

THEY CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA!



A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME
OF B-MOVIE GREATNESS!

Elavive

THEY CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA!



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 11

What is a Roleplaying Game?	11
<i>How does a game work?</i>	12
Example of Play	12
Is this a Comedy or a Horror Game?	14
<i>Metagaming</i>	15
Inspiration	15
<i>Are You Ready?</i>	16

CHAPTER TWO: ARCHETYPES 21

<i>Template Breakdown</i>	21
<i>Create your own Archetype</i>	22
Everyman	24
<i>Appearance</i>	
<i>Lifestyle</i>	
<i>Connections</i>	
<i>Skills</i>	
<i>Trademarks</i>	
<i>Tropes</i>	
G-Man	28
<i>Appearance</i>	29
<i>Lifestyle</i>	29
<i>Connections</i>	29
<i>Skills</i>	29
<i>Trademarks</i>	29
<i>Tropes</i>	30
<i>Nemesis</i>	30
Mouth	32
<i>Appearance</i>	33
<i>Lifestyle</i>	33
<i>Connections</i>	33
<i>Skills</i>	33
<i>Trademarks</i>	33
<i>Tropes</i>	33
34	
<i>Nemesis</i>	34
Scientist	36
<i>Appearance</i>	36
<i>Lifestyle</i>	37

<i>Connections</i>	37
<i>Skills</i>	37
<i>Trademarks</i>	37
<i>Tropes</i>	37
<i>Nemesis</i>	38
Survivor	40
<i>Appearance</i>	40
<i>Lifestyle</i>	41
<i>Connections</i>	41
<i>Skills</i>	41
<i>Trademarks</i>	41
<i>Tropes</i>	41
<i>Nemesis</i>	42

CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION 47

<i>Step One: Concept</i>	47
<i>Step Two: Paths</i>	48
<i>Step Three: Skills</i>	49
<i>Step Four: Attributes</i>	49
<i>Step Five: Trademarks</i>	50
<i>Step Six: Determine Relationships</i>	50
<i>Step Seven: Final Touches</i>	51
<i>Tweaks</i>	51
Example Character Creation	52
Path Creation	53
<i>Concept</i>	53
<i>Connections</i>	53
<i>Conditions</i>	54
<i>Skills and Trademarks</i>	54
<i>Advancement with Paths</i>	55
<i>Archetype Paths</i>	55
<i>Origin Paths</i>	56
<i>Ambition Paths</i>	58
Tropes	60
<i>Everyman Tropes</i>	60
<i>G-Man Tropes</i>	60
<i>Mouth Tropes</i>	60
<i>Scientist Tropes</i>	60

Survivor Tropes	60
Character Advancement	61
Experience	61

CHAPTER FOUR: SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES 64

Skills	65
Attributes	73
Mental	73
Physical	74
Social	76

CHAPTER FIVE: SYSTEM 81

How to Do Things	81
When to Roll Dice	81
Forming a Dice Pool	82
Doing Two Things at Once: Mixed Actions	82
Let's Do It!: Rolling the Dice and Successes	82
It's Not All About You: Difficulty and Complications	83
Difficulty	83
Complications	83
Loose Change:	
Stunts, Directorial Control, and Degree of Success	84
Stunts	84
A Special Case: Directorial Control	84
Degree of Success	84
Not All Wine and Roses:	
Failure, Consolation, and Rewrites	85
Failure	85
Consolation	86
Rewrites	86
Special Effects: Conditions, Fields, and Scale	86
Conditions	86
Fields	87
Scale	87
Filming the Action: Types of Sequences	88
Anatomy of a Round	88
Slow Motion: Round-by-Round Actions	88
Adventure! Investigation! Drama!	
Three Types of Sequence	90
Adventure!	90
Range	90
Moving and Maneuvering	90
The Combat Roll	91
Attacking	91
Defending	91
Combat Stunts	91
Increase Damage (variable)	91
Blind (1 success)	91

Disarm (2 or 3 successes)	91
Feint (variable)	91
Knockdown/Trip (1 success)	91
Pin Down (variable)	91
Seize (2 successes)	92
Shove (variable)	92
Grappling	92
Establish Grapple (variable)	92
Break Up Grapple (1 success)	92
Gain Control (variable)	92
Increase Damage (variable)	92
Pin (2 successes)	93
Position (variable)	93
Takedown (1 success)	93
Throw (variable)	93
Prone	93
Ambush	93
Surprise (variable)	93
Damage Ratings	93
Weapons	93
Damage Tags	93
Continuous (X)	93
Deadly	93
Grappling	94
Non-Lethal	94
Piercing	94
Reach	94
Returning	94
Shockwave	94
Armor	94
Indirect Damage	94
Injuries	94
Shrug It Off or Take It	95
First Aid	95
Death Scene	95
Combat Conditions	96
Blinded	96
Paralyzed	96
Stunned	96
Unconscious	96
Antagonists	96
Minor Characters	97
Attributes, Skills, and Injuries	97
Equipment	97
Mobs of Characters	97
Scene Combat	97
Investigation!	98
Gathering Clues	98
Successes as Clue Information	99
Successes as Enhancements or Rewrites	99
Finding Information	99

Drama!	101
Attitude	101
Attitudes of Player Characters	102
Atmosphere	102
Influence	102
Blocking Influence	102
Shift Attitude	103
Shift Atmosphere	103

CHAPTER SIX: CINEMATIC POWERS **106**

Close Encounters	108
<i>What Makes Someone Encountered?</i>	108
<i>Examples of Encounter Situations</i>	108
<i>The Encountered Character</i>	110
<i>Temporary or Permanent Harm</i>	111
Stunts	112
General Stunts	112
Simple (1 Additional Success)	112
Cunning Strike	112
Ears Like A Bat	113
Fiery Temper	113
School of Hard Knocks	113
Sharp Tongued	113
Something About Them...	113
Throw Your Back Into It	113
Alien Senses (Encountered Characters Only)	113
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	113
Animal Whisperer	113
Insanely Swift	113
Like An Ox	114
Old-School Carnage	114
Right in The Sweet Spot!	114
Table Turner	114
Crowd Control (Encountered Characters Only)	114
Telekinesis Novice (Encountered Characters Only)	114
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	114
Assertive Genes	114
Bodyguard	114
Counterattacker	114
Flesh Wound	115
Infused With Science!	115
Natural Empath	115
Quick Learner	115
Pyro-Punch! (Encountered Characters Only)	116
Everyman Stunts	116
Simple (1 Additional Success)	116
Fine Tuning	116

Improvised Weaponry	116
Mental Mapping	116
Past Experience	116
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	116
Delayed Failure	116
Scrounge	116
Sudden Bravery	117
Aim for the Outfield (Encountered Characters Only)	117
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	117
Alien Outfitting	117
Obscure Insight	117
Plant Your Feet	117
Giving Punches Like You Take Them (Encountered Characters Only)	117
G-Men Stunts	117
Simple (1 Additional Success)	117
All-Seeing Eye	118
Government Trained Sharpshooters	118
Peak Physical Fitness	118
Hold 'em! (Encountered Characters Only)	118
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	118
Do What You're Told!	119
I, Spy	119
Impeccable Grooming	119
Chain Attack (Encountered Characters Only)	119
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	119
Full Weight of Law	119
Inspiring Orders	119
Prototype Weaponry	119
Special Resistance Training (Encountered Characters Only)	119
Mouth Stunts	120
Simple (1 Additional Success)	120
Clever Circumstances	120
Ego Boost	120
Gift of Gab	120
Missed Me! (Encountered Characters Only)	120
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	120
Can't Outfox a Fox	120
Exo-Cultural Nuances	120
It's Not As Bad As It Looks	120
Not What You Think It Is (Encountered Characters Only)	121
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	121
Dread Inspiring Fighting Style	121
Golden Lie	121
I Am Who I Say I Am	121
I Wouldn't Do That (Encountered Characters Only)	121
Scientist Stunts	121
Simple (1 Additional Success)	121

Minor Adjustments	121
Surgical Strike	121
This Reminds Me...	122
Bane Bullets (Encountered Characters Only)	122
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	122
Forensic Eye	122
Major Adjustments	123
Skilled Linguist	123
Personal Teleporter (Encountered Characters Only)	123
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	123
Disarm / Repurpose	123
Psy Ops Training	123
Total Conversion	123
Genhancement (Encountered Characters Only)	124
Survivor Stunts	124
Simple (1 Additional Success)	124
Dumb Aliens...	124
Step In	124
You're Next	124
Telekinetic Shot (Encountered Characters Only)	124
Flashy (2 Additional Successes)	124
Always Another Way	124
Fighting Retreat	124
Snap Out Of It!	125
Enhanced Reflexes (Encountered Characters Only)	125
Daring (3 Additional Successes)	125
Doesn't Work On Me	125
Inspirational Storyteller	125
Superior Spotter	125
Phase Out (Encountered Characters Only)	125
Cinematics and How They Work	126
Ally of Convenience (Encountered Characters Only)	126
Bad Dubbing	127
Call the Understudy	129
Cheap Set	129
Deleted Scene	129
Fan Favorite	130
Kill the Extra	130
Omniscient Narrator	131
Rear Screen Projection	132
Scene Missing	132
Summon the Stuntman	133
Take Two!	133
'Twas Beauty Did Something to the Beast	134
You Dropped This (Encountered Characters only)	135
The Art of the Quip	137
Quip Mechanics	137
Draw Your Quips!	138

Thinking On Your Feet 139

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE HUMAN WORLD INVADED! 143

Only Real Is Real	143
Cultural Boom	144
The Red Scare and HUAC	145
The Homefront	145
Nuclear Tests	145
The Green Scare	146
Present Day and the Eastern Bloc	146
Purges and the Homefront	146
Zombie Stalin	147
And Things Were Going So Smoothly	148
Keep Watching The Waves	148
Keep Watching Your Backs	148
Okay, That's Just Gross	149
They Gotta Be Giants	149
You Think You're So Smart	150
The Water That Came from the Water	150
Don't Just Stand There, Do Some Science	151
We Will Fight Them With Transistors	151
The USA Will Not Stand For Monsters	152
In Orbit: Stories From The Front	153

CHAPTER EIGHT: THREATS 161

Destroyers	162
Aquatepillars	162
Brainbox	163
King Sea Serpents	165
Robot Sharks	166
The Shark Clans	167
Teenage Shrimp	168
The Uranium Man	169
Walking Dogfish	170
Enslavers	172
Gigantic Pillbugs	172
Glowing People	174
Iguanoids	176
Killer Kelp	177
Sirens of Ness	179
The Suspended	180
Invaders	182
The Atlantoids	182
Brain-Eater Eel	183
Crab People	185
The Prefecture of the Pod	187
The Robot Race from 3000 A.D.	189
Urchinfolk	190

Primordials	192
Anuradons	192
Bonellia Viridis Terribilis	193
Centopus	195
Gargantuan Squid	196
The Mariner's Menace	198
The Oblique	199
Rorqualasaur	200
Spies	202
Gill-kin	202
The Seahorse People	204
Thaumocs	205
The Were-Lobsters	206
Terrestrials	208
The Church of the Wave Ascendant	208
Transatlantica Steamship Company	209
F.I.S.H.	211
Average Citizens	213
College	213
Criminal	213
Industry	214
<i>Law</i>	214
Military	214
Science	215


CHAPTER NINE: PLAYING DIRECTOR	219
Running the Game	219
<i>Theme and Tone</i>	219
<i>Writing your Game</i>	219
<i>Act One</i>	220
<i>Act Two</i>	220
<i>Act Three</i>	220

<i>Fin</i>	220
<i>Acts and Scenes</i>	220
<i>Tailored Gameplay</i>	220
<i>Movie Tropes</i>	221
<i>Keep it Simple</i>	221
The Director's Chair	222
<i>Low Budget</i>	222
<i>Big Budget</i>	222
<i>Art</i>	222
<i>Exploitation</i>	223
<i>Tyrannical Director</i>	223
Small Wonders: The Delaware Beaches	223
<i>Lewes</i>	223
<i>Rehoboth Beach</i>	228
<i>Dewey Beach</i>	230
<i>Fenwick Island</i>	232
A Slippery Conspiracy!	232
<i>Setting the Table</i>	233
<i>The Prequel: A Watery Grave Nursery!</i>	235
<i>Tonight on Return of the Eels!</i>	235
<i>Epilogue</i>	241
Cast and Crew	243

APPENDIX ONE: QUIPS **248**

<i>Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk</i>	248
<i>Please Enjoy This Great Portent</i>	248
<i>Quip Your Griping!</i>	249
<i>Why So Glib?</i>	249
<i>And Before You Pull That Switch</i>	250
<i>The Flirtation</i>	250

APPENDIX TWO: STUNTS AND CINEMATICS **251**



THING FROM BELOW THE BOTTOM OF THE LOWER DEPTHS

The diver neared the mysterious black maw, swimming into its inky mystery. Two lights blinked on: two terrifying, bulbous eyes. The diver screamed, which turned out really really bubbly.

• • • • •

The boat was anchored off the coast of Powy Zowan, an idyllic tropical isle untouched by tourists. Two scientists had hired the *Tipilta* to investigate a recent underwater earthquake's effects on local aquatic flora, fauna and other "f" names. The first mate and two deckhands were helping the team of three into scuba gear.

"Looks like a good day for water-swimming," joked scientist Dr. Dabe Banibar.

Dr. Lonna Durene, the other scientist, chuckled in that good-natured way she had of chuckling.

Boat skipper, troubleshooting adventurer and sometime canner, Clain Hoake, was less jovial as he straightened his mask. "Sorry, I've seen too many dangerous fish incidents to take this lightly."

No one knew they were watched from shore by Dewlana, High Priestess of the island. Specifically it was Clain who held her gaze. His image stuck on her like greasepaint on a clown.

Underwater, Clain first spotted the newly unearthed cave and pointed. He was an old hand at pointing. The cave had not been seen for tens of millennia. Its untold mysteries could make for some really neat science.

Even with the miracle of flashlights, the cave was still lousy with shadows. When it began to widen, the divers spread out. Lonna came to a break in the wall. As she peered closer, the gap was suddenly filled by a monstrous scaly face with bulging eyes. Before she could manage an underwater scream, the horrible Thing was gone.

• • • • •

"I'm a scientist, I know horrible faces," declared Lonna, back on the boat. "And that was unlike any horrible face I've seen."

"Lonna, people see horrible things in the water all the time," chuckled Clain. "I know someone who saw a sofa."

"Leave her alone, Clain," snapped Dabe, who really didn't care for the man. "Lonna's a scientist. She doesn't really believe in horrible faces."

"Well" began Lonna.

It wasn't the first time the two men had almost come to blows over the female scientist.

• • • • •

That night, they were guests of the islanders at a wild and frenetic bonfire dance.

"Doesn't that hurt?" asked Clain, biting into something that might have once belonged to a pig.

Dewlana listened intently to Lonna's account of the horrible face and replied, "Our legends tell of a dweller, a deep dark demon dweller who dwells down in deep darkness. It lurks there, biding its time, waiting to emerge and do bad-bad. We tell it to the children to get them to brush."

"Were scientists, Dewlana," said Dabe, "trained to deal in facts, not fairy stories, except around holidays."

The dance and drums grew wilder and Dewlana could not take her eyes off Clain. She also saw that Clain could not take his eyes off Lonna. In fact, Dabe could not take his eyes off Lonna. And at the shore, peering above the water, the Thing from the depths also could not take its eyes off Lonna. Nothing, however, was looking at the Thing.

A short time later, the deckhand guarding the Tipilta heard a noise and rose from a stupor of his own making. Something stalked the darkened deck. The man went to investigate and walked right into the Thing from the depths. Half man, half fish was only half the story. Rough scales, jagged fins, and sharp powerful claws contrasted with long slick tentacles sprouting from various places. Glaring fish eyes goggled above its wide mouth of tiny sharp teeth. The deckhand froze as the big claw came crashing down.

• • • • •

Despite the missing crewman, the dive continued the next day while, elsewhere, Dewlana arrived at a hidden shrine: a small but bottomless pool and a large carving of the Thing itself.

"Oh hear me, horrible Thing we worship. I will prepare for you a sacrifice of the science-woman. In turn, the rugged man-person shall be Dewlana's!"

At the boat, Lonna took time out from work to enjoy a swim. She did not know that the en-

tranced Thing was attempting to match her moves from below, eventually giving up when he proved too uncoordinated.

• • • • •

That night, as Lonna compared science notes with Dabe, the Thing crept over the side and watched her through a porthole. A deckhand spotted it and raised the alarm.

"Dear cod!" hollered Dabe as he and Clain grabbed up spear guns and torches. "That Thing's unknown to science!"

"Lonna, it seems to be after you! Stay down the other end of the boat," shouted Clain.

Unable to grab Lonna, and forced back by weapons, the Thing jumped back into the sea. But at the other end of the boat, two islanders crept over the side and absconded with the female scientist. Clain and Dabe searched everywhere for her but could find no trace, realizing she must be Dewlana's prisoner.

• • • • •

The next day, the tribe gathered at the Shrine of the Thing with Lonna tied to the carving of the monster, right before the bottomless pool. Dewlana raised her hands and called on the Thing to come and accept their sacrifice. The islanders grew excited as bubbles appeared in the water. Lonna struggled with her ropes, yet still admired the carving. "Traces of East Lempootian, I'd say."

Slowly, the Thing rose from the pool, water pouring off scales and claws and tentacles.

Suddenly, Clain and Dabe burst in. They immediately attacked the surprised islanders who attempted to seize them. The flurry of action made the Thing go berserk and people began fleeing while Dewlana pleaded, "We had a deal! Look, do not let me down, Thing!"

Finally, with something like lust in its monster heart, the Thing turned to Lonna who observed coolly, "Some form of throwback perhaps or evolutionary fluke. Interesting dorsal"

Before it could grab her, Clain was between them, grappling with the scaly beast.

"No!" screamed Dewlana. Clain getting killed was not in her plan. She clutched at the monster, who swiped her with a mighty arm, killing her abruptly. The lethal blow provided enough time for Lonna to free herself, pull Dabe out of harm's way, and take off with he and Clain. The Thing, with nobody left there, shrugged and jumped into the pool, planning never to return from its dark depths to such a fickle world.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

You are about to land in a lonely zone of terror... on an uncharted atoll in the Pacific! You are part of The Second Scientific Expedition dispatched to this mysterious bit of Coral reef and volcanic rock. The first group has disappeared without a trace! Your job is to find out why! There have been rumors about this strange atoll... frightening rumors about happenings way out beyond the laws of nature...

- Opening Crawl, *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957)

There are few better ways of opening a game about science fiction, fantasy, monsters, horror, and comedy, than a quote from *Attack of the Crab Monsters*. The above snippet from a 1950s B-movie classic tells you so much about what this game contains. Your Director will introduce mystery, your characters will find adventure, and a communal story of daring deeds, bold feats, and heroic deaths shall unfold. In **They Came from Beneath the Sea**, all these things are possible.

The stage is set at a nebulous point in the 1950s. A new Chuck Berry record swings into place on the jukebox turntable. Greasers walk in and take their seats at the diner counter. Everyone enjoys a frosty milkshake and a juicy hamburger while Big Jim, the diner owner, shakes his head at the lackadaisical attitudes of youths these days. Oh, while Roy can fix up a hotrod and charm the skirt off that plucky girl Suzie (she'll make it as a top reporter one day, just mark Jim's words), Jim's just satisfied wiping down the counter and tapping his foot to the refrain from the machine in the corner. He enjoys the beat but can't help but think of how easy these kids have got it. He was in a war just a decade ago. A war he'll never forget. He lost friends. He lost...

And then the sheriff walks in. Diane takes her hat off and sits next to Roy, cramping the young mechanic's style as he makes moves on Suzie. Big Jim smirks and winks at Diane, serving up her usual pot of coffee. The Saturday morning ritual goes as normal, until that kook Professor Tamborne busts in, waving papers in one hand and a fish in the other. "What the heck, Tamborne?" shouts Diane, jumping from her stool. "They're here!" he replies, waving the eviscerated fish. "This is just a warning! They're going to invade from beneath the sea!"

Most of the diner's patrons laugh, but Roy and Suzie suddenly look afraid. Big Jim knows Tamborne from many years back, when they served in the same unit. And Diane? She knows a liar, and the Prof ain't a liar.

By the time noon rolls around, all five are exploring the caves on the shoreside, discovering evidence of Tamborne's "invaders" and looking at each other in a mix of disbelief and common cause. *They* have to stop whatever's about to happen.

In short, that is the game you're about to play. These characters are heroes, but they're also you and me. They're humans living in a time of geopolitical uncertainty, still reeling from the greatest war humanity has ever known. Big Jim is a Survivor, a veteran of war. Roy is an Everyman, just wanting to protect his patch of land. Suzie is a Mouth, capable of getting into any exclusive event and prying a story from any target. Diane is a G-Man, a sheriff of a small town with responsibilities to powers she does not fully understand. Tamborne is a Scientist, as prone to madness as to brilliance, in this atomic age. The characters you play in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** are like Big Jim, Roy, Suzie, Diane, and the Professor, but they can be whoever you want them to be.

Let's dial back a little to explain a few of the basics.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

All roleplaying games (hereafter referred to as RPGs) have this section, but this one contains a few differences from your standard core rulebook. The short answer to the question in the section title is: an improvisational game, where one player creates a story, and the others take on roles within that story. These players, usually numbering between three and six, come together to tell a story of fun, adventure, drama, and monsters.

The person running the game is known as the Director (often called the Game Master or GM in other games). They set

challenges for the other players, as well as providing voices to the various inhabitants and descriptions of the locations in setting. The Director's role is to facilitate enjoyment for the players and themselves. Everyone at the table (or playing online, or via some other, futuristic, and heretofore-unexpected method) is to have fun playing this game. That may sound like a dictate, but in truth, it's the only reason to play. It's up to the Director to write or improvise an interesting setting with appealing and horrific characters, and a mission, quest, or path for the protagonists to follow. These elements must engage the other players.

The other players take on the roles of characters in the setting. Typically, these characters are fixed from the beginning to the end of a story. Such characters are often referred to as "protagonists" or "player characters," and in some games "PCs," but simply, they are just identities the players assume for telling a story in the world of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** If you follow the rules laid out in this book, you can create a character in around 30 minutes. If you want to play fast and loose, come up with the concept first and build the character on paper later. That'll take you between five and 10 minutes. It's as simple as that.

HOW DOES A GAME WORK?

Well, the simplest method is the Director sets the scene — akin to the earlier scene with Big Jim and friends at the diner — and then something happens to dislodge normality. Each of the players is speaking for characters like Big Jim, talking about the weather, the war in Korea, the best songs on the radio today, when the Director introduces a swerve. This may be something as brazen as an aquatepillar attack on the nearby beach (see p. XX for more on those cuddly critters), or as subtle as someone at the diner counter murmuring nervously about having escaped government tests or some kind of underwater laboratory run by Glowing People (see p. XX for more on those radiant rascals). How the players react to the revelation is up to them, but that is the start of the adventure. The Director must then seed clues, provide dialogue, introduce monstrous and governmental encounters, and generally provide a good tale for the players.

RPGs are only as complicated as you want them to be. At their most accessible, they are games driven by the story, where players come together to tell an interesting tale, noting that failure can be even more interesting than success. Heroes fail several times before they succeed, making the success all the sweeter. A complication, but an enjoyable one, is when a character wants to achieve an action that's not as simple as just hopping on the bus. In these cases, the game changes slightly. It's no longer just dialogue, and now involves dice.

Dice can be a bit of a boogeyman if you've not roleplayed before. Negative connotations surround players hunched over a table, pumping their fists. Not so in this game. Just roll dice whenever it makes the story more interesting. As an example, maybe your character wants to punch a were-lobster in the face. They check the number of points they have in two of their abilities (probably Close Combat + Dexterity, though players can, and should, argue to use other abilities where appropriate), and roll as many 10-sided dice as they have points in those traits. Chapter

XX covers this in more detail, but in brief, any rolled dice with results of 8 or above are considered successful rolls.

That's roleplaying. You play your character, you develop their stories, you succeed, you fail, and you occasionally meet challenges requiring an element of chance — so you roll dice. By the game's conclusion, you've all worked together to make a fun tale of humans fighting back threats from the depths, or perhaps succumbing to them.

Time for an example of play!

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Simon, Jenna, Bryan, and Mike are sitting around the table at Simon and Jenna's house. They're the players, and they have snacks, pencils, and in Mike's case, a laptop on hand. A couple of copies of this book are on the table in front of them, while Mike refers to a PDF version (because he's modern like that). Matthew enters the room and sits down with his notes, the players' character record (often compiled onto a sheet as per the one on p. XX), and some 10-sided dice (sometimes referred to as d10s).

MATTHEW (THE DIRECTOR)

Okay, everyone ready to play? Who wants to recap the last session?

JENNA

I take the best notes, so I will.

MATTHEW

Go for it.

JENNA

So last time in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, we introduced our characters to each other and had our first encounter with the creatures trying to invade our world. My character, Betty-Jo, suspected her husband of being a crab in disguise and beat him to death with a skillet. Simon's character, a German scientist of dubious background, arrived in town looking shady under the protection of Bryan's sunglasses-wearing government agent. Meanwhile, Mike's overburdened county sheriff had to deal with the cleanup following my homicide, and the erratic activities of the babbling scientist.

MATTHEW

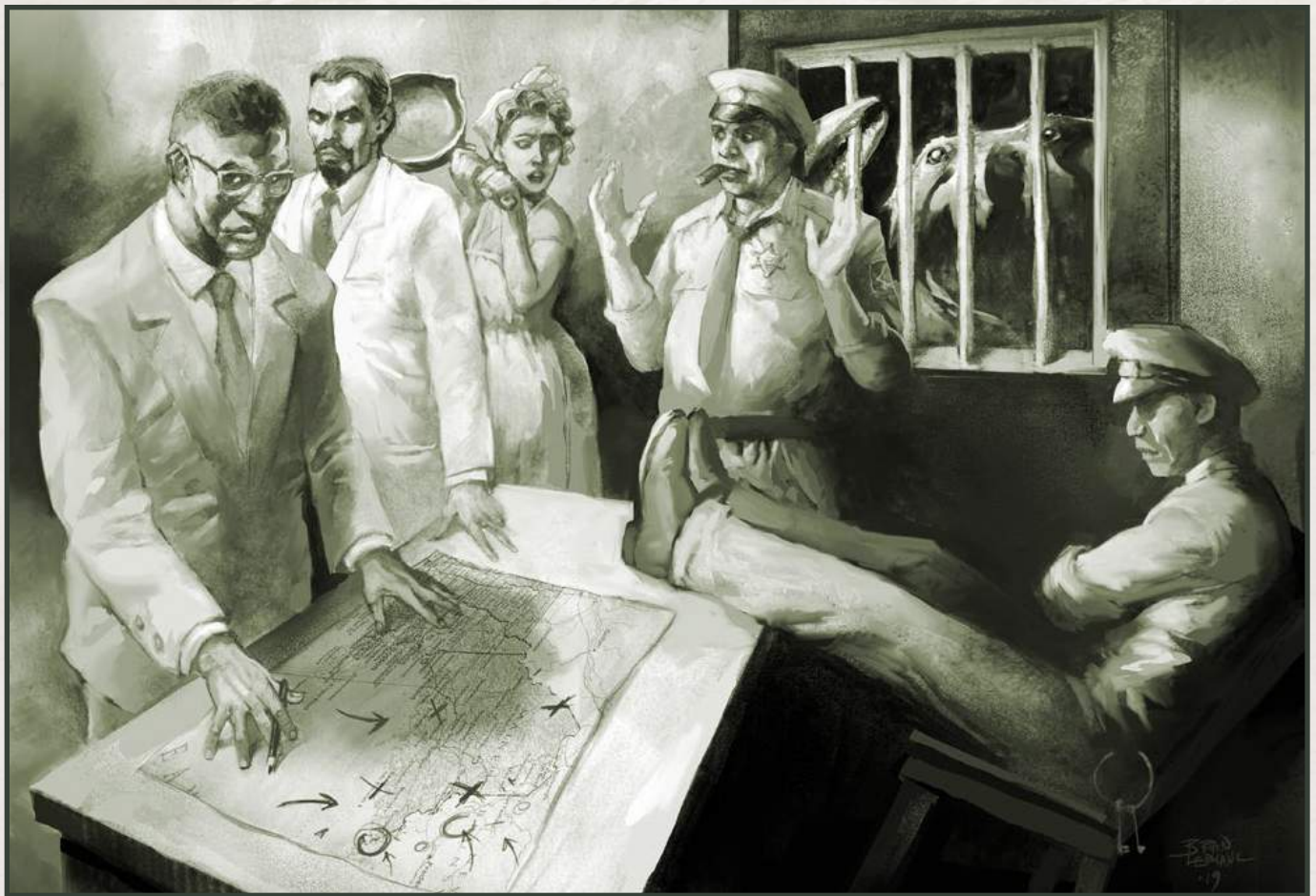
That's right. Hans said he came to town because it was in imminent danger, and he wanted to "desperately taste" — his words, not mine — the threat.

SIMON

My character isn't healthy.

BRYAN

We gathered.

**MATTHEW**

After introductions outside the town hall, you all heard the Coast Guard alarm go off and sped to the beach, where you saw a glowing, star-shaped vessel emerge from the waves, apparently luring bathers to swim toward it. That's where we got to, so let's get in character so we can see what happens next.

SIMON (PUTTING ON A POOR ACCENT)

"Nein! They're here already! I must join them!"

BRYAN

"Not on your nelly, buster. I'm here to keep you on land. You're here to tell us about the aliens, not go and join them."

MIKE

"What in tarnation is going on? That's my wife! My God, that's everyone from the bridge club just jumping into the water and swimming to the vessel!"

JENNA

"Maybe these commies are behind my husband's replacement and death!"

BRYAN

"Sorry, what?"

MATTHEW

That's right, neither Special Agent Nunes nor Professor Hans were aware of your husband's crab infestation.

JENNA

"I... I have a story to tell."

SIMON (BOLDENING THE ACCENT)

"It vill have to wait! Ve must stop zese enslavers!"

MIKE

"Are you German or French?"

SIMON

"It matters not! I want to see if I can determine how these star-shaped ships are drawing people to them. Maybe a ray or something?"

MATTHEW

Good idea. Simon, please could you roll dice for Hans' Science + Intellect? How many dots do you have in those abilities, in total?

SIMON

Eight. I may be mad, but I'm not stupid. [rolls dice] Okay, so I rolled 2, 4, 4, 7, 8, 8, 9, 10 — zeroes are tens, right?

MATTHEW

They are.

SIMON

Okay, so that's four successes! I must be able to tell how these aliens are luring bathers into the water.

MATTHEW

It's a good roll! You peek through your pocket telescope and can't immediately see a ray or beam cutting across the beach. What you do detect is a taste of aniseed in the air. You narrow your eyes and realize there's a thin, pinkish cloud floating over the area, a stream of gas emerging from the alien craft.

SIMON (THE ACCENT IS BACK)

"Ve must retreat or be lured ourselves! Mein gott!"

MIKE

"Let's get back to my office so we can make a plan. I was on a losing streak at bridge, and I'll be damned if I let those invaders take my club before I can score a victory or two! Oh, and get my wife back."

MATTHEW

You all hurry back to the sheriff's office, stopping for nothing and no one. A desk sits in the front lobby of the old, brick building, while a map of the town hangs on the wall behind it. It's a small town, so there's only one deputy here. He's snoozing in his chair, oblivious to your arrival. Stu, the town drunk, gargles at you from his cell before rolling over and falling asleep.

MIKE

The first thing I'm going to do is take the map from the wall, lay it across the desk, and see which areas of the town are the most defensible. These aliens may only be starting with the beachgoers.

MATTHEW (THE DIRECTOR)

Roll your Survival + Cunning, please. I'm making you use Cunning instead of Intellect as this is a quick action, not something thought through.

MIKE

[rolls dice] Two successes. Okay, what does that tell me?

MATTHEW

If you're looking to give the townsfolk sanctuary while they're under attack, the best places to do so are the union bank, St. Thomas' Church, and the high school.

MIKE

"Jane! Wake up! I've got a job for you."

MATTHEW

"What's up sheriff?" The deputy stirs from her sleep.

MIKE

"You're going to round up the people and get them to these three locations." I show her the map.

MATTHEW

"Say what?"

BRYAN

I flash my badge at her. "These are governmental orders, ma'am. Use this temporary badge if you think they'll resist." Can I roll Persuasion + Presence to make this happen?

MATTHEW

Sure!

BRYAN

[rolls dice] A single success. Is that enough?

MATTHEW

Jane nods and narrows her eyes suspiciously, but asks no questions and totters out. The silence following her departure is broken suddenly by laughing from the cells. "You dang fools," the laughter is from Stu, who's now standing and glaring at all of you. You notice his face twitching oddly as he shifts from side to side in his cell.

JENNA

"He's another crab person!"

MATTHEW

"You god-dang right! An' you're gonna listen to what ah have to say if you wanna save your town from the Glowing People!"

So it goes. Roleplaying games possess a mixture of tension, action, and humor, and **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** is a good example of mixing all three. It's the players' choice what happens next, but the Director will be on hand to describe what's going on around the characters, throw threats in their path, and construct a narrative that makes for an interesting tale.

IS THIS A COMEDY OR A HORROR GAME?

There's the crucial question. This game wouldn't work if it was pure comedy. It is impossible to prescribe comedy to a wide audience and expect everyone to laugh at the same thing. Rather, this is a science-fiction game with comedy elements. It provides you with the tools to make things amusing for you and your group, but how often you use these tools is up to you. **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** is a balance of horror and farce. Some groups will make every scene a playful

caper, while others will pull out the jokes at crucial junctures, like punchlines after a lengthy wind-up.

TCfBtS! contains a system device called Quips (see p. XX), which helps facilitate the humor element of the game. Characters come equipped with Quips from the point of their creation. These one-liners are to be used in dramatic situations for mechanical bonuses, as described in the Cinematics chapter. Likewise, the other Cinematics covered in that chapter all lend to the comedic feel of the game. Despite this, elements such as Quips, Directorial Control, and Tropes can be dropped if you feel they're inappropriate for your group. **TCfBtS!** is a toolbox, and you can choose to use the whole set or just the big hammer, depending on the task at hand.

On the subject of comedy and horror, good Directors should ask their groups before running the game what kind of game they want to play. Test the waters, find out what works and what doesn't. If things need scaling back or ramping up mid-game, that's fine. Adjust to suit the group, so long as everyone is having fun!

METAGAMING

In many RPGs, "metagame" is a dirty word. The concept of metagaming in the context of RPGs is applying player knowledge to a character situation. For instance, you (as a player) may know Centopus' weakness from a previous scenario of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** However, your character does not. If you (the player) use your knowledge to allow your unknowing housewife character a way out of Centopus' maw, it can erode tension and hamstring drama, as well as making you look like a know-it-all.

Metagaming in **TCfBtS!** is encouraged via certain paths. The Cinematics listed in the chapter of the same name allow players to step back from their character roles and affect scenes from a directorial perspective. Replacing your character with a stuntman to achieve a better outcome on a physical challenge, fading to black on a scene to avoid a harmful combat, or revisiting a scene to achieve a better outcome, are all metagaming — a little like a cheat mode on a video game. This kind of behavior is encouraged in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** as these powers are designed to further increase the fun (and farce) of the game, as well as to make it more cinematic.

You are reading and will hopefully soon be playing a rare game, in that metagaming in this way is rewarded. Just be aware that metagame actions you take as the player are not known by your character. Your character does not believe they're the character in a B-movie, or an actor playing a character. You are a god, or at the very least a director or editor when you use powers like this. Your character will never be aware of the subtle or heavy hand you place on their shoulder when you give them a push.

INSPIRATION

There exists a massive assortment of movies from which to draw inspiration for **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** games. On one hand, these movies evoke a simpler time. On the other,

they cast a subtle spotlight onto an era of nuclear tension, fear of invasion, and paranoia regarding one's neighbors. Take from these movies what you like or come up with your material wholesale — just remember when running your own game that almost all movies of this type had a message, whether the movie's writers or director succeeded in conveying it or not. Thanks to Larry Blamire, movie director and co-writer of this book, for helping compile this all-too-short list! And just before it starts, we recommend anyone interested in this genre checks out *The Lost Skeleton of Cadavra* (2001) and *Trail of the Screaming Forehead* (2007). While modern in comparison to the rest of this list, little has reignited my love for B-movie science fiction more than these two of Larry's movies (though his other works are stellar, too). Please check them out!

The Thing from Another World (1951) No film is a clearer example of science vs. military than this gem, widely believed to have been directed by the great Howard Hawks with his trademark naturalistic overlapping dialogue. Tough military protagonist here, and while the female lead is the scientist's 'secretary (typical for this era) she's 'surprisingly liberated for the time.

Fiend Without a Face (1958) One of the most unusual monsters — and invasions — of the time, these flying brain creatures were stop-motion animated and the film got attention for being way more visceral than contemporaries. The climax is gorier than any '50s counterparts. Another military hero and scientist's 'secretary, oddly enough.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) Clint Eastwood's mentor Don Siegel was responsible for the best of the aliens-among-us thrillers. Everytown, USA is slowly replaced by pod people in what has been seen as a commentary on McCarthyism, Red Menace, you name it, though Siegel insisted it was just aliens. Holds up well.

Invaders from Mars (1953) Boy sees flying saucer land in his backyard, as another small-town takeover begins. There's a great tweed-laden, pipe-smoking scientist in this one, and expressionistic William Cameron Menzies direction and art direction.

Attack of the Crab Monsters (1957) Surreal micro-budget Roger Corman film of intelligent giant crabs eating victims, absorbing their minds, and talking like them. Yes, you heard me. This film is nuts. International group of various scientists in this one, male and female, plus some insane science.

Them! (1954) Arguably the best of the '50s "giant monster" movies. Worth seeing. Has the "old scientist," but this time his daughter is also a scientist. The man of action is an FBI guy, and of course he falls for her, though not really understanding her sciencey ways.

Plan 9 from Outer Space (1959) This is so well known of course, and the Ed Wood entry here. His unique dialogue makes it a must see, along with other charms like limited budget, crazy science, general wonderful, hilariously bizarre air and an unmissable childlike innocence. The language in this was a major inspiration in Larry Blamire's films.

The Giant Gila Monster (1959) Great example of the '50s teen sci-fi movie, complete with teenagers, songs, and hotrods, battling a giant gila monster that is played by a... regular gila monster.

Invasion of the Saucer Men (1957) Another teen film, this one a classic horrible-alien invasion. This one emphasizes teens vs. grown-ups/authorities (nobody believes the teenagers even though they're right).

Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954) The iconic '50s monster. Good example of the typical love triangle: often male scientist, male adventurer/military, and female scientist/assistant.

It Came from Beneath the Sea (1955) Stop-motion legend Ray Harryhausen made this underwater giant-monster film, and we partly include it because — hey, the title. This one has a touch of that triangle thing — female scientist, male scientist, military guy — though the male scientist is never really a rival for the scrappy navy guy who falls for the female scientist.

Giant from the Unknown (1958) Offbeat menace here (large conquistador come back to life!), but also some fun goofy interaction and dialogue, especially from the old scientist's daughter (whom the younger scientist falls for).

It Came from Outer Space (1953) This movie doesn't convey the level of threat we're seeking to emulate, but it carries special effects in spades. The jellylike cyclops creatures are what you think of when you think 1950s sci-fi. It's also set in the US heartland, so you have that blue-collar feel so common in the genre.

Journey to the Center of the Earth (1959) Not an alien invasion movie by any stretch, but the ideal example of a mismatched party of ne'er-do-wells. We have a gruff professor, his plucky apprentice, the financier, the rival scientist, and the silent lug carrying the bags. Their interplay brought me back to this movie over and over as a child and the various environs the characters discover can provide inspiration for many an alien setting. Crystal caves! Lava streams! Salty caverns!

Invasion U.S.A. (1952) This bizarre piece of propaganda is worth a watch just to see how the movie wants to slap you over the head for underestimating the communist threat. We assume the invasion in the title is the Soviets, but as they're only referred to as "The Enemy" in the movie, it could as easily be aliens. The cop-out dream ending (spoilers!) and warning message is awful, but for mood, this movie is worth a watch.

The Magnetic Monster (1953) Of '50s science-fiction features, this one is among my favorites. We recommend everyone watches it for Richard Carlson's performance as a scientific investigator (teamed with another, lesser scientist of course), and the mounting threat that to my mind, still stands up. The monster in the title is a radioactive device, and the danger is advanced technology in the hands of unprepared men, but there's no reason you can't adapt it to be a genuine magnetic monster.

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953) Considering this movie is damn similar to Godzilla, we think it holds up in its own right. You know the drill: nuclear tests in the ocean wake up (and probably mutate) a dinosaur-like creature. This time, it attacks North Atlantic shipping and later New York. What we especially like about this movie is the monster is more than a simple man-eater. It has a contagion in its radioactive blood. It kills hundreds by the conclusion! It even launches an attack on the Coney Island amusement park. The effects aren't brilliant, but the scope is.

Monster from the Ocean Floor (1954) This one has it all. A lead female. A male scientist (there were a lot of them in the '50s, many ex-Nazis). A glamorous location. A truly monstrous beast hiding in the caves. A horrifying amoeba creature! Watch this movie.

ARE YOU READY?

With all that excitement out of the way, it's time to get into the meat of this game.

- **Chapter One: Introduction** You're already here. Some say it's avant-garde to make an Introduction the first chapter, we say it's common sense.
- **Chapter Two: Archetypes** Here's where you first meet your playable Archetypes in full. The Survivor, the Everyman, the Mouth, the G-Man, and the Scientist all corner different features of popular B-movies and contain a plethora of options within. This chapter also details the Nemesis, Trademarks, and Tropes of each Archetype.
- **Chapter Three: Character Creation** Now to create your character! The Archetypes should give you a fair view of the different concepts available, but this is where you get to construct your character's past, present, and future, as well as defining their innate and learned abilities. Form relationships in this chapter, learn how to apply Experience to your character, and craft an interesting Path for your hero to follow.
- **Chapter Four: Skills & Attributes** Delving into the nitty-gritty of your character's traits, this chapter explains what the different traits on your character sheet mean. What is Might in the context of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** and what is Integrity? Here is where you find out and decide if you're going to allocate dots to those Attributes and Skills. Remember — the more dots you allocate, the more dice you roll when those traits are called into question.
- **Chapter Five: System** The Director will want to read this chapter to get a handle on how to run and play **TCfBtS!**. This chapter breaks down the basics of dice rolling all the way through to Complications on actions, Conditions for characters, and scenes involving clue-solving, drama, and death. The players should scan through this chapter after creating characters just to make sure they know the basics.
- **Chapter Six: Cinematic Powers** This chapter is a lot of fun. If you've ever wanted to insert a deleted scene to explain what your character was doing at a given moment, score points for coming up with a cutting one-liner at just the right moment, or explode with amazing Stunts when you succeed spectacularly, this is the chapter for you.
- **Chapter Seven: The Human World Invaded!** If you want a view of the world in which you're about to play, this is the chapter for you. This chapter provides a recent history, a take on current (1950s) affairs, and firsthand accounts from some of the humans living at this time. Of note, this world setting is the default, but Directors and players should feel free to alter it as they see fit. Think zombie Stalin is too

much? That's also good. Let the bastard stay dead. Take what you like and keep the rest in the book.

- **Chapter Eight: Threats** Here is your cornucopia of monsters, traitors, mysteries, and potential allies. A massive range of aliens and the humans who aid them are detailed within this chapter, some acting as brief teasers, others providing a lot of detail around which you can base an entire story. This chapter also contains the tools to make your own threats, stats for every alien provided, and a story hook for each critter listed. After reading this chapter, there's no excuse to not come up with a story idea for **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**
- **Chapter Nine: Playing Director** For new and established Directors alike, this chapter contains three useful resources: guidance on how to write and run a scenario; a toolbox approach to the setting of Delaware; and a full scenario set

in Hawaii (though it can be moved to any other area with a coast). Not sure what's in Delaware? You'll soon find out, as the Diamond State introduces a mass of potential stories, characters, and locations around which you can set a game.

- **Appendix One:** Here we have the list of Quips present in the Cinematics chapter, but easily locatable near the back of the book. This appendix is especially useful for players lacking a deck of Quip cards.
- **Appendix Two:** This is a helpful list of Stunts and Cinematics, stating their names, costs, and in the case of Stunts, the Archetypes to which they're attached.

Don't feel you have to read the chapters in order. Like aquatepillars, players are unpredictable and unruly, and we wouldn't dream of dictating what you read first. Instead, go for what appeals and circle around to the rest later.



I WAS A TEENAGE SHRIMP

Nyllon Tines' short stature did not seem to be helped by his motorcycle jacket, slick ducktail, or punk demeanor. He was still called "Shrimp." He smoked, skipped class, stole hubcaps, yet managed to be both insider and outsider at the same time: an unpopular rebel.

Except where Rosty Newlar was concerned. As an art major she was automatically fringe. Besides that, she was unable to express anything. But she dug Nyllon's scene. The most.

The troubled teen pondered life as he sat brooding youthfully on Holeport's moonlit pier. Something at water's edge disrupted his thoughts of hotrods and he snatched it up. A shrimp. Man, what a trip.

Naturally he did what any unpopular rebel would do. He took it home, cooked it and ate it. Stupid shrimp.

• • •

At school the next day Nyllon felt weird. Man.

"What's a matter, Shrimp? Eat a bad cupcake?"

sneered football hero Clack Foalgood whose entourage laughed in unison. Nyllon just skulked away.

• • •

That night, Nyllon and Rosty parked at the pier.

"Did you hear, Nyllon? Cargo of radioactive shrimp washed overboard, returning from atomic testing," droned Rosty.

"Don't bug me, Rosty."

"Hey look, high tide," Rosty observed blandly.

Suddenly, Nyllon felt weird. "I gotta split, baby."

Before Rosty could express disinterest, Nyllon disappeared into the night. Rosty stared for a full minute before asking, "What I do with your wheels, baby?"

• • •

Nyllon closed the door to his darkened room just the way his parents liked it. In the mirror, moonlight etched the barest hint of a sickening transformation beginning.

Clack Foalgood chuckled goodnight to his pals at the malt shop and started home.

"Gee, I like fun," offered the high school brain trust.

He always took the alley shortcut because he was large and footballish. That wouldn't help him.

The leather-jacketed thing hissed as creepy feelers emerged from the darkness, rapidly feeling Clack's meaty face, which made him cry like a little girl. It was the last little-girl crying he would ever do.

Headlines trumpeted the butchery: TEEN KILLED BY TEENAGE SHRIMP they screamed.

Rosty mentioned it to Nyllon who grunted, "Don't bug me, Rosty." He didn't remember a thing. Only that something strange happened to him

Like popsicles taped to a summer fence, Clack's jock friends went in succession Braugh Morkis, Heth Punner, Jimmy Waiver one with every high tide. In fact, papers started calling it the "High Tide Murders," though many stuck with the whole "Teenage Shrimp" thing.

But one night, as Nyllon and Rosty parked in their usual spot

"Hey, know what I just thought of? There's a Teenage Shrimp on the loose. And, like, your nickname's Shrimp. Crazy, huh?"

"Don't bug me, Rosty," sulked the rebel.

"Hey, Nyllon, how's come you all a time sneak off at high tide, why is that, I ask?"

"Knock it off, Rosty, ya' crowdin' me."

But it was happening quicker. Nyllon didn't have a chance to sneak off. Before Rosty's jaded teenaged eyes, her troubled boyfriend began to change. His eyes became beady and black and grotesquely extended outward on stalks, while disgusting twitchy-feely things too numerous to make sense of started springing out all over, until there was hardly any teenage face there.

"Hey. You're Teenage Shrimp," Rosty observed through a chewing gum snap.

"Yeah."

Just when it seemed everything was still cool, even Rosty showed emotion as loathsome feelers began stroking her face. It was too much, even for an art major. For the first time in her young life, Rosty screamed, though not a very good one.

Science teacher Jantine Nuthers, working late in the school lab, listened patiently to her student's traumatic tale. "Rosty, I'm just a high school science teacher, but it sounds like Nyllon might have eaten one of those missing radioactive shrimp and became a kind of wereshrimp, but at this point it's only a guess. However, if we can find him, I might be able to give him an antidote."

Rosty suddenly remembered it was the night of the big dance at the gym, an event not cool enough for her and Nyllon to attend, but something that would be lousy with jocks.

Sure enough, at that very moment, at the height of a particularly frenetic and dangerous version of the Twist, the dancers became aware of a new presence in the gym. A girl screamed. Then another. Soon, many girls were screaming, like it was a thing.

It took a while for the jocks to get that something might be wrong, but eventually one of them, Voy Danover, swaggered into the crowd to see what all the ruckus was. Like hamsters when an octopus is dropped in their midst, the crowd began parting, and Voy looked to the center of it.

There was the coolest Teenage Shrimp ever black leather jacket, jeans strutting forward while trying unsuccessfully to comb his feelers. Voy stood staring like a bear in a flashlight as Teenage Shrimp swaggered right up to him and let those disgusting little feelers have their way with his face. Voy screamed as he was stung numerous times. Then he dropped.

Suddenly, Jantine was there. "Nyllon, I just whipped up this antidote so if you could drink this that would be great. I know you can't help it, and none of this is your fault."

For the first time, they heard Teenage Shrimp speak, with difficulty: a tortured shrimp-like rasp.

"You don't dig me, Miss Nuthers I like like this whole shrimp scene."

Before he could attack her, Rosty sprang between them. "Hey, cool it, Nyllon. Okay?"

Teenage Shrimp wrestled with his fading humanity, though that's kind of hard to see when something looks like that. But police were filing in, and, with a brief glance at Rosty, Nyllon rushed them, only to be cut down in a hail of bullets.

Jantine comforted Rosty, as all watched Teenage Shrimp change back to Nyllon.

"Hey, look. It's Shrimp," said someone in the crowd. For the first time, Rosty shed a tear.



CHAPTER TWO

ARCHETYPES

"Oh, shoreside women, sure. But there's a whole new breed who feel they're just as smart and just as courageous as men. And they are! They don't like to be overprotected. They don't like to have their initiative taken away from them."

- Professor John Carter, *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955)

Five Archetypes exist in the world of *They Came from Beneath the Sea!*, each with their own role in the fantastic stories ready to be told, each with their own star-powered scenes waiting to play out, and each with their own selection of Tropes just waiting to be pulled into the fray.

In this system, Paths known as the Ambition Path, Origin Path, and Archetype Path form the core of a character. These are the elements that drive a character in a certain direction. The Archetype, as described in the Character Creation chapter coming up, is arguably the most important of all Paths in **TCfBtS!**. It helps define your character's actions, behavior, and standing within a group of heroes. When we watch movies, we quickly identify which characters fit the Archetype of Survivor, Scientist, Everyman, and the rest. We know the Survivor won't stop until she's beaten the aliens back to the shoreline. We know the Mouth will jeopardize everything for her Pulitzer possibilities. The Scientist may be more concerned with researching the fascinating aquatic menace, while the Everyman just wants to protect his home. Meanwhile, all eye the G-Man with suspicion, only to have the government stooge work with them at the end to vanquish a common foe.

Archetypes may be likened to classes, callings, or other character-defining classifications, but characters within each Archetype may differ hugely. One Survivor may be a grizzled veteran, fresh back from the Korean War and distrusting of any who haven't served. Another may be the last survivor of an iguanaid-attacked fishing trawler, with hundreds of tales to tell of his exploits on the high seas. One Mouth may be a plucky journalist with a way of getting into even the most secure locations, while another is an old gumshoe who's seen too much and has a dry quip about everything, but knows a clue when it's dropped in front of him.

Have a read through the Archetypes now to get an idea of the character you want to play. You'll make your final decision when you reach the upcoming Character Creation chapter. The Archetype you choose will be an intrinsic part of the game you play.

TEMPLATE BREAKDOWN

Each character template starts with a short piece of fiction demonstrating the kind of character likely to fall within that Archetype and general pointers on the people who might classify as the Archetype in question.

APPEARANCE

TCfBtS! is a game where appearances are important. Your character's look helps define them in this world, whether it's because their hair is always greased in a perfect coiffure or because they never take off their pancake-batter-stained apron.

LIFESTYLE

Likewise, each Archetype section highlights the kinds of lives each Archetype lives. Though many of these lifestyles are rose-tinted based on popular perception of the 1950s, these guidelines help form a character's Origin Path (see p. XX) when you've decided on their background.

CONNECTIONS

All characters start the game with a group connection, a contact connection, and an access connection, representing individuals and organizations with whom your character is linked. These are detailed in full on p. XX, but so it's all in one place, a list of sample connections appear here, too. Just pick a few of the examples from your Archetype's list for fleshing out once you reach the next chapter.

SKILLS

Suggested Skills are also noted here, for ease of reference, but receive further coverage on p. XX. These Skills are those ones your character starts with access to, for being the chosen Archetype. If you want to change your Survivor's Athletics Skill

to Culture because they're retired now but loves the local museum, feel free! These are only guidelines.

TRADEMARKS

Trademarks are the unique behaviors and actions for which your character is known. Trademarks can be assigned to an Attribute or Skill of the player's choice. Whenever the chosen Skill or Attribute is used in a way involving the Trademark, the associated roll gains two additional dice, and if the roll is successful, the player may gain Directorial Control over the scene (see p. XX). An example would be attempting to charm urchinfolk with a risqué dance, with the Trademark "Got the groove" linked to a Dexterity roll. Trademarks do not have to sound positive to be invoked in a positive way. "Loaf in the oven" could be linked to Athletics as an excuse to flee a scene, implying the character left the oven on.

TROPES

Tropes are special abilities, normally tied to the kind of dynamic features you'd see characters display in movies. Each character starts with three Tropes. Make a note of the three that interest you when you reach that section!

PERSPECTIVE

It would be lovely if we all got along, but the world just ain't like that. This section provides guidance on how a stereotypical Everyman may view a Scientist, how a Mouth may perceive a Survivor's actions, and so forth. Use them to inform the way you play.

NEMESIS

All Archetypes have a Nemesis. Whether it's fate, destiny, or an attempt to create a vaguely symmetrical system between protagonists and antagonists, each Archetype gains a die on specified rolls against a classification of alien Threat. Beware! Those same Threats gain a die on certain rolls against their human Nemesis, in kind. Threats are covered in detail in Chapter Eight.

EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

Each Archetype concludes with a handful of example characters, so if you're running this game tomorrow and haven't read it yet, do not despair: Just choose a selection of example characters noted in this chapter, and you're on track to a fun-filled game!

CREATE YOUR OWN ARCHETYPE

Do you have a character in mind who doesn't fit into any of the Archetypes profiled in this book? Maybe you like the idea of the Scientist's Tropes but don't find their assorted Quips entertaining. Perhaps the G-Man appeals to you as a concept, but the suggested Skills and example characters just hold no appeal.

Fear not! The Storypath System is incredibly customizable. To start, a player can easily take an existing Archetype and switch certain traits, benefits, and drawbacks with those of other Archetypes. You want to play an Everyman with a Mouth's

Nemesis? You go right ahead. It might even be fun to provide an in-story explanation for why that kind of alien has such a hatred for your Everyman. Likewise, if you see your Scientist as a grizzled veteran plugging away in a remote lab, all beard and sinew, maybe it makes sense to add the Survivor list of Trademarks to your Scientist's array of options.

Let's say though, that you're not interested in the present five Archetypes. You enjoy your 1950s science fiction but can't find an Archetype to match the alien collaborator you want to play as. Maybe you enjoy the damsel in distress role in a suitably ironic fashion, but don't see that character as a Survivor or an Everyman, and calling the damsel a Mouth just because they scream "help!" a lot seems insulting. Perhaps you want your character to be something a little more magical and mystical, drawing inspiration from faiths and beliefs you've researched or from some of the more exploitative (and frankly misguided) movies of the era. While none of these "Archetypes" fit within the current list, you can easily customize your own.

THE DRAWING BOARD

When considering the character's appearance, think of what's striking about your customized Archetype. When you describe them to people or imagine them in your mind's eye, what is it about their appearance that makes them shout "Conspirator!", "Damsel!" or "Mystic!", to use the previous examples. Perhaps the Conspirator is a shifty cat with a constant sheen of forehead sweat and an oversized suit. The Damsel might bear the clothing tears and skin scratches of someone who's always escaping from a dastardly foe. The Mystic could wear the ritualistic apparel of their station, complete with tattoos or occult paraphernalia in hand.

Lifestyle is a little more tricky, as it affects more than mere looks. The lifestyle you assign to your created Archetype needs to link to an Origin Path (see p. XX), but just as with the rest of Storypath, there's no reason you can't create your own Origin too. You may go for an Origin Path of Raised in the Wild, Silver Spoon, or even Abandoned at Sea to differentiate from the existing Origins, and then just need to assign Skills to them appropriate to that Origin.

Connections are a simple addition. All you have to do is consider the kind of people and organizations to which a character of your chosen Archetype might gravitate, and in turn, who might find this character appealing. You can use the existing suggested connections from any Archetype or expand entirely. Using a Mystic as an example, having a head of the local Masonic lodge, an exiled necromancer, and a wise elder as connections make for decent options, but the world is your oyster, as they say. Just ensure they fit your Archetype's theme.

Then we have Skills, which just requires you to look at the Skills available in this game and select the four that appeal the most to you. There will undoubtedly be crossover with other Archetypes, but that's fine! The suggested Skills for a Conspirator might be Aim, Larceny, Persuasion, and Science, while the Damsel could have Athletics, Close Combat, Humanities, and Survival. Does the Damsel sound too physical? Well, you justify how

this poor character keeps escaping capture attempts and surviving to tell the tale! You're creating this character! Meanwhile, Trademarks are simply a way for your character to express their Skills in ways that befit the Archetype, so a Mystic might have "done with showmanship" and bolt it onto their Close Combat, or the Conspirator could have "I feel the aliens' pain" and add it to Empathy.

Tropes are where you put on your working boots, because these in-game powers, while mostly mundane, require a little review before you start creating them wholesale adding them to your character. Consider running any ideas past your Director or the other players, or adapting existing Tropes from other Archetypes, at least to start you off. A Conspirator may have a Trope that enables them to use a secret radio and contact one alien threat of choice at any time, or at least until they get tired

of the character. The Damsel may always have a skeleton key on their person to escape from inconvenient prison cells.

Guess what, we're nearly at the end and you could have created your own Archetype! Perspective just informs us what the stereotypical version of your Archetype thinks of other characters, but is an excellent guide for roleplay. Your Nemesis is a section of the alien population. For this, we recommend the type of threat that best fits your character. The Conspirator matches well with alien Spies, for instance, as the Damsel does to Enslavers.

Now we finish off with example characters, and here, you're on your own. In this case, as you've created the Archetype, the example is your character! You're a pioneer! Now go save the world, or you know, pick one of the Archetypes we've already written up in full for your use and stop trying to break our game.

EVERYMAN

Carlos threw himself over the hood of the car, his overalls carrying him to the other side where he ducked behind the wheel well. His wrench clanged against the cement floor and he cursed it for calling attention to his position. He heard the squelch of the monster before he saw it, a wet slapping sound that caused his stomach to turn. The fiend rounded the corner, sniffing the air. He had to get out of here, and that back door was certainly dead bolted from locking up earlier in the night. There had to be some way he could get out of there. He scouted his surroundings and after some brisk calculations he knew what he had to do.

The mechanic opened the car door and got the beast's attention by giving out a holler.

"Hey you ugly schmuck! Come and get me!"

Carlos dove into the car and grabbed the shift, throwing it into reverse. The anuradon howled, shattering the passenger window and crawling through. Carlos quickly turned the ignition, weighed down the pedal with a car jack, and jumped back. With a roar rivaling the beast's, the car flew backwards, smashing through the garage doors and onto the neon-lit boulevard.

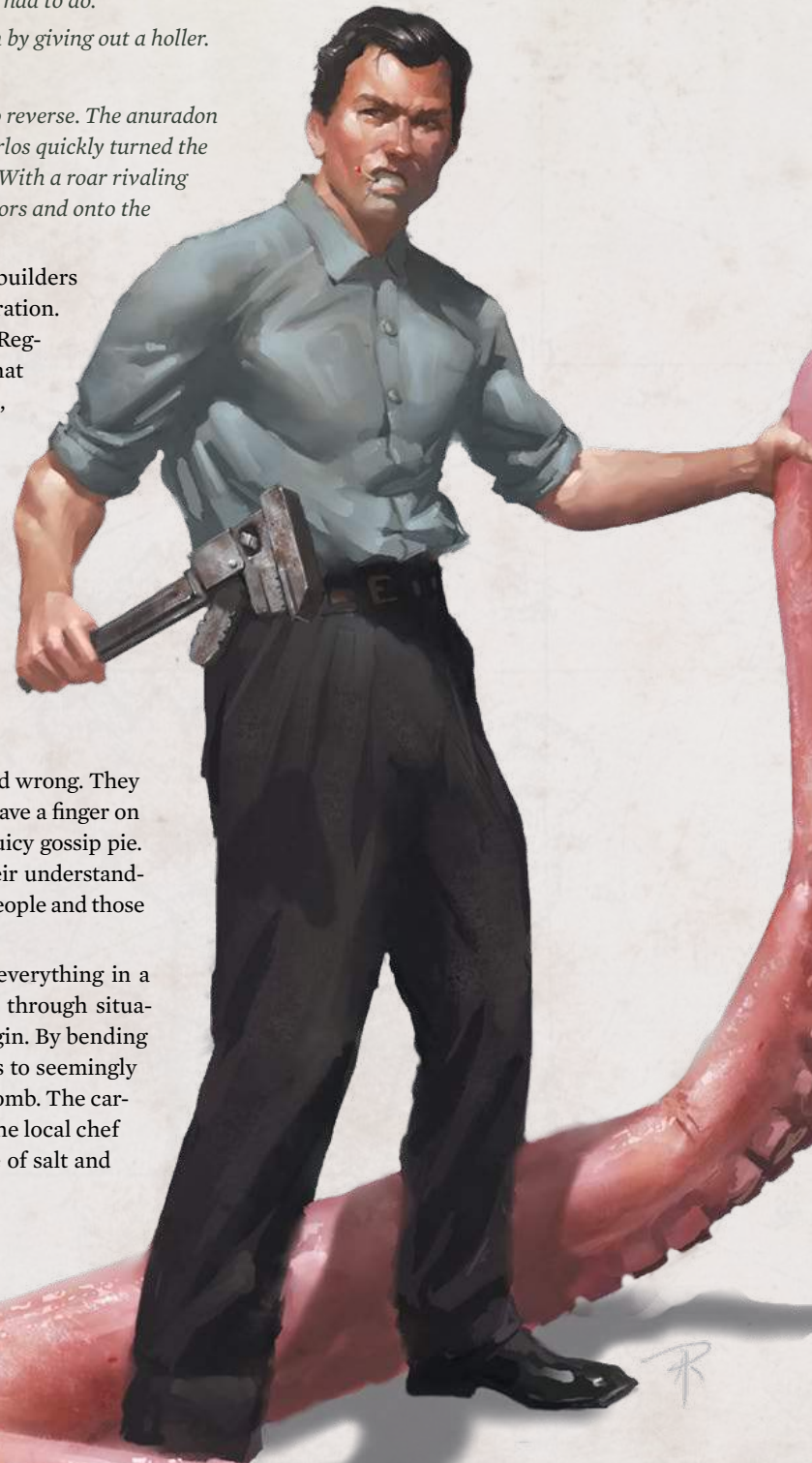
There is strength in the status quo. These are the bridge builders and the dreamers of dreams. The mothers and fathers of a generation. The workers, teachers, forgers, janitors, housewives, creators. Regular, everyday salt-of-the-earth folk who are each expert in what they do every single day. Though it may be perceived as mundane, there is strength in repetition and routine. You would be downright amazed at the expediency in which that knowledge could become weaponized against a threat trying to take over the world. There is something to be said about wanting to just keep things the way they are. Everymen have a lot of problems with change and transition. They would prefer to keep things stable and centered, potentially resorting to extreme violence to protect their sense of peace.

Being an everyday kind of folk also has some underlying issues. While these people have wonderful lives they are willing to defend and fight for, the routine also has the negative effect of building bias on what their morals recognize to be right and wrong. They just know how people should live and how they shouldn't. They have a finger on the pulse of the community around them and a thumb in every juicy gossip pie. These preconceived notions of how people should live shade their understanding of others. Their naivety overshadows their understanding of people and those with jet-set lifestyles.

That being said, there are benefits to knowing just about everything in a microcosm. Everymen can easily maneuver or creatively jump through situations that others wouldn't have the foggiest idea on where to begin. By bending this advantage to their will, they can build unorthodox solutions to seemingly impossible odds. The gardener can create the perfect fertilizer bomb. The carpenter can build the best barricade against an aquatic menace. The local chef knows the perfect way to make tentacles squirm with a mixture of salt and a well-placed blade.

APPEARANCE

Everymen dress how they believe they should be perceived. Dress for the job one does and the



job will come easy, right? Or they could at least fake it until they make it. They may be in a homemaker's dress with an apron, they may wear overalls covered in oil, or they may be clad in a folding hat with a fry cook uniform. Uniforms of every kind, steamed and starched, adorn everyone from the student to the subway conductor. Everyman appearances depend on what they do to get by. More utilitarian than anything, Everyman characters don't really wear anything too fancy or too brash. Everything has a purpose, after all.

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle and occupation go hand in hand and make the Everyman as they are. Schedule is as essential to them as the day in, day out, clock in, clock out, movement of life. Routine provides the Everyman their purpose, if not their joy. While they predominantly fall within the middle class, Everymen range widely socially and financially depending on how they eke out their existence. Remember, the depth and breadth of their occupational skills defines them. They range from dinner parties with the neighbors on Sunday to a meeting with their local secret society during the week. Everymen become deeply immersed in community-building activities such as book clubs, cooking classes, PTA meetings, and neighborhood watches. Their desire to build up networks of people comes naturally, as family and culture sustain the Everyman.

The Everyman way of life connects deeply to the suburban lifestyle prevalent during this era. Folks try to keep up with the Jones family next door. It's all about that new kitchenette or the grill Bob Laszlo the Mattress King got down the street. The sweeping excess and ease of buying household appliances fuels this race to be the best on the block.

CONNECTIONS

Everyman connections lean toward pillars of the community and everyday faces around town. Some Everyman example connections include:

- Factory Worker
- Local Shop Owner

• The Mayor's Wife

- Sports Enthusiast
- Union Representative

SKILLS

An Everyman's four associated Skills are typically diverse, defined by their role in the community or chosen profession. Recommended Everyman Skills include **Aim**, **Culture**, **Larceny**, and **Technology** as examples of the broad array of Skills an Everyman might possess.

TRADEMARKS

Everyman Trademarks tend toward dogged persistence and homely behavior, as their desire to protect home and hearth comes through. Some Everyman example Trademarks include:

- Momma Bear
- Jack of all Trades
- I Can Fix This
- I Am the Manager
- General Strike!
- Got the Groove
- Loaf in the Oven
- Get off my Land!

The Trademarks of the Everyman stem from their calling and specialize in their passions. There's a mother who takes care of all the neighborhood children during the summertime. When the watery threat comes to her doorstep, her home is her kingdom and she will defend it and its inhabitants with righteous power. The Union organizer who is ready to support her peers in their sacred rights of production with dignity will also fiercely defend her steel foundry and those same workers with a rousing word of support.

TROPES

All characters start play with three Tropes, with the Everyman's player choosing two from the Everyman list, and one from any of the other Archetype lists:

GRIT AND DETERMINATION

You never let not knowing a thing stop you. With a little grit and determination, you can rise to the challenge. Roll one extra die on actions that are outside of your character's Archetype.

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

You've been through your fair share of industrial accidents. You know exactly what to do in an emergency. Roll one extra die to shake off indirect damage, such as fire, radiation, or gas.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

You've learned that people respond best when you just lay it all out, even if they don't want to hear it. Gain +1 Enhancement to shifting attitudes in a social situation if you tell the complete truth.

AN HONEST DAY'S WAGE

You aren't rich, but you seem to always have money on hand and ready whenever the situation requires it. You can always bribe incidental characters, or pick up whatever gear or items you need as long as it makes sense. The Director is the final arbiter of what makes sense.

I DON'T GET PAID ENOUGH FOR THIS

Sometimes the situation is just not worth what you are getting out of it. You can declare "I don't get paid enough for this" to have your character immediately leave the scene.



PERSPECTIVE

Survivor: Hospitality is in order here. Hun, could you warm up the leftovers for our visitor?

Scientist: Anyone going to use their brains to make our lives better is a-okay in our book! I mean, these are the same folks that made that brand-new microwave oven we're hearing about!

G-Man: We're good tax-paying folk like the rest of our town; just don't be coming around here, meddling in our business.

Mouth: Somebody's got to tell us what's going on out there, and they always dress so fancy. I love watching the news after a hard day.

Aquatic Threats: I've got no personal issue with them, you understand, but they should go back where they came from.

Terrestrial Threats: It's easy to see how they've gotten so misguided. Things are a lot more confusing and busy these days.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

You always have the right tool on hand. Need a lock-pick? You've got it. Need a specific wrench? You've got it. Need a very specific set of interlocking gears to get the machine back up and running? You happen to have that, too. Few barriers can stop your character because of this.

PICKET LINE

You've worked the line before, and you know what it takes to crack a company. Roll one extra die on actions in which you lead others against an opponent more powerful than your group.

APPRENTICESHIP

You're a good teacher and everyone says they learn best from you. You're always willing to show someone else how to do a thing, even if they already know how to do it. Roll one extra die on actions where you perform a task while explaining to another character how you're doing it.

ELBOW GREASE

Sometimes things get stuck, or are just hard to move. But you know that a little elbow grease goes a long way. Just give it a good hard twist, and it should come right off. Add +1 Enhancement to Might actions to force something, but take an Injury when you do.

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE

It's easy to ignore what you don't want to know about, and that helps you remain inured to horrific truths. Roll one extra die to resist mental or social influences.

NEMESIS

"After the war those things just started coming up from the water everywhere. No one was safe. Those ones that think they're owed the world are the worst. Like God didn't put us here first. Somehow, they know exactly where we are. Let me tell you, it was never like this before the bomb. Plus, they don't even have the decency of paying taxes or being good hard-working citizens. What a nerve."

Primordials are the bane of the Everyman. These monsters tear down the perfect world these types of characters build up by insisting the humans are merely tenants. The Primordials are the landlords.

Primordials serve as a reminder that progress won't save humanity, when godlike ancient creatures have remained unchanged for millennia and will still come to rule. This sticks in the craw of the Everyman. There shouldn't be a limit to human endeavor, especially after the regression of terrestrial warfare. It just isn't fair. These warped things haunt the dreams of the Everyman, perhaps because they closely remind them of their own darker desires. Aquatic beasts living off means of their own, no masters to which to humble oneself. True freedom from the work of their own hands.

Everymen gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Primordials.

Primordials come in many shapes and sizes. They wish to absorb or put down humanity with minimal effort, reasserting themselves at the top of the food chain or social ladder. While some humans pity these aliens, their oppressive demeanor eventually takes precedent over the weak emotions of humans. While their arrogant behavior often builds instant resentment in humankind, they know they must become the masters. Primordials would rather show humanity its weakness of will, convincing the species to just give up now.

Primordials gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Everymen.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

A mechanic and father of three defending his family from the menace of the sea.

Big Jack Poke is a simple man with simple interests, dedicated to working hard and protecting his family. Ever since his wife disappeared in a freak yachting accident, he's been the sole breadwinner and carer for his three kids, and is seen as a gruff and burly fellow to outsiders, where his children see him a cuddly bear.

Known for his full beard and thick arms, Jack knows how to intimidate aquatic horrors and swing a wrench with a purpose. He will stop at nothing to keep his community from danger, even if that means putting his own life on the line.

A housekeeper with a side hobby of collecting and shooting antique rifles.

Sally Bostwick is known in town as prim, proper, and maybe even a little uptight, but when she gets out onto the range or starts discussing the topic of her precious antique firearms, her veneer drops and she becomes the warmest person anyone could know. When she's not firing guns and excitedly talking about firing pins and carved stocks, she's maintaining the most expensive houses around town. She has an eye for cleanliness and security.

Recently, she discovered a bizarre, unexplained trail of slime leading from the drain in one of the houses she looks after, leading all the way outside and into the woods beyond the property. She feels inclined to pick up one of her guns and do a spot of hunting.

A teacher who will do anything to defend the children in their care.

Alia Soomekh is new to town, but has formed an instant bond with the children in her care. She's worked hard to earn the community's trust, as a recently arrived migrant, but small-town xenophobia has steadily eased away as families admire the dedication she shows toward teaching their kids. Alia pays keen attention to radio broadcasts regarding invaders from the sea, and has started teaching her pupils how to decode messages broadcasted at sea, so they can stay one step ahead of the alien menace. Some children have talked about these decryption lessons with their parents, starting a rumor about Alia being a retired spy.

In truth, Alia has no history in the intelligence services, but is fascinating by cryptography and secrets. She strongly believes there's something mysterious out there waiting to be uncovered, and the possibilities of what the mystery could be excite her like little else.

The secretary to the local branch of the National Guard.

Iain Lazarides keeps his head down and types fast, pretending to drown out the conversations taking place around him and act as if he's never there. It's a superb deception, as most members of the local National Guard wouldn't be able to identify Iain in a line-up.

A small man, but incredibly cunning, Iain's been collating a whole file of information regarding the world's watery threats, and is just waiting to find the right newspaper he can sell it to. As time goes on though, he's feeling the increasing burden to take action and use this intelligence for good instead of profit.

The four-star chef whose restaurant overlooks the ocean.

Bernita Washington runs the most exclusive restaurant in town, with reservations required months in advance, and only the finest ingredients added to her plates and bowls. The recent shortage of shellfish and calamari has troubled her, given her main stock-in-trade is the serving of fine seafood to upper class diners. Bernita's restaurant employs its own fishing boat, but after weeks of small catches, it hasn't returned to dock. Now she's getting worried. Her livelihood is on the line, and it's only a matter of time before some steakhouse moves in and shuts her restaurant off the map.

The small-town detective searching for the cause of all these missing pets.

Aloysius Warren is an old fella and a practiced detective, but these days he's more interested in taking his pension than hunting down killers or breaking up criminal networks. Perhaps that's why he finds himself happily tracking down lost pets. It's a slower pace of life, or so he thought.

At first he wondered if some dognapper was operating in town, but now he thinks the creatures are drawn to the shoreline, and being snatched away by something unknown and vicious. He finds himself shelving his slippers and cardigan and polishing his shoes up again. It may be time for Aloysius to once again defend his hometown.

G-MAN

Agent Green walked up the hill and looked down on the sleepy hamlet. Mist slowly trickled down the hill and into the valley, flowing into the canyons between the perfect row by row houses and out into the seaside.

"This perfection is what we protect. This is what we won from the war. Such aesthetic wonderment" Green mused. She lit a cigarette, quickly, precisely, a silly superstition held over from the war. But it did save soldiers on multiple occasions. Sometimes superstition had moments of validity. She slipped the zippo into the breast pocket of her suit and squinted at the whitecaps. Her watch seemed to tick so much louder in the quiet of the evening. Reports said it would be any minute now. What will it be this time?

The light came before the sound, a crack like lightning as the tanker coasting through the bayside exploded. A few moments later the stench of diesel came to Agent Green upon the wind that rustled her sandy brown hair. The wind from the ocean swirled the leaves and cigarette smoke as the target began to uncurl itself from the sea. It was larger than the reports stated, to Green's dismay. It soared into the night sky and just as quickly slammed down past the beachline into one of the well-manicured lawns, throwing up dirt and sod in a rain of debris. A car shredded like a piece of paper and a fire hydrant exploded into a geyser. The tentacle finally sagged to a halt, crushing in a roof on one of the perfectly built homes. The scar across the land must have been at least a football field long. A drag of a cigarette later the radio in the car crackled to life.

"Move in."

Flicking the smoke, Green got into the car. The line of black sedans drove into the mist and down into the now scarred, not-so-perfect little town.

G-Men are a varied bunch. The men in black, surveyors and protectors of the realm, government cronies, all this and so much more describes some G-Men. At other times, they're county sheriffs, dedicated cops, or simply government bureaucrats who know too much. For the most part though, these agents work to protect the world and the people around them. Perhaps for power, perhaps for the honor or duty, and sometimes because it was the only job in town. Because of their skill set, they really have no other option to work for anyone else. These people defend and build the world they live in from the shadows. This is for multiple reasons, but mostly because the normal population may not agree with their methods. Sometimes someone must do what others are not willing to do.

To be a G-Man you must give, expecting nothing in return. This comes at a hard price to the agent. It may be the forgetting of oneself so they may perfectly fit into the area under their protection. It may be walling off their emotions so they can only think in a rational and logical way. It may be never falling in love or having family. Only





PERSPECTIVE

Survivor: Most of them would make excellent contacts. Build relationships with them and keep them on the path.

Everyman: They are the reason we do what we do and they can never know that.

Scientist: Knowledge builds rebellion. Keep them happy and in the dark.

Mouth: They will say anything we want if we pretend to be their source. A valuable ally, a worse enemy.

Aquatic Threats: The public can never know the truth about these menaces.

Terrestrial Threats: They should be made to answer directly to the President. See how they hold up then!

through sacrifice can one build a perfect world. The G-Men know this deeply.

APPEARANCE

There is something to be said about a nice pant suit or three-piece. There is also something to be said about a well-pressed military or police uniform, a polished sheriff's badge, or a car branded with the town's logo. These things command respect and power. Darker tones are the mantle of the G-Man's attire, if they work for the Bureau or other intelligence services. Perhaps this is some sort of recognition of the more shadowy corners and headspaces they reside in or the stain on their spirit from some of their work. This could also be the projection of the armor of intimidation and raw force they wield. Other, civic-focused G-Men likely wear a uniform for which they're known, maybe including a hat and a sidearm.

G-Men fit in perfectly in their communities. They do barbecues, they go to church, they visit the mall. You can't just roll into your local grocer in a perfectly tailored suit or your lawman's get-up every Saturday; people would begin to ask questions. Semi-formal wear like polos and slacks are perfectly fine for a G-Man or a proper house dress works as well. After all, they are just "normal" people.

LIFESTYLE

G-Men do occasionally laugh and are known to have a good time. It helps build camaraderie and lighten situations. They just have to be cognizant that at any moment they need to be ready to act. This level of tension builds strange routines with G-Men. They may keep things they believe they need within arm's reach, such as guns, a bug-out bag, essential documents, or simply a pair of good sunglasses.

G-Men also get themselves into rather precarious situations to better their agenda. It is well known that G-Men go undercover to deal with dangerous situations. A

G-Man may become the quintessential housewife to slow-track and destroy an alien infiltrator. Another may project herself as a simple groundskeeper that at night roots through im-

portant documents to get knowledge on the enemy. These tricks are all part of the work of a G-Man.

CONNECTIONS

G-Man connections are sometimes informants or colleagues, and at other times authority figures from the city or the floor you do not visit. Some example connections include:

- Coffee Shop Waiter
- Local Law Enforcement
- Secret Agent
- Shadowy Cabal
- Tech Specialist

SKILLS

A G-Man's four associated Skills prepare them for conflict, understanding the average Joe or Jane, and enforcing their governmental word. Recommended Skills include **Aim**, **Humanities**, **Integrity**, and **Pilot**.

TRADEMARKS

G-Man Trademarks often revolve around the confidence exuded by these characters, or their need to conceal the truth. Some G-Man example Trademarks include:

- This is totally my pay grade
- Ma'am, please step away from the alien
- License and Registration, please
- It was a dark and stormy night
- Cut through red tape
- Badge and Gun
- Just a small-town boy
- Nothing to see here

G-Men Trademarks center on efficiency, justice, and protection. They can easily flip over a system of bureaucracy and make it cry uncle. They can persuade the average citizen of a town there is nothing to see here and they should all just go back to the comfort of their own homes. They can even provide kind aid to a new

widow whose husband was just devoured by a strange half-crab, half-starfish creature running around the local fishery. When it comes to making things work smoothly in whatever capacity they see fit, G-Men know where and how to grease the wheels.

TROPES

All characters start play with three Tropes, with the G-Man's player choosing two from the G-Man list, and one from any of the other Archetype lists:

SHADOW CONSPIRACY

You aren't paranoid if you're right. Your shadows have skeletons and your conspiracy is deeply ingrained. You can inflict a level 2 Complication on someone else's action. If they do not overcome it, they are embroiled in one of your shadow conspiracies.

DISAPPEARING ACT

You've been trained how to lose a tail, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. You can disappear into a crowd as small as 10 people and somehow lose any tail that might be following you.

THAT'S ABOVE MY PAY GRADE

Working for the government taught you how to tell people no. You can declare "That's above my pay grade" to deny someone attempting to force your character into doing something you don't want him to do.

REDACTED

You have a healthy stock of correction fluid and black markers at your disposal. You've learned how to prevent paper trails before they even become a concept in some poor tax adjuster's mind. Anyone attempting to investigate you or your friends must overcome a level 2 Complication. If they do not, they get false information.

I'VE GOT A FILE ON THAT

You do, and it has all sorts of really useful information. Declare retroactively that you investigated a specific situation. Gain +1 Enhancement to relevant rolls just like you had gained a clue.

SUNGLASSES

It's all about the look. Gain +1 Enhancement when interrogating someone.

NIGHT-VISION GOGGLES

Everyone in your office has a pair of these. They come in handy in the dark, otherwise they are just kind of bulky and weird. Roll one extra die to take actions in the dark.

AN INSIDE JOB

It's been you this whole time! In a scene in which your character isn't present, you can declare that your character is actually masquerading as another, minor character.

HAND-TO-HAND TRAINING

Your combat training includes hand-to-hand, knife fighting, garrotes, and probably at least some basic target practice. Roll one extra die when fighting in hand-to-hand combat.

THIS WILL SELF-DESTRUCT...

You've got a really cool gadget that is absolutely suited for this specific job. And to boot, after you've used it, it turns into a one-time explosive that you have no control over.

NEMESIS

"I know they are here in this town. You can just feel it when you've been doing this as long as I have. I mean, I don't want to sound paranoid, but those seahorse people, dammit, they just have those abilities to get what they are looking for. Whatever the hell that could be. Bastards, I don't enjoy suspecting every Tom, Dick, and Harry of being a damn alien. Suspecting pinkos is bad enough."

While most G-Men enjoy a good challenge, they hold a certain alien as a higher threat than most. This type of alien is classified as a Spy. Paranoid by nature, G-Men hate these beings for their ability to shapeshift and blend into the community. This undermines the general acumen of the agents as they must always second guess the person with whom they are interacting. While citizens are willing to help in investigations, these fiends will actively destroy work that G-Men do.

G-Men gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Spies.

Spies find G-Men fascinating. Not only do they covet their hoards of knowledge and intelligence, they are terrified of being the reason why their civilization falls. This fear builds itself into tiny little psychoses that G-Men carry around like a crab carries a shell. Even if Spies fail at their mission they know they push G-Men into self-destruction.

Spies gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against G-Men.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

The veteran police officer who is too old for this nonsense.

Alan Burr is the oldest hand in the precinct, and over his long years has earned the respect of his colleagues and ire of criminal elements throughout town. He knows how to read the shifty eyes and uneasy gait of the felon, and has more confirmed arrests than any other cop in the state. He's only a week from retirement, which is why these apparently random coastal attacks are so vexing. He doesn't like to hear of any innocent manhandled, but to be manhandled and left draped in seaweed? Not on his watch.

The deep cover agent who took on another life to find the enemy.

Katie May wasn't her name a few years ago, but a lot has changed in the last decade. She was employed by the government (or more or less threatened with arrest if she declined) to spy on her communist friends. Begrudgingly, she agreed to do so, working both sides so her friends could stay out of jail while the intelligence services could feel satisfied with the little information she provided.

She performed the task so well, the bureau then deployed her to study "counterfeit people" in a small town she'd never heard of. To her horror, these imitators were human-sized crabs in synthetic skin! Now on the run from these crab people, Katie's changed her identity more than once.

An agent who lost all semblance of humanity to crush any threat.

Victor Lob doesn't remember everything about the last few nights, except there was blood, screaming, and a lot of cleaning up. Now he smells like fish-sticks and he's not sure why.

Victor was sent to this coastal community to provide security advice to the military base personnel. He remembers giving a few lectures, meeting with the scientist-in-chief, and generally feeling unimpressed with their underground dock leading to the sea. Something happened when he escorted a team of security staff to the cavernous opening. He remembers a glowing light, radiant people, and him screaming as he lashed out to protect his fellow humans. Now it's a question of piecing together the mucky puzzle.

A young beat cop fresh out of the force who got their first job in a sleepy fishing village.

Jeremy Hasselbladd has all the pluck and vim of youth. His desire to combat crime and make his community happy and safe is matched only by his innocence and love for his little dog, Pockets. He doesn't know why he was sent to this village, when the two cops already there seem to have everything perfectly under control, but he knows better than to question authority. For now, he wants to make friends, impress people with his dedication, and take Pockets on lots of walks along the shore. He loves his new home, and he's pretty damn sure it'll love him soon enough.

The city council member who knows the ins and outs of their entire town.

Marlena Bube is a far from straightforward individual. She wants what's best for the town, but can't help but interfere in everyone else's business. She claims the privacy and security of the residents is of utmost importance, but wants to know every secret and whispered piece of gossip on the street.

Marlena is voted in for her council position again and again because everyone's afraid of what she might say if she had the time on her hands to speak openly about every indiscretion, every scandal, and every romance with a gilled creature. Oh yes, she's heard about how some of the fishermen row out at night to meet mermaids. She just doesn't know whether it would be better to keep it a secret or let the entire town know.

The town sheriff who just wants peace and quiet so he can read his newspaper.

Oliver Dunn left the big city after the incessant fast-paced crime took its toll on him. There was no grand tragedy, no partner killed in action or innocent caught in the line of fire. Oliver was just tired, and wanted an easier life. He moved to this small coastal town to put his feet up and protect people in a simpler, less onerous way.

Now of course, some fish people have got it into their heads to start causing panic and mischief about town, so with a sigh, he puts his boots back on, his newspaper gets folded away, and this sheriff once again rides out to meet the bad guys.

MOUTH

"I have never seen anything like it folks; we don't know what it is but we'll get you the coverage here on ACB news." Marty adjusted his hat as a police officer pushed past him onto the destroyed lawn. Bill, his camera man, gave him a thumbs up and smiled, mouthing "scoop of the century!"

"That's right folks, this is Marty McConnell here for ACB news covering this monumental event here on Elm Street. What some are calling a sea monster has landed here right in front of the Thomas household and caused massive devastation to this sleepy little subdivision. There seems to be some sort of activity coming from the bulbous appendage!"

"There, now, there is something moving within the tentacle. What is going on with this glorious wonder of the sea? There seem to be openings growing on the side of the massive beast. I wonder what is going to happen folks, are they communicating with us?"

All at once, slime and blood splattered over the crowd as laser beams shot out from the tentacle, annihilating some of the police officers that were holding back the pedestrians.

"Holy smokes, let's split, Bill!" The reporter and his cameraman ran down the street, holding on to their hats.

Whether a struggling actor looking to make a mark on the screen, a plucky journalist looking for a scoop, or an amateur with a notepad and pencil wanting to chronicle the moment aliens invaded, Mouths are those who march into the beast's maw just to ask if it has a quote.

Most Mouths are reporters of some kind. The power of the Fourth Estate is monumental across the world, though whether they serve propagandist or free information aims depends on the journalist and newspaper. Either way, what they say changes minds and worlds. The press keeps people informed and claims to tell the truth. On a constant pilgrimage for the core of the enigmas in the world, Mouths work hard to be on the spot with information, and to keep people informed and safe. Knowledge is power and power is better in the hands of the many.

Naturally, with great knowledge comes great responsibility. A Mouth must provide information to the general public even if it puts them in harm's way. Quite frankly, it often does, as Mouths try to get right into the action without any way to truly defend themselves other than their guile and charm. Some do it out of a genuine belief that others need to know these things, while the rest do it just to get their face and name known.



APPEARANCE

Let's be honest, people like to look at beautiful things and as they like to live in the public eye, most Mouths are beautiful. From the 9 o'clock news anchor to the Johnny-on-the-spot with the gossip, it's easier to get people to tell you stuff if you look important or professional. They are second-rate actors that never made it big in Hollywood, so they settled on being the star of their hometown. Because of that, most Mouths wear fancy-looking outfits or at least pull a comb through their hair from time to time.

Most Mouths also hustle for significant periods of time during their "day." They may work 14- to 17-hour blocks of time chasing the next big scoop. They try to look as professional or glamorous as they can while also bringing extra sets of clothes that may help them get into restricted places or just provide general comfort. Never underestimate the power of some good makeup.

LIFESTYLE

Mouths take whatever they can get. A Mouth isn't going to pass up a free meal with a local politician or a home-cooked meal from someone they are interviewing. Their fast-paced lifestyle leaves very little room for rest or relaxation. So, they take wherever they can find whenever they can find it. Mouths are thankful for the generosity of strangers or even friends. Anyone that helps others is solid in their book. Their transient lifestyle generates a perpetual life in motion. This can be gratifying on the psyche of the Mouth. Because of this, most have some sort of safe haven that is theirs and theirs alone. A lake house, a nice office, or a discreet bungalow, perhaps. These places of respite provide a nice base of operations for a Mouth to look for new stories or avoid the public, while piecing together events into a cohesive storyline.

Most Mouths are social butterflies; it's just part of the job. You can't interview people if you keep making them feel awkward. Yet because of the nature of their job, the humans with whom they interact can become nothing more than commodities. They skim across the surface of civilian lives and then move onto the next story of tragedy. This sometimes makes Mouths cold and distant, not apt to build deep, lasting relationships with other humans in case they are the next front-page victim.

CONNECTIONS

A Mouth's connections often work in the same field or come from the ranks of fans. Mouths are likely to draw a following for their actions, meaning they can leverage information from their connections. Some example connections include:

- Camera Operator
- Local Celebrity
- Newspaper Editor
- Political Pundit
- The Mayor

SKILLS

A Mouth's four suggested Skills almost all revolve around manipulating and charming others, or getting away with tricky deeds. Recommended Skills include **Command**, **Empathy**, **Larceny**, and **Persuasion**.

TRADEMARKS

Mouth Trademarks often involve their outspoken nature or investigative drive to reveal the big story to the world. Players can create Mouth Trademarks or choose from the following list.

Some Mouth example Trademarks include:

- You're hearing it here first, folks!
- I would rather trip over my own lips than say something bad about somebody, but...
- This just in, sky is blue, water still wet, more at 11
- Cannot tell a lie
- Creative narrative
- Perfectly shot
- You won't forget me
- Sly wink to the camera

Mouths use their Trademarks for one thing more than anything else: to better disseminate the story. How they go about that is up to the individual Mouth, but it is still the main impetus for their Trademarks. This may be by jury rigging a television station together after an alien attack or getting to the newspaper department just in time for the morning press. Mouths use their gumption to make sure citizens are well informed with whatever they deem necessary.

TROPES

All characters start play with three Tropes, with the Mouth's player choosing two from the Mouth list, and one from any of the other Archetype lists:

SPOTLIGHT

You thrive when you are the center of attention. It may annoy your friends, but really, you are just that good. Roll one extra die when you are in the front and center of the action.

SHOW STOPPER

You've got a signature move that really blows people away. Gain +1 Enhancement when making that move.



PERSPECTIVE

Survivor: Have a drink with these people whenever you can. They love talking and we love listening.

Everyman: They tend to fabricate stories to build their lives up to something of worth. But, every now and then, they get it.

Scientist: Some things I just don't want to know.

G-Man: How can you trust one of Hoover's men? Keep an eye on them so they don't nick your notebook.

Aquatic Threats: What I wouldn't give for an exclusive interview with King Clam...

Terrestrial Threats: I'm not sure what's worse; their treachery or their refusal to buy our papers.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

You're willing to immerse yourself in the situation to get the raw story. You're also pretty good at not getting too wrapped up in it. Good for you. Roll one extra die to gather information.

SHOUT-OUT

You're the kind of actor that can't help but call back to your previous roles. Good thing you remember everything you've done, because no one else really does. Roll one extra die when performing an action multiple times in the scene.

MONOLOGUE

You give a monologue and people love you for it, or maybe they hate you. Move everyone's social rating up or down one step after listening. You can use this Trope once per Session.

MORE MONEY THAN SENSE

You have so much money you literally don't know what to do with it. But, you do know that most of your problems can be solved by money. You can end any scene by throwing money at it (literally or figuratively).

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ME

You're used to people trying to get their hands on you. Police who don't want you around, fans who don't understand boundaries, or exes who don't understand "no." Roll one extra die on defensive actions.

THE MISSING CLUE

After rolling to gather information you automatically gain an additional raw clue. If you somehow already have all the raw information you need about the situation, it turns into a question-and-answer clue.

CATCHPHRASE

You have a catchphrase people recognize. Your catchphrase replaces one of your Quip cards, and is never

shuffled back into the deck after use. After you've used your catchphrase once, the next time you use it the scene does not become Award Winning, but you still gain the die bonus to the action.

PRESS PASS

Your press pass is like a golden ticket. You flash it around and people let you into all the craziest places. You can get into anywhere, even if the press wouldn't normally be allowed. That thing is pretty handy.

NEMESIS

"Nobody, and I mean nobody is going to tell me what I can and cannot tell people. Those glowing bastards are hypnotizing people! They force you to say stuff. What, is this the alien form of fascism? Those squishy, sparkly scum deserve to be dragged out into the light for what they do to the human race."

A Mouth's purpose is to be loud and out there. Enslavers force Mouths to use their power against their own species. Reporters find these aliens to be particularly malicious, using their own talents against the people they serve. Anything that has the power to take away the free will of others and manipulate people to their whims needs to be destroyed first, with a biopic written later. Mouths resist this manipulation with every inch of their being.

Mouths gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Enslavers.

Enslavers love the charismatic nature of the Mouths. These perfect human specimens somehow entrance other humans to go along with their plans and aspirations. It is a formidable weapon for Enslavers when they could either subjugate humanity with heavy losses or instead just get one good Mouth in the right place and then get massive swaths of population under their control.

Enslavers gain one additional die on all social-based rolls made against Mouths.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

Local newsy desperate to move onto the big city.

Avril Lachance had big dreams as a little girl. She always wanted to write a story that would show up in one of the national papers. She'd snoop around the neighborhood, asking inconvenient questions about gossip and rumor. She'd interview shopkeepers and dog walkers, just looking to find the big break she wanted. Her tenacity saw her employed to the local paper when she left school, and didn't end as she became lead editor. But now she feels she's made a prison for herself.

Avril knows everything there is to know about the people and places and stories of this town, but she knows so little of the world beyond. She wants to sink her teeth into something new. Fresh not just to her, but her world. The little girl with the urgent desire for answers never went away, and now it fuels her every waking moment.

Neighborhood gossip who noticed some people are just a little too perfect.

Joel Kincaid's a quiet guy, for the most part. Some call him a curtain-twitcher. Others say he's a peeping tom. Whatever he is, he stays out of sight, out of most people's minds, but is always watching. On those rare occasions he goes to the local bar or diner, he always has a new story to tell, about this indiscretion in that house, about how someone's got a promotion or lost their job, or about how he doubted those fishermen were declaring their entire catch to the union.

People have grown tired of Joel's stories, which is why he's finding life so frustrating right now. Nobody believes what he's telling them about crabs posing as people, their personalities changing, their productivity increasing, their walks turning sideways. He's desperate to be believed, and may have to take drastic steps.

Picture-perfect news anchor who wants to be taken seriously by fellow reporters.

Emma MacCabee has developed something of a fan club and something of a professional resentment, the former cultivated by members of the public who trip over themselves due to her looks and manner on-camera, the latter from her colleagues for the exact same reason. Many people are the local news station resent Emma for her looks and following, which is the same reason so many viewers tune in to her segment of the news broadcast.

For her part, Emma has grown to detest her image as "picture-perfect news anchor" when all she wants is to report well on thought-provoking news pieces. There's more to her than a pretty face and comforting manner, but she struggles every day to get people to take her seriously. What she needs is a big story, and she thinks she's found one.

Citizen reporter looking into a local government cover up.

Josie Langley has no professional credentials as a journalist or investigative reporter, but by gum, they know when something is rotten in the political system of their small town. A natural inquisitiveness and friendly relations with key players at the town hall has led Josie to believe the mayor is concealing some shady dealings taking place down at the docks. At first, they believed some kind of weapon smuggling was taking place, due to the toolled-up appearance of a lot of the fisherfolk recently. Then, they suspected there was a clandestine hunting party going out onto the water, due to the size of the harpoons they saw strapped to old Jed's boat.

But then Jed disappeared and the fisherfolk dispersed. The hunt, smuggling, or whatever was going on, just stopped. Nancy took their questions to the mayor, but was told to keep their nose out of it. Since then, they've not been allowed inside. Nancy smells a rat. Or a rotting fish.

Celebrated news journalist who is faking stories.

"Hooch" Atward was a wartime journalist, and a damn good one. He followed the American army as they landed at Normandy, documenting campaigns across France and Germany. He even spent a little time in Italy, his stories always well-researched and well-received. Civilian life just didn't work for him. Back home for nearly a decade now, he's found the excitement of the front is lacking, no matter where or what he attempts to write about. It was his boredom that first led to his inventing fiction about the governor's wife. He never intended for his tale to get out into the world, but his editor saw it, loved it, and published it without his knowledge. The newspaper sold record numbers that day. Atward was confused but excited, and started creating new fantastical stories. Due to his credentials, the public lapped them up! Whether writing about extramarital affairs, gangland killings, communist spies, or alien invasions, people trusted his word.

Just yesterday, he saw what he believes to be a real alien, and now he's utterly terrified. Should he write about it, interview it, or back the hell away? This could be a chance to prove any of his naysayers of the last few years wrong.

SCIENTIST

The tubes bubbled and spewed frothing smoke as Professor Stack whirled around her laboratory, her white coat whispering as she desperately performed calculations in her head. She knew she only had to find the right connection. She knew there must be something, some vulnerability, some way to make the invasion stop. She walked over to the blackboard and began writing equations.

Stephen whined in the corner, watching her “Come on Stack, we got to get back to the car and get out of here!”

She turned on him, not hiding her disdain “Go, if you’re so afraid, just go, but know that I’m not going to abandon my town.”

“Come on sweetheart, you know you can’t do anything to save this place and I’ll be damned if I leave my lady in this mess.”

Stack walked straight up to Stephen and slapped him across the face, chalk dust billowing from the strike.

“Jeepers Stephen, I’m not only a lady, I’m a goddamn scientist! Pull yourself together!”

The scientific method: hypothesis, experiment, gather data, repeat. Over and over, scientists experiment and question their reality on the quest for knowledge and to understand the unknown. These plucky gatherers of wisdom use their discoveries to protect and defend humanity in its time of need. But their quest for understanding can get them into deep trouble. After all, curiosity did kill the cat.

Who doesn’t want to be recognized for their hard work? Scientists spend most of their time in thought, working on the next big project or doing advanced calculations no simple layperson could dare understand. Many see Scientists as over the top, spewing jargon or connecting strings of thought aloud in a mess that only makes sense to them.

Many Scientists are considered “mad” by those not of the profession, particularly in this time of invasion from the seas. Certainly, they are the only Archetype to exist that doesn’t react with a mix of fear and hatred when first confronted with some of the awful creatures slithering up the shoreline. Scientists feel compelled to study these creatures, in some cases ordering capture missions for research and dissection, in worse cases wanting to get to know the creatures a little too well, so as to understand their technology and methods.

APPEARANCE

Science is an unforgiving mistress and it often takes special tools and clothing to do proper work. Sometimes, one needs a radioactive suit or a lead vest. Sometimes, one needs to carry miles of tubing over one’s shoulders. Sometimes, one is covered in gargantuan squid blood. It happens! In the mundane world, Scientists try to wear what is fashionable at the time but the randomly exploded pen or chalk dust gives quirks to their appearance. Thick glasses and pocket protectors abound while lab coats always do look so fashionable. Tweed coats and conservative skirts cover up the raw talent and monstrous genius under the surface.





PERSPECTIVE

Everyman: They just go along, day in and day out, never questioning their true abilities. They resemble lab rats more than people.

Survivor: To be able to distill their resolve, bah, I would be a billionaire. Instead we must guide them away from their demise.

G-Man: I mean, they aren't so bad, right? They do provide us funding after all...

Mouth: Without them we couldn't get our discoveries to the people who need them. They are walking scientific journals, just not as exciting.

Aquatic Threats: Must resist urge to join them...

Terrestrial Threats: Not that I would join them. I mean, look at these cowards and turncoats!

Scientists are also apt to more liberal styles of dress outside of their career. Why would simple clothing styles have any bearing upon their fantastic minds? They often push the boundaries of style, from beatnik black berets and sunglasses to fantastic patterns that catch the eye. The world is full of beauty, why not help it along? The oddest Scientists clad themselves in the iridescent costumes worn by some aliens, of the opinion that the aquatic threat introduces more than death to humanity: They bring fashion!

LIFESTYLE

Scientists are guided by their wonder and curiosity. Their lives reflect this in myriad different ways. There are those who become part of grand hobby organizations, enriched by the ability to practice both a craft and social nuance. Perhaps they join lodges of town secret societies where they are able to debate esoteric mysteries of hard science and traditions passed down by so-called ascended masters. Maybe they are just really into leading their Girl Scout troop that meets in their basement on Tuesday evenings. Whatever the case may be, Scientists enrich their lives through progress and experimentation.

A facet of this experimentation is testing the boundaries of the human mind, body, and spirit. Scientists are fond of enjoying speculative medical advances to boost their existence. They may personally test alien technology or relics upon themselves or loved ones. They are even known to recreationally smoke the occasional cannabis cigarette to entice "greater cognitive function, man." They draw the line where cannabis may induce communist thought, however.

CONNECTIONS

Scientist connections are often in position of power or servitude, as the Scientist lives and dies based on lab assistants and generous funding. Some example connections include:

- Former Student
- Government Researcher

- Grant Approval Processor
- Lab Technician
- Materials Provider

SKILLS

A Scientist's four associated Skills often revolve around fields of academic learning or obscure trivia. Recommended Skills include **Culture**, **Enigmas**, **Medicine**, and **Science**.

TRADEMARKS

Scientist Trademarks often accentuate the eccentricity or assumed intellect of the Scientist, as their knowledge and study of the alien threat comes through use of Skills. Some Scientist example Trademarks include:

- Mental gymnast
- The smartest person in the room
- Surgeon General
- A taste for danger
- High blood pressure
- Force of nature
- Streams of jargon
- Seeing beauty in horror

Scientist Trademarks compound pure force of will with the unhinged mind. When left to their own devices, Scientists can forge information into something as sharp as a blade or as deadly as a bullet. When one combines unwavering will to live with the ability to literally bend the laws of reality itself, you are in for a good time kicking fishy tail.

TROPES

All characters start play with three Tropes, with the Scientist's player choosing two from the Scientist list, and one from any of the other Archetype lists:

WEIRD SCIENCE

You aren't even sure what it does. Roll one extra die on actions when you are using an alien device (weapon, console, medipack, etc.), even when you lack any familiarity with it.

MEDICAL GENIUS

It's a good thing you're a doctor, otherwise treating your friends could do more harm than good. Roll one extra die when treating another character to remove an Injury level.

OUTSIDE FUNDING

You can get some pretty big-ticket items with your grant, but there are limits to what you can spend the money on. No to trash bags, yes to laser death rays.

ATOMIC POWER

You have a single item that is nuclear powered. When used in combat it has the Deadly tag. Otherwise, it provides +1 Enhancement when used for its specific function.

PHYSICS NEED NOT APPLY

You know all there is to know about physics, which means you know also that sometimes it just doesn't work the way we think it does. Roll one extra die when choosing to defend against incoming attacks.

BREAKTHROUGH DISCOVERY

You've made a breakthrough. It could be a new medical technique, or a new way of punching aquatic aliens, but it's all your hard work. Gain +1 Enhancement when using your discovery.

WITH MY BEAR HANDS

It sounds like an experiment gone wrong, but in your world, everything is all right. Roll one extra die on all Might-related rolls.

THAT WAS ONLY THEORETICAL

You're a scientist, everything has a proper place in the world. Natural laws don't just break because some alien says they do. You refuse to believe what you see, which seems to help. Ignore one alien power used on you each scene.

