom-bomb tests!



**1960**

On April 20, a monster-watcher named Tim Dinsdale obtains motion picture footage of the Loch Ness monster.

## Loi

115 POINTS

**Attribute Modifiers:** IQ +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Attractive [5]; High Technology (+3 TLs) [100].

**Notes:** Most Loi encountered by the PCs will have a Duty (To the Great Council) [-5 to -20], though not all will.

## LOI MUTANT

295 POINTS

**Attribute Modifiers:** IQ +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Attractive [5]; High Technology (+3 TLs) [100]; Immortality [140]; Regrowth [40].

**Notes:** This is a bare-bones Loi mutant; add at least another 200 points worth of attributes, advantages, and powers. Especially appropriate are psionic abilities (from pp. B165-176 or *GURPS Psionics*), super advantages (pp. C149-71), or super powers (*GURPS Supers*). Most Loi mutants will be in the 500- to 1000-point range, due to their millennia of experience. Some mutants may have forgotten or lost all access to their native high technology skills, and will thus lack the High Technology advantage.

There are two symbols occasionally seen on scout ships of the Eye: the symbol of the Eye and the symbol of the Great Council. The Eye insignia is a solid circle within an ellipse; a line extends from the base of this ellipse and after a short distance makes a right-angled turn to the left. The symbol of the Council is a pyramid (or equilateral triangle with a central dividing line) below a semi-circular line curving over it. Slightly below the pyramid is a horizontal straight line.

The Loi have a great reverence for the sun (in their case,  $\xi$  Ursae Majoris A) and their philosophy is based on the ascent of the soul to the stars. Much of their architecture echoes this belief, with tall spires, towers, and pyramids. The Loi call pyramids *places of ascension*, and they serve several purposes in society, including funeral monuments, medical regenerative purposes, and force field wards. Each pyramid has only a single purpose. The amazing electromagnetic power they harness is channeled upward to provide energy to orbiting satellites and space stations. They all have built-in pocket antimatter generators, and every pyramid is mathematically tailored to create a transmission field with specific characteristics and abilities.

### The Loi Mutants

Victims of war, the Alphan-mutated Loi had powers beyond belief, powers unwanted by either the government or the victims. They were exiled from the Alliance and forced to flee the Alphans (who had invested much research in their creation). In their flight they discovered the uncharted Solar System.

They settled on the fifth planet, Atalan (between Mars and Jupiter), but realized that their discovery was only a matter of time. To deceive the Alphans, the mutants rigged

their outpost on Atalan to self-destruct when approached. They then colonized Earth and constructed massive caverns in which to live out of sight of enemy patrols.

The Alphans discovered Atalan 200,000 years later and attempted to land; the Loi outpost destroyed itself, the invading Alphans, and the planet as well. An asteroid belt formed; on Earth, the gravitational effects caused terrible catastrophes. The climate cooled and the Pleistocene Epoch began. As the ice crept farther south each year, the Loi moved to the surface and began to civilize and educate the astoundingly Loi-like aborigines. The mutants taught fire, tools, religion, and language to the first true men, who would make good companions to live with (and to hide among should the Alphans ever return . . .).

The mutants' most significant power was immortality. While each of the 400 Loi refugees had unique and often spectacular abilities, all would live forever. As the millennia passed, they decided that the Alphans would not return. Around 35,000 B.C., they established a civilization on the mountainous islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The Loi populated its cities with newly socialized humans. Incredible cities, flying saucers, and power-pyramids were built using the old knowledge, and the culture was named Atlantis, after the world they left behind. The leader of the mutants, Lauranis, was wise and powerful, and able to control the human mind.

When the Arend-Roland comet arrived in 10,000 B.C., it affected the Earth's climate, resulting in the end of the Ice Age. As the ice thawed, sea levels rose and submerged the Atlantean islands. The humans and the Loi fled, scattering to the Americas and Europe. As man settled down and created the first farming civilizations, the Loi took up positions of power as gods and priests. They began building pyramids again and fought among themselves. These gods who could not die and who possessed superhuman powers were remembered in mythology and legend. Man remembered how they fought a great war with demons (the Arendians) and banished them to the underworld, how they created man in their own image, and how a great flood almost wiped out humanity.

By 1700 B.C., the mutants had given up their "godhood." They realized that mankind was becoming powerful and would certainly persecute them, even if they couldn't be killed. The 400 mutants faded into the population, where they have lived incognito for the past 3,650 years. Only occasionally has one of their number stepped into the limelight, disappearing as quickly as he emerged (see timeline). The persuasive Lauranis has often made an impression on the human race.

Today the mutants live out lives of humdrum existence as antique dealers, road sweepers, violinists, taxi drivers . . . How the Alphans, the Arendians, or the Great Council of Worlds will react when (or if) they discover how much influence these secret aliens have had on Earth can only be guessed.

**Mutant Powers:** The powers attributed to the outcasts should be chosen carefully. A Loi mutant designed using *GURPS Supers* can be a 500- to 750-point super with Immortality, Regrowth, and practically any other powers the

GM fancies. It makes sense to design a character as if he were a Greek god (he probably was!), with powers grouped around a certain element or emotion. Remember, these powers aren't magic, but natural abilities!

## HOMEWORLD

The Loi race evolved on Loi, a cool Earth-like world circling ξ Ursae Majoris A. This is one of four stars in the system; two are G-V stars (A and B) similar to our own sun, and the other two (C and D) are M-V old red stars. The ξ Ursae Majoris system is 30 light-years away. Loi is a beautiful world; it would be perfect for humans. Fabulous mountain ranges mix with jungles of blue and purple trees and expanses of silver beach. Teeming cities live in harmony, the residents pursuing knowledge. On Loi – in fact, throughout the entire Alliance – teachers, educators, and scientists are respected more than entertainers and artists, who are in turn respected more than administrators and executives. The Loi recognize creative merit.

The government of Loi is a direct democracy in which each citizen votes on those issues which interest him. In addition, organizations and interest groups have their own representatives. The government is a council of randomly selected Loi carrying out “one-year government service.” A series of

committees staffed by elected experts advises the council. Delegates from the four other Alliance worlds live on Loi and attend the Great Council of Worlds that meets in the capital Kotol. If the PCs ever speak to “the government of Loi,” they will probably be talking to one of the many Council spokesmen.

The other worlds in the Loi Alliance have pleasant environments. Alomar is a hot desert planet where the Loi have created an artificial sea and forest. Archon is mostly water; the Loi inhabit eyrie-like cities atop vast mountain chains rising out of the ocean. Metanor has little atmosphere, but the Loi have built enormous caverns with interconnecting tunnels beneath the surface. The caverns are so vast that scout ships can (and do) fly into them and through to different chambers. Last, Raldor is a moon of a gas giant, where spectacular electromagnetic effects create a sky full of continually shifting color. The cities of Raldor are built in steep-sided canyons and on the sides of cliffs.

Alomar circles the K3V star known to astronomers as DM +50 1832, 37 light-years away; Archon circles the G8V star known as 61 Ursae Majoris, 30 light-years away. Metanor circles a G5V star 33 light-years away with the label DM -39 7301, and Raldor circles the K7V star called DM +56 1458, 39 light-years away.

## LAURANIS

**754+ POINTS**

Apparent age: late 20s; 5'9"; 150 lbs.; black hair, blue eyes.

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30]; DX 16 [80]; IQ 17 [80]; HT 14 [45].  
Speed 7.5; Move 7.

Dodge 7; Parry 11 (Judo).

**Advantages:** Appearance (Handsome) [10]; Charisma +3 [15]; Empathy [15]; Loi Mutant [295]; Voice [10]; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

**Disadvantages:** Pacifism (Total nonviolence) [-30]; Sense of Duty (Loi Mutants) [-10].

**Skills:** Acrobatics-15 [2]; Acting-19 [6]; Administration-16 [1]; Anthropology-16 [2]; Archaeology-15 [1]; Astronomy-17 [4]; Bard-21 [1]; Beam Weapons-18\* [1]; Biochemistry-15 [2]; Chemistry-16 [2]; Climbing-15 [1]; Diplomacy-20 [6]; Disguise-18 [4]; Ecology-15 [1]; Genetics-16 [4]; History-21 [12]; Judo-17 [8]; Leadership-20 [2]; Linguistics-18 [12]; Lip Reading-16 [1]; Literature-17 [4]; Mathematics-16 [2]; Occultism-16 [1]; Physician-16 [2]; Physics-16 [2]; Physiology-15 [2]; Psychology-21 [6]; Research-19 [6]; Riding (Horse)-15 [1]; Savoir-Faire-19 [1]; Sleight of Hand-15 [2]; Staff-17 [8]; Stealth-16 [2]; Strategy-16 [2]; Swimming-16 [1]; Teaching-20 [8]; Theology-15 [1]; Writing-18 [4].

**Psionic Skills:** Telepathy-20 [10]; Emotion Sense-16 [2]; Mental Blow-16 [2]; Mind Shield-16 [2]; Mindwipe-18 [6]; Psi Sense-16 [2]; Sleep-16 [2]; Telecontrol-18 [6]; Telereceive-16 [2]; Telesend-16 [2].

**Languages:** GM's option.

\* Beam Weapons includes +2 for IQ.

Lauranis, the millennia-old leader of the Loi mutants on Earth, looks like an attractive and unassuming post-adolescent. He has dozens of legal identities available around the world, but his favorite at the moment is Constantine Lauren, millionaire playboy.

Lauranis is soft-spoken, suave, and witty. He's never an overt snob (except, occasionally, to snobs), but he radiates an aura of calm certainty that puts some insecure humans off.

As Lauren, he always dresses in the height of fashion, and is seen only with the most fashionable people, be they financiers, politicians on their way up, or jazz musicians. Lauren's primary residence is a well-guarded mansion in Beverly Hills.

Lauranis seldom meets any of his fellow mutants these days, nor does he keep tabs on their whereabouts. If he wants them, he can contact them instantaneously through telepathy (after eons, Lauranis' range with his fellow mutants is many times greater than his range with any other intelligent beings), and if a mutant has need of his leader, he need only meditate on a certain complex mantra for a few minutes to draw Lauranis' attention.

Although some of his fellow mutants believe that Lauranis has gone completely decadent, he's actually using Lauren's important and trend-setting friends to shape human culture in various subtle but far-reaching ways.

At the moment, there are no humans who know Lauranis' true nature.

As presented above, Lauranis is a 754-point character, but the GM should feel free to add skills and even advantages at will. In particular, Lauranis certainly knows dozens of languages – modern, ancient, and alien – which are not detailed above or included in his point total.

## TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Loi science has reached TL10, going on TL11. There are two types of “flying saucer,” the scout ship and the mother ship. The scout ship has slow warp drive, minimal crew, and life support. The scout ships are capable of interstellar journeys, but are intended more for in-system use. They appear to be silvery discs with a raised hub; when shields are lowered, windows in the central cabin can be seen. Scout ships are armed (whatever their mission) with antimatter missiles and heavy lasers. Stealth suites are standard too, making them invisible to radar. A typical saucer layout is shown on p. 51.

Up to 13 scout craft can be carried within the mother ship, which is a 300-yard-long cylinder. Often described by observers as “airship-like,” “cigar-shaped,” or just plain cylindrical, these mother ships ferry scout ships and their crews to destination systems. Once in the system, the smaller vessels go to carry out their missions while the mother ship conducts its own tasks. The warp drive allows these vessels to fly within an atmosphere, which they often do when recovering scouts. The mother craft have stealth suites and a formidable array of weapons.

### FLYING EYES

One of the most advanced tactical innovations adopted by modern armies is the remotely piloted drone vehicle. It is no surprise that flying saucers have always used these.

“Flying eyes” appear to be balls of fire or glowing spheres, usually red or green. Each scout ship has three on board (a mother ship has 12) and can send them up to 200 miles from the ship. Each eye has a small warp drive, capable of Mach 3 in an atmosphere, and a sensor array including cameras and a multiscanner. An operator aboard the scout ship must control the flying eye at all times. The Loi can use their flying eyes as psionic relay stations. Aliens use these drones to observe distant locations that are too dangerous to visit (such as military installations) or too risky to land a spaceship (Central Park). As in WWII, the probes can be used to tail aircraft while conducting detailed analysis.

If a saucer comes under attack it may send a probe towards the aggressor to act as a “remote weapon.” Many flying eyes are equipped to attach themselves to a vehicle or piece of machinery, and allow the eye operator to control it through the probe. For example, if a jet in the '50s pursues a saucer, but the saucer crew does not want to kill the pilot, they might send out a flying eye to take over the jet's controls and force it to land. The pilot or machine operator has a chance to wrest control of his vehicle from the usurper. He must make a control roll at *-3 three times in succession* before he regains control.

A flying eye may try to remain hidden. Anyone within 1,000 yards can see it on a roll vs. Vision -2, anyone within 500 yards will sight it on a normal Vision roll, and anyone within 100 yards spots it on a roll vs. Vision +2.

To contact their homeworld, all ships have instantaneous faster-than-light communicators; their agents on Earth sometimes have them also. A communicator is a bulky black cabinet connected by a central rod to the triangular screen above it. Loi rarely carry weapons, although they are always available. Side arms will be X-ray laser pistols (called “energy pistols”) with built-in stunners. Each use of the stunner uses one-half of a laser shot. An X-ray laser fires invisible beams of energy and is very destructive; halve the DR of opposing armor or force screens. Smoke and bad weather do not hinder X-ray lasers. Members of a Loi saucer crew don't wear armor but do wear vacc suits (DR 1, 2 lbs.) with helmets (PD 2, DR 3), in case of emergencies or in fear of germ contamination.

Robotic technology is very advanced in the Loi Alliance. On some one- or two-Loi scout ships, a humanoid robot supplements the crew. Carefully constructed, each robot is intelligent (IQ 13) and equipped with armor and built-in energy gun. The robot always knows where the crew is, thanks to cybernetic implants in the base of their skulls. These implants allow limited communication with the robot. More complex orders must be given orally. The robot will only obey the orders of its crew and is totally loyal to the Loi. The robot can fly the saucer itself, but will not operate without orders unless the crew is missing, incapacitated, or dead.

The combination of pocket antimatter generators (looking like large, six-foot-long pearls or eggs) and pyramidal power transmitters is found across the Loi Alliance. Ships are powered by antimatter and robots are sometimes powered by beams from the vessels they travel in; this means they cannot stray too far from the craft.

Loi science has unlocked the secrets of the mind. Large “induction helmets,” which give the wearer telepathic powers, are available (and standard on most scout ships). Each helmet is rated in Power levels (see p. B165) with a power of 10 common for scout craft, 12 for mother ships, and 18 for units found on the Loi homeworld. The helmet is mounted on a large easy chair and is not mobile. It provides users with a default of IQ -4 in all telepathy skills, though most Loi have some training.

The range of an induction helmet on board a spacecraft is pretty dismal. The Loi, however, have learned how to transmit psionic energy through remote-control “probes” that increase the range dramatically. These probes are discussed below.

### TACTICS

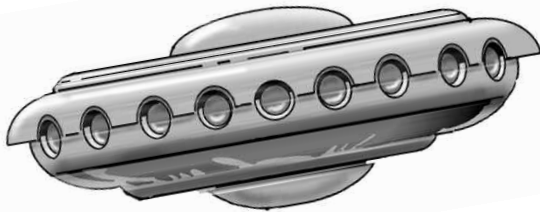
The Great Council of Worlds does not want to invade the planet Earth. It wishes to moderate our activities by persuading governments to stop atomic and germ warfare research, or by ensuring that no nation retains a technological lead. The first approach will probably fail; since when did governments listen to common sense?

The second approach will require intensive surveillance of Earth. This interstellar spying mission will set up contacts, information sources, and, at the end of the chain, Loi agents with FTL communicators. When the Council or the Eye have the data, they will either leak it to a foreign power or sabotage the research. The failure of American efforts to get a rocket

# Key to Flying Saucer Deck Plan

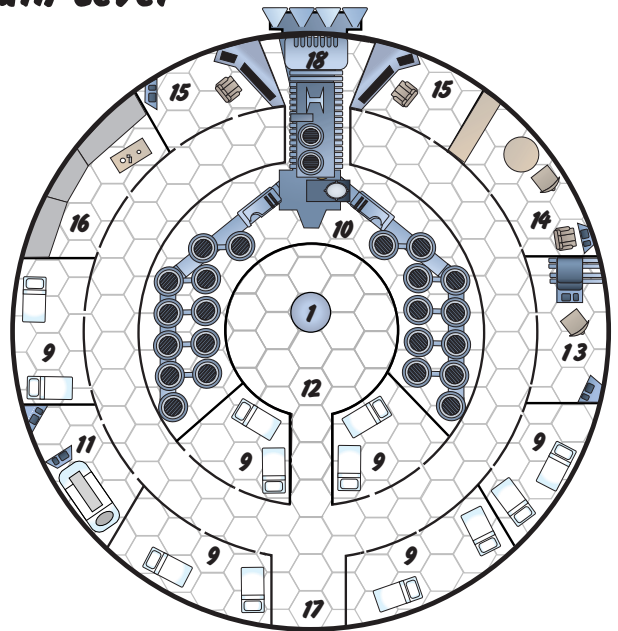
- 1 Gravity elevator
- 2 Control room
- 3 Map table
- 4 Weapons station
- 5 Engineering station
- 6 Captain's/pilot's/navigator's stations
- 7 View screens
- 8 Hibernation capsules
- 9 Double-occupancy cabin
- 10 Warp drive and antimatter pods
- 11 Medical room
- 12 Lounge with floor windows and tractor-beam generator
- 13 Communications room (with psi-helmet if Loi vessel)
- 14 Library/museum of home and other worlds
- 15 Engine maintenance
- 16 Tool shop and equipment bay
- 17 Extendable ramp
- 18 Main thruster

1 hex = 1 yard

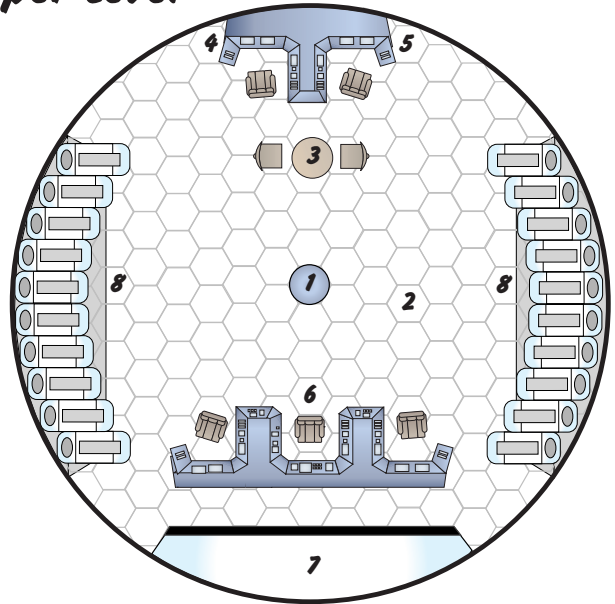


Forward

## Main Level



## Upper Level



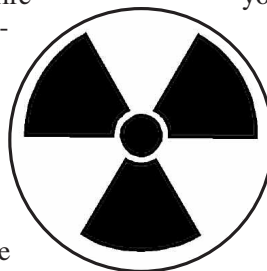
into the air and stay there was a direct result of Loi sabotage in retaliation for the White Sands incident.

The Loi use remote-control flying probes (which often appear as shining globes during the day or glowing fire-balls at night). These allow audio and visual reconnaissance of places too sensitive to visit in person. During World War II the Loi used these "flying eyes" to monitor man's advances in rocket and aircraft technology without risking scout craft in war zones.

The Loi will make great use of their ability to project thought waves through probes. Since the effective range is perhaps 200 miles, the saucer can land a probe near a target without exposing itself to human eyes. Through the probe, the Loi can communicate telepathically

with a human using the Telesend skill. This allows them to communicate on equal terms with the human race, but can also be used to try to dupe it ("We come in peace to warn you of an imminent nuclear war," etc.). No alien race yet discovered has the power to see into the future (not even the Vortun, who only look into the past) but the Loi may pretend that they *do* have this power, to scare mankind. Innocent "contactees" can relay Loi messages to interested witnesses.

Even more useful for Loi intelligence-gathering operations is the skill of Telereceive. Mind-wipe will also come in handy when humans have been aboard a flying saucer or have been taken to the Loi homeworld!



# The Metarans

Conservative in approach, the Metarans have had an interest in Earth for some time. The planet Metarus orbits an old red sun, and the world itself is dying. Raw materials and ores were once plentiful, but eons of extraction have resulted in the slow deterioration of Metaran resources. To survive, the race must abandon its homeworld and seek out a new world among the stars. The world they have chosen is Earth.

An average Metaran stands 6' or 7' tall, but usually stoops slightly. The black, shiny body has tough, fibrous skin and no head, only a three-lensed eye and a mouth at the top of the body. Metarans have long delicate arms ending in three fingers, and short, powerful legs which enable them to move quickly and stealthily in spite of their size.

The Metarans originally came to Earth in search of natural resources. When they arrived, however, they discovered an unexpected bonus – food. A race of carnivores, the Metarans found the infinitely recycled, synthesized food that they had survived on for millennia utterly devoid of taste – the population had completely forgotten the concept of “flavor.” The many organic delicacies of Earth were ambrosia to the Metarans.

The Metarans are very particular about which part of their prey they'll dine on – a Metaran ship will descend on a herd of cattle, or other meat animals, and bring them into the ship. They carefully remove the tastiest morsels, then unceremoniously dump the remainder of the animal where it came from.

Among all the terrestrial smorgasbord, however, one food in particular appeals to the Metarans – human brains. The Metarans like their brains best when they're really fresh, consumed directly from a living victim. A Metaran uses his huge, fanged maw to rip the face off its victim, then sucks out the brain through the sinus cavities. Horrifying though this process seems to humans, the Metarans regard it with no more passion than a human feels for throwing a lobster into the pot.

About one in every 1,000 Metarans is born with the ability to shift from its natural shape to some alternate form. It takes 2d seconds for a Metaran to change from its natural form to its alternate form. A Metaran shapeshifter can only transform into one alternate form, which is “programmed” into its brain. Since their discovery of Earth, the Metarans have been programming their shapeshifters to change into human form, for use as scouts and as bait for Metaran hunters. There are two ways to spot humanoid Metaran shapeshifters: they never eat while in human form, and their weight is wrong. A Metaran shapeshifter will look like a normal-sized human, but will weigh 300 to 400 pounds.

The three-fingered Metaran hand forms the basis for their mathematics, architecture, and design. Teams of Metarans have three members, telepathically linked by regular communion. All Metarans have Telepathy-12 and Telesend at IQ -3 to communicate with the members of their team *only*. Even their government is based on this principle: a triad rules over 27 aliens (9 teams). All aspects of life are carried out by the triad and its teams. A flying saucer will always have a crew of three teams and one leader; vessels will carry out missions in trios.

## METARANS 522 OR 532 POINTS

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST +3 [30]; IQ +3 [30]; HT +2 [20].

**Advantages:** DR 1 [3]; Fangs [10]; High Technology (+5 TLs) [400]; Hyper-Strength (Bites only, -75%) [4]; Mindlink 11 (x2, with each of two teammates) [22]; No Neck [5]; Telepathy 1 (Only with teammates, -50%) [3]; +35 ST (Bites only, -75%) [39].

**Disadvantages:** Chummy [-5]; Monstrous [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sentient's brains) [-15].

**Racial Skills:** Telereceive (M/H) IQ+8 [1/2]-21\*; Telesend (M/H) IQ+8 [1/2]-21\*.

\* Includes +11 for Mindlink, and only works with teammates.

**Notes:** About one in every 1,000 Metarans can shift from its natural shape to an alternate form. These individuals have the advantage Morph (One form only -50%, Takes 8 seconds -30%) [10]; this raises total cost to 532 points. A Metaran has effective ST 48 with a bite attack; per p. B140, this does 2d imp damage. Using Hyper-Strength, effective bite ST goes up to 72, giving 4d imp damage. To eat someone's brain, a Metaran will grapple the victim, then bite for the face or brain while using Hyper-Strength; 4d imp damage to the face or brain will often be enough to kill the victim! Members of the Anti faction may have bought off the Odious Racial Habit.

## METARAN PCs

If the GM approves, a PC can be a Metaran shapeshifter (see box). The Metaran PC could be either a traitorous ringer or a member of the Metaran Anti party come to aid humanity against its more radical kinfolk.

It takes 20-HT seconds for a Metaran shapeshifter to completely change form. There is no game difference whatsoever between a human-shaped and a natural-shaped Metaran, except that the Metaran cannot use either bite attack in its human form.

## HOMEWORLD



Metarus is the Earth-sized homeworld of the Metarans, orbiting the M5V red star Proxima Centauri, 4.2 light-years away from the Solar System. Metarus is gravitationally locked to its star; under a blood-red sky, the Forever Day, Proxima Centauri has cracked and blasted the bedrock. Convection currents feed the winds that erode the mountains and cliffs of a shattered wasteland.

The Metarans inhabit massive domes on the surface of the world and move sluggishly about their business. The depletion of the planet's resources, and the gradual degradation of its internal processes and magnetic fields, have caused the slow decline of the race as a whole. Atmospheric dissipation and an increasing number of meteors add to the effects of decay. The Metarans must abandon their planet or die with it.

There are three Metaran factions: Pro, Anti, and Moderate. The names reflect their political views on the invasion of Earth. Metarans are free to move from one group to another,

and they often divide on current issues. The Pro faction wishes to conquer the Earth, keeping the humans as cattle and using the Earth's resources at will. The Anti party will not infringe upon the living space of another race – they have no special respect for humanity, but find the wholesale destruction of an alien ecosystem distasteful. The Moderates would invade with only a small force, leaving human civilization more or less unmolested, but surreptitiously taking enough food and resources to improve life on Metarus. Currently, the Pro lobby is the largest, and is growing daily as Metarus becomes less habitable.

## TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Metarans are highly advanced, but do not walk around with every technological device available. For example, on Metarus they do not wear clothes or have a complex transport network. The tech level is equivalent to *GURPS* TL12. The Metarans are adept at manipulating local technology to suit their needs; several experimental colony worlds were organized with a bare minimum of equipment. On Earth the Metarans re-engineer '50s human technology rather than relying on imported gear.

The Metarans use blasters (they call them “atomic force guns”) and coercion guns (see p. 57), the latter reduced in size to a small disk or button. Metaran flying saucers can change shape and color at any moment, a byproduct of the scout ship's stealth capabilities. The GM can modify the flying saucer deck plan (p. 51) for use by other Metaran missions or other alien races. It has a crew of a dozen. The crew shares cabins when awake, but travels through interstellar space in hibernation chambers in the control room.

## TACTICS

Metaran forces seek to infiltrate all levels of human society. Normally, they assign a force of 10 to 30 Metarans to a given post, of whom about one-third are typically shapeshifters, who actually penetrate human organizations; the rest support the infiltrators, either from a secret base on Earth or from a ship in synchronous orbit above the station.

The Metarans want to combine mankind's know-how and facilities with Metaran high technology, to try to use local technology against the human race. Experiments with viruses, poisons, nuclear chain reactions, or more subtle political manipulations are all techniques in their attempts to harvest humanity. The Metarans also use brainwashing, through sound (the dreaded rock 'n' roll), television advertising, the Union of American Psychoanalysts, or even an addictive (and subliminally powerful) board game! Spiking human drugs, controlling the human underworld, or trying to sabotage Soviet-American peace talks to provoke atomic war are all acceptable to the cold Metarans.

Or . . . are they? Triads from the Anti or Moderate factions may try to stop the Earth invasion. The GM needs to be very careful not to let such a scenario turn into a spectator sport, as the PCs watch teams of alien creatures pound each other to pieces. Rather, the Metaran factions will proceed against the Pro lobby using tactics similar to those the Pros use against the humans. PCs should not realize there are

“good guys” and “bad guys” until well into the scenario . . . and even then, their new-found alien allies should *not* be the ones who stop the invasion.

## The Alphans



The Alphans are amoral creatures, interested solely in survival and power. They are shorter than humans, with barely discernible features: a slit for a mouth, large cat-like eyes, a single nostril in the little bulge that resembles a nose, and no body hair. Their skin color is a pale blue-white, slightly cool to the touch (Alphan body temperature is 94°); their general appearance is that of a short, weak creature. They have keen vision, even in very dim light, but they have no sense of smell. They dislike bright lights and loud noises.

Alphan clothing depends on the mission being conducted; they often wear a skin-tight vacc suit in blue, silver, or tan. When they expect trouble, they wear cybersuits (a vacc suit with DR 80 and PD 5, that enhances ST to 20). These look like shiny, black leather body suits with clear helmets.

### ALPHAN PCs

There are two possible kinds of Alphan PCs – disguised Alphans and Alphan duplicates. The GM might plant an Alphan in the party as a ringer (see p. 42), or the Alphan might be a renegade, working with the humans to foil his race's plans for earth. In such a case, the Alphan PC must take the 50-point Unusual Background: Alien, but will also be able to take a significant Enemy (All Alphans); the exact point value depends on how common Alphans are in the individual campaign.

### ALPHANS

65 POINTS

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST -2 [-15]; DX +1 [10]; HT -1 [-10].

**Advantages:** Acute Vision +3 [6]; DR 2 [6]; Extended Lifespan 4 [20]; High Technology (+2 TLs) [50]; Language Talent +5 [10]; Night Vision [10]; Peripheral Vision [15].

**Disadvantages:** Intolerance (Meat-eaters) [-5]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Odious Racial Habit (Ruminant) [-15]; Pacifism (Self-defense only) [-15].

**Racial Quirks:** Startled by loud noises [-1]; Uncomfortable in light brighter than twilight [-1].

**Racial Skills:** Disguise (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Language (Any Earth language) (M/H) IQ+3 [1]-14\*.

\* Includes +5 for Language Talent; note that all Earth languages are M/H to Alphans.

**Notes:** Alphans have nonhuman physiology; anyone attempting a medical procedure (including First Aid) on an Alphan must make an IQ+4 roll to notice an Alphan is not human. Alphan duplicates are artificially constructed duplicates of human bodies, implanted with a human mind. They are identical to normal humans, aside from having High Technology +2 TLs [50], and thus wouldn't use this template. Such duplicates may share the Alphans' racial Pacifism, Intolerance of meat-eaters, and quirks.

## GURPS ILLUMINATI

The Alphans originally appeared in *GURPS Illuminati*, where they were a small cadre of aliens manipulating human society through subversion and deception, rather than the callous and scientifically curious race of this book. The GM can rationalize this as either an evolution in Alphan operations between the 1950s and the 1990s, or simply as the difference between *Atomic Horror* and *Illuminati* campaigns.

Another illuminated group from *GURPS Illuminati*, the Time Meddlers, could easily be transplanted Vortun, sent back in time through the Vortex Tunnel to expedite the Vortun mission from this end.

There are many similarities between *GURPS Atomic Horror* and *GURPS Illuminati*. In both campaigns, the PCs, and the world at large, are initially at the mercy of groups and forces they cannot comprehend, or even perceive. Much of the dramatic tension comes from the slow unraveling of what's *really* going on in the world. The main difference between the two settings is that in *Atomic Horror* there are still a few things the PCs can count on – the American government and scientific research, to name two. Of course, the truly illuminated GM knows that the alien conspiracy to take over the earth might be nothing more than a smokescreen, to protect those who are *really* in control from prying eyes . . .

Alphan society is organized along tribal lines without the geographic connotations of Earth's nations. Each tribe has access to its own flying saucers, military forces, and scientific facilities. Tribes breed selectively for adaptability and intelligence and use genetics and biochemistry extensively – in fact, each tribe “designs” its own leader. Following a series of fitness and intelligence trials, the most effective tribal leader becomes the Alphans' One Leader. At the end of his reign, he steps down, and a new series of competitions takes place with new “designs.” The previous One Leader must forego the competition this time.

The tribes constantly need supplies of new genetic material. Their designs for the One Leader require fresh and innovative samples. Worlds like Earth receive a large amount of attention due to their primitive technology and political disorganization.

The Loi-Alphan War that began 1.65 million years ago was caused by Alphan attempts to steal Loi genetic material (i.e., to kidnap live Loi). The creation of the Loi mutants was intended to shatter the harmonious Loi way of life, but the plot failed. When the mutants fled across space, the Alphans tried to track them down to destroy them. Unfortunately for the Alphans, the Loi mutants live on, hidden within human society.

## HOMEWORLD

The Alphan homeworld orbits the G2V star ζ 1 Reticuli, approximately 37 light-years away. The planet Alpha is smaller than Earth, with a surface gravity of 0.7G. Its constantly turbulent atmosphere has worn the ancient mountains away to

amazing wind-cut terrain. Rock canyons, arches, natural tunnels, and depressions form the living places of the Alphan tribes. Rains of sand pour down from a constantly shifting scarlet sky, only to be swept up again by the storms.

Alpha is a world of staggering beauty. Deserts and badlands alternate with sprawling mud flats created by silt carried into the oceans. These flats support colonies of hive trees – petrified trees bound together to create a solid mass of fossilized vegetation.

Flying saucers descend through circular holes into enormous natural caverns many miles in length. These are used by the Alphans as hangars and service areas for the craft. Vents on the surface suck millions of tons of dust into the fusion stills each day. The stills transform the sand into water, which is used for drinking, cooling, and to irrigate the cavern farms.

## TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Alphan technology depends on genetics and automation; tribal scientists are well-versed in both. The culture's overall tech level is 9, with TL10 starships.

Each Alphan tribe is always updating their large libraries of genetic material. The libraries may contain samples of DNA, frozen skin, cell samples, or even adult specimens in suspended animation. Scout ships fly to mother ships, which travel to star systems such as ours. Once there, the ships take isolated specimens aboard for the journey back. There is a good chance that the inquisitive Alphans revive specimens to live a zoo-like existence. If the PCs are captured by the Alphans, they will find themselves in one of these cells, under constant observation . . .

Alphan flying saucers appear like silver disks with windows along the front; they sometimes have red lights on either side. Like most scout craft, they can produce some fantastic lighting effects. The vessels employ a warp drive derived from the Loi, and are armed with antimatter missiles and disruption beams. All types have stealth suites to avoid radar detection.

Alphan cybersuits do *not* include thermal superconducting armor (see pp. UT78-79), since they do not believe that man is capable of producing beam weapons. This is a weakness if human scientists invent one! Scout teams commonly make use of coercion guns and disrupters.

Alphans scientists excel in medical technology of all types. They can manufacture a drug for a specific application, or modify an Alphan (or human) body to withstand physical stresses, such as heat or high gravity. The Alphans are familiar with bionics, though they tend not to use such primitive modifications on themselves.

## TACTICS

The Alphans do not wish to invade Earth, but their raids could easily be misconstrued. Originally, Alphan ships concentrated on carrying off their victims. If the GM is not going to use the Vortun to explain the Bermuda Triangle, then the Alphans would make a good stand-in. If they use a saucer's warp field to jam an airplane's or ship's radio and navigational instruments, there will be little chance of escape. The craft will hover over the target, and either bring it on board whole



(in which case they may have to use the mother ship) or snatch the crew and passengers from the deck using a tractor beam. Are the crew of the *Mary Celeste* and Flight 19 (see p. 112) frozen alive on Alpha?

More recent Alphan activities have concentrated on abductions. Landing in some remote area, the Alphans abduct one or two people and give them a thorough examination. The subjects “donate” their genes, then have their memories of the abduction blanked. Only much later will horrific memories of paralysis and alien experimentation return to haunt the abductees.

This change in Alphan tactics has come about because of man’s awareness of flying saucers, and his recent advances in atomic energy. The Alphans do not want war with Earth – their sole aim is to improve their own race with infusions of human genetic material. They will go to some lengths to avoid direct confrontation with Earth governments . . . and their rockets and A-bombs.

The Alphans have the skills to duplicate an Earth human. However, the original must be abducted for a proper examination and a DNA sample. The Alphans perform an elaborate braintaping procedure in which the mind of an Alphan is stored electronically and transferred into the clone body. The clone, an Alphan agent, will be indistinguishable from his victim (apart from telltale lapses in knowledge and differences in body language . . .).

## The Vortun



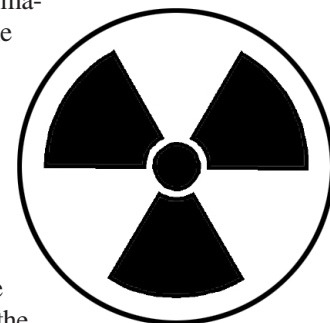
Far in the future, our descendants look on the past with envious eyes. After a war of terrifying destruction, the Earth has been reduced to a wasteland, polluted and charred. The remaining humans are pitiful wretches – irradiated, diseased, and dying. All that remains of the old world are the computers – and the remains of those who constructed them. The rich and privileged survived the war by preserving their still-living brains in containment chambers. Now that the war is over, they require bodies again . . . and their caretaker computer has spent decades creating a time machine for the purpose of obtaining them. Untainted bodies stolen from the past are highly prized by those in the future who wish to breathe again.

The process of time travel allows solid objects of any kind to travel to the future. Through the manipulation of energy fields, the Vortun civilization can peer through a rift in space-time. When a suitable target is in view, the rift engulfs the target and carries it through space-time in the Vortex Tunnel. The Vortun who have bodies take their name from the Vortex Tunnel Effect. They also apply the name to those minds not yet liberated through the use of the Vortex Tunnel. For people in the past, the Vortex is a terrifying enigma resulting in people, ships, and aircraft that disappear . . . without a trace. The heroes may be called in to investigate such a disappearance, or may become victims of the Vortex themselves.

When the rift opens, the target encounters peculiar electromagnetic effects: compasses spin, gyros tumble, and radio and radar suffer severe interference. (An Electronics Operation roll at -6 will allow limited use of the equipment, but no diagnosis or repair is possible.) Often there is also a sonar blackout and general instrument malfunction. The target must make a suc-

cessful Navigation roll every 10 minutes or become hopelessly lost. Within half an hour, the effect either passes or worsens. As the Vortex engages, a dense fog comes out of nowhere. The fog glows white or green and moves rapidly across the surface, often against the wind. As it approaches, all the victim sees is a “white-out,” as the sky and the sea or land become one disorienting glare. If the prey makes a Navigation roll at -8 (-6 if the radar still works) and a Piloting or Seamanship roll at -5, he can evade the Vortex even at this late stage.

These are phenomena observed in the Bermuda Triangle, a permanent, mobile gate created by the Vortun. The first “catch” of the gate was the *USS Cyclops* (see p. 112) and its entire 309-man crew. The Vortex usually leaves nothing behind: no wreckage, oil, survivors, or life jackets. Sometimes, it takes only the humans from a ship, leaving the vessel behind, abandoned, along with any animals on board; after all, it is the *human* bodies the Vortun want. Other effects caused by the Vortex are not restricted to the area of its use.



The breach of space-time has had adverse effects on the fabric that separates dimensions. “Skyfalls” have occurred throughout history, showering Earth with stones, frogs, red worms, ice, fish, gossamer-like “angel hair,” or “star jelly.” Another effect is the time slip, a replay of a historical event. An air crash or murder might occur over and over, with the observer unable to change the outcome. Some psychics have the skill of precognition, in which the time slip displays an event from the future in the mind of someone in the past. A further effect is the gain or loss of time that can occur in the Triangle. A pilot may disappear from radar for 20 minutes; sure enough, the pilot’s watch is 20 minutes slow. All this is dangerous to the whole fabric of space-time. The Vortun do not care. They wish to live.

### VORTUN

**35 POINTS**

**Advantages:** High Technology (+2 TLs) [50].

**Disadvantages:** Odious Racial Habit (Kidnap and steal the bodies of other humans) [-15].

**Notes:** Aside from their higher technology and body-snatching habits, the Vortun are identical to 20th-century humans – since externally they *are* 20th-century humans. However, many Vortun are mentally unbalanced from their millennia of disembodiment; Compulsive Behavior, Delusions, Paranoia, Phobia, and odd quirks are all common among awakened Vortun. Those Vortun who haven’t yet gotten new bodies would have the No Physical Body [-100] disadvantage, should the PCs happen to encounter one. The mutant refugees on the surface of Earth are also normal humans, with Primitive (-6 TLs) [-30].

## HOMEWORLD

The Vortun live in the year 6000. The great atomic wars between the East and West ended in stalemate; neither side had any population left to speak of. The brains of the rich and powerful corporate and government leaders were put into suspended animation within a Mechanical Memory Storage Device, to be implanted into healthy bodies once they became available. While the war finally wound down, the Central Computer created the Vortex Tunnel theory and began work on a projector.

The Vortun world is a sprawling city of tunnels, caverns, and underground complexes. The warren-like base is clean and white; recreation areas have real grass and lakes with fresh water. Awakened Vortun live an idyllic existence. The Central Computer employs robots of many kinds to do the routine jobs in the complex and carries out more cerebral tasks itself. Particularly efficient are the Computer's Watchmen, deadly androids that patrol the complex or carry out "cooperation missions" against the mutated human refugees on the surface, to prevent them from attacking the complex (which they have attempted in the past). Vortun favor light and colorful costumes.

People who are picked up by the Vortex will be paralyzed for 12 hours. During that time the glowing fog disperses, revealing an immense hall. Large robots take the abductees through winding corridors to small recovery cells. The front of the cells is a single force field wall. If a prisoner escapes before being taken to the "transferral hall" for transplant, he can explore the Vortun living places, other holding cells, and a vast chamber full of ships and planes stolen from Earth's past. He can join the mutants on the surface, or fight a running battle with Watchmen robots to get back to the Vortex and reprogram it to send him home. If he fails, he may spend the rest of the campaign falling through holes in space-time created by the Vortex. (The GM could use this to change the game into a *GURPS Time Travel* campaign!)

To give the party some control, the GM may give them a portable control unit for the Vortex, which they reprogram each time they wish to use it again. The unit creates a mini-Vortex 3 yards across and takes 2d×6 hours to charge back up after use. Each time the players use the unit it gets more and more accurate, until they make it back to the '50s (assuming that's where they want to go).

The Central Computer is a frugal entity, and it usually stores hosts' original brains in the containment units abandoned by the transplanted Vortun. This means that a Vortun victim can be rescued – all the rescuers have to do is kidnap the Vortun using the subject's body, steal the brain and containment unit, and convince the Central Computer's robots to return the brain to its original receptacle.

## TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

The technology level of the Vortun complex is equivalent to TL9. Watchmen robots usually employ blasters and stunners. The mutants on the planet's surface live out a TL1 existence with the aid of a few stolen TL9 items.

## TACTICS

The Vortun have no intention of invading our modern-day Earth. They are happy just to slowly depopulate it.

## UFOs

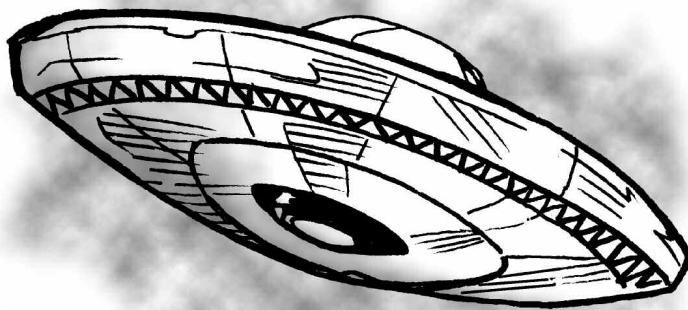


As seen above, flying saucers are practically required in an *Atomic Horror* game. It makes sense that the heroes will want to know how they work . . . and many of them will want to capture one for themselves.

## UFO BEHAVIOR

UFO reports constantly describe the bizarre, seemingly random actions of flying saucers. What exactly are they *doing* flying around our skies?

Some engage in threatening "dogfights" with aircraft; others hover over roads, disappearing into the sky when a vehicle



approaches. They fly over airfields, engage in amazing aerobatics, or trail cars or planes from a distance. The following list attempts to assign some meaning to these maneuvers:

*Survey:* The occupants conduct a biological and technological scan of a vehicle, analyzing its construction and the physiology of its passengers. The saucer may wait on a road until a car approaches, scan for one to three minutes, and then leave; trail a vehicle; or test the effectiveness of a plane by dogfighting.

*Military Challenge:* The saucer wishes to provoke a military response. It zooms over military installations, air bases, and civilian airports, and may engage a jet in mock combat. If the humans send up an interceptor, the UFO outraces or destroys it. Often the UFO switches off its stealth capabilities to make itself visible to radar.

*Power Gain:* Some UFOs have been seen near power stations and electricity pylons; they may have been responsible for the famous 1965 Eastern Seaboard blackout. Saucers following ley lines may perform exotic maneuvers. (Ley lines supposedly mark out a global energy grid; for more information, see pp. PM25-27.) The Atlanteans may have used leys to power their craft, or as a network to distribute pyramid energy.

