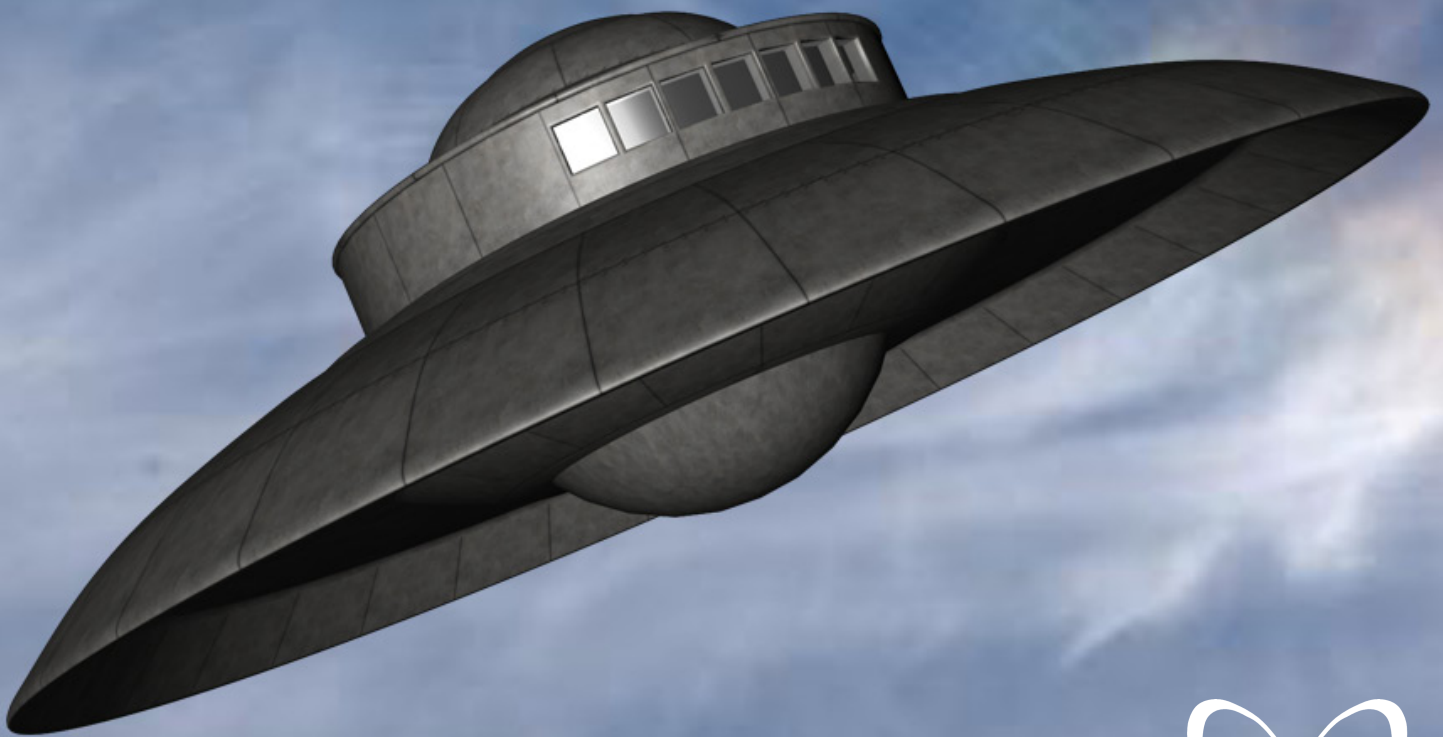


MOON DUST MEN

BY KENNETH HITE



GUMSHOE
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Pelgrane Press

KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

MOON DUST MEN

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A GUMSHOE CAMPAIGN FRAME

President Eisenhower established Project Moon Dust in 1953 to locate, contain, and coordinate everything known about the alien presence on Earth. The public-relations and open-source arm of Moon Dust was called Project Blue Book. Blue Book ended its work in 1970. It is 1978. Your work never ends. This GUMSHOE campaign frame can be a sci-fi, conspiracy, or horror game – it's up to you to find the truth.

PROJECT MOON DUST

"AFCIN intelligence team capability is provided for in UFO investigation (AFR 200-2) and in support of Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) Foreign Technology Division (FTD) Projects Moon Dust and Blue Fly. These peacetime projects all involve a potential for employment of qualified field intelligence personnel on a quick reaction basis to recover or perform field exploitation of unidentified flying objects, or known Soviet/Bloc aerospace vehicles, weapons systems, and/or residual components of such equipment. The intelligence team capability to gain rapid access, regardless of location, to recover or perform field exploitation, to communicate and provide intelligence reports is the only such collection capability available to AFCIN, and is vitally necessary in view of current intelligence gaps..."

-- Lt. Col. Norman A. Rosner, USAF, memo to Air Force Central Intelligence Office (AFCIN), 1961

"There is no agency, nor has there ever been, at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, which would deal with UFOs or have any information about the incident in Roswell. In addition, there is no Project Moon Dust or Operation Blue Fly. Those missions never existed."