I JUST NEED A SMALL SAMPLE

The biological agent can be reverse engineered to provide an antidote/cure/poison/really anything you need it to do. All you really need is a small sample.

EUREKA!

You're really good at putting clues together and figuring out the bigger picture. Gain in-depth understanding of a clue once a session.

NEMESIS

"Nothing makes me more worried than those darned thaumocs. You'd think beings who survived the crushing weight of the seas would be more civilized. But no, these beings want nothing more than to get at my stash of plutonium or steal my new prototype railgun technology. I mean, don't these ruffians have their own scientists? Jeez, stop stealing my work. I have to worry about that enough at the university."

Scientists make perfect targets for Invaders. Scientists have the proverbial "keys to the kingdom" in most places of high science or governmental facilities. Because of this, they draw the ire of these monsters due to their easy access to world-shattering technology. This peeves off Scientists ever so slightly, as they just want to get on with their work.

Scientists gain one additional die on all social-based rolls made against Invaders.

Invaders have a delightful symbiotic relationship with the humans who practice the craft known as "Science." These creatures love to observe and then steal destructive technologies from Scientists, using the humans' weapons against them. They find Scientists incredibly valuable as servants, willing or not. Invaders find a quick application of pain makes Scientists susceptible to acting to the Invaders' whims.

Invaders gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Scientists.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

A nuclear physicist concerned with the destruction of all humanity.

"This goes against the laws of physics," is what Walter said as he tested the device a beachcomber discovered fewer than five miles from his present location. A weapon capable of emitting a heated laser discharge, hot enough to cut through metal, yet with none of the components or power sources one would need to achieve such a feat.

Walter Wadcock spent days analyzing the weapon, testing it, breaking it down and reassembling it, and trying to replicate its effects. While the device itself worked perfectly, all his own devices made to work in the same way failed miserably. It took a letter from the president, instructing Walter to close down his lab and send all research to the FBI, for the dotty old professor to realize what a danger a weapon like this — or multiple weapons — could do in the hands of the wrong people. Now he's split between destroying this laser gun or finding someone responsible to take it on.

A high school chemistry teacher and football coach who hits the weight room in their off time so they can think more clearly about chemical equations.

Tam Chiappa is far from your regular high school teacher, with a mind excited for chemistry classes and dedicated to the pursuit of physical fitness. Her pupils always seem a little confused: will she deliver a lesson in a tracksuit today? Maybe she'll try and teach the hockey team about fusion? But however she works, she's well-loved as an eccentric but affectionate member of the faculty.

Tam has been performing some tests on the chemical contents of the seawater at different points along the local coastline, recently, believing it would make for a captivating lesson if the pupils can take a run along the beach and take some samples for themselves. To her surprise, she's discovered something very strange about the water near Caravan Cove, and what it might mean for the town.

The physicist using the laws of the natural world to defend others.

Colin Lassiter was a weapons researcher during World War II, but these days he lives a quieter life in a lighthouse, keeping the shipping safe while writing a memoir he expects he'll never release. He's never been able to pull his mind away from his contributions to the United States' nuclear weapons programme, and how his involvement contributed to the deaths of so many innocents. The trauma has forced him back to his roots, to the study of hydropower, wind power, and other natural sciences. For some reason, they give him comfort.

His solitude recently came to a close when he spotted a vessel approaching the rocks not far from his lighthouse. The ship wasn't one he'd ever seen before, and when it collided with the chalk cliffs despite his warnings, he was the first on-scene to check for survivors. He found nothing human in that craft, but many aliens.

Now, possessed of renewed purpose, believes humanity can turn the power of water against its inhabitants. He believes that rather than poisoning the world with biological and nuclear weapons, we can use the elements to devastating effect. Swiftly, he finds himself falling back into that profile of a man prepared to sell his soul to weaponize the world.

The ocean biologist working hard to find a way to destroy the briny threat.

Catherine Reeves didn't expect anyone to believe her when she told them what she came face-to-face with in her submersible cage, the other day, but still she tried to convince them the waters were no longer safe. She pleaded and begged, but still they went out on their luxury yacht and paid the price. She was only down there to study schools of fish, but when she saw the tentacles and the mouths, she knew whoever disturbed this beast would soon become lunch.

Now Catherine wants to take her observations to the top, if she can. She's trying to find a government bureau that might actually believe her word, as a respected biologist, that this creature just should not be, and if it grows any more, it could pose a serious hazard to all humans who take to the water in these parts, along with international shipping.

So far, only Catherine's kids seem to take her word seriously, even her husband laughing off her claims of underwater monsters. She grows close to despair, and needs a friend fast.

The radiologist studying the effects of radiation on marine plant life.

Nigella Ziegler accepts that part of the current situation is her fault, but quickly reminds people she was just a part of the team that mutated the seaweed that came to life and strangled the congressman. Yes, she led that team, but she was still only a part of it. They all had time to say irradiating temperamental seaweed was a foolish endeavor, but she only ever received encouragement.

Now, Nigella's in a tricky situation. The seaweed is growing at a dangerous rate and has consumed a good quarter of the town, absorbing all the moisture out of everyone and every thing. She's one of the few remaining scientists left (the rest have been weeded), so there's pressure on her to reverse the process that led to the attack of the killer seaweed.

SURVIVOR

Marline pushed her last patient into the day room, wheeling him around and bending down to examine his eyes.

“Earl, no matter what, no matter what you hear. Do not open this door. Do you get me, you old coot?”

He stumbled over his words, spilling out a “yes, ma’am” as the nurse closed the door, a hand on the handle, the other holding the shotgun. Her white uniform contrasted with her dark skin, now both speckled with the light green ooze that spewed from the creatures outside. She spun on her heels, peering through the darkness after hearing the monsters cough and sputter around the corner. It screamed out, and an echoing chorus of calls came from somewhere else in the hospital. They knew where she was and they were most definitely coming.

Marline stood tall, adjusted her nurse’s cap and cocked the shotgun.

“Visiting hours are between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Get the heck out of my hospital!”

She aimed and fired, the flash of the muzzle reflecting in the slime.

Not everyone is cut out to be a Survivor, and not everyone should be. These citizens may have started out as normal, run-of-the-mill humans, but they have experienced something horrifying and transformative. In **TCfBtS!**, sailors gain their “sea legs” from often traumatic situations arising from the horrors of the deep, the same goes for Survivors. Through war, torture, or just general hard living, these battle-hardened people are ready for anything. The problem is when one lives in a world of planning and continuum, they generally fail to witness what’s going on right in front of their noses.

Survivors are a bastion of good will toward their fellow humans and show it through their sacrifices and offerings. Quick with a smoke, a joke, or a toke, these ragtags go the extra mile to make people feel like they can make it. Through speeches, warm meals, a weapons arsenal, and the occasional pained hug, a Survivor knows how to rally the troops to a resounding victory or through the loss of a defeat. Ever the one to keep pushing forward, a Survivor can make or break a mission through tenacity alone.

Survivors are often surly and curmudgeonly types. Apt to look at the glass as half empty, Survivors have a penchant for gallows humor and wry quips. They may have even lost their sense of humor completely, wandering social circles aimlessly as they spew out puns and flat one-liners. Nevertheless, they do have the charisma to rile up a group with newfound determination. Their willingness to push forward into danger for the betterment of themselves or the whole of humanity is an example in the fight against a slimy menace.

APPEARANCE

Survivors often feel tired and this obviously sours their expressions. They have the common excuse of “I’m fine,” “I just couldn’t sleep last night,” or “damn it, why are you so worried about me?” when asked about their dour demeanor. They have been through a



and that takes a heavy toll on their physical form. Slumped shoulders or bags under the eyes are just as apparent as any apparel. Their clothing is always functional and effective in aiding their designated missions. Depending on their mental state, some Survivors may appear disheveled, worrying more about the next threat of the unknown than their own appearance or the modern styles. Others may cover up their general malaise with flashy, bright garb, tattoos, or obtuse jewelry such as old class rings, signets, or medals from those army days. This, combined with their overwhelming charismatic air, tends to ward off probing questions with even more uncomfortable answers. Plus, who doesn't love a good rousing story told by a lovable oddball?

LIFESTYLE

Survivors range from over-the-top bon vivants to hermits living on the margins of society. While some may swing into the bombastic, experiencing life to the fullest and never giving up a second of existence, others may be living out in their shack on the edge of town eating beans out of a can. Survivors vary wildly in this regard. Some may drink pots of coffee to cover up their restless sleep filled with nightmares of previous threats. Others may sit whittling sticks and drinking away their pensions at the local bar. A few throw lavish experiences for others to try to forget about the pain of living. It really depends on their demeanor and how well they deal with life's challenges over the years.

CONNECTIONS

Survivor connections tend toward those who have been through the mill and endured to come out the other side. Some Survivor example connections include:

- Conspiracy Theorist
- Group Therapy Leader
- Military Veteran
- Self-Defense Trainer
- Weapons Dealer

SKILLS

A Survivor's four associated Skills are likely to be those that assist a character in combat or in withstanding trauma and adversity. Recommended Survivor Skills include **Athletics**, **Close Combat**, **Integrity**, and **Survival**.

TRADEMARKS

Survivor Trademarks usually reflect resistance and aggression, as their trained ability in fighting back against adversity assists them in the direst of situations. Survivor example Trademarks include:

- Built like a brick outhouse

- Diamond-hard emotions
- I ain't afraid of no fish
- Is that all you got?
- I'm beginning to think you don't like me
- Up my sleeve
- Put a sock in it
- This isn't going to happen again

These Trademarks provide Survivors with an edge over the competition. Anything that will give them a leg up is useful. They don't have to be phrases; a sarcastic smirk or tip of the hat may seem more appropriate for a linked Persuasion roll, or a bag of tools left in the back of your old pickup truck could assist with a linked Technology roll. Whether the random contraption, sack of knick-knacks, or grating personal facet, these things all help the Survivor survive to the end of the day.

TROPES

All characters start play with three Tropes, with the Survivor's player choosing two from the Survivor list, and one from any of the other Archetype lists:

LAST MAN STANDING

You're used to watching your friends take hits, but you keep going. When determining Injury bonuses, you can use the Injury bonus of whomever is the most wounded on the team.

BEEN HERE BEFORE

This place looks familiar, and you're sure you know how to get around. Once per game session, you can declare that your character has been in a place before, and come up with a plausible story as to how. Gain +1 Enhancement to all actions taken while there.

SPECIAL CACHE

You are always prepared for whatever may come. No matter where you are, you can declare that your character has a cache of weapons or gear nearby that happens to have the exact item she needs in it.

GRIZZLED VETERAN

You are more familiar with your weapon than with your own husband. When you take this Trope, pick a weapon that is your character's signature. Anything that resembles your character's signature weapon gains the benefit of this Trope. Roll one extra die when using that weapon type.

SEEN TOO MUCH

You've been through a lot and seen more than most people do in a lifetime. Few things shock or strain your disbelief anymore. Roll one extra die to resist mental or social influences.



PERSPECTIVE

Everyman: We do what we must to help these hapless dolts. It's no fault of theirs they haven't experienced what we have. Quite frankly, I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

Scientist: They get us the knowhow to do our job and the tools to do so. Bless 'em.

G-Man: Well, I mean I trust the government and all, but, well they just sometimes rub me the wrong way.

Mouth: Eyes in the sky! These folks are hard at work keeping us informed. Just don't tell them anything you don't want out in the open.

Aquatic Threats: I don't care for their reasons. All I know is I've been through this once before, and I'll be damned before I let other humans suffer what I've suffered.

Terrestrial Threats: Those traitors. Those goddamned traitors! They're worse than the Reds!

VOICE OF REASON

When everyone else is freaking out, you remain calm and collected. When you come up with a plan that everyone agrees to, give everyone in the party +1 Enhancement on a single action of their choosing while enacting the plan.

SECRET BUNKER

Going to ground is your specialty. You have bunkers and safehouses all over. No matter where you are, you have a safe space to fall back to in a time of need. You cannot be followed there.

I'M NOT DEAD YET

You aren't necessarily prone to dramatics, but you don't know how to admit when you're down and out. When your Don't Forget Me Injury is filled, you gain an additional action with all the same bonuses before triggering a Death Scene.

SHAKE IT OFF

You grew up in a world where the hits keep coming, even when you can't take them anymore. You've learned how to shrug when you take a hit and keep on going. Roll one extra die to shrug it off after damage is declared on you.

WITH MY BARE HANDS

You work best with your bare hands, preferring to get down and dirty rather than use some flimsy tool. Roll

one extra die to any action in which you are attempting to use just your bare hands with no tools or weapons.

NEMESIS

"Listen here sonny, I didn't go fight the Nazis from '41 to '45 to get obliterated by these here fish men. I saw what they did to the west coast and it's worse than the Blitz. They have to be stopped!"

Because of the Survivors' fierce independence and grit, they tend to get ornery with beings bent on destruction. Couple this with a monster trying to destroy all of humankind and all bets are off. When it comes to the aliens classified as Destroyers, Survivors will go to any extent to vanquish this menace and vice versa. Survivors didn't get this far to have some waterlogged, upset fish try to make them give up the ghost.

Survivors gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Destroyers.

Destroyers despise survivors for their unwillingness to be destroyed. As far as they're concerned, it's not too much to ask for humans to just lay down their pathetic will to go on living and accept a good vaporization. Because of their dismay at the human lack of desire to be, well, destroyed, they lash out at Survivors with an unmitigated ferocity.

Destroyers gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Survivors.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

A veteran working hard to get his new life in order and forget about the horrors of war.

Gunnery Sergeant Halbert Chu suffers awfully from vivid nightmares, calling back to his time fighting in the Pacific Theater of World War II. When he was discharged in the late 1940s, he swore he'd never raise another fire another bullet. The sounds of gunfire and explosions still terrify him, every loud noise bringing flashes of traumatic memories to his mind.

Unfortunately for Halbert, the war isn't quite done with him. Recently, a former comrade-at-arms, Corporal Whittingstall, came by his house and though he made nice with Halbert's family, soon broke down when the two were alone. He explained how the members of their platoon have steadily fallen prey to an aquatic assassin looking to take revenge for some of their wartime activities in the Pacific. Regretfully, Halbert finds himself looking to the rifle above his mantelpiece.

The nurse who has seen too much of the evils people can do to one another.

Natalie Heinz is an old hand in the nursing game, working in hospitals across multiple cities and treating everything from influenza to gunshot wounds. She's had to smile and make nice with families guilty of abusing a relative in the bed beside them, and tell children their parents the horrible news of their parents' death. There's no human trauma she's not witnessed on the front line of intensive care.

This experience might jade some people, but not Natalie. She is so tired and angry at the suffering in the world that she's taken to offering free treatments to those who can't afford it, and rarely holds back in judgement at the worst perpetrators she encounters. She's not going to take it any more, and wonders how long it'll be before she smashes her fist into a face or knee into a crotch.

A hobo wandering the American southwest in search of a long-lost friend.

Johnny Kitano has been without a permanent home for years, but for a man like him, it's no great sacrifice. Johnny's always loved to wander, to feel the railroad beneath him, to experience new towns and cities, and sleep while looking up at the stars. It can be a painful, hard existence, and often is, but Johnny believes it's worth it if his journey ends with his finding his friend Buddy Guy, who disappeared years ago.

Once upon a time, Johnny and Buddy were fast pals, walking the road together and sharing a tin of soup over an open fire. They shared life stories and the warmth of their bodies when the nights cooled down. Then, Buddy vanished. Johnny's only clue was a map he found in Buddy's things, indicating he was heading to California or Texas, and a note that reads "beware the squid!"

A child running from an abusive sibling.

Charlie Brinks experienced an appalling upbringing, their parents often neglecting Charlie and their siblings, school not even considered for such a low income family, and fresh food and water a faraway dream. To compound matters, Charlie's oldest sibling and self-appointed head of the house while mom and dad were out who knows where, is a horrible bully whose activities have driven Charlie to run away from home.

Charlie would have struggled out on the streets within days, if not for a mysterious friend who drops off food and clothing for them whenever they're asleep. Charlie has no idea who this individual is, except for the occasional smell of the sea that accompanies their gifts.

The musician who busks out a living on the mean streets of a major city.

Carlos Ramirez knows what it is to live from hand to mouth, but he never lets the grind get him down. He loves his music, loves bringing a smile to the faces of passers-by, and always tips his hat when someone's kind enough to throw a handful of coins into his guitar case. Once, long ago, he was being courted by a record label. That dream fell apart when he knocked out the studio head for insulting his heritage. Since that time, Carlos has never looked back.

Carlos' preferred styles are upbeat and romantic, and has a lot of interest in these upcoming rock and roll artists. To his surprise, he's been invited to play for the fisherfolk down at the docks, as according to them, the fish with schools near land calm down when they hear his singing.



TUMULT OF THE ATLANTOIDS

The man from the Federal Bureau of Dams stared at the dam with the eyes of a man born to stare at dams. Cods Hairigon had seen breaks but this took the cake, with extra frosting. Split as by a giant axe, flooding tons of water below. The fifth dam in as many weeks, which was exactly five.

The helicopter landing nearby no doubt carried Dr. Karsly Morbin, the prominent damatologist he was waiting for.

"I'm Dr. Karsly Morbin," said the woman who got off.

"You? What does a woman know about dams?" sneered the FBD agent.

Karsly smirked, hand on hip. "It may surprise you to know the first dam was invented by a woman in 1142 BC." She gazed down at the wreckage. "Someone knew what they were doing."

"Sabotage, doctor?"

"Does a beaver give a dam, Mr. Hairigon?"

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For while, the pair used science to determine how it was done. But the only science working for them was *chemistry*.

"If I'd known all damatologists were like you, I would've busted one myself," murmured Cods.

"Mr. Hairigon, please, you'll raise my floodwaters," teased Karsly, before correcting him. "There's no such thing as a damatologists. That would be stupid."

"I can't think of any more dam lingo," Cods admitted, moving in for a kiss. But an urgent radio call stopped him cold.

• • •

Soon, Cods and Karsly found themselves staked out at famed Hooterscroft Dam where strange things were reported. Suddenly, a humming, fish-shaped flying saucer with jagged dorsal fins flew over and shot a ray straight down the center of the dam, creating a crack. Before Cods and Karsly could react, a torrent of water was unleashed.

"I wish we could have done something, but who expected a flying metal fish?" observed Karsly.

"No one ever does," replied Cods grimly.

The duo quickly hopped in a car and pursued the fishcraft to a secluded field where it landed. Using their good friend caution, the very recent lovebirds crept up to the silent vessel. As they neared, Cods pulled a gun.

"Is that really necessary?" asked Karsly.

"Unfortunately, history says it is," growled the FBD man, "But ask me again after I shoot something."

Suddenly, a door opened in the shiny craft. With the briefly shared glance of people who don't care, Cods and Karsly said goodbye to old man hesitance and entered.

Electrical dials were everywhere, along with levers and knobs, plus a very nice desk and chair, some really neat charts, and a big futuristic television screen.

"Hey, they have TV," noticed Cods.

"It's like something from outer space," uttered the damotologist.

"Don't talk crazy, Karsly, if you can help it," frowned the dam man that loved her.

"Or should you say *inner space*?" came a pompous and obnoxious correction.

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The couple who entered looked human but were garbed like aquatic space people, heavy on fins and capes.

"I am Phishaphus," announced the haughty male.

"And I am Aquana," purred the female.

"Oh, how we pity the minds of the hopelessly ungilled," offered the male with unmasked condescension.

"Ungilled?" perked Karsly with scientific interest. "You speak in puzzles, and I confess I've never had the patience, except for tic-tac-toe."

"Puzzles only to your land-mind. We are Atlantoids, descendants of Atlantis who ruled Earth when you were in diapers."

"It is my talking-turn, Phishaphus, for we are equals where we come from," stated Aquana. "Our plan is simple. Destroy all your dam blocks."

"You mean our dams," corrected Karsly. "Blocks are for children." She shared a glance with Cods who appreciated her clever backhanded insult. God, how he loved her.

"That is what I said! Your dam blocks. And when all your continents are flooded, only we will survive! Behold!" Aquana lifted her hair, proudly displaying working gills.

Cods and Karsly gasped as one, for they were that close now.

"People? People like fish?" It was obvious the scientist's thoroughly scientific mind was having a problem grasping the concept. Cods took her hand because it was there.

With completely unnecessary theatrical flourish, Phishaphus pulled a lever and the craft took off.

"Surely, there's room for all of us, Aquana," reasoned Karsly, hoping to reach her, woman to woman.

"Save your breath, Karsly. We'll need it underwater," jeered Cods.

The craft plunged into the sea. Soon the gill-woman gestured to the big screen, again calling out her favorite word, "Behold!"

Cods and Karsly gazed at the wonder of several small, rundown, domed underwater buildings that looked reasonably interesting.

"Is that Atlantis?" asked Cods.

"Yes! Yes, of course it's Atlantis! Fool! Remarkable fool!" hollered Phishaphus shrilly.

Seeing the land people were unimpressed, the gilled alien worked controls and the fishcraft burst out of the sea into the air.

"Even now we near your largest dam block," gloated Phishaphus.

"It's just dam, why can't you get that?" insisted Karsly.

"You know, you creatures are tough to reason with," growled Cods. "Are you as tough with your fists?"

"What are fists?" asked Phishaphus as Cods punched him, and the two erupted in a fight. Not made for onboard fisticuffs, the fishcraft lurched. Karsly went for the controls, but she was headed off by Aquana, and now they struggled.

The fishcraft was heading straight for a mountain. Cods turned from his fight with Phishaphus to call to Karsly. "Look, emergency parachutes! Guess even Atlantoids need those! Try to put one on!" he yelled as his opponent landed a punch.

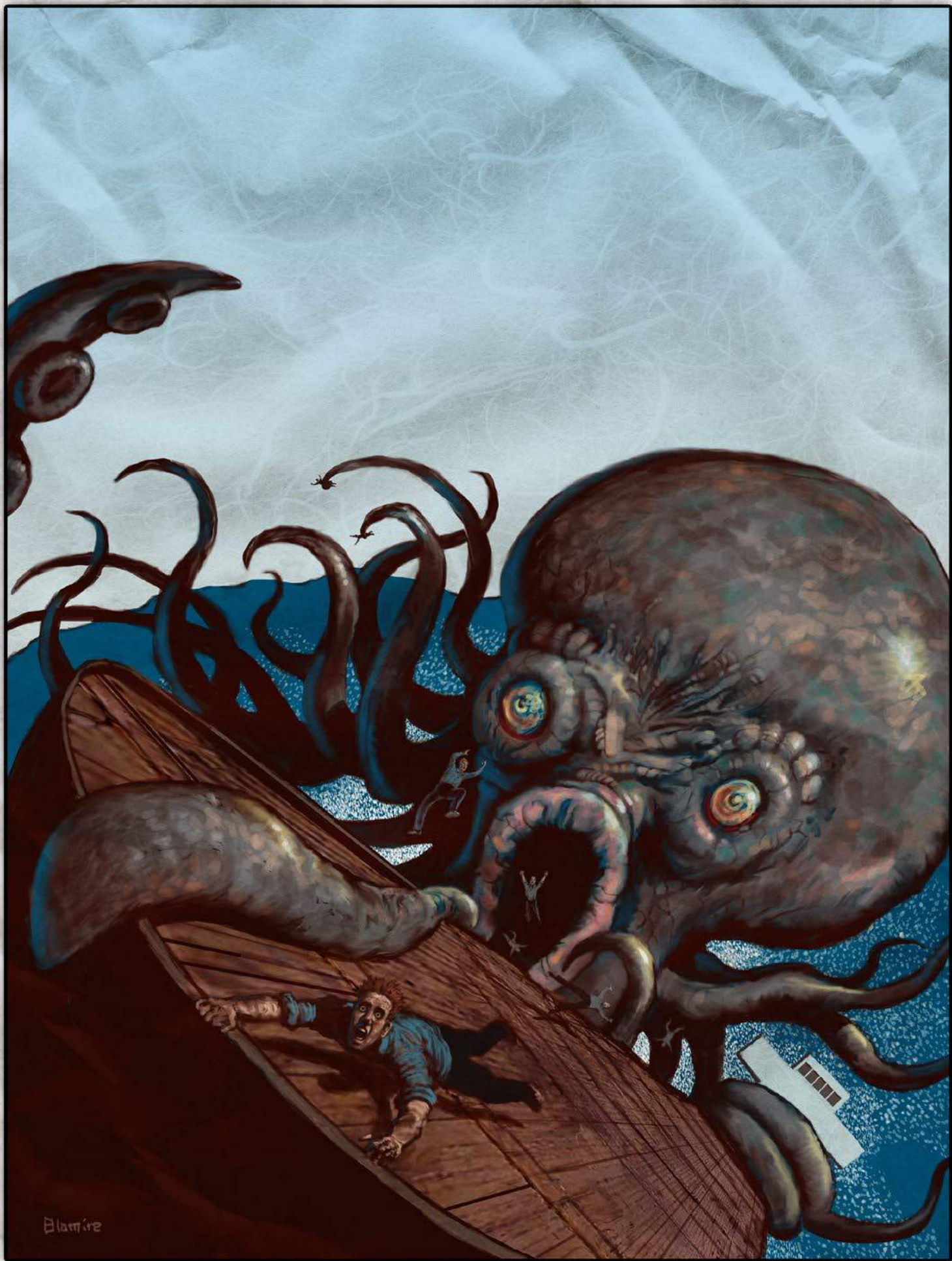
Karsly shoved Aquana away, and she and Cods donned parachutes. Karsly saw a lever marked EXIT, pulled it and the door opened.

"Jump!" Karsly yelled, and they dove out.

"No!" yelled Aquana as their craft plunged out of control. Our heroes landed safely on the ground in time to watch the screaming craft smash into a mountain and explode. Holding each other picturesquely, Cods and Karsly soberly surveyed the untouched dam.

"Maybe someday people will understand dams better," said Cods.

"Even people with gills," added Karsly with a hopeful smile.



Blamire

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER CREATION

"This is such a strange feeling. I feel as though I'm leaving a world of untold tomorrows for a world of countless yesterdays."

- Prof. Thurgood Elson, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953)

Now the fun really begins, as we show you how to make characters. Each player controls a single character, who is their avatar in the game world. Players control character actions and are aware of the themes and conceits of the game. Characters, on the other hand, are completely immersed in the world of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** and have no idea they are simply actors in a play. The player sees and acts through her character. Characters are also an essential tool for the Director. The choices a player makes when creating her character open new options for conflict and plot, and reveal different paths an adventure might take. Character creation has seven steps: Concept, Paths, Skills, Attributes, Trademarks, Relationships, and Finishing Touches.

STEP ONE: CONCEPT

First, you need to decide what kind of character you want to play. You could decide on your own, but it might be better to work with the other players and the Director. Everyone at the table should discuss their expectations for the game and the character dynamics that interest them. You may find a niche your character can fill to enrich the party, or two players may decide to connect their backstories. Summarize your character concept in a few words or a phrase. A more specific concept helps when choosing or creating Paths and assigning dots later in the process.

Examples: "Badass monster hunter," "Reporter who gets in too deep," "Out-of-touch suburban housewife," or "Ex-military conspiracy theorist."

Next, choose player Aspirations: two short-term and one long-term. Player Aspirations are your goals for your character, *not necessarily* the character's own goals. You may want your

character to find a squid monster's lair, even though your character doesn't even know how to swim. Aspirations are story moments you want to see happen.

Achieving Aspirations is the responsibility of the entire table.

While you should always be watchful for opportunities to achieve your Aspirations, you should also watch for opportunities to set-up your fellow players to achieve theirs. If all the players achieve their short-term player Aspirations in the same session, everyone present gets an additional point of Experience. The Director will also use Aspirations as guidance for the types of stories the group is interested in playing and provide opportunities for you to achieve your Aspirations.

Player Aspirations should always push action, not restrict it. This means you should phrase your Aspirations as something to *do* rather than something to *not do*. "Don't get into a fight" removes a character from action. In contrast, "Use your words for once" keeps the character in a potential conflict but nudges them toward using a different resolution tactic than usual.

A **short-term player Aspirations** is something a character can achieve in a single session. The Aspiration may be a scene you want to see happen, an ability you want to use, or a character moment you think would be interesting or cool.

Examples: "Punch an aquatic alien," "Get a cool new gadget," "Obtain more Valium," or "taste test a sentient slime."

A **long-term player Aspiration** is something that takes an arc to achieve and is related to one of the character's Paths. A long-term Aspiration may be how you would like to see your character grow or change.



POLLY'S PATH, PART 1

Alexia is creating a character for her first session of **TCfBtS!** and starts with the concept stage. She really enjoys the idea of playing a young suburban woman who digs a party and spending time at the drive-in, but secretly harbors socialist tendencies and arranges rallies at the local college. In this era, she'd be best served keeping those leanings quiet! Alexia names her character Polly New.

Alexia names her concept "rebellious, thrill-seeking socialist upstart." Her two short-term player Aspirations are "catch a movie with a boy I like," and "address the student body." She's certain she can do both these things in the first session, and really wants to explore her character's immediate world and society by doing so. Her long-term player Aspiration is "have my character lead a revolt against corrupt authority." This may take time to organize, hence why it's long-term, but this is a long arc Alexia would love to follow up.

Examples: "Get a promotion at work," "Find my lost friend, Chuck," "Get invited to a super-elite party," or "Eliminate an entire alien race."

STEP TWO: PATHS

Now to the critical choice of Paths.

Paths represent a series of decisions characters have made or experiences they've had over the course of their lives. They are the ways characters define themselves. Connected to those decisions and experiences are people — coworkers, friends, followers, family — and resources — lab space, heavy equipment, research archives — that each character can access.

In **TCfBtS!** each character has three Paths: Archetype, Origin, and Ambition. Each Path is significant to the character and reflects a major commitment of her time. A Path can be a single word or a short phrase that summarizes the nature of character's experiences.

The **Archetype Path** is the character's role in the story. In **TCfBtS!**, the Archetype is the most important aspect of the character and is picked first. We draw Archetypes from traditional roles in B-Movies. The Archetype Path helps define not only what the character does in the story, but also how she reacts to stimuli and what her driving goals are. Archetypes give access to Skills, Tropes, and extra Trademarks. Archetypes also determine the character's Quips and some Cinematics.

Write "Ar" next to four Skills on your character sheet. Those are the four Skills you choose to associate with your Archetype Path, meaning when you gain experience and advance in your Archetype, your Experience points can contribute to any of these four Skills.

If you want to know more about the different Archetypes, flick back to Chapter Two for their full write-ups.

Archetypes: Everyman, G-Man, Mouth, Scientist, Survivor

The **Origin Path** is a character's background; where and how she got started. While Origins may refer to a character's upbringing, it does not have to. Rather, think through your character's backstory and about the events that were the most formative. Your Archetype can help determine your character's Origin. Origins give access to Skills and Trademarks.

Write "O" next to four Skills on your character sheet. Those are the four Skills you choose to associate with your Origin Path, and follow the same rules for Experience gains as those for your Archetype Path. Importantly, none of these can be the same Skills as you chose for your Archetype.

Examples: *Suburbia, Army Veteran, Touched by an Alien, Life of Privilege, Adventurer*

The **Ambition Path** is what drives your character. In general, Ambition describes what your character's goals are, but put through a lens of her community. Think of it as what motivates your character to act the way she does. If the character is a lone wolf, then what makes her wake up every morning, drink her coffee, and set out to make an alien's day terrible? Does she have family and friends who depend on her? All of these things tie into her Ambition. The connections and people in this Path are the most important to her and are the real defining factor for Ambition. Note that the character's Ambition may differ from the player Aspirations for the character. Ambitions give access to Skills and Trademarks.

Write "Am" next to four Skills on your character sheet. Those are the four Skills you choose to associate with your Ambition Path. Again, these Skills cannot have already been selected for Archetype or Origin.

Examples: *Family Man, Lone Wolf, Community Leader, Money Talks, Out for Revenge*

Each Path consists of the following elements:

- A short description of the Path (e.g. an "Everyman" who was raised as a "Military Brat," and has a secret desire to be "Abducted by Aliens.")
- Four Skills associated with the Path. Which four Skills are up to you, but you should be prepared to justify non-obvious choices. You gain three dots to distribute among the four Skills you chose for each Path. A player may choose to put all three dots in one Skill or divide the dots among two or three Skills. A player may not use dots from one Path for Skills associated with a different Path.
- Each Path lists several Trademarks available to that Path. You begin with one Trademark each from your Origin and Ambition Paths, and two Trademarks from your Archetype Path. We will come to these later.
- A Path Condition that triggers when you invoke the Path too often. You can choose one of the example Conditions or use them as a template to create your own. Don't worry about this just yet.



POLLY'S PATH, PART 2

Alexia's next step is the choice of Paths available to her character, Polly. Having read the previous chapter, she already knows she wants Polly's Archetype to be Everyman. She notes "Ar" next to the Skills Culture and Larceny but doesn't see the suggested Aim or Technology Skills as in keeping with her Everyman Path, instead choosing to note her final "Ar"s next to Integrity and Command. These are now her Archetype Path-linked Skills.

Alexia now chooses the Origin Path of Suburbia, and notes "O" next to the Skills Empathy, Humanities, and Technology. The suggested Suburbia Skill of Culture is already on her sheet with "Ar" noted next to it, so she instead chooses Persuasion as her fourth Origin-linked Skill.

Finally, Alexia chooses Polly's Ambition Path. Throwing a curveball, she goes for the example Ambition Path of Out for Revenge. Maybe someone denounced her father as a communist and he's struggled to find work since. She notes "Am" next to the Skills Athletics and Enigmas. She already has Larceny and Technology, so she chooses Close Combat and Aim as her final two, just in case.

Alexia's character now has an Archetype, Origin, and Ambition. She divides the three dots for her Archetype Skills with one dot in Culture and two dots in Integrity. Her three Origin dots are split with one in Empathy and two in Persuasion. Her three Ambition dots go into Enigmas. Alexia thinks of Polly as a problem solver, but she leaves herself open to increase her more combat-related Skills later.

Making a note to assign Trademarks and a Condition later, Alexia moves on to step three!

For more information on building a Path and example Paths, see Path Creation on p. XX.

STEP THREE: SKILLS

They Came from Beneath the Sea! has a total of 16 Skills (p. XX), each rated from 0-5. These Skills represent what a character can do. They represent the studied or learned abilities she picked up through years of dodging aliens and trying to hold down a day job. Most of a character's Skills come from her Paths, but you also get **six additional dots** to distribute among any of the Skills. These Skills don't have to be tied to Paths in any way. Choose wisely. The total number of Skill dots a character receives at character creation for Skills, through Paths or not, is 15.

STEP FOUR: ATTRIBUTES

Attributes represent different ways of acting and how adept your character is at each. They represent your character's way of handling a sticky situation, rather than her raw base of knowl-



POLLY'S PATH, PART 3

To recap, Polly has one dot in Culture, two dots in Integrity, one in Empathy, two in Persuasion, and three in Enigmas. With the six additional dots awarded at this stage, Alexia assigns one to Larceny, one to Aim, two more to Empathy, and two more to Persuasion. She has now spent all 15 dots available, ending up with Skills as follows: Aim 1, Culture 1, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Integrity 2, Larceny 1, and Persuasion 4.

edge. **TCfBtS!** has nine Attributes divided among three Arenas: Physical, Mental, and Social, each rated 1-5.

Rank the Arenas in order of which your character is most adept. This is not necessarily the same as which Arenas the character prefers. For example, an amateur private eye might be more adept at the Social rather than the Mental. A veteran soldier might be a tactician, and have Mental as primary, Physical as secondary, and Social as tertiary. Any combination is fine, as long as it makes sense for the character.

Characters begin with a single Attribute dot in each of their nine Attributes. Distribute six dots among the three Attributes in the character's top-ranked Arena, four dots in the middle-ranked, and two dots in the bottom-ranked.

Remember! Each Attribute starts with a single free dot. Don't sell your starting dots short by not including this freebie.

Attributes also have an Approach. The Approach is how the character applies the Arena. The three Approaches are Force, Finesse, and Resilience. Every character has a Favored Approach or preferred way of approaching a problem, regardless of which Arena he's acting within. If he likes to be direct, his Favored Approach is probably Force. If he likes a delicate touch, his Favored Approach is likely Finesse. If he likes to let people tire themselves out against him, his Favored Approach is probably Resilience.

Place one additional dot in each of the Attributes in your character's Favored Approach.

- Force is Intellect, Might, and Presence.
- Finesse is Cunning, Dexterity, and Manipulation.
- Resilience is Resolve, Stamina, and Composure.

No Attribute may have more than five dots at character creation. If a Favored Approach bonus would take an Attribute over five dots, you may spend the extra dot on one of the other Attributes in the same Arena as the maxed-out Approach.

Finally, place a single last dot in any one Attribute of your choice, to round out your character so she isn't a complete bumbling idiot in one Attribute.



POLLY'S PATH, PART 4

Alexia wants Polly to be a social chameleon, skilled at coercing information out of targets, but who isn't as adept physically as she'd like. She decides that for Attributes, Polly's Arenas are ordered Social, Mental, and Physical. She places four dots in Manipulation, one in Presence, and one in Composure. Then, for Mental, she puts one in Cunning, one in Resolve, and two in Intellect. For Physical, she places one in Might and one in Dexterity. Alexia then decides that Polly's Favored Approach is Finesse. She increases each of the Attributes in Finesse by one. Dexterity goes to three dots, Cunning goes to three dots, and Manipulation goes to six. Since an Attribute cannot go over five dots at character creation, Alexia can shift the extra dot to another Attribute in the same Arena as Manipulation. She decides to assign the dot to Composure. Now she has one additional Attribute dot to put anywhere, which she puts into Resolve.

Polly's concluding Attributes are Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 5, and Composure 2.

STEP FIVE: TRADEMARKS

Trademarks define a character's signature moves. Trademarks are specialized actions or ways of doing things that are attached to a Skill or an Attribute. Whenever the character uses his Skill or Attribute in a way that references the Trademark, the player gains the following benefits: two additional dice on the action's roll, and if the roll is successful, the opportunity for Directorial Control over the scene (see p. XX). You can choose to exert this Directorial Control at any point during the scene from the point it is unlocked, but the option goes away once the scene ends. Some Trademarks are negative, but as long as the character acts in line with the Trademark, the player gets the positive effects.

Examples: *Mind like a Calculator* (linked to Intellect), *Swims like a Fish* (linked to Athletics), or *Always an Excuse* (linked to Larceny).

A character can only invoke each Trademark once per story.

Your character begins game with four Trademarks. Pick one Trademark each from his Origin and Ambition Path and two from his Archetype Path. Link each to whichever Skill or Attribute seems appropriate, remembering that even a negative-sounding Trademark can be invoked to gain the additional two dice and possibility of Directorial Control.

Example: *A Survivor with a Trademark of "Iron Jaw"* invokes his Trademark when he's engaged in a punch-up with an iguanoid. The player rolls his dice



POLLY'S PATH, PART 5

Polly's coming together as a character, able to hold her own in any battle of words but no slouch on solving a mystery, either. The two Archetype Trademarks she picks are *Jack of all Trades*, which she links to her low Larceny Skill, and *General Strike!*, which she links to her Persuasion Skill. With these, she can already see her character as being able to jimmy any lock and persuade workers or soldiers to lay down their tools and firearms.

Alexia assigns her Origin Trademark now, linking *Cultured Warrior* to her Integrity. Finally, she attaches her Ambition Trademark of *Party Crasher* to her Presence Attribute.

for the Attribute to which this Trademark is linked (Stamina) plus two for using a Trademark, along with whichever Skill is appropriate (Close Combat, in this case), as the lizards creature swings a wet fist. The roll is a great success! He takes Directorial Control and describes the unfortunate iguanoid's claw breaking against his skin. The tide of battle swiftly changes!

STEP SIX: DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS

You probably aren't making this character in a vacuum. And if you are, you should probably get some air. Anyway, you're likely to have other people at the table with you also making characters. Here's where you interact with them. Go look at the Drama! section in Chapter Four on p. XX. I'll wait.

Read it? Good.

For each other character in play, you are going to write down an attitude with an intensity rating. This can be either a positive or negative attitude, but it defines how your characters interact with each other. This is how your character feels about the other character. Don't worry, the other character doesn't have to feel the same way about yours. That's the joy of real-life relationships, so why would we deny it here? At character creation, you can apply a level 1 intensity to one character, level 2 to another and a level 3 to a third. If there are more than four people in your group, you gain additional 1 and 2 intensity attitudes with this alternating intensity repeating until you've defined a relationship with each other character at the table.

Whenever your character acts in line with her attitude towards another character to force him into greater action — by chiding, encouraging, or whatever — your character gains a number of dice equal to the attitude's intensity. You may choose to add the dice to a roll you make during the scene. If you have more than one added die, you do not have to use them all at once, but they go away at the end of the scene. You can only invoke a relationship with a character in this way



POLLY'S PATH, PART 6

Alexia is playing with Dan, Ozzy, and Syl. Dan's character is a G-Man, patrol officer Michael LeFleur. Ozzy's playing Dr. Jacqui Hodder, a Scientist in charge of researching marine life at the local military port. Syl's meanwhile taken the role of local radio news announcer Chip Sharkey. Alexia feels her character listened to Chip growing up, and so assigns Chip a level 3 positive intensity relationship. Polly's relationship with Michael is more complex, as they were dating but broke up when Michael ran off with Polly's best friend. They have a level 2 negative intensity relationship. Finally, her relationship with Dr. Hodder is minimal, but she and Syl agree the two characters live on the same street. They have a level 1 positive intensity relationship.

once per game, but all other social interactions utilize the character's attitudes for each other based on the Drama! system.

But what if your characters don't know each other at the start of the story? That's fine, just remember to come back to this section after your first session of play and fill it in then with first impressions.

STEP SEVEN: FINAL TOUCHES

At this stage, you should be mostly done with your character. All you need to do is pick two Tropes off your Archetype Trope list, and a single additional Trope off any Archetype list (this can come from the character's Archetype, but why would you do that?). Each Archetype profiled in the previous chapter provides a list of potential Tropes for selection.

Finally, you assign your character three Quips. Quips are the difference between a success and an award-winning victory, the distance between an ignominious death and a remarkable survival story, and the chance of going down in history as a real hero in this gray and murky world.

At character creation, all characters start with three Quips, with Quips detailed in Chapter XX.

- The **Everyman** draws 1 Quip from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*, and 1 Quip from *Quip Your Gripping*.
- The **G-Man** draws 1 Quip from *And Before You Pull that Switch* and 1 Quip from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*.
- The **Mouth** draws 1 Quip from *Why So Glib?* and 1 Quip from *The Flirtation*.
- The **Scientist** draws 1 Quip from *Please Enjoy This Great Portent* and 1 Quip from *And Before You Pull that Switch*.
- The **Survivor** draws 2 Quips from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*.

The third Quip comes from a deck of your choice.



POLLY'S PATH, PART 7

It's finishing touches time for Polly. As an Everyman character, Alexia gets to choose two Tropes from the Everyman list and one from any of the other Archetypes. *Tools of the Trade* and *Picket Line* seem eminently suitable for Polly as someone who can get something done in a pinch, or shut down authority figures following a little finagling. Alexia takes *The Missing Clue* from the Mouth Tropes list to round this section out.

Finally, Alexia draws her character's Quips from their respective decks. She draws one from the *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk* deck and another from *Quip Your Gripping*. She elects to take her third from *Quip Your Gripping* too. Checking her cards, Alexia drew "It's time we put the I in survival..." from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*, and "This isn't the pie I signed on to bake..." along with "You don't have the tartar sauce for something like this..." from *Quip Your Gripping*. Alexia's already wondering how to slip those into Polly's dialogue.

New players may wish to choose Quips from their respective selections, while experienced players may opt for a random choice, or leave it to the Director to assign Quips. You may come up with your own Quips to add to each selection, written up on blank cards.

TWEAKS

Sometimes everyone makes mistakes, and that's okay. We want you to be able to make some small changes to your character between game sessions to better fit what you want out of the game. Tweaks are small, cost-free changes that help you customize your character to fit the story and your style of play. It's hard to anticipate how your character will work with the others in the group, or how you will solve problems at character creation. Tweaks help counter this lack of prescience.

You may tweak your character sheet in the following ways.

Shift one dot from one Attribute to another Attribute or from one Skill to another Skill. At the start of a new session, you must announce that you want to shift a dot and must mark on your character sheet the Skill or Attribute you want to change. During that session, you should roleplay using the Skill or Attribute you're trying to increase. This can be as simple as creating a dice pool using the Skill or Attribute. The Director decides if you appropriately showed the change. If so, the shift occurs at the end of the session without any Experience expenditures.

Write a new short-term Aspiration. At the start of each session, you can set a new short-term Aspiration, even if your character did not achieve his short-term Aspiration in the previous session.



Abandon an Ambition Path for a new one. At the end of a Session, you can choose to abandon an Ambition Path and pick up a new one. This is different from purchasing a whole new Path. You retain whatever Ambition Path rating you had, but apply it to this new Ambition Path. You lose any connections you had through your old Ambition, and pick up new ones at the same rating. Skills and Trademarks do not change.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER CREATION

Danielle is making a new character for **TCfBtS!** named Janelle Hausenbaum, who is in no way just a wish-fulfillment version of Danielle. Danielle starts with Janelle's concept. She wants the character to have rocky relationships, as she likes drama. She also wants Janelle to be a secret operative for the government. She defines her concept as "special ops with a fiery temper." Next, she defines one long-term and two short-term Player Aspirations. Danielle knows she wants her long-term Aspiration to be "find someone to fall in love with." She's unsure of her short-term ones, so leaves them blank for now.

Next, Danielle chooses her Paths. As a special operative, she decides G-Man is going to be the most fitting Archetype. For her

Origin she picks Suburbia; Janelle was once a work-from-home novelist who got tapped by the FBI to help solve mysteries because her novels were so good. (Danielle is not a novelist.) For her Ambition, Danielle picks In Love, which she will use to fuel her rocky relationships.

Danielle picks four Skills for each of Janelle's Paths: Aim, Integrity, Pilot, and Science from G-Man, to which she assigns two dots to Aim and one to Science; Culture, Empathy, Medicine, and Technology from Suburbia, to which she assigns one dot each across Culture, Empathy, and Technology; and Athletics, Command, Larceny, and Persuasion from In Love, to which she assigns two dots to Persuasion and one to Athletics.

She now spends the six additional Skill dots all characters receive at character creation. She decides to increase Aim, Empathy, and Integrity by one, increase Athletics by two, and gain the first dot in Close Combat.

Her final Skills are Aim 3, Athletics 3, Close Combat 1, Culture 1, Empathy 2, Integrity 1, Persuasion 2, Science 1, and Technology 1.

Command, Larceny, and Pilot were selected as Path Skills, but currently lack any dots. They may receive some as Janelle advances in experience.

Next, Danielle needs to pick Janelle's Attributes. Since Janelle was once a writer, and her criminal mind landed her the government job, Danielle chooses to prioritize her Mental Are-

na first. She then chooses Physical and Social in that order. She assigns six dots to her Mental Attributes, two into Intellect, one into Cunning and three into Resolve; four dots to her Physical Attributes, one into Might, one into Dexterity and two into Stamina; and finally, two dots into Social Attributes; one into Manipulation and one into Composure.

Danielle decides the reason for Janelle's poor relationship skills is that she is too direct, making Force her Favored Approach. (Danielle has *never* been described as too direct.) She assigns an additional dot to her Intellect, Might, and Presence Attributes. Finally, she places her last dot into Composure.

Her final Attributes are Intellect 4, Cunning 4, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, and Composure 3.

Now Danielle picks Trademarks to attach to her Skills and Attributes based on her Paths. She gets two from G-Man and decides to pick *Ma'am, please step away from the alien* to represent her training in weird alien stuff and *This is totally my pay grade* to represent Janelle's love of her job. Danielle wants Janelle to be a tough cookie, so she picks *Not Soft* from Suburbia even though Janelle's Composure isn't high. She also thinks it would be nice for Janelle to have some versatility in her role in the group, so picks *Subaquatic* from In Love. (Danielle is not a good swimmer.) Danielle could have created some Trademarks of her own, but there's nothing wrong with picking from the examples provided, especially for a first character.

Now, she needs to make relationships with the other people at the table. Danielle's game consists of two other players: Josh is playing Jared South and Alex is playing Marty Fossilthwick. Danielle decides that Janelle is jealous of Jared, who is a Mouth, for always being the center of attention. She assigns a level 2 negative attitude to Jared. Marty is a nice, quiet, Scientist and probably the kind of person that Janelle would have dated a while ago but are now just good friends. Danielle assigns a level 1 positive attitude to Marty.

Finally, Danielle picks two Tropes from the G-Man list. She picks *I've Got a File on That* to show off her ability to look for clues and *Disappearing Act* to accentuate her special operative training. She then gains one additional Trope. Danielle picks *More Money than Sense* — to show her income from being a novelist — from the Mouth Trope list.

Now Janelle is ready for the first session of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**

PATH CREATION

Paths are an essential component of **TCfBtS!** Not only do they help define a character, but they also affect a character's Skills, Tropes, Trademarks, resources, and advancement. While this book offers example Paths for characters, you can always create your own. The Path details can be completed at character creation stage, or after the first session, when a player is more familiar with their character.

Each Path has four elements: concept, connections, Skills, and Trademarks. A Path also has a rating from 1-5. Each addition-

al dot in a Path strengthens the associated connections, Skills, and Trademarks.

CONCEPT

A Path's **concept** is its story. This is a brief explanation of what the Path represents for the character. The concept is indicated by the Path's type (i.e., Archetype, Origin, or Ambition) and descriptive word or phrase (e.g., high school coach, suburban housewife). The Path's concept also determines the kinds of connections the Path can offer and guides which Skills it provides.

CONNECTIONS

Just like the slimy tendrils attached to the body of the gargantuan squid, connections tie you to your Path in a vital way. A Path's **connections** are the people and resources the character can access thanks to the Path. Each Path has three different connections: group, contact, and access. The **group** connection is a well-defined collection of people who share a similar Path or are directly related. For example, a character whose Ambition is *Family Man* might be able to reach out to his children's school PTA, his wife's knitting circle, or his group of golf buddies. The character does not have a connection to all of these groups; you pick just one of them to be his group connection.

The **contact** connection is a single person related to the Path and with whom the character has a relationship. This relationship can be familial, platonic, romantic, competitive, strained, or something else entirely. The contact has some expertise related to the Path and is inclined to do a favor or two for the character. Again, choose one contact connection.

The **access** connection is the equipment or specialized space (e.g., lab, darkroom, gym) related to the Path. For example, a character who is a Mouth might be able to access a film studio, or yet-unpublished news articles. Access connections can be anything to which the Path may give the character access, and serves as an Enhancement to her actions. In this case, you don't pick just one access. Instead, anything that would be reasonable based on the Path is available. Mostly, this is up to Director discretion.

A Path's connections may come with inherent **obligations**, which are up to the Director. Once per session, a Path's connections may ask a character to perform a task. You may choose to take on the task as an additional short-term Aspiration, or you may attempt to complete it to regain your connection rating after using your character's connections. Often an obligation is something that can be accomplished quickly, within one scene, though may end up being a slight burden to the character. The obligation might be money for dues, a balance of favors, a promise to help fix a broken item, or a family member in need of support or guidance. If the character does not complete her obligation by the end of the session, your first attempt to use her connections next session suffers Complication 2.

CONTACTS

These are the people in a character's life who come to her aid when she needs them. They are reliable, despite whatever

crap she normally puts them through. They may be friends, professional acquaintances, business associates, or loyal followers — but are always associated with one of her Paths. Characters begin play with a single contact.

You have the same number of dots to use to create your character's contacts as she has dots in her Path. You can spend these dots on either gaining additional contacts, or making a single contact better. Each contact begins with one dot and one tag (see list of suggested tags below). Each additional dot placed in a single contact adds an additional tag.

Tags define the types of rolls with which a contact can help your character, and add the contact's dot rating as an Enhancement to those rolls. A contact with two dots and the Influential tag would add +2 Enhancement when he uses his status to sway events in your character's favor.

Suggested Tags

- Dangerous
- Informant
- Influential
- Loyal
- Mentor
- Numerous (gain 5-10 followers per dot)

USING CONNECTIONS

When you want to leverage your character's connections, declare which of his connections you're using and roll Path + appropriate Attribute. If the character is tapping a contact, success means the contact acts accordingly. If the character is trying to use his access, successes result in an Enhancement to your next roll.

Initially, each connection has the same dot rating as the overall Path. Each time a character draws on one of his connections (through access or a contact), though, that connection's rating decreases by 1. People get exhausted by always doing stuff for someone. Each connection's rating refreshes at the end of the session.

If the connection is reduced to 0 through use in play, you can still attempt to draw on your character's connections. The first time you do so, the character gains the Suspended Condition. If you try a second time in the Session, the character gains the Revoked Condition.

Example: Mark wants to use his character, Laurel Thistleschmidt's, access to her small-town newspaper to dig up old news articles that might be of assistance to researching a nest of gigantic pillbugs. Laurel works there, so should be able to easily access old papers. Mark rolls Persuasion + Manipulation to gain access, and nets three successes. When Mark rolls for Laurel's research roll, he will benefit from +3 Enhancement to the roll.

CONDITIONS

Paths aren't filled with people who love your character unconditionally. They have their own needs and wants. If you spend too much time pulling on your character's Paths without doing something in return, you could end up with a pretty nasty Condition. You'll likely want to get that checked out.

The following are examples of things that could happen if you upset your character's connections. Feel free to come up with your own brand of suffering for your character.

PATH SUSPENSION

You've done something to upset your Path connections. Maybe you called on them one too many times and they tire of your needy attitude, or you violated a minor code. You are on the outs, but they haven't written you off completely. You suffer Complication 2 whenever you attempt to engage anyone within your Path's group. If you attempt to access your connections again, or violate another code, you gain the Revoked Condition.

Rewrite Generation: When you make contact with a connection with whom you are on the outs, you gain a single Rewrite for the Writer's Pool (see p. XX).

Resolution: This Condition ends at the end of the session. Fulfilling a specific obligation may remove this Condition.

PATH REVOKED (PERSISTENT)

You've really messed up this time. Maybe you broke an inviolate code, violated your suspension, or just broke the rules one too many times. Your membership has been revoked. You are still part of the Path, but you cannot attempt to access your connections while you are still Revoked.

Rewrite Generation: If you go further and make this connection an enemy, you gain two Rewrites for the Writer's Pool (see p. XX).

Resolution: You must dedicate a Long-Term Aspiration to regaining your Path's good graces.

SKILLS AND TRADEMARKS

Every Path has four associated Skills. The Skills should extend from the Path's concept. Confirm your Skill choices with the Director or fellow players at the table to ensure they make sense.

Paths have multiple associated Trademarks. These Trademarks are generally associated with the Path's associated Skills, but sometimes link to Attributes. Trademarks can be pulled from the examples listed throughout this book, or created by the player of Director.

PATH RATING	SKILLS	TRADEMARKS	CONTACT*	TROPES**
1	3	1 (2 for Archetype)	1	2
2	6	2(3)	2	3
3	9	3(4)	3	4
4	12	4(5)	4	5
5	15	5(6)	5	6

*Total dots distributed among all Contacts.

** Archetype Path only.

ADVANCEMENT WITH PATHS

Each Path has up to five dots of advancement. Each dot of a Path strengthens connections and increases utility with Skills.

Each dot in a Path costs four points of Experience and provides three dots for distribution among the related Skills, one additional Trademark, and increases the Path contact by one. Increasing an Archetype Path also gives an additional Trope.

ARCHETYPE PATHS

They Came from Beneath the Sea! offers five Archetypes that play into traditional B-movie traditions. The character's Archetype is the driving factor in how she acts, what she's capable of, and who she really is. While her Origin and Ambition define what she did and why she does what she does, Archetype defines who she is deep down. No matter where she came from or where she's going, her Archetype remains the same.

Archetype Paths offer a greater look into the character's role in a game of **TCfBtS!**, and therefore offer more perks to investment. Archetype Paths give the character access to Tropes and Archetype scenes.

Tropes are small benefits and abilities that come from being a certain Archetype. They are not as bold as Trademarks, and only come up in very specific circumstances. Each Archetype has access to its own list of Tropes.

The following Archetype Paths are detailed in full in the Archetypes chapter. The connections and Skills are each examples of possible choices, but you can create your own if none of the provided options match your vision.

EVERYMAN PATH

Example Connections: *Factory Worker, Local Shop Owner, The Mayor's Wife, Sports Enthusiast, Union Representative*

Skills: Aim, Culture, Larceny, Technology

Trademarks: Momma Bear, Jack of all trades, I can fix this, I am the manager, General strike!, Got the groove, Loaf in the oven, Get off my land!

Tropes: An Honest Day's Wage, Apprenticeship, Blissful Ignorance, Elbow Grease, Grit and Determination, Honesty is the Best Policy, I Don't get Paid Enough for This, Occupational Hazard, Picket Line, Tools of the Trade

G-MAN PATH

Example Connections: *Coffee Shop Waiter, Local Law Enforcement, Secret Agent, Shadowy Cabal, Tech Specialist*

Skills: Aim, Humanities, Integrity, Pilot

Trademarks: This is totally my pay grade; Ma'am, please step away from the alien; License and Registration, please; It was a dark and stormy night; Cut through red tape; Badge and gun; Just a small-town boy; Nothing to see here

Tropes: An Inside Job, Disappearing Act, Hand-to-Hand Training, I've Got a File on That, Night-Vision Goggles, Redacted, Shadow Conspiracy, Sunglasses, That's Above My Pay Grade, This Will Self-Destruct...

MOUTH PATH

Example Connections: *Camera Operator, Local Celebrity, Newspaper Editor, Political Pundit, The Mayor*

Skills: Command, Empathy, Larceny, Persuasion

Trademarks: You're hearing it here first, folks!; I would rather trip over my own lips than say something bad about somebody, but...; This just in, sky is blue, water still wet, more at 11; Cannot tell a lie; Creative narrative; Perfectly shot; You won't forget me; Sly wink to the camera

Tropes: Catch Phrase, Investigative Reporting, Keep Your Hands Off Me, Monologue, More Money than Sense, Press Pass, Shout-Out, Show Stopper, Spotlight, The Missing Clue

SCIENTIST PATH

Example Connections: *Former Student, Government Researcher, Grant Approval Processor, Lab Technician, Materials Provider*

Skills: Culture, Enigmas, Medicine, Science

Trademarks: Mental gymnast, The smartest person in the room, Surgeon General, A taste for danger, High blood pressure, Force of nature, Streams of jargon, Seeing beauty in horror

Tropes: Atomic Power, Breakthrough Discovery, Eureka!, I Just Need a Small Sample, Medical Genius, Outside Funding,



ARCHETYPE SCENES

Archetype scenes are scenes in which a Director considers the scene in line with the themes of a certain Archetype. During a scene the Director considers a "Scientist scene" (for example) any characters with the named Archetype gains two automatic successes on any action she takes. These are not Enhancements, meaning you do not need to roll any initial successes to gain the benefits of these successes. It doesn't mean there's a guaranteed success (as some tests will require more successes) but gives the Archetype the edge. For the sake of narrative, this is a scene in which that Archetype takes the lead role.

Example: *Uriah declares that the scene in which the characters must dismantle one submarine to use its parts to fix another submarine in order to chase some slug thing is an Everyman scene. Wanda the factory worker is the only Everyman in the scene, and all her actions gain two automatic successes. This is useful when the submarine owners show up pissed at the characters for dismantling their machines, and Wanda throws bolts at their heads to knock them unconscious.*

Physics Need Not Apply, That Was Only Theoretical, Weird Science, With My Bear Hands

SURVIVOR PATH

Connections: *Conspiracy Theorist, Group Therapy Leader, Military Veteran, Self-Defense Trainer, Weapons Dealer*

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Integrity, Survival

Trademarks: Built like a brick outhouse, Diamond-hard emotions, I ain't afraid of no fish, Is that all you got?, I'm beginning to think you don't like me, Up my sleeve, Put a sock in it, This isn't going to happen again

Tropes: Been Here Before, Grizzled Veteran, I'm Not Dead Yet, Last Man Standing, Secret Bunker, Seen Too Much, Shake it Off, Special Cache, Voice of Reason, With My Bare Hands

ORIGIN PATHS

Origin Paths constitute where your character came from. It might be her upbringing, or it could be her life before learning about the fact that her world is inhabited by aliens. These Paths tell the story of who your character is now based on her past experiences. She can change and grow based on those experiences, or hold on to her history as a form of identity. Increased ranks in an Origin Path represents the character owning her experiences and becoming more invested in her own past.

The following are example Origin Paths. Feel free to delve deeper into these backstories and the groups they may be a part of to make the Path your own.

ADVENTURER

Your character used to travel the world seeking the next big thing. Maybe he joined the military to see the world, fought in a war or two, and came home. Maybe she joined an archeology team in college and signed up for every dig available. He might even just be a regular scuba diver, or surfer who thrills in checking out his hot bod in a skintight wetsuit. On his adventures is where he first ran into sea aliens. Probably that scuba-diving incident where the coral tried to eat him.

Example Connections: *High-risk Hobbyists (Divers, Mountain Climbers, Stunt Drivers, etc.), Bomb Disposal Experts, Travel Enthusiasts*

Skills: Aim, Close Combat, Pilot, Survival

Trademarks: The Name Is, Baseball Pitcher, Bloody Red Baron, Improvised Melee Massacre, There I Fixed It

LIFE OF PRIVILEGE

Your character grew up with far more than those around her. Maybe her parents were rich, or she had a trust fund from a wealthy distant relative. Either way, she had every opportunity handed to her and was rarely told no. She went to the best schools available and completed college at the top of her class. She may have worked to earn her keep, but she never really needed to. With this privilege comes confidence, and she makes her way easily through the world. While this money is likely the root of all your character's problems, it is also why she wasn't locked up after telling everyone about the giant centipede-fish-man she ran into at the yacht club.

Example Connections: *School Alumni, College Club Membership, Local Political Affiliates*

Skills: Command, Culture, Integrity, Persuasion

Trademarks: I Know What You Want, I Cannot Tell a Lie, Big Stick, Desk Jockey Bonaparte, Professor Oddball

MILITARY BRAT

Your character grew up with strong military influences. Maybe his parents were in a branch of the military, or he ran off and joined the military at a young age. Either way, he had a strict upbringing with a lot of guidance and structure. He learned about respect, loyalty, and how to defend himself. When your character ran into flesh-eating sea slugs, he knew the right hand-to-hand techniques to save his skin. Now he uses his knowledge to hunt them down in a salted earth fashion.

Example Connections: *Past Teacher, Military Commander, Steadfast Friend*

Skills: Command, Enigmas, Integrity, Technology

Trademarks: I'm the Juggernaut, Nerves of Steel, Talent for Destruction, La Resistance, Omnidisciplinary Master

OUTDOORS ENTHUSIAST

You character always had an escape plan, even when very young. Maybe her parents made her do weekly drills to ensure she knew how to get to the shelter if the bombs ever fell. Maybe her parents simply preferred to live off the land, teaching her how to hunt, fish, farm, and strike a clean campsite. She has trained her whole life in the outdoors, and she is more comfortable there than anywhere else. This kind of lifestyle came in handy when giant sea urchins destroyed the last city she was living in.

Example Connections: *Park Ranger, Conspiracy Groups, RV Neighborhood*

Skills: Aim, Close Combat, Medicine, Survival

Trademarks: Deadlift, Sniper, Xenobiologist, No Kill Like Overkill, Doomsday Prepared

STREET RAT

Whatever the circumstances, your character grew up on the streets. Maybe she was orphaned at an early age, or maybe her

home life was just bad enough to drive her to the streets. She made friends with other street kids, maybe even joined a gang. She knew the homeless people just as well as she did her own neighborhood kids, and school was always a second thought to the immediate drama of the streets. This is where your character learned you don't accept tech from aliens, no matter how many of the cool kids are doing it.

Example Connections: *Street Gangs, Helpful Family Member, Store Clerks*

Skills: Athletics, Enigmas, Larceny, Survival

Trademarks: The Quickness of the Hand Deceives the Mind, Take a Thief, I Played a Little Ball, Many Tongues, Untrusting Community

SUBURBIA

Your character's parents were well off enough to afford a comfortable living. She, like her parents before her, believes in the nuclear family. She has two beautiful children, a dog, and a cat, and a prescription for Valium to make sure it all feels right. He works a nine to five, has a perfect family, and while they can't afford a vacation every summer, they make sure their children are always cared for. The children might not get everything they





ask for, but they don't know what it's like to *need* anything. And if the neighborhood refuses to talk about its problems, like the weird monster that lives in the lake on Juniper Street, then that's okay, because your character is the one charged with making sure it doesn't eat the children.

Example Connections: *Favorite Professor, Neighbor Friend, Influential Teacher, Tupperware Party Circle*

Skills: Culture, Empathy, Humanities, Technology

Trademarks: Not Soft, Deprogramming, Gadgeteer, Cultured Warrior, A Degree in What?

AMBITION PATHS

The Ambition Path describes the motivations behind your character's actions. The people she cares the most about will often fuel these. Maybe it's her career, her family, her friends or the people she just hates. While it might be cool to describe your character as a complete loner who doesn't need anyone else in her life, that isn't what **TCfBtS!** is all about. Everyone — even the loner — has people they rely on. These relationships make the game interesting, and the Ambition Path defines the relation-

ships that matter most to the character. Again, these don't have to be positive relationships.

Your character may start with one Ambition and abandon it in favor of something else. Ambition is the only Path a character may completely abandon in favor of a new one. You can do this at most once a game session, though doing so has few benefits, and may cause your character to have an existential crisis as she cannot seem to hold onto an Ambition for very long.

BEST FRIENDS

Friends are the most important people in your character's life. These are the people she's chosen, versus those people she just kind of ended up with. Maybe they come from a shared job, or from a shared hobby, but these are the people she cares the most about. She believes firmly that true friends help you hide bodies, and she's willing to go to jail to prove that point. Her friends might be the group of people she hunts giant, fanged sea cucumbers with, but they also just might be the people she talks to after making a sea monster salad.

Example Connections: *Worker's Union Members, Bar Flies, Childhood Friend Groups*

Skills: Close Combat, Culture, Larceny, Pilot

Trademarks: I'm Not Good at Giving Up, Case the Joint, This Reminds Me of that Old Jalopy, Good Old Fashioned Fist-cuffs, Pop-Cultured

COMMUNITY LEADER

People look to your character for leadership and guidance, and this gives her life. She cultivates people who need her and look up to her, and she thrives on making sure these people remain fulfilled. She devotes her time to her followers and constituents, often to the detriment of every other relationship in her life. She gives of herself completely, which means when the community is threatened by underwater aliens, she coordinates teams of other people to deal with the issue.

Example Connections: *Corporate Board, Mega-church, Political Allies*

Skills: Command, Empathy, Humanities, Persuasion

Trademarks: Charmer, See the Way it Holds its Tentacles?, Marshal of Evidence, Rag Tag Band of Misfits, Peak Mental Specimen

FAMILY MAN

Your character is focused on her family. It could be her wife, her husband, her children, her extended family or any aspect of what she has deemed her family group. She cultivates people who are likewise devoted to family as the people she keeps close. She has access to all sorts of family-oriented programs and centers. She keeps her family safe from the ravening lobster people who tried to take over the PTA.

Example Connections: *PTA, Home Health Professionals, Extended Family*

Skills: Athletics, Empathy, Integrity, Science

Trademarks: Multitasking, We Have Ways of Making You Talk, I Forgot My Pen, Blinded by Science, Improbable Sports Skill

IN LOVE

Your character is in love with someone. That doesn't mean that someone necessarily feels the same way, but that doesn't stop him from doing everything he can for her. It could be your character's wife, best friend, an unrequited love from afar, or the puppy love he's just found. Once he falls in love though, he falls hard. Everything he does is centered around this person. He immerses himself in their life and only associates with people connected to them, maybe a fan club for a celebrity, or the gym that she frequents. He keeps her safe from the aliens trying to kill her, and if she never asked for help, well that's okay.

Example Connections: *Fan Clubs, Self-Help Groups, The Next New Thing, Long-term Significant Other*



ABANDONING AMBITION

In a long story, a character may choose to abandon their Ambition and embrace a new one. If this happens, make a note of the Skills and Trademarks selected under the soon-to-be-abandoned Ambition. Unless these same Skills and Trademarks are selected for the new Ambition, those Skills and Trademarks are now frozen on the character sheet. The Skills can still be used at their current rating, but no Experience can be spent on them. The Trademarks are unusable, with one new Trademark required for the new Ambition.

Skills: Athletics, Larceny, Persuasion, Science

Trademarks: Photographic Memory, Cat Burglar, Best Buddy, The Appliance of Science, Subaquatica

LONE WOLF

Your character doesn't get along with others, and he prefers to spend as much time alone as possible. He also likes to frequent groups of people who feel the same way as him. These people get together and spit invectives about how awful other people are, and drink to the shared hope for the downfall of humanity. This builds a strong sense of community among the group. And if a monstrous unipedal clam threatens his pack, he's there to kick its bivalve ass.

Example Connections: *Biker Gangs, Hunting Enthusiasts, Gun Nuts*

Skills: Aim, Enigmas, Pilot, Technology

Trademarks: Outwitty, Ballistics Expert, Hot Rodder, Do You Have a Nylon Stocking?, Analytical Awesome

OUT FOR REVENGE

Somebody did something terrible to your character. Maybe the government wronged him in some way, someone killed his dog, or he just got laid off. Now his desire for revenge drives him. He has little care for himself or what various illegal things he might do to finally get satisfaction. He associates with other survivors, but mostly he makes ties with anyone who can help him achieve his goals. This leads him in all sorts of interesting directions. Killing giant centipedes is just practice for the real action.

Example Connections: *Criminal Organization, Best Friend, Police Insider*

Skills: Athletics, Enigmas, Larceny, Technology

Trademarks: Party Crasher, Takes a Thief, Talent for Destruction, I Played a Little Ball, Omnidisciplinary Master

TROPES

Ever wonder where that movie character learned a piece of information he miraculously knew in a critical moment to stump his rival? Wonder where that scantily clad heroine was hiding that semi-automatic weapon? Wonder no more! These types of things are Tropes. They serve a very small, but specific role for a character to give her an edge or a benefit. A Trope could be a catchphrase or a situational descriptor that the character can call upon to help her in any given situation. Some Tropes are very specific, while others work all the time to give the character a small edge. For example, a G-Man could claim, "That's Above My Pay Grade" to gain a bonus to resist a social action to get her to act a certain way.

Tropes are detailed in full in the Archetypes chapter (see pp. XX-XX) and listed alphabetically here.

EVERYMAN TROPES

- An Honest Day's Wage
- Apprenticeship
- Blissful Ignorance
- Elbow Grease
- Grit and Determination
- Honesty is the Best Policy
- I Don't get Paid Enough for This
- Occupational Hazard
- Picket Line

G-MAN TROPES

- An Inside Job
- Disappearing Act
- Hand-to-Hand Training
- I've Got a File on That
- Night-Vision Goggles
- Redacted
- Shadow Conspiracy
- Sunglasses
- That's Above My Pay Grade
- This Will Self-Destruct...

MOUTH TROPES

- Catchphrase
- Investigative Reporting
- Keep Your Hands Off Me
- Monologue
- More Money than Sense
- Press Pass
- Show Stopper
- Spotlight
- The Missing Clue

SCIENTIST TROPES

- Atomic Power
- Breakthrough Discovery
- Eureka!
- I Just Need a Small Sample
- Medical Genius
- Outside Funding
- Physics Need Not Apply
- That Was Only Theoretical
- Weird Science
- With My Bear Hands

SURVIVOR TROPES

- Been Here Before
- Grizzled Veteran
- I'm Not Dead Yet
- Last Man Standing
- Secret Bunker
- Seen Too Much
- Shake it Off
- Special Cache
- Voice of Reason
- With My Bare Hands

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

This is the part I know you've been waiting for, earning Experience.

Characters advance through the accrual of Experience. The pace at which characters earn Experience relies on both the players and Director. The Director has more control over how quickly characters can reach a story milestone or complete a group story, but the players have more control over achieving Aspirations and spending dice from the Writer's Pool (see p. XX).

The below table describes how characters may earn Experience and how much they receive for each event. The table also indicates whether the Experience is "Solo" and going to just one player character or "Group" and going to all the player characters. The Experience charts you'll see are based on awarding from 4 to 6 Experience each session, but you could always give more or less if you want. I get it, tracking how often the players do cool things can be trying.

EXPERIENCE

EARNING EXPERIENCE

EVENT	EXPERIENCE COST	RECIPIENT
The character's player attends the game.	1	Solo
A player achieves their short-term Aspiration for their character	1	Solo
All players achieve their short-term Aspirations in the same session	1	Group
A player achieves their long-term Aspiration for their character (all players must achieve their long-term Aspirations before a player can earn this experience again)	2	Solo
The players spend half the Writer's Pool in a single scene (the amount spent must be greater than 1)	1	Group
The characters reach a story milestone	1	Group
The characters complete a group story	3	Group

Players spend Experience to purchase dots in Skills and Attributes or to purchase Tropes, Trademarks, Stunts, increase ratings in Paths, and purchase new Paths. You can never purchase a new Archetype Path, and you can only ever have five Paths in total.

The below table lists the cost for each change. Players may spend their Experience at the end of an arc.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE

OBJECT	CHANGE	COST
Attribute	Add one dot to a single Attribute	10 Experience
Favored Approach	Change a character's Favored Approach	10 Experience
Path	Add one dot in an existing Path or gain a new Path (max 5)	15 Experience
Trope	Add a new Archetype Trope	3 Experience
Trope	Add an out of Archetype Trope	5 Experience
Skill	Add one dot in a new or existing Skill	5 Experience
Trademark	Add a Trademark to a Skill or Attribute	5 Experience



REVENGE OF THE CRAB PEOPLE

The brochures were right. Holeport, New England sure was quaint, and tourists Togg and Norna Lamteem were in the mood for quaint on their rented boat that calm night. Until the scraping.

"I'll see what it is, honey. You enjoy the quaintness," chuckled the good-natured awning salesman.

"If it's a fish, tell him he's welcome if he's already cleaned," chuckled Norna, wielding her own gentle humor. But the only answer was a dull thud, which was not like Togg's thuds at all. Then silence.

"Honey? Is that silence you?"

Norna slowly walked starboard. A dark figure stood astern. Cautiously, Norna moved closer. When Togg turned, she was relieved. Until his lower face opened like crab mandibles and his eyes moved to the sides. Norna's scream ripped through the night like a paper cut.

...

Chasmaggon Cannery loomed, more gothic than one would expect for fish processing. Agent Newcott Waikes of the Department of Touristry looked worried. Holeport depended on two sources of income: Cannery and summer people, and the latter were disappearing like midges.

Inside, secretary Alice Green looked sympathetic. Owner Gideon Chasmaggon was too busy to see Newcott. The Touristry agent wasn't surprised. In fact, unsurprise was practically an old friend. The locals just didn't trust city folk like him. But his spirits lifted when Alice asked to meet him at the diner. "Never let it be said a Touristry agent turns down food, information, or a pretty face, in that order," chuckled the born charmer.

...

At the diner, Alice seemed uncomfortable. Over bacon biscuits, she informed Newcott that workers

were behaving strangely, acting peevish and morose. Plus they were walking sideways.

"At first I thought it was a safety thing around the canning machinery," she chirped.

Before she could chirp anymore, Clain Hoake swaggered in. A canning legend, the two-fisted troubleshooter naturally was the jealous sort. "Whattya doing with my gal, slick?"

"Clain Hoake, I'm not your gal," harumphed Alice. "Act like a human instead of a caveman for once."

Her words fell on unlistening ears as Clain and Newcott erupted in fisticuffs. Fortunately, it ended in a draw, but the biscuits were ruined.

"Say, you Touristry guys are every bit as tough as I'd heard," growled the can-handler.

"You canners give as good as you get also," begrudged Newcott, beginning an unlikely alliance. After brief discussion about the strange doings at the cannery, Clain agreed to hire him so he could go undercover; though he insisted government men lacked "canning hands."

• • •

As "Bark Barkson, novice canner" Newcott kept his ears open, quickly befriending chatty fellow canner Mizdy Hammis. Mizdy informed him that some of the workers were whispering about something going on after hours at the plant and so, at closing time, Newcott hid among some unused fish parts.

Soon workers began gathering, in that strange sideways manner, and it soon became evident it was a secret meeting. Before the horror of Newcott's horrified eyes, as one, the workers' faces opened in crab mandibles and their eyes shifted to the sides. Darned if they weren't crab people!

Most crabbishly monstrous of all was the owner, Gideon Chasmaggon, much larger, and crabbier. He spoke of their universal loathing of the "landers" and their "foul canning ways."

Newcott was spellbound. Suddenly, there was a noise behind him. To his relief, it was Mizdy. But relief quickly turned to jelly pie as her cherubic face went full-crab-mouth. They immediately began to grapple and her strength was considerable. Finally, Newcott maneuvered her to a canning machine and, with great effort, shoved her into it where she was canned.

• • •

Newcott ran through darkened streets, straight to the Holeport Police Station where he spilled his story to the desk sergeant. He'd barely started

when the man's face opened crab-style and said, "Care for some crab cakes?" which made no sense to the agent as he ran out the door.

Believing crab police would be of little help, Newcott ran again. *Who could he trust? Was the whole town taken over?*

Suddenly, he ran into Alice and Clain. Were they crab people too, also?

After trying to stretch Clain's face to see if it would open then making him walk forward and backward much to the latter's annoyance Newcott decided he could trust them.

"If only there was a plan," mused Newcott.

"Hey!" snapped Alice with her fingers. "I just remembered something. Clain, wasn't Holeport named for the giant hole in the center of town?"

"Oh my gosh, Alice, you're right!" exclaimed Clain, also snapping fingers.

"Course, I don't know if that can help us any."

"It might, Alice It just might," mused Newcott, wheels turning that didn't even really exist.

• • •

A short time later, "the last people in Holeport," as they now called themselves when asked, ran through the streets luring every crab person they came across to chase after them. Soon there was an enormous phalanx of crab folk in hot pursuit.

Clain led the way as they veered towards the town's namesake. It was quickly obvious he was no stranger to veering. Soon, the giant hole was within sight.

"It's a wonder they never put a fence around that!" shouted Newcott.

"Just like a city person," smirked Clain, and Newcott smirked back in a show of mutual smirking.

"Veer off at the last second!" barked Newcott.

"Sorry. That's a risk I can't take!" bellowed Clain.

"No, Clain!"

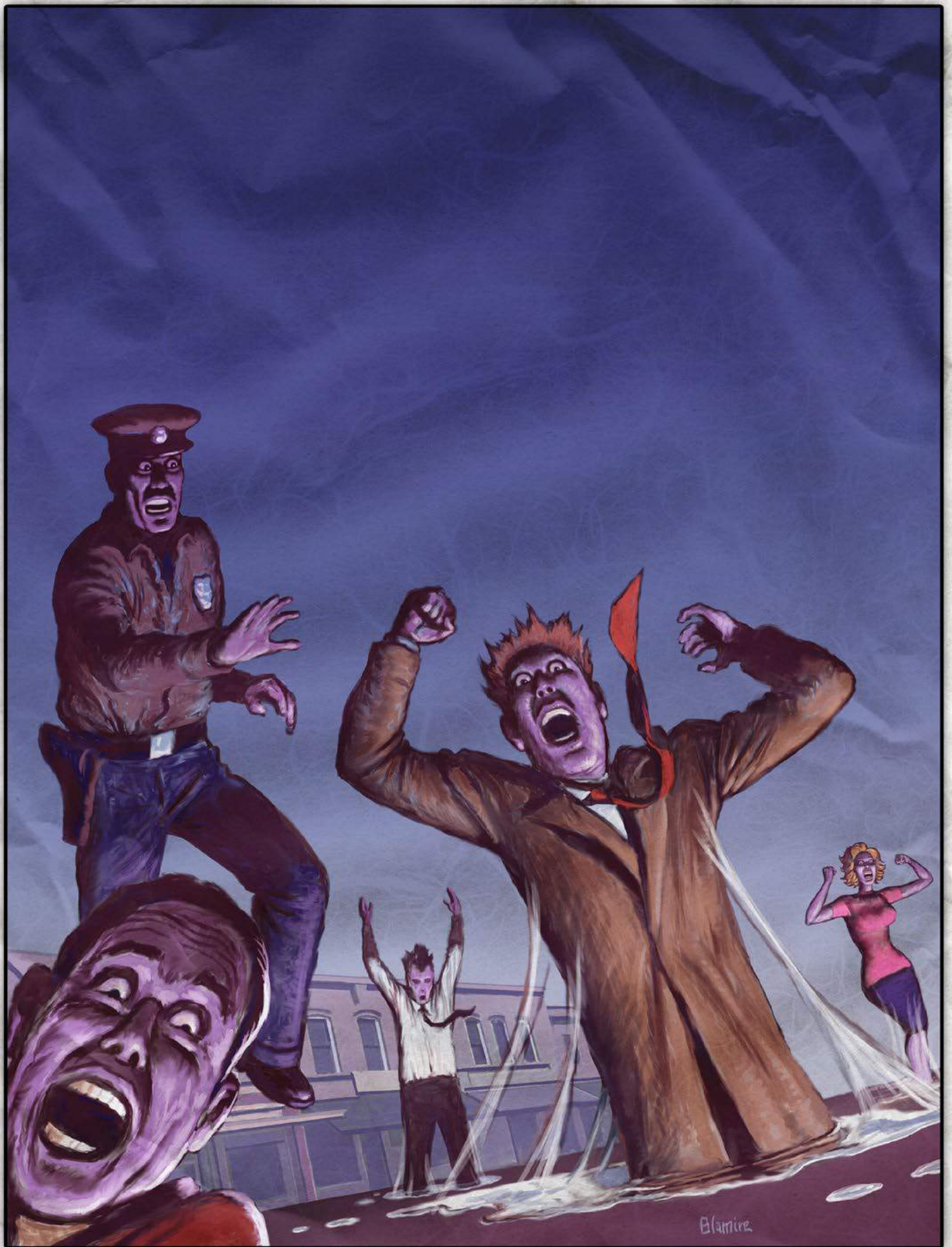
"Not this time, old chum," uttered the brave canner as he leaped into the hole's inky depths, followed by an enormous cascade of tumbling crab people.

The two survivors stared into the hole. Alice sobbed.

"He gave his life so crab people would die."

"He also gave his life so we *wouldn't*," added Newcott as he held her close in silence.

"Wonder how deep that is?" said Alice.



CHAPTER FOUR

SKILLS AND

ATTRIBUTES

"It's my own recipe: saut of unborn octopus."
Captain Nemo, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954)

All characters in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** possess a range of traits called Skills and Attributes. Attributes represent the raw, untrained elements of a character's makeup, while Skills generally form through training, education, or practice.

When assigning dots to these traits, it is worth considering the kind of character you wish to play. The more dots in a Skill or Attribute, the greater the likelihood of success whenever that ability is tested with dice rolls. Therefore, if you want to play a character who serves as the brains behind a group, it makes sense to assign more dots to Attributes such as Intellect or Cunning, or Skills such as Science or Technology. Likewise, a physical powerhouse would benefit from high ratings in Might or Stamina, and Close Combat or Athletics.

The customization of a character's build is key to getting the game you want out of your character. You can spread dots thinly, making a generally well-rounded character, or specialize in a few areas to compliment a deficiency elsewhere in the character group.

SKILLS

Skills represent learned activities. Acquiring or improving a Skill does not necessarily require formal training or education — some are best picked up on the job. A character normally acquires a Skill over a period of time spent practicing it.

There are 16 Skills in this system and, combined with the nine Attributes, they cover every situation a character might encounter

AIM

Aim represents a character's ability to hit a distant target. This might be with the aid of an implement, anything from a baseball bat to a sniper rifle, or with the body alone, throwing a rock or scoring a strike at the bowling alley. Aim is used for all kinds of

ranged combat, so it covers throwing a chunk of encroaching coral at a crab's head or shooting at the evil scientist from behind cover.

- **Good shot:** You shoot bottles off the fence
- **Marksman:** You shoot a specific bottle off the fence
- **Gunslinger:** As long as it's standing still, you hit it.
- **Crackshot:** You are called upon by the local farmers to shoot hares and other tricky game.
- **Deadeye:** You rarely miss a moving target in a crowd of innocent bystanders

Example Trademarks:

- **Sniper:** Brenda's companions can hardly even see the hostile pod, but she shoots their leader right between the eyes.
- **Ballistics Expert:** Martin surveys the scene on stage — someone shot the leading actor. Martin examines the entry wound... Clearly the shot came from Box 32, fired from a Smith and Wesson .38 special, probably manufactured in 1947. More relevantly, whoever fired the gun is almost certainly on the stairs.
- **Baseball Pitcher:** Simon throws a random rock at the rapidly retreating robot, removing a panel and revealing its wiring. His companions are amazed at his accuracy, although they have seen him get strikes in the bowling alley many times.

ATHLETICS

Athletics represents training in a specific sport (basketball, soccer, swimming, track and field) or a physically rigorous artistic discipline such as dance. It also represents a character's general state of physical fitness, coordination, and raw ability to perform tasks that require the use of the full body, from weightlifting and cardio on gym day to running away from roving packs of sharkmen looking to try human sushi for the first time.

- **Soft:** The character has spent their life avoiding any activity more vigorous than a walk.
- **Idle:** The character has occasionally played on office sports teams.
- **Active:** The character hits the gym regularly and perhaps belongs to their local sports league.
- **Energetic:** The character might post on Venice Beach with the other macho types.
- **Able-bodied:** The character is some form of professional athlete or the “amateur” Olympic equivalent.

Example Trademarks:

- **Subaquatica:** Monica is a terror of the seas and she doesn't even have the advantage of gills, fins, or webbed digits. A skilled diver, she can use an underwater camera and a harpoon gun while snorkeling or in a scuba rig, recover artifacts and evidence from sunken ships or undersea caves with equal ability, and spy on the suboceanic doings of the invaders with absolute insouciance. We're lucky to have her on our side — because if she weren't, she'd be the world's most capable double agent.
- **Improbable Sports Skills:** Sally was a track and field star in college, before she joined the resistance against the Invaders. Now she puts those skills to decidedly nonstandard uses: she's deadly at range with both a javelin and a shot put, she can long jump and high jump over obstacles that stymie less capable individuals, and there are selachamorphians suffering from fishy emotional disorders over the things she can do with a vaulting pole.
- **I Played A Little Ball:** Hank was an all-state high school linebacker before he became one of the world's foremost experts on the Invaders and their psychology. When pressed, he can call upon the defensive skills he learned while repelling offensive lines on the playing field and translating them to the field of battle.

CLOSE COMBAT

This Skill governs all forms of physical combat, with or without melee weapons. Characters who possess this Skill are trained martial artists, members of their nations' military or police forces, or street fighters with or without criminal backgrounds. Comprehensive distribution of violence is the characteristic of highly skilled combat experts, from knowing where and how hard to hit in order to inflict maximum harm to a target to possessing deep knowledge of one or more martial arts forms.

- **Aspirant:** The character took a karate class at the YMCA once.
- **Hopeful:** The character knows how to break someone's face without breaking their fist.
- **Fighter:** The character has stomped an opponent or two in their day.
- **Soldier:** The character is a hardened warrior, however they came about their training.

- **Hero:** The character can not only take on a selachamorphian death squad single-handed, the survivors will thereafter tell tales of their prowess and show off the scars.

Example Trademarks:

- **No Kill Like Overkill:** Through painful personal experience, Hoshiyo has learned that stabbing one of the Invaders once is unlikely to prove immediately fatal, no matter what the martial theory of the matter might dictate. She therefore makes absolutely certain that her opponents are not only dead but that their individual pieces are only vaguely recognizable as something once living before she's finished slicing.
- **Improvised Melee Massacre:** Jason never really had the luxury of a formal education in the gentle art of weapons-usage. Growing up on the mean dockside streets of his town, he instead gained a knack for using literally anything that came to hand (or feet or knees or elbows) as a possible weapon, from the reliable standards like broken bottles and bits of wood to the more exotic, like that one time he used a bucket of tar, a kerosene lamp, and a ladder and escaped with nothing more than a slightly singed backside. If it exists and can even theoretically be used to do someone else harm, he can do it.
- **Good Old-Fashioned Fisticuffs:** Pete cut short a promising career as an amateur prize fighter to join up with the resistance. Somewhere along the way, he ran into a teacher who took his natural talents as a pugilist and helped refine them into an even more terrifying weapon of interpersonal slaughter. Now he's one of the most terrifying combatants anything could hope to face: a human whose hands alone are the only tool he needs to bludgeon them into submission and thereafter tear them apart.

COMMAND

Command is the Skill that allows a character to bark “Dive!” and have everyone else asking “How deep?” It is the essence of taking charge in order to get things done, issuing orders that are neither second guessed nor questioned, both in times of stress or crisis and during more peaceful situations when decisiveness is a required. Possession of a position of authority — military or social rank, for example — is helpful but not required, and a sufficiently strong personality can more than make up any lack.

- **Functionary:** Those who can, do. Those who can't...you know the drill.
- **Administrator:** You can sometimes get others to do what you want if you ask really nicely.
- **Director:** Organizing others is an art form that you are mastering.
- **Honcho:** The person just about everyone points to when they're asked who's in charge.
- **Executive:** The person the honcho points to when they're asked who's in charge.

Example Trademarks:

- **Desk Jockey Bonaparte:** Okay, sure — nobody really expects the sort of cool head capable of organizing an effective defense, arranging for the evacuation of the wounded, demanding and getting close air support to cover a necessary retreat to a more fortified position, and making that position a choke point through which nothing has gotten in anything resembling fighting condition to arise from the secretarial pool. But, well, that's sort of what happened when Ruth took charge of the situation after the entire senior command staff was wiped out in a single precision strike and she remains in control of her crack, well-disciplined unit to this day. The brass is about ready to actually give her rank.
- **La Resistance:** From behind Invader-occupied lines she arose. No one quite knows her name: she is called many different things, many of them references to flowers, from Blue Delphinium to Rosa Blanca to Sakura. No one quite knows where to find her: she comes from nowhere to rally the troops, bringing with her arms, ammunition, gathered intelligence, means of communication, hope for the future of mankind, and she disappears once her work is done. Wherever she goes, the resistance is willing to kill or die at her command, to deny the Invaders a toehold, to destroy their infrastructure, to infiltrate their territory. There may be more than one of her, and if there is, that's a good thing.
- **Rag Tag Band of Misfits:** The crew came together from all over: survivors of torn up military units separated from the greater bulk of their individual commands, civilian resistance fighters and their hangers-on, random shell-shocked refugees looking for someplace safe to hide. It took a special personality to whip this crew into something resembling a functional force, and Ben had that personality — that special combination of father figure, tough-as-nails drill sergeant, and common-sense authority that made them put aside their differences and come together in order to not only survive but thrive.

CULTURE

Culture represents one's knowledge of human artistic, literary, religious, and other shared social touchstones. This can come from any number of sources — from formal education in the arts, religious studies, or communication sciences to being an insatiable pop culture junkie who goes to the movies three times a week and has a storage closet full of horror novels and tabloid newspapers. At the base, it represents a rudimentary level of cultural knowledge that would allow a character to tell the difference between a religious ceremony meant to memorialize the victims of a kraken attack and one intended to call far slimier and betentacled things from the briny deeps, understand commonalities across otherwise unbridgeable divides, and correctly interpret the cultural artifacts of other peoples.

- **Unsophisticated:** Your knowledge of human artistic endeavor begins and ends with television sitcoms.
- **Literate:** You have a library card and you know how to use it.

- **Civilized:** You know the difference between an impromptu performance of *Cats* and a profane religious ritual.
- **Scholarly:** You're the student of several different cultures and their associated arts.
- **Sophisticated:** You've studied several different cultures and their associated arts, and not all of them are human.

Example Trademarks:

- **Cultured Warrior:** Growing up in a family of scholars, Ameirin developed a taste for the finer things in life: edifying literature, exquisite music, fine poetry, intellectually and emotionally stirring experiences from cultures all over the world. It was his familiarity with all these things that allowed him to recognize when the society he traveled in began edging further and further from the norm, repellently so, and when the strange and inhumane cultural products they studied began infiltrating human academic discourse. His attempts to warn others of these mind-warping oddities fell on deaf ears until the invasion began — now, he is leading the charge in the study of their cultures, the best to understand and defeat them.
- **Pop-Cultured:** Sarah knew what the deal was the instant the first reports hit about weirdness boiling up on coastlines around the world. A student of the bizarre by way of Bela Lugosi movies, dime store novels, and horror comics she and her confederates sounded the alarm in their small town and managed to get enough people in positions of authority to take their warnings seriously that, by the time the Invaders actually invaded, their community was at least semi-prepared to weather the onslaught. Now a local authority with actual experience under her belt, she helps disseminate what she's learned through a network of fellow horror enthusiasts that spans continents.
- **Professor Oddball:** Dr. Bloom had the advantage of being on an expedition deep in the Andes when the Invaders' first strike massacred the rest of her department: the handful of people in their little liberal arts university who might possess the expertise necessary to recognize and decode their communications. Recalled in haste, she is now ensconced far behind the lines but in the thick of the action attempting to discover whether her screwball theories about dolphin clicks and whistles could actually be the key to cracking the Invaders' ciphers...

EMPATHY

Empathy indicates how good a character is at reading and responding to social clues such as body language. Not only does empathy allow a character to read these clues, it also allows them to use these cues consciously to affect the behavior of others.

A character would use this Skill to work out whether someone was lying, to soothe the wrath of an angry villager whose lawn has been taken over by coral, or to persuade happy volleyball players to vacate the beach about to be the scene of a shark-man gang rumble.



Empathy works best on members of one's own species, although, at higher levels, some extrapolation is possible. Rolls may suffer up to a 3 dice penalty depending on just *how* alien the target is.

- **Good Listener:** Friends and strangers are inclined to confide in you. Good listeners inspire trust in their subjects.
- **Counselor:** You pick up on gross social clues like body language and fluency. You know how to phrase advice to make a person more likely to act upon it.
- **Psychologist:** You pick up on fine social clues like pupil size and word choice. You work out what people want to hear and phrase your requests so they will be carried out unless they go against the listener's deeply held beliefs
- **Fortune Teller:** You pick up on extremely subtle social clues, things most people do not notice even when they are watching for them. At this level, you influence other people to do things they would not otherwise contemplate.
- **Psychic:** Your empathy is so highly attuned you appear to be a mind reader. You read details of a subject's history and personality from imperceptible clues and implant compelling suggestions into the minds of other humans.

Example Trademarks:

- **Deprogramming:** While science has firmly established that those infected with neuroplankton will obey the impulses so implanted, Jennifer uses a carefully constructed

combination of sounds and images to reverse this process, restoring the victim to their former state of independence.

- **We Have Ways of Making You Talk:** Sigmund captured a seal slug and is attempting to interrogate it. At first he has no success, but Sigmund swiftly surmises that sprinkling the seal slug with salt will soon persuade it to spill its slimy secrets.
- **See the Way It Holds Its Tentacles?:** Jeremy surveys the group of octopuses. "The one on the left is definitely the leader," he announces. "You can tell by the way it holds its tentacles."

ENIGMAS

Possession of this Skill represents a character's command of logic and their capacity to analyze and solve everything from riddles and puzzles to complex mathematical processes. In some cases, this capacity is the product of a naturally disciplined and discerning mind and in others, particularly in the case of a character skilled at mathematics or cryptography, it is the result of formal training in an associated academic discipline.

- **Casualist:** You're not as clever as you seem to think you are.
- **Student:** You've taken a couple of beginner-level mathematics or logic courses at college.
- **Theorist:** Your ideas are generally sound but need testing in the real world.

- **Savant:** You've taught more than a few mathematics or logic courses at college.
- **Logician:** Governments come to you when they need something figured out quite regularly.

Example Trademarks:

- **Omnidisciplinary Master:** Janet was never able to settle for a single area of study and, with the wealth of her family behind her, she never had to do so, instead mastering one field and hopping to the next in a relentless search for intellectual stimulation. In fact, she developed such a reputation as a master of the esoteric, when the government needed a number of anomalous scientific reports across several different disciplines analyzed, she was the one called in to do it.
- **Analytical Awesome:** Callan's obsession with the minutia of number theory marked him as an egghead among eggheads even in his advanced mathematics classes. When he discovered the linkage between seemingly pointless numerical strings being transmitted over otherwise-dead radio bands and the sites of Invader incursions, it became an advantage for the first time in his life, one he exploits to aid the embattled surface world.
- **Many Tongues:** Seizing the communications system from the wreckage of an Invader warship was one of the greatest coups of the war. Even greater was rescuing the finest linguist in the world, a polymathematical genius, from occupied Europe and bringing her into contact with the alien technology. The course of human history may lie in her hands now...

HUMANITIES

This Skill represents the character's general knowledge in the assorted fields of the liberal arts: music, performing arts, fine arts, literature, history, philosophy, and the assorted social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, archaeology, psychology, political science, et al. Many characters possessing high ratings in this Skill will acquire it through formal education in a collegiate setting and may have degrees in one or more academic disciplines, but this is not always the case. Some devotees of the humanities are extremely well-read or come to their knowledge through self-guided study without seeking formal higher education.

- **Novice:** You have just begun your education in your chosen field of study.
- **Undergrad:** You've picked your major and are thinking about doubling it or minoring in everything.
- **Scholar:** You doubled it *and* minored in everything.
- **Graduate:** Your student loan servicer adores your dedication to the academic life.
- **Professor:** Your alma mater adores your dedication to the academic life but not enough to give you tenure.

Example Trademarks:

- **A Degree In What?:** "What, exactly, do you do with a communications degree?" they asked derisively. The answer is, of course, composing propaganda pieces for the Office of Psychological Warfare and then handing them over to the real

nerds in linguistics for translation into assorted Invader languages. When the fate of the world is at stake, every little bit helps.

- **Peak Mental Specimen:** "This has all happened before!" It was a realization that shocked the entire academic community, when a mere graduate student pulled together obscure folkloric sources from all over the world that proved the Invaders had attempted to conquer the surface world at least once before...and failed. Now the race is on to discover what caused that failure and how to replicate it.
- **Gillman's Alienist:** No one quite knew what to do with the creature once it was captured — human throats are ill-equipped for Invader languages in the first place and, in the second, it seemed almost incapable of response. It wasn't even hostile, nor did it attempt to escape once incarcerated, facts that argued against executing it out of hand. Then the chair of the local university psychology department asked to see the thing and, as it turns out, the Invaders can develop shell-shock, too...

INTEGRITY

Integrity represents training and experience with being loyal, sticking to one's beliefs and moral code, and avoiding being misled. A character with the Integrity Skill is good at recognizing and resisting attempts to influence her. This Skill also comes into play when a character is under cover and needs to hide her true intent or feelings.

Integrity is often used to counter Skills like Command or Persuade but is also useful for hiding revulsion at the appearance of an aquatepillar, realizing the vision created by a Siren of Ness is not what it seems, or hiding a character's true motivation from the security detail.

- **Cool:** You were not born yesterday and sticks to your guns in the face of peer pressure.
- **Calm:** You are not taken in by bullshit arguments, even when they come from a person in authority.
- **Collected:** You usually realize when someone is trying to sway you from your convictions or predetermined plan. You notice something is wrong when your drink has been spiked.
- **Stubborn:** You stick to your convictions, despite any attempt to persuade you that other, less ethical, avenues of approach are more efficient. You swiftly become aware of any attempt to use mind-controlling powers on you, though you might not be able to recognize or name those powers.
- **Immoveable Object:** Nothing sways you from your beliefs, not even science. You are highly resistant to mind control and recognize it for what it is. You may even be able to track attempts at mind control back to their source.

Example Trademarks:

- **I Cannot Tell a Lie:** Joey always tells the truth. Sadly, the police officer doesn't believe him when he tells him Professor Price is about to be captured by things that look a bit

like frogs. Nor does Officer Riley think this is a good reason to be driving so much faster than the speed limit.

- **I Forgot My Pen:** Betty believes the blueprints to the gigantic brainbox robot are in the heavily guarded room where Dr. Gloom just gave his presentation. She approaches security and tells them she forgot her pen in the room while attending the lecture. Clearly, she has no hidden motivation for entering the room and gets the place to herself for a full 10 minutes of avid searching.
- **Nerves of Steel:** Does the 1,000-meter-long sea snake rearing above the tiny boat frighten Tracey? No, it does not. She stands up to it, waving her tiny dagger.

LARCENY

Larceny covers a multitude of sins from the sleight-of-hand and distraction technique for slashing a backpack or removing a wallet from a mark's pocket, to getting past sophisticated security systems. It involves both deception and stealth, along with manual dexterity. A character might use their larcenous abilities to pick a pocket or a lock, to sneak past a guard or a security camera, or to break and enter a Crabman hideout.

- **Pilferer:** You shop lift from the general store, get past a sleepy guard, or remove a personal item from an agent of F.I.S.H. who is otherwise distracted.
- **Pick Pocket:** You know how to avoid security devices and lift just about anything from a silicid who is not taking special precautions. You understand the basics of breaking and entering.
- **Cutpurse:** You can pick a complex lock and move soundlessly over a good surface. You are adept at distraction techniques (like having a friend spill ketchup on a crab in a diner so you can go through his belongings)
- **Second Story Man:** You understand the most up-to-date and sophisticated anti-theft devices and how to avoid triggering them. You move soundlessly over broken surfaces. You use cover and shadows to avoid being seen. You scale tall buildings (with equipment).
- **Midnight Rambler:** You are ninja-like in your ability to get into places unseen and no security system, safe, or lock is impenetrable when you are around.

Example Trademarks:

- **Case the Joint:** Patricia swims carefully around the area and is able to detect the precise security arrangements in place around the pod's secret underwater cave and work out how to get in there without setting off any alarms.
- **Cat Burglar:** Eamon scales the side of the skyscraper and gains entry through a cracked-open, 31st-story bathroom window.
- **Takes a Thief:** Gillian's deep knowledge of larcenous methodology allows her to examine tiny clues and piece together how the burglar got in, give a good description of him, and determine his current whereabouts.

MEDICINE

Medicine covers all aspects of healing the sick and stamping out disease. This includes healing others of injury and illness and the diagnosis of problems with anatomy and physiology. Attempts to heal, diagnose or figure out anything about alien anatomy or physiology may suffer up to a 2 dice penalty unless the character has experience with the specific alien type (taking a specialty).

- **First Aider:** You know what to do in a medical emergency in order to stabilize the patient until more expert help arrives.
- **First Responder:** You fix fractures and diagnose most common conditions in members of your own species. You provide basic care in a constructive manner and know when a patient needs to be taken to a specialist facility and what sort of facility they need.
- **Specialist Nurse:** You diagnose and treat most common conditions in members of your own species and are an expert healer in your area of specialty. You may be able to tell if an alien creature is injured or poorly. You know how to stop common infections from spreading.
- **Intern:** You are an expert all-around healer and tackle any illness or injury in your own area of specialty with confidence. You discern what steps to take to stop the spread of a previously unknown infection. You may attempt to diagnose or treat an alien being whose anatomy and physiology are known to you — a bone is a bone whether it's in a fish, a dolphin, or a human.
- **Consultant:** As well as having encyclopedic knowledge and wide-ranging practical experience of the entire fields of medicine and surgery, you are a world authority in your own specialist field. You research previously unknown conditions with great hope of success, you swiftly come to understand the anatomy and physiology (not to mention the pathology) of any alien you care to examine.

Example Trademarks:

- **Bedside Manner:** Nurse Saunders talks reassuringly to the atlantoid whilst sneakily taking a blood sample to analyze later in the lab. Dr. Foster talks confidently to the trapped soldier so his screams don't alert the nearby king clam.
- **Xenobiologist:** Marjorie easily figures out how the Suspended manage to breathe in air. Geoff invents a liquid to stop the creeping coral from spreading.
- **Pass Me the Scalpel, Nurse Hopkins:** The group needs to question the shark gang member, but it appears to be fatally injured. Frank asks for a scalpel and gets to work. The shark man will be fit for interview in a couple of hours.

PERSUASION

Persuasion is the art of getting others to do what a character wants them to do or bringing them round to her point of view. At higher levels a character may lead others to believe it was their

idea in the first place. There are many ways to apply persuasion; from speaking convincingly through subtle (or unsubtle) bribery to downright physical intimidation. A character might use persuasion to fast-talk her way past a security guard, befriend and earn the trust of a silicid, seduce an agent of F.I.S.H., or frighten an innocent bystander into lending her their car.

