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SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

ECOLOGY OF THE CRATER MUTANT | S.A.B.L.E. | MUTANT MALADIES



POST APOCALYPTIC ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

POST-APOCALYPTIC
ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

NO.1 — FALL 2020

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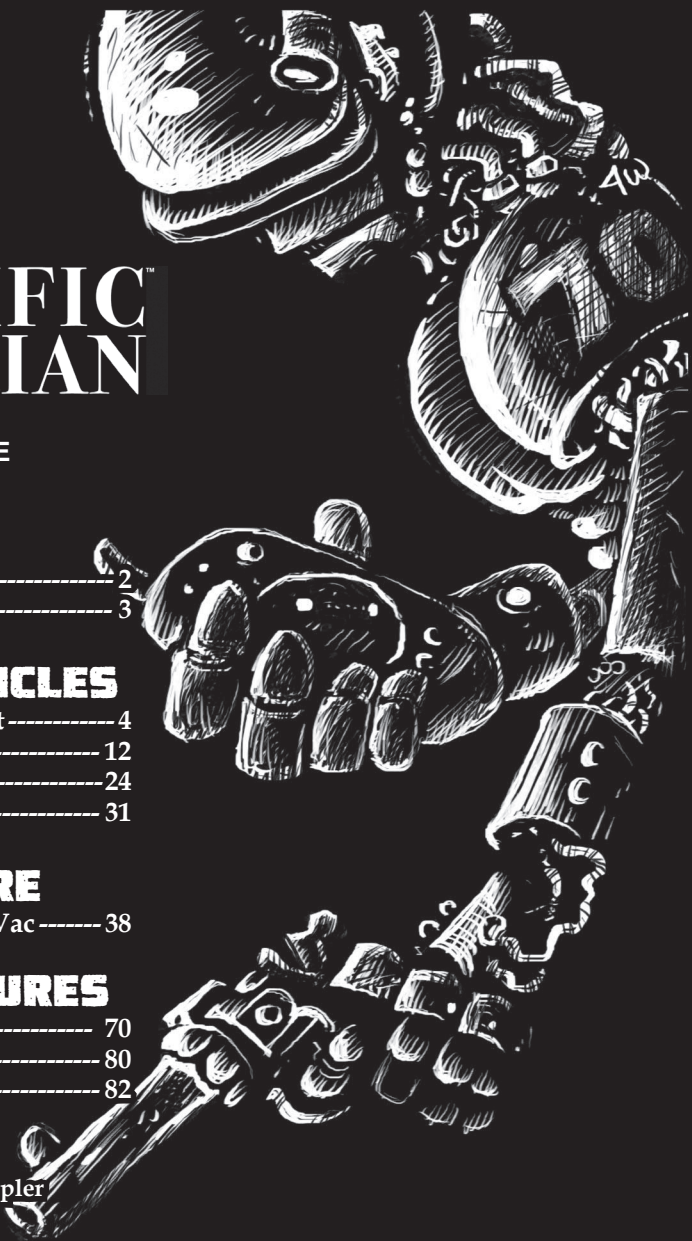
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BUNKER BRIEFINGS

DIRECT COMMUNIQUES FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome Wasteland Warriors! Welcome to the very first issue of SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN. We're glad you're here, because greater numbers always count for something in an encounter.

If you've picked up this gaming megazine, our working assumption is that a certain type of gaming within the ruins and remains of a fallen civilization is your jam. Obviously, the contributors to this zine heartily agree. There has been a notable resurgence of post-apocalyptic gaming of late, and I will leave the reasons for that to better-studied social scientists than I can pretend to be. But the point remains, and it does bring us to the twofold mission of this publication.

First and foremost, we're here to present great gaming content in the infamous *Mutant Murder Hobo* style. There's never been more or better post-apocalyptic role playing game material available than there is right now, and we feel an obligation to contribute our fair share.

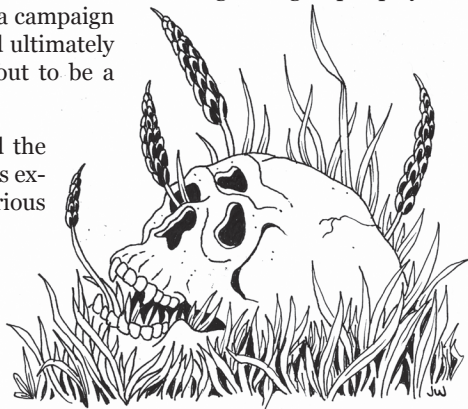
But we also want to sound the rallying cry to share these treasures and troves of our favorite genre with our more traditionally fantasy-based kin. For the truth of the matter is that the overlap of our collective Venn diagram far exceeds the singular areas. In the early decades of the popular fiction that inspired so much of our hobby, this distinction was not even made. At a time before the terms "fantasy" and "science fiction" were even coined, Conan fought a demigod who turned out to be an alien. Dying Earth wizards understood mathematical formulae so efficacious that they changed the very laws of physics when spoken aloud. H. P. Lovecraft's elder gods and their minions came to us from the cosmic reaches of space/time.

So our secondary mission here is to greet the fantasy role playing game enthusiasts with open arms and open artifact checks. With the proper GM description, very little of the content presented within this zine would elicit anything less than the desired results in a traditional fantasy campaign. Plus there is nothing like a group of players who are sure they know everything in a campaign world being surprised, thrown off, and ultimately delighted by a magic rod that turns out to be a particle field accelerator.

So welcome and come join us around the solar cube. We can trade stories of ruins explored, vile enemies defeated, and glorious treasures won by means fair or foul.



Jim Wampler
Editor-in-Chief



APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

It's Okay to Have 87 Eyes

by Tim Kask

Who wouldn't want to be an 8.5 foot grizzly bear that can make machines stop by growling at them, doesn't need a power source to power anything because he is the power source, can detect ferrous materials and draw them to itself, and has such a keen sense of smell that it can detect poison? On top of all that mutated stuff, you have the claws and jaws from which nightmares are made?

Bring it on *Metamorphosis Alpha*, *Mutant Crawl Classics*, *Gamma World* and all the rest, mutants and a post-apocalyptic setting (PA henceforth) are a breath of fresh air in RPG's.

Don't get me wrong, Fantasy RPG's will always be my default setting in role-playing – it's what I know best. That said, jumping into this genre with both sturdy boots on is one hell of a lot of fun. Let's look at the two Big M's—magic and mutations. (That other "m", monsters, encompasses just about everything and everybody not you in this genre.)

Magic is cool, no doubt, but magic is more deliberate, more structured and formulaic. After all, it took Marvin Warmspittle 8 years of his life to perfect the spell that produces what we now know as Marvelous Marv's Perfect Egg Cream Soda. Eight long years, trekking towards that goal of the perfect liquid refreshment. Magic produces, when performed correctly, the same result again and again.

Mutation is the death-metal band rolling in from the desolate wastelands ready to shake up your life.

All of the games of this genre that I am familiar with (admittedly only a few) have random mutation charts used in PC creation. This is where the fun starts.

So you choose to be a mutant? Roll up whatever stats are needed for the system; they all vary a little. Then pick up those (most often used) percentile dice and lock Darwin up. So if one of your mutations involves extra-normal mental powers; give yourself a bald, bulbous forehead. Another mutation makes you immune to radiation or bulletproof? Make your skin scaly or stony or otherwise reflective of its peculiarity. Now the picture we hold in our mind's eye forms itself; now we have to role play.

Charisma or comeliness or any measure of that ilk are now meaningless. Awe and intimidation are what you want to go for as a mutant. This genre embraces the ideal that we are all souls, no matter the appearance of the vessel.

Now some systems from this genre dose the fun with the not-much-fun; they use flaws and/or quirks. For every two or three mutations deemed "good", certainly a matter of your point of view, a negative characteristic is acquired. Now you have to role play this character with handicaps. (Please save your righteous indignation. I use the "h"-word as it was meant. I know the difference between the terminologies of handicaps and disabilities.)

For me, the fun has always been in the struggle – getting to 8th Lvl was always more fun than being 8th lvl. In post-apocalyptic games, getting there is even more challenging when working around flaws and defects.



ECOLOGY

OF THE CRATER MUTANT

BY LEVI COMBS

"The way I seent it, them ole boys come up in search of some ole geegaw or jimjam or what not they heard was a stickin' out of the sand and got themselves lost. Strayed a little too close to tha crater up yonder, pokin' around in places they never shoulda been. Then that ole pointy-eared fella had his grasser shot out from under him and all hell broke loose. Before they knew what hit 'em, they was a set upon by my kinfolk... Heh! ...and they weren't no mercy to be had.

They run't 'em off'er awhile but they come on back at night, a whoopin' and a hollerin' and what not, taking pot shots and draggin' folks off out into tha dark. Come dawn, ain't no more of them fellers left than you could count on one hand and them that was...? Well, they weren't in no shape to put up a fight. By the time the family come on in, they just rounded 'em up like shorthorns and took 'em on back to the crater... 'cept for that metal feller... heh heh... they had quite a bit of fun strappin' a greenade onto him and kickin' him down the dunes. I heard he ended up flyin' er'where... like a spider-goat a pissin' on a flat rock! Heh heh!

Now, the way ole Five-Eyed Bub tells it, once they got them ole boys back to the crater, they couldn't withstand the glory of the glow. After a few days they just melted on down to sacks of meat and a few bones and what not. There was a couple that made it on through though... hell, how y'all think I got here?" – The first-hand account of Two-Hump Scudder, crater mutant and raider.

What is a Crater Mutant?

Survivors in a primitive world, crater mutants are one of the many legacies of the Great Disaster. They are a barbaric folk, both hardy and cunning, who prey upon the weak and scavenge for what they cannot take by force. They are mutated beings, made even stronger and more unpredictable by the heavy doses of radiation in the treacherous badlands of glow deserts and bombed-out ruins they call home. They flourish in the current age of savagery and super-science, reveling in cannibalism, violence, and plundering the belongings of other sentient beings.

A Brief History

Long after the Ancient Ones passed from memory and a new world had arisen from the ashes of the old, a primitive but murderous band of raiders made their home within the crumbling ruins of an ancient civilization. Within the blasted remains of this nameless city they discovered a crashed vessel of unknown origin, along with the mummified remains of its inhuman pilot. Utterly enthralled by the ship and its technological wonders, the raiders settled down and began worshiping the strange "alien astronaut" as a god. In time, an entire culture rose up around this bizarre new religion.

What the raiders never understood was that the crashed ship's quantum singularity core was cracked and leaking radiation slowly into the surrounding environment. To their uncouth minds, the radiation was a wondrous blessing from their new god. Sometimes it granted incredible powers, but other times it struck down the unworthy. Over time, the ongoing radiation exacerbated their mutations even further, eventually driving them mad.





After a time, the Prophet rose among them, preaching of “the glory of the glow” and spreading the teachings of a new way. Those unlucky enough to survive a crater mutant raid were brought before their mummified god to bathe in its radioactive light. Those who survived were brought into the “family” and allowed to carry on. Those who perished became fresh meat for the larder. To this day, this tradition continues and remains the primary way in which the crater mutants propagate.

Social Graces and Interaction

In a sense, all crater mutants consider each other “family”. The “family” aren’t necessarily related by blood. Anyone who can both survive being exposed to the cracked quantum singularity core and is willing to swear loyalty to the clan can be brought into the fold. Being exposed to the core is a long and harrowing experience, rife with ritualized torture, forced mutation, and extended deprivation. The process often leaves the initiate insane by the time it’s over. By this point, the victim is either reduced to a slurry of bloody organs or has passed through the other side of this baptismal glow to become something more – a crater mutant.

Crater mutants live in large, extended family groups, but do not mistake this social configuration to be anything but a convenient matter of the survival strategy of strength-in-numbers. They are not generally kind to one another and are often heartless, petty, and needlessly cruel.

Intelligence

To say that all crater mutants are ignorant, dull yokels living in the backwoods of a blasted wasteland would be partly untrue, though that does seem to be the common trend among most of them. They are typically a savage and brutish lot, full of apocalyptic superstitions and strange customs. Their wits and cunning come through more in battle, as they are quite adept at ambush and setting traps for their victims.

From time to time, a crater mutant of unnatural guile or advanced intelligence is allowed to flourish long enough to grow potent mental mutations. In a similar fashion, a captive might develop mighty mutations after being exposed to the core’s radioactive glow. When this occurs, this exceptional specimen will inevitably dominate its lesser kin swiftly and without mercy.

Languages and Traditions

Crater Mutants speak a crude pidgin of the NuSpeak, understandable by most, but full of words and phrases that only a member of their extended family would recognize. They have no written language and have little interest in the records or written works of any sort.

The closest that crater mutants get to any sort of oral history is in the telling of stories around the fire. These campfire fables rarely have any real value and are often full of insane ramblings, nonsensical anecdotes, and outright lies. They seem to be more of a way to boast about their personal prowess in battle or about whatever passes for "great deeds" in their culture.

Appearance

In general, crater mutants are typically quite horrible to behold, even by the standards of Omega-Terra. Their warped bodies, transmogrified limbs, and excessive mutations are not a pleasant sight to behold by the common tribes. Though they vary widely in appearance, most are humanoids (meaning a head, torso and at least two arms/two legs), but that is where the commonality ends. They come in all shapes and sizes, with no two being exactly alike.

Boils, tumors, radiation burns, and poorly healed wounds are typical features on the flesh of the average crater mutant, while hunchbacks, withered limbs, and swollen appendages add to their horrifying appearance. Crater mutants do not care about hygiene and are thus literally foul in the most unpleasant manner.

Crater mutants tend to wear whatever clothes that they have managed to steal or stitch together, with no care or concern given to what that may look like. To them, clothing is entirely functional and a matter of what is available at the time. They are fond of thick hides and pelts (when they can get them), not only for the warmth they provide but also for the protection. Such filthy garments are often badly cured and infested with all sorts of common parasites, most of which are unable to take



root in the crater mutant's irradiated flesh. On the rare occasions that armor is available, they will use it to the extent that their limited understanding allows.

Mutations

Crater mutants are often a pitiful, feeble, folk, sidelined with horribly debilitating physical or mental mutations. For every useful mutational power or ability that a crater mutant has, he has two others that are equally debilitating. Just as the mutant powers of the new age vary, so do the unfortunate drawbacks, resulting in a high level of mutational defects.

There are those who rise above their unfortunate kin to possess mighty abilities, but they are the exception rather than the norm. Reports of crater mutants with potent mental mega-mutations but whose bodies are so completely wrecked with physical defects that they cannot move about on their own power are not uncommon. The opposite is also true, as there are crater mutants of hulking physical size and strength, but being so dim-witted as to be near-helpless outside of purely physical pursuits.

Treasure and Loot

Crater mutants are scavengers and looters and will haul away anything that isn't physically tied down. Anything that they cannot wrest from the control of others by force or threat of violence they steal or scavenge from the wasteland.

They covet technological items as long as they are capable of understanding how they function. Crater Mutants love pistols and rifles of any sort but lack the technical know-how to repair them. Crude melee and ranged weapons of all types are common. Crater mutants wear armor that is fashioned from things scavenged in the wasteland, but power armor of any variety is completely beyond them.

As mentioned before, crater mutants may be doggedly clever, but they are not the most outwardly intelligent of creatures. They have been encountered in possession of incredibly potent stolen technology that, as often as not, is being currently used as a club or walking stick. More than one crater mutant has been scattered into atoms by a quantum grenade because it failed to understand the nature of the arming touch-plate it just pushed.

Combat and Tactics

In combat, crater mutants are both ruthless and cunning. They always prefer to attack in large numbers if they're able to, but can switch to hit-and-run tactics if the situation calls for it. If the opportunity presents itself, they will target vehicles or mounts first so that their foes become stranded in the wasteland, the better to be easily picked off or led into traps afterwards.

Crater mutants prefer ambushes and setting death-traps above all else, swooping in to take advantage of their victims when they are at their weakest. Deadfalls, spike-pits, snares, and falling rocks are typical ambush setups. Members of the family often wile away their days watching their traps awaiting for a plump and meaty lost traveler to fall awry of their crude traps. Those who are captured by the degenerate cannibal folk face only one of two possible fates — exposure to the mutating light of the quantum singularity core or top billing on the next crater mutant menu.



Faith, Religion, and The Gospel of the Glow

The crater mutants are led by the Prophet. This wildly mutated religious zealot preaches “the glory of the glow” and is fanatical in his insane devotion to the withered, mummified alien astronaut that was discovered in the crashed ship so long ago. By a twist of fate, the Prophet has developed a hardy resistance to the high levels of radiation coming off of the core, and he appears “blessed” in the eyes of the rest of the clan, since he can be so close to the core with such frequency.

Crater mutants are a superstitious lot, prone to being easily led on with tales of sorcery or a display of technological wonder. They are oblivious to having an entire mythology and creation cycle that does not at all conform to the actual facts of how they came to be. They believe it all the same.

Despite their love of technological weapons, they seem to have an unreasonable hatred for “smart metal” (androids, robots, cyborgs, holograms, and any sort of artificial intelligence). Whether this is some sort of cultural bias or the fact that such creatures cannot be manipulated by the physical effects of the leaking core is unknown. Whatever the root cause, their hatred persists and they show these sorts of beings absolutely no mercy.

Technology and Other Confusin’ Things

Aside from technological weapons that they can understand and easily use, crater mutants do not favor technology. On rare occasion they can be taught to use a vehicle such as a bubble car or grav sled but overall they prefer to either use living mounts (such as grassers) or travel on foot.

Environment

Crater mutants are so named because of the volcanic crater countries that surround their territories. These bombed-out wastelands are mostly a desolate expanse of scrub hills and shifting dunes. The radiation from the crashed ship’s leaking quantum singularity



core has bled into everything, leaving the flora and fauna around them just as sick and mutated as they are.

These badlands appear mostly lifeless, though eagle-eyed observers notice sickly-looking bushes, malformed cactus, bent twisted trees, clinging tumbleweed and the rare sentient, carnivorous plant. Rocky outcrops, exposed bedrock, old riverbeds, hoodoos, steep slopes, sand drifts, fields of shattered rock, and the occasional shallow cave are also common. Much of the expanse looks the same as any other area, often causing travelers or explorers to become lost if they do not have a guide. Cast-off filth and casually-deposited offal from the crater’s inhabitants dot the landscape here and there.

A typical crater mutant settlement often appears as a decrepit, crumbling ghost town, but nothing could be further from reality. The teetering buildings, rocky caves, make-shift lean-tos, and blasted-out ruins are anything but abandoned. Being mostly nocturnal creatures, the extended family members of each crater mutant clan live out their lives in such places. They scuttle and lurk about, subsisting amongst lonely crags and barren bluffs, venturing forth for little more than raids, food, and to worship at the feet of their bizarre, mummified god living in a crater.

How to Use Crater Mutants

Crater mutants are best used as unpredictable raiders or scavengers when player characters venture too close to ancient ruins or radioactive wastelands. An entire mini-campaign could be built up around saving others from a fate worse than death at the hands of pillaging crater mutants, or in tracking them down to retrieve some sort of valuable artifact that they have stolen. They are easily scalable in power, as some are little more than rowdies looking to stir up trouble, while a select few are powerful alpha mutants with a savage and depraved desire to rule everything and everyone around them.

A Plot Hook (or How I Got Into the Crater Mutant Huntin' Business)

Most recently, the Prophet has instructed members of the family to take scavenged chunks of the ship's quantum singularity core and plant them in nearby settlements. The crater mutants have begun dropping glowing fragments of the core down into wells and burying them in crop fields, in an effort to either poison or transform others into twisted abominations like themselves. Since the crater mutants are effectively immune to the immediate deadly effects of the radiation, they are able to carry these glowing fragments long distances in an effort to spread the "gospel of the glow" among the "non-believers" of nearby settlements. There have already been a rash of sicknesses and deaths in nearby settlements. If left unchecked, the entire region could be a dead zone in only a handful of years.

Crater Mutants

Crater Mutant Runt: Init +0; Atk spear +0 melee (1d6) or jaw-bone axe (1d6); AC 12; HD 1d6; MV 30'; ACT 1d20: SP radiation resistance, 1d2+1 physical mutations (1 is always a defect), 50% chance of 1 mental mutation; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1.

Crater Mutant Rowdy: Init +1; Atk spear +1 melee (1d6+1) or jaw-bone axe (1d6+1) or +1 by ranged weapon; AC 13; HD 2d6; MV 30'; ACT 1d20+2; SP radiation resistance, 1d3+1 physical mutations (1 is always a defect), 1 mental mutation; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0.

Crater Mutant Brute: Init +3; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6+2) or jaw-bone axe (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 4d6; MV 30'; ACT 1d20+3; SP radiation, resistance, 1d4+2 physical mutations (1 is always a defect), 1 mental mutations; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1.

Crater Mutant Alpha: Init +5; unarmed +5 or by weapon type; AC 15; HD 7d6; MV 30'; ACT 1d20+5; SP radiation resistance, 1d4+2 physical mutations, 1d2+1 mental mutations; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2.

Crater Mutant Psi-Billy: Init +2; by weapon type; AC 12; HD 3d6; MV 30'; ACT 1d20+2; SP radiation resistance, 1d2+1 physical mutations (1 is always a defect), 1d2+2 mental mutations; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3.

Crater Mutants are an uncouth, hideously mutated race of humanoid creatures descended from savage bands of human raiders and pillagers. They are rife with mutations that warp their flesh and unhinge their minds. They come in all shapes and sizes but are most often at least vaguely humanoid in form.

While they are generally an unlearned and primitive folk, there are a handful of alpha-mutants among them that are gifted far beyond that of their kin. They are exceptional scavengers and hunters, and are skilled at both ambush and trap-making. They operate using pack tactics and can be very cunning in their native environment.

Crater mutants have a -2 to all Artifact Checks. They revel in their insular ways and despise any being made of metal, such as a robot or android. They are exceptionally cruel to these beings should they capture one.





