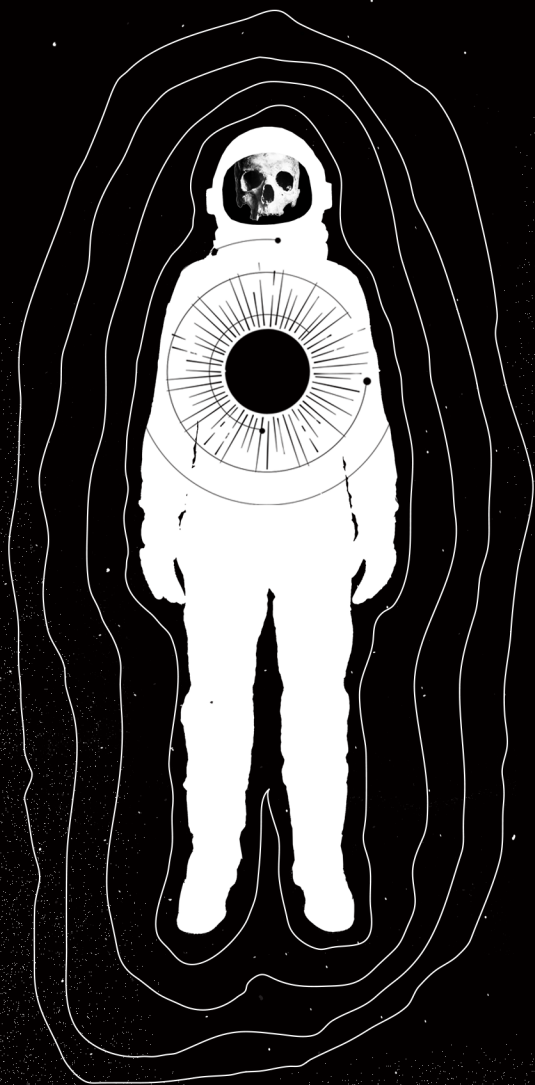


IN THE LIGHT OF A
GHOST STAR



A SCIENCE FICTION ROLE PLAYING GAME BY NATE TREME

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Thanks for checking out this game.

It's totally unoriginal and any clever idea is stolen from other better games like Jason Morningstar's **Dungeon Squad**, Ben Milton's **Knave**, David Black's **The Black Hack**, and other places I can't remember.

This setting is loosely based on real science. Most likely, the sun will eventually burn up all its hydrogen, then expand into a helium-burning red giant and eventually become a dim white dwarf. A white dwarf will burn forever, well, at least for longer than the universe has existed so far. This timeline is kajillions of years long and any number of technological and evolutionary changes could happen in that time. So let your imagination run wild, get real weird with it and have fun.

Keep track of updates and more products at HighlandParanormalSociety.com

IN THE LIGHT OF A GHOST STAR

BY NATE TREME

Earth was abandoned ages ago during the red giant expansion. Now, dimly lit by the ghost light of a dead white dwarf, it lies layered with eons of forgotten civilizations. From the warmth of Martian reactor cities, scavengers hire illegal transportation to earth to delve into its depths, looking for ancient treasures. There they must deal with ghosts, machines, and the strange life that has evolved on humankind's abandoned home planet.

Gameplay

The referee describes situations then the players get a turn to move up to 30 feet and perform an action. If an action's success is uncertain then the player rolls the appropriate stat die. A 4 or higher succeeds. At referee's discretion, special circumstances such as tactics or disadvantages give +1 or -1 to the roll.

Character Creation

Start with 3 HP, 10 inventory slots and 50 Credits. Assign a d4, d6, d8 among the following stats.

Fighter (combat, physical feats, etc.)

Explorer (sneaking, perception, etc.)

Scientist (knowledge, machinery, etc.)

Combat

To successfully land an attack or defend against an attack, the player must roll a successful fighter roll. Roll damage when someone is successfully attacked. 0HP = death.

Advancement

Gain level upon delivering 5 treasure to Mars. Treasures can be ancient Earth artifacts or Ancient alien tech. Increase HP by 1, raise one stat die to next size, gain 1 inventory slot. Dice size order: d4-d6-d8-d10-d12.

Conditions

Conditions such as hunger, intoxication, disease and exhaustion give a -1 to all rolls.

Ancient Alien Tech

Scattered around Earth are mysterious pieces of technology from alien civilizations. Each piece of ancient alien tech takes up 2 inventory slots and sells for 200 credits on Mars. Alien Tech takes 24 hours to recharge after each use.