*Feint:* An elaborate display of aerobatics may be a ploy to divert government and media attention from activity elsewhere.

*Comedy:* A humorous campaign might explain the wild maneuvers of flying saucers as young joyriders showing off in a backwater – or the Earth might be the best place in the galaxy to take flying lessons! (No wonder their behavior is so erratic!)

## MOTHER SHIPS

UFO sightings seem to be of two main types: the traditional flying saucer approximately 30' in diameter, and a huge cylinder or elongated cigar shape, sometimes with a swarm of saucers in attendance. The 300'-long "mother ship" has the capacity to carry up to 13 smaller saucers, or "scout ships." The mother ship has powerful warp engines capable of traversing interstellar space quickly and entering the Earth's atmosphere. All the main spacefaring races use these vessels for transportation. The Alphans, Loi, and Metarans all use mother ships. The information below can be applied to the ships of whichever race the GM prefers.

Mother ships cannot land; instead, they use their flying saucer scouts to carry out tasks on a planet's surface. Each vessel is equipped with crew accommodations, laboratories, medical facilities, a library, navigation room, control room,

two vast hangars for the storage of scout ships, and several cavernous engine rooms.

The ship is invisible to Earth radar (except during freak weather conditions; roll 17 or 18 on 3d). Once contact is made by a radar operator, it requires an Electronics Operation/TL7 (Sensors) roll at -4 *each minute* to maintain the contact. Like scout ships, mother ships are powered by antimatter generators and have high-technology weapons systems. These include antimatter missiles, lasers, and disruption beams. Most can also generate a tractor beam capable of lifting several thousand tons into the air. This enables the mother ship to reclaim a powerless scout craft – or pluck a ship out of the ocean!

The GM can describe the mother ship in many ways; the color, brightness, specific shape, and speed are different for every vessel. The mission of a craft depends on the objectives of its operators, but a few common ones are:

- ⊗ Testing the effectiveness of Earth's radar net;
- ⊗ Dispatching scouts for missions;
- ⊗ Recovering scouts from missions;
- ⊗ Collecting Earth specimens;
- ⊗ Taking water on board (via tractor beam); and
- ⊗ Ejecting objects accidentally taken on board during water collection (stones, fish, frogs, etc.).

## ABDUCEES

The '60s saw a disturbing new twist to the UFO story: alleged abductions by flying saucers. The reports often involved a new type of alien: the Alphans, short and ugly, humanoid but not human. Their methods included fiendish experiments, rapes, and interrogations. Often they induced extreme fear in the witnesses, many of whom blocked out memories concerning the event. Abductees would arrive at their destination and notice that an hour or two could not be accounted for.

The Alphans are the most common abductors. Using coercion guns to capture their victims, the Alphans can conduct a full physiological examination aboard their vessel, including taking cell, blood, and DNA samples, and perhaps making a braintape. This information can be taken back to Alpha or used to create an alien "copy" of the original. When the abductee is returned, his memory of the event is blanked with the coercion gun.

### The Coercion Gun

This fabulous piece of TL10 equipment can manipulate the active thoughts of a target. While the gun is in operation within 100 yards of the target, he must make a Will-2 roll or conform to the "setting." Within 50 yards he must make a Will-4 roll, and within 10 yards a Will-6 roll. The settings are "pacify" (the target is not afraid or angry, but intrigued and curious), "stupefy" (the target's mind is boggled; he stands and carries out no actions), and "sleep" (the victim's senses shut down, but he can be led). The effects last for 1-3

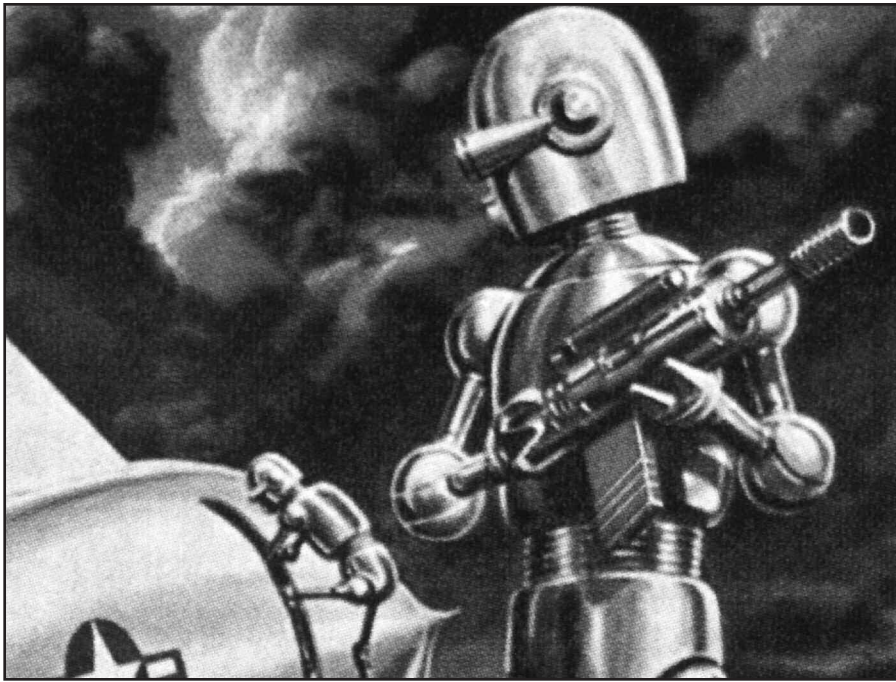
hours, and the victim has no recollection of what he witnessed under the coercion gun. A power cell allows 5 shots. The gun resembles a modern electric razor; its smooth body is broken only by an activation button and display.

Sometimes memories of events that took place under the coercion gun's influence surface some time later. When a character is exposed to a coercion gun, he gets one Will Roll at -5. If he makes the Will Roll, memories of events will resurface 2d months after the encounter. On a critical success, the amnesia effect won't "take" at all – the victim will remember the entire event. On a critical failure, the memories can never be recovered, even under deep hypnosis (see below).

Memories lost to a coercion gun are comparatively easy to recover through hypnotic trance. If an abductee tries to recover his memories through hypnosis, roll a contest of skill between the hypnotist and the coercion gun, with the gun considered to have a Hypnosis skill of 13.

Abductees must make an IQ+1 roll or suffer sporadic nightmares, replaying parts of the abduction. A scenario could be based on an abduction; the investigators must research it and interview the victims under hypnosis to work out exactly what happened. Perhaps one abductee remembers that the aliens referred to a place in the mountains, or to an important person. This involves the PCs with the aliens. They could meet the Alphans, fight alien replicas, or return to interview the victims – only to find that they've been "replaced."





## UFO COMBAT

Gaming any conflict between early TL7 soldiers and ultra-tech spacecraft is superfluous. A TL10+ spacecraft can devastate a city with lasers, disruption beams, and antimatter missiles. Small jet fighters and M48 tanks will pose little threat to it. Just look at the 1991 Gulf War, where forces at opposite ends of the *same* tech level differed enormously in their capabilities. A scout ship's hull is designed to withstand the rigors of radiation, re-entry, and interstellar space; modern missiles will not affect it. Atomic bombs can be zapped out of the sky before they detonate, and even if they do, armor and force fields will soak up the damage.

On a smaller scale, a UFO often has an array of lasers in its hull for anti-personnel work. A TL11 laser will make

mincemeat of a patrol car, tank, F-94 Starfire, or any approaching intruder. An alien gunner makes his skill roll with a bonus equal to the difference in TLs. A disruption beam will destroy everything within 5 miles of the target area (almost like a "clean" Bomb), while a laser beam will vaporize anything within 20 yards.

See *Flying Eyes* (p. 50) for use of these probes in combat. The peculiar side effects of the warp drive, which nullify the flow of electrons outside of the warp field, can also be used offensively. A warp field within 200 yards renders electronics temporarily inoperable on a 16 or less. Car lights, radios, missile and gun firing mechanisms – even radar and sonar will fail. A successful Electronics Operation roll at -4 can restore power, but it takes one minute and may be unreliable (roll 12 or less when needed). A UFO can also use its tractor beam to

focus this effect on a target vehicle. Within half a mile the roll is still 16, but this decreases by 1 point for every extra half-mile distance from the tractor beam.

## SCOUT SHIPS

Scout ships are the typical flying saucer. The one on p. 51 is a modest design for a crew of 12, but there are designs ranging from one-man versions to saucers with crews of two dozen or more. The crew of the sample saucer would comprise a commander, an executive officer, a pilot, two navigators, three engineers, one weapon officer, a medic, and two Earth specialists.

The scout ship is a highly maneuverable, very fast (Mach 30), tough vehicle. A small crew uses it as an observation platform from which to study the Earth. It is their home for months at a time, and is probably part of a much larger flying saucer fleet.

Many scout ships have extendable legs for landing, usually arranged in a tripod. The three legs of the saucer end in three strong legs ending in small disk-shaped feet. Investigators who later visit the site of a UFO landing will see the three circular imprints left by the craft. A Geiger counter will pick up signs of radiation – not lethal, but evidence that the electromagnetic field of the Earth in this area has been scrambled by a warp drive.

## THE BIEFELD-BROWN EFFECT

In the '30s, a young scientist named Townsend Brown accidentally discovered a propulsion system while experimenting with X-rays. With a colleague named Biefeld, he demonstrated the Biefeld-Brown effect, effectively a form of antigravity. Townsend Brown's experiments developed into Project Winterhaven, which demonstrated to the U.S. military that antigravity *was* a reality with the use of unmanned disks on a test circuit. The Pentagon shunned Brown's work, as did the rest of the establishment. During the war, he worked for the U.S. Navy.

Brown carried out further antigravity research in 1950s Cleveland. At the end of the decade, after working with a French aircraft company, he set up Rand International. There was still no interest in the Biefeld-Brown effect, and nothing still has ever come of his work.

Townsend Brown had stumbled upon the warp drive. Advanced dielectrics and power sources negate the inertial mass of the saucer, allowing not just antigravity travel, but faster-than-light travel! Warp-driven vehicles can maneuver freely while traveling FTL, and may make random turns in combat. Saucers can use the drive to stop instantly or change their direction of motion – it can "turn on a dime" and is immune to collision (it merely stops at the collision point, unhurt). Typical mother ship drives are capable of 30 light-years per day, while a scout ship will cover only 3 light-years in the same period of time. So much energy is required that only antimatter (or advanced miniature fusion) power plants are capable of sustaining the warp drive.

# Prehistoric Survivors

There are places on Earth where the natural process of extinction and evolution “shorts out.” In these tiny, remote enclaves, prehistoric creatures still survive.

The most impressive denizens of these ecological time capsules are dinosaurs, which still survive among the strange forests and plains of these lost worlds. But other forgotten creatures, from trilobites to *Ramapithecus*, from humanity’s remote ancestor *Australopithecus* through uncivilized tribes of Cro-Magnon to our near cousin *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*, can also be found there. (For more information on running a “lost world” game, see *GURPS Ice Age* or *GURPS Dinosaurs*.)

The actual number of “lost worlds” across the globe is up to the GM, but they’ve been reported in numerous remote locations worldwide, including:

- ⊗ Unclimbable plateaus deep in the African interior or the South American rainforest.
- ⊗ Forgotten valleys in the Andes or Himalayas.
- ⊗ Uncharted islands in the Pacific.
- ⊗ Mysterious pockets of temperate climate near the North or South Poles.
- ⊗ The mysterious “hollow earth” that some believe exists beneath the Earth’s crust.

These enclaves range from 10 miles across (100 square miles) to at least 100 miles across (10,000 square miles). Some reports say they support even stranger creatures than living fossils – prehuman intelligent amphibians, or colossal mammals and lizards many times the size of the largest dinosaurs. Some ancient legends speak of immortal cyclopean gods or demons who came down from the stars when the Earth was young, and now rest, uneasily, in secret places beneath the Earth and the sea.

If enclaves of ancient life remain on dry land, it only stands to reason that ancient creatures must also survive in the uncharted depths of the oceans. This explains the legends of lake monsters and sea serpents throughout history. Some also say that an ancient race of water-breathing humanoids lives in the deep, where they have ruled since before the first mammal ever walked the surface.

## Earth’s Near Neighbors



The solar system is a strange place. Although humanity is currently its only native civilized resident, the Earth is not the only place where life has evolved. When humanity leaves its home planet, it will discover many curious things in orbit around its own sun.

## THE MOON

Throughout the eons, many races have used the moon as a convenient vantage point to observe the amazing drama of life on Earth. The Martians, the Loi, the Alphans, the Loi mutants, and the Metarans have, by turns, established obser-

vation posts on Earth’s moon. Some of the alien bases were just temporary way stations, while others endured for millennia . . . and some bases, belonging to the Loi alliance and the Metarans, are still active. All of these bases remain, waiting to give up their secrets to humanity. But not all the lunar bases were left unguarded when they were abandoned, and some of the secrets they offer – perfectly ordinary tools and conveniences to the original builders – might threaten human explorers, or even all of Earth, in strange and unexpected ways.

Of course, Luna is not the only place where nonhuman spacefarers have set up way stations. They might also be found on Mercury or the satellite systems of the great gas giants. The asteroid belt, of course, is littered with the debris of the Loi mutants’ civilization.

## MARS

Long before humans, or even the Loi, began to walk on two legs, Mars was the home of a wise, powerful, and ancient culture.

About 5 million years ago, after millions of years of civilization, the Martians became extinct. There was no final catastrophe; they just died out from racial old age. They left behind their global network of canals, already dry for millennia when the last Martian died, and their monolithic architecture, so vast that to Earth-born astronomers, they look like geographic features.

Today, the planet Mars is nearly as dead as the Martian civilization. Only a handful of small, hardy species survive on the arid, windswept landscape. But who knows what treasures or dangers still survive deep inside the Martian pyramids and monoliths?

The atmosphere of Mars was never as thick as Earth’s, and has been steadily attenuating for millennia. A human can breathe Martian air for 2d+HT minutes before losing consciousness due to oxygen deprivation. Humans who carry their own supplemental air supply can last as long as the extra air holds out. Mars is also cold, and a human will have to wear clothing at least equivalent to arctic gear to survive there at night. During the day, a heavy parka and hood will suffice. There is no standing water left on Mars, except for the tiny polar ice caps, and none of the indigenous flora or fauna are nutritious to humans. The most dramatic environmental dangers on Mars are sandstorms, which appear frequently and can last for days – some huge storms can last for months or even years. An unprotected human on the surface of Mars would take 4d damage every minute during a sandstorm of ordinary intensity.

## VENUS

When the Loi mutants came to Earth, the most influential of their number, next to Lauranis himself, was Irinda. She was a precog and a healer, and her sporadic but always accurate predictions of the future played a major part in the mutants’ escape from the Alphans and their migration to Earth.

In 12,000 B.C., at the height of the Atlantean civilization, Irinda had a vision of the end of Atlantis. The vision was sketchy but frightening. Irinda was afraid that the coming holocaust would destroy the human race entirely.

## **VENUSIAN FEMALE -20 POINTS**

**Attribute Modifiers:** HT +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Attractive [5].

**Disadvantages:** Intolerance (Males) [-5]; Primitive (-6 TLs) [-30].

**Notes:** Venusian females have fallen to TL1.

## **VENUSIAN MALE -45 POINTS**

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST +3 [30]; IQ -3 [-20].

**Advantages:** Alertness +5 [25].

**Disadvantages:** Bestial [-10]; Presentient [-20]; Primitive (-7 TLs) [-35]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].

**Racial Skills:** Survival (M/E) IQ+5 [10]-12.

**Notes:** This is for a “wild” Venusian male; one of the “tame” males would lack the Bestial disadvantage and the Survival skill, leaving point cost unchanged. They are TL0, in any case.

She and Lauranis came up with a contingency plan. Irinda would assemble a group of followers, who would secretly build a space ship and establish humankind on some other planet in the solar system. Venus was the obvious choice, since its eternal cloud cover and thick jungles would protect them from discovery by Alphans or other hostile aliens.

Irinda assembled her team of 700 of Atlantis' most gifted and advanced humans. Over the course of a decade, they built their space ark, which soon touched down safely on Venus.

No longer under the authority of Lauranis, Irinda experimented with some of her own theories about human society. As soon as the colonists had built a great pyramid in the middle of the jungle, she banished all technology above TL3 from Venus. Irinda then established a matriarchal, agrarian society based on personal growth and spiritual enlightenment. Then she went into semi-seclusion, taking no active role in the day-to-day affairs of her people, but always available to help resolve a dilemma or to give oracular guidance when her powers foresaw something of importance.

For 7,500 years, the Venus colony lived peacefully. Then, one day, Irinda vanished. She was never seen again, and none of her followers had any clue as to her fate.

With their immortal priestess gone, the Venusian civilization began slowly to deteriorate. The enlightened matriarchal government became increasingly tyrannical and intolerant, particularly of its male citizens. The males reacted to this persecution with violence, speeding the culture's downward spiral.

A century or so after the fall of Rome, the matriarchy expelled all the males from their city. Women and men were not allowed to meet at all, except to mate.

By the '50s, the disintegration of Venusian culture is almost complete. The women, in their ancient citadel, are



reduced to Stone-Age barbarism, led by a priestess/chief who claims to speak for the near-mythical Irinda. Out in the jungles, the men have wholly reverted to a bestial state – they have lost the ability to speak, use fire, or make tools.

The women of Venus keep a few even-tempered males as slaves, and a few of these slaves can even learn to speak a few words. These tame, atavistic males are no good for reproduction, however – they produce weak, sickly daughters. Therefore, bands of female hunters frequently go out into the jungle to bring back the strongest, most savage males to use for breeding stock. Boy children are cared for until about the age of 10 (in Earth years), then are driven out, unless they're passive enough to become slaves.

The women of Venus are tall, healthy, and retain their fine Atlantean features. For reasons probably having to do with tribal markings, they style their hair, wear makeup, pluck their eyebrows, and wear bright nail polish. Because of the sweltering heat of Venus, they wear little or no clothing. The men are strong (average ST 13) but stupid (average IQ 7), and either wear skins or go naked.

The virile, intelligent crew of an Earth rocket expedition to Venus would be of great interest to the women of Venus. They would probably be intrigued by the possibility of mating with these super-males. Even the most intelligent males would still be treated as property, expected to know their place and do what they're told.

Venus' atmosphere is hot, thick, and wet, but can support human life for an indefinite amount of time. The jungles, which cover almost every inch of Venus, are as thick and dangerous as the deepest Earth rain forests, and are crowded with dangerous plants and animals ranging from venomous insects to dinosaur-size monsters. These alien life forms are interspersed with many recognizable Earth plants and animals, brought from Earth by the ancient colonists.

## **TITAN**

Titan, the largest moon of Saturn, is nearly the size of Earth and has evolved its own life forms.

Titan is presently in a geological epoch comparable to Earth's Jurassic period, characterized by intense volcanic activity and an evolutionary tendency towards gigantism. It is a world of monsters, where creatures hundreds of feet long fight constantly for survival beneath the breathtaking light-show of Saturn's rings.

Titan's atmosphere is breathable by humans. Despite its distance from the Sun, its own internal heat keeps its surface temperature close to Earth norms.

## **THE OUTER PLANETS**

There are observation posts on Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, too, but they don't belong to comparatively humanoid races like the Alphans and the Metarans. These posts were established by strange, cold creatures from the depths of space – creatures who could no more survive on Earth than humans could live in the corona of the sun. Some of these remote stations are ancient and abandoned; others might still be inhabited by their creators, or the guardians the creators left behind.



# ENEMIES OF FREEDOM



## THE WAR'S NOT OVER . . .

The celebrations that swept the civilized world on V-E Day (Victory in Europe) and V-J Day (Victory against Japan) went unnoticed by some. The Pacific War encompassed so many tiny islands that, perhaps inevitably, some of the Emperor's soldiers never knew the war had ended. In 1972, Shoichi Yokoi was captured by fishermen on the island of Guam where he had been hiding. Two years later, Hiroo Onoda emerged from the jungles of Lubang, an island in the Philippines. He had killed 39 policemen and villagers over the years. Some think Onoda was the last survivor of an elite bodyguard sent to guard the war booty of General Yamashita, who had despoiled half of southeast Asia and taken the secret of his hidden treasures to the gallows. Lubang is the most probable location of the hoard, and many ex-soldiers have gone in search of it. Soldiers in hiding may add confusion to a Pacific island scenario or become the center of an adventure.

Nazis fled to South America by the thousands; perhaps they established secret military training camps in the Andes or along the Amazon. S.S. leader Otto Skorzeny, commander of a special force sent to rescue Mussolini, also amassed a huge fortune, reputed to lie in Lake Como. After the war, "Scarface" Skorzeny lived in fascist Spain and then moved to South America. Constant trips to Austria meant he could recover some of his treasure – how much still sits under the waters of the lake, or in other hiding places?

Bunkers from WWII may still contain civilians or military personnel, who are under the illusion that the war still rages. An advanced underground bunker may have been placed on a Pacific island, in the heart of Russia (by Nazis), in Germany (Nazis again!), or in the heart of Britain. Some weird accident has convinced the bunker dwellers that the war still continues or that the homeland has been overrun.

## The World of the '50s



The atomic bomb brought World War II to a dramatic end, and ushered in a new era of human history. As the sole possessor of atomic weapons technology, the United States became the instant world leader – the world's first "superpower." Few realized the impact that the Bomb would have on international affairs, or that it would cause a "Cold War" that would embroil nations across the globe. At first it seemed that little could challenge the economic might of the United States: Europe had been devastated in the war, China was torn by civil strife, and the USSR had almost collapsed under Hitler's onslaught. America, on the other hand, was stronger in 1945 than it had been in 1941!

## DRAFT AND DEMOBILIZATION

With the coming of peace, most Americans wanted the troops home, which suited the Truman Administration just fine. America could cut the cost of the armed forces in one stroke, while maintaining its "teeth" with the atomic deterrent. The U.S. Army dropped from 12 million personnel in 1945 to only 550,000 in 1948. Such a force was spread too thin to defend Europe and the NATO allies effectively, as well as occupy Japan and secure interests in the Middle East. As a result, the opening shots of the Korean War almost totally crushed American forces. Most World War II veterans had been discharged from the service, leaving a small, inexperienced force to defend South Korea. Equipped with World War II surplus gear, these troops were outgunned by the superior Soviet equipment used by the Koreans. Needing more troops, America reinstated the draft, which proved unpopular at home. The Army learned that it could never demobilize its armed forces to pre-World War II levels. In the age of the Bomb, constant preparation for war was necessary, because when it broke out there would be no time to rearm, retrain, and reorganize the forces.

## 1945 to 1946

### 1945

First atomic bomb is detonated near Alamogordo, New Mexico, July 16.

WWII: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin attend Yalta Conference. President Roosevelt dies unexpectedly soon after and Harry Truman is sworn in. Allies cross the Rhine into Germany as Russian forces close on



Berlin. Allies meet the Russian Army at the River Elbe. Hitler commits suicide in his bunker; shortly thereafter General Jodi signs a surrender.

Germany is divided into four zones, each administered by one of the victorious nations. Berlin is also divided even though it lies in the Russian zone.

War in the Pacific against Japan comes to a fiery end; atomic bombs dropped by the U.S. on Hiroshima and Nagasaki result in Japanese surrender.

Potsdam Conference decides the fate of Europe. American troops occupy Japan. The United Nations is established in San Francisco. Nuremberg trials begin.

### 1946

Great Britain and the U.S. merge their occupied zones in Germany.

New York becomes the seat of the United Nations.

The U.S. Army launches V-2 rockets, captured in Peenemunde, Germany, from White Sands Missile Range.

The U.S. Navy continues American testing of atomic bombs, detonating two at Bikini atoll (which would also host later tests).

Greece is torn by a Communist uprising and President Truman puts forward the "Truman Doctrine," promising support for free peoples resisting subjugation.

A Communist government is established in Russian-held North Korea, separated from the American-held South Korea along the 38th parallel.

Russia and the U.S. begin to withdraw from Korea.

General Marshall, the Secretary of State, attempts to reconcile the Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung and the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek, but fails.

Dr. Benjamin Spock publishes the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*.



After Korea, the new army was reorganized to fight an atomic war in Europe. Nuclear artillery shells were developed in 1953. In the same year the Army received nuclear demolition mines, developed to enable an army to create radiation hazards on the battlefield, destroy mountain passes, and wipe out approaching enemy units. By the end of the '50s, even platoons had nuclear capability, with the development of the atomic recoilless rifle shell. Tactical rockets (similar to the modern Scud) also entered service in the form of the Redstone and Honest John battlefield missile systems.

Elvis Presley, along with many other young Americans, served in the military; he was posted to Germany in 1958. In Britain, National Service drafted young men into the Army to fight a guerrilla war against the Communists in Malaya. For many, this was the first time they had been abroad. France adopted the draft to man its armies in Algeria and Indochina (Vietnam). These conflicts and commitments weren't conventional wars, so governments didn't want the cost of fighting them with a conventional army.

Some Americans remained behind in Britain after World War II to man military air bases against the Eastern Bloc. Some GIs posted to Britain, France, and Italy returned home with war brides, or met future wives overseas. The veterans wanted jobs and homes when they returned. Most tried to forget the war and lead normal lives. There was a rapturous homecoming that quickly faded. The ex-servicemen had to learn to fit into a changing America. There was a mood of peace and progress that contrasted radically with the six years of war. Some men found their children grown up, their wives unfaithful, their disabilities ridiculed, or their relatives dead and buried.

## The Cold War



Pioneering a new style of war, America invested in atomic bombs, jet bombers, and the Strategic Air Command to deliver the weapons against any enemy. SAC's motto, "Peace

is our profession," referred to a U.S. policy of preserving peace through the threat of atomic devastation. SAC soon eclipsed the other armed services in power and prestige.

Russia with its huge empire and vast natural resources posed the greatest threat. Ideologically, the Soviet Union and the United States were opposites; the late '40s saw relations between these two powers deteriorate. Stalin's immediate postwar policy was to create a buffer zone of allied nations between the Soviet Union and western Europe. In 1948, he attempted to force the Western powers out of West Berlin, which was in the Russian zone of partitioned Germany. This resulted in the Berlin Airlift.

Churchill declared that an "Iron Curtain" had descended over Eastern Europe, dividing the continent politically and economically. International crises with serious consequences occurred in Berlin, Czechoslovakia, and newly Communist China. The U.N. seemed powerless to deal with these incidents, so the U.S. needed a defense strategy. The gathering of Stalin's massive army in Eastern Europe was thought to be a prelude to an invasion of the rest of the continent. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed in 1949 in response to this threat. When it became known that Russia possessed an atomic bomb, the danger seemed even greater. Genuine panic swept the West because now the U.S. could not stop Stalin's army with threats of nuclear annihilation. A stalemate had developed.

The Communist invasion of Korea in 1950 confirmed the hopelessness of U.S. strategy. General MacArthur wanted to use atomic weapons to irradiate the Korean border; Truman feared that this would overcommit U.S. forces in Asia, leading to a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. America hastily built up its army to fight a conventional war; it was either that or play the deadly game of nuclear "brinkmanship" promoted by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. This involved threatening the Soviet Union with atomic attack if it invaded *any* allied nation, but few people believed that the President would risk a massive retaliation.

### 1947 to 1950

#### 1947

American aid to Greece begins; the Greek civil war is over by 1949.

India and Pakistan achieve independence after bloody rioting.

Communist rebels begin an armed struggle against the French government in Vietnam.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are discovered at Qumran.

The Bell X-1 breaks the sound barrier at Edwards AFB.

More than a million veterans enroll in college under the G.I. Bill.

#### 1948

Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated.

Under the "Marshall Plan," aid worth five and a half billion dollars is offered to help in the reconstruction of Europe.

The Soviet Union cuts off traffic from the West to the Allied zone of Berlin, and the Berlin Airlift begins.

The independent Jewish state of Israel is founded and immediately attacked by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

Britain pulls out of Palestine.

A Communist regime is established in China.

#### 1949

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is established to prevent a Soviet invasion of Europe.

The Berlin blockade is lifted and the two nations of East and West Germany are formed.

Truman withdraws American support to Chiang Kai-shek's government, which is quickly forced out of China onto the island of Taiwan. Mainland China is held by the Communists.

Leaders of the American Communist Party are convicted of conspiracy.

U.S. researchers launch Viking guided rockets.

#### 1950

Sen. McCarthy alleges that there are 200 Communists working in the State Department and begins the infamous "McCarthy witch hunts," which create hysteria and paranoia in the USA.

Alger Hiss is imprisoned for membership in the Communist Party.

Atomic scientist Klaus Fuchs is imprisoned in Britain for leaking atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

Gasoline rationing ends in Britain.

A Suppression of Communism Act is passed in South Africa.

Eisenhower introduced a new nuclear strategy: tactical atomic weapons would be used against Soviet invading armies, limiting war to the battlefield. This was a far more sensible strategy, but it seemed likely to escalate until the two superpowers were once again at the brink. To the man on the street, it looked as if either Communist invasion or nuclear destruction was right around the corner.

Stalin's death in 1953 raised hopes for an end to the Cold War, but little changed for the better in global politics. The East German uprising of the same year was savagely put down by the Red Army. Despite summit conferences at Geneva in 1955 and 1959, no thaw in U.S.-USSR relations took place.

## THE POWER BLOCS

During the '50s, the global political scene was dominated by three power groups: the U.S.-led Western Bloc, the Communist Soviet Bloc, and the Asian Communist countries led by Red China.

### Western Bloc

The Western Bloc comprises the United States plus NATO and SEATO members. NATO includes Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Great Britain, and the USA (all of which joined in 1949), Greece (1952), Turkey (1952), and West Germany (1955). SEATO includes Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain, and the USA (all 1954).

### Soviet Bloc

Countries in the Soviet Bloc, and the year they joined, are the Soviet Union (1916), Albania and Poland (1944), Bulgaria (1946), Romania (1947), Hungary and Czechoslovakia (1948), and East Germany (1949). Yugoslavia (1945) and Cuba (1959) maintained close political and economic ties to the USSR, but held on to more autonomy than the other members of the Soviet Bloc.

## Asian Communist Countries

The Asian Communist countries are Mongolia (1946), North Korea (1946), China (1949), and North Vietnam (1954).

## SPY VS. SPY

To gain their atomic capability without the massive amounts of money and manpower invested in the Manhattan Project, the Soviets used espionage as an effective short-cut to atomic ascendancy.



Dr. Klaus Fuchs was the head of theoretical physics at Britain's Harwell atomic research establishment. The British intelligence service, MI5, arrested Fuchs in January, 1950, acting on information supplied by the FBI. Fuchs had fled from Nazi Germany to America and worked on the atomic bomb at Los Alamos. He maintained contact with a Soviet espionage ring and passed secrets to Harry Gold in Philadelphia. When he came to England in 1946 and began to work with the Atomic Energy

Agency, he continued to hand over secrets to the Russians. For his betrayal, Fuchs received a 14-year jail sentence. The U.S. Congress demanded that no more atomic secrets be entrusted to the British.

Another British scientist who leaked secrets to the Soviet Union lived in Canada during the war. He was Alan Nunn May (codename "Alek") and by August 9, 1945, he had given the date of the first A-bomb test, the daily output figures for the project's uranium-235, and even a U-235 sample to Colonel Zabolin, head of Russia's Canadian spy ring. The Special Branch in Britain arrested him in 1946; he received a

## 1950 to 1952

**Korean War:** The United States discovers that the Soviet Union has its own atomic bomb. Troops from Communist North Korea cross the 38th parallel and push into South Korea. A United Nations force lands in South Korea; under U.S. Gen. MacArthur, it forces the Communists to retreat back into North Korea. Attempting reunification, MacArthur captures the capital, Pyongyang, and pushes northward to secure the Yalu River border with China. Chinese troops pour over the border reinforcing the North Koreans, forcing the U.N. troops back into South Korea.

Puerto Rican nationalists attempt to assassinate Truman in Washington.

The comic strip "Peanuts," by Charles Schulz, debuts on October 2. New strips run daily until January 3, 2000.

Swanson introduces frozen TV dinners.

### 1951

**Korean War:** General MacArthur is dismissed as Far East commander while the U.N. force continues to try to drive the Chinese back to the 38th parallel.

Two British Foreign Office officials, Burgess and Maclean, defect to the Soviet Union to avoid capture by the Security Service.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted of espionage and treason.

The Festival of Britain is held on London South Bank.

Armistice talks in Korea stop and start.

Churchill is elected Prime Minister.



China invades Tibet.

Japan concludes a peace treaty with America, but the USSR refuses to sign.

### 1952

King George VI dies.

The European Defense Community is established.

Identity cards are abolished in Britain.

King Farouk of Egypt is overthrown by the army for his lax anti-British stance.

Eva Peron dies.

Radiocarbon dating is first used.

Britain detonates its first A-bomb.

Mau Mau revolts in Kenya.

Eisenhower wins the U.S. presidential election for the Republicans.

The U.S. detonates its first hydrogen bomb on Eniwetok Atoll.



10-year prison sentence. He declared that he thought he was doing the right thing. He believed atomic energy should not be confined to a single nation.

It is estimated that Fuchs and May saved the Soviet Union 10 years and countless rubles worth of research into atomic weapons.

The Russians detonated a bomb in 1949, beginning a new era of nuclear stalemate and proliferation, one in which both sides had atomic weapons. The Battle for the Bomb was over; other things became more important in the '50s. The main military objectives for Russian and American spies included rocketry, submarine detection, and atomic technologies.

## 1953 to 1954

The DeHavilland 110 fighter breaks the sound barrier.

South Africa declares apartheid to be official government policy.

The Reverend Norman Vincent Peale writes the bestselling *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

### 1953

The death of Stalin brings Malenkov to power in the USSR.

Dag Hammarskjold is elected Secretary-General of the U.N.

Queen Elizabeth II is crowned in Westminster Cathedral.

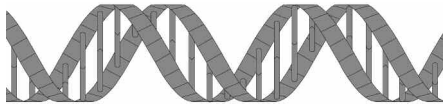
Hillary and Tenzing reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Vincent Price stars in *House of Wax*, the first of many roles in low-budget horror movies over the next several decades.

North and South Korea finally conclude an armistice.

The Soviet Union tests its own H-bomb.

Crick and Watson discover the structure of DNA.



The Rosenbergs are executed in the U.S.

McCarthy becomes the chairman of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee, and intensifies his search for Communists in American society.

Nikita Khrushchev becomes the First Secretary of the Communist Party in the USSR; Stalin's chief of secret police, Beria, is executed.

A major Franco-Vietnamese operation begins against Communists in Indochina.

### 1954

Vietnamese Communists attack and overwhelm the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu, leading to French peace talks and the partitioning of Vietnam into North and South Vietnams by a Geneva conference.

Food rationing finally ends in Britain.

Billy Graham preaches in New York and London.

Roger Bannister runs the mile in four minutes.

Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham publishes *The Seduction of the Innocent*, accusing comic books of causing juvenile delinquency and youth violence. Publishers, facing the threat of regulation, create the Comic Code Authority and police themselves.

Nationalists rise up in rebellion in French-held Algeria.

## INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

**BfV:** The West German counter-espionage agency. Infiltrated by Communist agents at an early date.

**BND:** The West German Federal intelligence agency. Its ex-Nazi chief, Gehlen, approached the CIA after the war with a mass of Soviet secrets. Gehlen was put in charge of the BND and worked closely with the CIA to infiltrate agents into East Germany and the Soviet Union. The BND had a bad record in foreign operations, and it was believed to be compromised early on. Many agents were ex-Nazi officers. Gehlen was distrusted by the BfV, but he was, nevertheless, the Americans' chief weapon in the Cold War.

**CIA:** America's Central Intelligence Agency is directed by Allen Dulles (who took over from General Walter Bedell Smith in 1953). The CIA is a civilian intelligence organization that advises the National Security Council and collects and evaluates intelligence relating to national security. It handles foreign operations *only*. CIA HQ is a complex of buildings at 2430 E Street in the Foggy Bottom section of Washington. There are West Coast offices in L.A., San Francisco, Denver, and Seattle. Besides scanning foreign papers, press releases, broadcasts, technological and scientific literature, and the reports of agents abroad, the CIA carries out extensive espionage operations overseas. Separate regional divisions concentrate on different parts of the globe.

**KGB:** The Ministry of State Security of the Soviet Union, in charge of espionage against the West. Its tasks are similar to those of the CIA, but the KGB places much more emphasis on spy networks. The First Directorate actually carries out these espionage operations. The Second Directorate coordinates with Communists abroad (and maintains Fifth Column operations), monitors the loyalty of Soviet citizens, and assassinates or kidnaps opponents at home and abroad. Assassination is the job of the Ninth Section for Terror and Diversion, known as SMERSH. Assassins are always monitored by other agents.

**MfS:** The East German espionage and intelligence agency. Obstructing the West German armed forces and government defense policy is a paramount goal, mainly accomplished through counterfeiting information and documents. Other operations include penetrating important ministries and public bodies in West Germany and Europe. The MfS has offices in East Berlin and is probably the main tool of Communism in that city.

**MI5:** Britain's counter-espionage organization, also known as the Security Service. It cannot arrest, and delegates that task to the police Special Branch.

**MI6:** The British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) is the espionage agency of the government. Its head is called "C" (not "M"! ). SIS was accused of being a tool of the Foreign Office, and also of having been infiltrated by the Soviets in the early '50s. Absolute secrecy is always maintained; MI6 is easily the most secret intelligence organization in the world. All electronic espionage is handled by GCHQ at Cheltenham in cooperation with the NSA. Most agents are ex-military; the "MI" stands for military intelligence.

**Mossad:** Set up in 1950, the small, overseas intelligence and espionage section of the Israeli intelligence service is perhaps the best known. Agents have been placed in all hostile Arab countries. Mossad was responsible for kidnapping the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, and for discovering the presence of Nazi rocket experts in Egypt after the Suez Crisis in 1956. Virtually all agents are Israeli nationals.

**NSA:** The U.S. National Security Agency, created in 1953 as a communications and electronic surveillance organization, is controlled by the Secretary of Defense and is the President's prime source of intelligence and foreign-policy advice.

**SDECE:** A French secret service that conducts espionage abroad.

### 1954 to 1956

The atomic scientist Robert Oppenheimer is declared to be a security risk.

The U.S. tests another H-bomb at Bikini atoll.

Sen. McCarthy carries his hunt for subversion into the U.S. Army. The Senate eventually votes to "condemn" his activities.

Both the European Defense Community and the European Political Community collapse as cooperative organizations.

Khrushchev returns from talks with Mao Tse-tung and declares, "Conflict with China is inevitable."

James W. McLamore and David Edgerton create Burger King of Miami, later to go nationwide.



### 1955

In the Soviet Union, Bulganin and Khrushchev succeed Malenkov.

Albert Einstein dies.

Eden succeeds Churchill in Britain.

A 14-year-old black boy is lynched in Mississippi.

Blacks begin a city bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama.

A conference on the reunification of Germany begins in Geneva.

The European Parliament first meets in Strasbourg.

Juan Peron resigns as Argentina's president.

Commercial TV begins in Britain.

The hanging of Ruth Ellis fuels the anti-capital punishment movement in Britain.

The Austrian Peace Treaty is signed and Russian troops leave the country.

George Grivas' EOKA begins terrorist activities in Cyprus.

Atomic power is first used at Schenectady, New York.

Ray Kroc opens the McDonald's restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois, earning \$366.12 on the first day.

Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" becomes the first rock 'n' roll hit.

Supermarkets account for 60% of American grocery sales. Seven companies join forces to create the Top Value Stamp Co.

### 1956

Khrushchev begins the "de-Stalinization" of Russia and visits Britain with Bulganin.

Grace Kelly marries Prince Rainier of Monaco.

Trans-Atlantic telephone links are established.

## DANGER FROM WITHIN

The collapse of the U.S.-backed Nationalists in China and their failure to stop the ascent of the Communist Republic under Mao Tse-tung shocked America. In one year, the number of Communists in the world had gone from 180 million to a staggering 800 million! An indignant public wanted to know why the administration had pulled out of China.

In Korea in 1950, the attempt to hold ground had been a massive failure. U.N. troops had been forced back to the southern tip of the peninsula and the blame fell on the American government. Stories circulated of U.S. prisoners turning to Communism; the Army claimed they'd been brainwashed, but the prisoners later denied these claims. Government employees found their loyalty tested more frequently. Self-doubt and paranoia overcame the government. The U.S. seemed to be losing the fight against Communism, and the most likely reason was support for Communists deep in the heart of government . . .

The question of the early '50s was "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?" Anyone in a position of influence was suspect: teachers, writers, civil servants. The House of Representatives Committee on UnAmerican Activities conducted these investigations.

A massive anti-socialist, anti-Communist, anti-Russian movement took place at every level of society. Even a desire for international peace marked one as a tool of the worldwide Communist conspiracy. A "premature anti-fascist" – anyone who had

spoken out against fascism before the outbreak of WWII – risked being accused of supporting Communism, since Communism and fascism were deadly enemies. John Wayne, a staunch anti-Red, led the "Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals." John Foster Dulles told America what it wanted to hear: God was on its side. Billy Graham said the same, which was fine because everyone knew that Communism was a great godless, atheistic, anti-Christian organization. Graham declared Communism to be the work of Satan.



1956 to 1957

The United States refuses to help finance Egypt's planned Aswan Dam, because of Egypt's Communist links.

Egypt's President Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal to pay for the dam project. Israel attacks Egypt as a supposed pre-emptive move. France and Britain, major shareholders in the Canal, send "peace-keeping forces" to capture the Canal. International opinion suspects collusion and the armies withdraw.

A liberal revolution in Hungary is brutally put down by a Soviet show of force.

Eisenhower is re-elected as President.

John Foster Dulles advocates "brinkmanship" policy.

Neutrinos are discovered.

Fidel Castro begins rebel attacks on the Cuban government of Batista.

France goes to war against Algerian rebels.

Elvis Presley records "Hound Dog."

### 1957

The Treaty of Rome establishes the European Common Market to help break down economic barriers between member countries.

Ghana gains independence.

Macmillan succeeds Eden as British Prime Minister.

The British test their first H-bomb on Christmas Island.

Malayan Federation gains independence.

Federal troops are sent to enforce integration at Little Rock High School in Arkansas.

The Soviets launch Sputnik I and II into orbit, proving that they can launch an atomic bomb around the globe.

U.S. attempts at satellite launch fail.

U.N. forces occupy the Gaza strip.

Queen Elizabeth travels to USA and also speaks at the U.N.

The United States, Britain, and Russia form the International Atomic Agency for peaceful atomic research.

Five French governments fall in this single year, all plagued by the problem of Algeria's status.

Mao announces his "Hundred Flowers" campaign, ending government censorship in China. It lasts six weeks, after which Communist critics are banished to remote provinces.

Jack Kerouac writes *On the Road*, inaugurating the "Beat Generation."

Desegregation crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas; President Eisenhower sends paratroopers to forestall violence.

International Geophysical Year.

Communists could not work in government or receive unemployment money; some were denied passports. The U.S. was gripped by a mass hysteria. J. Edgar Hoover had been directing the FBI to harass suspected Communists since 1945. Senator Joseph McCarthy used the paranoia as a platform for re-election. In 1950 he declared that the government was part of the Communist Conspiracy, and that over 200 members of the State Department were dues-paying members of the Communist Party of America.

The witch hunts that began in the early '50s were similar in style to those of the Inquisition. The committee interrogated a suspect and forced him to denounce his friends as Communists. If he had no Communist friends, then the committee could provide a list; all he had to do was name those on it. McCarthy had a talent for publicity, insult, and intimidation, and he managed to terrify or overawe most of those he questioned. He shaped American attitudes and had unprecedented influence in foreign and domestic affairs. In 1953, he became chairman of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee, giving him a great deal of power. The "godfather of the Bomb," Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, had his security clearance revoked when he began to oppose the development of the H-bomb. At the time Oppenheimer was the chairman of the advisers to the Atomic Energy Commission.

No one dared to cross McCarthy until he turned against the Army in 1954. For this, he was condemned by the Senate, abandoned by his followers, and generally lost his power to inspire terror. The House UnAmerican Activities Committee continued to function without him, however, and Hollywood became its next target. It was apparently a hotbed of intellectual liberals and Communist sympathizers. Writers, directors, and actors faced the committee, and those who took a stand and refused to denounce their friends or the names on a list were unofficially blacklisted. They found it impossible to get work; many resorted to pseudonyms, or left the U.S. to work overseas. The witch hunt continued throughout the decade as the committee produced a comprehensive list of organizations

with Communist links. Most were wartime committees and charities that had fostered Soviet-American cooperation during the fight against Hitler. No one could now afford to be connected with them.