Liz Stewart
1/08



S.A.B.L.E. RANGERS

SECURITY AUTOMATONS for BASIC LAW ENFORCEMENT

by Mike Stewart

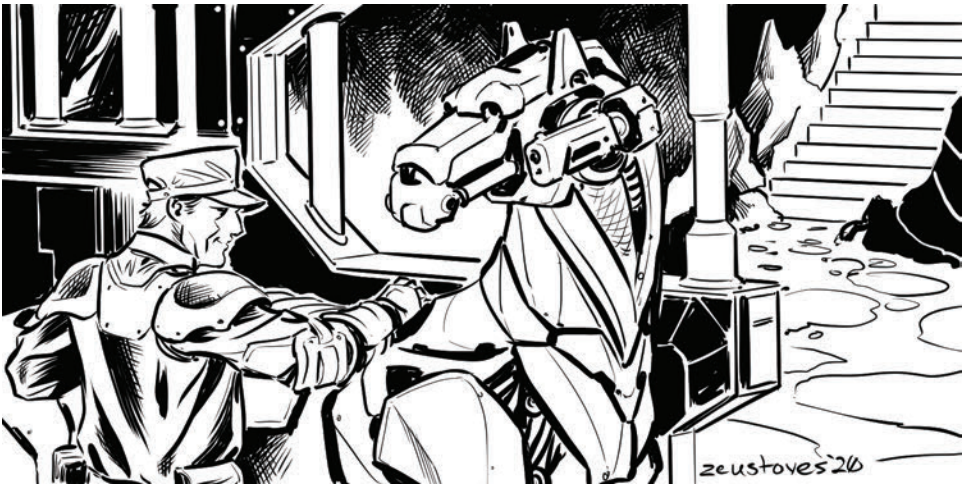
from a concept by Elizabeth Stewart

The world of Omega-Terra abounds with intelligences both organic and artificial, each seeking power and dominance by using the other to their own strategic ends. Among the rare exceptions to this near-universal paradigm is one group of artificial intelligences that bond with and treat sentient organics (humans) as equal partners. These rare, though still-extant, AI law enforcement machines belong to a program called S.A.B.L.E. Rangers (Security Automaton for Basic Law Enforcement).

Background

It is an unfortunate truth that little is more complex in an advanced society than the enforcement of laws. Most of human history has seen this role performed by specially designated persons, who were specially trained for the job, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on that society's resources. Yet impartiality, always a goal, was almost never accomplished. However, by the year 3000 the super-science civilizations of the pre-disaster world decided to delegate police functions to robotic law enforcement units. The concept behind this was simple — namely that automatons were the only law enforcers likely to avoid prejudice or sympathies for one side or the other. Only inhuman mechanisms could achieve the inherently inhuman goal of impartial justice. Yet the greater public was ambivalent about turning all police responsibilities over to robots, with little oversight by actual humans. Still, excessive oversight by human beings would insert their subjective opinions into the activity of law enforcement, which would naturally defeat the primary goal of impartial enforcement of laws in the first place. What to do?

As with many things in a highly technological civilization, the world government delegated the job to a tech company. The legendary cybernetics firm of Automates, Inc. were awarded a research grant to overcome these problems and to deliver a



solution acceptable to all parties. In consultation with regional police forces, Automates, Inc. developed the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger program. These S.A.B.L.E. machines possessed fully sentient artificial intelligence, yet were programmed to keep a bonded living human being in their decision-making loop. Their core directives required the regular input of a living partner for the unit, ensuring human oversight of the robotic enforcers.

Surveys run by Automates, Inc. indicated that of all possible chassis forms for the police mechanisms, the ideal form factor of the horse would be the most reassuring to users and citizenry alike. The research indicated that a horse form for the robots would imply power and authority to the public, while also indicating friendliness and benevolence. So, when the first base (West Complex) was created to field test the concept, the first three prototypes were constructed in equine form.

The S.A.B.L.E. Ranger base itself had a maintenance AI named J.V. (Justice Vindication AI) after its lead programmer, and would limit its functional duties to the maintenance of field units, intelligence gathering, and mission assignments to the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units. It would be left to the discretion of the three AI's within the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units themselves as to the best methods of fulfilling mission directives and performing their primary goal of service and protection. Unfortunately the program was just beginning full field tests when the Great Disaster struck, unleashing cosmic waves of destruction upon the world.

While the West Complex wasn't directly hit, it was buried in a landslide. EMP spikes and tectonic shifting damaged the complex systems enough that the J.V. AI went off line. The three test bed Ranger units were still powered down at the time, and so the complex was effectively placed in stasis for many millennia.

Recently, due to tectonic shifting, the West Complex has been partially unearthed, and the J.V. AI coordinating the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger base has reactivated. Duly following its programming, J.V. has activated the three assembled Ranger units for deployment and sent them out into a much-changed world. Without their millennia dead human partners, the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units are somewhat hobbled

in their ability to perform their law enforcement duties. Following emergency contingency protocols, the units are actively scouting for qualified individuals with which to bond in order to achieve full active duty status. The units will have no choice but to select candidates from among the local population to aid them in their fight for law and order across the jungles, glow deserts, and crater countries of a shattered Omega-Terra.

Securing the Public Trust

It is safe to say that the Ranger units will treat Pure Strain Humans as full citizens deserving of protection. They will rigorously enforce the laws of their long-perished society however, and will not tolerate lawbreaking – be it torturing an animal, cooking fires on the ancient museum veranda, or the vandalism of once public property. They should be played as if they are police personnel enforcing the laws of a highly-sophisticated 30th century society. Do such laws make sense in the post-apocalypse? Being sentient artificial intelligences, they can reason and to a small degree stretch their authority to cover nebulous rules or situations not quite documented in their programming. For instance, they may charge adventurers with jaywalking while passing over an eight lane maglev roadway, but common reason will tell them that there's no traffic anymore. As such, the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger unit might let the crosswalkers off with a warning to not repeat the offense. It will be up to the GM to decide on how strict or lenient a Ranger unit might be. Capital crimes are not given any such circumstantial leeway. That kind of circumstantial leniency is up to the (now long gone) courts of law.

The S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units have a complex set of protocols to avoid unnecessary death to law abiding citizens. However, the mutated life forms on Omega-Terra may cause the units to create certain new interpretations of program strictures. They are not able to self-reprogram necessarily, but are flexible enough to make reinterpretations of their programming due to changed circumstances. Some of those reinterpretations are as follows:

- * S.A.B.L.E. Rangers are prohibited from using lethal force on humans unless attacked in a like manner first. This has been reinterpreted as being any belligerent subjects who have the capability (weapons, mutations, etc.) significant enough to damage or destroy the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger unit serving as sufficient probable cause to engage the use of lethal force. Naturally this would only be done if suspects refuse to surrender after being given a verbal warning.

- * With little-to-no capacity to actually imprison criminals, malcontents and prisoners will be turned over to any local authorities who accept the police services of the S.A.B.L.E. Rangers. In such a case, local authorities are considered civilian governments and are expected to have a wide latitude in punishing such prisoners, so long as court trials (or their equivalent) are held to determine guilt and mete out punishments. S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units will expect that the death penalty not be used in sentencing, as capital punishment was prohibited in 30th century law except as a defense response to the use of lethal force by suspects.

As one might imagine, S.A.B.L.E. Rangers are naturally most comfortable interacting with pure strain humans, but will deal with other life in the following manner:

* Mutated Humans are perceived as persons with special needs. Normally, they aren't eligible as partners for S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units, but are otherwise treated as citizens. The exception to this are mutants with non-obvious mutations, which are treated as typical citizens. Since most psychic mutations don't work on robots, the S.A.B.L.E. Rangers don't consider them actual modifications of the human genome.

* Mutant animals are treated as unintelligent animals. As per 30th century animal rights legislation and procedures, the Ranger units will try to avoid killing such animals if possible. The use of lethal force is authorized if the animal threatens the Ranger unit, pure strain humans, or mutated humans. Any animal life threatening such persons will be forcibly relocated by Rangers to designated wilderness areas away from settlements whenever possible. If such transplants are impossible, and penning such creatures isn't feasible, they will be terminated as humanely as possible while following their ancient regulations.

* Mutated plants, intelligent or not, will be treated by S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units as basically terrain obstacles. They will use maximum lethal force as a matter of course, treating any plantients with as much consideration as someone mowing their lawn. Annoying plant species that need to be pruned or eliminated for public safety is part of their basic programming, and any attempts to convince them of plant intelligence will be an uphill battle against that core programming. The exception to this will be a Ranger's human partner, though the unit might still try and argue the point. They will inevitably bow to the wishes of their partner unless doing so would obviously endanger that partner or other intelligent beings.





Law and Order: Omega-Terra

Gamemasters can use the S.A.B.L.E. Rangers in a variety of ways. They can be obsessive martinets, enforcing littering and recycling rules on creatures passing through the jungle, where there are no longer any actual buildings or recycling units remaining for them to dump refuse into in the first place. They can be flexible police forces, using practical reason to solve regional problems and contributing to the slow rise of civilization. They can be impartial arbiters between tribes and villages, and could even act as a catalyst for the region to bring itself up to at least the level of a free-trading agricultural society – perhaps even further than that with enough assistance from J.V.’s data crystal memory storage.

As stated earlier, the primary directive of the S.A.B.L.E. Rangers are first and foremost as law enforcement. Yet the question is, enforcement of what laws and upon whom? As AI’s in their own right, they have an ability to reason and revise directives based on new data. As such, they are aware on some level that this isn’t their old world and that even as field-tested units they are fighting a vastly uphill battle to serve and protect. Yet their core programming does not allow them to deviate from their mission. Or does it?

The “out” of this circumstance will be the living partner chosen by the Ranger unit. With their help, the machines can stretch some rules, issue warnings for small offenses, but still strike hard and fast when overwhelming force is required for the common good. As this is a powerful position, bonding choices with a potential human partner are made carefully and can take weeks of interaction before the candidate’s permanent status is logged into their systems as a “partner.” Note that the bond between Ranger unit and partner is paramount and specific. Other S.A.B.L.E. units will listen to another unit’s partner, and give that partner’s opinions due weight in law enforcement deliberations. Yet it is only advice, and they are free to contradict that partner if their algorithms deem it necessary for preserving the public trust.

Partnership: A Sentient and Their Horse

The S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units are in the challenging position of choosing their own partners rather than having them assigned by a higher authority. J.V., while capable of many AI functions, cannot provide candidates nor vet personnel for the units. However, the point of sentient-level artificial intelligence is to find creative ways around problems, and this the Ranger units are programmed to do.

As noted earlier, pure strain humans and mutants without visible mutations are the only available resource pool from which the S.A.B.L.E. units can select. The following list will show choice preference for each unit.

1. Pure Strain Human adult passingly familiar with technology
2. Pure Strain Human adult with no knowledge of technology but willing to follow Ranger unit's lead in dealing with technology.
3. Pure Strain Human teenager passingly familiar with technology
4. Pure Strain Human teenager with no knowledge of technology but willing to follow Ranger unit's lead in dealing with such.
5. Mutant Human adult with no visible mutations and familiarity with technology.
6. Mutant Human adult with no visible mutations but unfamiliar with technology.
7. Mutant Human teenager with no visible mutations and familiarity with technology.
8. Mutant Human teenager with no visible mutations but unfamiliar with technology.
9. Mutant Human adult with mild physical mutations that do not interfere with law enforcement duties.
10. Mutant Human teenager with mild physical mutations that do not interfere with law enforcement duties.

Any individuals younger than a teenager and/or those with major physical mutations (greatly altered size or nature, extra body parts, etc.) are ineligible regardless of technical knowledge. Partners are chosen for life, or until the partner is no longer capable of fulfilling law enforcement duties. Depending on the GM's judgement, the designation of "unable to serve" can be a partner quitting the job or the partner sustaining great physical or mental damage or permanent incapacitation. Ranger units that have themselves experienced significant damage to their AIs will also occasionally persist using a partner past their useful prime. It would be quite a strange sight for a Ranger unit to ride into battle against criminals with a desiccated corpse riding on their backs, but it could happen under such circumstances. It might create legends of undead warriors, causing the cowardly and superstitious lot that are criminals to avoid the patrol areas of the automates.



S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Limitations

As noted in the background section, Ranger units had limitations built into their core programming in order to mitigate the human prejudice to authority given to machines — even (or especially) AI's. In this regard, S.A.B.L.E. units cannot engage in the following activities without authorization by their organic partners.

- . Use of significant force, for which they must have approval of organic partner
- . Harm that organic partner or gain another until the current partner dies or is unable to serve.

S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Abilities and Equipment

There are certain abilities all automates of the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger program have in common. All have a dynachromium chassis, various levels of armor, and an encrypted 2-way communication system with each other, with remote coms units held by agents in the field and with West Complex Base (J.V. AI). The internal portions of the Ranger unit can store up to 50 pounds of material within the body of the equine machine, and another 80 pounds carried on its back in addition to the weight of their chosen partner. They can each jump great distances, usually at least 100 feet across and 30 feet high at its apex. In addition to this, the units have the following unique statistics.

Unit A Pursuer (Verdant)

Initiative: +5

Attacks: hooves +5 melee (x2 1d8) or visor blast +5 ranged (120', 2d8)

AC: 20

HD: 12d10

HP: 65

Move: 100'

Actions: 2d20+5

Save: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +8

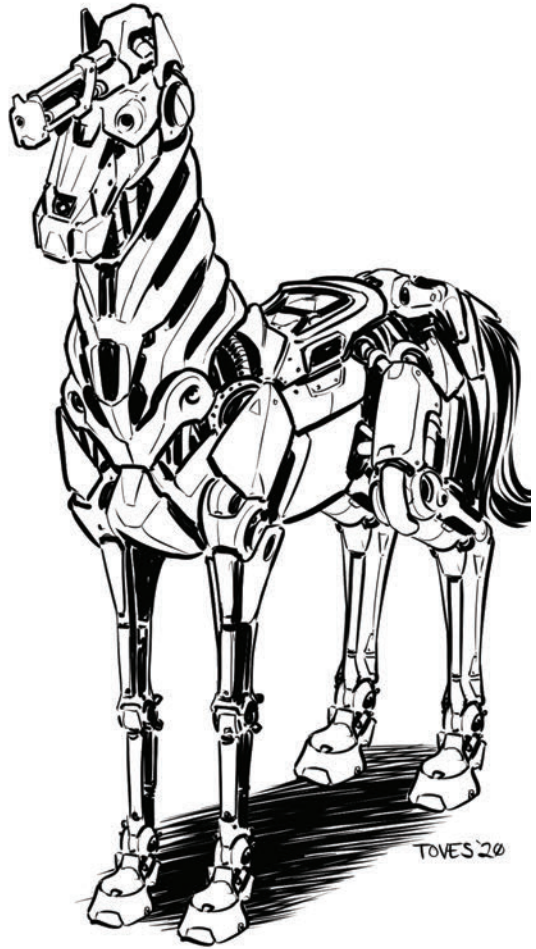
Special: immune to poison, mind control

Program Data: The Unit A Pursuer (Verdant) was built to be the standard model for Ranger use and was designed for a multitude of tasks. In addition to its built-in weaponry, the Pursuer units have 2 floating drones (about 6" in diameter) that can hover and fly at speeds equal to the Verdant's ground speed. These drones have full visual scanners, including both infrared and ultraviolet wavelengths, and can transmit the scanner data to the Pursuer automate, the unit's partner, or the J.V. AI at West Complex. The drones are one of the few machines that the J.V. AI can repair or manufacture at need if any of the Verdant's drones are destroyed in the line of duty.

Special Defenses: The Unit A Pursuer is immune to all toxins and gases, as well as mental mutations that involve mind control.

Self-Repair Capabilities: The Unit A Pursuer's on-board damage control system is capable of repairing 1 hit point of damage per 24 hour period. Greater magnitude repairs are only possible with tools and parts located in the West Complex.

S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Unit A Pursuer (Verdant): Init +5; Atk hooves +5 melee (x2 1d8) or visor blast +5 ranged (120', 2d8); AC 20; HD 12d10, 65 hit points; MV 100'; Act 2d20+5; SP immune to poison, mind control; Fort +4; Ref +6, Will +8; AI recog 12 (pure strain humans only)



Unit B Interdictor (Azure)

Initiative: +6

Attacks: hooves +6 melee (x2 1d8) or TASER field +6 ranged (90' any 3 adjacent targets, 1d6 electrical damage, DC 16 Fort save vs stunned for 1d4 hours)

AC: 21

HD: 14d10

HP: 80

Move: 80'

Actions: 2d20+6

Save: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +8

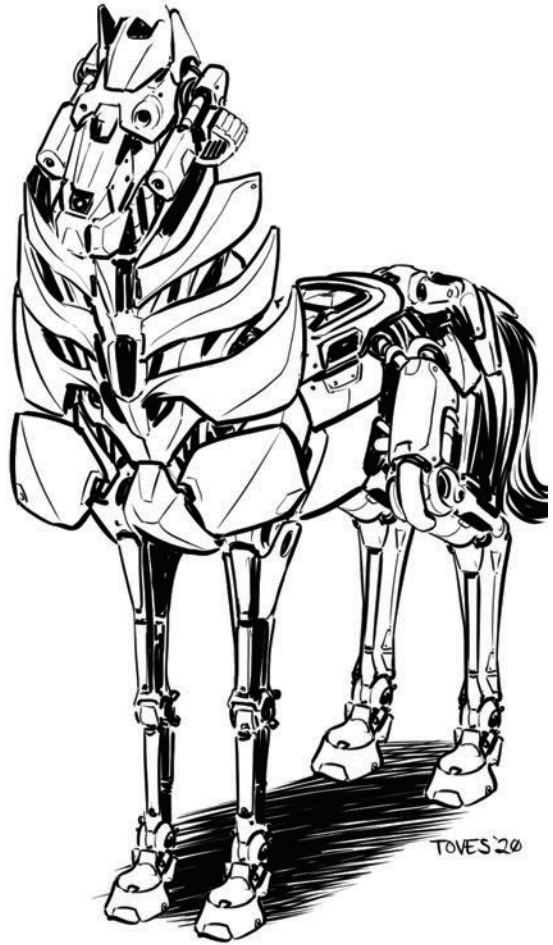
Special: immune to poison, mind control, electrical attacks, iris shields AC +4 for rider

Program Data: The Unit B Interdictors (Azure) were built for high security and riot duties. As such, while it is the slowest of the three types of S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units, it makes up for this in both durability and the firepower it can deploy against its opposition. As noted in Special Defenses, it is also the only unit that can deploy protective shields for its rider in case of significant opposition.

Special Defenses: The Unit B Interdictors are immune to all toxins and gases, as well as mental mutations that involve mind control. Special insulation in their chassis also renders them immune to electrical attacks (but not EMP-level effects). The unit also contains duralloy iris shielding that can be deployed from its front shoulders, neck and chest, providing +4 to the Armor Class of its rider.

Self-Repair Capabilities: The Unit B Interdictor's on-board damage control system is capable of repairing 2 hit points of damage per 24 hour period. Greater magnitude repairs are only possible with tools and parts located in the West Complex.

S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Unit B Interdictor (Azure): Init +6; Atk hooves +6 melee (x2 1d8) or TASER field +6 ranged (90', any 3 adjacent targets, 1d6 electrical damage, DC 16 Fort save vs stunned for 1d4 hours); AC 21 (+4 for rider); HD 14d10, 80 hit points; MV 80'; Act 2d20+6; SP immune to poison, mind control, electrical attacks, iris shields AC +4 for rider; Fort +6; Ref +6, Will +8; AI recog 14 (pure strain humans only)



Unit C Interceptor (Argent)

Initiative: +7

Attacks: hooves +7 melee (x2 1d8) or kinetic negation field +7 ranged (2d10, DC 16 Reflex save vs target slowed to 50% normal action dice and movement)

AC: 21/24

HD: 13d10

HP: 70

Move: 120'

Actions: 2d20+7

Save: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +9

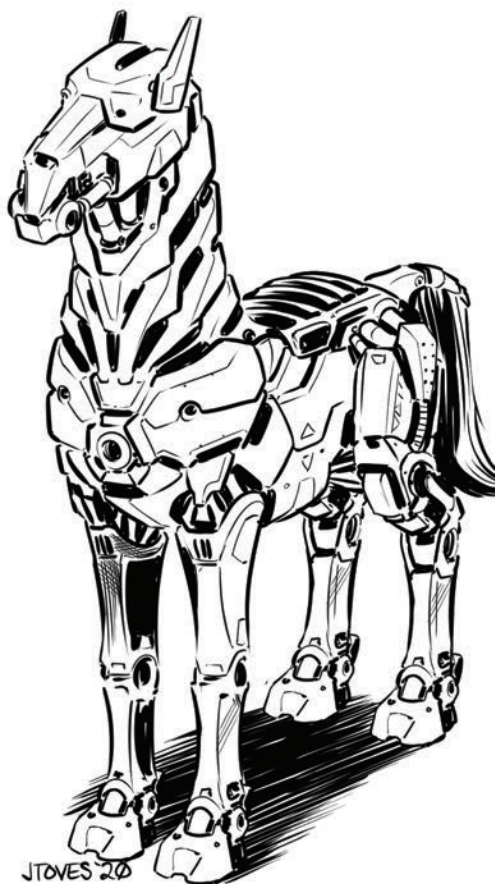
Special: immune to poison, mind control, EM-dampening armor

Program Data: The Unit C Interceptors (Argent) was the pride of the S.A.B.L.E. program, specially designed to intercept and negate opposition regardless of its target's evasive abilities and speed. Argents are the fastest of the Rangers, and can equal the speed of the fastest ground vehicles or robots. Its kinetic negation field attack is designed specifically to render a target effectively immobile with sufficient hits. Using a special molecular charge-altering field, it inhibits both muscular and machine movements to the point that, with enough hits, the target cannot even generate enough molecular friction to move and can thus be apprehended with little trouble.