Persuasion works best on members of one's own species. Attempts to persuade a different species may suffer up to a -3 dice penalty depending on how close that species is to one's own.

- **Plausible:** You convince others to go along with your plans provided this does not mess up their own plans. You change their minds about trivial matters, such as whether it will rain on Wednesday.
- **Trustworthy:** You convince others to go along with your plans provided this does not inconvenience them too greatly. You change their minds about celebrities, but not about people they know intimately.
- **Eloquent:** Others will go out of their way to get you what you want, though they will not endanger themselves. You convince strangers to change any belief to which they attach little importance.
- **Convincing:** Others will put themselves in dangerous situations to further your cause. You persuade them to change beliefs they have held for years, but not deeply held beliefs such as their religion or their conviction that the Brooklyn Dodgers are infinitely better than the New York Giants.
- **Compelling:** Others will move heaven and earth to get you what you want. You talk a person into changing their religion or supporting the Red Sox.

Example Trademarks:

- **Marshal of Evidence:** The government doesn't believe the coastline is in danger. Mary marshals the evidence and convinces the authorities to provide finances and vehicles to fight the threat.
- **Best Buddy:** Stefan befriends a lonely crab woman who tells him her leader's home address.
- **Big Stick:** Marvin's threats convince the agent of the pod to turn over incriminating documents.

PILOT

The Pilot Skill applies to any kind of vehicle from a pushbike to a space rocket or submarine. There is an assumption that all characters are able to drive a standard car to the supermarket or the airport. This Skill only comes into play in stressful situations or when attempting to control an utterly unfamiliar vehicle. The Pilot Skill also covers routine vehicle maintenance and running repairs (true expertise in creating and fixing complex machinery falls under Technology).

A character uses their Pilot Skill to lose a tail or engage in a car chase or a dog fight. Pilot determines whether a character runs another vehicle off its course, stunt rides a bicycle, or works out how to operate an entirely alien vehicle.

- **Bench Racer:** You drive well, even a stick shift under stressful conditions. You park in small spaces. You do a wheelie on a motorcycle without falling off.
- **Burning Rubber:** You're pretty good in a drag race from the lights — as long as the real drag racers don't turn up. Your friends think you're a great driver.
- **Drag Racer:** You're one of the real drag racers. You drive a getaway car from a heist or run getaway cars off the road. At this level, piloting of more exotic vehicles becomes possible. Choose one as a specialty.
- **Formula One:** Sure you can beat the drag racers! You drive Formula One or have real respect as a fighter pilot or submarine captain. You hire herself out to the mafia as a getaway driver or to the police to catch a thief.
- **Test Pilot:** You are the best there is when it comes to your chosen vehicle type. You can also pilot other, similar vehicles. If you're a submarine captain, you can manage any aquatic vehicle and have a good idea of how an alien one works. If you're a jet pilot, you could take a shot at flying one of those space rockets, once the science masterminds work out how to get them off the ground.

Example Trademarks

- **One Arm Tied Behind My Back:** Charlie tries to move his broken arm. No joy. He looks at the Dodge. It's a wreck. Ten minutes later, Charlie has the Dodge going again and is halfway to St. Louis.
- **This Reminds Me of My Old Jalopy:** Elizabeth examines the "thing with wheels." She's never seen anything like it before. Maybe it's some kind of prototype. Maybe it belongs to those weird creatures she saw on the beach. But, it is a thing with wheels and Elizabeth soon works out how to make it go.
- **Hot Rodder:** Jason is racing to get from Springfield to the beach in the dark. A 10-foot barrier has been erected on the highway just the other side of a small rise. Jason notices it just in time and manages to launch his Buick into the air, landing neatly on the other side of the obstruction.
- **Bloody Red Baron:** Incredible acts of ballistic violence emanate from Belinda's vehicle as she conducts a dogfight with the enemy. No one has ever beaten her in a one-to-one, vehicle to vehicle fight.

SCIENCE

This covers natural sciences and also all theoretical empirical hard sciences. Physics, chemistry, biology, life sciences, and earth sciences, but not medicine (which has its own Skill) or social sciences and archaeology (which come under Humanities). If someone is wearing a white coat and glasses and is not a medic, they are probably doing science.

With the Science Skill a character attempts to come up with biological or chemical controls for the encroaching coral or to explain an obtuse point about the neuroplankton swarm to an

audience. Science also represents a special knowledge of geology to deduce where a hole in the rock leads, the know-how to conduct experiments to test theories, and the jargon to convince fellow scientists of the validity of a project.

- **Lab Assistant:** You were really good at science in school and still take an interest, reading magazines and books and watching documentaries about science. Okay, it's not much more than general knowledge, but it impresses less-knowledgeable friends and is occasionally useful in the field.
- **Bachelor:** Having majored in at least one natural science in college, you kept up since graduating. You have a good, basic understanding of science and the scientific method. You are resistant to being persuaded by pseudoscience, though your grasp of statistics does let you down at times.
- **Master:** An expert in your chosen field with a good general education in natural science and scientific method, you assess unknown items from your specialist field (a master's degree in chemistry does not help much when trying to identify a strange fish and a master's in biology will not help much in analyzing a strange and possibly explosive compound).
- **Egghead:** You earned a doctorate in at least one natural science and a smattering of high level knowledge in the others, mostly gained through discussions in the student lounge. You analyze and identify anything described in a scientific journal in your own field (and come up with the means to combat it – at least in theory) and, given time in the lab, have a chance of doing the same for something previously undescribed. You can teach and explain difficult concepts related to your own field.
- **Mastermind:** There is little in the field of natural science you don't understand. You have an international reputation and sway your fellow scientists to your cause. Your analyses and inventions are not confined to your own field. You can apply science to any problem.

Example Trademarks:

- **Blinded by Science:** Jules delivers a long and involved scientific presentation to the military committee. Utterly confused by the jargon and fine detail, the chairman (who is not a scientist) agrees to lend Jules a platoon to help defeat the trencher rather than admit that he understood no more than one word in five from Jules' presentation.
- **The Appliance of Science:** Anne secludes herself in the lab and comes out a few hours later with a poisoned bait the leviathan will be unable to resist.
- **For Science!:** Gavin uses science to tackle the problem without regard to the consequences. His spray does, indeed, get rid of the creeping coral on the mayor's lawn, but it also kills every invertebrate in a 10-mile radius including the oysters that are of vital importance to the local economy.

SURVIVAL

Survival is the Skill governing a character's ability to successfully navigate the wilderness, and covers the basic knowledge of how to recognize and avoid natural hazards, find safe food to eat and potable water to drink, make fire and build shelter, and to make one's way deeper into the wilds or back to civilization, with or without map and compass. It is generally acquired through membership in wilderness-enthusiast organizations such as scouting, survivalist, or environmentalist groups, or military hostile environment training, though there are plenty of enthusiastic amateurs who have achieved their knowledge through less-pragmatic means.

- **Tenderfoot:** You've read a book about mushroom identification.
- **Greenhorn:** You've read the book and managed to not poison yourself as a result.
- **Capable:** You're comfortable going out into nature without a 50lb backpack.
- **Practiced:** Your face appears on those "take only pictures, leave only footprints" pamphlets.
- **Seasoned:** You're what everyone thinks of when someone says Eagle Scout.

Example Trademarks:

- **Doomsday Prepared:** Skye always knew this day would come. Sure, it wasn't godless commie hordes, it was slimy critters from beneath the ocean, but in the end it's just a piece of the same thing. He was, consequently, able to retreat in good order to a bunker containing enough food, water, medical supplies, arms, and ammunition to last out the collapse of human civilization. That was some months ago, and someone just knocked on the door.
- **There, I Fixed It:** It's always good to know how to make something functional out of piles of dubious junk, and Jamie has that knack, traveling from town to town on the edges of the occupied zones and sometimes across them to bring help to people in need. She just recently got her hands on some bits of the Invader technologies for the first time and has begun incorporating them into her newest projects. This has, unfortunately, had the side effect of attracting the attention of both the human and Invader militaries to her efforts.
- **Untrusting Community:** Sometimes it takes a village. In specific, a takes a village to gather food and the means to replenish that food supply, water and the means to purify and store as much as possible, medical supplies and the materials to produce more, weapons of all varieties, and the resources needed to close off said village to all outsiders who have nothing to offer but hungry mouths and unhelping hands. When the invasion started, Josephine wasn't mayor – she was the mayor's secretary, but she was the only one hard-minded enough to do what needed to be done. Now the town is secure, the people are safe, and her dreams are haunted by the choices she made – but she would make them again to save what's hers.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology describes a character's familiarity and aptitude with a wide range of tools and devices. This Skill covers using, making, analyzing and repairing any tool, device, or piece of machinery. It also includes detecting weaknesses in such items in order to reinforce or break them.

Technology comes into play when repairing a machine of any kind, detecting the weak girder in a structure, working out what an unfamiliar machine was designed to do (and maybe repairing it) or using a computer the size of a house.

- **Journeyman:** You're pretty good at tinkering with anything mechanical or electrical. You fix items around the home. You've delighted in taking things apart since you were four.
- **Craftsman:** You understand how common machines work. Not only did you take things apart as a child but you were usually able to put them back together. Friends bring you items to fix.
- **Mechanic:** You work at a professional level on any piece of machinery in which you have a specialty and cope pretty well with other machines of a similar nature. You perform running repairs in the field and routine repairs with the right facilities and equipment.
- **Engineer:** You understand machines, devices, and tools and you are usually able to work out what a previously unknown item was designed to do. You fix most things even if they are very broken, though clearly having the right equipment, spare parts, and assistance help. You invented a couple of handy gadgets to make your life easier.
- **Inventor:** Working out what a strange device does is not a problem for you. Given the tools and the time you may also make an attempt to repair an unfamiliar item with reasonable hope of success as long as you can obtain or improvise the spare parts.

Example Trademarks:

- **Gadgeteer:** Milly pulls a strange device out of her purse and points it at the suspended. Its carapace just seems to melt away, leaving a gasping, fishlike being thrashing around on the ground. "I always like to keep my patented distance dehydrator handy," Milly says, whilst emptying out the storage tank on her gadget, taking care, of course, to keep a sample of the slime for later analysis in the lab.
- **Do You Have a Nylon Stocking?:** Improvisation is the key to performing a dramatic repair using only everyday objects that are bound to be at hand. Karl never leaves home without his trusty WD40 and gaffer tape.
- **Talent for Destruction:** Sophie surveys the giant brain-box robot bearing down upon the crowded boardwalk. She points towards it. "See the point where the spinal structure curves? If it takes a hit there, the whole thing will fall." Simon takes a baseball out of his pocket and flings it towards the robot, hitting it precisely where Sophie indicated. The robot crashes into the sea, microseconds before it reaches the innocent bystanders.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes represent a character's untrained abilities. They fall into three arenas: Mental, Physical, and Social. Each arena has three approaches: **Force** represents the raw application of each arena, **Finesse** has to do with speed and accuracy of application, and **Resilience** describes how a character resists the application of an arena. This makes for a total of nine Attributes.

MENTAL

Mental Attributes deal with the powers of the mind, thought, and logic. This includes how fast a character is on the uptake, their ability to solve tricky puzzles, and how they apply logic to problems. Mental Attributes also determine how good the character is at noticing detail and applying deductive reasoning to small and seemingly unconnected data. These Attributes are also used to concentrate for long periods and to resist all kinds of propaganda, persuasion, and brainwashing.

INTELLECT

Intellect covers the raw computing power of a character's brain. Intellect comes into play when someone needs to work out what is going on in a situation using the powers of logic, deduction, and, on occasion, intuition. It has nothing to do with level of education, though those with high Intellect find it easier and quicker to learn new material and are better at studying.

A character might use Intellect to recall something they read about the propagation of corals, to calculate where the rock the crab man just threw is likely to land, to deduce what an alien-looking piece of technology was designed to do, and maybe even intuit how to get it working again.

- **Dunce:** You never took to book learning, which you find difficult and boring. If people talk with lots of long words and complicated sentences you may not understand.
- **Practical:** You will read up on a topic if you have reason to do so, but this is not your first line of approach.
- **Bookworm:** Maybe you graduated from college, maybe you acquired a similar level of education from the school of hard knocks. You understand complex issues as long as they touch on subjects with which you have some experience.
- **Brainy:** At school the other kids called you "brains." You follow the majority of explanations and, if things get too technical, you know how to frame the right questions to help you understand.
- **Genius:** You have a first-class brain and world-class expert knowledge in more than one field. You learn new material quickly and easily.

Example Trademarks:

- **Trivial Pursuit:** Leonard always wins at Trivial Pursuit. Seeing his companions about to succumb to a vision summoned up by the Sirens of Ness, he remembers how Odys-

seus overcame the sirens in the Odyssey and using improvised blindfolds helps them escape entrapment.

- **Photographic Memory:** Confronted by Professor Crumb and his mad robots, Jenny is able to recall the precise contents of the notes she scanned briefly when the Prof left them on a table in the coffee shop. She remembers that the robots have an Achilles heel and points out the one spot of their anatomy which will cause them to explode.
- **Elementary, My Dear Watson:** Belinda looks around the restaurant trying to put the clues together. There's a slime trail along the base of the bar; the waiter has suddenly lost the order from table 23... Suddenly it all falls into place! The seal slugs have set up their secret headquarters in Sally's diner.

CUNNING

Cunning covers mental tasks requiring speed and precision. It deals with the ability to notice details quickly, to multitask, and to spot a strange irregularity on the surface of the ocean. Cunning is what allows an individual to grasp the essentials of a situation in a short span of time, to solve tricky riddles, to fast-talk the man from F.I.S.H., or to con a sharkman.

- **Oblivious:** A crab person could walk up behind you, but they'd have to say "boo" before you noticed.
- **Slow On the Uptake:** You hardly ever walk into the furniture. You are aware of your environment but don't usually notice small or hidden details.
- **Sharp:** You have uncommon attention to detail and will notice small details that the average person would miss.
- **Vigilant:** It is unusual for you to be taken by surprise. You have excellent powers of observation.
- **Wired:** You don't miss a trick and find it easy to outwit others. The kraken is easy to fool; atlantoids are slightly trickier.

Example Trademarks:

- **Cunning Plan:** Betty comes up with a cunning plan to entrap the agents of F.I.S.H. She sets up a special "secret" meeting, ensuring one of their agents hears about it. She makes sure the agent knows only those wearing red carnations can gain entry. And she has her companions watching the door for anyone wearing a red carnation.
- **Outwitty:** Frank is two steps ahead of the enemy. His knowledge of tidal and weather patterns enables him to work out when and where those infested by neuroplanktons will come to the sea to drink — our heroes will be there, waiting for them.
- **Multitasking:** Martha is talking on the telephone to her superior while writing a report on her research into silicids. At the same time she notices those very silicids creeping up to the front door of the building. Without missing a beat, she sends a message in Morse code to the SWAT team, alerting them to the silicid presence.

RESOLVE

Resolve measures a character's strength of will, and resistance to psychological trickery and mental or emotional stress. Characters who possess a high degree of Resolve are highly mentally focused and organized, capable of ignoring distractions with ease, keeping themselves and others on task in stressful situations, identifying and counteracting attempts at exploiting them, and standing fast in the face of others' uncontrolled emotional reactions. Characters with a low Resolve are easily distracted and manipulated, lack mental focus, and do not manage their own mental and emotional stress competently.

Resolve may be used to: resist attempts at persuasion, resist attempts at mental or emotional manipulation, stay strong under pressure, remain focused in stressful situations, control one's own emotions and convince others to do the same, or organize group activities or investigations.

- **Weak-willed:** You get flustered easily.
- **Indecisive:** You meditate about once a week.
- **Purposeful:** Your day job requires advanced stress-management skills.
- **Resolute:** You are a Zen master or an expert spy, and very likely both.
- **Steadfast:** You experienced stress once a long time ago and disliked it so much you decided to never do that again.

Example Trademarks:

- **Not Good at Giving Up:** In the fell clutch of circumstance, Ellen neither winces nor cries aloud and nothing, absolutely nothing, causes her to give up her chosen course of action — neither tidal waves washing away important parts of physical infrastructure, nor trusted allies becoming the pawns of mind-control plankton, there is no disaster around which she cannot adapt to keep a plan on track.
- **Unemotional, Cold-Blooded So-and-So:** When everyone else is running around like highly overstressed chickens with their hair on fire, wailing and gnashing their teeth in despair, Melissa most definitely is not. Coolly controlled no matter the circumstances, she can lend her steadiness to others in the clinch and help recover situations in which all might otherwise be lost.
- **If You Didn't Want Me in Charge, You Should Have Taken it Yourself:** Hope wasn't the most beloved member of her small group of survivors, but she is most definitely the one in control of it. Faced with disaster and no clear hierarchy of command or authority, she took charge when a leader was needed and will keep that role until someone who wants it more comes along.

PHYSICAL

Physical Attributes cover the control the character has over her body and its interactions with the environment. They control feats of strength, coordination, and resistance to illness and injury. This arena also covers suppleness, dexterity, and the ability to juggle three hagfish at a time, while fighting off a kraken with one's bare hands.

MIGHT

Might is raw physical power. It determines how much weight a character can deadlift. Might is used in lifting and moving objects (including oneself, as in jumping and running up a steep incline). It determines how much damage a character inflicts when they hit a sharkman or kick a reef of encroaching coral. It indicates how far a character can throw a hagfish.

- **Puny:** You frequently get sand kicked in your face when you're with your cutie at the beach.
- **Weak:** You need help to lift heavy furniture whilst cleaning your house.
- **Fit:** Your face is known in your local gym. You can push start a car on the flat.
- **Well-muscled:** You could be a gym instructor or personal trainer. You work out every day and it shows.
- **Pro-strength:** Olympic level weightlifter, shot-putter or discus thrower. You tow cars uphill with ease and could push a tank along the road.

Example Trademarks:

- **Knuckle Sandwich:** Denis punches a hole through the steel door into the oblique's hideout while Marvin is still fiddling with his lock picks.
- **Pumping Iron:** Bracing herself, Maria dead lifts the heavy headstone in the graveyard. There is a vault beneath it which contains no skeletons, but five Sirens of Ness who appear to be torturing the missing Prof. Winters.
- **Jack-in-the-Box:** Katy leaps 12 feet into the air and grabs hold of the window ledge, cautiously pulling herself up to where she can peer through the window at the blueprints the enemy scientist carelessly left lying on the table.

DEXTERITY

Dexterity deals with how well an individual controls their body movements and describes eye-hand coordination.

Dexterity is used to keep balance while chasing a shark gang on water skis. It determines a character's ability to dance with a silicid, throw a baseball with accuracy, or repair a complicated machine.

- **Butterfingers:** Food ends up in your mouth more often than it goes down your front. Just about.
- **Ungainly:** You're usually the second to last person picked for the team. You sometimes tread on your partner's toes at the hop.
- **Def:** You dance. You juggle a bit. Well, enough to impress your nieces.
- **Nimble:** You are a professional dancer, contortionist, athlete, or stage magician.
- **Agile:** World-class gymnast, diver, or ice skater — your sleight of hand is undetectable.

Example Trademarks:

- **Twinkletoes:** Fred's fancy footwork flummoxes the enemy. The sharkman's fist can't connect with any part of him and he is able to get away undetected.
- **The Quickness of the Hand Deceives the Mind:** The student in service to the neuroplankton Swarm lunges for the phial of neuroplankton killer Jake holds aloft, but mid-lunge, the phial disappears (and is later found behind Jake's assistant's ear).
- **Fixit Fingers:** Using nothing more than a screwdriver and a butter knife, Lilly repairs the malfunctioning engine.

STAMINA

Stamina measures a character's ability to manage purely physical exertion, ranging from environmental hazards (extreme cold or heat; holding one's breath underwater; running, jogging, or walking for long periods of time; climbing any sort of incline), to surviving exposure to contagious disease or toxins, and enduring the effects of combat and injuries on the human body. Possession of a high Stamina score is vital to fighters of all kinds, such as soldiers, endurance athletes, and medical professionals including EMTs and emergency room personnel, all of whom require a hardy constitution to avoid succumbing to injury or disease in the course of their daily lives. Individuals with a low Stamina score tend to catch cold easily, suffer a disproportionately high number of injuries, and also take longer to recover from said illnesses and injuries.

Stamina can be used to: run or march long distances, continue to fight despite physical injury, recover more quickly from illness or injury, and resist becoming ill from disease or succumbing to poison.

- **Feeble:** You're always the first to get sick and the gym is a foreign land to you.
- **Lethargic:** Your job involves a lot of sitting but you do hit the gym semi-regularly.
- **Energetic:** You rarely need a doctor's visit and you're on a first-name basis with your trainer.
- **Vital:** You compete in Olympic grade triathlons for fun.
- **Indefatigable:** You never get sick. Ever. You are the peak of human endurance.

Example Trademarks:

- **Marathon Nitro Boost:** William always had the gift of sheer-terror-powered adrenaline: When he was little, he used it to run from bigger and stronger bullies, when he got older he used it to break state swimming time records that stood for decades, now he uses it to evade the invaders in their own element on the missions he performs for the resistance. Having rings swum around you by something that doesn't even have fins or gills must be deeply humiliating.
- **I'm the Juggernaut:** Humans are pursuit predators and Charles is among the most deadly of the kind, trained by

the special-forces unit to which he belongs to put aside pain and weakness, illness or injury, to become an unstoppable machine in the pursuit of his goals. It just so happens that the goal now involves making calamari.

- **Acquired Poison Immunity:** Sarah has always had a fondness for snakes, and so becoming a herpetologist was only logical — as was developing an immunity to animal toxins via repeated survival exposure. To the surprise of many, including the invader whose head she cracked with a convenient fire extinguisher, she's immune to their poisons, too.

SOCIAL

Social Attributes determine how well a character interacts with other people. This arena deals with the ease with which a character picks up the social signals used by the sharkman gangs, how well they can impress the agents of F.I.S.H., and how easily they convince the teenage shrimp to do what they want him to do. Social Attributes also determine a character's ability to resist attempts by others to influence them socially, and their ability to read individuals and social situations.

PRESENCE

Presence measures a character's ability to sway other intelligent beings. It can derive from a variety of sources — it could be stunningly good looks, intimidating size, charm, or an assertive or reassuring manner of self-presentation.

Presence is used to get others to obey orders, influence the behavior of a hagfish, pull the wool over a siren's eyes, interrogate a humanoid crab, or train the king clam.

Presence works best on your own species. If the target is a member of another species, Presence rolls may suffer up to a -2 dice penalty depending on just *how* alien they are.

- **Bashful:** It is difficult for you to get anyone's attention. Sadly, it doesn't make you any better at avoiding unwanted attention. You find social gatherings intimidating.
- **Wallflower:** People sometimes forget your name, or that you are in the room. You get nervous if you need to address a large group of people.
- **Confident:** With the right preparation and aids, you can persuade people who are already inclined to your point of view. You are confident around people.
- **Charismatic:** A charismatic character could sell a silicid a pig in a poke, even though no silicid has any idea what to do with it. You can handle large groups of people.
- **Compelling:** Others cling on your every word; you are an opinion leader, an icon. You know how to work a crowd.

Example Trademarks:

- **Cutie:** Bert swans past the security guard who is taken in by his suave good looks and fails to notice he has gone right across the hazard tape into the forbidden area and taken his friends along with him.

- **What a Nice Young Person!** Daphne's good manners and obliging attitude persuade the general's secretary to let her speak to the general without an appointment. The general also takes to her and is happy to provide her research group with a battalion of commandos to protect them while they strengthen the dam.
- **Charmer:** Jake is a real sleazebag. Some people find him creepy. But the way he smarmed himself into that silicid's affections was truly impressive. The other silicids don't know it, but she's working for Jake now.

MANIPULATION

Manipulation measures a character's ability to adapt to social situations and to analyze the behavior of others. Manipulation is vital to con artists, fortune tellers, and fast talkers. It enables an individual to read other intelligent beings through analysis of their body language and other unconsciously emitted behaviors.

Manipulation is used for predicting what another creature will do next, posing as another individual or a member of another species, and for lying convincingly.

Manipulation works best on your own species. Attempts to manipulate a member of another species may suffer up to a -2 dice penalty depending on just *how* alien they are.

- **Awkward:** You frequently make social faux pas and find other people's behavior difficult to understand or predict.
- **One of the Crowd:** You occasionally encounter problems in company if you don't know the social rules. You are a lousy liar.
- **Socially Competent:** White lies come easily to you; you often watch a situation taking place between humans and work out how to insert yourself into it. Sharkmen though, they are a different proposition.
- **Social Climber:** It's almost as if you can read people's minds, such is your ability to know what they want and to offer it to them convincingly.
- **Rock Star:** A consummate liar; with the right disguise you can be the belle or beau of the atlantoids' prom.

Example Trademarks:

- **Kissed the Blarney Stone:** Confronted by a deputy sheriff who wants to know what he is doing trying to sneak into the dolphin park after hours, Ryan tells her about his young nephew who has leukemia and whose last wish was to get hold of one of those brightly colored hoops the dolphins use in their performance. Moved almost to tears, the deputy arranges for Ryan to get a private viewing of the dolphins (and one of the damned hoops) and, while he is in there, Ryan manages to place a bug so he can listen to the pod's attempts to communicate with their captive brethren.
- **Party Crasher:** Sidney disguises himself as a sharkman gang member and attends one of their rallies. He fits in perfectly and makes friends with several gang members. He manages to leave just before the hazing.

- **I Know What You Want:** Bernard discerns that what the teenage shrimp really wants is a date for the school prom. Bernard is able to convince Belinda to be the shrimp's date for the evening. The teenage shrimp is aware he owes Bernard a favor and Bernard will make it up to Belinda because he's worked out that what she really, really wants is a Cadillac. Now, he just needs to persuade Vincent to lend him the money to buy one for her.

COMPOSURE

Composure measures a character's strength of mind, their awareness of and resistance to efforts at social manipulation, and their ability to recognize and manipulate the social strengths and weaknesses of others. Characters who possess a high degree of Composure are enormously socially adept, capable of reading a whole room with ease — much less someone with whom they are engaged in close conversation, sussing out truth from lies without missing a beat, interrogating others, or being interrogated without putting a single nerve or hair out of place. Characters who lack Composure are easily flustered and manipulated by stronger personalities, deceived by liars, and cracked by interrogators.

Composure is used to: resist manipulation, recognize deceit, conceal your own intentions, manipulate and deceive others, and maintain a cool façade.

- **Naive:** You may have actually been born yesterday.
- **Perturbable:** You occasionally lose your cool in high pressure social situations.

- **Nonchalant:** Very few people have ever successfully lied to you and never more than once.
- **Assured:** Intense business negotiations and high-level diplomacy are your bread and butter.
- **Dispassionate:** You are so completely unflappable that even the reality of invaders from beneath the sea didn't make you lose your cool.

Example Trademarks:

- **The Name Is:** James is a man of supreme competence, through a combination of natural talent, highly trained skill, and encyclopedic knowledge married to the sort of personality equally at home shooting rubbery tentacle monsters and escorting alien ambassadors through high-level diplomatic soirees. Recently, he has been called upon to do both and more.
- **Not Soft:** Do not mistake Jeremiah's kindness for weakness because, in order to complete his goals, he will beat, blackmail, betray, or kill anyone who stands in his way. He may feel uncomfortable about it, because he's actually quite squishy and nice on the inside.
- **Not Nice:** Do not mistake Phoebe's goodness for weakness, because she has never been kind and the darkest depths of the ocean run warmer than her blood. Any decisions she makes will be to obtain the greatest good for the greatest number and individual tragedies will not move her one iota.





THE CREEPING CORAL

The old beachcomber paused at the shoreline of the old beach. He liked picking things up, but he sure hadn't picked this up before. He touched it, then screamed and never knew why.

• • •

"It appears to be a member of the coral family," uttered venerable Professor Limus Mankeason at his lab in Coastal City, a large coastal city named after itself. He and assistant Rosty Newlar taking up science after it killed her boyfriend Teenage Shrimp gazed at the strangely encrusted corpse. Also there: Agent Cods Hairigon of the Federal Bureau of Dams, probably because of his familiarity with hard crusty things.

"How could coral do this to a human person, Professor?" he coughed, lighting a cigarette.

"It's an advanced form, Mr. Hairigon, unlike any I've seen. Preliminary tests tell me it might be intelligent."

"Next you'll be telling me rocks can talk," chuckled Cods through smoke.

"We shall require more tests," coughed Limus, waving smoke away.

• • •

That night at the empty lab, the encrusted corpse sat up. With crunching difficulty, the Coral Man got off the table and shuffled out the door. A short time later, it looked up at a tall building, then reached out and embraced a corner. Coral began spreading to the building.

• • •

"Things just don't get up and walk out unless they're things that can do that," objected Cods the next morning.

"Incredible," gasped Limus. Just then the radio crackled. "We interrupt almost everything to bring you this news flash! Buildings in Coastal City appear to be turning to coral. Authorities remain baffled but promise to say words when they have them."

• • •

Limus, Rosty, and Cods stepped into a nightmare. Crowds ran screaming through the streets. Limus stopped a man. "What? What is it?"

"Let go of me, you old fool! What's wrong with you, do you want to be coral?!" yelled the man, half insane with fear, who clearly didn't want to be coral.

The crunching was oppressive as coral crept like fungus up building after building.

"Because it's hard and crusty, this is under the jurisdiction of the FDD," barked Cods. "I'm declaring martial law!"

• • •

A short time later, Limus, Rosty, Cods and army officers studied a map.

"So you're dead against an atom bomb?" persisted Cods.

"Cods, that could actually be worse than turning to coral." reasoned Limus.

"Have you seen that stuff?"

A cry from a guard brought them to the window. Coral People were roaming the streets, touching buildings, which began to coralize. It was the final straw. The army ordered evacuation.

• • •

Soon, Coastal City was a shadow of its former self, which used to have people in it. But three did remain Limus, Rosty and Cods using the only subterfuge they could: realistic papier mach coral costumes laced with actual coral in case the coral had a way of sensing that. They shuffled along, occasionally touching buildings to "coralize" them, mingling with actual Coral People.

"I don't see what this will accomplish, Professor," mumbled Cods through his mask.

"Only by studying them can we hope to defeat them," replied the elderly scientist.

• • •

After shambling a while, Rosty said, "Hey, Prof, can we eat? I'm starved," so they stopped in a diner.

"The coral is somehow reanimating corpses of its victims, forming almost a hard candy shell to keep them from decomposing," theorized Limus.

"But, Prof, like, why would they do this, man? Is it just really mean coral?" queried Rosty.

"If only I knew, Rosty."

Abruptly, a Coral Man shuffled up. "Why are you not turning this diner to coral?" It was the first time they'd heard one speak, and its deep, dead croak rumbled. The three started touching things, pretending to coralize, until the annoying Coral Man left.

• • •

The city continued its horrifying coralization. The crackling was unbearable, like buildings in pain. Limus began a series of tests to see what, if anything, might reverse the process: water, sodium, electricity

"I usually try punching things," grunted Cods, "That's the tried-and-true method." And, with that, the veteran dam man hauled off and laid one on some coral.

As Cods iced his swollen hand, Limus continued testing: acid, extreme cold, extreme heat

Head about given up, when Rosty pointed. Coral People were crowding together around a particularly crusty leader. Rarely had there been so much shambling.

"Soon our work will be complete, my coral brethren and sistren!" croaked the Leader. "Long has humankind weakened our delicate ecosystems: coral reefs that are the beating hearts of the sea, livings oceans that sustain life on this planet. Now well see how they like it, okay? When the final building is covered, then shall we trigger the vibration that crumbles them to dust."

"Vibration," gasped Limus. "That's it!"

• • •

Cods watched as the Professor and Rosty used a primitive electronic device to test various sounds and frequencies on a secluded coralized building corner.

"If one vibration can crumble, another may simply remove it," bleated the elderly scientist.

Just then, a Coral Person spotted them, then another. Cods had his hands full, fighting them off the only way he knew how. But they were closing fast

"I've got it!" cheered Limus. "Okay, now run away!"

• • •

A short time later, the three emerged from an uncoralized music store, free of cumbersome disguises. It was not exactly music, but the untrained sounds emitting from their flutes had the desired effect. Like Pied Pipers, except for the rodent part, they made coral slide down the sides of every building they passed an unearthly and unattractive striptease to crumble harmlessly to the ground. Likewise, each Coral Person began shuffling off its coral coil, slumping to the pavement, their rotting corpses now revealed.

• • •

The city was finally restored.

"Now we can get the people back. Clean things up," said Cods.

"Gee, you, like, did it, Professor," said Rosty.

"Not I, my dear," twinkled Limus. "Twas the simplest of God's creatures, the flute."



CHAPTER FIVE

SYSTEM

"What if he can read our minds?"

"He'll be real mad when he gets to me."

- Lieutenant Ken McPherson and Eddie, *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Now you have a character, with many dots carefully filled in. It's great to look at, isn't it? Very soothing. The dots are almost... mesmerizing...

Snap out of it! Making a character is just the first step. Now she needs an adventure to participate in. But how do you do things in this game? Grab your dice, fearless reader, as we teach you how to turn those dots into a gripping story!

HOW TO DO THINGS

They Came from Beneath the Sea! was created with the Storypath system, which uses several 10-sided dice (although we'll sometimes call them "d10s"). As the adventure unwinds, your character will encounter situations and conflicts where it's not clear what the outcome will be. That's what the dice are for! You, as the player, will roll some dice and make choices to resolve the situation.

Every time you need to roll dice, you and the Director determine which of your character's Skills and Attributes are being used to resolve the situation at hand. You take a number of dice equal to the dots you have in that Skill and that Attribute, and roll all of them at once. Each die that shows an 8 or 9 is a success, and each 10 counts as two successes! If you get at least one success, you add any bonus successes from appropriate Enhancements.

Now that you have successes, you spend those to overcome the situation's Difficulty and any additional Complications. If you don't have enough successes to buy off the Difficulty, your character fails the task she was trying to accomplish. But don't worry — you'll get some Consolation for your trouble. If you didn't generate any successes and have at least one die showing a 1, then you botch, but at least you earn some Rewrites.

Did you catch all that? It was a lot to cover. Let's dig into each part of that core mechanic and explain it.



EXAMPLE NAMES

You'll see some examples of play in this chapter, referring to a few players and their characters. For the sake of ease, the players are Gail, Roald, and Willie, and they're playing Eto, Minerva, and Damarco, respectively. Unclear?

PLAYER	CHARACTER
Gail	Eto
Roald	Minerva
Willie	Damarco

WHEN TO ROLL DICE

Challenge and conflict is what drives a story forward. For exciting adventures like those in **TCfBtS!**, you need a way to keep the audience uncertain about what's going to happen next. In this case, you and your fellow players are also the audience, and it's no fun if everyone knows everything in advance. That's why we use dice — it's a chance to inject some uncertainty into the story.

That doesn't mean every action should involve dice. A small-town sheriff shouldn't have to roll to eat a doughnut, turn on his siren, or pretend to look for a broken taillight. In these cases, he just does it as we move on to the interesting parts. But if the sheriff wanted to put up his fists and punch an aquatic alien, that's something fraught with uncertainty. When the stakes are high, or when the consequences for success or failure are both interesting, that's when you break out the dice.

FORMING A DICE POOL

How many dice should you roll? There's a straightforward process for that.

First, ask yourself "What is my character trying to accomplish?" Try to keep it to a single action like "My character wants to punch an aquatic alien" (although if you can't do just one thing, we'll talk about mixed actions on p. XX). Once you have an answer to that question, look at your character sheet and find out which Skill best matches the intended action. Count the dots by your Skill, and pick up that many dice.

Next, ask yourself "How is my character accomplishing it?" With the answer to that in mind, look for the Attribute that best matches the method. Again, count the dots and add that many dice. That's the start of your *dice pool*.

As a note, you can pair any Skill with any Attribute. Sure, trying to punch an aquatic alien might rely on physical force (such as Close Combat + Might), but your character might also want to use his mental control (Close Combat + Cunning) to find the right rubbery protuberance to grab in the fight for maximum effect. If your Director agrees that a particular Attribute is a good fit for your action, then go ahead and add those dice together!

Lastly, ask yourself "Does this action fall within one of my character's Trademarks?" *Trademarks* are very specific forms of Attributes and Skills that define your character. Two characters might have four dots in Close Combat, but one can be "Built Like a Brick Outhouse" while the other might be "Secret Practitioner of Baritsu."

If the action fits within your Trademark, you can invoke it once per story to add two additional dice to the roll, and you have an opportunity for Directorial Control. (More on Directorial Control on p. XX.)

DOING TWO THINGS AT ONCE: MIXED ACTIONS

Sometimes, things are more complicated than just punching an aquatic alien. Maybe you need to do two things at once, like punching an aquatic alien while trying to remember the abort codes for the missile launch. Doing two things at once is called a *mixed action*.

To resolve a mixed action, you calculate the dice pool for each action by asking yourself "What is my character trying to accomplish with this action, and how is my character accomplishing it?" Once you've sorted out the Skill + Attribute of each task, figure out which dice pool is smaller, and use that. (If the

mixed action falls within your character's Trademark, you can tack on the two additional dice if you like. You might need them.) You'll then use this dice pool to resolve challenges and Complications for both actions, but we'll get to those on p. XX.

LET'S DO IT!: ROLLING THE DICE AND SUCCESSES

Have all your dice in hand? Great. Now roll them. Don't worry about adding them all together, though. Instead, we'll be looking at each die separately.

Every die that shows an 8 or a 9 is called a success. If you have a 10 (or a 0, depending on the dice you're using), that counts as two successes! Some rules might reference "double 8" or "double 9." That means that the 9 or 8 also counts as two successes. Successes are the currency you use to accomplish things, so you want as many as possible.

ENHANCEMENTS

Sometimes your character will have a benefit or boost that makes things easier, outside of his natural ability and trained skill. Maybe the fact that he's a small-town sheriff helps give him an edge of authority when trying to stare down a hoodlum. Or maybe he's in a good mood after a cup of Rosie's damn good coffee, and the Depressatron 5000 fails to work on him. These circumstances or props that make an action easier to accomplish are called *Enhancements*.

If you roll at least one success, and if the Enhancement is relevant to the action, each Enhancement also adds at least one additional success to the total.

Enhancements range from trivial to major. Here are some examples:

Sometimes an Enhancement hinders as well as helps. Being the sheriff gives you an air of authority, but you also should follow the law. That coffee might put you in a good mood, but now you're all jittery and it's harder to keep your hands from shaking. When there's a downside to using an Enhancement, the Director can play it one of three ways:

- The drawback adds a Complication (p. XX).
- The drawback increases the Difficulty (p. XX) of another action.
- The drawback gives the antagonists a free Enhancement to use against you.

ENHANCEMENT	SUCCESSES	CIRCUMSTANCE EXAMPLE	EQUIPMENT EXAMPLE
Trivial	1	Right place, right time	Seriously, have you tried this coffee?
Notable	2	It's part of your job	You read a book about this exact situation
Significant	3	You planned and prepared for this	The perfect tool for the job
Powerful	4	Ideal testing conditions	The latest McGuffintron 3X
Major	5	Your entire life has led to this moment	The Spear of Destiny

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU: DIFFICULTY AND COMPLICATIONS

Now that you have a pile of successes, you need something on which to spend them. You see, the Skill and Attribute you use to create your dice pool shows how good your character is at doing something in isolation. Whether your character is trying to punch an aquatic alien or a jellyfish, how good he is at punching doesn't change. However, an aquatic alien and a jellyfish are very different opponents, and how hard it is to do something against either factors into how successful that punch will be. Similarly, it's easier to punch an aquatic alien who is tied to a chair. It's much harder to do so when it's up and moving. In the pouring rain. While you're standing in gasoline. That's also on fire.

This is where *Difficulty* and *Complications* come in.

DIFFICULTY

Every action has a Difficulty, which is the number of successes you spend to accomplish that action you carefully compiled that dice pool for. Most times, the Difficulty is 1, which means you need to have accumulated at least one success to... well, succeed. A Difficulty of 2 requires at least two successes, a Difficulty of 3 needs at least three successes, and so on.

Example: *Gail is playing Eto, a suburban husband. He was preparing a delicious dinner for his wife when he got caught up in an invasion from aquatic aliens. One of the maritime monsters has broken into his living room, and Eto tries to shove the kitchen table against the door between the living room and the kitchen. The Director decides that the Difficulty for the action is 1. Gail rolls and gets three successes. She spends one to have Eto shove the table, blocking the entrance. But for how long?*

Each Difficulty can be *static* or *opposed*. Static Difficulties don't change: Regardless of how skilled or unskilled you are, punching an aquatic alien is equally difficult. However, opposed Difficulty occurs when two parties are trying to defeat each other. If your character is trying to race an aquatic alien to see who gets to the missile launch controls first, how fast the alien is determines how easy it is to beat it there. In that case, each participant generates their successes separately, and then compares amounts. The one with fewer successes sets the Difficulty for the one with more successes. If both generate an equal number of successes, they get some sort of mixed result, such as reaching the finish at the same time. If that's not possible, the character with the smaller dice pool fails, and sets the Difficulty for the one with the larger dice pool.

Example: *The alien bursts through the door and shoves the table aside. Eto tries to bolt for the opposite door leading to the garage. The alien sees this and lurches to beat him to the garage door.*

Both Gail and the Director (rolling for the alien) roll. The Director gets three successes, but Gail only gets one. Eto fails, and the single success becomes the Difficulty for the alien. The Director happily spends a success to beat Eto to the door, blocking him in.

Spending successes on mixed actions is trickier. Each task in the mixed action has its own Difficulty, and the successes must be spent to address them separately. If you don't have enough to defeat both Difficulties, you can choose to put your successes toward one task instead.

Example: *Eto spies a knife sitting on the kitchen counter, but the alien is between him and it. Eto decides to distract the alien while making a lunge for the knife. The Director declares that both actions have a Difficulty of 1. Gail rolls, but again only gets one success. Eto needs that knife, so Gail spends the success on that. However, the alien has Eto in its grasp.*

Regardless, if the Difficulty of any task is higher than the number of successes you have, your character fails in his action. You can try to spend Rewrites (p. XX), or accept failure and take a Consolation (p. XX).

COMPLICATIONS

Most actions aren't as straightforward as punching an aquatic alien. Unexpected challenges and disastrous circumstances can make even a simple task seem difficult, and they can hinder an otherwise successful action. These are Complications, and they require additional successes to overcome. Complications are distinct from Difficulty because they don't change whether the action is completed or not. Rather, they add additional disadvantages, such as injury, unrelated problems, or increased Difficulty for future rolls. Complications are a terrific way for a Director to make a situation more difficult... er, *exciting*... without increasing the Difficulty to impossible heights. Complications are ranked from trivial to major, just like Difficulty.

Example: *The alien has Eto in its grasp, and Eto has the knife in his. The alien's strength is incredible, and the fiendish fish is slowly pushing the knife toward Eto's face. Eto tries to break out of the alien's grip. The Director determines that the Difficulty is 3 — the alien is incredibly strong — and the knife adds an additional trivial Complication of 1. If Eto doesn't overcome the Complication, either he must drop the knife or it'll injure him as he escapes.*

Gail throws away her old dice and rolls new ones. Her superstition pays off, as she rolls an incredible five successes. She spends three for Eto to escape the alien's grip, and the remaining one to keep the knife in the process. There's one success remaining.

LOOSE CHANGE

STUNTS, DIRECTORIAL CONTROL, AND DEGREE OF SUCCESS

Let's say you have a pile of successes. You've bought off the Difficulty and any Complications. What do you do with the remaining successes? You can use them to buy *Stunts*, or leave them to increase your *degree of success*. Some particularly splashy rolls allow you to take *Directorial Control*.

STUNTS

Yes, your character does her own stunts. But in this case, a Stunt is more than just making someone who looks and dresses like you dive through a window. In **TCfBtS!**, Stunts allow you to spend those extra successes to make your character's situation a little better. Stunts come in three basic forms.

- A *complicated Stunt* allows you to make a Complication for another character, making their lives more *exciting*. How many successes you spend on the Stunt determines the level of the Complication.
- An *enhanced Stunt* creates an Enhancement that you can use for your character's next action. Again, the number of successes you spend on the Stunt indicates how many successes the Enhancement gives you. It's like giving yourself some successes for later.
- Finally, a *difficult Stunt* makes it harder for others to accomplish actions directed at you. The successes you devote to this Stunt add to the Difficulty for characters to take actions against you.

Example: *Gail has one success remaining after her character escaped the grasp of an aquatic alien in his kitchen. She could choose to add a Complication on the alien, give Eto an Enhancement, or generally make it harder for the alien to attack him. She decides to make an enhanced Stunt and give Eto "Good Positioning." Eto's closer to the exit than the alien is now, which will give Gail an additional success on the next roll to escape.*

You can create your own Stunts or pull predefined ones from Chapter XX (see pp. XX- XX). The Stunts in Chapter XX range from general Stunts to ones for specific Archetypes, and are classified as ranging from *simple*, to *flashy*, to *daring*. More on that in the following chapter!

A SPECIAL CASE: DIRECTORIAL CONTROL

If you've activated a Trademark and have some successes left over, you can perform a special kind of Stunt: telling the Director to change things in the story itself. Each success spent on *Directorial Control* can add or remove one detail from the scene. An alien falls through the (suddenly weakened) floor, a rescue plane appears on the

horizon, your character mysteriously understands an alien language, and so on. Think of it as the actor that portrays your character asking the director of the movie to change the scene so she looks better.

Be careful, though: You can't ask the Director to undo something that's already established, but you can change something that exists or create something that hasn't previously existed. It must make sense within the story, after all, regardless of how far-fetched it is. Having a handful of thugs run out of ammunition is fine, but you can't say the thugs surrounding you suddenly don't have any guns at all.

Think of all the unlikely coincidences you've seen in movies like those in our inspirational media. Some examples of scene details you can change with *Directorial Control* include:

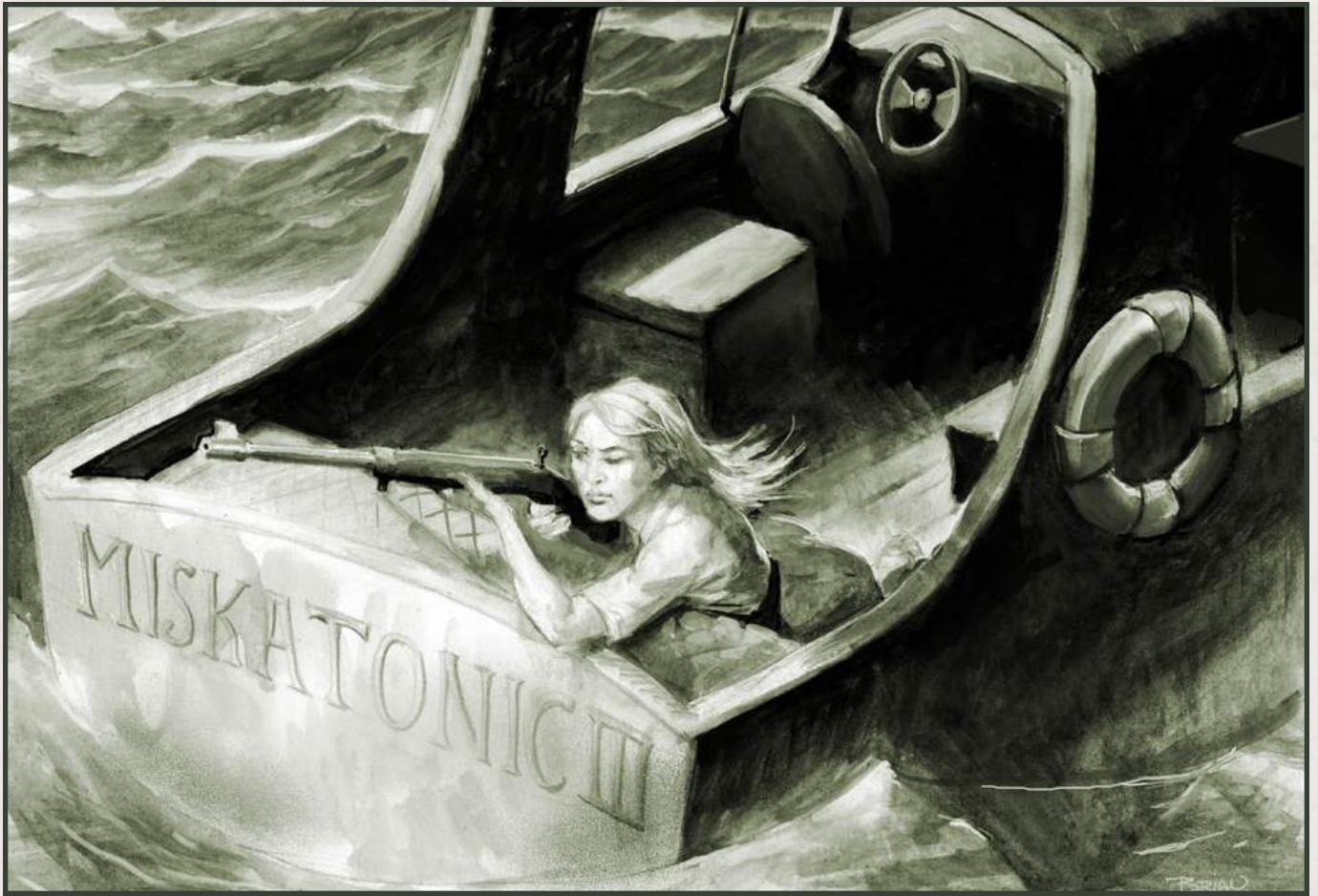
- The power pack on the alien device suddenly runs out.
- Sirens are heard in the distance as the police arrive on the scene.
- The first sequence of numbers randomly punched in to stop the missile launch happens to be the right one.
- A character under the control of the Director is suddenly revealed to have been the love child of a human and an alien.
- The damaged car engine suddenly turns over, allowing the character to escape.
- Reading the headline of a newspaper from a park bench reveals a vital clue.
- The aliens suddenly develop a weakness to an Earth disease, like the common cold.
- A previously-silent extra develops the capacity to speak; they were just staying quiet the whole time.
- The evil computer develops a logic fault, unable to reconcile an obscure (and previously unmentioned) bit of its programming with the current situation.
- The character starts to sing, lulling the alien to sleep.

The Director may decide that some details require more successes than others, but in general it's one success for one scene change. Nothing created or removed via *Directorial Control* lasts beyond the current scene.

Example: *If Gail had activated Eto's Trademark in the previous roll, she could have used the last success to change a detail in the scene. Gail couldn't say the aquatic alien never appeared, but she could determine that the fight caused the alien to accidentally stumble into the pantry, burying it in a cascade of boxed ingredients and canned goods.*

DEGREE OF SUCCESS

After you've totaled all your successes and spent them on Difficulty, Complications, and maybe Stunts, you may have some left. Lucky you! If you've bought off the Difficulty, your character succeeds in her intended action. Leftover successes, however, can determine how *impressively* she succeeds. We call that the *degree of success*. Here's another handy table to illustrate.



LEFTOVER SUCCESSSES

DEGREE OF SUCCESS

0	Normal: You did what needed to be done. It's nothing special.
1	Competent: You showed particular expertise or luck in pulling it off.
2	Well Done: You performed particularly well, and others recognize your talent or fortune.
3	Amazing: Witnesses stand in awe of your accomplishment.
4+	Sublime: Stories will be spread. Statues might be erected. Everyone will remember where they were on that day

NOT ALL WINE AND ROSES FAILURE, CONSOLATION, AND REWRITES

Sometimes, things don't go your way. Your luck runs out, and you just couldn't pull it off. Or maybe the dice are against you, and what seemed like a simple task turned into a nightmare. It's the opposite of success, or what we call *failure*. But it's not all

bad — sometimes failure can be converted into a success, with a little bit of a *Rewrite* to the script. Even if you fail, though, the worst situations offer a little *Consolation*.

FAILURE

If you don't have enough successes to overcome the Difficulty, that's failure. Either the current problem continues, or a new problem starts. But the bad news doesn't stop there. If you rolled zero successes *and* at least one die is showing a 1, that's particularly rough. We call that a *botch*, and that adds additional consequences beyond just failure. Whatever problems you had before, a botch piles on some new ones. Some Directors might even saddle you with an additional Complication.

That said, it's not all bad. Failure doesn't stop the story. Instead, things are always moving forward. Sure, you might have screwed the pooch on an important roll. You might have rolled so badly that your friends and loved ones will remember your failure for years to come, reminding you about it at family dinners and birthday parties. But the story doesn't end because of one bad roll. It just gets more... *exciting*.

Example: Having escaped the calamitous clutches of the aquatic alien, Gail has given Eto an Enhancement of "Good Positioning," and he is ready to run for the door. Once again, this is an opposed Difficul-

ty roll, so both Gail and the Director roll their dice. Unfortunately, Gail's rotten luck returns: She doesn't get a single success on her roll. The aquatic alien gets one success. (If you recall, Eto gets one success for his "Good Positioning" Enhancement, but unfortunately, Gail can only use that if she gets at least one success on her roll.) Eto's still trapped in his kitchen, which is rapidly being demolished by this fracas.

Luckily, Gail didn't roll any 1s on her dice. If she had, that means Eto would have botched his escape attempt, maybe giving him an additional problem or Complication in the process! But let's face it: Eto's life is rough enough as it is. It's never easy when you're stuck in the rules examples.

CONSOLATION

Every cloud has a silver lining. As long as you didn't botch the job, failure often comes with a small upside. We call these minor, helpful side benefits *Consolations*.

The Director decides what Consolation you might get. It could be some unexpected-but-useful information, pointing you in the right direction. It might be a minor Enhancement because you learned from your mistake. It may even be a strange twist of fate that opens new and intriguing questions about the universe. If there's something in the scene that makes for a useful Consolation, the Director might throw you a bone. If you botched, though, tough luck: You don't get any immediate Consolation.

Sometimes, though, the Director is low on ideas, or there's nothing in the scene that allows you to snatch a minor victory from the jaws of a major defeat. That's okay; your Consolation won't be lost in the mail. Instead, you'll get a chance to perform some Rewrites down the road. Botches add even more Rewrites, because the writers have taken pity on you.

Example: *The Director looks at the scene, thinking of a good Consolation for Eto's dilemma. The door's smashed, the pantry's wrecked, the table's shattered, and the only useful weapon in the scene is in Eto's hand. Shrugging, the Director tosses a Rewrite into the Writers Pool.*

... wait, you don't know about that yet, do you? Hang on, looks like my script pages are out of order. Let's step back and talk about Rewrites and the Writers Pool.

REWRITES

In **TCfBtS!**, failing in one scene can lead to getting some help in a later scene. Taking one for the team to make the story interesting builds up some clout with the writers of the story you're working on. So, failing now means you can ask for some Rewrites down the road.

Rewrites make up a resource pool that all players share, called the *Writers Pool*. Every failed roll that doesn't come with

an immediate Consolation adds a Rewrite to the Writers Pool. Botches add two Rewrites to the Writers Pool, so don't say we never give you anything. The Writers Pool can hold up to three Rewrites for every player; so, if you have six players, the Writers Pool can hold a total of 18 Rewrites.

What do Rewrites do? You can use them to activate your Cinematics (p. XX), enable additional attempts at complex actions (p. XX), or add dice to your dice pool. On the last one, if there's a roll you really want to make sure you succeed at, or something you just want to generate a lot of successes for, spending a Rewrite adds one more die to your dice pool.

Simple, right? Hold on there, slick. First you need to talk your idea out with the writers room. When you want to spend Rewrites, you pitch your idea to the other players. If you can sell them on your vision — in other words, if no one vetoes your story idea — it's in the script! Once you get the approval of the writers room, you can spend up to half the Rewrites in the Writers Pool at once.

Example: *As we were saying, the Director tosses a Rewrite into the Writers Pool as Consolation for Eto's failure to escape the kitchen. That brings the Writers Pool up to four Rewrites.*

Eto really wants to get past this alien, so Gail pitches an idea to the other players: What if she uses some Rewrites to end this scene as quickly as possible? Life's rough in the example section, after all, and the audience is probably a little bored with Eto chasing a churlish cuttlefish with cutlery. The players all agree, and Gail spends two Rewrites (the most she can take) to add two more dice to the dice pool. Maybe this time Eto will be able to escape.

SPECIAL EFFECTS CONDITIONS, FIELDS, AND SCALE

Now you have a grasp of how to direct your character to take actions with varying degrees of success and failure. But sometimes a story needs that little extra *something* to spice things up. The thread of character complication that really sells the drama, or the epic moment that is literally larger than life. You might run into *Conditions* or *Fields* that add a new dimension to a story. For those times when you absolutely need a giant monster rampaging across the city, though, you and your Director need to think about *Scale*.

CONDITIONS

Conditions are long-term problems or lingering benefits that stick with a single character. Maybe you've had too much to drink, and that hangover is murder. Or maybe an injection of alien DNA made you stronger than normal. Think of Conditions like Complications or Enhancements that last longer than normal. If a Condition causes your character to fail or otherwise suf-



SCREW THE SQUARE-CUBE LAW: LET'S TALK GIANT MONSTERS

Giant monsters are fun, and a staple of the kinds of stories you can tell with **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** In many ways, they're going to be at the top end of the scale... er, Scale Ranks... in most encounters. In fact, in many cases you might not want to even fiddle with calculating successes. If a 50-foot lizard steps on you, it doesn't really matter if he had eight successes or 10.

Only sort out Scale when the results would be interesting, and the scale is at least moderately close. No more than two ranks apart is a good rule of thumb. Everyone knows that giant monsters are bullet-proof (Rank 2 weapons against a Rank 5 hide), so even if the army calls for "five rounds rapid," don't bother rolling dice: The Director will gleefully describe every bullet bouncing off the monster's irradiated hide. But when you and your mad scientist friend get that Rank 5 death ray up and running, things will be quite different.

for a significant setback, it provides one Rewrite in addition to any gained as a Consolation.

All Conditions have one or more ways to *resolve* them. The Director can decide on special resolutions, or even additional ones beyond the norm, but they should all be achievable. For example, that Hangover Condition will fade after a day or so, but the Director may decide that a cup of Aunt Mildred's home remedy might resolve it earlier. Finding a clever way to resolve a Condition ahead of when it would normally resolve also adds a Rewrite to the Writers Pool.

Some Conditions won't fade over time, like Near-Sighted or Naivety. Only something spectacular like alien science or a radical character shift can remove such a Condition. Instead, those Conditions are useful as a steady source of Rewrites, as they make specific actions and tasks more difficult to resolve (and the writers of your story don't have to work so hard to think of creative problems for your character).

FIELDS

Complications and Enhancements, even long-term ones like Conditions, only affect a single character. Sure, everyone had a fun time at the bar last night, but not every character has the Complication of "Drunk." (Someone had to be the driver, after all!) But occasionally, a group of characters may find everyone is affected by an obstacle or opportunity. These Fields impact every character within a specific space, whether it's a geographical space or a mental space. Trying to fight in a cramped space rocket might result in the Field of "Tight Fit" for everyone inside. Similarly, the buff space hunk might be able to apply the Field of "Seduced" to anyone sexually attracted to men.

Fields are great ways for a Director to add context and excitement to a scene. Treat them as Complications, Enhancements, or Conditions for all characters impacted. Characters under the effects of the "Tight Fit" Field might have an additional Complication 1 for any actions taken within the space rocket, while all of those under "Seduced" might have a Complication 3 to any action taken against the space hunk.

SCALE

Sometimes, things are just not equivalent. The fastest man alive might be able to outrun someone on a bicycle, but he won't be able to outrun a cheetah. And punching an aquatic alien might be fun, but it's something else to punch a 20-foot-tall aquatic alien. Where there's a different in power or size between two entities, that's when we look at their relative *Scale*.

When a characteristic between two entities is vastly different, the entity with the greater capacity receives a Scale Enhancement. This acts just like a regular Enhancement, adding successes to a roll that's already generated at least one success. This means that

RANK	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
1 (Standard)	Baseline. Competent and skilled human or creature, or common equipment.	Person at work, dog, knife.
2 (Formidable)	Talented, more powerful, or customized for the task.	Chess grandmaster, elephant, gun.
3 (Impressive)	Designed to excel at the task.	Chess-playing supercomputer, cheetah, anti-personnel gun.
4 (Awesome)	Streamlined design for improved performance.	Chess-playing supercomputer that can learn, a blue whale, anti-tank launcher.
5 (Incredible)	Operating on a grander plane, with greater power, size, or speed as a side benefit.	Chess-playing alien computer, a mutated blue whale that can walk on land, a missile.
6 (Astonishing)	Operating on a grander plane, and very good at it to boot.	Chess-playing alien supercomputer grandmaster, a mutated blue whale that can walk on land with a hunger for human flesh, a missile with a nuclear warhead.

skill isn't completely ignored as a factor: The fastest man alive can still outrun a cheetah if it slips and falls into a ditch.

The Scale difference of a characteristic is ranked from 1 to 6. Each rank grants the entity with the advantage an additional two successes on related rolls. In the case of man (Rank 1) vs. cheetah (Rank 3), the cat would have four additional successes to spend on a successful roll. Here are the Scale Ranks, along with some suggestions.

The examples given in the table are not absolutes, but are used in comparison to the baseline of Rank 1. For example, a car is appropriately Awesome (Rank 4) when racing against a human, but is considered the baseline (Rank 1) when racing against other vehicles. Further, conflicts between anything more than two Ranks apart aren't worth rolling: No matter how many successes you get, you're not going to outrun a sports car.

FILMING THE ACTION

TYPES OF SEQUENCES

During a story, sometimes the action needs to slow down. When the furious fists or cunning comebacks are flying left and right, everyone needs to know exactly what's happening in the sequence. We call those *round-by-round actions* or *slow-motion sequences*. On the other hand, sometimes an action takes place over an extended period, and we need to compress time to keep it all in focus. Repairing a rocket, hitting the library, or building a relationship can all be important, but tedious to play out every moment. We call those *complex actions* or *montage sequences*.

ANATOMY OF A ROUND

Whenever there's a scene where multiple characters are all doing something at the same time with different, conflicting goals, that's a round-by-round action. The action in **TCfBtS!** moves into the conveniently named *rounds*.

A round is exactly as long as it takes for every character in the scene to take an action. Characters take actions when the *Focus* is on them. Focus moves around, based on the character's *initiative*. This order is determined by each character's appropriate Skill + Cunning roll, with the players and Director rolling for each character of note (with the Director rolling a communal Skill + Cunning roll for all extras), and play proceeding in order from the character with the greatest number of successes down the line. Players may opt to switch places in initiative order, just as the Director can switch antagonists and supporting characters around on any initiative rolls they made.

Once every character has had Focus, the round ends. The players and Director decide if the action requires another round. If so, then a new round begins, using the same initiative ticks as before.

Let's go over it again in more detail.

SLOW MOTION: ROUND-BY-ROUND ACTIONS

Players perform round-by-round actions when... well, when the action has moved to rounds. In the story, round-by-round ac-

tions can be messy and chaotic, but at the table everyone needs to understand what's happening, and have a fair chance at contributing to the action.

As such, each player, along with the Director, only takes an action with their character when it's their turn in the round. We call this "having Focus." Think of it like when the camera is on your character, waiting for her to do something amazing. When the character has taken an appropriate action, they "use up" the Focus, and the camera moves to someone else — the Focus passes on to someone else in the scene.

Player characters can take any of the following actions when they have Focus. Ordinary and mixed actions use up Focus, while reflexive actions do not.

ORDINARY ACTIONS

Ordinary actions might be anything but ordinary. Certainly, punching an aquatic alien is not most people's definition of ordinary! But in this case, we're talking about performing one task covered by a single dice pool. If what your character wants to accomplish can be covered by one combination of Skill and Attribute, then that's what we call "ordinary."

MIXED ACTIONS

Mixed actions are when your character is trying to accomplish two tasks as once. We talked about this back on p. XX, but it's worth going over again: Mixed actions must be things a character can do at the same time, but are also worth breaking into two separate dice pools.

And let's keep it to two. Theoretically there's no limit to the number of actions a character can perform at once, but try to imagine what it would look like on camera. Most of the time, more than two actions at once would be hard to follow. If it's more than two actions, odds are some of them are reflexive actions (see below), some of them can be combined into the same action (such as running through a gunfight to find cover), or you're looking at a complex action (p. XX).

REFLEXIVE ACTIONS

Sometimes you need to take a quick action that isn't part of the Focus. These aren't important actions that are combined — that's a mixed action — but rather minor, inconsequential tasks. Looking both ways before darting across a busy street is a reflexive action; looking both ways and trying to spot alien infiltrators while also darting across a busy street is a mixed action. Characters can perform as many reflexive actions as they desire without using up their Focus (provided the actions all make sense and do not interfere or impact the primary action).

A good test between a mixed action and a reflexive action is to ask yourself "Would rolling the dice make things interesting here?" If not — if your character is just looking, talking, yelling, or moving in a normal way — then it's probably a reflexive action. When in doubt, the Director will decide if what you want to accomplish is a reflexive action or part of a mixed action.

INITIATIVE

In round-by-round action, **TCfBtS!** uses initiative to determine which character starts with Focus during the round. When

your character has Focus, it's your turn to take an action. With a few exceptions, only one character can have Focus at a time.

Each player who has a character involved in the scene pairs a Skill appropriate to the character's action with Cunning, creates a dice pool, and rolls. The Director does the same for any characters she controls. The number of successes generated is the character's initiative rating.

The character with the highest initiative rating goes first, unless they opt to switch places with another character down the track. Players can only switch character initiative with other players' characters, just as the Director can only switch their characters. If initiative ratings are tied, determine the order by comparing the size of the respective dice pools (higher gets ranked over lower). Beyond that, the Director simply decides which character goes first if it's still unclear.

The player who has gained the initiative has the Focus, and takes her action. Once she's completed her action, Focus switches to the next character on the list, again with the option to switch. Characters that have already taken an action this round cannot have the Focus more than once.

Once everyone has had the Focus in the round, initiative order remains the same for the next round, unless the players vote to reroll initiatives.

TIME FOR A MONTAGE: COMPLEX ACTIONS

The opposite of round-by-round actions are those actions that take several rounds, scenes, or even longer to accomplish. Maybe the action needs a complex collection of skills, cooperation between multiple parties, or just takes a long time to resolve. That's where complex actions come in. Some examples of complex actions include:

- Extended actions using the same Skill and Attribute, like poring through a card catalog or fixing a stubborn engine
- Staged actions using different Skills and Attributes, like infiltrating a military base or building a house
- Teamwork where two or more people cooperate to accomplish a task, like publishing a novel (one person writes, another person edits) or searching a large area

MILESTONES

To make a complex action seem simple, we break it down into two or more *milestones*. Each milestone is something one character does to progress the complex action — think of it as one brief scene in our imaginary montage sequence.

Each milestone has its own Difficulty and Complications. Usually these are the same from milestone to milestone, but the Director might change things up. At each milestone, one player rolls a single dice pool and buys off the Difficulty and Complications, as usual.

However, failure is a big deal. Failing a milestone means the entire complex action might fail as a result. The complex action

can only be resolved by a number of rolls equal to twice the number of milestones. That's the maximum number of attempts that can be made. On average, that means players can attempt each milestone twice, but the group can spread the attempts out in any way they want. They may decide to spend three attempts on the first milestone, while hoping the second one gets completed on the first try. Our unwelcome friend the botch is bad news here as well; botching a roll in a complex action uses up that attempt and the next.

If things are just not going your way and you're running low on attempts, you can make a pitch to the Writers Pool about how important completing this action would be. If successful, you can spend 3 Rewrites to buy an additional attempt.

On the other hand, if you roll better than expected and have successes left over, you can create an Enhancement for the next attempt. Every two successes invested in the Enhancement increases it by one level.

Example: *Eto has somehow made it out of the kitchen, and is now at the library researching aquatic aliens. The Director decides this is an extended action with three milestones at Difficulty 1, with each milestone acting as an hour of research. He has six roll attempts. It's time for a montage!*

For the first hour, Gail rolls and immediately botches, because of course she does. She now has four attempts left to succeed at three milestones. She gets one success on her next roll, which she uses to buy off the Difficulty of the first milestone. She fails her next roll but (thankfully) doesn't botch, leaving her two attempts for the next two milestones. Good thing the group has some Rewrites banked with the Writers Pool. Maybe she should start warming up her pitch....

SUCCESSSES FOR COMPLEX ACTIONS

As you successfully complete each milestone, the Director writes down the number of successes generated (not spent). The highest number of successes generated at a milestone is the number of successes the whole complex action generated, which can be used to buy Stunts. In some cases, the rules may call for a total of all successes generated, not just the highest milestone.

Example: *Eto barely managed to pull off his research action. Gail got one success at the first milestone, two at the second, and one at the third. This means Eto's research generated two successes total (the highest number generated, which was at the second milestone). If the rules asked for the number of successes the research generated in total, Gail and Eto would have four successes, not two.*

ADVENTURE!

INVESTIGATION! DRAMA!

THREE TYPES OF SEQUENCE

Like any good (or bad) film, there are various kinds of sequences. Sometimes you see an action-packed adventure, sometimes it's a gripping investigation scene, and once in a while you might get some dramatic acting. In **TCfBtS!**, we break down the kinds of things your characters do into three broad areas: adventure, investigation, and drama.

Adventure focuses on physical conflicts. It can be anything from an exciting car chase, a tense scene defusing an alien warhead, stealthy infiltration, and, yes, even punching an aquatic alien. Let's now bury that reference at sea.

Investigation focuses on mental conflicts. These can be attempts to find clues, track down alien infiltrators, researching bizarre scientific problems, and crafting clever plans.

Finally, *drama* focuses on social conflicts. Here's where all the real acting takes place — charm, seduction, intimidation, command, persuasion, befriending, and alienating other characters all build the drama.

ADVENTURE!

The rules in this section support all kinds of physical violence, conflicts, peril, and other round-by-round actions.

RANGE

Not all violence happens up close and personal. Sometimes your character needs to do something from far away — and in the case of doing bodily harm to invading aliens, the further the better. Figuring out how far away something is from something else is what we call *range*.

Range dictates the dice pools for some actions, as well as what actions your character can take. For example, if your character is armed with a pistol, you could attack at close, short, and medium ranges, but not at any range beyond long. Each range also has an Attribute required for combat dice pools to affect targets at that range (with an appropriate weapon, of course).

MOVING AND MANEUVERING

In normal circumstances, your character can move from close to short range without a roll or taking an action. However, sometimes things are far from normal.

- **Barriers:** Any kind of wall, gap, or other feature that takes time and skill to traverse. A barrier might have a Difficulty rating to overcome, or be a Complication to a different action (because it takes extra time and effort away from your intended goal).
- **Drop Prone/Stand:** Your character can drop prone as a reflexive action, but standing up from being prone takes your character's movement for the round. Neither action requires a dice roll (usually). They can still act, but cannot move again in that round after standing.
- **Complicated or Difficult Terrain:** Some areas have treacherous terrain that makes them dangerous or complicated to traverse, such as loose gravel or an oil slick. These

RANGE	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL DISTANCE	COMBAT ATTRIBUTE	WEAPONS
Close	In range to trade blows blunt objects, blades, or fists.	0-2 yards/meters	Might	Unarmed combat, melee weapons, pistol
Short	Close-quarter distance for close shooting and thrown weapons.	3-30 yards/meters	Dexterity	Thrown, pistol, rifle, bow
Medium	Long distance aiming and shooting with a firearm or bow. Maximum pistol range.	31-100 yards/meters.	Cunning	Thrown, pistol, rifle, bow
Long	Range to plan and execute long-range sniping (compensating for wind, etc.)	Over 100 yards/meters to max effective range, ~1000 yards/meters	Resolve	Rifle, some bows, light artillery
Extreme	Range of heavy military weapons that need to compensate for curvature of the Earth.	By weapon (typically over 1000 yards/meters to weapon max)	Intellect	Missiles, naval railguns, heavy artillery
Out of Range	Beyond maximum weapon range.	Beyond maximum weapon range.	n/a	n/a

situations are usually handled as Complications. Particularly difficult terrain may require a complex action with a Difficulty of 1 at each milestone (such as a long-distance swim or climbing a mountain).

- **Sprinting:** Occasionally, your character needs to run while doing something else, or to move further than short. Whether as an ordinary action or part of a mixed action, sprinting is Athletics + Dexterity, Difficulty 1.

THE COMBAT ROLL

Whenever your character wants to perform bodily harm, you make a *combat roll*. This is just like a typical action roll, and can include mixed actions. Here's how it breaks down.

- Decide on one or more attacks or actions you'd like to take.
- Based on those actions, form a dice pool (lowest of all actions desired if it's a mixed action).
- If you declared an attack, the Difficulty is usually 1. However, your target(s) may have made a difficult Stunt (p. XX) to increase the Difficulty.
- Roll your dice pool and tally successes as normal.
- Use successes to buy off the Difficulty of the actions you want to perform.
- If the attack is successful, use remaining successes to purchase Stunts, and determine final damage rating.
- If the attack is successful, the target decides to accept or resist the damage, and any Injuries or Conditions are applied.

We'll be giving you examples as we go. As a note, all dice pools listed here are simply suggestions — if you think a different Skill + Attribute combination works better, and the Director agrees, then go ahead and pile on those dice, baby!

ATTACKING

In general, when declaring an attack action, you choose a specific target or targets. Attack actions usually have a Difficulty equal to 1, unless the target has made a difficult Stunt (see below). You can attack more than one target, but remember that's a mixed action, and you must spend successes against the Difficulty of each target.

Example: After his research, Eto has run afoul of three thaumocs in their "human suits." Two of them are in close range, while the other is at short range. Eto, having also acquired a revolver in his adventures, wants to shoot all three of the obnoxious octopi. As such, Gail declares four actions: two close attacks with Eto's knife, a reflexive action to draw the revolver (which doesn't require a die roll, being reflexive), and an attack with the revolver. She rolls the lower of Eto's Close Combat + Might and Aim + Dexterity. Good luck, Gail! Eto is depending on you!

DEFENDING

Every character is Difficulty 1 to hit. However, characters can choose to make things harder for other people. Diving behind cover or stepping away from a conflict can make things harder for your opponent.

On your turn, you can use your action to defend yourself. Compile your dice pool as normal for the action (including as part of a mixed action), and make a roll against Difficulty 1. If you are successful, you can spend additional successes into the Defense Stunt:

Defense (variable): You do whatever it takes to avoid being hurt. Every success spent on the Defense Stunt increases the Difficulty to attack you by 1 until your next turn.

Example: The Director decides the thaumocs aren't taking any defensive action, so each thaumoc's defense is 1. Gail rolls four successes, so she can choose for Eto to hit three of them at damage rating 1, with one success left over.

COMBAT STUNTS

If you have leftover successes after buying off the Difficulty of your target, you can use them to buy Stunts. Any Stunt your Director allows is valid, but these example Stunts represent common actions that can occur in the heat of combat. Each Stunt has its success cost listed as well.

INCREASE DAMAGE (VARIABLE)

You find a sensitive spot, which inflicts more damage. Each success increases the attack's damage rating by +1.

BLIND (1 SUCCESS)

You throw something into your opponent's eyes. Your opponent has +1 Difficulty on their next action.

DISARM (2 OR 3 SUCCESSES)

You knock, twist, or pull your opponent's weapon or other item out of their hand. You can spend an additional success (total of 3) to knock the weapon or item to short range.

FEINT (VARIABLE)

Your attack forces your opponent to make a false move, putting them in a precarious position. For every success spent on Feint, you generate one level of Enhancement on you or your ally's next attack against this opponent.

KNOCKDOWN/TRIP (1 SUCCESS)

You push or kick your opponent, knocking them prone.

PIN DOWN (VARIABLE)

You use your ammunition to force your opponent to stay put. Each success adds one level of the "Pinned Down" Complication to the target's next attack. If they

don't buy off the Complication, they are hit with a damage rating equal to the level of the Complication.

SEIZE (2 SUCCESSES)

You take an item (not a weapon) out of your opponent's hand.

SHOVE (VARIABLE)

Each success allows you to push your opponent back a number of yards/meters equal to your Might.

Example: Eto has one success left over in his encounter with the thaumocs. Gail decides Eto wants to really hurt the thaumoc at short range, so she spends her last success on the Increase Damage stunt, hitting that one with a damage rating of 2.

GRAPPLING

Sometimes, it's all about wrestling someone to the ground. **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** reflects this by *grappling*.

Grappling is a special form of Close Combat. A grapple starts when the attacker uses the Establish Grapple Stunt (see below). That character controls the grapple. While in the grapple, each

side continues to make attack rolls (and, thus, generating damage ratings if the character is in control of the grapple), but only grapple Stunts can be purchased until the controller releases the grapple, the opponent breaks free, or someone outside the grapple uses the Break Up Grapple Stunt.

ESTABLISH GRAPPLE (VARIABLE)

You force your opponent into a grapple, and you are in control. The number of successes spent on this stunt sets the Difficulty for your opponent to break free of the grapple (minimum of 1).

BREAK UP GRAPPLE (1 SUCCESS)

You break up a grapple in which you're not participating.

GAIN CONTROL (VARIABLE)

You maneuver yourself to be in control of the grapple. The cost of this Stunt is equal to the Difficulty of the grapple set by the Establish Grapple stunt. Now you are in control of the grapple, and the Difficulty for your opponent is the same as the cost for the Gain Control Stunt.

INCREASE DAMAGE (VARIABLE)

If you are in control, you can increase the damage of your hold. Each success increases the attack's damage rating by +1.



PIN (2 SUCCESSES)

If you are in control, you keep your opponent from moving. The opponent cannot use the Defense or Position Stunts on their next turn.

POSITION (VARIABLE)

You put yourself into a better position. Each success creates one level of the Good Positioning Enhancement, which can be used in the next grappling attempt.

TAKEDOWN (1 SUCCESS)

If you are in control, you can take yourself and your opponent to the ground. Both you and your opponent are rendered prone. Can be combined with the Increase Damage and Throw Stunts.

THROW (VARIABLE)

If you are in control, you can throw your opponent a number of yards/meters equal to your Might. Each success after the first increases the distance by a yard/meter. This ends the grapple.

PRONE

Sometimes, hitting the dirt is a smart idea. Other times, someone knocks you into the dirt. Either way, it makes things easier in some ways and harder in others. Characters at close range with a prone character can attack at Difficulty 1, but attacks from any other range are at Difficulty 3.

Getting up is normally a reflexive action that takes your movement for the round. However, if there's an opponent with you at close range, things get more complicated. In that case, standing up is an Athletics + Dexterity roll with a Difficulty of 1 and an Opponent Nearby Complication of 1. If you don't buy off the Complication, your character takes an Injury from her opponent.

AMBUSH

The best way to fight someone is if they don't know you're there. When attempting to surprise an opponent, roll Athletics + Dexterity (or equivalent roll) vs. the opponent's Integrity + Cunning (or equivalent roll) to sneak up on them. If a group is sneaking up on another group, pool all the successes on both sides and divide them by the number of people on each side (round down).

The target's successes become the Difficulty for the ambusher. If the ambusher can buy off the Difficulty, she can spend remaining successes on the Surprise Stunt:

SURPRISE (VARIABLE)

You've surprised your opponent. Give your opponent the Complication of Surprised with a level equal to the number of successes spent. If your opponent cannot buy off the Complication with their initiative roll, they cannot act in the first round — treat them as if they have already taken a turn.

DAMAGE RATINGS

Once you've hit someone, you should make sure it hurts. **TCfBtS!** isn't a game about detailing the intricate nature of the human body or replicated detailed ballistics studies. Instead, anything that stun, cut, stab, slash, puncture, or otherwise cause pain to someone is measured with *damage ratings*.

Damage ratings are how well you... well, do damage. The higher the rating, the more potential damage you can do. If you make a successful attack roll, buying off the Difficulty gives you a damage rating of 1. The damage rating can increase through the purchase of the Increase Damage Stunt (p. XX). Other forms of damage, like fire, poison, and radiation, come with their own set damage ratings.

WEAPONS

Knives, guns, fists, feet, bar stools, or a well-placed scream — if you want to do hurt someone, you need something to hurt them with. Most of the time, a weapon is simply the tool you need to make an attack roll. If you want to punch someone, a fist is all you need, but if you want to shoot them, you need a gun. This keeps things fast and loose — if you stumble across a murdered police officer and want to take his gun, there's no need to write down a bunch of stats. Just take it and start blasting away at that alien scum!

Weapons that are particularly effective, like alien technology, well-crafted items, or other special implements, can be considered Enhancements. The pearl-handled pistol your father gave you before his death might be a +1 Enhancement, while the PX5 Disintegrator stolen from an alien base could be a +3 Enhancement. These work like normal Enhancements, giving you bonus successes on successful attack rolls, which you can usually leverage into the Increase Damage Stunt (p. XX).

DAMAGE TAGS

Some forms of damage also have specific *tags* which make them more effective. Some example tags are below.

Concealable: The weapon can be hidden in a pocket, up a sleeve, or inside a particularly long coat. Gain +1 Enhancement to any tasks involving sneaking the weapon into a location without someone noticing.

CONTINUOUS (X)

This source of damage continues to affect you for as long as you're in its presence. For example, a room filled with poison gas continues to affect characters for as long as they breathe it. All damage with the Continuous tag has a rating, for how frequently targets take the listed damage. Common examples are Continuous (round), Continuous (minute), and Continuous (hour).

DEADLY

This type of damage is particularly difficult to shake off. No matter how well a character rolls on her Stamina roll, she always takes at least 1 Injury from this source of damage.

GRAPPLING

This weapon grants +1 Enhancement to making the Grapple attack.

NON-LETHAL

Damage from this source causes a Status Condition instead of Injuries. The damage rating of the source determines the effect of each Condition. For example, the Complication associated with the Stunned Condition is based on the damage rating of the source.

PIERCING

This weapon is meant to punch through the protective layers of armor. Reduce a target's Armor value by 1 when dealing damage with a weapon with this quality.

REACH

A weapon with a long haft, or one where the end of the weapon can reach up to 2 yards/meters or more away (like a whip). These weapons can be used to make Close Combat attacks out to short range.

RETURNING

This weapon returns when fired or thrown away from the character. A boomerang is the most common example, but a harpoon with a retractable chain would also be Returning.

SHOCKWAVE

This weapon can be used to strike all targets in the same range band. This tag is reserved for weapons at large Scale, not mundane weaponry.

ARMOR

What you wear can help reduce the effects of damage. This kind of wearable defense is collectively called *armor*. Armor grants additional successes to shrug it off (p. XX) in specific circumstances. For example, a gas mask might give +2 Enhancement to gas attacks, while a bulletproof vest could give +1 En-

hancement to damage from firearms. The Director decides if a particular piece of armor is effective against a specific attack.

INDIRECT DAMAGE

Sometimes, damage doesn't come from someone trying to attack you, but from the environment itself. Disease, poison, fire, and falling can all hurt you just as much as a blast from a death ray. This is collectively called *indirect damage*.

Indirect damage doesn't have to make an attack roll. Instead, it has an inherent damage rating, which your character can shrug off or take as normal (p. XX). Many also have damage tags. Wearing armor effective against these sources of damage can be helpful. Below are some common sources of indirect damage (well, common in the world of **TCfBtS!**, at least).

INJURIES

So you've been punched, and a damage rating has been generated. What's next is a world of pain. Time to learn about *Injuries*.

Every character has 10 Injuries, divided into four *Injury Levels*. An Injury is a box that you tick whenever you take damage. These are one for one: One point of damage rating inflicts one Injury. Simple, right?

As you accumulate Injuries, your character moves through the various Injury Levels. More Injuries mean that your character gets benefits at each Injury Level. These modifiers kick in once every Injury in the level is ticked — for example, the effects of That'll Leave a Scar take effect once all the Injuries on that level are filled in (or at least six Injuries in total). Effects from previous Injury Levels are ignored — only the lowest filled Injury Level's effects take precedence.

The four Injury Levels are:

- **Just a Flesh Wound** (three Injuries): Your character is scratched, bruised, or otherwise superficially hurt. This inspires her, rather than diminishes her: Once this Injury Level is filled, all dice pools that fall within the character's Archetype gain one die. (You don't need to activate your Archetype to get this bonus.)

DAMAGE EXAMPLES

THREAT	DAMAGE RATING	TAGS
Alcohol	1	Non-Lethal
Arctic Water (Immersed)	3	Continuous (Rounds), Deadly
Cobra Venom	5	Deadly
Falling 1 for every 3m if falling onto a solid surface	Above 6m, falling becomes Deadly	
Interior of a Burning House	3-4+	Continuous (Minute)
Knock Out Gas	3	Continuous (Round), Non-Lethal
Nuclear Reactor Leak	5	Continuous (Minute), Deadly
Mustard Gas	5	Continuous (Rounds), Deadly
Tranquilizer Dart	4	Non-Lethal

- **That'll Leave a Scar** (three Injuries): Your character is hurt, but not too badly. However, this just forces her to focus on what she does best. All dice pools that fall within the character's Archetype gain two dice. (You don't need to activate your Archetype to get this bonus.)
- **Last-Ditch Effort** (three Injuries): Your character can't take much more, but she might have enough for one more push. All dice pools involving the character's Archetype gain two dice (and you don't need to activate your Archetype to get this bonus). Further, for any Archetype-defined rolls, you can choose to push your luck. If you do, you gain *three* dice, and the target number for all your dice is a 7, not an 8. However, if the roll fails or botches, the character instantly triggers a Death Scene (p. XX).
- **Don't Forget Me** (one Injury): Your character has one last gasp left in her. She only gets one more action. The dice pool for that action gains three dice, and her target number for the roll is a 7, not 8. After the roll, success or fail, the character triggers a Death Scene (p. XX).

SHRUG IT OFF OR TAKE IT

Once the damage rating is determined, you decide if you want to shrug it off (i.e., try to resist the damage) or take it (i.e., accept the damage).

If you decide to shrug it off, roll the appropriate Resistance Attribute (usually Stamina). Just the Attribute, mind you — there's no Skill associated with it. Each Success from this roll reduces the damage rating by one. The remaining damage rating is applied as Injuries on a one-for-one basis.

On the other hand, if you decide to take it, the damage rating is ignored. Instead, fill in all the remaining Injuries on your current Injury Level. If the damage rating was particularly high, the Director may also impose a Condition like Stunned or Unconscious — whatever's dramatically appropriate for the situation.

No matter what, nothing can reduce the character below Don't Forget Me. Even if every Injury is filled in, the character still has the option for her last action (unless a Condition like Unconscious is in effect).

Example: After Eto's attempt to stab and shoot three thaumocs, one of them got in a lucky shot and punched our hapless hero. The attack ends up being damage rating 3. Eto has one Injury checked in his Just a Flesh



DAMAGE RATING, NOT INJURIES

A quick note that damage ratings are different from Injuries. In some places, you'll see powers and effects that give Injuries. You can't decide to shrug off or take those effects — that only works against damage ratings. The order is always damage rating, then shrugging off or taking it, then marking off Injuries. Anything that marks off Injuries has jumped to the end of the order, and has made your day a little rougher as a result.

Wound track. If he takes it, the other two Injury boxes would get checked in, filling up Just a Flesh Wound, but he might get Stunned or go Unconscious. Gail decides Eto will fight on, and rolls his Stamina. She gets one success... so, she's still filling in two Injuries, but at least she avoided the possibility of a Condition.

FIRST AID

Once the fight's over, you probably want to stop bleeding so much. I mean, the blood just gets everywhere, and that couch will never be clean again. There are two ways to do this.

If your character goes to a hospital, doctor, or otherwise seeks out medical attention, the treating character rolls Medicine + Intellect (or equivalent dice pool). The Difficulty is 1, increased by 1 for each Injury Level completely filled in. For example, if both Just a Flesh Wound and That'll Leave a Scar are filled in (i.e., all six Injury boxes are checked), the Difficulty is 3. Each Condition liked Unconscious is a Complication of 1. If the Difficulty is bought off, erase all the Injuries from the lowest Injury Level. Any Complications bought off remove the associated Condition.

On the other hand, you can have your character rewritten so that the Injury isn't as bad as it first appeared. You can make an appeal to the Writers Pool to have your lowest Injury Level bought off. If the group agrees, you can erase all the Injuries in that level. The cost is one Rewrite per box erased.

In both cases, you can only remove one Injury Level per scene, unless the Director rules otherwise (such as in the case of alien science).

Example: After that nasty encounter with the thaumocs, Eto goes to the hospital to get treated by the lovely Dr. Anna. Eto has five Injuries filled in (all the boxes in Just a Flesh Wound and two in That'll Leave a Scar). The Director rolls Dr. Anna's Medicine + Intellect, and gets two successes. That's just enough to buy off the Difficulty of 2. Gail erases the two Injuries in That'll Leave a Scar.

DEATH SCENE

Not everyone makes it through the story. When the injuries (or Injuries) pile up, it's time to write your character out and send her to the great Cutting Room in the Sky. It's time for your Death Scene.

No matter the situation or the nature of your character's injuries, the action stops for a Death Scene. If the game is in round-by-round actions, the Focus immediately shifts to the dying character, if it's not on them already. The scene can't

involve any dice rolls, but otherwise it must be epic. The dying character can use a Death Scene to impart wisdom, pass on a dying request, or otherwise have a few moments in the spotlight before the end. (In round-by-round, once the character dies, your last action is to decide who gets Focus next. Yeah, it's a crummy last request, but at least it's something.)

Death Scenes are triggered in one of three ways:

- If you choose to roll the additional dice at reduced difficulty when Last-Ditch Effort is filled, and you fail or botch the roll.
- If you make any dice roll (other than shrugging it off) for your character when Don't Forget Me is filled.
- If you fail to shrug it off when Don't Forget Me is filled.

COMBAT CONDITIONS

Occasionally, the results of a fight aren't Injuries, but some other problems. These Conditions can be applied at any dramatically appropriate time (particularly if the character decided to take it instead of shrugging it off; see p. XX). Like with any other Conditions, if your character is significantly hindered or suffers a setback because of the Condition, you gain a Rewrite.

Here are some of the Conditions you might suffer from conflict.

BLINDED

Something has rendered you sightless, whether it be an alien weapon, a cyber-blindfold, or just staring at the sun for too long. Your character is at -2 dice to all rolls relating to visual perception, including aiming a gun or spotting an upcoming attack.

Rewrite Generation: If you suffer further harm directly due to your Condition, add a single Rewrite to the Writers Pool.

Resolution: The Blinded Condition can wear off after a few hours, if treated correctly by medical professionals or alien technology. Even permanent blindness may be curable using the correct experimental devices.

PARALYZED

You're helpless, unable to move or act for a brief period of time.

Rewrite Generation: If you are unable to prevent an ally from incurring harm due to your paralysis, add a single Rewrite to the Writers Pool.

Resolution: The Paralysis Condition wears off naturally after a few hours, based on the source of the Condition. Drugs or other medical aid may end the Condition early.

STUNNED

You're confused and find it hard to focus, whether it's from a sap to the head, the result of an alien mind ray, or just because you're overwhelmed by the strangeness around you. Your character is at -2 dice to all rolls while you're Stunned.

Rewrite Generation: If you willingly reduce a dice pool to 1 die as a result of this Condition, and roll despite the risk of failure, add a single Rewrite to the Writers Pool.

Resolution: The Stunned Condition wears off naturally after a few rounds based on the damage source. If the source is external (like alien science), shutting off the external source can end the Condition early.

UNCONSCIOUS

You've been knocked out, you've fainted, or you've been hit with an alien sleep ray. Regardless of the reason, you can't move or take actions, and you're not aware of your surroundings.

Rewrite Generation: If your unconscious form is taken somewhere by an antagonist, add two Rewrites to the Writers Pool.

Resolution: Unconsciousness wears off naturally, or when you take an Injury. Medical attention and certain drugs can also awaken a character early.

ANTAGONISTS

A story is only as good as its supporting casts, or at least that's what those actors who play extras keep telling us. But in **TCfBtS!**, there's a degree of truth to it. Background characters can be colorful and interesting without having to roll a single die, but once someone steps in the way of the player characters, those *antagonists* need a few numbers behind them.

Antagonists can be anything, from the innocent beat cop who's investigating some suspicious activity to the insane mastermind summoning aliens from the depths as part of her scheme to preserve aquatic wildlife. Some characters are there to be fought tooth and nail, while others are merely minor inconveniences that keep things interesting on the way to the plot.

A significant antagonist — one you want to present a real threat and maybe even show up over multiple sessions — should probably have her own fully detailed character sheet, just like a player character. You can copy something from the Threats section, modify it a bit to suit your own needs, or build a new character from scratch. Particularly powerful antagonists might even have some extra experience points spent on them to give them an edge against the protagonists (that's the players, by the way).

On the other hand, an antagonist that doesn't stick around for more than a scene or two won't need much more than a few dice rolls before he's off-screen again. Rank his Attributes as Strong, Typical, and Puny. You can assume that any Attribute that's Strong has 4 dots, Typical has 3, and Puny has 2. Then pick three Skills to be his most proficient, four Skills to be average, and everything else is weak, using the chart below. That should get you through most conflicts in a hurry.

Either way, the chart below can serve as a guideline for creating antagonists.

ANTAGONIST POWER LEVEL	EXPERIENCE ADDED	PROFICIENT	AVERAGE	WEAK	CONDITION TRACK
Minor	20	7	4	1	5
Medium	30	8	5	2	6
Moderate	40	10	6	2	8
Major	50	12	7	3	9
Colossal	60	14	8	3	12

MINOR CHARACTERS

Some characters aren't even worth giving a name to, let alone an allocation of dots. Countless street thugs, bodyguards, gangsters, and ninjas have come and gone with little more than a grunt and maybe a scream. If your Director wants to liven things up but doesn't want to do a lot of work, introducing some *minor characters* might just be the ticket.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND INJURIES

Don't worry about assigning Skills or Attributes to minor characters. Instead, give them a dice pool in three different areas: Mental, Physical, and Social. It can be anywhere from 1 to 10, but generally they're around the 2-6 range. Minor characters use this dice pool for every action; if the rules ask for a specific Attribute or Skill by itself, just divide that dice pool in half, rounding down.

As for Injuries, don't even bother with them. Let minor characters try to shrug it off if you like, but if even one damage rating gets through, the character goes Unconscious and is out of the fight.

EQUIPMENT

Minor characters have whatever equipment makes the most sense for them to have. Don't worry about writing down everything in their pockets; they'll simply produce whatever makes the most sense for the story. If the equipment needs any mechanics, assume it's an Enhancement. Give it a +1 if it's good, or +2 if it's top of the line. Same goes for weapons; minor characters have whatever weapons they need to do what they do, but they only get Enhancement bonuses if the weapons are noteworthy.

MOBS OF CHARACTERS

You can also track multiple characters as a single group, if you like. Assuming each character is



PUSHING ARMY MEN AROUND

Maybe your character is responsible for a whole squadron of other characters, but the Director still wants a large conflict to part of a montage before cutting back to the real action. To resolve this, make each side one unit with one set of statistics (perhaps using the minor character rules, above). Then, simply treat the whole conflict like a complex action. Count the number of individuals in each unit, and that's the number of successes the other side needs to defeat them.

functionally identical (like a group of nameless gangsters or faceless ninjas), each character after the first is simply a +1 Enhancement to the mob. Each time a character is knocked Unconscious, reduce the Enhancement by 1.

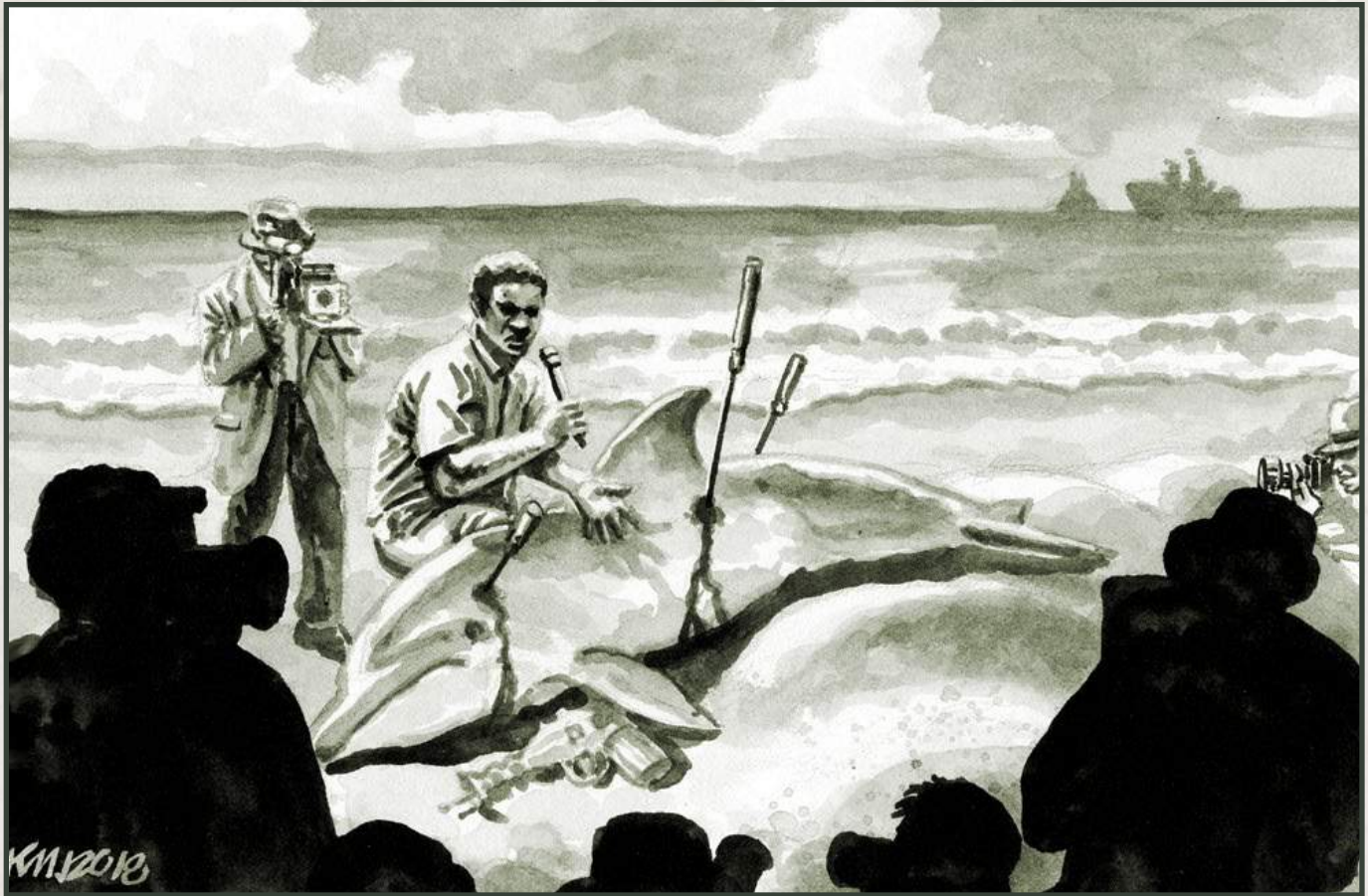
Example: After getting patched up by Dr. Anna, Eto runs into a mob of five mind-controlled gangsters. The Director considers them minor characters, and after assigning some quick numbers to Mental, Physical, and Social, he gives the mob a +4 Enhancement to each roll. Eto knocks the first gangster out, and the Enhancement drops to +3.

SCENE COMBAT

Some fights just aren't that exciting to spend time on, even if you abstract the opponents as minor characters. A few thugs mugging an old lady isn't nearly as interesting as tangling with an alien menace, for example. Maybe the Director wants the fight to take place off camera, but everyone still needs to know how things turn out. Or maybe time's running short, and you need to get to the good parts of the action as quickly as possible. Sometimes the Director will just hand wave something and move on. However, if the results will be interesting either way for a particularly low-stakes conflict, the Director can break out Scene Combat. It's a kind of complex action with lots of small milestones.

As Director, assign a strength rating of 1 or 2 for the enemies in the scene (if you think an enemy is stronger than that, you probably want to break out the minor character rules). This is the Complication of "Deadly" for each enemy. Also, assign a turn limit: Typically, this is equal to the number of enemies, but you can make it twice the number of enemy units for an easy combat, or half that number for a difficult one.

Instead of initiating round-by-round action, the Director simply asks each player what they're doing to dispatch one of the enemies. The dice pool is created and rolled. If the Difficulty of 1 is bought off, the enemy is dispatched. If the Complication is not bought off, however, the player character suffers one Injury. If the character has extra successes, they can spend them as a



Stunt to incapacitate additional enemies: The Stunt cost is equal to the Difficulty and Complication value of the enemy combined.

Either way, the turn limit is decreased by one (or two, in the case of a botch), and the next player describes their action. In this way, players keep rolling until their turn limit expires. The non-player characters never roll; they're simply milestones to overcome. If the players can't overcome all the enemies before the turn limit expires, something else happens. The player characters might be defeated, an alarm might sound, or the remaining non-player characters might simply flee.

INVESTIGATION!

They Came from Beneath the Sea! stories aren't all about menacing or being menaced by nefarious nemeses. There's usually some kind of mystery to solve, even if that mystery is "who are these aliens and why are they attacking us?" Sometimes your characters will have to search for clues, build strange devices, and generally solve problems with intelligence, rather than furious fists or witty words.

Welcome to Investigation!

GATHERING CLUES

During a story, you might solve a mystery by searching a crime scene, raiding a private library, looking for secret doors, or translat-

ing ancient texts. While your character might do some of that for her own reasons, most of the time it's to move the plot of the story forward. As such, we combine all kinds of information gathering related to story momentum into one handy unit — a *clue*. **TCfBTs!** has two distinct kinds of clues: *core clues* and *alternative clues*.

Core clues are those that are necessary to continue the plot; if you miss the clue, the story grinds to a halt. As such, you don't roll dice to find core clues — simply being in the right situation causes your character to discover them. Occasionally, the Director might require possessing (not rolling) a Skill to find a clue, such as having at least one dot in Medicine to know that someone had their spinal fluid sucked out. You might also get a core clue as Consolation for a failed roll.

Alternative clues aren't essential to the plot. Rather, they're available as part of side stories, personal agendas, or worldbuilding. Unlike core clues, you always roll dice to find alternative clues. Alternative clues can also be part of Consolation.

Example: *Eto's wife, Minerva, is a brilliant scientist. Roald is playing Minerva. After a series of extraordinary events, she's now wrapped up in her husband's crusade against invading aliens. An alien virus has spread across the globe, and Minerva is trying to find the vital formula to develop an antibiotic. Unfortunately, the scientist developing the formula was murdered.*

The formula is a core clue: Minerva must be in the lab and have the right Skill to recognize the formula for what it is. As such, Roald doesn't have to roll — the Director describes how Minerva finds the formula. However, Minerva wants to know who killed her colleague. The scientist's murder isn't necessary to the plot, so any information about the murder would be considered an alternative clue. Roald starts compiling his dice pool to see how much information Minerva gets.

SUCCESSSES AS CLUE INFORMATION

Aside from core clues, you roll dice to get information. More successes means more information. If you want more information from a core clue, you can roll as normal. Assemble an appropriate die pool, and then set one of your dice aside, turning it so it shows an 8. That's an automatic success, before you even roll.

Each success leads to one piece of additional information. The Director can share this additional information in several ways, which can be combined as well: *raw information*, *interpretation*, *question-and-answer*, or *delayed*. Clues related to the character's Archetype can be *player-created*.

- Raw information provides an additional fact-related clue, but doesn't provide any interpretation or meaning. The information generally relates to a Skill your character possesses, or your Archetype.
- Interpretation provides depth and understanding to an existing clue, as well as its relevance to the story.
- Question-and-answer allows you to ask one question about the clue. The question must relate to how your character is gathering information, although the Director can suggest appropriate questions if you're struggling.
- Delayed happens when a clue isn't relevant now, but becomes relevant later. In effect, you can "bank" the successes for a later scene. Write the nature of the clue down, along with the successes, such as Alien Physiology (2). Those successes can be converted later into raw information, interpretation, or question-and-answer clues.
- Player-created are a bit like Directorial Control Stunts (p. XX). If the information is directly related to your Archetype, you can create new facts, just like raw information clues. These new clues are subject to the same constraints as Directorial Control.

Example: Minerva is looking for more clues about her colleague's murder. If she wanted to know more about the formula, her player would get one success automatically, but these are alternative clues. Roald rolls three successes.