-- Lt. Col. John E. Madison, USAF, letter to Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), 1991

After a spate of sightings over Washington State in June and the UFO crash at Roswell on July 7, 1947, the U.S. military began a wide-ranging investigation into the UFO phenomenon. From the outset, this investigation had a public face designed to placate a panicky citizenry and mislead the Russians, and a more serious secret side. "Project Saucer" was the public program; Project Sign was the main investigation, operated by the Army's T-2 (air intelligence)

program and after January 1948 by the U.S. Air Force's Air Technical Intelligence Center. Skepticism, bureaucratic infighting – and possibly interference by another, even more secret "Majestic" interagency group -- slowed progress. Sign's enemies got the program canceled in 1949, replaced first by Project Grudge, and then (in March 1952) by the entirely cosmetic Project Blue Book. The entire Air Force UFO program numbered fewer than a dozen men ... until a squadron of UFOs buzzed Washington, D.C., on two weekends in July 1952.

The Truman administration attempted to restart the secret saucer program, but it took a new President to clear out the military-bureaucratic obstructions. Eisenhower unified all the military UFO investigation programs under the Air Force, leaving Blue Book as the public face ordered to release only "cleared" cases to the press. With the end of the Korean War, top air intelligence teams became available for secret domestic (and foreign) operations: Eisenhower established Project Moon Dust firmly within an existing unit (at that time, the 4602nd Air Intelligence Service Squadron) rather than leaving it a Pentagon orphan. When Blue Book shut down amidst public obloquy and cynicism in 1970, Moon Dust continued.

MOON DUST: 1978

At present, Project Moon Dust is staffed and concealed by the 7612th Air Intelligence Group, based out of Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Detachments of the 7612th – mostly "early assessment teams" like the PCs – can stage from secure facilities on 19 air bases in the U.S. and 25 overseas. In theory, a Moon Dust team can get anywhere in the U.S. within six hours – and anywhere in the free world within 24. In the last decade, Moon

Dust teams have carried out missions in the Sudan, Nepal, South Africa, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Panama. And those are just the ones that got into State Department records. You're not encouraged to involve the State Department.

The cover mission of the 7612th is enemy aircraft assessment, security and investigation of classified crashed U.S. aircraft, the interrogation of captured enemy pilots, and interpretation of air-gathered intelligence. Moon Dust personnel are either assigned or seconded to the 7612th, in at least one cover identity. This gives them access to the Moon Dust areas of Fort Belvoir, and to the Foreign Technology Division at Wright-Patterson AFB near Dayton, Ohio. Inside the FTD is Hangar 18 (actually a complex of hangars) where DARPA, NASA, and other above-top-secret agencies study anything retrieved by Moon Dust or its transportation section, Project Blue Fly.

Active experimentation, reverse-engineering of UFO systems, and other such activities take place at Area 51 in Nevada, under cover of the "black aircraft" programs building the next generation of spy planes and testing Soviet-bloc aircraft performance. Moon Dust operatives need special clearance to enter Area 51, or the rumored "Grey prison" beneath the Archuleta Mesa near Dulce, New Mexico.

A Moon Dust team comprises three to six personnel, usually including a linguist, a technician, and a combat ops specialist. All are airborne, or at least jump, qualified – UFOs don't always crash near roads or landing strips. The Air Force attempts to cross-train team members in the skills of the others to ensure a team functional capability despite any casualties that may be incurred in their employment.

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On some missions, especially within U.S. borders, Moon Dust personnel can't just show up in camouflage and cordon things off. They may have to investigate a crash already contaminated, or follow up rumors and sightings and a missing persons report. On those operations, Moon Dust agents are allowed to wear civilian clothing and show non-military ID, impersonating other federal agents, local law enforcement, or anything else that gets the mission done. Moon Dust and Blue Fly vehicles are unregistered, or carry false plates and signage. Reports of some Moon Dust men have come back as "Men in Black" rumors – so "MIB" is another possible cover for misdirection and misinformation ops.

YOUR MOON DUST MAN

May be a woman, to be fair. It's 1978, not 1958. Women have been allowed to enlist in the Air Force, and enroll in the Air Force Academy, for two whole years now. But man or woman, you are either an officer, NCO, or airman in the U.S. Air Force, or part of some Defense Department agency or military unit that can be easily seconded to its most top-secret projects. You might be a Green Beret who saw a "red sphere" bring down a B-52 over Laos in 1970, or a DARPA engineer with access to the Philadelphia Experiment files, or even a liaison from the British DI 55 "UFO Desk"

BUILD POINTS AND ABILITIES

Build characters as normal for GUMSHOE, using the following parameters:

NUMBER OF PLAYERS	INVESTIGATIVE BUILD POINTS
2	32
3	24
4	22
5+	20

Each player gets 65 points to spend on General abilities, regardless of group size. See the list of available abilities for Moon Dust Men in the sidebar.

FREE RATING POINTS

Take 1 free rating point in each of the Investigative abilities Military Science and Ufology. This represents your military training (and familiarity with military culture) and the basic remit of Project Moon Dust: investigate, contain, recover, and exploit extraterrestrial artifacts and beings for the national security of the United States.

In General abilities, take 4 free rating points in each of Health, Parachuting, and Stability. All Moon Dust personnel are jump qualified, and reasonably fit in mind and body.

ABILITY DETAILS

Most of the abilities in this campaign frame are familiar from other GUMSHOE games, or their parameters are obvious from their names. Here are a few clarifications and details for the remainder:

Aircraft Engineering (Technical)

Covers all aspects of aircraft construction and design: aerodynamics, avionics, lifting bodies, thrust, stability, etc. both historical and cutting-edge. If it's any question about an aircraft besides "Can I fly it?" this ability answers it.

Communications (Technical)

Incorporates telegraphy, radio, semaphore, and any other communications method likely to be used in the military or civilian piloting sphere. Sending messages in adverse atmospheric conditions may

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require a spend; gathering core clues by radio never does.