Beacon: Shoots a bright 2ft wide pillar of light for up to 10 minutes. The light's color can be changed before each use.

Cloaking Device: User becomes invisible for 10 minutes or until attacking another creature.

Cocoon Pod: Generates a 10 ft wide domed structure of hard chitinous material that disintegrates after 8 hours. Structure has a single entrance with lock and maintains an internal temperature of 65 F.

Exo Armor: Black chitin armor grows around the user giving them +2 on any defensive Fighter rolls. Dissolves after 10 minutes.

Glow Orb: Creates a small floating ball of light that follows the user for up to 1 hour. Illuminates a 50ft area.

Gravity Mortar: Creates an instant gravity disruption at a point within 60 ft of the user. All creatures within 20 ft of that point are pushed 20 ft away from the disruption or pulled to it and take 1d6 damage. The direction of the gravity is up to the user.

Gravity Reverser: User can reverse the direction of gravity on themselves for up to 10 minutes.

GEAR	SIZE	COST
Plasma Lantern	1	10
<i>Casts light in a 30' radius</i>		
Light Weapon	1	10
<i>Does -1d4HP on successful fighter roll</i>		
Heavy Weapon	2	25
<i>Does -1d6HP on successful Fighter roll</i>		
Light Armor	1	10
<i>Increases Max HP by 1</i>		
Heavy Armor	2	25
<i>Increases Max HP by 2</i>		
Ration	1	5
<i>Keeps hunger at bay for 2 days</i>		
Zero Oxygen Flare	1	5
<i>Lights a 50'radius for 10 minutes</i>		
Cell Patcher	2	30
<i>Heals 1d4 on successful Scientist roll</i>		
<i>Must recharge for 12 hours after each use</i>		
50' Rope	1	5
<i>Durable carbon fiber rope.</i>		
Simple Tool	1	5
<i>A shovel, crowbar, screwdriver, etc.</i>		

Hologram Generator: Creates a realistic hologram anywhere within 40ft of the user. Hologram must fit within a 6ft cube and lasts for 10 minutes.

Humidifier: Produces a 40 ft cloud of thick fog.

Leech Gun: Does 1d8 damage to a target and heals the user by the same amount.

Lung Filter: User can breathe underwater, in poisonous atmospheres and low oxygen environments for up to 30 minutes.

Mind Control Apparatus: Requires Scientist Roll to use. On successful use, the target will obey a command from the user that does not directly harm itself.

Motion Negater: Target becomes paralyzed for 10 minutes or until making a successful Fighter Roll.

Plasma Key: Unlocks any mechanical or electric lock.

Rewinder: Reverses time by a short moment. If activated immediately after an action that required a roll, the die may be rerolled.

Teleporter: User can instantly teleport to a location in view within 50 ft.

Earth Expedition One

SAMPLE ADVENTURE MAP



This adventure uses the hex map on the facing page. There is no plot or story that the players must follow. As you, the referee, present the world to them and they react, a story will emerge. A blank hex map is provided on *page 9* for you to plan your own adventure. You can use the location generator on *page 10* to help populate it.

Introduction

The transport ship lands in the dunes in the center hex. The pilot tells the scavengers she'll pick them up at the same spot one week from now. Their job is to explore the area and find as many valuable artifacts as they can before it's time to leave. Five hexes have named locations which are described below. When the scavengers enter a hex without a named location, role on the encounter table (*pg. 6*) to see what they find. It takes a day to travel across a hex.

Map Locations

1. The Astro-Lich's Tower

Nergal The Astro-Lich was once a human but through science and magic, they have become a powerful undead being. Nergal is served by humanoid cockroaches (3HP, 1d4 damage). Nergal only cares about knowledge and will provide scavengers with room and board in exchange for ancient books or computer parts. The top of the tower is a detachable flying saucer which the Astro-Lich plans to fly into a black hole once all the correct calculations are made.

2. Glork City

The ruined city of Glork is inhabited by militant apes who worship a giant space slug they call Glork the Great, God Slug of Destruction. The apes send scouting parties out to find creatures, preferably human to feed to Glork. They often clash with the Astro-Lich's cockroaches and are planning a siege of the Astro-Lich's Tower. The city is full of ancient artifacts that the apes don't care about.