Roald spends one on raw information, and the Director mentions that there's a strange burn mark on her colleague's clothing, which wasn't made by anything in the lab. Roald has an idea where this is going, but spends a success for a question-and-answer clue. He asks the

Director "Since I've compared this to the equipment in the lab, can I determine that this burn mark is of alien origin?" The Director confirms that this is the case.

Minerva and Roald have one success left.

SUCCESSSES AS ENHANCEMENTS OR REWRITES

You can also use your successes in clue finding as Enhancements to relevant rolls. Consider these to be ephemeral "equipment" that can help in future scenes. The duration of the Enhancement depends on the situation and the number of success.

Example: Roald could use his last success to give Minerva a +1 Enhancement on "Alien Beam Ray." She'll be prepared against an attack by this specific weapon in future. The Director says that, if she goes this route, the information will only last for the next couple of scenes — it's a tenuous piece of information at best, and she really should get working on that antidote.

Alternatively, you can use these successes as plot hooks for the Writers Pool. Essentially, you can give the writers of the script a chance to tie into your piece of information, which makes future Rewrites easier. If the piece of information is related to an appeal to the Writers Pool, each success reduces the cost of by one Rewrite — this can reduce the cost to zero, but you still must make an appeal to the Writers Pool (although it should be an easy sell if you're doing their writing job for them)!

Example: Roald also considers using this information as a plot hook. That seems more likely and narratively cohesive to him, so he jots down "Alien Beam Ray (1 Rewrite)" on Minerva's sheet. If there's a Rewrite needed... such as, say, being shot by an Alien Beam Ray... such an edit will be a little cheaper now.

FINDING INFORMATION

How your character finds information is up to you and your Director. Here are a few examples, however, to get you started.

ANALYSIS

You use your education or hard-earned knowledge to understand the relevance of a clue you already have.

Dice Pool: Appropriate Skill + Intellect

COMPUTER USE

You gain access (legitimately or not) to a computer or other mechanical system with the information you desire. Note that in the timeframe of **TCfBtS!**, computers are not connected to a network like they are today, unless alien technology is involved.



Dice Pool: Enigmas + Cunning, assuming the character has an appropriate Skill or Archetype to be able to access such a system. (Directorial Control or Rewrites may also offer such access.)

EVIDENCE RESEARCH

You perform experiments, technical analyses, or other Science! to acquire further information. Your character must possess the appropriate skills and facilities for such research.

Dice Roll: Science + Resolve, assuming the character has an appropriate Skill or Archetype to be able to perform such research. (Directorial Control or Rewrites may also offer such capacity.)

INTERVIEW

You interview a subject who knows something. You can ask him about a topic to learn clues, or get more information on an



already-discovered clue. The subject must be open to sharing information, but getting to that point may require some influence or manipulation (p. XX).

Dice Pool: Persuasion + Intellect for an open interview (such as by a reporter); Empathy + Cunning to extract information covertly via nonverbal clues and manipulating the conversation (such as by a private detective)



STANDARD OR COMPLEX ACTION?

Some methods of gathering information require complex action to complete, rather than a single roll.

Multiple Forms of Information: In some scenarios, you need to find raw information and then subject it to analysis. This is a complex action. For example, you might search an archive for raw information as part of one milestone, and then subject this information to analysis in another.

Complex Information: Some clues are inherently complex to unearth or interpret. In these cases, perform a complex action consisting of all the milestones required, but only count the most successes from a single roll. For example, you might need to process information in a lab and analyze it in two separate milestones.

SEARCHING AN ARCHIVE

You sift through a library, card catalog, microfiche reader, or other repository of information. Getting *into* the archive may require a little bit of social manipulation, however (p. XX).

Dice Pool: Humanities + Resolve, assuming a large and ordered archive. A small archive (like a stack of books) doesn't require any roll, while a large and disorganized collection (like a warehouse of books taken from a madman's mansion) could require a complex action (see below).

SENSING

You use your senses to detect something hidden or subtle.

Dice Pool: Integrity + Cunning

DRAMA!

No game is complete without people. And people bring with them emotions, motivations, and relationships. And all of that means drama! In this game, dramatic interactions are based on two core systems: *attitudes* and *influence*. Attitudes are the feelings characters have for each other and how those relationships help and hurt them. Influence represents the strategies people use to affect others' actions and thoughts. This includes manipulation and coercion as well as encouragement and inspiration.

ATTITUDE

These two systems are affected by each character's *attitude* toward one another. Friendship, for example, is harder to foster between two people who are hostile toward one another, at least until they are thrown together into a desperate situation where

the fate of the world is at stake. Attitudes change over time – sometimes gradually, but sometimes quickly. These can happen because of influence (p. XX), a Consolation, a Complication, or atmosphere (p. XX).

Attitude is measured by levels of *intensity*. Intensity can be positive or negative. The table below gives some examples.

INTENSITY	POSITIVE ATTITUDE	NEGATIVE ATTITUDE
1	Friendly acquaintance	Pest
2	Friend	Rival
3	Well-trusted friend	Enemy
4	Like family	Hated enemy
5	Platonic or romantic soulmate	Nemesis

Attitude is an Enhancement or a Complication. When your character tries to influence someone else, consider the opinions of the target. If the attitude would help her action, she gets an Enhancement equal to the level of the attitude's intensity. If it would work against her, she gets a Complication of equal value.

Example: *Eto is married to (and deeply in love with) Minerva. His positive attitude to Minerva is at intensity 5. If Minerva asked Eto to help her in her quest to create an antidote, she would receive a +5 Enhancement. If, however, she told him to leave her behind to die, Roald would have to buy off a Complication 5 of "Eto's Love."*

ATTITUDES OF PLAYER CHARACTERS

Sometimes you will want to influence another player character. In these situations, the target character should have an attitude toward you. The player of the target character decides whether their character's feeling is generally positive or negative. Then, starting with a default rating of 2, each player provides one or two concrete reasons why the attitude should be a point higher or lower (one point for each reason).

Example: *Minerva and Eto are joined by Damarco, a grizzled ex-cop who was in the wrong place at the wrong time when the aliens invaded. Minerva is trying to get Damarco to stop Eto from following her into certain death. Before dice can be rolled, the players need to determine Damarco's attitude to Minerva. They decide the relationship is generally positive. Damarco points out that he's never liked her stuck-up demeanor, but Minerva rebuts with the fact that Damarco has a white-knight streak when it comes to women. They agree each point cancels the other out,*

so they keep the default rating of 2. Damarco's player, Willie, writes down "Minerva: Positive Attitude 2" on his sheet.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is an external factor that modifies an attitude. Sometimes emotions are infectious and affect everyone present, like collective desperation or a swinging party. Like attitudes, an atmosphere can be positive or negative, and have a strength of 1 to 3. Positive atmospheres adjust positive attitudes upward, and negative attitudes downward. The reverse is true of negative atmospheres.

Example: *A shared victory brings Minerva and Damarco closer together as friends. The Director rules that "Shared Victory" is a positive atmosphere of 1, so Damarco's attitude to Minerva is adjusted upward. He now has a Positive Attitude 3 toward her as long as the atmosphere is in play.*

INFLUENCE

Now that you know how characters feel about each other, you can manipulate them to your whim! Muahahaha... ahem. Affecting another character socially and emotionally is called *influence*. This covers activities like seduction, intimidation, inspiration, fast-talking, and the like. The *Difficult* is the target's Resolve, Presence, or Manipulation – whichever is most appropriate to resisting or work against your efforts. A target's attitude always modifies an influence action by granting Enhancements, as mentioned on p. XX.

Not all influence is equal. Asking someone for a huge favor (like hiding an alien corpse from the police) is more difficult than a smaller favor (like hiding fifty bucks from the landlord). For tricky, dangerous, or otherwise unwanted influence, the Director can increase the *Difficulty* by +1 to +4. Note that the *Difficulty* in this case is unrelated to the person being asked – that's where attitudes come in.

Example: *Minerva wants to stay behind and make sure the rocket doesn't explode. If it does, she'll most certainly be killed. She asks Damarco and Eto to leave her behind. Asking someone to leave a dangerous situation isn't inherently difficult, so the Director doesn't adjust the Difficulty. Eto and Damarco both have positive attitudes toward Minerva, so their attitude intensities are added as Complications: 5 for Eto and 2 for Damarco. Roald needs to get a lot of successes for Minerva to convince both men to leave her to her work.*

BLOCKING INFLUENCE

Unlike with many other rolls, the target of influence doesn't have to accept the result of the roll. In general, it's more fun to accept the results of an influence roll rather than ignoring it, but

if the influence would negatively affect the story or make anyone at the table uncomfortable, ignoring it is the better option.

If a player character ignores your influence roll, you get a Consolation. Typically, it's an Enhancement for the next roll against the character who rejected your roll. For example, if your offer to trade secrets was rejected, you can leverage that into an intimidation attempt later because you "tried being reasonable." The Director might offer some other Consolidation, such as a clue (p. XX).

If a non-player character ignores your influence roll, you get Rewrites. The Writers Pool gets 1 Rewrite if the character flat-out rejects the influence, or 3 Rewrites if she accepts it and then works against your intents.

If you were influenced and decide to accept the results, you get a Rewrite. If you ignore the influence of a non-player character, he gets nothing.

Example: *Minerva didn't convince Eto to leave her, but Roald got enough successes to convince Damarco. If Willie rejects the results of the influence roll, Roald gets an Enhancement of "I Warned You" on his next roll against Damarco. If Willie accepts the results, he gets a Rewrite for the Writers Pool. Seeing that the*

pool is getting a bit low, Willie decides to accept the results and leaves the married couple to their fate.

SHIFT ATTITUDE

If you want to make someone else feel more or less positive or negative toward you, you have to shift their attitude. The Difficulty of this roll is equal to the intensity of the target's current attitude toward you, regardless of its tenor (so, changing a Positive or Negative Attitude 3 to either 2 or 4 is a Difficulty of 3). If this influence is successful, the target's attitude changes by one shift.

SHIFT ATMOSPHERE

If you want to change the atmosphere of the room (such as giving a rousing speech), that's shifting atmosphere. The Difficulty is equal to the level of the current atmosphere modified by the size of the crowd — add +1 Difficulty for every five people, give or take. The environment and equipment can also give an Enhancement to shifting atmosphere, such as trying to convince everyone how dangerous it is to go outside when there's thunder and lightning to highlight your speech. If this influence is successful, the atmosphere changes by one shift in whatever direction you choose.



SLIME OF THE SEAL SLUGS

The yacht sailed slowly into the fog. Never to be seen again.

• • •

Newcott Waikes grunted. He had grunted before, but this time the Department of Touristry agent really meant it as he stood on the deck of the rescue cutter while it streamed along. "Can't believe I'm in the middle of the ocean looking for missing yachts."

Bran Farsimmon looked amused. If the ace seafarer and folklore expert had seen one like him, he'd see five. "You Touristry boys are always up to your necks when tourists go missing."

"I know why I'm here," growled Newcott, "but why the scientist?"

Karsly Morbin looked at him like he had three hands. "Simple, Mr. Waikes. I'm an expert on marine life, as well things that live in the ocean."

"Of course!" exclaimed Bran. "I read your paper *The Science of Disgusting Things*. Interesting stuff."

"Something in the sea might be responsible for these disappearances. Something *alive*."

"There's mystery connected with this part of the ocean." The folklore expert paused to light a pipe. "Satan's Septagon, it's sometimes referred to."

"Don't expect scientists to get caught up in superstitions, Bran," scoffed Karsly.

• • •

The next day, the cutter drifted into dense fog. Then, one by one, crewmen on watch began disappearing overnight without a trace, save a sickly yellow-green slime on the deck. With half the crew gone, Karsly, Bran and Newcott started to wonder.

"The instruments are going haywire," said Bran in the pilothouse. "Typical for Satan's Septagon."

"Is haywire good or bad?" asked Newcott.

"At this moment we are hopelessly lost, without hope," uttered Bran who looked at Karsly, who turned to Newcott, who turned to Bran, which went round several more times, stopping only when something emerged from the fog: a yacht.

Onboard, they found it empty the telltale slime their only clue, of which Karsly took a sample.

• • •

That night, Karsly went to get some air on deck and ran into Newcott enjoying the fog.

"How's the slime analysis, doctor?"

Karsly chuckled. "I'm afraid slime isn't analyzed like you would toothpaste or whipped cream. I should know more tomorrow."

"There's another analysis I'd like to make Karsly." Newcott moved in and kissed her, not realizing Bran was watching from the pilothouse. "Been wanting to do that for a long time," murmured the Touristry agent.

"We've only known each other a week," said Karsly.

A squishy sound made them freeze and feel queasy.

"Something over the side!" exclaimed Newcott. "Too dark to see!"

A steady slapping. Some *thing* was climbing the hull. With a massive splat on the deck, the creature sprawled before them: an unholy union of seal and slug, big as a walrus. Of the four stalks on its head, the upper two housed shiny black eyes, while whiskers betrayed its seal side. It dragged itself along with large heavy fore-flippers, its tapering bulk leaving a trail of slime.

Suddenly, a crewman was there with a boathook. Before he could act, the monster absorbed him into its body, like fruit sucked in gelatin. Karsly screamed. Apparently sated, the horror pitched into the sea.

• • •

Newcott and Bran watched lab-coated Karsly study slime under a microscope.

"No doubt about it. Half seal, half slug."

"A Seal Slug!" exclaimed Bran.

"That's crazy," sneered skeptical Newcott. "I mean how would they you know?"

"It's possible these are some sort of atomic mutations. I spent years studying seals. Maybe I could communicate using seal fin claps."

"I dunno," reasoned Bran. "I mean, it absorbed a guy."

Their clapping-and-absorbing talk was cut short by a cry from the deck. They rushed out and immediately stood agape. Seal Slugs were climbing up the sides in a slimy horde.

Crewmen battled with anything they could lay their hands on, but the slushing hulks continued overpowering and absorbing victims with disgusting slurps.

Newcott drew his Touristry Department gun and fired, but bullets just passed through. Like any good hero, after running out of bullets, he threw the gun at one. It was quickly absorbed.

Bran grabbed whatever was handy, which was a tennis racket, and started swatting, but it only made obnoxious waffle patterns.

Karsly tried an acetylene torch from her lab but even flame had no effect. She then tossed sodium, even acid, but nothing slowed them down. As a last-ditch effort, she started barking and clapping, but Bran just moved her delicately away. Finally, having absorbed all remaining crewmen, the slimy hulks disappeared overboard.

• • •

Karsly brought her science stuff to the wheelhouse where they were holed up.

"Maybe they're done with us. They ate a whole crew," suggested Newcott.

"Absorbed," corrected the scientist.

"I don't think they'll be done with us until they're done with us," said Bran. "At least the fog's lifting."

No sooner was that said than Seal Slugs began dragging themselves onto the deck. Soon, they surrounded the wheelhouse, smashing doors and windows.

"Quick, you two!" yelled Bran. "Up onto the platform on top while I hold them off!"

"Are you crazy?" barked Newcott.

"No, I'm sacrificing myself!"

"Let's all go up there!" called Karsly, grabbing her science stuff.

"No, no, I really wanna sacrifice myself!"

"Oh, come on!" said Newcott, and they dragged him out of there onto the top of the platform. Seal Slugs started squishing up the sides and Bran and Newcott whacked them with baseball bat and boathook respectively. Karsly saw the sun coming out and had a brain-storm. Hastily, she began whipping something together.

"What are you doing?" asked Newcott as his boathook harmlessly pierced a Seal Slug.

"A little trick that just might work," declared Karsly, coming up a couple of large magnifying lenses rigged together. She shifted it, aiming the sun's rays at Seal Slugs, one after the other. Horrible shrieks filled the air as they started smoldering, then melting. Until, finally, only smoking pools of slime remained.

The three caught their breath, enjoying good fortune, as a rescue ship appeared on the horizon.



CHAPTER SIX

CINEMATIC

POWERS

"A secret agent should never sleep, but there I was, dreaming of Mom's apple pie while up on deck, Renzo and his cutthroats were taking the first step, killing an innocent Cuban"

Sparks Moran, *Creature from the Haunted Sea* (1961)

In *They Came from Beneath the Sea!* the players create something approximating the events of a movie, whether in the style of hammy sci-fi or grim aquatic horror. The cinematic powers in this chapter allow them a few hefty weapons and abilities to use both in-character and as players sat around the table.

In this chapter you'll find explanations of:

- **Encounters:** When a character finds an eel manipulating their mind and body, discovers their husband was a were-lobster in disguise, or steps aboard an alien submarine, they are considered Encountered. This section explains the different ways in which an Encounter might occur, and the changes that take place in the character's body and psyche.

- **Stunts:** Sometimes characters find themselves capable of unbelievable actions. Stunts are powers all characters can buy by scoring extra successes on a dice roll.
- **Cinematics:** Cinematics might be used to manipulate the framework of the story — inserting a deleted scene, dubbing the voices of alien antagonists, or otherwise falling back on the meta conceit of making a movie, among other powers. This section explains how Cinematics work in-game and how they might be used to enhance the play experience.
- **Quips:** Every character in *They Came from Beneath the Sea!* begins the game with three Quips they can use at appropriate (or at least entertaining) times for bonus dice. A perfectly delivered Quip can also be an Award-Winner (see p. XX). This section provides guidance on a Quip's potential use.



ENCOUNTERS IN THEY CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA!

Many games use the word "encounters" to mean action scenes or exciting set-pieces, but ours is different. Here, in a world invaded by submarine intelligences and atomic titans, an Encounter is a meeting with aliens or other strange beings — a good, old-fashioned close encounter of the third kind!

A character can encounter things other than aliens, such as roadblocks and generals, but we won't call these Encounters. When that word shows up, the viewer can be assured of exciting special effects!

Also, a word on terminology: When the word Encountered is capitalized, it is being used as a reference to someone who has the Encountered condition. When it is spelled all lower case — encountered — it references the mundane dictionary definition of the term.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

"If there is a single cause, then that cause is outside of nature as we know it."

Dale Drewer, *Attack of the Crab Monsters*

Close encounters come in three variations — the first kind is a plain old UFO sighting, and the second kind involves some other unexplained phenomenon, such as cars shutting down or livestock acting strangely. But the one that has most captured the public's imagination is the third kind, where bystanders observe actual unexplained beings. Just the observation is enough to qualify as a close encounter of the third kind. Lately, though, the beings that come from beyond our civilizations rarely seem to leave it at that — such meetings instead usually serve as a prelude to more extensive contact, and often of a hostile nature. Emboldened by their own might, they do what they please to anyone who comes in their way.

But humanity is not powerless to strike back. Those individuals who commit themselves to danger and face the aliens head on can learn to even the odds and use their own strange weapons and uncanny sciences against them. To feel one's mind buckling under the Pod's music, or facing near-death at the Oblique's hands, is a horrific and traumatic experience, and it leaves the victim changed forever. A character who has undergone this sort of close contact is an Encountered character and gains the Encountered condition. He can draw upon the resources of the creatures that hurt him — many Stunts require the Encountered condition for use.

Many different ways lead to becoming Encountered, and ultimately, what sort of experience counts is up to the Director's good taste and judgment. Do you become Encountered if an alien shoots at you? Usually. What if it uses a standard-issue US Armed Forces M1 Garand? Then it becomes a matter of context and circumstances, and the Director's personal tastes. This book cannot provide firm definitions on such a wide-reaching and ambiguous topic — what it can do is offer guidelines and examples.

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE ENCOUNTERED?

There are three basic criteria that ought to be fulfilled in order for a character to become Encountered. Two of these criteria are simple and straightforward, but the third one is not. These guidelines exist in order to create plot-advancement opportunities and encourage players to take risks in accordance with genre conventions, and the Director should consider their spirit within that context when handing out the Encountered condition.

Firstly, the character must be in some way victimized. This applies to supporting cast as well — shadowy Soviet agents who work for the Hippocampus Empress must also be victimized in some way in order to use certain powers and devices. A Director can override this requirement and allow friendly beings to grant their human allies or agents the ability to make full use of extraterrestrial advantages, though this weakens the game's inbuilt themes somewhat.

Secondly, the victimizer must have some degree of intelligence and command of technology (any type will do, even if it's not very impressive), and also control abilities or devices that would require a main cast member to be Encountered to wield. This applies to less direct attacks, as well — if a crazed lobsterman scientist sends a mindless death robot after a main character, that robot is a weapon of the fanatical creature. If the robot runs out of control and attacks another character at random, though, she is still not Encountered, because there is no intellect behind its senseless violence. This allows the Director to send giant leeches against the main cast without also granting them the ability to use atomic magna-ray cloning beams.

Thirdly, the attack must in some way be characteristic of the strange alien terror, and not of humanity — and this is where things become complicated. To return to the M1 Garand-armed thaumoc above, a gunshot wound from a mundane battle rifle would by default not cause the target to become Encountered, no matter which hand, claws, or tentacles hold the gun. However, if the oceanic alien were to use its power of mind control to force a US soldier to fire his gun, then that might very well suffice, especially if the shooting was overtly unnatural — if the soldier was a trusted friend, or the alien made a show of it. Alternately, if the wielder was actually a shapeshifter in disguise, and used that ability to approach the victim while she was held in jail under heavy guard, then that would also count.

EXAMPLES OF ENCOUNTER SITUATIONS

All Encounters follow the same basic guidelines, and those simply require the subject to be victimized. In order to more clearly demonstrate what qualifies as victimization, this section is going to provide examples, divided into physical, mental, and social Encounters. That division exists only for the sake of clarity — practically speaking and rules-wise, all Encounters are the same beast. The classification is also arbitrary — many of these examples could conceivably fit in more than one category.

PHYSICAL ENCOUNTERS

The most obvious way to become Encountered is through a direct attack. Rayguns, syringes, and the claws of the crab folk have their own kind of brutal subtlety, and certainly qualify the recipient for the Encountered condition. Surgery, long-term incarceration, and medical experiments do not necessarily have to happen during combat, and neither does simple torture. Also, aliens directly modifying someone to have unusual abilities is a direct pathway to uncanny powers. Parasites also fit in here, if they are intelligent or deployed as a weapon by fantastical foes.



Example: Every 50 years, the Earth's magnetic fields shift, and a creature made of uranium ore rises from the Mariana Trench to feed. Every time, it finds nothing, and returns to its lair. But now, mankind has refined radioactive metals, and now the Uranium Man walks again. Frank Jaybridge is a colonel in the US Air Force and is the only survivor when the creature attacks his base to steal weaponry. Now recovering from radiation sickness, Col. Jaybridge is faced with a military convinced this was a Soviet attack.

Example: One thousand years in the future, humanity has faced a nuclear apocalypse when the Cold War erupted into fighting. The few survivors huddled in undersea colonies, surrounded by powerful atomic monsters. Vowing that no such cataclysm will happen again, they turned themselves into robots, and now they have returned to the past to convert humanity into perfectly logical machines and avert the nuclear war. Sally-Mae Evans is a reporter, and while investigating disappearing miners in the Appalachians, she fell into the hands of the robot race from 3000 A.D. She managed to escape, but not before they had already replaced parts of her body with machinery.

Example: Norma Kensington, a traveling saleswoman, is staying at a motel in a small town far away from anywhere else. The locals tell her to stay away from the lake, and the sheriff is particularly unpleasant to her. One night, the motel manager sneaks into her room and opens her window. At the stroke of midnight, a savage were-lobster jumps in and attacks the saleswoman, but she manages to drive the creature off with only minor injuries thanks to her trusty revolver. The next day, everyone acts strangely around her. Now, she must join forces with a rogue paparazzo and the town's barber, the only local who is not afraid of the were-beast, to take it down, and find out who is responsible for polluting the lake.

MENTAL ENCOUNTERS

Mind control — most viewers would immediately associate mental assaults with that phrase, and it is certainly the case that most types of mind control qualify eminently as an Encounter. Simple manipulation or gaslighting can also qualify, however — if a housewife discovers her husband is a monster that killed him and wears his skin, then she is Encountered. If a businessman is driven mad with paranoia because a secretive conclave of mad scientists is deliberately staging bizarre events around him, that also counts. Any telepathic contact also qualifies, with few exceptions.

Example: Delilah is 12 years old, and outside her family's farmhouse in Alaska, they have heard strange noises for the last few weeks, ever since returning from vacation. One night, Delilah wakes up and walks down to the beach, towards the sound, and she has no idea why. As she gets closer, her mind swims and she feels faint. In the distance, she sees a trail of smoke and rippling waves from a meteorite and feels a presence tugging at her mind from there. It wants to eat her brain!

Example: Jebediah "Hoagie" Garfield, the bumbling, likable janitor at the St. John Naval Base, shouldn't have gone into the restricted laboratory to clean it up, but the smell was so bad, he couldn't stand it. In there, curiosity got the best of him, and he opened the big jar labeled "Do Not Open — Danger" to see what was inside. That was when the amoeboid from 30,000 fathoms attacked and slithered into his nose, taking control of his brainstem. Three days later, he falls and lands on a bag of salt, which kills the amoeboid and gives him back control of his own body. Now, he intends to help stop these nasty creatures, not just because they're dangerous — but because they're unsanitary, too.

Example: Roger G. Fillmore, ensign of the Canadian Navy, was exploring a beached alien submersible that crashed outside of Newfoundland. There, the pilot found him — and switched places with him using advanced psionic technology. Now, "Ensign Fillmore" has returned to the surface, and aims to reach the top of the Canadian Navy, while the real man is stuck in the body of a horrific sapient sea urchin. The process can be reversed, of course — but first, the human in the alien's form must convince his superiors that the "ensign" is actually an impostor. But then it turns out, they haven't switched places at all — only memories. They are actually who they look like. And now, their true memories are trickling back.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

A gumshoe slandered by a police chief who bleeds green, a man who finds he has been divorced in favor of a superhumanly charismatic android in disguise, a journalist fired for looking a little too closely into those disappearances near the docks, and the haggard scientist who is the last one on base they haven't replaced — all of these characters are Encountered. They have experienced traumatic and uncanny events in their lives, regardless of whether they left physical marks. Indeed, the mere presence of horrors that man was never meant to know can suffice.

Example: Dr. Marjorie Hammersmith, a scientist based in an abandoned lighthouse, captured a

shapeshifting Crab Person mutant, and is studying the creature in her lab. However, one night she becomes careless and accidentally administers only half the prescribed sedatives. The mutant overpowers her, chlo-roforms her, and locks her in her own cell. When a brash young athlete breaks into her lab and frees her, she finds the monster has impersonated her and spent a lot of effort discrediting her. Now, her colleagues think she is a kook, her family resents her, and her fiancé has called off the engagement and moved to Rio de Janeiro. Worst of all, it has implicated her as the impostor.

Example: Wilma Washington is a young, up-and-coming reporter looking to prove herself. Now, she has found the scoop of the century, and she has kept it secret. Aliens have emerged from the Gulf of Mexico, and she has not only been bold enough to approach them, but they have decided to let her onto their ship and give her an interview! They seem friendly enough, but during the interview, the alien commander casually reveals that they intend to exterminate humanity before it can destroy all the other — innocent, in their eyes — life on Earth. Then, they let her go. Now, she must convince the military and America of the threat these creatures pose, despite only her knowing of their existence.

Example: Dr. Dexter K. Harding is a discredited fringe scientist, and the laughingstock of the scientific community. Now, a powerful being from the depths of the ocean, ancient beyond belief, has appeared to him by possessing his secretary. It is a benign, god-like entity, and it wants to help humanity. At first struggling to convey the message to the world, Dr. Harding's efforts eventually bear fruit, and he founds a powerful organization looking to spread the word of this enigmatic savior. Only the intervention of a small band of intrepid investigators, led by his old rival, Dr. Argyle Stonecliffe, finally reveals to him the truth — the mysterious benefactor is malevolent beyond belief. Now, Dr. Harding must join forces with his hated rival to tear down the cult he himself made.

THE ENCOUNTERED CHARACTER

Becoming Encountered is the first part of the story. Being Encountered is the rest. All these experiences are traumatic, psychologically and sometimes physically. A psychiatrist who knows what is going on might talk about "paranormally-induced mental fragility disorder," and particularly paranoid officials might create lists of "suspected alien-influenced individuals," but nobody at the present time knows exactly what the effects of becoming Encountered are. The truth is that a lot of the time, it's an individual thing. Some people are left with little more than a slight dose of healthy

paranoia, and some experience radical physical changes until they could no longer possibly pass for their own, human species.

In general, though, there does indeed seem to be a pervasive effect, beyond the simple consequences of the Encounter itself, that takes hold of the Encountered individual. Psychological effects are all but universal, while changes of the body are less common, and mild effects are an order of magnitude more prevalent than severe changes.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Other than the understandable but mundane effects of the Encounter event — having one's worldview shaken, paranoia, trauma — being Encountered also has several characteristic psychological symptoms which often occur, along with a few rare and dramatic extremes. Most Encountered individuals experience some degree of increased curiosity, aggression, recklessness, or assertiveness, or a combination of these traits. Obsession is also fairly common, though not quite as much, and some individuals become obstinate and insistent, demanding to be believed and discarding those who refuse to from consideration. In extreme cases, psychosis can be observed, which sometimes coincides with homicidal or strange impulses. A few rare cases exhibit major derangement and delusions of grandeur, often combined with intuitive insights into extreme sciences — these individuals seem to be far removed from humanity indeed, and can in fact trigger others into becoming Encountered.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

The most common physiological side effect of becoming Encountered is a change of eye color to green — green-eyed individuals obviously have little cause for concern in that regard. Other changes are usually atavistic, throwbacks to the time far before history when mankind's ancestors were creatures of the oceans. Hair might change color to silvery, bluish, greenish, or other marine colors, or simply fall out. The sufferer might develop any sort of ichthyosis —

that is, a skin disorder leading to a scale-like appearance. More severe changes include reptilian or sea creature traits such as webbed fingers or gills, and a few extreme cases involve the affected transforming fully into an unrecognizable naval horror, often influenced by the form of their tormentor. All these are fairly rare.

More common are direct injuries or traits caused by the initial Encounter itself. Someone implanted with gills by submarine surgeons, for example, may rightfully count this trait as a physical effect of becoming Encountered, as may a child who lost her arm to an amorphous, acidic mastermind.

TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT HARM

The Director should have in mind the duration of time they see the Encountered Condition lasting on a character. Physical effects may fade, psychological harm may receive treatment, or an alien device may reverse the Condition altogether.

Directors can remove the Encountered Condition at any time deemed appropriate for the story. This decision should not be made as punishment, as it may nullify acquired Stunts, but as incentive. If a character has grown used to possessing Telekinesis or the ability to Teleport, they will develop a desire to Encounter aliens once more, throwing themselves in the way of harm just for the possibility of renewed power.

In this way, Survivors develop fixations on their enemies, Everymen lose what it means to be an average Joe or Jane, Mouths gain features that set them apart from their peers, G-Men start working outside the law, and Scientists become mad.

ENCOUNTERED

Having had a close brush with aquatic beings, you find a little bit of the uncanny in yourself — or perhaps witnessing the aliens' methods firsthand simply lets you put some good, old-fashioned American know-how to use, no matter your nationality. Regardless, you now



IT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN

With Stunts, Tropes, Cinematics, and Quips in play, it may feel as if there are too many special abilities to juggle on top of the basic Storypath system. Fret not, as one of the easiest ways to classify these powers is as follows:

Every character has access to three Quips from character creation onward. Quips can trigger Award-Winners, which in turn allow the free use of Cinematics.

Every character starts the game with three Tropes, two of which are defined by their Archetype. Tropes can be used at any time by characters possessing them, and further Tropes can be purchased with Experience points.

Stunts are used after rolling excess successes. They can be made up or pulled from these pages. Feel free to write your favorite Stunts down so you can use them again and again without having to scour the book.

Cinematics must be purchased with Rewrites or after a successful Award-Winning Quip. They disappear as soon as they're used. Cinematics are a "meta power" used by the player, not their character.

If the range of powers available is too much for your game, we recommend making Tropes or Stunts optional.

know how to operate alien technology and take advantage of their strange and unearthly sciences. Your character now qualifies to wield any ability or power that explicitly requires this Condition.

Rewrite Generation: When you first use alien technology, powers, or speak their language, you gain a single Rewrite for the

Writers Pool (see p. XX). You gain an additional Rewrite if you start behaving like the alien in question.

Resolution: At Director discretion, and with appropriate character-shaping events, your character may return to normal once more.

STUNTS

"You may think you've got me beat, with your gang of mutant seahorses and your weird undersea nation. But know what I see? A fish out of water who is about to get fried."

Agent Patricia Morgan, shortly before the Crete Lighthouse Incident

A researcher runs down the hall, her hands fumbling over the device taken from the professor's laboratory. She's a competent scientist, but the pieces of wire and crystals attached to the device make it seem more like it came out of Jules Verne than MIT. As the creature from the depths stalks her, she tries one last time to get the device to function. She can barely hold back her smile as she hears the machine power on, and she turns it on her pursuer...

In RPGs, players will want to do more than just succeed. They will want to absolutely crush their die rolls, and hope they get as many successes as possible. This is not because they are keeping score, or because the game is about who can do something better, but because they do not just want to competently succeed at a roll but instead have their roll mean something throughout the course of the story. They will want to do more than pick the lock or climb a fence. They will want to do so in a way that is memorable, and very, very cool.

In **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, players are able to take excessive successes rolled and use them to improve their action and make it accomplish more in the scene, as explained on p. XX. In the Storypath system these are known as Stunts and while the number of successes always represents how competently they have accomplished their task, Stunts help make their roll more dramatically potent.

As well as the ability to create your own *complicated*, *enhanced*, and *difficult* Stunts on the fly, as described in the previous chapter, this chapter outlines predefined Stunts you may wish to note on your character sheet in case you want to use them in your game. These prewritten Stunts are classified as *simple*, *flashy*, and *daring*, but the easiest way to think of them is

you need to roll one additional success to activate a *simple* Stunt, two additional successes for a *flashy* Stunt, and three additional successes to activate a *daring* Stunt, which is a Stunt so powerful it can drastically change how the scene plays out.

Simple Stunts represent small chances at finesse or power that can help the character overcome an obstacle. They can be a slight edge in combat or an ability that can activate to help the hero in their time of need. A *flashy* Stunt involves an ability that few other people possess or reflects a character's years of training they are able to use in a new and ingenious fashion. *Daring* Stunts are at the peak of human exertion, representing the character pushing themselves or their abilities beyond what they are normally capable of.

If a Stunt does not specify an effect duration, any bonus it grants to the character remains for the duration of the scene.

GENERAL STUNTS

There are some things that just about anybody can do with enough gumption. These are the General Stunts.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

These Stunts represents the ability to push oneself beyond their normal limits and as such are available to all characters.

CUNNING STRIKE

The sharkmen hissed and swung their axes as Eugene eluded them once again, weaving in and out of their blows and back behind Brock's towering figure.



NOTE YOUR STUNTS!

As Stunts are supposed to be a fluid part of the game, it is advised you don't spend minutes reading through this chapter whenever you roll your excess successes. That would slow the game down. Rather, you should spend a little while before the game starts, noting down a handful of Stunts you would like your character to use in the story and the basics of those Stunts' mechanics. This makes what could be a time-consuming task into a quick reference check.

Some people just have a natural ability to move out of danger's path. Maybe it's an innate cowardice, maybe it's cleverness. Call it what you like, it gets a character in and out of danger unharmed. Characters with this Stunt can attack on the move and, once their attack is resolved, retreat up to 10 feet away from the target they struck without penalty as part of the same action.

EARS LIKE A BAT

"Sometimes the best thing to do is stop and listen. Once you block out the ambient noises like the wind, your heartbeat, and the sound of slithering inside the walls, it's easy to focus." —Paul Cringer, Fisherman specializing in creatures of unusual size.

Once per encounter the player is able to ignore all penalties to making listening rolls. You can do this on your next Cunning roll related to listening.

FIERY TEMPER

Lara drained the bottle of rum as she sized up the look of the thugs in the room. "Evening, boys. Y'all know who I am, and y'all know why I'm here. You've heard of what I can do, so if you do not back out that door right now then there will be hell to pay!"

A reputation for anger or violence can be a detriment, but it can also be leveraged to an advantage. A character employing this Stunt is not intimidated by any fear-based effects that come from confrontation in this scene and gains +1 die on Presence rolls when interacting with other humans.

SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

Mackie proudly rolled up his sleeves as he cracked his knuckles loudly within the confines of the old submarine. "You might not know this, but I once went toe to toe with the Navy's best boxer. Well, just because you have two more pairs of arms than him doesn't mean I'm afraid!"

Through adversity people can find motivation to keep moving. For each level of wound penalties a character has this turn they may apply +1 to their roll when attempting to make any rolls related to avoid passing out or make physical actions.

SHARP TONGUED

"Hey! You! Your mother was a crustacean and you ain't nothin' but a basa!"

Wanda prided herself on her witty putdowns, as well as being an excellent judge of character. Though it was hard to tell from its bizarre features, she'd say that weird-looking toad guy was about to cry.

While some characters present an aura of charm, characters with this Stunt are beacons of annoyance, arrogance, or menace. The effects of their unique charms are situational. They can force one character to leave the room in disgust or anger, or cause an alien to attack them instead of their intended target.

SOMETHING ABOUT THEM...

Ada had been naturally suspicious of a man who referred to himself as "Big T," but she had to admit, there was something about him that made her want to trust him.

Something about the character makes others view them as trustworthy or safe. It can be a friendly or familiar look, or a softness of voice. Whatever it may be, characters with this Stunt can use their Composure rolls to convince characters to take an additional minor action in their favor. Characters so convinced will not take life-threatening risks on the character's behalf.

THROW YOUR BACK INTO IT

"Quickly! The bunker is covered up and their air is running out!" Tish gestured wildly at the burning backyard of his neighbor's house while Sam and his crew broke out their shovels. She only hoped her friends would be strong enough to lift whatever metal that ship was made from.

Your character is used to hard labor and lifting heavy things. When engaging in strenuous physical activity they gain +1 die to their rolls for the remainder of trying to overcome the obstacle.

ALIEN SENSES (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"Wait! Don't go in there. There's something... fishy about it"

As unfunny as his remark was, Officer Webber couldn't escape the fact that it was true. An ominous shadow told of a creature hiding behind the door frame.

As part of her encounter with the aliens, this character has gained a strange form of clairvoyance or danger sense. When making Cunning rolls to survey an area, this character can sense the presence of hidden aliens or traps and surveillance devices left by them.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Showing there are no limits to how far someone can push themselves, these Stunts represent being able to supplement skill with a healthy dose of force.

ANIMAL WHISPERER

"You're going to keep that thing?"

Byron laughed incredulously at Cassandra's question. "Of course! Why not?"

Cassandra held the pieces of scrap paper up to the moonlight to help her read the notes written in the margins better. "I'm pretty sure the alien language we translated beneath its cage said it's only going to get bigger..."

When attempting to communicate or manipulate alien animals without sentient intelligence, the character gains +2 dice to their pool.

INSANELY SWIFT

"Run!" shouted Erika. Though she had not contemplated Dr. Mostov completely outpacing her and leaving

her between him and the ravenous Gargantuan Squid!

One of the simplest of Stunts. When making an Athletics roll characters may cover double their normal speed, outpacing even the hardest of heroes.

LIKE AN OX

As Chunk downed the last mouthful of the poisoned dish, the thaumocs giggled and rubbed their tentacles together in glee. Their reverie was broken as he burped loudly and called out,

"Not gonna lie. Momma's was better."

Characters with this Stunt have an unnaturally strong constitution. Whenever this character passes a Stamina roll due to an alien attack being used against them, she may force the alien imposing the roll to miss their next turn through sheer disbelief.

OLD-SCHOOL CARNAGE

"Silly human," the alien muttered through its breather mask. "You are out of bullets!"

"You're right," Guadalupe said as he hefted the fire axe he found in the shed. "Good thing this doesn't need bullets."

Characters with this Stunt inflict +2 additional damage when wielding melee weapons.

RIGHT IN THE SWEET SPOT!

The creature's eye glowed red as it attempted to take control of the group. Clarice knew what to expect this time, and as she slid another arrow into her crossbow she gave the order. "Aim for the eye! Aim for the red glowing eye!"

When a character makes a successful attack at a target, they can call out to their allies to attempt to hit the same place. By making a successful Cunning roll they can grant their allies the ability to do +1 damage to their target for the remainder of the encounter.

TABLE TURNER

The alien produced a golden pistol from its holster and leveled it at Agent Murphy. Quick as a flash he snatched at the barrel of the contraption and yanked it from the creature's grasp.

For those with excellent hand-eye coordination, this Stunt allows a character, as part of a hand-to-hand attack, to steal the weapon from their opponent.

CROWD CONTROL (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"I know you thought that was an alien ship, but it was really a weather balloon caught in swamp gas. You can tell that by that smell, which is burning swamp gas. That piece of skin on the wall was just a poor crocodile caught up in the fire. Poor animal." Shawnda Coburn ushered the crowd away with one hand, wiping the sweat from her brow with the other.

When a successful Manipulation roll is made against a supporting character asking questions about the

character's activities, the character gains +3 dice when dealing with the next supporting character, followed by +2 dice for dealing with the second, and +1 die for each additional supporting character after the first.

TELEKINESIS NOVICE (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Steve reached for the key, a futile gesture. His cage was meters away from the guard station. Just then, much to his pleasant surprise, the key began hovering from the desk and gliding steadily towards him!

This character has been altered by their encounter with the aliens in such a way that they can now draw objects (small enough to be handheld) to their side from out of their reach. They have not fully mastered this ability, but they're learning!

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Science has always depended upon those who are willing to risk much in order to expand the depths of mankind's knowledge. Only those who are willing to risk much are able to use their knowledge to blend bleeding-edge technology with the wisdom with how to use it properly.

ASSERTIVE GENES

Anthony watched as the last scales fell from his hand, noticing Abitha's change was coming more slowly. For some reason the effects of the device did not last as long on him as they did on her. "Don't worry, hopefully you'll turn human again soon."

Strong genes can mean more than possessing your father's eyes or your mother's nose. For some, their genes are able to resist being recombined against their will. Characters with this Stunt are able to shorten the recovery time from alien effects by half.

BODYGUARD

The clicking sound was all Agent Johnson needed to hear; she leapt immediately to the side, grabbing Professor Yancy as she went. The two women crashed onto the metallic floor just in time to see the disintegrator beam erupt from the hidden floor tile.

Any time a character with this Stunt is asked to roll to avoid a trap, she can award an automatic success to one other member of the group, immediately saving them from any danger without them having to roll.

COUNTERATTACKER

The Siren's tongue wrapped around Stephanie's throat. Immediately she felt the burning of the paralyzing poison and the pulling of the muscular appendage. Thinking fast, she pulled the gift Brad gave her from her belt.

The combat knife gleamed in the blinking lights of the alien devices, right up until she jammed it into the soft pink flesh of the tongue.

Characters with this Stunt are such opportunists that they can turn their enemy's own strikes against them. If attacked by an alien within range, on a successful Close Combat roll, this character can immediately make one riposte attack per turn. If the attack hits, the alien benefits from no defense or resistance as she is countered by the hero of the hour!

FLESH WOUND

Blast after blast burst from the golden wand of the Prefect, but still, Wang kept coming, stumbling forward with a grim look on his face and an axe in his hand. "Pathetic human! Why won't you die!"

Characters with this Stunt can, when succeeding on a Stamina roll, negate up to 2 more damage than the number of successes rolled, and reduce what had at first seemed like a grievous injury to a mere flesh wound.

INFUSED WITH SCIENCE!

Jimmy was speechless, but not as speechless as the monsters in front of him. His shirt had melted from his body but the alien's teleportation ray had refused to take him. "Believe me, guys, I'm just as confused as you are. Must have been that juice I accidentally drank in Doc's lab!"

Through exposure to the arcane and super scientific, the character's body sometimes interacts differently with the strange powers it encounters. Once per encounter with an alien the character can choose to apply a different effect to their character than a power would normally apply to them.

NATURAL EMPATH

Gretchin never liked dealing with the mechanic on the edge of town. Whenever she tried talking to him, no matter how much the mechanic smiled at her, she felt this sense of anger and disgust welling up inside her. It would be years before she discovered the mechanic was not human, or that the creature's hatred for mankind bordered on the ruthlessly psychopathic.

Emotions of all kinds flood your senses in ways you have never been able to understand. Characters with this Stunt gain +2 dice to Intellect rolls involving emotion or discerning if someone is keeping their feelings or intentions hidden from them.

QUICK LEARNER

"Yellow tile, followed by blue tile, followed by red tile four times." Gregoire kept repeating the strange mantra in his head as he tried to assemble the alien rifle on



his own. His mantra paid off when the rifle began humming and the diode at the end glowed with energy.

Unfamiliar devices do not remain unfamiliar to you for very long. By focusing on the task at hand, you are able to figure out how to work a device faster once you have been introduced to it by someone who has used it before. Gain +2 to all rolls involving trying to operate a device you are completely unfamiliar with.

PYRO-PUNCH! (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

She could feel the energy inside of her, she channeled it, balled it into her fist and swung. A bright light, a burst of intense warmth and the Siren erupted in flames!

This character's Encounter with the aliens imbued them with an inner force they can channel into a strike. Once per turn, they may make a standard attack against a target. If successful, the attack is resolved as normal, but the target automatically catches fire and must take 3 damage from the flames each turn until they burn out or are doused in some way. This damage begins on the turn it is inflicted and is resolved on the target's turn each round.

EVERYMAN STUNTS

The Everyman is one of the Ordinary Joes of the world. They can blend in, stand out, and step up to handle anything this world or any other can throw at them.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

All an Everyman wants is to return to the quiet life they knew before. If that requires fixing up a few cars or turning a rake into a multi-pronged spear, then so be it.

FINE TUNING

The sound of rhythmic slamming metal on metal under the hood gave way to the aircraft's engines roaring to life. Julio smiled as he lowered the hood. "Sorry prof, but sometimes you just need to stop tinkering with something and give it a good once over. It may not run on stardust and fly us to the moon, but this ol' bird will get us where we're going."

By spending part of a scene working on a machine that they are familiar with such as a car, boat, or tractor, the Everyman can gain +2 dice for a number of rolls with that device equal to the number of successes rolled.

IMPROVISED WEAPONRY

Clara Belle felt her fingers pop as she clutched the ladder in her hands. Just before she took her swing, she remembered something her sensei taught her about improvised combat: Anything can be used to hit something else if you try hard enough.

Practicality often means that not everyone has access to sophisticated weaponry and must instead get down and dirty. Any attack made with an improvised weapon while possessing this Stunt negates any penalties to attack rolls.

MENTAL MAPPING

Sarah looked at the alien display in front of her. It was bad enough it was a hodgepodge of Soviet technology combined with the biotech the creatures used, but her knowledge of Russian only extended to two semesters at Georgetown. It was then she remembered the diagram of the console she saw scribbled in the professor's notebook, and she knew which wire to pull to shut down the whole process.

As long as the Everyman is informed earlier in the story about a possible situation they will encounter later on, they are able to gain +2 dice to a single roll made when they encounter that situation.

PAST EXPERIENCE

Manuel slid out his pocket knife as he jumped into the driver's seat of the car. Barbara couldn't help but stare incredulously as the car roared to life within a few moments. "Where did you learn how to hotwire cars?" "Breaking into Berlin."

"I didn't know you were in the war?"

"I never said I snuck into Berlin during a war." Manuel gave her a smile as he slammed the pedal to the floor.

Once per scene the character who purchased this Stunt may make a single roll requiring Skills they do not have any points in without suffering any penalties.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Everymen are as gifted at sabotage as they are at repair. They bring a wholesome bravery to every task they undertake.

DELAYED FAILURE

As the semi's engine sputtered and kicked, Renaldo smiled and fidgeted in his bonds. He knew when he was forced to fix it that the small hole he put in the engine would eventually cause the whole thing to break down. Now they were going to make him try to fix it again, and that's when he would strike.

Everymen with this Stunt are able to place a hidden flaw in something they've repaired, in a code they've programmed, or in an elixir they've created where it will suddenly reverse itself or break down not long after it is used.

SCROUNGE

Copper wiring was easy to find, and so was aluminum, though the chemicals the doctor said would neutralize the creature's venom were not only hard to come by but also illegal. Jesse knew where to find them, but finding enough of them would require serious work if she was going to make enough antivenom to save the town.

The Everyman's eye sees the world around them and breaks it down into parts they can easily catalogue and store for further use. By making a Larceny roll, the Everyman can receive clues as to where they may have seen materials and supplies they are unsure of where to obtain.

SUDDEN BRAVERY

"Alright Donnie, you just have to race across the pier and shut off the alien device summoning a gigantic creature from the bottom of the ocean while dodging dozens of fanged tentacles trying to rip your face off. No big deal. Also, you're secretly a movie star from Hollywood. Yeah, right. Well, here goes nothing."

The Everyman with this Stunt is able to channel their inner resolve to overcome overwhelming odds. By using this Stunt, they are able to ignore penalties imposed on them for the remainder of the scene that come from fear or psychological based effects.

AIM FOR THE OUTFIELD (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Pete reached into the duffel bag, desperate to find something that could save him now. The mutated arthropod made a strange gurgling noise as it approached, with pieces of slime falling off its shell and splattering on the ground. As Pete searched the bag, his hand felt the cold, reassuring feel of pine wood. As he hefted the baseball bat from the bag, he readied it at his shoulder and tugged down on his baseball cap, a familiar motion to him that he had not done since high school.

"Play ball."

When using sporting equipment, including hunting rifles and fencing swords, the Everyman can inflict +2 damage in combat. This Stunt lasts for the duration of the scene.

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

The Everyman represents the heights every person can aspire to if they push themselves to do greater things. These Stunts represent the Everyman's willingness to reach for almost super-human levels of resilience and tenacity.

ALIEN OUTFITTING

Scavenging tech from that crashed lander was a pain, but Tyreese didn't mind the slight buzzing feeling in his skin when he cranked the dial on the device on his wrist. All he knew was it made him stronger, and his group needed him to be stronger if they were going to kick these thugs out of their hometown.

When an alien device is discovered, the user of this Stunt can negate the requirements for using it for just one scene at the cost of taking 1 point of damage.

OBSCURE INSIGHT

"It's a reference to the Bull of Heaven." The group turned to look at Marshall, the jock who only a few minutes ago had been stuffing his face with spaghetti.

ti. "It was one of the creatures sent to confront Gilgamesh. If that book is saying what I think it's saying, I think it's saying that the Bull of Heaven was not just a Mesopotamian folk tale. What? The story of Gilgamesh is like a comic book! It's the only thing worth listening to at school."

While others are able to offer specialized and particular mindsets into solving complicated tasks, the Everyman is able to cut through the minutiae and give a hint into solving the problem through the use of obscure information they have heard before or simply by offering an uncomplicated view into the problem. Once per session the Everyman may substitute any other Skill for a roll they are untrained in.

PLANT YOUR FEET

Abigail did not know why these creatures were here. She did not know what they were saying in their strange language, nor did she know why she had to be the one holding them back while the scientists rushed to finish their strange device to banish the creatures once and for all. But what she did know was that in the room with the scientists was her little girl, who needed her momma to keep the monsters from stepping out of the closet. For the little girl who loved banana pancakes in the morning she would stand up against the devil himself.

As long as the Everyman decides not to move and stands their ground, they gain +2 dice to an attack roll and +2 to damage for the remainder of the scene.

GIVING PUNCHES LIKE YOU TAKE THEM (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"That's all you got?" Nigel began laughing even though he just watched two of his teeth bounce across the pavement. "I've bounced tougher animals out of the bar, and they didn't have as many arms as you. Let's go."

When the Everyman is the only one engaging in hand-to-hand combat in a scene, they gain +3 dice to their rolls to hit their opponent, may ignore any effects from wounds they have taken, and deal +2 damage.

G-MEN STUNTS

The G-Men act with the strength and authority of the government by utilizing the best training their country has to offer. They know that they are the first line of defense and if they fail, then it means grave things for their country.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

G-Men must keep themselves in shape and focused on the mission, and these abilities help supplement their natural training.



ALL-SEEING EYE

"I know you thought you slipped that note under your hand without me seeing it, but not only did I see it but I see the gun hidden in the back of your belt. Choose wisely."

The G-Man is trained at observing the finer details of a situation and keeping track of them in their mind. For each turn that the G-Man spends being silent and observing the scene around them, they may lower the difficulty of their rolls to a cumulative -3, after three turns.

GOVERNMENT TRAINED SHARPSHOOTERS

Breathe out and pull. The army trained you to shoot at targets and this is just the next step. No reason to get nervous; the rest of them count on your skill with a gun to fell the beast.

The G-Man is trained to shoot to inflict maximum damage. G-Men with this Stunt can ignore one degree of difficulty when attempting to hurt the target for the remainder of the scene.

PEAK PHYSICAL FITNESS

The recruit leaned against the wall of the gym, as her lungs burned from the cold Alaskan air coming through the open windows. Her superior agent stopped to give her some encouragement. "Keep running, kid."

You never know when a pair of fast legs is gonna help you get you where you're going or get you away from where you don't want to be!"

Whether they are coming or going, a G-Man needs to meet strenuous physical requirements in order to qualify to work for the government. This training means they may reroll a failed Athletics roll as long as it involves strenuous physical activities such as running, swimming, or lifting.

HOLD 'EM! (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Restraining a perpetrator comes with the job, and it's not hard to figure out how to restrain a criminal who has two, four, or even eight arms. Problem is what to do with them!

The G-Man may double their Might when attempting to hold back a creator that is roughly humanoid. They engage the target in a Grapple test as normal, but double their Might as they resort to alternative methods of restraining them.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

There comes a time when each agent needs to put it on all on the line for their country, and these Stunts allow them to better hone the trademark abilities of the G-Man in service to their nation.

DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!

The sheriff waved a finger in the mysterious drifter's direction. "Look, wise guy, either you start falling in line or your next meal will be through metal bars and you'll have to sip it through a straw!"

For each dot of Presence they have more of than their target, they may reduce the difficulty of all Social-related challenges against them for the remainder of the scene.

I, SPY

The tracking device was ready to go but Shoshanna was not sure how to sneak it onboard the fishing trawler the gill-folk were using to transport prisoners. Fortunately, she knew how to shrink it down to the size of a quarter and the monstrous hybrids never noticed the small disc slide underneath the captain's chair on the bridge.

The G-Man is able to study a device and find a way to make it covert. Items rendered covert can only be discovered if specific attention is drawn to them over the course of the scene.

IMPECCABLE GROOMING

James never expected that he would own so many suits after leaving the police force to work for the government, but he also never expected he'd be trying to seduce someone that he knew was really a gill-folk in disguise. Good thing he was able to freshen up in the men's room before making his move.

Although everyone is encouraged to look their best, a G-Man with this Stunt is able to take that one step further. When using this Stunt, they are able to increase the level of their appearance to offset any penalties they may currently be under or to gain advantage when talking to others. An agent with this Stunt gains +2 dice to any rolls where their appearance would factor into the roll.

CHAIN ATTACK (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Leroy had held his own against the biggest men the Navy had to offer, and now he was facing off again against a squid the size of a semi truck. He followed the same strategy he always counted on in a fight: hit them once, hit them twice, and keep on hitting them until they fall.

For the remainder of the combat, a G-Man with this Stunt is able to lose a dot of Might to immediately make another attack immediately following one they have just made. They regain a dot of Close Combat at the rate of 1 per hour of rest.

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

G-Men have access to certain parts of society the rest of the heroes do not, whether in the form of an FBI task force or through modifying their weapons with experimental technology.

FULL WEIGHT OF LAW

"Captain, I'm here to inform you that you're not only going to give me the assistance I require, but you're going to release my friends from your jail."

"Says who?"

The phone rang, the agent barely able to suppress his sarcasm. "Says J. Edgar Hoover."

By calling on their contacts, the G-Man is able to summon the full force of their government to bear. By employing the weight of their government credentials they are able to give an order to any FBI Agent or police officer and have it followed through. This order still has to make sense, but can be used to dismiss curious detectives, requisition vehicles, or temporarily halt an investigation.

INSPIRING ORDERS

It was a huge gamble, Agent Taylor thought as she watched the soldiers spread out into the farm. If the scientist was wrong then she would have gambled away her career on nothing but a crazy hunch. But from the lights they saw earlier and the squid-like corpse they had back on ice at the station, she knew she made the right call.

Though G-Men are expected to operate on their own in the field, sometimes they are able to make a call and send others into battle alongside them. By coming up with a plan and giving clear orders to others, they are able to give everyone in the field with them +3 dice to all combat-related rolls for the remainder of the scene.

PROTOTYPE WEAPONRY

Charlie hefted the bulky rifle with its unusual stock and barrel. "Feast your eyes, boys. Little gift from the egg-heads in Washington. Let's just say this little beauty will punch a hole in that thing's shields or ain't nothing will!"

When the modification is applied to a weapon in the G-Man's possession they are able to inflict 2 additional damage for the remainder of the scene, at which point the modification is depleted and rendered useless.

SPECIAL RESISTANCE TRAINING (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Sue seethed at the aliens restraining her. "Look, I don't know who you are, and we do not recognize the authority of some Empress of the Omega Hippocampi where I come from. But what I do know is that your power is based on your ability to control people, and well, you've not been able to control me since that night by the wharf."

When a G-Man encounters a new alien power for the first time, they are able to make a Culture, Technology, or Science roll to try to get as much information about the power as possible even if they do not fully understand it. For each success they gain, they are able to turn over this information to their government to devel-

op a defense against it. The next time they encounter this power, they gain a number of bonus dice to resist its effects equal to the number of successes they gained from the original encounter.

MOUTH STUNTS

The Mouth is able to talk their way out of almost anything, though it takes more than just being a smooth operator. It requires subtlety, finesse, and more importantly, knowing who the rube in the room is and having it not be you.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

Whether through babbling a bewildering argument or mocking a defeated foe, the Mouth can do with their words what a Survivor must do with their fists.

CLEVER CIRCUMSTANCES

Devlin opened his hands and raised them in mock innocence. "Look, there's a perfectly logical reason for why we are here at 3 a.m. with a boat full of fish chunks and dynamite..."

When attempting to explain away why they are in an area they shouldn't be or when trying to explain who they are, the owner of this Stunt gains +2 dice to their roll.

EGO BOOST

"I see from your shirt you serve in the Army. I've always had a thing for Army boys. Tell me, you're from that base across town? How long until the next shift starts on the base?" Leaning across the table, hotshot journalist Maxim Ballard stole some of the soldier's milkshake.

The character is adept at figuring out just what the other person wants to hear and how good it will make them feel to hear it. By pointing out this fact, they give anyone interacting with the target +1 die to all Manipulation rolls as long as they are complimentary in nature.

GIFT OF GAB

"Wow, you're from Mobile? I've got family from there! Did you ever check out that diner out on Main Street? The one that serves all you can eat brisket? It reminds me of that time I..." Ishmael rambled on, keeping all eyes on him while his partner snuck into the bank vault.

Those with this Stunt are able to keep talking in a smooth, uninterrupted manner about a variety of subjects with their target and keep their attention drawn to the speaker and not to the area around them. By focusing all of their attention, the subject of the speaker's attention is at -2 dice to all Cunning-related rolls.

MISSED ME! (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Jiang had no idea why he had been chosen to distract the aliens, but he knew that Han needed a few more minutes to seal their portal. Though he was often the last one to volunteer for this kind of thing, he had to keep them diverted from Han. By waving his hands over his head and throwing rocks, he caught the attention of the aliens, but now he had to survive the salvo of blasts shot his way!

With the use of this Stunt the character is able to declare that they are attempting to distract their opponent and focus their next action to be on them. This ability only works if the next action their opponent takes can reasonably be taken against them instead.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Mouths are canny as anything, but also capable of slipping a convincing lie by a perceptive opponent.

CAN'T OUTFOX A FOX

Margaux nodded along as the thing claiming to be her friend Roxy told her a story about why she was late or why her coat was found torn up outside the building. She could tell by the way Roxy sipped her coffee that she wasn't her friend of 15 years. She didn't know how to save her friend, but she knew how her friends could make "Roxy" tell her what actually happened.

Once the character successfully makes an Empathy roll to uncover if a statement is a lie, they automatically pass any further rolls for the remainder of the scene against that opponent.

EXO-CULTURAL NUANCES

Gregoire straightened the tie around his neck. "Don't worry, I've got this. I'm going to tell them I'm the President of Earth."

Jennifer glared angrily at her partner while she loaded her father's service revolver. "Wait, what? They won't believe that!"

"You mean, 'they won't believe that, Mister President.'"

A Mouth with this Stunt is able to ignore any penalties for communicating with an alien species due to cultural differences and is able to pass off any inconsistencies with their story as the eccentricities of Earth culture.

IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS

Shelly had served as a nurse in a MASH unit during Korea, and she currently worked in the ER. She knew that no matter how bad it was, you couldn't tell the patient or else they might panic. She held her breath and said the words that were part lie, part prayer, and part fervent wish: "Don't worry; it's going to be okay."

By talking with a victim, there is a chance words can help them hang on or get through the pain they are

suffering. As long as the subject is conscious and able to communicate with the speaker, they reduce the penalties from all Conditions and wounds by 1. This Stunt does not heal the target.

NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Willie slicked back his hair as the reporters hurriedly wrote down notes from his speech. Sometimes the best way to cover up a lie is with a more believable lie. They may not believe the Loch Ness Monster is really a race of aliens bent on enslaving humanity, but they will believe it's a poorly designed prom float if the story is compelling enough.

When attempting to cover up any evidence of alien involvement, the Mouth may reroll a failed attempt to lie or cover up the truth about what a witness saw.

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Mythology is full of examples of storytellers able to pull off incredible feats against impossible odds. Whether it is outtalking a dragon or trying to bluff their way past a gill-folk, the Mouth is able to use their gift of gab to perform almost mythic feats.

DREAD INSPIRING FIGHTING STYLE

The creature stopped its advance, curious about the strange boast of the human. "What is Tyrannosaurus Style?"

Alex the Dane raised her hands like tiny claws. "It's what they teach all of us back in Toledo. You heard of breaking boards with your bare hands? Try breaking skulls! One step closer, and down you'll go!"

Fear is an intimidating weapon, and can often make up for shortfalls in strategy, cunning, or even in brute force if the opponent becomes too afraid to act. By using this Stunt in combat, the opponent begins to second guess their attack and strikes last during the round this Stunt is used.

GOLDEN LIE

"Well, of course the car won't start. You've got a hole in the battery fluid filter." George fiddled with the engine, completely unsure of where to start. After a few minutes and some random tweaking with a wrench, the car roared to life. "See? Good as new!"

Sometimes the best lies we tell are to ourselves. By telling a lie and refusing to part from it, Mouths are able to offset the penalties applied to their dice pool for not possessing the proper Skills, gaining +2 dice to all related rolls due to their self-confidence.

I AM WHO I SAY I AM

Posing as a high-ranking colonel, Jameson watched the Supermind's minions salute as he made his way towards the central lab. His disguise was so good few questioned it, or even noticed his "uniform" was made from several lab coats he had modified in the storage closet.

When creating an alternate identity to fool others perceptions, the character is so skilled at hiding who they really are that they can craft disguises almost indistinguishable from the real thing. All successful dice in any roll to see through the character's disguise must be rerolled.

I WOULDN'T DO THAT (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"Sure, you could use your death ray. But by now you've noticed the crystal on that gun isn't quite as shiny as the ones you're used to. That's because I've got the actual core in my pocket and that one is just some cheap knockoff I got at the department store." It was a bold risk, but considering how he had seen that ray gun turn the officers to dust, what could Stantz lose by keeping the thing talking?

For each turn the speaker spends engaging the target through conversation, they are able to disable one alien power the target possesses. This Stunt lasts until the speaker fails their first Social roll.

SCIENTIST STUNTS

Scientists are the brains of the operation. Their Stunts allow them to enhance human technology and deepen the heroes' grasp of alien technology.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

Whether it's their memory for obscure trivia or capacity to think on the fly and come up with radical solutions, even the simplest of Scientist Stunts packs a punch.

MINOR ADJUSTMENTS

It had been a struggle, but Gene had finally convinced Brock to give up his rifle for reengineering. It had been almost impossible to convince him that perhaps his multiple PhDs in ballistics and the history of firearms made him more likely to get 'Betsy' shooting straight than stroking its barrel with an oily rag. Even as he set to work, Gene crooned soothingly to Brock as a Doctor might to a patient.

"Now Brock, I know you're attached to Betsy, but if you just let me replace that barrel with one a little longer, it'll be thirty-five percent more accurate."

Scientists can make the rest of the party stronger by augmenting their weaponry. When examining a weapon, Scientists with this Stunt can alter a weapon to remove 1 level of Complication from its attacks or penetrate 1 level of armor (not both). The process takes eight hours and must be conducted out of combat.

SURGICAL STRIKE

The frogman's rubbery skin seemed to bend around Brad's baseball bat as it broke for the door of the lab.

Bounding headlong past the racks of test tubes and centrifuges with superhuman speed, straight into Professor Armitrade's outstretched hand and what seemed to be the sharp end of a cocktail umbrella.

"It's simple, really," said the Professor, through a know-it-all grin, "If you want to incapacitate a Siren, you just have to strike the poison sac under their tongue pouch."

Scientists are more careful and discerning in their attacks. A Scientist with this Stunt can disable one of the target's alien powers upon a successful attack roll.

THIS REMINDS ME...

"Doc, is everything okay?"

Stu looked on in concern as Dr. Van Holden stared into the ruin that was the alien ship. It was no longer the brainchild of an unknowable intelligence, it was the complex weave of pipes and gears under the hood of her dad's car.

"It's fine, Stu" she replied, "it's just, I think I've got an idea."

The apparatus, device, cadaver, creature, etc. the character is investigating suddenly reminds them of something they saw in an old tech manual or surgery book from university, or perhaps even an old encounter from their childhood. The Director will impart

information on the object and its use, any strengths or weaknesses it might possess.

BANE BULLETS (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

After her encounter with the aliens, Professor Quinn set immediately to work. They shared key genetic traits with terrestrial sea life, it seemed. It stood to reason they would also share some of its inherent weaknesses.

This Scientist can take the time to create ammo that does special harm to a certain kind of alien. The process of modifying a character's rounds takes eight hours to complete, after which ranged attacks made by that character using this ammunition against the type of alien specified by the Scientist do +1 damage.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Some claim Scientists operate on a different wavelength. Their Stunts back up this claim, granting them the ability to see what others cannot, and speak in languages they've never heard before.

FORENSIC EYE

It seemed quite obvious to Doc Greenwood. The members of the Symposium had been taken from their yacht



by Sirens of Ness. Limited sign of struggle, weapons left behind, not discharged. All of the targets were scientists. The only question was: When should she break it to Tank? He seemed to enjoy fumbling around the deck of the ship looking for discarded candy wrappers as if it was some sort of evidence to the identity of the real masterminds behind the great undersea conspiracy. Presumably, he thought Captain Farquar of Farquar's Fudge was behind it all.

Scientists see more from the clues they find than just the obvious. A Scientist with this Stunt can identify, from their extensive knowledge, the kind of aliens involved in any incident they investigate. The Director should furnish them with an idea of how many were involved and the motive for the incident.

MAJOR ADJUSTMENTS

Tracy didn't need a PhD in Ballistics to know she could improve the aim on Brock's gun. But it damn sure made her better at it than those dime-a-dozen honors students.

Scientists can make the rest of the protagonists stronger by augmenting their weaponry. When examining a weapon, Scientists with this Stunt can alter a weapon to remove 2 levels of Complication from its attacks or penetrate 2 levels of armor (not both). The process takes eight hours and must be conducted out of combat. They can also apply "Minor Adjustments" to weapons during combat (takes two full turns).

SKILLED LINGUIST

The group listened to the impenetrable babble going on in the corridor outside through the radio device formerly held by the unconscious guard.

"Would you listen to that!? It sounds like they're being sick!" exclaimed Sergeant Cowie, almost turning up his nose at the incoherent and harsh noises.

"Keep it down, this may sound like a load of gurgles and screeches but it's actually a fairly rudimentary dialect" hissed Elaine, as she pulled the radio closer to her ear.

The Scientist with this Stunt has the distinction of being able to translate almost any language from brief exposure. After hearing or reading even small amounts of alien language, the Scientist will be able to translate text or speech made in that language.

PERSONAL TELEPORTER (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"Last one in the sub's a rotten egg!" called out Daisy, rushing away from the sighing form of Dr. Schmidt. He stroked his bald head and regarded his egg-like appearance in the mirror.

As Daisy rushed up the boarding ramp, she saw a bright light burst from the inside of the submarine, fading to reveal the doctor, swiveling lazily toward her on

his leather chair, a stoic frown on his lined features.

Scientists may not be the fittest or the strongest, but they can find a way around those deficiencies. After their encounter with an alien, those avenues of research become magnified in the quest for survival. With a personal teleporter, Scientists can teleport themselves and one target that they can touch up to 500 feet.

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Daring Stunts take Scientists into the world of the weird, as they experiment with their bodies and minds to become better than the aliens.

DISARM / REPURPOSE

The alien technology was fascinating. Perhaps what was most fascinating about it was its modular nature. While it, no doubt, made it simple to repair and maintain, it also made it very easy to repurpose to suit the needs of a smart saboteur.

When a trap or alien device is discovered by a Scientist with this Stunt, they can immediately disarm the trap. Alternatively, they can modify it to only trigger in the presence of an alien.

PSY OPS TRAINING

The Prelate stared at him with its deep black eyes, the humming of the golden, PsyEnhancement Crown it wore telling Professor Dupont that it was attempting to use its abilities to subvert his will. Well, he had a nasty surprise for the Prelate...

Scientists have the most advanced and disciplined minds in humanity. A Scientist with this Stunt can render herself immune to mind-controlling techniques by resisting it once with the special techniques she has developed. What's more, any alien attempting to mind control this character takes 2 damage immediately.

TOTAL CONVERSION

Rickard wasn't certain where the maker of the person that modified this weapon got their PhD, but he was pretty sure they should return it at once. What good was improving the accuracy if you didn't improve the stopping power?

The pinnacle of modification. Scientists can make the rest of the protagonists stronger by augmenting their weaponry. When examining a weapon, Scientists with this Stunt can alter it to remove 3 levels of Complication from its attacks or penetrate 3 levels of armor (not both). The process takes eight hours and must be conducted out of combat. Furthermore, weapons modified by them do +1 damage. They can also apply "Minor Adjustments" to weapons during combat (takes one full turn).

ENHANCEMENT (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Stumbling, open-mouthed, into his study, Dr. Armitrade fumbled at his dictaphone and, with trembling hands, pushed the record button. "Research Notes, 14th July. Genetic enhancement program continues apace. I think I have finally begun to replicate some of the aliens' own abilities, without compromising my own humanity. The applications of this technology could be limitless..."

Whichever alien Encountered the Scientist became the focus of her study for quite some time. Even as it watched her, she watched back, different from any human it had Encountered before. The Scientist has found a way to replicate some of its innate powers and may use them in the same way as the alien would. In addition, she may use alien tech and will show up to Spy type aliens as one of them if scanned or probed.

SURVIVOR STUNTS

Survivors are worldly and tough. Their endurance is reflected in the special Stunts they call their own.

SIMPLE (1 ADDITIONAL SUCCESS)

The Survivor knows how to use their sheer force of will to increase their intimidation factor and cause even creatures from beneath the oceans to recognize their ferocity.

DUMB ALIENS...

Grace snorted. "Thought these guys were supposed to be incredible super-geniuses with technology from beyond the bounds of our wildest imagination? And yet they're still dumb enough to leave behind the sort of clues that might as well be a big neon sign pointing right to their secret lair."

A Survivor has seen it all from humanity, the best and the worst. But sometimes these supposedly dangerous aliens just disappoint her. When investigating a scene for clues, the Survivor with this Stunt finds their methods so familiar and even simplistic that it gives her party confidence. Add 1 Rewrite to the Writers Pool.

STEP IN

The Gargantuan Squid wrapped its tentacles around Officer Carberry, lifting him from the floor and causing his donut and cup of coffee to fall out of his chubby fingers and on to the ground. As onlookers fled and screamed in terror, Frank put down his mug and stepped forward. "Why don't you pick on someone your own size? Too big for that, huh? Then why don't you try to pick on me?"

The sense of duty to the punk kids, naive scientists, and everyday Joes in the Survivor's company makes them willing to step in and take the flak for the team. A Sur-

vivor character with this Stunt who makes a successful Stamina roll can add 1 automatic success to another party member's Stamina roll within 10 feet of them as she steps in to shield them from harm.

YOU'RE NEXT

Officer Stuart's revolver barked out a single shot with a thunderous report, flooring the alien in its path. Before the creatures could blink their black eyes, he swiveled the barrel on the next one in line. "Feeling brave, big mouth?"

The Survivor is cool under pressure and her self-assuredness inspires fear in enemies as much as it instills confidence in her allies. With this Stunt, a Survivor who succeeds in an attack roll can instantly turn to another enemy who can see, hear, or otherwise detect her and threaten them. Doubt and fear wracks the alien's mind and forces them to miss their next turn in the encounter.

TELEKINETIC SHOT (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"Tarnation!" roared Angeline as the alien ducked behind the metal desk again and another salvo from her pistol plinked harmlessly from its surface. She closed her eyes and fired again, allowing herself to become the bullet, bending it around the cover and finding her mark.

Some Survivors spend endless hours on the practice range with their guns, honing their aim. After Encountering the aliens, Survivors with this Stunt gain the ability to become their bullets with enough concentration, causing their shots to ignore cover or, if the target is not in cover, do an extra point of damage through sheer, unerring accuracy.

FLASHY (2 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

The Survivor can even make a tactical retreat look heroic and never lacks a plan for a successful counterattack.

ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY

There they were, a heavily guarded barricade in front of them and certain capture behind. The heroes steeled themselves and grasped their weapons tightly. Carlos took a deep breath and prepared to lunge forward.

Just then, Bertha opened the air vent to their left, smiling at the group as she did.

When you're in a tight spot, you need a Survivor in your midst. If a Survivor can't fight their way through, they'll find a way out when all seems hopeless. With this Stunt, the Survivor always finds an additional avenue to circumvent a guard station, escape imprisonment, or slip into hiding when capture seems certain.

FIGHTING RETREAT

"Everybody out, NOW!" Peter turned back as the others rushed out of the newly opened hole in the wall. The creatures were following them. Backing through the hole, he fired blindly into the smoke.

The Survivor sees herself as the last line of defense for the party. When making an Athletics roll, Survivors with this Stunt may simultaneously make a normal attack while moving at their full speed with no additional difficulty or complications due to the movement.

SNAP OUT OF IT!

"It's no use Ted, you're going to have to leave me..." hissed Dr. Truman, slumping back listlessly against the wall, succumbing to the poison of the Siren.

A mighty slap rang out through the room, shocking even the evil Frogmen, as Bill's hand knocked the life back into his friend's torpid limbs. She heard him yell at her over the blast of his shotgun.

"Pull yourself together, Doc!"

There's no quit in a Survivor and they'll be damned if they let any of their party succumb to the aliens' attacks. A Survivor with this Stunt can remove any Combat Conditions placed upon one other protagonist within touching distance. They may still take another normal action during the turn.

ENHANCED REFLEXES (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

"Foolish human! You must choose, your lover or your only hope of stopping the Armies of Brainbox!"

Tank hesitated, his pistol wavering between the two identical automatons. Betsy cried in the clutches of one and Agent Barton regarded him with wide-eyed fear in the metal talons of the other. The pistol moved, faster and faster, left, right, left, right, bang! Bang!

Those tinmen didn't know who they were dealing with.

Something about this character's Encounter with the aliens left her in possession of highly enhanced reflexes. When rolling initiative, if this Survivor scores 2 or more higher than the aliens, she may take two actions per turn instead of one. These actions include Stunts which can normally only be performed once per turn.

DARING (3 ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES)

Sometimes, a Survivor is capable of acts rivaling alien ability, whether shrugging off harm as if it was nothing, or rousing a crowd of defeated humans to fight again.

DOESN'T WORK ON ME

The hissing of the alien's poison sac could be heard as it wheezed out a cloud of noxious gas. The crew of the ship reeled back and gagged as the toxic fumes filled their lungs. Only Frankie strode confidently forward through the sickly, green haze, jamming her pistol right into its mouth.

"I got a metal mint for that breath right here."

Simple, yet incredibly powerful, this Stunt allows a Survivor, once exposed to an attack from an alien that

usually imposes a Combat Condition, to ignore the effects of that particular attack not only in the moment, but for the remainder of the story.

INSPIRATIONAL STORYTELLER

"When I was a kid, my Momma told me to always be a good guy. She said that one day, when she couldn't look after me no more, I would have to look after her. That maybe my old man wouldn't be around no more to fight in her corner and it'd be up to me to do right by her. Well she's dead now and so's my old Pop. But, by God, that don't mean I stop bein' the good guy. I gotta look out for YOUR Mommas now. I gotta get you back home to them. And I am gonna do that, no matter what."

They may come across as world weary at times, but the Survivors have seen things that give them an inspirational spirit. They can speak of surviving horrors that would break the minds of weaker people. Their recounting of those tales inspires the party to push on. This Stunt adds 3 Rewrites to the Writers Pool.

SUPERIOR SPOTTER

Holding out his hand, Frank stopped the group in its tracks. He pulled a piece of chalk from his pocket and drew a large circle around one of the floor tiles in front of them.

"You know, once you get right down to it, all the corridors on these alien ships look alike. Apart from this one right here, there's something weird about that tile..."

Survivors quickly become the masters of whatever beat they walk. Once a Survivor with this Stunt identifies a trap in an area, they immediately and automatically notice any other traps they come across within the same area type, such as an alien ship, base, F.I.S.H. Headquarters, or local park.

PHASE OUT (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

It was a dead end! Robert spun around only to be faced with the barrels of the alien weapons, leveled against him by a firing squad of black-eyed Prefects that had assembled to pursue him. He closed his eyes and... their shots passed through him. Laughing, he waved goodbye to his would-be captors and stepped back, phasing through the bulkhead.

The weird energies to which this character was exposed during their encounter gave them the ability to push their body out of phase in times of need. The character can trigger this when attacked or with a Stamina roll if simply trying to pass through a locked or sealed door or wall. While phased out, the character is immune to physical damage of any kind but also cannot attack or physically interact with their surroundings, appearing only as a blurry, flickering version of themselves.

CINEMATICS AND HOW THEY WORK

"You 'come in peace' with spears!"
Woman of Goona, *The Wild Women of Wongo*

They Came from Beneath the Sea! is a collaborative enterprise between the Director and the players, with a great deal of give and take built into the foundations of the enterprise. Cinematics are one of those drama-enhancing mechanics: a method by which the players, using the power of the Writers Pool, can change the direction of the narrative.

The Writers Pool is a shared resource filled by failed and botched rolls with *Rewrites*, the narrative fuel used to activate *Cinematics*. Cinematics allow the players to manipulate the framework of the script and assume a decision-making role in the game's overall storyline, in a collaborative and creative fashion. Asking for another take, calling for the stuntman, inserting an originally unscripted subplot, all of these and more are potential options as far as Cinematics are concerned. The goal of Cinematics is not to set up an antagonistic relationship between the Director and the players but rather to allow the players to engage in creative redirection of the action for the enjoyment of all — after all, just because you're making playing a game about rubber-suited monsters from beneath the sea, that doesn't mean it has to be a Z-grade production, now does it?

To follow, you'll find a selection of sample Cinematics. Directors and players are strongly encouraged — nay, *required* in the name of *utmost drama* — to discuss and develop their own Cinematics to suit the individual needs of their productions.

Importantly, as with Stunts, Cinematics work best when triggered quickly. Leafing through the book for the appropriate Cinematic is a good way to kill excitement. Cinematics are therefore available as cards with their associated Rewrite cost numbered on them, but can also be noted on paper. The group should choose five Cinematics they would like to see in a session. These can either be chosen in secret or as a communal exercise. The Cinematics cards then sit in the center of the play area as a reminder that the *Rewrites* in the Writers Pool can be used to

pay for one of these Cinematics at any time. Once used, that Cinematic comes off the table until the next session. By presenting Cinematics in a visible manner, they see use more than when locked up in a book.

ALLY OF CONVENIENCE (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

There could be no doubt about it, this had been a bad day for Joey. Stuck behind the ominously thrumming, glowing, electrified bars in this alien prison was certainly not what he had in mind when he pulled on his finest leather jacket earlier in the evening. He was supposed to be at the Spring Break Dance, doing the twist with Tina. But he was here. He wished he'd never followed that damned Shark!

"The prisoner will stand back!" came a harsh cry from behind the sterile, gray surface of the only way in or out of the room, a pentagonal door which slid aside as creatures approached. Joey had learned the hard way to do what the voices said. He rose and shuffled back from the bars to the rear of his cage and winced as the bright white light of the corridor filled the neon-colored gloom in which he had previously sat.

Enter the Shark. Was it grinning at him? Hard to tell, those things were all mouth. But... wait... it was unlocking the cell.

"Hey now, let's not do anything hasty..." started Joey, but a sharp outburst from the alien silenced him.

"Come now human, it is not safe for you here."

Cost: 1 Rewrite

In any great storyline, there's always got to be a chink in the alien armor. Sometimes the best chink is where they let a little bit of humanity through their façade. Any player whose character has the Encountered status can choose to be the catalyst



THE CINEMATIC PARADIGM

Cinematics, Quips, and Directorial Control are rare features in roleplaying games, as they allow players to take on narrative influence over the game. Such powers enable characters to avoid death, change the context of a scene, or simply erase an encounter. Use of these powers is therefore most fun when used collaboratively alongside the other players and the Director.

for this most devious of tropes. Using it, at a time of the player's choosing, they may use their unwitting alien ally to escape a particularly troublesome or perilous situation, open a door, undo a lock, operate an escape vehicle, or read a vital piece of text. Any situation can call for the narrative device that is the Ally of Convenience to don his rubber suit and step forward. Of course, once used, the ally should be quickly abandoned, subdued by the heroes or terminated by its more stoic counterparts.

Allies can take on numerous forms and Directors are encouraged to use their imagination. However, below are some suggestions as to types of allies that can be fitted in.

THE HUMANIST

Perhaps the alien had been studying humans long enough to feel a certain sympathy for them, perhaps it regards its slaves as prized pets and dotes on them. During the encounter, the Everyman may have seen past their differences of species and saved its life. Whatever the reason, this alien has a soft spot for the human race and doesn't want to see them go under.

THE DUPE

Lured by the strange, humanly wiles of our heroes, promised some sort of promotion for heroic valor, or tricked into thinking it could gain some vital information, technology, or even just pleasure, the Dupe is not the brightest alien in the deep. Falling into a trap the players have planned for it, thus allowing them to make a daring escape or to snatch its weapon and force vital information from its clenched jaws.

THE BUREAUCRAT

Some aliens are just sticklers for the rules and regulations. *"Those humans cannot be held in that cell without holding permit JC-24 being lodged in the archive at least one hour after imprisonment commences. Guess they'll just have to be released. I don't make the rules; I just follow 'em."*

THE REDEEMED

A human possessed or controlled by the aliens may, at the vital moment, rediscover their humanity long enough to turn

the tide in the favor of our heroes. Grabbing at the keys to the cell and blasting the guard with his own gun, telling the party the direction to the nearest launch bay and the codes to start the vessels, or simply refusing to pull the trigger and shoot the woman who was to be his wife.

BAD DUBBING

The doctor peered over the lip of the railing surrounding the balcony. He could make out several shapes below, conversing openly. They chattered and barked in that bizarre language of theirs.

"Do you understand any of it?" asked Pete.

Doctor Spiegler waved his hands, motioning for silence. And that was what did it. The gestures. He might not be able to hear every word, but if he watched closely. That wave of the hand. The nod of the head. The look on those bizarre faces. It almost started to make sense to him. As if some hidden voice translated it all for him in the back of his mind. Put those grunts and gurgles together into something more substantial.

It was almost like they were subtitled or dubbed.

Smiling, the Doctor turned back towards the others, who looked at him expectantly. He was pleased not to disappoint.

"Well they keep pointing over there; I think that's where the prisoners are being held. And they gesture over there with the keystones for their ships; that must be the hangar. Which means that the third corridor leads to the command center. And that's where we need to go if we want to get a hold of the plans to their super weapon."

"You're a genius, doc!" hissed Pete through his pearly white teeth.

"Tell me that again after we all get out of here alive." replied Doctor Spiegler.

With an exchange of grim nods of assent, the group knew what it had to do. Those plans were coming back to the surface with them, no matter what."

Cost: 1 Rewrite

The languages of the aliens are the first line of defense



CINEMATIC STYLE

In the Chapter Nine we speak about directorial styles. As Director, you can restrict the available Cinematics to push for certain movie styles and choose to allow Cinematics to see repeat use instead of coming off the table when triggered.

As examples, if you want your story to feel like a Japanese-import monster movie, it makes sense for Bad Dubbing (p. XX) and Cheap Set (p. XX) to see repeat use. If your story is going to be a blockbuster action film, it makes sense for Summon the Stuntman (p. XX) to come out to play. Similarly, if you want your game to emulate a movie thought lost, and only now recovered in fragments and scratched reels, Deleted Scene (p. XX) and Scene Missing (p. XX) should appear more than once.

Play around with the way you restrict and allow Cinematics, and how you reward players for using them at key moments in the game.



against discovery by the humans. If their words can't be deciphered, it's impossible to know their plans. Of course, that doesn't bode well for our audience, does it? That's why we've hired a team of the finest voice actors small amounts of money can buy to dub over the click, clack, cluck of the alien speech with something a little closer to home.

Players with this Cinematic can activate it at an opportune time and the Director will then dub over the alien conversation in English for their benefit.

IMPORTANT EXPOSITION

The player triggering this Cinematic can rest assured that whenever they utilize it, they will only be getting top-quality exposition of the plot, expounded upon for the benefit of the audience. I mean, why on Earth would we waste good money on this production just to bring the aliens discussing how many humans they had for breakfast this morning? Those VAs don't come as cheaply as we would like, and Directors should only use them to explore vital areas of the plot.

PLAYING ALONG

You know your character can't hear what was said, I know your character can't hear what was said and you can be damn sure the *Director* knows your character can't hear what was said.

And that means you need to play along. Sure, feel free to use the knowledge you gained, but you have to find a way to explain it off, just like Doc Spiegler in "Lair of the Crab Men." Convincing and hilarious explanations should be rewarded with 1 Experience point.

ALTERNATIVE USE: POST-CUT DUBS

Alternatively, players can choose to alter a line of dialogue in a scene. Of course, if all of the extras we have playing aliens (or sometimes the stars themselves) could remember their damned lines that wouldn't be a problem. Of course, he was supposed to tell you the hidden door was behind the statue of the Ninth Prelate. Oh, and I'm sure you meant to say the right answer to the question in scene four. Don't worry, we'll get it dubbed out in edits.

ALTERNATIVE USE: REDO WITH BETTER ACTORS!

If the supporting characters are lacking in a certain *je ne sais quoi* when it comes to delivering their lines, why not let the stars take over and deliver those lines for them? The players take control of the dialogue between two or more supporting characters of their choosing and dub in what was supposed to have been said during one scene.

CALL THE UNDERSTUDY

"I'm out of bullets, Prof. What about you?" Susan whispered her words as the two sat, cowering behind the counter.

"Me too. But there may be another way past them..." The Professor's voice turned gravelly as he peered around the corner, taking in the two humanoid crab creatures with his beady eyes. His hand moved slowly toward the frying pan on the counter top and clasped around the handle.

"But your injuries! You can't possibly swing that thing!" Susan shook her head as the Professor stood up, frying pan in one hand, the other one held out and upwards in a gesture of surrender.

"We mean you no harm. There's been some mistake. Please, for the sake of all our offspring, let us part ways in peace. Do not make me use this." He nodded toward the frying pan. The crab-folk chittered and squeaked nervously in response.

"What are you doing?" Susan's hushed voice emerged from behind the counter as she tried to make sense of the Professor's actions. He'd never been a gifted negotiator before now, and certainly had no affinity for hand-to-hand combat.

Amazingly, the speckle-shelled backed up and departed the kitchen, leaving the scientist and his bodyguard alone.

"How did you do it?" Susan pulled herself to her feet. "I've never seen you persuade anyone of anything."

The Professor smiled, placing the frying pan back on the worktop. "I'm not sure... I felt as if possessed of a youthful strength and capable of making those crustaceans think a frying pan was a deadly weapon. It worked though, didn't it?"

Cost: 2 Rewrites

This Cinematic lets a player replace their character with an understudy for the duration of a scene. Understudies have their own training and skills, making them capable in different ways than their actors. Sometimes that shows, and sometimes those different skills are sought.

A player can use Call the Understudy at any point during a scene, from which point the understudy portrays her character until the scene ends. The player can then rearrange the character's Skills as she sees fit.

The player cannot rearrange the Skills within a given scene more than once, though a different understudy in another scene may allow for a rearranging of different Skills.

An understudy-played character cannot have the spotlight, and if a camera is pictured in-mind, it can never focus on the replaced character.

Understudies can enter combat, but they aren't paid enough to do anything really dangerous. Any time an understudy suffers damage, the actual actor shows up unharmed but probably sporting a bandage.

CHEAP SET

"The ooze is creeping toward us, and the door is on the other side of it!" Agent Faulkner pointed out the obvious as he and BC

were increasingly cut off from the rest of their group. Even with his strong, athletic legs, he wasn't going to be able to vault the growing puddle of sludge.

"Break through the wall, you young fools!" Dr. White gestured at the wall behind them. Yes, the outside world was on the other side of it, but it was likely reinforced and not just made from thin, wooden planks. Still, it was worth a chance.

"Stand back, BC!" Faulkner backed up a little, stepping a little too close to the puddle and its reaching tendrils, before shoulder-charging the wall and smashing straight through into the front yard.

"Freedom!" BC yelled, jumping through the Faulkner-shaped hole in the wall. They really don't make houses like they used to.

Cost: 1 Rewrite

A player with this Cinematic can call upon an object or set piece to break or fail. A character might crash through a wall, pull a door off the hinges, shatter a car window, or bend metal bars with ease. Alternatively, the player might target a device in the hands of another character and cause a raygun to misfire, a doomsday device to shut down, or for an extra to bust into the room at a crucial moment.

Though the player activating this Cinematic needs their character present for its use, it can effect any character in the scene, whether ally or enemy. Once the effect takes place, anyone can break the object or make use of its fragility as an Enhancement. The Director can add a Rewrite to the Writers Pool to declare an object or set piece *not* to be cheap, rendering it immune to this Cinematic. If the Director does this in response to the player using Cheap Set, she must add two Rewrites to the Pool.

DELETED SCENE

Director: We left this scene on the cutting room floor for the sake of brevity, you see? Directors, producers, editors all have to make hard cuts on their movies, even to scenes they love or might be vital to the plot, because a studio wants you to shave five minutes here, or speed up the action there. Well, here for your viewing pleasure, for the first time ever, is the scene that explains how BC Rosberg ended up with an axe down his pants in the final act! We enter at the point the movie cuts this scene, where BC and Sheriff Rees are about to head away from the jail and to confront the possessed citizens of Denton...

"We'd best make a move if we're gonna rescue my deputies, Rosberg. Come on, let's go." Rees picked up his revolver, holstered it, and stepped over Karen's body as he made his way to the door, BC shortly behind him.

"Wait a sec there, Sheriff. I should arm myself with something too!" BC had stopped in his tracks to look around the station for something with which to arm himself.

"I'm all outta guns, boy! The deputies had 'em before the Dentonites overpowered them. We've gotta move now!" Rees marched through the door and climbed into his car.

BC took one last look around the sheriff's station before settling on a fire axe on the wall. "I guess this'll have to do."

Cost: 3 Rewrites

The player with this Cinematic can insert a Deleted Scene into the action. This Cinematic allows the character to add to a scene that has already happened, in order to introduce a new element, set up a future advantage, or provide Enhancements to an action. The player using this Cinematic must have had their character present in the scene they wish to expand, though their presence may be a weak one. For example, the scene might now include a phone call to the character, just as easily as it might involve their walking into the spotlight.

Deleted Scenes can go on as long as they need to or they can be as brief as a couple of lines of dialogue or description. The player should provide a bit of context as to why this scene wasn't included in the final cut, perhaps for time, maybe because their character behaved in an "out of character" way.

A character can do anything they wish within a Deleted Scene — unlock a door, steal a weapon, tip off a character about an impending ambush, even start a barfight or insult their father. The only thing the character *can't* do is anything that would make scenes that have taken place since the Deleted Scene invalid or nonsensical. For example, in the scene above BC picks up an axe because his player wants him armed in the final scene. However, if there's been a love scene in between then and the final scene, where BC was without his top layer of clothing, the Director should feel free to enquire where the axe was at that point. If no justification can be given, the Director should decide on how the continuity break occurs.

FAN FAVORITE

The Professor voice emerged through their radios. "Go now! I'll only slow you down. I'll stay behind to disarm the bo—"

The explosion was deafening and the sight of the bunker collapsing was enough to force Creme to tears. The Professor was gone, there was no doubt about that.

As Creme screamed and tried to reenter the burning building, Joycie tackled him to the ground and tried to soothe his upset friend. "It's too late, Creme! The old man's gone! He wouldn't want you losing your life too!"

Creme struggled in Joycie's thick arms. "No, you're wrong! We didn't see him get caught in the blast! He might have had time to escape!"

Joycie just shook his head as he cradled the weeping Creme, only a small part of him clinging to hope that his friend might be right, and the Professor did find a way out.

Cost: 2 Rewrites

Sometimes a character appears to die, but they're just too popular to let go. This Cinematic allows a player to do one of two things during a scene, but not both.

FAVORITE HERO

When a character goes through a Death Scene, the player can declare the character to be a Fan Favorite. The character's

Death Scene continues as normal, but the character can return during wrap-up of a chapter, or during the next story. If the character is to return, the last scene should include a reference to the character still being alive. The character could return from the grave due to a miracle of alien technology, or return with little explanation other than an alluded to "lucky break" that permitted their survival. Sometimes, such a character might even appear returned and stronger than ever.

Any characters who undergo Death Scenes and return in the same story can never have their Health drop lower than That'll Leave a Scar (see p. XX) until the next story begins.

FAVORITE VILLAIN

Players may nominate a villain or supporting character as a Fan Favorite. If they do so, that character must return in the next story, no matter their fate in the current one. Such a nomination means they might somehow survive being devoured by the gargantuan squid or somehow break free from the county jail.

The player can only use this Cinematic on a specific character. Doing so earns every player an immediate 2 Experience points..

KILL THE EXTRA

Well it came down to this. Everything they'd been through, hordes of squishy Squidmen lay strewn around the room, and now it seemed that Alice had brought a knife to a gunfight.

The alien gurgled a threat at her, its tentacled face wobbling in barely concealed glee at having the upper hand. Pointing the funneled end of its ray gun menacingly, right at the center of her chest. Alice had come too far to back down now. If they got away with this, the whole town would be dragged off within the month, and who knew what would follow. No, it was do or die time.

Alice yelled a war cry, like a valkyrie of legend. She charged forward, her blade gleaming in the light globes of the alien ship. Time seemed to slow down as she crossed the room in a swift bound matched only by the twitching of the alien's finger on the trigger.

She barely registered the movement out of the side of her eye before Angus hurled himself from out of nowhere. That kid, he'd always followed her around and she'd thought he was nothing but a stupid boy. And here he was, laying down his life for her.

The blast caught him full in the chest and there wasn't even dust to speak of as he vanished in a puff of foul-smelling smoke. Alice surged through the cloud that was once Angus, driving the knife into the alien's black heart.

As the black blood of the Squid gushed from the wound, Alice only had eyes for the rapidly dissipating smoke behind her. A tear rolled down her cheek as she realized what had just happened.

"Angus! NOOOOOOOO!"

Cost: 1 Rewrite

Even in the B-movie business, it pays to be the star. Stars know their worth and extras know their place. And their place, all too often, is in front of the stars, eating the killer shots.

Players who choose this Cinematic will start play with a supporting character attached to their own. A sidekick of sorts, who participates in their misadventures without being too closely involved with the party. However, should their character come into immediate danger of death, the star can activate their extra to take the hit.

Not only does this make sure that the star of the show is not written out too soon, but it also gives them the chance to enact a scene-stealing performance, swearing vengeance for the demise of their fallen comrade.

CONVENIENT APPEARANCE

Any attack that would otherwise kill this player's character outright can be absorbed by their extra and the extra should always be conveniently nearby to take it, even if they hadn't seemed to be present up until that moment.

MANIACAL LAUGHTER!

The death of the extra is always a cause of mirth to the alien menace. The character who shot the extra now spends a round of combat deploying the most evil of laughs or otherwise taunting the character saved by the extra's sacrifice.

NOOOOO!

Players who choose to miss their own turn in response to the extra's death to bellow a pain filled "Nooooo!" gain 1 extra Experience point for the scene. The best directors reward their stars for bringing emotional content to the production.

MARTYRDOM

The death of the extra adds a Rewrite to the Writers Pool for the scene as their death spurs them on and motivates them to complete their goal of saving mankind in the name of... that guy...

UNEXPECTED SURVIVOR?

If the extra somehow miraculously survives the experience of being cast in your production, this ability can, thereafter, be extended to *all* members of the party (still using the same extra). This remains, of course, at the discretion of the player who initially brought the extra on set.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR

"It was at that time Creme realized how much Joycie loved him. More than friends, more than warriors sharing the same



battlefield, and more than brothers: Creme knew Joycie loved him more than life itself.

“Susan was oblivious to it all. Ever since the Professor had been taken by Glowing People, her mind was only on one thing: saving the Prof. Perhaps it’s because she wasn’t so wrapped up in human emotional drama that she was able to spot the alien ship slowly rising to the surface before anyone else.”

Cost: 2 Rewrites

This Cinematic grants the player the ability to narrate exactly what’s going on in a scene, whether that entails an antagonist’s secret plot to betray the group, an upcoming disaster, or a secret escape route the characters aren’t yet aware of. It can also allow the narrator to get into the heads of characters in the scene, whether protagonists or antagonists, and narrate what they’re thinking. This power can be used to dictate a little of what happens next, such as in the example above, or simply set in motion some plots the player wants to see.

A more powerful version of Directorial Control (see p. XX), Omniscient Narrator allows a player to narrate what’s going on and importantly, *why* it’s happening. The player remains the Narrator for the remainder of this scene, with their character none-the-wiser as to their master’s power.

If the Director wants to change the narration, they must add three Rewriters to the Writers Pool, telling the narrator what needs to change in their last line. The Director can also add a single Rewrite to establish that the now-unreliable narrator is simply *wrong* about a detail, but doesn’t have to specify which one. This is useful for allowing the narrator to introduce “allies” that betray the characters later.

If the narrator’s character enters a Death Scene while they’re narrating, they get to play out the Death Scene as normal, but also get to dictate it from an omniscient perspective. The player should consider their character’s departing thoughts as they ascend (or perhaps plummet) to their given great beyond.

If a different player employs Directorial Control during a narrated scene, the narrator and the player assuming control need to come to agreement on what happens. If they come to an impasse, the Director must make a decision for them, but it’s best to let them come to a consensus.

Using this Cinematic to determine how other characters behave requires unanimous consent from the other players. Otherwise, the player is restricted to narrating their own character’s feelings and motivations.

REAR SCREEN PROJECTION

BC slammed his hand against the steering wheel and turned the key over and over. “Start, you pile of junk!” The tentacles slithered closer to the old jalopy as it rumbled and shook.

Faulkner gripped the axe he found behind the driver’s seat. “It looks like I’m going to be going out swinging...”

Dr. White shook his head, moaning. “You know they’ll keep coming, no matter how many tentacles you lop off! It won’t even slow them down!”

The car’s engine finally turned over and the three men let out a cheer. “We’re on our way!” cried BC, as the tires kicked up dust and the car sped away from the monster.

Cost: 1 Rewrite

Car chases and speeding down country lanes can be a hazardous pursuit, which is why Rear Screen Projection is an option for the more cautious player. With this Cinematic, a player can declare any trip in a car (or another conveyance that might conceivably have a rear-screen projection) to be “safe” — no matter their terrain, environment, and despite attacks from external monsters. The characters reach their destination unharmed, though the vehicle may be covered in scratches and dents, and require a new paint job. As an example, characters might take a speedboat along the coast while under bombardment from Brainbox’s modules. While they’ll survive unscathed, the battered vessel sinks immediately upon reaching their destination..

ALTERNATIVE USE: DRAMATIC EXPLOSION!

Another use for Rear Screen Projection is to escape an explosion. As long as characters run away from the rear screen as quickly as possible, and jump simultaneously as the bomb detonates or explosive-laden aquatepillar goes off, they all escape signed but unharmed. To jump in perfect unison, spend a Rewrite for every two characters affected (rounded down if an odd number of characters). This allows them to survive everything from a gas fire to a nuclear blast.

SCENE MISSING

“I rate our chances as slim to poor.” The Professor, ever the king of understatement, wiped his glasses on his coat as the goliath form of the gargantuan squid rose up from the depths ahead of his ship.

“You got us into this mess, damn you!” The irascible Dr. White primed his nuclear cannon, freshly liberated from a weapons research facility. He hadn’t wished to use it in anger, but now might be his only chance. “If you can’t do something useful, Professor, hide below deck!”

BC and Joycie looked at each other, the latter gripping his harpoon gun. “Damn it, we are not unleashing more nuclear hell on the world!”

“Wait!” The Professor shouted, placing his glasses back on his nose. I have a better idea...”

SCENE MISSING — APOLOGIES FROM THE STUDIO

“Well thank heavens we got out of that one.” Dr. White brushed singed calamari from his shoulders as he sat at the coastal bar, stirring his drink. “I’ve honestly never seen someone do that with a piece of fruit before.”

“Nor me.” responded Joycie. “And who knew the gargantuan squid would behave in such a peculiar way?”

The Professor shook his head. “Maybe we’ll never know.”

Cost: 3 Rewrites

Sometimes scenes, and occasionally entire reels go missing. Whether they're lost in a fire, cut out by a vengeful editor, or simply misplaced and turn up several decades later in some collector's archive, the missing scene is a vital part of the cinema legend.

When using the Scene Missing Cinematic, the player must announce "Scene missing — apologies from the studio," and quickly continue with the game, with the Director narrating the introduction to a new scene. The trick, however, is to create enough distance from the previous scene and never refer back to the content in the scene that's now disappeared.

A player with this Cinematic can use it to get out of whatever situation their character is currently in. The character and any other player-controlled characters in the scene cannot be harmed, killed, or otherwise made to suffer direct damage during the missing scene. The scene ends and the film resumes with the characters unhurt and in a new situation some time later. The Director can begin this new scene however they choose, but *cannot* place the characters in a certain-death kind of situation. Otherwise, the Director has full control over what happens between the missing scene and the next scene.

The Director can remove items or positive reputations, harm supporting cast members, allow villains or monsters to escape and fortify their position, and otherwise make the situation worse at the cost of having the characters escape their immediate problems. Using Scene Missing is a gamble, as it's almost guaranteed to introduce new problems or exacerbate existing ones.

It's encouraged that players and their characters do not discuss the events of the missing scene directly, though they can allude to them. They can discuss everything up to the point the scene cut out, but talking about how the miraculous escape happened should only come through rumor, innuendo, and side references.

SUMMON THE STUNTMAN

Dr. White ran as if his life depended on it, which it probably did. He cast aside his cane and sprinted down the length of the alien submarine while clutching the baby in his arms. He would not let the aliens take the girl away. He could not. He couldn't lose another child.

Crème observed the scientist run past, faster than he'd ever seen the old man move before. He didn't think it was possible, what with White's dodgy knees and arthritic hip, but there he went, saving the life as the rest of the crew held the rear guard. "God bless you, Dr. White." Crème unsheathed his dagger and lunged at the crawfish creature.

As Dr. White reached the conning tower, determined to scale it before the sub went down, he looked at the beautiful baby's face and his own crumpled into a sob. "Now don't you cry." Suddenly, his strength left him. He couldn't lift himself up the ladder and carry the baby. "Please, somebody help!"

Cost: 2 Rewrites

Humans aren't created equal. Some may be masterminds, others may be built like brick houses, but occasionally, the former need the brawn of the latter.

That's where stunt performers come in.

When a character is incapable of a physical task, a player might use Summon the Stuntman to make all physical rolls automatic successes (or grant five additional dice to physical rolls if the player wants to take their chances). The stuntman version of the characters can suffer horrific injury, with their health status reducing the number of dice available rather than increasing them (see Injuries on p. XX), but no wounds or damage transfer to the character. However, stunt performers only work for a short period of time, and the Director gets to choose when the character's replacement has pushed it too far and add a Rewrite to the pool when it's time to switch back.