Covers common codes such as Morse. Can be used as an Interpersonal ability with ham radio enthusiasts, air-traffic controllers, or anyone official-sounding on the other end of the microphone.

Crash Scene Investigation (Technical)

Forensic examination of aircraft crashes: causes, reconstructions, burn patterns, impact areas, likely spots for fallen wings or black boxes, and so forth. What forensic pathology and crime-scene investigation does for human bodies, this ability does for crashed aircraft.

Criminology (Academic)

Covers both criminal profiling and crime scene investigation under one cinematically generous ability. Also covers specific technical actions such as fingerprinting, blood sampling and testing, ballistics comparisons, etc.

Data Retrieval (Technical)

In addition to its normal functions in GUMSHOE, this ability includes getting any data whatsoever out of (or into) a computer. It's 1978, after all.

Impersonate (Interpersonal)

This is, among other things, the ability to flash a badge (phony or at least not officially yours) and not look ridiculous. The Project provides cover identities, both general and specific to a given investigation.

Inspiration (Interpersonal)

Introduced in *Ashen Stars*, this ability allows you to identify the witness' noble or higher principles and awaken or play upon them. Stereotypically, Moon Dust investigators use this ability to convince people to speak (or remain silent) "for the good of their country."

Languages (Academic)

Operates as in *Esoterrorists* and *Trail of Cthulhu*: one extra language per rating point. Almost all Moon Dust operatives begin with Russian as their second language.

Notice (Technical)

With specific "evidence collection" falling under Crash Scene Investigation or Criminology, this becomes the more general "spot hidden" or "find the notebook" type

MOON DUST MEN ABILITIES

INVESTIGATIVE

Academic

Anthropology
Archaeology
Architecture
Biology
Criminology
Diagnosis
History
Languages
Law
Military Science
Occult Studies
Physics
Research
Ufology

Interpersonal

Bullshit Detector
Bureaucracy
Cop Talk
Flattery
Impersonate
Inspiration
Interrogation
Intimidation
Negotiation
Reassurance
Tradecraft

TECHNICAL

Aircraft Engineering
Astronomy
Chemistry
Communications
Crash Scene
Investigation
Cryptography
Data Retrieval
Document Analysis
Electronic
Surveillance
Explosive Devices
Forensic Anthropology
Notice
Outdoor Survival
Photography
Traffic Analysis

GENERAL

Athletics
Driving
Filch
Health
Infiltration
Mechanics
Medic
Parachuting
Piloting
Preparedness
Scuffling
Sense Trouble
Shooting
Shrink
Stability
Surveillance

ability from *Night's Black Agents*.

Parachuting (General)

This General ability governs the use of parachutes. A normal jump is Difficulty 4: high-altitude low-opening jumps (the most common in covert operations) are Difficulty 6. Night jumps, forested terrain, and high winds each add +1 to Difficulty. A failed Parachuting test normally just lands you somewhere you didn't want to be: only a badly failed test (a roll of 1, or failing by 5+) causes actual injury (Health loss equal to the Difficulty of the failed test).

Photography (Technical)

This ability includes aerial photography, and interpretation of same. It also includes gun-camera photography.

Tradecraft (Interpersonal)

Introduced in *Night's Black Agents*, this ability allows you to use and recognize the techniques of intelligence and counter-intelligence agents. It also covers clandestine meetings, dead drops, getting information out of the unit's CIA liaison, and other similar activities.

Ufology (Academic)

This ability is the "UFO equivalent" of Occult Studies, dealing with every aspect of UFO lore both real and reported, from Ezekiel's Wheel to the Roswell autopsy photos to the cinema of Steven Spielberg. The briefing dockets in Moon Dust training grant every operative 1 point in this ability for free.

PSYCHIC ABILITIES

Psionic or psychic powers are special General abilities. It's up to the GM whether only one character can be "the psychic" or whether any given psychic can have only one power.

Build points for such paranormal abilities come from the pool of General build points. The first rating point in any paranormal ability costs 5 build points; after that, build points for that ability become rating points as normal.

Jack wants to get Pyrokinesis (starting fires at a distance). He spends 7 build points, and gets Pyrokinesis with a rating of 3. The first rating point costs 5 build points; the next two each cost 1 build point.

Using a paranormal ability is like any other General ability use: roll a die, add any points you spend, and compare the result to the Difficulty. However, you *must spend* at least 2 points from your ability pool if you can. If you have insufficient points in that pool, you must spend points from your Stability pool instead. Points spent from your Stability pool do not add to the die roll, however.

Shocking revelations or other uncanny phenomena accompanying paranormal ability use will more than likely trigger further Stability tests (likely 3- or 4-point potential losses).

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REMOTE VIEWING CIRCUMSTANCE	DIFFICULTY MODIFIER
Viewer has visited the site in person or in Stage Six viewing of target	-3
Viewer has excellent IMINT: surveillance footage, ground photos; or previous Stage Three or better viewing of target	-2
Viewer has good IMINT: real-time satellite or aerial footage	-1
Viewer has adequate IMINT: satellite or aerial photos	+0
Cold “coordinates only” viewing without IMINT	+1
Site has anti-RV precautions (Tesla coils, astral wards, etc.)	+2 or worse
Viewer is distracted by loud noises or other stimuli	+2

REMOTE VIEWING INTELLIGENCE RESULT	DIFFICULTY
Stage One: Perception of site’s general nature: e.g., “structure,” “water,” “event”	4
Stage Two: Basic sense perception of site or target: taste, temperature, sound, color, quality of light	6
Stage Three: Dimensional perception of site or target: height, length, depth, angle, curvature; site or target can be sketched with an appropriate spend (e.g., Architecture, Military Science)	8
Stage Four: Complex and abstract information about target: chemical composition, mechanical intentions, orientation, dollar value, relationship to outside world, etc.	10
Stage Five: Viewer may “interrogate” the vision; Director answers any one question about the target for 1 Remote Viewing point	12
Stage Six: Full three-dimensional imagery of target, assuming the viewer can draw, render, or otherwise model the target with an appropriate spend (e.g., Architecture, Mechanics, Military Science); Director answers two more questions about the target for 1 Remote Viewing point.	15

While using a paranormal ability, you cannot use any other ability except as specifically noted in the ability text. You cannot use any paranormal ability while in combat or in immediate physical peril.