3. The Cybernetic Monolith

Loud thumping music plays from large speakers and multicolored lights flash in dizzying patterns all along the surface of

the monolith. Humanoid cockroaches dance to the music and eat the strange glowing mushrooms that grow in the grass around the monolith. Near the top of the monolith is a robotic eye that constantly scans the surrounding area. Any act of violence is answered with a laser blast (2d4 damage) from a metal orb that floats above the monolith. This strict anti-violence policy generally keeps the apes from Glork away (to their dismay because they love music). The cockroaches here are either off-duty servants of the Astro-Lich or former servants who have gone rogue.

4. The Black Lake

This reservoir of thick oily liquid is infested with piranha dogs (2HP, 1 damage). A blinking green light is visible deep below the surface. This light has caught the attention of the Astro-Lich's cockroach archeologist, Dr. Quartek who will give the scavengers 2 artifacts if they recover the crate of scuba gear that a gang of ape raiders recently stole from his campsite. The apes are camped in the woods southeast from the lake. The blinking light is on the control panel of a large bomb, powerful enough to destroy an entire map hex.

5. A Foreboding Cave

In an overgrown mound of ancient rubble, an opening leads down into the earth. Disturbed dirt implies something recently traveled through this tunnel. Obscured by vegetation is a worn sign reading Caddo Ocean Aquarium. Thick humid air comes from the tunnel. This passageway leads to **The Sunken Temple Of The Whale Prophet** described on *page 7*. You can use the notes and grid sections on *page 11* to plan your own dungeon location.

Weather

Roll a d12 on this table when the Scavengers enter a hex to determine the weather.

- 1-3)** 20°F. Sky is overcast with pink clouds.
- 4-5)** -15°F. Clear sky, neon aurora borealis.
- 6-7)** 30°F. Strong winds. Swirling blue clouds.
- 8)** 45°F. Light rain from glowing clouds.
- 9)** 15°F. Small hail falls from maroon clouds.
- 10-12)** 60°F. Perfectly circular clouds move independently of wind direction.

NPCS

The following are some of the prominent NPCs (non-playable characters) in this region.

Nergal The Astro-Lich

Nergal is bored of this reality and plans to reach other dimensions by traveling through a black hole. They still need to do some more research before they'll be ready to leave. Once gone, Nergal will leave their tower and valuable artifacts behind, ripe for looting. Nergal is arrogant, aloof and can shoot lightning bolts from their hands.
30 HP, damage 2d6.

Dr. Quartek

Nergal's chief archeologist, the humanoid cockroach Quartek, is trying to find out what's at the bottom of the black lake. His camp is occupied by another 4d4 cockroaches. Dr. Quartek is affable and disposed to making puns. 6 HP, 1d4 damage.



Dr. Quartek

Warlord Ruzar

Ruzar is the leader of the apes of Glork. She hates Nergal and wants to destroy the Astro-Lich's tower and rule over all the cockroaches. Ruzar will let the scavengers freely explore Glork City if they help her destroy the tower. But she is not easy to negotiate it and will normally attack humans before talking to them. Ruzar knows the space slug Glork is just a dumb slug but pretends it's a god to keep the other apes in line.



Warlord Ruzar

Glork The Great, God Slug of Destruction

Glork is a 25-foot long space slug with a wide circular maw full of razor-sharp teeth. It's kept chained in the city square of Glork City. The apes feed humans and other creatures to the slug to keep its favor upon them.

Ape Names: Malzork, Garho, Dagum, Somat, Ruka, Molor, Kawut, Tarchu, Baluka, Tukagro, Malrik, Noluk, Bazko.

Cockroach Names: Gurbek, Badubek, Dimshi, Ulmsho, Bazpuk, Xanwee, Hachi, Misho, Goyo, Cazka, Quarjee.

D20 Random Earth Artifacts

- 1. Book
- 2. Floppy Disk
- 3. Candy Bar
- 4. Clock
- 5. Magazine
- 6. Baby Doll
- 7. Cassette
- 8. Crayons
- 9. Sunglasses
- 10. Toothbrush
- 11. Laptop
- 12. Cellphone
- 13. Microchip
- 14. Bracelet
- 15. Halloween Mask
- 16. Bottle of Wine
- 17. Trumpet
- 18. Lunch Box
- 19. Soccer Ball
- 20. Twinkies

D12 Random Encounters

1. 1d6 Sluglings

Cat sized space slugs that try to eat any living thing they find. Each has 2HP. Bite does 1d2 damage. If undisturbed, they eventually crawl back to their lair where the Slug Mother resides.