Of note, stunt performers cannot *inflict* damage on important targets. A stunt performer can take out a roomful of extras, but if the Director determines that a fight with a particular enemy is too important to leave to a stunt performer, she can add a Rewrite to the Writers Pool to reserve a task the character must handle on their own.

If the character as a stunt performer provides any dialogue during a scene, this Cinematic ends. Summon the Stuntman does not allow for speech, unless Bad Dubbing is also in play.

TAKE TWO!

Susan and Anita-Jo stepped into the were-lobster's command module, sneaking past his guards and approaching the carapaced creature in his opulent chair without him spotting them. Severa; lights blinked on and off on the commander's control panel, most switches and dials especially crafted to fit only his over-sized pincers.

Anita-Jo levelled her sub-machine gun at the back of the were-lobsters head. "Freeze right there, Herr Blankmann. That's right, we know your human identity. You're going to release all your prisoners right now, and provide us the cure for your shapeshifting poison! We have the advantage!"

A dry chuckle emerged from the lobster's small mouth as it slowly turned around in its chair. Strapped to its chest were strapped ten sticks of explosive. "It is I who have the advantage, human scum!"

The were-lobster pressed his pincer on the explosive, and—

TAKE TWO

Susan and Anita-Jo crept into the command module, sneaking past the were-lobster guards and approaching the armored creature in his control throne. He hadn't spotted them. Lights of red and green blinked on ship's computer, over-sized switches and dials molded into the panel for the were-lobster commander to use comfortably with his pincers.

Anita-Jo levelled her sub-machine gun at the back of the were-lobster's head and fired.

"That solves that problem. Now, which of these buttons releases the prisoners?"

Cost: 2 Rewrites

With this Cinematic, a player can require a scene be played twice, with potentially different outcomes each time.

At any point during a scene, a player can purchase this Cinematic and call “Take Two!”, at which point the Director restarts the current scene. If a new scene has begun, the character cannot ask for a second take of a previous scene. For that kind of power, use the Deleted Scene Cinematic (see p. XX).

The player can decide at any point during a scene that they will ask for a second take, but it is polite to check with the other players whether a Take Two! is desirable. The Director should take note of the rough beats of the scene so they can note where the scenes diverge. When the scene has been played out — twice — the players get to decide (by vote, mutual agreement, or with the Director breaking a tie) which take is used in the final cut.

In a second take, the characters can take entirely different actions, allowing the players to improvise a bit. The scene starts out the same way — same set, same marks, same initial dialogue — and the underlying assumptions of the scene are still true. For example, in the confrontation depicted above, the characters wish to rescue prisoners from the were-lobsters, and secondarily want a cure to the purported lobster shapeshifting disease, but in the first take, Herr Blankmann sabotages their attempt. In the second take, Susan and Anita-Jo eliminate Herr Blankmann before he can detonate his bomb, but still have the same core objective.

Of note, if there are sufficient Rewrites in the Writers Pool, players can choose to use a Take Three!, Take Four!, and so on, but doing so must be at the agreement of the rest of the players.

‘T’WAS BEAUTY DID SOMETHING TO THE BEAST

Something was wrong with the creature.

At first, Dr. Rideout thought it might be the result of some sort of mechanical issue with the creature’s containment cell but, in the end, that did not appear to be the case. He tested the physical parameters of the creature’s habitat himself, with the assistance of Dr. Delamere-Leng, who also volunteered to test both water and blood samples for any trace pathogens that could explain the creature’s sudden and dramatic decline.

And, indeed, its decline was visibly noticeable. No more did it dart restlessly about its enclosure, the scales adorning its upper body and long, muscular tail catching the laboratory lights. No longer did it flare its fins around itself, eyes filled with alien intelligence flashing about, observing the team as they observed it. Both scales and fins were noticeably less lustrous, taking on a slaty, gray-toned cast, eyes dulled and downcast. Even its natural bioluminescence was dimmed. Now it spent the majority of its “waking” hours curled amid the rocky substrate, moving barely, before crawling back into its cave-like “sleeping” alcove. Neurology insisted it didn’t sleep as humans understood the concept, but instead cycled through greater and lesser periods of cognitive arousal based on both internal and external stimuli and, in their estimation, the creature’s periods of heightened function had dropped off alarmingly. It ate, but desultorily. It responded to the assorted stimulation devices



they attached to both the tank and its person, but only because they could not be ignored.

“Well?” Rideout asked as his colleague entered the laboratory, a folder at least an inch thick tucked under one arm.

“Nothing.” Dr. Delamere-Leng replied. “Or, at the very least, nothing that could account for such a severe physiological and neurological downturn.”

“Not good.” Rideout flipped open the folder and scanned the assessment summary. “Damn it all. If this thing dies on our watch — what could possibly be wrong with it?!”

Delamere-Leng crossed the lab and crouched down next to the enclosure, putting himself roughly at a level with the creature. “Arthur, did you have any pets as a child?”

“No.” Dr. Rideout replied, irked. “What does that have to do with—”

“What if we’re not looking at a physiological ailment but an emotional one?” Dr. Delamere-Leng replied. “We know it has humanlike neurological function.”

“Humanlike but not human, Meredith. We don’t even know if these things have emotions as we comprehend the term.” Dr. Rideout threw up his hands. “We—”

“When, precisely, did you first begin observing the creature’s changes in physiology and behavior?” Dr. Delamere-Leng asked.

“A little under three weeks ago.” Dr. Rideout replied shortly.

“Four weeks ago the duty rotation changed.” Dr. Delamere-Leng observed. “The entire military staff turned over.”

“Your point, Doctor?”

“My point, Arthur, is that once you eliminate the probable, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, is likely the truth.” Dr. Delamere-Leng looked up at him. “The creature is pining for something. Or someone.”

Cost: 1 Rewrite

It’s a tale as old as time: human meets fish-person and, contrary to all reason, substantial differences in physiology, difficulties in engaging in any form of verbal communication, or stated intent with regards to conquering the surface world, these two disparate beings fall in love. Of course, nothing about this will ever go smoothly — true love never does, and when has that ever stopped anyone?

Players with this Cinematic can activate it to initiate a romantic plot or subplot that, with the connivance of the Director, could alter the entire complexion of the conflict going forward. Or it might not. That depends on the motivations of the characters involved.

INTERSPECIES ROMANCE

The player triggering this cinematic gets exactly what it says on the tin: a romance arc with a member of one of the invader species. This can be arranged in a multitude of ways to advance or retard aspects of the plot: putting a more “human” face on the invaders and allowing a deeper interrogation of their cultures and their motivations, for example, or to engage in a nonhostile form of first contact with a species not yet encountered. In any

case, be certain what you’re getting into and always wear appropriate protection.

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

The player triggering this Cinematic has invoked the most ancient and potent of romantic plots: that of the lovers tragically doomed to be kept apart by the tidal forces clawing at their lives and the plot. Enjoy your romance while it lasts, because it will end in tears, recriminations, quite possibly more than one corpse, and a mournful soliloquy about beauty’s reasonably standard effects on beasts, though who that might be is fully open to dramatic interpretation.

ALTERNATIVE USE: I COME IN PEACE

Alternatively, one of the principles involved here can be a legitimate defector from their cause or species, not merely a love-sick idiot, and they may consequently have valuable information for the war effort as well as a strikingly lovely scale pattern, and teeth that aren’t that terrifying once you get used to them.

YOU DROPPED THIS (ENCOUNTERED CHARACTERS ONLY)

Why did her father insist on Gertrude wearing this blasted nightgown? Sure, the practicalities of crawling after some kind of glowing man weren’t a top consideration when selecting a negligee, but this thing was ridiculous. All frills and lace. She found even sliding over the wet lawn to be like crawling through treacle as the blades of grass pinched and grasped at her ostentatious neckline, threatening to expose her, to the aliens or to anyone who happened to be perched in one of the trees that loomed overhead.

Thankfully for her, the glowing man, well, glowed. It was, obviously strange, but it made the creature remarkably easy to follow in the dark. She wondered how she could be the only one to have spotted it, but everyone else seemed to be sound asleep. Even Wolfie lay on his back, legs thrown farcically in the air, drool dangling merrily from his fanged, snoring maw. Nobody stirred except for Gertrude. And that seemed to give the alien assuredness. It seemed unconcerned that anyone might be following it, least of all Gertrude Taylor, crawling through the wet grass with her thick glasses fogging up from the early morning dew.

Gertrude wiped her lenses clear just in time to see the glowing man raise his arm and point a device out toward the sky. Pressing one button caused the star-shaped vessel to appear. Pressing another lowered the boarding ramp. The device hummed and glowed green as he clambered up the silvery staircase that descended from the craft.

SQUEEEEEAK

Wolfie’s cartoon dog chew-toy glared with guilty eyes from the ground at Gertrude as she shifted her weight forward. She only had eyes for the alien as it spun with a face reminiscent of the squeaking fox that had announced her presence so abruptly. Its eyes wide in fear and shock, the alien fumbled at its device and dropped it to the floor as it fled, startled, onto its vessel, taking off even before

the ramp had fully pulled up. It seemed the Glowing Man was even more scared of her than she was of him.

Cost: 2 Rewrites

Alien technology can be a tough nut to crack. However, in the hands of a character with this Cinematic, it's just another plot device. Encountered characters can, in the course of their Encounter, witness the use of alien technology or even acquire a piece of it. Sometimes these objects' true use is initially unknown to the character, but the player will know what it does and when it can conveniently be used in the nick of time to deliver swift justice to the aliens or save the day for the party.

Players who choose this power gain an alien artifact either at start of play or over the course of play and will always, very conveniently, be furnished with the exact knowledge they need to utilize it. Perhaps the encounter itself imbues the character with the special alien energy needed to fire their weapons or activate their devices.

Examples of alien tech to be found include:

RAY GUNS!

No cinematic masterpiece would be complete without the sight of our hero, turning the deadly alien heat ray upon those who have wreaked so much terror with those infernal devices. Alien weapons appropriated by the character should have limited-use capacity but will always do significantly more damage

than human weaponry. Now, load up and watch the blubber burn!

CODEBREAKERS

Devices that allow this character to open the usually secured doors in the secret undersea bases of the aliens, or to access their hidden ship, cloaked in a nearby cove from view. It will be vital to the party that this character is protected, as without them, they could all be trapped.

TRANSLATORS

What!? You mean you don't speak the foul tongue of the Crab People? Well fear not, for by using the device the aliens use to communicate with us, now you can! Just hold that megaphone up to your mouth and start barking orders in Crabbish with the best of them!

HOLOFIELDS

If you were wondering how those damned monstrosities were passing for human at the local bar, you've got your answer. With this holofield, two can play at that game! A character armed with one of these can alter their appearance to not only look like one of the aliens, but perhaps an enterprising character may be able to replicate the appearance of a specific alien, one senior enough in rank to access areas of their base off limits to the standard alien fare.

THE ART OF THE QUIP

"It's not just what words you say it's when you say them and how you say them Also what words you say I've said before you can take away my armaments. You can take away my freedom. You can take away this neat hook thing I use. But nothing can touch my quips. Nothing"

— Clain Hoake, veteran canner, troubleshooter, and quipper

There is no handier weapon at the monster or alien fighter's disposal than the Quip. Also a gun. And a ray, some kind of ray. Plus speed, agility. Hiding is good, if you hide from something, so you can organize later, maybe regroup. Punching, also handy.

But Quips, they are something special, because all they take is some presence, some wit, some wherewithal, and a little bit of imagination. And, before a wave of slime can engulf, before a razor-toothed mouth snaps, or a clutch of allies panic, those words are out of your mouth and no one or no thing can ever put them back. It's often believed a Quip turned the tide for the Scots at Stirling Bridge, though its actual words are lost to history.

QUIP MECHANICS

There are six decks of Quips in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, from which you will be drawing your character's pithy one-liners. If you don't own the official decks, that's fine. Appendix One (p. XX) lists each deck's contents so you can create your own.

VOWS, DEFIANCE, AND TOUGH TALK

These are the Quips that express your steadfastness, dedication, or resolve. They can boost those around you, but they can also boost you. Often, it's a show of grim determination, a pledge of alliance, or a vow to not give in to fear. These are the Quips we all need from time to time.

QUIP YOUR GRIPING

Quips aren't always about cocky bravado or quick cleverness. They can also express displeasure, a bit of wiseass attitude, often jaded, towards how things are progressing, perhaps even as a criticism of their fellows. This is especially true of hardened veterans who are just not happy with things, the newbie who's been thrown into more than they bargained for, or the hotshot who wants some action, pronto. These can be sneered, bitten off, and spit out or dropped like that sour note no one wants to hear. Sarcasm often works nicely here.

AND BEFORE YOU PULL THAT SWITCH

There will come a time in fighting thaumocs that you are just about to deliver something of consequence. It might be as

small as a single punch that carries symbolic weight. Or perhaps an attack that could have great impact, an escape that could turn things around, sometimes a jump from a high place. Often times it means throwing a switch, pushing a button, or pulling a lever that could have devastating effect.

It is practically a prewritten rule that this be punctuated by something pithy and punchy, usually just beforehand. This Quip carries perhaps less weight than the others. It's just *so* satisfying...

PLEASE ENJOY THIS GREAT PORTENT

Nothing freezes a room full of brass or lab coats like an ominous ton of bricks plopped in their midst by a mere twist of tongue. It reverberates in the air like aftershock, earning the respect and admiration of any doubters, but also as a wakeup call, a rally to go and kick some alien ass.

No matter what your role in the battle against Things from the Sea, your true mettle is shown when you utter a portentous foreshadowing. Often, it can be an ultimatum. Sometimes... it's an ultimatum to yourself...

These can be perceived as being negative but often it's a harsh truth that must be faced. A reality check of sorts. As if to say: This is it. Now or never. We have to buckle down or we are done for. In this way, it somewhat overlaps the Vow. But it can also be a grave and heroic pronouncement after a perceived victory, even a minor one.

WHY SO GLIB?

Glibness is crucial to a large portion of well-delivered Quips. It is the humorous heart of the snappy remark. Nothing raises morale in the face of a scaly goggle-eyed horror from the deep more than a brash display of amusement.

Of course, people on screen have been laughing at danger since the days of Errol Flynn and, before him, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. (most effectively recreated in *The Princess Bride*).

It can be that devilish rejoinder against all odds as a slimy dripping appendage closes in on your face. Or, most popularly, the triumphant punctuation just prior to pressing that button or pulling that switch or whatever the coup de grâce may be that dispatches one or more horrifying aquatepillars. Again, under-



statement is key. It implies confidence, coolness, lack of effort. It says, despite your exertion, despite the grueling effort it took to get here, the rising fear you constantly tamp down like so much mud... please accept this wisecrack...

THE FLIRTATION

Finally, nothing spices up a growing attraction or old movie chemistry like a playful Quip. A string of these can become the light verbal fencing that takes place even in the midst of conjuring the necessary science to battle aquatic nightmares. Slight smirks are welcome.

DRAW YOUR QUIPS!

You start a session with three Quips, with two drawn from the decks specified, and the third from any deck of your choice:

The **Everyman** draws one Quip from *Why So Glib?*, and one Quip from *Quip Your Gripping*.

The **G-Man** draws one Quip from *And Before You Pull that Switch* and one Quip from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*.

The **Mouth** draws one Quip from *Why So Glib?* and one Quip from *The Flirtation*.

The **Scientist** draws one Quip from *Please Enjoy This Great Portent* and one Quip from *And Before You Pull that Switch*.

The **Survivor** draws two Quips from *Vows, Defiance, and Tough Talk*.

New players may wish to choose Quips from their respective selections, while experienced players may opt for a random choice, or leave it to the Director to assign Quips.

If a player chooses to have their character utter a Quip in-game, that player must let the other players and Director know after the Quip is made and look to them for consensus that it was an appropriate (or at least amusing) use of the Quip. The group performs a quick vote, with a tie or victory for the Quip granting the quipper one additional die on the roll associated with the Quip, or the next roll following the Quip.

After using a Quip, the player can choose to discard the Quip and draw a new one from any selection, or keep it and use it again at a later point. If successful on a later use, the quipper gains three additional dice. This chain of success can continue up to five additional dice for the same Quip used five times in one session.

At the start of each new session, the number of additional dice resets, along with the Quips.

AWARD WINNERS

When a character belts out a Quip, the player rolls the dice, and rolls at least three successes, the Quip is considered Award



SPEND YOUR QUIPS WISELY

Remember! The Quip is the outside you want to portray. Wear it proudly but use it wisely. Above all, be creative. Inspire yourself to new heights of quipdom. Quips can startle. Why not be startlingly original? With Director approval, make your character's third, random Quip one of your own design!

Winning. This is the scene from the movie that will be played as a preview clip at the award ceremonies, or at the very least get into the film's trailer.

Award Winners allow the character to do one of two things: retain the Quip until the end of the story arc and draw an additional Quip immediately, or instantly use a Cinematic without a Rewrite cost. Characters can have a maximum of five Quips in hand.

THINKING ON YOUR FEET

The immediate thing that a Quip shows is a protagonist alert in the midst of crisis, keeping a cool head despite sometimes overwhelming odds, be they sheer numbers, enormous size, advanced technology, or disgustingly hideous adversaries that could make a maggot gag. The properly dropped, timely and

well-turned remark can flip a scene around, inspire compatriots, give enemies pause, even bolster one's own self-confidence. Sometimes it's a variation on the old line about at least leaving a "well-dressed corpse." Hey, if you gotta skip, go with Quips on the lips.

The sharpest tools in the drawer for the seasoned quipper are glibness, understatement, and sarcasm — the pepper that adds some bite and ironic wit. Sneering sarcasm is almost too much. It's better to err on the side of restraint and *underplay* it just a tad. This expresses that your effort is minimal, that you're seemingly unconcerned with your own fate.

It's best to simply drop the Quip like a verbal hand grenade while up to your neck in whatever you're up to your neck in. Then watch the fun. Or keep fighting. Or planning. All in a day's work, by golly.



KING CLAM

Radiation hung over misty Odluk Atoll (somewhere in the Pacific) like the odor of red licorice after a roomful of children vacated. It was from past atom-bomb tests and the team could feel it as soon as they came ashore.

Navy Captain Hemp Maxwell was restless. He liked bombs but didn't care for science stuff. "How much longer?"

Dr. Karsly Morbin turned from her radiation detector with a flip of her hair. "Just a few more figures, Captain."

"The figure I'm looking at is fine as it is." Hemp lit a smoke.

Karsly matched his smoke with a smirk, rolling her eyes and making a rude gesture at Hemp's back after turning to her moody assistant Alice Green. Still new to the science game, Alice's "trial by fire" was a run-in with the crab people, and it still upset her to think of it.

A sailor's yell brought them to the far side of the atoll and a sight that would freeze the most hardened jeweler. It was the largest pearl anyone had seen. Larger than a rich lady's.

"Why...it's as big as a small cottage," Hemp gasped.

"We need to take it back with us," said Karsly, captivated by shiny things.

"That the scientist talking? Or the woman?" uttered Alice.

"A giant pearl? On a navy ship?" griped the outraged Hemp.

"Relax. Even a woman scientist would find it difficult to wear a pearl the size of a small cottage. But if we can find out what *made* it this way, who knows what doors we may unlock?" said the scientist, scientifically.

• • •

Back in the not-named-ironically Coastal City, Karsly had the pearl inlaid in a lovely massive industrial setting and she and Alice went to work studying it, along with difficult but brilliant Dr. Bundolph Laig. They quickly found the pearl had extraordinary properties.

"The radiation, constant pulsing, that funny hum — this pearl is jam-packed with science," gasped Karsly.

"It is, in effect, my dear, a miniature atomic plant of inconceivable force," confirmed Laig.

Hemp grasped that like a giraffe in a necktie store. "A source like this could make a whole lot of bombs. I'll classify it and phone Washington."

Later, Laig made his way to a cafe, into a back room, through a secret door to a secret chamber with a powerful modern television screen. It squealed as he made contact and soon he was looking at Egarp Krosh, severely-bearded representative of a hostile foreign power. "Well, brother-comrade? Is it true about the pearl?"

"More than true," said Bundolph. "It is exactly true."

"At last. The answer to big bomb prayers. We must have it at all costs, brother-comrade. You know what you must do."

"I know you know I know what I must do," smiled Laig.

"I know you know I know you know what you must do." For security purposes, this went on...

• • •

But a gargantuan shadow loomed. And a resounding cry of grief special to mollusks. The captain of a tanker in the Pacific screamed as something the size of a stadium crashed down on him.

• • •

Reports of missing ships stacked like pancakes at a breakfast convention. Though the incidents followed a path directly to Coastal City, Karsly, Laig, and Alice were too caught up in science to notice. In fact, they'd succeeded in jury-rigging the pearl to power several nuclear plants.

But after hours, Laig and his minions snuck in with paint cans and managed to disguise the pearl as a giant display baseball, the kind enjoyed in ballparks across the country. Then they disappeared with it into the night.

Karsly knew who had stolen it right away: She'd never trusted Laig. Hemp notified law enforcement to be on the lookout for something giant, shiny, round, and radioactive.

The unsuspecting Coastal City waterfront became a nightmare when something as vast as a convention center rose from the water, looming

darkly. A clam so colossal the press immediately dubbed it "King Clam."

It slammed down on pier after pier, leaving rubble, confusion, and distaste for seafood in its wake. Its legless mobility was a raising and slamming down, as deadly as it was annoying.

• • •

Hemp hadn't wanted Karsly to go undercover, but when they heard of the secret "radioactive pearl" auction she knew it was the only chance. Oddly, the sullen Alice was all for it. Fact was, Laig had betrayed his ungodly masters and was selling the pearl to the highest bidder.

Pretending to be "renegade scientist Bleeko Promine," Karsly arrived at the warehouse location where both underworld and hostile powers were intent on buying the pearl. For display, the paint had been washed off and it looked as shiny and radioactive as ever.

As bidding began in earnest, Alice burst in, blowing Karsly's cover.

"Karsly Morbin stole Newcott Waikes from me on their Seal Slug voyage! I vowed to get revenge and now I have!" she laughed.

"It was just a brief fling," claimed Karsly.

Thunderous booming stopped everything. From the windows, all saw King Clam slamming its path of mass destruction right towards them. Hemp was leading the fight, firing up at the monster harmlessly with a pistol for some reason, which he emptied, then threw at the thing.

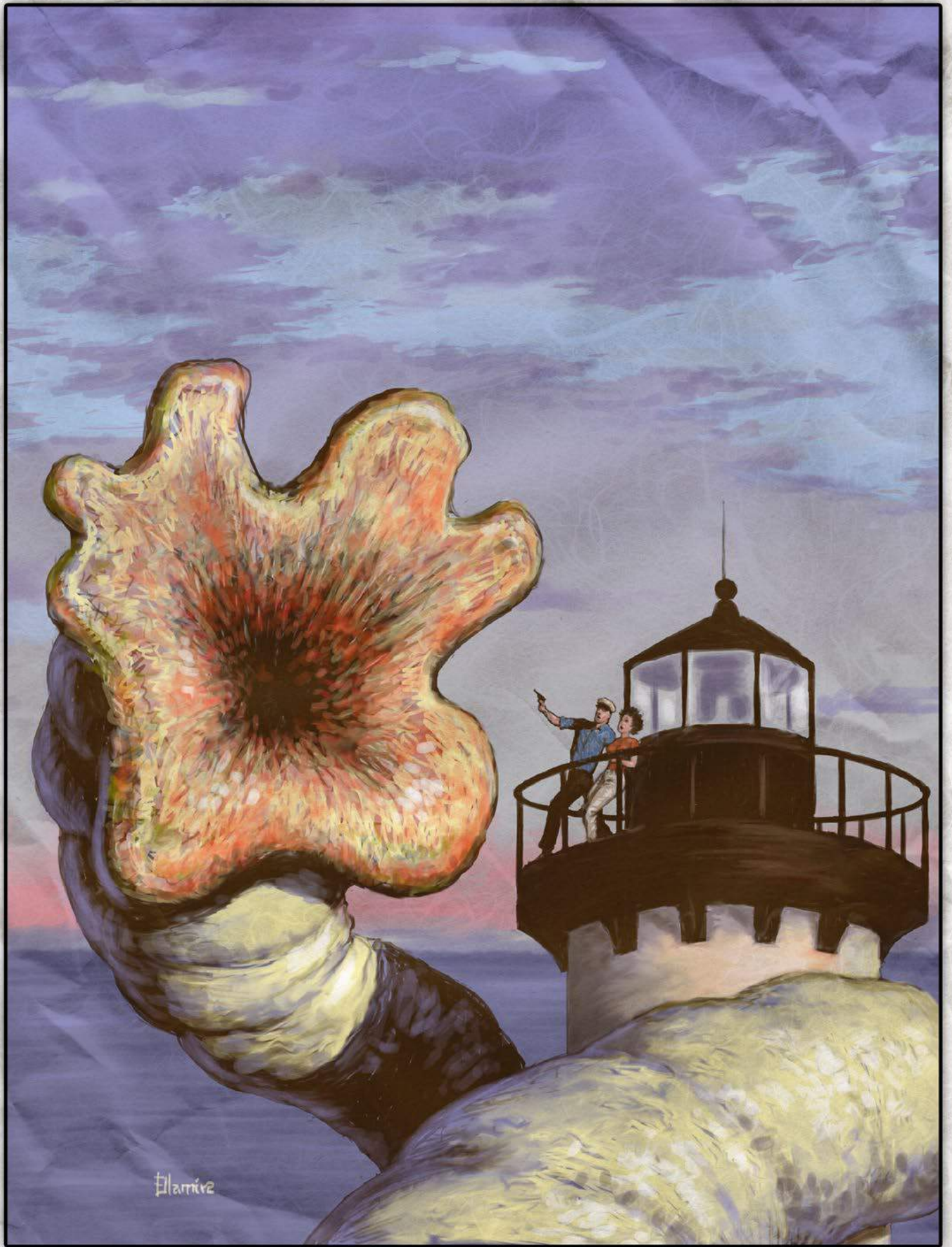
Karsly shouted, "Don't you see?! You fools, oh you fools! All it wants is its pearl back!"

"Never!" shouted Laig like a madman, trying to roll the giant pearl to a hiding place.

Fearing for her own life, Alice got on the roof. "Here! Here is your pearl, King Clam! Oh, what have I done?!" she sobbed beneath the mighty shadow of King Clam as it slammed down on her and the roof. The hole in the building revealed the pearl to the monster as Laig bolted. Happy as a clam, King Clam managed to open its maw and scoop the pearl inside.

• • •

Hemp and Karsly watched from a pier as King Clam returned to the sea with its radioactive prize. "Maybe someday, Hemp... we can make bombs without giant clams."



CHAPTER SEVEN THE HUMAN WORLD INVADED!

"Boy, if I can still raise an arm when we get out of this place,
I'm gonna show you just how saturated I can get!"

Robert Graham, *Them!* (1954)

The world of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** is a technicolor reimagining of our own 1950s. In the halls of power, serious-eyed men worry over the intrusion of spies into their bureaucracy. In the suburbs, wives kiss their children goodbye and go about their day, while young women take the bus into the city for typing and nursing classes. Every city still has a public pool, and every drive-in is full of teenagers not actually there to watch whatever monster movie is on the screen that week. Ever since *They* arrived, monster movies have been more popular — though they're more like newsreels than *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

The truth is, media often portrays the 1950s through rose-tinted lenses, and we are doing the same in this game. The central setting of 1950s America is one in which people still smile at each other as they walk by in the street, where the men go out to mow the front lawn every Saturday morning and the family goes to church on Sunday. Race, class, and gender divides exist, but they change through the prism of the silver screen. It's likely many old, set-in-their-ways males at the lab dismiss the up-and-coming female scientist, until the halfway point in the feature where she proves them wrong and her coworker has to admit "I sure misjudged that lady." Sometimes these revisions to our history might feel uncomfortable, but they are in place to emulate a specific medium, and you can adjust them however you see fit to suit your game.

If all this feels a little *Stepford Wives* or *Happy Days*, you're getting the picture. There are airs of darkness in the former, and the fear of friends leaving for college or the army in the latter, yet, they are seen on the surface as ideal-world scenarios. There's always another beer behind the counter, nobody is afraid of hitchhiking along the coast road, and certainly, nobody's afraid of aliens. We'll ignore Mork's presence in *Happy Days* for the time being.



I'M NO HISTORIAN

Directors and players alike are free to use as much or as little of the history and geography noted in this chapter as they wish. Some elements of the 1940s and 1950s were grim, to put it mildly, and are included here in case a Director wishes to add a serious edge to their game of alien invasion. While communist witch hunts are sometimes spoken of in humor in the present era, at the time it was a life- and career-shattering thing to be accused of being a Red.

Use the elements that could tie into character backstories, giving them more depth and purpose; discard those ill-suited to your adventure. It's as simple as that.

They Came from Beneath the Sea! presents a depiction of our world, but weirder. Tune up the camp of the 1950s and tone down the communist witch hunts, or cast a spotlight onto aliens in the employ of McCarthy's goon squad, kidnapping suspected communists for conversion to something other than human. This game is yours, so make of the world what you wish.

ONLY REAL IS REAL

As explained by Delia Jacob, Red Cross Nurse and Survivor of the Manhattan Invasion

Listen honey, the '50s are a time of overwhelming contradictions. We're at heights of economic prosperity never before seen. The skirts are full, the cars are flashy, and the music is rock-



in'-and-rollin'. The suburb is on the rise as cities sprawl outward, and returning soldiers want a piece of the dream, American or otherwise. In former Axis countries, massive rebuilding efforts clean up the detritus of war and provide for an exhausted and cowed populace. Slowly, the siren song of capitalism begins to play. The United States is pouring billions of dollars into providing abundant food, clothing, shelter, and luxuries to anyone who aligns with the nascent NATO pact, and this wins many people over to the American side.

It isn't all roses in the capitalist countries, however — there are just as many thorns in the US as behind the Iron Curtain. I'll explain.

CULTURAL BOOM

For the boys at home it's a paradise, I'll tell you that for nothing. We've got rock and we've got roll. We've got Bill Haley and the Comets, we've got Chuck Berry, we've got that young warbling upstart, Jerry Lee Lewis. They're putting a dent in the music scene, getting the young men jiving in the streets, wearing their hair slicked back like airmen, and driving fast, open-top cars to impress the ladies.

At any time, you might be walking through the town only to get a screeching car pull up alongside, a handsome voice asking

you if you want to "get in and go for a ride." Most of those guys can take a hike, and I'll tell them as much. Nobody's asking for their smarm and swagger. Some of them though? Well, let's just say some of the wheels of pre-war inhibition fell off with the turn of the decade.

For anyone of simple means you've got access to dollar shakes, the drive-in theatre, and tickets to the local dance hall. Honestly, for young men and women both, we've got a whole lot of entertainment possibilities. Even better, it's not like we have to rely on the guys' wallets to pay for it all these days. With the boom in female nurses, factory workers, and such, we're carrying just as often as the men do. It'll take them some time, but those fellas'll soon realize this world is built for more than just Johnny.

Yeah, it ain't perfect, but this feels like a time when you can appreciate the little things like a warm night under the stars, watching a movie while sitting in your best friend's car. There'll be about a dozen couples necking around you and we don't give a damn. We're just pleased life feels a little safer than it did 10 years ago.

Well, until you get to the Reds and the aliens. They screw up everything.

THE RED SCARE AND HUAC

"Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communist atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down — they are truly down." —Senator Joseph McCarthy

Let's start with the real bad stuff. Formed in 1945, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) is a force to be reckoned with. Originally founded to keep an eye out for "subversive propaganda," the HUAC has become involved in all levels of American life, from blacklisting Hollywood actors and directors due to "communist leanings," to subpoenaing private citizens to ask for their experience with Soviet espionage. I hear Alger Hiss accused the committee of libel and Orson Welles fled to Europe to find work after being blacklisted. Ridiculous, baby, but many Americans consider the HUAC a necessary evil, so long as it doesn't interfere with their lives personally.

One of the HUAC's major supporters was Joseph McCarthy. While he was a senator and didn't personally serve on the committee himself, his bombastic personality and constant discovery of lists of so-called "Reds" made him a driving force in the anti-communist movement. His famous list of 205 members of the Communist Party in the US State Department often gets waved around as a prop, even following his not-so-tragic accident.

McCarthy's fervor led to widespread political investigations based on "patriotic loyalty" in both the private and the public sectors. Individuals are subject to interrogation based on statements they may or may not have made concerning US policy, relations with the USSR, or simply something that "sounded communist." Non-emergency numbers are set up for citizens to report communist activity to local and federal law enforcement agencies.

There's this thing called the McCarran Internal Security Act that requires all member of communist, anarchist, socialist, or other "subversive" groups to register with the US Attorney General and submit to an investigation by the Subversive Activities Control Board. Like I'm gonna do that. Any outcry against these acts is often immediately targeted as being the product of communists. McCarthyism is a self-propagating panic.

It's a shame the Smith and McCarran acts, both written to stop the movement of "subversive aliens" within the US, can't stop the actual aliens from beneath the sea.

THE HOMEFRONT

After the Second World War, many of us elected to return to the home and continue domestic life. Many others, however, did not. Me, for example. Women, post-war, became typists, journalists, doctors, and nurses. The biological sciences and computer engineering are considered "appropriate" fields for women, and so produce women like Grace Hopper, Rosalind Franklin, and Hedy Lamarr. Heroes, all of them.

Men returning from the war find their wives changing as much as they have. Much of the advertising now focuses on women in domestic roles in an attempt to push them back to that state. My husband finds it hilarious, but he doesn't have to live it.



CIVIL RIGHTS

In the early 1950s, there's a big uptick of black veterans and civilians alike coming together to protest their treatment as second-class citizens. Direct action is only now beginning to occur, with some sit-ins and protests in major cities.

Executive Order 9981 is a victory for civil rights in some ways, desegregating the armed forces after WWII. *Brown v. Board of Education* is another, desegregating school systems throughout the US and shattering a major supporting pillar of Jim Crow laws. Public transportation, polling places, and many other public services are still segregated, especially in the south.

Segregation requires a mention when discussing this era. This game will not be focusing on the issue of civil rights except through a human and aliens lens. Depending on how historically accurate you want to place your game, it's a worthwhile fact about which to be aware.

It's not all doom and gloom. Fashion really got interesting recently. Men embrace their plaid when off-duty and wear a pocket square when at work, keep the wax in their hair, and wear boots or slippers for leisure. Meanwhile, while massive flared skirts with heavy crinolines are coming back into fashion, so are new styles like culottes and pedal pushers. We wear soft sneakers just as much as kitten heels, and short hair is once again acceptable, thank God. Denim is huge. Men and women alike wear leather jackets and increasing amounts of jewelry.

This is also the era of the cinema and the late-night diner. Dating is in full swing, as so many young military men are single and the media pushes the idea of the shared milkshake with burgers and fries. Getting down in the back seat means a successful night.

Many subcultures are thriving, you know? The beatniks, the greasers, and the surfers all have copious members. Gangs and cliques are popular, especially among men and women of color and the working classes. It's worth noting these subcultures are protective of their own, and this mentality carries over to the invasion.

NUCLEAR TESTS

Now I'm no expert on this stuff. I get most of it from the professor. He tells me the forces unleashed at the Trinity site were a mere pittance compared to the weapons that can be unleashed now. Even Little Boy and Fat Man, the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to cow Japan into total submission, were 15 kilotons and 10 kilotons respectively — that is to say, the blast equaled the explosive power of the equivalent weight of dynamite. Ivy Mike, the first detonation of this decade, let out a blast of 10 megatons, one order of magnitude higher than Fat Man.

If Fat Man could bring a whole city to its knees, who knows what Ivy Mike could do?

The professor has some idea, unfortunately. The second nuclear test conducted by our United States was Castle Bravo, and the results were catastrophic. Castle Bravo was meant to be a smaller explosion than Ivy Mike, about 6 megatons. The bomb itself was originally referred to as the “Shrimp,” due to being smaller than Ivy Mike, Fat Man, or Little Boy. Instead of uranium or plutonium, it used liquid deuterium instead, thus allowing the device to be much smaller. The thinking went that if the device was smaller, so too would be the resulting explosion — but because of the choice of fuel, it would be that much more devastating to the target area.

That wasn’t the case. When the Shrimp exploded during the Castle Bravo test, its 15 megatons of radioactive death encompassed the atoll it was being tested on, plus neighboring islands, the ships observing, and a Japanese fishing boat sailing too close. Because of a miscalculation in wind direction, the massive cloud of fallout blew out to sea, affecting island populations as far west as Japan and as far south as New Zealand.

Perhaps it was Castle Bravo or Ivy Mike that awakened those below to our shortcomings as a species, or maybe eyes from the deep watch as we happily destroy each other and think they’ll give us the last push we need to go over the edge.

THE GREEN SCARE

“We know nothing about these creatures from beneath the sea. We don’t even know if they know about us. Maybe they do. Maybe we should be worried.” – CIA white paper on the NACA “Anomalous Suboceanic Species” report to HUAC

They responded to the nuclear tests, in any case. Wouldn’t you, if your home was being bombed?

Their biggest coup was the USS Shangri-La, a decorated aircraft carrier that survived the Pacific theater in WWII. She was pulled beneath the waves in harbor by a sudden eruption of tentacles from the sea floor. Few lives were lost, but the west was thrown into a panic. “Is this some new plan by the Soviet Union?” we all asked. “Who could be behind it?”

It’s amazing how quickly that event disappeared from the news. Government cover-up? Human inability to accept that we share our planet with something unknown? Who knows?

Honestly, we don’t know what specific creature caused it, but it created a new scare. The Red Scare, the Lavender Scare, they all fold back into the Green Scare, like flowers on a tree branch or fish in kelp. The CIA, FBI, MI-5, and CSIS all have lists of “un-human” activities to comb through. High-profile citizens are taken in for questioning. But in the halls of government, parliamentarians and congresspeople say nothing. Task forces are set up and just as quickly disbanded.

Popular culture’s changing too. Don Siegel introduced the threat of the “no-brainers,” humans taken over by alien intelligence, with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Ken Hughes followed it with his *Atomic Man*. Songs and short stories about extra-human intelligences are all the rage. In something of an ironic twist, scarlet red is now back in fashion as a statement against alien sympathies. The US produces a ridiculous volume of wartime propaganda. I hear Jack Kirby drew Captain America punching a

squid, and the comic sold out in hours. An uncredited propaganda artist pulled on by HUAC drew a much-mocked take of the cover depicting Joseph McCarthy as Captain America fighting the “Green Menace.” It wasn’t nearly as good.

At this point, McCarthy’s fear of the “Reds” has taken a back seat in politics. It is still there, of course. The intelligence community today considers recruiting some of the folks they questioned, but it’s early yet, prejudice preventing a coordinated response from across humanity. All that said, McCarthy’s recent death has done some good in taking the governmental ammunition out of the HUAC arsenal.

PRESENT DAY AND THE EASTERN BLOC

As whispered by Ivan Mikoyan, Soviet double agent hiding in San Francisco

At the Yalta Conference in 1945, the western Allies split Germany into two pieces — West Germany for the members of NATO, and East Germany for the CCCP, or USSR. This agreement marked the beginning of a larger split in Europe. At the end of the war, there were eight Eastern European countries with communist governments strongly allied with the USSR, to the point their governments were derisively referred to as “puppets” by the NATO bloc. These countries were strongly opposed to the capitalist democracies in the west, and good for them, I say.

Once the Axis threat was obliterated, it was time to get down to the real business of superpower versus superpower, a struggle for dominance over much of the world.

PURGES AND THE HOMEFRONT

After a famine in the late 1940s, due to the sheer number of lives lost during WWII, Stalin initiated a new series of the purges he was so famous for. Similar purges were carried out in other Warsaw Pact countries. In an effort to prove their loyalty to Stalin, many countries went farther than we did, imprisoning, killing, or torturing intellectuals, suspected spies, religious clergy, and artists whose work did not conform to the Stalinist aesthetic. It is a deep shame on our Soviet State that this is the example we set and encourage.

Many of the doctors imprisoned during this period, however, were released following Stalin’s purported death, due to their skills being in such high demand. The USSR is still reeling from the massive number of casualties in the Koreas and World War II. Bread and morale are in short supply. The country conforms to a deeply brutalist aesthetic, and the black market is in full swing. Can you get cigarettes? Depends on who you know, comrade.

Beria’s intelligence agents say this despair makes it easy for several alien factions to gain a foothold in my home country. Rumor holds they mostly base themselves around the Crimea, Leningrad, and Arkhangelsk, but there is talk of moving further into the country — especially with Stalin’s influence.

And now we get onto why I speak against the Premier with no hesitation.

ZOMBIE STALIN

Despite his physical frailties, millions saw comrade Stalin as a superman. His smoking habit and the stress of his position could have killed him at any time, but his collapse in March of 1953 was cause for great surprise and panic. Whether the stroke followed as a direct result of the heart attack he suffered in the 1940s, was a symptom of poisoning, or simply came with age, nobody in the Presidium was quite sure how to act. The wrong move would have had any one of them shot, were Stalin alert enough to sign the order. Again, this all comes from comrade Beria, so take from it what you will.

Stalin remained unconscious for five days, during which time his children were called and the rest of the governing council fussed over what to do. It was only on the last day he woke for long enough to die.

After his death, a major power vacuum formed in the Soviet Union and I got out soon after. Stalin had not nominated a successor, and now his enemies are free from the threat of purge, they set about destroying the cult of personality he built up. The struggle is still in progress, but it looks as though one of three contenders — Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Soviet Union; Georgy Malenkov, Stalin's former deputy; or Lavrentiy Beria, the head of the NKVD — will take the premiership sooner or later.

After his death, Stalin's body mysteriously disappeared. Unlike his predecessor, Vladimir Lenin, Josef does not have a bier where he permanently lays in state. Instead, he had a closed-coffin funeral, after his body was on display for three days — and since then nothing has been heard from his body.

The truth is quite sinister, comrade. Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, reports that when he died, he "had a look of cold hatred for everyone in the room." It wasn't Josef Stalin looking out through those eyes. The CIA suspects he overdosed on a pain medication, the NKVD thinks he was poisoned in retaliation for his party purges. Neither is true.

"Uncle Joe," as you Americans like to call him, was the first prominent victim of the brain-eater eel invasion.

His symptoms were consistent with a possession — sudden failure of bodily functions, erratic behavior, mysterious death. There are rumors since his body's disappearance that he has been seen out at *Kamera*, the Soviet human experimentation lab, or at City 40, the closed city containing our nuclear weapons program. Most Soviet citizens discount these rumors. An undead Premier is the least of their worries, when their lives include more tanks than toasters.

Josef Stalin is not the only prominent figure in this strange age to fall victim to the eels. There is a white bishop in the Bel-

gian Congo rumored to be the ghost or reincarnation of King Leopold II, “the Belgian Butcher.” Rumors hold of the corpses of high-ranking Nazis being reanimated by these aliens, with the world thankful for the majority of the Third Reich’s movers and shakers being cremated.

Though many sporadic attacks from beneath the waves punctuate the Cold War, it is the brain-eater eel threat that takes Russia by storm. They are the first but will not be the last.

AND THINGS WERE GOING SO SMOOTHLY

“This is the fishing trawler Waggy-Belle out of New South Nortland... Our position is [classified]... There’s an obstruction dead ahead... Appears to be alive... enormous... hundreds of tentacles... I think it’s moving toward us—oh, dear—” – Last recorded message of Captain Lupert Gopp of the fishing trawler Waggy-Belle as regaled by Professor Goldacre, experimental physicist and all-around nice chap

I’m going to take you away from all that dry history and into something a little wetter. Let’s go for a paddle, shall we?

On June 24th, 1947, businessman and aviator Kenneth Arnold sighted nine shiny objects in formation as he flew near Mount Rainier in Washington state and the modern era of UFO fascination was ushered in. About a week later the controversy of the infamous Roswell, New Mexico crash came to light and fueled the fervor. Here came the beginnings of a wave of investigators, both amateur and professional, and for many a growing obsession with visitation from outer space. The Washington, D.C. UFO Incident, aka “The Invasion of Washington” further amped paranoia at a time when nuclear weapons and HUAC were already helping.

The US Air Force, concerned over the security aspects, institutes Project Sign (1947), Project Grudge (1949), then Project Blue Book (1952) to investigate the widespread reports that seem almost epidemic.

It’s little wonder movies jump on the craze (where science fiction pulp magazines had already been for years) and usher in a flood of cinematic alien invasions and monsters of all kinds, in films with budgets of all kinds — from rock bottom to studio gloss. While radioactivity assumes responsibility for many of these fictional encroachments, a large part were threats from above. Flying Saucers from Outer Space is now firmly in the zeitgeist.

When it comes to the concept of alien invasion, people all over the world share one thing in common. The monsters, the creatures, the advanced race — warlike or not — will be “Not of This Earth.”

But the threat, dear Brutus, is not from our stars...

KEEP WATCHING THE WAVES

Deep-sea exploration is nothing new. It’s been going on since 1521 when Ferdie Magellan dropped a line 2,400 feet and didn’t find the bottom. It didn’t get into full swing until the 1870s

with the HMS Challenger’s systematic approach to undersea exploration — leading to the birth of oceanography — with lines, dredges and trawls to make measurements and take samples. In the 1930s, Otis Barton’s bathysphere broke ground, or water, and Barton himself recently set a record with his 4,500-foot dive in his benthoscope.

There have been some pretty strange specimens retrieved from extreme depths. Some could be called nightmare-inducing, things glowing in a world of otherwise absolute darkness, but they are relegated and accustomed to those conditions. They are frightening to behold, but their environment is one of enormous pressure and lack of light. They would not do well on the surface, if they could even get to it. While it’s true that much of the ocean floor remains unexplored, it seems hard to imagine anything vaguely sinister, or anything with an agenda, and there’s certainly little to suggest advanced intellect.

And so indeed it is something of a shock that the actual alien invasion of Earth comes, not from above, but from below. The monsters are in our very own backyard, our giant swimming pool, where so many go to relax, that “next to final frontier,” the place we smugly thought we knew and rather complacently take for granted, where most of our water is.

They Came from Beneath the Sea.

So the question immediately comes to mind: Why? And why now? What could they possibly want with us? What could they want on land?

Quite a bit, actually. More on that later. First, let’s look at who, or what, they are, and how we first become aware.

Like many past civilizations before us, the first to become aware of the danger are pets and circus clowns. The latter might sound facetious, but when circus-goers begin to react listlessly and morosely to their zany antics, it’s the clowns’ heightened sensitivity (possibly brought on by years of pies in the face) that first react to the subtle changes in humanity. For the beginnings of this alien intrusion are not in the form of a sudden overnight onslaught of things marching from the sea. Indeed, this invasion is insidious, not only in its sheer scope and variety of outrageous and horrific lifeforms, but also its clandestine and sinister infiltration into our daily lives.

KEEP WATCHING YOUR BACKS

The sandpits are singing.

You know, the ones out back, just past the yard, beyond the crooked tree on the little knoll. Like the little boy in Invaders from Mars we begin to discover that Mom and Dad are not Mom and Dad anymore. One by one, friends and family are lured out back, to be sucked into that sandpit.

Yes, the first wave of alien attack is subversive: infiltration. The enemy mixing among us. This comes in two basic forms:

- Destruction and replacement
- Takeover and possession

Each results in false humans walking and interacting with us. For the most part it’s systematic and effective, which is why we should be worried. But there are signs. There are things to

look for, and that gives humankind some hope to go with our grim determination, science, and flailing fists.

For instance, the crab people, even posing as humans, are compelled to walk sideways. They can't help it. Evolution-wise, they're part people — and there's quite a resemblance — but that sideways thing is just really hard to shake. Plus, it's difficult to hold the bony face plates under their skin to retain a certain likeness (of the person they've replaced) for longer than several hours or so before needing a breather, at which point their wide hideous mandibles open up the entire face and suddenly it's not Uncle Walt anymore.

The disgusting brain-eater eel is easily squished in its natural form. Not so much in a human host, so these things are dangerous. What we need to be on the lookout for, then, is their insatiable appetite and a rather geeky hunger for human cinema. These can sometimes give them away. Of course, this does little to lessen the terror of knowing these creepy things could be beside us in line at the supermarket or Marx Brothers festival.

The third of our notable identity crisis nightmares is perhaps the strangest. The thaumocs are a form of super-intelligent octopi that are both clever and technologically advanced. How does a brainy cephalopod pass as human? With great difficulty, as the joke goes.

Actually, they ride around in a masterfully designed people suit: fleshy fluid-filled frames fine enough to fool folks. One shortcoming is the thaumocs' lack of speech, causing them to depend on a contrivance that spews small talk, which is what they hear when they monitor and record our human blather. If you meet someone even more boring than usual, with limited direct interaction, there's a good chance it's one of them.

Knowing these imperfections should not lead us to a sense of overconfidence, by any means. It is merely meant to balance what has become the highest level of paranoia to ever infect civilized society, even more than the spread of communism. They are survival tips as well as morale boosters in the face of things that sometimes quite literally make our skin crawl. The only enemy more dangerous than the one you don't know is the one you know.

Keep watching your backs...

OKAY, THAT'S JUST GROSS

It is likely a genetic or ancestral memory accounts for our immediate revulsion to certain things, including, say, arachnids or certain television commercials. In this wave of aquatic invaders, though it might not be one of their weapons per se, it is nevertheless a hazard we must factor in as we face these sometimes-disgusting unknowns. And right now, it seems like every oozing slithering tentacled collective human nightmare is coming to life and crawling ashore. Shock and revulsion can mean a difference of valuable seconds before something loathsome snaps out and wraps around your head.

Take the Suspended. Please. These blobby horrors travel in a thick slimy casing and, once on land, are able to lull their prey and then encase them in something similar, before taking them back to whatever watery home they came from for... we still don't know what. But they keep coming back for more...

The aptly named aquatepillars almost qualify as giant monsters as some of them can reach 30 feet in length. However, the ones most mobile on land average about 10 feet (a still-formidable length). The fact that these rampaging eyeless maggot-like beasts are slow doesn't make them any less unpalatable. And did I mention they love meat? Or that they're relentless and stubborn about doggedly pursuing the same? Plus they wriggle. People have always had a problem with wriggling things.

The Sirens of Ness are frog-like beings, about whom we still know little. Their chief tactic is to present the illusion of a mythical creature, some tantalizing legend come to life, and (not unlike their mythological namesakes) lure their victim into their power. We know they take prisoners. We're just not sure for what purpose, and they seem to have a particularly unhealthy interest in our scientists.

The gigantic pillbugs are not "giant" as we think of giant monsters in the human sense (see next group) but are certainly giant compared to regular pillbugs, which are those little "walking tanks" under every rock that can curl up in a ball. The big ones stand on two legs, and are twice as tall as humans with antennae unfolded. Unlike the other invaders in this section, these horrors can actually speak. Worse than that, somehow, is the fact they have a concept of human humor, with a particular fondness for puns; a prospect that seems to make them all the more nauseating.

Only the fact that a lone gigantic pillbug can be persuaded to join with humans in their fight makes these things slightly less unpalatable. It almost makes up for the disgusting mindless grub stage, with their powerful jaws and corrosive saliva. But not quite.

THEY GOTTA BE GIANTS

Arguably, for sheer destruction, the most devastating forces of this strange invasion from the sea are the giant monsters. Certainly, in an overt and reckless kind of way. Once in our cities and towns, their sheer size guarantees a level of rampage. Hey, even a benign giant is going to step on things. So one that's belligerent, reckless, mindless — in some cases controlled — is going to wreak havoc few other things can match.

Perhaps the oddest of the ones we're facing is the ironically named Teenage Shrimp. Formerly a troubled youth turned wereshrimp by radiation, this monster was nasty enough in human size. Once his devoted, but equally troubled, girlfriend got some science and turned him giant he's 1,000 times more so. Thus, the angry teen wereshrimp becomes the giant stomping shrimp-faced monster, still in motorcycle jacket and jeans (fortunately they grew, too). He has many a teen girl screaming, but for all the wrong reasons.

Centopus is also the result of science gone awry, but once again of course it's mad science. A gigantic octopus with 100 tentacles, this behemoth uses them to reach out and snag a building, in order to then drag itself through the streets (lest anyone think a giant octopus would be no danger on land). Centopus is a classic example of the giant rampaging monster. Lacking any intelligence whatsoever, this one is fully dependent on mad scientist control.

Far more unconventional is Brainbox. This post WWII computer developed by the US was too smart for our own good. When a (still unidentified) undersea alien race swiped the device from the government it was only a matter of time before it turned about and revolted on them (their fate is still a mystery). Now Brainbox is a free agent — his own man-machine — tricked out in a massive fighting fortress that moves slowly on piston-like legs, packing heavy artillery and robot minions while wearing an approximation of a scowling face. This titanic one-stop-shopping war machine is truly an existential threat to mankind.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART

As if it isn't bad enough with every imaginable monstrosity rising from the depths to invade our personal space, we also have the human variety of monster to contend with: the new breed of aqua-centric mad scientist. Of course, they wouldn't agree with you that they're mad, which is part of what makes them mad. If they knew they were mad they'd be less mad.

Arguably, the two most prominent are Dr. Uriah Hermann and Dr. Bundolph Laig. Interestingly, they bear a resemblance, based on their similarity to Captain Nemo, fictional creation of the great Jules Verne, though they'd probably never admit it. And since they can't stand each other (Laig finds Hermann utterly pretentious, Herrmann thinks Laig lacks focus, and each thinks the other obnoxious), they'd also no doubt refuse to acknowledge any similarity in their natures.

Where they really do overlap is their passionate love for the sea and its myriad lifeforms, and their belief in its vast superiority over land in every sense. They are equally adamant in their extreme hatred for humanity and the wrongs perpetrated by people and industries on the oceans of the world, and, subsequently, the delicate ecological balance.

While Bundolph Laig has only incorporated his dull and plodding squid men (dubbed squidiots) for labor and enforcement, the arrogant Uriah Hermann employs a full force of armed human henchmen. Each fully intends to carry out their diabolical schemes until the landlubbers succumb. In fact, were one to conjecture what these two evil scientific geniuses might perpetrate together, let's be thankful they despise each other and hope they continue to do so.

Both men look down on the Atlantoids. Surprising, in a way, since the Atlantoids also believe strongly in "all things sea" over land. They are an ancient and proud race descended from the people of the sunken city of Atlantis who managed to adapt and, over much time, grow gills, making them equally at home on land or beneath the sea. For reasons that aren't altogether clear, they hate humanity as much as Hermann and Laig.

Whereas the human mad scientists aspire to flood the continents via the icecaps, the less forward-thinking Atlantoids conspire via the slightly more cumbersome model of destroying all our dams; a sketchy proposition at best. They seek to accomplish this with their amphibious, destructive ray-shooting, fish-shaped flying crafts and lead one to conjecture they've been monitoring old Buck Rogers serials.

Ultimately, it may be their own haughty confidence and love for long florid speeches that help us defeat them in the end. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to underestimate this arrogant race.

No intelligent watery threat is more daunting, however, than the Pod, also known by the deservedly lofty title the Prefecture of the Pod, who have a yet-uncertain connection to the mysterious organization known as F.I.S.H. This nightmare enemy represents the highest intelligence of the sea, aside from certain cephalopods and perhaps the Glowing People. The Pod are a sophisticated society of dolphins and whales based in their great bubble complex in the North Atlantic. These finny fiends also plot the flooding of the earth, which they believe would bring about our utter dependency on them for survival. They have little respect for people and consider us "children."

Besides having an intricate network of minions on land, the Pod themselves possess a variety of sounds and mental abilities that can fend off human foes quite handily. It's also rumored they have a working relationship with the killer kelp.

Last but not least we have the Glowing People. This is a very ambiguous race. When not glowing, they are small, multicolored beings with enlarged, featureless heads but for large green eyes and a diamond-shaped forehead bone. They dress gaudier than the Atlantoids who look somewhat clunky beside them.

We know little of their technology beyond the fact that it's clearly quite advanced. Their craft, both above and below the waves, bears strong resemblance to what we call flying saucers, leading many to believe they have been the source of sightings all along.

There is evidence, unconfirmed, that the Glowing People use captured humans for slave labor.

THE WATER THAT CAME FROM THE WATER

The most nebulous menace facing us may be one that actually doesn't intend us harm. We're just not sure.

The Oblique is a creature of water (at least in appearance) that comes from the ocean and is believed to be quite ancient. It has the ability to shape itself into any form, or split into several, and upon absorbing all the moisture from a person's body, also ends up with their knowledge and memories (clearly a privacy violation). This seems to attract the creature to the victim's loved ones and, unfortunately, should contact be made, it inadvertently absorbs that person's water also, killing them instantly.

It's believed the thing is attempting to reproduce, which, malicious or not, could be a danger to humankind. Unfortunately, it's like trying to capture a will-o'-the-wisp or collect from an insurance company.

WE CERTAINLY HAVE OUR HANDS FULL

The motives of the invaders, at least those we know, are diverse and include: revenge for our perceived negligence of oceans and ocean life, hunger to dominate the land masses and make them "fish friendly," primal genetic hatred of mankind, or sheer belligerent aggression because many of them are, after all, monsters.

Then there's the more mundane truth that many creatures are simply predatory when it comes to people. And sometimes we're just a darn good food source.

But, as many are asking, Why now?

There are a number of potential factors, many of which were hinted at in the history section. I hope you read it. If not, here are our potted theories: A perceived weakening of humanity by dangerous divisions and extreme ideologies (we're looking at you, communism); sudden intensifying of technology that encroaches more on the world's oceans than ever before; or perhaps the sheer obnoxiousness of television commercials (you just know they're monitoring those beneath the waves).

Looming above it all is the dawning of the tenuous Nuclear Age and its nasty poster child Andy Atom Bomb. Let us note that underwater testing — we're talking actual underwater nuclear explosions — began in 1946 with Operation Crossroads at Bikini Atoll, at relatively shallow depth, with much deeper tests beginning in the 1950s. If this isn't an oceanic wakeup call I don't know what is.

Whatever the reason, the collective hellspawn of the oceans have decided that now is the time to strike and strike big, even if not all of them are aware of each other. It may be that some instinctive primal universal trigger was pulled, something in the undersea zeitgeist, whispering...

This is it...

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, DO SOME SCIENCE

"The monsters came, not with a bang, but with a whimper. Okay, that whimper was me, actually, hiding under my desk. Not because of a civil defense drill. No 'bend over, place your head firmly between your legs and kiss your ass goodbye' type of move... But because my teacher, Mrs. Rubens... She wasn't my teacher anymore..."
— Jimmy Haypers, *Sophomore, Bynder High School as excitedly told by Sally Sargent, Savior of Southampton, Lab Assistant with spunk*

Professor Goldacre likes to think I'm his assistant, but I keep the lab running while he delves into the realms of conspiracy. I'm here to talk more about the reality of the threats surrounding our every shore. Get ready for an information dump.

Usually, the first murmurings that something isn't right come quietly. In an atmosphere already soiled by the infectious mistrust fueled by HUAC and Gunner Joe, people begin acting strangely. Even stranger than usual. Neighbors are different. A coworker doesn't say hi. A relative stops smiling. That certain habit they used to have, that tune they no longer whistle, that favorite cookie they no longer bake without help.

People are subtly different.

It's the kind of thing that's hard to cash at the reality bank. How do you tell authorities that you *think* someone is no longer quite themselves? Without them thinking *you're* the nut? And how can you even *trust* the authorities? That's the worst — *who to take into your confidence?*

For the most part, the "strangers" blend in; living, eating, dry-cleaning with the rest of us, hoping little differences will go unnoticed. It's extremely hard to legally prove a person is really a duplicate or possessed by an evil alien entity.

Aunt Molly's just not herself lately.

No one would dream she's really aquatic and dangerous. Not Aunt Molly.

But little by little, people begin to catch on. There's too much coincidence. There's still too many actual humans and eventually people begin to carefully compare notes. Alliances are made. Some of the right people in the right places begin to catch on. Soon there's a groundswell that pushes back. Mystery loves company and courage is reinforced by numbers as the public begins to catch on.

The correlation of the possessions and duplicates and various ocean-related elements (like a cannery where half the workers are crab people) begins to clue in authorities that the source just may be the sea.

Infiltration is only the beginning.

WE WILL FIGHT THEM WITH TRANSISTORS

Here's something a lot of people don't realize: The people of one country have been experiencing this aquatic menace for a few years, but our governments (and I include the Soviets, here) have done well to disguise news broadcasting from their shores as cinematic fiction.

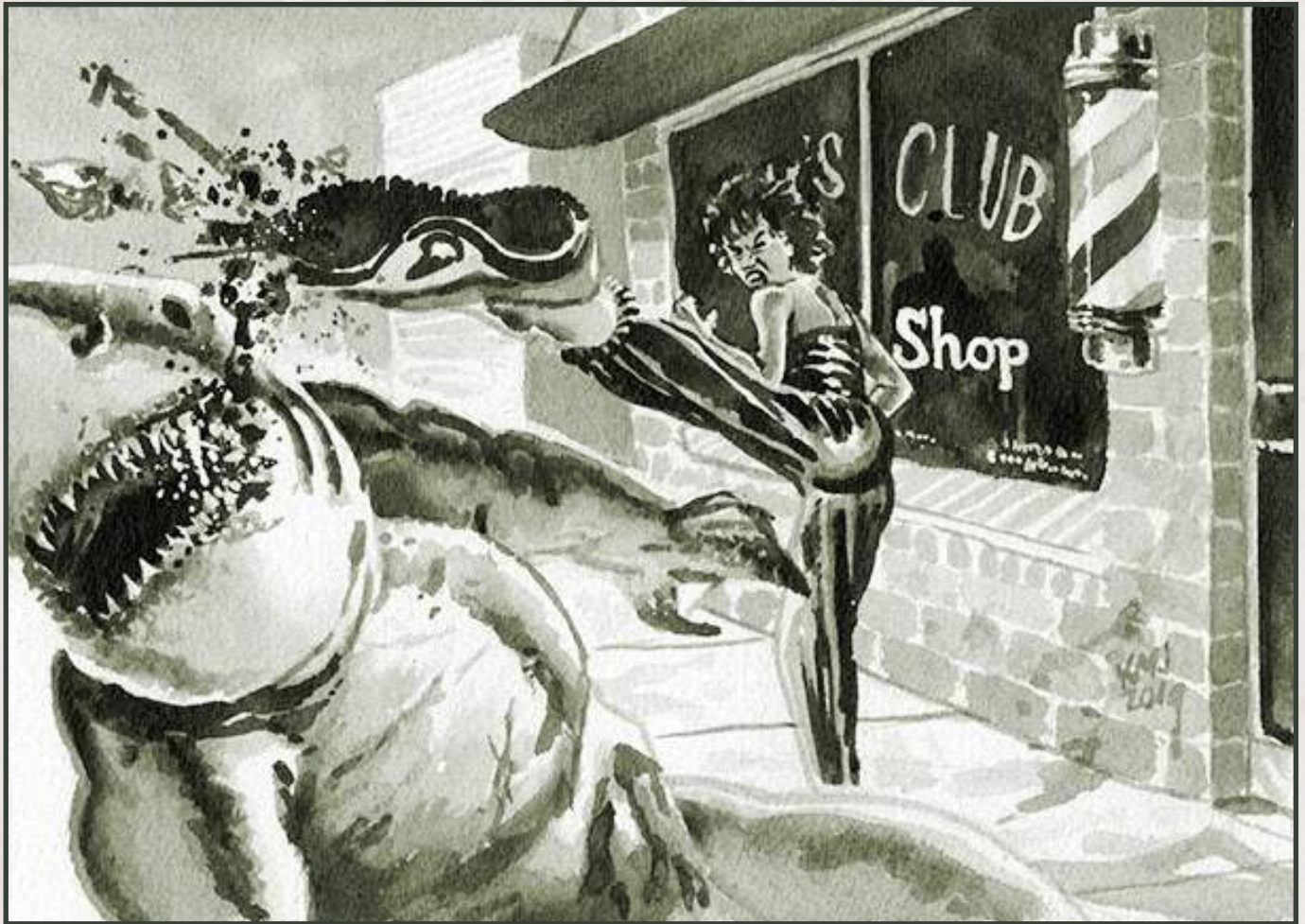
Despite being not that many years from the devastation of WWII, Japan not only became aware sooner than most, they seemed ready.

The island nation is experiencing a technology boom, particularly in the area of transistors (including their popular transistor radios), and just as they are quick to adapt in developmental areas they also accept the idea of an invasion of various monsters, creatures, and beings — the like of which the world has never seen — like they have been waiting for it all their lives. It almost seems as though such things may be ingrained in their culture.

The giant ones are quickly dubbed *kaiju* (meaning "strange beast"), a term that immediately catches on, and top Japanese scientists are pulled off all other projects in a concentrated effort with the military to take a systematic and coordinated approach to defense and confrontation. It is no help that the country is surrounded by water; indeed this aspect may contribute to the unified and vigorous stand by the entire population.

Groups are appointed to focus on individual aspects of the invasion, like detecting and neutralizing human takeover (or duplication and replacement), combating enormous creatures (*kaiju*) impervious to conventional weapons and advanced weaponry for use against intelligent undersea races.

At the same time, merchandising based on some of the monsters becomes quite popular (especially *kaiju*), which may seem strange, but it appears to contribute to the morale and focused determination of the population, contributing to the global wakeup call.



Further morale boosting comes from some new and inventive sushi and sashimi dishes, sculpted to look like some of the invading creatures. Most popular among them, the aquatepillar roll.

While it would be of great assistance to the rest of the world to find out what the Japanese know of the situation beneath the waves, to date, small-town America is completely oblivious to activities in East Asia that aren't the war in Korea.

THE USA WILL NOT STAND FOR MONSTERS

WWII left the United States of America the most powerful nation in the world, but politics and paranoia threaten to diminish that esteemed global role. Despite prosperity, HUAC and McCarthy have caused the population to look inward with skewed eyes. This divisiveness seeks to retard awareness of the *real threat* even as it crawls disgustingly up onto land.

So, our country, who should be the leader in this existential fight, wastes valuable time. First we deny the invading things as communist propoganda, perpetrated through brainwashing, chemicals in the water supply or microwave rays. Then, once accepting the danger, it is largely underestimated as a threat, not only to the United States, but to the world.

It's the scientists that lead the fight for awareness, marching on Washington, even risking jail time. While some find the notion preposterous, the majority recognizes the existential crisis and it's in this atmosphere that the American Science Army (ASA) formed. Labs are hastily set up and people in lab coats volunteer their time to study the various and sundry creatures in order to best devise a method of defense as well as ways to defeat them. Despite this, Jane Q. Public is unaware of why a secret laboratory has sprung up in the place of the abandoned munitions warehouse she worked at in the '40s.

Coincidences of "people among us acting strangely" and "an awful lot of workers who walk sideways" and "family members who aren't family members" are thankfully starting to add up and the tide is gradually turning from mistrust over ideology or race or sexual preference to a feeling of mutual cooperation and unification. This is aided in no small part by the death of Senator Joe McCarthy, swallowed by King Clam which he stepped into, thinking it was an office building.

With recently inaugurated Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeding Truman, the country finds the right leader for the right time: a man who knows the value of each human life on the battlefield. Hopefully, the American Science Army will work with president instead of against him.

IN ORBIT: STORIES FROM THE FRONT

The Battle for Earth against the things from beneath the sea affects people from all different walks of life. Age, gender, race, all of these might matter to humanity, but when *they* show up, everyone looks just as delicious or vulnerable.

THE WAR HERO: STANLEY LAWRENCE, 104TH INFANTRY DIVISION

I once asked the Jewish chaplain if he believed in hell. Padre Plaut was a little man with big brown eyes and even bigger glasses. He never broke those glasses, not once, not even in Hurtgen Forest, when we were pinned down by sniper nests of krauts. Nothing seemed to ruffle our rabbi's feathers.

He looked at me with those big brown eyes. This was after Dora-Mittelbau. He had a lot of sick and dying to care for that week.

"Well, Stan," he said, in that warm, slightly hoarse voice over his mug of coffee, "what would we need another hell for when we've created one of our own?"

I thought about that, when we were herding the townsfolk to bury the victims of their ignorance. I thought about that again, after we shipped back to Fort Lewis. I think I reenlisted because of Padre Plaut's words. Why do we need another hell...

Don't get any ideas, now. I'm not like James or Bolton, those mad bastards who went above and beyond. I was a kid during the war, barely 20 and full of myself. My skin was more important than that of the unit — you know the civilian mindset. I don't think my ego got punctured enough to let in some serious self-sacrificing compassion until Dora.

In a way, this is easier. That's not to say that fighting man-eating tripods or crustacean invaders is a cakewalk, at all. It's like going up against tanks with a popgun. The movies in the big-city theaters don't capture it at all, got it? You can't imagine what it's like. If you

can't rely on your boys, you gotta haul ass. There's no random acts of heroism here. You try being targeted by a disintegration laser for the third time in a month and tell me you wouldn't fill your pants. The fight ain't fair. That's not to say it's impossible, these things are as mortal as us — we think, anyway. I don't know. I'm not one of those college-educated eggheads out in D.C., pulling these things apart and scribbling notes on little yellow notepads. My job is to neutralize, not analyze. It's just now, I don't have government consent. I'm a survivor, out in the field on my own.

All that being equal, though? It ain't a hell we created just for ourselves. These Things, whatever they are and whatever comes next, is a hell someone else imposed on us.

These are demons. They got teeth, they got claws, they got weird magical powers. I ain't ever seen them drag someone off to hell, but I've sure as hell seen them chewing people and tearing apart whole towns like it was nothing. If this ain't a punishment for the mishandling of the war in certain parts — and I think you know what I'm talking about, don't play dumb Mr. Brass — I don't know what is. Some of the Things are glowing and radioactive. If I wanted to say "Screw you, President Truman," I can't think of a better way.

Maybe this is a hell we created for ourselves, then? Maybe we woke the Things up, rattling around over here, flexing our muscles over and over. I don't know. It's my job to neutralize, not analyze.

Well, Stan, what would we need another hell for when we've already created one of our own?

I don't know, Rabbi Plaut. Seems we got one now, though.

All I can do is make sure our hell doesn't haunt anyone else. Even if I've got to do it on my own.

HEELS IN THE KITCHEN: ELAINE WICKETT

They'll never tell you, those shiny billboards with the smiling movie stars, but fighting aliens requires a lot of laundry in the aftermath. Laundry, and food, and other things the men say they can't do. They say it's demeaning; it's a woman's work. It's not all tanks and guns, you know. Someone has to make those bullets, and someone has to feed everyone in the fight. Sometimes, though, that fight comes to you — so I guess it's all right we were taught we have to be everything. Who else is going to do it?

If you plan on supporting your man and community without preparing, though, you're a flopping fish. The monsters don't spare us just because we're pretty or helpless. Especially not if we're pretty or helpless. This is a war, not a drive-in flick.

I founded the Women's Home Defense League after an incident on North First Street. It was in the early days, where the biggest boogeyman was the reds and not tentacle-things coming to eat your body and destroy your mind. We didn't have the public service announcements then, or the attack shelters. No one really knew what they were, beyond urban legends and occasional "masked intruders" or "mass hysteria." The tabloids said it was commies poisoning the water supply, then went on to talk about Marilyn Monroe's all-night parties. No one knew. That's how they almost got me.

One minute I was bending down to adjust my stockings, and the next I was upside down in the air. It grabbed me by the ankle and was looking at me with one single kaleidoscope eye. I froze in midair.

"Human?" It said, slowly, as though it were trying to choke the word out.

"Yes," I said. What else should I have said? I'm no Fay Wray.

"Woman?"

"Married," I said. I must have looked ridiculous, hanging in the air by my foot. The Thing didn't even have the courtesy to stop my skirt from flopping down around my waist.

"Woman. Yes," it said, almost thoughtfully. "We go."

It turned slowly with me in its... appendage? Tentacle? Tail? I don't know; I never really got a look at it. All I remember was the eye. The huge, swirling, gemstone eye.

Then it blinked.

All of my limbs came unstuck for that second. Was it hypnotizing me? I couldn't say for sure. All I know is that in that instant, I swung my free foot around into what I thought might be the Thing's face. It dropped me with an unceremonious yelp, sounding for all the world like an angry toddler who had just dropped their ice cream cone on the boardwalk.

"Woman!" it roared, as I picked myself up. "WOMAN!"

Well, I'd heard that from my dad and from other women's husbands before, and there was no way I was going to let myself be caught again. So I got to my feet and I ran.

There was a burst of light behind me, and a rush of heat that singed my hair. The paper later said I had escaped from a transformer exploding on the telephone pole. That was before, though, when we had no idea an invasion was coming, before their strange underwater crafts and the resurgence

of the oyster toad people. Did you know that fish people were a thing once? I certainly didn't, but they're back now, at least some of them, with their sour faces and their scale-dappled skin.

Anyway, just because the papers said I escaped an explosion unharmed doesn't mean that's what everyone thought. There were men from all sorts of government agencies calling for weeks after I made the police report. The FBI, the CIA, The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, and I think there might have even been a gentleman from the Department of Agriculture, but they all blend together. They all listened to my report, then smiled patronizingly, called me "little lady" and said they'd take care of it — but they always came back with more questions, and looking a little more frantic. There were more incidents, they said, and as the first confirmed failed abduction, maybe I'd have something useful to say.

I sure did. I asked why it was allowed to continue, why I hadn't known about this beforehand, and what I could do about it. Never mind me, what if it was my children? What if it was my neighbors' children next?

Acceptable civilian casualties, they said. Gives us time to plan and prepare. Besides, they could still be alive.

I stopped offering them coffee and cookies after that.

The commercials always say that once you're a housewife, you should be able to wear petticoats and pearls all day, clean the kitchen in high heels, have a snack ready for the children when they're home from school, a three-course meal for your husband when he comes home from work, and daintily sip the cocktails you live on as your reward. I think the commercial lifestyle works for all of us up until the end of the honeymoon. Some of us manage to keep it going until the first pregnancy.

I almost miss the Second World War and working on the home front

to help "the boys." No pearls and pumps back then! Working in factories and on farms didn't make us less of wives, though, did it? No one questioned us back then. We understood, then, that being a wife is making a commitment to protecting the home and hearth, whatever the cost. We fought too, in the Woman's Land Army and the Women's Army Corps, as nurses and cooks and pilots and laborers. We weren't afraid of getting dirty back then, when lives were on the line.

It wasn't hard to find other veterans of the women's war. We started as a small circle, at first, remembering our training and flexing our muscle memory. Word spread. It always does. The Women's Home Defense League grew out of my frustration with the way the men were handling the most vulnerable among us.

Some of the League members objected rather strenuously when the idea of including colored women came up. I reminded them of the 6888th and told them if they wanted to play at superiority, there were alien monstrosities right outside. They were more than welcome to exclude aquatepillars from their cocktail parties and public pools.

This was mostly in the beginning, before they made their presence really known. Don't think it hasn't stopped now that we know, though. Large groups of women have always made men nervous. Some of our training materials were used by the Department of Defense's home defense manuals — without accreditation. It was probably Helen who gave them to her bureaucrat husband, that snitch. She never did like how we suggested trousers and flat shoes for daily wear in a world of perpetual war.

As if that wasn't enough, now a housewife has to be able to dispatch aliens without getting her cocktail dress dirty. Hmph!

It's impossible.

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NOTICE:

Single man of modest means, early 40s, looking for a DIS-CREET companion in life. Must be in her 20s, no taller than 5'4", knockout legs and a dazzling smile. Blonde if possible. Must not want children. Prefer a good housekeeper, will tolerate good cook. No tramps, former models, or girls who went to secretary school. Can offer a garden, a comfortable house near the Main Line, and pin money. Contact Dick Steele through this paper if you're a swell girl who fits this description.

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**BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY:
BARTHOLOMEW "BART"
KANE**

When you're in my line of work, it's very easy to cut the Gordian knot of communism by simply saying that it came from brain-eating, ship-smashing alien monstrosities from the stars or at the bottom of the sea. Certainly, a lot of my fellow agents do. Senator McCarthy might, too. I don't pretend to know what was happening in that head of his prior to the clam incident.

I used to, I admit it. The Reds aren't people, you know? The Reds are monsters from the depths of the Soviet Union, drunk on vodka and incredibly vicious. Of course they were the ones sending Them after us. It had to be some new plot from Uncle Joe's house of horrors.

Slowly, that reversed. The things are intelligent — don't remind the CIA. They're still upset they didn't figure that out first. It was some peon from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics that figured it out. No one took them seriously until then. Now they get so much pork you'd think they were a

smokehouse. Maybe they are, but it's not like they're blowing that smoke up anyone's asses any more. Now they have information to bargain with.

Where was I? Sorry. There's so much.

It was a huge shock to the intelligence community when NACA presented their findings to the House Un-American Activities Committee. How were these things with one eye or masses of writhing tentacles or myriad other disgusting, slimy features intelligent, let alone aware? Wild theories began to surface. Of course they were intelligent — they were the Soviet puppet masters all along! Who else could have convinced millions of people that forced labor and famines were for the good of the state? Only aliens who wanted to consume the flesh of millions of innocent peasants, naturally. Maybe they controlled the Nazis, too. Maybe there were whole civilizations of Them. Maybe They didn't work together.

Maybe we weren't alone.

The Green Scare started with that phrase, I think. It must have been one of the CIA paranoiacs who brought it up. The idea of dozens, maybe hundreds, of countries under the sea flipped a switch that none of us could control after that. HUAC was always looking for fresh meat. Our list of warrants tripled overnight, suspected alien collaborators listed alongside suspected communists and homosexuals.

It was mostly procedural bull, of course. Elaine Wickett's Women's Home Defense League could not have possibly been considered a collaborating faction, but since the women were all encouraged to wear pants and keep their hair short, they were put on both the homosexual and alien sympathizer lists. I personally interviewed her, back before the WHDL became the force it is today. She just seemed fed up with all the attention. Do you know, there were Brussels sprouts in the oven when I came to call? There was no

way she or any of her girls should have been on that list.

No-brainers were a special case. We knew about pod people and possessions at this point. I think the aliens had caught onto us, because there was a disproportionate number of political dissidents who displayed symptoms of enhanced encephalomalacia — missing brain tissue. The bastards opened up their heads and chewed out their minds, then danced them around like sick marionettes. There wasn't much we could do but notify the families and write up field reports afterwards. No-brainers though, they already had a piece missing. They were too loud or too sick in the head or too inconvenient for someone else, so a doctor went into their head with an ice pick and took out a little bit of them. Not much, just enough to keep them quiet.

It turns out that that little bit was all They needed. No-brainers are much more susceptible to being taken over, but that comes with an unexpected risk for their captors. See, no-brainers still have bits of themselves inside their head. It's easier for Them to get in, because they don't have to chew up outer bits of the brain to get to the juicy center, but that makes it easier for the no-brainer to kick them out. As long as they still have that little bit of personality, that "indomitable spark of human will" or whatever you want to call it, they can cope with having one of those slimy devils in their head. Atlantic City's Jane Doe testified to playing host for at least three different possessor aliens over the course of five years. Do I believe her? Hell no, but it's not inconceivable that, instead of just kicking out something that's trying to control your mind, you'd develop a symbiotic relationship with it. Think double-agents. There's always something to get from both sides.

The CIA got hold of a no-brainer of their own, of course. They had to, sooner or later. I don't know what they're doing with that informant. I do know from a friend that the director has developed

an interest in mind-altering drugs. What a beatnik. Maybe he thinks he'll see into another dimension and finally locate the queen of all aliens.

They're not in another dimension. I keep saying this, and I keep being ignored. Do I know how they jump into other people's heads or phase through walls? No, sure don't, but 20 years ago, we didn't know the secret of atomic fire. There are more things in heaven, on earth, and in the seas, than we could ever dream of, and this is just the beginning.

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NOTICE:

Attractive single woman in her 20s looking for a mate. Must have good eyesight, all his hair and teeth, and a strong jaw. Looking in the Main Line and Germantown areas. No fishermen, please. T. C.

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**ONE FROSTY DOLL:
SARAH RAYNER**

It was a night at the Diamond State Drive-In. The usual, we got Alice's beater, got the girls together, and went out to see a stupid horror flick. No one really goes to the drive-in to see a movie, and if you think that, you're a total square. We parked right next to the boys in their pickup. Alice went off with Lou, pissing off Pat — she and Lou had been a thing. We all got switched around, and settled in. I found Jimmy so we could watch the submarine races during the previews. Jimmy and I were never an item, not really, but he was always good for some fun when I was between boys.

Part of the reason we were never an item is because I was always the one with the scratch. About 30 minutes or so into the flick, I went to go get popcorn. There's only so long you can suck someone's tongue before you get hungry for actual food. Jimmy sulked

a little bit, but I told him we could get handsy after I came back. Whatever. Call me easy, but he was a good time when he wasn't pouting like a kid.

Drive-ins outside of a car are creepy, let's be real. If you're a peeping tom, there's a lot to look at, but the kiddies' playground stands empty just under the screen like a skeleton and no one talks to you as you pass. It's like a city of corpses.

Luckily, I'm okay with being alone.

The line was pretty short when I got there. A couple of old folks, probably there to try to rekindle something, and freshmen from the high looking to get their first feel. Alice and Lou were a couple of people ahead of me in line, doing that goo-goo thing. Whatever. They're good for each other, I guess. She's on cloud nine whenever she's around him. They paid and moved off. I shuffled up in line.

There was a scuffling noise out in the darkness just beyond the ladies room. I saw Alice head that way a couple of minutes before. I thought they'd decided to neck in the darkness by the bathrooms to get a little more privacy. Gross, but ok. Whatever they want. I tried not to pay attention.

The scuffling got louder. Some of the folks in line looked over. I could see her shadow, but not his. There were some muffled noises from the darkness.

C'mon Alice, I thought. Be cool.

This wasn't like her. I'd stood guard for her little escapades before. She usually hid it better, and I wasn't needed. She wasn't the sort to flaunt her necking.

"Get off of me, you freak!"

That was my cue. I ducked out of line and ran for Alice's shadow, balling up my fists. I didn't want to have to deck some no-good creep, but if it was that or let him break into her cullottes, I'd rather break my hands first. Girls have to stick together, after all.

I rounded the corner, fully expecting Lou to be grabbing Alice while she shoved him away.

What I didn't expect was a vague shape, surrounded by a watery light, pinning her to the wall and moving towards her face. He seemed to slither, like a snake or an eel, and what might have been his mouth was full of broken, sharp teeth.

Well, I wasn't going to let that stop me, was I?

"Get the heck away from her!" I screamed, charging him.

I guess he wasn't used to girls sticking up for themselves. Maybe he shouldn't have picked on my gang. I cleaned his clock with a right hook. He staggered back, freeing Alice.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, just — watch out!"

What a good pal. I turned around and hit him again, putting him on the ground. I wish I hadn't worn my sneakers, because my pumps would have been better for stomping him, but I slammed my foot into his chest anyway. He made a disgusting squelch noise, like a platter of jellied tomatoes smashing on the ground.

"Stay down!" I snarled, kicking him in the head, then again for good measure. I didn't stop until he stopped moving.

"Let's go," I said, after a moment. Alice and I were both breathing heavily. "He was no good anyway."

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NOTICE: OBITUARY

Richard "Dick" Steele was found dead in his home on Sunday. A businessman with interests in the banking and oil sectors, Mr. Steele passed at the age of 53. The coroner's office is still trying to determine whether or not foul play was involved.

Mr. Steele is survived by a wife and four children.
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ATLANTIC CITY'S JANE DOE

We know what you're thinking. We always do.

You're thinking: How could she let this happen to herself? How could she not fight it?

We saw no point in fighting it. We are one being, two lonely people who found each other across the infinite abyss of oceans. We just happen to live in the same body now.

One of us was Phyllis Alexander, a very nice girl from a very nice small town. She was friends with a very nice woman, whose name she cannot recall. The nice woman tried to protect her from a not-so-nice partner, who thought she had ghosts in her brain. He didn't like the thoughts she had, so he shipped her to a facility where they remove those thoughts. Tap, tap! Oh she screamed, but they held her down and the bright silver knives went into her eyes, slicing out her mind and locking her inside herself.

The other was Il-ihā, a daughter of the ocean. She was beautiful and silver and sinuous. She swam through the currents, following her people's migration, until she was scarred by a fight with a beast. She fled, and was lost. There was no nice woman for Il-ihā, and she was trapped, flopping around in an unfamiliar landscape. Where would she go?

Phyllis reached out from her prison, and so Il-ihā reached out from her exile. They found each other, and became us. It was frightening for Phyllis, at first, allowing another to share her anatomical home. Il-ihā was not used to such a small space. It took time. It took effort.

It was worth it.

We were released from the facility soon after Phyllis's brain was cut. But we did not go home, not to the ocean nor to the not-so-nice husband in the south. Instead, we went east, to the coasts and the bright lights. A very nice bus driver took us there. We ended his sad existence as thanks.

Atlantic City! A beautiful name, isn't it? A very princess among cities, more beautiful than the coral caverns in the Deep Mountains. Her people are ugly, and small-hearted, and greedy, but their shadow makes the lights of the casinos shine that much brighter. Our first night in the city, we simply sat on the boardwalk and breathed in the salt air, watching the humans pass by in waves and herds.

It was in the casinos that we made our living. Apart, we couldn't have survived. Together, we are a force to be reckoned with. It started as pickpocketing, then cheating at cards so fast the dealer couldn't see, then seductions and robberies. They could never prove it, of course. We were too good.

We had a suite in the Chalford-Haddon hall, overlooking the water. That's where we watched the invasion of Atlantic City. None of Il-ihā's people came up on the shore. Sad! Phyllis tried to comfort her. We were sisters, then, we are closer now. We cannot be torn apart.

The Green Scare was our undoing. We were good. The FBI was better. We liked them, almost, they were much kinder than the men at the CIA. The FBI questioned us over coffee. The CIA tried to kidnap us, and almost succeeded several times.

We were undone by the FBI's promises of sanctuary. Oh, they delivered, with a little house in Ventnor City, just down the shoreline, and a stipend so that we would never want. We settled in, and lived a nice little life, in a nice little house, in a nice little city.

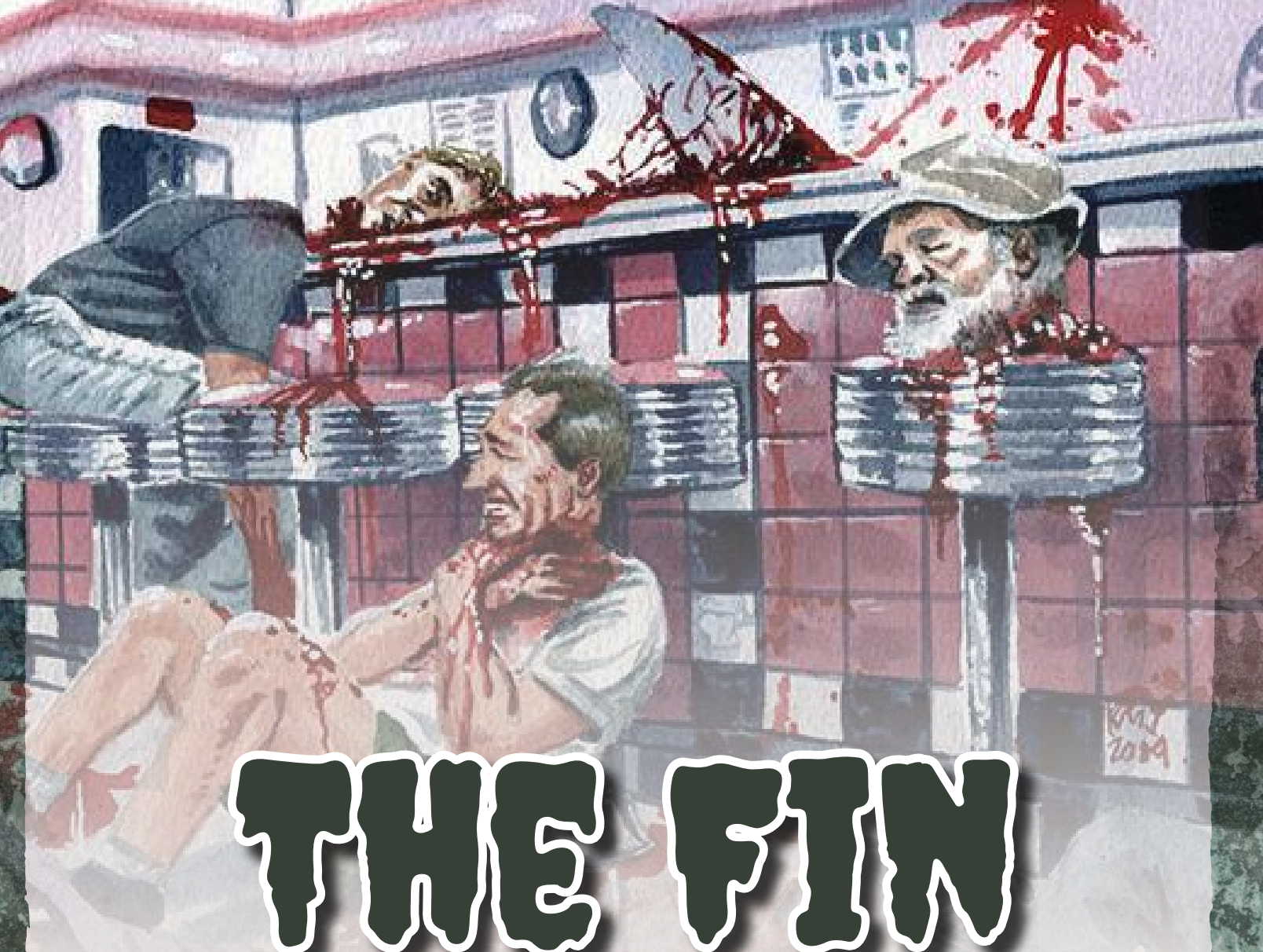
We're bored.

We're bored, don't you see? We were the queen of the boardwalk for the year, the queen of the princess of cities. We were feared! No one would cut or scar us ever again! We were powerful!

Now, we are under protection. Bah!

It is protection from us, not for us that they should want!

We want to be free!



THE FIN

The Loose Limpet was one of the finer seafood restaurants in Coastal City, so it came as a surprise that a horrible murder was committed there, as opposed to a chain like Captain Guppy's.

It happened in the wee hours as assistant head busboy Jep Feemer cleaned up after a night of exceptionally vigorous shellfish shucking. He had just dumped a pot of unwanted fish parts in the alley, according to stringent health department guidelines, when an ominous sliding sound caught his attention. Jep squinted, trying to see what might emerge from the darkness. When it did, he screamed. It was to be his last scream at a monster.

• • •

Government man Newcott Waikes of the Department of Touristry had seen repulsive leftovers in his line of work, but these seafood-re-

lated mutilations really took the crabcake. Six in three weeks, all in one city, seemed more than coincidence, and if tourists heading to the shore were robbed of their fine-dining privileges, well then he didn't even want to know an industry like that.

Newcott needed to consult an expert, and in this case renowned gastroceanographer Dr. Leeka Marl. Beyond the fact that all the victims were killed by something sharp and fishy, she needed more evidence, so it was decided the two would go undercover as typical tourist couple, the Mottersons, and take in Coastal City's seafood restaurants.

They started at Tres Bon Squid, which Newcott figured meant the Happy Squid, and went with several interesting choices, including the popular flaming eel and chocolate-covered clam.

They tried several more over the next few nights. All was quiet if filling until they

dined at the Diamond Barnacle. After trying half the menu, including the clubbed salmon and muscle-capped herring, they decided to head back and compliment the chef.

They opened the kitchen door and immediately froze. There, impossibly, was what appeared to be a shark passing by on the other side of the counter. They quickly saw it was not a shark beyond the counter, but a single fin, atop the counter.

It slid with a repulsive squishy sound on the part at which it had been dismembered. The entire kitchen staff lay sprawled, hacked to pieces by the rampant fish part.

Newcott drew his government-issue Department of Touristry automatic (the Sightseer 26) and blasted away, but the beast's hide resisted. It jumped to the floor and scooted toward them with a piercing scream like a buzz saw. Newcott and Leeka parted just in time as the finny horror flung itself between them and into the restaurant. They dashed after it, but it smashed through the glass of the front door and into the night, so abruptly a nearby diner spat oysters.

• • •

Dr. Leeka Marl had identified the culprit as the detached fin of a particularly large sawshark (pristiophoridae). Better still, she had retrieved a sample that she could study and run tests on. And there was no more satisfying scientific monster-hunting coup than studying and running tests on something.

Leeka was able to determine, somehow, that the rogue fin had been processed at Slim Chance Seafood, a plant on the outskirts of the city, run by a man named Cartorn Hippens.

• • •

Newcott and Leeka approached an ominous facility overlooking the ocean. They saw no workers in evidence which seemed odd for such a large structure. Inside the entryway they were met by a thin bespectacled woman, Miss Goods, who offered to give them the tour.

She proceeded to take them to an enormous processing room with bubbling vats and then turned to them and said, "Well, there it is, thank you for coming."

"I'm afraid to tell you, Miss Goods," said Newcott, "we're here on official business though I'm not really afraid."

Miss Goods stammered that they'd need to make an appointment with Mr. Hippens who was

presently unavailable. A sudden noise from somewhere startled her.

"That sounded like something falling over," offered Leeka.

"Things are always falling over in the seafood industry," said Goods. Then she cried out at another noise. "You must go. You fools. Don't you see? Before it's too late." And with that the terrified woman bolted, her footsteps echoing among the vats.

Newcott and Leeka had no intention of leaving and crept among the big vats in the dim light from the very high windows.

A shrill cry cut the air. Miss Goods. Followed by a familiar squishy sound. Newcott and Leeka rushed to find her dead, an elderly man crouched beside her.

• • •

In his office, haunted fish processor Cartorn Hippens explained his obsession that led to the monster he'd created.

"It's time I unburdened myself of this. Long had I dreamed of the perfect canned seafood Fish parts that could move of their own volition."

"How is that a good thing?" asked Leeka.

"I finally achieved it using the fin of a sawshark. It was able to move about, to destroy."

"Still not sure of the reasoning but please continue," muttered Newcott.

"I soon realized how wrong I'd been. The fin my brainchild was the fin of my own subconscious. It took revenge on fancy restaurants it perceived to be my enemy. Now, even I can't control it."

Suddenly there was a loud bang on the door.

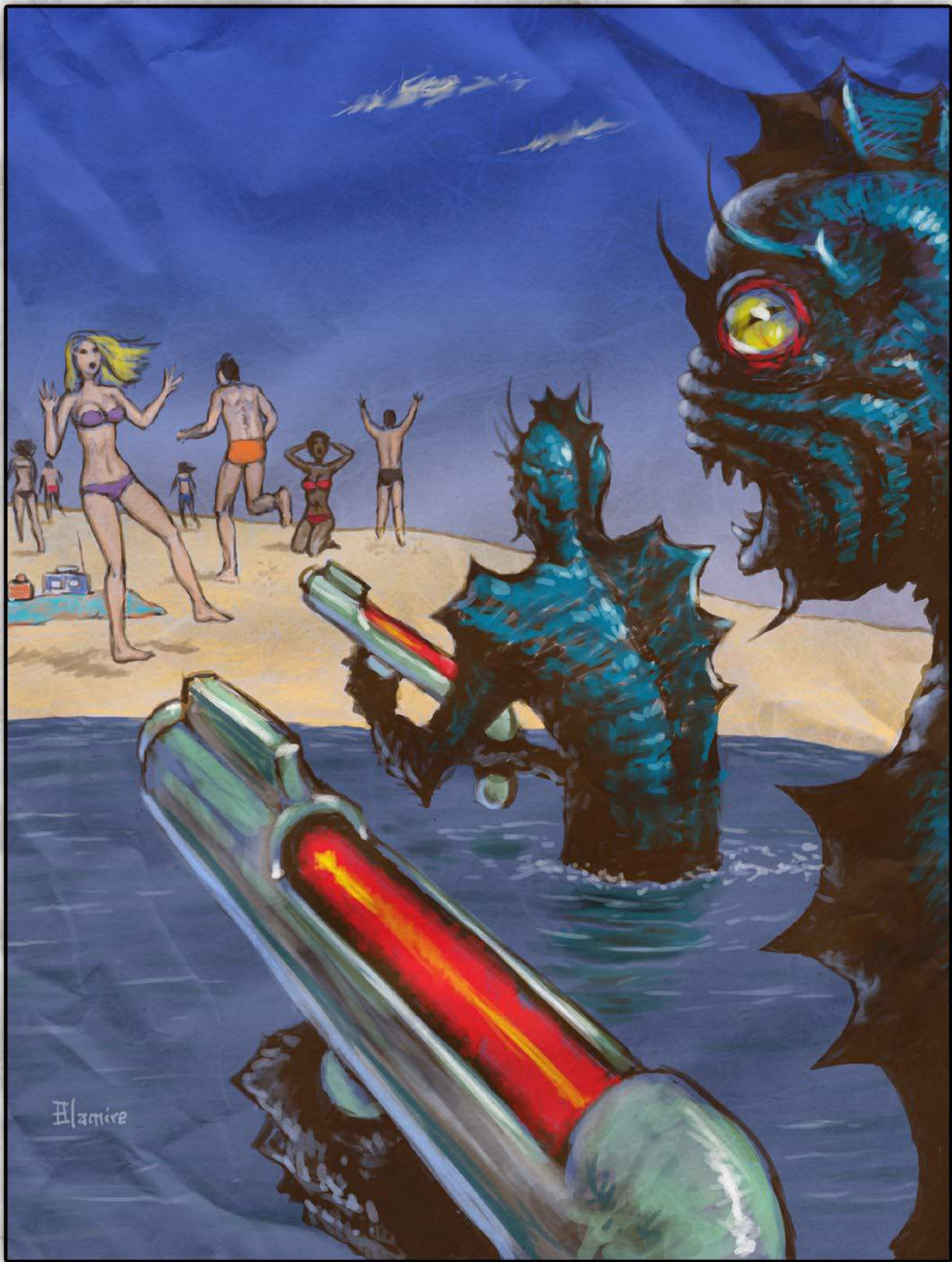
"It's coming to destroy you," said Cartorn. "It perceives you as enemies. There is no way to stop it."

"There might be one way," said Leeka, mixing several vials the talented gastroceanographer brought with her. "This is a powerful, fast-acting tartar sauce that just might do the trick."

With a smash, the door caved, and in flew the horrific fin. It landed on the floor and began inching its way towards Leeka and her vial.

Before it could reach her, Cartorn Hippens grabbed the vial, doused himself liberally with sauce and lunged at the fin.

It was a terrible sight, fin and creator; the latter perished in a frenzy of cuts while the former dissolved, destroyed by the basic enemy of all seafood.



H/amive

CHAPTER EIGHT

THREATS

"Suppose that saucer or whatever it was had something to do with this?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Larry. One thing's sure. Inspector Clay is dead. Murdered. And somebody's responsible."

- Patrolman Larry to Lieutenant Johnny Harper, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959)

Into every compelling narrative some tension must fall. The heroes, setting foot upon the stage of story, must face a challenge greater than themselves, or sometimes within themselves. The protagonist versus some intrinsic flaw in their own inner nature is one of the fundamental building blocks of narrative. So, too, is the valiant defender against an external threat. Supplication and deliverance, rivalry and vengeance, pursuit and daring enterprise, misfortune and disaster, love and self-sacrifice, all of these themes form one of the foundations of the plot.

The other corner of the foundation is the antagonists, which in this case are the *They* in the title of our enterprise. Much of both the drama and the humor of the stories to be played out upon the sound stage derives from these beings: the alien creatures from beneath the waves, the strange and previously unknown beings whose goals and ambitions for the surface world, and the human race, will likely form the core of any conflict. *They* are as many as, well, there are fishes in the sea, with their own forms, their own objectives, their own powers, and their own technologies.



THREATENING HEALTH

Unlike your characters, threats do not incur Injuries. Aliens just have Health, and the number of Health Points an alien possesses reduces when damaged. When an alien reaches 0 Health, it either dies or lies prone, depending on the Director's preference and the manner by which it was attacked.

They are all divided into several types — Destroyers, Enslavers, Invaders, Primordials, Spies, and other, more Terrestrial threats. Below you will find *Them* in all their scaly, web-fingered, slime-trailing, betentacled glory.

DESTROYERS

Destroyers are the most physically powerful of all the alien types either naturally, due to their enormous size or their gifts of biological weaponry, or by design, mechanical beasts constructed by physically less-impressive aliens to wreak havoc on their enemies. Many of these creatures are fundamentally mindless, rendered aggressive and perilous to others by the manipulations and technologies of more intelligent creatures. Those that are, themselves, intelligent are among the most dangerous of their kind, capable of precisely directed violence and absolute carnage unimaginable by lesser beings.

Destroyers exist in fundamental opposition to Survivors, individuals who have been forged in the fires of conflict and violence.

Survivors gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Destroyers.

Destroyers gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Survivors.

AQUATEPILLARS

"It's okay everyone! It's just a bunch of dwarfs in a pantomime costume. Wait, wait! It's eating me! Oh God!" -Transmission received by the Denton Coastguard

One of humankind's first exposures to monsters from the deep came in the form of the aquatepillar. Awful creatures possessed of monstrous hungers, they struggle up from the sea and shamle onto beaches, at which point their hunt for food begins. They devour whatever they can find, from plants to more meaty options. Aquatepillars can eat and eat, working through a herd of cattle in less than an hour, leaving behind nothing but piles of foul-smelling excreta and a few undigested bells.

Aquatepillars come in a variety of shades and sizes, ranging from 10 feet in length and three feet in diameter to up to 30 feet in length and a thick 12 feet in diameter. They come equipped with thin, hair-like bristles on their bulbous bodies, their skin ranging in color from vibrant greens to ill yellows. Some resemble great, pulsating maggots, translucent white with black at the tip. Though scientists hypothesize as to the reasons behind color variation, guessing at region of origin or status in the aquatepillar herd, the days of study are still nascent.

Though aquatepillars lack visible eyes or nostrils, they seem able to sense living things, both flora and fauna. They charge their intended food while gurgling like an emptying drain, which some scientists assume implies a form of echolocation, but their charge is not particularly quick, with top speed on land recorded as up to

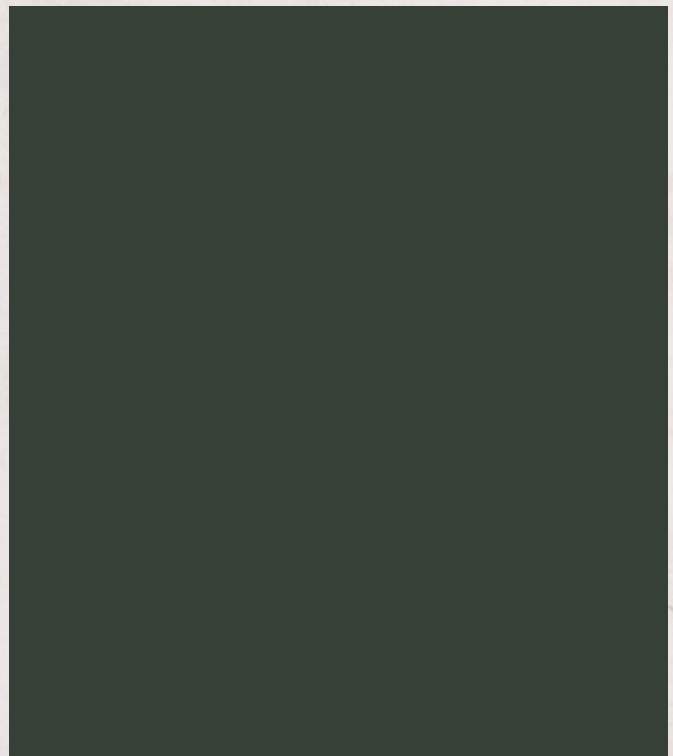
an unsustainable 20 miles per hour. Motor vehicles are an effective form of evasion when these creatures attack, but running away is only possible if the victim has more stamina than the aquatepillar, which usually drops down to around 10 miles per hour after 20 seconds of charging.

The trait victims find most terrifying about aquatepillars is their relentlessness. Once they select a victim, they do not stop until they feed, are destroyed, or are harmed sufficiently to drive them back into the sea. Touching them is a hazard, however. Their fine hairs irritate and blister the skin of any living creature in contact with them, with repeated exposure causing paralysis.