After using a paranormal ability, you must make a Difficulty 5 Health test or immediately lose 2 Health *and* become Hurt for the rest of the scene. (If you are already Hurt, you become Seriously

Wounded.) This represents a profound, bone-deep exhaustion approaching shock, not an actual injury.

Paranormal abilities do not refresh until after an operation.

Abilities the GM suspects might break the game (such as reliable mind-reading) should be chancy (high Difficulty numbers), dangerous (required Health loss: -1 Health per

paranormal ability point spent), or just restricted to NPCs.

Aside from that, any paranormal ability the GM allows is possible: the CIA is up to all kinds of weirdness, and has been since its first LSD experiments in the 1950s. More to the point, weird psychic powers are very much in genre both for UFO lore and for 1970s SF.

The following example power has the further advantage, so help me, of having been actually attempted for 25 years by the U.S. government.

Remote Viewing (General/Paranormal)

This ability, as practiced by the Scanate program at the Stanford Research Institute (funded by the CIA) or the U.S. Army Intelligence Project Grill Flame (set up in 1978 to coordinate all military psychic research), is not a psychic power so much as a training regimen that maximizes both its users’ innate psi abilities and their analytical subconscious. In fine, it is militarized clairvoyance, the ability to see things unknown to the viewer at a distance. It does not allow the viewer to find a specific person or object; rather, it reveals anything present at a specific set of map or GPS coordinates. You can use remote viewing (RV) to view the inside of a locked building, specific room, or sealed vault, assuming you have the coordinates.

The more specific the coordinates, the more specific the information: in practice, trying to remote-view any site larger than a square kilometer returns nothing but blurs. Switching coordinates (including “zooming in”) during a remote viewing session requires a new test roll. A session lasts between one and six hours.

Difficulty does not vary by range, but by the amount of intelligence returned by a given session. After spending points from your Remote Viewing pool, roll the die, apply any modifiers, and check the total Difficulty achieved against the result column. Each result includes the earlier Stages: e.g., a Stage Three result also returns the information available at Stages One and Two.

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RULES

Use whichever GUMSHOE rules set you feel most comfortable with to run this campaign frame. Assumption clash is least severe with *Esoterrorists* or (for a higher-action game) *Night's Black Agents*, but the basic rules from *Trail of Cthulhu* or *Mutant City Blues* are close enough for shadow-government work.

There is one framework-specific rules mechanic for Investigative ability use, however.

BACKSLASH POINTS

The default assumption for a given ability is that it conveys actionable, real-world information. Even Occult Studies and Ufology deal with things actually believed, written, or (in some cases) witnessed. This default assumption goes out the window in the “weird science” genre typified by *The X-Files* or *Fringe*. In this genre, insane theories, crank science, and arrant lies have a very real chance of providing real-world leads and clues.

To avoid either bogging the ability list down with a myriad of fringe abilities, or providing a single unbalanced “Fringe” ability, this framework introduces Backslash Points (or B.S. Points, for short). When you spend an investigative ability point, you decide whether to spend it on real knowledge or crank knowledge. A point you spend on nonsense (even – especially – if it turns out to be valid for this investigation) goes in front of the backslash, thus:

Chemistry 2\1

This indicates ratings of Chemistry 2 in “Real Chemistry” and Chemistry 1 in “Fringe Chemistry.”

You can always add unassigned points on either side of the backslash, or move points from the respectable back to the crazy front.

Faced with a dangerous leak of the nonexistent substance red mercury, Lt. Gerald (Chemistry 2\1) decides to spend 2 Chemistry backslash points to figure out a solution. From now on, his score reads: Chemistry 1\2.

But once points have gone past the slash, they stay there. You never get less crazy – or, rather, you never again fool yourself into thinking that the real world is the whole world.

This isn't quite as bad as it sounds: even with Chemistry 0\3, for example, you still retain enough “Real Chemistry” to understand and find any core clue normally available with Chemistry.

As the example indicates, spending backslash points often provides answers to weird conundrums, or indicates a direction toward a solution to the current problem or investigation. Like the Cthulhu Mythos ability in *Trail of Cthulhu*, backslash points shouldn't short-circuit the scenario – they should bring the weirdness. Also like the Cthulhu Mythos ability, the realization caused by the backslash spend might invoke a Stability test. (In some campaigns, the GM can just rule that each backslash spend costs 1 pool point of Stability per backslash point spent. This seems a little mean, but it matches the genre perfectly.)

The GM doesn't have to solicit or offer returns on backslash point spends, but she should tailor the general weirdness tone of the campaign to the rough ratio of Real and Fringe points out there on the heroes' character sheets.