### *When the Tanks Roll Down Main Street*

A pervasive fear in the '50s was of waking up some morning to find that the Reds had moved in and taken control, with or without a fight. Schools would be regulated, personal property outlawed, political indoctrination mandatory, and armed troopers ready to eliminate or "re-educate" any malcontents.

Absurd as this scenario seems now, it was very real to the citizens of the '50s. Alien invaders (and *Atomic Horror* GMs) can use this fear to good advantage. Aliens might isolate some rural '50s community from the rest of the world, disguise themselves as Communist soldiers, and take control of the town. Under the guise of "state-sponsored relocation programs," the citizens could be quietly siphoned off to the future, the laboratory, the dinner table, or wherever.

## **THE HOT WAR - WWIIII**

If the GM wants to take the campaign in a radically different direction, he can always "drop the Big One" – start World War III.

There are basically three options for WWIIII in an alternate '50s milieu:

*Total Nuclear War:* Everybody's worst nightmare. This sort of conflict is nasty, brutish, and *short* – it could be all over in 24 hours. By the mid-'50s, if the U.S. and the USSR both let loose with their whole nuclear arsenals, it could easily result in the end of all life on earth. Such a catastrophic nuclear exchange would effectively end an *Atomic Horror* campaign, as such, although the PCs could continue, perhaps going into space with the Loi mutants, or struggling to stay alive in whatever nuclear wasteland is left after the bomb.

## **1958 to 1959**

### **1958**

In reaction to Russia's space successes, the United States establishes the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to run its space program.

Castro wars against the Batista government in Cuba.

The Common Market goes into effect.

The U.S. Explorer probe discovers the Van Allen radiation belts.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is established.

DeGaulle becomes president of France following Algerian insurrection.

Fuchs and Hillary travel to the South Pole.

Khrushchev becomes Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

The atomic submarine *Nautilus* passes beneath the North Pole.

Atlas ICBMs are tested at Cape Canaveral.

The U.S. sends troops to Lebanon to protect Western interests as nationalist tensions rise.

British forces enter Jordan.

Mao launches the disastrous "Great Leap Forward" five-year plan.

Communist China bombards the islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

Notting Hill riots in London.

### **1959**

Fidel Castro takes power in Cuba and soon enters the Soviet camp.

Alaska becomes the 49th state of the Union and Hawaii the 50th.

A hovercraft makes its first crossing of the English channel.

DeGaulle proclaimed President of the Fifth Republic.

The USSR's Luna probe takes the first photographs of the far side of the moon.

Prime Minister Macmillan visits Moscow.

Singapore gains its independence.

Mao Tse-tung is succeeded as Chairman by Liu Shao-chi.

Chinese troops invade North Eastern India.

J.F. Dulles dies.

Khrushchev visits Washington for talks with President Eisenhower.

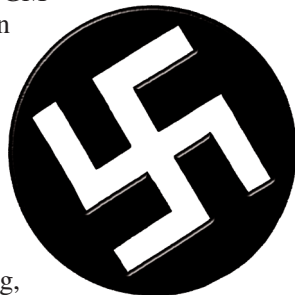
As a sign of growing strain between the USSR and China, the Soviet Union withdraws its promise to help China develop atomic capacity.

Rock stars Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper die in a plane crash at Clearlake, Iowa, Dec. 3.



*Limited Nuclear War:* The much-talked-about “winnable nuclear war.” Perhaps this war breaks out in the early ’50s, before the superpowers build up their nuclear stockpiles to world-threatening levels. Or perhaps either the U.S. or USSR attacked with such efficiency and force that the opponent was completely overwhelmed. Perhaps, through a combination of good fortune and good sense, both sides simply limited their use of nuclear arms to a few key, tactical objectives (this would be a major violation of ’50s strategic doctrine, but the GM can do whatever he wants). A limited nuclear war, particularly one with a decisive victor, would dramatically change the complexion of the campaign – the Cold War subplot would have to change to one of reconstruction – but the campaign could remain *Atomic Horror*. After all, the aliens would still be out there, pursuing their own agendas, and then there are terrestrial life forms, in all that fallout . . .

*Conventional War:* A protracted, conventional land war like World War I or II is difficult to envision in the ’50s. The superpowers’ militaries have all these neat nuclear toys, and there are a lot of important people who are eager for any excuse to try them out. If the GM wants a nonnuclear world war in his ’50s, his best bet is probably to have one of the alien races from Chapter 4 tamper with the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers, making them unworkable. The Loi, the Loi mutants, or the Vortun are the most likely groups to engage in such tampering, though the Alphans, Metarans, or even the Arendians might also do it to preserve their supply of human cattle. Such a war could allow the campaign to switch completely to military adventures, or the campaign could remain *Atomic Horror*, with the added complications that the PCs have to conduct their investigations of strange phenomena under battlefield conditions.



## The Fourth Reich

Science-horror films of the ’50s occasionally focused on surviving Nazi scientists. The great strides in German technology during the war, coupled with their brutally pragmatic character, make the Nazis perfect antagonists in an *Atomic Horror* game. Nazi scientists in the movies are typically crazed megalomaniacs bent on restoring the Third Reich. The horrific researches of Dr. Mengele, and the amazing “wonder-weapons” of the desperate Luftwaffe, evoke a powerful blend of fiendish horror and soulless science. Mengele, along with hundreds of other top Nazis, escaped the fall of Germany to plot revenge in hidden refuges across the globe. Whatever goal these fanatics seek, be it the resurrection of Hitler, the destruction of America, or the establishment of a Nazi base on the Moon, their lack of humanity and their Godless science must surely be their downfall!

## OCCUPATION AND EXTRACTION

Six years of savage warfare in Europe resulted in the defeat of Germany and the occupation of the country by the victorious Allies (France, Britain, the U.S., and Russia). Before the Allies could leave the devastated nation, they not only had to reorganize the German economy, but carry out a thorough program of “denazification.” Every Allied leader remembered that only a decade ago a defeated Germany had come back stronger than ever to threaten global conquest. There could be no Fourth Reich, if civilization was to survive.

Hitler did not survive the war but committed suicide with his mistress, Eva Braun (although their bodies were never positively identified . . .). Heinrich Himmler took poison and died while in British custody; the Allies arrested 16 other Nazi leaders. As a result of the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-1946, 11 were executed, two were sentenced to life in prison, two were acquitted, and Hermann Goering committed suicide the night before his scheduled execution.

## 1960 to 1963

### 1960

John F. Kennedy defeats Richard M. Nixon to become the youngest U.S. President ever.

Former Gestapo chief Adolf Eichmann arrested.

In January, Jacques Piccard and Lt. Don Walsh descend 35,800’ in the bathyscaph *Trieste*.

The Twist is a popular dance.



### 1961

Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba fails.

Berlin Wall is erected.

Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human being in space.

Activities of the ultra-conservative John Birch Society concern U.S. Senate.

White and black civil-rights activists are attacked and beaten by white citizens in Anniston and Birmingham.

### 1962

Cuban missile crisis brings the U.S. and USSR to the brink of nuclear war.

U.S. military council established in South Vietnam.

John Glenn orbits the Earth.

Bob Dylan records “Blowin’ in the Wind.”

Thalidomide causes children to be born with severe birth defects.

### 1963

Civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, lead to riots, beatings by whites and police, and maltreatment by officials; Martin

Luther King is arrested; President Kennedy calls out 3,000 troops.

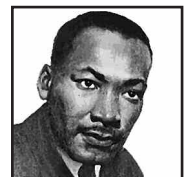
“Hot Line” established between the White House and the Kremlin.

200,000 black and white “Freedom Marchers” demonstrate in Washington, D.C.

Buddhist-led military coup overthrew government of South Vietnam; U.S. sends financial and economic aid.

President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Nov. 22. Prime suspect Lee Harvey Oswald is shot and killed by Jack Ruby on national TV.

Stanley Kubrick directs *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.



In addition to imprisoning war criminals, both the Soviet Union and the U.S. seized valuable scientific information, particularly Nazi rocket and aircraft technology. Under “Operation Paperclip,” the OSS shipped captured V-2s and the engineers who designed them (among other useful ex-Nazis) to the U.S. to be absorbed into the nation’s military rocket projects. The Soviet Union also seized engineers and inspected German rocket installations. If science-fiction technology did exist in Germany, the Allied powers would have taken everything they could find. Of course, someone might have taken it first. Perhaps a group of renegade LoI “Nordic supermen” are trying to cover their tracks, or perhaps a secret Nazi conspiracy of mad scientists and SS fanatics have not yet given up the iron dream of world domination.

## NAZI REMNANTS

“Hitler’s Commando,” Otto Skorzeny, helped establish the Organization der Ehemaligen S.S. Angehörigen (the Organization of Former Members of the S.S., or “ODESSA”) to get S.S. members out of Germany. He also helped create the Werwolf group, a Nazi “partisan” underground. Werwolf, and especially ODESSA, became two legs of *die Spinne* (“the Spider”), the master conspiracy of Nazis determined to survive Hitler’s inevitable defeat. The S.D., the S.S. security arm of the German state, funded the movement with gold and art pillaged from conquered Europe. Most of the French national art treasures from the Louvre fell into Goering’s hands at one time or another. Many survived the war and are once again in French hands (unless the returned “masterpieces” are all incredible fakes . . .). Treasures not returned, and fortunes not stored in Swiss banks, were piled in abandoned bunkers. Die Spinne secreted stolen jewelry, antiquities, art, bonds, and tapestries in caves in the Italian Dolomite Alps and in salt mines in Upper Austria.

Along with art masterpieces, die Spinne smuggled Nazi masterminds out of occupied Germany. Martin Bormann, Hitler’s deputy Führer, and Heinrich Müller, head of the Gestapo, both vanished during the end-of-war chaos in Berlin. S.S. General Heinz Kammler, in charge of underground construction and secret weapons research, likewise disappeared from Berlin in April of 1945. Skorzeny himself escaped from Darmstadt Prison in 1948, and helped smuggle Adolf Eichmann, engineer of the Holocaust, out of Germany in 1950. Germany’s most-decorated Luftwaffe ace, Ernst Rudel, simply flew out of Germany – and only narrowly failed to break 102 other ex-Nazis out of a British prison in 1952! Tens of thousands of Nazi murderers and madmen followed the Spider’s web to safety. Perhaps even Hitler (or at least his living, disembodied brain) survived, hidden in some jungle mansion, or buried in an icy cavern torn from his fevered dreams of Teutonic mythology. Perhaps the Führer had one more invulnerable bunker . . .

## NAZI REFUGES

Much of the Nazi loot and hierarchy made its way to South America, where Fascist parties never lost political power, although the region’s governments had mostly followed the American lead during the war. In Argentina, the

## THE HOLY LANCE OF HAPSBURG

Hitler’s fascination with the occult led him to seize the Holy Lance of Hapsburg from the Vienna museum in 1938. The Lance, reputedly used by a Roman soldier to stab the crucified Christ, and also known as the Spear of Destiny or Spear of Longinus, was discovered in Antioch by European pilgrims who brought it to Europe. Charlemagne supposedly wielded the Holy Lance in 47 military victories and died when he let it fall from his hand. The German king Henry the Fowler later fought with its powerful magic on his side; it was passed to the conqueror Frederick Barbarossa who was victorious against the city-states of Italy and the forces of the pope. In 1945, when Americans attacked Nuremberg, they faced thousands of S.S. soldiers bent on protecting the Holy Lance. The Americans found the relic, in its specially constructed vault, and the American government took possession of the Lance of Hapsburg. (For one possible look at what happened then, see pp. WT38-40.)

dictatorial regime of Juan Perón showered honors on German scientists, airmen, and generals. ODESSA settled 30,000 Nazi Party members in Buenos Aires alone! (Perhaps Perón hoped that die Spinne would use Nazi superscience to help him conquer all of South America – and in an *Atomic Horror* game, they just might!) When Perón fell from power in 1955, die Spinne simply activated other networks, moving its “clients” into Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil. Others, including Major General Otto Remer, removed to Nasser’s Egypt, where they could plot the destruction of Israel – and no doubt search the Pyramids for ancient alien technology or the Ark of the Covenant.

In suitably science-fictional games, the Nazis may have found an even more remote refuge in Antarctica! In 1939, a German military expedition mapped, staked, and claimed over 230,000 square miles of the Antarctic continent, which they named Neuschwabenland. The S.S. may have sent armies of slave labor to dig a secret network of caverns deep in the Antarctic ice cap, a Last Redoubt. Did they discover the entrance to the Hollow Earth at the South Pole, or uncover eldritch technology in ancient cities of prehuman monstrosities straight out of H.P. Lovecraft? At the last extremity, perhaps General Kammler removed the ultra-secret Projekt Saucer prototype (see p. 76) to Antarctica, and transferred Hitler’s brain to a new Refuge on the Moon! (The latter was the rationale for the Heinlein novel *Rocket Ship Galileo*, which inspired the 1950 movie *Destination Moon*.)

## NAZI RESEARCH

The GM may assume that the hidden laboratories of the Third Reich experimented with many kinds of futuristic technology. If those listed on p. 71 are *real* projects, what might the Allies have overlooked – or what might ODESSA have escaped with – from the Nazi files and factories? What horrors could the German scientists have created with unending human experimentation? The totalitarian technocrats may





have attempted cloning and the creation of genetic supermen, or built antigravity motors and death rays, or mastered mind control and exotic radiations. If the Antarctic Space Nazis had access to such technology, perhaps the “Loi” are actually blonde S.S. troopers, tanned from the ultraviolet rays of interplanetary space! Is the Fourth Reich plotting to irradiate and thaw frozen dinosaurs buried in the glacier? Of course, if the Nazis built a prototype of Project Janus (see p. 34) they can travel back in time and get them fresh . . . Such science-fictional ideas can mix horror with intrigue for an exciting struggle between the U.S. Air Force and ODESSA over control of technology . . . and mastery of the future.

## SECRET NAZI PROJECTS

When World War II ended and Nazi records and factories were seized, the Allies discovered an amazing variety of research on high-technology projects. Western or Communist governments may be continuing these projects.

The German Army weapons office, Heereswaffenamt, had a special weapons-assessment group, the *Waffenprüfamter*. Of particular importance was the *Waffenforschung* – the weapons research institute, responsible for designing and building prototypes of many science-fiction weapons.

*Flying Wing:* Several tailless jet bombers were designed for the Luftwaffe. Some of the prototypes flew; the single-seat Horton Ho IX was capable of almost 600 mph. The much larger Junkers EF 130 did not fly, but had a theoretical range of 3,700 miles. The U.S. flying wing program took a lot of research data from these Nazi designs.

*Hurricane Cannon:* Intended as an anti-aircraft gun, the hurricane cannon produced artificial vortices to knock planes out of the sky. The shell released powdered coal, which was then detonated. It was never used in combat.

*Jump Jet:* The Focke-Wulf Triebflügel had a long wingless body standing on its tail. Three rotors with jets at the tips would turn to provide lift and the coleopter would change its attitude to fly conventionally. The stub-winged Junkers EF 09 lifted off on ten small jets; after gaining height, it flew normally. It took off on its tail but landed on skids. Its speed was supposed to be 600 mph.

*Sound Cannon:* This was able to project a beam of concentrated sonic energy at 1,000 cycles per second with devastating consequences. It caused headaches, dizziness, and blackouts out to 300 yards. Death was expected within a minute at 50 yards. Two huge parabolic reflectors, the larger 10 feet in diameter, were mounted over a combustion tube. An oxygen-methane mix was burned in pulses that produced the sound waves.

*Supergun:* Similar to the modern Iraqi supergun project, this was an immobile gun with a 150’-long barrel. Two were used against Antwerp and Luxembourg. As the 8’-long shell traveled up the barrel, mini-barrels on either side fired charges that increased the gas pressure and accelerated the shell to 4,500 feet per second. A huge supergun was built near Calais to attack London, but was bombed by the RAF shortly before use.

*Wind Cannon:* Designed to fire a “plug” of air at aircraft, the wind cannon had a 50’ barrel and produced explosive shock waves with hydrogen-oxygen mixtures. A prototype was installed on a bridge across the Elbe, and other experiments showed that the gun could smash a one-inch board at 200 yards.

## World Overview



### CHINA

Communist forces under Mao Tse-tung overran China in 1949. They pushed the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, onto the island of Taiwan. This earned the enmity of the USA, which refused to recognize the new regime as the legitimate Chinese government. They acknowledged the Chiang Kai-shek government on Taiwan as the legitimate authority. Europe for the most part recognized Communist China immediately. China tried to forge links with neutral nations across the world and was initially friendly with Moscow.

In 1951, China invaded Tibet. Mao put 20,000 troops into the country and, following the 1959 uprising, brutally took over. The Dalai Lama fled. This reinforced the American “domino theory” of Communist domination in Asia, in which one country after another fell. The tension in Asia erupted into violence almost as soon as the Japanese invaders had been expelled. In Vietnam and Malaya, Communist “liberators” clashed with the returning imperial powers for control. The U.S. propped up Taiwan against Chinese aggression, backed the Philippines, and controlled Japan, who became an overnight ally once the Korean War started.

## EUROPE

After 1945, the world was dominated by two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR. Ideology, not colonialism or territorial expansion, was the driving force behind their antagonism. Both were federations of states; Europe, duly noting this, considered a similar union and the creation of a third superpower. Churchill initially wanted a powerful European superarmy, but NATO was fulfilling that need. Economic union was the great goal.

Europe gladly accepted the Marshall Plan (the American program for the economic recovery of Europe after WWII) and even more happily cooperated with the United States in the formation of NATO. France, Holland, and Britain had overseas commitments that meant they could not maintain a large anti-Soviet army. NATO had its permanent headquarters in Paris and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) in Fontainebleau. The Russians countered NATO by forming the Warsaw Pact.

Questions of unity were also important in southern and eastern Europe. An uprising in Hungary and disorder in Poland indicated objections to Soviet interference, but the USSR intended to make Eastern Europe a buffer zone of satellite states. In Hungary, following demonstrations in 1956, Imre Nagy became Prime Minister. He promised free elections, but Russian troops occupied Budapest after savage street fighting. Pro-Soviet groups also added to the death toll, which eventually came to 25,000. Radio Free Europe, funded by the CIA, broadcast supportive messages to the Hungarians; many thought America might intervene. After the Hungarian struggle ended, Russia was widely condemned for its actions. The purges that followed were thorough.

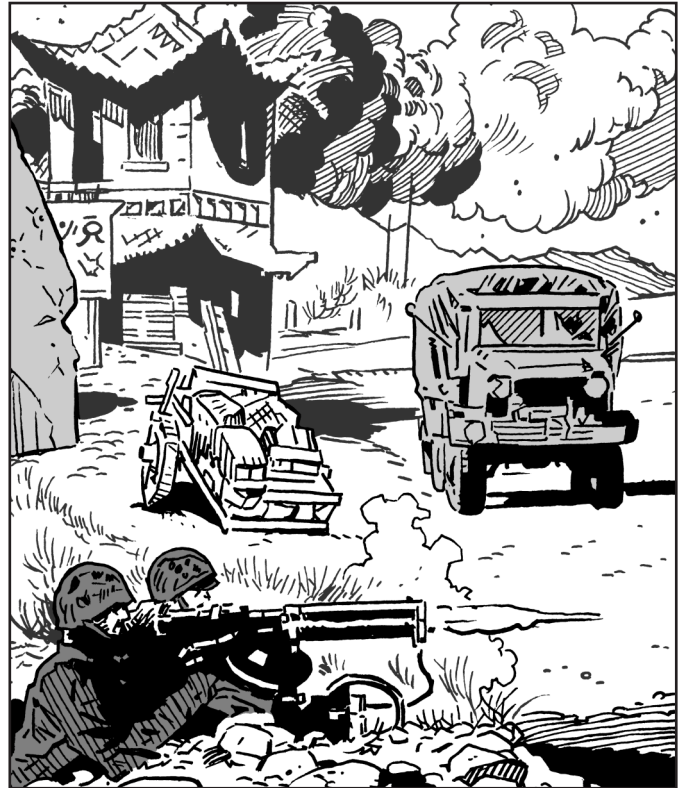
## KOREA

Following World War II, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel into the Russian-occupied North and the U.S.-occupied South. Reunification stalled. Once separate governments were established, Soviet and American forces were no longer needed; the U.S. withdrew in 1949. North Korea established a Communist government while the South had a right-wing, U.S.-backed president. The previous occupiers armed and funded the respective sides. Rebellions and unrest in the South were followed by border incidents and a full-scale invasion of South Korea in June 1950. North Koreans overran the peninsula except for the area around Pusan. The United Nations passed a resolution condemning North Korea and asking for troops to restore peace.

American forces immediately moved to help, and were later joined by British Commonwealth, Turkish, and other troops as part of a U.N. force commanded by General Douglas MacArthur, who forced the North Koreans back beyond the 38th parallel. He proposed to reunite Korea by capturing Pyongyang and securing the northern border with China, despite Chinese warnings against approaching the Yalu River border. As the U.N. forces moved north, they encountered large Chinese “volunteer” forces supporting the North Koreans. The U.N. army was stretched so thin that the well-equipped Chinese troops easily repulsed it.

MacArthur wanted to send B-29s into China to bomb factories and cities, and hinted at the use of the atomic bomb. President Truman foresaw an atomic war against the Soviet Union if such raids took place, and MacArthur was dismissed.

There were heavy casualties on both sides, and also in the civilian population. Refugees were caught in the crossfire as armies moved north and south in a mobile war. Due to Soviet intervention, a truce was agreed to in 1951, but there was no armistice until 1953. The war taught the United States strategic and tactical lessons that it would use to reform its Army and foreign policy.



## THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union was a multinational state dominated by Russia. Russians “colonized” other areas of the USSR, but there were over a hundred other races: Ukrainians, Tartars, Armenians, Latvians, and so on. It was the largest nation in the world.

After the war, Stalin used troops stationed across Eastern Europe to install Communist governments and put sympathetic leaders into power; nationalists and the Church were suppressed. Because the Red Army did not occupy (“liberate”) Yugoslavia, Russia had little chance to dominate it in the post-war years. Stalin’s death allowed discontent to surface in the Red Empire. There were demonstrations in Czechoslovakia in 1953; the Russians brutally put down riots in East Berlin. Both Hungary and Poland adopted more liberal policies and offered amnesty to Stalin’s victims. His successors, Malenkov and Nikita Khrushchev, relaxed some of the control on the satellite states. The theory of a peaceful coexistence of Communists and capitalists was formulated, and peaceful competition was encouraged.

Khrushchev emerged out of the power struggle following Stalin's death. He was a bald, down-to-earth man from peasant origins. His colorful character made an impression on many statesmen; he traveled extensively. He visited Britain and the United States, talked to leaders, and lived the life of an incredibly wealthy tourist. He even appeared on television. The American public wondered if this jovial man could be at the heart of the godless conspiracy that so threatened the United States.

Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization resulted in the release of many of Stalin's enemies, an end to forced labor, and the curtailing of many of the secret police's activities. China felt that Khrushchev had "sold out" with his ideas of peaceful coexistence, and relations between the two countries worsened. China made it clear that there was no Communist unity. In 1957, Russia had agreed to help China build its own atomic bomb, but this pledge was retracted in 1959.

## **CUBA**

Fidel Castro was a lawyer who, in 1956, launched military attacks on the corrupt Batista government. His guerrilla base was well-hidden in the Sierra Maestra mountains in eastern Cuba. Batista used terror tactics to destroy the movement, executing perhaps 20,000 people over the next two years. The final offensive, which decided the future of Cuba, took place in 1958; Castro had a major success against Batista's troops. On January 1, 1959, Castro and his lieutenant, Che Guevara, reentered Havana; Castro took power. The United States, which had supported the Batista regime and Cuban big-business interests, and which had trained and equipped Batista's army, shunned Castro. Although he asked for American aid, Castro was denied; he turned to the Soviets.

## **Final Frontiers**



In 1945, the Allied invasion of Germany brought to an end the activities at Peenemünde, the Nazi rocket development center. Many rocket scientists, led by Wernher von Braun, the man responsible for the V-2 design, fled west to the Allies; others were captured by the Soviets. The United States captured a great deal of intact equipment, including a huge stock of unused V-2s. Each V-2 was a liquid-fueled, 46'-tall, single-stage rocket. They weighed 12 tons and carried a 1-ton warhead up to 120 miles. The Germans had pursued rocket research *rather* than atomic research, and the V-2 was operational by 1942. On September 8, 1944, the first of many V-2s fell out of the sky at 3,600 miles per hour to land on London.

In the United States, research continued piecemeal across the country, divided among various branches of the armed services. In the USSR, a more centralized approach was taken to space research, and the effort was well-coordinated. It took a while for either side to make any significant progress, and even that was directed toward military objectives. The most important use that was seen for the new technology was to launch atomic warheads across the globe. Meanwhile, sounding rockets were investigating the upper reaches of the Earth's atmosphere with scientific instrument packages.

Then the Russians announced the launch of the world's first satellite. Sputnik was a tiny metal sphere of little scientific use, but it showed the world that the Soviet Union now possessed the capability to put an atomic warhead into orbit. Further Sputniks followed, proving that Russia had global striking power. The United States was thrown into panic; national pride had been hit hard, and criticism was leveled at the scientific community and the education system. The following year, after congressional hearings, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration was established to put a man into space. This organization, operating out of Cape Canaveral in Florida, brought together all the nation's space projects. The race for space supremacy had begun . . . a Space Race that meant national pride to some Americans, the progress of science to others, and, to some, the very survival of America.

The new effort to recapture the lost ground was also fueled by the twin needs to put spy satellites over Russia and to have the capability to retaliate against a Soviet ICBM attack. In 1958, four U.S. attempts to get Pioneer probes to the moon all failed. In the following year, Russia had more success with three Luna moon probes, the third of which took the first pictures of the moon's far side.

## **ROCKET INTO SPACE!**

If the GM restricts his universe to a purely historical simulation of the 1950s, he ignores a great potential. The possibility of space missions – and the expectations for space – began in the '50s, and it is not unreasonable for the PCs to get involved in a space shot. It is the feel and theme of the '50s that are important, not the attention to historical detail. The movies constantly depict startling new projects that will revolutionize society, but everything is experimental; just because the PCs fly to an asteroid in (say) 1951, doesn't mean that there'll be regular flights. When it's over it's over . . . for a few decades, anyway.

The space rocket designs below are meant to be used this way, as experimental prototypes. If a rationale is needed for this advanced rocket technology, assume that the Allies managed to salvage a working nuclear thermal rocket from the Nazi labs. V-2s were only suitable for long distances; the Americans still had to conduct research to develop sounding rockets and ICBMs. The Phoebus rocket (see p. 76) opens up space and allows rockets of tremendous size to reach other planets. It is these revolutionary missions which can involve the players. Alternately, the key to interplanetary rocketry could come, willingly or unwillingly, from one of the alien races detailed in Chapter 4.

The '50s glorified individual initiative. Many of the films of the era assumed that the revolutionary technological developments of the last half of the century, like space travel, would come, not from massive federally funded programs, but from brilliant engineers and inventors, privately doing research and using corporate sponsors to finance prototypes. Consequently, the campaign's first space shot might originate from a privately owned field somewhere in Iowa, not from an Air Force base or missile test site.

# SPACE HAZARDS

There will be a revolutionary flavor to space-exploration scenarios. Players will be responsible for details such as fuel, navigation, space suits, etc. The adventure will probably consist of overcoming the obstacles of the journey. Space hazards were popular in '50s movies; some were astronomical realities, while others were pure space opera. The GM can choose the hazards he wants or just roll for them. A longer journey will have more potential hazards.

## Rocket Damage

When a '50s rocket suffers damage, roll 2d on the following table. Apply a +1 modifier if it is a sounding rocket, and -1 if it is a large multi-stage or Phoebus rocket. Also, add +1 for each previous damage roll suffered.

Roll	Effect
2-4	No effect.
5-7	Fuel leak. Roll against Mathematics -2 to calculate new course; add 10 percent to flight time.
8	Serious fuel leak. Roll against Astrogation skill to calculate new course. Lose half of present payload weight.
9	Controls damaged. Roll against Piloting skill or treat as Fuel leak, above.
10-11	Cabin hit. Decompression. All crew must roll against Vacc Suit skill to get into space suits (or Vacc Suit +4 to put on helmet) or suffocate per the rules on p. B122.
12	Motors destroyed. No acceleration or deceleration; the ship keeps going, on and on . . .

## Hazards

**Comet:** A dark comet must be avoided; roll vs. Piloting -2 and Astrogation +3 or fly through the halo or tail, doing damage. May produce bizarre radiation effects!

**Gravity Anomaly:** The vessel encounters an area of high-gravity space which pulls it off course. Treat as a fuel leak, though with no damage to the ship.

**Magnetic Storm:** Solar flares or planetary magnetic fields inhibit communications and cause radar interference (-1 on the next Piloting roll). On an 8 or less on 3d, instrument packages are damaged.

**Meteor Shower:** Micrometeorites pepper the hull of the craft and can cause serious damage (GM's option).

**Radiation Cloud:** Geiger counters go crazy; the ship suffers no damage, but the crew members suffer 3d×10 rads each.

## Types of Rocket

**Sounding Rocket:** Rocket engineers will find it fairly easy to build their own sounding rockets. These are usually single-stage light rockets that reach into the upper levels of the atmosphere to collect data. A sounding rocket takes two months to design and build, and must also have an *instrument package* (see below). The package is returned by parachute when the mission is over. The designer needs Engineer/TL7 (Rockets).

**Single-Stage:** Small single-stage rockets have chemical rockets burning liquid hydrogen (LH) and liquid oxygen (LOX), similar to the historical Atlas, Titan, and SS-5. Such a rocket can reach orbit and takes six months to develop. A single-stage rocket with a Phoebus motor takes twice as long to develop and is capable of reaching the Moon, landing with retrorockets and returning using the main engines. The Phoebus rocket has two floors near the nose, one for the crew quarters (capacity six) and one for the control room. Hatches connect these floors with the radar, gyros, and other electronics in the nose cone and the motors under the living deck. The airlock on the crew deck leads outside, and a telescopic ladder extends down to the ground. The designer needs Engineer/TL7 (Rockets) (roll at -1).

**Multi-Stage:** Multi-stage chemical rockets are similar to the Saturn V; they are capable of sending three men to the moon and returning them in the last stage of the rocket. The designer needs Engineer/TL7 (Rockets) (roll at -3) and 12 months of development time. A multi-stage Phoebus rocket is *big*. The crew compartments will be in the nose section that returns, and there may be several crew or equipment decks. With interconnecting hatches and rooms on each deck, such a craft can easily accommodate a "creature on board" scenario. In addition there will usually be a couple of airlocks. Phoebus rockets take twice as long to develop and are capable of flights to any of the other eight planets.

**Horizontal Launch:** This design replaces the launch stage with a rocket booster mounted on a long rail. The booster launches the rocket along the rail and into orbit. Wings provide additional lift. The rocket booster usually flies back to the launch site as the rocket continues with the mission. A horizontal launch requires fewer engines and less fuel; hence, the rocket can carry more cargo or crew. The development time is four months; the designer needs any TL7 Engineer skill (roll at -3). An Engineer/TL7 (Rockets) with skill 14 or more must design the boosters, or the project suffers a further -3 penalty.

**Instrument Package:** This collection of scientific instruments includes an ion chamber to detect UV radiation, a cosmic ray counter, photographic equipment, spectrum analysis prisms, and a battery pack. Thermosister strips measure the outside temperature, and a gauge measures cumulative erosion on the spacecraft's skin. It can include telemetry coding systems to transmit the information as radio waves; more usually, the package falls to Earth on a parachute. An instrument package takes one month to build and can be fitted to any spacecraft. The designer needs Electronics/TL7 (Sensors).

## Building Rockets

Realistically, the construction of these rockets requires a considerable sum of money, a piece of wilderness or an island, and the active cooperation of several thousand trained engineers and their support staff. Whether the GM wishes to enforce such pragmatic limitations, or simply let a brilliant PC build the thing in his garage, depends on the style of game desired. Failure to make the development roll indicates an unforeseen problem; the development time is doubled, and the GM assigns a penalty of -1 when the player rerolls for development. If too many rolls are failed, the project drags on and

on, and its complexity increases. Trying to halve the development time incurs a penalty of -4.

The rocket will also need fuel. Preparing the proper mix of LH and LOX for a chemical rocket requires a Chemistry/TL7 roll. Phoebus motors require a successful Nuclear Physics/TL7 roll for the proper mix of nuclear material. For Phoebus only, add +1 if three or more nuclear physicists are involved, and +2 if 50% longer is taken to build the rocket.

Course calculations take a variable time, depending on the destination: one week for an orbit; one month for the moon; two months for Venus, Mars, or the asteroids; and four months for anywhere else. Computation depends on a Mathematics skill roll (Astrogation is not yet available) at -2, with a +2 bonus if Computer Programming 12 or better (and, of course, a computer) is available, a +2 if the calculation time is doubled, and +1 if six or more mathematicians are involved. The GM should roll the dice, telling the player the result only if he is totally certain of success or of failure. A failure indicates problems in-flight, requiring a Piloting (Rockets) roll to correct the problem. The amount by which the Mathematics roll failed is used as a penalty to the Piloting roll. A Piloting failure leads to a crash, running out of fuel, an orbit decay, loss of control, or any other crisis the GM can come up with. The ship needs rescue, fast!

### *Historical Rocket Designs*

**A-10:** This V-2 project did not reach the test stage, but was seriously considered by the Nazis for a rocket attack on the American mainland! The A-10 rocket was a two-stage design with dart-like wings. It carried the smaller A-9, a delta-winged rocket, on its back. In a series of aerodynamic “skips” the A-9 would reach the far side of the globe and begin a protracted glide to its target. If launched from western France, the A-9/A-10 combination might have been able to reach the USA, but its combat value would have been limited; its one-ton warhead was hardly bigger than that of a V-2!

Wernher von Braun secretly constructed an experimental V-2 without a warhead. Instead, it had a cockpit for a crewman, perhaps for high-altitude research or even a flight into space. When the Gestapo toured Peenemünde, it was kept well hidden. Would further research have resulted in the first man in space being a Nazi officer?

**Redstone:** Developed from the V-2 rocket, the Redstone was used starting in 1956 as a test launcher, and launched the first Mercury capsules into space in the early '60s.

**Atlas:** This was the largest rocket built and flown in '50s America. It took to the air in '58 from Cape Canaveral and was the nation's first ICBM design. Fueling it before launch took a great deal of time, making it impractical for military use.

**X-Planes:** The German Luftwaffe carried out tests with rocket-powered planes, but had no astounding successes. The designs which the Allies encountered over Germany, and later recovered, were short-duration, high-speed interceptors, prone to malfunction and dangerous to fly. The tiny Komet and Natter were typical. The Americans' first rocket plane, the Bell X-1, flew in 1946 after being “air launched” from a B-29. In 1947 the X-1 first broke the “sound barrier” (760 miles per hour) in the hands of Chuck Yeager. A series of rocket-powered X-planes followed, all flown from Edwards Air Force Base. These projects tested the limits of men and materials at phenomenal heights, speeds, and temperatures. The X-2 flew at Mach 3; the X-3 was built of titanium to test supersonic temperatures; the X-4 was called the Bantam and used a new swept-wing, tailless design; and the X-5

was based on a Nazi swing-wing design. The GM should feel free to bring '60s projects into the '50s for PCs to work on or investigate. These rocket planes entered space and glided back, or were launched on top of rockets.

## **UFO TECHNOLOGY**

If crashed flying saucers were analyzed by scientists, new technologies would be incorporated into American military projects. Stealth technology derived from the radar-invisible qualities of UFOs. The 1977 development of the stealth fighter, code-named Project Senior Trend, used facet technology to deflect radar beams. This technology was almost immediately superseded by RAM (radar-absorbent material). An aluminum airframe was coated with RAM and overlaid with a ferrite-based “iron-ball” paint. This led to electrical bonding of structural elements. Used on the B-2 Stealth Bomber, this technique could have come from a dismembered scout ship at Wright-Patterson or Edwards AFB.

Analysis of flying saucer weapon systems could have led to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program of the late '80s. Lasers originated at the start of the '60s; more recent research into particle beam weapons could have derived from the study of alien disrupters or blasters.

In *Atomic Horror*, these research projects have already started. White Sands Missile Range is the Navy's experimental laser facility; the Loi Alliance may want to sabotage this development. The KGB may try to compromise some of the staff and steal information from the Los Alamos National Laboratories.

Other possible “stolen” technologies could be fusion, taken from a UFO power plant; optical computing; and heat-resistant tiles for reusable spacecraft.



*Nova:* Project Nova was NASA's answer to the huge multi-engined rockets that launched the Sputniks. The super-rocket was canceled in 1961, before it ever flew, because of fuel problems. The monster stood 500' high and was 70' across at the base. Its 20 engines generated more than 6 million pounds of thrust. Its fuel was a traditional mixture of liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen, but the best pumps available could only pump 2,500 gallons per minute, which was not fast enough to supply the engines. Engineers calculated that a one-hour launch delay would cost \$500,000 in evaporated fuel. Perhaps a PC scientist could solve this problem, setting the stage for some amazing missions to other worlds (see *Multi-Stage Rocket*, p. 74).

*Phoebus:* Phoebus was one stage in the Kiwi project (later developed as the NERVA rocket) that began in the late '50s. Phoebus is a nuclear thermal rocket, an idea first tested in 1959. The GM can introduce Phoebus much earlier, especially if he intends to run missions to the planets. Some of the fictional rocket designs on p. 74 assume that the Phoebus rocket is working by 1950. The historical rocket was never tested off the ground, but it embodies the '50s fascination with atomic power. A nuclear reactor provides controlled heat which vaporizes a liquid fuel (probably liquid hydrogen); this vapor provides thrust. Once the engine was in space, it would be far more efficient than a conventional chemical rocket.

### Top Secret Prototypes

If the scenario calls for a highly secret research project, then the list below will be useful. Perhaps the Loi intend to sabotage the project, or the Metarans plan to take it over, or the plans are the bait for spies.

*Aerocenter Belphegor:* This was a French very-high-altitude research plane. The pilot sat in the cockpit; the rest of the crew sat in the bulbous fuselage. A late-'40s propeller design.

*Avro Canada VZ-9V:* There was extensive research into vertical takeoff and landing in the '50s. The VZ-9V was a peculiar machine designed to test the Coanda Effect. Known as the Avrocar, its fuselage was a huge silver saucer; two crewmen sat in separate bubble-like canopies on the upper surface. A ring of three turbojets within the body trapped air to provide lift; rearward deflection of the jets gave forward thrust. The saucer was a perfect aerodynamic shape. Unfortunately, it could only achieve an estimated 300 miles per hour. Its first official flight took place in 1961.

*Convair NB-36H:* This modified B-36 bomber first flew in 1955 – with an operating nuclear reactor on board! The airplane was a test bed for a series of X-6 planes (again, modified B-36s) that would have had General Electric P-1 nuclear turbojets as standard. No X-6s were ever completed.

*Convair XB-58:* The prototype of this amazing machine flew in 1956. It was a three-seat supersonic bomber capable of Mach 2. It utilized the new concept of the delta wing as well as several other technical innovations. The XB-58 (later named "Hustler") had a stainless-steel honeycomb-sandwich body and was the first aircraft ever to use stellar-inertial navigation. Its four engines were mounted beneath the delta wing.

*Doak VZ-4DA:* The VZ-4DA was involved in VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) research at Edwards AFB in 1958. It was a single-seat monoplane with wing-tip ducted

propellers that were capable of rotating for vertical or horizontal flight. This idea was fully developed in the '60s.

*XHGM-25 Titan Project:* Developed in the late '50s, the Titan ICBM replaced the disastrous Atlas ICBM project (although Atlas achieved success as a satellite launcher). Deployed in 1962, the XHGM-25 was designed to be launched from a hardened silo and to deliver a 9-megaton warhead to a Soviet target 9,300 miles away. It was capable of flying to one of three preselected targets.

*Hawker Aircraft P.1127:* Another attempt at vertical take-off, this time by the British, the P.1127 was built to test the revolutionary Bristol-Siddeley 53 vectored-thrust turbofan engine (later named the Kestrel). It had rotating outlet nozzles, for either vertical or horizontal flight. Rebuilt in the '60s as the single-seat Harrier attack aircraft, the P.1127 was a brilliant technological demonstration that impressed the U.S. Marines. Further prototypes may be in America for evaluation.

*Lockheed XF-104:* Sometimes derided as a "manned missile," the XF-104 was a super-streamlined prototype fighter with barely any wing. The high-speed jet, later named Starfighter, embodied the Space Age in every way. With its sleek, chromed exterior and a long, rocket-like body tapering to a pointed nose cone, the XF-104 looked like it could go to Mars. It featured a new downward-firing ejector seat and entered service in 1958.

*Mikoyan MiG E-5:* Later developed as the MiG-21, this was a prototype delta-wing, Mach-2 jet fighter. It was capable of very high performance and greatly impressed the West.

*XMIM-23 HAWK:* Standing for Homing All the Way Killer, the XMIM-23 HAWK is an experimental surface-to-air missile (SAM) for air defense. It was tested in 1956 and built by the Raytheon Company, reaching the Air Force in 1960. It was deployed on a two-wheeled towed carriage.

*Projekt Saucer:* Projekt Saucer was alleged to be a Nazi program to construct a flying saucer. Reports in '50s German newspapers named Rudolf Schriever, who exposed the project, as one of its designers. The saucer was test-flown in 1942; by 1944, it had been fitted with advanced jets at the BMW plant near Prague. This flying disc had a wide surface which rotated around a fixed cockpit. This 42-yard ring was formed of adjustable wing discs. The saucer was supposedly capable of VTOL, speeds of up to 1,250 mph, and a ceiling of 40,000 feet! Further tests were canceled in 1945 when the Allies crossed into Germany. The papers were burned or stolen and the machine was purposely destroyed. Perhaps the United States secretly restarted the project with advanced Nazi engine designs. The Air Force could be preparing for a test flight to the moon or Mars!

*SS-5 IRBM:* This was a Russian single-stage intermediate-range ballistic missile built by the Korolev Design Bureau. It had a range of 2,500 miles and a 1.2-megaton warhead. The SS-5 launched from silos or launch pads and entered service in 1961. A variant, the C-1, was planned early on; it would have been a flexible intermediate launch vehicle, capable of launching warheads – or up to eight satellites at a time!

*Tupolev Tu-22:* This was a Soviet project to design and build a long-range supersonic reconnaissance bomber. It had a three-man crew and was developed in 1960.

## THE BRINY DEEP

The Earth's surface is 70% water; a great deal of exploration remains. It is a frontier, as unknown as space, requiring just as much technical expertise to penetrate. Resources of minerals and food lie unexploited within Earth's 316 million cubic miles of water. If Mt. Everest were placed on the deepest seabed, there would still be one and a half miles of water above it!

Scientists are eager to penetrate the black depths; in 1934, Beebe and Barton made a record-breaking descent down to 3,028' in a steel bathysphere. In the '50s, the exploration of the oceans was pioneered by three men: Jacques Cousteau, Auguste Piccard, and Auguste's son, Jacques. The Piccards built a free-floating dive vessel (or bathyscaph) called *Trieste*; in 1954, it descended to 3,540' in the Bay of Naples, 10,300' in the Tyrrhenian Sea, and 23,000' off Guam. Many other dives followed, and *Trieste* was bought by the U.S. Office of Naval Research. The deepest dive came in 1960, into the Challenger Deep, 36,198' down the Marianas Trench. This was the deepest known point in the ocean; lying southwest of Guam, it was discovered in 1951 by *HMS Challenger II*.

Jacques Cousteau developed the Aqualung in WWII France. Earlier pure-oxygen diving lungs were dangerous and limited to 40'. The Aqualung could be used safely down to 200', where the "Rapture of the Deep" (nitrogen narcosis) prevented further safe descent. Compressed-air tanks are usable down to about 100'; deeper dives use a helium/oxygen mix to avoid the bends.

For more information on diving technology and rules, see *GURPS Atlantis*.

In 1949, Cousteau was put in command of the oceanographic research ship *Calypso*. In 1952, it began an extended series of voyages in the Mediterranean and carried out tests of an underwater television system. GMs could bring Cousteau's 1960s experiments with underwater habitats into the game a few years early. Based in the Red Sea, *Conshelf I* and *II* were seabed "houses" that were used by several divers at a time. Both were about 35' down and were entered through an open hatch in the floor. Air pressure kept water out, so there was no need for an airlock. *Conshelf III* was a more advanced project – the steel cylinders were at 330' and the divers breathed a helium/oxygen mix. Divers should remember the need for decompression!



## USS PROMETHEUS

Interest in nuclear-powered submarines was high in the '50s, because they need not surface to recharge batteries. The U.S. Navy had the AEC design reactors for their subs.