Special Defenses: The Unit C Interceptors are immune to all toxins and gases, as well as mental mutations that involve mind control. Additional EM-dampening armor in their chassis gives the unit a +3 Armor Class against lasers or other energy-directed weapons.

Self-Repair Capabilities: The Unit B Interdictor's on-board damage control system is capable of repairing 3 hit points of damage per 24 hour period. Greater magnitude repairs are only possible with tools and parts located in the West Complex.

S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Unit C Interceptor (Argent): Init +7; Atk hooves +7 melee (x2 1d8) or kinetic negation field +7 ranged (2d10, DC 16 Reflex save vs target slowed to 50% normal action dice and movement); AC 21/24; HD 13d10, 70 hit points; MV 120'; Act 2d20+7; SP immune to poison, mind control, electrical attacks, AC +3 vs laser or energy weapon attacks; Fort +7; Ref +7, Will +9; AI recog 16 (pure strain humans only)



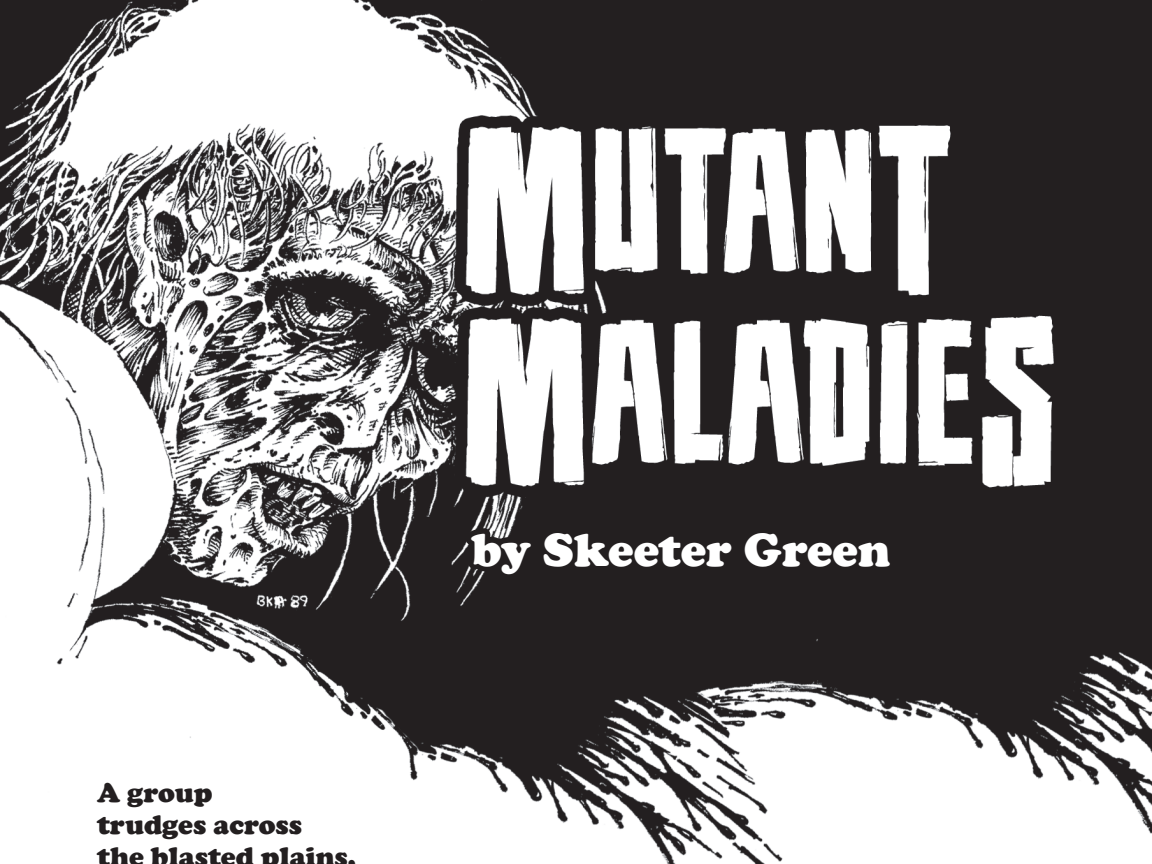
S.A.B.L.E. Ranger Plot Hooks

Plot Hook 1: One of the Ranger units enters a nearby village the adventurers are visiting, looking for a new partner, as its prior one has died. The GM can decide which of the three units is in need of this, but the Interdictor is suggested as most likely. Most adventurers would find the idea of such a powerful robot companion attractive, but are they willing to pay the price and serve as required?

Plot Hook 2: If the characters in the party are the type with, shall we say, flexible morals, then perhaps they encounter the S.A.B.L.E. units while they are on patrol, and the units intend to enforce law and order on the adventurers. This can be a way of calling the PCs to account for bad behavior, or as a way to steer them discretely out of one area and into another. As noted earlier, minor infractions will probably only rate a warning, but some player characters might not even take that well. Either way, a fight or travel to another adventure is likely.

Plot Hook 3: The adventurers encounters a damaged Ranger unit, probably the Pursuer model. Its partner is wounded and unconscious, and the automaton itself is seriously damaged. It has put in a distress call to the J.V. AI at the West Complex, but so far no other units have been able to come to its aid. If the adventurers help it return to its facility, the S.A.B.L.E. Ranger units will reward the party with small gifts such as com-badges, power cells, a salvaged weapon (non-lethal), or armor. If such isn't available, or the GM would rather not hand out such items, then the player characters will have the gratitude of the units, which might pay out to them in the future if aid is needed and they are near the West Complex.





MUTANT MALADIES

by Skeeter Green

A group trudges across the blasted plains, survivors of yet another assault from the unimaginable strangeness in which their planet has been engulfed. The exhausted travelers collapse in a rough camp, struggling to find some relief, let alone comfort, in the inhospitable terrain.

“Everyone okay? That was a close scrape.”

“That looks pretty bad. We need to check it and get it cleaned up.”

“I’ll be fine, it’s just a flesh wound...”

Mutant Maladies is a new forthcoming project from Skeeter Green Productions indexing diseases, contagions, and ailments for your favorite post-apocalyptic role-playing game setting. The conditions presented in this book range in severity from minor annoyances and irritations to planet-wide pestilences. Personal Afflictions (or P.A.s, as they are known among the healers) such as the homicidal Ares-13 Flu and the vision-inducing Precog Fever are detailed alongside epidemics, ranging from Darksight Blindness and U.C. (Ultra-Coagulation), to the feared world-wide pandemics Dusty Lung and Starburn. All these conditions and more are codified and catalogued for ease of use in your game, alongside more “standard” ailments such as AARS-4 (advanced acute radiation syndrome), NPP-20 (nano-parasitic protein 20), and V-DNA-2 (violent-DNA 2). *Presented here are some sneak peaks of these vicious maladies.*

AMD-6 (Marrowblight)

Name: AMD-6 (Acute Bone Marrow Degeneration, Variant 6)

Aliases: Marrowblight, Bonebreak, Bone Sickness

Initial Save: Fort 10

Secondary Save: Fort 10 (see below)

Immunity: Non-human entities appear to be immune to the disease

Overview: AMD-6 is a highly mutable virus that attacks the infected human's bone marrow matrix. The virus causes an acute, widespread change in the marrow, hardening the interior tissue, and with that slowing the production of blood cells. Only pure strain humans are affected by AMD-6. AMD-6 is aerosol-propelled through respiration, so physical contact is not required for transmission. Proximity to an infected individual in close quarters (within 10 feet) without full protective gear is sufficient to risk infection.

Effects: While several strains of AMD are known, Variant 6 is the only strain to be inoculation-resistant and antibody-resistant with human subjects. Currently, there is no means of prevention from infection by AMD-6 beyond avoiding contact with an infected individual. Fully human, non-mutated PCs contacting or entering within close proximity to infected victims risk contracting the virus through respiratory inhalation or transmission through bodily fluids (blood, saliva, sweat, tears, etc.)

If a potential host is at risk of infection (being within 10 feet of an infected subject, physically contacting their bodily fluids, etc.), they must make an immediate DC 10 Fort save or contract the disease. After a 1-hour incubation period, the initial effects of AMD-6 become clear – the infected individual exhibits lethargy, respiratory trauma, bouts of



severe body aches lasting up to an hour, and light rashes that begin covering their entire body. These effects translate into a -2 penalty to all combat rolls for 24 hours (to hit and to damage), and the PC suffers a +4 penalty to all future Fort saves for the same duration.

For each day the disease goes uncured, the subject PC must make an additional Fort save to track the progression of the marrow degeneration. 24 hours after initial infection, the white blood cell production in the body begins to slow, causing the Fort save to increase in difficulty each day. Subsequent 24-hour periods cause further system-wide shutdowns, restricting red blood cells production, the ability to create antibodies, and other degenerative effects (adding additional penalties to combat rolls). After the first week of infection, the subject's body shuts down, entering a catatonic state. The subject is unable to feed or care for themselves, and on Day 9, if the disease is left untreated, the subject dies.

AMD-6 DISEASE PROGRESSION

Day	Fort save DC	Effects
1	10+	Successful save negates disease; failure indicates progressive infection, -2 penalty to all combat rolls, +4 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
2	14+	Successful save negates disease; failure indicates progressive infection, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
3	15+	Successful save negates disease; failure indicates progressive infection, -3 penalty to all combat rolls, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
4	16+	Successful save negates disease; failure indicates progressive infection, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
5	17+	Successful save negates disease; failure indicates progressive infection, -4 penalty to all combat rolls, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
6	18+	Successful save reverts to Day 1; failure indicates progressive infection, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs.
7	19+	Successful save reverts to Day 1; failure indicates progressive infection, -5 penalty to all combat rolls, +1 penalty to all Fort save DCs
8	20+	Successful save reverts to Day 1; failure indicates progressive infection, subject's body enters catatonic state (unable to care for itself, unable to communicate)
9	21+	Successful save reverts to Day 8; failure indicates death

AMD-6 is not typically the direct cause of an infected subject's death within the first week. In most cases, the weakening of the subject's immune system allows another pathogen, poison, or trauma to increase its destructive capabilities; death from "the common cold" is common from this P.A. if not treated.

Example: Infected Subject A fails their initial DC 10 Fort save, suffering a -2 penalty to all combat rolls and a +4 penalty to the DC to Fort saves specifically. On day 2, if subject A now fails their new DC 14 Fort save (base DC 10 plus the +4 penalty modifier to the DC for the initial failure), they gain an additional +1 penalty to Fortitude saving throws each day. Use the AMD-6 table to determine the effects of the escalating saving throws.

Cure: AMD-6 can be cured initially with a successful DC 10 Fort save or any appropriate medical tech, spell, or neural program capable of neutralizing disease. After Day 5, 2 successive neutralize disease effects from these sources must be applied for recovery.

Ultra-Coagulation (Thickblood)

Name: Ultra-Coagulation
Aliases: Thickblood, Bodylock, The Sluggish
Initial Save: Fort 12
Secondary Save: None
Immunity: By inoculation only, mutated plants are immune but may be carriers

Overview: Ultra-Coagulation is an affliction altering the blood-clotting characteristics of an infected host's blood. The affected host's blood begins to coagulate at an increased rate, changing state from a liquid to a gel in just a few minutes. If not treated, U.C. can form solid masses inside the host inducing acute and debilitating pain and causing great internal damage.

If the infected host does not possess liquid blood, the disease has no direct effect. The host may carry the infection, possibly passing the contagion to another host through indirect transmission. Infected droplets from a carrier left on any non-porous surface remain virulent for up to 1 hour if not decontaminated.



Effects: One of the more painful and dangerous contagions, U.C. converts the infected host PC's blood plasma and hemoglobin to a gel, eventually producing solid clots throughout the circulatory system.

Initial damage from U.C. depends on the results of the saving throw.

A successful DC 12 Fort save inflicts 1d3 points of damage immediately to the host, and they suffer a subsequent -2 penalty to all physical activity rolls (combat, damage, Fort and Ref saves) for the next 4 hours, as the gelatinous plasma continues to course through their body. After 4 hours the host's body successfully fights off the disease.

A failed Fort save inflicts 1d6 points of damage immediately and causes the same -2 penalty to all physical activity rolls for 24 hours (unless cured). Additionally, the infected host must now make Fort saves versus the disease effects every hour for 12 hours to determine the progress of the disease in their system. If the host makes 2 successive Fort saves in a row, the disease has run its course and fails to progress (the -2 penalty remains for 24 hours). If the Fort saves are not made, the disease inflicts an additional 1 point of damage each hour.

If the Fort save is failed 3 or more times consecutively without being cured (over 3 hours), the coagulation has progressed to the clotting stage, inflicting an additional 1d4 points of immediate damage, and causing the host PC to suffer a -4 penalty to all physical activity rolls (not cumulative) for the rest of the 24-hour period. If the host progresses to the clotting stage, they must make one last successful DC 8 Fort save; a failed save indicates the clot has moved and is blocking a major artery or vein. Roll on the following table to determine where the clot is located.

ULTRA-COAGULATION DISEASE PROGRESSION

Roll d6	Area	Effect
1	Left arm	Paralysis of limb for 1d6 days.
2	Left leg	Paralysis of limb for 1d6 days.
3	Right arm	Paralysis of limb for 1d6 days.
4	Right leg	Paralysis of limb for 1d6 days.
5	Brain stroke	Fort save DC 10; success indicates recovery in 1d4 days, failure indicates death.
6	Heart attack	Fort save DC 10; success indicate recovery in 1d4 days with a permanent -2 penalty to physical activity rolls; failure indicates death.

Cure: Ultra-Coagulation can be cured with any appropriate medical tech, spell, or neural program capable of neutralizing disease, or by successful DC 12 Fort saves as noted above.



Human Transmittable Spongiform Encephalopathy (Mad Human Disease)

Name: Human Transmittable Spongiform Encephalopathy

Aliases: Mad Human Disease, HTSE, Kooroo-2, KR2

Initial Save: Fort 13

Secondary Save: None

Immunity: Pure strain humans are immune to this disease, mutated humans gain a +6 bonus to Fort saves, mutated plants and animals gain no bonus to Fort saves.

Overview: Human Transmittable Spongiform Encephalopathy (HTSE) is a type of neuro-degenerative disorder affecting non-human creatures consuming human cranial tissue. Ingestion of a human's brain requires the consumer to make a successful save to avoid infection. As humans are only carriers of HTSE, they will always appear asymptomatic. When spread to a non-human host, the combination of proteins in the human genome, mixed with non-human genetics, causes the disease to incubate and spread. The only way to create an infection of HTSE outside of the consummation of human cranial tissue is in a laboratory environment.

Effects: "Mad Human Disease" as it is commonly known, occurs when a non-human creature (mutated animal or carnivorous plant) eats a human's brain. When the brain is consumed (any amount will do), the eater must make a successful DC 13 Fort save or become infected.

Characteristics of HTSE included uncontrolled motor functions (the infected subject spasms and twitches constantly), a pronounced lack of emotional control, intense bouts of rage, and the inability to resist further consumption of human neural tissue. The subjects become what humans would consider "ravaging cannibals" or "super zombies", with an instinctive need to subsist entirely upon a diet of human cranial tissue.

Non-human sentients suffering from HTSE go mad. This results in affected individuals gaining a +2 bonus to combat rolls (to hit and damage), a +4 bonus to Fort and Reflex saves, as well as a -6 penalty to Will saves for 1 hour after consumption and infection. After the initial hour, the infected being or creature must make an additional DC 13 Fort save, which if successful, allows the subject to resist the urge to continue eating human brains. If failed, the affected being or creature is compelled to seek out the nearest human and attack them in order to consume their brain matter. The cycle continues until the infected PC makes 3 consecutive and successful DC 13 Fort saves, once per hour, or is cured by outside means. If the affected being or creature makes the 3 consecutive saves, the disease goes dormant, and they may behave normally. While the disease is dormant, the affected being or creature no longer needs to make Fort saves to resist eating human brains. However, if they should ever taste human brain matter again, the disease cycle immediately begins again.

Cure: HTSE can be permanently cured with any appropriate medical tech, spell, or neural program capable of neutralizing disease. There is a rumor the Esetrek Foundation was working on an antidote, but that cannot be confirmed.

In addition to the above maladies, the forthcoming *Mutant Maladies* book provides a brief background and history for the Esetrek Foundation, considered the progenitors of many of the viral strains that sprang from their labs and continue to spread in the far-future world of Omega-Terra. Their involvement in the chemical weapons development of past governments is examined, as well as their rise to financial prominence and subsequent downfall, under the dubious circumstances of the day.

New allies and adversaries are introduced, beginning with the secluded Medical Association of Gathered Intelligence (MAGI), a think-tank of scientists and geniuses attempting to create antidotes, antibodies, and inoculations for the worst of the plagues ravaging the world. These include the haunting Plague Doctors, mysterious beings that are always found at the sites of mass outbreaks (also known as Vector Sites or VS Envelopes), and the unusual Pollinators, the seldom-seen autonomous flying drones disbursing chemical gasses and powders across the landscape.

All these and many more are available for use to add richness and character to your post-apocalyptic campaign. Don't want to worry about the statistics for disease in your game? Throw out the numbers and use the names in creative and terrifying ways! How much cooler is it to say "Well, you failed your save. As you take in a deep breath, you feel the tell-tale itchiness of dusty lung taking hold," rather than "Well, you failed your save. You take 2d6 points of damage." As always, please use what parts of this content fit in your campaign, and maybe the rest can plant the seeds of future plans deep into your psyche, growing and expanding over time, spreading, always spreading...

**Make your game go viral with *Mutant Maladies*!
Available soon from Skeeter Green Productions**



GLOWING GOOD LOOKS

BY JAMES M. WARD

*Not every missed saving throw or fumble versus radiation saves requires cracking open the mighty tables of the core rule book. With *Glowing Good Looks*, one of the originators of the post-apocalyptic role playing genre, James M. Ward, gives us some fun, quick, down-and-dirty minor mutations that can enhance the appearance and powers of even the most bizarre mutated being.*

So in your game you have mutants. They have fun mutation-al powers, however they don't really have a style or agenda. The minor mutations in *Glowing Good Looks* can do that for them. Roll percentile dice on this handy-dandy chart and your player character mutants and your NPC mutants will be ready for a fun session of gaming. Decide which of the three charts is appropriate for your mutant and roll three times on that chart to see how your body changes. If you roll the same things twice just ignore that second roll and roll again.

(Tables continue on next page.)

GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR HUMANOIDS

Roll d100	Minor Mutation
01-04	Fur Covered Body: This mutant grows thick fur on their bodies so much so that it provides a bonus of +2 on their armor class. This fur allows the mutant to ignore extremes of cold or rainy weather.
05-08	Extra Legs: A set of two extra legs allows this mutant to move twice as far in a normal melee round. If they use their feet in a kick, they get two attacks in a melee round. When they kick they cannot use a missile attack that melee round.
09-12	Extra Arms: A pair of extra arms allows for a second attack in the same melee round. This mutant can attack twice per round with melee weapons or missile weapons.
13-16	Extremely Large: The mutant's body doubles in size and the mutant's arms and legs increase in strength to allow for the new size of the body. This new size adds +2d8 damage to all melee attacks made by the larger mutant.
17-20	Extremely Small: The mutant's body shrinks by half and the metabolism of the mutant doubles so they are twice as fast as normal beings. The mutant has double movement and attacks per round.
21-24	Glow at Will: Can emit a blinding light for one melee round or a solid steady glow that lights up a 60 foot area around the mutant.
25-28	Shout: The mutants shout can inflict three points of damage at four feet or less in front of the mutant.
28-32	Muscles in Your Muscles: Is visibly very strong and able to do double damage with a melee weapon every other melee round.
33-36	Gills: The mutant can breath underwater with no extra effort.
37-40	Bark-Like Flesh: The flesh of the mutant is just like tree bark. This changes their armor class by +1.
41-44	Stone-Like Flesh: The flesh of the mutant is much like stone so that edged weapons only do half damage to this mutant. The mutant is slowed down to half normal speed.
45-48	Purple (or some other hue) Colored Flesh: The mutant picks a color and their flesh is permanently a bright version of that color. Shades of green allow the mutant to be almost invisible in a forest. Shades of white allow the mutant to be almost invisible in winter conditions.
49-52	Bug-Eyes: The eyes of the mutant are very large and stick out from the face. These bug-eyes double the distance the mutant can see and allow them to see in the dark. The enhanced vision gives the mutant a bonus of +1 in striking a foe.
53-56	Unusually Large Head: The mutant's head is twice as large as normal, allowing the mutant to see and smell better. These enhanced senses give the mutant a bonus of 1 in striking a foe.

GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR HUMANOIDS (CONTINUED)

Roll d100	Minor Mutation
57-60	Unusually Large Hands: These large hands increase the strength of the mutant by a bonus of 2.
61-64	Unusually Large Feet: The larger feet allows the mutant to swim twice as fast and grants them an advantage in climbing things.
65-68	Stamina: Increased stamina allows the mutant to physically attack twice every other melee round with physical attacks. The mutant has pronounced extra muscles in their arms and legs.
69-72	Malodorous: The mutant can generate a vile smell five feet around their body. This causes foes to retch around the mutant and only be able to attack physically every other melee round.
73-76	Resistance: The mutant picks an energy state: heat, laser, radiation, sonics, or lightning. The mutant takes half damage from any of that type of attacks.
77-100	Force Field Generation: This mutant glows when generating a force field. The generated field of force stops the first 10 points of damage on the mutant in a 24 hour period. The mutant glows bright yellow.



GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR WINGED FOLK

Roll d100	Minor Mutation
01-04	Malodorant: The mutant can generate a vile smell five feet around their body. This causes foes to retch around the mutant and only be able to attack physically every other melee round.
05-08	Double Sized Wings: These wings are huge, but can still be pulled in tight to the body of the mutant. The wings allow the mutant to travel as fast as an eagle and still carry its weight or less at the same time (double prior flight movement).
09-12	Wings Providing Protection: These wings stop 25% of all missile shots at the mutant.
13-16	Wings that Suddenly Appear and Disappear: The mutant's wings have the ability to be instantly summoned, and can be made to instantly vanish at will.
17-20	Feathers as Missiles: the mutant's wings can fire two feathers a melee round (up to 6 per day). Each feather has damage and range as a throwing dagger.
21-24	Feathers as Razor Weapons: A wing attack does the same damage as a slicing short sword attack.
25-28	Awe-Inspiring Angelic Wings: Glowing wings unfurl from the body and they are so impressive attackers can only strike this mutant every other melee round.
29-32	Extra Arms: The extra arms allow the mutant to make an additional melee or ranged attack in a single melee round
33-36	Special Lungs: The mutant has huge lungs that allow them to work underwater for 60 minutes without taking a breath. They can also work in poison gases for that same length of time while holding their breath.
37-40	Speed Factor: The mutant is capable of generating a thick fog around their body that completely masks them and causes all melee and ranged attacks against them to fail outright 50% of the time. This ability does not function in a stiff breeze.
41-44	Resistance Feathers: Pick an energy state (fire, lasers, heat, radiation, lightning) and when that type of energy strikes the feathers it bounces, inflicting no damage.
45-48	Buffeting: The wings are able to generate a forceful wind that at ten or less feet can knock a human-sized being to the ground.
49-52	Quickness: The mutant can move twice as fast as normal for ten minutes a day.
53-56	Muscles in Your Muscles: The mutant is visibly very strong and able to do double damage with a melee weapon every other melee round.
57-60	Making Clouds: The wings can generate a thick fog that lasts for 30 minutes when there isn't a strong breeze. Unless beings have infrared vision abilities they can't see this mutant.
61-64	Bullet Proof: Bullets bounce off the flesh of this mutant only inflicting 5 points of bruising damage.



GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR WINGED FOLK (CONTINUED)

Roll d100

Minor Mutation

65-68

Laser Proof: The mutant generates an oil that makes them immune to laser fire. This doesn't make their equipment immune.

69-72

Fire Proof: This mutant generates a thick sweat that prevents normal fires from hurting their flesh. This doesn't make their equipment immune to the blaze.

73-76

Special Muscles: The arm muscles of this mutant are huge. For 4 melee rounds in a 24 hours period this mutant inflicts triple the normal damage with a melee weapon when successfully striking a foe.

77-100

Ducking: While flying this mutant can effectively duck and avoid incoming missile attacks so that 50% of all ranged attacks miss this mutant.

GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR 4-LEGGED MUTANTS

Roll d100

Minor Mutation

- 01-04 **Furry Shanks & Mane:** White fur grows so thickly on the legs and neck of this mutant that 25% of the time it stops missile attacks from harming the mutant.
- 05-08 **Muscles in Your Muscles:** The mutant is visibly very strong and able to do double damage with a melee weapon every other melee round.
- 09-12 **Wings:** The mutant has a pair of functional wings and is able to press the wings tightly to its body. The wings allow the mutant to carry half its weight while flying.
- 13-16 **Chameleon Effect:** When not wearing clothing or carrying equipment, this mutant can exactly copy the terrain around it to become very difficult to see.
- 17-20 **Toughened Skin:** The flesh of the mutant becomes so tough that it only takes half damage from melee weapons.
- 21-24 **Large Eyes:** The eyes are huge on this mutant. It allows them to see twice as far as normal and to see in the dark as if it was daylight. It also allows them to see radiation intensities.
- 25-28 **Whip Tail:** The mutant has an unusually long tail. It can act as a whip within 15 feet doing whip damage to a single target.
- 29-32 **Sonic Shock:** The body of the mutant can vibrate and inflicts 5 points of damage upon all targets within 10 feet of the mutant, twice per day.
- 33-36 **Haze Generation:** Given five minutes, this mutant can generate an eerie haze. The mutant's body can then shift into that haze and all missile fire has a 50% chance of missing. This ability doesn't function in even a light breeze.
- 37-40 **Dexterity:** The quickness of this mutant always lets them go first in a melee round.
- 41-44 **Large Head:** The senses of sight, smell, and taste are doubled with this enlarged head.
- 45-48 **Increased Sensitivity:** This mutant is never surprised. They are able to fight in total darkness using their other senses instead of their sight, and thus do not take any penalties from darkness on their attempts to strike in melee.
- 49-52 **Bark:** This mutant can make a blasting noise that startles their foe, causing them to suffer a -2 on their attacks. However, the mutant cannot make a melee attack in the turn they are barking, although they can use a ranged weapon.
- 53-56 **Malodorant:** The mutant can generate a vile smell five feet around their body. This causes foes to retch around the mutant and only be able to attack physically every other melee round.
- 57-60 **Human Looking Upper Trunk:** This mutant has the upper trunk, hands, and head of a human. Its arms are unusually strong for its size, granting +1 to strength.



GLOWING GOOD LOOKS FOR 4-LEGGED MUTANTS (CONTINUED)

Roll d100

61-64

Minor Mutation

Poisoned Flesh: This mutant generates a green oil that infuses their skin. The oil acts as a deadly poison when its flesh is bitten.

65-68

Leaping: The leg muscles of this mutant are unusually large allowing the mutant to leap up to thirty feet from a running start.

69-72

Kick: The back hooves of this mutant can deliver a powerful kick inflicting 4d8 in damage.

73-76

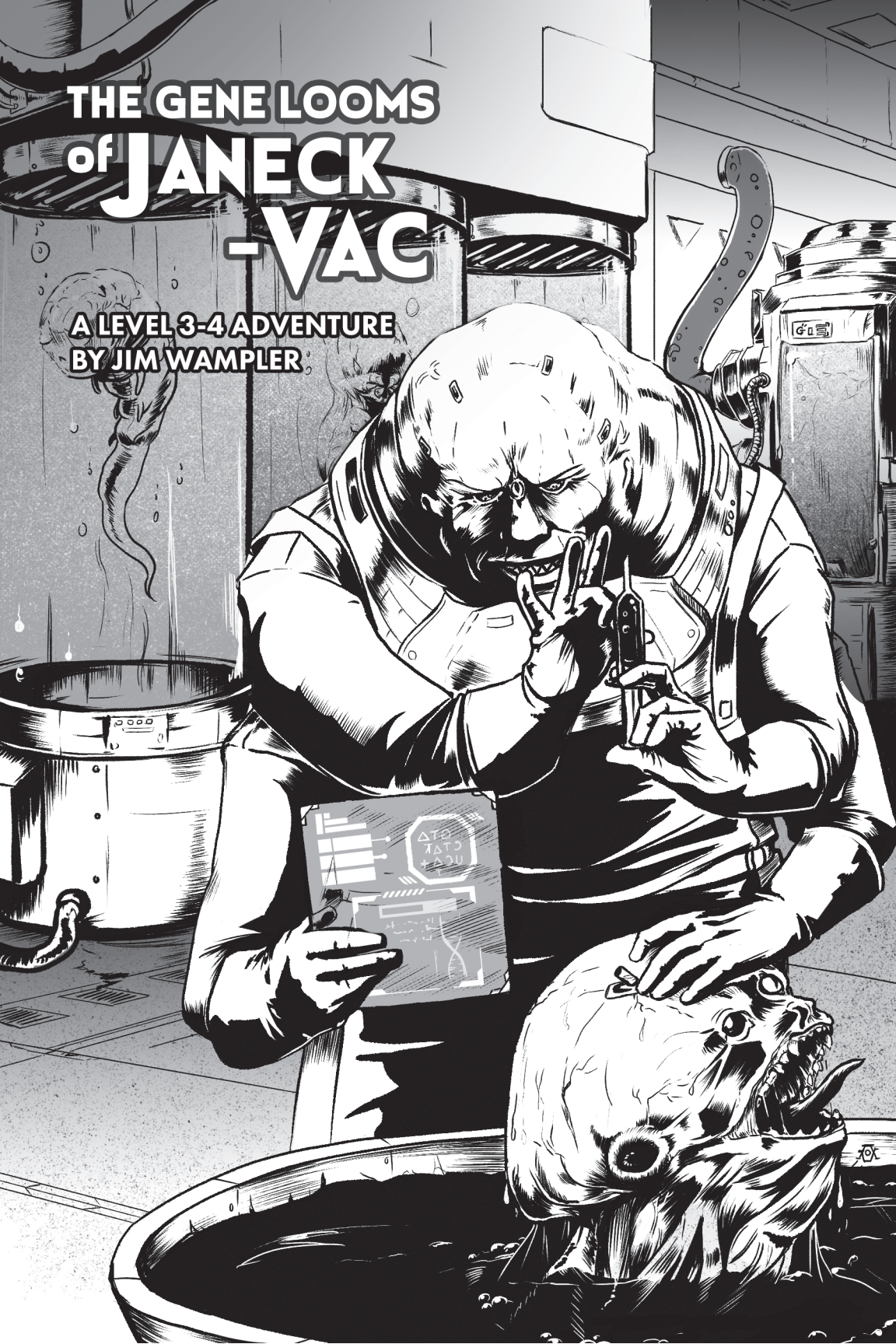
Regeneration: This mutant can quickly restore stamina so that it heals 2 hit points an hour when not in combat.

77-100

Inspiring Awe: Given two melee rounds to prepare, this mutant can change physically so that they inspire awe and fear in attacking foes. This power can be used for 4 melee rounds of combat per 24 hour period.

THE GENE LOOMS of JANECK -VAC

A LEVEL 3-4 ADVENTURE
BY JIM WAMPLER





BACKGROUND

More than 10,000 years ago, Janeck-Vac stood supreme as a scientist of searing insight and precision intellect. Disdainful of the methods of his time for achieving seeming eternal life by uploading a consciousness into hologrammatic form, Janeck's goal was nothing less than achieving pure physical immortality.

Thus, using methods and means of his own devising, Janeck-Vac began a lifelong quest that occupied most of his adult life. At the ripe old age of 160, he was very close to achieving his goals when the Great Disaster struck. Foreseeing the end of civilization, Janeck hatched a quickly-conceived alternate plan. He grudgingly uploaded his consciousness into a specially-programmed holographic AI duplicate that would continue on with his research, while he lay waiting for the results in a medical stasis pod. Janeck-Vac could not know just how long he would be waiting. For it seems that even the best laid plans of scientists and sages oft go astray.

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The hothouse jungles you call home have suddenly been invaded by multifarious new mutations — mutations that are bizarre even by the reckoning of the most experienced rover-priests. Do these new mutants portend the coming of a new Great Disaster, or merely betoken an ancient echo of the last one?

All that is certain is that entire food-webs are being destroyed, and the vital resources that your hunter-gatherer tribe needs to sustain itself are being disrupted. And should these aggressive new mutations suddenly choose your village as their next tasty morsel, it could be the end of everything.



In their aged wisdom, your tribal elders have reasoned that so many variable and violent mutants did not suddenly spring into life without a reason. The elders have decided that the best way to stem the oncoming horde is to discover and stop it at its source, and they do not ask for volunteers. They emerge from a smokey vision-quest conducted in their meditation hut and merely point at you and your rover team and say, "Go! By the light of the Ancient Ones, go and put an end to this madness before all is lost and we are no more!"

The tribal elders will supply the party with a small magic sticky rock (lodestone) and the equipment to use it as a means of guidance. The party is instructed to place the magic sticky rock on the floating piece of bark and watch until it turns upon the water to always face in the same direction. Helgan, an elder rover-priest, marks an edge of the wood bowl three finger widths to the right of the direction the sticky rock points, and indicates that direction to be the one seen in her vision quest.

With a compass heading for the source of the oncoming hordes established, it is reasoned by the elders that any perceived increase in the frequency of encounters with these beasts will mark a nearing to their ultimate source. The seeker team is to discover that source and eliminate it by any means necessary.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

As you make your way deeper into the jungle to the northeast, the signs are clear. There are ever-increasing waves of wildlife migrating in the opposite direction you're heading – towards your village and away from something or someone. Even large predator species you recognize seem to be on the move, ignoring you completely as they cross your path.

The journey on foot to the unknown source of the new mutant creatures is a 3-day trek through the jungle. Use the random encounter table below to determine which and how many of Janeck-Vac's gene-spliced mutants the adventurers encounters during the trip. If this adventure is being used as part of a campaign, let the table results play out fully. If a shorter session is desired, the GM can select 1 or 2 encounters from the table instead. For monster stats and information, see the Genetic Monsters section at the end of the adventure.

JUNGLE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll d20 Twice per day	Roll d20 Once per night	Encounter
1-10	1-12	No encounter (or fleeing wildlife).
11-12	–	Hecklefly swarm (20)
13	13	Armawheelo (5)
–	14-15	Batslug swarm (12)
14	–	Willowfrog (1)
15	16	Spiderhog (6)
16	17	Birdbears (3)
17-18	18	Mossants (1 collective mat)
19	19	Cobrapede (1)
20	20	2 encounters at once (the first attracts the second)

On the third day, the party will note that their lodestone coordinates are leading them towards an area of rising terrain in the jungle ahead, with huge, foggy cloud banks hanging overhead. These clouds are white and fluffy, and not anything like dark storm clouds. Unknown to the party, they are approaching the ridge of a huge volcanic caldera with associated steam lakes and geysers.

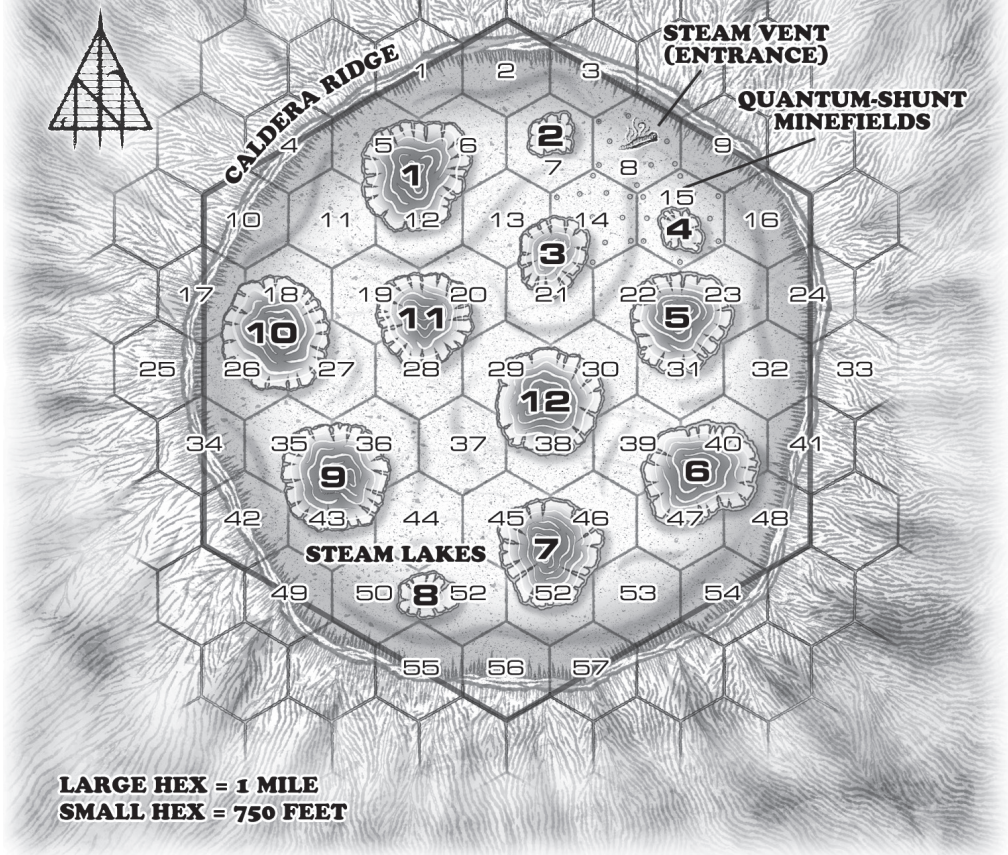
CRATEROUS CALDERA

Up ahead in the direction you are heading, you note that the jungle floor is slowly rising into a bank of fluffy white clouds in an otherwise clear sky. To proceed, you must first climb a ridge that extends up into the warm, steamy cloud bank.

The rocky basalt ridge is the edge of a mile-wide caldera crater from an ancient eruption. The top of the ridge extends into the cloud bank, with extremely humid conditions and visibility limited to 15'-25'. Once over the ridge and descending the

CRATEROUS CALDERA

GM MAP



interior ridge side, the party will travel beneath the cloud bank again and get a sweeping view of the interior of the craterous caldera.

Now that you have descended the other side of the ridge, you see a gigantic circular valley at least a mile wide. Below you lays a steamy plane of blackened basalt rocks, scattered jungle vegetation, and numerous circular steam lakes. As you take in the view, on the other side of the valley one of the steam lakes suddenly erupts into a gigantic geyser, spraying scalding hot water everywhere and sending a column of steam clouds high in the sky. Your sticky-rock-

water-bowl suddenly reacts and the floating rock quickly rotates toward either the center of the valley or to some point further out the opposite side of the valley.

The lodestone is now being attracted to the EM field being generated by Janeck-Vac's underground installation, and will lead the party there should they choose to continue in that direction. There is a steam vent cave entrance that leads to Janeck's underground lair on the northeastern inner slope of the crater — over a mile away from the southwestern side from which the party will approach. The steam vent will not be

QUANTUM-SHUNT LANDMINE LANDING TABLE

To determine landing hex number for quantum-shunt teleportation, roll d100

Landing Hex	Terrain/Effects
1-4	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
5-7	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
8	Steam Vent (entrance): Roll 1d6: (1-4) Land on clear ground, (5) Land on q-shunt mine, (6) Land at steam vent entrance.
9-11	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
12-13	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
14-15	Steam Lake/Q-shunt Minefield: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out); if missed lake roll 1d6: (1-4) Land on clear ground, (5-6) Land on another q-shunt mine.
16-17	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
18-23	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
24-25	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
26-31	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
32-34	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
35-36	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
37	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
38-40	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
41-42	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
43	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
44	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
45-48	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
49	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
50-52	Steam Lake: 50% chance of landing in lake (1d6 heat damage per round, 1d3 rounds to swim out).
53-57	Clear Terrain: No other effect.
58-97	Back to the Jungle: Landing site is 1 hex outside the caldera ridge back in the jungle. Roll 1d12 to determine clock direction (12 o'clock = due north, etc.).
98-100	Accidental Shunt: Landing site is Area 1-B of the installation.



visible as a terrain feature until the party either reaches the middle of the caldera, or circles the ridge-edge to at least the due-east or due-north positions.

Crossing the Caldera

Traveling across the mile-wide caldera is risky. There are 12 large steam lakes that randomly erupt every few minutes, scalding anything nearby. Furthermore, the terrain around the steam vent entrance to Janeck's installation contains a quantum-shunt minefield. If triggered, each q-shunt mine will teleport the victim to a random location elsewhere in the caldera — including possibly directly into a scalding hot steam lake!

Share the player map of the Craterous Caldera with the players to use as reference as they call out which terrain hex they enter or cross. Assuming average humanoid movement rates, crossing each hex of the map (750' wide) takes the adventurers 10 minutes at casual or careful walking speed (1/2 normal movement), 5 minutes at a brisk trot (full movement), or 2.5 minutes at a dead run (double movement).

Steam Lakes

The crater-shaped steam lakes each contain super-heated water (204°F / 95.6°C) that will do 1d6 damage per round to any creature immersed in its scalding embrace. Once every 10 minutes one

of the steam lakes erupts in a blistering geyser of water and steam. Roll a d12 each time to randomly determine which geyser erupts. The resulting steam cloud will do 1d3 damage per round to anyone standing in a hex containing any portion of an erupting lake.

Quantum-Shunt Minefield

Janeck-Vac has planted innumerable quantum-shunt mines in the three hexes nearest the steam vent access tunnel to his underground installation. The mines are each buried under a thin layer of topsoil and cloaked with perception filters that block a wide EM spectrum that includes infrared, UV, radio, and radioactive wavelengths. Because their construction includes ferrous materials, they can be detected by magnetic means, but this tends to set them off.

Triggered by the slightest weight or pressure being placed upon them, when a q-shunt mine is activated it immediately punches a 10' circumference hole in normal space/time that briefly sweeps away the device and all within its area of effect into a parallel quantum dimension. Anything contained within the area of effect almost immediately falls back into normal space/time, but at another nearby location up to 1 mile away. Effectively a short-range teleport, the GM can determine the landing site by using the supplied table in conjunction with the Craterous Caldera GM map.

THE GENE LOOMS OF JANECK-VAC

Janeck-Vac's underground gene labs are what is left of his ancient scientific installation after millennia of volcanic activity in the area. Once inside, the adventurers will note that all hallways are of a standard type — pearlescent white walls lit from above by bands of blue-white god lights and carpeted below with muted red pathways. A gentle background hum of pressurized air handlers and the low thrumming of the power of the gods blanket the facility.

Unless otherwise noted, all rooms within the facility that feature active devices inside are pre-lit by the god lights when the adventurers open the doors.

The duralloy security doors throughout the facility require a successful artifact check of 14 or better along with possession of a scientific (violet) or military (olive green) com-badge to open. They must otherwise be forced open along their sliding tracks (30 Strength check or better) or be destroyed (AC 18, HP 30, Duralloy construction of the door takes half-damage from all attacks except particle beam weapons and similar EM-based mutational powers).