BACKSLASHED ABILITIES

Here's a brief starter of the sorts of things “fringe” might mean for the most likely abilities to be backslashed. (Backslashing Occult Studies or Ufology might be possible, but hardly seems necessary.) The GM can also consider this a list of Google keywords to search for scenario inspiration.

Aircraft Engineering: vortex engineering (Viktor Schauburger), dielectric effect, plasma-jet engine

Anthropology: witch-cults, peaceful matriarchies, craniometry, collective unconscious, archetypes, race memory

Archaeology: ancient astronauts, pyramidology, creationism, lost cities, “earth changes,” Atlantis et al.

Architecture: feng shui, houses built as “etheric windows” or “psychic sinks”

Astronomy: hidden planets, Velikovsky, canals on Mars, Venusians, lumeniferous ether, astrology

Biology: cryptozoology, entheology, orgone, Lysenko

Chemistry: red mercury, alchemy, homeopathy, chemtrails

Criminology: hereditary criminal tendencies, mass Satanic murder cults, enneagrams, subliminal murder programming, Manchurian candidates

Data Retrieval: EVP, rods, orbs

Diagnosis: reiki, chakras, aura reading, engrams, iridology, reflexology

Document Analysis: graphology, cut-up method, Baconian/Oxfordian theory

Electronic Surveillance: EVP, microwave mind control

History: conspiracy theory, immortals or “walk-ins” or Secret Masters, “hollow history” or “missing time” (Illig, Fomenko, Velikovsky)

Languages: Senzar, Naacal

Negotiation or Reassurance: neurolinguistic programming

Physics: zero-point energy, free energy, perpetual motion, vril, orgone, N-rays, torsion field physics, scalar physics

Photography: Kirlian photography, spirit photography

Traffic Analysis: numerology, weird Dale Cooper holistic profiling bullshit

Some of these topics may overlap with paranormal General abilities, available to the players at the GM's discretion (see above). Such abilities are almost always available to a major NPC in the scenario, but may not be reproducible to U.S. Air Force standards.

JUST A SPRINKLE OF MOON DUST

Blending the Moon Dust Men campaign frame with other GUMSHOE games is as easy as you want to make it.

ASHEN STARS

While a team of lasers going around the Bleed investigating reports of sorcery and demonic invasion might be interestingly bizarre, it's not the most likely crossover. Most obviously, *Ashen Stars* contains lots of alien gear – and aliens! – to drop into Grey mother ships or the hills of Kentucky. Balla might be Tall Greys, Cybes could be Nordic robots, Durugh could be Short Darks or Short Greys (especially given their Phase ability), Kch-Thk make fine Mantids, the Tavak are good Reptoids, and the Vas Mal are almost ideal Greys. Don't rule out a "time travel" episode that crashes your lasers on Old Earth and faces the Moon Dust Men as implacable foes who can't be killed without derailing the time stream!

ESOTERRORISTS

These two games can be almost identical already – both the Ordo Veritas and the Air Force want to keep things hidden and veiled-out. The OV is more intergovernmental and (at least in the default setting) less paranoid than the USAF, but almost anything that works in one game can be tossed at the other. In the Esoterror universe, of course, the aliens are actually Outer Dark entities, trying to build a new myth-pattern of demons for an ignorant scientific age. OV likely set up Moon Dust as its false flag within the U.S. government, which can create all manner of hilarious bureaucratic snafus.

FEAR ITSELF

Before you reject the possibilities, remember this. According to UFO lore, aliens abduct and rape people, test them arbitrarily, and seem to revel or batten on their victims' confusion and fear. They mutilate cattle ... at least. They only appear to the lost, the alone, and the isolated. In short, they're perfect slasher villains. Re-read Stephen King's *Tommyknockers*, or re-watch *The Mothman Prophecies* or *The Objective* for some pure-quill UFO horror.

MUTANT CITY BLUES

First of all, make sure to upgrade the alien powers to be at least the equivalent of human psychic powers. But even then, in a superhero universe, aliens are just weird supers. That said, the ghost flu might have an alien cause (either directly, or reverse-engineered and released by Majestic-12) and as such be a useful mystery. The Quade Institute might be a little less benevolent in such a setting, too – where, exactly, do its government contracts come from?

NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS

Another strong, natural fit here. You can build aliens using the various vampiric powers, or build vampires using these aliens, if you've decided on an alien vampire origin. Both games involve coverups, conspiracies, and hidden secrets – and the 1970s is the great age of the Le Carré spy story, Capricorn One, and Anne Rice's alienated vampires. Even James Bond went to space in the Seventies, though he didn't meet any aliens or vampires. That we know of.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

This can be a "back-door" Cthulhu campaign in which the players slowly find out that the Greys are actually Mi-Go, the Reptoids are Serpent-Folk, and the Nommo are Deep Ones. It also might work as a more straightforward "cover within the cover" *Trail* game in which Project Covenant keeps looking into the Mythos under the guise of alien-hunting. Setting *Moon Dust Men* in the 1930s is trickier: Welles' Martians aside, there wasn't a national UFO panic that decade. UFOs did show up then, especially in Canada, Alaska, and Sweden, and Charles Fort's writings were still fresh. One weird possibility: modern ufologists claim that Mussolini established a UFO investigation "Cabinet" called RS/33 under Guglielmo Marconi and Italo Balbo. If Fascist fliers were finding Yog-Sothoth cults and byakhee infestations behind reports of "glowing spheres" and "flying wedges" then you're really cooking with garlic!

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EBES AND OTHERS

For the opposition, the GM should add any or all special powers that take her fancy. There may be different castes or breeds of Greys, for example, each with their own special abilities from levitation to paralysis to teleportation.