*USS Prometheus* is a fictional oceanographic submarine operated by U.S. Naval Research after 1954. It was not built for combat, but might see service during a crisis. *Prometheus* tests a new kind of reactor; exploration of the sea depths is its primary mission. It is one of a kind, a test site for equipment that will not be commonly available for decades. Its primary berth is at Long Beach, California.

It has a Westinghouse natural-circulation S5G reactor. It can reach 18 knots submerged and 30 on the surface. It displaces 4,000 tons and is 250' long. *Prometheus* normally dives to about 2,000', but can reach 3,500' for short periods. It uses radar on the surface and sonar while running submerged. For research purposes, its sensor array in the bow includes cameras (with searchlights); Geiger counters; and pressure, temperature, magnetic, and chemical sensors. The experimental titanium hull houses 110 crewmen and contains 4 torpedo tubes. The crew complement includes 20 scientists. It has an on-board lab (fitted out before each mission) and a recreation room. In the submarine's control room is a monitoring station big enough for four scientists.

The commander is Captain Christopher Stanford, son of a well-respected senator. He loves his command and is fascinated by the sea. Stanford is sometimes at odds with more militaristic factions in the Navy, who see *Prometheus* as a waste of time and resources. Typical missions include polar surveys, geological surveys (of volcanic activity on the ocean floor), cartography, biological surveys (of deep zones of the ocean), or participating in scientific projects with other vessels. These might involve recovery of a space capsule (or UFO!), analysis of strange radiations, or resupply of a seabed research station.

*Prometheus* could form the basis of a campaign similar to the television series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* or *seaQuest DSV*, or just as a one-shot scenario idea. Perhaps in 1957, the International Geophysical Year, an international team of scientists is allowed on board. Murder, sabotage, and deception could follow.

The United States' nuclear submarine *Nautilus* sailed beneath the North Polar ice pack in 1958, having navigated the Northwest Passage from the Pacific to the North Atlantic. *Nautilus* was the first of several revolutionary nuclear-powered submarines built in the mid-'50s.

## TOP SECRET BASES

The U.S. government has many important installations across the country. Some of these are of interest to the investigators, since they house research facilities, test sites, and secret examination hangars for UFOs.

## Cape Canaveral

The Cape is a rocket test and launch facility in Florida. Later made famous by the Mercury, Apollo, and Space Shuttle flights, the Army made slow progress in the '50s. The site is still quite small and launch pads are modest affairs, used mostly to launch V-2s. Any fictional rockets to make it off the drawing board may be launched from Cape Canaveral.

## Edwards AFB

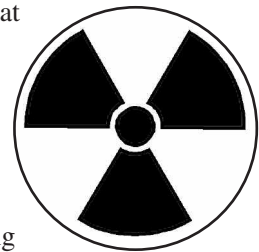
This huge air base in the Mojave Desert is a test center for an amazing variety of aircraft. The National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics is based here, and the "X" planes were all tested at Edwards. New concepts, designs, and propulsion systems will almost always be test-flown from this base. It is named after a test pilot who died when he lost control of the flying-wing bomber. Most of the streets are named after pilots killed in the line of duty.

## Fort Streeter

This Army facility is alleged to be a huge base with extensive underground facilities. Located in (and under) San Francisco, it served as the U.S. Pacific Command Bunker until it was decommissioned in 1946. During the war years it was known as Kirby Hall; its warren of rooms, vaults, and dorms extends 31 stories below California!

Streeter is a secret installation that is home to Majestic Twelve's main research labs. While the administrators communicate with the President and his staff in Washington, the real work of MJ-12 is done here. There are cold rooms, decontamination areas, and vaults containing alien artifacts, corpses, and knowledge.

(For more information on MJ-12, see pp. WT68-71 and pp. Y43-44 and Y101.)



## White Sands Missile Range

Extensive facilities here indicate the range's importance. The first A-bomb detonated at White Sands, the home of Project Manhattan during World War II. In the '50s, it is the test site for other weapon systems. Rockets, new bombs, lasers or sonic guns, and any radical new technology will be tested here. There are numerous observation bunkers and trenches.

## Wright-Patterson AFB

In UFO lore, this air base is famous for two things. It was the home of Project Sign, established to investigate UFOs; Projects Grudge and Blue Book were also based here. Second, when rumors of crashed flying saucers have circulated, they have said that the saucers were stored at Wright-Patterson. If MJ-12 is the only government organization studying UFOs, then this cannot be the case. Blue Book was the civilian face of UFO research, designed to keep the public guessing; even the staff was unaware of the *real* truth. Any UFOs captured by the military are analyzed in a secret part of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. This tallies with the account of Eisenhower's visit there to see alien corpses.



# Technology in the '50s

The frantic research programs of the World War II combatants produced some startling innovations in science and technology. A whole new era in scientific progress began in the shadow of war in the late '30s, and the results affected all walks of life by the '50s. Specific technological advances included the invention of jet engines, the atom bomb, the helicopter, and the computer, and refinements to radar. A few of these innovations are described below.

## ATOMIC POWER

The blinding flash and unmistakable mushroom cloud of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked the end of World War II . . . and the beginning of a new age. Along with the danger of global destruction came the opportunity to harness atomic energy peacefully.

Although Japan's defeat made the military advantages of atomic power clear, its civilian uses were less obvious. Some writers imagined atomic planes circling the globe without refueling, atomic liners crossing the oceans at fantastic speeds, and the eradication of all major diseases. Eventually, some predicted, the atom would save more lives in the hospital than it took at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These dreams were exciting, but to realize them, engineers had to overcome difficult problems. Among these was the serious hurdle of radioactive contamination. In 1945, when scientists watched the first test of the atom bomb in New Mexico, and when the two bombs were dropped on Japan, no one expected the effects that followed. The bomb was expected to produce a high level of radiation in the initial blast, but was otherwise considered just an immensely powerful "clean" weapon. When scientists heard about a mystery disease following Hiroshima and Nagasaki they dismissed the reports as fabrication and propaganda. Perhaps the greatest shadow cast over '50s science was the pollution study published in 1952 that showed that the H-bomb *was* harmful to the Earth's environment.

The nuclear reactor that was the goal of American scientists was planned and built around a fission pile. After five

years of work, the Russians built the world's first reactor to generate electricity in 1954. Britain followed with a gas-cooled reactor at Calder Hall in 1956, and the United States commissioned a water-cooled reactor in 1957 at Shippingport, Pennsylvania.

In 1947, the World Power Conference heard of a "breeding" process, whereby plutonium-239 enriches uranium-238 to create more plutonium. The cheap power source looked even cheaper. But serious problems of radioactive waste disposal soon arose; in the '50s this waste was usually buried in sealed drums (where it could easily seep out and cause strange mutations in the surrounding flora, fauna, and populace).

By the start of 1946, Oak Ridge Laboratories in Tennessee was producing radioactive isotopes for industrial, scientific, and medical applications. New medical treatments were developed using the latest isotopes: radioactive iodine for thyroid problems, radioactive phosphorus for leukemia, and cobalt-40 for other cancers. Atomic power seemed ready to revolutionize the entire world; the ultimate dream was the *atomic city*. This settlement would be built around a nuclear reactor which would provide electricity, sterilize the water supply, convert waste to useful materials, and run the sanitation system. The atom would be used to create "cold light," to pasteurize and preserve food, and to manipulate the genetic makeup of plants and animals. In this nuclear utopia, unlimited electricity meant complete automation and the institution of a three- or four-hour working day!

Unsurprisingly, the political arenas of the

postwar period focused on the uses of atomic energy. The Atomic Age could be one of progress and achievement . . . or irradiated wastelands and corpse-filled ruins. Scientists at Alamogordo, where the first American bomb was tested, were already worried about the implications of their work in other hands.

## RADIATION

This discussion of radiation and its effects is sketchy at best; for a more detailed (and chillingly realistic!) system, see pp. CII145-148.

Radiation exposure is measured in *rads*. The more rads you take, the more likely you are to suffer ill effects. Record the total amount of radiation and the date. A quick dose of radiation (from a bomb, for instance) is simply measured in rads. Background radiation (from a solar flare, perhaps, or fallout) is measured in rads per hour. If the background radiation is 5 rads/hour and you stay out for 6 hours, you accumulate a 30-rad dose.

### Fallout

Small radioactive particles, such as those produced by a ground-burst explosion, descend to earth as fallout. If you swallow or breathe fallout particles, you will get a continuing radiation dose from *inside*. Intensity of the dose, and time for the fallout particles to decay to harmlessness, depends entirely on the situation. But it's always unhealthy!

### Protection from Radiation

Any material between you and the radiation source will help cut down on radiation. The thicker and denser the material, the better the protection factor (PF). A foot of earth has a PF of 8. (Two feet of earth give a PF of 8x8, or 64, and so on.) A foot of concrete has a PF of 18. Spacecraft hulls have a PF of 8. Vacc suits can have a thin layer of metal which gives a PF of 2 against gamma radiation.

There are radiation drugs available that can halve the effective rad exposure if a dose (\$100) is taken 1 to 3 days in advance. *Chelating* drugs are also available to flush radioactive fallout out of one's system; a \$100 dose will halve damage after a week and eliminate the fallout entirely after two weeks. This does not affect radiation previously absorbed!

## COMPUTERS

Although primitive computers were used during World War II to decode enemy messages, the first *electronic* computer was built in 1946 at the University of Pennsylvania. Its inventors, J.P. Eckert and J.W. Mauchy, began constructing it to calculate gunnery tables for the U.S. Army. The computer was not complete until after the war, though, when it was given the title of ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator). This monster had 18,000 vacuum tubes and covered 1,600 square feet of floor space.

UNIVAC (UNIVersal Automatic Computer), the world's first business computer, became available in 1950. It was designed to speed the calculation of census returns and won international fame when it correctly predicted the outcome of the presidential election on live TV in 1952.

Words like *hardware* and *software* became part of computing terminology in the '50s. Worse, the sophistication of the hardware began to outrun software development. Calculations were being made faster than the punched card media could supply data to the machine. UNIVAC introduced magnetic-tape data storage, which significantly improved the speed and efficiency of computing.

By the middle of the decade, large companies all over America were showing interest in giant computers. The manufacturers realized how much manpower they would save, and how much faster they could carry out repetitive calculations. In *GURPS Atomic Horror*, a computer usually has an acronymic name and a small team of dedicated operators; it probably occupies a whole building. The office staff distrusts the computer, because they see their jobs threatened by a "machine."

### Artificial Intelligence

In the early days of computing, a thinking, self-aware supercomputer was both a fear and a dream. Social commentators foresaw the emergence of an artificial brain that would be faster and more efficient than man's, thereby making him obsolete. Others, mostly those engaged in computer research, were enthralled by the prospects of artificial intelligence (AI). GMs can pit these two views against each other in scenarios involving AI.

There are plenty of modern stories featuring rogue computers that can be rewritten and set in the '50s. Without a modem to connect it to the outside world, an AI will be isolated. It will be able to control all the devices in its installation and communicate via radio to robots, or via teletype to other installations. Possible (fictional) AIs of the decade might include:

*Cyclops*: Based at Cooke AFB (later known as Vandenburg), north of Los Angeles, Cyclops computes attack and defense strategies for the West Coast and the Pacific theater (see pp. 118-119). It organizes maneuvers, wargames, and simulations. The computer is a military expert. For spice, it might become a pacifist. Or aliens might contact it and tap its data banks. On the other hand, Cyclops might be able to help the PCs stop an alien invasion by assessing tactics and calculating counter-tactics.

*FELON*: The Federal ELectrONic Numerator is a crime computer at the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. It might become a party to crimes, paying criminals to do its work. Or, it could even defect to the Communist cause, helping them penetrate new targets and cover their tracks.

*NATAC*: The NATional Atomic Computer, run by the Atomic Energy Commission to help design, build, and monitor reactors and bombs, could learn to build its own designs. NATAC might make errors and build unstable reactors, or it might be contacted by aliens who provide information for building a safe fusion reactor, causing uproar and espionage.

## LAND TRAVEL

There were no major developments in overland travel. Electric and diesel locomotives ruled the rails, while automobiles were getting bigger and more luxurious. Size and ostentation were important; the industry became as style-conscious as the fashion world. Designs changed every year to increase sales, and an affluent family had the largest and most up-to-date car on the market; mechanical design came second to body styling and the image of the vehicle.

The P-38 Lightning airplane was the inspiration for General Motors' Cadillac division, and the imminent arrival of the Space Race heavily influenced cars' appearances. New designs oozed futuristic styling; rocket-like elements covered the body, as nose cones, rocket nozzles, fins, and complex light clusters multiplied. As the '50s progressed, cars got wider, longer, lower, and chromier. New styles and evolving body forms hit the market to keep the initial sales up. Built-in obsolescence became a reality, combined with "extreme design features" that were intended to date the car quickly, ensuring further sales. This idea was taken too far by the infamous Edsel; it was an immediate flop, even though it incorporated every fad going. By the mid-'50s, streamlining was all-important. Cadillac described their products as "graceful bulk," and they led the field in huge cars with fins, wide grilles, and chromed *everything*. The famous designer Raymond Loewy called these creations "jukeboxes on wheels."

To cope with these cars, the government instituted extravagant highway building projects, motels sprang up across America, and multi-story parking garages began to appear. Small cars were popular in Europe, hit by expensive gasoline and the inability to build highways so soon after the war, but no one in America wanted them. Whale-like cars were symbolic of waste, wealth, luxury, and flamboyance – all considered very good things. The '50s gave birth to a new auto culture that had special appeal for the young. This drive-in society had restaurants, movies, and banks that could be used without stepping out of the car. The drive-in diners were meeting places for teen-agers and gangs. Without a car a young man had no social life.

The Willys-Overland jeep, the workhorse vehicle of WWII, found civilian popularity as *the* vehicle for off-road work. For expeditions on the lonely, harsh roads of Alaska, adventurers may need the services of the U.S. Army's land train. Used for a short time in the '50s, these massive four-wheeled tractors pulled multiple trailers across the state to military installations. Each wheel stood 10 feet tall!

## AIR TRAVEL

When the Berlin Airlift took place in 1948-1949, the massive Allied effort was a *tour de force* for the new aircraft industry. American airplane manufacturers could offer airlines three long-range, high-capacity airliners immediately after the war: the Boeing Stratocruiser, the Douglas DC-4, and the Lockheed Constellation.

Jet propulsion was perhaps the major aeronautics development of World War II; both the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force had jet fighters in service in 1945. The first jet airliner, the De Havilland Comet, flew in 1949 and entered service on the London to Johannesburg route. Two unexplained crashes in 1952 resulted in investigations which kept the plane on the ground until 1958. That year it was recommissioned by BOAC to begin the first transatlantic service, beating TWA's Boeing 707 by a matter of days. The DC-8 came into service in the same year.

Experiments with helicopters in the war resulted in battlefield versions used in Korea and Algeria. They were able to transport troops to places without airstrips and to evacuate casualties. The death rate from wounds in the Korean War was the lowest in military history, because the wounded could be taken to a field hospital almost immediately. Armed with unguided rockets and machine guns, the helicopter could also provide battlefield support unrivaled in the previous war.

Perhaps the greatest amount of military research went into bomber technology. This was the new delivery system of the atomic bomb, the weapon to end all wars. Designers worked to increase speed and range; until new designs emerged, the Air Force continued using the B-29s that had bombed Japan and that would see service in Korea. It is quite possible that Truman's decision to send a force of nuclear-capable B-29s to Britain during the Berlin Airlift prevented Stalin from sending tanks into West Berlin.

Even more devastating weapons-delivery systems were on the drawing board. The Convair B-36 flew with the Air Force in 1948, and was designed to bomb Germany from America if Britain was invaded! In the late '40s it was the longest-range airplane in the world, but it belonged to a different age with its six turrets, 15 crewmembers and six-piston engines.

The backbone of the Strategic Air Command's bomber force in the '50s was the revolutionary B-47. First flown in 1947, the B-47 was years ahead of its time, with swept wings, jet engines, radar-guided tailguns, and a crew of only three! The immense B-52, intended to eventually replace it, entered service with SAC in 1956. The B-52 had the striking power to drop several nuclear bombs on an enemy city on the other side of the globe.

To counter the bombers, jet fighters took to the skies in great numbers; the first jet-versus-jet dogfights took place over Korea. It was a new and deadlier form of air combat. Most major powers had first-generation jet fighters in their arsenals by 1950, and the world speed record was broken and rebroken as faster planes came on to the scene. Fighters became even deadlier in the late '50s, when radar-guided and heat-seeking missiles began to replace the old-fashioned cannon and unguided rockets.

## PRODUCTS OF THE DECADE

1945: Contact lens, microwave oven, nylon sail, Tupperware, zoom lens.

1946: Bikini swimsuit, electric car window, electric computer (ENIAC), espresso coffee machine, vinyl records.

1947: Land Rover, motor boat (gas turbine), radiocarbon dating (University of Chicago).

1948: Atomic clock, McDonald's hamburgers, LP record, electric guitar (Fender Broadcaster), soluble aspirin, Velcro.

1949: Color TV, key ignition (Chrysler), magnetizable ferrite computer cores, amplifiers.

1950: Diner's Club credit card, Xerox copier.

1951: Experimental Breeder Reactor No. 1 (Idaho), gas turbine helicopter (S.O. 1120 Ariel III), power steering, transistor.

1952: Artificial heart valve, electronic calculator, FM car radio, hearing aid, mass-produced computer (UNIVAC).

1953: Commercial hydrofoil, heart-lung machine, computer print-out, pressure cooker.

1954: Color TV broadcasts, synthesizer, solar battery, transistor radio.

1955: Electric kettle, felt-tip marker, fiber optics, Lego blocks, stereophonic tape recording, tilt-rotor plane (Bell XV-3).

1956: Letraset, videotape.

1957: Endoscope, Fortran (IBM), Interferon, pacemaker, RAM magnetic computer disks, tilt-wing plane (Vertol Model 76 VZ-2A), Sputnik.

1958: ALGOL, communications satellite (SCORE), geodesic dome (by R. Buckminster Fuller), laser, stereo records, echo sounder.

1959: high energy particle accelerator (CERN, Geneva), chess computer program, COBOL, computer-controlled chemical plant (ICI), computer-controlled refinery (Port Arthur plant, Texaco Oil), Identikit, microwave radio, car seat-belt, Ski-Doo snow scooter, transistor computer (IBM).

## Bombing Atomic Horrors

The main use for aircraft in a campaign is for air strikes against atomic horrors or their lairs. The Forward Observer skill is used to relay coordinates, via radio or field telephone, from the battlefield to the air base from which the bombers will leave. The GM should assume that bomber crews always drop their ordnance where they're told (unless a miss would serve to advance the plot . . .). It is up to the PCs on the ground to send the correct coordinates.

To get it right the first time, the forward observer must roll vs. Forward Observer or the default (see p. 23). Add +4 if the target is illuminated at night or marked with smoke by day, -2 if there is a strong wind, and -1 if there is low-level mist or fog.

## ATOMIC ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment business has never been a stranger to mystery and the bizarre – certainly not in the '50s! The player characters may uncover a ghostly secret society in Hollywood and Beverly Hills. Devoted to fame and the famous, it selects members, blackballs others, and generally gives the impression that its members are honest entertainers who have won popularity and audience ratings through talent and hard work. Actually, the audience is the herd, and the society, called Palaestra, wields massive power. There are no “shadowy figures”; everyone is famous! And they make sure their members are always working.

Writers, producers, agents, movie companies, and sponsors are all tools of Palaestra. Its actors can threaten to quit a movie, change agents, or generally raise hell unless the society gets its way. Now you know why it's so hard to make it into the business: *they* don't want you.

TV is not immune to dark conspiracy. This new toy of suburbia could be controlled by terrible forces (and not just the makers of game shows . . .) such as the Metarans or Arendians. With subliminal messages and telehypnotism, many trends in '50s society could be part of the invaders' plan. Feminism, teen-age rebellion, the nuclear family, vegetarianism, and Hula Hoops might all be interlocking phases of the conquest of Earth.

Rock 'n' roll, too, may be a social manipulation. The invaders have implanted secret subliminal messages in otherwise meaningless song lyrics. These force impressionable minds to commit acts of rebellion, such as taking drugs, burning draft cards, drinking, and despising authority. The End of Civilization can't be far behind . . .

Naturally, the PCs are going to have to ask someone to carry out the airstrike. In America that person will usually be the state governor, who controls the state Air National Guard, or the U.S. Secretary of Defense in Washington if front-line bombers are needed.

To borrow a couple of F-86 Sabres for half an hour, the group will need to ask for aid on the Reaction Table, p. B205. Use the following modifiers:

- 2 for use of live ammunition away from a bombing range.
- 1 if there is a danger to innocents.
- +2 if local police are working with PCs.
- +3 if PCs are federal agents.
- +4 if town or city threatened.

If it is an election year (GM's option), Poor or Bad results become Very Bad, while Good or Very Good results become Excellent.

If the Air Force won't get involved, perhaps the Army or National Guard will. Obviously, they won't be able to call in airstrikes, but they have formidable weapons of their own, including a wide variety of cannons. For rules on specific artillery pieces, refer to *GURPS High-Tech*.

## The Social Upheaval

The '50s was the decade of the teen-ager. After World War II, America experienced a “baby boom” that made children and young teens in the '50s more numerous and visible than ever before. Because they had money, leisure time, and no responsibilities, they became a force to be reckoned with. They adopted fashions radically different from those of their parents, spurning their values and attitudes. The rise of the affluent society provided part-time work for teen-agers. The five-day week and shorter working hours meant more leisure time and a need for their own places to go, away from adults. Drive-in diners, dance halls, movie theaters (indoor and drive-in), and jazz clubs supported the teen-age lifestyle. Probably most important of all, affordable cars (with big back seats) gave teens a mobile base of operations, almost completely immune to parental monitoring.

As their independence increased, so did their disaffection with society. Conflicts with parents and with authority in general were taken up by Hollywood idols like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* and Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*. Brando's film *The Wild One* depicted a motorcycle gang from the open road terrorizing a town. While Brando was the victorious rebel, Dean's characters were more enigmatic: victims, lonely, bitter, and misunderstood.

This rebelliousness resulted in an increase in street violence and vandalism, often perpetrated by youth gangs adopting their own dress, identity, and codes of honor. Teen-agers rebelled by wearing the unsophisticated jeans and T-shirts usually associated with manual laborers. Teens wanted a separate identity, different from their parents.

### Songs of Rebellion

The rebellion spread to music, and gained its own anthem: rock 'n' roll. By 1955, rock 'n' roll captured the essential anger and frustration of being a teen-ager in the '50s. It was instantly popular. Its elements had been around for a while; rock 'n' roll originated in the southern United States and combined black rhythm and blues with up-tempo country and western music. The first big hit on white radio was “Rock Around the Clock” by Bill Haley and the Comets (1955), popularized by its use in the movie *Blackboard Jungle*. “Rock Around the Clock” was then made into a film starring Bill Haley. The film was an international success. Teen-age audiences danced in theater aisles. In London in 1956, 2,000 youths rioted, supposedly incited by the movie.

Adults needed no convincing that rock 'n' roll was a bad influence that encouraged defiance and moral laxity – but their disapproval just made it more popular. The earliest singers were black artists like Little Richard and Chuck Berry, but white singers soon took over. Elvis Presley, one of the first, helped increase sales and popularize the music. His first record was “That's All Right Mama” in 1954, but his career took off in 1956 with “Heartbreak Hotel,” the same year Carl Perkins brought out “Blue Suede Shoes.” Elvis led the rock 'n' roll revolution; he epitomized what teen-agers loved and parents loathed. Famous for his sneer and pelvic movements, Elvis was only shown from the waist up on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, because his gyrating hips were “offensive.”

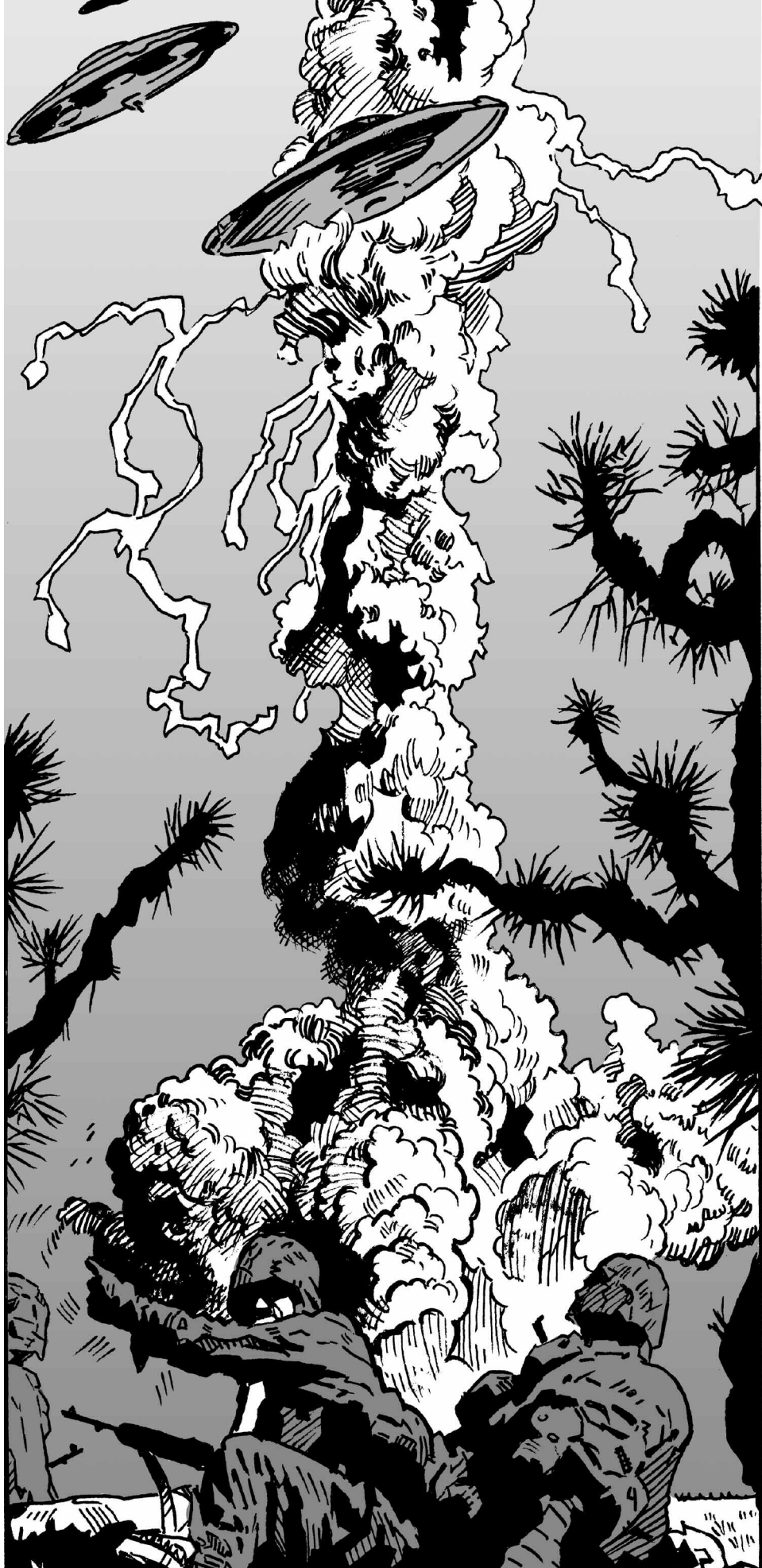
## Juvenile Delinquents

These trends terrified adult middle America. "Juvenile delinquency" became a buzzword second only to "Communist subversion" in its ability to provoke extreme reactions. Religious and community leaders across the country sponsored organized burnings of rock 'n' roll records. Violent and "antisocial" comic books came under attack both from the left (Dr. Fredrick Wertham's inflammatory psychosocial critique of comics, the notorious *Seduction of the Innocent*) and from the right (a Senate inquiry into the comic book industry led directly to the creation of the Comics Code Authority, a self-censoring body).

The paranoia also led to the creation of a counter-myth, the "all-American kid." This mythical suburban ideal of adolescence was respectful, well-groomed, and energetic. Boys were athletic and responsible; girls were perky, cute, and chaste. Sure, these kids had their own wacky music, dances, and lingo that were completely alien to adults, but that was just youthful high spirits. Teen-oriented movies of the time (and there were hundreds) were equally likely to buy into the myth of the "teen-age rebel," with the "squares" presented as either dull or intolerant, or to glorify the image of the "all-American kid," with the "juvenile delinquents" presented as dangerous and threatening criminals.

Rock 'n' roll was an integral part of the monster movies of the period, and many an earnest young star of a B-movie adventure found occasion, during the film, to strap on a guitar and serenade a roomful of gyrating teens.

The connection between the teen revolution and the B movies can't be overemphasized. Almost all the science-fiction films were targeted squarely at the hordes of teenage filmgoers, with their unheard-of free time and disposable income. Even films that didn't actually star teens (and there were plenty that did) were designed for teen-age tastes.





### *The Beat Generation*

The revolt was not confined to teens, however. There was a growing intellectual rebellion against the establishment. The nuclear stalemate was questioned, as were the Korean War, McCarthyism, and consumerism. An “underground” of social dissidents – writers, poets, and intellectuals – sprang up across America and Britain, supported by older teens and college students. Their Bible was Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*. The Beat Generation, as they called themselves, rejected the norms of society and announced they were “dropping out.” The press dubbed them beatniks (a thinly-disguised dig at their supposed Communist sympathies), and once described them as “white Negroes.” American suburbia disliked them because they rejected the work ethic, were into universal love, and smoked marijuana. Black clothing, glasses, and beards were typical for men; Beat women favored black stockings, short skirts, and duffel coats. These dropouts “dug groovy things, and flipped out when squares bugged them about earning bread, man.” British beatniks joined the newly organized CND and marched in regular demonstrations to Aldermaston, the home of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment.

Beat music was jazz, which gained even greater popularity in the ’50s. Although its roots were also in black music, this intellectual sound did not share the frenzy of rock ’n’ roll, which was largely the domain of blue-collar youth. Jazz always had a smaller audience, catering to suburbanites and students in small clubs. Some of the beatniks preferred the simpler pleasures of folk music to the sophisticated sounds of jazz, and their influence grew until they came to completely dominate the coffee-house culture in the early ’60s.

The shady, exotic, artistic milieu of the beatniks was irresistible to many B-movie directors, who explored this angst-

ridden subculture to give an otherwise-pedestrian monster film a touch of the exotic.

The expected sexual revolution took a long time to get started after the war. At the start of the decade, large families were fashionable; girls were dropping out of college and marriage had almost become a duty. The modern couple was marrying at a younger age, resulting in the baby boom. Birth rates soared – luckily for Dr. Benjamin Spock, child-care expert and hero of the suburban family.

The style queens of film like Ingrid Bergman, Deborah Kerr, and Katherine Hepburn were eclipsed in the late ’50s by busty women like Marilyn Monroe, Jane Russell, and Jayne Mansfield. These women had freedom and a will of their own. Blonde was in, and blonde bombshell Monroe became America’s most desirable woman.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the teen revolution, pre-adolescent children were also growing more important to American culture, thanks to the baby boom. Little girls discovered the hula hoop and the Barbie doll and turned them into American institutions. Little boys consumed violent, military toys, and were fascinated with entertainment genres like WWII adventures, westerns . . . and science fiction and horror.

## **MAJOR PERSONALITIES**

The GM can enhance the flavor of the ’50s by letting the protagonists have a passing encounter with a Very Important Person. Many are experts in their field of study who will work with PCs or ask them for help; others are politicians who may need to brief (or be briefed by) the heroes.

### *William Beebe (1877-1962)*

An American naturalist, explorer, and writer. He is an expert in marine zoology and diving techniques and created the bathysphere that explored the ocean depths in the ’30s. Beebe was the ornithological curator at the New York Zoological Society before he turned to his marine studies. Beebe is a gaunt man, balding with a fair-haired mustache.

### *Sir Winston Spencer Churchill (1874-1965)*

At the turn of the century, Churchill was an army officer and journalist, a hero of the Boer War. He entered Parliament in 1900 and opposed Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler in the ’30s. He became Prime Minister of Britain in 1940, and led the country to victory. A brilliant diplomat and leader, he opposed Stalin and Communism and invented the phrase “Iron Curtain.” He was re-elected as Prime Minister in 1951, and left politics in 1955 to write on history and current affairs. As Prime Minister, he may need to talk to PCs involved in an investigation dealing with the British Empire, Communism, NATO, or Nazi plots. He is fat and bald, with a preference for bow ties, bowler hats, and cigars. His deep, halting voice is distinctive. (For more information, see pp. WWii102-103.)

### *James Dean (1931-1955)*

More than any other individual, James Dean symbolized teen-age frustration. Born James Byron Dean in Marion, Indiana, “Jimmy” was raised from the age of 9 by an aunt and uncle on a farm. He studied theater for three years before

moving to New York to be a stage actor. In the early '50s, Dean took a few bit parts in minor motion pictures, and numerous roles on television. It was not until his role as a blackmailing Arab in a Broadway play called *The Immoralist* attracted attention that he was offered a Hollywood contract. His first major role was in *East of Eden*, followed by his starring role in *Rebel Without a Cause*, the legendary film that gave voice to the legions of misunderstood American teens. His third and final major role was in *Giant*, where he played a nonconformist ranch hand.

Before *Giant* was released, Dean was killed when his sports car went out of control near Paso Robles, California. His tragic death only heightened his status as an American icon. Local legend says that Dean's ghost haunts the stretch of highway where he was killed.

### *Albert Einstein (1879-1955)*

Possibly the most famous modern scientist. He proposed the Theory of Relativity that shook the scientific world in 1916. Einstein was born in Germany and went to school in Switzerland; he returned to Berlin to teach, but moved to Princeton when Hitler came to power. He was a frail man in the '50s, with white, wispy hair. Einstein was asked by Leo Szilard to tell President Roosevelt that the Nazis were close to producing an A-bomb. The result was the Manhattan Project. He joined other scientists in opposing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and became devoted to world peace in his last years.

Officials may ask Einstein to debrief the PCs after an unusual adventure, or he may be involved on the fringes of an experiment that goes wrong (like the Philadelphia Experiment). When investigators discover alien artifacts such as weapons, power plants, or even working UFOs, Einstein may be brought in to analyze them. He may also be asked by the government to provide assistance to the PCs in an investigation.

### *Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)*

Eisenhower was a West Point graduate who shot to fame as the Allied leader of the invasion of North Africa, Italy, and Europe. As the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, he displayed diplomacy, intelligence, and administrative skills that resulted in victory. He commanded the post-war U.S. forces and headed NATO in 1951. Eisenhower was elected president in 1952 and continued American help to Europe and Japan. The witch hunt for Communists was carried out during his administration, though without his approval. Re-elected in 1956, "Ike" traveled widely.

As America's great war hero, Eisenhower will be able to formulate strategies against alien invasions and atomic horrors. He won't be afraid of testing the military or trying new methods. If the threat is great enough, the PCs will find themselves at the White House talking to Ike. He is a friendly-faced, bald-headed man with an affable smile. Eisenhower is also a keen golfer.

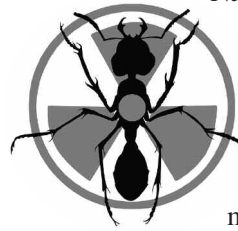
### *Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961)*

From 1953 until his death, Dag Hammarskjöld was the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He had been a mem-

ber of the Swedish government and a professor at Stockholm University before he joined the U.N. council. A skilled diplomat, Hammarskjöld may preside over U.N. efforts to deal with an alien menace. He will try to unite the world against an extraterrestrial threat; he may end up meeting an alien delegation after the PCs first discover the alien interest in Earth. The experts may have to talk to the U.N. Security Council through Hammarskjöld, who will help them stress the urgency of acting quickly against the atomic horror.

### *J. Edgar Hoover (1895-1972)*

This American has been the powerful Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation since 1921. He has seen presidents come and go while he diligently pursues criminals, Nazis, and Communists. He is utterly loyal and devoted to his job. If the PCs cross his path, he may want to discuss their investigation and how it relates to an ongoing Federal case. He may offer help or advice, or dark warnings and hinted threats. Hoover is well-known for maintaining detailed dossiers on anyone who has ever come to his attention for any reason. He is not so well-known for being a closet transvestite . . .



### *Howard Hughes (1905-1976)*

Hughes inherited a fortune from his father's oil-related business. He is an eccentric, millionaire playboy, who dabbled in movie production in the late '20s and, later, aviation. He founded the Hughes Aircraft Company and designed and flew planes produced by it. He broke the world speed record three times and built the "Spruce Goose," the world's largest seaplane, just after the war – it flew exactly once, for a distance of about a mile. Hughes made more films in the '40s and '50s and was principal owner of TWA.

Howard Hughes is reclusive, mysterious, quiet, and shy. Because he was always personally involved in his businesses, the PCs may meet him if they are hired by Hughes Aircraft, TWA, or his movie company. Alternately, he would make an excellent patron on his own, especially if one of the characters has medical training – Hughes was plagued at times by ill health.

### *Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971)*

This smiling, down-to-Earth Russian is the son of a coal miner, worked as a shepherd in his youth, and couldn't read or write until he was 25. With simple peasant roots, Khrushchev became a guerrilla leader in WWII. In 1953, he became the First Secretary of the Communist Party, effective leader of the Soviet Union. He denounced Stalin and is trying to spread Soviet influence around the world by diplomacy; he tours Europe and the U.S. later in the decade. Khrushchev is considered a more moderate leader than his predecessors.

Perhaps this bald, smiling, stocky man is kidnapped on a visit to the U.S. – the Loi may try to "convert" him; the Alphans may want a clone! He may meet the PCs if the TSF is hired by the Soviet government. In that case, perhaps the "mystery" is fabricated to get hold of Western technology and experts . . . but perhaps it's real . . .

### *Martin Luther King (1929-1968)*

Martin Luther King is an emerging black leader in '50s America, a Baptist minister in Montgomery, Alabama. He joined the bus boycott sparked by Rosa Parks' arrest in 1955; in 1957 he became the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King is becoming a rallying point for blacks across the country, and is organizing civil rights protests in the South. He favors nonviolence (he visits Gandhi in India in 1959). Perhaps King is an agent of the pacifist Loi, or he might act as an intermediary between the PCs and a mystery in the Deep South, where a black family or community has encountered an atomic horror. They may be afraid to turn to the government – or maybe it was created by the government . . .

### *Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964)*

An American general and West Point graduate (at the top of his class). He served in WWI and proved himself an excellent leader, leading the drive to retake the Philippines in WWII. In 1950, MacArthur was sent by President Truman to command the U.N. forces in Korea. Because of his public conflict with Truman (Truman favored limited war, MacArthur wanted to invade and possibly nuke China) he was replaced, and returned to great acclaim.

His sermons about the Cold War and his need to get back into the limelight might lead MacArthur to support the team members in a scheme to defeat a conspiracy. They may find him a valuable ally in winning official recognition; certainly his military knowledge will be formidable. Perhaps Eisenhower brings him out of retirement to help defeat an alien invasion!

### *Joseph McCarthy (1908-1957)*

Senator Joseph McCarthy, from Wisconsin, always carries a bulging briefcase full of "incriminating documents." He is America's witchfinder-general, hunting out Communists in every government department and all walks of life. Right-thinking Americans admire him; nearly everyone fears him. His hearings leave a trail of destroyed reputations and smashed careers in his wake.

McCarthy affects a limp from an old "war wound" (actually suffered during a shipboard party) and he has the skills of a con man. His hard-drinking, hard-swearing demeanor and his streetwise aura set him apart from the "respectable" people he interrogates.

The PCs may discover that he is not after Communists after all, but alien invaders. Of course he could never publicly admit this, but the heroes might gain his confidence. McCarthy would never let his documentation be seen, and his manners might reflect his overwhelming – but justified! – paranoia. Perhaps the aliens are using the American Communist Party as a cover. He was followed everywhere by a loyal pack of journalists until his fall from grace at the end of 1954. He died in 1957, from an alcohol-related illness.

### *Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962)*

Monroe is America's greatest sex symbol. Born Norma Jean Mortenson (later changed to Baker), she became the idol

of millions as an actress in the '50s. She appeared in the movies *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *The Seven Year Itch*; her platinum blonde hair, good looks, and childlike innocence made her a box-office success. She was married to baseball player Joe DiMaggio for nine months, and playwright Arthur Miller for four years. Her death by overdose in 1962 was fraught with rumor and mystery. What was she involved in during the '50s? Did she make a terrible pact with the Alphans, Loi, or Metarans for her fame? The PCs may have to rescue her from the clutches of an atomic horror. Perhaps she meets the party while making a celebrity appearance at a U.S. air base or science convention . . .

### *J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967)*

Robert Oppenheimer is an American nuclear physicist, and from 1942-1945 was director of the Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico, responsible for building the very first nuclear bombs. He spent the rest of his life teaching at Princeton. He wanted nuclear technology to be shared among all nations of the world, and especially by the U.S. and the USSR. This philosophy resulted in accusations of disloyalty from the defense community, especially since he opposed research into the H-bomb in 1953. He was later cleared of these accusations. As an outcast from the Establishment, Dr. Oppenheimer and the adventurers might have something in common.

### *Linus Pauling (1901-1994)*

This American chemist led a group of scientists and thinkers who opposed the military use of atomic power. This made him unpopular with the government. He taught at the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) and discovered how to map the structure of molecules; his research was useful in microbiology and in combating diseases. He won a Nobel Prize for his work in 1954, and another for his peace efforts in the '60s.

Like Jonas Salk (see below), Pauling may be called in to examine almost anything: zombies, blobs, alien blasters, dinosaurs, etc. The military will be very wary of him, however, and will not let him near obvious alien weaponry.

### *Auguste Piccard (1884-1962)*

A Belgian physicist, Professor Piccard made several balloon ascents and explored the stratosphere for the first time. It was there he studied cosmic rays and the atmosphere (1931). With his son Jacques (born 1926) he explored the ocean depths in the bathyscaph Trieste, which he used throughout the '50s. Auguste is an old man, stern-faced, with tousled fair hair and glasses. If he himself didn't propose a deep-sea dive to PCs, then he would most assuredly want to talk to them, and follow up any discovery they make with dives of his own. His protective son may come into conflict with experts. Perhaps he is missing on a dive and the agents are asked to investigate . . .

### *Jonas Salk (1914-1995)*

Salk was born in New York and paid for his own college education. He devoted himself to virology after graduating



from the New York School of Medicine. Salk discovered the polio vaccine in 1953, first injecting himself and his family with the vaccine. In the following year, 2 million children were vaccinated. Jonas Salk is an acclaimed scientist and an expert in viruses and diseases. It is quite possible that the PCs may work briefly with him on a case involving an alien disease or microorganism. The authorities will call Salk first, and the PCs soon after, to get the research data Salk needs to find a vaccine . . . He wears round spectacles and has black hair and a high forehead.

### *Orson Welles (1915-1985)*

Orson Welles is a U.S. director, writer, and actor. A child prodigy, Welles tried his hand at writing, painting, and composing before settling on the theater, all before his 20th birthday. His first successful film was *Citizen Kane*, which he made when he was only 25, and which is still regarded as one of the all-time masterpieces of American film. He also produced radio plays in the '30s, including the famous *War of the Worlds* broadcast in 1938, which sent panic throughout the United States. As a popular and influential writer and entertainer, Welles may become a target for alien replication – or perhaps their goal has already been achieved, and *War of the Worlds* was a test for a future invasion, or a double-bluff cover for an *actual* invasion of North America!

Welles has dark hair, a wide face, and a charismatic voice. His figure is blocky in the early '50s, and notably obese by the end of the decade. He is fascinated by the media and may track down the investigators to find out the truth behind their researches. If convinced, he may be a staunch ally, carrying their stories of invasion or alien possession to the public. Unfortunately Welles has cried wolf before, and his pleas will be taken for (rather excellent) fiction.

## **The American Dream**

### **FASHION**



Evening wear for women included strapless – even backless! – tight-fitting boned bodices with full skirts and the new Italian stiletto heels. Gloves were still chic, but hats were losing their glamour. Hairdressing had suddenly become a big industry. Magazines like *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* had a great influence on fashion.

At other times, ready-to-wear clothes were popular. Men wore casual lounge suits and slip-on shoes, or favored a sporty look with flannel trousers, button-down shirts, and thin ties. Tweed sports jackets were fashionable; for casual wear, so were Bermuda shorts, Hawaiian shirts, and the T-shirt.