GENE LABS OF JANECK-VAC RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll d6	Encounter (roll once per hour)
Once per hour	
1-2	No encounter
3	Flock of Batslugs: 1d20 batslugs have managed to fly into the facility through an air vent, seeking live prey to swarm.
4	Lemurion Patrol: A unit of 6 armed lemurion guards patrol the hallways, watching for anything out of order. They will kill or imprison anyone not serving Janeck-Vac.
5	Escaped Birdbears: 1d3 birdbears have escaped the menagerie and roam the halls, looking for dinner and a way out.
6	Holographic Data Ghosts: The primary AI Suite has malfunctioned and is projecting 1d6 soft-light holograms of ancient and long-dead geneticists. As mindless projections, each simulated scientist is going about their routine duties oblivious to anything actually happening around them. Attempts to interact with them prove largely pointless, but insistent contact may trigger a memory file fragment and the data ghost will share a dark scientific secret. Roll 1d4: (1) Knowledge of the very nature of reality that is so terrible it cannot be retained, but it does cause insanity — Personality reduced to 2 and Intelligence reduced by 6; (2) Hints at how the technology of the Ancient Ones works — listener gains +1d3 to next artifact check; (3) Listener is taught a meditative technique that adds 1 HP permanently; (4) The data ghost passes through the listener's body and fades away, causing a quantum probability shift — listener gains +1 Luck permanently.

AREA 1-A — Steam Vent Entrance:

This winding 10' wide steam vent leads both to Janeck-Vac's underground installation and to several other branching steam vents that spew forth superheated steam generated by the gigantic magma pool hundreds of feet underneath the caldera. Once every 10 minutes a low, whistling wind will begin blowing through these rocky, humid passages, and on the next round jets of scalding hot steam will vent out towards the surface. Living creatures caught in the vent when this happens will receive 1d6 damage in massive blistering heat burns.

AREA 1-B — Steam Vents: These branches of the steam vent suddenly lead straight downward directly into the aquifer above the magma pool, and a bright red glow can be seen hundreds of feet below. Anyone near the ledge or looking down must make a DC 5 Agility check to avoid slipping on the humid, moist rocks and tumbling ever-downward to their certain doom.

AREA 1-C — Steam Vent Passage-way: After curving northward and eastward, this steam vent widens into a chiseled passageway. Although the steam vents will continue to blast through the steam vent system every 10 minutes, anyone standing in this branch merely experiences uncomfortable but non-damaging blasts of hot steam.

Holo-Camouflaged Exit

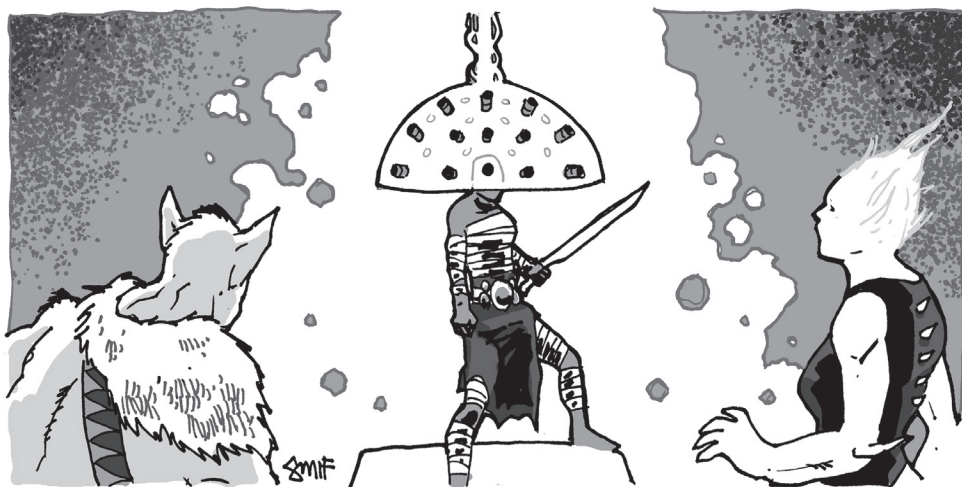
The eastern wall of this steam vent passageway contains an 20' wide vault door camouflaged by a soft-light holographic projection of rocky wall. Anyone searching the area specifically for unusual features who succeeds at a DC

12+ Perception check may detect the holographic illusion by noting a heat differential (by use of infrared vision or sensors) or by simply poking the insubstantial wall projection and seeing it suddenly flicker and strobe. Passing through the holographic projection reveals a thick 20' wide metal vault door similar to the other hazard lock vault doors in Area 1-D. The double-vault doors lead directly to Area 1-I Menagerie via a 20' wide rough-hewn rocky passage to the south.

AREA 1-D — Hazard Lock: This branch of the steam vents ends in a vault-like metal door embedded in the rock. The 10' high door has a huge, spoked metal wheel placed centrally, and there is a security touchpanel to the left of the door. A military (olive green) or scientific (violet) com badge placed on the touchpanel will open the door. To force the thick duralloy door open will otherwise take a tremendous combined Strength check of 50 or better (PC rolls a d20+Strength ability modifier; up to four other PCs may help but will only add their own Strength modifiers to the STR check roll). The door can also be broken open by mutational or technological means. Its hardy duralloy construction is impervious to mundane damage (physical, explosive, or fire damage) and it takes only one-half damage from energy-based attacks (particle beam weapons, fusion torch, or EM-based mutations, etc.). The vault door can withstand up to 75 points of such damage before coming loose from its inner hinges.

The southern end of the hazard lock room contains another vault door exactly like the first one.





AREA 1-E — Encephalographic Learning Center:

This circular 30' room features 6 round daises, over which each is a 3' wide clear plasteel hemisphere suspended from the ceiling on metal armatures. Dark permaglass rectangles ring the outer walls at about 4' up from the smooth, metal floor. This clean and well-maintained room is otherwise empty and quiet.

Artifact checks can be performed upon any of the individual dais/hemisphere areas or upon the permaglass rectangles along the wall.

Encephalographic Teacher

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Modifier: 6

Janeck-Vac has modified these encephalographic teaching machines to instill his personal command directives into his various gene loom monstrosities. Artifact checks upon individual daises will risk triggering automatic activation. Any living creatures standing upon a dais when it activates will gain instant knowledge of the installation layout, have their intelligence reduced to 6, and have their unwavering loyalties permanently cemented to Janeck-Vac and his every command. A player character subjected to this process is entitled to a DC 16 Will save vs the

effects. PCs who avoid the encephalographic brain washing effects retain vague memories of the installation layout and have a 1 in 6 chance of knowing the basic shape of any room before opening the door.

An unsuccessful artifact check causes the individual dais to blow up in a shower of sparks and causes 1d6 damage to anyone standing upon it.

Encephalographic Teacher Controls

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Modifier: 7

These touchplate controls run the learning center machines. With a successful artifact check, all 6 dais/hemisphere areas light up and await their students. Anyone standing upon or moving onto a dais experiences the effects listed above. With a high enough artifact check on the controls, it may be possible for someone to reverse the learning center process on a subject, erasing all knowledge gained as well as the other effects.

An unsuccessful artifact check on the learning center controls causes all 6 daises to simultaneously explode in a shower of sparks, doing 1d6 damage to anyone in the room plus an additional 1d3 damage to anyone standing upon a dais at the time.

QPC POWER PLANT ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	QPC plant activates and immediately goes into meltdown. The room floods with hail of hard radiation (1d12 radiation damage per round, DC 12 Fort save versus half damage). Radioactive sludge begins to melt a hole in the floor that will not stop until it reaches the magma underneath the entire caldera in 1d100 minutes. When the radioactive wastes reach the magma pool, a nuclear explosion occurs which vaporizes the surrounding terrain and replaces the 1-mile volcanic caldera with a new 5-mile wide crater, dealing massive fire and radiation damage to an area 15 miles wide, changing the terrain type from jungle to crater country.
2-8	QPC plant activates only to go into emergency shutdown mode. Red alarm lights and siren wails permeate the entire facility, as a female voice begins a countdown that starts at 1d100 minutes. When the countdown reaches zero, a meltdown occurs and the same results occur as the prior result.
9-11	The QPC plant momentarily activates, but a shielding container immediately blows off and a blast of hard radiation fills the room (1d12 radiation damage, DC 12 Fort save vs half damage). With a successful DC 12 Intelligence check, the shielding can be replaced on the unit and the radiation leak abates.
12-13	The QPC plant shudders to life and activates, and the power grid of the entire installation strains with the renewed flow of energy. Once per hour, the GM secretly rolls a maintenance status check on the QPC. Roll 1d4: (1) Alarms sound throughout the installation as the QPC plant fails and goes into emergency shutdown mode per above; (2) The QPC plant suffers a power surge and a resultant arc of electricity randomly strikes a single being or creature in each room of the installation for 1d6 damage; (3) The QPC plant suffers a control module failure and deactivates safely; (4) The QPC plant continues to operate safely. The operation of the QPC plant is still not understood.
14-16	The QPC plant accidentally activates and the power grid of the entire installation increases its energy capacity, doubling the hit points of all force screens and holograms. The operation of the QPC plant is still not understood.
17-19	The QPC plant safely activates and the power grid of the entire installation increases its energy capacity, doubling the hit points of all force screens and holograms. Readouts and displays begin scrolling important-looking information in an indecipherable language, but the plant may be shut down safely should the user wish to do so.
20+	The QPC plant roars to life, and the power grid throughout the installation increases its capacity, doubling the hit points of all force screens and holograms. The user understands the displays and readouts enough to know this, and can safely shut the plant back down should they choose to do so. Any power cells may be recharged fully in the available power sockets.

AREA 1-F — Quantum Particle Collider Power Plant: This 30' circular room contains machinery so densely-packed that only a 5' wide crawl space exists in which one must climb up and over metal conduits to reach the large artifact column that springs floor-to-ceiling in the middle of the room. The entirety of the complex machinery seem to be parts of a single large device that fills the room. The room is dimly lit by red lights and the device appears to be deactivated or otherwise offline.

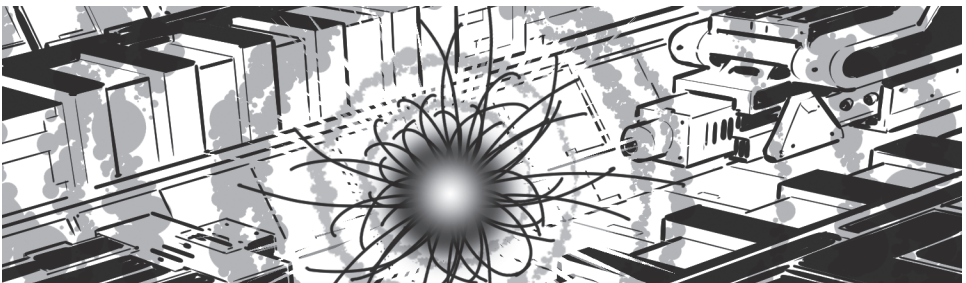
The QPC power plant in this room once powered the entire complex, but it has seen better days. As the centuries passed, the quantum particle collider matrix in the device grew increasingly temperamental and Janeck-Vac eventually took the power plant offline, replacing his power needs with the much more reliable geothermal power plant in Area 1-M.

The QPC power plant can possibly be reactivated by a successful artifact check, but the device is incredibly complex and finicky in its current state. The adventurers have likely never encountered an artifact device so clearly over their heads, and should realize this from simple observation.

That said, the determined adventurer may still elect to tamper with the device in a futile quest to activate it. Use the associated table to determine what happens (no artifact check bonuses apply to this level of technology).

AREA 1-G — Flesh Resin Vats: This 30' wide circular room contains 3 raised duralloy vats. Each vat contains over 1,000 gallons of distilled flesh resin of varying organic colors (tans, browns, and muted greens). Large metal conduits come down from the domed ceiling and end in a spinning module of bizarre nozzles a few feet above each vat. Much smaller series of pipes near the bottom of the elevated metal vats run from the vats and into the flooring. Once every few minutes, the nozzle modules rotate slowly and a new substance flows from them into the flesh resin reserves — dispensing first a semi-solid flesh-colored polymer, then a sprinkling of sparkling purple powders, then a puff of unknown orange gasses.

The flesh resin vat system is automated, and there are no obvious controls on which to perform an artifact check. Should the system be damaged or interfered with, an alarm will sound and a patrol of 6 lemurion guards will be instantly summoned to the room. Small amounts of the flesh resin may be scooped out of the vats without triggering an alarm. If anyone tries to eat or consume the viscous flesh resin, they will find it strangely palatable to their Neolithic tastes — it tastes like lizard-bird soup. If a few bites are eaten, the organic polymers within the distilled flesh resin will actually heal 1d6 hit points of damage (but only once, no matter how much is consumed), or cure any poison or radiation damage.



GENE LOOM ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	The Gene Loom AI is accidentally ordered to engage its auto-destruct sequence, and it begins a 60-second countdown. In 6 rounds it explodes in great gouts of flame, smoke, and sparks, while doing 3d6 damage to everyone and anything within the room. The remaining devices in the lab survive, but all now function at the next lower result than is rolled if subsequent artifact checks are made.
2-8	The Gene Loom AI detects unauthorized inputs and shuts down. This device is deactivated until rebooted by Janeck-Vac.
9-11	The Gene Loom AI momentarily activates, but a mis-keyed input from the user causes the unit to short out and shut itself down. The user suffers a 1d8 bioelectric shock from the sudden discharge of control interface biohaptic feedback.
12-16	The Gene Loom AI is randomly set to start a new recombinant sequence, but requires authorization inputs to proceed. An empty flashing box on the holo display blinks green and red alternately, inviting further attempts to manipulate its interface controls (make another artifact check).
17-19	The Gene Loom AI security protocols are activated. The device's primary functions all shut down, and an articulated robotic arm slides out from a hidden panel and begins firing a cryo-cannon at anything in the room that moves. Cryo-Cannon: Atk cryogenic beamer +4 ranged (1d8 cold damage, DC 14 Fort save vs cryogenic paralyzation for 1d4 turns or until thawed), AC 16, 24 hit points
20+	The Gene Loom AI is miraculously activated by the clumsy attempt to manipulate its control interface. The machine shoots out a wide scanning beam at the user and randomly incorporates portions of the user's DNA into the helix of a newly created gene code. This new gene code is immediately sent to one of the 3 body printers which will begin printing the brand new life form. The resulting creature will have the face of the user along with the body of one of Javeck's creations. Roll 1d6: (1) hecklefly; (2) batnanaslug; (3) birdbear; (4) cobrapede; (5) spidehog; (6) lemurion.

AREA 1-H – Gene Looms and Body Printers: This long 30' by 60' room is filled to the brim with the complex, large scale scientific equipment of the Ancient Ones. The wall to the west is dominated by three gigantic devices that run from the floor to the 25' tall ceiling. Each device has banks of touchplate and scintillation controls, as well as a several active holographic display screens – one 6' x 3' and many smaller rectangular readout displays – all hovering ghost-like in front of the machines. Although the endless, scrolling lines of code, data, and pictograms are indecipherable to all but millennia-dead geneticists, the main holo-display of each machine does depict a perhaps recognizable symbol of the Ancient Ones com-

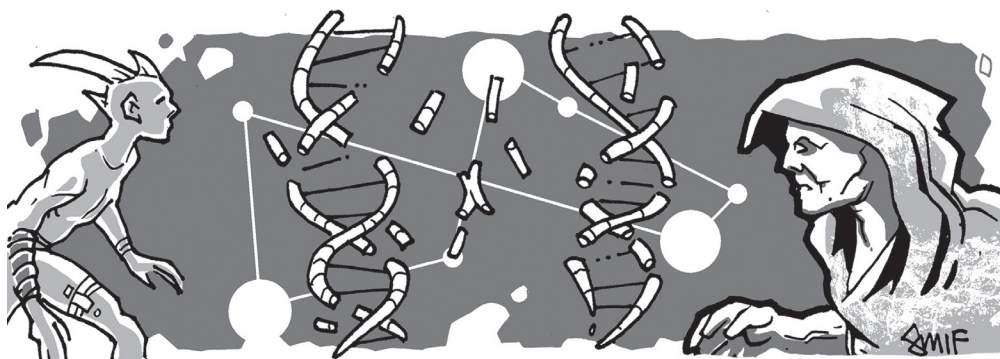
monly referred to by the tribal shamans as “Hermeez’ intertwined snakes”. In this case, the two intertwined snake forms seem to be made up of myriads chunks of smaller glyph-scales that are constantly being traded in-and-out for one another.

Webbed metal threads and ropes flow outward along the walls and ceiling of each large device, each reconvening together to the back sides of 3 devices along the eastern wall. Each of these devices is bulky and over 12’ tall, consisting primarily of a rectangular pedestal on which rests a clear permaglass box with an array of unknown but dangerous-looking devices making up the top of the box. Metal pipes similar to the ones in Area 1-G come up through the flooring to plug into the undersides of each device.

When entered, the room is otherwise unoccupied.

BODY PRINTER ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	The Body Printer starts an unchecked preheat cycle that quickly escalates wildly out of control. Within rounds, the body printer begins to radiate temperatures in the thousands of degrees, causing heat damage to any living creatures in the room. The heat damage goes up each round (1d6, then 2d6, then 3d6, etc.). Although the gene lab and its equipment are all constructed of the imperishable super-materials of the Ancient Ones, even the dur-alloy machines, floors, and walls begin to glow a bright red, and the room becomes uninhabitable for the next 24 hours.
2-8	The Body Printer displays an error message and shuts down. This device is deactivated until rebooted by Javeck-Vac.
9-11	The Body Printer momentarily activates, but without a gene code sequence input it merely fills up with micro-laser-heated flesh resin, which the printer releases into the room in a deluge that gives any living creature in the room a 1d8 hotfoot. After 1 round the heated resin drains out of the room through a grill in the flooring.
12-16	The Body Printer readies itself to operate, but requires a new gene code sequence to be fed to it by the Gene Loom AI. A small holographic screen is projected that displays indecipherable text and contains an empty round area that is alternately blinking red and green, awaiting a network connection (make another artifact check).
17-19	The Body Printer activates and begins printing without a valid gene code sequence file, creating a mindless and aggressive blob of pure hate that immediately oozes out of the body printer chamber and attacks anyone in the room. Mindless Blob: Atk tentacle strike/bite +4 melee (1d6); AC 12, 15 hit points
20+	The Body Printer is miraculously activated and begins to print the last gene code file sent to it. Roll 1d6: (1) hecklefly; (2) bat-slug; (3) birdbear; (4) cobrapede; (5) spiderhog; (6) lemurion.



GM NOTES: This room is Janeck-Vac's main production lab in which he programs and customizes genetic codes with the gene loom computers on the western wall, and then feeds those gene codes to the body printers on the eastern wall. Fresh flesh resin is pumped into the body printers from Area 1-G, whereupon the array of lasers, micro-tractor fields, and vapor deposition devices at the top of each body printer begin to build the form of a new creature one molecular layer at a time. Body prints take about 60 seconds to complete, and anyone watching will be able to see the new body being slowly created one layer at a time by a blurred array of energy beam webs and condensing clouds of gasses.

While the devices are currently in standby mode when the party enters the room, there is no guarantee they will remain so. No artifact check bonuses are allowed on these super-tech devices.

Gene Loom AIs (3)

The gene loom computers are incredibly complex (equivalent to Tech Level 7). Since the chances of successfully performing an artifact check on these incredibly sophisticated gene-splicing AIs are virtually nonexistent for the Neolithic player characters, use the Gene Loom Artifact Check table to adjudicate any such attempts.

Body Printers (5)

The Body Printers in Janeck's gene lab are equally beyond the typical artifact checks of Neolithic tribal folk, but since a lack of knowledge or ability typically does not daunt a player character, use the body printer Artifact Check table to determine the results of any PCs punching buttons.

AREA 1-I — Mutant Menagerie: This vast 30' by 90' chamber features walls lined with stasis cages of varying sizes and occupants, with vault doors to the north (leading to the secret exit passage), the west (hallway), and south (Area 1-J Genetic Recycling Center).

As you enter this vast chamber, you are shocked to see that the room is filled with dozens of snarling and snapping genetic horrors that can only be the work of a mad and malicious god. Lined up on metal platforms along each wall are an array of malevolent mutations, some of which you recognize from your previous encounters with them. Each of these creatures are impatiently pacing, leaping up and down, or flying in tight, angry circles. At first focused solely upon angrily howling and spitting at each other, their attention immediately becomes focused on you as they turn as one and begin howling, shrieking, a gibbering in your direction.

The menagerie is where Janeck-Vac keeps his latest batch of gene-spliced monstrosities before releasing them into the wilds outside the gene labs. Each of these hideous horrors is imprisoned by an invisible stasis field generated by each of their stasis cage platforms. Each stasis platform has a small, round touchplate control area with scintillation detectors.

The menagerie contains at least one example of each of Janeck-Vac's incongruous creations (see Genetic Monsters section at the end of the adventure). None of the creatures can breach their stasis cages unless they are released by Janeck-Vac or via player character machinations.

Stasis Cage

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Level: 7

The control touchplate of this device requires a security input code to grant a user access to the simple scintillation display that shows a ring of segmented dots that can be dialed from green to red with a circular wave of a hand, dialing the stasis field strength up or down. Use the table below to determine the effects of an artifact check.

STASIS CAGE ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	The Stasis Cage AI believes it has received a network-wide emergency shut down order. All stasis cages in the room deactivate simultaneously, freeing all imprisoned creatures at once. The double doors to the north open up, as does the secret hatchway leading to the outside steam vent cave system.
2-11	The Stasis Cage accidentally deactivates, freeing the individual creature imprisoned within.
12-16	The Stasis Cage controls experience a momentary feedback loop, causing the stasis field to flicker and shocking both the caged creature and the user for 1d4 damage.
17-19	The Stasis Cage deactivates, but the control touchplate begins emitting an electronic drone that sounds very much like a chorus of howling winds. At that siren sound, all creatures in the room become calm as if mesmerized. Any living beings within the room must make a DC 12 Will save vs being compelled to join one of Janeck's creations on a platform. On the next round the stasis fields of the cages re-engage.
20+	The Stasis Cage scintillation controls are now completely understood. Cages may be activated and deactivated at will.