2. Moon Priest

The moon priest has somehow survived on earth for many years, engaging in strange rites and research. Though much of what he says sound like nonsense, he will share rumors with the scavengers. If he's feeling inclined he'll pray a blessing over a scavenger, giving them a +1 on their next roll.

D6 Rumors

- 1) The Slug Mother makes her bed in the ruins of an ancient library. Some books are still intact.
- 2) A robot spoke to me of a city of beasts deep in the earth, in a massive warm, wet cavern.
- 3) If you see the tall man, all black but for the static face, do not disturb him, you don't want his attention.
- 4) The people here used to collect sunlight. It still sleeps in some of their machines.
- 5) Warmth is all anyone wants on this rock. A warm body is worth a fortune to the things crawling here.
- 6) There is a temple built by machines, where their gears grind out prayers to something older than the stars.

3. Legendary Space Whale

A massive space whale can be seen flying far overhead. No one knows where it comes from or where it goes. Its lonely beautiful call is a major bummer to humans and makes them aware of their mortality and the passing of beautiful things in the unrelenting flow of time. It eventually disappears through a wormhole.

4. Robocat

Some ancient pet, mews and rubs its artificial fur against the scavengers legs. If followed it leads the way to a ruined bunker containing 1 Heavy Armor, 2 light weapons and a chocolate bar (a valuable treasure on Mars).

5. 1d4 Spider Knights

Bulbous oozing humanoid scouts from some disgusting subterranean kingdom ride on spiders and carry crude spears. Spear does 1d2 damage. Spider bite does 1 damage and %50 chance of transmitting disease. Each has 3HP.

6. Cleaning Bot

This robot has been programmed to clean, it will spray a now empty bottle of cleaner at the scavengers visors and proceed to wipe them with a now dry and dirty cloth. The robot could be reprogrammed to do other activities.

7. Ghostly Apparitions

- 1) A procession of black-robed figures carries a nuclear warhead on a litter. They eventually fade away.
- 2) A baseball game is on hold while players look for a missing ball. Will lead way to a clubhouse with valuable sports memorabilia if a scavenger brings them a baseball.
- 3) A dark tall thin figure follows the scavengers, hiding in shadows and behind corners. If scavengers approach it will disappear.
- 4) A man in a tweed suit, bowler hat and carrying a small black bag approaches the scavengers and gives them a medical checkup. He places a stethoscope on their chests, looks in their ears and hits their knees with a small hammer. Anyone injured is healed 1HP.

8. 1d6 Rival Scavengers

They are cautious but not openly hostile. They are interested in any treasure the party has and would like to get it, either by unfair trades, deceit, or possible violence. Each has 3HP and can do 1d4 damage.

9. 1d6 Battle Apes

Clad in crude spiky armor, these apes are very territorial and consider human flesh a delicacy. They love music and are scared of fire. They have 4 HP and do 1d4 damage.

10. 2d4 Fungal Star Goblins

Moldy skinned aliens who traveled to earth on some wayward meteor. 2HP, 1 damage. Poisonous spores explode from their bodies when they die with a %50 chance of transmitting disease. They love shiny objects and philosophy.

11. Ancient AI Hologram Kiosk

This ancient computer program was once some kind of help desk or information service for ancient earthlings. It appears as a glowing, transparent, humanoid chicken in a tuxedo. Eons of digital entropy have rendered it prone to malfunctions but it will do it's best to answer any questions it is asked. The referee can come up with their own answers or use a real AI like Siri, Alexa or Google to answer the player characters questions.

12. Robo Bandit

A robot decked out in neon western wear with lots of fringe. Programmed to rob everyone it encounters and eat everything it steals. It is fond of 'your momma' jokes and is easily coaxed into joke battles. Also is programmed to give a weather report on command but these reports are highly inaccurate. 4HP, 1d6 damage.

Sample Dungeon Crawl

The Sunken Temple Of The Whale Prophet

In ancient times this was an aquarium where humans came to see rare sea creatures. It is now sunken deep into the earth. A winding tunnel leads from the surface and opens into

Room 1. The air is warm and moist, algae grows on the walls and floor. The sound of waves can be heard.

Room 1

A faded mural of cartoon sea creatures is painted on the North wall. A small box office stands near a doorway with turnstiles on the East wall. Box office contains novelty jellyfish umbrella with streamers for tentacles. An old empty vending machine hides a doorway on the South wall.