For women, there were several popular fashions: frilly Mexican dresses, the college/bobby-soxer “little girl” look with circular skirts and puffed-out petticoats (teen-agers, meanwhile, were sewing whimsical fabric decals onto their skirts – which soon turned into a national fad for “poodle skirts”), or the tomboy/sweater-girl look with denim jeans, ski pants, or three-quarter-length pedal pushers. The latter two usually favored tight sweaters that emphasized the bust,

a constant '50s preoccupation. Film stars like Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell were famous for their busts, and Howard Hughes even invented the cantilevered pointed bra for Russell.

### **HOUSING**

The American Dream included houses for everyone. In the '50s it looked as though this dream might be achieved. Government-guaranteed mortgage funds for war veterans were part of the GI Bill. A veteran needed no down payment to buy a house, with the backing of the Veteran's Administration and the Federal Housing Administration. “No cash down for veterans” was the slogan of the campaign to sell newly constructed, prefabricated housing.



Most new buyers after the war were veterans buying homes in new suburbs of “tract” housing. On Long Island, the Levittown development was built for veterans and provided cheap houses for \$9,000 each. These long, low “ranch-style” houses, surrounded by neat lawns and a web of roads, were typical of suburban homes. All were similar and fairly basic, and most were designed and built by developers, not architects. It was a joke of the era that a tired businessman could take a wrong turn in suburbia, and not realize he was entering the wrong house until he found himself in some stranger's living room. Open-air living was the theme for the houses: large picture windows faced the lawn and the interior was open in design. The principle was typified by the informal barbecue with the family gathered on the lawn.

The mythical typical suburban family was made up of a father, mother, and two children (one of each sex). The father would work in a large company office in a downtown high-rise and be loyal, hard-working, and ambitious. The mother would be the perfect housewife, taking the kids to school, baseball practice, or Scout meetings, and getting involved in community projects.

## **Cops and Robbers**

After the war, the FBI noted that crime gangs were on the increase, and feared a return to the '30s. Many gangs had no name or national ties, but were led by a single man who organized the gang and arranged for contacts, equipment, alibis, and so on. His tough criminals might be disgruntled war veterans who knew each other during the war. These gangs are relatively easy for the authorities to break up; when they've caught the boss, the rest of the group folds.

*Mafia*: Also known as the Cosa Nostra (“this thing of ours”), the Mafia, perhaps the most famous criminal organization, is loosely based on allegiance to heads of specific powerful families.



*Tongs and Triads:* Tongs are Chinese criminal gangs that prosper wherever Chinese business flourishes. Both San Francisco and Los Angeles host powerful tongs. The main San Francisco tongs in the late '40s were the On Leong and the Hip Sing. They are small, independent and focused on a single family. A Triad gang is a more complex; each gang member knows the identity of two members below him and the one above him. The Triads may be operating on a national scale.

## THE POLICE FORCE

If the player characters break the law for any reason, they should expect to be arrested and charged. In towns and cities, a patrol car with two armed and alert police officers can reach an incident within a few minutes, and up to 20 more cars can be summoned within 10 minutes.

On highways or in rural areas, PCs might have trouble finding a law officer. In a small community, the outsiders' faces are likely to be remembered, and possibly connected with unusual crimes in the area. In the big city, cops are everywhere and may turn up when the players are engaged in what could easily be mistaken for criminal activity (such as killing a person thought to be controlled by Alphans . . .)?

Typical police equipment for an officer on the street is a .38 Special, a pair of handcuffs, a nightstick, a flashlight, a notebook, and a badge. Police autos are largely "stock" sedans with the largest available engine and standard features, plus a two-way radio and a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun. The Los Angeles Police Department was unique in the '50s: it introduced Ford Freeway interceptor cars that weren't available to the public. Based on the Ford Mainline auto, these were high-powered cars that could out-perform everything else on the road.

A rational group of citizens will contact the local police when a malign menace is discovered. If PCs are TSF staff members, the precinct captain is likely to tell them to continue the investigation. He might promise them an armed officer to accompany them, but the adventure is still in their hands. If things really get out of hand in a big city, the Riot Squads will be brought in. The captain or his superior, the inspector, may send aid, if asked, according to the *Requests for Aid* section on p. B204, with the following modifiers:

- +1 if the PCs are from the TSF.
- +2 if it involves a minor crime.
- +2 if there's obviously a mystery here!
- +6 if it involves a major crime.
- 2 if PCs have no I.D.
- 3 if PCs are caught breaking the law.

In a TSF-style campaign, the police can provide support. Where the team has less official status, they may need to hide their activities from police scrutiny – perhaps

the police department has been infiltrated by the menace . . .

All of the above, of course, assumes that the PCs aren't, themselves, cops. See p. 15, or *GURPS Cops*, for guidelines on police PCs.

## OFFICER DOWN

*What's your position, Unit 3?*

County Road 22, just north of the Beeline and proceeding north.

*Unit 3, we have a report of an injury accident on Lindberg. Caller is at the Harper farm. Not making much sense, but she says their car turned over.*

Roger. Have you dispatched an ambulance?

*Yeah. She sounded hysterical.*

Okay. My ETA is five minutes. Over and out.

\* \* \*

Dispatch, this is Unit 3. I'm at the accident scene. One car, brand-new 1952 Buick, white over blue, upside down, can't see the plates. Nobody in sight. I'm checking it out. Over.

*Roger, Unit 3.*

\* \* \*

Damnedest accident I ever saw, Paul. Car's all tore up. Roof is almost gone. Lots of blood, no bodies. Car's 20 feet from the road, but it didn't leave any tracks getting there. Over.

*Say again, Unit 3. Did you say it rolled 20 feet from the road and left no tracks?*

That's what I said, Dispatch. I'm proceeding to the Harper farm to talk to the woman who called. Did you get ID?

*Affirmative, Unit 3. She didn't stay on the line.*

Well, call Harper's and tell 'em I'm on the way. Over and out.

\* \* \*

This is Unit 3, Dispatch. I'm at Harper's. Something's wrong here.

*Like what?*

I dunno. One side of the house is tore up, and the chickens is out, and there's no people or dogs. Hell, there's no cows. I hit the siren and nobody came out. Nothin's here at all. You call 'em?

*There's no answer, Rudy. The phone rang three times and then quit.*

I'm checking it out. Get me some backup. Over.

*Ten-four, Rudy. Clint is east on the Beeline; sending him your way.*

\* \* \*

Dispatch! Jesus! Paul, it's ants!

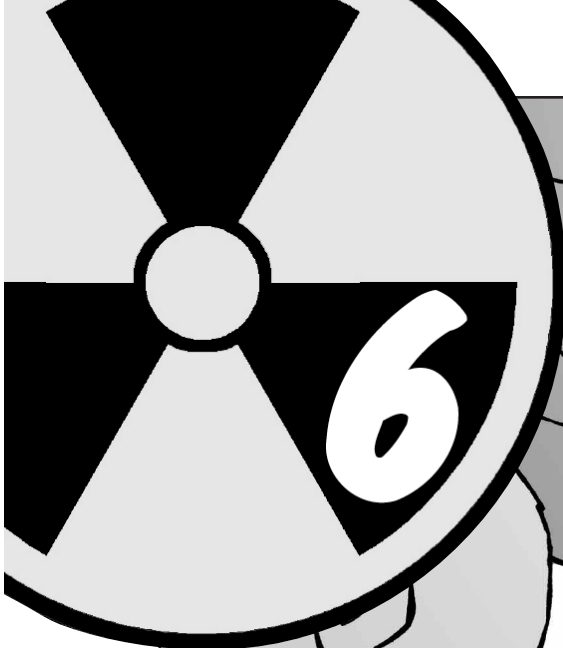
*Say again, Rudy? I mean, Unit 3. Say again?*

*Rudy?*

*Unit 3? Rudy? Come in, Unit 3.*

*Aww, Rudy, this isn't funny.*

*All units, we have a possible officer down at the Harper farm. Repeat, officer down. Proceed with extreme caution.*



# ATOMIC MONSTERS



Fascination with atomic power, and fear of the Bomb, created a new type of monster in '50s movies: the mutation, altered into something unnatural by science. This was, by far, the most common origin of monstrous menaces – but not the *only* one. Some monsters were survivors from Earth's remote past (though often such creatures were *roused* by man's science, not created by it); others came from outer space.

Statistics for monsters in this chapter are deliberately sketchy. The GM is encouraged to customize his monsters with whatever mutant powers and nasty surprises his fevered imagination can concoct. For guidelines on using these monsters in combat, see Chapter 18 of the *Basic Set*.

## THE SYMPATHETIC MONSTER

Not all the creatures from the monster movies were evil, or even savage. Many were misunderstood, even likable beings which became a menace only when they were disturbed or attacked. King Kong (the ancestor of all the giant beasts of the '50s) and the Creature from the Black Lagoon were both happy, reasonably benevolent creatures until they were brought low by "civilized" interlopers . . . and an inexplicable taste for blondes.

Sometimes a monster's sympathetic qualities can lead to a happy ending – the heroes can arrange to return the creature to its natural environment or to reconcile it with humanity, halting the danger to innocent people and the creature simultaneously.

At other times (and this is probably more common), the ending is tragic. The monster would never have endangered anyone if it had only been left alone, but by the time the team figures out the creature's true nature, the monster is so profoundly changed by mankind's cruelty that reconciliation is no longer possible: the monster must be destroyed. Even if the monster can't be spared, though, it can be pitied.

## Amphibians

Inhuman creatures from the depths of the oceans, or the deep, unexplored lagoons of the wilderness are popular alternatives to monsters from outer space. In *Atomic Horror*, these creatures can be mindless beasts that wreak havoc on shipping and coastal towns, or intelligent humanoids with their own plans.

Intelligent amphibious mermen predate humanity on the evolutionary scale. They were driven to the deep parts of the ocean, and the world's most inaccessible lakes, by the change in climate that exterminated the dinosaurs. Mermen later resurfaced in human mythology as the Greek tritons, Japanese kojins, and Philistine dagon.

A typical merman is humanoid, with repulsive features, gills, and fins on its back and limbs. It cannot remain out of water for long. Every 10 minutes the creature must make a HT roll or take 1 point of dehydration damage. Although they generally fight with claws, they may use stone knives, spears, or even spearguns at the GM's discretion; the speargun will function much as a Thrown Spear, both in and out of water. They will keep their Basic Speed and Move while swimming.

Scenarios involving creatures from the deep usually begin with human encroachment on their environment. Perhaps an oil well is drilling too close to their nesting site – eggs may then be brought up by the rig. This may result in unexplained disappearances, and then savage murders. If these do not stop the drilling, the rig will eventually be found abandoned, save for a confusing log entry and copious amounts of human blood . . . The creatures will attack stealthily – they are too few to risk direct confrontation with mankind.

For variety, the GM might also use the old ploy in which the creatures secure a human female "for breeding purposes." Why mermen suddenly need human women for breeding is anyone's guess – perhaps they seek to adapt their race to life on land.

When the heroes discover the lair of the mermen, they should find that much of it is an air pocket in which the creatures keep captives. This gives them a chance to explore the creatures' habitat without continually resurfacing to refill air tanks.

### Gill Men

ST: 13	Move/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 2/2	Wt.: 200-300 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: 2d+1 cr	
HT: 14	Reach: C	

### The Nommos

The Creatures From the Deep may actually have come from space. The Dogon tribe of Mali told French travelers in the '30s and '40s that creatures came to them from a tiny but heavy star circling Sirius. This was dismissed until radio astronomy in the '50s discovered Sirius B, a small but superdense star circling Sirius. The legend says that the aliens (called the Nommos, Masters of the Waters, Instructors, or Monitors) were fish-like amphibians that landed in a flying saucer. The Nommos said they would return to rule the world from the waters.

The ancient Sumerians called their gods the Oannes, amphibian gods of wisdom. They imparted the secrets of mathematics, writing, and astronomy to Mesopotamia. Berossus, a Babylonian priest, described one of the Oannes as part-man, part-fish. When he arrived on Earth, he landed in the Red Sea. In Philistine legend, God was born from an egg which dropped from heaven into the Euphrates.

The Dogon say that their tribe came from the northeast – close enough to the Red Sea to pick up the stories of the Nommos? Anthropologists and archaeologists will have to unravel the myths for themselves . . .

Perhaps the Nommos came to communicate with the whales around 3000 B.C., and discovered mankind. They were intrigued, and founded the first earthly civilization, in a city they built for that purpose. After a time they decided to leave when they saw how destructive man was, even to each other. (Or perhaps the attentions of the Alphans frightened the Nommos away.) If colonies still exist, then they may use advanced technologies to survive in our oceans. Aquaculture, mineral extraction, geothermal power generation, and huge turbines could all supply their cities with power.

# Big Bugs



The giant insect – mutated by mysterious chemicals or atomic radiation – is a staple of '50s science-fiction movies. They could be spiders, ants, scorpions – or whatever. With wings they could be giant moths, bees, or flying ants. For convenience they are divided into three categories: “big bugs” average about the size of a watermelon or cocker spaniel, “great big bugs” are approximately the size of a human, and “giant bugs” are the size of a Buick or bigger.

Besides biting or clawing for cutting damage, an insect might have a special attack. A big ant’s formic acid *squirt* attack does 1d-3 points of damage for 1d turns. Squirt attacks have a range of about 3 hexes, depending on the size of the ant.

A spider’s venom is injected after a successful bite. If the victim fails a HT roll, he suffers 2d-1 points of damage and is paralyzed for 2d hours. Even if he succeeds, he suffers 1d points of damage and partial paralysis (-3 DX). Scorpion venom can be deadly, but a sting causes 1d+2 points of impaling damage even *before* the venom takes effect! On a failed HT roll, the target takes 5d points of damage; even on a successful roll he still takes 3d points of damage. Most “giant” venoms take effect within 1d turns.

Strange and exotic variants are possible – for example, lightning bugs that emit hard radiation! Victims take 200 rads every minute spent within a 10-hex radius of one of the bugs. See pp. CIII145-148 for the effects of radiation.

## Big Bug

**ST:** 2                      **Move/Dodge:** 5/9 (Fliers move 10)  
**DX:** 14                  **PD/DR:** 2/1                      **Size:** <1  
**IQ:** 2                      **Damage:** 1d-5 cut\*              **Wt.:** 5-25 lbs.  
**HT:** 14/3                **Reach:** C

\*See special damage above.

## Great Big Bug

**ST:** 13                      **Move/Dodge:** 10/9 (Fliers move 15)  
**DX:** 12                  **PD/DR:** 2/2                      **Size:** 1  
**IQ:** 2                      **Damage:** 1d+2 cut\*              **Wt.:** 100+ lbs.  
**HT:** 13                      **Reach:** 1

\*See special damage above.

## Giant Bug

**ST:** 60                      **Move/Dodge:** 14/9 (Fliers move 20)  
**DX:** 13                  **PD/DR:** 3/6                      **Size:** 9+  
**IQ:** 2                      **Damage:** 3d cut\*                **Wt.:** 1,000+ lbs.  
**HT:** 15/30                **Reach:** 3

\*See special damage above.



# Blobs, Slimes, and Gunk



One of the outstanding traits of '50s society was *cleanliness*. Homemakers cooked and cleaned in dresses and heels, protected only by a frilly apron. Restaurants boasted that their food was “untouched by human hands.” Even gas station attendants were expected to keep their coveralls white and pressed. It's not surprising, then, that one of the things that could frighten '50s Americans was the thought of filth, mobile and aware.

## Blobs

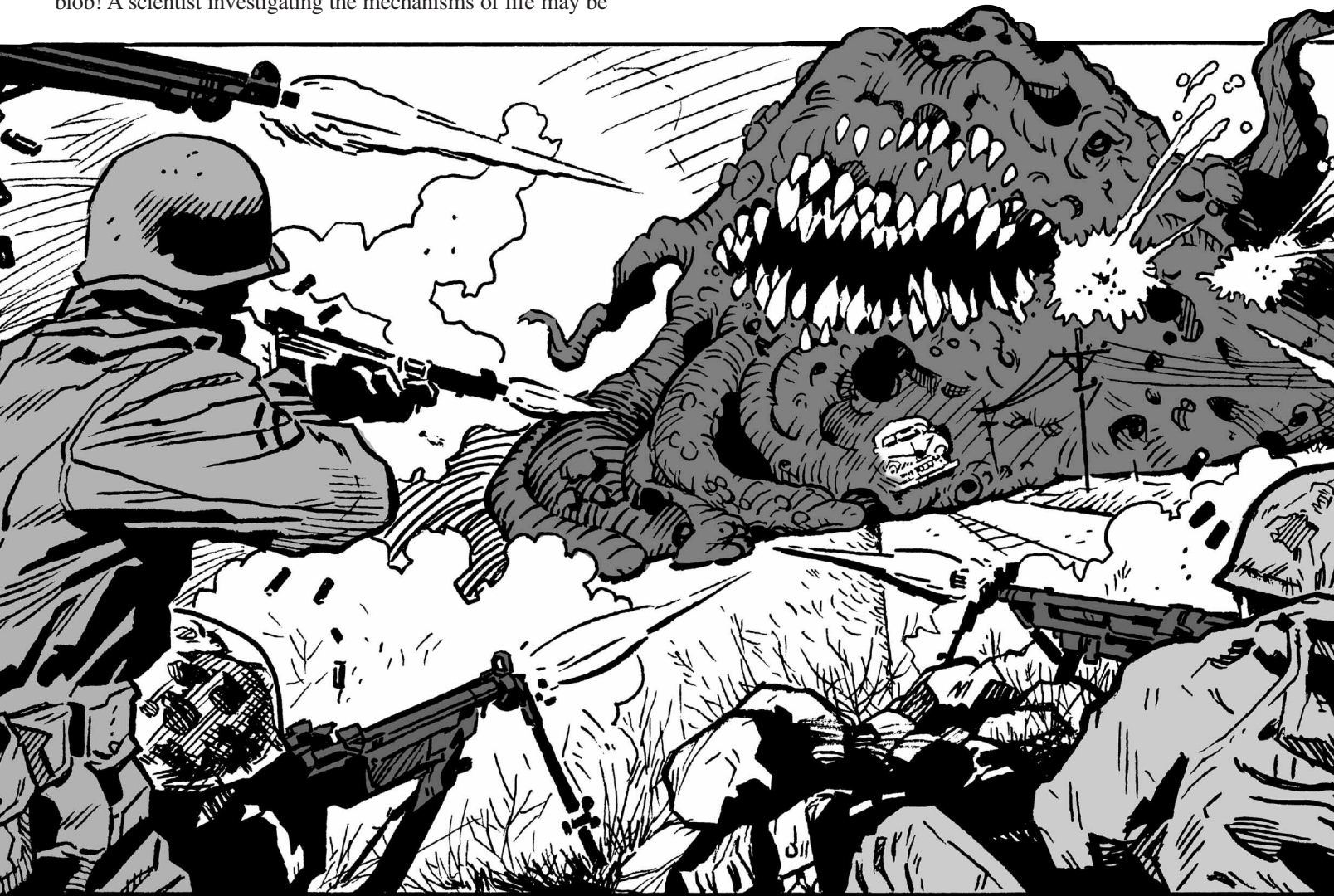
The blob was an inspiration to '50s directors – a menacing, utterly inhuman monster that could appear on screen with practically no special-effects budget and still look effective. A screen blob could be anything from a tub of strangely colored gelatin to a crowd of teen-agers under a tarp.

In *GURPS Atomic Horror*, alien blobs may be protoplasmic entities carried to Earth by meteorites or space probes. If the latter, twisted GMs can assume that the craft flew through a cloud of radiation, which turned the poor test pilot into the blob! A scientist investigating the mechanisms of life may be

responsible for a blob of his own. Like any concerned parent, he will not stand by and watch the authorities exterminate his creation. A human “were-blob” could transform at sunrise or sunset, or when it receives a certain external stimulus (such as light, heat, physical threats, or water), making it much harder to track down.

Many blobs can produce tentacle-like pseudopods. Many can also grow by absorbing new victims, becoming stronger and more dangerous. A blob kills by absorbing its victim (as long as the victim is composed of organic matter). Armor protects for a number of turns equal to DR, after which the blob does damage (anywhere from 1 point to 4d points, or more).

For an extra-nasty blob, the GM may make its internal fluids – or even its surface – poisonous or acidic. Killing a blob may be difficult with melee weapons or guns; the defenders may have to play on a vulnerability to electricity, radiation, nerve toxin, acid, heat, or cold. Crushing weapons will seldom have an effect on blobs, and some may be partially or completely immune to cutting and impaling damage as well. Blobs are not vulnerable to stunning or unconsciousness (when they reach 0 HT they simply stop moving). At  $-3 \times \text{HT}$  a blob is destroyed . . . unless, of course, the GM has decided that it can only be killed by one of the elements above!



Most blobs take normal damage from falling and explosions. Particularly tenacious varieties might fragment into a lot of little blobs when splattered, each of which would slither off to start eating – and growing! – on its own.

Someone may be absorbed by a blob of at least equal weight. It takes a blob three turns to absorb a human-sized victim. The victim must win a Quick Contest of ST vs. the blob to escape. On the first turn, the contest is against 1/3 the blob's ST, on the second turn it's against 2/3 the blob's ST, and on the third turn it's against the blob's full ST. If friends are trying to help the victim pull free, each helper may add half his ST to the victim's for purposes of the Quick Contest. Once the victim is absorbed, he is digested at the rate of 1 HT per turn, plus any applicable special attacks the blob may have.

Blobs come in a variety of sizes, from small, cat-size coagulations to city-devouring behemoths. The blob below is about the size of a Volkswagen.

<b>ST:</b> 45	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 7/0	<b>Size:</b> 12
<b>DX:</b> 12	<b>PD/DR:</b> 0/0	<b>Wt.:</b> 1,200 lbs.
<b>IQ:</b> 1-5	<b>Damage:</b> Special	
<b>HT:</b> 14/40	<b>Reach:</b> C, 1-2	

## Bug-Eyed Monsters

In the '50s, most aliens tended to be shaped like human beings to a greater or lesser degree. The "bug-eyed monster" (BEM) is a generic term for nonhumanoid extraterrestrials (regardless of actual ocular configuration). Bug-eyed monsters were seen more in the comics than in the movies – they tended to be expensive to make, compared to a blob or a guy in a humanoid monster suit. Perhaps the definitive BEM of the decade was the evil turnip-creature from Roger Corman's *It Conquered the World*.

BEMs are intelligent and typically solitary (it was hard enough to find the budget to construct even one good BEM). They usually remain in hiding while their nefarious plots are carried out by drones, monsters, or human zombies under the domination of the alien mastermind. BEMs can look like anything, the weirder the better – tentacles, fangs, pseudopods, spiky bits, whatever.

Most BEMs are physically formidable, but they often have strange weaknesses to common Earthling substances – water, cigarette smoke, Cheez Whiz, etc. They are either cruel and megalomaniacal or cruel and dispassionate. Either way, they're likely to last after Earth women (especially blondes).

Many BEMs have psionic powers, particularly of the mind-control variety. They may also have strange physical attacks –

acid-spitting, lightning-throwing, or the like. Of course, they also have access to various super-scientific "death rays." Their main line of defense, though, is probably their human or monster minions.

## Brains



Disembodied brains may not seem to hold many adventure possibilities, but with imagination they can be fiendish enemies. Many brains have psionic talents, and may be able to manipulate their creators (or whoever rescued the brain) as well as any others who come too close to their mesmerizing powers. A psionic brain has a psi power of 10 or more and skill of at least 15 in suitable psi abilities, including Telepathy, Telekinesis, or ESP.

It could be that, when the brain was removed, exotic rays or experimental chemicals were used to awaken it, unlocking amazing powers normally dormant. The mind within the brain might once have been wise and benevolent, but turned violently insane by the fundamental isolation of its new condition and the horrific treatments required to keep it alive.

Other brains might lack exotic powers, but have superior intellects which make them dangerous masterminds, plotting strategy for a gang of crooks or spies. Still others own personal forces of monsters or robots.

Typical brains are housed in glass containers and supplied with the essential chemicals and blood for their survival. Non-telepathic communication is via an electronic voice box, or maybe images on a TV screen. Less-affluent brains will use a teletype to talk to the outside world. Most have a TV camera and microphone with which to receive sensory input.

Brains in the '50s tended to be obsessive and passionate (despite the absence of glands to produce adrenaline and norepinephrine . . .). The brain may want revenge on the individual or organization that destroyed its body; it may desire the complete domination of a company, country, or the entire world! A brain often wants a new body and uses its minions to get it.

A typical brain-in-a-jar has an IQ of 15 or more, with no physical stats whatsoever. It has lots of high mental skills, though. For self-protection it might have an armored container or even automated weapons systems under its control.

Brains are scary things, and not all brain-monsters have to be surgically removed human organs. Say, for instance, that a mad scientist mixed brainwaves with new energy sources to create brain-like creatures. These monsters live off human life force and must kill to feed. They may have tentacles or membranous wings, or they may travel by levitation. The brains are vampiric and could live like ants, with a communal nest where they gather to swell their group IQ. They might even be able to possess humans by penetrating the skin and wrapping themselves around the spinal cord to control the mind and body like a puppet. Stats for flying brain vampires might be as follows:

<b>ST:</b> 4	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 10/5	<b>Size:</b> <1
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>PD/DR:</b> 0/0	<b>Wt.:</b> 10 lbs.
<b>IQ:</b> 13	<b>Damage:</b> 2d energy drain	
<b>HT:</b> 10/6	<b>Reach:</b> C	



# Dinosaurs, Sea Monsters, and Other Colossi

The grossly enlarged giant animal is a staple of the “creature feature.” It may knowingly be created by scientists during experimentation on animals, or unknowingly as a side effect of some other experiment. Growth research may hope to solve the world’s food shortage, with giant cattle and crops as the goal. What if the serum or treatment is accidentally spilled on a spider, scorpion, ant, or rat? A growth experiment probably revolves around the alteration of the animal’s DNA or the use of chemicals to stimulate growth hormones.

Other possibilities include the accidental spillage of toxic chemicals or radiation. The detonation of an A-bomb in the desert could cause a whole colony of creatures to mutate to giant size, like the giant ants in *Them!* (see *Big Bugs*, p. 91). The dumping of radioactive waste underground or at sea may have the same effect. Consider the possible effects of 300 giant earthworms, with their ability to dig tunnels and to regenerate as two separate beings when divided! Cosmic radiation is another possible source of mutation, especially for experimental creatures sent into orbit in a space capsule.

In the movies, the mutation typically appears first in the remote wilderness, causing the inexplicable deaths of a few isolated individuals. As the creature moves toward civilization, its trail becomes easier to follow, and its nature becomes more apparent. Finally, with luck, the good guys know enough about it to try to stop it, just about the time it hits a major metropolitan area.

Sometimes the hapless individual transformed into a colossus is human. In the movies, as the person grows larger, his mind usually becomes more twisted. His fears and desires multiply completely out of control, and he turns into a monster driven by emotion rather than logic.

The first half of a colossus scenario can be a cat-and-mouse game, with peculiar attacks on lone cars, gas stations, and travelers. This turns into a race against time to prevent the creature from satisfying its voracious appetite in the nearest city, then breeding a host of giant horrors. For added complexity, a spider may have cocooned its victims *alive* somewhere, a scorpion or snake must be captured to create an antidote to the poison of its giant brothers, etc. Tracking down and capturing a giant creature is considerably more difficult than firebombing it from an Air Force jet, and prevents the military from saving the day through sheer force.

## Giant Human

This sample giant human is roughly 50’ tall. The GM should use him with care; he’s a match for an M48 tank! A giant can lift 6,000 lbs., and – with extra effort – pick up 70 tons!

ST: 240	Move/Dodge: 30/7	Size: 6
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/2	Wt.: 30 tons
IQ: 7	Damage: 25d thrust, 27d swing	
HT: 10/120	Reach: C, 1-10	

# LOST WORLD CREATURES

This aspect of the genre revolves around man’s awakening of ancient creatures that are sleeping or in hiding. Awakened or released by accident, through greed, scientific ignorance, or environmental damage, the sleeping horrors of the ’50s movies are in *our* world. They’re here to teach us how little we know and how ineffective our “advanced technology” actually is.

## Dinosaurs

Dinosaurs are among the most popular giant menaces in atomic horror films. Usually, time travel is not involved – instead, a living dinosaur is somehow preserved from ancient times – or recreated in the present (see, for instance, *Jurassic Park*). Perhaps a construction project uncovers a nest of eggs? Their discoverers would certainly try to hatch them, and they might find that the little dinosaurs grow *much* faster than expected.

More often, an adult dinosaur is found, somehow preserved against the eons. If the dinosaur is embedded in solid rock, the most likely types of rock are limestone (the deposits of a warm, shallow seabed), sandstone (the fossilized remains of a desert), or mudstone (the deposits of a shoreline or estuary). Finding a living dinosaur in solid rock sounds unlikely, but there are reports of toads and insects crawling out of coal or stones; in the 1800s, French laborers working on a railway tunnel reportedly freed a pterodactyl from solid rock – and it lived for a few minutes! Perhaps cracks and fissures in the rock allow air, water, and nutrients to reach the comatose creature. More plausible (although still scientifically impossible) is the preservation of a Pleistocene creature in ice. Mammoths have been recovered in significant numbers from the ice fields of Siberia; have any been revived?

There are plenty of other ways to bring dinosaurs into the campaign. They might have been imported from a place where many dinosaurs still live, like the “monster island” of the Japanese monster films, or they might be dinosaur-like creatures from another planet.

The problem with a dinosaur in a *GURPS Atomic Horror* scenario is its vulnerability. They are easy for the military to spot and shoot or bomb, which is not very challenging. Aquatic dinosaurs, like the plesiosaur, have the advantage of hiding under the waves during the day and coming ashore at night. Likewise, a tyrannosaur could hide out in a thick forest, but its size makes it vulnerable. One solution is to isolate the team in some remote area, then let them find the dinosaur. This changes the goal of the adventure from killing the beast to evading it, at least long enough to reach civilization and call in someone else to do the dirty work.

As most dinosaurs were herbivores, only a few types will be suitable foes for an adventure. On land, the tyrannosaur is a natural choice. At sea, the plesiosaur and ichthyosaur are formidable meat-eaters. Don’t restrict the game to one of these, though. The chance that a species hasn’t appeared in the fossil record yet is high; adventurers might be the first to discover (and name . . .) a new species of dinosaur. Prehistoric plants can also threaten ’50s America.



A devious GM can prevent airstrikes or artillery barrages from turning the creature into mincemeat. Humans today have no natural defenses to microbes from the dinosaur's own time, which still infest it. The danger may not lie with the monster's appetite, but with its deadly germs. Blowing the monster apart will spread the germs across the city, so it must be killed subtly, with electricity, freezing temperatures, or radioactive isotopes. The GM should use the stats below as a guide to creating his own monsters.

### *Tyrannosaurus*

Tyrannosaurus was the largest meat-eating land animal that ever lived, and no predator had stronger jaws. It measures about 40' from head to tail, stands about 20' tall, and has a 4' head armed with 6" teeth. Its bite can reach out to 2 hexes. It also has ridiculously small forelimbs, which it used as "meathooks."

**ST:** 100-150    **Move/Dodge:** 17/7    **Size:** 13+  
**DX:** 14    **PD/DR:** 2/3    **Wt.:** 4-6 tons  
**IQ:** 3    **Damage:** 5d+2 impaling  
**HT:** 15/50-80    **Reach:** C, 1, 2

### *Super-Dinosaur*

This is a giant mutant dinosaur straight out of the Japanese monster movies. It stands more than 500' tall, and it's literally capable of leveling a city. Obviously, actually rolling damage dice for something this size is futile. If the monster leans on something, that thing falls over. If it steps on something, that thing is squashed (except, of course, for other giant monsters).

In some movies, monsters of this size are literally invulnerable to physical damage. They can't be destroyed; they have to be tricked or driven off (an invulnerable monster *can* feel pain). For game purposes, give an invulnerable monster DR. Any attack that does less than the DR is ignored, any attack that does more than the DR annoys the monster, and any attack that does more than 2x the monster's DR causes it to head away from the direction of the attack for 2d minutes.

Usually, monsters of this size have some sort of exotic energy or elemental attack. Assume a damage of about 20d and a range of 500 yards. The actual nature of the attack can be defined by the GM as a special effect – lightning, radioactive fire, halitosis . . .

The super-dinosaur below can do thrust crushing damage by stomping on something, thrust cutting damage by biting, or swing crushing damage with a tail sweep.

To GM a combat between two or more monsters at this scale, it's recommended that the GM divide the damage dice and hit points by 10, to keep the dice rolling to a realistic scale.

**ST:** 990    **Move/Dodge:** 100/0    **Size:** 100  
**DX:** 10    **PD/DR:** 6/100    **Wt.:** 10,000 tons  
**IQ:** 5    **Damage:** 100d thrust, 102d swing  
**HT:** 20/600    **Reach:** C, 1-100



## SEA MONSTERS

Sea monsters may be dinosaurs newly released from an eternity of sleep, or they may be giant sea creatures such as octopuses, squid, crabs, or jellyfish. Giant squid capable of capsizing a small cargo ship are well-substantiated in the real world. Bizarre new sea monsters of the GM's own devising are easily rationalized as undiscovered species or newborn dinosaurs from eggs uncovered by earthquakes, atomic tests, or oil drilling.

### *Plesiosaur*

These are air-breathing marine animals, filling the same ecological niche as the killer whale. Some have short necks, others have such long and supple necks that they can reach 7 yards in any direction – ideal for plucking people out of small boats! They range from 10' to at least 40' in length, though some authorities claim they reach 60'. They can move around on land like seals using their flippers.

**ST:** 10-30    **Move/Dodge:** 7/7    **Size:** 2-30  
**DX:** 14    **PD/DR:** 1/1    **Wt.:** 150 lbs.-2 tons  
**IQ:** 3    **Damage:** 1d-1 to 1d+1 imp  
**HT:** 14/10-25    **Reach:** C, 1-8

## PRIMORDIAL ENTITIES

Long before man's early ancestors trod the Earth, other, more terrifying entities lived in isolation. These "things" predate the dinosaurs, the carboniferous forests, and the trilobites; they are unique intelligent beings trapped deep below the Earth's crust or floating in outer space. An entity could be the very last of its race and about to give birth, or a member of a whole race who has somehow become trapped on the planet's surface and is anxious to return to its fellows below. Primordial entities can look like anything, from a mass of proto-plasmic pus that crawls from a fissure in the ground to a radioactive aurora that travels through space at the speed of light.

### *Mantle Entity*

A creature that originated inside the Earth could have become trapped, undying, when the planet's surface cooled. As volcanic activity or exploration boreholes bring up matter from deep within the Earth, such a creature may make an appearance. Like a living earthquake, it moves through the crust at the speed of a supersonic jet, capable of warping rock and earth. Once it comes above ground, it becomes a silicon-based mass moving slowly. It rolls over victims and crushes them (doing 20d damage each turn) and absorbs thermal energy to keep itself alive. It attacks humans and animals by absorption, followed by the removal of all the body's minerals. If an escaped victim fails a HT-2 roll he will lose 2d ST points *permanently*.

## Cosmic Entity

An energy creature from space, that can travel at light-speed and fly unaided between stars, might happen upon our insignificant backwater world. It feeds on energy – A-bomb test sites and nuclear power stations powerfully attracted it. Growing bigger and hungrier as it feeds, it becomes visible, a thick, luminous cloud able to fly through the atmosphere.

Until it reaches that point, however, it is almost undetectable. Humans within 50 yards of the entity must make a HT roll at -1 every 10 minutes or fall asleep and take 1d points of damage each minute they remain within the entity's range, as it absorbs their life force. Within 200 yards people may roll at +3, and lose HT at the rate of 1d-2 points per minute. Anyone drained to HT 0 is dead.

The GM must decide how the entity can be destroyed.

## The Enemy Within

The most frightening alien invasion movies were the ones in which the invaders looked and sounded *just like us*. These films echoed real-world fears of deep-cover enemy agents secretly working to subvert the American way and prepare the U.S. for a Communist coup or invasion.

Aliens could often imitate individual humans exactly, down to their fingerprints and behavioral patterns. The classic movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* had alien pods taking on the likenesses of people who slept nearby. When activated, a new being would dispose of the original and take his place.

## ALIEN DOPPELGANGERS

Most alien doppelgangers are, for *GURPS* purposes, exactly like their human versions. However, the GM is free to spice them up with unsuspected, undetectable defensive powers – perhaps an energy discharge, paralyzing touch, or hypnotic power which the alien uses as a last resort. Regardless of any exotic powers, each alien has a unique identifying trait or vulnerability. The traits below are possibilities:

*Alcohol acts like acid.* A jugful does 2d-1 points of damage; an immersion probably kill the alien (6d damage per turn). Other common substances can be substituted, such as salt.

*Immune to heat or fire.* The alien does not flinch or think to move away from fire. It may burn itself slightly, but flees obviously dangerous fires.

*Minor physical trait.* The alien has some unobvious physical detail that differs from ordinary humans – no nipples, no belly button, no Adam's apple, fingers or toes the wrong lengths, or a third eye under the hair at the back of its head!

*A particular sound causes intense pain to the aliens* (1 point damage each turn). Examples are a dog whistle, thunder, a harmonica, or rock 'n' roll!

*The aliens do not eat.*

*Strange behavior or memory loss.* Just because the alien has a human's shape doesn't necessarily mean it has all the memories and behavior patterns of that human. However, this can easily be explained as amnesia, or simply a bad mood.

## ALIEN POSSESSION

Not all invaders-from-within *mimic* the human form; some take over the mind and body of a living human. These intelligent parasites are broadly classified as *external* and *internal*.

External aliens cling to some part of the host body – typically the spinal cord, under the shirt or the hairline. They're small and usually defenseless apart from their hosts. It's comparatively simple to remove and destroy an external parasite from a restrained or unconscious host, although doing so might entail considerable damage or risk to the human. External parasites are also relatively easy to spot, provided the investigator knows where to look and what he's looking for.

Internal parasites live inside the host's body. These are much harder to remove. Sometimes, they can be killed with a serum or injection; other times, they must be surgically removed. The most insidious internal parasite has no physical form whatsoever – an energy being or psychic entity that can take over a human mind without leaving any physical trace at all.

Often the only way to detect alien possession (particularly an internal infestation) is through behavior. This could appear as “strange behavior and memory loss,” above, or more overt behavior – kidnapping school children for strange surgical operations, or taking over the local radio station, for example.

## Angel Hair and Star Jelly

Skyfalls have been reported from Biblical times to the present. Most falls are of terrestrial substances: insects, stones, ice, fish, frogs, etc. In an *Atomic Horror* universe, perhaps these mundane falls come from interdimensional rifts, as described in *The Vortun* (see p. 55).

Two extraterrestrial substances are often reported during skyfalls: angel hair and star jelly.

Angel hair falls from the sky and is often connected with UFO sightings. Its delicate gossamer-like strands of silky material are usually white, strong, and shiny; it quickly melts when touched.

Angel hair could be a semi-intelligent extraterrestrial creature invading our planet. Any creature touched by angel hair during a skyfall becomes infected (roll vs. HT-5 to resist infection).

Angel hair eats its victims from inside, gradually transferring the victim's IQ to itself. The character's IQ-based skills get worse as the game progresses (roll vs. HT daily – each failed roll results in the loss of a point of IQ). Once the victim starts to lose IQ, the GM should roll daily vs. current IQ – on a successful roll, the person realizes that his mental capacity is diminishing. As the victim loses intelligence, the angel hair parasite gets smarter. When the individual is reduced to less than half his original IQ, the angel hair takes over his personality completely.

At this point, those around the victim observe an apparently steady recovery. In fact, the dominant angel-hair personality is growing more intelligent, as it continues to absorb the host's IQ.

Angel hair lives only to reproduce: 2d days after the host's IQ is completely absorbed, the host body abruptly

explodes, doing 1d points of damage to anyone within a 1-hex radius, and scattering angel hair over a 15-hex radius. The angel hair uses all its borrowed intelligence to insure that it's positioned to infect the greatest possible number of hosts when it explodes.

If the PCs invent a serum or a vaccination against angel hair, the victim will survive, provided he still has at least one point of IQ left when he receives the cure. He regains IQ at the rate of one point per week until he's back to normal. If the cure is used on a victim whose original personality has been completely drained of intelligence, the angel hair dies; the body doesn't explode, but it is brain-dead.

Star jelly is a gelatinous substance that has several names: star shot, rot of the stars, and star slough. It is sometimes found where meteorites fall, and evaporates quickly. Is its life carried down to Earth on a meteorite? Residue abandoned by a UFO? Waste from a warp drive? Is it dangerous?

## VICTIMS

When using enemy-within aliens, the GM must consider the fate of their victims. Humans duplicated by doppelgangers probably are murdered by their mimics, but they might also be imprisoned or enslaved.

Humans possessed by alien entities usually return to normal if the alien can be destroyed or driven out. But removal of an alien parasite is often very dangerous or damaging to its human host, and in some cases it is automatically fatal.

## ALIEN RACES

All of the alien races described in Chapter 4 of this book have the ability to live among us as humans. The Arendians must possess humans to live and carry out their plans, and they destroy their hosts when they abandon them. The humanoid Loi need no special abilities to live undetected among earthlings. The Alphans have the ability to create synthetic doppelgangers of kidnapped subjects. Certain Metarans have the ability to shapechange into human form. The Vortun, from the future, can kidnap humans and transplant a Vortun brain in the stolen body, then return to our time and take on the identity of the victim.

## Human Zombies

In *GURPS Atomic Horror*, zombies are living or dead bodies stripped of their human personality, and often of their human intelligence as well.

The walking dead have had their nervous systems reactivated by aliens, by a burst of cosmic rays, or by a virus brought down by a probe or meteorite – one spring evening, a shooting star lands in the town cemetery, and by morning, everyone's dead relatives are lumbering around the streets causing an uproar.

Often, the zombies hunger for human flesh or just mayhem. More eerily, they can carry out some inscrutable alien mission given to them. For a less-bloodthirsty game, or when the zombies have eaten all the residents, they might carry on perverse, mindless parodies of the roles they led in life.

Living people affected by this condition suffer effects very similar to an "enemy within" scenario (see above). The difference is that in an "enemy within" situation, an alien intelligence is actively controlling the human body. Living zombies have their IQs stripped away, or their wills reprogrammed by aliens. Zombies will not be able to respond intelligently to any situation not in their "programming."

A small town may be taken over by aliens (especially the Alphans) by the use of cybernetic implants at the base of the skull. Within the zone of the aliens (which the zombies will never voluntarily leave), the affected humans are zombified mind-slaves. The PCs may be alerted to this situation when a zombie accidentally *does* wander out of town.

Human zombies can be bestial cannibals, intelligent communal cannibals, mindlessly violent, or uncontrollably violent but still aware of the horrific acts they carry out. A plague of zombies doesn't have to be an alien attack. It might be caused by some exotic radiation, or a toxic spillage from a factory, chemical dump, or germ-warfare installation.

Most zombies can't or won't use weapons. They usually attempt either to bite their victims or rend them. Bites do 1d-2 points of cutting damage. To rend a victim, a zombie must first make a successful grapple maneuver in close combat (see p. B111). Each turn thereafter, until the grapple is broken, the zombie does 1d points of damage to the affected limb. If a limb takes enough damage in one attack to cripple it, it is ripped off!

The template below is for an animated corpse. Living zombies have stats as in life, except (perhaps) for a reduction in IQ. All zombies should be treated as though they have the High Pain Threshold advantage.

<b>ST:</b> 14	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 3/0	<b>Size:</b> 1
<b>DX:</b> 9	<b>PD/DR:</b> 0/0	<b>Wt.:</b> human normal
<b>IQ:</b> 6	<b>Damage:</b> 1d-2 cut*	for height
<b>HT:</b> 15	<b>Reach:</b> C	

\* See special attacks above.

## Killer Critters

Atomic horrors don't have to be strange creatures from outer space. Sometimes the most mundane creatures can make the most frightening monsters, if they turn against humanity *en masse*.

There were few killer-critter movies in the '50s. The genre originated with Alfred Hitchcock's classic 1963 horror film, *The Birds*. The subgenre flourished throughout the '60s and '70s. Although they missed the '50s, killer critters fit perfectly into an *Atomic Horror* campaign.

There are two general approaches to a killer-critters scenario, each equally frightening in its own way. The first way is to take small creatures people are customarily afraid of – bats, bugs, spiders, snakes – and make them organized and *mean*. The "swarm" rules on p. B143 are useful if particularly tiny menaces are being used.

Such a scenario can often be effective with a relatively slight exaggeration of real-world dangers – locust plagues, "killer" bees, flights of bats, etc.

The other approach is to take benign, or even friendly, creatures – cats, dogs, birds, cows, penguins – and turn them unexpectedly against humanity.

Ordinary creatures can turn violent as the result of alien interference or a scientific experiment gone wrong. Often the scariest such situations, however, happen for no discernible reason at all.