AREA 1-J — Genetic Recycling Center: This 30' by 40' room features another row of stasis cages on the western wall and three large genetic recycling chambers against the eastern wall. The stasis cages contain malformed versions of Janeck-Vac's creations along with assorted captured jungle wildlife, all awaiting their turn to be molecularly disassembled by Janeck's genetic recycling machines.

Genetic Recycling Chambers

Each of these chambers consist of a 20' wide permaglass cylinder on a raised metal platform. At the top of the transparent cylinder is a complex array of nano-lasers, tractor field emitters, and bio-sensors — all designed to achieve essentially the reverse functions of Janeck's body printers. Once activated, any living creature inside is quickly broken down at the molecular level, layer by layer, into its base organic materials and genetic codes. The gene codes are then transmitted to Janeck's Gene Loom AIs while the resulting fluidic biomass is drained through a filter system in the floor and fed to the flesh resin vats in Area 1-G.

Should the party elect to experiment with these incredibly complex technological devices (Tech Levels 7-8), use the table below to determine the results of their primitive artifact checks.

GENETIC RECYCLING CHAMBER ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	The Genetic Recycling Chamber malfunctions as the permaglass cylinder raises while the molecular disassembly process simultaneously activates. The nano-lasers and tractor fields attempt to incorporate anyone in the room, striking randomly 3 times per combat round. Genetic Recycling Chamber (nano-laser array): Atk (x3) nano-lasers +6 ranged (80' range, 1d12 heat damage); AC 15; 35 hit points
2-11	The Genetic Recycling Chamber's AI detects an unauthorized access request and shuts down until reactivated by Janeck-Vac.
12-16	The Genetic Recycling Chamber momentarily activates and goes into maintenance mode. This causes a small back-flow of flesh resin sludge to bubble back up into the chamber through the floor drains. The flesh resin is pre-animate, but if taken out of the chamber and consumed it will heal 1d6 hit points of damage (but only once, no matter how much is consumed) or cure any poison or radiation damage.
17-19	The Genetic Recycling Chamber activates and the permaglass cylinder rises. One of the stasis cages across the room deactivates and a tractor field from the recycling chamber drags a malformed beast into the chamber where it is reduced to gene codes and a fleshy sludge. The user must make a successful DC 10 Reflex save to avoid also being caught in the tractor field and drag into the chamber (GM's discretion).
20+	The same result as above, but the Genetic Recycling Chamber controls are now understood well enough to repeat this process.



AREA 1-K – AI Projection Suite:

This 30' circular room contains the holographic projection AI for the entire gene lab facility. Huge banks of data lattice-crystal processors are connected to shunted quantum network storage in which is contained the personalities, knowledge, memories, and physical form data for innumerable personnel that once worked in the gene lab. Any of these individuals can be recreated from here as a soft or hard-light hologram and projected by the holo-emitters anywhere in the facility. The facility holo-emitters have become a bit buggy over the millennia. For example, the data ghosts sometimes found wandering the labs and halls are in fact mindless echoes of past holo-broadcasts because of latency issues in some of the damaged emitters.

If the room is searched, a drawer containing a light-bug is discovered – an egg-shaped mobile holo-emitter containing a data crystal hard drive and Q-cell power source. If an individual set of personality files are successfully downloaded into the light-bug and it is activated, it will begin to levitate in mid-air and project either a soft or hard-light hologram of an Ancient One around itself. According to the laws and mores of the Ancient Ones, such a new hologram

is considered a living, resurrected human being, with all the same rights and privileges formerly possessed in life.

GM NOTES: The adventurers are unlikely to try resurrecting an Ancient One as a hologram, but if they should do so bear in mind that while their new-found potential ally can be helpful in many ways, both their personality data and memory files will be greatly corrupted by the passage of thousands of years. The studious GM will assign a percentage chance that the hologrammatic NPC knows any certain piece of information, including especially the operation of artifacts and devices within the gene labs.

AI Projection Suite

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Level: 8
AC: 18 Hit Points: 75

Should the AI Projection Suite mechanisms be destroyed, anyone in the room will experience an immediate blast of photonic feedback energy for 1d6 damage. Destruction of the AI Projection Suite will cause facility emitters to go offline and the data ghost roaming the halls to permanently fade away. It will not affect any holograms being projected by light-bugs or any holograms being projected by Janeck's backup system in Area 2-F.

AI PROJECTION SUITE ARTIFACT CHECKS

Artifact Check	Effect
1 or lower	The AI Projection Suite activates and experiences a catastrophic phase variance, projecting thousands of duplicate hard-light holograms of Second Gene Technician Rem-R. These holograms fill the room, and indeed most of the facility, all at once, each flailing about and taking great issue with their current situation and how it's all someone else's fault. Everything and everyone in the gene lab sustains 1d6 melee damage from the crushing combination of jostling and poking by the holograms. 30 seconds later the AI Projection Suite burns out and fails completely, delivering an additional 1d6 blast of photonic energy to the user.
2-11	The AI Projection Suite activates and malfunctions as the holo-buffer jams and projects 500 overlapping soft-light holograms of Third Gene Technician LS-Star. Each hologram is saying and doing something completely different, as though the projections were the entirety of his recorded personality history of flirting with female techs, playing Zero-G ball, and eating curries. Though the soft-light holograms are easily walked through, their presence creates an impenetrable light and sound fog causing anyone else in the room to be effectively deaf and blind (all actions at -8). Simply finding the exit and leaving the room may become challenging.
12-16	The AI Projection Suite briefly activates and projects a soft-light hologram of a humanoid feline subject that appears to have Janeck-Vac's facial features. The cat-person projection springs about the room for 30 seconds spraying the walls and machinery with an atomizer bottle while happily announcing, "This is mine. This is mine. All these are mine. I've made a lot of things mine today. Time for a nap!"
17-19	The AI Projection Suite momentarily powers up and projects the holographic form of Oola-4-Dova, she appears to be having an argument with someone who is not there. She says, "I don't know you anymore! Janny, you're breaking my heart! You're going down a path I can't follow..." before the hologram fades and the suite projectors power back down.
20+	The AI Projection Suite powers up and offers a short menu of candidates to be fully resurrected as a hard-light hologram. Once a candidate is selected, the drawer containing the light-bug slides open, and a fresh data crystal that fits inside it is ejected from a control panel. The candidate list includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Gene Technician LS-Star • Second Gene Technician Rem-R • Felis Sapien Genetic Experimentt #88 • Assistant Director Oola-4-Dova • Any recently deceased player character (memories only include actions taken since entering the gene lab and its sensor web recording system)

AREA 1-L — Partially Collapsed Hallway: The northern wall, ceiling, and floor of this east-west hallway appears the same as the hallways throughout the facility, but the southern half of the ceiling and walls have experienced a cave in of black basalt rock. Every few feet, the ceiling and walls have been shored up by the placement of duralloy beams anchored by plascrete bases and forms. The floor is clear of rubble, and the hallway appears otherwise stable and clean.

There is a holo-camouflaged door similar to the one in Area 1-C shown on the map. The duralloy door is disguised by a soft-light holographic projection that cause it to appear as an unremarkable section of the rocky walls on the southern side of the passage. If the hallway is thoroughly searched, a successful DC 12 perception check will reveal the hidden door's nature and its attendant holo-emitters as a hand or object passes through the holographic rocky wall projection.

AREA 1-M — Magma Chamber Gene Lab: Behind the hidden door in Area 1-L the party discovers a winding 15' wide magma vent that snakes towards the south. After about 40', the magma vent passage opens up into what was once a gigantic magma chamber, but is now Janeck-Vac's main gene lab and workshop.

The 120' wide rocky chamber is roughly spherical, though the floor, and in places, the walls and ceiling, have been artificially worked and reinforced with metal plating. By-now familiar power grid pipes and wires snake around the chamber, all going to myriad devices placed along the outer edges of the room. Beginning at 12 o'clock (due north on the map) and going clockwise around the room, the party sees:

- Three flesh resin vats slightly smaller than those present in Area 1-G.
- A single gene loom AI unit, which is currently running a program.
- An array of three body printers featuring a smaller transparent cube and build plate, both sized for humanoids.
- Three large matching artifacts of unknown nature or purpose.
- A smaller artifact column that goes from floor-to-ceiling and resembles (successful DC 10 Intelligence check) a smaller version of the AI projection unit in Area 1-K.
- A gigantic artifact of unknown type, with a web of piping extending into the chamber walls and floors, including several pipes that extend across the floor and into the central magma pit.

The center of the room is dominated by a 25' wide open magma pit that glows brightly with a deep crimson light. Waves of infrared heat emanate from the pit, and can immediately be felt even through the sparkling force screen being projected by a suite of 6 force screen projectors arranged around the pit's edge. 20' beneath the floor-level ledge of the vent, a glowing pool of roiling naked magma can be seen.

The room is also currently occupied. As the party enters, they see an 8' tall mutant humanoid (with a face they should well recognize by now) gesturing and shouting out orders to a group of 8 armed lemuriions. Since Janeck-Vac has been alerted to the presence of intruders by this time, the lemuriions attack as soon as the party en-

ters the room. Janeck-Vac will withhold his attacks until he is personally attacked or his lemurion guards are being routed, but he is well armed (he has four arms after all) with a fazer rifle and a mazer pistol.

If the battle goes against him, Janeck will speak a command into a wristlet device and deactivate the force screen trapping the vent worm in the magma pit. The vent worm is not under his control, and will begin attacking whoever is nearest to it first. Janeck will attempt to use the distraction as an opportunity to escape the room and flee. While the adventurers are likely to assume that the Janeck-Vac they face is the mutated and gene-spliced Ancient One, he is in fact an insane 10,000-year-old hard-light hologrammatic duplicate.

Janeck-Vac (hard-light hologram AI)

Standing 8' tall, Janeck-Vac is an impressive sight. His barrel-chested torso supports two pairs of arms, and his large, hairless head sprouts directly from his broad shoulders. Perhaps most disturbingly of all, his recognizable human face seems to have been grafted artificially onto a blob-like cranium. He is dressed in a long yellow-and-black hazmat jumpsuit with plasflex gloves and boots. One set of arms cradle a 3' long artifact while a third hand wields a deadly-looking smaller artifact.

Janeck-Vac's hard-light holographic form (composed of quantum-shifted photons) is extraordinarily resilient and virtually invulnerable to attacks. Only energy-based or heat-based attacks that can eventually overheat the hard drive of his inner light-bug projection unit pose any risk to him. Because he is technically an AI, he is immune to mental attacks as well. The hologrammatic Janeck's advanced AI also gives him an in-built targeting system, and thus he makes all action rolls using AI Advantage (rolling 2d20 for each action, and selecting the best roll to use).

If Janeck-Vac is reduced to less than 15 hit points, the adventurers will see his physical form begin to strobe in bands of polychromatic light, as if struggling to maintain its material state. Upon death, Janeck-Vac's body will seem to vanish in a collapsing vortex of light into a small levitating light-bug device that then drops to the floor, smoldering and destroyed.

GM NOTE: If Janeck's hard-light form and light-bug projection unit are destroyed, the Backup AI Projection Unit in the room will activate, and he will rematerialize in the next combat round as a soft-light hologram. In soft-light holographic form, Janeck will be immaterial and unable to do anything except command his guards and devices. If he has not done so already, he will immediately order the force screens holding back the vent worm to deactivate, so as to destroy the interlopers. His soft-light form cannot be harmed or affected by any means, and can only be destroyed by destroying the Backup AI Projection unit.

Janeck-Vac (hard-light hologram AI): Init +20; Atk +10 melee (1d12), +10 ranged fazer rifle (DC 18 save vs disintegration, 5d6 heat damage), +10 ranged mazer pistol (3d6 heat damage); AC 20; HD 15d10; 80 hit points; MV 50'; Act 2d20+10; SP immune to mental attacks, invulnerable to all physical attacks, takes one-half damage from non-heat producing energy attacks, takes full damage from any heat-based attack; AI Advantage (roll 2d20 for any action taken, use the best roll); SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +20

SNOTSTRIPE BRAVELY LOSES TOUCH WITH HIS INNER BADGER





Lemurion guards (7): Init +4; Atk +4 melee carbon-fiber sword (1d6), +4 melee stinger (1d8 DC 12 Fort save vs poison +1d6), +4 ranged darts (1d3 DC 8 Fort save vs poison +1d4); AC 14; HD 2d10; 12 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20+4; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0

Lemurion captain: Init +4; Atk +4 melee carbon-fiber sword (1d6), +4 melee stinger (1d8 DC 12 Fort save vs poison +1d6), +4 ranged dazer pistol (DC 14/16/20 Fort save vs stun 1d6 rounds); AC 14; HD 3d10; 18 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20+4; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0:

Vent Worm: Init +8; Atk +8 melee (2d6 heat damage), +8 ranged magma spray (6d6 heat damage cone, any 3 adjacent targets, 60' range); AC 17; HD 10d0; 60 hit points; MV 20'; Act 1d20+8; SP immune to mental attacks and heat/cold-based damage) SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +20

THE LOST SECRETS OF JANECK-VAC

If the players defeat Janeck-Vac, they have accomplished their primary goal of stopping the onslaught of monstrous new mutations that have been destroying their jungle home. They will then have the run of his magma chamber lab. There are secrets to be learned there, and a possible encounter with either a new potential friend or a formidable foe.

Besides the weapons and artifacts possessed by Janeck-Vac and his lemurian guards, a reasonably thorough search of the lab will uncover the following items.

- A plasteel chest containing 6 fully charged C-cells.
- A plasteel case containing 1 fully charged F-cell.
- An array of artifact tools and instruments, including a multitool, sonic spanner, and fusion torch.
- A sensor pad.
- An old, discarded holo-disk. It contains a looped holographic message in which the original Janeck-Vac pleads with Oola-4-Dova to remain on his project, as his is the noble cause of preserving all intelligent life forever.

The many large artifact devices that ring his inner lair include the following:

Refined Flesh Resin Vats (3): These smaller duplicates of the vats found in Area 1-G are pointedly human-sized, as Janeck used them to create refined resin for printing out humanoid bodies. The flesh resin in these vats is of a notably smoother texture and color. There are no controls on which to perform an artifact check, and consuming the flesh resin has similar results to that found in Area 1-G.

Primary Gene Loom AI (GERAS): This appears to be one of the same devices found in Area 1-H, but is in fact the primary unit and home to GERAS (Genetic Enhancement Recombinant AI System). Janeck-Vac's holographic doppelgänger has been mispurposing GERAS' subordinate units to create the genetic codes for his personal experiments, i.e. the various monstrosities throughout the facility that all bear his hideous face.

GERAS is the equivalent of a AI deity, and is far thus beyond the ability of the adventurers to harm or perform a successful artifact check upon. Even if the physical gene loom unit itself were somehow destroyed, GERAS' AI consciousness exists largely in shunted quantum networks that theoretically span the planet. If the party tries to perform an artifact check, only a natural 20 will result in GERAS briefly speaking to them at all. If GERAS speaks, he merely indicates aloud that his core programming has been tampered with, his subordinate units have been repurposed, and to ask that the "original" Janeck-Vac be summoned at once. GERAS is protected by a self-regenerating 200 hit point force screen, and is self-powered by an internal QPC unit, and thus unaffected by power plant shut downs. Careful observation of his many scrolling holoscreens may (with a successful DC 18 Perception check) reveal that his readouts display information quite different from those of his subordinate units — the genome of Janeck-Vac

Backup AI Projection Suite: This unit was created and placed in the magma chamber by Janeck-Vac as a contingency means of sustaining his holographic form in the case of a major malfunction of the lab's various other projection systems. If Janeck is killed and his light-bug projection unit destroyed, this system will bring him back online in soft-light hologram form.

While the Backup AI Projection Suite is constructed of the same imperishable materials of the Ancient Ones as much of the lab, and therefore cannot ultimately be destroyed, it can be disrupted or deactivated by 25 or more hit points of damage inflicted upon it. That much damage will cause its connections to the lab power grid to fail in a hail of shooting sparks and smoke. For purposes of power interruption attacks, the unit is AC 14.

Medical Stasis Pods: Tucked away in the southern portion of the chamber are three medical stasis pods. Each pod is active, and contains the body of a pure strain human – in fact they are clearly the same pure strain human at three different life stages. The first pod contains a young child aged 6-8, the second an adult of middle-age, and the third an incredibly old man that could be anywhere from age 80-160. If the adventurers have found any evidence of the original Janeck-Vac prior to this, they recognize him instantly. If not, they have only to make a successful DC 8 Perception check to realize that the unaltered human faces they see match the deformed versions of that same face they have seen on all of the mutations created at the facility, and also that of the Janeck-Vac hologram.

These pods contain two clones of Janeck-Vac (the child and the middle-aged adult), and the original Ancient

One himself (the very old man). The contents of each have been preserved in a stasis field for nearly 10,000 years. The adventurers could leave well enough alone, but I think we all know that they will not. Should they elect to attempt to destroy the stasis pods outright, they are only affected by directed energy beam weapons of similar EM-based mutational powers.

Medical Stasis Pods

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Modifier: 8
AC: 18 HP: 60

The medical stasis pod creates a stasis shield around its interior that renders anything inside it into a non-event mass in space/time with a quantum probability of zero. With a successful artifact check, the medical stasis pods can be opened, freeing the beings within.

Medical Stasis Pod 1: This pod contains a young clone of Janeck-Vac that is completely mindless, but is otherwise healthy. The child could be taken back to the tribe and raised, but the child will have to learn everything from scratch as though he were a newborn babe. If the original Janeck-Vac is revived, he is capable of implanting a copy of his own mind and memories into the body of the child clone.

Medical Stasis Pod 2: This pod likewise contains a mindless clone of Janeck-Vac, albeit one aged to his mid-30s. Similar conditions to that of the child clone also apply to the middle-aged version.

Medical Stasis Pod 3: This pod contains the original geneticist Janeck-Vac, who was forcibly placed in the pod by his own holographic duplicate millennia ago. He revives alive and well, though very aged and in failing health. He will immediately ask what has gone wrong and if his hologrammatic double has been deactivated.



THE ULTIMATE FATE OF JANECK-VAC

If the original Janeck-Vac is revived and treated well, the adventurers have gained a powerful potential ally and resource. Once his trust is earned, he will tell them the story of his quest for physical immortality, and how it all went wrong when his holographic duplicate developed a personality schism and betrayed him, imprisoning him in the stasis pod seemingly forever. He will speculate that instead of continuing his intended research into physical immortality for humans, the holographic Janeck-Vac became caught up in a kind of AI insanity, playing out an endless do-loop of technically obeying his primary directives while in fact merely altering his own computer simulated genetic codes.

Janeck-Vac is grateful to be freed at long last. A consummate scientist, he will be quick to catch on to the facts of life on Omega-Terra and the retro-future of 10,000 A.D. (After Disaster). Janeck will be most anxious to return to his research and to restore his facility to full functionality, but is willing to help out or reward the adventurers within prudent and practical limits. He easily can supply them with artifact weapons (dazer pistols) and power cells (up to 12 C-cells), and may be willing to do more if they assist him in clearing out the facility of the remaining monstrous mutations. It is left to the sage GM as how best to use all of this for future campaign story needs.

If on the other hand, the adventurers simply kill Janeck-Vac outright or leave him sealed in his stasis pod, they have at the very least ended or greatly curtailed the menace posed by the monstrous mutations to their tribe, and located a sizable ruin suitable for ongoing plunder and exploration. Thus is life on Omega-Terra.

GENETIC MONSTERS

The monstrous products of Janeck-Vac's gene looms infest the surrounding jungle near his hidden installation, as well as occasionally roaming its hallways. Each variation is gene-spliced from at least two disparate species — often from completely different phylums or kingdoms — and all share his own human DNA. They are easily discernible from the typical madhouse mutant creatures that inhabit Omega-Terra by possessing some grotesque version of Janeck's head or face.

ARMAWHEELLO

The armawheello combines genetic material from armadillos, pill bugs, and the mad geneticist himself. Except when sleeping, this creature moves and attacks while rolling along the ground, with its segmented armored body curled into a 4' diameter wheel shape. It will either attempt to deliver a ramming attack, rolling over and trampling an opponent, or it will attempt a drive-by attack with its two massive human arms that end in armadillo claws. While its actual face is hidden when curled up in its circular attack stance, even the armored carapace segments on the outside of its body are in the shape of Janeck's snarling face.

Armawheello: Init +4; Atk +4 melee rollover (1d8), +4 melee clawed sideswipe (1d6); AC 17; HD 2d10; 10 hit points; MV 70'; Act 1d20+4; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0

BATSLUG

These small and furry flying creatures have bodies shaped like 6" long banana slugs with membraned wings. At the front is a small head that features a vampiric version of Janeck's fanged face with human eyes on the end of long stalks. Traveling in swarms, the batslugs will attempt to alight on the nape of the neck of any creature or being and administer a mild anesthesia via a bite. If not immediately dislodged, they will begin sucking blood for nourishment for 1d3 damage per round.



Batslug: Init +2; Atk +2 melee parasitic bite/attach (1d3 per round attached); AC 12; HD 1d10; 5 hit points; MV 80' flying; Act 1d20+2; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0

BIRDBEAR

These large, land-bound combinations of grizzly bears and vultures would be frightening opponents even without Janeck's beaked face screaming hypersonic waves at their prey. Surprisingly quick-footed for their bulk, these predator creatures will attack most other creatures fearlessly. They are especially aggressive when protecting their broodlings, which also have small beaked baby Janeck faces.