Room 2

Large snails feed on algae in broken aquarium tanks. **Garv**, a humanoid porpoise (HP 4, 1d4 DMG) is collecting glowing snail slime in jars.

Room 3

Large cavern with white sand beach and a sea that stretches off into the darkness. A large light hanging from ceiling simulates sun/moonlight. 2d6 robots stand in front of a humanoid orca seated on a throne, all singing whale songs in unison. The orca, **Olorp**, is upset that some of its robot zealots have become followers of **Tekos**, a psychic jellyfish. On the wall behind the throne is a gravity machine that controls the intensity of the tides. Down the beach, 1d6 Roach people surf the waves. Under the sea is a village of hospitable humanoid porpoises. They will feed visitors seaweed snacks. They don't like robots and like to see them crushed by waves. They have 2 artifacts buried on the beach, a lava lamp and an oceanography textbook.

Room 4

Finkmar, an ape in a tuxedo jacket and top hat, sits on a seashell encrusted bench writing notes in notepad by the glow of fluorescent fungi. He is doing research for his upcoming book on the origins of whales. He believes they are descendants of aliens who colonized earth when it was covered in oceans.

Room 5

A skeleton of a great white shark is on display in the center of the room. Clamshell shaped benches line the walls.

Room 6

1d6 Fungal Star Goblins play on an ocean-themed playground, seahorse spring riders, a submarine structure with slides and a swingset attached.

Room 7

Schools of colorful fish swim in a large intact aquarium. It's maintained by the porpoises from **Room 3** who feed the fish daily.

Room 8

2d4 robots (3HP, 1d6 DMG) worship, **Tekos**, a large floating jellyfish (12 HP, 1d8 DMG). Electric bolts of from **Tekos** keep the robots in an ecstatic stupor. **Tekos** is telepathic, wants more robots to join its electro-spiritual neural network.

Room 9

A long hallway dimly lit by phosphorescent coral that has grown along the walls. Many small closets line the hallway. Roll a d6 when a closet is opened for the first time.

- 1) An old Earth artifact.
- 2) A human skeleton tangled in seaweed.
- 3) An angry stingray cat (3HP, 1d4 DMG).
- 4) A porpoise person high on sea fungus.
- 5) Burnt robot remains.
- 6) Snails feeding on algae.

Wandering Monsters

Roll on this table when the party is stalling, being noisy, backtracking, or if you just want to give them something to deal with.