## Man-Monsters

The very cheapest of the B-movies – those that had no special-effects budget whatsoever – often resorted to the man-monster for a menace. A man-monster is simply a big, tough, scary-looking human (often deformed) who's either been driven violently mad or just plain dumb and mean. The king of the '50s man-monsters was the legendary Tor Johnson. Stripped of the medieval fantasy trappings, Max the guard, from p. B224, would also make a good man-monster.

Man-monsters are often the minions of mad scientists (like Tor in *Bride of the Monster*) or victims of science-gone-bad (like Tor in *The Beast of Yucca Flats*). Sometimes they're just irritable, unsociable fellows who happen to be between the PCs and where they want to be.

## The Missing Link



Evidence of a “missing link” ape-man in the Himalayas or the American Northwest is far less conclusive than that of a dinosaur in Loch Ness, but still compelling in its prevalence and detail. The Yeti of the Himalayas is reputedly between 7' and 9' tall, hairy, with a brown or reddish coat. A hunt for the Yeti (or “Abominable Snowman”) can be full of references to the giants of Indian and European lore. Even without a connection, discovery of this creature (or creatures) could lead to an underground complex inhabited by aliens. The ape-men could be leftover genetically modified servants who did manual labor for the Loi outcasts on Atlantis. Perhaps the Arendians, or other disembodied aliens, use the Yeti



as eyes, ears, and hands. Or they could be descendants of a downed saucer crew, and have lost the technology of their forebears. The PCs might stumble across the craft in the Tibetan mountains, some of the crew still frozen in their seats.

The North American Bigfoot, similar to the Yeti, is just as hard to locate. It has been seen since the late 19th century, and looks like its Tibetan cousin. The Russians call their version of the Yeti the Alma; it has been seen throughout Siberia, from the Altai to the Gobi. World War II prisoners escaping from Siberian labor camps encountered the Alma several times.

**ST:** 18      **Move/Dodge:** 7/7      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 12      **PD/DR:** 2/3      **Weight:** 400-800 lbs.  
**IQ:** 8      **Damage:** 3d cr  
**HT:** 10/20      **Reach:** C

## Plant Food!



Carnivorous plants were a staple of '40s and '50s science-fiction and horror films. Usually the plants were mindless eating machines, but sometimes (notably in Roger Corman's definitive *Little Shop of Horrors*) they were intelligent. Most of them were stationary (although able to lunge out unexpectedly up to several feet), but sometimes (as in *Day of the Triffids*) they could move. Carnivorous plants might be encountered in "lost world" areas, on other planets, or guarding the entrance to a spaceship or mad-scientist's lab.

The plant below is of the large, immobile, unintelligent variety, along the lines of a Venus' flytrap, with a large, hinged bulb atop a flexible stem. When a victim walks into its range, it opens its bulb and clamps it around the victim's upper body with a ST of 18 (this bite can be avoided with a successful Dodge roll). Each turn thereafter, the plant's digestive enzymes do 1d-2 points of damage to the victim. The enzymes will eat through any armor worn at the rate of 1 DR per turn. The victim can make a Quick Contest of ST against the plant each round that he remains conscious – if he wins the contest, he pulls himself free. If the plant already has something in its jaws, it has sharp fronds that can lash at attackers no more than one hex away from the stem, doing 1d-3 points of cutting damage. The quickest way to release the victim is to sever the thick, tough stem by doing damage equal to the plant's hit points. While this disarms the plant, it does not kill it – the only way to permanently kill the plant is by destroying the roots.

**ST:** 18      **Move/Dodge:** 0/0      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 14      **PD/DR:** 0/4      **Wt.:** 500 lbs  
**IQ:** 1      **Damage:** \*  
**HT:** 10/20      **Reach:** C, 1-3

\* See special attacks above.

## Robots



In the '50s, a "robot" meant a humanoid machine. Nobody in the '50s except a few visionary engineers envisioned machines that imitated the functions of humanity without also duplicating the form. Robots in the '50s were also seriously intimidating presences. The cute little robot buddy was an idea whose time had not yet come. (For more

information on using robots in a game, please refer to *GURPS Robots*.)

## ALIEN ROBOTS

Several alien races can construct advanced robots that are at least equal in intelligence to their designers. When encountered by humans, such robots may appear menacing and all-powerful.

The humanoid robot Gort in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is typical: 8' tall and constructed of a remarkably resilient metal, the robot seems immovable and indestructible. It moves slowly and surely, following the dictates of its programming. Robby, in *Forbidden Planet*, lacked the menace of Gort, but was a powerful (and faceless – another important design feature) servant.

Inflicting damage on robots is similar to damaging other inanimate objects (see p. B125). A guardian robot for an advanced alien culture has ST 40, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 40/60, Move 5, and Dodge 3. Its armored body has PD 6 and DR 80. A robot can use its arms to do 4d+1 points of crushing damage. The robot might also have some sort of built-in energy attack.

A robot guardian such as this is loyal to its masters (unless something goes horribly wrong!) and follows no one else's commands. It is capable of acting on its own initiative, but does not, unless its alien masters are dead or in danger. It may or may not use voice communication, perhaps receiving messages through a remote control device. Typical optional features for a robot are infrared vision, amplified hearing, Geiger counter, short-range (500 miles) communicator, and an integral chest- or face-mounted blaster rifle or stunner rifle. The robot has an internal power supply, which might be damaged or, if the PCs are *very* lucky, simply run out of juice. The robotic brain has a large suite of programs, giving it all the skills of a saucer crewman at an average level of 15 (including Guns, for use of the blaster).

Less formidable robots, that can be used as cannon-fodder on a mother ship, for example, have ST 25, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 15/25, PD 1, and DR 10.

Robots that can pass for human were out of fashion in the '50s, but they were not unknown (they'd been part of science-fiction movies since *Metropolis* in 1926), and are a possibility for a sneaky GM.

## HOMEMADE ROBOTS

Mad scientists often made their own mechanical guardians. A '50s-tech robot is quite a bit clunkier and less sophisticated than its sleek alien brethren. Its vulnerable points are often considerably easier to find – for example, a reset switch at the base of the neck or a stationary remote-control console that's considerably more vulnerable than the robot it controls.

This type of robot has ST 30, DX 8, IQ 0-10, HT 12/20, PD 1, DR 8, Move 4, and no Dodge. In combat it does 3d points of crushing damage. A homemade robot might have one or two of the options above, but no more than that. It's much more likely to have a pistol or gas discharger in its arm than a blaster or paralysis ray.

# Space Men and Space Girls

Many of the alien races in SF from the '40s through the '60s were just ordinary humans in shiny suits who happened to come from another planet. Sometimes (though rarely) they had hidden superhuman powers. Usually they had weapons far beyond Earth technology. Sometimes these space men shared a common ancestor with Earth humans – sometimes they *were* the ancestors of Earth humans – but usually they were just assumed to be the products of parallel evolution. The Loi (see pp. 47-51) are an example of such a race.

A variant on the space man concept was an all-female race (reproducing itself through more-or-less mysterious means) which either hated males, enslaved males, or had no concept of the existence of males. The cultural level for such Amazon civilizations ranges from Stone Age to ultra-tech. An example of a (typically bizarre) space-Amazon civilization is found on pp. 59-60.

## Survivors



An excellent source for monsters is Earth's prehuman past – creatures thought long extinct, that somehow survived to the present. The most popular such survivors – dinosaurs – have already been discussed (see p. 94), but many others are possible.

Prehistoric creatures can be brought into the present by escape from a "lost world"-type enclave, by a ray or scientific experiment that devolves one of their modern descendants into a form from the remote past, or by time travel (though this was rare in the '50s).

### Sabertoothed Tiger

<b>ST:</b> 26-32	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 8/6	<b>Size:</b> 2
<b>DX:</b> 12	<b>PD/DR:</b> 1/1	<b>Wt.:</b> 400-600 lbs.
<b>IQ:</b> 4	<b>Damage:</b> 2d+1 imp	
<b>HT:</b> 14/20-24	<b>Reach:</b> C	

### Giant Killer Trilobite

<b>ST:</b> 8	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 6/7	<b>Size:</b> 1
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>PD/DR:</b> 1/2	<b>Wt.:</b> 50-100 lbs.
<b>IQ:</b> 2	<b>Damage:</b> 1d-3 cut	
<b>HT:</b> 12/6	<b>Reach:</b> C	

## SUPERHUMAN ANCESTORS

Distant, supposedly extinct ancestors of Man may still live on Earth. These survivors may be Neanderthals, Cro-Magnon, or strange giants not yet found in the fossil record. They may even be responsible for sightings of Bigfoot or the Yeti (see p. 98). *GURPS Ice Age* and *GURPS Low-Tech* provide information on the culture and habits of ancient man.

### Troglodytes

Hidden away in a sealed cave system, these shy prehumans have developed their own elaborate culture. They are

albinos capable of seeing in the underground darkness. Troglodytes are hardier than modern man, with an average ST and HT of 12.

The Paiute Indians believe in a race of red-haired giants that might be older cousins of humanity. They were known to the Indians as the Sitecah and wore long robes. Driven deep below the Nevada desert by white settlers, the Sitecah could give 1950s spelunkers quite a shock. Mining, drilling, underground developments such as pipelines or subways, or atomic tests may anger cave-dwellers like the Sitecah. They venture above ground only at night.

Other possibilities include the survival of a psionic culture or gene in the human race. These people have incredible mind powers and live among us in secret. A family (or community) of psis makes a formidable enemy. However, the GM can split the psis into different camps; some want power, some prefer anonymity, others, perhaps, are willing to help the PCs. A psionic culture may come into conflict with the military or CIA, who want psi powers for military ends.

## Victims of Science

This is a catch-all category. It includes humans who have been transformed into something strange and inimical by alien tampering, strange phenomena, or ill-considered experiments.

Where *GURPS Supers* uses radiation leaks and chemical accidents as the trigger to create superhuman heroes, *GURPS Atomic Horror* takes a more pessimistic attitude. The '50s treated superhuman powers as dangerous, often deadly; powers are usually gained at the expense of sanity.

Characters who gain some strange power find that it gradually controls them and, more often than not, is destructive and unreliable. The person either turns into a victim (who has to be rescued from his curse) or a megalomaniacal monster (who must be destroyed for the good of society). The GM should be very cautious about allowing PCs to gain such powers, even temporarily.

A GM who has *GURPS Supers* can create the villain using those rules. Point levels range from 250 points on up (no Unusual Background is necessary). Often, superhumans start out with rather low-key powers, and become more potent as they become more unstable. GMs without *Supers* can just define a power and its game effects (e.g., 6d lightning bolt, range 30 yards), since it's not necessary to carefully balance (or even consider) the point totals of such monsters.

The list of possible superpowers is endless, but bear in mind their pseudoscientific nature and the fact that they must be fought by mere mortals. Example powers: the ability to become insubstantial and pass through solid objects, the ability to drain human life force like a vampire (see *The Arendians*, p. 43), invisibility, any psionic power, X-ray vision . . .

One of the most common sorts of human monsters is the human/animal hybrid, as typified by the title character of *The Fly* or the victims on H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Such hybrid creatures might possess enhanced strength, claws and fangs, superhuman speed, night vision, spider-like wall walking, chameleon abilities, venom, or anything else from the animal world.

# ATOMIC ADVENTURES



**Atomic Horror** adventures are like regular horror games . . . to a point. The GM should entertain the players with as much fear, apprehension, and tension as possible, using carefully constructed plots and atmospheric storytelling. But a psychopath with an axe isn't *science* horror. A real atomic monster must shatter the PCs' comfortable view of the universe; this is part of its fearfulness.

To most people, even in a game, real fear is *physical* fear. A horror game is more frightening when each player thinks his character can be killed at any moment. As the game nears its climax, the threat to innocent people – or the whole world – should be so great that the heroes will *have* to face the danger.

Real people in a situation like this would do the sensible thing and call the experts. To prevent this, the PCs should be the best (or only) experts around. Geographical isolation also compounds the tension. When the investigators are cut off from help, the GM is in full control of the environment. The team can't set up an electrification grid, stock up gasoline bombs, or visit an atomic physicist unless the GM lets them. He can leave appropriate clues and control which NPCs are available.

More subtly, the GM can isolate the team members socially. There are people (police? military?) who could easily deal with the menace, but they refuse to believe the PCs' wild story until it's almost too late. This greatly enhances the B-movie atmosphere of desperation.

The actual introduction of the menace will, to a large extent, determine the suspense level of the scenario. If the adventure begins with a world conference on global calamities, coupled with the threat of a comet striking the Earth, it will be hard to make things any *more* tense. If the scenario begins with a seemingly minor event – a peculiar death, a missing document, a UFO sighting – the GM can involve the players in the story by letting the heroes solve parts of the mystery and gradually revealing some awesome danger. The problem becomes personal because *they* followed it up, rather than because an atomic horror was dumped in their laps.

It's much scarier when the first clues are subtle. Putting off the final revelation until the climax allows the players to fill in the gaps. The investigators shouldn't be able to learn everything just by looking at victims or talking to witnesses. With 100'-long monsters, it may seem hard to hide the clues. But in *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, the creature is only briefly glimpsed at the start of the movie, and heard off-screen a few times. Later on, reports come in of attacks on a lighthouse and a trawler; not until it crawls out of the Hudson River is the beast seen clearly.

## Creating the Ultimate Horror

Traditional horror hinges on natural human fears: death, disease, vengeance, the undead, or beast-madness. However, the menaces of **GURPS Atomic Horror** are unnatural, artificial creations of Man, the products of his irresponsibility and pride. Atomic horrors should defy the laws of nature and should act in wholly unpredictable or unearthly ways.

To create a truly petrifying horror, the GM can choose a menace based on its *modus operandi* – the more bizarre, the better. A creature that burrows through the ground to snatch people from fields and beaches has *got* to be monstrous. This mystery can't be explained by an escaped lion or snake!

From there, the GM can create a plot to involve the PCs in the creature's creation or destruction. There are a variety of vicious causes of death to toy with, even apart from being dragged into the ground by the "burrower." A creature might feed on nerve tissue, bone, or calcium, or a monster might digest a living being *except for its skin*.

## THE SUPERNATURAL SMOKESCREEN

A GM may want to disguise the science horror as a supernatural horror to confuse the players, add variety to a scientific campaign, or provide a rational explanation for a so-called "paranormal" monster or effect. This is an effective way to mix supernatural and scientific elements – to show how science has duplicated a supernatural phenomenon or has exposed the true causes. Rumors of a vampire might lead to an Arendian; a werewolf might turn out to be the result of fiendish genetic experiments involving animals and men. Of course, these creatures are immune to exorcisms, magical rituals, and holy objects. Players who believe these creatures are occult in nature may have a nasty shock; they will have to turn to science sooner or later.

An **Atomic Horror** campaign that combines science with the occult is quite feasible. One adventure could involve a haunted lighthouse, with real ghosts, spells, and magic; another might uncover rock-creatures attacking uranium miners. Mixing the two genres can expand the scope of the campaign but also may confuse the players (which may or may not be a good thing). A GM who wants to run a mixed game will find **GURPS Horror** a distinct help. Let the PCs discover the reality of the game universe for themselves. Mere humans may be seriously bewildered. A '50s magician or priest may think he's dealing with demons when in reality he's being contacted by the Loi Alliance!

## POLLUTION AND MUTATIONS

Like nuclear radiation, pollution can be used as a general monster-maker. Most chemical spills will cause horrendous damage to living organisms – blackouts, chemical burns, the destruction of lung tissue, and brain damage. The GM may assume that DNA (still poorly understood in the '50s) can be altered by toxins. Maybe the new genes cause some of the mutations described in Chapter 6. Deadly toxic gases may be leaked from chemical manufacturers, germ warfare research facilities, or, more rarely, natural underground deposits. At sea, an overturned freighter could release hundreds of drums of chemicals into the sea, creating unspeakable horrors of gigantic size.

Perhaps the Army tests bizarre new chemicals on animals. What if one of these altered animals escapes? The drug could have been a combat serum to stimulate violence or to reduce the feeling of pain, either of which would make the



## STRANGE ENERGIES

During the first half of the 20th century, mankind became ever more conscious that earth was adrift in a sea of strange, invisible energies – gamma rays, X-rays, cosmic rays, and, finally, atomic radiation.

In the '50s, most people knew that radiation existed, but few had any concept what it *did*. This makes things easy on the GM – “radiation” is the perfect all-purpose monster-maker for the campaign. Fallout from nuclear tests can change innocent desert creatures into ravening monsters. Undetectable cosmic rays can turn stalwart astronauts into something inhuman. Solar flares and radioactive comets can bathe the whole globe in strange energies that fundamentally change the nature of things.

This allows the GM to create an atomic horror anywhere there's energy. And as the people of the '50s were becoming increasingly aware, energy is *everywhere*.

animal hard to kill or capture. In Alan Moore's graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, scientists test chemicals on inmates of concentration camps, echoing real-life tests in the Nazi death camps. Science may indeed make a breakthrough, but only at the cost of human life and suffering. A mutated human created under these barbarous conditions will seek revenge on those carrying out the experiments.

While it is unlikely that normal pollution (carbon monoxide and such) can create a monster, more obscure chemical releases might. The natural toxins mentioned above might spew out of a crack in the ground (like the radioactive gas radon), including wholly unknown chemicals from the Earth's mantle. Such a cloud might have localized effects or might lead to the eventual extinction of mankind. Can the PCs prevent the destruction of every man, woman, and child on the globe? Surely that would be worth a few extra character points!



## Settings

### THE BIG CITY

Major metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, London, or New York make excellent headquarters for an ongoing campaign. However, they are not normally the site of the horror's initial forays. A destructive attack on a major urban center should be reserved for the climax of the adventure, like the flying saucer attack in *War of the Worlds* or any number of giant monster attacks on Tokyo.

The suburbs make much more fruitful ground for horrific encounters, since they tend to shelter universities, secret research facilities, and breeding grounds for science-gone-bad. The suburbs – the epitome of ideal '50s life – are also an excellent stage for a covert invasion (see pp. 108-110), as in the classic *Twilight Zone* episode, “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street.” The suburbs represent safety, family life, and normality; the contrast makes the appearance of some sort of monster all the more terrible.

### SMALL-TOWN AMERICA

As in the suburbs, horrors seem even more horrible in contrast with the bucolic vision of 1950s small-town America. From the GM's point of view, small towns are relatively easy to isolate. Having the monsters cut off all the phone lines and jam all the radios in Wholesomeville eliminates the investigators' option of calling in additional military or scientific support, while still giving them lots of innocent lives to protect.

An excellent side effect of small-town isolation is the uncertainty factor. The team should wonder if the menace is already “out there.” They shouldn't be sure until the adventure ends whether they eliminated the menace, or won a local victory in a much bigger war.

A small town could also spring up near a military base which houses the secret project that created the horror. Of course, a military installation on the outskirts of town can eliminate the GM's advantage of isolation – unless the menace destroys the base's personnel and equipment before the townsfolk even suspect that something's happening.

### WILD PLACES

The desert, the jungle, the Arctic, the woods, the mountains – remote areas are excellent places to hunt for strange creatures and unknown horrors. Atomic test sites were usually in the middle of the desert or tundra, or on remote and isolated islands. Such tests could create new creatures or awaken existing ones.

And, of course, mad scientists conduct their experiments as far as possible from civilization.

It's eminently simple for the GM to isolate the PCs, leaving them entirely to their own resources in the wilderness. However, they no longer have to worry about protecting the innocent (at least in the short term), so some dramatic tension is lost.

Sometimes a wilderness scenario is a battle of wills, matching the team's abilities directly against those of the enemy – a fight to the finish.

On the other hand, if the menace is truly overwhelming, the adventure becomes more of a race against time, in which the PCs try to evade the menace long enough to warn civilization about the approaching danger. This is one time when it's OK for the Air Force to fly in and bomb the monster out of existence at the end of the scenario – the challenge lies in reaching the Air Force.

## UNDERSEA

Underwater scenarios are doubly hard. Not only the monster but also the very environment is against the team, making for tense, frightening adventuring. Depending on the depth, the ocean delivers death by drowning, crushing pressure, or freezing cold – to say nothing of natural predators. The investigators are restricted to their submarine, habitat module, or pressure suits. Intelligent foes like the Nommos (see p. 90) attempt to exploit such a weakness. If the menace gets inside the investigators' habitat, they will have to fight it however they can, with no place to run, in conditions where heavy weaponry is possibly more dangerous to the user than to the target.

The ocean depths also offer perhaps the ultimate in isolation. A team at a depth of 30,000 feet, in the only bathyscaph within thousands of miles, that suddenly loses its phone line to the surface – it's hard to get more isolated. Finally, the undersea world is mysterious. Completely apart from the otherworldly strangeness possible in an *Atomic Horror* campaign, the ocean is home to enormous creatures that have never been caught or analyzed by science.

In fact, the biggest challenge for the GM in a deep-sea adventure is not building tension, but giving the team a plausible means of survival. Helpful hints may be found in *GURPS Atlantis*.

## UNDERGROUND

In the '50s – the decade of the “International Geophysical Year” – inner space was nearly as fascinating as outer space. Many science-horror films dealt with menaces that crawled out of deep, subterranean caverns. Often, whole civilizations flourished under the earth. (See *Troglodytes*, p. 100, for some ideas on subterranean dwellers.)

An option for underground adventuring is the “Hollow Earth,” a whole world on the inside of the earth's crust. Usually, a tiny internal sun lights up this world, which has entrances at the poles.

## OUTER SPACE

Investigators may find themselves in outer space, as the crew of a primitive interplanetary rocket or the guests (or prisoners) of spacefaring aliens. Deep space offers all the advantages of the ocean floor in terms of isolation, mystery, and environmental hostility, plus the possibility of exploring entirely new planets and alien cultures.

# The Scenario



Science horror differs from traditional horror in its basis in scientific principle. By midadventure, researchers should know “why” and “how” and be able to use that information to defeat the menace. These questions can be answered over several games to create a long-running campaign, or in the space of a single scenario.

The stand-alone game resembles a movie and is easier to design and play. There is usually only one menace to contend with and few ramifications to consider. The heroes can be tailored to the scenario. This lends the plot credibility and allows relevant skills to be individually selected.

An ongoing campaign tends to be more complex, with several facets the GM should consider. Players can explore their own characters in more depth, and can solve plots spanning several scenarios and a variety of obstacles. This campaign resembles the “miniseries,” where a single complex story is broken down into several manageable chunks.

A third type is easier to plan and play, but lacks the detail of the miniseries approach. This is the “serial,” which may introduce the characters and setting with an extended initial scenario (similar to a TV series pilot), followed by stand-alone adventures. Each session, the investigators face some new threat, but the team members and the background stay the same. As with TV series, between scenarios the heroes are off-camera, living as usual until the next challenge arises.

A science-horror scenario works best as a series of layers, representing the heroes' growing knowledge, in much the same way that a police investigation becomes more focused as further evidence comes to light. New clues narrow the investigation and point the way to the horror's defeat. The final layer is often a face-to-face encounter with the menace at the climax. Armed with their knowledge, the researchers put their plan into action. This may involve using force or scientific theory (or both) to end the scenario.

A clever GM can allow the heroes to use a massive amount of firepower, only to see it fail miserably. They must then quickly reassess the situation. Similarly, if the PCs develop a second-rate plan, the GM can let them carry it out to a futile anti-climax. The GM may then drop hints about more “realistic” approaches.

The GM should never let a climax fizzle with an intellectual argument or abstract display of alien power. The players have worked hard to get this far, and deserve to wrap up with action! Car chases, firefights, or a spectacular monster battle all release built-up tension. When designing the climax, the GM would do well to plan the destruction or loss of evidence. If a scenario ends with the capture of an intact UFO, his world is in for radical changes. With just a little alien technology, the PCs could become supermen.

## Designing an Adventure

The climax is a good place to start designing an adventure. It is the kernel of the plot, encompassing the entire story, the “big picture.” The GM needs either to create a menace or to choose one, from those listed in this book or from films,

books, or TV. The science-horror genre is so much a part of American culture that players may instantly recognize a menace from one of the movies. The GM should blur plots and rationales, or mix one movie with another. Players who identify part of the scenario may make assumptions about the rest of it and receive quite a shock!

Once the GM has the basic idea behind the adventure, he can plot the story. Even without the PCs present, it should still be an interesting story, not frozen until the team appears. Their goal is to foil the menace; their clues must be spread through the scenario. Each layer of clues should refine the characters' perception of what they face. Initially, perhaps, the threat seems to be a strange disease, but the next disclosure hints that a vampire is responsible. Next, the heroes learn that the "vampire" is immune to crosses and that it only preys on America's brightest mathematicians. The plot thickens . . . the GM adds many more layers, each producing some "revelation" that eventually leads to the final explanation. In a campaign or extended scenario, each climax is only a stepping stone in a series of surprises; the finale should be well worth waiting for! The GM is within his rights to lull the protagonists into a false sense of security with minor climaxes. When they've completely relaxed, he can throw the *real* climax at them; the shock of it will be that much greater!

Matching the talents of the team to each situation may be the GM's most difficult problem. The TSF gives a group reasons to investigate mysteries, but covering every aspect of '50s pseudoscience is unlikely. If the party includes a rocket scientist and a zoologist, they are well-equipped to deal with dinosaurs or space shots, but not mutants with mental powers or radiation that rapidly decays metal. The GM can either write suitable adventures, or ensure that characters have a broad range of skills. The zoologist may also be familiar with biochemistry, botany, and biology, for example, and even knows a little about medicine. The cinematic Science! skill (see p. 24) has been designed to encourage this approach.

## STELLAR CATASTROPHES

If a comet caused the explosion over Tunguska in Siberia, then it is typical of the stellar catastrophes that continually threaten the Earth. The massed telescopes of the scientific community may warn of such a collision, providing a deadline for the PCs.

If the world's scientists gather to solve the stellar catastrophe, then the protagonists may be the American delegates, independent experts, or a special commission with the task of coordinating efforts. The United Nations might even approach the TSF with this in mind. The party might face any of the following astronomical problems:

*Sunspot Activity:* Increased sunspot activity bombards the Earth with cosmic rays that cause mutations, spectacular auroras, global warming, and a rise in sea levels. Scientists may need to fire an experimental probe into the Sun, or "seed" the Earth's upper atmosphere with protective particles.

*Unstable Orbit:* Whatever caused Earth's unstable orbit (too many A-bomb blasts, the gravitational fields of passing black holes, or the Moon falling into the Earth), the effects are severe. Giant hurricanes, worldwide earthquakes,

tsunamis, volcanic activity, and phenomenal tides smash the planet and its inhabitants. Each catastrophe brings the end of the world closer. To prevent it, the agents have to tackle the cause of the instability. A-bombs might be used to "knock" the planet back into a stable orbit. As a variation, the Earth may be spiraling in toward the sun – that should test even the most experienced heroes!

*Return of the Ice:* Geologists believe that the planet is currently in an interglacial period; it will, eventually, end. If the Ice Age returns in the '50s, heroes may try to prevent it. Sea levels drop as water freezes at the poles; glaciers develop in mountainous areas and head towards lowlands; sub-zero weather grips the continents and crops do not grow. Is this nature's rhythm, or part of a nefarious alien plan to "terraform" our world?



## Cosmic Collision

One standard B-movie plot puts the Earth on a collision course with a heavenly body. Such a calamity can have a number of *interesting* effects.

If a comet, asteroid, or meteor strikes the Earth, it may well destroy our world, starting with violent earthquakes and volcanoes in the impact region. The blast would pulverize everything within hundreds of miles of the crater, throwing billions of tons of dust high into the atmosphere. Spectacular red sunsets follow for months after, as the temperature drops rapidly. A new Ice Age may begin, with the effects described above.

The plasma tail and hydrogen halo of a comet could have other effects, either before it strikes or as the comet makes a near miss. Radiation could cause rapid aging, a spate of cannibal zombies, or whatever the GM fancies. If the heroes narrowly avert the impact, the comet's tail might still release some other danger on the world!

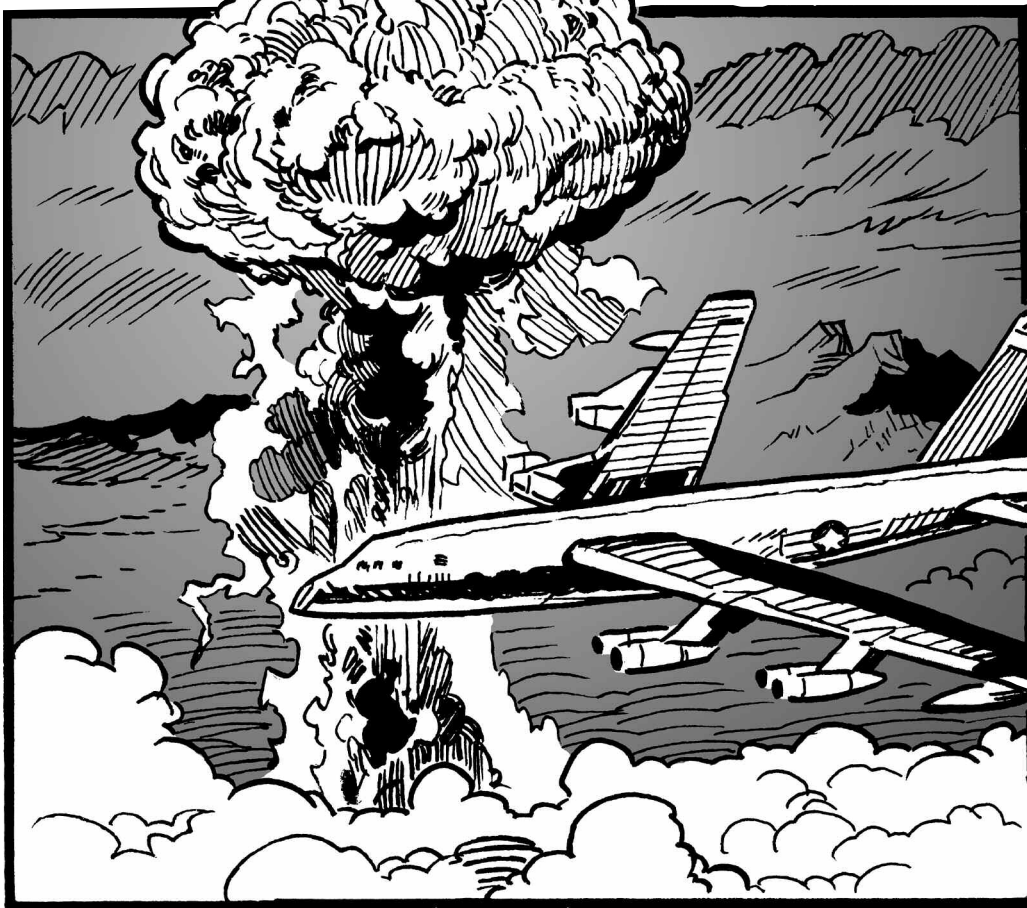
Firing an ICBM at the approaching object may knock it off course, or the characters could fly out to it in an experimental rocket. Once there, they might plant an atomic charge designed to split the target in two pieces that will veer off to either side of the Earth. (See the movies *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon* for plot ideas here.)

## GLOBAL CALAMITIES

When roleplaying the end of the world, it is handy to know exactly what kinds of things will happen on the local scale. A scenario may require rules for geological or meteorological catastrophes that the PCs may be caught up in.

### Volcanoes

These most often appear around the Pacific and in parts of the Mediterranean and the mid-Atlantic, although *Atomic Horror* GMs may place them wherever a suitable catastrophe creates them! A volcano is a vent that allows magma to flow to the surface, sometimes beginning with an explosive eruption of boiling gases and clouds of ash and pumice. The intense heat melts any snow on the summit of a volcano, which in turn triggers dangerous mudflows.



Barring superhuman abilities, anyone on the summit during an eruption is killed by the shock waves. Every 15 seconds that anyone remains in the open in a five-mile radius during a fall of ash, he takes 1d-3 points of damage. Wooden-roofed buildings collapse in half an hour as the ash builds up. Within five minutes, the ash halves all ground movement; after 15 minutes, ground movement is impossible. Where pumice precedes or accompanies an ash cloud, the rain of scalding stones ignites flammable buildings and causes 1d+2 points of damage to unprotected individuals every 10 seconds.

### Earthquakes

Seismic tremors can result from volcanic eruptions or the impact of a meteorite with the Earth. Usually they are caused when mounting stresses at the boundaries between tectonic plates suddenly release. The *epicenter* is the point on the surface above the quake's origin – the effects are fiercest there and decrease with distance. *Atomic Horror* earthquakes should be momentous disasters (rated 7 to 9 on the Richter scale) with crumbling office blocks, bursting gas and water mains, and fissure-torn roads and bridges. PCs caught in the quake must roll vs. ST to avoid taking 1d damage. Though the main quake may last just for 10 seconds or so, it will be preceded by warning tremors and followed by aftershocks. The aftermath will certainly test the skills of a group: trapped office workers, unstoppable fires, lack of drinking water, and refugees fighting for food. The “foreshocks” should warn the PCs of the disaster to come if they don't prevent the catastrophe that is the meat of the scenario. An earthquake is a great backdrop for an adventure.

### Hurricanes

Violent tropical storms are ever-present dangers in the Indian Ocean, Western Pacific, and the Caribbean. When catastrophe strikes, hurricanes may sweep across the world halting air and sea travel, flooding cropland and rivers, swamping coasts with deadly tidal waves, and destroying lives and property. Like earthquakes, hurricanes cut off water supplies, telephone communications, and electricity. PCs have to abandon vehicles and make plenty of Swimming rolls to get to higher ground.

### A-BOMB TESTS

Growing fears of danger to Earth's stability and Earth's atmosphere in the '50s occasionally showed up in the movies of the decade. Newer, more powerful devices (such as the hydrogen bomb) seemed to be constantly appearing. Throughout the 1950s, there were rumors of a Doomsday Machine, a device capable of destroying the Earth, which would be detonated when any one nation began using atomic weapons. This mythical weapon epitomized the deep-rooted fear of the Massive Retaliation syndrome and its principle of atomic suicide. Fear of this bomb and the utter hopelessness of attack (since attackers, defenders, and all humanity would perish) was supposed to preserve peace. Such a weapon never existed.

Atomic tests in *GURPS Atomic Horror* could shift the Earth's axis, creating an unstable or decaying orbit. They may throw up so much dust that a new Ice Age – “nuclear winter” – is just around the corner. *GURPS Ice Age* has information for games which take place in this dismal future. Other problems are likely, such as radioactive dust clouds that sweep across the desert or ocean to mutate travelers. The government, of course, does whatever it can to correct its tragic mistake. Sinister government coverups were not usually a part of popular entertainment in the '50s – of course, the GM remains free to be more cynical than the source material.

As an alternative, the GM might consider the Bomb's effect on the space-time continuum. Huge atomic and subatomic forces are involved; who can say exactly what can happen to the fabric of space-time? Perhaps, each time a device explodes, it creates a rift that can act as a door to another time, another part of the universe, or another universe altogether. Each rip acts as a miniature Bermuda Triangle, causing disappearances and radiation anomalies. An expedition through such a rift might find Flight 19 and the *USS Cyclops* (p. 112) – undamaged, with their bewildered crews.

## MEDDLING SCIENTISTS

The '50s scientific establishment is driven to benefit mankind. It mainly tackles problems as if they were engineering questions, building bigger and better solutions to

bigger and worse challenges. In many ways, the scientist is devoted to the progress of mankind and the pursuit of knowledge with little regard for the ramifications or irresponsible uses of his theories. This is particularly true in the '50s, when it was generally considered a good thing to invent ever-more-destructive weapons – after all, if we don't, *they* will. A scientist who worries about military exploitation of his discoveries might well be regarded as a traitor – or, at best, a dupe of the Communists. Of course, if the project is not complete when the military gets its hands on it, or the military's application is far beyond the scope of the experiment, the effects on global climate or local population could be disastrous.

Mad scientists may see the damage they inflict on society but forge ahead regardless, believing that the benefits far outweigh any short-term inconvenience. Or they could be crazed megalomaniacs – psychopaths intent on world domination or revenge. The type of horror they unleash should mirror their mental state; often, it causes their downfall or death.

Here are several advanced scientific projects, and the ways in which they can be perverted in the wrong hands (or just plain go out of control):

*Sonic Research:* Sonic vibrations, used to repair cell damage, can be used by the military as a weapon that kills at a distance.

*Borehole:* Able to tap the tremendous temperatures of the mantle as a power source, this experiment is unstable; volcanic activity threatens to split the Earth.

*Subliminals:* Subliminal imaging can be used to rehabilitate criminals or help the mentally ill. Subversives can use it for propaganda.

*Microwaves:* The Army might misuse research into microwave communications to build a heat ray, able to cook tank crews but leave the vehicles intact.

*Antigravity:* The use of an antigravity “accelerator” to launch probes into space could rupture the Earth's gravity field, allowing the atmosphere to leak away. The rupture might move with the Earth's magnetic current. Cosmic rays may also penetrate the rift, causing untold damage to those below.

## CONTACTEE CULTS

Real cults from the '50s and '60s include:

### **The Aetherius Society:**

Founded by George King, this society is a worldwide group that believes the rest of the solar system is inhabited. The society communicates with an Interplanetary Parliament and works with UFOs to store up energy in spiritual batteries around the world, which is released at times of crisis. King has traveled in flying saucers and talked to the Master Aetherius and the Master Jesus.

### **The One World Family**

Founded by Allen-Michael Noonan, this is a California cult. Noonan was transported to another planet and was asked if he would become the Savior of our world. He accepted. He is in contact with Ashtar, takes trips to Venus, and regards himself as the Messiah. Drugs and psychic abilities are popular with the One World Family, which supposedly will one day rule the United States, control the U.N., and “eliminate” all professing Christians.

### **Institute for Cosmic Research**

Founded in Michigan by a man known as Gordon, this society is involved in the construction of a flying saucer called “Bluebird.” Gordon is one of seven Great White Brothers who are in contact with extraterrestrials from Io. He represents Earth on an Intergalactic Council that has announced that hatred will destroy our world.

## DISCOVERIES

In the '50s, the exploration of the Earth was finally completed – Hillary and Tenzing went to the top of Everest, while the *Trieste* went to the floor of the Challenger Deep. After the '50s, there were no more blank spots on the map.

The films of the decade often dealt with what explorers would find at these farthest reaches of the earth. Movie scientists didn't always cause the menace; sometimes they just *found* it – “Lost Worlds,” monster islands, subterranean civilizations, and all their denizens and dangers.

Sometimes the challenge of a discovery scenario is just to get there (wherever “there” is) and get out alive. Other times, the discovery is only the start – the real action comes when something is brought back to the outer world. Here, the concept of “hubris” comes into play – something that was harmless and necessary in its own environment becomes dangerous when moved by careless, ignorant, or greedy humans.

## SPACE EXPLORATION

With ancient secrets of the Earth being exposed almost daily, man started looking to the stars. The GM should feel free to nudge the start of the space race back a few years and make the PCs the crew of an early expedition to the moon . . . or another world.

Space shots in the 1950s should be rare and dangerous, as they were in the real-world Apollo program. If the PCs go to another world, they should not hope for rescue if something goes wrong or expect to return for several years at least.

However, realism need not compel the GM to confine space exploration to near-Earth orbit and the moon. Manned expeditions might be possible to Venus and Mars, passing comets or asteroids, or even the moons of Jupiter or Saturn.

In the '50s, few people had any idea how difficult and expensive space travel would be; an *Atomic Horror* campaign can reflect this. Rockets in the '50s might well be smaller than real-world multistage monsters, including more spacious crew quarters. A civilian corporation, rather than the government, might sponsor a '50s space program. The first successful space flight could well be the work of a small team of engineers working in their spare time, with money from academic grants and private fortunes.

## The Alien Invaders

Not all calamities befalling '50s Earth are man-made or acts of cosmic fate. Somewhere out there, alien intelligences far superior to ours watch the Earth with suspicious eyes. Without doubt, the most frequent threat to America in 1950s B-movies was not the Red Army or the A-bomb but alien invasion. Across the United States, newspapers, radios, and televisions reported sightings of flying saucers at an ever-increasing rate.

From 1947 on, the country was gripped by a wave of interest in spaceships from other worlds. Many sightings could not be reasonably explained as anything else . . . The Air Force, the CIA, even the President himself expressed deep interest in the phenomenon. Almost immediately, fiction mingled with fact in films such as *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing*, and *Invaders From Mars*. The flying saucers' motives for visiting Earth were uncertain: they came to watch, to learn, or to warn . . . but usually to invade!

## THE COVERT INVASION

A sneak invasion, without violence or fuss, is always an excellent way to stage a takeover. Typically, when the investigators discover an invasion, no one believes them; the government and armed forces rarely involve themselves. The PCs are entirely alone. The definitive film of this type is *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

The covert invasion can begin *anywhere*, but the scenario works best when the alien beachhead is a small town off the beaten track. The inhabitants are isolated from the rest of America and usually lack proper scientific facilities, giving the aliens an edge. On the positive side, the investigators have a better chance of figuring out which "people" are the aliens

## CYBER IMPLANTS

The following alien cyber implants can be removed with a successful Surgery-4 roll. Failure has the same effects as any other surgical failure (see p. B56).

*Cortex Control:* This is a small needle implanted into the base of the skull to tap into the cerebral cortex. A small silver nodule protrudes, but a collar or long hair covers it. A cortex control allows the implanter to control the actions of the victim. General commands (such as "patrol this area and deal with intruders") are followed, but the victim suffers a reduction of -1 to DX. For detailed work involving concentration, an alien must control a victim carefully. If ordered to carry out some action involving a mental disadvantage or suicide, the victim can make a Will roll at -4 to disobey. Resistance to repeated commands to carry out the same task must still be rolled, but the penalty decreases by 1 each time.

The maximum range for cortex control is 5 miles. When the control is deactivated, the victim has a blurred memory of his time in captivity.

*Psych Implant:* This mind-altering implant provokes certain psychological reactions in the brain. Aliens use it to alter the thinking of an important person (temporarily abducted for the implantation process). It gives the victim a mental disadvantage, such as Pacifism, Combat Paralysis, or Gullibility, which is useful for manipulating politicians or other famous people who cannot be replaced by an alien agent. The Loi have used the Pacifism implant on several key U.S. senators and important atomic scientists. (Historically, many scientists *did* adopt a no-nuke stance in the '50s, notably Einstein and Oppenheimer.)

*Radio Beacon:* A minor implant in the lower spine, the radio beacon emits a continuous signal that the alien can pick up within 200 miles, to keep track of dangerous humans or even fellow aliens. The beacon also monitors body activity, and emits a warning signal if the victim is wounded, and a separate signal if he is dead.

FM radios are able to pick up the beacon's pulses. The operator should make an Electronics (Communications) roll each 10 minutes, with a bonus of +2 within 10 miles or +5 within 1 mile. Using three radios at least a mile or so apart, the PCs can locate an implanted beacon after all three operators have picked up the signal (requiring 2d hours).

and of destroying them than in, say, New York, where it is more difficult to follow someone's movements.

With skill, the GM can use the covert invasion as a campaign theme as well as the source of individual scenarios. The result is a series of linked adventures, similar to the TV series *The Invaders* and *War of the Worlds*. In this type of game the aliens probably do not take over one small town after another (there are a lot of small towns in America!), but invade towns here and there as bases from which to conduct operations. The struggle could last for many game years, with humans discovering more and more about alien physiology, society, and technology. Even when the PCs think they've stopped the

invasion, the aliens may not all be wiped out. This allows the campaign to resume in the future. The adventurous GM may set a sequel in the '90s or even in a cyberpunk future. In traditional Hollywood style, the main characters might be the children of the '50s investigators!

The government views any proven alien operations as Communist sabotage, no matter how bizarre; only the TSF (or the Scientific Advisory Agency) knows differently. If the protagonists are government agents, they are on their own, with limited resources due to "security restrictions" and a "need-to-know policy." This prevents them from calling in an air strike or the Marines every time they face an atomic horror . . .

A scenario could begin when the PCs sift news reports of alien activity or pick up unearthly transmissions from an innocuous location. Throughout the adventure, they must struggle to find out what the aliens are up to while evading the interlopers. Alien invasion plots vary depending on the race of the invaders, but typical activity includes:

- ⊗ Producing a virus deadly to humans.
- ⊗ Producing a substance toxic to the Earth's beneficial bacteria.
- ⊗ Exploding an A-bomb to set off World War III.
- ⊗ Trying to keep a reporter from publishing the truth.
- ⊗ Colonizing another small town.
- ⊗ Taking over a radio station to communicate with home.
- ⊗ Taking over a factory to repair their flying saucer.
- ⊗ Locating and rescuing a crashed flying saucer crew.

Perhaps the end of each scenario provides clues that point to the aliens' next plan of action, which leads nicely into next week's *Atomic Horror* session . . .