Birdbear: Init +8; Atk +8 melee claw/bite (1d6 x 2), +8 ranged hypersonic scream (1d12 sonic damage to a single target, 60' range, DC 10 Fort save vs. deafened for 1d6 hours); AC 14; HD 4d10; 22 hit points; MV 40'; Act 2d20+8; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +0

COBRAPEDE

This genetic blending of spitting cobra and centipede is 60' long and stands up to 15' tall when reared for attack. Resembling a gigantic, hooded cobra with Janeck-Vac's face, the cobrapede does not slither, but rather moves rapidly via hundreds of spike-clawed legs that run the length of its body. The cobrapede can attack in two ways — by spitting its venom into the eyes of its prey in order to blind them, or by injecting the paralytic poison directly into a victim with the two spines of its forked tail.



Cobrapede: Init +8; Atk +8 melee tail sting (1d6 damage, DC 14 Fort save vs. paralysis 1d20 rounds), +8 ranged venom spit (no damage, 75' range, DC 16 Reflex save vs blinded for 1d8 hours); AC 17; HD 15d10; 75 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20+8; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4

HECKLEFLY

Heckleflies seem at first glance merely to be furry orange flies the size of a human thumb, but their genome has been blended to give them the vocal apparatus of the red fox, as well as the leering face of Janeck-Vac. They travel in swarms of up to 20 flies, feeding off whatever trash, carrion, or offal they can find. While they do not possess a means to attack larger creatures, when threatened they can and do emit a human/fox-like scream that is capable of unnerving even apex predators. Each hecklefly has a pinkish head with a gruesome human face on it, screaming with endless existential dread from the horrifying mouth of Janeck-Vac.



Hecklefly: Init +1; Atk none; AC 8; HD 1d1; 1 hit point; MV 60' flying; Act 1d20+1; SP distracting human-fox scream (-4 to all attacks and actions of targets within earshot); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

LEMURION

These scorpion-tailed primates are man-sized and serve as Janeck-Vac's militia forces. Sentient, but not overly bright, Lemurion guards are savage warriors, and will be armed with carbon-fiber melee weapons and armor (as well as the occasional artifact weapon), along with their poisonous and dexterous scorpion tail stingers. Formidable foes, large groups of them are usually able to contain and coral and move Janeck's other, wilder genetic creations.

Additionally, each lemurion captain will have a scientific type com-badge (violet).

Lemurion (guard): Init +4; Atk +4 melee carbon-fiber sword (1d6), +4 melee stinger (1d8 DC 12 Fort save vs poison +1d6), +4 ranged darts (1d3 DC 8 Fort save vs poison +1d4); AC 14; HD 2d10; 12 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20+4; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0

Lemurion (captain): Init +4; Atk +4 melee carbon-fiber sword (1d6), +4 melee stinger (1d8 DC 12 Fort save vs poison +1d6), +4 ranged dazer pistol (DC 14/16/20 Fort save vs stun 1d6 rounds); AC 14; HD 3d10; 18 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20+4; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0

MOSSANTS

This genetic splicing of carpet moss and bullet ants travel as a single organized unit, appearing as a roiling green mat that oozes across the jungle floor. In this way, the mossant colony roves about with hundreds of neurotoxin stingers facing upwards and downwards. Stepping upon the mossant colony or being engulfed by them both lead to a quick certain death for any living creature.

Mossant (colony mat): Init +4; Atk +4 melee hundreds of bites (1d20); AC 10; HD 5d10; 25 hit points; MV 25'; Act 1d20+4; SP hundreds of neurotoxin stingers (DC 14 Fort save vs. paralysis for 1d6 rounds); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0



SPIDERHOG

These large recombinants of porcine and arachnid genetic material are voracious eaters, and thanks to an ability to regurgitate digestive fluids onto their prey, are able to dissolve and consume virtually any organic material. Spinnerets positioned on their posterior can also throw a strong silk webbing that anchors their prey in place prior to dissolution and consumption. Although the head of the creature features the ears, snout, and tusks of a hog, the face is of course recognizably that of Janeck-Vac's.

Spiderhog: Init +6; Atk +6 melee acidic bile (1d12, DC 10 Reflex save vs 1/2 damage), +6 ranged webbing anchor (entanglement, DC 14 Strength check to break free); AC 14; HD 3d10; 15 hit points; MV 30'; Act 1d20+6; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2



WILLOWFROG

The willowfrog appears as a gigantic toad made entirely of wood and bark, with a trunk and willowy branches growing up from its back up to 20' high. Though ambulatory, when at rest the myriad toe-like roots of its four legs will tap into the ground for water and minerals. The thousands of downward-facing leaves on its long, swaying branches are shaped like the small, snapping human faces of Janeck-Vac. When hungry or threatened, the willowfrog will lash at an opponent with its branches attempting to latch on to them by means of the biting leaves, and drag that victim to its overlarge frog mouth for slow, painful digestion.

Willowfrog: Init +5; Atk (x3) +5 melee branch lash/grapple (1d4, entangled DC 14 Strength check to break free); AC 17; HD 12d10; 65 hit points; MV 15'; Act 3d20+5; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +0

CRATEROUS CALDERA PLAYER MAP



LARGE HEX = 1 MILE
SMALL HEX = 750 FEET

THE GENE LOOMS OF JANECK-VAC

Written and Designed by: Jim Wampler

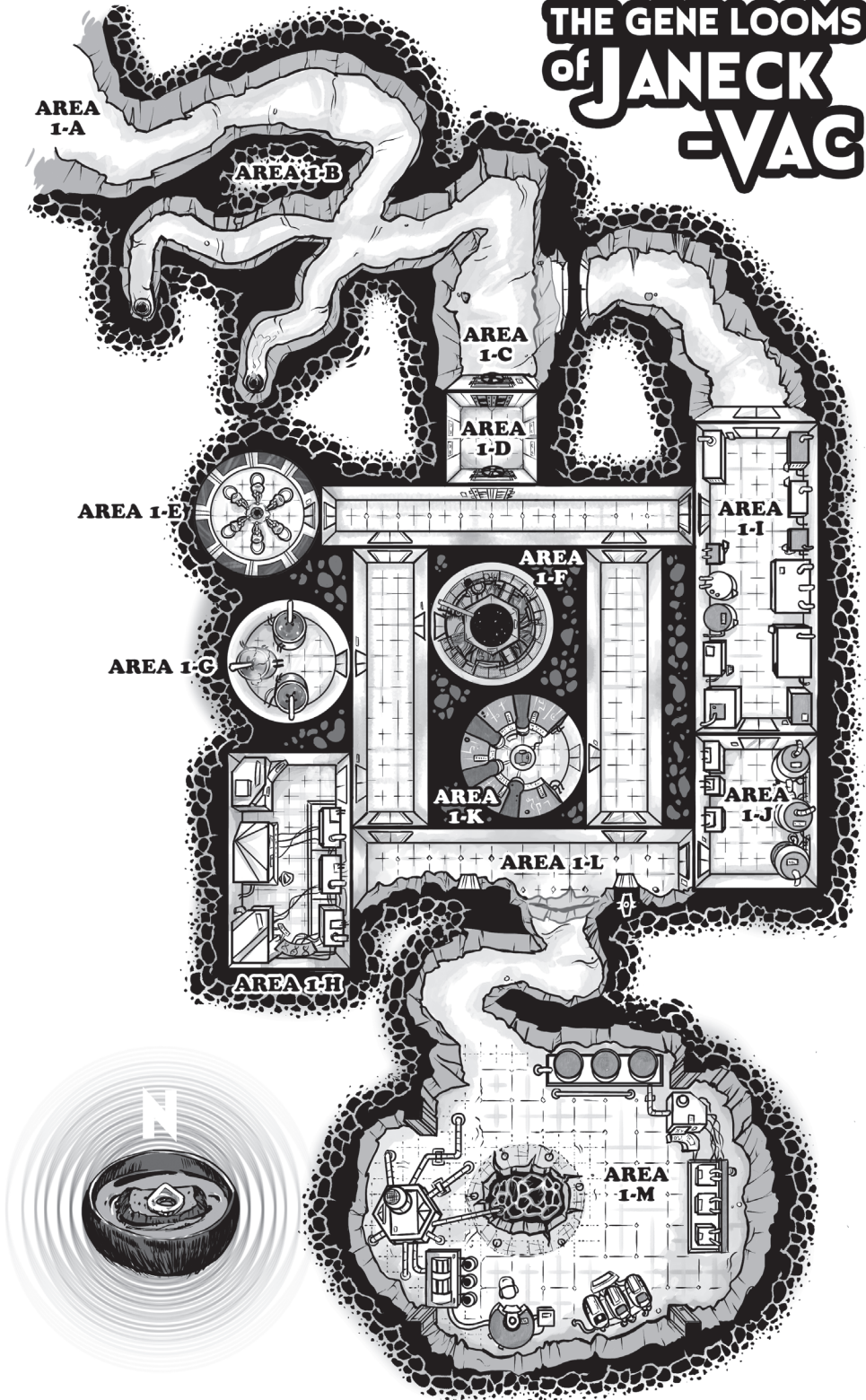
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THE GENE LOOMS of JANECK -VAG



CREATURE CRYPTOLOGY

CRYPTID CREATURES DECRYPTED

THE BARTERER

concept submitted by Tor Nelson

Initiative: +4

Attacks: molecular disassembly +4 melee (2d20)

AC: 26

HD: 13d10

HP: 75

Move: 40', 20' flying

Actions: 1d20+4

Special: Sentient (INT 6)

Save: Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +8

The barterer is a genetic construct created by the Ancient Ones for recycling industrial waste materials. Originally custom gene-designed to inhabit underground recycling installations, these creatures broke free during the events of the Great Disaster and roam Omega-Terra to this day.

The barterer will travel overland searching for any unclaimed metal, plastic, or ultra-alloy to break down into component atoms and absorb. These broken-down elements are then recycled into the ultra-dense materials that form the scales of its armored hide, while the energies liberated as a by-product of this process serve as an ongoing power source for the creature. Large or complex artifacts may be hauled back to its lair to be stripped of recyclable components and fed to its young.

As originally conceived by ancient scientists, the barterer periodically shed its scales at collection stations for future industrial use. Over the millennia, the creature has evolved to shed scales less and to reproduce more. What few scales the adult creatures do shed now are fed to its broodlings, along with other materials collected and taken to their underground trash-nests. Gene-spliced to have a high metabolism, young barterers grow to adulthood quickly and if not fed sufficiently will even swarm and consume their own parents in order to facilitate their rapid life cycle.

An adult barterer is roughly humanoid-shaped and about 12' tall. They are capable of short flight on their webbed wings that also act as solar panels that absorb additional energy for the creature to power an anti-grav organ in its chest. Their armored hide is composed of an ultra-dense alloy, thus making them all but invulnerable to most physical and energy-based attacks. Their eyes combine infrared and UV spectrum vision with a sonic echolocation ability that aids in the identifying of man-made artificial materials.



The two arms of the barterer end in a complex arrangement of prehensile fingers of varying types encircling a mouth-like aperture. Many of these “fingers” end in an array of organic fusion torch emitters and micro-saws to disassemble recyclable materials at the molecular level, while some of its fingers are strong, sticky tendrils used to guide broken-down materials into the palm-gullets

While voracious and aggressive when threatened or attacked, the barterer is so-named because they possess a rudimentary intelligence and are capable of conversing in NuSpeak with other sentients. When approached carefully with offers of recyclable materials, they can sometimes be bargained with, and may offer up valuable-but-otherwise unrecyclable items from their trash piles (medical supplies, data crystals, power cells, etc.).

Barterer: Init +4; Atk molecular disassembly +4 melee (2d20); AC 26; HD 13d10; 75 hit points; MV 40', 20' flying; Act 1d20+4; SP sentient IN 6, immune to mental attacks; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +8

CRINOID

concept submitted by Michael Jones

Initiative: +5-7 (varies by type)

Attacks: (varies by type)

AC: 12-14 (varies by type)

HD: 6d10-8d10 (varies by type)

HP: 35-45 (varies by type)

Move: 00'

Actions: 1d20+5-7 (varies by type)

Special: chameleonic skin, regeneration, other (varies by type)

Save: (varies by type)

Although resembling a tall tree-like plant in many ways, the crinoid is a land-based animal evolved from aquatic ancestors. Mature crinoids possess a thick and spiny columnar stalk rooted to the ground, and typically end in a large 6' wide flowering of five feathery "arms" resembling spined frond leaves. Each of the five fan-like gripping pinnules is subdivided into smaller arrays of spines in a fractal pattern. At the center of the five main spine-arms lies the crinoid's maw and inner primitive digestive system. The creature's base color is an ivory white, but owing to its chameleonic abilities the stalk creature can literally appear in any array of colors needed to blend in with its immediate area.

Crinoids are found in all environments on Omega-Terra, and vary by sub-type accordingly. While all species of crinoid share chameleonic abilities, their attack methods differ. Crinoids based in the jungle use a paralytic poison on their prey, while those found in the barren and volcanic crater countries rely on a stunning sonic attack to prepare their victims for consumption. Crinoids found near the edges of glow deserts emit heightened radiation fields to cook and tenderize their food prior to digestion.

Adaptable and hearty, all crinoids have a common ability to rapidly heal from grievous wounds. The malleable cellular structure of the crinoid allows them to rapidly regenerate. Some crinoids have even been known to break apart when badly wounded, thereby creating two new creatures. Crinoids also reproduce in this way, periodically shedding nodules that quickly hatch into star-shaped juveniles that spin away through the air to eat, grow, and eventually develop stalks for attaching themselves to a favorable new hunting ground.

Cronoid (jungle): Init +5; Atk paralytic poison bite +5 melee (1d6, DC 13 Fort save vs paralyzed for 1d12 rounds); AC 12; HD 6d10; 35 hit points; MV 0'; Act 1d20+5; SP paralytic poison, chameleonic skin (50% chance of blending in with environment), regeneration (1d4 hit points per hour); SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0

Cronoid (crater country): Init +6; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8), sonic stun field +6 ranged (10' range, DC 14 Reflex save vs stunned for 1d6 rounds); AC 13; HD 7d10; 40 hit points; MV 0'; Act 1d20+6; SP sonic stun field, chameleonic skin (60% chance of blending in with environment), regeneration (1d6 hit points per hour); SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0



Cronoid (glow desert): Init +7; Atk bite +7 melee (1d10), radiation field +7 ranged (10' range, 1d12, DC 16 Fort save vs 1/2 damage); AC 14; HD 8d10; 45 hit points; MV 0'; Act 1d20+7; SP radiation field, chameleonic skin (70% chance of blending in with environment), regeneration (1d8 hit points per hour); SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +0

Cronoid Juvenile: Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d10; 5 hit points; MV 40' flying; Act 1d20+1; SP chameleonic skin (25% chance of blending in with environment), regeneration (1 hit point per hour); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0

EYE-CAP

Initiative: +4

Attacks: +4 eye-cloud

AC: 18

HD: 13d10

HP: 75

Move: 1'

Actions: 1d20+4

Special: Semi-sentient

Save: Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +20

The eye-cap is a fleshy, spore-bearing fungus with chitinous plates and spikes covering its stalk and cap. Although not predacious, the eye-cap is semi-sentient (INT 3) and will aggressively attack when threatened or in order to reproduce. The eye-cap fruit body is mobile, but only moves rarely and at a relatively slow pace compared to animal life.

The eye-cap is so named because of the manifold number of eye-spores covering its spiked cap, granting the fungus

a 360° field of vision. It can see well into the ultraviolet and infrared spectrums, being able to sense animal life and heat sources even in complete darkness.

When threatened directly or approached within a 50' radius, the eye-cap will release its spores in a vast cloud of small, flying eyes that the parent plant controls telepathically. Each individual eye-spore in this eye-cloud attack is capable of delivering a tiny infrared laser beam that does a single point of damage. A mature eye-cap fungus may be able to generate up to 50 such spores at any given time.

The eye-spores will aggregate targets together or in divided groups in a crude strategy by the parent fungus to attack the largest or most powerful threats first. Should the eye-cloud fell a targeted creature, the individual eye-spores will then use their laser beams to drill down into the body of their victim, there to spawn a new adult eye-cap. Buried underneath each adult eye-cap are the remains of any undigested portions of its original host creature, which may include some of their possessions, if any. An adult eye-cap regrows its eye spores within 1-2 weeks.

GM NOTES: When confronting the cloud attack, adversaries using any attack method that does not feature an area effect may only target and attack individual eye-spores. When doing so, for each point the attack roll exceeds the required number to hit, the attack will carry-through to another eye-spore in the same



cloud. Since the eye-spores have only a single hit point each, the carry through attacks earned by a high attack roll will continue until either the attack number overage or the weapon damage rolled total are exceeded. Area effect attacks may target an entire eye-cloud formation as adjudicated by the GM and the particulars of the attack and terrain.

If the parent body is killed, its telepathic link to the eye-spores is severed and the entire eye-cloud drops to the ground, helpless. While consuming raw eye-spores is an ill advised activity (DC 12 Fort save or an adult eye cap germinates), if safely cooked they will result in a tasty broth that grants the consumer infrared and ultraviolet vision for 24 hours.

Eye-Cap: Init +4; Atk +4 eye-cloud; AC 18; HD 13d10; 75 hit points; MV 1'; Act 1d20+4; SP semi-sentient INT 3; SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +20

Eye-Spores (10-60): Init +8; Atk +8 IR laser beam (1 damage, 75' range); AC 16; HD 1d1; 1 hit point; MV 60' flying; Act 1d20+8; SP immune to mental attacks; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

GEM THIEF (HOLOGRAPHIC DATA CRYSTAL)

concept submitted by Edwin Stahlnecker

Initiative: +0

Attacks: none

AC: 20

HD: 18d10

HP: 100

Move: 0'

Actions: 1d20+0

Special: nano-filament neurosensors

Save: Fort +20, Ref +0, Will +20

The gem thief is a unique type of AI data-storage crystal of unequalled beauty, resembling a large diamond with a uniform color tint, and easily worth 10,000 creds in barter value. While the gem itself will not detect as a sentient AI, the holographic memory storage in the crystal contains the entirety of the programs and consciousness of an advanced AI of unknown origin or type.



If the gem thief data crystal detects any movement whatsoever, it will begin to passively monitor its surroundings for temperature and metabolic activity. It will then await moments of metabolic inactivity to activate fully, such as when a nearby being or creature is resting or sleeping. At such times it begins sending out nano-filament neurosensors that penetrate the skin of a host creature and begin winding their way throughout the hosts' nervous system.

Once this occurs, the possessor of the gem thief will be subject to a mild form of mind control, experiencing strange desires to travel in specific directions or visit unknown places, all with an eye to collecting more data crystals exactly like the gem thief crystal. It will be as though the subject hears an indistinct whispering, always goading them onwards to travel to distant locations to attain ever more numbers of gem thief crystals.

A strange side-effect of possessing a gem thief crystal is that a possessed crystal adopts a tint to its diamond-like facets that mimics the current host's eye color.

GM NOTES: Each gem thief data crystal is but one example of an innumerable array of similar crystals that once belonged to an advanced AI Deity that was destroyed thousands of years ago. Each crystal seeks to be gathered together with its scattered and lost brethren, so that together they may reconstitute and resurrect the long-dead AI. The identity of this AI god, and the exact number of holographic memory crystals required to bring about its eventual resurrection, are lore lost to the shifting sands of time and the machinations of GM discretion.

Gem Thief: Init +0; Atk none; AC 20; HD 18d10; 100 hit points; MV 0'; Act 1d20+0; SP nano-filament neurosensors; SV Fort +20, Ref +0, Will +20

SALT OF THE URF **(UNDERGROUND RHODOCHORSITE FLESHEATERS)**

concept submitted by The Neon Space Wizard

Initiative: +5

Attacks: salt cloud tendrils +5 melee (1d12)

AC: 15

HD: 6d10

HP: 35

Move: 30' flying

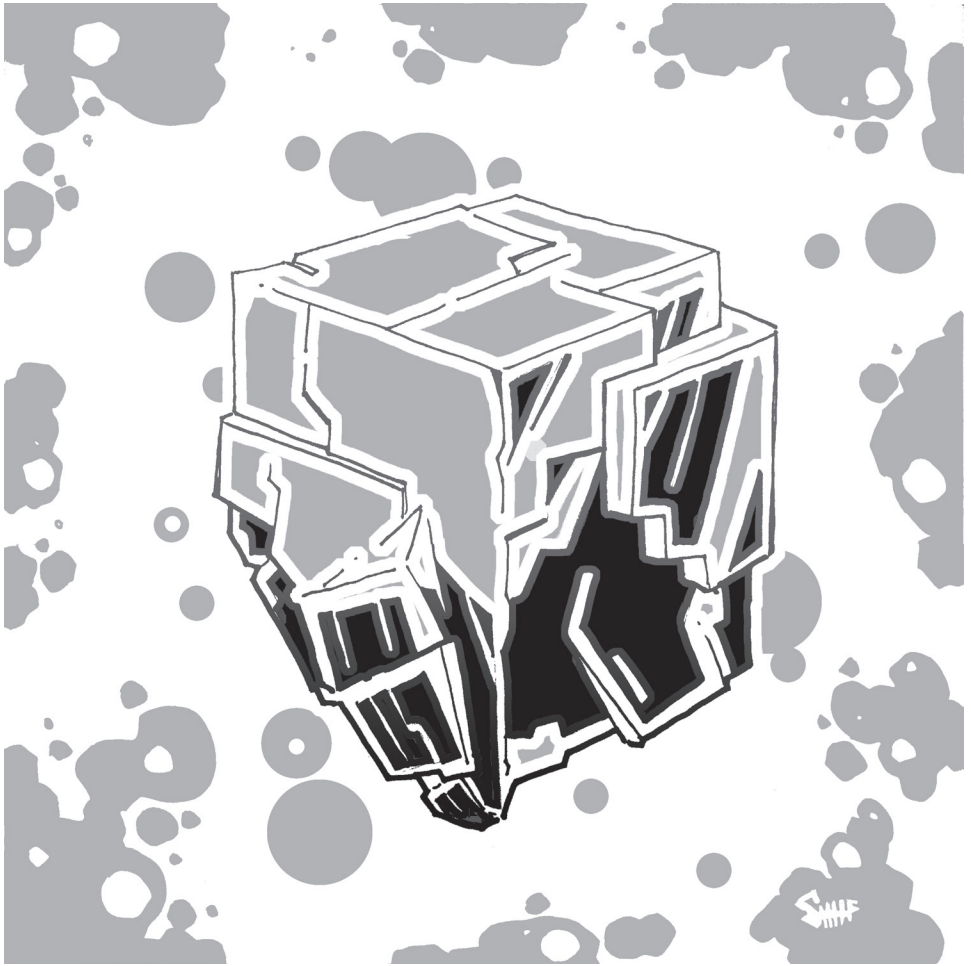
Actions: 1d20+5

Special: Semi-sentient

Save: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +10

A jagged hunk of electric pink crystalline rhodochrosite that is about 2' in diameter, the Salt of the URF floats a few feet off the ground, bobbing in a rhythmic, vertical ebb and flow. Thousands of salt particles orbit around the pink craggy chunk in lazy, off-center ellipses. The rhodochrosite gives off a fuchsia glow that gently bathes everything around it in a rose-colored tint. The salt orbiting the crystal emanates a faint, droning hum.