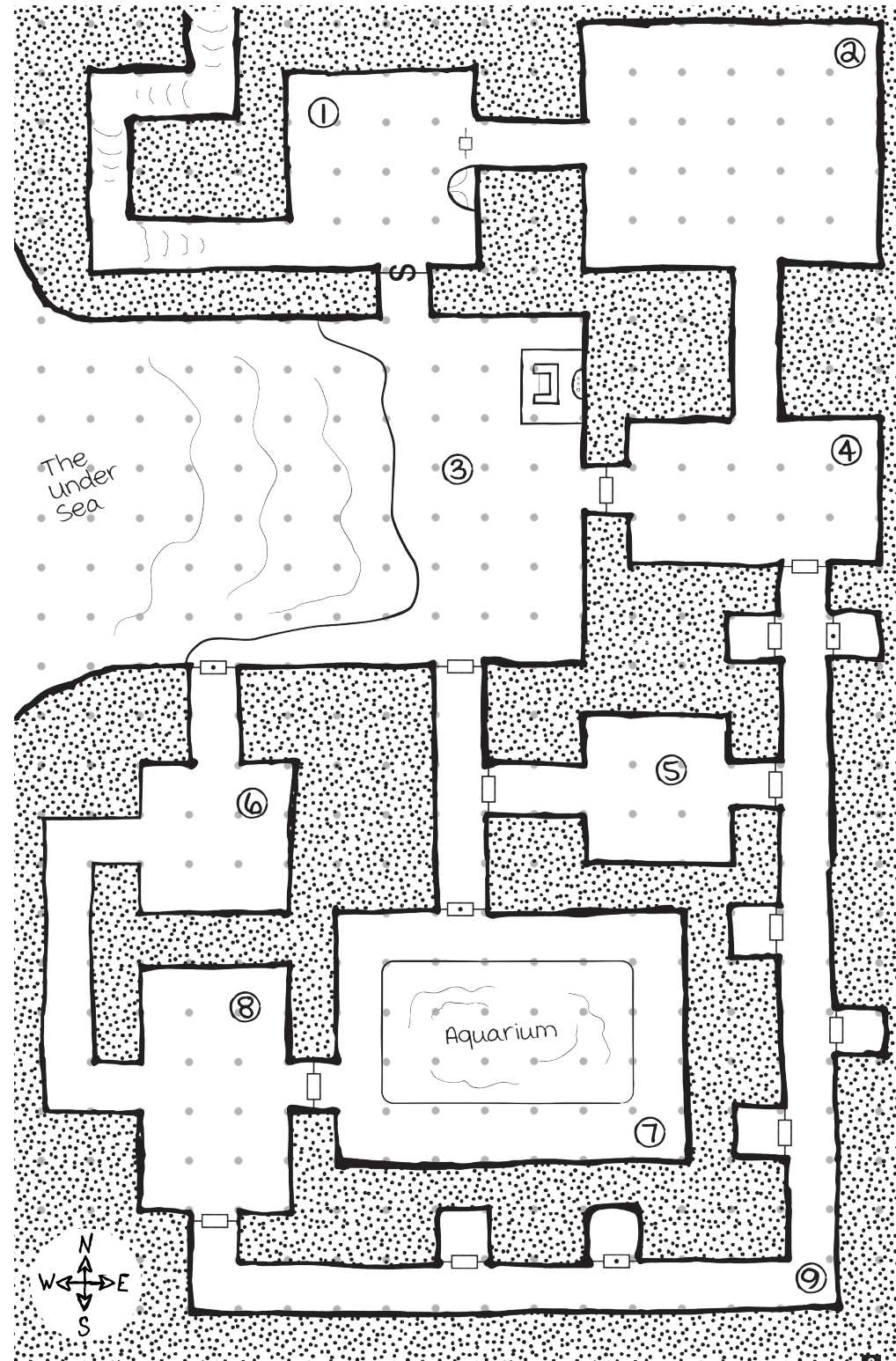
- 1) 1d6 Porpoise People
- 2) 1d4 Shark Bats (1HP, 1 DMG)
- 3) Giant Crab (8HP, 1d6 DMG)
- 4) 1d4 Battle Apes (4HP, 1d4 DMG)
- 5) Clam Mutant (6HP, 1d6 DMG)
- 6) 1d4 Robot Zealots (3HP, 1d6 DMG)

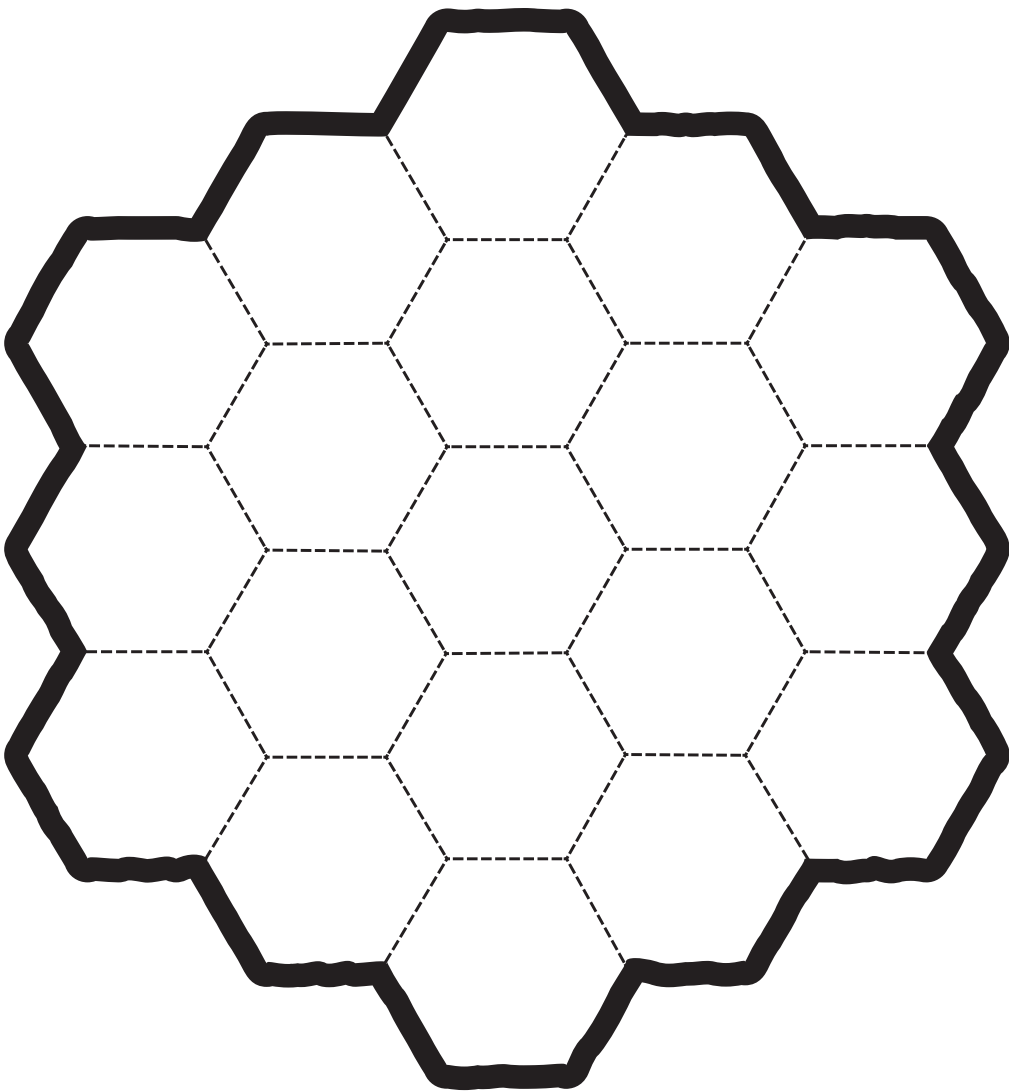
Reaction Table (optional)