NPC PSIONICS

Festooned with Russians, aliens, and mutants, the world of Moon Dust is rife with psionic foes. Rather than provide a raft of different mechanics, this frame defaults to one player-facing effect. (NPC psionic use on other NPCs succeeds or not as the GM decides the drama dictates.) First, the psychic spends *at least* 2 points from any General pool: usually Athletics, Health, or a combat ability. (The GM may instead add a Psi ability pool for NPCs to track this specifically, if she wishes.) Then the GM rolls a die and adds the result to the spend. If her total is greater than 4, the attack occurs. The GM then describes the sense of the attack to the player: “You feel like you’re sleepwalking, or in a waking dream” or “You feel icy fingertips rifling through your thoughts” or “You find your memory of the last hour fading” or “Your gun seems impossibly heavy.” If the player decides to resist, he makes a Stability test with the Difficulty equal to the total result of the NPC’s roll plus her spend. If he fails the test, the psychic attack succeeds.

Telekinesis: TK uses the same rules, but resolves the attack as a Scuffling attack for a grab or as a Shooting attack for a psi blast. Damage of a psionic blast or telekinetic punch attack is +0; the psychic may increase that damage by +1 per 2 additional points spent to increase damage. These points *do not* modify the Scuffling or Shooting roll; if the blast misses, those points are wasted. For a psionic Athletics test to throw, crush, or break an inanimate object, set the Difficulty by how hard it would be for *that psychic* to cause the effect – a Grey might throw a car at Difficulty 4 while a creepy mutant child might need Difficulty 7 to manage it.

ALIENS

There are dozens of beings, from bearded men with Midwestern accents to angry

goblins to floating purple blobs, that have appeared to UFO contactees. Here are a few of the more common. They have Psi ability ratings for simplicity’s sake.

Mix and match at will, change numbers and powers to suit the individual mystery. Re-skin a description if need be. For example, the Greys and the Reptoids both fit possible profiles for the “Mantid” aliens from Dubhe if you add a psionic terror attack and a layer of chitin armor.

GREY

The most common aliens in ufological lore, especially in abductee testimony. Even then, only 20% of reported sightings match the description of the Greys: large black eyes, slender build, long fingers, silence and uncanny presence. They are reported in all sizes from 3’ to 6’ and more, and in colors from green-gray to gray-brown. Their home star may be Zeta Reticuli or Rigel.

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 6, Psi 12, Scuffling 3, Shooting 8

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +2 (big eyes, psychic “sonar”)

Stealth Modifier: +1 (weird un-presence)

Damage Modifier: -2 (weak little fists); paralysis gun (save vs. Health at Difficulty 9 or be paralyzed for 1-6 hours; amnesia gun works similarly vs. Stability)

Armor: none; or perfect halo armor against all kinetic energy

NOMMO

Aquatic, gray-green aliens who may have been the mysterious “Anunnaki” who uplifted Sumerian civilization. They resemble dolphins or merfolk, depending on the specific breed. Their home star is Sirius B, a dwarf companion of Sirius.

Abilities (on land/in water): Athletics 3/12, Health 9, Psi 6, Scuffling 3/12, Shooting 4/8

Hit Threshold: 3/5

Alertness Modifier: +0/+1

Stealth Modifier: +0/+1

Weapon: +0 (butt, tail bash); +1 (sonic cry)

Armor: -1 vs. any (scales and skin)

NORDIC

From the Mojave Desert to Spain, tall blond aliens of seemingly human appearance are the next most common sort of EBE. They may indeed be humans – time travelers

from the future, or Nazis from a hidden colony in Antarctica or on the Moon, for instance – or humans may be descended from their earliest colonists on this world. Or their appearance may be built or assumed for better communication or infiltration. They often claim to come from Venus, but that’s likely just a handy base for organic fuels; their native star might be in the Pleiades or Hyades.

Abilities: Athletics 9, Health 9, Psi 9, Scuffling 9, Shooting 9

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1 (keen senses)

Stealth Modifier: +0

Damage Modifier: +3 (ray gun); +3 (pain whip)

Armor: -3 (futuristic shiny mail, keyed only to Nordics’ bio-field)

REPTOID

Are they the descendants of the Troodon, a weirdly humanoid dinosaur of the Cretaceous? Or are they alien beings who merely resemble bipedal, large-headed Earth reptiles? Fair warning: they may be shapeshifting dimension-travellers infiltrating our ranks by cannibalism and sorcery. Complicating matters, the “Orange” race is reputed to be a Grey-Reptoid hybrid. Their home star may be Altair, Capella, or Thuban.

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 10, Scuffling 11, Shooting 7

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1 (+2 heat sense)

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (bite), +1 (hind claw); +3 (ray gun)

Armor: -1 vs. any (scales)