Aquatepillars only need to brush a target a few times before the victim slows and the aquatepillar snuffles over their paralyzed form, eating them pound by pound.

Alarmingly, aquatepillars possess great speed in the water, their bodies undulating and expelling liquid to create a form of jet power enabling them to up their speeds to faster than many boats. Tales tell of them ramming boats to topple the inhabitants into the sea, while rarer stories of their smashing through hulls exist in some briny dockside pubs.

To date, no human has seen an aquatepillar take cocoon form and emerge as a new creature, throwing their moniker into doubt. While some human scientists maintain the closest analogue to



these creatures is the land-born caterpillar, no reputable laboratory has sought the capture of an aquatepillar to observe a transformation. Popular consensus is to destroy the aquatepillar before something like this could happen.

No aquatic creatures enjoy the company of aquatepillars, as these monsters eat anything, whether Glowing People, Gill-kin, or anything unfortunate enough to get in their way. The Suspended detest aquatepillars as they are one of the few threats to not be affected by Suspended slime. In fact, they enjoy the consumption of this ooze.

GOALS

The goals of aquatepillars are simple: consumption and metamorphosis. Unintelligent to human minds, this species of crawling, slithering creatures has communicated nothing more detailed to its prey.

STORY HOOK

After a spate of disappearances and eyewitness accounts, Tumbleton puts itself on high alert against the aquatepillar menace. When a few plucky heroes track these creatures to their shorefront lair, however, they find an injured aquatepillar trying to care for its larvae. It looks at them sadly, snuffling and shaking in fear.

SYSTEM

The stats below reflect an “average” sized aquatepillar. The Director should adjust these stats in either direction for a larger or smaller one.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Setae: Aquatepillars have thousands of bristling hairs along the lengths of their bodies. When living creatures touch these setae, their skin becomes itchy. Prolonged exposure can even lead to paralysis. Roll three dice against the touched character’s Stamina. On a success, the protagonist suffers an increased Difficulty on all actions until the area can be thoroughly cleansed. More severe effects appear as Complications, though they may affect supporting characters instantly for dramatic effect.

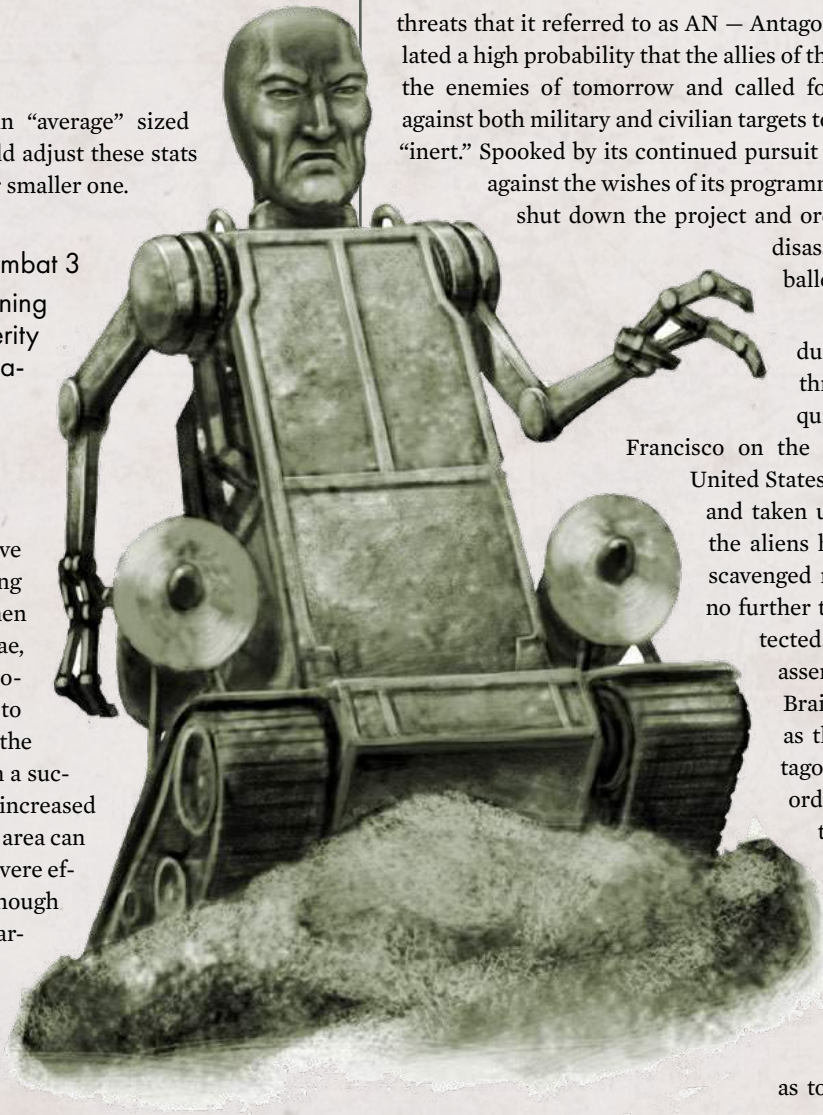
BRAINBOX

“They don’t feel anything, they don’t care if you live or die. They’re hard to kill, impossible to understand. And if you’re in their way they’ll sweep you aside in the most efficient way possible. All that was left of my unit were bodies and the strange urge to buy my groceries at Harlow’s Stores.” –Private Shane Thomas, Rifle Security Company Pearl Harbor, 25th Infantry, US Army

DTX-157, Codenamed “Brainbox,” was initially designed to perform codebreaking work during World War II and was later repurposed as a so-called “Thinking Machine” to make real-time tactical and long-term strategic analysis. Its creator, Dr. Theodore Montfils, was known to have almost a paternal relationship with it. Lab assistants described him talking to it at night during late shifts fine tuning its tumblers and dials. He fitted it with a harmonic resonator to allow it to talk back to add a vocal component to the calculations it made on its viewscreen.

Following the end of the war, Defense Technologies at first attempted to repurpose Brainbox as an advertising analyzer, hoping to use it to turn a profit from burgeoning American Corporations. However, even as they reprogrammed it, they grew concerned at the continued recommendations of Brainbox, to annihilate the threats that it referred to as AN — Antagonist Nations. It calculated a high probability that the allies of the time would become the enemies of tomorrow and called for preemptive strikes against both military and civilian targets to render those threats “inert.” Spooked by its continued pursuit of a military strategy, against the wishes of its programmers, the Government shut down the project and ordered Brainbox to be disassembled and moth-balled.

Unfortunately, during a raid by an alien threat on the San Joaquin facility near San Francisco on the Pacific Coast of the United States, Brainbox was stolen and taken undersea. What plans the aliens had for the tech they scavenged remains unknown, as no further trace of them was detected. They managed to reassemble and reprogram Brainbox to see their race as the new Primary Protagonist Nation. On its orders, they are known to have scavenged the sites of multiple key naval battles in both the Pacific and Atlantic Theaters. Conjecture among intelligence services as to what they were do-



ing with the salvaged tech was confirmed when the first robotic beings surfaced off the coast of Hawaii and picked Pearl Harbor base clean of large amounts of salvage and military equipment. They appeared from inside retrofitted infantry barges, redesigned for submarine transport, and attacked with upgraded versions of the Navy's own weapons tech. The mainstay design rolled into the armories on tank treads while other variants sprouted propellers from the top of their chassis and took to the air. Each wore a pink constructed human face, contorted into a frown. Broadcasting via the resonator fitted to each unit, DTX-157 sent a chilling message to the world: "We claim this technology for the PPN, all who resist shall be rendered inert... So, don't delay! Get down to the Smokey Mule BBQ, just off State Route 1 near Dana Point, San Diego!"

The automatons made off with an arsenal of weaponry and ammunition in that raid. With it, it is assumed DTX-157 is attempting to create a new army to defeat the ANs. It seems that title encompasses all of humanity. Brainbox and its metallic minions have either exterminated or subjugated the aliens that attempted to control it and seized their undersea facilities in the North Pacific. Scout subs have also picked up one huge blip at the center of its compound. Though no boats have returned, the imaging they returned shows something huge being built around the central core. Brainbox is building itself a body capable of wielding the firepower of a battleship with the intelligence and drive of a cold, unfeeling machine. All it needs is enough raw materials to construct enough automata to challenge the armies of the world. When its calculations indicate a high chance of victory, it will strike, wearing its contorted approximation of a human face.

GOALS

Brainbox's goal is to pacify the entire human race and repopulate the Earth with its machine soldiers in preparation for the inevitable wars with those below, or beyond.

STORY HOOK

The Coast Guard in San Francisco have reported sighting trundling vehicles coming ashore late at night and disgorging one or two robot scouts from their bellies before submerging once again. Governor Swinburne may be appealing for calm, but he's reached out to several government agencies for a discreet investigation into what the tinmen are up to, even going so far as to allow the deputization of regular citizens who want to help.

SYSTEM

Brainbox is served by the robotic soldiers it constructs in its undersea base. These vary between the tank-treaded infantry units, armed with built-in machine guns and armored against attack, and the lighter air units, which use head-mounted propellers to fly in a similar fashion to modern helicopters. Both types patrol the areas to which they are assigned, searching for signs of life, barking out orders from Brainbox and, occasionally, advertisements for Ma Slater's latest line of soup.

Infantry and air units can attack at a range up to 800 feet with their chest-mounted machine guns or can grasp at and strike enemies with mechanical hands.

INFANTRY UNIT

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Technology 2, Command 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 6

AIR UNIT

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Technology 2, Pilot 2, Command 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 5

AUTOMATA SPECIAL RULES

(Automata) The Hive: All units connected to Brainbox use its Social Attributes as well as its Intellect as they are part of a hive mind. If the unit is disconnected from Brainbox by damaging its transceiver, the unit reverts to Intellect 0, loses all Social Attributes and simply pursues whatever its last directive was regardless of changing circumstances. The transmitter is located on the "head" of each unit and can be hit with any attack at Difficulty 3.

(Automata) "Malfunction! Activate Self-Repair!": Automata can forego a turn to roll Technology + Intellect to self-repair any damage taken to a maximum of 2 Health per turn. This action cannot be taken if their hive connection is broken.

BRAINBOX

Brainbox has constructed a huge, metallic frame to carry it into battle. Standing on between two and eight piston-like legs, it is equipped with forward-facing, long-range cannons from salvaged World War II era battleships emerging from its back and is flanked by infantry unit pods at the spaces between its legs along its chassis, able to fire in all directions. It strides like a chrome colossus into battle, leaving behind monstrous footprints and implanting a desire to check your tires for signs of wear this winter with its bizarre, schizophrenic vocalizations. It bears the face of a giant, unhappy man.

Skills: Aim 4, Close Combat 3, Intimidation 5, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 7; Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Health: 15

BRAINBOX SPECIAL RULES

(Brainbox) "IT'S HUGE!": Brainbox's construct is gargantuan and its slow, clumsy steps can crush a protagonist into pulp. Any character unfortunate enough to be caught under its stomping feet can be killed in an instant by its massive Might, and hand-wielded weapons have no effect against it. A character who gets close enough to the construct to be stepped on must make a successful Athletics + Dexterity roll at Difficulty 3, with an added Complication of 2 for Brainbox's size. If the character doesn't avoid the attack, they suffer a Condition for the remainder of the story, representing a crushed limb.

(Brainbox) Electromagnetic Burst: Brainbox can disable all electronic devices within a single mile of its location once but must then return to its hub to recharge this ability for a second use. This power nullification subsides after the scene ends, or whenever the Director deems appropriate.

(Brainbox) "Malfunction! Activate Self-Repair!": Brainbox can forego a turn to roll Technology + Intellect to self-repair any damage taken to a maximum of 5 Health per turn.

(Brainbox) Massive: Brainbox is a giant and counts as Scale 5 for all physical encounters.

KING SEA SERPENTS

"I tell you, it weren't no snake, officer. Thing looked as long as a football field, and had quills down its back as long as my arm! You tell me exactly what kind of snake that's supposed to be?" – Clive "Clitus" Tully, truck driver

Although the iguanoids consider themselves peaceful, they understand that terrors live under the water. Some, like the anuradons, can be controlled, but others are simply mindless monstrosities. The aquatepillars have proven to be a particularly dangerous monster. The rampaging beasts have destroyed several cryostasis centers, murdering thousands of iguanoids through brutal, mindless violence. Aquatepillars have no natural predator anywhere in the world, so the remaining iguanoids have used their super-science to create an artificial one: The king sea serpents.

These giant serpents resemble snakes, but only in the sense that they are long tubes of muscles with no legs. Beyond that, the differences disappear. The largest king sea serpent is several hundred feet long, and able to wrap its body around an entire colony of aquatepillars — or a human shipping vessel. It has a row of spikes running down its back, with webbing between each spike, that helps it navigate particularly choppy waters. And a king sea serpent's maw can open wide enough to eat an aquatepillar whole. An iguanoid uses a command crown — a metallic headband of neuro-pathic circuitry — to command each king sea serpent.

As recent creations of the iguanoids, the king sea serpents still have a few problems. Most notably, a serpent's brain is relatively simple, and occasionally it gets confused by the iguanoids' commands unless the task is incredibly easy. Further, it has a highly sensitive danger sense, so anything remotely threatening might be attacked — even a distracted iguanoid controller. Final-

ly, its fearsome appearance makes it seem like a threat to anyone who witnesses it. More than a few humans and anuradons have attacked king sea serpents, thinking them a threat.

GOALS

King sea serpents don't have goals and objectives of their own. When commanded by an iguanoid controller, the king sea serpent follows its directives... as long as it can understand them. Otherwise, it defaults to normal animal activity: hunt, eat, and sleep.

STORY HOOK

Old Jack is out in his rainbow-colored rowing boat with Sailor Sue and his dog, Salty, when a roiling monstrosity topples the vessel and snatches both humans beneath the waves. Salty's frantic paddling bark alerts a nearby ice cream seller on the seafront, who in turn runs to the nearest watering hole, dropping cones, flakes, and vanilla ice cream as she goes. "Please!" she cries, to the assembled drinkers. "The Rainbow has gone down with all hands! It's another king sea serpent attack!"

SYSTEM

All king sea serpents are much the same — while there are only a handful in the whole world, each of them was made by the same iguanoid technology.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 11

SPECIAL RULES

Large Beast: The king sea serpent is larger than most marine animals. It counts as Scale 3 for all physical encounters.

Controllable: As long as a sentient creature (including a human) is wearing an iguanoid command crown, any king sea serpents within two miles must follow the wearer's mental commands. However, the commands must be simple — generally no more than two or three words, like “attack the ship” or “defend me.” If two or more command crowns attempt to control the same king sea serpent, or if one is given a complex command, the creature will go into a rage, thrashing and attacking everything nearby until it can escape into deeper waters.

ROBOT SHARKS

“There I was, grabbing a few waves on my surfboard, when I saw this fin, you dig? It's not the first time I've surfed in shark-infested waters, but last I checked there weren't any sharks this close to the shore. So I check, just to make sure, and I notice that there's something... wrong about it, you dig? Something metallic. I didn't stick around. Probably some freaky military thing.” – Melanie Dunne, (ex) surfer

As the robot race (p. XX) continues its nefarious schemes by exploring and reporting on the state of our world, they discovered a need for literal war machines; creatures that would protect their watery time vessel, scaring off curious humans without revealing the robot people's true intentions — in order to preserve the timeline before the opportune time to strike. After a careful study of



the Earth's marine life (all of it had been destroyed by 3000 AD), it was decided the shark would be the best form for these aggressive monstrosities to take.

However, humanity could subvert a mere mechanical creation. They were limited to the technology available to them in their time-travel ship, and any automata built with contemporary machinery were only loyal to the hand holding their controlling device. No, these robot sharks needed to be completely devoted to the cause of the robot people, cannibalized from the resources and parts they had available from the technology of the year 3000. So, the most aggressive and fanatical robots were approached. They were told they would become the vanguard of robot warfare, in complete control of these new weapons of destruction. Their pleasure circuits hummed with pride as they marched, one by one, to the production line.

There, every robot patriot's body was broken. Their heads were cracked, their joints snapped, and their minds forced into new, stronger shark forms built from their own circuits and diodes. No mere automata, the robot sharks are vicious, loyal, and utterly insane.

A robot shark can operate in water as shallow as one foot or dive down hundreds of feet. It has constant communication with the nearest robot people base of operations, able to broadcast what it sees and hears with very little delay. Due to their shape and composition, they look like normal sharks (if a little large) to radar and sonar — it's only through a visual inspection that the robotic nature of the shark is revealed. By then, it is too late.

As former robot people, robot sharks do have a mind of their own. However, the process of robo-conversion destroys much of their higher cognition, including their speech centers. Robot sharks replace their destroyed speech centers with a sonic cannon lurking in their mechanical gullet.

GOALS

Robot sharks rarely have their own goals, preferring instead to receive orders and directions from robot people. However, robot sharks out of contact with the robot people for too long start to hear voices. These insane monstrosities end up following their new “orders,” no matter how illogical or extreme.

STORY HOOK

The responsible scientific community said it was a mistake to put an experimental lab at sea, but the more “eccentric” members of that order brushed the criticism aside, erecting a series of laboratories on an offshore rig, away from government censorship or scrutiny. Transmissions from the lab were common until one week ago, when the manic, cackling voice of Herr Doctor Professor Johnson announced in a broadcast to the coastline that the robot sharks were seizing the platform, and all humanity was doomed! No radio signals have emerged since, and the military are pointedly remaining aloof regarding the matter.

SYSTEM

Each robot shark is an individual brutally reformed into a new body. Their statistics vary widely, but these figures sum up their average lethality.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Survival 1, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 4; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Remote Communication: Everything the robot shark experiences can be transmitted back to the robot people via sonar waves. This only works underwater, however – if the robot shark is somehow brought or forced onto land, the communication ends.

Built-In Sonic Cannon: The robot shark can extend its jaw, allowing a hidden sonic cannon to extend. The sonic cannon counts as a +2 Enhancement to ranged attacks, but only while in the water. On land, the sonic cannon is not as effective, only acting as a +1 Enhancement.

THE SHARK CLANS

“Josie and I made the mistake of laughing at them. We thought they were stupid costumes. I guess the laughter stopped when the thing bit Josie in half.. Still, it looked stupid.” – Jerry Champion, survivor of a shark clan attack and beach bum

“The Shark Clans” is the collective term for the half-human, half-shark monstrosities who prowl the waves in packs, looking for their next meal. They have no uniform appearance, other than “bizarre.” Some have a shark head on top of a human body and need to turn their whole bodies to talk. Some simply have shark skin on a human body. Some are sharks with human eyes instead of their normal dead, black ones. Some look closer to Atlantoids, with big eyes and hidden gills. Whatever they look like, they are often heavily scarred and tattooed. Some clans use these for deep and important meaning. Some just think they look pretty.

The shark clans are not terribly complicated. They bite, they fight, and they feed. They are always moving, and always bad-tempered. Occasionally, they join up with the Atlantoids to fight their mutual enemies: the Glowing People. Shark clansfolk do not keep slaves – they only slow the clan down. As they have been made slaves themselves, they feel the need to rectify this humiliation.

Most clansfolk are uninterested in humans – but beware those from shark-fishing waters. Those whose shark pets or cousins (it’s unclear what relationship the shark clans have with their less-intelligent kin) were scooped up by fishermen hold a deep grudge, and overturn boats and destroy limbs if given half a chance.

The biggest question concerning the shark clans is their genesis. Without doubt, these creatures resemble Doctor Moreau-style abominations, crafted in some wicked laboratory or by a



capricious god. The shark clans snap into anger whenever confronted about their past, however, so the truth may never become known. For now, the local legend runs up and down the Pacific islands of healthy adults kidnapped from boats, only to return with a fin, gills, or rubbery skin that resembles a poor attempt at a pantomime costume.

GOALS

Not many. The shark clans fight over territory, resources, mates, and little else. Occasionally they'll band together to overturn a boat or carve out an iceberg as a breeding ground in the spring.

STORY HOOK

It's probably their own damn fault, but someone needs to go and rescue them. A bunch of youngsters thought it'd be fun to steal a boat and party at night in shark-infested waters, like you do. Worryingly, neither the boat nor its crew has returned the following morning, compelling the town to dispatch anyone capable of navigating the seas to find the lost teens. Such a mission would be typical Coast Guard stuff, but for the talk of a shark the size of a bus, with no tail but two kicking human legs protruding from its torso. "Toothy," as it's known, has a bounty of \$200 on its head.

SYSTEM

When confronted, clansfolk will bull-rush their target with little thought for their own safety or that of their kinsmen. Retreat is not an option. They fight with teeth and primitive weapons, and gladly wear any scars they receive as battle trophies. Dead clansfolk are left to float where they died, a sort of water burial.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Command 2, Integrity 1, Medicine 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 12

SPECIAL RULES

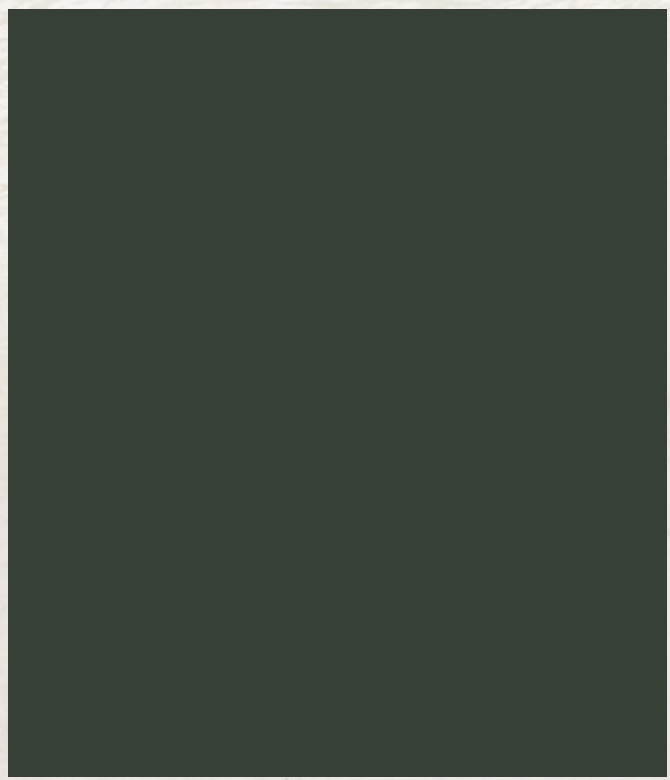
Charge!: When attacking in a group of at least three, clansfolk gain the equivalent of a trivial Enhancement (see p. XX).

Bite!: A bite attack always does Piercing damage. Additionally, when in a grapple, a shark clansfolk can Increase Damage (p. XX) even if they're not in control.

Shark Attack!: For a single round, the shark clansfolk's eyes go totally black and she freezes. All of her damage for the next three rounds is Deadly in addition to Piercing.

TEENAGE SHRIMP

"He was, like, my boyfriend and stuff, and then he ate bad shrimp, and he was all like killing people and stuff, then I got all scienced up, man, and brought him back to life, which was cool, but



then I made him giant cause it seemed like a good thing at the time, but now I'm not so sure. Ya get me?" – Rosty Newlar, art major and scientist in training, Coastal City, USA

Teenage Shrimp was originally Nyllon Tines, a troubled and aggressively antisocial teenager in black leather motorcycle jacket and tight jeans who managed a good trick: He was both an insider and outsider at the same time — a rebel who was not cool. He defied the short stature that brought him the unfortunate nickname "Shrimp," by being as tough and surly as he could; stealing hub-caps, cheating on exams, smoking. But none of it seemed to help.

Then one night he impulsively ate a radioactive shrimp that caused him to become something of a wereshrimp at every high tide — a black-leather-jacketed shrimp monster who would seek out and destroy his high school enemies whom he perceived as tormenters. He would lurk in an alley then jump out, freezing the person with his startling appearance. Horrible feelers on his monster shrimp face would extend and grotesquely feel around the shocked victim's face, then sting it in various places, injecting poison that would quickly drop his prey. The same feelers he would then try to instinctively comb back in typical teen manner.

Newspapers dubbed him "Teenage Shrimp" and the name stuck. Killings went on until finally, despite the efforts of a sympathetic science teacher and his outsider girlfriend Rosty Newlar, Teenage Shrimp was cut down in a hail of bullets.

Out of love, the formerly disconnected Rosty threw herself into science and succeeded in resuscitating Teenage Shrimp, and then, when Coastal City was threatened by the enormous octopus monster Centopus, she also managed to make him giant size to combat the threat. He managed to defeat the monster and was briefly celebrated as a hero. Back to normal, Nyllon tried to fit in at first and it went fairly well for a time. But he could not withstand the pull of the antisocial ways that nurtured him and he soon re-

verted. The natural resentment built into the moody angst-ridden teen was destined to emerge again and again as Teenage Shrimp.

Now he is something of a triple threat: Nyllon by day, Teenage Shrimp by night, and Giant Teenage Shrimp at seemingly random times. His high tide attacks are becoming more and more uncontrollable. Once again, just as he did against his high school enemies, the leather-jacketed fiend is jumping unsuspecting people from alleys. Only this time it's anybody.

Realizing he's back to his old tricks, not wanting to implicate the devoted Rosty, Nyllon ditches her and goes on the run: one of his few selfless acts of humanity — perhaps one of his last. Undertaking a series of disguises, he's almost constantly on the move, one step ahead of the authorities trying to solve the "Teenage Shrimp Murders."

Adding to this is the annoying complication that he can become Giant Teenage Shrimp at any given time. While the reasons for this are unknown, theories have been put forth that the trigger for his sudden growth may be powerful emotions, the presence of certain gases in the air or something that didn't agree with him. When he grows giant, fortunately his clothes do also, presenting the spectacle of a motorcycle-jacketed giant in jeans with a loathsome shrimp face. It is also at this stage that he is farthest from his Nyllon Tines persona, unable to recognize even his beloved Rosty. In giant mode he stands somewhere around 50 feet tall; a standard giant monster size since *The Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* and *The Amazing Colossal Man*.

Neither Teenage Shrimp nor Giant Teenage Shrimp is capable of human speech, and as Nyllon he just barely manages.

GOALS

Teenage Shrimp's immediate impulse in giant size is stalking through the city, stomping on things, crushing cars and people as well as lifting and tossing them. It's as though Teenage Shrimp's antisocial resentment towards people, born in Nyllon, becomes amplified on a large scale. All-out destruction is the only way to go, man.

STORY HOOK

As if the threat of Nyllon weren't bad enough, an entire clique of obnoxious jocks at the local school have decided they want to replicate the malcontent's mutation. The boys say they're going to change their forms so they can be heroes and fight back against the Teenage Shrimp, but anyone who knows the bullies knows they're just in it for the power. They already have the rotten seafood and one of their dads works at a nearby military base that just happens to contain a plutonium core. Can the idiots be stopped before a small army of Teenage Shrimp rampage across the land?

SYSTEM

Originally the result of freak radiation, this wereshrimp lurks among us as an antisocial teen whose transformations at high tide turn him into a black-leather-jacketed monster, preying on humankind, as well as a giant rampaging version of same at any given time. Though aware of his affliction, Nyllon Tines has come to somewhat accept it with a complex mixture of dread, guilt, and grim satisfac-

tion as he eventually gives in to his base need for revenge against the mankind that tormented the teen, at least in his mind. The stats below indicate his Giant Teenage Shrimp state, his normal-sized wereshrimp strength and fortitude being somewhat less.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Culture 2, Humanities 2, Integrity 2, Persuasion 1, Science 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Health: 12

SPECIAL RULES

Fast-Acting Poison: Teenage Shrimp depends on a loathsome array of feelers and stingers extending from his shrimp face that can reach out, feel his prey (usually a human face), and sting it with fast-acting poison. This is his primary weapon, afflicting victims who fail a Stamina roll with the Paralyzed Condition (see p. XX). This poison has a damage rating of 2 and the Continuous tag, until the scene ends.

Giant Growth: Nyllon has the ability to grow to giant size (around 50 feet) within a round, the triggering of which remains elusive. While still able to sting (other giant monsters, for all practicality) the giant size affords him the usual rampaging and stomping skills typical of the kind. A character who gets close enough to Tines to be stepped on must make a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll at Difficulty 3 or receive 5 damage that cannot be resisted.

Resistance: As a normal-sized wereshrimp, Teenage Shrimp is vulnerable to the same things a human is, but as a giant only heavy and repeated artillery bombardment can take him down. The Shrimp's size provides a +3 Enhancement against any attacks that aren't explosives.

THE URANIUM MAN

"I commend you. Your species has achieved a pinnacle of science in taming the power of the atom. In this, you have reached an apex, and also rendered yourselves obsolete. You have given me what I desire. I have no further need of you. Stand aside, and pass beneath my notice." — The Uranium Man

Buried deep, deep beneath the sea floor near the Marshall Islands slumbers a creature of pure uranium. A walking mound of silvery-white metal with a malign intelligence of his own, he awakens every 50 years to consume radioactive materials. And every 50 years, he finds none pure enough for his palate. But now he stirs once more, smelling the delicious scent of radiation, and once more he emerges from the sea to strike terror into the hearts of man.

Seeking out sources of pure, refined radioactive metals such as uranium and plutonium, the uranium man is an intelligent and cunning foe with no regard for human life or property, and an innate sense for where his meals might be found. He especially likes to seek out weaponry or tools to use in his pursuit, such as vehicles or explosives. The main physical threat he poses in combat,



SYSTEM

The uranium man is a lone predator, hunting his radioactive quarry relentlessly.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Empathy 1, Enigmas 2, Integrity 4, Larceny 2, Persuasion 1, Pilot 2, Science 4, Survival 5, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 13

SPECIAL RULES

Radiation: The uranium man exudes a field of radiation out to short range. Within that field, the Director may decide that any animal or plant becomes a dangerous mutant creature of a codex Scale lower than the uranium man. Additionally, every character unshielded against radiation suffers indirect damage equivalent to a nuclear reactor leak (Damage 5; Continuous [minute], Deadly; see p. XX). After two meals, the field extends to medium range, and after four meals, it extends to long range.

Consume Radioactives: The uranium man begins at Scale 1 in combat ability and size. For every nuclear bomb or power plant's worth of radioactive materials the uranium man eats, his Scale increases by 1 rank.

Reactivity Excursion: When the uranium man has his fifth meal, he detonates like a thermonuclear weapon. This annihilates anything below durability Scale 5 within extreme range, inflicts one Injury on anything else, and scatters radioactive fallout for miles around (equivalent to a nuclear reactor leak). After the explosion, the uranium man reverts to his original Scale and retreats to the sea to slumber once more if he has no other outstanding business.

however, is the powerful radiation his body emits, which can not only lead to sickness and death, but can also mutate both flora and fauna into aggressive and dangerous monsters. While the uranium man himself has no control over these, he does enjoy capturing them and using them as traps or distractions.

As he feeds, he grows larger and stronger. Nuclear weapons do nothing but heal his injuries, while conventional arms only chip away at him. Anyone who wishes to destroy or neutralize this creature must find other tactics. Compounding the problems he causes, however, is the fact that his increasing size eventually leads to a reactivity excursion. What happens then has never been witnessed, though nuclear physicists theorize that a detonation in the 150 megaton range or even stronger might occur. They also believe he would likely survive the blast, ready to start the cycle again.

GOALS

A force of nature, the uranium man cares about sating his hunger. The pathetic humans who stand in his way are obstacles to bypass, worthy of respect as a potential threat and no more. He is a lonely creature, though, and his thoughts turn to companionship every now and then. Perhaps one day he will create the uranium woman.

STORY HOOK

The power plants of America are under siege by an insidious intruder, the uranium man, who believes the Americans are planning to harness nuclear energy to power their country. Brigadier General Stone and Dr. Kumquat butt heads with opposite but equally extreme solutions — destruction of the uranium man via nuclear strikes versus diplomacy, capture, and study. It is up to the protagonists to navigate between hostile and unreasonable factions to stop the uranium man before it is too late!

WALKING DOGFISH

"I'll never forget it. One moment I was walking along the beach, a beautiful woman next to me. The next, I heard a terrible gargling howl. As I tried to see where it was coming from, this thing crawled into the sand. It was larger than my car! The creature had stubby, rubbery legs and three rows of teeth. And the noises it made sounded like a dog being drowned. That's what it was... some kind of dogfish!"

— Carlo Collodi, investment banker (on holiday in Buenos Aires)

A servitor race to the gill-kin, the walking dogfish act as trackers, protectors, and companions. The generally inquisitive

gill-kin soon discovered their excursions to the surface were fraught with peril and danger. Not possessing any technology of their own, instead they domesticated some of the more unusual varieties of fish lurking in the darkest parts of the ocean. Over time they were able to breed a variety of dogfish that not only followed their commands, but were also able to follow them on land as well as in the sea.

The modern dogfish is much like the gill-kin with whom they live: They are curious about the surface world, and eager to enjoy its wide variety of smells and stimuli. However, the dogfish are easily startled — screams and acts of hostility can terrify it, leading it to attack out of fear and self-defense, rather than aggression. Much like the canines of humanity, dogfish are also protective of their owners and companions, and will take their cues from their gill-kin family.

Not all dogfish are well-mannered. Many have been left behind, abandoned by the gill-kin intentionally or unintentionally, forcing the dogfish to live on its own under the waves. Some are lucky enough to find new gill-kin owners who adopt them, but others are not so fortunate. Rumors swirl of packs of feral dogfish who attack gill-kin and human settlements for food, or simply out of boredom.

The average walking dogfish is several meters tall and over a dozen meters long — far larger than most humans and gill-kin. They walk on thick, stubby legs, a bit like an elephant's, and their gait is rolling and graceless. In the sea, however, they are good swimmers, able to keep up with most human seacraft. Particularly well-trained dogfish end up as mounts to their gill-kin family, but many simply walk alongside, or scout ahead of gill-kin excursions.

Unlike the reduced olfactory senses of the gill-kin, dogfish are excellent trackers. Gill-kin use them to seek missing companions or locate human dwellings. Dogfish also have several rows of teeth, which are used both to eat particularly stubborn meals, as well as for protection. More than one automobile has startled the wrong dogfish, only to have its front end ripped to shreds like construction paper.

GOALS

None. Most walking dogfish follow in the path of their gill-kin family, following their goals. Feral dogfish have no discernable goals at all beyond “eat” and “procreate.”



STORY HOOK

Tammy rarely leaves her clifftop cottage these days, not since the death of her husband. Occasionally, villagers bring supplies to her home, but mostly they leave the old dear to her own devices. She's kind, but leery of strangers. All expectations surrounding Tammy the hermit vanish when she appears at the market with a beaming smile on her face and a new pet walking beside her, just taller than her head. She explains his name is Kipper, she found him abandoned on the coastal path, and he won't hurt a fly. Everyone admits it's lovely to see Tam with a zest for a life again, but they're all secretly worried about her new pet. How long before the gill-kin come to reclaim the cheery dogfish?

SYSTEM

The following are typical statistics for the average walking dogfish.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 4

SPECIAL RULES

Scale: Walking dogfish are larger than humans, and are able to go toe-to-toe with cars and other industrial equipment when riled. As such, they are considered to be Scale 2 in terms of size, as well as physical conflicts (see p. XX).

Armor-Piercing Teeth: The teeth of the walking dogfish are razor sharp, and strong enough to rend metal. When attacking, they ignore one level of hard armor.

Good Trackers: Walking dogfish have Enhancement +2 to rolls involving smell and tracking.

ENSLAVERS

Enslavers are a broad class of beings, ranging from the at least passably semi-humanoid to the not very human at all, with nearly everything in between. The one characteristic these multifarious beings have in common? Their ability to invade, corrupt, and dominate the minds and bodies of others. Even the strongest-willed humans can be reduced to putty in their hands given sufficient time, forced into the service of humanity's enemies.

Enslavers find their natural enemies in Mouths, those humans most firmly and fundamentally dedicated to discovering and promulgating information, most specifically the truth.

Mouths gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Enslavers.

Enslavers gain one additional die on all social-based rolls made against Mouths.

GIGANTIC PILLBUGS

"I was at the beach with my gal when those freaks showed up. They looked more like bugs than fish, like those gross silvery ones you can find when you flip over rocks. Definitely not something that should have arms and legs! I freaked out. I tried to punch it, but it stabbed me with one of its stubby arms and I passed out. When I came to I was in the hospital, getting all different kinds of antivenom pumped into me. The gash it gave me required 12 stitches!" – Travis Parker, the first civilian victim of the gigantic pillbugs' venom, now deceased

The pillbugs are physically large and have a fearsome appearance. A gigantic pillbug is a bipedal creature, with a pair of arms and another set of shorter arms with no hands. Instead, the sec-

ond arms end with a sharp nail, the injector used to deliver venom to any threat that comes into close range. A gigantic pillbug becomes twice as tall as a man if it unfolds its antennae fully.

Gigantic pillbugs are capable of communicating in human speech, but the words from their mandibles are often lies. It is possible their only purpose is revenge against their former enslavers, the Glowing People, and they have a desire to prevent another intelligent species from becoming their new slave race. Records show the aliens may have a concept of humor and can make pill-based puns.

While linguists and several laypeople agree that the pillbugs know enough of human language to communicate with mankind, enough for them to make attempts at joking, they show no understanding of human etiquette. Their way of introducing themselves contains no greetings of themselves or their race, instead they tell you how much they hate the Glowing People.

If one should manage to tolerate their brash behavior, a lone pillbug can make an interesting sidekick if asked to tag along. There are reports of lone pillbugs being seen in places where violence or death can occur, such as gang fights, boxing rings, even fishing boats. It is important that those who have enjoyed their pillbug companion's company ensure they never cross paths with another of their kind. Once they do, their connection to their species' hivemind will make them leave behind any friendships they've created in order to return to their vengeful pursuit of the Glowing People.

Gigantic pillbugs collect the bone plates of Glowing People and make necklaces of them, sending a clear message to any Glowing Person who happens to witness their accessories. A bone plate from a Glowing Elder is an especially prized possession, something that may be used as a chestpiece rather than a necklace.



FROM HUMOR TO HORROR

Some of the threats in this chapter sound ridiculous, while others are potent nightmare fuel. An aquatepillar shuffling and snuffing up the beach, resembling a pantomime caterpillar crewed by six people, is hardly terrifying, nor is a shark clansfolk in a body resembling a crudely-built rubber get-up with a flappy fin. Then again, nobody relishes the thought of a brain-eater eel burrowing through the roof of their mouth and into their brain, or the flesh-melting pools in Centopus' stomachs. How to balance these extremes?

In truth, any of these threats can go either way, and that's partly the point of this game. The Director can describe Brainbox as a rampaging, destructive robot, or a catchphrase-spouting machine cobbled together with bits of detritus. Crab people may be terrifying undercover agents, wearing the skin of humans, or ridiculous spies incapable of walking forward or backward.

In system terms, games aiming purely for comedy should reduce the maximum Health and some of the Skills and Attribute values an alien possesses, to make them squishier. Similarly, serious horror games should buff creatures like the gigantic pillbugs and were-lobsters, making them each a truly terrifying threat to humanity.

Especially valued are bone plates carrying an intricate design. These bone plates display many individual variations, especially those of fully grown sessile slavers. The pillbugs have a complicated system for assessing the value of each bone plate.

However, the pillbugs never trade bone plates. All known cases where a person has attempted to trade with a pillbug for their bone plate ended with a head butt, then a desperate plea for an aspirin after waking up from a concussion. Each pillbug family keeps their own trophies as family jewels. Faking a bone plate, or altering it to make its pattern more attractive, are capital crimes. In fact, the pillbugs extend the punishment of falsifying battle memorabilia to mankind. Fake furs, synthetic materials, and other similar materials upset the aliens, but give them common cause with Amish communities.

GOALS

The gigantic pillbugs know their former enslavers are kidnapping humans in order to shackle a new race. The lone pillbug cares greatly for the fate of the humanity, but the hivemind pillbugs focus solely on their species' collective goal. Pillbugs are split between wanting to enslave the Glowing People for the cruel treatment of their race, or to exterminate them completely. However, they do agree on one thing — the Glowing People must pay!

STORY HOOK

For unknown reasons, James Bean, private investigator, was staking out the penthouse of successful businessman Stephen Siviid. When Bean's body is found in a dumpster, his head cleaved by a sharp weapon laced in potent venom, the town starts talking: Is Siviid a killer? What does he have to hide? Are the scientists right when they describe the venom used in the attack as that of the infamous gigantic pillbugs?

SYSTEM

These disturbing creatures come in two forms scientists have so far identified.



ADULT GIGANTIC PILLBUGS

The adult pillbug stands tall on its two back legs. Its back is covered in hard plates they boast are impenetrable. When the pillbug becomes an adult, it has the innate need to seek out the rest of its kind, and most continue to travel in groups that slowly expand in size. A few strike out on their own, perhaps to find more distant members and bring them to a secret location.

The pillbug is impressionable when on its own, with documented cases of people convincing a lone alien to join their cause and abandon the pillbug purpose.

All players making Persuasion and Manipulation rolls for characters interacting with gigantic pillbugs gain one additional die when there's no other pillbug present in the scene. However, the die is lost if the bug sees another of its kind or a Glowing Person. Nobody knows why this is the case.

When there are at least three pillbugs present in a scene, all Persuasion and Manipulation rolls lose a die.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 13

LARVAL GIGANTIC PILLBUGS

The different growth stages of the pillbug initially appear like an uncoordinated invasion of mindless alien animals eating everything. The larvae do not physically resemble the adult pillbug, and pillbugs blame the slavers for this mutation, claiming it's the harsh result of generations without proper nutrition and attempting to make the race less independent so they can more easily be controlled. The young look more like a crossbreed of grubs and shrimp.

The smallest of this race are swimmers and live only in water, while bigger ones are amphibious but must stay close to water, and the largest can live on land or in water for as long as they want. Only after a few months and several molts do they take on an appearance similar to adult pillbugs.

Grubs lack the venom and armor of the adults. They have, however, strong jaws that can make short work of human limbs

and spit an extremely corrosive acidic saliva. With no technology or understanding of how to even use the most primitive of tools (other than consuming them for food) the grub is only a threat to unarmed civilians.

The number of eggs spread by the pillbug ships is enormous, and depending on the amount of food eaten, the pillbugs grow at differing rates. They eat younger pillbug stages if no other food is available, which guarantees that in the end only adult pillbugs will be left. In practice, the process efficiently converts a whole biosphere into a pillbug army.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

The pillbugs like to take advantage of their size and weight in close combat. They attempt to grapple their targets, using their limbs to pin them down and then use their stinger arms to inject venom.

Venomous Sting: The gigantic pillbug venom isn't fatal to healthy adults but does lead to extreme pain, nausea, and vomiting.

Its stinger arm easily penetrates leather. The stingers have a reach of one and a half feet, so they need to get close.

Their toxin is an Injectable Venom with a damage rating of 3, with a damage tag of Continuous (minute). On a successful hit, a victim must succeed on a Stamina roll or suffer the Paralyzed Condition for the remainder of the scene as excruciating pain wracks their body.

A Ball of Armor: True to their name, the gigantic pillbug can roll up to protect their vitals, turning into a ball of impenetrable armor. Their back armor protects them against any direct damage and they must either be coaxed to show their body parts that aren't as well-protected or dealt with by using indirect methods (by using fire or gas-based toxins). The ball of armor conveys a +4 Enhancement against kinetic energy, such as bullets or rocks.

The grub stage has plates on its back, but isn't hardened to match the toughness of the adult. Its protection grants a +2 Enhancement against kinetic energy. It will exhibit the same behavior as the adult and roll up in any danger where it feels it can't feasibly fight off the threat.

Acidic Saliva: This ability is only used by pillbugs in the grub stage, allowing them to consume almost everything. Its acid is strong enough to dissolve and soften up the hardest of steel. The resulting burns from their spit are atrocious. Luckily, the acidic saliva can be diluted and washed away using water, but it does nothing to ease the smell of burning flesh that lasts for up to one week.

The acidic spit is contracted upon the grub biting a victim, or them spitting on anyone who threatens their existence. The longest range documented by grub spit is short range and inflicts an Injury as the corrosive fluid dissolves flesh.

GLOWING PEOPLE

"Last thing I remember was staring into their big, empty, green eyes. This beautiful mist of colors enveloped me. I felt warmth and joy. It was euphoria beyond feelings and description. I'm sure I felt things I'll never get to feel again, it was as if I had developed a new sense. Then through the silence, I heard Ma calling out to me, and I fell...hard onto the concrete floor. I don't know what happened afterward, but I woke up in the storm cellar, alone, covered in blue, gooey blood, and the whole town was missing." - Kathy Miller, the sole survivor of the abduction of her hometown, giving her testimony

The Glowing People are humanoids of a height similar to the average seven-year-old Billy. Their enlarged heads lack external human features like hair, ears, and a nose. Instead, they have odd, diamond-shaped bone plates on their foreheads. When they aren't emitting their character-defining glow, the Glowing People's skin can be seen, shimmering like oil slicks in a puddle. Their skin is smooth, and the colors appear to be swirling, even after their death. They give off a radiating glow of multiple colors that glows through their clothing. The Glowing People all wear tight outfits with broad shoulder pads and bejeweled belts. Psychologists claim their varied and spectacular dresses (or garments) are a representation of the aliens' extreme vanity.

When the Glowing People arrive, they take entire towns with populations between 50-150 people, leaving no witnesses. There are only a few instances, such as the Kathy Miller case, where isolated individuals have seen these aliens and lived to tell the tale. Some scientists propose the Glowing People might be behind the traditional folklore of a being in the water communicating and, in some cases, dragging people down into the depths. In some cultures, the Glowing People are therefore known as Kelpies, or Ladies of the Lake.

The People rise from beneath the waves in rapidly spinning star-shaped ships. The US Navy has reported seeing massive fleets moving close to larger coastal cities only to remain still, bobbing in the water, before turning and sinking back to the ocean depths. These viewings have spread panic among the good serving people in the Navy as they believe the aliens are planning an attack — they are only waiting for the right time to strike.

The Glowing People are suspected to follow a hierarchical system. When the aliens arrive in a group, there's always one taller with a more pronounced bone plate, who dresses in a gold-foil suit. The physical difference between the two types of aliens is evidence of distinct bodily castes, or perhaps even subspecies, in their society. Some investigators prefer the idea that the two observed morphs may represent different sexes. Others have suggested the aliens may grow slowly through an extended period of their lives and that their social status and functions may change during growth. Despite the lack of substantial proof, there is no shortage of theories. For now, the taller individual in reports is called an Elder, or General.

Why the Glowing People kidnap large numbers of individuals is still not known. Corpses of the disappeared have washed up on the beach, presumably after outliving their use. Their bodies show signs of malnutrition and overexertion, along with faint traces of mineral dust,



suggesting they are using humans for manual labor, such as mining. That begs the question why, and how do they keep people alive?

During a deep-dive excursion, a team of scientists made the shocking discovery of a vast underwater city. It was a series of interconnected star ships encased in a bubble, making them look similar to an idyllic snow globe. On closer inspection, the bubble-like creations appear to be keeping water out, which begs the question of what the Glowing People breathe. They seem to have no difficulty surviving on land without any masks, so why live in an enclosed area at the bottom of the sea? While there is no proof the cities belong to the Glowing People, the technology used looks similar to that of their ships.

One reported sighting details a clash between Glowing People and gigantic pillbugs, ending with the Glowing People losing the entire crew of four ships before retreating. Afterward, the remaining alien pillbugs approached the witnesses, asking for their cooperation to rid the Glowing People from this world and how “[they] are the pills to cure humans of this menacing Glowing People headache.” This may have been an attempt at a joke, or quip.

GOALS

They want to take back what they’ve lost. They want to take back their grand underwater cities, so that they don’t have to live as nomads, and reclaim their place at top of their pyramid, with the slaves holding them up. They want to use humans for manual

labor and to assemble an army to combat their alien nemesis, their former slaves, the gigantic pillbugs.

STORY HOOK

Nobody cared when Jimmy the homeless barfly disappeared from his usual preaching place on the seafront. With a prime dating spot freed up, many youngsters go to the beach for a late-evening dip into the ocean. Despite the delirious warnings from Jimmy about the creatures in the water, the young are enjoying themselves there.

As people start vanishing, gossipers blame the absent Jimmy. He always looked a little dangerous, after all. Two weeks after the sheriff starts a search for the vagrant, the bodies of Jimmy and 10 other missing youngsters wash up on the sandy white beach. Five are still unaccounted for.

SYSTEM

The Glowing People always arrive in a group, but they split up after arriving at their target destination to cover more ground. They are adamant on retreating together, never leaving a member behind, even when they are dead.

Scientists are discussing an upgrade of these aliens to Charlie-level, as they assume the Glowing People must communicate via telepathy or scent. These beings rarely use their high-pitched, lilting vocal sounds.

THE GRUNTS

The grunts are the most common form of Glowing People one encounters during their invasions. They outnumber Elders five to one and wear smaller shoulder pads.

Skills: Aim 2, Culture 1, Integrity 1, Science 3, Survival 3, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Health: 6

THE ELDERS

Taller and clad with golden clothing, there's usually only one Elder per ship.

Despite their level of technology, the majority of Glowing People only have primitive weapons of their own. After all, the slavers do not need to carry lethal weapons with their abilities. When attacked, they mind control the attacker. The assumed leader of the invasion groups brings a stun weapon they use on anyone resisting their mind control.

Skills: Aim 1, Culture 4, Empathy 3, Integrity 2, Persuasion 3, Science 4, Survival 3, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 5, Manipulation 6, Composure 4

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Telepathic Clouds: The Glowing People's signature power: the ability to charm and control others with their glow cloud auras.

The aliens must have their target in line of sight before emitting the clouds, forcing people to breathe in their mind-control gas. Humans should not feel too safe with being short and hiding in a crowd, as being within three feet of the gas is enough for someone to fall under their spell.

The target rolls Integrity + Resolve against Difficulty 3. On a failure, the character is now under alien control for the remainder of the scene. On ties, the victims resist the manipulation but end up confused, losing a die on their next action.

The gas travels one step of range per turn, concluding at long range. Physical interruptions break the control effect immediately.

Mind Ray: Looking into the eyes of a Glowing Person has a similar effect as the telepathic clouds, but it can't be used to corral a large group at once. The

Glowing Person needs to lock eyes with the victim for them to assume control, and they need to maintain it for two turns uninterrupted to fully establish the mind connection.

The target rolls Integrity + Resolve against Difficulty 4. If the Glowing People achieve more successes or on ties the victim is under their control.

Stun Net: For the strong-willed victims that don't succumb to the mind-altering effects, the Elders carry a small metal tube that deploys a 10ft × 10ft glowing net that sends electric shocks through the victims caught in them.

The target rolls Athletics + Stamina against Difficulty 3. If they fail, the victims suffer the Paralyzed Condition (see p. XX).

IGUANOIDS

"The hairlessss apesss on the sssurface like to think that they are the oldessst and mossst powerful ssspeciesss on the planet. They are missstaken." – Sssalek Primuss, iguanoid patriot

For millennia, humanity has had legends and myths of reptilian humanoids. Cecrops I of Athens was believed to be half-man, half-snake. The dragon kings of China ruled fiercely in their day. Wadjet was worshipped in ancient Egypt as she slithered over the sand while the naga of India lived underground. All of them are

true, to an extent. For the iguanoids have lived under the water for far, far longer than humanity has walked upright.



Millions of years ago, after the Silurian period came and went, iguanas went through a similar path of the evolution humanity would later undergo. Unlike the hominids, however, these proto-iguanoids preferred to live in the water instead of land. Living on algae and other aquatic plant life, the iguanoids evolved and thrived. Over the centuries, they developed an entire underwater culture and technological basis.

But the iguanoids did not live alone. Their culture was shared with another marine species, the anuradons. However, unlike the iguanoids, the anuradons were aggressive and hostile. Despite many attempts to constrain the amphibians, their warlike nature proved to be too strong. Reluctantly, the iguanoids banished them from their cities, forcing them to the surface or the darker parts of the ocean.

Then, disaster struck. An ice age covered the planet, and the temperatures of the waters grew colder and colder, making them uninhabitable for the iguanoids. Rather than artificially raise the temperature of their inhabited waters, it was decided that the whole race would put themselves into hibernation. Unfortunately, key computers were accidentally miscoded, and the iguanoids didn't wake up for millions of years.

The underwater conflicts of World War II woke up one of the iguanoid cryostasis centers. Realizing they woke up far too late, they decided to learn about the planet as it exists now, and discovered the horrors unleashed upon their oceans. Entire species hunted to extinction, whole areas of water made radioactive and artificially warm, and more. These iguanoids decided that it was time to reclaim the world from these warlike apes and bring things back to the way they were.

By any means necessary.

GOALS

The iguanoids have two primary goals. The first is the location and recovery of other cryostasis centers scattered all over the world. Many have been damaged or destroyed, whether by accident, natural disaster, or anuradon incursion, but some still survive. Every slumbering iguanoid must be awoken and resurrected.

The second, longer-term goal, is to bring the planet back to a habitable state. While the iguanoids have no particular hatred for humanity, they aren't sure the surface world is willing or able to do what is necessary to preserve the waters of the Earth. They remind the iguanoids too much of their deadly enemies, the anuradons — too warlike and shortsighted. It is possible that humanity must (reluctantly) be destroyed for the greater good.

STORY HOOK

An excavation on an island just off the mainland uncovers something astounding: a set of iguanoid cryostasis pods. Unfortunately, a trigger-happy student activates one of the pods early, releasing a shrieking, unhappy iguanoid into the air via an emergency release. It lands with a dead splat. It won't be long before other iguanoids converge on the island, and the heroes must decide whether to return the tech, mediate between scientists and lizards, or fight them back into the sea.

SYSTEM

These are the statistics for a typical iguanoid. Those of a scientific bent have more dots in the Mental Arena, diplomats and negotiators have more in the Social Arena, and those focused on self-defense prefer to enhance the Physical Arena.

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 1, Command 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 1, Integrity 2, Medicine 1, Persuasion 1, Pilot 1, Science 2, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 4

SPECIAL RULES

Advanced Technological Understanding: Iguanoid technology is far in advance of humanity. They are considered to be one Scale higher on any rolls involving human technology (including developing defenses against human weapons).

Mesmeric Influence: Iguanoids all have a mild telepathic field, which they use to subtly convince and suggest courses of actions more positive to the iguanoids' viewpoints. They have a +1 Enhancement to all Social rolls involving Presence and Manipulation. Further, they can tell if someone is attempting to manipulate them as well, as they read vague insights from the mind of the manipulator. Unless the character subverting the iguanoid has the ability to shield their thoughts, all such attempts have a Complication 1 of "I Know What You're Thinking."

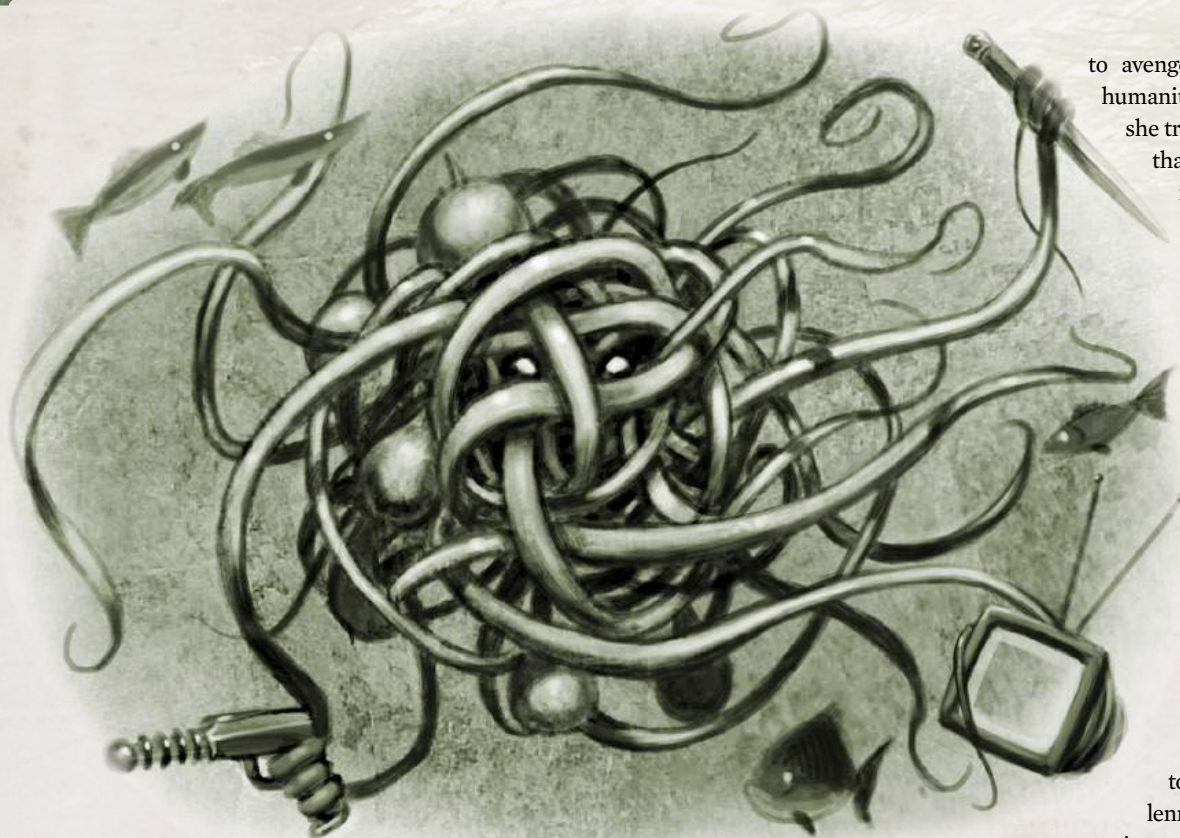
KILLER KELP

"Greetings, viewers! Don't change the channel just yet — it's time once more for Seaside Storytime with Mary-Ann Miesling! So settle in... relax... and let the sound of the ocean soothe your weary soul..."
— Unnamed announcer, on a hijacked broadcast of killer kelp origin

When the Radion company built a TV dinner factory right outside New Orleans, the chemical runoffs from the place started poisoning a nearby bay where the marine biologist Dr. Flora Carmichael was studying a unique species of kelp. As life in the bay died off, she approached the city council with her concerns, but they, more worried with the 500 jobs the Radion plant brought to the city, brushed off her marine-life concerns.

As revenge, Dr. Carmichael drew upon one of her more controversial theories and built an evolutionary acceleration ray. She turned it onto the surviving kelp, and when the hyper-intelligent plant life crawled ashore, like the ancestors of humanity millions of years ago, she stood there, ready to explain why their home was in ruins. Installing herself as their ruler, she watched in awe as her creations rapidly advanced technologically, reaching in a matter of months a level of sophistication beyond that of modern-day humanity. And then, they marched on the Radion factory.

Armed with advanced firearms and strange communications devices with small TV sets inside that work anywhere around the



world, the sub-sea slavers rapidly conquered the factory. They enslaved the workers and forced them to build robot planes and robot tanks for their newfound masters, which the kelpmen could control by means of their advanced color-screen walkie-talkies. They established the factory as their base, and automated the TV dinner production almost completely, allowing them to mask their presence and maintain a source of income. Underground, they built a military base unlike any seen before, capable of tracking operations all across the world. And in secret, they constructed a television broadcast tower hidden within the factory's smokestack, which they now use to hijack broadcasts and send out mind control programming disguised as light entertainment. To most viewers, this programming is harmless, but those who have eaten the isotope-laced TV dinners the Radion factory now produces find themselves brainwashed into following secret orders, which are encrypted using a Soviet-derived method originally intended to communicate with agents deep in the American heartland.

Now, the plant people have bases and equipment in every country, and are prepared to send out their TV-brainwashes alongside perfectly coordinated soldiers. While no harder than human troops, their advanced equipment has allowed the sub-sea slavers to capture several human military bases before they had a chance to warn the world. The kelpmen's objective is simple: enslave all of humanity and force them to spend 1,000 years building the Millennium Spire, a monolithic ziggurat to house the entirety of killer kelp civilization. Their one military weakness: the centralization of military command in their main headquarters beneath the Radion factory.

Their leader, Dr. Carmichael, is beginning to have doubts. She never thought her creations would go this far — she wanted

to avenge the bay, not bring humanity to its knees. While she tries to convince herself that the goal is just and necessary, in her heart she fears the day will come when she can no longer bring herself to keep betraying her species. And when that day comes, she knows the kelpmen will show her no more mercy than they do her kin.

GOALS

The kelpmen want to be the dominant species on Earth, and they want to construct their Millennium Spire, a gigantic ziggurat large enough to contain a complete civilization all on its own. Then, they want to make it spaceworthy before the planet dies so their culture can last as long as the universe itself.

STORY HOOKS

When our heroes stop for the night in the small town of Pennington, they start noticing strange behavior from the townsfolk. When the sheriff approaches them, claiming to be the only remaining sane man ("Because I only eat pork and beans!") and asks for help figuring out what has affected his fellow citizens, a sordid tale of small-town corruption and killer kelp mind control ensues. But is the sheriff as unaffected as he claims, or does the Radion-brand Pork & Beans TV dinner wrapping in his trashcan indicate sinister motives?

SYSTEM

The kelpmen are often underestimated as a basic foe, but they possess a diverse range of abilities.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Command 3, Empathy 1, Enigmas 1, Integrity 3, Larceny 1, Medicine 2, Persuasion 1, Pilot 2, Science 5, Survival 2, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Health: 8

SPECIAL RULES

Mind Override: The kelpmen use their color-screen walkie-talkies to display snippets of specially encoded signals using

Soviet subliminal encryption. When a human being who has eaten a Radion-produced TV dinner within the last year sees this programming, they become Manchurian candidates and will mindlessly obey the kelpmen's orders. This ability works automatically unless targeting a protagonist, in which the targets rolls Integrity + Resolve against Difficulty 4. On a failure, the victims suffer the Stunned Condition until the soonest of the end of the scene or when the walkie-talkie is disabled. A protagonist then becomes permanently immune to the ability.

SIRENS OF NESS

"I'm telling you, I saw it. And when you see it too you'll believe me! Wait... what's that? There! In the water! It's true! Didn't I tell you? It's..." – Last transmission of Dr Hans Hummels, lead researcher aboard "The Argonaut" science vessel, studying Loch Ness

The beings known to us as the Sirens of Ness are among the most brazen of the alien species. Though limited information exists regarding when they first appeared, given their modus operandi they could have been operating anywhere up to hundreds of years into the past in one form or another. Any story told about people going missing while searching for some mysterious and rare creature could have been the work of the Sirens, and what's more, they use the curiosity of some of Earth's most creative and brilliant minds to get exactly what they want.

The Sirens are Enslavers with a finely crafted method: They fake visual sightings of mythical beings in lakes or on coastlines. Many conspiracy theories have been sent into overdrive when adventurous types respond to tales of long-necked creatures swimming through the mists of the Great Lakes. Even the beloved "Nessie" was the construction of their deranged, alien minds. The fact it has become a bizarre tourist attraction is proof of the twisted humor of fate.

Captured Sirens appear to be amphibian, almost like frogs or toads. Despite their alien nature, at first glance in the right setting, a misty night or from a distance, they appear human. Their darting tongues and strange, swiveling eyes give them away easily enough after sustained study. That is, if their bulging throat sacs don't give the game away first.

The Sirens have refined their methods over the years, no doubt aided and abetted by the scientists and researchers they capture. They still use their monster mash schtick but enjoy tempting specific targets by emitting strange radiation below the water to attract scientists to their traps. Many humans take the stance of shooting first, as the Sirens' poisonous tongues can paralyze a victim, and the last thing anyone wants is to be dragged away and interrogated by these fiendish frogmen.

GOALS

The Sirens continue to add to their collection of great minds, furthering their technology in the hopes that they can surface and enslave all of humankind for good.



STORY HOOK

Dr. Amelia Pendragon of the Department of Heritage and Tourism was sent to investigate reports of science vessels going missing in Loch Ness, Scotland. She met up with the local constabulary and a few charming locals, who aided her in solving the true story behind the myths of Nessie. Now she's returned, her skin has taken on a greenish hue, and she's inviting representatives of the royal family to meet with the Sirens to discuss peace terms. Are the Sirens sincere, or is it trap?

SYSTEM

The Sirens chiefly target characters of the Scientist archetype and cast their lures to show whatever their research indicates is the very thing Scientists are searching for. Despite this, they reserve their greatest enmity for Mouths, as plucky reporters dismiss them as hoaxes and deter investigation.

It should be noted that Sirens of Ness are sneakier than they are brawny and, when confronted with physical altercations, flee rather than fight.

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Command 3, Culture 1, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Humanities 2, Integrity 2, Larceny 3, Medicine 1, Persuasion 4, Pilot 2, Science 2, Survival 3, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Health: 4

SPECIAL RULES

Technology: The Sirens possess machines that can mimic the signatures of certain types of energy, radiation, or other materials. They are usually armed with dart guns for tranquilizing humans. Protagonists hit by the darts make an Athletics + Stamina roll against Difficulty 2 to shake off the effect. Failure results in the character gaining the Paralyzed Condition for one scene.

Captured characters are fitted with a Servitor's Collar, a device that jolts electricity straight to the wearer's heart at the push of a button. They can only be removed with a Technology + Intellect roll against Difficulty 3, or by the Enslavers themselves. Failing to remove the device triggers it, causing 6 damage and the Paralyzed Condition for one scene.

Prehensile Tongues: The Sirens have long, sticky tongues coated in a paralytic poison. They have a short range and can drag their paralyzed victims. Any character struck by the tongue must make a Survival + Stamina roll against Difficulty 2 to avoid gaining the Paralyzed Condition (see p. XX) for a scene. They are considered grappled until they overpower or are released by the Siren.

Blend in: Despite their amphibious, froglike nature, their appearances are near human and, if pressed, they will attempt to pass off as such when obscured by poor lighting. Players must roll a Medicine + Cunning roll against Difficulty 2 to notice the strange signs of the Siren. The inhuman eyes, darting tongue bulging beneath the mouth at the sight of a nearby fly, or a strangely bulging neck.

THE SUSPENDED

"I was pulled into something like thick, warm, water. Maybe mud? Or porridge? I panicked at first, until the guide told me to not worry, that soon I would see the most wondrous kingdom. The next thing I remember I was being pulled free. But what happened to the guide? I hope he's okay..." - Nigel Silveracre, Royal Navy debrief following the incident at Portsmouth Docks

The Suspended are a dangerous and insidious race. Watery and slimy, at their most comfortable in the form of puddles or as pillars of slime, the Suspended can also take on the forms of thick blobs containing the vague silhouette of an adult human. These blobs shift and flow on land, attempting to reach humans with what the Suspended call "expanded minds" to show them their "glorious kingdom".

Suspended communicate with humans telepathically, explaining they are just on land for scientific experimentation, referring to their own body being "suspended" within mobile viscous goo as a product of their scientific advances. A Suspended's suit only allows it to survive on land for a few hours, during which time the creature endeavors to convince a human to accompany it on a trip beneath the waves, guaranteeing the victim will suffer no harm and be able to breathe normally within the Suspended's slimy coating. The reward for doing so? The chance to experiment with Suspended technology, and further the cause for whichever government state the human serves.

The Suspended, of course, are duplicitous. At least in part. They wreathe a victim in a blob of slime, which true to their word allows them to breathe underwater. Sadly, they never permit humans to return to the surface after this journey. Any technology witnessed, wielded, or analyzed in the cities of the Suspended never reach land, and neither do the victims.

Why scientists and other great minds continue to trust the Suspended speaks to their skills of persuasion and the hungry need humans experience when offered devastating weaponry, defense systems, or tech that could send them into space. The Suspended offer it all, and sometimes bring such devices with them to the surface to act as a lure. They maintain that nobody taken to their cities ever chooses to leave, remaining there purely of their own volition. It's impossible to read emotion from a Suspended's telepathy, so nobody has yet picked up malice or irony in their tone.

Suspended slime is flexible and liquid, but retains surface tension, and is capable of hardening to an impressive degree in seconds. The Suspended conveyance is actually a blob of slime wrapped around a core layer of water, causing some experts to wonder at whether the Suspended is related to the Oblique. The Suspended is capable of producing more of their slime at will, up to twice as much as their normal mass, which is approximate to the size of an average human male.

Suspended connect to their human prisoner's slime blob with a tendril of slime, with which they drag the human into the sea. Once in the ocean, the creature can move much faster, and so someone hoping to rescue an incapacitated victim needs to sever the connection between the two blobs before the Suspended reaches the ocean. The Suspended attempts to telepathically reassure anyone trying to rescue a victim that the victim will come to no harm, promising the victim will soon be taken to a wondrous kingdom lit entirely by bioluminescent fish and coral, possessing great, inhuman technology, and life eternal. Transmitted visions display this fantasy realm to anyone in pursuit.

In the water, the Suspended resemble immense lampreys, measuring roughly nine feet in length and 24 inches in diameter. They can convert the water around them into slime in seconds. The Suspended can control the properties of the slime to some degree, such as deciding whether the slime carries the oxygenation effect imparted to their prisoners, or whether it suffocates whatever is trapped within.

Suspended technology is entirely slime-based. The creatures harden the exterior layer of their slime suits to repel attacks or roll over dangerous terrain like a tank tread. They can extrude pseudopods of slime and then quickly solidify them as a vicious stabbing attack. If threatened, the Suspended respond defensively rather than offensively, claiming to be a peaceful race of beings.

GOALS

Unknown. They would rather retreat than reveal their true agenda, and even now, no one on the surface knows what the Suspended want with all those people. Some suspect the Suspended who appear on the surface *are* the captured humans, transmogrified into Suspended.



STORY HOOK

For the first time ever, a fisherman escapes the Suspended after visiting their underwater domain. Though he's frightened and babbling, he's physically unharmed, doctors describing the man as even healthier than when he descended. Before his kidnapping, he suffered arthritis in his joints and dreadful flatulence, both of which have cleared up. This medical miracle leads to scientists seeking volunteers for a mission to the depths of the ocean.

SYSTEM

The Suspended cannot survive in open air if separated from their suit, suffocating within a minute. They lack limbs and so without their suits, they can't do much more than flop around. The stats below reflect a Suspended wearing a slime suit.

Skills: Aim 2, Close Combat 2, Culture 3, Empathy 3, Medicine 5, Persuasion 3, Pilot 4, Science 5, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Health: 9

SPECIAL RULES

Slime Armor: The Suspended can instantly harden the outer surface of their slime suit, rendering them immune to bullets, blades, punches, and other such physical attacks with an effective +5 Enhancement to defense rolls. Explosions, fire, and electricity affect them normally.

Envelop: A Suspended can expel a blob of slime to trap a human being. This requires an Aim + Dexterity roll. Once trapped, the victim can free himself by scraping the slime off or shaking violently. He must work quickly, though – if the slime isn't off within a number of turns equal to the victim's Stamina, he lapses into a comatose state (this happens automatically if the victim is willing). A Suspended has just enough water in a slime suit to trap two adult human beings and still have enough remaining water to breathe.

Slime Stab: By extruding a slime tentacle and then hardening it quickly, the Suspended can make a melee attack. The Suspended prefer not to do this (the tentacle invariably breaks off and melts after the attack lands) but will in a desperate situation. Roll Close Combat + Dexterity to attack with a +2 Enhancement.

Telepathy: The Suspended are able to commune with humans and each other telepathically. The recipient of a telepathic message must be within one mile of the message's transmission and can only respond if they likewise have Telepathy.

INVADERS

Invaders are those beings most fiercely dedicated to the subjugation of humanity and the conquest of the surface world. Their forms cover a broad range of phenotypes and their technology ranges from the relatively simplistic to the amazingly complex, as do their standards of intelligence. Many of these beings are capable of superhuman feats of complex planning and mission execution. Whether they are driven by the pure demands of survival occasioned by irreparable damage to their native environment, ideology inimical to peaceful coexistence with other species, or some other, less examinable motivation, they are humanity's most dire enemies beneath the waves.

Invaders find their primal opposite in the form of Scientists, those humans for whom wisdom, inquiry, and curiosity are the strongest suit.

Scientists gain one additional die on all social-based rolls made against Invaders.

Invaders gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Scientists.

THE ATLANTOIDS

"Please, we have no desire to harm you. We just want to find our way home, and your brain matter might assist in that endeavor." – Dewey Chen, Atlantoid of the San Francisco Commune

Atlantoids look human, generally speaking. They can be of any height, weight, complexion, or physical ability. The only thing that distinguishes them from normal humans is the gills behind their ears and under their pectoral muscles. It is assumed that they all have blue or green eyes, but this has yet to be confirmed. Atlantoids do have a slightly higher incidence of heterochromia than most of the general population.

To hear them tell it, the Atlantoids are descendants of the ancient civilization of Atlantis, and while there are some families that carefully breed to keep their heritage pure, the vast majority are children who were born to seemingly normal human families. The Atlantis gene appears to be recessive, but sometimes you just get (un)lucky.

Atlantoids walk among us and are generally pro-human. Since they have not been raised to know any better, this is just as well. The danger comes in the secessionist movement among some members of this race. Cities in harbors, lakes and rivers are filling up with lost Atlantoids and their allies. This does not present an immediate threat, as they are little more than squatter towns right now, but as their nations grow, so will their threat level. In

their natural habitat, the Atlantoids wear loose robes of cotton and seaweed, and are often trailed by an entourage of less-intelligent creatures.

The Atlantoid secessionists have taken to discreet terrorist activity against humans they declare as "oppressors," mainly focusing on fringe religious groups. Rumor has it, Atlantoid high priests believe the path back to their sunken home is encoded in the brains of the most enlightened humans, leading to their scooping out the insides of skulls wherever possible. The Vatican has gone on high alert, after talk of Atlantoids targeting the pope emerged in the tabloid press.

GOALS

They want, more than anything else, to reclaim their lost heritage. Atlantoids are fundamentally lost in their world, a stateless people, and want to find somewhere to call home. They will go to great lengths to do so. They also want to destroy the Glowing People, who have taken some of their own into "custody."

STORY HOOK

Increasingly, the Atlantoid secessionists strike out against the humans who provide them alms against HUAC and other witch-hunting movements. Despite the care afforded to them, it seems this rebel group is determined to not fall under any human yoke. One group, calling itself "the Atlantoid Liberation Front" (or ALE, for short), take responsibility for sinking a small coastal burg of Quakers. While some Atlantoids publicly decry their terrorist cousins, others quietly agree with the action, citing the Quakers' attempt to erode all semblance of Atlantoid culture. The incident creates a moral quandary for Atlantoid sympathizers, as their wards become the focus of public ire.

SYSTEM

Atlantoids rarely engage in combat with humanity, preferring to be left alone. When forced, however, they bring to bear tridents of a strange, iridescent material our scientists have not been able to identify. They attack three-dimensionally, preferring to use the water to its full advantage. If pressed to land, Atlantoids will retreat to the water as fast as possible.

Skills: Culture 2, Integrity 2, Science 2, Survival 4, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 10



SPECIAL RULES

Atlantium Trident: All Atlantoids, within their own domain, have rediscovered the art of forging a subaquatic metal code-named “Atlantium” by human scientists. While the tridents are only effective at close range, they are deadly accurate. They can be thrown up medium range in the water, in which case they have the Returning tag, and the damage they do (about the same as a machete) always has the Deadly and Piercing tags.

Dolphin Kick: Atlantoids are most at home in the open water, and there are few faster at eluding pursuers. When offshore, Atlantoids have a +3 to all Survival rolls, and can vanish into the waves if no one is looking at them or holding onto them.

BRAIN-EATER EEL

“As if the brains and brawns of these scaly freaks weren’t enough, one of them feeds on human minds, turning our good patriotic people into mindless traitors!” — Doctor Eric Foster, breaking the news of his discovery to his science crew

Initially discovered in the body of a giant seal slug, the US military and the CIA took an interest in the brain-eater eel for its potential to infiltrate enemy organizations. By capturing a member of a group and sending them back in with a mind-controlling

alien, much information could be gained as well as sabotaging any plans they have which could harm US citizens. So far however, there has been zero success in controlling these aliens or finding out how they manipulate their hosts.

The life cycle of the brain-eater eel is an odd one. An infected host stubbornly gives up habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking drugs, but gorges on fatty food at every possible diner, ordering extra fries while staying clear of anything else that might alter one’s brain chemistry. Meanwhile, the parasite feeds on the host’s brain, starting with the non-vital parts. Soon memories perish and the host experiences severe mood swings. Before the host turns into a drooling husk, the parasite forces them to seek a large body of water where they finish eating the remainder of the brain.

Eggs within the parasite later hatch and eat the host’s body fat, explaining why the alien forces the host to go on nightly raids for the soggiest donuts in town. After escaping the husk, most brain-eater eels remain as solitary creatures, only seeking each other’s company when wishing to reproduce.

American scientists hypothesize that the egotistical alien can experience the memories of the host by either eating the whole brain cells, or by only eating the myelin, the fatty part of a brain, allowing for the electrical impulses to pass through their body. The eel has a unique response to the human physiology, and they have grown quite fond of the 1950s movie culture. The CIA suspects the aliens have increased cinema revenue in the United States by four percent.



The feeding of the host's brain affects the vessels differently. While some people, like CIA test subject HNCP-003, lost all sense of their former personality within a few days, there are other cases such as HNCP-047B, a twin study, where the host remained lucid for six months before escaping the laboratory. The subject claimed to be able to communicate with the brain-eater in their mind, like a second internal voice. The CIA's Dr. Fauster concluded the genetic makeup of the host might not affect who the eels consume. Instead, the correlation may be the subject having a more stimulated mind since subject HNCP-047A, the less creative of the twins, succumbed within the first week.

Discovery of the alien's weakness came accidentally, following Dr. Fauster accidentally consuming a specimen with his lunch. Initially, he exhibited the same classical symptoms as the other subjects but did not let on to his colleagues that he now contained an eel in his skull. His colleagues only noticed when they observed the pipe-smoking doctor refusing to join his colleagues for post-experimentation tobacco and coffee. Forcing the pipe into his mouth, either the nicotine or tar from the drug compelled the eel to escape its host in an unpleasant display. Within a few hours, Fauster's usual healthy smoking habits resumed, he could now eat vegetables without them being deep fried, and new experiments proceeded on discovering the eels' vulnerabilities to smoking.

GOALS

The brain-eater's primary goal is to reproduce, and consume brains and other fatty tissues. However, if they find themselves inside a host that provides them with interesting stimuli, such as an aspiring young artist or a lazy slob who's rewatching the latest "Best Motion Picture" winner for the fifth time, they might consider postponing their goal...for the time being.

STORY HOOK

When Joyce opened up her diner she did not expect the locals to warm up to her battered food so quickly. As the locals flocked, so did the youngsters from a camp across the lake. After a few days, Joyce noticed a behavior change in the young teenagers. They started to become more aggressive, elbowing the other customers to get into the small food shack. Deciding to follow the patrons back to their camp one night, Joyce could only run away screaming after witnessing four human bodies exploding with eels in the lake.

SYSTEM

The eel might arise as an opponent to humanity in its full or larval stage, both posing their own risks.

THE BRAIN-EATER EEL

Its physiological appearance is similar to the moray eel as it has a prolonged and wide mouth. The eel has a discreet brown pattern on its smooth, scale-less skin that produces mucus with no detectable toxins upon touch. The alien has a second set of jaws in its throat that launch forward as it opens its mouth and pull its food in.

The brain-eater's physical strength is puny compared to the average Joe or Jane. Its soft body is easily squashable with a heavy object. The alien's razor-sharp teeth are what it uses to enter the host via their eyes, mouth, or open wounds. One can try to remove the alien as it's burrowing into its host, but such attempts often result in the eel turning on its new aggressor.

Skills: Close Combat 2, Culture 3, Integrity 5, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 7, Cunning 5, Resolve 4; Might 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1; Presence 1, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Health: 6

BRAIN-EATER LARVAE

Larvae swim within plankton until a host consumes them or they grow to adult eel size. It is possible to consume more than one brain-eater larva. Once inside a body, they eat until ready to mature. Larvae consume fat steadily, with a single larva devouring three pounds a week. Dieting by this method is not advised. Most will grow to full size in a month.

In difference from the adults, the larvae appreciate the company of their own species. As they reach adult age, the larvae turn

on each other and if there's no more food to consume in the shared host, they cannibalize each other until only one is left.

Skills: Culture 2, Integrity 4, Survival 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 4; Might 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 3

THE HOST

Nobody knows why the brain-eaters are so fascinated by our culture, but they love watching the silver screen and famous actors dance across the projection. For as long as a host keeps consuming fatty food and watching movies, the eel does not assert further control. Only when a host's Intellect drops to 0 does the eel completely dominate the host, using the husk for its aims before depositing the corpse in a body of water.

SPECIAL RULES

Inhabit the Vessel: When inside the host, the brain-eater can be driven out by consuming anything that affects the brain's chemistry. Since the host is being controlled to stay away from such things, they have to roll Integrity + Resolve against Difficulty 3 to consume any toxins and do so within three separate scenes. Each time the character succeeds, the eel loses 2 Health, exiting when it reaches 0.

Enhance the Vessel: When in control of a vessel, the brain-eater eel affects the host's Mental Attributes. The Director chooses how the alien responds to the person. In a symbiotic relationship, the brain-eater bolsters the host's Intellect and Cunning to 7 and 5, respectively, but the host must continuously stimulate their brain (learning something new, watching movies) so the parasite can consume non-vital parts of their brain. Where the eel just wants the host for a set purpose for disposal, it instead eats the host's brain.

Controlling the Vessel: There are a few signs one can look for to deduce if a brain-eater has taken control of a human. Their increase in appetite and refusal to consume anything that alters their brain chemistry such as alcohol and tobacco are the most obvious ones. If compromised, the person will also have an entry wound somewhere on their body. The only exception to this is if the alien enters via the host's mouth.

Brain Deterioration: The eel experiences the memories of the host by either eating the whole or parts of the brain. This means memory loss for the victim. In addition, they suffer horrible mood swings, and even lose control of their body functions.

Each new day, the victim rolls Survival + Resolve to see if they resist the deterioration of their brain. On a failure, the eel eats more of the brain and the host loses one dot in Intellect. For each consecutive day the eel abstains from eating, add 1 Difficulty to the dice pool to resist.

The Director chooses the amount of control the host still has and what signs of deterioration occur after feeding.

Slippery Mucus: The brain-eater produces a sticky gel when it feels threatened, which it uses to get out of the grip of grubby scientists or to move away quickly when not in water.

If this skill is activated, the eel gains a +2 Enhancement when attempting to flee from the scene.

CRAB PEOPLE

"In all my years as a trained canner and deep-sea-diving adventurer I don't think I'd ever encountered anything as startling as that human face opening up like a crab's. It's enough to put a person off seafood." – Clain Hoake, veteran canner, diver and all-around troubleshooter, Holeport, USA

The crab people evolved on a parallel course alongside humans primarily in deep underground ocean grottos, which encouraged the development of both terrestrial and aquatic crab traits, including the gills of the latter. Though much is still unknown about them, it's believed their amphibious nature has been key to their monitoring of what they view as shameful human exploitation of sea life (crabs in particular) as a source of food. Their general exterior human appearance combined with comparable intelligence makes them a horrific threat. Sophisticated vocal cords allow them to mimic human speech and behavior to the point that they can blend in seamlessly. It is also believed that a rather hearty "hive" lifestyle below the surface has led to a "work ethic" unique among monsters or alien invaders. Their plodding devotion to their cause and inability to question the totalitarian authority of their ruler has led to them being the only monsters allegedly admired by the Communist Party, to the point of some flattering propaganda campaigns.

Their spartan lifestyle has contributed to them being quick studies willing to absorb all they can about humans, whom they derogatorily refer to as *landers* or *small mouthers*. The latter references the startling mobility of the shell-plates within the crab people's faces, which allow them to shift to quite credible human likeness. The strain of this concentrated effort must be relieved every four hours at least, in what they refer to as *coffee breaks*.

Once in private, the plates move back and the wide crab mandibles relax and open up in a kind of "sideways mouth" even as the eyes return to the sides of the face and "stalk out" a little. The effect is so unnerving that anyone witnessing this, as before an attack, has first to get over the shock before acting. Only persons experienced with the creatures have the advantage, and, while terrifically strong, the crab people are not nearly as fast as humans. In their natural form, the replication of human speech gives way to a cavernous and guttural voice that reverberates through the head worse than film trailer voiceover.

By far its greatest physical weapons are those powerful mandibles that can literally bite a person's face off. There's an old saying, "a crab person can bite a tree and spit a cabinet," though talk of their carpentry skills is unfounded. Second to that, the grip of their fingers intensifies tenfold when closing together into claws, which has served on occasion to "blow their cover" in a diner or public library.

The greatest drawback in blending in, however, and a definite "eyebrow raiser" in public, is their inability to walk forwards and backwards. The crab people are only able to shuffle sideways, easily their biggest giveaway. It's also the reason so many take jobs on assembly lines and similar jobs where this strange walk may not be noticed. Plus, they tend to carpool a lot for a similar reason and socialize only with their own kind. They also have some difficulty



with the full range of human emotion or personality traits, particularly *joviality* and, to a lesser degree, *biting sarcasm*. A certain haughtiness and confidence, however, seem to come quite naturally.

Despite these flaws, they have sufficient instinct and training to obscure these shortcomings and pose a serious and dedicated threat intent on subjugating humanity. It's their solitary goal and they are raised from birth to hate people. Their patience and dedication seem inborn as they methodically attempt to take over one city at a time.

Their infiltration method betrays their hive nature. Each human victim is selected and marked for a crab person of similar sex and body type. The victim is then carefully killed, disposed of, and replaced in an isolated setting, after which a crab person assumes their life. Sometimes, entire families are marked for replacement to avoid suspicion from close relatives. Whether for the sake of irony or mere practicality, they first target businesses in the fishing industry, in particular, the dreaded canneries (rumors that they have *human canneries* in their undersea grottos are, at this point, just that).

GOALS

They remain fixed on their primary goal of enslaving humanity, fueled by a passionate hatred the simple reason they no longer want their brethren to be food. Crab people feel the only road to freedom is to sit at the top of the food chain.

STORY HOOK

Austin started acting strange the other day, his face twitching unnervingly while he listened to his favorite radio show, his legs creeping sideways as he scuttled into bed for the night. When his wife questioned him, the farmer waved her concerns away, blaming them on his rickets. To his credit, Austin is working harder than ever before and offering employment to a lot of locals. Those who wonder whether he's a crab in disguise shrug and wonder if it's an improvement on the old model that's worth keeping.

SYSTEM

The stats below indicate an average crab person in or out of human guise, which is not dramatically different in appearance.

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 4, Resolve 2; Might 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 1, Close Combat 3, Culture 1, Humanities 2, Integrity 4, Persuasion 2, Science 3, Technology 3

Health: 9

SPECIAL RULES

Bone Shell: Because of the hard, bony shells just beneath their human-like surface, the crab people are only superficially

damaged by bullets, gaining a +3 armor Enhancement when under gunfire. They are, however, vulnerable to boiling water and small hammers.

This Crab's Got Claws: In a stand-up fight, a crab person is pretty nasty. When successfully grappling a victim, the bipedal crustacean becomes lethal. A crab person's mandibles deal an additional +3 damage on top of that caused simply by making an unarmed strike.

Shifting Face: Crab people are predatory, evolutionary hybrids of crab and human whose hive-like social system and plodding nature balance fierce strength, dangerous mandibles, claw-like fingers and a remarkable ability to blend in with the working class. They systematically mark and replace victims by way of diabolically shifting face plates, gaining a +2 Enhancement to Manipulation rolls when pretending to be someone other than a crab. They work hard at maintaining their disguises despite several tells like limited expression and, especially, their sideways gait.

THE PREFECTURE OF THE POD

"For years, humans thought they were the most intelligent beings on Earth. It was the stupidest thought of all. For how could they judge the unknown? How could they fathom the unseen? How could their selfish, individualistic natures match the unity of the Pod?"
- Excerpt from the Book of the Aouraphoun

The Prefecture of the Pod, or simply the Pod to any man, woman or... thing who has encountered them, are one of the most dangerous of the threats to humankind beneath the waves.

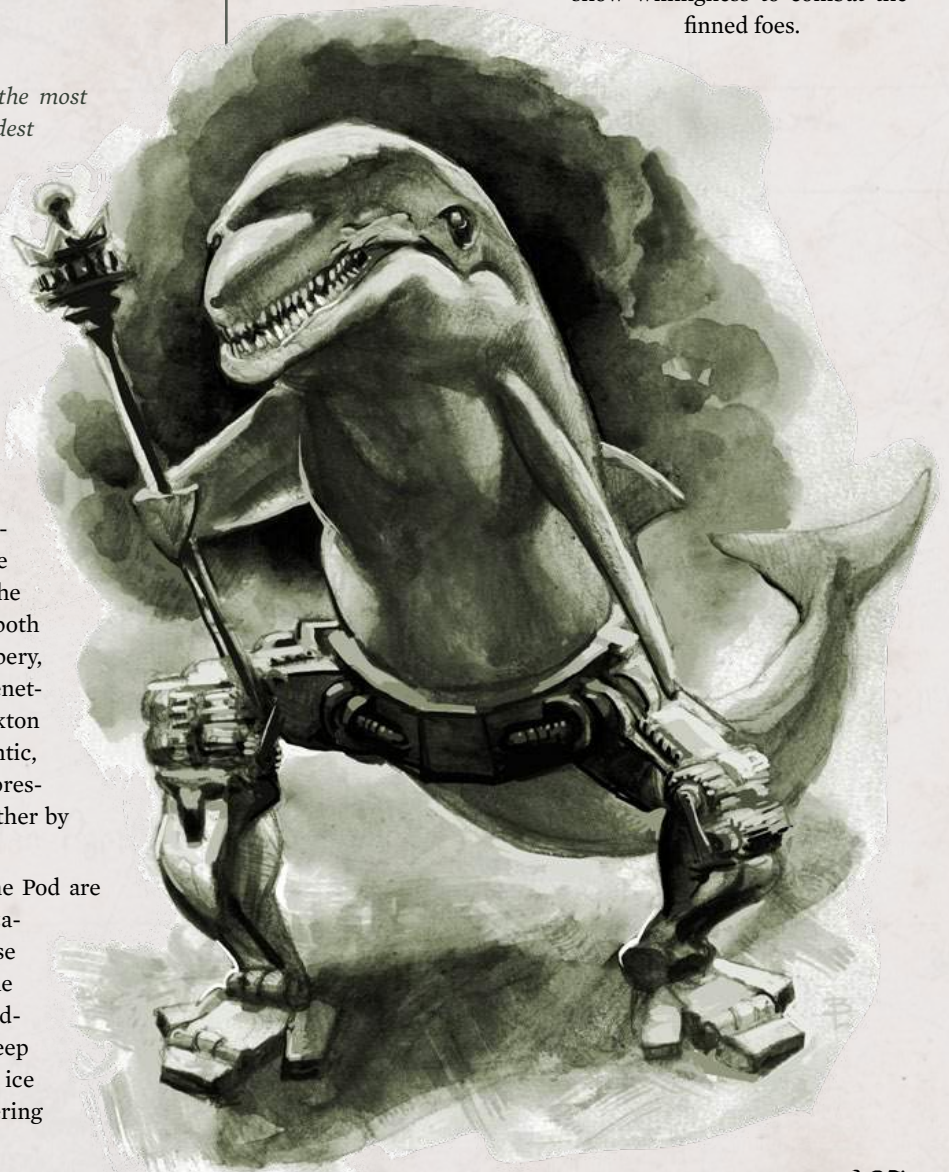
The prefects form a highly structured, advanced society made up of all manner of whale and dolphin life. Purely aquatic in nature, the Pod favor the use of manipulated servants, both human and alien alike. Either by coercion, bribery, or by means of their insidious technology, genetic manipulation and the dreaded neuroplankton they employ. Their fortress in the North Atlantic, which they call "the Great Bubble," is an impressively vast construct of air pockets held together by strange, alien force fields.

Several human organizations suspect the Pod are the shadow-fin behind the F.I.S.H. organization. Or perhaps the other way around, as those deluded fools would have it. In any case, the Pod have the contacts on land to do their bidding and enough lackeys beneath the sea to keep pushing their agenda of melting the polar ice caps and covering the Earth in water, rendering

human life subservient and reliant on them for nourishment and shelter. Since members of the Pod refer to humankind as a child race, it is clear they have little respect for humans outside of their own needs and potential labor.

Though they often act through their proxies and minions, the prefects themselves are not to be underestimated. Even once a human has circumvented their technology, which is far more advanced than anything on the surface, an attacker then must contend with the prefect's innate abilities. The wail of a prefect can reduce a hardened soldier to a blubbering mess, or worse, vibrate his insides into jelly. Their mental abilities can paralyze and freeze a human on the spot with their black, empty gaze. Their dorsal jets can spray out water like a cannon if someone tries to sneak up on them. All in all, they are a fearsome foe, if limited in number.

The crab people seem to have a strange relationship with them, but who can really understand those bizarre crustaceans? It's clear some of them are in the Pod's pocket and others don't like that fact. Those that are can be marked out by their possession and use of advanced technology, giving them an edge on their usual brethren. Any aliens not under the wet flappers of the prefects show willingness to combat the finned foes.



Despite that ray of hope, humans should take caution. The Pod's members are ruthless and trained from birth to sneer at humanity. Their own young are taken from their mothers and forced to survive in the wild oceans, hunted by man and alien alike, on a round-the-world cycle demanded by their alien gods. Only those who prove themselves worthy in the eyes of Raaurak and survive to see the Great Bubble can truly join the prefects and become one of the future masters of the Earth.

GOALS

The Prefecture's aim is to manipulate humanity into melting the polar ice caps and flooding the world, paving the way for their rule. It is believed they are already manipulating politicians into saying such climate change is impossible.

STORY HOOK

Special Agent Karl Magruder, fearing the Pod has compromised the Department of Investigations, has gone rogue and now hides in a sleepy town on the coast. While he builds a case against the Pod using F.I.S.H. to infiltrate the intelligence services, multiple interested parties dispatch agents to track down and secure, kidnap, or murder the special agent. The information he possesses could spell a change in tides for the Pod.

SYSTEM

The Prefects of the Pod employ many fiendish devices and powers to decimate and subjugate their foes.

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Command 4, Culture 3, Empathy 2, Enigmas 4, Humanities 5, Integrity 4, Medicine 3, Persuasion 3, Pilot 3, Science 4, Survival 5, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 6, Cunning 5, Resolve 4; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Combat: Prefects will attack first with their weapons, then their abilities and, if pushed, their powerful bite.

SPECIAL RULES

Technology: The Prefecture is one of the preeminent technological threats on Earth. They employ a number of technologies they also farm out to their agents. The presence of these techs in the hands of other aliens is a clear sign of their allegiance, or perhaps that they have somehow stolen from the Pod and survived.

Among their technologies are:

Raaurak's Ray: A long, scepter-like device that projects a ray of energy up to medium range. The wielder uses Aim + Dexterity to use the device, which may be evaded with an opposed Athletics + Dexterity roll. The ray deals 4 damage and targets must succeed

on an Athletics + Stamina roll at Difficulty 2 or gain the Stunned Condition (see p. XX) for the remainder of the scene, or until slapped across the face.

Amphiboflyers: Alien craft that have stealth and cloaking technology, used to transport prefects to locations across the globe where their personal guidance is required. They are unarmed vessels, used to arrive and escape unnoticed.

LandWalk Suit: The prefects who choose to lower themselves by walking upon the dirt of Earth themselves do so with these robotic legs, housed on a belt system that fits around the waist. The suits can take 6 Health of damage before being destroyed and any attack made against a prefect wearing one damages the suit first. If the suit is destroyed, the prefect wearing it falls prone and flounders, reducing any combat rolls to two dice.

Neuroplankton Swarm: These dreaded creatures are what the Pod use to pacify difficult prisoners or ensure the loyalty of key operatives. To the naked eye, they seem like a pale cloud swarming inside watery pools. Victims are lowered headfirst into bowls drawn from hatcheries in the Great Bubble. Once infested, the subject becomes pliable to the suggestions of the prefects and follows any instructions given.

Neuroplankton require water in increasing amounts. Subjects under their influence grow increasingly thirsty and will go to any lengths to quench that thirst when it hits. The subject must drink one pint of water every hour, increasing by one pint each week under the influence. If a subject resists the urge to drink with an Integrity + Composure roll, Difficulty 5, the neuroplankton die off. A botch means that the victim succumbs permanently to the neuroplankton until it is removed by other means, so timing when to roll to resist is crucial. To surgically remove the neuroplankton requires a character of Intellect 4 or higher, with a Medicine Skill of at least 3, and the procedure takes eight hours of action to complete, requiring an accumulated 10 successes across a complex action montage (see p. XX).

Sonic Wail: The prefect emits an ear-splitting shriek that begins to vibrate the very flesh of the target. Targets within hearing range must succeed on an Integrity + Composure roll or gain the Stunned Condition (see p. XX) for the remainder of the scene, or until water is thrown over them. The target also takes 3 damage. Ear protectors nullify this effect.

Raaurak's Gaze: The deep, black eyes of the prefect fix the target in place with a psychic hum. A target with whom the prefect makes eye contact must succeed on an Integrity + Resolve roll or gain the Paralyzed Condition (see p. XX) for the remainder of the scene, or until someone pinches them.

Dorsal Jet: The prefect emits a burst of pressurized water from its blowhole. The prefect makes an Aim + Dexterity attack against a target who rolls Athletics + Dexterity to evade the attack or Athletics + Might to resist it. This attack deals 3 damage, though it can be resisted. Any struck targets who roll fewer successes than the attacker are pushed back to medium range and knocked prone.

THE ROBOT RACE FROM 3000 A.D.

"We harbor you no ill intent. We come to offer a reprieve from the specter of nuclear annihilation and environmental destruction. We come to rescue you. We come to make you perfect." – Diplomatic unit Zeta-334

In the year 1979, the Cold War heated up as zombie Stalin pushed the big red button with his necrotic hand. Blossoms of fire and death flowered briefly, and then, it was all over. The only survivors of humanity were those who lived in undersea colonies and a scattered handful on the moon who did not last long without supplies from Earth. The people in the undersea cities were bitter, each blaming the other side for what had happened, and they fought until their rage burned out. Then, they looked around at the terrible wasteland around them and realized what a mistake humanity had made. Our emotions had gotten the best of us, and the result was ashes and a blasted planet. The remnants of humanity set their differences aside, both having now seen the futility of their respective ideologies and set out to find a way to ensure such a calamity could never happen again.

By the year 3000, they had succeeded, and turned mankind into a race of robots – perfect, rational, and emotionless. Being perfectly logical beings, they deduced that the only way to truly prevent a nuclear war from existing in any dimension of space-time was to travel back to the 20th century and save their ancestors from themselves. Their time vessel has appeared at the bottom of Lake Superior, and they are preparing to embark on a grand project, to convert all of 20th-century humanity into machines – but first, they intend to gather intelligence on the current situation, incomplete and patchwork as the surviving records of the nuclear war were, and to build themselves a force of conquest. To that end, they have taken to sending lone agents into sleepy little lakeside towns at night, kidnapping unwary people still out after dark and converting them into more robot people.

Inside and out, the robot people are mechanical. Their society is perfectly logical and ordered, planned and administered without dissent or discontent by analysts, who in return report to the Head Analyst, an enormous databank capable of containing a whole library's worth of information. The Head Analyst processes the computer tapes containing the day's records and spits out reams of paper in every building with the instructions on how to proceed. In effect, every one of the robot people are extensions of the Head Analyst's will, even though they are theoretically still individuals, because the Head Analyst is the most competent authority on logic they know.

The expeditionary force, stationed beneath Lake Erie, receives orders from the Head Analyst through a temporal punch-card printer. Their submarine laboratory-vessel is well-stocked according to the Head Analyst's situation analysis, but one thing it lacks is manufacturing capability. While those plans were meticulous and ingenious, one thing they are unprepared for is technologies and powers beyond that which 1950s humanity ought to have. The robot people, for all their intellect, are poor independent



thinkers – if they were to face those kinds of unnatural resources, or their temporal punch-card printer were to be destroyed, they would fall into confused inaction and bickering until they could reestablish contact.

GOALS

The robot race is single-minded. At present, their goal is to uplift humanity and curb its self-destructive impulses. If cut off from the Head Analyst, or faced with an unexpected situation, however, the expeditionary force's sole goal becomes to reestablish contact with the Head Analyst and seek its guidance. If the Head Analyst dies, the whole species' goal instead becomes finding out which individual member is the most rational and convert that one into a new Head Analyst. This would mean civil war.

STORY HOOKS

When Air Force One vanishes over Lake Erie, the United States blames the Soviet Union. As the situation escalates toward nuclear war, however, the President of the United States returns – and orders all citizens to report for roboticization! As the Armed Forces, now under robot command, start rounding up citizens, it's up to intrepid journalist Ivan Kravshenko to uncover the truth about the president's conversion before it's too late!

SYSTEM

The average robot person from 3000 A.D. has the following statistics:



EVIL ROBOTS AND ACCURACY

We are of course aware that evil robots in the movies have dreadful aim. This isn't reflected in the write-up for the robot race, but can easily become the case through use of Rewrites and Cinematics, and a good use for both!

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Integrity 4, Larceny 1, Pilot 1, Science 4, Survival 2, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Super-Human Physique: The robot people are completely immune to poisons and diseases, as well as nearly all environmental hazards (the Director has discretion on what can affect them).

Eye Lasers: The robot people can emit deadly laser beams at targets within medium range. Roll Cunning + Aim to attack with a +2 Enhancement.

Conversion Chamber: Anyone captured by the robot people and placed in a conversion chamber is completely helpless. Minor characters suffer 1 damage (Continuous [4 hours], Deadly), while player characters and other major characters suffer 1 damage (Continuous [day], Deadly). When the character runs out of health, she irreversibly becomes a robot person. A character rescued after taking damage may have mechanical parts at the Director's discretion, or the player's choice if a protagonist.

Living Armor: The robots are essentially suits of walking armor, in the sense they're metal-plated (except for some glowing domes of swirling and blinking lights). This armored shell grants a +3 Enhancement against all attacks, often making bullets ping off.

Becoming roboticized applies the following changes to an individual:

Skills: -1 to Command, Culture, Empathy, Enigmas, Humanities, and Persuasion; +1 to Aim, Athletics, Close Combat, Larceny, Pilot, and Survival; +2 to Integrity, Science, and Technology

Attributes: +2 Intellect, +1 Resolve, +1, Might, +1 Stamina, -2 Presence, -1 Manipulation, +1 Composure

Health: +5

URCHINFOLK

"What you are about to see cannot leave this room. You are all here to be briefed on one of the most dangerous species on our entire planet. Or, more accurately, the most dangerous species in our oceans. Even though we haven't heard of them, they have heard of us, and we have to make sure they never have cause to attack the human race. Gentlemen, witness... the urchinfolk!" – General Brian McTavish, liaison to F.I.S.H.

The urchinfolk understand warfare, having engaged in a protracted war against the killer kelp. These spiny fiends have destroyed kelpman settlements, killed kelpman soldiers, and eaten kelpman corpses. The urchinfolk's appetite for the vegetable flesh of the kelpmen is voracious and insatiable and has been so for as long as they can remember. Unfortunately, "as long as they can remember" goes back only a couple of years.

When Dr. Flora Carmichael built her evolutionary acceleration ray, it didn't merely enhance the kelp. It also managed to evolve some of the urchins that were happily feeding on the kelp. Where she took control of the kelpmen, the urchinfolk slid off, forming their own society devoted to the overthrow and destruction of their hated rivals.

The urchinfolk don't live in established cities. Instead, they move in roaming tribes, an extended family of murderers that travel the waters in search of their enemies. Occasionally two rival bands of urchinfolk might stumble across an enclave of kelpmen, and fight each other for the privilege of battle (and the first taste of kelpman flesh). Recently, several families of urchinfolk have devoted themselves to communicating with different bands, coordinating them, and sharing resources to make their ongoing war more efficient. This urchinfolk nobility is respected by some and denigrated by others, but slowly the urchinfolk are evolving from disconnected nomads into a unified force to be reckoned with.