Roll 2d6 to see how the monsters react

- 2) Immediate Attack
- 3-5) Hostile, possible attack
- 6-8) Uncertain, monster confused
- 9-11) No attack, monster leaves or considers offers
- 12) Enthusiastic friendship

- ⊗— Secret Door
- Unlocked Door
- ◻— Locked Door





D12 Location Generator

Roll a d12 on each of the following lists to generate some more strange encounters that your scavengers might come across.

Place

1. A desolate shopping mall
2. A crashed spaceship
3. An ancient ruined amusement park
4. A skyscraper, somehow still standing
5. An underground train station
6. An obsidian pyramid
7. A massive tower, made of a strange organic shifting material
8. A labyrinthine trash dump
9. A shantytown floating on a black lake
10. A glowing crystal castle
11. A haunted trailer park
12. A thick forest of blue barked trees with large black leaves

Occupied by

1. Jovial humanoid squids
2. Churlish humanoid insects
3. Sentient telepathic snails
4. Children with completely black eyeballs
5. Bulbous oozing humanoids and their spider steeds
6. Posh talking apes
7. Malodorous, sentient, carnivorous vegetation
8. Chipper workbot tribe
9. Deranged martian scavengers
10. A Tribe of human outcasts
11. Fungal star goblins
12. A congregation of robot monks

Seeking to

1. Trade organic material for ancient earth artifacts
2. Sing to a strange deity
3. Enslave all living things
4. Tell and hear jokes
5. Eat humans
6. Sacrifice a human to a strange deity
7. Travel to Mars
8. Protect their territory from strangers
9. Shoot a nuclear missile at the moon
10. Challenge adversaries to intense breakdance competitions
11. Feed human brains to angry imprisoned space slug
12. Witness the long awaited blooming of giant star flower



Notes & Sketches



Example of Play

Referee: From far down the tunnel behind you, the howls of the mutants let you know they are still pursuing you. An open mechanical portcullis ahead of you leads to a staircase that leads upward, you can see the dim light of the sun spilling down from above.

Scavenger Devik: The surface! Let's go!
Scavenger Rose: I want to try to close that portcullis behind us.

Referee: There is a broken control panel on the wall next to the portcullis, you see wires sticking from behind it. Make a Scientist roll to attempt to wire it to close. You hear the howling mutants getting closer.

Scavenger Jen: I ready my heavy blaster and keep watch on the tunnel behind us.

Scavenger Rose: Ok, I have a d8 in Scientist. *rolls d8* I got a 5!

Referee: Success! The wires spark as you touch them together and the portcullis begins to slowly descend. Suddenly, two mutants leap from the dark tunnel and are rushing towards you, you hear more approaching in the darkness behind them. What do you do?