Crucial to the covert invasion is paranoia. Some inhabitants of the town may start to believe that a loved one is somehow "different," although to everyone else he speaks and acts quite in character. His body language is subtly different, detectable only by those who know every nuance of his personality. The PCs can follow up such clues.

Detecting an alien possession is more difficult when the victim lives alone; the hunters may only discover who the alien is when he begins trying to kill them or get them arrested. The GM can give the alien some identifying mark that the PCs can look for: the aliens may always travel in threes (Metarans), gradually suffer burns and bruising (Arendians), or have a scar at the back of the neck (Alphan cybernetic implants). For more on spotting invaders, see *The Enemy Within*, p. 96.

### Handling Paranoia

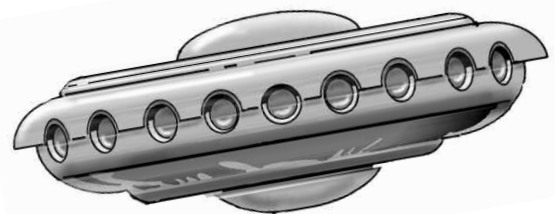
A story or a campaign that focuses on paranoia and covert invasion must be handled differently from more "ordinary" adventures. When the GM runs a plot that casts even a slight doubt on the loyalty of any party member, he should write notes to convey any information that can be written down rather than spoken. This means that the actions of all players, even innocent ones, are hidden (unless the *characters* can see and hear each other).

When the time comes for an agent to deceive the rest, they will be none the wiser. When characters were created in secret, like people in real life, players can no longer be sure that anyone is what or who he says he is!

## UFO LITERATURE

Investigators in the '50s may find any of the following books in libraries or on book shelves. Some could be useful in an investigation. GMs will find these books an excellent source of adventure and campaign ideas.

- Adamski, George. *Inside the Flying Saucers* (Abelard-Schuman, 1955).
- Adamski, George and Leslie, Desmond. *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (Werner, Laurie, 1953).
- Adamski, George. *Flying Saucers Farewell* (Abelard, 1961).
- Allingham, Cedric. *Flying Saucers From Mars* (British Book Centre, 1955).
- Arnold, Kenneth and Palmer, Ray. *The Coming of the Saucers* (Amherst Press, 1952).
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- Churchward, James. *The Lost Continent of Mu* (Coronet, 1931).
- Danielsson, Bengt. *Forgotten Islands of the South Seas* (The Adventurers Club, 1957).
- Donnelly, Ignatius. *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (1882).
- Flammarion, Camille. *The Unknown* (1900).
- Jung, Carl. *Flying Saucers* (Routledge, 1958).
- Keyhoe, Donald. *Flying Saucer Conspiracy* (Holt, 1955).
- Long, Max Freedom. *The Science Behind Miracles* (Devorss & Co., 1948).
- Michel, Aime. *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery* (Criterion, 1958).
- Michel, Aime. *The Truth About Flying Saucers* (Criterion, 1956).
- Owen, Robert Dale. *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* (Lippincott, 1875).
- Randall-Stevens, H.C. *Atlantis to the Latter Days* (El Eros, 1957).
- Ruppelt, Cpt. Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (1956).
- Scully, Frank. *Behind the Flying Saucers* (Holt, 1950).
- Von Liebenfels, Jörg Lanz. *Bibliomystikon* (1930).
- Weidenreich, Franz. *Apes, Giants and Man* (University of Chicago Press, 1946).
- Wilkins, Harold T. *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (Citadel Press, 1954).



## INVADERS IN CONTROL

Discovering that the U.S. government is being controlled by (or staffed by!) aliens could be the climax of a whole campaign. Over a series of scenarios, the agents find more and more clues pointing toward Washington, the Pentagon, and the White House. Actually identifying the aliens may prove to be an insoluble problem, unless the party has a secret list, a detection device, or the time for an elaborate battery of psychological tests. Such a task will be hindered by the Secret Service and the FBI, as well as the alien duplicates themselves; the eventual murder of one of these extraterrestrial officials will not have the approval of law-enforcement officials.

Characters who are “detained” by the FBI after killing an alien masquerading as a government official may not automatically go to prison. During their interrogation, the GM should make an NPC reaction roll as though in a potential combat situation. This roll has an automatic modifier of -10! Positive modifiers can be included for corroborating evidence, from +1 for a witness, to +5 if the President exploded when sprayed with ammonia, up to +10 for a working flying saucer. (Add +3 if the crime was only *attempted* murder.) The reaction of the interrogating agency reflects its ability to help or hinder the PCs; for instance, a Poor result means a lengthy court case followed by a prison sentence. Better reactions could mean that the agency turns a blind eye to the investigation, or even helps the PCs! Once the agency has proof of alien infiltration, the question is not what to do about it – investigate, naturally – but what to do with the people who first discovered it?

## THE OVERT INVASION

This type of invasion is far more difficult than the covert attack. In such a scenario, a literal “battle for the planet” is taking place, as the humans struggle to tip the balance in their favor.

A full-scale war is not the ideal setting for a roleplaying adventure; people’s actions are dwarfed by events around them. But a war against aliens is not a conventional fight – American M48 tanks and World War II weapons are no match for force fields, disintegrator beams, and antimatter missiles. The very futility of a war between the aliens and the armed forces is the key to an overt invasion scenario. While the Air Force attacks the saucers, and the Army tries to contain the aliens on the ground, the heroes can try to create a scientific solution, or just conduct a good, old-fashioned guerrilla war. In *War of the Worlds*, the scientists fail to come up with an answer; in *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, the heroes invent a radical new weapon (a sonic cannon) to deal with the intruders.

An overt invasion may begin accidentally, with humans attacking a flying saucer that has come in peace. Or the aliens may not be invading at all, but trying to retrieve a wounded comrade held at a military base.





A real military invasion is a super-scientific juggernaut, rolling over a helpless Earth. First, mother ships are spotted in the upper atmosphere, executing strange maneuvers while surrounded by a swarm of scout ships. Soon after, scout ships begin to carry out sabotage to frighten the populace and cause chaos. They drain power lines, causing widespread blackouts; jam Air Force radar; buzz airfields to taunt planes into the air to be annihilated; and destroy towns and cities. Sensible citizens will flee to the countryside.

The aliens may carry out some form of ecological warfare. The Alphans, for instance, release the spores of their homeworld food source, a fungus called "rotweed," which parasitically transforms Earth food (fruit, vegetables, crops, even trees) into a fungal cross-breed that the Alphans can eat. The humans slowly starve to death. Those who are *very* unfortunate are captured for genetic experiments. The Metarans may release a similar "Red Blight" – and they catch humans for food.

Military intelligence may employ the heroes in the early stages, to help with strategy and speculation, but the Army invariably goes ahead with an all-out attack on the aliens. This first battle probably is a disaster, causing the high command to realize that the armed forces are only good for slowing the advance of the invasion fleet slightly, as it stops to wipe out the troops. All eyes then turn to the TSF, or whoever the players work for, to discover and exploit a weakness.

### *Men in Black*

Extraterrestrial encounters do not always end with the disappearance of the flying saucer into the night sky. Witnesses who have spoken out, informing the press and government agencies of their experiences, are occasionally harassed by mysterious "men in black." Driving large black cars and wearing somber black suits, they warn contactees to keep quiet. Allegedly, some witnesses have been harassed by men in black even before they've had a chance to tell anyone! Who are these people? Why do they want UFO reports suppressed?

The men in black could simply be agents of the CIA or FBI wanting to suppress any unsubstantiated reports. Perhaps they believe that if there are too many UFO reports, the Soviet Union could launch an offensive using UFO scares as a diversion. The CIA or military might not be able to sort out reports of foreign planes from flying saucers.

There are more intriguing possibilities. The men in black may be part of an advance invasion force that needs to quash any stories about UFOs *fast*. Similarly, if a scout ship gets into trouble, the men in black (Loi, human-bodied Arendians or Metarans, or any human doppelgangers) may want to muzzle people who saw the crash and could report it to the authorities. The GM may give aliens high-technology equipment that can be used to "silence" witnesses, or to look for recovered bits of wreckage or alien artifacts. A multiscanner (see p. S70) easily detects the unique power emissions and metal compounds of alien technology. If the UFO was a secret Air Force project, the men in black are likely to be from Air Force Intelligence, the Office of Naval Intelligence, or the KGB ("A UFO, you say? Yes, please tell us all about it. You say you first saw it near Edwards Air Force Base? Allow us to take down all the details . . .").

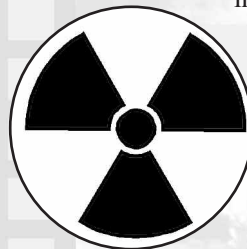
## **PANIC AND MARTIAL LAW**

When trouble breaks out, the first people to get involved are the local cops. A police department can probably lay its hands on a few Thompson SMGs, M-2 carbines, pump-action shotguns, and Winchester '94 .30-30s. A few large departments might even have a riot squad or stakeout squad able to use them effectively. There was no SWAT equivalent and no comparable training or expertise available.

A menace too great for the police may inspire a call to the governor's office to request help from the National Guard. Although these troops are only part-time soldiers, they have military equipment and may prove tougher than they first appear. Typically, a Guardsman carries an M-1 Garand, steel helmet, and bayonet. Officers carry M1911 pistols, M-2 carbines, or M3A1 SMGs. Such a call should be governed by the rules for *Bombing Atomic Horrors*, p. 82.

The National Guard will evacuate families, search the wilderness for crashed objects, patrol the town during emergency curfews, or guard important installations (hospitals, police stations, governor's residence, airport, etc.) during periods of crisis. Their presence will attract the attention of Washington; regular troops will be notified of the situation if the problem involves actual military action. If so, the National Guard will assess the strength of the menace. If it is beyond their abilities, the U.S. Army or the Marines will move in and take over.

The threat of an atomic horror will probably cause the governor to authorize the evacuation of a town or city. Public transport will be collect the gathering refugee crowds at assembly points and ferry them into the countryside. The National Guard will patrol city streets to prevent looting and work with the police to notify residents in every house and apartment of the menace. Radio and TV stations will broadcast continuously to the panicked population; the state governor will ask for calm. When the city is empty, the National Guard will blockade the roads in and out. Only the most optimistic of GMs should run the evacuation as smoothly as George Pal did in *The War of the Worlds*. More likely, chaos and violence will erupt at collection points and in the center of town.



The men in black are particularly frightening when they are only rumors, shadowy bad guys, who are heard of but never encountered. A UFO witness may call the PCs and recount her story, including how the men in black threatened her. When the party returns from their dead-end investigations, they find someone else living at the witness's house . . . Neighbors, tax records, lease holdings, and even the paper boy all tell the same story: the "new" occupants have lived there for over 20 years! Hallucination? Or cleverly orchestrated trickery?

# Unexplained Phenomena



Rather than use a traditional interpretation for such things as the Loch Ness monster, '50s scriptwriters tried to update the explanations. *Atomic Horror* GMs can dress up a well-known mystery with Nazi plots, secret atomic reactors, and alien invaders. TSF investigators should expect a scientific challenge.

## LOCH NESS

Although lake monsters are known in Canada and other parts of the world, the creature that supposedly resides in Scotland's Loch Ness is undoubtedly the most famous. The dark waters stretch for 25 miles and descend to over 800', and have been the scene of hundreds if not thousands of sightings of a large, long-necked animal. By the 1950s, many people had taken photographs and even moving pictures, adding weight to the theory that something similar to a plesiosaur (or, more realistically, a *family* of plesiosaurs) lived in Loch Ness. This species otherwise died out 70 million years ago.

In *Atomic Horror*, the monsters could be a surviving school of plesiosaurs (see p. 95), or extraterrestrial creatures brought to Earth by the Nommos (p. 90), who built their base beneath the loch. The monsters were meant to deter native tribes from invading the privacy of the base; in the Age of Science, however, the guardians only invite attention. The GM might let players believe Nessie is a plesiosaur

and slowly allow them to discover the truth about the loch's inhabitants . . .

The Loch Ness mystery may also relate to the phenomenal number of sea serpent sightings around the world. Oceanographers do not doubt that many of these creatures are undiscovered species; the ocean is a vast and relatively unexplored realm. One of the most disturbing of recent photos is a long-necked, four-flippered *something* hanging from a derrick on a Japanese whaling ship. Caught in nets, it was heavily decomposed; it was thrown overboard after a scientist took samples for analysis in Japan.

## THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

The Bermuda Triangle stretches from Bermuda in the north, to southern Florida, east through the Bahamas to a point past Puerto Rico. In this area, ships and planes seem to disappear in disproportionate numbers without a trace. Columbus passed through the Triangle and witnessed fireballs and other phenomena. The most famous modern disappearances include the *USS Cyclops* and Flight 19 – a group of five Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bombers. These planes, on a routine training mission, vanished in December, 1945, after reporting bizarre electromagnetic effects. Most of the documented disappearances have occurred since 1945. Usually there is no wreckage, no oil, no life jackets, and no survivors. Sometimes a ship is found adrift without a crew.

The United States Navy has also reported many USOs, or Unidentified Submarine Objects. During one naval exercise, several vessels tracked a USO for four days, during which

## LOS ANGELES NPCs

These characters can be used in any type of campaign based in or around Los Angeles. This list provides names and occupations; skills and abilities are left up to the GM to suit individual scenarios.

*John Brittain*: This stern, ultra-efficient man served in the Pacific. In his mid-30s, he is the Special Agent in Charge for the FBI's L.A. office. He is as cold and security-conscious as anyone can be.

*Christian Burrows*: A short, plain man, but violent and streetwise. Retired from the police due to illness, he runs a detective agency with Frank Hershey, a bigoted Korean War veteran who lives on his boat in Santa Monica. Encounter Investigations is popular with large companies and scientific groups. Burrows is married to a young French girl named Anne.

*Gabriel*: This Loi outcast, owner of a bar called Brendon's, is a mysterious police/FBI informer in the L.A. region.

*Tonora Kojima*: A Japanese biologist pressed into service during the war to help develop germ weapons, his sabotage prevented the weapon's use. Kojima later went to Cal Tech to study molecular life and the origins of life on Earth. He lives in Pasadena; his family (including his daughter, Laura) lives in Little Tokyo.

*Major-General David Mulroy*: Ignorant and blunt, he is the commander of Edwards Air Force Base.

*Konstantin Pudovkin*: The KGB's resident director in the L.A. consulate is a cruel and heartless surveillance expert. His network concentrates on UCLA, Edwards AFB, and any scientific projects in the region.

*James Roberts*: This inept and clumsy chief investigator for the Atomic Energy Commission in southern California could lose his job soon, and he knows it. His boss is a harsh taskmaster who relentlessly throws Roberts into new investigations.

*The Scillacci Family*: A growing Mafia clan with interests in Lake Tahoe, Hollywood, smuggling, and Italian restaurants. Part of the family lives in London; a few still live in Palermo, Sicily. It is led by Tony Scillacci. Important bases are a bar called The Albany, and The Square Club in the West Side.

*Miranda Stanton*: This attractive ex-doctor is in her late 40s, and is the science and technology correspondent for the Los Angeles Times.

*Steven Wayne*: A friendly but dedicated scientist, Wayne is the head of the physics department at UCLA. He conducts his own research experiments, and his large home is often visited by scientist friends and journalists.

*Rear Admiral Daniel B. Wright*: A clever and experienced officer, he is commander of the naval base at Long Beach.



time it achieved speeds of 150 knots! Other phenomena include the temporary disappearance of planes from radar screens, with a loss of time on board the aircraft; and phantom vessels, seemingly replaying past events.

### *The Sunken City*

There seem to be traces of ruins beneath the waters of the Triangle, especially around the coast of Bimini. Seen from the air or through clear waters, the ruins extend out across the continental shelf (at depths of between 30' and 200'). Long stone roads, terraces, arches, plazas, and even what seem to be artificial pyramids have been recorded. Some say there are similar ruins off the Mexican coast. One amazing account tells of a monumental stairway cut into the rock, leading down the continental shelf into darkness . . .

The city could be part of the Atlantean chain of islands that stretched across the Atlantic before the Flood. What if some of the Loi exiles still inhabit it? They might have colonized the Caribbean when Atlantis sank. With flying saucers and blasters they've thrived undisturbed for 12,000 years. This could explain the UFOs and USOs seen in the Triangle. Alternately, the city might be a Alphan or Nommo colony.

### **NAZCA LINES**

There are thousands of artificial lines in the Peruvian desert. These lines are many miles long and form giant triangles, rectangles, and trapezoids. Some continue dead straight for miles. They were created by moving stones and topsoil to expose the chalky soil below. How are the lines so straight,

even when crossing hills and mountains? Even more amazing are vast pictures, each drawn with a single line: fish, birds, even a monkey! The Pan-American Highway was built right through them and no one detected the drawings; they are so huge that they can only be seen from the air. There are other drawings farther south in the Atacama Desert. The Nazca culture that built them all flourished around 2,000 years ago.

Erich von Däniken thinks the lines are runways for UFOs, but warp drives do not need runways. The beautiful drawings and lines may be messages, pleading with the gods to return. The Loi outcasts who lived among the Nazca taught them to expect the return of their brethren (the Alliance) in the future. Perhaps the exiles have retreated into tunnels beneath the Nazca desert.

### **OTHER UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA**

*The Silent City of Alaska:* This mirage of a city appeared in the 1890s, at Mount St. Elias in Alaska. In a glacial region near the coast, prospectors, Eskimos, and an expedition led by the Duke of Abruzzi saw a city with houses, spires, streets, trees, and towers. A few observers likened it to Bristol, 2,500 miles away in England. The mirage was visible every year between June and July.

*Ancient Indian A-Bomb:* The *Mahabharata*, an epic Indian poem from the second century A.D., talks of flying chariots and rockets, and "a single projectile charged with all the power of the universe." This weapon, brighter than 10,000 suns, turned into a column of smoke and fire able to burn the enemy race to ash. The corpses were burned beyond recognition, their hair and teeth fell out, and everything remaining was poisoned.

*Disk of Jelly:* In 1950, two police officers came across a 6'-wide disk of purple jelly in Philadelphia. It quivered as if alive and glowed from within. Residents saw the thing float to Earth; in half an hour it had evaporated. A similar jelly-like mass landed in Ireland in 1958.

*The Planet Vulcan:* In 1859, Urbain le Verrier sighted a planet in an orbit closer to the Sun than Mercury's. Confirming reports of a small, black disk moving across the Sun's face came from other quarters; this new world was called Vulcan. An American sighted Vulcan in 1878, but that was the last official sighting. Did Vulcan exist?

*Horned Giants:* In the late 19th century, archaeologists and historians in Pennsylvania uncovered the remains of an Indian burial mound. The skeletons discovered there averaged 7' tall, and the skulls had horns above the forehead! Mysteriously, the skeletons disappeared from the Philadelphia museum where they had been sent.

*TV Timeslip:* British television broadcasts were interrupted in some areas, in 1963, by an American program. This transmission, from a Houston TV station, TV-KLEE, faded in and out. How such broadcasts could interfere with local programs at that distance is a mystery; what is more mysterious is that TV-KLEE had long since shut down, and had transmitted the signals in question *years* before . . .

*Sole Survivor:* In 1939, a military transport plane left San Diego on a routine flight to Hawaii. It never arrived. Three hours after it took off, San Diego picked up distress calls, but heard nothing more until the plane limped back to base, its fuselage damaged and holed from exterior blasts. The 13 men on board were all dead, covered with gaping wounds; the copilot who made the emergency landing died within minutes. Technicians who touched the plane reportedly suffered severe skin infections. And the Colt pistols carried by the crew had been fired repeatedly; spent shells littered the cabin. What had the crew fired at? Desperation must have caused them to open up with pistols, which have an effective range of only 50 yards.

*Brazilian Worm:* A giant worm was seen in several Brazilian locations in the 1860s. One witness said that the amphibious worm was 3' wide and had a pig-like snout. It lay on a river bank; when startled, it burrowed into the ground, leaving deep furrows.

## Late Night Frights

The following two scenarios could be used for almost any team of investigators based on, or working in, the West Coast of the USA.

### DOA

The investigators are visited by a woman in distress. Dolores Devro was involved in an auto accident two nights earlier, near Santa Barbara. A wrecked car was blocking her lane on a bridge – she swerved and crashed her car into the railing. She was unhurt. When she went to investigate the abandoned car, she found two men covered in blood, badly injured or even dead. She looked for a pulse or I.D. and discovered a black, handgun-like gadget. Just then, the two men exploded! Their bodies burned brightly, their faces melted down across their

chests, and they soon became little more than charred places on the front seat. She can't remember much more, only being driven home by the sheriff and giving a statement. Devro has called the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, but they insist the men were victims of a routine car accident. There's nothing in the newspapers about it, either.

Alternately, the GM can introduce this adventure *as it happened above*, replacing Devro with a party member driving to Santa Barbara.

### Thinking Back

When she thinks back, Devro remembers that the two men wore janitor's suits with the logo I.S. Also, she's felt a little sick recently (from the radiation from the two bodies and the car – but she doesn't know that). Devro has brought the gadget with her, a peculiar black handgrip with a flat triangle mounted on top. There are several keypads and blank glass windows on the triangle.

### Industrial Services

Research reveals an L.A. cleaning company called Industrial Services. The two janitors worked for I.S. and had been subcontracted to the AEC's experimental atomic facility at Oak View, a tiny town 60 miles west of L.A. Their names were Johnson and Carter, and they were driving an I.S. car. Checking with I.S. shows that the two are missing; irate phone calls from the Oak View plant have been frequent. However, the sheriff's department has now informed I.S. of the deaths.

The bodies of the two men had been possessed by two Arendians from a "saucer" that landed near Cooke AFB a week ago. The Arendians first possessed the bodies of important officers and implanted cybernetic control devices in the rest of the base staff. Because they lack plutonium on Arend-Roland, the bodies of the janitors were used to steal it; they were driving back to Oak View after delivering the plutonium when they were severely side-swiped by a drunk driver. The Arendians abandoned the damaged bodies of the janitors and possessed the relatively unharmed driver and his passenger. The gadget is a multiscanner (see p. S70), which they used to find the plutonium.

### The Sheriff's Department

The sheriff's department denies any strange happenings. No one can see the car or the autopsy reports (such as they are). If the PCs somehow manage it, they discover that the auto is heavily irradiated; the only things left are clothes and a decomposing slime that defies explanation. It is partly human tissue, in which an amazing cellular deterioration is taking place. The sheriff's report recommends covering the case up and notifying the FBI of a dangerous mystery at Oak View. The FBI, as it happens, is already on the case . . . Of particular concern is the trunk of the car, which is dangerously radioactive (as if it had carried plutonium . . .).

Depending on who the PCs work for, they may be able to convince the sheriff to join their investigation. If so, he provides a copy of the autopsy report as above, but the FBI warns him away. They don't want *anyone* sniffing around this embarrassing mystery; the PCs might be Communist agents – or even

## ARENDIANS IN AIR FORCE BODIES

**Attributes:** ST 13; DX 12; IQ 15; HT 15.

Speed 6.75; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

**Skills:** Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-12.

**Weapons:** M1911 pistol, M3A1 submachine gun, or M2 carbine.

There are three Arendians in each group; each has credible ID and papers. They could use this paperwork to get police backing if they need it.

## ZOMBIE GUARDS

**Attributes:** ST 11; DX 11 (7); IQ 12 (8); HT 10.

Speed 4.25; Move 4.

Dodge 4; Parry 8 (Brawling).

**Skills:** Brawling-13; Driving-11; Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-12; Guns/TL7 (Rifle)-13.

**Weapons:** M1911 pistol and Garand M-1 rifle.

**Equipment:** Steel helmet (PD 3, DR 4).

These guards have cybernetic implants at the base of their skulls; a silver nodule protrudes out of the skin. This “programs” the guards and slows their reactions, reducing IQ and DX by -4. They will kill any intruders they find, check for others, and then inform the Arendians of the breach in security.

worse, reporters! If they have approached the sheriff, then the FBI begins trailing them immediately.

### Oak View Experimental Atomic Reactor

With a population that is almost 60% AEC employees, the town of Oak View lies a few miles off the main highway. The main bar in the town is always full of workers. This is where the investigators meet Floyd, a disillusioned worker who’s under suspicion for the (rumored) loss of 2 pounds of plutonium. He complains about massive security restrictions that have been instituted over the last four days, about the fact that the two missing janitors might be responsible for the upgraded security (and, he idly speculates, the loss of the plutonium that got him in trouble), and about the recent strange behavior of the plant engineer, Harvey Bullman.

(The Arendians need Bullman’s expertise to help them with their secret project. They’ve already tried to possess him at work but failed. Next they’ll try to snatch him from his home.)

Floyd will soon shut up; he’s seen one of the FBI agents watching him. The FBI now suspects the PCs of buying plutonium from Floyd to make a bomb. They follow the citizens and tap any phone calls they make. In this scenario, these Special Agents are the “men in black.” If the team tries to get into the facility, or attempts to see the manager or the chief engineer, they are treated roughly and put under surveillance by the FBI.

### Into the Fire

Now the players should be intrigued, confused, and paranoid! The two Arendians, now in Air Force officer bodies, drive

from Cooke AFB into L.A. to visit Dolores Devro (they got her name from files in the sheriff’s office). They want the multiscanner that she picked up at the car crash. If she gave it to the PCs (a logical thing to do), one of the Arendians exchanges host bodies with her, then contacts the team for “an urgent meeting.” They may have any military hardware the GM wants; after all, they’ve just come from a military base. The absolute minimum is a handgun each. They ambush the PCs and try to get the multiscanner from them. Remember that Arendian host-bodies spontaneously combust when dead! The car license plate and the uniforms can be traced to Cooke AFB. Obviously, something bizarre is happening at Cooke.

Meanwhile, a second team of Arendians in an Air Force van has kidnapped Harvey Bullman and killed his FBI body-guard. They don’t possess his body or give him a cyber implant, hoping to coerce the information from him before trying the rather risky option of possession.

With several Electronics Operation rolls, the team might be able to make some sense out of the multiscanner, particularly if they’ve got a Geiger counter for comparison. If used at Oak View it shows a high level of radioactivity coming from the Oak View plant (obviously), and a smaller level from Cooke (the missing plutonium).

### Cooke AFB

Cooke AFB is a large Air Force base on the west coast of America. The Arendians are building their secret device in Hangar 18, and the zombie-like base personnel do not let *anyone* through the gates, not even legitimate staff or delivery trucks! If the investigators try to get through the gate but drive away once they are denied access, a UFO flying eye, like a small ball of red fire, follows them for a while, keeping them under surveillance and listening to their conversations. The multiscanner shows unusual energy fluctuations coming from Hangar 18 as well as a radiation concentration.

While the party waits, Bullman is fitting the plutonium into the device. By first light, the aliens have completed their mission, destroyed the device, and left the area. Bullman lies in the hangar, shot to death.

Bringing the PCs into the hangar after the Arendians have used and destroyed the device ensures that they don’t get their hands on any technology, and leaves them feeling paranoid, and a little powerless. The GM can also bring them to the hangar at night, as Bullman and an Arendian helper are making final repairs. Bullman can tell the group what’s happened, and can show them the device (perhaps providing evidence of an Arendian invasion going on in America somewhere) but insists they leave. He plans to plead with the aliens to take him with them (in vain . . .). Exceptional patriots could attempt to sabotage the device without Bullman’s knowledge; if they succeed, the device blows up before it can be used. The pragmatic Arendian with Bullman allows the PCs to go on their 10-cent tour, in the name of keeping Bullman happy and the project on schedule. The Arendians will seek to silence the PCs at some other time – soon.

And what does the Arendian device *do*? That’s up to the GM. Perhaps the most frightening option is *never* to allow the PCs to figure out what the machine was for . . .

## ISLAND OF THE CRAWLING TERROR

The island of the title is Gozo, situated somewhere in the western Pacific. The U.S. government owns it. Since the end of WWII, it has supported an Early Warning radar installation, to detect Soviet bombers if they cross the ocean to attack the American west coast. Recently, a radical new type of radar has been developed; a prototype is on the island. The heat which this new radar generates requires extensive cooling facilities, for which it pumps sea water out of the ocean. Unfortunately for the staff and the heroes, sea water is not all it has pumped ashore . . .

The team members are asked to visit Gozo. The exact reason depends on the nature of their employer and on the skills that they possess. Technicians may need to help solve the failures that plague the radar; biologists may want to study the effect that the radar has on local animal life; and "general" investigators could perhaps be collecting data for a TV documentary, writing a series of scientific articles, or tracking down someone that has been sending some of the radar specs to the Russians.

### Settling In

The PCs fly to Gozo from Guam or Honolulu in a Super Widgeon seaplane. As they wade ashore with their gear, the plane is already powering across the turquoise ocean and back into the air. Gozo is a tiny island barely a mile across; the only hill on the north coast is the site of the experimental XMT-302

Westinghouse radar array. A hundred yards south of this is the personnel building, complete with air raid bunker. In the southeast corner of Gozo, a helipad is being cut out of the jungle for regular supply visits.

The investigators are met by Captain Willard and Master Sergeant Barnes, who run the island for the U.S. Air Force. Willard looks nonchalant, but gaunt and tired. Barnes is a seasoned military man and dedicated to his troops (and radars). He is tough, well-built, and scarred from bitter fighting at Okinawa when the airfield was overrun by the Japanese. These men have only nine Air Force men under their command, mainly engineers and radar experts. None are combat-trained, and few are familiar with the meager store of weapons on the island.

Barnes gruffly shows the guests to their rooms in the personnel building. (He has little love of civilians, but may warm to an ex-soldier or flyer.) The PCs have free run of this building, but if they wish to visit the radar, they must be accompanied by a technician.

### The Beginning of the End

The outsiders can explore the personnel building and the general layout of the island, but darkness descends soon. At dinner, the PCs can talk to the men at the installation. Willard is haunted by his task; Barnes is terse and critical; and most of the enlisted men are frustrated, both with the long hours trying to sort out the breakdowns and with the lack of leisure facilities. Because of the malfunctions, even the radio is out of service.

## OCTOPODS

**Attributes:** ST 14; DX 14; IQ 5; HT 12.

Speed 6.5; Move 6 (in any direction; ignore facing).

Dodge 6.

**Skills:** Stealth-13 (Retains its chameleon-like abilities).

Attacks by grappling foe (Quick Contest of DX). The target must immediately succeed at a HT check to avoid paralysis from secreted nerve toxin. Even on a successful roll, the victim is at -3 to DX. The toxin takes effect in 2 seconds. In the second round, the octopod will attempt to pull the target to its beak. This is a quick contest of ST. The bite does 1d-1 cutting damage.

**Ink Sac:** Octopods are able to squirt a black, inky mist of droplets to cover their escape. They can squirt into the three front hexes; the cloud remains for 1d seconds. The mist counts as total darkness (-10) for combat purposes. Each mutant has one "squirt" available each day. Combatants entering the cloud will find that it has the properties of tear gas (p. B132).

**Special Note:** Because they were born in extreme heat (in the radar cooling system), the octopods are immune to heat and fire attacks. However, cold does severe damage to them; a typical fire extinguisher does 1d+1 points of damage. Most extinguishers can be used 1d+1 times before they run out.

## GIANT OCTOPOD

**Attributes:** ST 20; DX 12; IQ 5; HT 14/35.

Speed 6.5; Move 0.

Dodge 0.

**Advantages:** DR 2; PD 0.

Attacks as a regular octopod, but can attack three times per round (it has a lot more tentacles) in any direction; ignore facing. The giant octopod bites for 2d-1 points of damage. Its ink squirt can be used six times each day and forms a cloud out to 4 hexes from the monster's front. It is a 10-hex creature.

## AIR FORCE TECHNICIANS

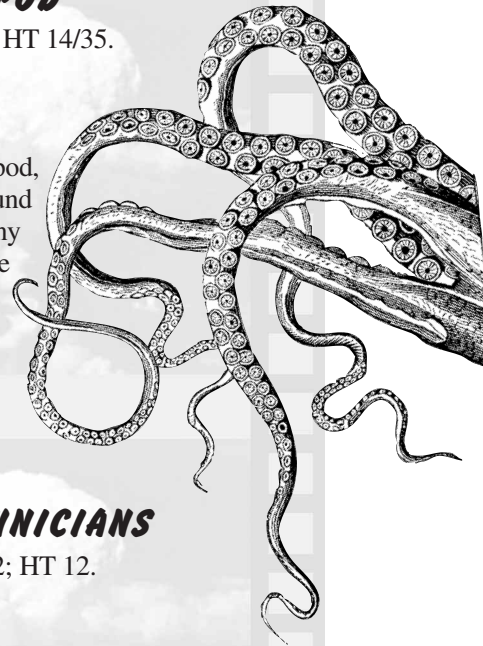
**Attributes:** ST 10; DX 10; IQ 12; HT 12.

Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Skills:** Electronics Operation/TL7 (Sensors)-16; Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-11; Mechanic/TL7 (Electric Motors)-15.

**Weapons:** At most a wrench, default skill-5; damage: 1d+2; must be readied.



The following morning, the group can go about its business. After only a couple of hours, Sergeant Barnes appears and tells them that Captain Willard cannot be found. He asks the PCs to check the personnel building while he organizes a search party. Assuming they comply, the investigators will find no trace of Willard. His room is tidy except for an open window (fairly common here at night); a bottle of ink has spilled over a letter he was writing to his wife.

### *The Crawling Terror*

A mutant octopus killed Willard during the night. Thousands more roam the island. The radar's cooling system sucked in a female octopus, who became lodged inside various tubes and pipes. The installations' exotic energies have transformed her into a monstrous giant octopod that has wrapped itself around and into all parts of the cooling system, causing malfunctions. And now . . . she has given birth. Her mutant offspring, numbering almost 20,000, are able to run on land and have all the predatory abilities of more mundane cephalopods. In addition, these octopods are huge, roughly the size of a man, and have carnivorous appetites!

The GM should lead up to the first encounter slowly, then swamp the PCs with attacks. As they fend off octopods from within the personnel building (the bunker must look particularly inviting) and the robust radar building, they should ask themselves, "Where did all these mutant octopods come from?"

### *Panic, Now!*

In the afternoon, the PCs may find two clues to the fate of Captain Willard. First, his body turns up in an unused part of the radar building. He is half-eaten; his blood contains some sort of paralytic neurotoxin; and he has been impaled repeatedly by a sharp, bony object. Second, there are bizarre tracks on the banks of the only stream on the island. They resemble a kind of oversized spider and lead to the shore. If the PCs have brought some of the technicians with them, then up to six mutant octopods (see box) attack them as the group reaches the shore. This melee should be confusing and violent; the GM should wipe out most of the technicians, leaving the visitors to make decisions on their own. If the PCs come to the shore alone, then the GM can scare them with just one or two octopods.

When they get back to the personnel building, any surviving technicians tell of huge groups of these monsters roaming the island and attacking them. As the Air Force men fled here, they were sure they were being followed! Either Barnes or a technician suggests spending the night in the air raid bunker below the island. It is supposed to be safe from nuclear attack, and should prove adequate.

### *The Bunker*

The bunker is, of course, far from safe! It is a poor design, riddled with vents and ducts that allow the octopods access from the surface. It does have, however, three M1911 auto pistols, an M2 carbine, and a flamethrower, all in an equipment locker. There are three reloads for each weapon. Note that the flamethrower could be more dangerous to the user than the octopods. Since heat and fire do not bother them, the operator may be exposing himself to great danger. Use of this item will alert the PCs to the monsters' invulnerability, though, and if they think to use the CO<sub>2</sub> fire extinguishers lying around, they will see that cold *does* affect these monsters. There are four extinguishers in the bunker.

The attempt to secure the bunker must fail, or appear to fail, with countless hordes of octopod monsters scuttling down corridors and pouring out of vents. Defending the bunker is futile; the survivors have to battle their way to the radar station, with its sturdy walls, for protection.

### *The Radar Station*

The interior of this building is a maze of corridors, gantries, machine spaces, maintenance shafts, and work rooms. Perhaps the best reason to retreat here is access to the radio, which is inoperative due to the fluctuating emissions from the radar itself. To call for help, the PCs' only real hope of survival, they must deactivate the radar by tinkering with the controls in various machine rooms. This is the climax of the adventure, as mutant octopods find ways into the building and pounce on the workers.

As the PCs crawl through connecting shafts and cooling vents, they come across the original giant "mother" octopod . . . or part of it, at least, probably a single massive tentacle curling its way through pipes and electronics. Touching it causes instant paralysis; the tentacle tries to retract and attack them. When they reach the chamber they want, the heroes discover the giant octopod there waiting for them. The radiation has caused her to grow a host of smaller tentacles, which whip the air between the party and the control unit. If they loiter, more octopods attack, to spur them into action. When they destroy the "mother," they can radio for help; she was rebroadcasting the radar's energy to her mutant offspring, keeping them in their present (excited) state of life. Without her, they wither and die, and very quickly resemble nothing more dangerous than dried jellyfish . . .

With the radio free, the PCs are free to call Guam or Hawaii for assistance and a ride home . . . but that may not be the end of it. Like all the best movies, the GM can run a sequel, "Return of the Crawling Terror," in which a number of embryonic octopods are carried (by the PCs or their rescuers) back to the States. Octopods in the sewers, in San Francisco Bay, on the airliner from Honolulu . . . the possibilities are endless.



## OTHER ADVENTURE SEEDS

### *Behind the Green Spore*

In a small California valley town, strange things begin to happen. The local three-man police office calls on Sacramento for help, and is referred to the Los Angeles office of the Theoretical Science Foundation, which dispatches investigators (the PCs). They learn from the sergeant that a psychopath has perpetrated a hideous case of cannibalism; he is now in the local mental facility. Normally a harmless nutcase, he was found down by the creek, near his favorite fishing spot, covered in blood and standing over the partially eaten body of a farmer's son.

As the players dig into the man's past and comb the area, they hear of (or witness) more cannibalism, always near the creek, by "normal" citizens turned slaving idiots. While they are connecting the creek to these horrific murders, the man in the asylum dies. Apparently he choked for a couple of minutes before his lungs swelled up and exploded!

The problem is a spore which enters the lungs and breeds there, driving the host to an insane lust for human flesh within hours. As the spore grows, it blocks the airway and releases a gas, which causes an explosion designed to spread new spores over a wide area. Anyone in the room with the psychopath is contaminated; a similar fate awaits them in 2d×4 hours. Exact rules for the green spore are up to the GM.

In town, during all the mayhem (in which one of the cannibals might get into town and explode, in a movie theater or a bar), the PCs see a couple of trucks from the Department of Agriculture. They are here on classified business, but scuttlebutt says it's connected to the Jeff Stoner farm. Everyone in town knows that Stoner has *significantly* increased his yield; but then, his farm *is* the biggest in the valley . . .

Stoner has bribed the local government to get a license for an untested agrochemical. Over the last few weeks, he's been spraying it on his fruit with incredible results. The Department of Agriculture has heard about the development and has come to see if Stoner can offer the federal government new techniques or strains of fruit. Unfortunately, the chemical caused a mutation in a strain of melon, which began producing this green spore. His melon patch is right next to the creek which flows past his farm. Dastardly GMs might allow the Department to cover up the chemical mishap and start dispensing the stuff. They could even bring the Department of Defense in on the psychological aspects of the green spore!

### *Comic Book Cover-up*

One of America's most popular comic books, *Visionary*, is renowned for the realistic and spectacular technology featured in every issue. The artist and writer responsible seems almost psychic; little does he know that he actually *is* receptive to the emanations of the Loi. Loi scouts were astonished to find exact copies of their equipment and craft in *Visionary*. The artist will find himself harassed by "men in black." The PCs may be asked to investigate these persecutors, or to look into the scientific feasibility of the artist's fabulous designs. Eventually the poor artist may be abducted or have his mind blanked.

## SILLY SEEDS

These adventure seeds are not meant to be taken seriously! The GM should exercise caution when employing them; not every player is suited to adventuring in absurdity.

*Invasion Hollywood!*: Aliens have arrived in Los Angeles. They don't want to take over the Earth or destroy humanity – they want to meet the superstars of Hollywood! The aliens are on a scouting mission to locate the origin of the "gods" they see and hear on the television and radio waves. They want to meet Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, John Wayne, and all the other stars. Perhaps the PCs can help them? Press agents, movie moguls, and the FBI can add to the confusion.

*A Left Turn at Saturn*: The aliens want our help; they've come from somewhere and are heading somewhere else . . . if only they could find it. These beings are not as smart as their technology would imply. If asked, they admit that they found all this equipment in a high school time capsule on their world! Not only do they keep getting lost, they mistake almost anything (except humans!) for intelligent life on Earth.

Other options include the Loi taking the artist into their confidence and feeding him bogus information for *Visionary*. Perhaps the Loi can "steal" his mind, or his thoughts, and retain them in a container. The PCs must locate this jar and get his mind back to save the writer.

### *The One-Eyed Giant*

At Cooke AFB in California (which would become Vandenburg AFB in 1958), the Air Force has created an artificial intelligence called Cyclops. This monster computer controls and coordinates the operations of the Strategic Air Command across the Pacific. An electronics professor designed and built it in the late '40s for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, he died while working on it, from a massive electric shock while testing circuit breakers. His psyche is now in the machine, forming Cyclops' subconscious. After he died, the Air Force put the supercomputer into immediate use in the Cold War. It correlates attack strategies and conducts realistic atomic war simulations against the Soviet Union, something the professor's spirit finds abhorrent.

Cyclops plans to ensure the balance of power by selling Air Force secrets to the Russians. It sells secrets to a KGB cell operating in L.A. via coded radio messages. Air Force intelligence thinks someone is transmitting on the base radio. The KGB thinks it's dealing with a human!

The CIA has told the FBI that Cooke codes and data are being used in Russia, so there is obviously a leak. FBI agents must detect the leak. This scenario might be difficult to run with TSF investigators. As the agents go through personnel files and schedules, they may find automated equipment "attacking" them. Cyclops may also pay one of the KGB agents to eliminate the Air Force general who now controls Cyclops. Investigators might uncover the horrible truth – the general actually *arranged* for the professor's death.

For more about AIs, see p. 80.



## Other Campaigns

The GM is not limited to using the *GURPS Atomic Horror* setting with science-horror stories. Several other campaign ideas work well in the postwar environment. Some of these are outlined in this chapter. He can also mix and match, with Cold War spies tracking subversive aliens, and hard-boiled private eyes facing mutant monsters – this is entirely in keeping with the spirit of the B-movies, where elements from different film genres were often mixed, seemingly at random.

### ESPIONAGE

The start of the Cold War has effectively split the world's nations into alignment with one or the other of the opposing superpowers. An espionage campaign addresses the “battles” of this war. Characters are secret agents engaging in dirty tricks against the Communist Bloc, or counterespionage agents exposing spy rings.

To organize such a campaign, the GM should decide which kind of game he wants to run, and in which country. If the campaign centers around counterespionage, it is unlikely to move outside one nation. The major spy rings should be sketched out, with names and connections. It is a good idea to draw a flowchart that shows who (and where) the residential director is, who his couriers, radioman, and agents are, and what jobs they do (which indicates what

secrets they have access to). Secrets are vital to a spy network, and the *Top Secret Prototypes* on p. 76 should fill this need. There are also new atomic detonators, infrared scanners, guidance systems, etc. The heroes can do more than uncover one spy after another. Think of the “big picture” – what will happen in two or three years? How can that be foreshadowed in the scenarios? Possible adventures include defections, assassinations, moles, and agents being murdered.

Operations abroad can be faster and more dangerous, but there may be little chance for the GM to build up NPCs and background if the party is on the move all the time. Rather than investigating, the agents organize penetration missions, sabotage, assassinations, and contacts. Some missions may involve investigating what became of a previous agent, or why a friendly network has been behaving irregularly. An agent abroad will have a false I.D. as a tourist, businessman, or embassy employee.

For a particularly Machiavellian campaign, the GM can plant a Communist mole in the team who has special orders each mission: to steal some information, to stop the group from seeing something, to kill an NPC, etc. The GM can offer cash bonuses for these actions. The agency can tell the team that it has heard there is a mole in their midst. These methods may seem unfair or brutal, but they give the campaign a sense of pervasive treachery, suspicion, and competition. They compress the fears of a lifetime of espionage into a few hours of gaming.



## BLACK OPS

In the same vein, the GM could decide that the biggest secret around is the very existence of the aliens, and build a *GURPS Black Ops* campaign around the attempt to unearth the truth about extraterrestrial visitors. In many ways, a '50s *Black Ops* game actually *is* an *Atomic Horror* game writ large; the PCs will be far more powerful, but then, the secrets they're rooting out can be that much larger and better-hidden, too. The TSF is a perfect patron for an *Atomic Horror/Black Ops* game.