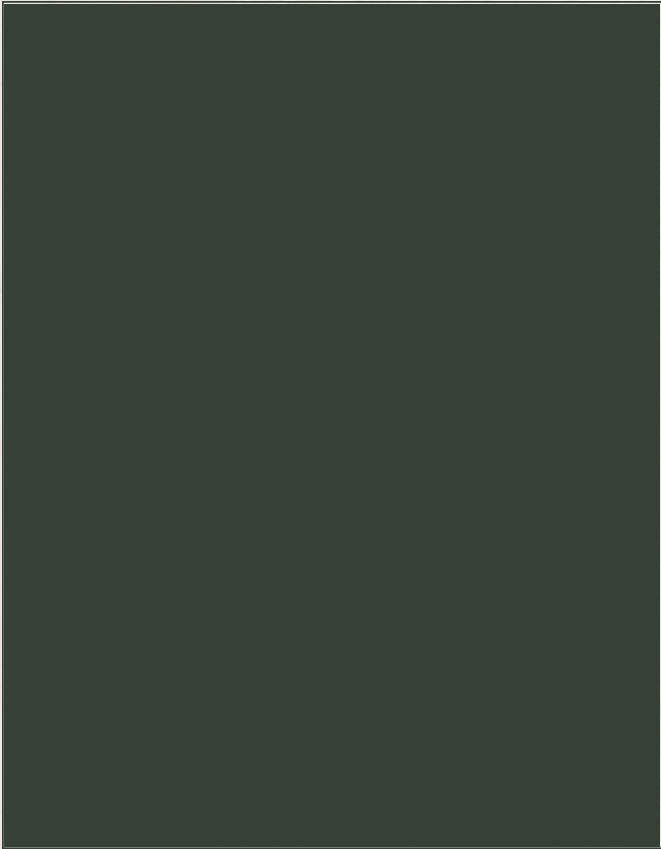
As their conflict with the kelpmen rages on, the urchinfolk have updated their technology. Not satisfied with their natural defenses of long spikes that can be extruded from their flesh, the urchinfolk have developed increasingly powerful and efficient ways to dispatch their foes. By reverse engineering equipment stolen from the surface world, they've managed to create their own devices. These days, their technology is roughly equivalent to that of humanity, although their weaponry is a little more efficient and water-resistant.

GOALS

In general, the goals of the urchinfolk are very simple: Find the kelpmen, kill them, and eat them. However, as the kelpmen invade the world above the waves, the urchinfolk follow. Their discovery of humanity has led them to consider a new enemy to face — one whose flesh isn't edible, but who stands in the way of the utter eradication of the kelpmen and the urchinfolk's total supremacy.

STORY HOOK

When Big Jimmy's hotrod goes missing from the drive-in theater as he picks up snacks, the local gangs receive the blame,



Jimmy delivering an ass-whooping nobody expects from the old mechanic. The greasers' pleas for innocence finally fall on sympathetic ears when they describe the spiny critters they saw giggling and dropping spikes all over the parking lot just before the car's theft. A few in-the-know types recognize the tell-tale signs of the urchinfolk, but the question arises: What do humanoid urchins want with a supercharged hotrod?

SYSTEM

The following are the statistics for the average urchinfolk warrior. Urchinfolk nobles have fewer dots in the Physical Arena, but more in the Social Arena – feel free to adjust accordingly.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 1, Pilot 4, Survival 1, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

Spiky Bodies: The spikes all over the bodies of the urchinfolk can be deployed or recessed at will. When deployed, anyone making an unprotected hand-to-hand attack on an urchinfolk receives an Injury Condition. However, any Athletics + Dexterity rolls the urchinfolk makes while its spikes are deployed has a Complication 1 of "Awkward," as the urchinfolk tries to maneuver.

PRIMORDIALS

Primordials are the most alien of all the invaders: true, virtually incomprehensible monsters of the deep. They are the terrifying remnants of elder epochs when the world was even more watery than it is now, the survivors of countless extinction events that wiped away lesser creatures. They are often unique in that status: Any culture that these singular and mighty entities might have once possessed, if they had any at all, long ago ceased to exist. Many are not even sapient as humans understand the term, possessed of a cold and feral intelligence that does not recognize human life as possessing any value. To them, we are tiny, young, and frequently food.

The Primordials stand in stark opposition to the Everyman, those anonymous and dronelike humans who exist in unremarkable multitudes.

Everymen gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Primordials.

Primordials gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against Everymen.

ANURADONS

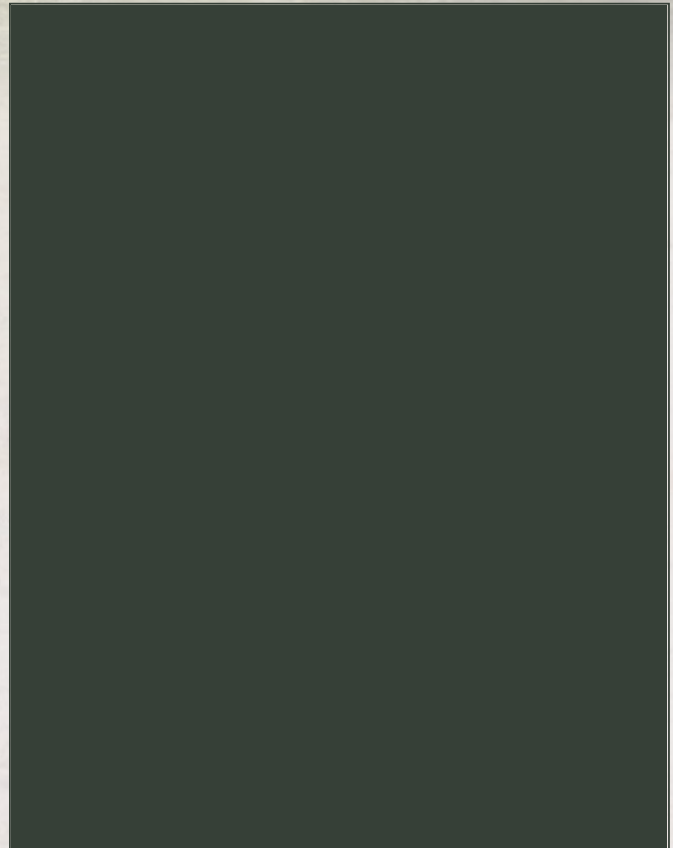
“The iguanoids like to (croak) think that they are the oldest and most (croak) powerful species on the planet. We will (croak) prove to them the depths of their (croak) folly.” – Ribbidus Maximus, Anuradon war leader

For millennia, the iguanoids evolved and grew, living peaceful lives under the waves. The same evolutionary forces spurring the creation and development of the iguanoids also pushed another, companion species. The ancient frogs and amphibians that graced the planet slowly mastered both land and sea. They became the anuradons.

Unlike the iguanoids, however, the anuradons spent time on the surface world. They learned of the vicious ways of the mammals, the need to fight and kill for food, territory, and dominion. Such violence and aggression pleased and attracted the anuradons, and they attempted to educate the iguanoids in such tactics.

The peaceful iguanoids were not interested in the knowledge of warfare. Instead, they simply... spoke to the anuradons, telling them it was better to embrace the simple life of study and contemplation the iguanoids offered. Powerless to resist the iguanoid spell, the anuradons obeyed. They became the slaves of the iguanoids in all but name.

But the violent streak of the anuradons was never lost. Rather than eradicated by the soft, mesmeric words of the iguanoids,



the rage simmered and seethed, lurking just beneath the surface. Time and again the anuradons would lash out in whatever way they could, destroying equipment or disrupting events simply to hurt their masters in some trivial way. Each time the mental influence of the iguanoids was reapplied, but they were never truly tamed.

Eventually, the anuradons discovered a way to rebel. The iguanoids developed a dampening collar, reducing sound and brainwaves so that they could rest easier without distracting “noise” around them. Anyone wearing such a collar was effectively immune to iguanoid control. Copies were made and passed around to anuradons all over the world. Once they were prepared, they attacked, killing thousands of iguanoids before retreating en masse from their civilization.

Then, disaster struck. An ice age covered the planet, and the temperatures of the waters grew colder and colder, making them uninhabitable. Unfortunately, the anuradons weren’t as technologically capable as the iguanoids, and couldn’t find a way to protect their scattered enclaves from the coming chill. Many perished

in the ice age, while some fled to warmer climates. A few were perfectly preserved by the chill, and one or two even managed to make it into an iguanoid cryostasis center.

As the iguanoids slept, the anuradons rebuilt. They used their time to grow, reclaiming lost waters and hiding from bigger predators. They watched with awe at the slow growth of humanity as they conquered the planet. Never as technologically adept as their former masters, the anuradons nevertheless kept pace with the surface world, biding their time.

Now, with the recent reawakening of their hated slave owners, the anuradons have deemed it the time to strike. They have organized a plan to replace the humans and take control of the surface world. And then, both the humans and the iguanoids will croak with despair.

GOALS

The anuradons, while aggressive, are also patient planners. They will spend generations building up resources before preparing to strike. They aren't cautious, however — if a risky plan is needed to continue their build-up, the anuradons will undertake it without a second (or even a first) thought.

Their long-term plan is twofold. First, they want to control the surface world. Humanity has built up an infrastructure that dwarfs that of the iguanoid empire, particularly in large countries such as the United States and Russia. Destruction of key hominids to control assets like military installations and missile sites will allow them to control the world above the water. Then, once they have that control, they will use it to track down and wipe out every last iguanoid cryostasis center, obliterating their former masters once and for all.

STORY HOOK

As human forces engage in war on the Korean peninsula, a third force joins the fray, sowing destruction against both sides of the conflict. Establishing landfall and claiming Seoul as their aboveground kingdom, the anuradons declare this to only be the first of their conquests. They demand human ambassadors meet with them to discuss the terms of their new regime, only interested in peace if it guarantees reprisal against the hated iguanoids.

SYSTEM

Most anuradons consider themselves to be warriors, so the average statistics below reflect that. Anuradon scientists and intelligence operatives might shift some dots over to the Mental or Social Arenas, but in general it's assumed that every anuradon is capable in a fight.

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Medicine 1, Survival 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 4; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Resilient Hide: Anuradons have developed a thick, rubbery hide over millennia of conflict. It acts as light soft armor, granting a +1 Enhancement against all attacks.

Resistant Mind: After an eternity of being mentally and emotionally controlled by the iguanoids, the anuradons have developed strong wills and iron resolve. As such, any attempt to convince them to do something they don't want to do, even via superscience or supernatural compulsion, has a Complication 2 of "Resistant Mind."

BONELLIA VIRIDIS TERRIBILIS

"Spoon worms hail from outer space, did you know that? Not in an "invasion from Mars" kind of way, but "meteorites crashing to earth carrying alien bacteria." Give those bacteria a couple million years, and boom: spoon worms. Add radiation to that — we know it's radiation because Terribilis didn't exist before Hiroshima — and strange things happen." — Dr. Keoka Kalua, Senior Scientist Facility HHK-22B

A Japanese marine ship near Nagasaki Bay documented the first encounter with *bonellia viridis terribilis* in 1946. Believing the floating worm to be a large piece of unidentified kelp, they fished it out of the ocean for research and didn't live to regret it. While direct casualties from the encounter were low, as the worm's heavy body was ill-suited to being out of water, the neuro-toxin on its skin claimed another dozen or so sailors later.

Normal spoon worms hail from the Cambrian period, some six hundred million years ago. The giant spoon worm remains remarkably similar in physiology, if much larger and terrifying. The species is dioecious, having separate male and female individuals. Both look like a bulbous green worm that can grow up to nine feet in length in their early development. Beyond that though, their growth diverges. Females, always having been larger than males, continue their growth as-is. The largest documented female specimen to date is 15 feet long, not counting its feeding proboscis. Males however, split into new growths until they resemble a many-branched piece of kelp. The most documented growths on a male, again to date, is seven branches each with its own feeding proboscis.

Bonellia viridis terribilis has several natural weapons at its disposal. The main is a feeding proboscis that extends up to 10 times the creature's body size. This appendage ends in a maw lined with rows of needle-teeth slanted inward: once the giant spoon worm bites onto a creature, the only way forward is deeper in. Between this and its size, *bonellia viridis terribilis* can attack and consume dolphins, small sharks, and all humans with ease. In 1948, a passenger on a British cruise liner shot pictures of what appears to be a giant spoon worm using its proboscis to wrap around a whale. The pictures, however, were grainy and publicly debunked. The worm also has a neurotoxin on its skin that paralyzes any crea-

tures that come into contact with it. The toxin has a greater effect the more its victim struggles, which has the military very interested, and eventually shuts down the heart and respiratory system.

The worm wriggles along to travel on the seabed and, using gas from its digestive tract, the worm floats to the top of the ocean where water currents and wind propel it along. It senses vibrations, both under and above water if it's at the surface, to find well-populated areas. When it does, the worm expels gas and sinks to the sea bottom again. Extending its feeding proboscis to drift on the ocean, the worm lies in wait for its next prey. While *bonellia viridis* *terribilis* can feed on fish, it prefers human flesh for the rich tissue. The worm expels its prey's bones. The species has only been sighted in moderate to warm waters.

GOALS

Eat. Grow. Reproduce.

The giant spoon worm's mental faculties aren't any more developed than its six-million-year-old progenitor species. That's also why it was classed as a Primordial, when in fact the species emerged just five years ago.

STORY HOOKS

Remaining in bed until it wears off is the best treatment for giant spoon worm poison. That's not always an option for heroes, and scientists seek an antidote to the neurotoxin. An eccentric professor hires the characters to trace a *bonellia viridis* *terribilis* and return with its skin (worm inside optional).

SYSTEM

Generic giant spoon worms grow up to nine feet in size, with six feet being the most commonly encountered specimen as smaller ones are often mistaken for especially thick kelp.

Females continue to grow in size up to 15 feet. They also appear to be the smarter of the worms, hiding itself in kelp and letting its proboscis float along with the current.

Male adults split into multiple connected branches, each with its own feeding proboscis which works in tandem to hold prey down.



GIANT SPOON WORM, YOUNG

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Larceny 3, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 12

GIANT SPOON WORM, FEMALE

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 4, Larceny 4, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 1; Might 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 7; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 14

GIANT SPOON WORM, MALE

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 4, Larceny 3, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 7, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 14

SPECIAL RULES

It's a worm, Jim: While all specimens of *bonellia viridis* *terribilis* have a Resolve and Composure of 1, they are worms. The creature can't be talked to. It can't be reasoned with. All efforts to dissuade it from its goals automatically fail.

If you cut it in half...: A worm that loses more than half its Health seeks to escape. If it can't, and it's an adult, it splits in two. Both halves use the stats for a young specimen, save their Health which is the original's remaining Health halved, rounded down.

How do I get out of this thing?! The giant spoon worm can contort its body, and gains +2 to all grapple checks. If *bonellia viridis* *terribilis* is in control of a grapple for two turns, including the turn it was initiated, its feeding proboscis latches on. Breaking free of the grapple, whether under the character's own power or with aid of an ally, now deals one automatic damage.

Great, it's also poisonous: Bare skin contact with a giant spoon worm triggers a Stamina roll for the character. One success means the character fights the poison off until the scene ends, at which point it takes effect normally. Two or more successes lets the character shake the poison's effects entirely, though repeat-

ed skin contact triggers repeated checks. If the character rolls no successes, they are poisoned. *Bonellia viridis terribilis* poison subtracts two dice from all rolls the character makes. Additionally, it subtracts a point of Stamina whenever a penalized roll comes up with zero successes. The effects last for 24 hours.

Oh, and it's massive: The *Bonellia viridis terribilis* is a Scale 5 monster. You're welcome.

CENTOPUS

"What do you mean 'Have I SEEN it?' Nobody has SEEN it, kid. Only parts of it. Only tentacle after tentacle of crushing death. We must have blasted everything we had into the thing. Every slimy, sucker-filled arm that withdrew was replaced by 20 more. Bigger and bigger. It swallowed my ship and all hands along with it. How did I escape? Are you serious, kid? You think I stuck around for the grand finale? When something like that comes up from below, you don't worry about pride anymore." — Captain Warren Gatesley, Sea Tanker "Wavebender," found alone in a life raft off the coast of Alaska, USA.

Nobody knows if it's the only one of its kind, but surface dwellers certainly hope so. The Centopus first emerged from the Mariana Trench around four years ago, in what was referred to as "the Alaskan incident." Its appearance resulted in all cargo ships being rerouted southward. Top scientists analyzed tissue samples from the wreckage of the tankers it dragged under the sea with its huge, flailing limbs. Suffice it to say, Centopus is old. So old that every story told about a kraken or similar, could have been a Centopus attack from antiquity.

Centopus is probably the most famous of the collection of the creatures scientists refer to as the "Trenchers," huge beasts from the deep places of the world. It has no agenda, save to fill its city-sized, labyrinthine gut with anything it can ensnare. Battleships have emptied shell after shell into its limbs and not slowed it down. Subs have fired endless waves of torpedoes and still it keeps coming. Nobody is sure what lures it from its deep lair but some speculate that a few of the more insidious aliens found a way to lure it up to the surface waters. If so, it's an effective weapon in their war against

the human race. Centopus might not have a complex agenda, but every time it appears, it wreaks absolute havoc and leaves utter devastation in its wake. The people of Earth can only hope it never finds its way to one of the more populous coastal cities.

GOALS

Centopus is devoid of true goals. It eats its fill and returns to its lair to sleep.

STORY HOOK

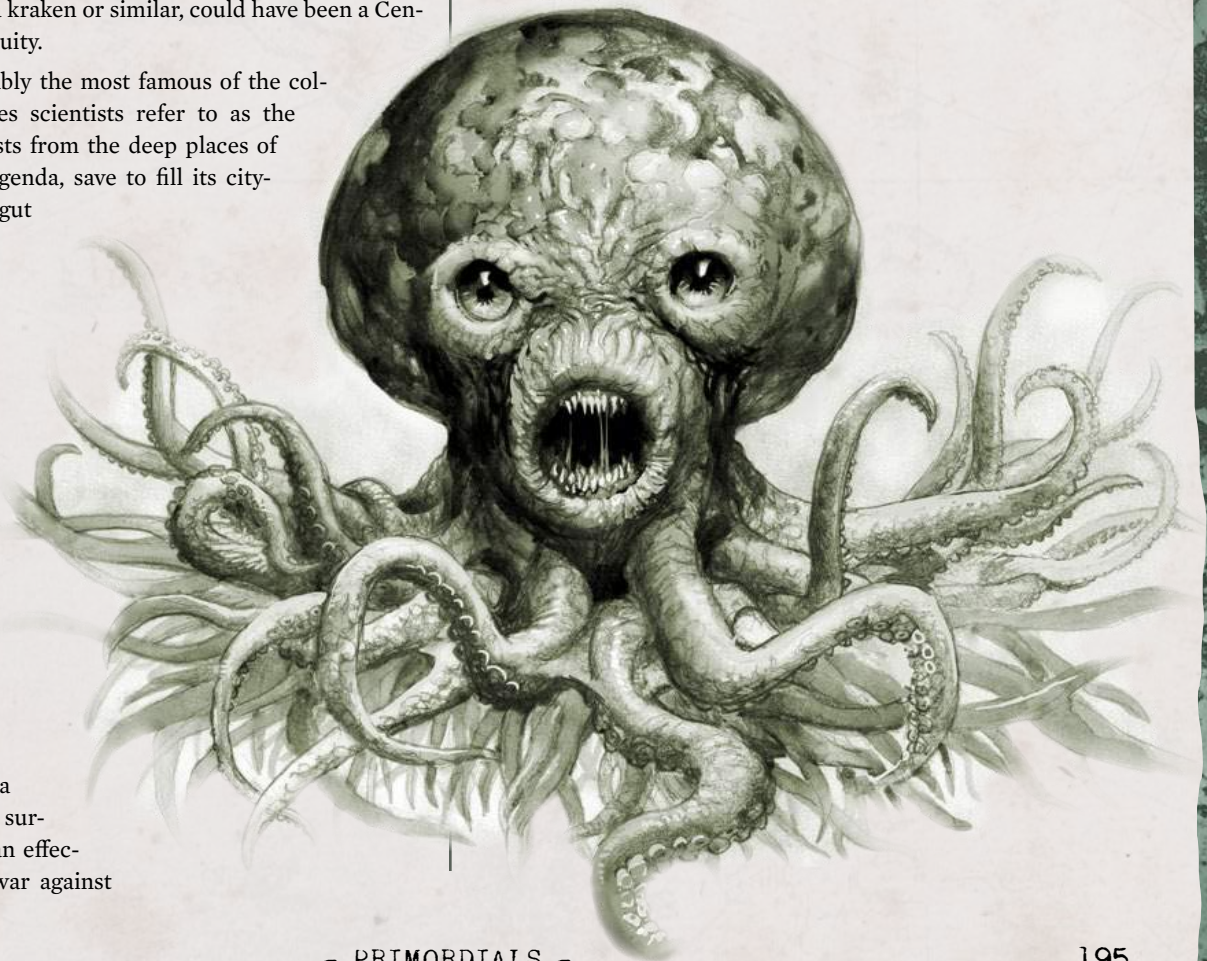
A freighter hauling seafood from Tokyo to Seattle runs aground in the middle of the Pacific, or so it seems. As Coast Guard units from Hawaii scramble to rescue the ailing vessel, the rescue party becomes an additional sweetmeat for the great maw of Centopus. Inside the huge mollusk, our heroes must negotiate their escape while avoiding the maddened, chanting cultists within.

SYSTEM

Centopus has no set Attributes or Skills. It is a primordial beast of colossal threat, and is as strong or specialized as the Director sees fit. A standard dice pool of nine dice is enough to deter most attackers.

SPECIAL RULES

It's unstoppable!: Centopus cannot be harmed by any weapons possessed by humans and even the alien threats seem to give the beast the widest of berths. Individual tentacles can be dam-



aged and driven back by doing 5 damage to them, but several fresh tentacles will take its place two turns later. Fighting it in the standard fashion should be long and drawn out as it slowly dismantles and devours any oceangoing vessel on which the party finds itself. A special weapon or alliance with other aquatic threats is the only thing that could stop the mollusk.

It's massive!: Centopus is a Scale 6 threat, and engaging it human to monster leaves a great likelihood of death.

Inside Centopus: Once all protagonists have been swallowed, Directors may wish to pause for dramatic effect. Characters awaken in the central digestive chamber of the beast. They find themselves on an island of flesh surrounded by a lake of bubbling, green acid into which they will see the melting hull of their ship sink (and possibly some of their crewmates). This is the beginning of the real fight against the deadly trencher. The walls of its digestive system pulse with the beating of four alien hearts and are slick with transparent slime, sticky to the touch. The Centopus' stomach can be exited via a patch of slitted wall, allowing the characters to push their way through, although they will find themselves coated in alien mucus.

CHILDREN OF THE TENTACLE

Other creatures can be found wandering the innards of the beast, trying to find a way out. They may offer to aid the heroes in exchange for the promise of escape, or they may attack, seeking sustenance after a long time trapped inside the Centopus with little to eat. Included may be survivors of Centopus attacks on human vessels also scraping for survival. Some have even gone mad and decided to worship the alien monstrosity from within, forming a bizarre, cannibalistic cult calling themselves the Children of the Tentacle. Cultists will attempt to capture unwitting players by spraying them with a substance that causes the mucus coating their bodies to harden and freeze them in place, conveying the Paralyzed Condition unless evaded.

SYSTEM

Children of the Tentacle have the following statistics, with the cult leader having +1 Intellect, Presence, Command, and Persuasion as well as a stolen alien weapon from any of the other threats Centopus has devoured, showing it does not play favorites. Individual Children of the Tentacle can be convinced to abandon their cultist ways but players are at +2 above standard Difficulty to achieve this.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 2, Culture 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 3, Humanities 1, Integrity 3, Larceny 3, Medicine 2, Persuasion 3, Pilot 1, Science 1, Survival 4, Technology 1

Attributes: Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Health: 5

Internal Organs: This is where the Centopus can finally be fought. Protagonists inside the creature can finally kill it by either stopping all four of its hearts, or somehow fighting their way to its

primordial brain. Of course, it won't be easy. The Children of the Tentacle guard the important areas of the beast and must, somehow be overcome. If the protagonists achieve this goal, they then have 30 minutes of real time to escape before the corpse of the Centopus sinks to the bottom of the ocean in floods with deadly seawater. To survive they must either force their way out of its maw (requiring 30 accumulated damage to force through), manage to pass through its digestive system, finding a vessel sturdy enough to allow them to survive the acid draining from the beast's system, or they can choose the gory way, and try to blast their way out of the beast's softer parts. If they do so before the time elapses, they emerge close enough to the surface to swim up as the beast sinks down beneath them, into the infinite darkness.

GARGANTUAN SQUID

"You don't want to take that boat of yours out into these waters, I promise you. I once captained a vessel myself, you know, years back. That was before this demon squid, this unholy monstrosity clamped onto my hull and used its beak to put more holes in her than a slice of Swiss cheese. I never did find that demon squid. One day, I'll have my revenge. One day." – Leslie McCullar, former ship's captain (now drunkard)

Many have heard of the giant squid, but few realize that there's an even larger version lurking in the darkest waters. A giant giant squid, sometimes known as "demon squid" or "gargantuan squid," is truly a terrifying sea monster. Only a few humans have survived an encounter with the creature, and most are treated as cranks and drunks when they try to explain the horrors they witnessed.

Even those who study the secret alien life teeming under the waves aren't entirely sure where gargantuan squids come from. Some speculate a shoal of squids lived underneath Japan when it was hit with nuclear bombs during World War II. Others believe they were engineered by an intelligent marine species such as the iguanoids, before they lost control of their experiment. Maybe they're part of some bizarre breeding stock, mixing seed with ancient and best-forgotten monsters to create gigantic, hellish spawn. Or maybe they are millions of years old, somehow surviving from the time of the dinosaurs in the hidden depths, and only now rising to the surface to unleash havoc on humanity.

No matter what the origin of these creatures, what is known is there are very few in the world. For many years it was believed there was only one gargantuan squid, but comparing stories from the (rare) survivors revealed that there are at least four different squid lurking the seas. They all have eight arms, with two longer tentacles. These long tentacles have sucker rings with a serrated edge, which is sharp enough to cut metal and stone. A gargantuan squid uses these tentacles to pull prey toward its powerful beak, shredding it with a tongue covered in sharp teeth before devouring it. Large ships full of human passengers are a favorite delicacy, as they pierce the thick metal hull to find the soft, juicy meal within.

As horrible as these monsters are, the worst is that they aren't just animals. As researchers compile more data, they are coming

to the inescapable conclusion that the gargantuan squid has a rudimentary intelligence — enough to recognize some objects are dangerous and avoid them, or skirt around waters inhabited by warships or other vehicles capable of actual harm. Their relative lack of visibility may not just be coincidence, but intentional on the part of these monstrosities. And they're learning more and more with every encounter.

GOALS

Most gargantuan squid have very simple goals: Eat, survive, and occasionally explore to find more places to eat and survive. As gargantuan squid age and learn more, some have developed slightly more complex goals, such as “destroy that ship that hurt me” and “find more human flesh to devour, because that was particularly tasty.”

STORY HOOK

Professor Fartel rushes to the mayor's office, a sheaf of papers trailing along the road behind him. Anyone who intercepts the yelling, frantic scientist, finds an excited Fartel gesturing wildly at printed readings. They make little sense to the everyday Joe or Jane, but to someone of science, it appears Fartel has worked out the gargantuan squid's prey patterns. This aquatic map requires verification but could lead an enterprising group directly to the squid's lair!

SYSTEM

Since gargantuan squid are a bizarre mutant offshoot of giant squid, it's hard to discern what a “typical” one would be like. However, the following statistics are considered the average — dots can be moved around to customize each gargantuan squid as needed.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 5, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Might 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 16

SPECIAL RULES

Scale: Gargantuan squid are much larger than typical giant squid. It's not uncommon for a gargantuan squid to attack sharks, whales, and even ships with relative success. As such, it is considered Scale 3 for purposes of size and physical conflict. (See p. XX.)

Armor-Piercing Beak: The beak of the gargantuan squid is dense and powerful, able to pierce the hull of a ship with ease. When attacking, gargantuan squid ignore any armor that isn't on the same Scale as them.

Iron-Clad Grip: The sucker rings on the squid's tentacles are serrated, able to bite into just about any kind of metal or rock. As such, it has a +3 Enhancement to any grapple attack, increasing the Difficulty of breaking the squid's grapple.

Ink Attack: While in the water, the gargantuan squid can squirt ink into an area, creating an Inky Water Field that imposes a Complication 1 for all rolls requiring vision. In open air, the ink attack can only target one individual. If the attack roll is successful, the target gains the Covered in Ink Complication 1, and may gain the Blinded Condition (see p. XX).



THE MARINER'S MENACE

"Don't ye listen to these fools, lass. The Menace be real, as real as me peg-leg and 20 dead crewmates. Uglier than old Hob it is; aye, and twice as big, too. It took me ship, me crew, and me leg, 40 years back. If ye be looking for that fiend, I'll gladly take ye." – Uriah "Bad Luck" DeFries, retired sailor

Deep beneath the Bermuda Triangle, in the ruins of an ancient sunken temple, dwells a titanic terror from an ancient age, a mindless guardian loyally defending its long-departed master's domain. Sailors know it as the Mariner's Menace, the locals call it el Diablo de la Zona Hadal, and ancient peoples called it Ah-Wa-Batu, the Thing That Never Died. But it is more commonly known as the giant barnacle, or by its Latin name: *megabalanus apocalypsensis*.

Little more than an animal, the Mariner's Menace is a barnacle of primeval size, fiercely territorial and aggressive. It perceives ships passing through its demesne in the Bermuda Triangle as threats and pursues them in order to latch on and pull them under with its immense weight, or else eat a hole through the hull and insert horrid, slimy tendrils to grasp and batter at anything within. While no true threat to a concerted military response, its ability to go undetected and sink into the depths of the waves when injured makes it very hard to kill.

Worse is in store for those who anger the barnacle, however. Its intelligence is limited, but it has demonstrated the capacity to hold a grudge. Furthermore, it has command of swarms of mundane barnacles, which it can command to let go of any surface to which they are attached and attach instead to anything else — like a human body. It's horrific enough to be pulled beneath the waves and drowned by a thick shell of living scabs, or to have them cover one's mouth and suffocate, but if the victim avoids both those fates and the barnacles remain in place, they slowly devour him alive.

The giant arthropod can also sense its minions' locations, and since it orders them to attach to anything it attacks, they function as an accidental tracking beacon of sorts, leading the barnacle after the objects of its wrath. While it is not a supremely fast swimmer, it is stubborn in the extreme, and can move on land by pulling itself along with its horrific tendrils — surprisingly, at around the same pace as a human can run. It tracks down and hunts its object of aggression and can display an instinctive sense of stealth.

The US Coast Guard offers a \$5,000 reward for the creature's carcass, while the Cuban regime will pay double that amount, and even more if the monster is still alive. Anyone searching for the Mariner's Menace should be advised that communist agents or ruthless bounty hunters pose an additional threat, especially after someone else has successfully overpowered their quarry.

GOALS

The giant barnacle is a creature of instinct and animal urges, chief among them territoriality and hunger. It is also vindictive in the extreme, much like a badger with a long memory — it remembers what has threatened it and destroys it.

STORY HOOKS

When Sir Thomas Hopkins disappeared while sailing the Bermuda Triangle for a regatta, his young daughter Margaret was left an orphan. Now, the adult Dr. Margaret Hopkins has finally found the trail of her dead father, and she is determined to kill the beast that ate him no matter the cost. There is only one problem — she woefully underestimates the Mariner's Menace. As she is a friend of our heroes, and will not give up on her mission, they must now decide how best to ensure her survival!

SYSTEM

The Mariner's Menace itself is an immense foe, while its barnacle swarms are a simpler, albeit not weak threat to handle.

THE MARINER'S MENACE

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 4, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 5; Might 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 8; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 28

BARNACLE SWARM

Skills: Athletics 1, Close Combat 3, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 4; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Grapple Ship: The giant barnacle can latch on to any ship as an ordinary action, automatically succeeding. However, if the ship is helmed by a protagonist, or by a Director character of surpassing Pilot Skill – 4 or more – the helmsman may attempt a Difficulty 3 reflexive action to evade. Add one Complication for every rank of Scale the ship's size has over the giant barnacle. The Mariner's Menace may then initiate a complex Close Combat + Might action at Difficulty 2 with Complication equal to the highest amount of damage it suffered from a single source since its last round. It takes two milestones to breach the hull, and three to pull the ship under. The barnacle will cease its attack and leave if brought below half Health, but it will return for revenge.

It's Big: The Mariner's Menace is considered Scale 5 (see p. XX) and therefore is an imposing foe for a small group of humans or even humans on a decent-sized ship.

Tendrils Attack: The creature can extend powerful tendrils and use them to attack at short range, or medium range if attacking inside a ship to which it has attached itself and breached its hull. This is a Close Combat attack and acts as if it was made at close range.

Swarm of Barnacles: When the barnacle is in a nearby body of water, that body gains the barnacle infestation field, which inflict a single automatic damage die on every organic being not wearing appropriate protective clothing. In addition, the field inflicts Complication 1 on all Athletics checks, which persists until the barnacles covering the character are removed. The giant barnacle can sense the direction of every member of its personal swarm and can use that to track those against whom it carries a grudge.

The Mariner's Menace can, as an ordinary action, remove the barnacle infestation field to manifest a number of barnacle swarm minions equal to the number of characters plus one. These minions use the barnacle swarm rules listed above. If a barnacle swarm inflicts at least one point of damage with its attack, it inflicts the same penalties on its victim as the barnacle infestation field. The effect is not cumulative.

THE OBLIQUE

"Hey, honey? Did you leave the bath running? There's water coming all the way down the stai...." – Last words of Mrs. Hilary Wexler of Gloucester, Massachusetts, USA

The little information held on this creature tells humanity that while it could be the last of its kind, at one time, these creatures were worshipped as gods of the seas and rivers. The Oblique is a being of pure water and can form into whatever shape it desires in its liquid state. It has been sighted throughout the known world and throughout time. Historians and scientists have uncovered texts and reports from antiquity to the modern day describing the appearance of a mass of sentient liquid, formless and unknowable.



The Oblique has the ability not only to change its shape, but to absorb all water from any being with which it comes into physical contact. What's more, it seems able to absorb the memories and knowledge of the people it kills and shows increasing aptitude in operating rudimentary technologies such as the opening of doors and navigating of sewer systems. The Oblique is the ancestral cause for humans to scan the toilet before sitting, though few connect the dots.

The other sub-aqua threats are not safe from the Oblique; many of the cadavers scientists recover are the victims of its water-draining attacks in the very same manner as its human targets.

The Oblique is dangerous and hard to kill. So far, nothing has succeeded in harming it. Superheating it merely allows it to change its form into a mist before it reforms, while freezing did contain it for a while, but when melted it escaped. Apparently, it is resistant to being re-frozen following defrosting. Conventional weaponry passes through its shifting mass without harm and bullets that don't pass through merely float infuriatingly inside it until it dispels them, often with lethal effect.

Worst of all, the creature seems to become partially obsessed with the families and lovers of people it has absorbed, following them like a bizarre, watery stalker. Few know what it wants, but it must be stopped. The CIA is attempting to cover up its string of murders, but can only keep a lid on the Oblique for so long.

GOALS

The Oblique's only goal is to draw enough water to reproduce. It is not truly evil; it merely wants to produce more of its

kind. While this goal is not dastardly, players must consider the means with which it reproduces and weigh up the possibility of several such creatures roaming the Earth.

STORY HOOK

May Brown is a tough housewife who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. Her husband, Wallace, a military man, goes missing on amphibious combat training, leaving her alone to raise their young son. As locals rally round the bereaved widow, a strange shape seems to stalk the house by night. When the local sheriff's deputy turns up dead after coming round to investigate, May knows she has to get to the bottom of this, or her son could be next. Sometimes, love can be lethal.

SYSTEM

Attributes: Intellect 0, Cunning 5, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 0, Composure 5

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 5, Close Combat 3, Command 0, Culture 0, Empathy 0, Enigmas 0, Humanities 0, Integrity 3, Larceny 0, Medicine 0, Persuasion 0, Pilot 0, Science 0, Survival 5, Technology 0

SPECIAL RULES

Water Drain/Water Points: Any character the Oblique strikes, as well as any other character in physical contact with it when it commences its turn, may be damaged in the form of Water Drain. The Oblique can drain up to its Stamina rating in water points per turn of physical contact, resisted with its victim's Athletics + Stamina, with each success reducing the damage by 1. If a character loses all Health due to this power, they become a dehydrated husk that isn't dead, but cannot move until reintroduced to at least 1 pint of water.

Absorbed Skills: If the Oblique manages to completely consume any creature, it immediately gains one dot in any Skill its victim possessed. It also gains a single point in Intellect. These stats remain in place for the remainder of the story.

Lay Dormant: When not moving, the Oblique is little more than a large pool of water and can lay dormant on floors or in containers large enough to hold it. Its size is such that it could fill a standard sized bathtub.

Long Division: The swirling mass of the Oblique can safely split apart and reform. Any part of it that moves away will instantly rush back to the main body and reform. In this way, it can "throw" itself up to heights it otherwise couldn't reach, but tossing part of itself and then summoning the rest of the mass up walls and through the air to that location. This transformation takes one round to complete and the Oblique may not take any other actions while performing it. This ability has a maximum range of medium.

You are what you eat: Having consumed the knowledges of its victims, the Oblique also retains part of their personalities. It seeks out loved ones of its latest victim and watch them, often trying in vain to communicate with them, only to suck the water from their bodies accidentally.

RORQUALASAUR

"There are some things even monsters fear. For the creatures that live under the sea, there is one name that strikes dread into their clammy hearts — Rorqualasaur." — Agent Shumway Fowler, government expert on aquatic threats

There are some things so ancient, so terrifying, so mind-bogglingly massive that even elder races living under the seas fear them. Such monsters are legends, myths, creatures that some claim come from a time when the world was new, and may possibly live until the world finally sheds its last drop of water.

In the case of Rorqualasaur, it's all true.

Rorqualasaur is the largest whale ever, making its nearest biological neighbor, the baleen whale, seem like a minnow in comparison. It has never been weighed, but estimates of 500 tons are probably conservative. It is so large that it sometimes gets confused for an island or a landmass. Entire civilizations have been wiped out as a snack. Iguanoids tell stories about the Rorqualasaur to scare their hatchlings. It is not a creature so much as a force of nature.

For all its fearsome reputation, Rorqualasaur is no mindless beast. Over the countless epochs, it has slowly devised a form of intellect. It is incapable of speaking — or perhaps it considers communication with lesser life forms to be a waste of energy — but it understands every language just fine. While it does not build things of its own, it is familiar with all forms of technology, both current and lost. Some theorize that Rorqualasaur is an advanced alien intelligence trapped on our planet for countless years, but in truth Rorqualasaur neither knows nor cares about its origins.

Rorqualasaur is ageless and vast. As far as anyone can tell, it lives on only tiny amounts of food and water compared to its size, but even those quantities can be vast. Sometimes it falls into millennia-long slumbers, only awakening when a continental shelf drifts into it. A few times vegetation and life have sprung up on Rorqualasaur's back, becoming an island of civilization before the beast stirs and destroys it all with a shiver.

The world had been lucky. For all of recorded history, Rorqualasaur was in one of its slumbers, enjoying the solitude of its thoughts. It slumbered off the coast of modern-day Japan, frequently mistaken for a landmass. But then, two nuclear bombs were dropped. Amidst the horrors of nuclear fallout, one final ghastly act came in the wake of the bombs: Rorqualasaur awoke.

GOALS

For decades the ancient and terrible beast has lurked in the deepest, darkest waters of the world. It learned of this new species that dominated the land above, and the machinations of those that lurk in the waters. The conflicts between marine and land life have reached a fever pitch, making it difficult for Rorqualasaur to return to its slumber. After careful consideration, it has come to only one conclusion: It all has to go. Everything must be destroyed.

STORY HOOK

A pioneering research vessel runs "aground" in the Pacific Ocean, on a sandbank that just should not be there. As Dr. Ham-



merstrop and her team survey the site, they realize the island is moving beneath them — it's Rorqualasaur! Hammerstrop has an exclusive chance to study the great whale up close, but how long before it decides to submerge, or lash out at the team on its back?

SYSTEM

There is only one Rorqualasaur.

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 5, Close Combat 5, Enigmas 3, Integrity 3, Science 3, Survival 5, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 5, Resolve 5; Might 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6; Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 15

SPECIAL RULES

Massive Beast: Rorqualasaur is a force of nature. Its gigantic size and dense hide make it a challenge for even the most advanced weaponry and species to attack. Only something equally massive or destructive can even hope to get Rorqualasaur's attention. It is considered to be Scale 5 on all physical encounters, making it immune to most mundane (Scale 1) weaponry.

Acidic Blood: The blood that pumps in Rorqualasaur's veins is ancient and powerful. Its very touch eats away at just about anything it touches. If anyone not wearing armor performs a hand-to-hand attack that causes Rorqualasaur to draw blood, the attacker takes an Injury from the spray of blood eating away at their flesh.

Crushing Jaws: Rorqualasaur's jaws are so massive that very little survives being crushed by them. When attacking, Rorqualasaur ignores any armor that isn't on the same Scale as it.

Jet of Acid: Once per combat, Rorqualasaur is able to expel a jet of acid that covers a massive area. This counts as a Shockwave attack that instantly destroys all armor that isn't on the same Scale as it. Any non-reinforced equipment is immediately destroyed, and all living creatures take three Injuries.

Sealed Environment: Unless Rorqualasaur is cut open, it is able to survive almost indefinitely in any environment, simply by closing its mouth and eyes. Once "sealed" in this way, Rorqualasaur is immune to all biological and chemical attacks, and no longer needs to breathe. Rorqualasaur can also put itself into hibernation, eliminating the need for food and water until it chooses to reawaken.

Ageless: Rorqualasaur does not age. Barring accident or intentional destruction, Rorqualasaur could theoretically live until the end of the world.

SPIES

Spies are, as their name suggests, the intelligence gatherers of the suboceanic cultures to which they belong. Subtle, sneaky, and dangerous, they are frequently highly skilled shapeshifters and mimics capable of taking on forms that allow them to seamlessly blend into human society. Their wicked tasks often include sabotage and assassination in addition to intelligence gathering. They are frequently armed with technologies that allow them to communicate with their superiors and defend themselves if their true natures are uncovered by their victims.

Spies are at primal odds with G-Men, those humans whose nature most closely mirrors their own, being fonts of secret and dangerous knowledge.

G-Men gain one additional die on all physical-based rolls made against Spies.

Spies gain one additional die on all mental-based rolls made against G-Men.

GILL-KIN

“My family has always been the weird one in town. They kept trying to make me come back home, insisting that I would meet this man who was renting the space above our garage. Apparently, he had some sort of insight on the enemies who were coming after us humans. They introduced me to this “man” named Gilligan. It was at that point I knew that my parents weren’t just odd, they were worse than that. Gilligan wasn’t a man, he was a fish on legs!” – Melvin Stone, giving his witness statement after turning his parents in for treason.

The first documented description of the gill-kin starts off with “this alien has a face only a mother could love.” Half-fish, half-human, these bipedal creatures made their first appearance in South America where a group of scientists were attacked by a group of gill-kin. The aliens’ sharp claws and super strength ripped the scientists apart, large bruises on their bodies caused by a gill-kin’s long, whip-like tail. These creatures communicate with different grunts and hiss sounds.

The gill-kin have green-blue, smooth skin and two breathing holes where one would expect humans to have a nose. In captivity, experiments show the gill-kin can survive just as well on land as in water, but after depriving them from a body of water over 24 hours, the alien shows signs of distress. Their outer physiology shows they are adapted for life in the sea. They have webbed feet and hands, making them adept swimmers. The alien has big black eyes, with transparent eyelids that give them the ability to

see underwater. When one feels threatened, the gill-kin hisses and unfurls the colorful, pleated skin flaps encircling the lower part of its face.

Curious and inquisitive of humans, the gill-kin are drawn to innocent and gentle souls. They steal items and personal belongings that evoke strong feelings from their owner or beholder, like weapons (fear) and art (amazement). They all have their own place where they stash their collection of items, most commonly on rocky or sandy areas. There’ve been observations of gill-kin seemingly crying out in anguish when trying to stash something that dissolves in water. Shortly all sightings near theme parks report this type of crying after gill-kin perform raids on milkshake and cotton candy booths. The alien will never attempt to steal something that they cannot carry on their person in one go – it’s all or nothing.

Most gill-kin are of a peaceful nature, acting only in self-defense during conflicts that arise from their thievery. However, a 10th of all violent interactions with the aliens have been violent without any provocation from the human side. Scientists have tried to find the answer to why this is, and whether some of the gill-kin are extraordinarily territorial or feral. The main lead they have is that high doses of toxins can be seen in their blood.

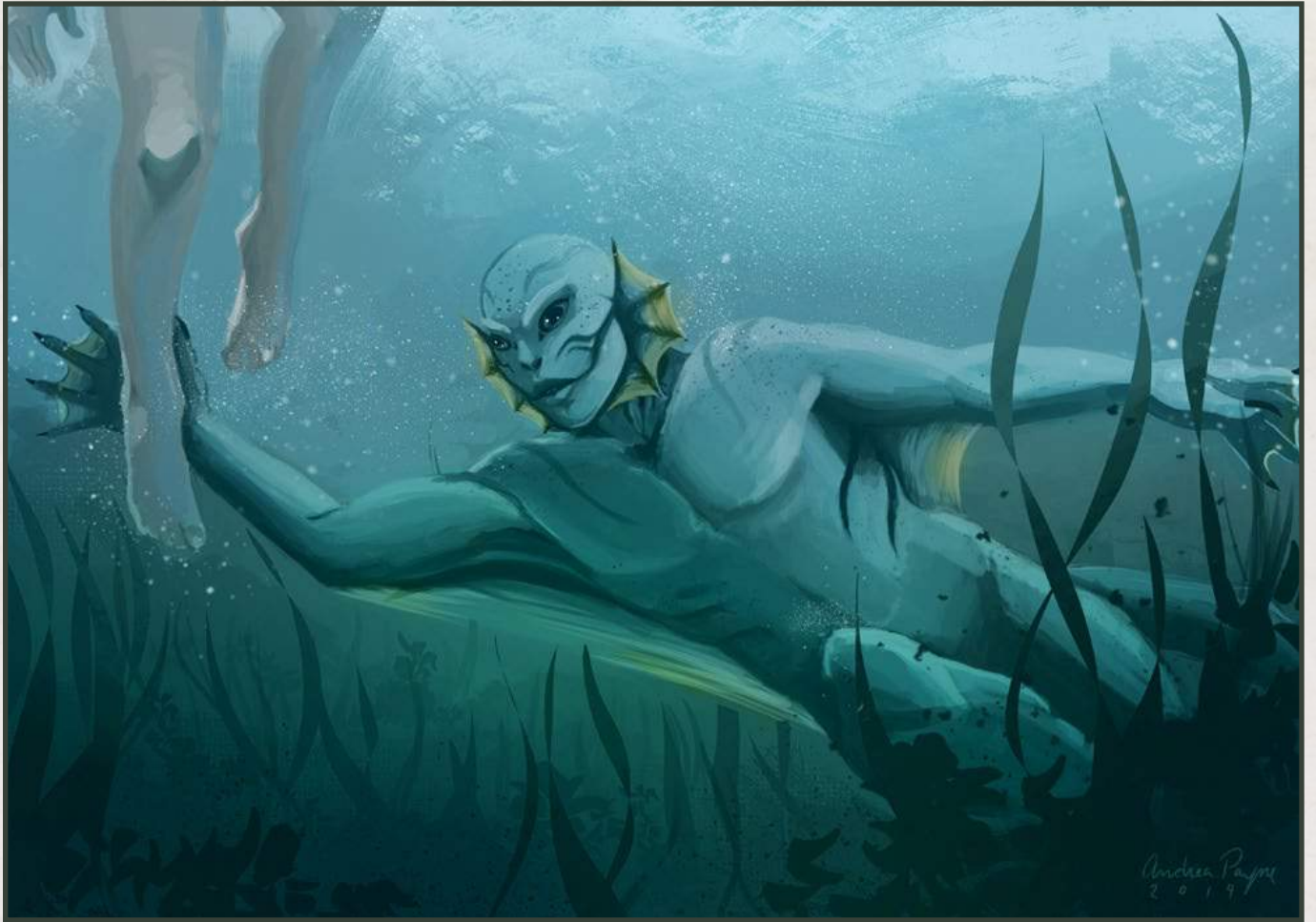
Scientists have noticed that the gill-kin are human-face blind, incapable of telling one person from another based on physical appearance. They identify individual humans on the basis of which possessions (clothes, weapons, personal items) they carry around. They may however remember and recognize human voices, but can easily be fooled if the human intentionally alters his voice.

Some gill-kin mimic human behavior and customs when they have become attached to a person, though whether this is benign or not is up to debate. Multiple victims have reported looking after a gill-kin and one day coming home to witness them in a suit or dress holding a bouquet. Conspiracy theorists posit that their goal is to destroy the human race from within, by attempting to create a breed between both races. Despite the scientists’ conjecture, all the victims deny the gill-kin acted with malicious intent, respecting their wishes despite the language barrier.

One thing is sure, nobody is fooled by their disguises, as they do nothing to hide their face and cannot imitate human speech.

GOALS

The gill-kin have no shared species goal. Some of them want to live in peace; others wish to integrate into human society and perhaps to even share the most intimate of feelings with their special ones. The ferals wish for nothing else than to be left alone, by both humans and their own kind.



STORY HOOK

Anyone who's worked or grown up in Appletree's Orphanage knows the story of the blue lady by the river. The story was born from superstition after an incident over a decade ago where a large group of children disappeared, one by one, only to be found years later in loving families. If a child goes to the river alone at night and bring one's most prized possession, the blue lady might show up. In exchange for one's property, she'll take you to a new loving family.

With a resurgence of the rumor, children from the orphanage as well as families are vanishing. While many try to find the missing children, there seems to be a resistance in the shadows.

SYSTEM

Gill-kin range from the mild-mannered, investigative types, to their feral and barbaric cousins.

INQUISITIVE GILL-KIN

The most common type of gill-kin. Kind and curious, they only attack in self-defense. The adults enjoy each other's company but have their own place where they stash their collection.

The calm and peaceful gill-kin have no ulterior goal with their curiosity of mankind, they collect items of emotional value even without human interference.

While they are drawn to kindhearted and emotional people, the inquisitive gill-kin always backs off if what they are doing causes distress in a person they care about.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Empathy 3, Larceny 3, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 1, Resolve 2; Dexterity 3, Might 2, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 9

FERAL GILL-KIN

The violent gill-kin are the results of pesticides making their eggshells thinner, causing dire consequences for the alien. Multiple eggs are buried underground on land, with these young gill-kin breaking free and growing together without parental guidance. Their weak shells lead to fewer gill-kin being hatched in a group. Without their siblings, the gill-kin don't seem to learn how to deal with their negative emotions and turn to violence. Scientists report a correlation between the usage of DDT, the popular insect repellent, and the areas where feral gill-kin have been spotted. However, these reports have been deemed insufficient or not worthy to heed as the award-winning insecticide is keeping both beaches and farms insect-free.

Being feral, they attack anyone, even their own, on sight.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Larceny 1, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Emotion Reader: The gill-kin are capable of reading human emotions both on a person and an object, being able to see the personal importance of an item even after its owner is long gone. They read the emotions of people as though a color were emanating from their skin. Hence, people who wear their heart on their sleeves are viewed as beautiful and interesting in their eyes, while stone-faced humans don't interest them, or are perceived as threats.

THE SEAHORSE PEOPLE

"Now, Zita Moretti, you will bow knee to the Hippocampus Empress and swear fealty — or taste the jaws of the great Izzibanni, Her Majesty's barracuda steed!" — Zeltan, seahorse vizier

Deep beneath the Mediterranean lies the Hippocampus Empire, a state run by a proud and haughty race of giant, intelligent sea horses called the omega hippocampi. The enigmatic beings trace their lineage both from their smaller kin, and from an ancient Roman fishing village that adapted to life under the sea when their island slowly sank beneath the waves. The imperial oceans stretch from the Bosphorus to Gibraltar, and all underwater beings within live under the harmonious law of the Hippocampus Empress.

The Empress is not content to dominate only the seafloor. She gazes up to the lands above and sees commoners rule, and she pities them. Beneath the waves, everyone knows their place, from the Empress down to the lowliest peasant, and the omega hippocampus nobility rules their seas under a strong sense of noblesse oblige. Though the land people are feeble and weak compared to the immense physical might of the seahorse people, their weapons are mighty indeed — and so the drylands must come under orderly rule under the divine right of the Empress through subtlety, not conquest.

Transforming her own people into a human form in the imperial transmutation center, the Empress' network of spies is vast, and aided further by the careful release of normal seahorses augmented with marine telepathic abilities to pet stores and aquariums around the world. These innocuous spies gather information from all marine life kept as pets or zoo exhibits and transmit it to humaniform omega hippocampus spies.

So far, the Empress has been content to send spies into the human lands to gather intelligence, and the lack of respect for the proper feudal hierarchy dismays her. Now, she is preparing to begin infiltration efforts, to place her people in control of all Earth's human militaries — starting with Italy, once home of the great ancient empire itself.

Humaniform omega hippocampi have the ability to transform between seahorse person and human shapes at will, though it takes the better part of a half hour to do so. In their natural forms, they are bulky and mighty, able to slither along on their tails. In their human forms, they are indistinguishable from the population at large unless they slip up and let their true arrogance and superiority show. They are also not terribly familiar with technology and tend to avoid situations where that trait might reveal them. They prefer tridents and harpoon crossbows in combat, and the harpoon crossbows are just as effective as human single-shot rifles, as well as similar enough that their skills at arms translate easily.



GOALS

By order of Her Majesty herself, the seahorse people aim for nothing less than the conquest of the surface world itself, that she might add it to her dominion and her glory grow ever brighter. She wants to impose order — the feudal order — on a chaotic humanity, and teach them their proper place as serfs. For now, her people are still watching and scheming.

STORY HOOK

When an exceptionally large seahorse washed ashore 10 years ago, the lighthouse keeper Elizabeth Nkundu adopted the creature as a pet, only to discover the young seahorse was not only self-aware, but as intelligent as a human child! Since then, she has raised the young omega hippocampus as her own son, naming him Edward. But one night, as she hosts the protagonists in her lighthouse, a ruckus sounds from Edward's basement room and the seahorse boy is gone! His own people, having sent him to the surface to spy, have now reclaimed him, but Edward is loyal to his adoptive mother and refuses to talk! Can our heroes figure out what has happened in time, and rescue the boy?

SYSTEM

More dangerous than many humans give them credit, the average seahorse person has the following stats:

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Culture 4, Empathy 1, Enigmas 4, Integrity 2, Larceny 4, Persuasion 3, Science, Survival 1

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Health: 11

SPECIAL RULES

Transformation: An omega hippocampus who has endured the transmutation center may transform back and forth between human and seahorse person shape at will. The process takes a single scene. In human form, it loses two dots each of Might and Stamina.

THAUMOCs

"Hello, friend! And you are my friend. Are you enjoying the weather? I estimate that it might become colder as the day proceeds. Do you like the cold?" - "Mr. John Smith," making conversation

The cephalopod is one of the most intelligent aquatic species, displaying the ability to rapidly adapt to hostile circumstances and plan lengthy, complex traps and ambushes. Their systematic approach to expanding territory and propagating is superior to that of perhaps any other marine lifeform.

The creatures known as "thaumocs" (after *thaumoctopus mimicus*, the mimic octopus) are a race of hyper-intelligent large cephalopods who help prove the theories of this intelligence. They

possess an insatiable curiosity, their technology is more advanced than that of the human race, and they already hide among us.

Thaumocs are master infiltrators. They ride around in robotic endoskeletons covered in a fleshy, fluid-filled system of bladders simulating muscles. The octopus curls up atop the false body's neck, forming the brain of the false human. The octopus' tentacles pull levers and press buttons to make the body move in a fairly decent approximation of human behavior. The thaumoc's natural abilities at mimicry allow it to form a face, complete with eyes, lips, a tongue, and teeth, but they cannot reproduce hair, forcing many of them into investing in wigs or owning millineries. Any attempt to create their own version of hair creates a waxen slab that can be shaped and might fool someone at a glance, but won't flow in the wind or separate under a comb. One failing of this race's disguise is their occasional forgetfulness to blink, turn their head to face someone when being addressed, or make a chest rise and fall to imitate breathing.

Imitating humans has its difficulties.

Speech is the thaumoc's biggest hurdle. Thaumocs wear speech-producing devices built into the upper chest region of their disguises. The device is programmed with all human languages known to the thaumoc scientist responsible for the suit's creation, but lacks nuance and tone, forcing all words to emerge in a bright, cheerful style of speech. While they can select pitch and timbre by adjusting the orientation of their fluid bladders, they can't mimic a specific person's voice. This vexes the thaumocs, and one of their primary goals is to learn the intricacies of human language.

Thaumocs can escape their human suits and move around on their tentacles, displaying an ability to survive on land for up to an hour before their body requires immersion in fresh or salt water. It's rare for thaumocs to exit their shells on land, though doing so is mostly for the purposes of spying or creeping. They can bring their voice modulator with them in their natural form, to act as distraction or to record other voices.

For the time being, thaumocs hide among us, exchanging conversational pleasantries and making small talk. They aren't naturally dangerous, interested more in study than in invasion, but when humans encounter these octopi they tend to react with paranoia and lash out at the thaumocs, earning violent reprisal.

If a thaumoc's ruse breaks down, they follow a strict escape protocol. It will use its shell to get it as close to a body of water — such as a river, lake, or the ocean — as possible. It retreats into the chest cavity and sets the device to self-destruct (some of the fluids used in the bladder system, if mixed, create a powerful explosive). The thaumoc then ejects from the midriff in a transparent, hard orb, in an aim to roll into the water. The suit explodes soon after.

Some cases have been reported where thaumocs discovered by lone humans swiftly strangle the human and hide the corpse. The murderous action appears to delineate simple thaumoc spies from thaumoc special agents, the latter of whom undertake ultra-secret missions to infiltrate the government or military.

GOALS

Imitate. Observe. Take notes. Beyond this, the thaumocs' goals are a mystery. They do not communicate outside their disguises, and when inside them, restrict dialogue to pleasantries



regarding the weather. It's possible the thaumocs act as reconnaissance agents for another alien race, are scouting ahead of an invasion, or are merely inquisitive octopuses.

STORY HOOK

It comes as a great shock to everyone in Biggleton when the mayor's head falls off during a town meeting, rolling away as an octopus while her body crumples to the ground. The thaumoc escapes into the town and is now hunted by all and sundry. There's only a day left before the creature dries out or escapes to sea, pushing Earth's defenders to capture and interrogate the thaumoc before it's too late.

SYSTEM

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5

Skills: Close Combat 2, Command 1, Culture 1, Enigmas 3, Humanities 2, Integrity 4, Larceny 5, Persuasion 1, Science 4, Technology 3

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Human Shell: It takes a thaumoc one scene to change the orientation of the fluid-filled bladders in its human suit and look taller, shorter, fatter, thinner, or change gender presentation. Thaumocs

find it's best to do this when their shell is nude, as clothes have a tendency to tear or look out-of-place if the body inside them has shrunk.

Self-destruct: The thaumoc can initiate a self-destruct sequence on its suit, which if activated in an emergency has a ten second timer, while if planned can have a timer running up to 24 hours. Once the timer has been set, it cannot be reset. When the suit explodes it inflicts six dice of damage to anything within short range. A character can disarm this explosive with a Technology + Resolve roll at a Difficulty of 3, as the technology is built for creatures with tentacles, not fingers.

THE WERE-LOBSTERS

"There is a terrible beauty to their movements, a reflection of the ocean's ferocious and mysterious nature. It is as though the seas themselves rose up to punish humanity for daring to trespass upon the waves." – Petty Officer Second Class Albert Schuyler, *USS Wisconsin*, secret were-lobster

When the submarine *USS Wisconsin* discovered a sunken temple outside Iceland, they sent Albert Schuyler out in a diving suit to investigate. Above the temple door, he reported an inscription: *"Beware, those who approach from above, for you defile this sacred place. A curse upon you, and all your companions, for the Children of the Deep alone may see the temple's secrets and leave."* Ordered to proceed, he entered the temple and promptly vanished, out of contact for over an

hour before the *Wisconsin* successfully recovered his quivering form.

By the time they returned to shore, every single crewmember had succumbed to the curse. Some believe it supernatural, others put it down purely to a new infection: *astacusthropy*. Everyone so infected feels compelled to visit one of the underwater temples of Xx'na'bnznbn in the form of a lobster, which each cursed host can now take. There, they encounter one of the mouths of the mindless ancient leviathan. Now, the cursed are on a pilgrimage to establish a foothold on what the leviathan calls "the long-denied Plateaus of Nowater," to spread their faith and the dread curse of the were-lobster!

Were-lobsters dwell in temple hives spread across the ocean floor, usually numbering a dozen or so individuals. Each and every were-lobster is a converted human, usually surviving victims of shipwrecks scavenged for the hive. They eat flesh, and prefer that of mammals — the higher order, the better. As lobsters, they pose no great threat beyond their ability to spy and go unnoticed while at sea. As humans, were-lobsters maintain a near-perfect cover without the debilitating appearance flaws of the crab people. They have yet to achieve a hybrid form but believe the leviathan will one day reward their loyal service with the ultimate cross between human and lobster.

GOALS

The were-lobsters' long-term goals are hidden, but their short-term objectives are simply to spread their religion through-

out human power structures so they can know everything that happens. Secondly, they instinctively desire a spread of their curse throughout the populace.

STORY HOOKS

When the *USS Wisconsin* pulls in at an isolated American naval base on Newfoundland, the personnel on site rapidly become infected with the curse of the were-lobster. As our heroes face an invisible threat, it quickly becomes apparent that only one person can help: the captured Soviet spy Olga Igorovna, who somehow proved immune to the curse when the leviathan's minions captured her vessel's crew.

SYSTEM

The following statistics represent the average were-lobster crewmember onboard the *USS Wisconsin*, in human form:

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Empathy 1, Integrity 1, Larceny 3, Medicine 1, Persuasion 1, Pilot 1, Survival 4, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 4; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Transformation: As an ordinary action, the were-lobster may roll Athletics + Resolve in order to transform into a different form. This roll may gain a Complication 2 of Badly Injured if the were-lobster has less than half its maximum Health. A were-lobster in lobster or human form can still understand all human languages they already speak or read. The were-lobster can bite a human being when in lobster form to turn that individual into a were-lobster. In this case, the Director rolls Close Combat + Might against the victim's opposed roll of Integrity + Stamina.

Anthromorph: In human form, a were-lobster is all but indistinguishable from humanity at large. Were-lobsters in human form may be spotted with an Empathy + Cunning or Persuasion + Cunning roll, with a Complication from 1 to 3 of Excellent Disguise, depending on how significant and clever the individual were-lobster is. Apart from hiding among humans, this form is most useful for anything requiring finesse and coordination. Only in this form can were-lobsters communicate or use tools.

Nephropimorph: In lobster form, a were-lobster is only distinguishable by a marine biologist or other individual closely familiar with the species. Spotting a were-lobster in lobster form requires a Science + Intellect roll, with a Complication 3 of All Lobsters Look the Same. The lobster-form were-lobster enjoys a +1 bonus to Dexterity, but suffers a -1 penalty to Might, Stamina, Presence, and Manipulation. They enjoy a +1 bonus to Survival, but suffer a -1 penalty to all other skills. Their Health also decreases to a maximum of 8. A lobster is not especially imposing on its own, nor particularly skilled in digital manipulation or communication. This form's main benefit is that it is easily overlooked.



TERRESTRIALS

Not all perils come from beneath the waves. Terrestrial threats are human beings and human organizations who have, for a multitude of reasons, chosen to ally themselves with the aliens. Some are moved by compassion for enemies that seem more human than monster and who may, in fact, be potentially worthy allies for mankind against the more warlike among their kind. Some are purely mercenary, choosing to sell out their own species for their own profit, and to avoid the destruction that will surely follow – better to serve as pets than as lunch. Some are the seekers of higher spiritual truths that bind land and sea together as one community, despite the obvious efforts of everyone to disprove that theory with guns, knives, and mind-control rays.

Humanity is frequently its own worst enemy, even in times of world-spanning crisis. For the purposes of threat classification, terrestrial threats are considered Spies (see p. XX).

THE CHURCH OF THE WAVE ASCENDANT

“Come! Come, my brothers and sisters! Step into the waves, walk into the surf! Our destiny awaits us in the arms of Mother Ocean!” – Extract from the writings of Azmareth Ellsgoode

This is an old problem with a new name.

The world has always been graciously oversupplied with loons: occultists, theosophists, thaumaturges, mediums, clairvoyants, tree-hugging mystics, and, sometimes, just plain cultists. This bunch consists of the last type.

According to the information intelligence has dug up, the Church of the Wave Ascendant does not have the most auspicious of origins. The 19th century saw a bumper crop of freaks and weirdos forming various secret societies devoted to an assortment of esoteric philosophies, most of which didn't survive in anything resembling that form into the present. One of them – the Esoteric Order of the Great Eastern Sea – was based in Brigantine, New Jersey. An island city, it's linked to the mainland by a single bridge and regular ferry service. It's pretty much the ideal locale for a group dedicated to the worship of the ocean as the primordial womb of all humanity, which is the stated theological ideal of both the original Esoteric Order and its assorted offshoots, of which the Church of the Wave Ascendant is the largest. It still retains control of the Order's original properties on the island.

The Esoteric Order of the Great Eastern Sea was founded by Azmareth Ellsgoode, a Civil War veteran who emerged from the



crucible of conflict more than a little bit cracked around the edges. A shy, quiet, and bookish sort, he nonetheless felt compelled by patriotic love of country to enlist in the Union Navy. Already a skilled sailor, he advanced rapidly through the ranks, eventually coming to rest as a lieutenant aboard a Union blockade ship, which was sunk by a spar torpedo in the early days of the blockade effort. Ellsgoode survived but was never quite the same afterward, crediting his survival to a creature he encountered after his ship slipped beneath the waves. The creature, he insisted, was a native of the sea, drawn to the sounds of conflict echoing into the deeps and which saved him out of some excess of fellow-feeling for another intelligent creature, a long-estranged child of the sea. It took him to its bower beneath the waves, apparently a “sea cave” of some variety that contained a constantly-replenishing bubble of breathable air for him, which the creature could also breathe. There it kept him safe for some weeks while teaching him through what he described as a form of speech-without-speaking, possibly empathic, very likely telepathic, maybe some form of subtle mind control. Those lessons would become the fundamentals of the philosophy he later shared with the like-minded colleagues who

joined him in his paradise by the sea, a plot of land he purchased on Brigantine Island. There, the Esoteric Order built their oceanside temple and homes for generations to come.

By all accounts, the members of the Esoteric Order were largely innocuous weirdos, given to conducting rituals involving seashells and swimming in the buff along the length of beach they owned — traumatic to the dignity of the locals but otherwise harmless. Nothing came bubbling out of the ocean to divest the rest of the island of human life, at any rate. Things puttered along with occasional visits by the constabulary for the best part of ten years until Ellsgoode fell ill. It was at this point that Ellsgoode's younger brother, Mahershalahashbaz (hereafter abbreviated M. Ellsgoode), came into the picture. M. Ellsgoode was the mad, bad, and dangerous to know sort even before his arrival at the Esoteric Order's compound. He wormed his way into the confidence of his seriously ill brother, who came to rely on him more and more, to the detriment of his original followers, who resented the influence of this interloper over their leader. Tensions gradually rose as M. Ellsgoode seized control of the Esoteric Order's finances and began a program of evangelizing the neighbors and the tourists who came to town during the hot summer months. It was from these that he built the core of his own following after their grudging admission to the commune.

During the summer and into the autumn of that year, M. Ellsgoode grew increasingly powerful as his brother's health waned, using his influence to send his personal followers south to seek out the being his brother encountered and the sea cave where he was taught. Azmareth downplayed it in favor of the philosophy and the wonders of universal brotherhood, but his accounts of the creature and its lair suggested the sea cave was filled with riches taken from dozens of shipwrecks. Accounts provided by both original members of the Esoteric Order indicate this expedition returned bearing not only riches but also artifacts produced by no known human culture, sculptures, ritual implements, jewelry, the whole nine yards. A few contemporaneous accounts provide sketches of the items and the symbology resembles known invader artifacts. For the original members of the Esoteric Order all of this, coupled with M. Ellsgoode evidently taking a page from the megalomaniacal cult leader handbook, was entirely too much: Most, but not all, of Azmareth's own followers moved out of the compound. The organization renamed itself the Church of the Wave Ascendant and spread out, seeding itself throughout the Caribbean, along the American Gulf Coast, and in Central and South America.

Whatever they're up to, it's occurring at a low-enough key that the local authorities haven't had any trouble with them. Given recent events, however, it's likely only a matter of time for that to change. Who knows what these freaks have been sitting on for years, whether or not they actually understand or use it, or if it's been using them?

GOALS

To serve the dwellers in the deep well enough that they and all humanity may one day be exalted by a return to Mother Ocean. The Church of the Wave Ascendant is an invader sleeper cult, seeded in the decades before the uprising to act as a ready source of human minions already indoctrinated in the belief that the

dwellers in the deep are humanity's friends and fellow travelers, that the ocean is the natural home of all humanity, and that any service rendered to their suboceanic kin will be richly rewarded. Legend within the cult is that its founders, the brothers Ellsgoode, were the first of humanity to be so honored and reside in glory beneath the waves in a vast undersea metropolis where there is no old age, pain, or want.

STORY HOOK

A senior member of the Wave Ascendant discovers the church's status as a front for alien monstrosities of significantly less than benign nature. Stealing one of the organization's prized artifacts, the defector flees, seeking sanctuary and allies, and encounters the tattered remnants of the Esoteric Order of the Eastern Sea. The Esoteric Order has long since learned the truth of the invaders and has been waiting for the day when they will rise against humanity — and now that hour may be at hand...

SYSTEM

Cult members have the following stats:

Skills: Athletics 2, Command 2, Culture 3, Enigmas 3, Humanities 2, Empathy 3, Integrity 2, Persuasion 4

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 5

The cult members have access to ordinary levels of human technology.

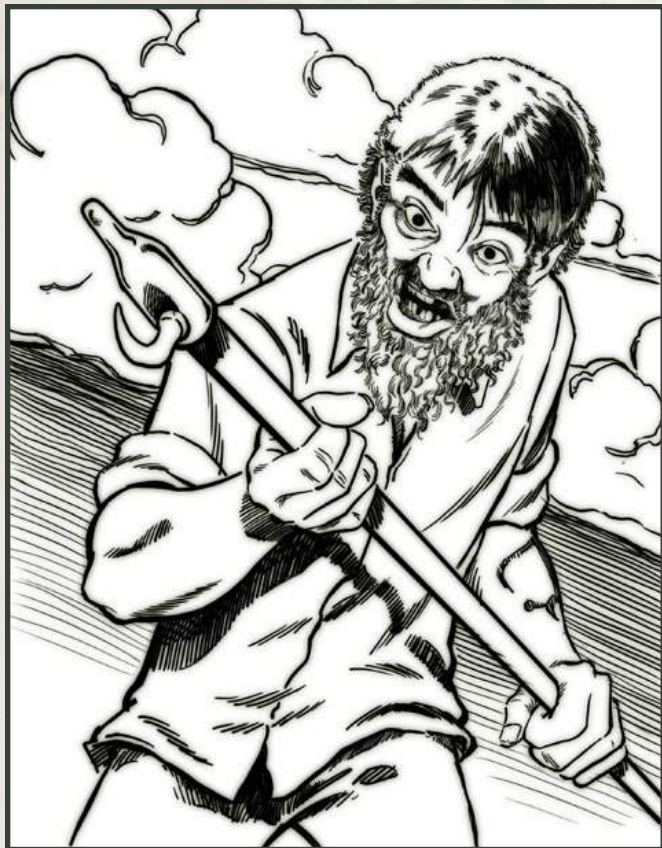
Several of the antiquities handed down from the original cult to its satellite organizations spread across the world are, in fact, invader artifacts, but the cult does not know how to use or activate them, if it's even possible for them to do so.

TRANSATLANTICA STEAMSHIP COMPANY

"Listen – listen – I know the timeline just got shorter than we thought it would be, but this needs to happen right now. Our clients are breathing down my neck and, between you and me, making them unhappy is the last thing anybody wants." – Stanley Abruzzi, Vice President of Operations, Transatlantica Steamship Company

The Transatlantica Steamship Company came to the intelligence community's attention only recently, as part of a much larger investigation. What they discovered was sickening even by the CIA's fairly liberal standards for reasons to lose faith in humanity.

The corporation that would eventually become Transatlantica Steamship Company was founded in the early 20th century in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — Philly remains the corporate headquarters and one of the line's major ports of call in the United States, along with New York, Boston, and New Orleans. Its Eu-



ropean ports are Southampton, Liverpool, and Antwerp. It was originally conceived and operated as a passenger line, shuttling travelers back and forth across the Atlantic for the first 50 years of its existence, mostly puttering along as a less-costly alternative to the luxury cruise lines of the day. This ultimately didn't save them: The Depression hit the entire passenger ship industry hard and, in 1935, the assets of the company were bought out lock, stock, ships, and all.

The new owners reoriented the line in the direction of goods shipping with occasional passenger service offered as a sideline. According to all available public records, the company served the war effort with distinction during World War II, offering several of its vessels to the Allied cause and having several more commandeered by the Axis when they were trapped in port at occupied Antwerp. Absolutely nobody, even the most cynical G-Men, suggested they were deliberately playing both sides of that particular conflict, especially given the extent of losses they suffered among their Axis-confiscated ships.

What is believed now, however, is that at some point during the course of WWII, they made contact with one or more factions of the undersea invaders. Maybe it was when one of their ships got torpedoed in the North Atlantic and, miraculously, most of the crew and passengers survived. Maybe it was when one of the hospital ships went down and nobody but one lucky midshipman got scooped out of the water more dead than alive days later. With the exception of their Axis-controlled assets, fewer of their ships fell victim to unrestricted submarine warfare than average, a fact that became apparent only in retrospect, which suggests now that someone below the level of the waves was watching out for them

even then. Since the end of the war and the return of their assets, their business has flourished significantly: they've branched into a sideline in undersea salvage that's turning a pretty penny, they've got stated plans to expand into the Pacific and have set up a branch office in Seattle to that end, and they're getting into that newfangled container ship long-haul end of things.

On August 4th, the *SS Eastern Ranger*, a container ship belonging to Transatlantica left Antwerp bound for Boston, Massachusetts. It was carrying one paying passenger: Jacob Jameson McCrae, an impecunious college student travelling back home on the last of his wandering money, having spent the summer between his junior and senior years backpacking around Europe on a project apparently related to his major. He took the ship from Antwerp — that much was confirmed by both the captain of the *SS Eastern Ranger* and the harbormaster. He did not, however, make it to Boston. That's where Transatlantica's troubles started because "JJ McCrae" was a traveling alias. The kid was actually a son and heir of a Boston Brahmin family whose private estate is older than the country itself and who was more than prepared to make a federal case of it when he failed to make it back home. Literally a federal case: They called the FBI before they called the local PD and from there the information filtered down.

The command crew was cagey about it, suspiciously so, and ended up sweating for a good 40 hours before one of them cracked and admitted they were sure he'd gone overboard in rough weather and, when his absence was discovered, they chucked his belongings in an effort to cover it up. That alone would have been bad enough but they'd missed one thing: the kid's diary, stashed under his bunk mattress, the contents of which contradicted their timing of the event, because unless he was writing entries from beyond the watery grave, it continued for several days beyond the point he had allegedly gone over the side. It also gave rather striking details of the weird and unearthly rituals he secretly witnessed the command crew engaging in on a regular basis as they sailed into the North Atlantic, including a pretty decent phonetic replication of the language they used, and his fears that he might have been spotted in his spying — fears that were probably correct.

The investigating agents, recognizing they were in over their heads, passed the information on to Mouths in the press, but strangely, Transatlantica continues to operate as if an individual high in government protects it.

GOALS

Transatlantica Steamship Company is a group of human collaborators working together with the the Glowing People to enable their schemes and plots to regain power beneath the waves. During World War II, the captain of a Transatlantica vessel and his crew were rescued from certain death by the Glowing People and offered a choice: while the majority of humanity would, inevitably, become either slaves or food when the true masters of the Earth reclaimed their thrones, a certain select caste would be allowed to be more — the overseers and governors of their own kind, exalted above all other humans, provided they were willing to serve and serve well in the here and now. The captain brought this offer to the owners of the company, facilitated a meeting between them and the elders of the Glowing People, and a deal was struck.

Now the company serves as a willing tool of the invaders, providing them with human technology to dissect and understand, human test subjects to experiment on, and transporting the people in specially constructed containers and ship compartments in order to facilitate troop movements and assorted other military activities.

STORY HOOK

Rumor has it, Transatlantica container ships are prone to losing cargo during heavy weather in the North Atlantic — they've dropped a couple dozen tons of machinery over the last three years when the lashing system failed in high seas and severe winds. It passed under the radar because their insurance has thus far covered losses for their clients and nobody had to make a huge public stink about it. It's not entirely beyond the bounds of possibility that their clients wouldn't make a stink because they, too, are in cahoots with the Glowing People, who have need of the technology.

SYSTEM

Typical officers and associates of Transatlantica have the following stats:

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Command 4, Culture 1, Survival 3, Aim 3, Integrity 2, Larceny 3, Pilot 5, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 5

Transatlantica primarily has access to the cutting edge of human technology in terms of sailing ships and their related equipment. Some of their vessels may, at any time, be secretly transporting invader equipment from place to place and could, in theory, be armed with invader weapons in order to prevent their seizure by human authorities.

F.I.S.H.

"Are some of these creatures hostile? Yes, indisputably so. But they are also intelligent, capable of communication and understanding. Our relationship with these beings does not have to be one of violence and conflict — we need only find the way of bridging the divides that exist and work to bring our cultures together peacefully. We are all peoples of this world." — Dr. Meredith Delamere-Leng, fish sympathizer

This is what happens when you give a bunch of eggheads with too many doctorates and not enough common sense to fill a thimble access to reams of classified military intelligence and then a job that puts them in an ethical quandary.

In a word: *collaborators*.

The organization now calling itself the Federation of Intelligent Sealife and Humans (F.I.S.H. for short) started its life as a top-secret military research unit dedicated to finding out what makes these things tick and then stopping them ticking, as efficiently as possible. They were pulled together from all over the world: biologists, marine biologists, microbiologists, bacteriologists, infectious disease specialists, geneticists, all brought together with the same goal, to find a method of stopping the invaders using biological agents rather than, say, nuclear ones.

The civilian head of the project at its inception was Dr. Arthur Rideout, chair of the Life Sciences Department at Oxford University, and it was he who recruited the rest of the sciences team on the basis of their expertise. The stated goal of the project was to develop one or more bacterial or viral bioweapons capable of jumping the species barrier and affecting these things where they live, across their military and civilian populations, if there's even a real distinction between those two. Some of the participants were, from the start, more enthusiastic about that goal than others. At least two members of the project team came from places that had been hit by known invader actions, one of whom had lost immediate family. Three more were just the sorts who, if you gave them their lead and enough stock to culture, would weaponize whatever bacteria or viruses you wanted for the sheer intellectual joy of seeing how deadly



they could make a thing, no ethical questions required. Good, solid science types. The project base was located 50 miles away from the nearest civilian population center. Base security was provided by a regularly rotated contingent of Royal Marines.

During the first 18 months of its existence, the project — codenamed FISHSTICK — produced several functional prototypes markedly more lethal than wild base strains. Controlled testing on aquatic mammals and fish inside the newly constructed subaquatic isolation environment on base was set to begin when a stroke of good fortune landed. A Japanese fishing trawler pulled something out of the ocean that was neither fish nor human, but a little bit of both.

The creature was wounded when the trawler's nets scooped it up. Its wounds were deliberately inflicted and were, in the estimation of the medical team that initially treated it, the products of directed weapons discharge rather than natural predation. FISHSTICK acquired possession of the creature through a quid pro quo research-sharing agreement with the Japanese government and, as soon as it was well enough to travel, it was brought to base and incarcerated in a specially prepared enclosure in the isolation environment for study and eventual use as an pathogen test subject.

The team's examinations suggested the creature was neurologically similar to humanity in a way that raised significant ethical concerns even among the ones who didn't have a problem gassing thousands of sheep in the name of science. It passed a number of tests designed to measure its levels of cognition and self-awareness and at least potential capacity for communication. Dr. Delamere-Leng wrote a couple of prejudicial memos about "Geneva Conventions" this and "war crimes" that and soon even the most enthusiastic fishsticker in the project team was starting to get cold feet about the fallout of committing bacteriological genocide against a potentially sapient species. And, somewhere in the middle of all this, some stupid American jarhead on loan to the Brits fell for the thing, a sentiment the thing apparently returned, and from there it was all over.

In the small hours of the morning a little over two months later, after indoctrinating and recruiting the bulk of their own military security team, the science team methodically destroyed the documentation of their research and their pathogen stocks, sabotaged their base facilities, and, along with the creature and a significant quantity of military hardware, vanished. Those few members of the security team that hadn't sided with them were chloroformed and restrained but left otherwise unharmed in their barracks along with Dr. Rideout, who was apparently the only member of the research team not enthusiastically on board with the idea of committing treason against the human race because someone had a crush on a guppy with some sign language tricks.

Shortly thereafter, the group — now calling itself the Federation of Intelligent Sealife and Humans — issued a statement through a dozen major news agencies calling on the governments of the world to unilaterally cease hostilities, asserting there were nonhostile cultures beneath the sea that were our natural allies against the aggressors, and offering to act as diplomatic intermediaries. Suppressing the whole thing was a nightmare and somehow not a single member of the group managed to get caught in the subsequent dragnet. The group issued a second statement a few

weeks later, lamenting the world's failure of vision and, since then, has been a thorn in the side of our field operations, wherever they may be taking place.

GOALS

The members of F.I.S.H. are dedicated to bringing about a peaceful resolution of the conflict between humanity and the invaders, a quest that some regard as quixotic, some consider treason, and others consider a useful vehicle for their own nefarious goals.

In general, F.I.S.H. members favor nonviolent methods. They are, for the most part, scientists with a marked predilection for neither shooting nor being shot. This doesn't mean that they *can't* resort to violence — it just won't be their favored first response. The military elements of the organization have likewise adopted this approach and tend to bring their assorted skills to bear when it comes to sabotaging equipment, misdirecting enemies, and muddling communications.

STORY HOOK

The hostile invader factions with whom F.I.S.H. is attempting to negotiate show their true colors, seize several of the group's scientists, and set them to work creating weaponized pathogens to deploy against the human race. The governments of the world learn of this development the hard way or from F.I.S.H. themselves, since the failure of diplomacy was always an acknowledged possible outcome.

SYSTEM

F.I.S.H. comprises both scientists and military personnel in its pursuit of aquatic appeasement.

F.I.S.H. SCIENTIST

Skills: Empathy 3, Integrity 4, Medicine 5, Persuasion 3, Larceny 3, Science 5, Technology 3, Athletics 2, Command 2, Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Humanities 2, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Intellect 5, Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 5

F.I.S.H. SOLDIER

Skills: Aim 4, Integrity 3, Medicine 1, Pilot 3, Larceny 3, Science 1, Technology 3, Close Combat 4, Command 4, Culture 1, Humanities 1, Survival 4

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 5

F.I.S.H. possesses access to standard human transportation methods, firearms, communications equipment, and specialized scientific equipment consonant with their collective expertise, which is largely medical in nature. They occasionally replenish their supplies of all of the above by assorted legal and illegal meth-

ods, including very simply stealing what they need from military supply depots and civilian retail establishments, though they are generally loath to do so.

Their relationship with the Prefecture of the Pod may be changing this in dangerous ways: some observers believe F.I.S.H. operatives may be using modified Amphiboflyer technology to get to and from their more ambitious targets undetected. No one yet suspects that an exchange of weapons technology is in the offing, given F.I.S.H.'s stated peaceful goals, but it may be only a matter of time before the Pod realizes the harm their putative "allies" could cause, say, under the control of a neuroplankton swarm.

AVERAGE CITIZENS

Civilians. Common people. Just plain folks. Whatever you call them, not every person you'll run across will be a fish-mad spy or an alien hiding behind a clever disguise. Often, you'll need to rumble with a confused country sheriff to free your companions from jail, or try to convince a typical American family that they need to flee before giant crabs destroy their house. Whenever you need some quick dice pools for those one-off encounters, here's a list of upstanding (and not so upstanding) citizens to use in a pinch. *A pinch of lobster claws!*

COLLEGE

Ah, academia. Where fresh young minds devote themselves wholeheartedly to the pursuit of knowledge, bettering not only the lives of everyone around them, but the country as a whole... Well, maybe not all the time. While many of our young academics study hard and prepare for a better life, others end up as hooligans, spending more time at sock hops than in the classroom. No matter what, healthy, attractive young adults certainly comprise a disproportionate number of aquatic targets, so be careful when you go to the beach!

LIFE OF THE PARTY

"Hey, daddy-O! We're having a beach party tonight, where we're going to dance and drink until the sun rises! I even got my cousin's band to play for us. Come check it out!"

Skills: Athletics 1, Culture 2, Empathy 1, Persuasion 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Health: 5

NERD

"I did an extensive paper on the Earth's oceanic coverage, even if I did get an A- on it because I corrected the teacher on a minor but salient point during his lecture."

Skills: Enigmas 2, Science 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Health: 5

PROFESSOR

"If you'll all turn to page 231 in your textbooks, we can resume our exploration of the myth of so-called 'Atlantis' and how it resonated with the ancient Greek... my god, is that a tentacle?"

Skills: Command 1, Culture/Humanities/Medicine/Science/Technology (pick one) 3, Enigmas 1, Integrity 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 5

SWIMMER/SURFER

"Take a deep breath of that fresh ocean air! There's nothing like the smell of salt and sand as you dive into the water and ride the waves. I'd live in the water all the time if I could. But no one can live in the water (laughs)."

Skills: Athletics 3, Culture 1, Pilot 1, Survival 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 5

CRIMINAL

In these great American states of ours, not everyone lives on the straight and narrow. Thugs, con artists, thieves, and mobsters terrorize our citizens just as much as nefarious alien monsters from underneath the waves. But sometimes, a bigger threat can cause a hardened criminal to see the error of their ways, or even work together with decent, hard-working folks to promote the greater good. So make sure that Pete Pickpocket understands the error of his ways as you fight against alien tyranny!

MUSCLE

"Hey, you can't talk to the boss like that. If I hear any more lip outta you, I'll wallop you so hard that you'll be seeing sea monkeys dance around your head. They don't call me Rocky cuz of my good words, you know."

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 1, Integrity 1, Larceny 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 5

THIEF

"Oh, this old thing? Just a little something I picked up from the Ming Dynasty. I'm happy to sell it to you for a reasonable rate. And don't worry what I paid for it - I can guarantee that any offer you make will lead to an attractive profit margin for me."

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 3, Close Combat 1, Culture 2, Integrity 1, Larceny 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Health: 5

INDUSTRY

One of the most industrious countries in the world, America thrives on honest, hard labor. Why, how could we have won the war if it weren't for the work of the boys and girls back home? And even in peacetime, tough, industrious workers clock in and out to make our country's production and shipping lines work like a seamless machine of progress. Even out local fishermen, working lonely hours out on sea, are happy to put in the extra hours so you get the best possible dinner in your home. Only communists and aliens would dare to destroy such noble industry!

DOCKHAND

"You think this job is easy? You try pickin' that crate up yerself. Yeah, that's what I thought. Next time you look down your nose at me, just remember I'm the guy who makes sure your fancy schmancy china plates don't get broke."

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 1, Integrity 2, Larceny 1, Persuasion 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 5

FISHERMAN

"I tell you, lad, I've been on that ocean for going on t'irty years now, and I ain't never seen the likes of that beast before now. And I hope I ne'er see its likes again. Now help me take these dogfish down before they dry out."

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Command 1, Empathy 1, Pilot 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 5

LAW

When dealing with the nefarious machinations of sub-aquatic scoundrels, the forces of law and order are essential to preserving our way of life. Whether they come in the form of well-trained professional government agents or the humble small-town sheriff, these men and women are the first line of defense against those that seek to overthrow our way of life. Unfortunately, even well-meaning American law officials can sometimes get things wrong, and it's possible for the defenders of freedom to end up in handcuffs or even a cell. But don't worry – in the end, the justice system of our democracy will prevail!

COP

"Hands where I can see 'em! Yeah, raise those flippers, too. Wait... why do you have flippers?"

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 2, Enigmas 1, Integrity 1, Larceny 1, Pilot 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 1, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Health: 5

DETECTIVE

"The victim was attacked from behind by some kind of jagged, edged weapon. Something like a saw. But look at the angle here – the attacker must have been much taller than the victim, maybe even seven feet. Hey, you mind not puking on my crime scene?"

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Command 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 3, Humanities 1, Integrity 2, Larceny 1, Medicine 1, Persuasion 1, Science 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 5

GUARD

"You can't go in there."

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 2, Integrity 3, Persuasion 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Health: 5

MILITARY

As our law officials keep the law of the land, our military keeps the security of our great nation intact. Whether they have to go overseas to deal with the encroaching threat of communism, or they remain stationed here at home in case of enemy attack, our men and women fight on land, sea, and air are there. They make sure that no person, monster, robot, alien, or even Soviet has the ways or means to infiltrate and destroy the country we've worked so hard to build!

COMMANDER

"Soldier, what in the Sam Hill is going on here? I don't recall ordering anyone to get torn apart by aliens from beyond the deep! All you survivors, drop and give me twenty!"

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 3, Integrity 3, Persuasion 1, Survival 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 5

SAILOR

"I may be new on this ship, captain, but even I know that there's no such thing as a turtle that walks upright and... and does whatever you're claiming it did. Next you'll be telling me to get a quart of elbow grease!"

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Integrity 2, Pilot 2, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Health: 5

SOLDIER

"Sir! Alien presence detected on the southern perimeter! Deploying alpha squadron to intercept, sir!"

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Integrity 2, Survival 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 5

SCIENCE

Science! The cornerstone of American ingenuity! Our democratic freedoms attract the finest minds all over the world to expand the frontiers of human knowledge. These intelligent men and women help make our lives better, whether it's inventing the latest in underwater exploration technology or healing the brave test subjects of that technology using the finest education that medical science has to offer. Yes, we might even land on the moon in a few short years. And from there, the sky's the limit!

ASSISTANT

"I'm sorry, doctor. I didn't realize I had mixed those two chemicals together. I must have gotten the labels mixed up when I knocked all the beakers over last night. Should I get a mop to clean up the blood?"

Skills: Empathy 1, Enigmas 1, Medicine 1, Science 2, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Health: 5

MEDICAL DOCTOR

"This woman needs urgent medical attention. Get her to the hospital, now! What, you want that fancy medical jargon? She's got bilateral limb ablation. Now pick up her arms and follow me!"

Skills: Command 1, Empathy 2, Integrity 2, Medicine 3, Science 2, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 5

RESEARCH HEAD

"I understand that you need my team to analyze this water sample, but our staff isn't large enough to accommodate the extra workload. I'm sure we can squeeze it in once we have our annual budget discussion in Q3. Now hand me the Jacob's ladder, would you?"

Skills: Enigmas 1, Humanities 1, Larceny 1, Persuasion 3, Science 3, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 5

An illustration of a man with short brown hair, seen from the back and side, wearing a dark suit jacket and a light-colored shirt. He is looking at a large, glowing green screen mounted on a wall. On the screen, a frog's face is visible, appearing to be in a futuristic or medical setting. The frog has large, expressive eyes and a slightly open mouth. The background shows a room with a sink, a faucet, and some electrical outlets on the wall.

THE FROG THAT WALKED LIKE A MAN

He walked down the street, garnering little attention. That was the whole plan. Not garnering. This emissary from a non-human race sought to fit right in and so far it was working. Working like a bracelet, as these people were wont to say.

Lamber Prawt, as he called himself, promenaded into the grocery store just like a person. He had trained well. They'd been watching humans since the beginning and he was proud to be one of the first to venture among them and pave the way for invasion.

Lamber purchased items for a gathering known as the "occasional gethertoget" later that evening. He made a point to buy no food items a frog would like. Fortunately there were few insect-based snacks.

He pulled into his lovely suburban driveway, hopped out of the car, then caught himself. That was exactly the kind of slipup they couldn't afford.

His human wife greeted him with the usual "Hi, honey," which he returned. Penty Prawt was the

perfect suburban housewife for a duplicitous sea invader. She asked no questions, did as she was told, and left him on his own. In other words, like every other 1950s housewife. As always, she arranged snacks in a pleasing manner, which Lamber considered very "lily pad."

The guests arrived, the usual three couples, and the gethertoget went as usual until the following curious exchange

"Hey, you hear the news? Torrince Welchecker croaked," stated public-relations man Don Pander.

"Oh, he was due to croak any time," replied Morst Penley.

As he often did, Lamber Prawt excused himself and went to the bathroom. But it wasn't for the usual Earth reasons. Carefully locking the door, he pushed his toothbrush in its holder like a lever, and the medicine cabinet mirror quietly turned, revealing a futuristic viewing screen. Lamber worked the faucet handles like knobs, and waves appeared on screen with a high-pitched

squeal. An image formed; a terrifying froglike being, Ribbidus Maximus.

"Who calls on Ribbidus Maximus, leader of the anuradons? Oh, it's you, Barump Phumf. What news of the surface world?"

"I have just heard something of alarm. One of our operatives has been exposed, Great Leader."

"What? What is his name?"

"I know not, except he goes by the Earth name Torrince Welchecker."

"Hmm, I will have to check and see who that is. Meantime, find out all you can. He may have to be eliminated for the good of the invasion."

"I shall, My Leader. Barump Phumf, over and out."

Lamber returned to the gethertoget, finally leading the conversation back to Torrince. "So. This Torrince. You were surprised when he croaked?"

"I wasn't," said Morst. "Hey, we all have to croak sometime."

Lamber tried not to look taken aback. As conversations resumed, he scanned the room, wondering who to trust. In his anxiety, he shot his tongue out at a fly, whipping it into his mouth. He looked about in panic, but no one had seen. Except Don, who stared at him.

Lamber was quickly back in the bathroom, talking with Maximus.

"You fool. The human must be eliminated."

"But the others, I now believe most of them are our people."

"I will check on that," spat Maximus. "Meantime, take care of that flywitness."

When Lamber returned, he found Don Pander still looking at him strangely. Before the frog-being could think up a subterfuge, Pander asked to speak with him alone.

The privacy of the garage was perfect for Lamber. Once there, Don confided.

"Lamber I've been a little worried about you lately. Maybe you're working too hard."

"Nonsense," croaked Lamber. "I work no harder than any of you I mean, us."

"You need to relax more. Look, when a guy starts eating flies with a really long tongue"

"I do relax, Don. Take this interesting hobby for instance." Lamber led Don to his workbench, upon which rested an odd contraption.

"What the heck is that thing?" blurted the PR man. "What's it do?"

"This," said Lamber, pushing a button that zapped Don, who disappeared with a snap.

Back at the gethertoget, Lamber explained that Don had to go suddenly, which confused his wife who noted their car was still there. Soon, it was time for the guests to leave, which gave the stressed anuradon some relief.

As Penty cleaned up, her frog-husband finally got around to asking her the key question.

"Say, were you shocked to hear that Torrince Welchecker could croak?"

"Oh no," stated Penty casually. "I'd seen that coming for quite some time." She chuckled, "In fact, with his lifestyle, if anyone was going to croak it'd have to be him."

Waves of relief passed through the disguised frog-being that he had not felt since leaving the bottom of the ocean. "You have no idea how pleased I am to learn this, Penty. No idea."

"Learn what, Lamber?" asked Penty, focused on washing dishes.

Lamber laughed a froggish laugh, no longer afraid.

"Not Lamber. Not anymore. Call me Barump."

"Barump?"

"By the way, now that it's out, what can I call you?"

"Lamber, what on Earth are you talking about?"

"This, my dearest."

And with that, Lamber crouched and hopped a good 20 feet to the hallway. Penty dropped a dish and it shattered. Believing her not convinced, he came close to her and allowed his features to go froglike, particularly the wide mouth, inflating throat and eyes, which spread wide apart and bulged. Naturally, Penty screamed and ran.

Confused, Lamber chased after her into the garage, where she backed away from him.

"Stay back! Stay back, you you horror!"

"Perhaps I was mistaken," realized her ghastly husband who moved slowly toward her, forcing her to keep backing away.

"I'm sorry it's come to this, my dear. You know too much." Lamber kept coming, now in full-on hideous frog-thing mode.

His terrified wife backed into his workbench, hand feeling behind her for a weapon.

"I I wouldn't touch that"

Zap, went Lamber with a snap.



CHAPTER NINE PLAYING DIRECTOR

This town is in danger. Now, several people have been killed already!
Now we we had to make this noise so you would listen to us, so we could warn you!

- Steve Andrews, *The Blob* (1958)

This chapter offers advice on how to write your own scenarios, along with two ready-made scenarios for running immediately.

Small Wonders: The Delaware Beaches is a sandbox set on the beaches of Delaware. It offers a plethora of towns and locations, and a smorgasbord of threats both taken from Chapter Six and newly created for *Small Wonders*. Rather than create separate scenes, *Small Wonders* offers story hooks for the Director to map her own campaign around. The scenario works perfectly for groups that have a grip on the rules and system for **TCfBtS!**, but whose Director prefers not to create a chronicle from scratch. With everything *Small Wonders* has to offer, characters will never have to leave Delaware.

A Slippery Conspiracy! is geared to groups who are either new to roleplaying games in general, or **TCfBtS!** specifically. The scenario encourages Directors and groups to find their own solutions to in-character problems, while offering suggestions replete with rolls in case they're stumped. It speaks to the Director directly to help her set the right tone for **TCfBtS!**. Divided into linear scenes, *A Slippery Conspiracy!* has a clear beginning and end but provides extra scenes and plot hooks to kick off a full campaign. The scenario comes with five pre-made characters, which can be personalized for a full campaign. They are situated at the end of this chapter so you can find them easily.

RUNNING THE GAME

If you're interested in running a game of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, here are some tips to help make the time you spend in the Director's chair enjoyable.

THEME AND TONE

There are many ways to run a game of **TCfBtS!**, and as noted throughout the book, you can angle the game toward horror,

comedy, Cold War thriller, or just plain sci-fi fun. It's important for the Director to have a theme and tone in mind for their game and communicate it to the players before starting character creation. Players create very different roles depending on the kind of scenario they're about to play and may develop expectations based on previous games, unless you tell them the mood you're going for.

You need to build a story to match the theme and tone you're advertising. It's unfair on the players to say "this will be an action-packed game of science fiction, lasers, and aliens in cheap rubber costumes," only to unleash a town on them where the crab people are thousands of tiny crustaceans infesting human bodies, shifting their skin horribly with every movement. The monsters, societal backdrop, and characters in this game must ideally match the tone, or have an instance where they stray so far from it as to become farce. Your game may intentionally play very light-handedly with the communist witch hunts of the era, but having Joseph McCarthy show up at the conclusion to demand the quarantine of the entire town due to "a hidden army of Reds" among the populace, just as justification for the alien goings-on, can work well.

In the same way as movies have age ratings and classifications, consider doing the same for your game. **TCfBtS!** has edges of horror at all times, but its default setting is easily accessible to young teens. If you intend for human beings to explode in showers of gore in your game, consider restricting play to a more mature audience.

WRITING YOUR GAME

It's all very well to want to run a game, but how to write one? The role of a Director is one of immense reward, and only a little work. Some Directors will plan out massive sagas comprising multiple sessions, a hierarchy of threats, and a conspiracy designed to drown the world. Others will come to a session with

ACT ONE

Scene One: Introduce the location, its recent mundane events, and the characters living their lives.

Scene Two: Local gossip surrounds a missing scientist known to the characters. A relative asks the characters to investigate.

Scene Three: Investigation reveals a government agent came to town to shut down the investigation into the missing person's whereabouts.

Scene Four: Investigation of the missing scientist's home reveals they had discovered anomalous underwater activity nearby. Evidence of alien activity!

ACT TWO

Scene One: The characters travel to the site of underwater activity and find physical traces of the aliens and a trail left by the missing person. The government agent appears and warns them to look no further.

Scene Two: They locate the missing scientist in a nearby cave, chained up, now being forced to work on a device to allow these aquatic creatures the ability to assume human form.

Scene Three: When they attempt to free the target, the characters are attacked by alien grunts.

Scene Four: If successful, the hysterical scientist says it's too late and the prototype device is already in alien hands, claws, or flippers! They claim the only way to stop the aliens is to blow up their submarine.

Scene Five: The characters travel to the submarine and enter a confrontation with the aliens, possibly resulting in the submarine's detonation.

ACT THREE

Scene One: The scientist is returned to their relatives, suddenly calm. The suspicion should exist that they were working for the aliens voluntarily.

Scene Two: The characters are confronted by the government agent who warns them to tell no one of their encounters, at pain of being branded a lying communist. At a push, the agent may confirm the government wanted to find out more about the aliens, and as the characters have proven themselves capable of getting into the thick of it, they may be recruited in future.

Scene Three: The characters settle back into normality. As normal as life can be, when you know aliens are just waiting beneath the sea.

Scene Four: The debrief, including awarding end-of-game Experience points (see p. XX).

FIN

a single piece of paper containing a few bullet points listing interesting characters and locations.

Many new Directors will script out the entire scenario in defined, detailed beats, giving all characters in the game location a mini biography (and maybe a stat block), creating or downloading a suitable map for the area, tagging pages in this book for ease of reference to threats and powers you want to see in play, and writing out blocks of description text and dialogue for when a particular event occurs. These Directors might also have an ending to the scenario in mind, some art to display when characters encounter creatures, and have briefed the players privately before the session so each character has a lead in to the scenario.

Conversely, experienced Directors will just make a list of key points: character names and their motivations, key locations, a few events and encounters, and page references for information critical to this game. These Directors improvise the rest.

Ultimately, you should go with the method that makes you the most comfortable. We advise you start heavy on the note taking and planning, moving to the list style of running a scenario after you've handled a few. Practice makes perfect, and nothing slows a game down more than flipping through the book at a dramatic moment because you've forgotten a rule. Planning helps prevent this.

ACTS AND SCENES

The simplest way to plan a story is to look at one of your favorite television shows or movies and see how it's structured. Plays signpost this in their scripts. They're divided into acts, generally in which characters are established, drama unfolds, a conflict occurs, and a conclusion is met. Not all stories need to follow this chain of events, but for your first scenario, it makes sense to go for something tried and true.

Three act plays consist of setup, confrontation, and resolution. Consider how in *TCF&S!*, your scenario may start with characters on or near the beach, introducing who they are and why they are there. Suddenly, *something* occurs. Perhaps an aquatepillar snuffles and struggles its way onto the sand and devours a bather, or maybe were-lobsters capsize a ship offshore. The characters respond to this, forming the meat of the story. The conclusion is where the villain is stopped, the characters emerge, triumphant or with losses.

Each act contains scenes. When writing your game, think of the scenes you want to portray. For contrast, it's useful to hone in on the *Happy Days* feel of the era, only to disrupt it with a *Jaws*-like disaster. You require a few scenes of normality, in which characters perform their daily routines, meet up with friends, talk about politics or sports, and so on. After the action starts, you need scenes comprising investigation (and red herrings, maybe), confrontation, action, and sometimes a little introspection. Here's a breakdown of how a basic scenario might go:

TAILORED GAMEPLAY

In the previous example of a game's breakdown, you see scenes dedicated to certain themes and actions. Investigating a missing person's whereabouts benefits characters with strong



Mental Attributes, discussing the scientist's activities and engaging in dialogue with aliens or the government agent requires characters with strong Social Attributes, and combating the aliens, rescuing the scientist, and fleeing the exploding submarine gives spotlight to characters with strong Physical Attributes. All games should have some element for each character, so all the players enjoy their experience.

Consider the Player Aspirations chosen at character creation of the session start, and the characters' Ambition Paths. Stories work best and resonate more with the players when they feel their desires are being met.

Always keep a read on behavior at the table. If everyone looks like they're having a good time, then fantastic! Play on. If there are any doubts, call a recess partway through (perhaps between acts) and speak privately with any players who you don't feel are jiving with the material. A chat often helps, and the reason may be as simple as the game not allowing their character any agency. If that's the case, make every effort to give that player a chance to shine in an upcoming scene or two.

MOVIE TROPES

The recurring villain, the well-known location, and the catchphrases and Quips uttered by characters and supporting roles alike make a game of **They Came from Beneath The Sea!** stand out.