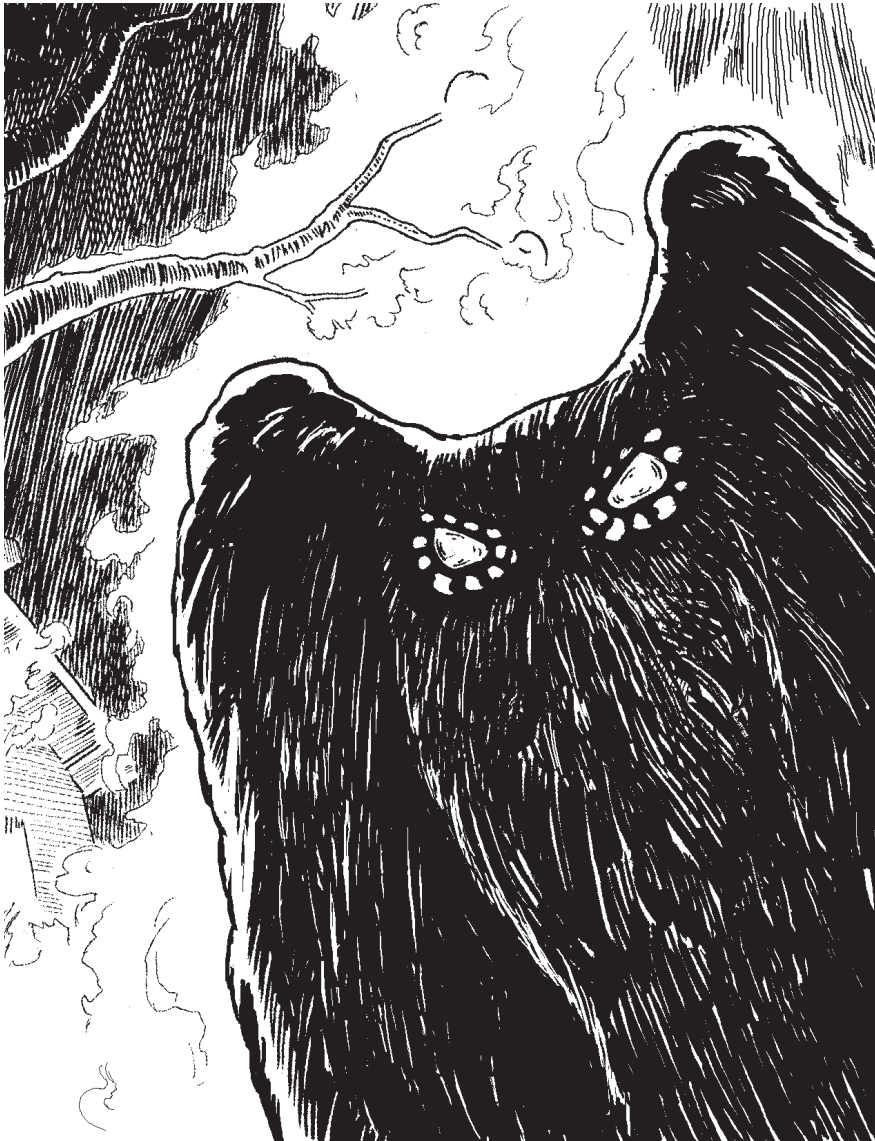
ROBOTS

A lot of contactees – from France, Brazil, Kentucky, and southern Russia, among other places -- report aliens made of or wearing metal. While angry robots are more 1958 than 1978, this is the decade of the bionic man, after all.

Turn any alien or cryptid (or Soviet!) into a robot by adding a total of +12 to Athletics, Scuffling, and/or Health, along with -3 Armor and a +1 claw or bash attack.

KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

MOON DUST MEN



CRYPTIDS

Whether the various other things seen in the woods by drunks are also alien is something Moon Dust doesn't know – it just knows it runs across a lot of them nowadays.

CHUPACABRA

The spined, wolf-sized “goat sucker” of Latin America tends to vanish from sight when nobody's looking right at it. And when they are, it can leap ten feet from a standing start. It's fast, is what I'm saying.

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 6, Scuffling 8
Hit Threshold: 5 (fast)
Alertness Modifier: +3 (smell and hearing)

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (vampiric bite; successful bite transfers victim's lost Health to chupacabra)
Armor: -1 vs. any (fur)

MOTHPMAN

The most enigmatic and terrifying of cryptids, the winged, headless, glowing-eyed Mothman heralds disaster when beheld. It may be a Jungian archetype given life by nuclear terror, an Indian manitou, or an alien hunter seeded here to weaken America ahead of Grey invasion.

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 8, Psi 20, Scuffling 10
Hit Threshold: 4
Alertness Modifier: +2
Stealth Modifier: +3 (in flight); +0 (on

ground)

Weapon: Terror (psionic; flee, freeze, or faint on failure); Curse (replace any foe's die roll by paying difference from own ability pools)

Armor: either none or cannot be hit by terrestrial weapons

YETI

Or Sasquatch, sure. Per contactee reports, a large number of UFOs are piloted by “Very Tall” or hairy giants: these aliens may have colonies in the Himalayas or the Pacific Northwest.

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 9, Scuffling 16

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: +1 (+2 downwind)

Weapon: +0 (fist), +0 (thrown rock)

Armor: -3 vs. any (thick fur)

SOVIETS

The primary human foe of Moon Dust is the Project's opposite number across the Iron Curtain. Stalin rejected his UFO specialists' reports, and the Soviet academic UFO program carried on in the face of official denunciation until a series of incidents at Soviet air bases in the far north forced the Party to respond with official sanction. UFO attacks in Kazakhstan and Karelia in 1977 and 1978 have kicked the Setka-AN (civilian academic) and Setka-MO (military) UFO programs into high gear.

GZ (“BLUE STAR”) PSYCHIC

Unlike the UFO program, the Soviet psionic warfare program goes back to before WWII. Likely a graduate of one of the Soviet brain institutes in Leningrad or Kharkov, the GZ psychics infiltrate Western facilities to gather intelligence and take point in locating psionically-active alien presences.

Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 4, Psi 9, Scuffling 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +1 (sixth sense) or -2 (oblivious)

Stealth Modifier: -1

Weapon: -2 (fist); +0 (psionic “brain burster”)

Armor: none

MOON DUST MEN

SETKA-MO AGENT

These agents should resemble “mirrors” of the PCs, with similar ability levels and access to weird technology. More of the Soviet gear will be “psychotronic,” powered by psychic energy or affecting the enemy’s brain or perceptions.

Abilities: Athletics 9, Driving 3, Health 8, Scuffling 7, Shooting 7

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: -2 (fist); -1 (combat knife); +1 (9mm pistol); +0 (AK-74 assault rifle)

Armor: -1 vs. bullets or explosives (bullet-proof vest)

SPETSNAZ OPERATOR

The feared Soviet special forces, Spetsnaz should only show up inside the Soviet bloc or for the most urgent and important crashes in the Third World. They should be capable of taking out two or three Moon Dust agents in the normal course of things, only equaled by a badly unbalanced “combat monster” PC.

Abilities: Athletics 12, Driving 3, Health 8, Scuffling 12, Shooting 12

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1 (same at night; bulky passive-light night vision goggles)

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: -2 (fist); -1 (combat knife); +1 (9mm pistol); +0 (AK-74 assault rifle); rifle grenades

Armor: -2 vs. bullets or explosives (combat armor and helmet)

GM CONSIDERATIONS

This campaign frame is deliberately focused at “ground level” – on the immediate investigation of a crash, anomaly, or event. That’s partially because exploring the “recent historical” world of 1978 has its own joys, not to be missed by zooming around too far above or behind the scenery. But it’s also because the GM should decide what flavor of game to present to her players; what the hidden truth is that’s out there and who’s hiding it. This frame begins as a mystery campaign, or rather as a series of mysteries: What’s behind that glow in the woods? What did the captured Red Air Force pilot see? Where did the missing jumbo jet go? How

did that cow get mutilated? The explanations that emerge in play can point the game in any number of directions.

In a sci-fi (or spy-fi) game, the answers are pulpy and exciting: there are aliens, and Soviet psychics, and secret ray guns, and maybe Nazi colonies on the Moon. The individual scenarios can turn into a black-tech Cold War or a secret (but high-octane) War of the Worlds, depending on the GM’s goals.

In a conspiracy game, the answers are shadowy and incomplete: there may or may not be aliens, and they may or may not be in contact with people above your pay grade. Your own bureaucracy thwarts you almost as often as the Russians; civilian UFO investigators might be working for anyone or end up dead in a crop circle. Individual scenarios wind their way through a maze of explanations, always hinting at a larger truth than anyone (perhaps even including the Men in Black) know. Sometimes, the PCs may have to cover up the real truth to avoid letting the press or the Russians find out what’s going on. Ending a conspiracy campaign is always the tricky dismount – usually it defaults to horror.

In a horror game, the answers are dreadful and uncanny: the aliens don’t just have advanced technology, their mere existence defies natural law. They drink human blood or claim human breeding stock, and someone (possibly a very official Someone) helps them do it. You can make the aliens Mi-Go, or Colin Wilson’s Space Vampires, or shapeshifting pod people: whatever ultimate truth will reliably terrify (or at least horrify) your players. Coverups will make even more sense in horror games.

Many campaigns will shift between those modes and genres as the spirit takes them: the *Moon Dust Men* frame works well for picaresque narratives with divergent tones and truths. Any given incident might be a fake, a hallucination, or just plain inexplicable. That said, the GM may want to answer some of these questions for her own ease of storytelling:

- What is the real history of UFO lore on Earth? Did ancient astronauts arrive in the distant past? Are they the same species as the current invaders? Or are the UFOs Nazi or Soviet aircraft, when they’re not swamp gas?

- Does U.S. government know any of the truth, and if so are the Moon Dust agents cleared for that?
- Is there a secret space program – missions to Mars, negotiations with aliens at Holloman AFB, zero-point saucer craft in Antarctica or teleportation at Montauk? Whose is it?
- Is there some shadowy super-agency (Majestic-12, for example) that hides the truth from the characters? Why? Are they just evil jerks, or is the truth really something few people can or should handle? Or does “knowing the truth” prejudice Moon Dust agents against figuring out what’s going on in a specific situation?
- Are the Russians ahead of us in UFO research? Psionics? How much of all this is disinformation? Are the Soviets alien allies? Alien tools?
- How much alien technology is available to the United States? To the player characters? What, exactly, did it cost to get?

More questions will surely occur to the GM. If not, the players will happily ask them for her.

SOURCES

Between *The X-Files* and *Fringe*, the only thing that’s really left is to set the game in 1978 and widen everyone’s tie. But man cannot live by cult TV alone.

There are approximately seven trillion books and websites on UFOs, aliens, and allied lore. Probably the best single source for this campaign frame is the two-volume (so far) series *UFOs and the National Security State*, by Richard Dolan. Picking nearly at random from my shelves, Michael Hesemann’s *UFOs: The Secret History* is attractive, comprehensive, and daft. Curtis Peebles’ *Watch the Skies!* is a fine skeptical history of ufology; Kevin Randle’s *Project Moon Dust* provided the believer’s take on our titular operation. Jerome Clark’s encyclopedia *Unexplained!* expands its coverage into cryptids and other gameable phenomena.

Jacques Vallee’s books (especially *Dimensions* and *Passport to Magonia*) are sober but believing, a good combination; John Keel’s books (especially *The Mothman Prophecies*) are manic and terrified, an even better combination.