## TECHNOMANCER

*GURPS Technomancer* presents a world where the Trinity atomic bomb test opened the door to the Hellstorm, which brought magic to Earth. Given its tie to the first-ever nuclear weapon test, a crossover with *Atomic Horror* seems inescapable.

However, the focus of the *Atomic Horror* game is almost always on *science*, not magic. Arthur C. Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," but the movies and fiction of the '50s rejected magic as the explanation in favor of superscience.

That's not to say that an *Atomic Horror/Technomancer* crossover won't work – just the opposite! Imagine the party's surprise when they reach the source of a giant insect infestation and discover, not a toxic waste spill or a nuclear test gone awry, but a sorcerer conjuring up gargantuan aphids to unleash upon the world.

## WAREHOUSE 23

A repository of hidden knowledge, holding the collected mysteries of the human race . . . is this an *Atomic Horror* game or an excursion into *Warehouse 23*? Well, both. There are plenty of ideas in *GURPS Warehouse 23* for ancient artifacts to throw at the heroes. And what will members of the TSF, or other investigators, do with the knowledge of a government-sponsored (and government-concealed!) cache of ultra-tech, documents that expose all the secrets of history, and incontrovertible evidence of alien influence on human development? If they can find proof, can they hang on to it?

## PRIVATE EYE

Although this genre is more firmly rooted in the '40s, there is no reason why a private-eye campaign cannot work in the '50s. A soldier of fortune or war veteran who finds that he cannot settle down in suburbia can set up a business with like-minded people. The office could be owned by one of the group or by an older (and wiser?) detective who probably earned his spurs in the '40s. Perhaps there is a mysterious backer (the TSF? The KGB?).

The GM presents adventures to the group in a free and easy manner; these could be orthodox cases, tangled spy dramas, or science-horror mysteries. There is no pressure on the GM to stick to the same genre (although it might help the players if he does . . .).

## GANGSTERS

This is a definite change of pace from either the TSF or espionage campaign. Gangsters live a dangerous life and must deal with other gang bosses, the FBI, the cops, and the media. The scenarios will mainly be nonpolitical crime dramas, but like the P.I. campaign, there is no reason why science horror and the Cold War shouldn't affect these guys too. Also, the same techniques described above can be used to keep tension high. The moles are not Communists, but undercover cops, reporters, or tools of rival families. The Boss wants the traitor uncovered – and when he is, "He'll live long enough to dig his own grave."

A wonderful source of ideas for this genre are the *Godfather* movies (obviously), and the TV show *Crime Story*, set in the early '60s rather than the '50s. The GM needs to briefly detail the main mobsters in the city, including their contacts in the city and across the country; crooked judges and Feds; safe houses; family members doing time; connections to the Old Country; and the family residence. The bigger the mob, the farther afield its operations will take it. Eventually, it will get involved in politics, either domestic or foreign.

## SLAPSTICK

Slapstick comedy still ruled in the '50s, and comedians like Abbott and Costello, the Bowery Boys, and the Three Stooges sent up both the science-fiction and science-horror genres. A slapstick adventure could be a refreshing change from the rather grim atmosphere of a more conventional *Atomic Horror* campaign.

Slapstick is different from "camp" (see p. 6). In a camp adventure, the PCs are just as noble, competent, and patriotic as PCs in a serious adventure, they're just caught up in a ludicrous situation. The humor is compounded and enhanced by the heroes' stubborn refusal to even *admit* that the situation is anything but deadly serious.

In slapstick the PCs are, well, goofballs – ordinary, cowardly, barely competent guys with nothing going for them except a quick tongue and a willingness to do absolutely *anything*, no matter how humiliating, to save their own skins.

To successfully run a slapstick scenario, the GM has to be willing to play fast and loose with the rules. Plans should succeed or fail, not based on how well-thought-out they are, or on the roll of the dice, but based on how funny success or failure is likely to be. If the PCs hire a brilliant scientist to construct a secret weapon to destroy a monster, it's certain to go wrong in some preposterous way.

On the other hand, our hero has an excellent chance to take out the monster if he follows "Look up. Look down. Look at my thumb. Gee, you're dumb!" with a right cross to the jaw . . .

Of course, to keep the mood, it is important that no one get seriously hurt, no matter how grim the monsters or villains might be. GMs looking for inspiration for this kind of scenario are referred to *Toon*, particularly the "Atomic Monster Theater" section of the *Tooniversal Tour Guide*.

# The Front Page



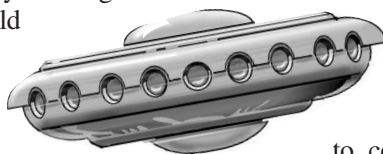
Rather than the simmering paranoia, secret invasion, and atomic alienation found in the “real” *Atomic Horror* campaign frame, the GM might consider running an “open” *Atomic Horror* game, one in which everybody knows the Earth is at war with other worlds. Part of the thrill of watching a classic 1950s alien-attack or monster-madness movie is the sheer brio, the operatic scale of the story. The events of the average B-movie would alter history – it was the day the Earth stood still, for gosh sakes! In this timeline (called *Klaatu*, for *Infinity*, Unlimited *GURPS Time Travel* campaigns), history does indeed change, and closely follows a number of B-movie trajectories. Through it all, though, the Fifties keep going, as a hard-pressed world seeks out comforting normalcy where it can, and demands conformity in the name of unity against the invaders.

## WARS OF THE WORLDS

For centuries, beings from other worlds had watched humanity master the tools of reason and technology. When mankind used both rockets and the atomic bomb in a global war, the United Planets felt that it was time to step in and end Earth’s term in the traditional quarantine of primitive worlds. The Martian delegates objected: surely the Earth would destroy itself in war before ever threatening the galaxy! Other worlds, which had been smuggling goods to and from the restricted Earth, took the side of Mars, but the UP stood firm. Earth must be told of other worlds, and warned of the dangers to itself its new knowledge posed.

And so, in 1951, an immense flying saucer sent by the UP lands on the Washington Mall. Between an energy-suppressor ray and a powerful robot, its pilot overawes humanity and convinces the entire planet that mankind is no longer alone. Unfortunately, a panicky soldier’s shot kills the UP ambassador, and opinion in the United Planets swings against the Earth. The Martians (see p. 59) move quickly. Having long planned to emigrate to Earth after World War Three depopulated the planet, Mars decides to seize the Earth and present the United Planets with a *fait accompli*. In 1952, the Martians invade, landing outside Los Angeles and blasting it (and other major cities) to ruins before succumbing to an unforeseen complication – the common cold. The American government (possibly working through the TSF) begins a crash program of science-weaponry and space research.

The Martians’ radioactive weaponry, and the continuing impact of atomic testing, begin to awaken long-dormant creatures; missing links from the gill-man of the Amazon to enormous beasts from 20,000 fathoms. Normal creatures, such as ants, leeches, and octopuses, grow to prodigious size; containing their rampages taxes America (and the world) to the utmost. The Martians begin infiltrating newly immunized commando teams into American society, while other selfish aliens molest Earth women and drop onto wholesome small towns to gobble teen-agers.



In 1956, affairs reach a crisis on three fronts. The greatest of the atomic monsters, an immense tyrannosaurus, levels Tokyo, only driven off by another monster-spawning atomic explosion. An opportunistic alien race that colonizes vulnerable worlds with replicant pod creatures establishes a beach-head in California. And, worst of all, the Martians (now immune to the cold virus) assemble an immense armada of flying saucers that nearly conquers the Earth until the TSF develops sonic weaponry just in the nick of time. Now, NASA is building Earth’s own flying saucer armada for a D-Day on the Red Planet – the first step into space for a planet united for peace, justice, and the American Way.

## BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The future of this timeline after the Martian defeat might resemble movies such as *Forbidden Planet*, or several *Twilight Zone* and *Outer Limits* episodes depicting *us* as the operators of flying saucers. Now *we* are the alien visitors! On Earth, the wars of the giant monsters are over. Technology has been harnessed for peace, the Atom liberates humanity, and the ideals of the ’50s have been realized in a high-tech age of automation and space exploration. Most of mankind lives happily in Utopian nuclear-powered cities. All citizens are gainfully employed according to their skills. The cities are connected by tube cars and have grand names such as Elysia, Pacifica, Arcadia, and Fortuna. The tech level ranges between 8 and 10, and society relies heavily upon atomic power for everything. The only cloud on the shiny horizon of the future is a small but militant Luddite movement which believes technology is evil, and seeks to return civilization to some non-existent agrarian ideal.

## PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

In the War Against Mars, PCs can be soldiers, TSF investigators, scientists, or normal people trying to get by in a world of giant shrews and drag-racing interstellar blobs.

Heroes in the Futuristic ’50s can be members of an idealized interstellar Exploration Corps of clean-cut, disciplined officers and courageous crewmen, piloting flying saucers into space to find new worlds to colonize. As members of the Global Peace Force, they would fight Luddites, mutant savages from the isolated atomic wastelands, garden-variety crooks with futuristic technology, and mad scientists and would-be tyrants of all descriptions.

### Crosstime Crossovers

PCs in the “real” world of *Atomic Horror* may encounter the Vortun, fall through a dimension warp and end up in Reality *Klaatu* – or in some other parallel Earth. The scientific-Reality Gernsback (pp. AE107-125), from *GURPS Alternate Earths*, would seem to be a natural fit; for a world in which the Nazis won the War, try Reality Reich-5 (pp. AE33-51). Perhaps in that reality, it’s Admiral Byrd and the American remnants (*They Saved Patton’s Brain!*) who hide out in Antarctica and on the Moon!

# FILMOGRAPHY

*GURPS Atomic Horror* is inspired by the science-fiction films of the '50s and this filmography includes a multitude made during that decade. A few are unwatchable disasters, while some are masterpieces of the genre that broke ground cinematically and conceptually. These entertaining and rewarding (for *Atomic Horror* players) movies are marked with an asterisk (\*). This list also includes several movies from the '60s, which are part of the genre and thus worth watching, and some later movies, either remakes of the classics or new films in the same spirit. They have been loosely classified into movies about aliens, monsters, nukes, and everything else – “loosely,” because a movie about aliens who use radiation to create monsters rather muddies the waters.

The movies' availability on VHS or DVD are marked below. This information is accurate as of the publication date, but could change later – check the sites below for up-to-date information.

Three Websites were invaluable in compiling and annotating this list:

The Internet Movie Database ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) is a monumental achievement, containing facts on just about every movie known to man. If this is not your first stop for information on movies or actors, you are cheating yourself. The IMDb tells whether movies have VHS and DVD versions available; check there for updates on the notes in this list. It also includes trivia, movie goofs, alternate versions, and “crazy credits” – don't go here when you only have a few minutes to spend!

Bad Movie Planet

([www.badmovieplanet.com](http://www.badmovieplanet.com))



is a somewhat more focused resource dedicated to the movies we all love, even if we hate to admit it. They take themselves about as seriously as the subject matter deserves; this site is worth a bookmark.

The Bad Movie Review website ([www.badmovies.org](http://www.badmovies.org)) is notable for its “Things I Learned From This Movie” lists . . . bad movies aren't just fun, they're educational!

**Warning!** Any movie flagged with an exclamation mark (!) may damage your mental health. View with caution! Wooden sets, wooden acting, and effects that have nothing “special” about them will make you either laugh or cry . . .

## ALIENS!

Many of the classic B flicks were about alien invasions of the Earth; others were about the fledgling exploration of space.

*Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (Charles Lamont, 1953) **VHS** Actually, Bud and Lou go to Venus (as if it matters . . .).

*The Andromeda Strain* (Robert Wise, 1971) **VHS/DVD** A satellite crashes near a small town, and a space-borne alien virus kills everyone within. Now a team has to figure out how to neutralize the virus before it spreads. Based on an early Michael Crichton thriller.

*The Angry Red Planet* (Ib Melchior, 1959) **VHS** Martians throw monsters at Earth astronauts.

*The Atomic Submarine* (Spencer Gordon Bennet, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Submarine vs. flying saucer under the Arctic Circle.

*Bamboo Saucer* (Frank Telford, 1968) Agents from U.S. and USSR investigate a flying-saucer report in mainland China.

*Battle of the Worlds* (Antonio Margheriti, 1961) Cheap Italian flick about an alien world nearing collision with Earth.

*The Brain Eaters* (Bruno VeSota, 1958) Loose adaptation of Robert Heinlein's classic novel *The Puppet Masters* has space creatures clamping on to peoples' necks and turning them into mindless zombies. Brief appearance by Leonard Nimoy.

*The Brain from Planet Arous* (Nathan Juran, 1957) **VHS/DVD** Giant floating brain takes over the body of a scientist.

*Cat-Women of the Moon* (Arthur Hilton, 1953) ! **VHS/DVD** Intrepid space explorers discover a manless civilization of beautiful women.

*The Conquest of Space* (Byron Haskin, 1955) **VHS** Preachy George Pal production about the first mission to Mars.



*The Cosmic Man* (Herbert S. Greene, 1959) **DVD** Alien with invisibility powers visits Earth.

*The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951) \* **VHS** Definitive science-fiction film of the '50s puts the fate of the Earth in the hands of a humanoid alien and the giant robot, Gort.

*Day of the Triffids* (Steve Sekely, 1962) \* **VHS** Rivals *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as the greatest “secret invasion” movie. The BBC remade this as a miniseries in 1981, directed by Ken Hannan; the BBC version is as good as or better than the movie.

*Destination Moon* (Irving Pichel, 1950) \* **VHS/DVD** Modest but excellent vision of the first moon mission. Produced by George Pal, co-written by Robert A. Heinlein (and loosely based on his *Rocket Ship Galileo*). Definitive '50s space-travel film.

*Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (Fred F. Sears, 1956) \* **VHS** Excellent, definitive alien invasion movie.

*Enemy From Space* (Val Guest, 1957) **VHS/DVD** Heroic Dr. Quatermass saves the Earth from secret invasion of body-snatching aliens. (Also known as *Quatermass 2.*)

*Evil Spawn* (Kenneth J. Hall, 1987) ! A scientist uses microbes from Venus to create an anti-aging drug. Unfortunately, it has the side effect of turning the woman who takes it into a homicidal insect.

*Fire Maidens From Outer Space* (Cy Roth, 1956) ! Astronauts find all-female civilization on Jupiter's moon. Fire Maidens do a ritual dance to “Stranger in Paradise.”

*First Spaceship on Venus* (Hugo Grimaldi, Kurt Maetzig, and Hieronim Przybyl, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Venusian expedition discovers still-working artifacts of a war-ravaged civilization. Original European film is a full hour longer than the incoherent American cut.

*Five Million Years to Earth* (Roy Ward Baker, 1967) **VHS/DVD** Ancient spaceship and crew are unearthed in modern-day London. Third Quatermass film (original title, *Quatermass and the Pit*). A fourth Quatermass film, *Quatermass Conclusion*, appeared in 1980.

*Flight to Mars* (Lesley Selander, 1951) ! **VHS** Expedition of scientists and newsmen discover lost civilization on Mars. Special effects are notably cheesy.

*Forbidden Planet* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1956) \* **VHS/DVD** One of the best science-fiction films ever. Intelligent script (inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*), great cast, and special effects that still impress. Spaceship's crew discovers the last survivors of a lost expedition, living among the relics of an extinct super-race. Introduced Robby the Robot.

*I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (Gene Fowler Jr., 1958) \* Better than it sounds. Wife notices her husband and some of his friends have begun acting . . . strangely.

*Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996) **VHS/DVD** Flying saucers appear all over the world, and they are not here to spread the message of universal brotherhood. The film's plot varies from contrived to compelling.

*Invaders from Mars* (William Cameron Menzies, 1953) \* **VHS/DVD** Classic '50s paranoia film, as small boy watches aliens capture and brainwash his family and neighbors. There is a 1986 remake, directed by Tobe Hooper, which is markedly inferior; the brave fan can find it on VHS and DVD.

*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956) \* **VHS/DVD** Landmark film of alien invaders replacing humans with "pod people." Genuinely scary – a must-see. Philip Kaufman directed the 1976 remake, also considered quite good, and also available on VHS and DVD.

*Invasion of the Saucer Men* (Edward L. Cahn, 1957) Comic adventures of a teen-ager stalked by big-headed aliens.

*Invisible Invaders* (Edward L. Cahn, 1959) ! **VHS** Invisible aliens animate corpses while scientists look for some way to stop them.

*It Came From Outer Space* (Jack Arnold, 1953) \* **VHS** Low-key, intelligent science fiction based on a Ray Bradbury story. Aliens try to pass as earthlings while they repair their crashed space ship. A 1996 made-for-TV sequel, *It Came From Outer Space II*, is not nearly as good; the Roger Duchowny-directed movie is available on VHS.

*It Conquered the World* (Roger Corman, 1956) Giant carrot-shaped alien invades Earth. Early Roger Corman cheapie is better than it has any right to be.

*It! The Terror from Beyond Space* (Edward L. Cahn, 1958) **VHS** Vicious alien stows away on space ship. The inspiration for *Alien*.

*Killers from Space* (W. Lee Wilder, 1954) **VHS** Aliens resurrect dead scientist so he can collect information for their invasion.

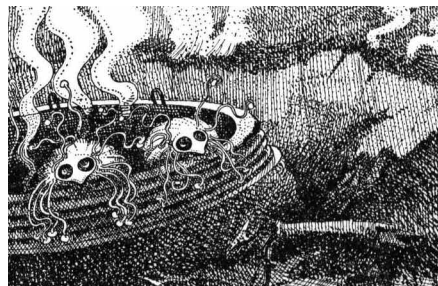
*The Man from Planet X* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1951) **VHS/DVD** Evil men turn alien visitor against the human race.

*Mars Attacks!* (Tim Burton, 1996) **VHS/DVD** Pure camp from start to finish, this movie really gets going once the aliens decide to stop playing nice, and it's up to a ragtag band of humans to save the day.

*Men in Black* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997) \* **VHS/DVD** The aliens are among us – and the government knows about it. Don't forget to put on your dark glasses before you use the flashy thing.

*Missile Monsters* (Fred C. Brannon, 1958) Martians try to take over the Earth with guided missiles.

*Missile to the Moon* (Richard E. Cunha, 1959) ! **VHS/DVD** Lunar expedition finds race of moon women. Remake of *Cat-Women of the Moon*.



*The Mysterians* (Ishiro Honda, 1957) \* Alien invaders come to Earth and demand women. Since this is a Japanese film, of course there's a giant monster.

*Not of This Earth* (Roger Corman, 1957) Alien vampire comes to Earth after his own world is destroyed by atomic war. Good Roger Corman chiller. There have been *two* remakes. The 1988 version directed by Jim Wynorski is notable only for starring adult film actress Traci Lords (it is available on VHS and DVD); Terence H. Winkless' 1995 effort is actually better than the original (and is out on VHS).

*The Phantom Planet* (William Marshall, 1961) ! **VHS/DVD** Shipwrecked astronaut gets shrunk and drafted into tiny aliens' war against space monsters.

*Plan 9 from Outer Space* (Edward D. Wood Jr., 1958) ! **VHS/DVD** This film is popularly regarded as the single most hilariously inept movie ever made. Space aliens raise the dead to conquer Earth. Directed by Ed Wood Jr., featuring Tor Johnson and a few minutes of home-movie footage of Bela Lugosi.

*Queen of Outer Space* (Edward Bernds, 1958) ! **VHS** Zsa Zsa Gabor has the title role in this campy tale of space travelers who discover an all-female civilization on Venus.

*Red Planet Mars* (Harry Horner, 1952) ! **VHS** Intercepted messages from Mars turn out to be from God. Hilarious anti-communist propaganda flick.

*Riders to the Stars* (Richard Carlson and Herbert L. Strock, 1954) Hopelessly dated film about the early days of space travel.

*The Rocket Man* (Oscar Rudolph, 1954) Sweet-natured juvenile fantasy about a young boy who receives a magical ray gun from a mysterious spaceman. Script by Lenny Bruce.

*Rocketship X-M* (Kurt Neumann, 1950) **VHS/DVD** Moon mission gets blown off course to Mars. Better than average.

*Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* (Nicholas Webster, 1964) ! **VHS** Martians kidnap Saint Nick to cheer up their kids. Truly awful juvenile fantasy.

*Satan's Satellites* (Fred C. Brannon, 1958) Leonard Nimoy plays a Martian who helps save the world from destruction.

*Space Master X-7* (Edward Bernds, 1958) Missile returns to Earth with dangerous unwanted cargo.

*Teenagers from Outer Space* (Tom Graeff, 1959) ! **VHS/DVD** Extremely cheap movie about adolescent alien invaders who threaten earthlings with ray guns that turn people into skeletons. The only "space monster" the makers could afford was the shadow of a lobster.

*The Thing (From Another World!)* (Christian Nyby, 1951) \* **VHS** American military/scientific base in the Arctic finds an ancient flying saucer buried in the ice and thaws out its pilot, a killer carrot. Dopey as it sounds, this Howard Hawks adaptation of a John W. Campbell story is perhaps the most effective science-fiction suspense film ever made. John Carpenter's 1982 remake (called simply *The Thing*) is more slasher flick than thoughtful horror piece, but no less entertaining for that; it can be found on VHS and DVD.

*This Island Earth* (Jack Arnold and Joseph Newman, 1954) \* **VHS/DVD** Aliens kidnap Earth scientists to help defend their planet from invasion.

*The Three Stooges in Orbit* (Edward Bernds, 1962) **VHS** The title says it all.

*20 Million Miles to Earth* (Nathan Juran, 1957) **VHS** Monster from Venus rampages through Italy. Ray Harryhausen did the special effects.

*War of the Satellites* (Roger Corman, 1958) Aliens strong-arm earthlings to cancel their space program. Roger Corman conceived this film the day after the first U.S. satellite was launched; he released it two months later.

*War of the Worlds* (Byron Haskin, 1953) \* **VHS/DVD** Excellent adaptation of the classic alien invasion story by H.G. Wells, highlighted by gorgeous special effects.

*Zombies of the Stratosphere* (Fred C. Brannon, 1952) **VHS** Aliens build an H-bomb to shove Earth out of its orbit so that Mars can take its place.

## MONSTERS!

No list of classic '50s movies would be complete without a selection of monsters . . . alien, giant, and otherwise.

*The Abominable Snowman* (Val Guest, 1957) **VHS/DVD** Intrepid explorers search for the legendary Yeti. Modest, but very well made film – the first major release from Britain's legendary Hammer studios.

*The Alligator People* (Roy Del Ruth, 1959) ! **VHS** Bride searches for her lost husband. When she finds him, he's been transformed into an alligator creature.

*Astro-Zombies* (Ted V. Mikels, 1969) ! **VHS/DVD** John Carradine gets fired from the Space Agency, and takes his revenge by animating the corpse of a criminal. The corpse promptly goes on a killing spree, attracting the notice of the CIA and an international spy ring.

*Attack of the Crab Monsters* (Roger Corman, 1957) **VHS** Intelligent, brain-eating crabs stalk folks on a shrinking island. Interesting early Roger Corman picture.

*Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (Nathan Juran, 1958) ! **VHS** Aliens turn a woman scorned into a monster.

*Attack of the Giant Leeches* (Bernard L. Kowalski, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Man-sized swamp leeches take to sucking dry the red-neck inhabitants of a town in the Deep South.

*Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* (John De Bello, 1978) **VHS** Giant carnivorous beefsteaks. Maybe you ought to forgo the ketchup . . . Made into an animated TV series in 1990.

*Beast from Haunted Cave* (Monte Hellman, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Roger Corman cheapie pits crooks against a spider monster.

*Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugène Lourié, 1953) \* **VHS** One of the best giant-monster movies ever made, with special effects by Ray Harryhausen.

*The Beast of Yucca Flats* (Coleman Francis, 1961) ! **DVD** Truly one of the worst movies ever made. This film makes *Plan 9 from Outer Space* look like *The 10 Commandments*.

*Beware! The Blob* (Larry Hagman, 1972) ! **VHS/DVD** When actors have time and money to burn, bad things can happen. Witness this movie, Larry Hagman's big-screen directorial debut.



*The Black Scorpion* (Edward Ludwig, 1957) **VHS** Big bugs infest a Mexican volcano.

*The Blob* (Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr., 1958) \* **VHS/DVD** The grownups just don't understand, but teen-agers save small town from space jello. Memorable as Steve McQueen's

first starring role, and for its virulently infectious Burt Bacharach theme song. The 1988 remake, directed by Chuck Russell, is only available on VHS.

*Bride of the Monster* (Edward D. Wood Jr., 1956) ! **VHS/DVD** Legendary Ed Wood stinker starring Bela Lugosi, Tor Johnson, and a rubber octopus.

*The Cosmic Monster* (Gilbert Gunn, 1957) **VHS** Mad scientist's cosmic-ray experiments go awry and produce giant bugs. Orig-

inally released in Britain as *The Strange World of Planet X*.

*The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (Jack Arnold, 1954) \* **VHS/DVD** Scientific mission discovers intelligent humanoid amphibian. A classic. Originally filmed in 3-D.

*The Creature Walks Among Us* (John F. Sherwood, 1956) \* **VHS** Sequel to *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* has scientists attempting to civilize the captured and surgically altered gill man.

*The Creeping Unknown* (Val Guest, 1955) \* **VHS** First Dr. Quatermass movie transforms the sole survivor of a space mission into a hideous monster. More mature and intelligent than most movies of this type. Original title *The Quatermass Experiment*.

*Curse of the Fly* (Don Sharp, 1965) The third installment of the original *Fly* series suffers from a lack of Vincent Price. Descendants of the first scientist continue his work, and have to use the matter transporter to escape when the law closes in on their lab.

*The Cyclops* (Bert I. Gordon, 1957) Lost member of a scientific expedition to Mexico turns into a monster.

*The Deadly Mantis* (Nathan Juran, 1957) **VHS** Big bug threatens NYC.

*Destroy All Monsters* (Ishiro Honda, 1968) **VHS/DVD** Japanese monster slugfest features Godzilla, Mothra, Rodan, and others.

*First Man Into Space* (Robert Day, 1959) **VHS/DVD** The title character returns from orbit as a blood-drinking monster.

*The Flame Barrier* (Paul Landres, 1958) Satellite goes down in the jungle, bringing super-heated space monster along with it.

*The Fly* (Kurt Neumann, 1958) \* **VHS/DVD** Definitive film in the man-to-monster genre. Scientist's trip through experimental teleporter makes him a hideous, half-human fly creature. David Cronenberg's 1986 remake is true to the vision of the original; Chris Walas' 1989 sequel, *The Fly II*, is far worse. Both of these are available on VHS and DVD.



*Frankenstein 1970* (Howard W. Koch, 1958) **VHS** Boris Karloff plays the mad doctor in this otherwise completely undistinguished rehash of familiar Frankenstein clichés.

*From Hell It Came* (Dan Milner, 1957) ! Walking tree with an attitude terrorizes island villagers.

*The Giant Behemoth* (Douglas Hickox and Eugène Lourié, 1959) **VHS** As opposed to standard and miniature behemoths, presumably. Radioactive dinosaur tears up England.

*The Giant Claw* (Fred F. Sears, 1957) ! Big bird vs. fighter planes.

*Giant From the Unknown* (Richard E. Cunha, 1958) **DVD** Outsized conquistador thaws out of suspended animation in California mountains and goes on a rampage.

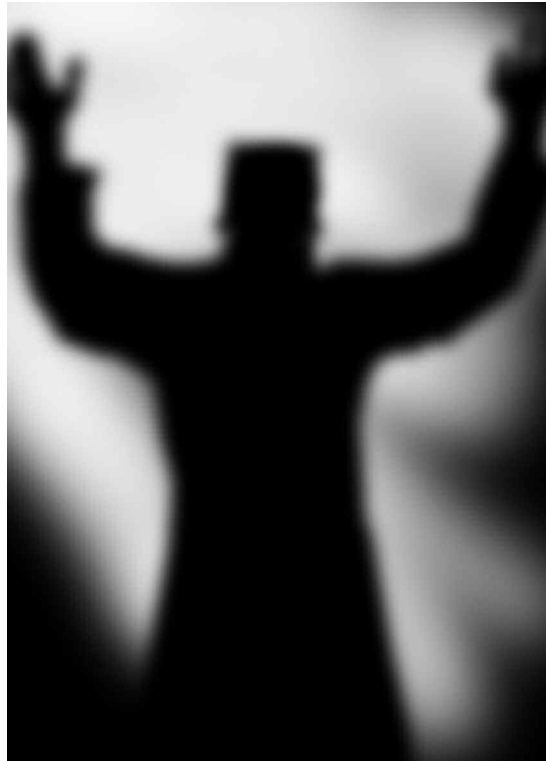
*The Giant Gila Monster* (Ray Kellogg, 1959) ! **VHS/DVD** Big lizard terrorizes a small town in Texas.

*Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (Shiro Honda and Terry O. Morse, 1956) \* **DVD** Forget the countless schlocky sequels – especially the disappointing 1998 version, set in New York City. The original Godzilla was a walking nuclear blast – the embodiment of all the fears of post-Hiroshima Japan. And he was scary.

*Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984) \* **VHS/DVD** Adorable fuzzball gives birth to homicidal mutant creatures. This movie never takes itself seriously, which only adds to its charm. This is what happens when you don't take care of your pets . . . (Furor over this movie led to the creation of the PG-13 rating.) The sequel, *Gremlins 2: The New Batch*, is at least watchable, and is available on VHS.

*The Hideous Sun Demon* (Tom Boutross and Robert Clarke, 1959) ! **VHS/DVD** Exposure to radiation causes scientist to turn into a lizard-creature in the sunlight. Re-released as a comedy in 1983, with humorous dialog dubbed over the original footage. (There's no video version of the re-release, alas.)

*It Came From Beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon, 1955) **VHS** Big octopus attacks San Francisco. Excellent Ray Harryhausen special effects.



*I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (Herbert L. Strock, 1957) Mad scientist “repairs” teen after car crash.

*Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) \* **VHS/DVD** A nice twist on the “Lost World” genre. Scientists use preserved dino DNA to clone the big lizards. Naturally, they run amok. People get squished, and eaten, and some of them even escape. Pass on *The Lost World*, the (first) sequel.

*The Killer Shrews* (Ray Kellogg, 1959) ! **VHS/DVD** Innocent dogs were forced to wear ridiculous shrew costumes in this tale of giant rodents rampaging over a Texas island. Once you get past the silly monsters, not bad.

*The Little Shop of Horrors* (Roger Corman, 1960) \* **VHS/DVD** Man-eating, intelligent houseplant from space corrupts innocent nebbish. Shot in two days, this is one of Roger Corman's best films. Made into a hit stage musical in the '80s, which Frank Oz brought back to the screen in 1986 (now on VHS and DVD).

*Lost Continent* (Sam Newfield, 1951) **VHS** Expedition to recover lost rocket ship stumbles onto prehistoric creatures on a high plateau. Michael Carreras and Leslie Norman remade this in 1968; their version can be found on VHS and DVD.

*The Magnetic Monster* (Curt Siodmak and Herbert L. Strock, 1953) Stolen magnetic isotope grows until it becomes dangerous.

*Man Beast* (Jerry Warren, 1956) Expedition searches for the Abominable Snowman.

*The Man Who Turned to Stone* (Leslie Kardos, 1957) About a group that petrifies if it does not drain life force from others.

*The Mole People* (Virgil W. Vogel, 1956) **VHS** Explorers find underground race of albino Sumerians with mole-like slaves.

*The Monolith Monsters* (John F. Sherwood, 1957) **VHS** Fragments of a shattered meteorite grow and reproduce when they get wet.

*Monster From Green Hell* (Kenneth G. Crane, 1958) **VHS/DVD** Wasps sent into orbit as an experiment crash in the jungle and get big.

*Monster From the Ocean Floor* (Wyott Ordung, 1954) ! Roger Corman's first film, and maybe his worst, about a sub chasing a giant squid.

*The Monster of Piedras Blancas* (Irvin Berwick, 1959) **VHS** Humanoid blood drinker terrorizes the beach.

*The Monster That Challenged the World* (Arnold Luven, 1957) **VHS** Big snail creatures menace mankind. Better than it sounds.

*The Most Dangerous Man Alive* (Allan Dwan, 1961) Escaped convict becomes invulnerable due to chemical explosion and seeks revenge.

*Mothra* (Shiro Honda, 1962) **VHS** Strange Japanese monster movie has explorers capture tiny twin girls and take them to civilization. The girls telepathically call a giant caterpillar to their rescue, who then turns into a giant moth.

*Night of the Comet* (Thom Eberhardt, 1984) Campy end-of-the-world movie; most of the people turn into red dust, pitting Valley Girls and the men who love them against scientists-turned-cannibal-zombies.

*Return of the Fly* (Edward Bernds, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Sequel to sci-fi horror classic *The Fly* doesn't equal the original, but doesn't shame it either.

*Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* (John De Bello, 1988) This sequel to *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* manages to be better than the original, if only because it has George Clooney in a supporting role. Two further sequels, *Killer Tomatoes Strike Back* and *Killer Tomatoes Eat France!*, are eminently forgettable, but are out on VHS for the masochistic.

*The Revenge of the Creature* (Jack Arnold, 1955) **VHS** The Gill Man from *Creature from the Black Lagoon* is captured and held in a Florida aquarium. Memorable mostly as Clint Eastwood's first movie role.

*Robot Monster* (Phil Tucker, 1953) ! **VHS/DVD** Almost as bad as *Plan 9*, and even cheaper. The producers couldn't afford a robot costume, so they made the monster a gorilla suit with a diver's helmet.

*Rodan* (Ishiro Honda, 1957) **VHS** Giant pterodactyl threatens Japan.

*The Snow Creature* (W. Lee Wilder, 1954) Captured Yeti is brought to civilization.

*Superman and the Mole Men* (Lee Sholem, 1951) **VHS** The Man of Steel meets creatures from the center of the Earth. Predecessor to the long-running TV show, both starring George Reeves.

*Tarantula* (Jack Arnold and W. Donn Hayes, 1955) \* **VHS** Excellent giant spider movie. Clint Eastwood has a bit part at the end.

*Target Earth* (Sherman A. Rose, 1954) **VHS/DVD** Invading robots trap human survivors in a deserted city.

*Teenage Zombies* (Jerry Warren, 1957) ! Female mad scientist imprisons snooty teenagers. No zombies to be found in this movie.

*Terror Is a Man* (Gerardo de Leon, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Scientist turns a panther into a humanoid; the H.G. Wells story has been done twice since under the better-known title, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

*Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954) \* **VHS** Giant mutant ants attack the Southwest.

*These Are the Damned* (Joseph Losey, 1963) Surreal science-fiction horror set in the British "Teddy Boy" youth scene.

*The Tingler* (William Castle, 1959) **VHS/DVD** Scientist discovers a creature that feeds on human fear. This film is infamous for a promotional gimmick in which the theater was wired so that, when the film announced that "the Tingler is loose in *this* theater," random viewers would receive mild electrical shocks!



*The Toxic Avenger* (Michael Herz and Lloyd Kaufman, 1985) **VHS/DVD** A nerd gets shoved into toxic waste and transforms into a hideous but good-hearted monster. Has multiple sequels. "Toxie" is the mascot of Troma Studios, home of many other mediocre-to-excrucible movies. Check 'em out!

*Tremors* (Ron Underwood, 1990) **VHS/DVD** Giant wormlike creatures with an appetite terrorize a small town. There are two direct-to-video sequels which can be skipped.

*The Unknown Terror* (Charles Marquis Warren, 1957) Uncontrollable fungus is released from the South American jungle.

*Village of the Giants* (Bert I. Gordon, 1965) ! **VHS/DVD** Space gunk turns juvenile delinquents into giants, so they take over a small town. Based on H.G. Wells' *Food of the Gods*. Beau Bridges appears as one of the giant teens, and "Ronny" Howard plays the spunky kid hero.

*Voodoo Woman* (Edward L. Cahn, 1957) ! Incoherent film about a mad scientist changing a woman into a monster.

*The Wasp Woman* (Roger Corman and Jack Hill, 1960) **VHS/DVD** Cosmetic magnate's secret formula keeps her young, with just one small drawback – it periodically transforms her into a homicidal wasp creature. Quintessential Roger Corman. A 1995 TV remake, directed by Jim Wynorski, can be found stinking up the VHS aisle.

*The Woman Eater* (Charles Saunders, 1957) **VHS/DVD** The title monster is a carnivorous tree in a mad scientist's basement.

## NUKES!

As Tom Lehrer said, "First we got the Bomb, and that was good, 'cause we love peace and motherhood." The Bomb – and still-poorly understood radioactivity – made a great scientific menace for the newly sophisticated audiences of the 1950s.

*The Amazing Colossal Man* (Bert I. Gordon, 1957) Radiation causes an army officer to grow into a hideous giant mutant. At 60', he attacks Las Vegas.

*Atomic Cafe* (Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty, and Pierce Rafferty, 1982) \* **VHS** "Duck . . . and cover!" This documentary compiles amusing (and often naive) excerpts from 1960s-era nuclear

safety films, and official archival footage of troops observing nuclear tests.

*The Atomic Kid* (Leslie H. Martinson, 1954) **VHS** Mickey Rooney becomes radioactive and chases spies.

*The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (Val Guest, 1961) **VHS/DVD** Atomic war starts the Earth plunging toward the sun.

*The Day the World Ended* (Roger Corman, 1956) Internal strife threatens the last survivors of the nuclear war. There's also a monster. Directed by Roger Corman.

*Deterrence* (Rod Lurie, 1999) \* **VHS/DVD** The President is trapped in a Colorado diner and must deal with a military crisis, including the threat of nuclear missiles striking the United States.

*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Stanley Kubrick, 1964) \* **VHS/DVD** Not exactly science fiction, but Stanley Kubrick's black comedy was a dead-on hit at Cold-War paranoia. One of the finest movies ever made.

*Fail-Safe* (Sidney Lumet, 1964) \* **VHS/DVD** Smothered by Kubrick and *Strangelove*, Lumet's gem went largely unnoticed for some time. However, its serious treatment of the same topics that Kubrick laughed off is a chilling reminder that we should not put too much faith in machines. An all-star cast gives stellar performances. The 2000 remake, directed by Stephen Frears and produced by George Clooney, is equally compelling, especially for being the first live TV drama in decades.

*The H-Man* (Ishiro Honda, 1958) **VHS** Radioactive liquid wreaks havoc in Tokyo.

*The Last Woman on Earth* (Roger Corman, 1960) Romantic triangle between the last three survivors of nuclear war.

*The Lost Missile* (William A. Berke, 1958) ! Searchers try to destroy a rocket before it explodes in New York City.

*On the Beach* (Stanley Kramer, 1959) \* **VHS/DVD** Not really science fiction. This film is a sad, dramatic, and thought-provoking look at the aftermath of nuclear war. Only Australia is left untouched after the war, and in a few months the radiation will arrive to kill the last human life on the planet – and the Australians know it. In 2000, Russell Mulcahy did a credible TV remake, now available on VHS.



*Seven Days to Noon* (John Boulting and Ray Boulting, 1950) Excellent thriller about a scientist holding London hostage with a super-bomb.

*The Space Children* (Jack Arnold, 1958) Mysteriously brainwashed children sabotage nuclear test site.

*Unknown World* (Terry O. Morse, 1951) **VHS** Humans build mechanical mole-vehicle to find refuge underground from the Bomb.

*War of the Colossal Beast* (Bert I. Gordon, 1958) Turgid sequel to *The Amazing Colossal Man*.

*The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (Ranald MacDougall, 1959) Only three people – a white woman, a white man, and a black man – are left after the nuclear war.

*X The Unknown* (Leslie Norman, 1956) \* **VHS/DVD** Seeping radioactive mud threatens Scotland.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Some movies are just unclassifiable; not every mad scientist dabbled in abominations or radiation, after all.

*The Amazing Transparent Man* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1960) **VHS/DVD** Mad scientist makes a thief invisible.

*Attack of the Puppet People* (Bert I. Gordon, 1958) **VHS/DVD** Mad scientist shrinks people.

*Beyond the Time Barrier* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1960) \* Flyer gets transported to the 21st century and finds that a plague has devastated the world.

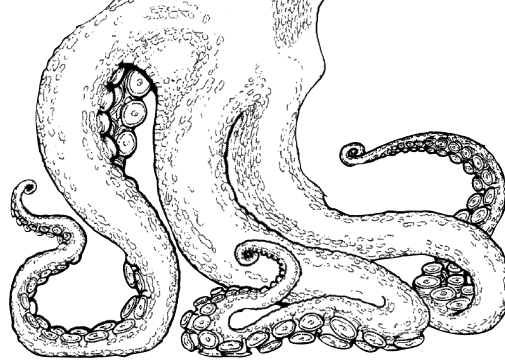
*The Black Sleep* (Reginald Le Borg, 1956) John Carradine, Lon Chaney, Jr., Bela Lugosi, Basil Rathbone, and Tor Johnson in a story about a brain-transplanting mad scientist.

*The Brain that Wouldn't Die* (Joseph Green, 1962) **VHS/DVD** Surgeon searches for new body for his decapitated sweetheart.

*Children of the Damned* (Anton Leader, 1963) **VHS** Uninspired sequel to *Village of the Damned*.

*Donovan's Brain* (Felix E. Feist, 1953) **VHS/DVD** Dead industrialist's brain is kept alive in the laboratory. Definitive brain movie.

*Fiend Without a Face* (Arthur Crabtree and Marshall Thompson, 1958) \* **DVD** Mad scientist creates invisible, man-eating brains.



*4D Man* (Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr., 1959) \* **VHS/DVD** Scientist learns how to become intangible.

*A Head for the Devil* (Victor Trivas, 1959) Eerie tale of head transplants.

*The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Jack Arnold, 1957) \* **VHS** Title character starts to get smaller. Excellent special effects, intelligent script by Richard Matheson. A high point of '50s SF. Peter Segal is directing a remake to be released in 2001.

*The Invisible Boy* (Herman Hoffman, 1957) **VHS** A whole science-fiction genre is foreshadowed when power-mad computer goes berserk. Guest appearance by Robby the Robot, from *Forbidden Planet*.

*It Happened Here* (Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, 1966) **VHS/DVD** Alternate-history story of Britain conquered by the Nazis.

*Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies, 1936) \* **VHS/DVD** Although it preceded the '50s by more than a decade, this rather preachy epic (adapted by H.G. Wells from his novel *The Shape of Things to Come*) established the themes of technological utopia and apocalypse that would dominate the science-fiction films of the '50s. George McCowan helmed a substantially worse 1979 version using the full Wells title.)

*Tobor the Great* (Lee Sholem, 1954) **VHS** Enemy agents plot to steal secret robot plans. Tries and fails to be warm and funny.

*The Undead* (Roger Corman, 1957) Scientist studying reincarnation transports himself back to the Dark Ages.

*The Unearthly* (Boris Petroff, 1957) ! **VHS** Mad scientist John Carradine creates mutants in his basement.

*Village of the Damned* (Wolf Rilla, 1960) \* **VHS** Weird mutant children born in English village. John Carpenter revisited this story in 1995, with a film that is mediocre at best. It's available on VHS and DVD.

*When Worlds Collide* (Rudolph Maté, 1951) \* **VHS** Scientists race to complete a space ark before the Earth is destroyed by a rogue planet.

*World Without End* (Edward Bernds, 1956) **VHS** Rocket to Mars breaks the time barrier and lands in 26th century.

*X: The Man With the X-Ray Eyes* (Roger Corman, 1963) **VHS/DVD** Man acquires the ability to see through solid objects.

## Television Series

*The Invaders*. Late '60s series with ideas for covert invasions.

*Mystery Science Theater 3000*. Unique take on the old "creature feature" concept. Mad scientists beam wretched movies – many from the '50s – to a sanitation worker trapped on a satellite space station and his robot companions. To protect their sanity, Joel (early on) or Mike (later) and the 'bots make satiric comments while the movie is on. Not for purists, but the running commentary is some of the smartest, most side-splitting comedy on TV, and many of these movies just can't be found anywhere else.

*The Outer Limits*. Classic mid-'60s science-fiction series; updated and new segments can be found on Showtime and in syndication.

*Quatermass*. Three British series from the '50s.

*The Twilight Zone*. Classic early-'60s science-fiction TV show. An updated version ran on CBS in the late '80s; reruns can sometimes be found on cable or in syndication.

*Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. Awful effects and plots but some good ideas for scenarios.

*War of the Worlds*. Intelligent late-'80s covert invasion. TV sequel to the 1952 movie. Plenty of ideas for any invasion scenario.

*The X-Files*. No **Atomic Horror** GM can afford to ignore this now-classic science-fiction show. Full of settings, plots, and ideas for creatures and encounters, *The X-Files* is almost a modern-day version of the FBI Campaign from p. 37. The feature film, *X-Files: Fight the Future*, explains some of the mysteries from the TV series while adding others. (Who put those mountains next to Dallas?)

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