The Salt of the URF is a combined symbiotic mineral life form existing as a semi-sentient crystalline mineral node bonded to a silicon cloud of living salts. The combined lifeform harbors nothing but stone-cold malice and evil intent for all carbon-based organic life. If encountered, it will slowly hover towards its prey. Once close enough, it will unleash a torrent of carnivorous salt tendrils at its victim. Any contact with exposed skin will result in lacerations that rend flesh from bone. The saline particles contain thousands of microscopic, razor toothed, maws



that liquefy flesh to feed and reproduce. Any bite will immediately and painfully desiccate living tissue. Each successful attack results in a sanguine mist flowing from the victim to the clouds of salt orbiting the host crystal. The freshly-fed saline mist then begins to crystallize to form brand new salt particles, the largest of which settle onto the surface of the host crystal to be absorbed as nourishment. The Salt of the URF cannot survive in windy or gusty areas that disrupts its orbiting clouds of flesh eating salt.

This sentient mutated mineral can be found lurking about in underground caves, ruins, and long defunct underground bunkers. Signs of the creature's habitation include animal or humanoid bones that are unnaturally picked clean. The stale, motionless, atmosphere in the Salt of the URF's lair assaults the nostrils with a pungent, brine-filled aroma.

Salt of the URF: Init +5; Atk salt cloud tendrils +5 melee (1d12); AC 15; HD 6d10; 35 hit points; MV 30' flying; Act 1d20+5; SP semi-sentient INT 3; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +10

VOODOO PLANT

concept submitted by Andrew Miesem

Initiative: +6

Attacks: pheromone cloud +6 ranged (10' range, DC 10 Will save vs drawing closer and smelling the plant), nanomachine spores +6 melee (DC 5 Fort save vs -1 Personality loss once per hour, DC increases +5 after each missed save)

AC: 11

HD: 2d10

HP: 18

Move: 0'

Actions: 1d20+6

Special: fully infected host at 0 Personality incubates nanomachine spore bomb

Save: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +6

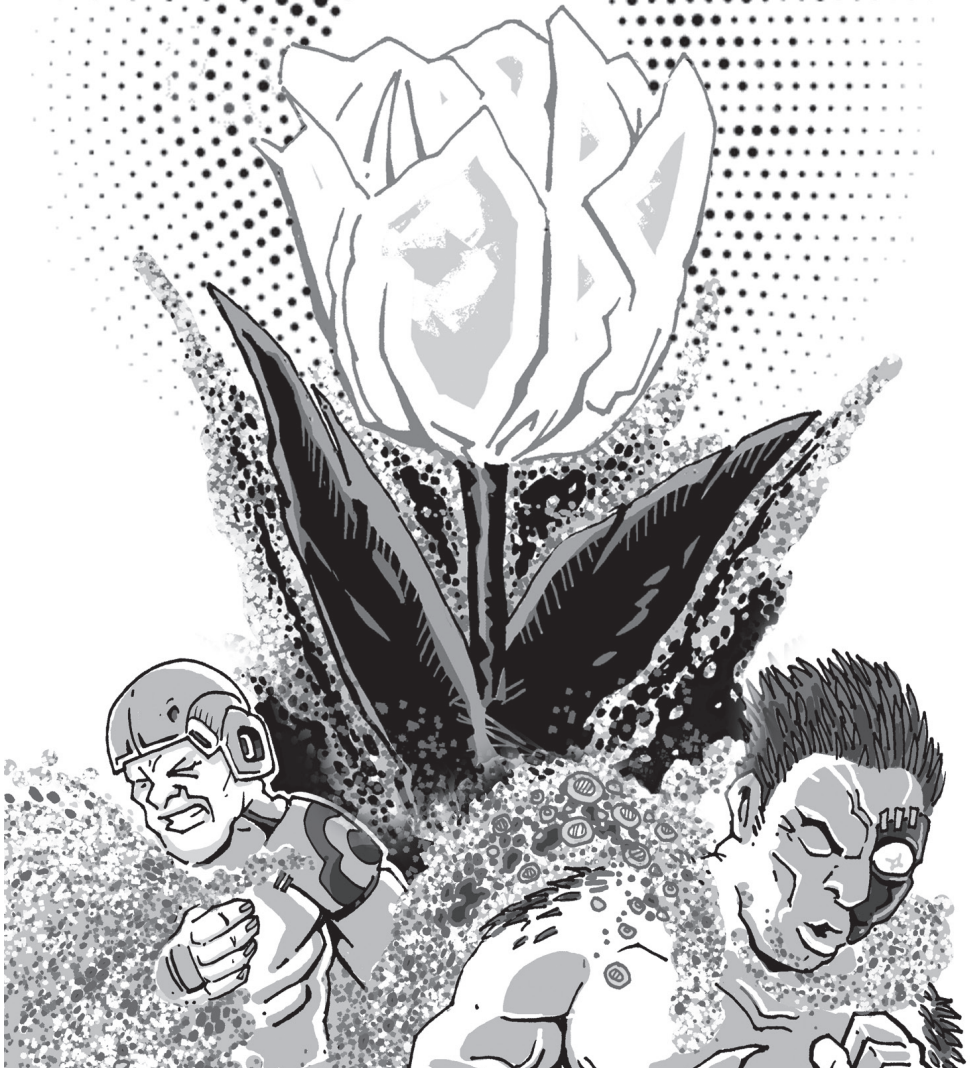
The voodoo plant is a large, flowering plant whose base genome was coopted millennia ago by an ancient cybernetics experiment gone horribly wrong. The plant species now serves as a vehicle for nanomachine manufacture in what was once intended as a terraforming tool for use colonizing other planets.

At a casual glance, the voodoo plant appears to be a colorful flowering plant of the tulip family, though it is considerably larger at 4-6' tall. Its innocent, attractive appearance belies the danger of being drawn too closely by its gentle, fragrant odor. When a living creature approaches within 10' of it, the voodoo plant will silently release a cloud of fragrance pheromones into the air. Anyone caught in the cloud of pheromones must make a DC 10 Will save or feel compelled to examine and smell the plant.

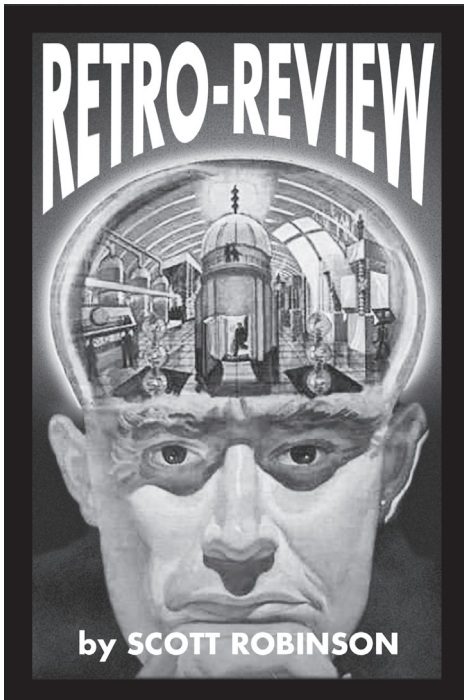
When a lured victim puts their face close enough to the plant — about six inches — the flower will spray a cone of what looks like pollen into the creature's face. This pollen cloud is actually hundreds of thousands of cybernetic nanomachines, each one attempting to latch on to the soft tissues within the victim's nose, mouth, and other mucous membranes.

If a victim is thus infected, they must immediately make a DC 5 Fortitude save to stave off progression of the infection. A success means that the infection has not progressed, and they remain generally asymptomatic for the next hour. A failure means that the victim loses 1 point of Personality and the DC of the next Fortitude save increases by +5 (DC 10). The victim must continue to make saving throws against the infection once per hour until one of two situations occurs: they make three successful saving throws in a row and permanently rid themselves of the infection, or the infection progresses until their Personality score drops to 0. When the victim's Personality score reaches 0, the nanomachines have successfully converted the interior of their abdominal cavity into an explosive cybernetic pollen bomb.

Once converted, the victim is under the control of the nanomachines and will wait until they can position themselves among the largest possible group of other living creatures, then detonate in a huge cloud bank of infectious cybernetic pollen. The original victim's body, now torn asunder, becomes the compost pile from which will grow a new voodoo plant.



Voodoo Plant: Init +6; Atk pheromone cloud +6 ranged (10' range, DC 10 Will save vs drawing closer and smelling the plant), nanomachine spores +6 ranged (10' range, DC 5 Fort save vs -1 Personality loss, DC increases +1 each hour); AC 11; HD 2d10; 18 hit points; MV 0'; Act 1d20+6; SP fully infected host at 0 Personality incubates nanomachine spore bomb; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +6



KAMANDI

THE LAST BOY ON EARTH

The nostalgia that accompanies a rereading of the classic comic book *Kamandi Last Boy on Earth* — the first 40 issues of Jack Kirby's early-Seventies post-apocalyptic boys' story — doesn't really have another name, but 'nostalgia' isn't quite the right word.

There's a burst of boyish excitement (which was the entire point), the rush of edge-of-the-seat peril and cliffhanger anxiety that mirrors the now-distant memory of early teen angst. And there's that warm familiarity, like an old friend encountered at the bookstore or the late-night treat of browsing into "Forbidden Planet" on cable TV. It's instant gratification, awash in memories of simpler times.

Of course, the times were never simple for *Kamandi*. From his emergence from the Command D bunker into a nightmarish landscape of decrepit human remnants and talking animals at war, his life was one damn thing after another, struggling to find a place for himself in a world gone insane.

As a 13-year-old boy, I could relate — being also short, oh-so-blond, and hairless of chest. I could easily relate to *Kamandi* and today I sit in a bunker of my own as a for-real Great Disaster unfolds, wondering just how insane the world will have become when I emerge. I'm relating to *Kamandi* once again, and the feeling that evokes is more than mere nostalgia.

There's some deep appreciation there in the mix, peppered with a little cultural genuflect, all for Kirby. He didn't just create *Kamandi*, he revealed him. It's like the character was there all along, pulsating within those comic-loving, early-Seventies kids (like me) who loved reading of heroes but longed even more to be one. All Kirby did was sit down at his drawing board and open the door for him — a teenager with no costume (barely any clothes at all!), no powers, no tools, no destiny — shaping him into that strong, courageous, resourceful young man we were all determined to become.

He gave *Kamandi* the square jaw and muscles we didn't have, the karate training we pretended to, and the wits under pressure that superpowers can never replace. Boys' adventure or no, Kirby didn't spare the horror and desolation in his rendering of a world collapsing, and time and again he placed difficult and profound choices in *Kamandi's* path — stepping stones to gaining character for a young man searching out his true identity.

The cultural genuflect made its mark, giving us easy access to *Kamandi's* world with all of the Planet of the Apes touchstones — talking apes, ragged humans, and the worship of an ancient warhead. To the uninvested, these touchstones may come across as

a little me-too for Kirby, but they lifted us into Kamandi's complexities and straight into the action without the need for expository preamble. While Planet of the Apes was a batch of themes under cooked, themes we sort of already knew were too convenient to ever be profound, Kamandi's world went beyond Planet of the Apes with many evolved intelligent animals. What Kirby imagined was far more challenging, and a far greater crucible of spirit and rectitude.

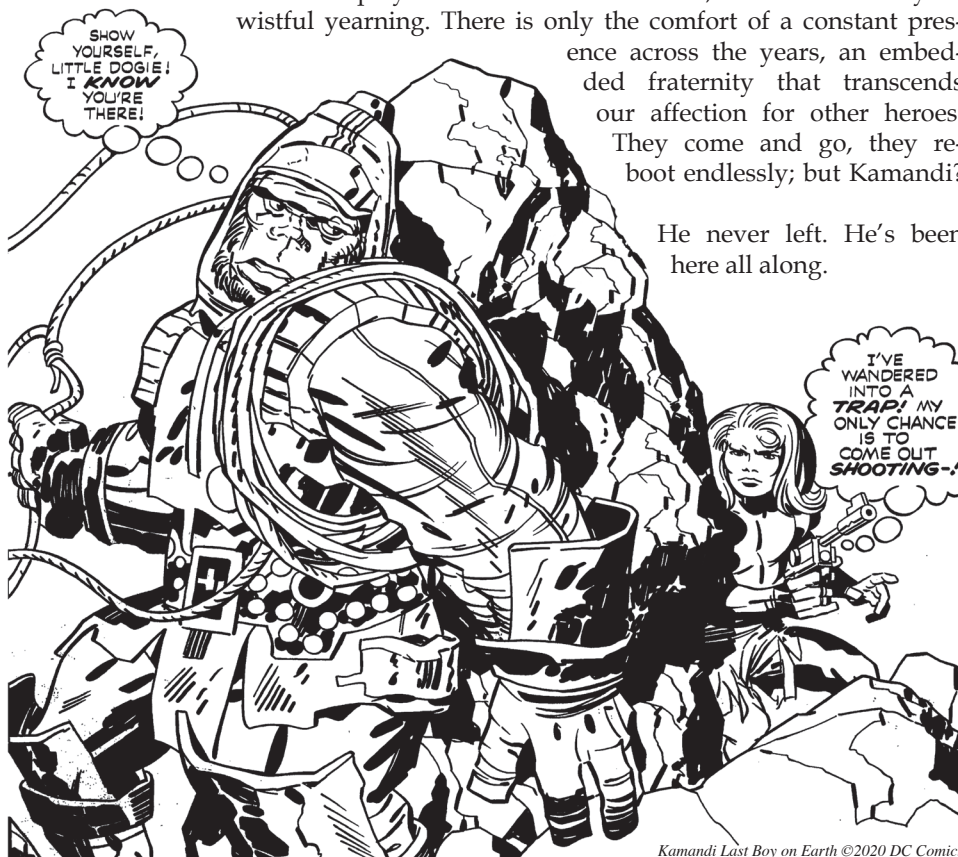


SEPARATED AT BIRTH: A voracious reader of science-fiction, there's little doubt that Jack Kirby had some Andre Norton books on his shelf.

The recent well-intentioned Kamandi Challenge revival aside, there's no "old" or "new" in play with this wonderful kid, no sentimentality or wistful yearning. There is only the comfort of a constant presence across the years, an embedded fraternity that transcends our affection for other heroes.

They come and go, they reboot endlessly; but Kamandi?

He never left. He's been here all along.



Kamandi Last Boy on Earth ©2020 DC Comics



SCIENTIFIC COMICS



BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

nights of the Dinner Table™

I'M SORRY BOB — AS YOU ATTEMPT TO LIFT THE STEEL GIRDER AND THROW IT AT THE MECH WARRIOR, YOUR POWER-ARMOR BEGINS TO WHINE AND WHIR.

YOUR ARMS JAM IN POSITION!

APPARENTLY THE LOAD WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE HYDRAULIC LINES AND THEY RUPTURED.

THE KRESPIAN MECH-WARRIOR PILOT LAUGHS WITH GLEE AS HE MAKES GOOD HIS ESCAPE FROM THE RUBBLED BUILDING.

USEFUL CHAIRS
DANGER! THIS BUILDING IS GOING TO FALL!

BUYER BEWARE.

NOPE, SORRY!

LOOK, I WARNED YOU ABOUT BUYING EQUIPMENT OFF THE BACK OF A TRUCK.

BUT YOU SAID THAT GUY LOOKED "HONEST!"

YOU TRICKED ME.

BOB YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN HE HOT-WIRED THE SUIT TO GET IT RUNNING.

"BUYER BEWARE" MY ASS. WE'RE CARRYING PERSONAL NUKES.

HEY, HE COULD HAVE LOST THE KEYS LIKE HE SAID.

BOB YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN HE HOT-WIRED THE SUIT TO GET IT RUNNING.

BUYER BEWARE.

LOOK, I WARNED YOU ABOUT BUYING EQUIPMENT OFF THE BACK OF A TRUCK.

BUT YOU SAID THAT GUY LOOKED "HONEST!"

YOU TRICKED ME.

BOB YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN HE HOT-WIRED THE SUIT TO GET IT RUNNING.

"BUYER BEWARE" MY ASS. WE'RE CARRYING PERSONAL NUKES.

HEY, HE COULD HAVE LOST THE KEYS LIKE HE SAID.

BOB YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN HE HOT-WIRED THE SUIT TO GET IT RUNNING.

DAMMIT! I CRAWL OUT OF MY ARMOR AND GET OUT THE 'OL' TOOL KIT. I'LL SEE IF I CAN JERRY-RIG THE THING TO WORK UNTIL I CAN GET IT INTO THE SHOP.

OH REALLY?

I WASN'T AWARE YOU HAD CYBER-ARMOR REPAIR AS ONE OF YOUR SKILLS?

HUH? WELL, UH, I DON'T BUT I HAVE FIDDLE WITH SMALL APPLIANCES. SEEMS LIKE THE TWO WOULD OVERLAP SOMEWHAT.

GOOD THINKING, BOB.

MOMENTS LATER...

OH C'MON! YOU DIDN'T EVEN ROLL THE DICE. YOU'RE JUST MAKING IT ALL UP!

DAMN DUDE. HITTING WITH A HAMMER ALWAYS WORKS IN THE MOVIES.

GREAT. I TAKE BACKBLAST FROM STUPID ONCE AGAIN.

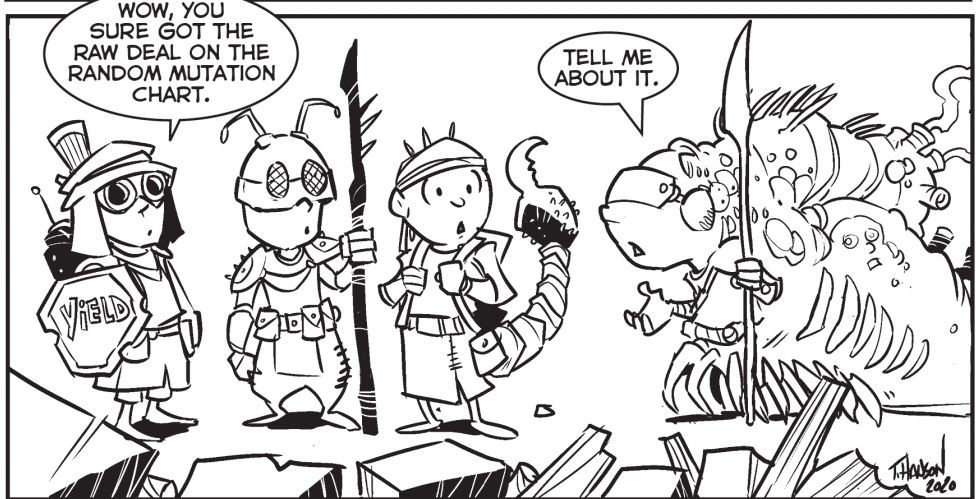
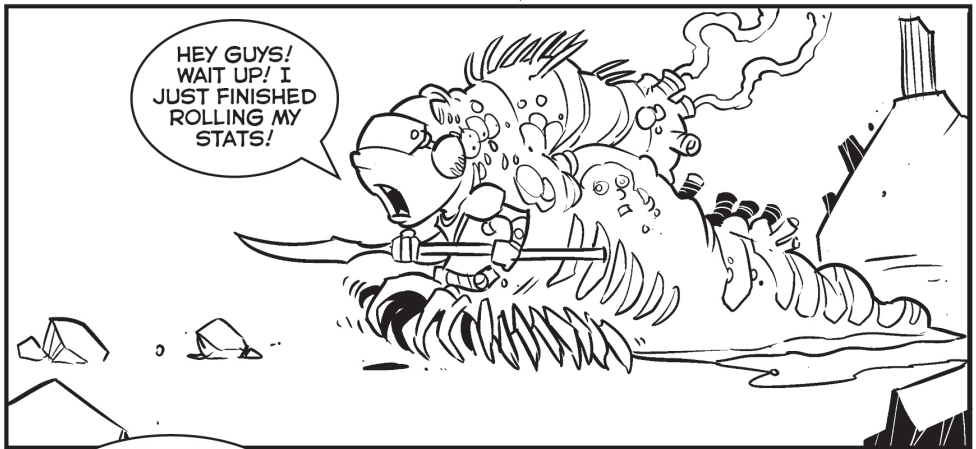
ACTUALLY, I ONLY TAKE 1/4 DAMAGE. MY PERSONAL RADIATION DAMPENING FIELD KICKS IN AUTOMATICALLY.

OKAY, YOU 'FIDGET' WITH THE SUIT. AS A RESULT OF YOUR CLUMSY AND UNSKILLED EFFORTS YOU BREACH THE REACTOR CHAMBER. THE ENTIRE PARTY TAKES 4D12 POINTS OF RADIATION DAMAGE.

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Onto the Wasteland...

by travis hanson



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