Scavenger Jen: I fire my blaster at the closest mutant. I have a d6 in Fighter *rolls d6* A 4!

Referee: That hits! Roll damage.

Scavenger Jen: *rolls d6* 3 damage.
Referee: You drop a mutant. Devik, Rose, What do you do? The portcullis is about halfway down and the other mutant looks like it's about to leap at you. You can make out more shapes approaching from the dark tunnel.

Scavenger Devik: I grab the portcullis and try to pull it down quicker.

Scavenger Rose: I shoot my pistol at the mutant.
Referee: Ok, those are both Fighter rolls.

Scavenger Devik: *rolls d6* I got a 4!

Scavenger Rose: *rolls d4* I rolled a 1.

Referee: Rose's shot misses the mutant as it leaps towards her with its long nasty claws ready to strike. Fortunately, Devik pulls the portcullis down the rest of the way before the mutant reaches you. The mutant begins beating on the other side of the portcullis and is soon joined by more mutants. The door shakes and bends against their strikes. It doesn't seem like it will hold for long.

Scavenger Jen: Let's go up.

Referee: The stairs take you up to the surface. You emerge on a sidewalk. You see the ruined and toppled remains of an ancient earth city around you. A street littered with smashed old earth vehicles, parts of destroyed buildings and other debris stretches off to your left and right.

Scavenger Devik: I want to gauge our position and determine the direction to our rendezvous point.

Referee: That will be an Explorer roll.

Scavenger Devik: Oh, and I have a compass in my inventory.

Referee: Great, that will add +1 to your roll.

Scavenger Devik: *rolls d8* It's a 4, plus one, so 5 total.

Referee: Using your compass and looking at the position of the stars you are able to determine that your basecamp is to the east. East is to your right.

Scavenger Rose: Well let's go that way, quickly.

Referee: The road leads out of the ruined city and eventually disappears under dirt and rock as you enter a rocky forested area. You recognize the strange rock formations and the short trees with large flat black leaves and realize you are close to camp. You hear noises up ahead, coming from just beyond a line of trees, from the position of your base camp and rendezvous point.

Scavenger Devik: I sneak towards the sound to see what it is. *makes Explorer roll* I got a 6!

Referee: Through the trees, you see a dozen apes in crude battle armor inspecting your former campsite. A large gorilla in a red spiked helmet grunts and says *"Smells like humans, in my kingdom! Find the trespassers and feed them to the mighty Glork!"* Four more apes enter the clearing pulling chains attached to a large worm-like creature with a wide circular maw full of razor-sharp teeth. *"Find them!"* the Gorilla yells at the other apes. He then turns to the worm creature and says *"We will offer these humans to you, O Glork the Great, as a sacrifice to nourish you! Hail Glork, God Slug of Destruction!"* The other apes say *"Hail Glork!"* in unison and break into groups of 2 to begin their hunt for humans. 2 apes start walking in your direction. You are still hidden behind the trees, what do you do?

Scavengers: ...
Referee: What?

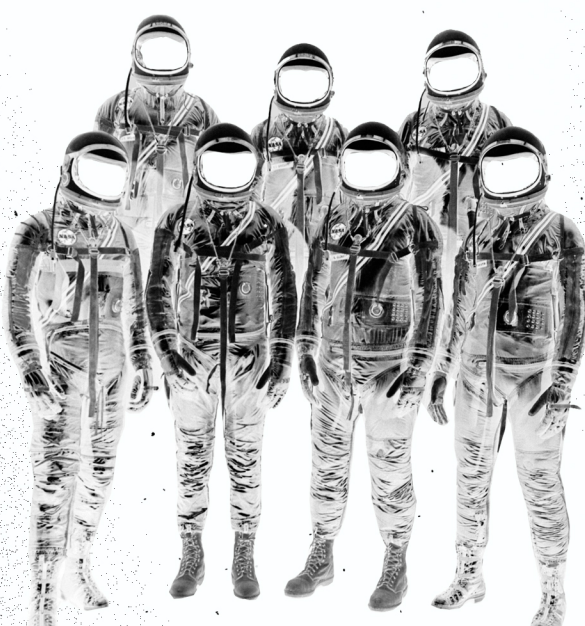


FIGHTER	PORTRAIT	LEVEL
EXPLORER		CURRENT HP
SCIENTIST	NAME:	TOTAL HP

INVENTORY

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CREDITS: _____



HIGHLAND PARANORMAL SOCIETY