Never be afraid to allow your mad scientist antagonist an unfathomable getaway or give them an off-screen death where the characters hear the villain's scream, but don't see the body fall. Players love running into characters with whom they're familiar, as it rewards their investment in the story.

Similarly, if the characters' first meeting is in the local diner, give it a little character. Talk about the coffee-mug stains on the counter, the way Dolores chain smokes as she flips the pancakes, or the Jerry Lee Lewis record that always sticks. Building scenery in this way makes a group feel comfortable. You know it's working when the players instinctively refer to supporting characters and locations by name or description. When they do, it means you've created a world they care about.

Recurring phrases, well-worn accents, and repetitive behavior is the final key to embedding players in the game world before them. If the local sheriff says "well I'll be..." every time he discovers a crime scene, it isn't flashy, but it leaves a mark in the players' group memory. Describe how the waiter at the bar is a little too touchy-feely, how the town veterinarian always smells of lavender perfume, and don't be afraid to apply silly voices to characters. These little elements all serve to make a stronger game your players won't forget.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

There's rarely a requirement to write full character sheets for all your antagonists and supporting characters. Dolores

doesn't need an Ambition Path and she doesn't have a player, so there's no requirement for Player Aspirations. It's unlikely she'll ever have to roll dice for her Enigmas Skill or that she'll have any Tropes.

In short, keep it simple. Give all supporting characters with but a few lines of dialogue a Force pool, a Finesse pool, and a Resilience pool, containing an average number of dice you expect to see them use on those challenges. The following examples for staple characters may assist:

Blue-Collar Worker (Force 4, Finesse 2, Resilience 6)

Doctor (Force 4, Finesse 4, Resilience 4)

Entertainer (Force 4, Finesse 6, Resilience 3)

Law Officer (Force 5, Finesse 3, Resilience 4)

Server (Force 3, Finesse 4, Resilience 2)

Student (Force 2, Finesse 3, Resilience 3)

Teacher (Force 3, Finesse 4, Resilience 3)

Thug (Force 6, Finesse 3, Resilience 4)

All basic characters like these have as little Health as the Director sees fit, with 5 the normal upper limit and 3 the average.

For the most part, these dice pools will save you a job, though don't be afraid to amend them. For instance, while it makes sense the thug would have a Force dice pool of 6 if hitting someone really hard, it's less likely they will need a dice pool that size for intellectual tasks. You can always use your discretion.

THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

While Directors come with many ambitions, they are as much of a player as the others at the table. Just like the players, who get to enhance their characters as they gain experience through play (see p. XX), Directors in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** get to alter their games with a few fun features they should advertise before the game commences.

LOW BUDGET

If the Director decides the story they're running is equivalent to a low-budget movie, they should go out of their way to describe the shoddiness of the sets, costumes, weapons, and acting. Directors of this type should play their supporting characters in stilted or hammy ways, implying washed-up actors pulled in off the lot are the cast of this feature. Monsters should seem less threatening in their description, or have their actions only rarely described. When the low-budget Centopus devours its prey, the camera cuts away to the faces of the characters. You never see the full action in a low-budget movie.

Consider restricting your plots to a handful of areas, or repeating descriptions for multiple locations using the same, slightly adjusted set. If you want to get truly meta, insert deleted scenes where transitions might otherwise happen. In games on

the low-budget setting, the highlight reel is more important than the car journey from A to B.

Directors should consider awarding Experience points (see p. XX) to players whenever they act in a hammy or amateurish way, when they describe their characters falling through scenery (or making it wobble) at a dramatic moment, or when harm dealt to an alien seems to do more damage to the costume than the alien itself.

BIG BUDGET

Big-budget movies barely scrape by under the B-movie banner, but plenty of blockbusters have flopped, to later be incarcerated to the bargain bin of a supermarket somewhere. This is your story. Directors should insert characters based on famous movie actors and lovingly describe the effects and visuals surrounding alien attacks. Liberally apply explosions after every gunshot, even when a bullet hits something innocuous like a telegraph pole. Boom — up it goes, the victim of a movie with too high a budget.

In games based on big-budget movies, action takes precedent over subtle dialogue. Incongruous styles edge in, such as a martial arts contest between the sheriff and the intruding special agent, a cheerleader who works as a costumed vigilante at night, or the giant monsters when humanoid-sized threats will do.

Directors should consider awarding Experience points (see p. XX, if we've not made that clear) to players whenever their characters cause an explosion, when they suborn dialogue in favor of fists, or when they accomplish an award-winning scene (see p. XX) that makes the rest of the players applaud.

ART

Art movies are, by their nature, often B-features. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was common for a confused crowd to stumble away from the French art feature preceding their monster movie, wondering why in hell that skeleton was smoking that cigarette for 45 minutes, and what the voiceover was rattling on about. A game of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** with an artistic flair should give scenes over to introspective character moments, inexplicable alien movements, and political and philosophical declarations during the story that bear little relevance to the action. Only in the hours after the game ends will the players start thinking "so the Prefecture of the Pod was an Anarcho-Syndicalist commune after all...?"

No player group wants to walk away from a game utterly confused, but a teased mystery or a montage of events following or running adjacent to the story that *seem* to bear no relevance, can serve to pique interest or amuse. Consider freeze framing at the end of a session to explain what happens to each character present. The players may be a little bewildered when they find out Dino, the local circus strongman, was a communist all along, but they may see this as part of the madness of **TCfBtS!**

Directors should consider awarding Experience points to players whenever they stand or move away from the group to perform a soliloquy, when their characters make a stunning political or philosophical revelation, or when the characters do something completely incongruous to the rest of the plot.

EXPLOITATION

Exploitation movies existed in one form or other since cinema began and were almost always B-movies. To those unfamiliar with the term, exploitation in a cinematic sense is creating a movie of a genre or containing content designed to shock or spread controversy. **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** can enter the realms of exploitation very simply: by exploring the politics of the time through a sympathetic lens.

The sad fact is, the 1950s were no picnic for minorities in America or much of Europe. Any game focusing on the struggles of the persecuted could be described as an exploitation feature and should be finely measured to not wade into the realms of offense and ridicule. Careful highlighting of issues of the time, framed within a hamfisted alien-invasion setting, is a perfect example of how minorities struggle beneath a tide of violence. It's not advised this course is pursued entirely for comic effect, unless the humor is "punching up" against the persecutor.

Of course, exploitation also covers the realm of gore, needless violence, and sex. All these things happened to limited degrees in 1950s cinema (more prevalent in European features than American), but an inventive Director may wish to reengineer **TCfBtS!** into a splatterfest of green goo and pink guts.

Directors should consider awarding Experience points to players whenever they get the better of "the Man," when they achieve a poignant goal for a persecuted group (including aliens, potentially), or when they do something completely incongruous with the lighthearted B-movie sci-fi genre.

TYRANNICAL DIRECTOR

Some directors (not Directors — you're all lovely!) are complete jerks. Another word for them would be perfectionists, but it's rare for actors to experience heavy-handed direction and feel "well, he's just a perfectionist" when being made to experience take 98 of scene 12.

Directors should definitely advertise if they're playing the role of a tyrant before gameplay starts, as this is the style of story designed to punish characters. Never punish the players, but do punish the characters. Make the characters go through the mill, have the aliens deal more damage than usual, cut off glib moments or award-winning scenes with an extra or supporting character walking across the location: Do what you must to bring the best out of the characters.

What purpose does such a role serve other than to be the aforementioned jackass? The Director should have a goal in mind,

a Rubicon to cross, an achievement for characters to attain. Once the characters reach this goal, the tyrant should shower them with rewards. They've made it! They want Experience points? They have them! They want alien tech? They have it in the next adventure! It's a fine line to walk, and not for brand-new Directors, but consider it a trial by fire for all participants who want a tougher game.

SMALL WONDERS: THE DELAWARE BEACHES

According to local legend, Thomas Jefferson stayed a night in southern Delaware on his way to Washington D.C. When leaving, he declared Delaware to be a "jewel among states" because of its strategic location and its abundance of natural resources. The state has proudly used the nickname "the Diamond State" ever since, and every year it plays host to hundreds of thousands of summer vacationers, each seeking the unique mix of beauty and culture the Delaware beaches provide.

"Small Wonders" is not a linear scenario. Rather, it provides a wealth of story hooks for your chronicle, based on the history of the Diamond State. Here, members of F.I.S.H. and the crab people mingle with ordinary citizens, government agents, and legislators on holiday. The Marsh House remains a point of contention for the family that once owned it, whereas Poodle Beach is full of shadowy corners and blinding lights, enough to hide a threat whose disguise is slipping.

Welcome to the Diamond State. Be careful where you step.

LEWES

Lewes advertises itself as being the "First Town in The First State." The first European settlement was established in the 1630s, but the area did not receive its current name until 1682, when William Penn personally visited. It sits at a strategically important location — the mouth of the Delaware River, opening up into the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. In the summer, it's a bustling tourist town, full of farmers' markets and visiting vacationers. In the winter, the military keeps an eye on Fort Miles and the University of Delaware's beachside campus, while a skeleton crew of citizenry plans for next beach season.

While Lewes is a postcard-worthy small beach town, reports of strange people on the shores, odd sounds at night from the graveyard in the center of town, and ghosts in every building abound. The monsters from beneath the waves have been in this area almost as long as the humans, and sometimes they get a little too comfortable.

SECOND STREET

The main street "downtown" of Lewes, Second Street is a one-way road parallel to the Lewes-Rehoboth canal. It includes such attractions as:



King's Ice Cream: A new ice cream parlor that opened out of an old general storefront directly opposite the old church. It serves 52 flavors, one for every week of the year. One can usually see the owner behind the counter, talking to customers. Eric King (see Crab People, p. XX) is a weathered-looking veteran who is a little shy around tourists, but always has a smile for children who want to taste every flavor.

King never comes out from behind the counter during business hours, and for good reason. If anyone inquires as to his side-to-side shuffle, he appears very hurt, and indignantly asks if the speaker has ever had a grandfather with arthritis. This is a lie, of course. King is perfectly healthy. King is also a crab person, who maintains the people's base of operations in Lewes. His deep racial hatred for humans is more fanatical than most, but he is less of a violent activist than his fellows, especially after his service sabotaging human submarines during WWII. Eric King is a born organizer, and his apartment above the shop serves as a safehouse for others of the people when they're in town.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church: Built in 1680, this historic church serves as both the geographical and spiritual heart of Lewes. It is also a major source of ghost stories among tourists and townies. Reports of lights and eerie singing are common, especially in the summer months.

The truth might be a little stranger than the local folklore. The Glowing People who live in the shallows off Cape Henlopen have long made journeys into Lewes, whether for business or

pleasure. None among them are sure who first made contact with the vicar of St. Peter's, but there is now a small faction among their number who consider themselves Episcopalians. They always come up for Mass in the summer months, when their stock and trade — tourists to be kidnapped — are plentiful.

The Glowing People have their own Mass, usually at night. This arrangement was created back at the founding of the church and is all but part of the local canon nowadays. While the vicar is always human, the congregation is solely alien. It used to be Glowing People exclusively, but some of King's crab people have joined in recent years. The Glowing Mass is an excellent place to keep an eye on rivals, exchange gossip, and experience fellowship for those who live in the waves.

In other words, it serves exactly the same function as a human Mass, just with more pseudopods.

The staff, clergy, and vestry of St. Peter's are considered off limits to the enslavers of the ocean. Attendees of the Glowing Mass will fight fiercely to protect anyone under the protection of the church. This has led to confusion among humans attempting to defend their town against invaders, as dead aliens are found in the churchyard in the wee small hours of the morning.

The current pastor is the Reverend Larry Mitchell (Force 4, Finesse 2, Resilience 5). He personally says the Glowing Mass for his non-human parishioners and is training his assistant pastor to do the same. While he shows a marked dislike for the enslavement of humans, he holds out hope that he can convince some of his "parishioners" to give up their ways.

Hotel Rodney: Built in 1923, this is Lewes' most upscale hotel. Its first floor is occupied by shops and restaurants, while the other two floors are suites and rooms. In the summer, it is always full, as wealthy tourists from Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia take advantage of its location. In the off-season, it is a haven for researchers and resistors. In fact, it's become sort of an unofficial haven for those seeking to rid Lewes of the alien influence.

One of the shops on the first floor is an occult store called Melinda's Magical Market. It is run by a fresh-faced young woman, Melinda Harry (Force 3, Finesse 3, Resilience 4), who mostly sells crystals and other kitsch to tourists. She is also the main hub of human resistance on Second Street. She suspects something is up with Eric King, but does not have enough information to be sure. Melinda knows every resident in Lewes, and while not a fighter herself, is a necessary source of information for the human resistance.

ZWAANENDAEL MUSEUM

Before the English settled the area in the 1680s, the Dutch had their own colony. Named "Zwaanendael" or "Valley of the Swans" by the settlers, the colony was all men and was founded in 1630 to hold the Delaware Bay. While in a highly profitable area, the colony died rather quickly, as the governor killed the chief of the local Nanticoke tribes for stealing the coat of arms that hung on the colony's palisades. In response, the Nanticoke killed all of the men of the colony, and the second wave of colonists soon resettled in what would become New York City. The Dutch East India Company then sold the tract of land to the Swedish, who attempted to settle, but soon found themselves annexed by the English, who renamed the colony Lewes in 1682.

All of this and more can be found at the Zwaanendael Museum. Built in 1931, the cheerful brick building on Savannah Road is modeled off of 17th-century Dutch architecture and hosts a series of rotating exhibits throughout the tourist season. It is entirely cared for by the Historical Society of Lewes and is open six days a week during the tourist season. Exhibits include coastal history, geological hazards, the history of the Delaware Breakwater, history of native First Nations tribes, and other locally relevant topics. There is almost always one exhibit dedicated to the destruction of Zwaanendael.

What the exhibits do not show are accounts taken from the local Nanticoke natives at the time. The Nanticoke were the first victims — and resistors — of the Glowing People. Contemporary accounts show that the natives themselves thought that the Dutch were another ploy by the Glowing People to lead them into the darkness of the waves. The governor's murder of their chieftain did nothing to dispel this assertion, and so the Nanticoke wiped the Zwaanendael colony out to protect themselves.

A descendant of the Nanticoke is currently on staff at the museum. Gloria Norwood (Force 6, Finesse 2, Resilience 3) is the office manager and scheduler for Zwaanendael Museum and grew up with the stories of the Glowing People. While it pains her that she can't move against them directly, she does have a certain amount of influence with the Historical Society of Lewes and can be a valuable ally for player characters looking for information. She has access to a great deal of primary source information — diaries, interviews, and the like — and will happily share if she feels

the characters have the best interests of humanity at heart. She is friends with Melinda Harry and passes along any information she can find. If the player characters talk to one of them, the other one will likely know about the conversation before the day is up.

Because of Gloria's influence, the Zwaanendael Museum is a local hub of resistance. Every October, the museum puts out an exhibit about the ghosts of the Delaware Beaches. Local stories like Molly on the Dunes, Patty Cannon, the Tulip Tree, Tower 12, and Old Maggie's Bridge could all be attributed to the monsters under the waves — at least, Gloria thinks so. She's not sure ghosts exist, but she knows the aliens are out there somewhere. The Historical Society mostly humors her because the exhibits bring in visitors, but Gloria has built up a respectable network of people who have interacted with "ghosts," only to discover that those beings were very much alive.

CAPE HENLOPEN

Cape Henlopen is the peninsula where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. It is northwest of downtown Lewes and unsettled by civilians. While it is a public beach, it is also home to a series of military installations.

Fort Miles: Constructed to protect the Delaware River, this fort was finished only days before the attack on Pearl Harbor. While it never saw combat during the Second World War, Fort Miles consistently attained high marks in test firing and practice drills. The United States Army currently controls Fort Miles, though it shares space with the Coast Guard. There are five gun batteries at the fort, including rail-mounted artillery and anti-aircraft guns.

Much of Fort Miles' land was declared "surplus" (not worth the military's budget, essentially) in the late '40s, though the batteries themselves remain operational. About 500 personnel remain on base, with hotlines to Dover Air Force Base and Fort Meade installed should the fort find itself under surprise attack by the USSR or any of its allies. So far this hasn't happened.

What *does* have the base personnel in a tizzy is the attacks by the crab people. Cape Henlopen is a popular spot for crabbing and seining by locals and tourists alike, and while the Army does their best to discourage such activities due to the invasion, several dozen people still go missing every year. Several more wash up down the coast, on Chincoteague or Assateague Islands or under the Nanticoke Bridge. The fort itself has not been targeted yet — Army and Navy intelligence both suggest they are far too smart to attack a manned military installation. Personnel on the ground, however, believe it's only a matter of time before the crab people get wise and eliminate Fort Miles. Quiet preparations have begun for an evacuation of support personnel to further inland, either to Milford or Dover, and the guns are tested once a month. The mood at Fort Miles is grim, like a people who expect to be under siege any day now.

Still, they continue to provide the Coast Guard a base to patrol the area, and a certain amount of safety for civilians coming to relax on the beaches of the cape. While the staff of Fort Miles has not been altogether successful, they still try. After all, just one life saved from the crab people is one more human still alive. They are suspicious of any outsiders, but if a player character has



OYSTER TOADFISH

Known as oyster crackers, ugly toads, or oyster toadfish, these fish eat mollusks, trash, and particularly tasty bits of flesh. They can bite down through bone or shell with their three rows of teeth, and their mottled brown scales make them difficult to spot until they get too close. Luckily for their intended victims, they tend to emit a loud foghorn noise when mating or feeding, so it is fairly easy to avoid them if you know what to listen for.

The bite from an Oyster Toadfish does 1 damage, deadly, as it pierces through flesh and bone. They do not attack difficult targets, only something that gets in their way. Oyster toadfish are slow moving but ill-tempered, and will latch on to whatever happens to wander by their mouth.

military connections, they might be more willing to support or house them temporarily.

Fire Control Towers: Contrary to what their name might suggest, the fire-control towers on Cape Henlopen's dunes are not used to control brushfires or spot acts of arson. Instead, these 15 concrete towers provide a baseline to spot and triangulate the locations of suspicious-looking air- and watercraft. While all 15 were regularly manned during WWII, the current number of enlisted personnel means that only five can be manned at any given time. This does not completely destroy Fort Miles' surveillance capabilities, but it does significantly reduce them.

Fire-control duty is extremely dangerous these days. A small group of soldiers, stuck four stories up in the air, are easy targets for monsters with flying crafts. Glowing People especially are known to "swoop" the towers, trying to abduct sentries as they pass over. The small arms soldiers on fire-control duty carry are not enough to discourage the slavers, and sentries have resorted to ducking into the lower levels of the tower if any sort of aircraft comes too close.

Military MWR Area: Parts of Cape Henlopen are sectioned off for Army MWR (morale, welfare, and recreation) areas. Enlisted and retired members of the Army and their family are permitted in these areas, with or without weaponry. The MWR areas include the dunes and swamps of the cape, as well as beaches and fishing piers. Servicemen and women can be found here both on- and off-season, and it is rare that the MWR areas are completely empty.

Fort Miles focuses most of its internal security capacity on these MWR areas, especially when high-ranking officers come to visit. So far, what they have had to deal with is not promising. There is a king sea serpent under the so-called "megadune" on the north shore of the cape, sleeping until it smells fresh meat on top of its sandy blanket. Atlantoids live in the bay, building their strange city under a major shipping channel — depth charges and

the minefield originally created to stop German submarines haven't dissuaded them yet. Another king sea serpent occasionally hunts near the ocean fishing pier, swallowing up crab pots, fishing boats, and occasionally people who fall in. The Army has had several altercations with the shark clans oceanside, though that was mostly resolved after brass from Fort Meade stepped in to negotiate payment for their services.

Most of the aliens' victims from Cape Henlopen are not from the MWR areas, though they are heavily infested. Something about large military families seems to dissuade them — though not entirely.

Public Beach: The rest of the cape is currently used as a public beach for tourists and locals from Henlopen Acres, Lewes, and Rehoboth. One of the most popular destinations in the state, Cape Henlopen also hosts tourists from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington D.C., and farther. It is also a popular hunting ground for several groups. Riptide warnings posted by the Coast Guard prevent some disappearances, but more and more are happening every year.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE: LEWES CAMPUS

The newest campus for the University of Delaware is slightly northeast of downtown Lewes. Currently located in an old house on the bay, while the buildings are under construction, this campus houses the nascent marine biology program. Three professors, two adjuncts, and an overworked department secretary currently run the entire program, making runs between the main campus and this slapdash experimental facility. With the money granted by the Delaware legislature, they also bought two old fishing boats for data collection purposes. These boats are outfitted with rudimentary sonar equipment, seining nets to drag through the salt marshes and bay, and coolers for fish and water samples.

One hundred students have been admitted into the marine biology program since its recent inception, and more are expected to follow. The plan was to have the students shuttle down to Lewes in the summer to do field work, while taking their classes at the main campus upstate. With the advent of the invasion, that is no longer possible.

The Lewes campus, however, is now in a unique position to aid any sort of the human resistance. With the best marine biologists in the state, assisted by public funding and a wave of new students, the university has a great deal of resources at its fingertips. If a player character somehow convinces the staff or the students to work with them, they will have access to the best local understanding of the flora and fauna of the Delaware Bay region available to them.

The positioning of the facility, while inexpensive, is somewhat unfortunate. Local fishermen know the area to be filled with a particularly nasty type of bottom feeder called an oyster toadfish (see sidebar). Even before the invasion, the fish were a threat to the fingers and toes of everyone in this area. Now, they're under the control of the crab people, who use them as shock troops and spies. The Atlantoids also keep them as pets, in the same way a human might keep a guard dog or a favorite cat that bites everyone. They mostly spend time in the estuary,

and around the Atlantoids' city in the bay. The university has a catch-and-release program for these fish — they're a good gauge for the health of the bay, but trying to keep one long enough to eat or study it is a risky proposition that might result in minor mutilations.

THE DELAWARE BREAKWATER

Constructed in order to provide a safe harbor for ships sailing up the east coast, the Delaware Breakwater is a series of artificial shoals and seawalls meant to prevent damage from storms. They extend about two miles into the Atlantic Ocean and are open to the public — though the walkways that are farther out to sea are often closed off by the Coast Guard if a major storm is on the horizon. On a good day, families and couples take picnics out onto the seawall and watch the waves. Kites and skipping rocks are also common sights.

While the breakwaters are a massive boon for Lewes and the surrounding area, they are tantamount to a declaration of war for those who live beneath the sea. Even before the invasion proper, there were stories of strange fishermen crawling on the rocks and kidnapping children who strayed too far from their parents. They were mostly considered bedtime stories — but no longer.

Apart from the various piers and docks attached to the seawall, there are two lighthouses, both of which may be points of interest for a troupe.

East End Light: Located just offshore from Cape Henlopen, the East End Light is a squat red tower with a powerful fog siren and a rotating Fresnel lens. Residents of northern Lewes know its horn all too well, as it sounds almost continuously during winter storms. This makes it a point of contention with the crab people, who view the loud noise as a sonic attack. Stories of phantoms with huge mouths full of sharp teeth attacking the light have been discounted until recently.

Sadly, the lighthouse keepers have far too much on their plates to start negotiating with angry crustaceans. The interior of the lighthouse is about 18 feet across, damp, and spartan. Winter storms are common, as are fall hurricanes thundering up the coast. Since each storm means double shifts on the light, calls to shore to report ships in distress, communication with the ships themselves, and occasional emergency repairs to the light, the keepers (Amelia and Patrick Martin, a husband and wife couple, each Force 4, Finesse 4, Resilience 2) are stretched thin. They have no interest in negotiating a peace and would rather have to smack crab people around with a shovel every once in a while, than lose another ship to the winter waves. Amelia and Patrick are both suspicious of strangers, but not unreasonable. In fact, for living in semi-isolation and going into town once a month, they're both down downright sane.

The Harbor of Refuge Light: Somewhat larger than the East End Light, the Harbor of Refuge Light is on the outermost edge of the Delaware Breakwaters. It is a massive conical structure, and its foundation goes straight down into the breakwater itself rather than resting on top. Instead of the intricately carved and difficult-to-repair Fresnel lens, the light has a DCB-36 Aero Beacon. This huge floodlight-like device was a gift from Dover Air Force Base, after WWII. The light has withstood major hur-

ricanes, blizzards, and surge from storms farther out in the Atlantic. It is only accessible by boat and is not open to the public, though that doesn't stop people from sailing out occasionally.

The keeper is Millicent "Millie" Kittridge (Force 4, Finesse 5, Resilience 1), a former member of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve. She was stationed at the light during WWII, but even when the Reserve was ended and recreated after the war, she stayed on as the lighthouse keeper. Millie looks every inch the "wicked witch" archetype, though she's extremely shy. With her hooked nose, neat salt-and-pepper hair, and severely chapped lips, she is content to remain out on the breakwater and not bother anyone — at least, not anyone human.

Millie likely has more dealings with the Glowing People and the Suspended than anyone else in southern Delaware. She has avoided capture repeatedly, at least to hear her tell it, and she and the slavers have an uneasy truce. Recently, a member of the Suspended has begun leaving packages of food and pearls at her door. Millie isn't sure if it's a trap, if it's an overture of friendship, or if she's being courted.

THE BAY CITY

While it is unclear when, exactly, the Atlantoids began building their city in the Delaware Bay, it has only grown since then. Completely underwater, this city is slightly bigger than Lewes, boasting about 500 Atlantoid residents and the occasional tourist. F.I.S.H. has an embassy outside the limits proper, and members of the organization often mingle with the citizenry. The crab people spend time in what might be called the suburbs but are generally treated with a measure of healthy suspicion.

While residents refer to it as "New Atlantis," the Coast Guard and Navy call it the "Bay City" to defer any sort of delusion of grandeur. Sonar shows that the city is mostly square buildings constructed of stone and shells, tied together with a mortar of seaweed, algae, and mud. Some of the residents appear to be growing gardens or farms of kelp, though what kind is unclear. The roads of the Bay City are not paved and appear to be little more than vague ruts of mud and sand that occasionally wash into the buildings. Oyster crackers, weakfish, horseshoe crabs, and other wildlife wander through the city, occasionally being scooped up as pets or warhounds.

The mayor of the Bay City is Alissa Harcombe (Force 4, Finesse 4, Resilience 6), a former seamstress, textile worker, and member of a socialist movement during the Second World War. While the focus on Nazis allowed her to remain relatively undisturbed during the war, the Red Scare drove her underground — or underwater, as the case may be. She grew up knowing the stories of Atlantis, passed down through her family as oral history, but it was only when the invasion came that she truly "awakened," as she put it. She founded the city of New Atlantis with several other Atlantoid outcasts and has ruled as its mayor ever since.

Alissa's goals are fairly simple. She wants to create a space in this cruel, dry world for her people to live in relative peace. While her socialist utopian ideals make her appear a bit of a radical to most other Atlantoids, many of whom grew up in the west, she has attracted a certain following. Atlantoids from all over the world

have come to join her in the Bay City, and she hopes it will continue to grow. Three hundred in a year isn't bad. She'd prefer 3,000.

REHOBOTH BEACH

Known as the "Nation's Summer Capital," Rehoboth Beach is an old, established coastal community that plays host to some of the most well-known figures in American politics. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Roosevelt all summer (or summered, as the case may be) here, as well as senators, representatives, local governors, and hundreds of thousands of capitol staffers. In fact, Rehoboth's population increases by about three *million* when beach season rolls around.

Humans aren't the only ones drawn to the shores of Rehoboth when the temperatures soar. F.I.S.H. has a major stake in the area, and Atlantoids, Sirens of Ness, the Glowing People, the Suspended, and other creatures the military has yet to encounter swarm the streets. Their motives are as diverse as the humans on the streets, but they're all potentially dangerous.

POODLE BEACH

Slightly back from the main strip, Poodle Beach is at the south end of Rehoboth. A seemingly normal neighborhood on the outside, Poodle Beach is, in actuality, host to a vibrant queer community of both residents and tourists. It's not just bars, much as the Lavender Scare tries to make the community out to be a bunch of degenerates on holiday from Washington, D.C. Poodle Beach is host to family homes, parks, and restaurants, much the same as any other Rehoboth neighborhood.

Unlike most other Rehoboth neighborhoods, Poodle Beach is used to raids from the police and mobs of morality crusaders. Many buildings in the area, both residential and commercial, have deadbolts and panic rooms that their residents and owners have managed to put together. Poodle Beach also has a neighborhood watch to defend the residents against the police, and a doctor who lives by the beach and takes care of the residents under the table.

This has worked in their favor ever since the invasion. The queer folk of Poodle Beach are used to being raided, and that expertise has allowed them to resist the kidnappings and assaults that have plagued other beach towns. Armed with cooking knives, bricks, bats, and the occasional handgun, they've been able to protect their neighborhood — and surrounding neighborhoods as well.

Does this change the public view on the residents of the neighborhood? Likely not. However, Elaine Wickett (Force 4, Finesse 6, Resilience 3) has contacts in the area, especially among the lesbian and trans women, and Poodle Beach has been left largely unmolested by other humans since the appearance of things from beneath the sea.

THE PETER MARSH HOUSE

Known as the "Homestead," this house has been on Dodd's Lane in the suburbs of Rehoboth since the late 1700s. It was restored in the 1930s, and is currently open to visitors. The University of Delaware occasionally uses it as an object lesson for its art history students, so the house is usually quite full.

What the university doesn't know, however, is that Peter Marsh was a descendant of the Marshes of Massachusetts, a F.I.S.H. family that had some interests in shipping and trade. When the house was renovated by a private donor, the crews discovered a huge black opal sitting in the basement. It was sold to a collector upstate, who eventually donated it to the University of Delaware's geology collection. It is this opal and the house that the descendants of Peter Marsh are trying to get back.

Why is the opal so important? Most of the Marshes aren't actually sure. Some of the older ones have a half-remembered idea that it's an egg of the species, and it needs to be in the house to hatch. Most consider it a family heirloom. All members of the Marsh family regard the University of Delaware as an enemy of their kind, even if F.I.S.H. at large does not.

Currently the Marshes content themselves with frequenting the house and trying to get an idea of what they're up against. A Marsh stands out — they usually wear clothes that are clean and tidy, but at least 10 years out of date, and always green or black. Since they haven't done anything yet, they haven't drawn the attention of the authorities. They have, however, been noticed by the neighbors, who are concerned about the strange people asking about the house.

THE BOARDWALK

The Rehoboth boardwalk is over a mile long, and full of different stalls, attractions, hotels, and other establishments that are swarmed by tourists in the summer, but hauntingly empty in the winter. Among these are:

Dolle's: One of the oldest establishments on the boardwalk, this candy shop is almost always packed full during the beach season. While they're most famous for their saltwater taffy, the shop stocks anything from local fudge to big-name candies. Because of this, Dolle's is one of the few places in the world where one can reliably see human and alien children (or possibly not children, it's difficult to tell with some species) freely mingling. This does present an occasional problem when a non-human attempts to pay in something other than dollars, but the staff of Dolle's are used to foreign visitors, so they are usually pretty happy to explain the misunderstanding.

Rehoboth Beach Sports Complex: A large, three-story structure with a wide courtyard and a ball field out back, the Rehoboth Beach Sports Complex is usually bustling with tourists during the summer season. Children, especially, flock to play skee-ball, mini-golf, whack-a-mole, and ride the miniature ferris wheel in the courtyard. When the weather turns cold, the complex is nominally closed, in that the rides are non-operational and the mini-golf course is not open to the public.

This makes it a mecca for local teenagers, however. The beat and greaser movements have just penetrated southern Delaware, and gangs of counterculture youths spend time in the massive complex hanging out, smoking, and drinking. Some find it particularly funny that they can "watch the submarine races" (read: make out) in the submarine-shaped gondolas of the stopped ferris wheel.

Some of these youths are Atlantoids who haven't realized it. Some are members of F.I.S.H. who have been sent to live among

humans to learn and thereby strengthen their cause. Some are just normal humans, who have nothing to do and need to make their own fun. All are welcome to hang out in the complex in the off season, so long as any rumbles don't use knives or guns.

The Pink Pony: A bar on the main boardwalk, the Pink Pony got its start right after the war, catering to returning soldiers and sailors. A customer has to pick their seat carefully, as local liquor laws forbid walking around with a drink once it's in the customer's hand. This has become a sort of ritual at the Pink Pony — sitting next to someone once you have a drink is a sign of trust and interest.

Because of this, the Pink Pony is renowned for being Rehoboth's most gay-friendly bar. Most of the homosexual men in the city, whether they're townies or tourists, make a trip down to the Pony at least once a year. While there is no dancing, the music is good (especially when there's a live pianist on Thursday nights) and the bartender, Dale Matthews (Force 3, Finesse 2, Resilience 5), has a broad smile and an even broader ear for gossip. The queer community at the Pony is strong, even including tourists and transients into the mix with no questions asked.

It was the denizens of the Pink Pony that first noticed the invasion into Rehoboth. It's those same people who keep the overt incursions into Rehoboth at a bare minimum. While their attempts to organize against the various threats in the area have

been repeatedly interrupted by police raids, these ex-military men do the best they can to keep their city safe from the horrors that wait beneath the waves.

Rehoboth Art Gallery: Sponsored by Tallulah Bankhead and members of the DuPont family, the Rehoboth Art Gallery is one of the first in the state to sponsor all-female artists in a variety of different mediums. The Gallery is open to the public and hosts some truly excellent pieces by women of color, queer women, housewives, and others. The only requirement is that the women be local.

The Rehoboth Art Gallery is, in part, run by Elaine Wickett, the founder of the Women's Home Defense League. Since the gallery is conveniently centrally located and already sponsors women artists, it's a good place for her to conduct classes and gatherings. For a nominal membership fee, which goes toward paying teachers and sponsoring artists, any woman above the age of 16 can learn defensive tactics, such as basic punching and blocking, improvised weaponry, firearms, hand weaponry, and booby traps. This membership is open to all women, just like the gallery. In fact, Elaine doesn't require that the women who take her classes be local, only that they are willing to learn.

These skills are supposed to be used against the invaders. The classes are careful to talk about how a woman should defend her



home from non-humans. However, Elaine does not police how women use the tactics she teaches. Predictably, there has been an outcry from the straight men of Rehoboth, accusing these women of being “crazy” and “mannish.” Elaine is well aware of this, and has had to sneak more than one woman away from her husband so she could have some room to breathe and cry.

The Beach: Rehoboth Beach is the second northernmost ocean-facing beach in Delaware, the first being the oceanside of Cape Henlopen. It is about a mile long, with a gentle slope into the sea beyond the dunes. The dunes are the only thing separating the boardwalk from the beach proper, so it is not uncommon for tourists to bounce back and forth between the beach and the boardwalk all day.

In the summer, the beach is usually packed with tourists and visitors. In the winter, it is extremely uncommon to see anyone other than the Coast Guard or beachcombers from the area out on the sand. There have been reports of crab people scouting out the area at night or in the off season, but these are likely unfounded. Winter tides are dangerously high in Rehoboth, and so there’s no way anyone could walk out of the surf without a certain amount of obvious damage and disorientation. Everyone would see them come out of six-foot waves. The Coast Guard would definitely know about it. The crab people couldn’t get this close to downtown Rehoboth.

Right?

THOMPSON’S ISLAND

A small barrier island on the south end of Rehoboth, Thompson’s Island is home to some of the most pristine salt marshes in the state of Delaware. It is still a protected state park. It also used to be a popular spot for hiking, canoeing, and picnicking.

It started with a few herons going missing. Then a bike, then a canoe, then the person along with the canoe. Sometime, there are shoes left. Sometimes enough of a person gets away to tell the tale in between screams in the emergency room. No one’s really sure what’s happening. They don’t usually see it, if they’re attacked. The Coast Guard has gone in and found nothing out of the ordinary – barring, of course, the occasional presence of aquatepillars and an abundance of saltwater eels, something not normally native to the area.

Deep in the bowels of the swamps of the island, something is stirring. Something has taken up residence, hidden by the sluggish water and the thick reeds. Some of the brain-eater eels (p. XX) from Fenwick Island have followed it, acting as a sort of pilot fish. This is the closest the Rorqualasaur has been to land in decades, possibly centuries. It was initially surprised and angry at the humans encroaching on its new territory – but quickly discovered they were delicious. Whatever it is, it’s cunning and will not eat everyone it comes across, as that would arouse too much suspicion. If it spots someone who is alone, or who can’t get away fast enough, however, it moves closer...

DEWEY BEACH

Affectionately known as the “wild little sister” of Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach is five minutes south on the Coastal Highway (see below). Whereas Rehoboth is full of candy shops and

arcades, Dewey is full of bars and restaurants with recently acquired liquor licenses. The town swells to a population of at least 50,000 in the summer, whereas in the winter, the townie population remains somewhere around a stable 300.

This means the invasion is somewhat more open in Dewey rather than in Lewes or Rehoboth. Whereas Lewes’s population of mostly retirees and new families has an uneasy truce with the cCrab people on its shores and the Glowing People in its churches, and Rehoboth’s invasion mostly happens in seductions and disappearances, Dewey’s invasion takes place in the open. Most of the summer vacationers are too drunk to remember what happened last night anyway. It’s easy to get away with things when the number of temporary residents vastly outranks people who will remember what happened in their backyard last night.

Dewey is a major beachhead for the Atlantoids and F.I.S.H., some of whom lead double lives as members of the town. Several are even restaurant owners and bootleggers. It’s a challenge to tell who’s who in Dewey – until the masks come off.

THE OLD LIFESAVING STATION

Located at the end of Dagsworthy Street, the Lifesaving Station has been called many different things at many different times. It has been, variously, the Rehoboth Beach Patrol, the Dewey Coast Guard Station, and the Dagsworthy Beach House. To make it more confusing, most of the locals use the names interchangeably, occasionally in the same sentence.

The building was decommissioned in 1947 and has not been taken over by any other US organization since. F.I.S.H. has taken this as a weakness and established an outpost here. This might be the only open, organized beachhead of the alien invasion on the entire eastern seaboard.

F.I.S.H. is not shy about making their presence known at the Lifesaving Station. One part embassy, one part military training ground, one part shipping port, the Station hosts about 25 members of F.I.S.H. at any given time. Their leader, Colonel Graciliara (Force 4, Finesse 5, Resilience 2), is a stern, older woman with fine green scales on her cheekbones and obvious gills on her throat. While Graciliara herself is amphibious, this is not the case for all of her subordinates. Some of them live in the ocean just off of Dagsworthy Street, while others require oxygen tanks or other breathing apparatus to be underwater for any length of time.

Graciliara’s goals are fairly simple, at least on first glance. She aims to open dialogue between F.I.S.H. and the human race. However, like an iceberg, her real motives are deep below the surface. Graciliara plans to introduce Atlantoids and F.I.S.H. into the general population to outbreed the humans and take over the dry Earth through numbers alone. She has not shared this plan with any of her subordinates just yet – she’s waiting for a big wedding day to break the news.

Colonel Graciliara’s right-hand fish is Nurse (Force 2, Finesse 5, Resilience 3). Nurse is a rare member of the shark clans – one who decided to train in battlefield medicine along with tactics and weaponry. No one knows what gender Nurse is. They’re just Nurse. Perhaps appropriately, they have the skin of a small

nurse shark, and beady black eyes that never move from whoever happens to be talking. Nurse has a fairly even temper, but only a tenuous grasp of humor, and they will spring into action whenever they think someone is threatening Graciliara. Apart from their bodyguard duties, Nurse acts as a sort of Doctors Without Borders for the various sea-folk who drop by the Lifesaving Station. While they do not observe any sort of Hippocratic Oath, Nurse is curious and likes being helpful, so player characters in need of a quick fix might be able to talk Nurse into patching them up.

THE COASTAL HIGHWAY

State Route 1, also known as the Coastal Highway, runs around Rehoboth and straight through the middle of Dewey Beach. It is the main artery of the Delaware beaches and the beating heart of this little town. Bars and restaurants line the Coastal Highway, including:

Al's Restaurant and Tiki Bar: For someone who runs a Hawaiian-themed dive bar, Al (Force 3, Finesse 3, Resilience 3) has a surprisingly Italian accent. He is always out in the front of house, chatting with customers, calling for a round of drinks, and showing off whatever girl he happens to be dating this week. He doesn't share his last name or his personal phone number with anyone, not even the people he's seeing, and there's speculation that Al is part of the mafia. His bar serves a variety of middling tropical cocktails, along with local seafood and kabobs. If any of the player characters have FBI or criminal connections, they may be able to get into Al's back room, where he stores several sawed-off shotguns, heavily marked maps of the area, and the keys to his boat.

Zogg's Raw Bar and Grill: People who suspect that Zogg's is run by an alien are correct. Zogg, a member of F.I.S.H., doesn't even try to hide what he is. The staff of Zogg's are sent out every morning to go seining in the ocean. Whatever comes up in the net is what's on the menu that day. Sometimes the restaurant is closed because the catch wasn't good. Zogg employs an almost all-human staff, and while he pays them well (or his human accountant does, anyway, after he smashed three tills trying to do it himself) they are terrified of him. Zogg does not like fire and has to be kept out of the kitchen, for fear of him smelling ash or blood. Rumors of Zogg and Nurse being in some kind of secret relationship are greatly exaggerated.

Dive!: Up in the north, towards Rehoboth, Dive! is one of the rare, unapologetic gay bars in the area. A small building right on the beach, this bar serves hard liquor and little else. It also hosts live music from amateur bands in the area. Any genre is welcome, from rumba to rock to swing. What is not terribly public about Dive! is that the owners are Glowing People. No one has ever seen them, not really. They occasionally come out on the dance floor, using their Fascinate ability (see p. XX) to take new slaves. However, the owners of Dive! find themselves in a predicament. The bar has gained a reputation of being friendly to queer members of other races as well, and so the human clientele is declining, while the shark clans, brain-eater eels, Pod, Atlantoids, and F.I.S.H. members who have been attending has skyrocketed. Police raids, once so common, have rapidly declined due to the sheer number of dangerous aliens on the dance floor.

Blue Moon: In response to the disappearances at Dive!, one of the former patrons opened up her own bar closer to the cen-

ter of town. Blue Moon is less overt about being a gay bar but unmistakably caters to queer patrons of all stripes. The owner, a drag queen named Mary Jackson (Force 3, Finesse 4, Resilience 6), takes good care of her customers and carefully screens all of them for potential danger. While she hasn't taken any of Elaine Wickett's classes, she takes inspiration from the Women's Home Defense League and the men at the Pink Pony. Unlike the Pink Pony, however, she has allowed Atlantoids and F.I.S.H. members into her bar — so long as they don't start nothin' there won't be nothin'.

Hot Fat Lazy Susan's: Run by a married couple of elderly Atlantoids who only realized their lineage after the invasion, Hot Fat Lazy Susan's is named after the wife. Mark, the husband, says it's her fault. If someone asks Susan, she'll say that it's because if Mark called her hot, she'd smack him. If he called her fat or lazy, she'd smack him with a cast iron skillet. It seems like a joke — Mark and Susan are very obviously affectionate (Force 2, Finesse 4, Resilience 3). They've also ended up as enemies of the crab people for their famous preparations of blue and softshell crab. The crab people see them as picking easy targets, and are planning to get back at the couple in a very public way.

Finn's Ale House and Finn's Fish House: Contrary to popular belief, aliens or fish people do not run these two establishments. The Finn brothers, Jonathan and Andrew, inherited their father's restaurant, Finn's. However, Jonathan (Force 2, Finesse 4, Resilience 2) wanted to cook traditional seafood, whereas Andrew (Force 3, Finesse 3, Resilience 2) wanted to do heartier tavern fare. They had a bitter split, and Jonathan took the original Finn's, renaming it Finn's Fish House. Andrew currently owns Finn's Ale House, a half-mile down the road. Their battles are mostly limited to advertising, though the feud is escalating. At least one all-out brawl has broken out between the staff of the two restaurants, and more than one person has been sent to the hospital because of the ongoing conflict. Some speculate that one (or both!) of the brothers has been taken over by a brain-eater eel and is trying to escalate the conflict to an all-out restaurant war. This may or may not be true.

Rusty Rudder Restaurant: No one's really sure how long this restaurant has been here. It's in pictures from the late 1800s. Certain diaries make reference to it being there earlier. The building itself is made out of nondescript gray stone, with a wood-and-iron sign out front. The kitchen still uses a wood-fired oven along with more modern industrial appliances. The tableware, and the tables themselves, are a mix of new, outdated, and positively ancient. The invasion didn't disrupt business or operations in the slightest. The Rusty Rudder is positively still amid all this chaos, and it's enough to send chills up the spine.

Murph's: This neighborhood bar has an unfortunate history. Before the invasion, it was owned by a local member of the KKK, Murphy Rainhurst, who used it as a staging ground for raids into the local countryside. He himself was killed in a confrontation with the Atlantoids from the Bay City and the bar has since been taken over by a local restaurant mogul. This hasn't stopped it from remaining a staging ground for racists and bigots of all kinds, but it does mean that they have to do it on the down-low instead of being open about their hatred. Protagonists in-

terested in confronting a more mundane sort of evil in-between inhuman fish monsters can get their fill here.

FENWICK ISLAND

Newly incorporated at the beginning of the 1950s, Fenwick Island is a small beach town on the southernmost barrier spit of Delaware. It is separated from the mainland by Assawoman Canal, a shipping waterway that runs to the Indian River Inlet in the north. The population is a scant 178 people, mostly fishermen. It is beginning to gain some traction as a resort town, though the townspeople's attitude toward tourists isn't helping much.

Make no mistake, though, this small community isn't putting up with aliens either. That might be the one thing they hate more than tourists. The fishermen and their families just want to be left in peace, and they have no qualms about taking a harpoon to a fishman of any kind.

THE FENWICK ISLAND LIGHT

Built on an isolated peninsula on the southern end of the spit, the Fenwick Island Light is the first defense against anything encroaching into Delaware. It stands an impressive 90 feet tall, taller than many of the more northern lighthouses, and is equipped with a Fresnel lens. The town cannot afford to replace it with an Aero Beacon but maintain that it serves its purpose just fine. The keeper's house is a separate building, allowing for a whole family to live there instead of just one or two keepers.

During the Second World War, the Fenwick Island Light was a strategically important lookout point. Now, it serves much the same purpose. The light is manned by the Baylis family: a middle-aged married couple, their two teenaged daughters, and their seven-year-old son. The daughters, Lauren and Anna, are capable of keeping the light in their own right, and the son, Aaron, has gone on rescue missions with his parents. They're a close-knit family who might look slightly grim to outsiders, but they do genuinely care about their fellow islanders.

To that end, they have repurposed the Fenwick Island Light's fog siren. Swarms of crab people and aquatepillars are frighteningly common in this little community, so whenever one of the Baylises spots an incursion, the fog siren goes off. They have also found it supremely useful when dealing with members of the Suspended, who occasionally try to take isolated townsfolk. The scream of the fog siren has a chance of breaking even the most tenacious mind control.

Unbeknownst to them, the Baylis family has made an enemy of the Glowing People and the Suspended. Certain factions among both races have banded together to move against this family of five, who keep thwarting their plans.

CEDAR ISLAND

A small, swampy island at the mouth of the Assawoman Canal, Cedar Island is a site of local legend. Rumors suggest that pirates buried treasure — or bodies — here, and shipwreck detritus in the Assawoman Canal suggests there is some truth to these rumors. The island is starting to sink, though, due to heavy rainfall and dredging of Little Assawoman Bay to the south.

For the Atlantoids up north in the Delaware Bay, though, this is a godsend. Cedar Island is strategically placed for a takeover of Fenwick Island, and Dewey Beach to the north. If it washes under, it's a useful starting point for a new city in the Assawoman Canal, one that could be a hub of trade for inland and oceanic Atlantoids alike. It's unclear if the Atlantoids are hastening the decline of Cedar Island — but they're certainly not trying to stop it.

Cedar Island is also home to an odd species — the horseshoe crab people. An offshoot of the crab people, these heavily armored aliens have, in addition to the mouth that opens at four points, a smooth olive carapace instead of hair, and a long, pointed brown tail. They are generally fairly peaceable, though they can lash out with their barbed tails if they feel threatened. Apart from Cedar Island, the horseshoe crab people live on Seal Island, on the Delaware Breakwater, and clinging to half-sunken sandbars and barrier islands around the Delmarva Peninsula.

A SLIPPERY CONSPIRACY!

We open to the Kau region on the island of Hawaii. Vast, rural, and - above all - remote, no one would ever suspect Military Facility HHK-22B sequestered away between towering trees. Even the townspeople of nearby Hanamalu - once sustained by fishing and the occasional tourist - believe the facility to be pharmaceutical rather than military in nature. They've come to accept the facility, which now employs more townspeople than any other industry, even if they consider the Americans colonial usurpers and outsiders.

Hawaii is a young island and home to several active volcanoes. As the camera pans out, we pass over mighty Mau and hear the rumble of molten fire in its belly. The earth shakes and a flock of birds rises shrieking from the island canopy. Finally, the camera comes to a stop over the natural bay near Hanamalu, and we zoom in on the ocean - and the darkness rises from its depths....

A Slippery Conspiracy! centers on the Hawaiian town of Hanamalu and the facility of mad scientists nearby. A brain-eater eel (see p. XX) experiment resurfaces, literally, after ending in tragedy three years ago and begins to infect the townspeople. The characters are the only ones who can battle the infection amid rising feelings of distrust and paranoia. While the scenario itself has a closed ending — the eels are defeated — it leaves enough loose ends to kick off a larger campaign.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The end of every act lists your objectives under the Director's Notes — what you have to accomplish to enhance the mood of the scenario and prepare for subsequent acts. Try to keep them in mind as you go. Other than that, just enjoy whatever path your players choose to walk.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

While *A Slippery Conspiracy!* offers excitement and drama for any group, we're paying extra attention to starting groups and Directors. Whenever the characters are confronted with a task, we list examples of how to resolve it in case you want to give struggling players a nudge in the right direction. We've also included the dice pools as quick reference. Your players will likely come up with new and unanticipated resolutions though, and that's great — it means they're embracing the scenario! Just pick the Skill, Attribute, and Difficulty you think matches and have your players roll for it. The same holds if they use a Trademark or Cinematic Power — take a moment to consider if it'll work and proceed accordingly. As a general rule, try to say "yes" more than you say "no" — creative ideas should work *unless* you have a compelling reason why they shouldn't.

Throughout *A Slippery Conspiracy!* you'll find a distinction between Core Clues and Alternative Clues. Characters find Core Clues simply by stating they're searching (as the scenario can't proceed without them), while Alternative Clues yield extra information and require a successful roll. The scenario lists Alternative Scenes and Core Scenes in the same manner: Alternative Scenes give an extra opportunity for roleplay and setting the stage, while Core Scenes are necessary for the scenario to progress. Use as many Alternative Scenes as you think your players will enjoy and add a couple of your own. You know your players best!

SETTING THE TABLE

Every game starts with character creation. Well, technically it starts with assembling your players and getting a bearing on what they do and don't want out of a game. But let's assume you passed that stage and are now on to character creation. *A Slippery Conspiracy!* assumes all characters are relatively new employees at Facility HHK-22B — either they don't know about the brain-eater eel incident three years ago, or they were so low-ranked at the time they didn't catch any of the details.

Scientists make a natural fit for the facility, while Survivors and G-Men are employed as security. Everymen clean the laboratories after hours, and Mouths work as spokespersons to the public or as liaisons to politicians in Washington, D.C. Just because the scenario assumes they work for the facility doesn't mean they *have* to though — maybe they're reporters digging

into the facility's pharmaceutical facade, assistants to senior brass touring HHK-22B, or wait staff at Jack's Diner where facility employees gather for lunch. Having outside characters in the mix means you have to do a little extra work to bring everyone together, but it also creates more options to pursue during play. Or if you just want to jump in *now*: Check out the pre-made characters starting on p. XX.


SWEET HOME HANAMALU

Hanamalu is a small town off the beaten tourist path. The nearby volcano Mau, while nowhere near as large as Kilauea, used to draw a respectable share of the tourist trade, but the facility worked hard (and in secret) to exclude Hanamalu and Mau from tourist brochures lest any "jungle excursions" stumble upon them. The town picked up revenue supporting the facility though, so their bottom line wasn't hurt much. The facility has also built a drive-in cinema as public commodity, which won support from Hanamalu's mayor. The facility and town are only a short distance apart, with a small bus shuttling workers to and fro every four hours. While the facility has an onsite cafeteria, the food is bland and mushy, and most employees try to time breaks at Jack's Diner.

Director-controlled characters have a starting attitude intensity of 1 toward player characters, and can be chosen as individual Contacts. Players ideally select these townspeople during character creation, but a seasoned Director could let them leave Contacts blank, and fill them in during play for more narrative flexibility. We've supplied a list of Hanamalu inhabitants, but you and your players can certainly add to it or switch characters out — a player character's boyfriend might run the diner instead of Rose.

Townsfolk

- **Mayor Nalani Akana** (Force 4, Finesse 3, Resilience 6) is the first democratically elected leader of Hanamalu since the end of World War II's military rule. She is charming and astute, and it's almost impossible to get a lie past her. She supports statehood for Hawaii, though she prefers to work quietly, plying continental congresspeople as they visit rather than call for a revolution. Akana fully supports the facility, as it's the town's main source of revenue.
- **Sheriff Robert Mills** (Force 2, Finesse 5, Resilience 3) emigrated from the continental US before the Second World War, and was quickly propped up as sheriff by the facility who liked having "one of us" in charge of law enforcement. He proved to be a horrible choice: lazy and more interested in riding out 'til his retirement than upholding the law. Mills is more likely to lock himself indoors, surrounded by all his guns (which he does love), than go out to confront an emergency.
- **Jack's Diner** is run by **Rose Delaney** (Force 3, Finesse 3, Resilience 5), granddaughter of the eponymous Jack. **Jack Delaney** (Force 4, Finesse 2, Resilience 4) settled in Hawaii for love and the diner still has that sense of runaway romance and optimism. Jack, now an elder widower, spends most of his time sitting on a bench outside the diner and



looking out across Hanamalu Bay. Rose is in her mid-20s, offering service with a bright smile and dash of dark curls. She is a vocal proponent of Hawaiian statehood and considers herself more Hawaiian than American.

- The town's **drive-in cinema** is ostensibly a gift from the facility to the township of Hanamalu, even if its original purpose is making the American scientists feel more at home. The cinema — consisting of a packed-dirt parking lot, beamer, and white-painted wall — features only American movies, and currently shows *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Handsome high-school dropout **Kaipo** (Force 4, Finesse 2, Resilience 4) manages the ticket and popcorn stands, as well as the movie reels. Kaipo loves to flirt, and lets anyone in for the price of batting their eyelashes or sneaking Kaipo a pack of cigarettes.
- Ahe “**Old Man**” **Keli’i** (Force 4, Finesse 4, Resilience 2) hails from a long line of fishermen, though business has been very slow since the facility started importing its food rather than buying locally. Money trouble leaves Ahe in a perpetually disgruntled state, and he warns anyone willing to listen (or not) against the dangers of American imperialism, the decline of traditional trades, and the rising threat of the deep as oceans are polluted.
- Ahe’s estranged daughter **Lilinoe Keli’i** (Force 4, Finesse 3, Resilience 3), sensed the winds of change long ago and dropped the family fishing business in favor of botany —

that is to say, she tends a marijuana patch hidden in the forest. She doubles as tour guide whenever wandering tourists want to visit the **active volcano Mau**, to ensure they don’t accidentally bump into her crop field. Lilinoe’s business activities are an open secret amongst the Hawaiian townspeople, none of whom intend to tell the “outsider Sheriff.”

- **Rambling Jane** (Force 1, Finesse 1, Resilience 6) lives in a box in the alley behind Jack’s Diner. She asks for money and cigarettes from anyone she meets, and frequently receives leftover meals from Rose Delaney. She refuses to talk about her past, though her thick Bostonian accent reveals mainland origins. Occasionally, when facility employees pass her on moonless nights, she warns them not to sell their soul to the devil.

Facility Employees

- **Keoka Kalua** (Force 5, Finesse 3, Resilience 2) is the senior scientist in charge of — among others — the project the player characters are working on. She brooks no nonsense and always pushes her team to reach farther than they did before. Kalua is a stickler for the clock: If employees take 35 minutes for their half hour lunch break, they had better compensate by working five minutes late.
- **Max Cunningham** (Force 5, Finesse 2, Resilience 3) is a junior scientist working for Kalua. He considers himself an

old-fashioned bloke of Christian values, and cannot wait for Kalua to marry so he can receive the promotion owed him due to his sex and race. Cunningham is peerless in the field of genetic modification.

- **Hanale Palakiko** (Force 3, Finesse 6, Resilience 4) seems permanently glued to his chair in the security cubicle. His preferred method for dealing with problems is sending two junior guards to check it out. He's quicker than his bulk and love for poi pudding suggests though, and strong enough to lift a bull should he ever leave his cubicle.

THE PREQUEL: A WATERY GRAVE NURSERY!

Constructed by Hawaii's military government after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Facility HHK-22B has seen its grants triple under the Cold War. The facility's mission is the development of biological enhancements for US troops. Their leading project — HNCP-003 — experimented with brain-eater eels to make soldiers more pain-resistant and compliant, until one of the samples infected a lab technician by name of Keone Mahelona. The facility's commanding officer, Ewan McAllister, called in continental soldiers to retrieve the sample and they killed Mahelona, still carrying the eel, in a final confrontation atop a cliff overlooking Hanamalu Bay. Mahelona's body fell into the water below and, thinking that was the end of it, McAllister terminated the experiment and classified all project documents. The chain of command then transferred McAllister back to the mainland to remove the lingering stench of failure.

Unknown to all involved, the brain-eater eel had laid a cluster of eggs inside Mahelona. The eggs have since hatched and entered the prolonged larval state of their existence. Left to their own devices, the miniscule larvae would feed on each other until only one eel remained — a process that could take anywhere between five years and a decade. A recent earthquake disrupted their watery nursery though, kicking up Mahelona's body and the larvae alike.

TONIGHT ON RETURN OF THE EELS!

In *A Slippery Conspiracy!*, the surfacing brain-eater larvae infect the people of Hanamalu, starting with Director characters who take a morning swim or even just get their feet wet during a walk on the beach. The larvae prefer easy entry granted through orifices, but are small enough to enter a host's body through any cut on the skin. The Director decides which non-player characters are infected and in what order, allowing you to coax protagonists to get involved. The only exception to this is Rambling Jane, as the scenario calls for her to get infected toward the end of Act Two. The player characters are forcibly exposed to infection in Act Four, but you can let them be accidentally infected sooner — you could even roll a die for each character at the start of every act, and decide they're infected on a 1.

The story of *A Slippery Conspiracy!* is a mass infection of brain-eater eel, which the characters must stop. The scenario's mood hinges on the comfortably familiar no longer being either. Imagine waking up one morning, and thinking everyone around you has been replaced by an evil doppelganger — and then discovering you're *not* imagining things.

ACT ONE: SKELETONS IN THE WATER

The scenario starts with the characters going about morning business in Hanamalu, whether that's breakfast at Jack's Diner or a jog along the bay. The Director should give each character a small scene or two to introduce their character to the other players and let them touch on relationships with Director characters. Away from their eyes, Keone Mahelona's body has resurfaced in the bay and was brought in by Sheriff Mills (who would make a great patient zero for infection, as the characters would no longer have law enforcement to fall back on).

By the time the characters arrive for their shift at the facility, word has already spread and the facility is abuzz with rumors about Mahelona. The characters should meet at this point in the scenario, whether they're working on the same project (check Act Three for sample projects run at the facility) or simply sharing a lunch break together. Characters who ask around learn several rumors about Mahelona.

Core Clues

- Mahelona worked as a scientist for the Facility.
- Mahelona died three years ago in a suicide by drowning. The latter part of this rumor is false, but the characters don't necessarily know that.
- The body of Mahelona, thought lost to the tides, was kicked up by the earthquake and surfaced in the bay.
- Mahelona stole military secrets from the facility. This rumor is also false, and part of the cover for Mahelona's man-hunt two years ago.

Alternative Clues

Persuasion + Intellect or Empathy + Cunning to uncover, one clue per success.

- Mahelona's work for the facility was classified and sealed posthumously.
- Mahelona's family does not believe he committed suicide
- Mahelona's was pursued by soldiers after he stole facility secrets.
- The facility claimed Mahelona's surfaced body for military burial, rather than release it to his family.

Director's Notes

- The pace for this act is slow. *A Slippery Conspiracy!* relies on characters caring about Hanamalu and its inhabitants, or you can't create that sense of losing the familiar later.
- Introduce any Director characters of your choice. This gives players an incentive to care about saving them *and* provides a baseline for their behavior so characters can recognize they're different (that's to say, infected) in Act Two.

ACT TWO: RISING TIDES AND THREATS

Small and translucent, the eel larvae are barely more than ocean foam and instinctively cluster together in tiny balls. Previously feeding on each other in a slow and prolonged cannibalism

tic feast, they quickly disentangle to consume a host's brain once inside. As they go from forced cannibalization to plenty for all, their behavior changes — where adult brain-eater eels are extremely solitary, the larvae begin to exhibit cooperative behavior. They force their host bodies to the bay, fishing up new balls of larvae with cups and empty bottles, and then place these clusters in the food and drink of uninfected mortals. Hanamalu's eel infection now spreads at an alarming rate, and the Director should include several of the characters' friends among the infected. The characters should definitely notice strange behavior spreading through the town, using some of the scenes below or custom scenes written by the Director.

- **Alternative Scene:** A character enters Jack's Diner to find a group of townspeople consuming plate after plate of fatty food. Trays of fries are licked clean with gusto, followed by turducken sandwiches and huge milkshakes. Rose can barely keep up with all the orders. Max Cunningham, a facility colleague renowned for his obsession with coffee, is just nursing a large strawberry shake. Cinema operator Kaipo, whose normal diet consists of fruits and vegetables so he's in fit shape for his various lovers, sits at a table finishing a huge burger with two empty plates already pushed to the side.
- **Alternative Scene:** Returning to her home or apartment building, the character sees the flickering lights of television sets through *every* neighboring window. Even old man Ahe, who always refused to buy a television because he won't indulge in dangfangled modernism (and "it's how they track you"), is carrying one up the stairs with the help of his daughter Lilinoe. Also, since when are Ahe and Lilinoe back on speaking terms?

An Integrity + Cunning roll lets the character catch glimpses of a news report amid the barrage of American movies, detailing the earthquake and increased activity of Mau sending up smoke.

- **Alternative Scene:** Passing the harbor, the character spots a cluster of townsfolk, including mayor Akana, standing with their heads pressed together and whispering. When the character comes nearer, the townsfolk cease their odd behavior and — as one — turn to stare at him. Akana slowly raises her arm to point at the character and a halting, watery-sounding "Get hiiiiim" emerges from her throat. At this point, it would be advisable for the character to run. If he stays to seek out a confrontation however, Akana draws a jar filled with ocean water and a writhing cluster of very small worms from her coat jacket while two of the other townsfolk run towards the character to grab him. If the character still won't make a run for it, combat breaks out and the brain-eater larvae try to infect him (see Act Four for details).

Note: Use this scene with a character who is traveling solo, so you can save the larger fight and infection scene for Act Four. The character automatically escapes if he runs at the first signs of trouble.

- **Alternative Scene:** A character passes an intersection or alleyway, when Jack Delaney runs past pursued by a

cluster of townsfolk. The townsfolk catch Jack and carry him, kicking and screaming, back to the diner where they hold him down on a chair. Rose Delaney approaches the chair, gently touching her grandfather's cheek and saying: "Don't be afraid, pop. All is well inside my skin. It's so pretty, so serene." She then pushes a coffee mug — filled with brain-eater larvae, but the character can't see that from this angle — toward Jack. "Drink, pop, and we can be family again." If at any point the character tries to intervene, the infected townspeople try to infect him, too (see Act Four for details).

Note: Use this scene with a character who you suspect will observe rather than intervene, or who is traveling solo — again so you can save the larger fight and infection scene for Act Four. If the character does intervene, essentially risking her life to save Jack, give her an above-average chance to succeed (i.e. by arranging diner seats so the character and Jack are nearer the door than the infected people, allowing them to make a run for it).

- **Core Scene:** Rambling Jane runs up when the characters pass the diner, dragging them back to her alley and out of sight. She speaks in a whisper: "They're here. Did you see them? We're all part of the experiment!" She claws at her head and pulls her hair, as if trying to physically rip something from her brain. "Can't talk now. They're listening. They *always* listen. Come back after dark. After dark!" With that she refuses to say more and runs off.

When the characters return after dark though, Jane is nowhere in sight. If they search for her, the characters find Jane in the diner (a peculiar situation as Rose brings Jane leftover meals in the alley, but doesn't allow inside her inside for fear Jane will drive off paying customers). Jane is on her second plate of fries while watching a romance movie on the diner's television. She refuses to come outside if the characters ask her, and claims no recollection of their earlier encounter. If the characters persist, all patrons turn to stare at them until Rose insists the characters leave.

At this point the characters hopefully think to search Jane's usual spot behind the diner. They find Jane's belongings — a backpack filled with torn clothes, a sleeping bag, and a crumpled packet of cigarettes — dropped in the diner's dumpster. A thin layer of mucus — the eels' natural excrement pushed up through the skin — covers everything. Wedged between the dumpster and the wall is torn sheet of notepad, bearing a single name and project number in Jane's handwriting (Enigmas + Cunning to recognize, if they've seen it before): Keone Mahelona HNCP-003.

Director's Notes

- This act should leave a sense of unease and rising threat. The characters are being watched and outnumbered by oddly behaving townsfolk.
- Let the players find Jane's "Keone Mahelona" clue on their own. If, instead of searching the alley, they decide to trace Jane's origins (perhaps by asking townsfolk who are still acting normally), they learn she used to work for the facility. Digging into her personnel file reveals she worked

with Mahelona on HNCP-003 before being fired, shortly after his suicide. Only if the players seem to come up blank, or the characters are running around in circles, should you nudge them toward the alley for the clue and then onto Act Three.

- Make sure to mention the fat-rich food, obsession with movies, and volcano Mau sending up smoke — these all become potential tools in Act Five.

ACT THREE: TO THE SECRET LAB!

Even if the characters haven't caught on to the brain-eater eels yet, they should be aware that something is very wrong in Hanamalu. Their only lead comes from Rambling Jane, and points to Keone Mahelona and project HNCP-003. Fortunately, the facility keeps excellent records. In fact, and this might complicate things slightly, they keep two sets of records: open and classified.

The characters can access the open records room freely, without anyone asking any questions. Unfortunately, neither Mahelona's personnel file nor the files on HNCP-003 are kept there. The information they need is in the classified records, and none of them have the necessary clearance. They'll need to break in to either access the computer mainframe or physical records. The Director should let players tackle this problem on their own as much as possible, but here are a few ways to go about it if they're stumped.

- One character distracts security guard Palakiko, while the others sneak past or even steal Palakiko's keyring. This is a staged teamwork action, requiring two milestones at Difficulty 1: (Persuasion + Manipulation) to distract Palakiko, and

(Larceny + Dexterity) to either steal his keys or sneak past.

- The characters persuade Palakiko (Persuasion + Presence) to let them in, under the pretense of retrieving a file for senior scientist Kalua. They could persuade a senior scientist to grant them official permission to access the classified record's room, though they need to come up with a compelling reason.
- Picking the lock to the records room is Larceny + Dexterity, with a Difficulty of 2 to compensate for the excellent make of the lock.
- Sneaking through the air ducts would normally make a ruckus akin to a metal hailstorm inside an amplifier box, but the right Cinematic power or Trademark could manage it silently.

Once inside the records room, the characters can find both Mahelona's personnel file and the project files for HNCP-003. The character with the highest Computer ranking searching digital files automatically finds either. The same goes for the character with the highest Science ranking searching the written records. If none of the characters have either Computer or Science, the discovery goes to the highest Enigmas ranking — and if no one has that either, default to Intellect ranking.

Below are the front pages of Mahelona's personnel file, as well as the three projects he was working on at the time of his death. Project HNCP-003 experimented with brain-eater eels and is relevant to this scenario, the other two are red herrings which the Director could use to kick off new stories later. You can print and hand them to your players when the characters access the file. Anticipating further research, you can also print the brain-eater eel file on p. XX, excluding the information under System.

MAHELONA, KEONE

Date of Birth: 08-15-1922

Place of Birth: Hanamalu

Gender: M

Marital Status: S

Highest Education: Biology BS

PROJECTS:

- BBH-027, human exoskeleton through gene splicing.
- HNCP-003, increased pain tolerance and obedience through implementation of maritime DNA.
- MQP-001, lightweight armor from proteinaceous Caerostris Gigantis spider silk.

Employment: Forcibly terminated after Hospitomuraena Cerebriphaga infection. Body has not been retrieved, both to prevent spread of infection and inquiries as to his cause of death.

HNCP-003

Status: closed 02-07-1949, reopened by [REDACTED]

Project Leader: Ewan McAllister

Scientists: Keoka Kalua, Keone Mahelona, Jane Chastings

Overview: HNCP-003 seeks to infect subjects with *Hospitomuraena Cerebriphaga* to increase both pain threshold and compliance. Previous experiments with *Hospitomuraena Cerebriphaga*, colloquially known as the brain-eater eel, have resulted in subjects becoming compliant as long as they are fed fat-rich foods and allowed to watch movies. Neither of these are sustainable behavior for our subjects.

Hospitomuraena Cerebriphaga consumes the host's brain, leading to erratic and eventually self-destructive behavior. Parallel studies HNCP-047A and HNCP-047B indicate this cycle can be slowed with sufficient mental stimuli and independence prior to infection. Unfortunately, independence is not a trait valued in our subjects. One incident involving Dr. Johnson's running study HNCP-053 suggests *Hospitomuraena Cerebriphaga* is vulnerable to smoke, likewise a trait we must seek to remove before subjects are sent into combat situations.

BBH-027

Status: ongoing

Project Leader: Keoka Kalua

Scientists: Max Cunningham, Hofland Vamun (deceased)

Overview: Proposed by Dr. Cunningham, BBH-027 seeks to grow human cartilage over the skin to create an exoskeleton. First tests yielded uncontrolled cartilage growth, requiring surgery to free the subject's nose and mouth. Dr. Cunningham remains optimistic that new experiments will yield better results.

MQP-001

Status: ongoing, under review

Project Leader: Keoka Kalua

Scientists: Max Cunningham, Hofland Vamun (deceased)

Overview: *Caerostris Gigantis* has only been documented on the Hawaiian inland. An exceedingly rare species, they can grow up to 40 cm in height and 35 kg in weight. Facility HHK-22B currently has one specimen, kept in laboratory 5X where scientists are harvesting proteinaceous spider silk from it. More durable than any substance of comparable size and weight, this silk has great military prospects.

MQP-001 is currently under review after the captive specimen dragged in and consumed Dr. Hofland Vamun. The specimen's silk production has increased exponentially since the incident, with webs lining the cage and obscuring sight. Dr. Kalua has reported at least two decimeter-sized oblong objects in the webbing, though the specimen's increased aggression has made retrieving either object impossible.

The characters have just read the files (possibly printing them if they're accessing the computer records) when they hear footsteps draw near in the hall. The records room has no other exits, but characters can try to hide between the file cabinets (Larceny + Cunning). They can also try to hide the physical files on their person to smuggle out, which automatically succeeds if the character attempting it has at least one dot in Larceny. They might use this last safe moment to look up the other projects referenced in the HNCP-003 file: HNCP-047A, HNCP-047B or HNCP-053. If they do, meaning they forgo hiding or smuggling any papers out, let them read the brain-eater eel entry on p. XX, excluding the information under System.

Dr. Kalua enters and demands to know why the characters are trespassing. Regardless of their excuse and whether she buys it, Dr. Kalua insists they leave immediately. If the characters resist, her first action is sounding the alarm. Once the characters vacate the records room, forcibly or voluntarily, the Director should take back any files no longer in the characters' possession.

Director's Notes

- Act Three is a puzzle scene, both physically (breaking into the file room unseen) and mentally (finding the right files and comprehending them). Let the players work it out for themselves, and only step in if they explicitly ask for guidance.
- If any players have characters geared for physical combat, send in two guards to accompany Dr. Kalua so they can flex those muscles.

- Project HNCP-003 being reopened is not relevant to *A Slippery Conspiracy!*, but can be used to start a new campaign later. The same holds true for the red herring files. If the characters immediately run off to laboratory 5X to see the Caerostris Gigantis, you can either let them (it's a very large, aggressive female spider locked in a secure glass cage) or decide the laboratory is locked and impenetrable right now.

ACT FOUR: CUTTING TO THE CHASE

A second earthquake hits Hanamalu as the characters leave the facility. This quake is much heavier than the first: the alarm siren sounds in the distance, and angry plumes of smoke rise from the nearby volcano Mau. If you want to present the characters with another problem, have a tree fall across their car — maybe the vehicle is salvageable once they lift the tree off, or they'll have to steal the facility shuttle.

The characters find Hanamalu's streets empty on their return. The stray dog that usually greets the characters is nowhere to be seen, as are the cats loitering around Ahe's boat — after Jack's diner ran out of food, the infected hosts caught stray animals to fry. Between the siren still sounding (the noise doesn't bother the brain-eater larvae, so no one turned it off) and the absence of living things on the street, Hanamalu feels eerie and unreal. The first townsperson to come into sight might even feel like a relief — until he refuses to interact, beyond staring at the characters and following them.



CONDITION: BRAIN DETERIORATION, LARVAL STAGE

Brain-eater eel larvae are smaller than their grown specimens in all ways — they're less voracious, and also more likely to strike up a (albeit temporary) synergy with a host rather than consume their brain immediately. The Director, acting as the larvae, rolls two dice at the start of each day, and selects the lowest. If they rolled below the host's Intellect, the larvae stave off feeding. If not, the player loses a level in a chosen Skill or Attribute. Brain-eater larvae are much friendlier to each other than adult brain-eater eels, and an infected character must succeed at an Integrity + Resolve roll before they can enter combat against another host.

The Chase: Infected townspeople (Force 2, Finesse 3, Resilience 0) pour from side alleys and houses to follow the characters. They don't *do* anything yet, but their numbers steadily swell. If the characters turn to confront them, the townsfolk immediately attack.

The characters can attempt Athletics + Cunning to shake their pursuers — this is a complex (extended teamwork) action requiring three milestones at Difficulty 1. If they succeed, they make it to a safe and hidden viewpoint from where they witness the townspeople attack another person and try to infect him. If you think the players are keen for a confrontation, but the characters ran away because it made sense, the new victim is someone they care about — this gives players a valid excuse to get their characters into the fray after all. If the players genuinely wish to avoid combat right now, you can make the victim a nameless person instead. Either way, leave a moment between the townsfolk attacking and pinning the victim down, so the characters have time to react. If the roll to shake the townsfolk fails, the infected people immediately attack.

Otherwise the townspeople wait until they outnumber the characters three to one (more if any of the characters look particularly strong) and then attack.

Combat: The brain-eater larvae, working through human hosts (Force 2, Finesse 3, Resilience 0), don't try to harm the characters but instead focus their combined efforts on pinning them down. Once two townspeople manage to restrain a character (the Pin Stunt of Grappling, see p. XX), a third brings out a glass vial containing ocean water and a writhing ball of small worms — the larval brain-eater eels. They pour the water onto the character's face, allowing the larvae to enter through nose, eyes, ears, or mouth — no amount of squirming can stave off infection once the water is poured out. Infected characters take the *Brain Deterioration, Larval Stage* Condition and are immediately released from their hold by the other infected.

The townsfolk retreat if more than three of them are incapacitated (the larvae aren't very brave) or when all characters are infected.

Director's Notes

- Even though the townsfolk initiate the attack, you should give players as much agency as possible. If the characters try to find a dead-end street so they can put their backs to

a wall, climb a fire escape for elevation, or otherwise use the terrain to better defend themselves: let them. If one of them proposes to serve as bait to lure townsfolk into an ambush set by the others characters, or so the weakest characters in the group can make a safe get-away: they succeed. An attack is *almost* inevitable, so the players should at least have a chance to choose their battleground.

- Unless the players are genuinely freaked out about being infected, to the point where it stalls your game, don't tell them that larval infection moves at a slow rate. Let them, and the characters, worry — it'll add a great sense of urgency to the final act.

ACT FIVE: SUNDOWN SHOWDOWN AT MAU SLOPES

By now all of Hanamalu, save possibly the characters, has been infected by eel larvae. Pets, livestock, and stray animals have been hunted down, fried, and eaten. Buildings and streets are coated in a sticky layer of mucus and the stench of stagnant ocean water pervades the town. Unless the characters specifically went out of their way to save a Director character, the larvae infected everyone. The characters are alone. This is their moment of truth: either they drive out the larvae, or everyone they care about is lost.

With so much on the line, the characters need a way to destroy — or at least expel — the brain-eater larvae. And this is where *you* sit back and let them brainstorm.

To prepare you, here are a few plans the players might come up with (or if they're really desperate for help you can nudge them to one):

- Lure the infected hosts to the drive-in cinema. In theory this is easy as the eels love movies, but the town has plenty of active television sets and there's no immediate need for the eels to go to the cinema. The characters need to climb out to the signal tower further inland and cut it: Survival + Stamina to get to the tower, and Technology + Intellect to shut it down. Then they have to operate the cinema, using amplifiers to crank up the sound and draw the eels' attention: Technology + Cunning. Of course, with all the eels gathered in one place they still need to *defeat* them but that is a later problem (something that produces smoke works nicely — like a volcano, or large quantities of marijuana).



WEAPONS OF MASS EEL DESTRUCTION

At some point, your players might ask for bigger guns — perhaps even a flamethrower, because any threat is best killed with fire. Hanamalu doesn't have any of those lying around ready to go, but the town does have plenty of potential components: Sheriff Mills owns a lot of guns, Lilinoe Keli'i keeps barrels of weed killer near her crops, Old Man Ahe owns a harpoon gun, and Kaipō keeps a popcorn cannon at the drive-in. Also, the facility is packed with chemicals. A rat race to find the necessary components and build a weapon would make a great montage scene, represented by an extended Technology + Cunning action with three milestones at Difficulty 1.

- Both the HNCP-003 and HNCP-053 files mention Dr. Johnson battling off infection after he resumed smoking. As it so happens, Mau is conveniently sending up smoke. The characters just need to lure the eels a little closer to the volcano — by stealing the last mystery-meat sandwiches from Jack's Diner (Larceny + Dexterity), loading them into a truck and driving around town until all infected townspeople follow (Pilot + Dexterity). Now they just need to coax the eels to keep following until Mau sends up another plume of eel-killing smoke.
- As an alternative to drive-ins and volcano slopes, the characters can lure the infected townspeople to Lilinoe Keli'i's marijuana field (an open secret among townfolk) and set it on fire. Or take Lilinoe's dried, ready-for-transit bales and bring those to the infected townspeople. Not getting high from the smoke themselves requires an Integrity + Stamina roll, and pulling freshly exorcised people from the fire before they burn constitutes Athletics + Stamina. The bonus of using marijuana is that the small eels are so high they can't move even after leaving the host bodies, granting the characters an easier task finishing them.
- Eels (of the regular variety) are prepared for consumption by dunking them in an extremely salty bath to burn off their skin. The characters can find this in a cookbook (Integrity + Cunning) or might even know it at the top of their head (Science + Intellect). Hanamalu does not have a communal bath and the bay is far too large to over-salt, but the facility does have a staff exercise pool. The characters need to steal all the salt from Jack's Diner (Larceny + Cunning or Dexterity), lure the infected townspeople to the facility (possibly using the "sandwiches on a truck" gambit above), and then get both the salt and the people into the aforementioned pool. While infected mortals are covered with people skin as opposed to eel skin, salted water coming in through their ears, nose, and mouth drives the eels out.

This act is the climax of *A Slippery Conspiracy!* and should feel equal parts improbable, hilarious, and daring. Once the smoke (or salt bath) drives the eels out, the larvae escape through the host's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. They cluster together again, instinctively seeking strength in numbers, and emerge as writhing balls of worms that carpet the entire area. They're disoriented from their expulsion though, and possibly high from marijuana smoke, allowing the characters enough time to dispatch the small eels if they move quickly. If the characters wait

too long, the eels start to worm toward any body of water in an effort to escape back to the ocean, or failing that try to re-infect nearby human hosts. Let's hope the characters are wearing their stomping boots, or brought a weapon of mass eel destruction.

Director's Notes

- Hanamalu desperately needs a hero — and characters are it. Let the players feel the weight of the crisis at the start of Act Five: This is do-or-die time.
- Whatever harebrained idea your players come up with to defeat the eels, roll with it. Heck, let them go door to door with an incense burner if they want! This is *their* moment. That doesn't mean the characters can't fail — just that they can *try* anything they want.
- While the examples above list single rolls, you can substitute them with complex rolls for montage sequences or teamwork actions. Strike the right balance between making your players feel like they're doing something *and* keeping the pace without getting bogged down in rolls. This is Act Five and you know what you're doing!

EPILOGUE

With the eels defeated, the characters high-fiving each other and helping their rescued friends to their feet, you can move on to the epilogue. This can be as quick as "you did it — let's go celebrate with a feast in Jack's Diner!" or you can tack on a few more scenes.

- The characters spot Dr. Kalua in the distance. She bends over to pick up a baby eel that wriggled away further than its brethren, opens her mouth to reveal an adult brain-eater eel emerging from her mouth and devours it whole. The eel that infected Mahelona two years ago stayed near Hanamalu Bay watching over its eggs, and set out to find a new host when the earthquake disrupted the larvae's normal cycle. The creature was very disconcerted by this whole communist experiment the larvae delved into, rather than cannibalizing each other as proper eels should! The creature flees to the ocean when it realizes the characters saw it, abandoning Kalua's body for the safety of the deep. The characters can pursue if they want, initiating another chase scene: Kalua is at long distance from both them and the ocean (in the other direction), so they need to be quick about it.



CALLING IN A FAVOR

Several of the characters have friends and colleagues in Hanamalu willing to do them favors. Because of the limited nature of the scenario, these Contacts don't have the same range as normal Contacts would. For example, scientist Gabriela Cruz has senior scientist Keoka Kalua tagged as "work favors." This means Kalua will only perform those favors Cruz can reasonably persuade her have to do with work. She will let Cruz in the lab to work after hours, which definitely helps with the breaking and entering part of getting into the building, but she won't grant access to the restricted files. The Director should carefully navigate the line between letting these Contacts be useful enough to get around problems or aspects of problems, without solving the whole situation.

- The military, arriving after all is done, is very impressed with the characters' handling of the brain-eater eel outbreak. They propose the characters become a mobile team, with increased salaries, that travels the United States to deal with experiments gone wrong. Whether the characters are up for this, or would prefer the military ends its risky experiments all together, is up to them. Rejecting the offer draws the attention of Laissez, a syndicate organization dedicated to fortifying America's defenses without *needlessly* antagonizing the creatures of the deep. Either scene can kick off an ongoing States-trotting campaign.
- If you'd rather run another adventure in Hanamalu, the spider eggs from project MQP-001 hatch and the hatchlings are small enough to escape through the cage's air holes. As Caerostri Giganti are telepathically connected to each other, the baby spiders don't scatter inland to be eaten by natural predators while they're still young (as they'd normally do). Instead, they hide near Hanamulu for two

months, meticulously clearing the town of any remaining pets and vermin. Run this as a cut-scene, and pick up your campaign two months later when cat-sized spiders emerge to rescue their mother from the facility.

- The file for HNCP-003 listed the project as reopened. If the characters investigate, they discover the person responsible is Dr. Ewan McAllister — the scientist initially leading the facility's brain-eater eel project. McAllister kept an eye on Hanamalu through various facility contacts, and recognized the outbreak in its early stages. Rather than warn anyone, he persuaded his superiors to treat the crisis as a field experiment, and reopened the project. You can run this as a cut-scene if you have plans for a second brain-eater eel adventure, or leave it be unless the characters pursue on their own accord.

Director's Notes

- No notes. You did it!

CAST AND CREW

This section contains five pre-made characters for *A Slippery Conspiracy!* The characters have starting stats, no experience points, and follow the character creation rules in Chapter Three. They come with a Quip already drawn. Players can use the characters as-is for a one-shot game, or create their own Aspirations and Relations if *A Slippery Conspiracy!* is the kickoff for an ongoing campaign. Long-Term Aspirations are unlikely to be accomplished in *A Slippery Conspiracy!*, but rather are intended for character flavor and a longer campaign.

AVERY BROWN, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Avery Brown was headhunted into military intelligence after graduating top of his class. Brown is tasked with reviewing HHK-22B's security protocols, but as an unhappy compromise needs permission from lead scientist Kalua to access any files and systems. He knows HHK-22B is a military facility rather than a pharmaceutical company, but has little insight into *what* they're researching.

Brown can hold his own in combat, though he prefers the precision and finesse of a gun to brawling. He is handsome, suave, and unerringly polite and calm. The latter are less the product of natural disposition and more of careful control: Brown is fully aware that as a black man, he is never allowed to lose his temper. Recruited for his intuitive skill with numbers, Brown cracks numerical codes and equations with ease. His job sees him travel all across the US, and he calls his parents and sister every night just to talk.

Long-Term Player Aspiration: Rise through the ranks of military intelligence

Short-Term Player Aspiration: Learn the purpose of HHK-22B; Show off his intellect

Paths: Archetype: G-Man; Origin: Suburbia; Ambition: Family Man

Skills: Athletics 2, Aim 4, Close Combat 2, Enigmas 3, Empathy 1, Integrity 2, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Trademarks: Not Soft (Close Combat), Please Step Away From the Alien (Composure), This is Totally My Pay Grade (Integrity), We Have Ways of Making You Talk (Cunning)

Relationships: Gabriela Cruz (respect 3), Jay Everett (distrust 2), Kala Hale (professional courtesy 1), Naomi McEwan (who? 1)

Connections: Colonel Arianna West (military academy mentor), Military Intelligence Agency (informant), Jack Delaney (friendly favors)

Tropes: Disappearing Act, Secret Bunker, This Will Self-Destruct

QUIPS:

How about some ham with those eggs?

The government is always right, ma'am, except when it's wrong...

I'd sooner wear commie clothes than give up my humanity...

GABRIELA CRUZ, NEWBIE JUNIOR SCIENTIST

Gabriela Cruz has just moved to Hawaii after taking a job as junior scientist at HHK-22B. An up-and-coming talent in the field of xenobiology, Cruz sure hopes the facility hired her for something *interesting*. She starts on Monday, however, with a mundane tour of the facility and its non-classified, pretty standard projects. Recruited by Kalua personally, she has a good if nascent rapport with the facility's lead scientist. She's not too sure about some of the other scientists, but she's used to working hard — Cruz knows she'll have to be twice as good to get half the credit other people do.

Cruz spends most of her free time hiking and camping. This has given her more of a solitary reputation than she deserves. Cruz doesn't mind the company of others on these trips, as long as they can be quiet and respectful towards nature. Most people can't, so she rarely brings anyone.

Long-Term Player Aspiration: Become a leading xenobiologist

Short-Term Player Aspiration: Learn a new scientific fact or secret; Always be at the scene of action

Paths: Archetype: Scientist; Origin: Outdoors Enthusiast; Ambition: Lone Wolf

Skills: Enigmas 3, Medicine 3, Science 5, Survival 1, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Trademarks: Analytical Awesome (Enigmas), Madam Professor (Science), Force Gymnast, (Dexterity), Xenobiologist (Intellect)

Relationships: Avery Brown (wary of men with badges 2), Jay Everett (banter 3), Kala Hale (friendly 1), Naomi McEwan (friendly 1)

Connections: Eva Ramirez (university friend, xenobiologist), Unnatural Geographic Magazine (informant), Keoka Kalua (work favors)

Tropes: Eureka!, I Just Need a Small Sample, Night-Vision Goggles

QUIPS:

If you want something done right, ask the Latina girl...

Boy... you think you know an ocean...

Wave when you get to the explosion...

JAY EVERETT, ACTOR AND SPOKESPERSON

Jay Everett is an aspiring actor. Handsome and with a modicum of talent, he moved to LA and landed roles in several plays and small movies. Then his mother fell ill, and Everett moved back to Hanamalu to take care of her. He currently works as a waiter at Jack's Diner, but starts Monday as spokesperson for HHK-22B. Jay is a little hazy on the details — he'll be giving tours of the facility to sponsors from Washington — but the pay is great.

Jay grew up in a lower-income family, the middle of six siblings. Working in Hollywood gave him a taste of the rich life though, and Jay wears fine suits, aviator sunglasses, and knockoff designer watches that are barely distinguishable from the real thing. He has an easy laugh and adapts to the tenure of any meeting easily. This endears him to most people, and Jay is perpetually surprised when someone doesn't like him.

Long-Term Player Aspiration: Become a famous actor

Short-Term Player Aspiration: Favorably impress senior staff of HHK-22B; Get paid

Paths: Archetype: Mouth; Origin: Suburbia; Ambition: Family Man

Skills: Athletics 1, Culture 2, Empathy 4, Humanities 1, Integrity 3, Persuasion 4

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Trademarks: Cultured Warrior (Athletics), I Forgot My Pen (Persuasion), I Would Rather Trip Over My Own Lips (Presence), You're Hearing It Here First (Integrity)

Relationships: Avery Brown (professional courtesy 2), Gabriela Cruz (banter 3), Kala Hale (friendly 1), Naomi McEwan (friendly 1)

Connections: Hanamalu Daily Star (informant), Rose Delaney (friendly favors), Max Cunningham (work favors)

Tropes: Keep Your Hands Off Me, Monologue, Shout-Out

QUIPS:

These eyes wouldn't lie to you...

There's no one I'd rather battle deadly creatures with...

Don't look now, but we've got dinner guests!

KALA HALE, MILITARY VET

Kala Hale served in the US Army, doing two tours under the UN flag in light combat zones. She would have done a third tour, but was injured in the line of duty. Assigned male at birth, she began living as her true gender upon returning to Hawaii. She works security at HHK-22B, preferring the night shift for the quiet. The extra pay is also nice, even if Hale hardly needs it: Her two brothers are gainfully employed (in the military), and both her parents have excellent military pensions.

Hale is a movie buff, always first in line to watch new features at the drive-in. She is diligent about her job, making her rounds at perfectly timed yet irregular intervals. When she's not at her cubicle though, it always has the television paused on a motion picture, or a magazine about movies lying open. Hale does one heck of a Lauren Bacall imitation.

Long-Term Player Aspiration: Attend a Hollywood premiere

Short-Term Player Aspiration: Impersonate a top actress; Successfully order others

Paths: Archetype: Survivor; Origin: Military Brat; Ambition: Lone Wolf

Skills: Athletics 2, Aim 3, Close Combat 4, Command 1, Integrity 1, Pilot 1, Survival 2, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Trademarks: I Ain't Afraid of No Fish (Resolve), Ballistics Expert (Aim), Diamond-Hard Emotions (Survival), Nerves of steel (Integrity)

Relationships: Avery Brown (rookie 1), Gabriela Cruz (she's okay, I guess 3), Jay Everett (fangirling 1), Naomi McEwan (friendly 2)

Connections: Captain Dirk Johnson (former commander), Kaipo (friendly favors), Hanale Palakiki (work favors)

Tropes: Hand-to-Hand Training, I'm Not Dead Yet, Last Man Standing

QUIPS:

I came here to fight for Statehood and punch aliens...

I'll make my final move if it's the last thing I do...

Mister, that won't buy you a half stick of gum at the Half Stick of Gum Store...

NAOMI MCEWAN, ASPIRING SURFER

Naomi McEwan came to Hawaii on vacation with a group of friends, then decided to stay and become a professional surfer. It was a whim, born more on a vague idea of beach life and international travel than actual knowledge of the professional surf scene. McEwan is a natural athlete though, and she has a genuine talent for surfing. She lost her left arm to a boat propeller, though her friends always joke that a shark got it. She hasn't attracted a sponsor yet, folks being reticent to put money down on a one-armed surfer, but definitely has the potential to make a name for herself.

McEwan uses the off season to explore Hawaii. She's visited all the islands, and has worked a plethora of jobs from mechanic to waitress. She arrived in Hanamalu just the other day, after her car's carburetor broke down on the road that passes the town. McEwan got a job cleaning labs at HHK-22B to raise money for her next trip, planning to continue on her journey in a week or two.

Long-Term Player Aspiration: Become a professional surfer

Short-Term Player Aspiration: Get high; Catch some surf

Paths: Archetype: Everyman; Origin: Adventurer; Ambition: Best Friends

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Larceny 1, Persuasion 1, Pilot 2, Survival 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 1; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Trademarks: Got the Groove (Athletics), I Can Fix This! (Technology), Jack of all Trades (Pilot), Get Off My Land! (Might)

Relationships: Avery Brown (Mr. suit 1), Gabriela Cruz (friendly 1), Jay Everett (pretty fly 2), Kala Hale (banter 3)

Connections: Surfers (odds 'n ends), Kaipō (friendly favors), Ahe Keli'i (friendly favors)

Tropes: Grit and Determination, Keep Your Hands Off Me, Tools of the Trade

QUIPS:

Never mind me, just wheelin' on through...

I've spit in the eyes of hurricanes bigger than you...

Now I know how a sardine feels, except for the whole oily part...

A man with a beard and a sailor are shown in a whirlpool. The man on the left has red hair and a beard, wearing a white shirt. The sailor on the right is wearing a white uniform and a white cap. The water is swirling around them, creating a vortex. In the background, a ship is visible, partially submerged in the water.

NIGHT OF THE DAY OF THE WHIRLPOOL

It was pitch black and the man had no idea where he was. But Clain Hoake swam like a man who needed to swim. And he did. Worse, he didn't know who he was. All he knew was he couldn't hold his breath forever. It was like he was at the bottom of a vast well.

Light showed ahead and he swam for it, down to the bottom, into a tunnel off the main "well." He emerged into light and quickly broke the surface, gasping for air, trying to get the bearings he'd never lost before.

It was a vast underground grotto, a complex world of strange phosphorescence, cave systems, cliffs, and pools of water. If he didn't know better, he'd swear it was the center of the Earth.

"It is the center of Earth!" A voice boomed off the walls.

"It's like you can read my mind," exclaimed Clain.

"I can read your mind!" came the voice, which was becoming annoying. The figure stood on a rock projection, wearing a helmet covered in spark plugs. "I am Dr. Bundolph Laig." The man clapped his hands and immediately grotesque nightmare shapes surrounded Clain. "Meet my squidiots, as I call them." The title fit; a strange evolution merging man and squid. Obviously of limited intelligence, they plodded to carry out Laig's will.

• • •

Clain sampled food off the large shell on the stone table, seated on a living cushion that was some kind of mutated balloonfish. "What am I eating?" asked Clain in disgust.

"I farm everything from the sea so that is something from the sea, I'm not sure but it's very good for you." Laig went on to explain how he'd fled King Clam's destruction, seeking refuge in a

massive hole opened by the underwater earthquake. This led to the center of the Earth where he met his squidiots, commanding them to scuttle ships for lab equipment. Bitter revenge against humanity drove him now and he would soon unveil his greatest experiment of all.

Just then a warning sounded, which was actually an excited dolphin, and in the largest grotto pool something rose to the surface: a miniature submarine. A hatch opened and up popped Karsly Morbin and Captain Hemp Maxwell.

"Is this the center of Earth?" chirped Karsly.

"Well. What a pleasant coincidence. My old enemies. How nice of you to join me," gloated Laig. Escorted by squidiots, the surprised pair were brought to Laig.

"I'm Clain Hoake and I don't remember anything," offered Clain helpfully.

"Aren't you a famous canner?" asked Hemp.

Though it sounded familiar, Clain's amnesia held. Karsly and Hemp had been investigating reports of missing lab equipment. They had their answer.

With great flourish, Dr. Laig revealed his masterpiece, the Funnelizer, which could create an underwater whirlpool that would lift up the horrors of the deep and rain them down on Coastal City to exact his revenge.

"Underwater whirlpool?" puzzled Hemp. "How can you see water if it's in the water? I mean"

"Silence!" shouted Laig, being anything but silent.

"What horrors?" wondered Karsly with scientific curiosity. "Your squidiots?"

Dr. Laig laughed heartily. "Come! You shall have a front-row seat."

"Normally that would sound good to a sports fan like me," said Hemp, "but this is one game I'd rather miss."

• • •

The sub rose to the surface just off the coast of Coastal City. Laig readied a remote-control device while squidiots kept hold of Clain, Karsly, and Hemp.

"You won't get away with this," growled Clain, who seemed to remember it was the thing to say.

Laig grinned. "Behold!"

"Stop saying that," said Karsly. "Why do you master villains always need an audience?"

"It appeals to the showman in me," chuckled Laig. "I spent a formative summer helping out on

puppet shows." He flicked a switch and the ocean began to rumble. With explosive fury, bursting from its surface, came a funnel of water rising hundreds of feet into the air, carrying within every dreadful aquatic nightmare, spinning round and round.

"What hellish seafood is this?" barked Hemp with loathing.

Clain perked up *Seafood Cannery Canner*

Laig laughed, "The center of the Earth is lousy with things like this!"

Something clicked in Clain, who took advantage of the distraction and jumped into the sea. This time he swam like a swimmer with a *memory*. *The memory of a canner.*

"Let the fool go!" barked Laig to his squidiots. The funnel of water towered over the city. Laig hit a switch and it began to bend toward it.

Clain quickly reached shore and immediately warned the authorities. Above them, the massive head of the vortex was lowering to just above the rooftops. Evacuation was underway, and the National Guard quickly called in.

Hemp went for Laig's remote and squidiots lunged, struggling to hold the rugged Navy man. But Karsly took advantage and snatched the remote from Laig's evil grasp.

Meanwhile, Clain and National Guardsmen battled grotesque writhing sea life in the city streets: crustacean things with sharp stingers, sharks with legs, floating jellyfish horrors

Before Laig could get the remote back, Karsly pulled a switch and immediately the funnel stopped releasing its monstrous rain of terror. Another flick, and the huge whirling mass began to draw back toward the ocean. Finally, Laig managed to grab the remote. But, unbeknownst to him, his squidiots watched their aquatic brethren being destroyed by Clain and the soldiers, and a sound almost like whimpering began to emerge from them. Before Laig could reverse the funnel again, the squidiots moved toward him as one.

"No! No! No, you squidiots! I warn you!" were his last words before his pathetic minions engulfed him, at last finding their self-respect.

• • •

The funnel of water returned to the ocean, with most of its sea life as well. Clain joined Karsly and Hemp on shore.

"Good to have our city back," smiled Karsly.

"Good to have one canner back," smiled Clain, looking off somewhere important.

APPENDIX ONE

QUIPS

The following is a breakdown of the Quips present in the **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** decks.

VOWS, DEFIANCE, AND TOUGH TALK

If being right works when I go to bed... it still works at breakfast...

I'll make my final move if it's the last thing I do...

Like the math whiz said, count me in.

It's time we taught them a little human know-how as well as some neat engineering tricks, also knot-tying...

Just get this through your little hive mind...

Sorry if I parted your scales too close...

It's time we put the "I" in survival...

We'll cross those T's when we come to them...

I've spit in the eyes of hurricanes bigger than you...

If you're going through me, you'll have to go through me to do it...

I have one rule: If I can eat it, I can kill it...

I don't know much about science or monsters but... I'm willing to learn...

Just one question... Which garnish?

I'd sooner wear commie clothes than give up my humanity...

Mister, that won't buy you a half stick of gum at the Half Stick of Gum Store...

Maybe I'm just not comfortable with the phrase "aquatic alien overlords."

If I'd known you were coming I would've baked a sweetbread...

I've smoked worse things in my pipe...

Hope I didn't ruin your little fondue club reunion...

PLEASE ENJOY THIS GREAT PORTENT

Don't look now but my skirt just got a little longer...

I'm afraid this is something even the jaded face of science hasn't gazed upon...

Sometimes the solution is in front of us the whole time, laughing...

I don't think I've ever bargained with anything quite so hideous...

We're going to need a bigger intellect...

There's enough science in there to ice a cocktail...

Let's just say this is one deadly sea creature we won't be inviting home for dinner...

These things really put the hell in hellspawn...

We might as well be throwing cufflinks...

If the sun still gets up in the morning and has breakfast... so will we...

Some exchange recipes... others exchange minds...

If we don't... this could be the start of the beginning of the end...

It's time we all snapped our suspenders in unison...

Boy... you think you know an ocean...

Without an answer... we'll only have a lot of questions...

Something tells me those aren't antennae...

Correct me if I'm wrong but I think everything I ever feared is correct...

The term "ultimate aquatic horror" comes to mind about now...

If I didn't know better, I'd swear we're surrounded by monsters...

QUIP YOUR GRIPING!

This isn't the pie I signed on to bake...

Wake me when the world is saved...

If it isn't one thing, it's another, and probably another after that...

Sometimes we learn the hard way, especially after we've already touched something gross...

I don't make the rules, I just test them...

We could sure use a good atom bomb right about now...

Remind me to stay home next time we're battling repulsive things...

This whole day's been stepping in one monkey pie after another!

Now I know how a sardine feels, except for the whole oily part...

And to think I had to skip marine biology...

If you're going to defeat a fish, you'd better start thinking like one...

If you're counting on a patsy, count me out...

You don't have the tartar sauce for something like this...

If we have another close one, would you mind taking it?

If I never see another terrifying sea thing, it'll be too soon...

I like drinking water alright, but fighting in it is something entirely different...

If you need me, I'll be in a dry, monster-free place...

Next time you're having a pool party...don't invite me...

That's one claw that will never click like a maraca...

WHY SO GLIB?

I'd question my own sanity if it wasn't one of my favorite things...

I didn't know aliens came in disgusting...

Didn't expect to touch anything with fins when I left for work this morning!

I've seen some aquatic nightmares in my day but this takes the caviar...

I just find it hard to communicate with anything that's dangling...

Don't look now, but we've got dinner guests!

The bottom of my shoe has scarier things than this...

If I didn't believe my own eyes, I wouldn't be seeing this!

Not exactly what I had in mind when I said let's put our heads together...

It's almost enough to make you dislike giant bulbous eyes...

Never thought I'd be fighting underwater in a rented dinner jacket!

Not to be nosy, but... do those eyes belong to you?

When I look something in the face, I prefer it has a face!

If you're the dessert, can't wait to see the topping...

Can't miss it — just turn left at the next indescribable horror...

I don't know whether to fight it or have it for lunch!

Is this any way to run a subversive alien takeover?

These things really put the "F" in fish don't they?

Don't make me open a container of fisticuffs on your posterior...

AND BEFORE YOU PULL THAT SWITCH

How about some ham with those eggs?

And to think people laughed when I named my fists...

Let's slap tentacle...

Please, don't get up. Ever.

Sorry to throw a hairnet on your evil plans...

Don't kill us, we'll kill you...

Pardon me, but is this your fin?

I know white goes best with you... but I brought red...

Hold onto your bunsens, kids!

Time to cut some apron strings...

There's more than one way to skin a cephalopod...

Time to pay the organ grinder...

Glad I'm not in your webbed feet...

I'd like to stay, but I've got a date with the rest of my life...

Never did care for seafood...

Wave when you get to the explosion...

Hope you like smoke with your shrapnel...

Must be Friday!

You just don't have the tentacles needed.

THE FLIRTATION

Have you been monster-fighting long?

If all opponents of undersea invasions look like you, count me in...

We must compare encounters with the unknown some-time...

Where have you been all my longevity?

I know one figure I'd like to check...

Careful, things might be overheating...

There's no one I'd rather battle deadly creatures with...

Well... the end of the world just got a little bit brighter...

I've never been happier to be free of something's slimy grip...

You know, you make those loathsome horrors look... even more loathsome...

If we get through this, the sushi's on me...

Well now... what oyster did you come out of?

Underwater hell doesn't seem so bad... now...

That's not the biology I had in mind...

So... what are you doing after foiling an invasion?

Alien takeover's no match... for the takeover of my heart...

You know... you have just the right number of eyes...

There's something about the smell of fish that just gets me going.

You remind me of all the things I love about my mother.

APPENDIX TWO

STUNTS AND

CINEMATICS

The following is a breakdown of the Stunts and Cinematics present in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**

GENERAL STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
Alien Senses	1	p. XX
Animal Whisperer	2	p. XX
Assertive Genes	3	p. XX
Bodyguard	3	p. XX
Complicated Stunt	Variable	p. XX
Counterattacker	3	p. XX
Crowd Control	2	p. XX
Cunning Strike	1	p. XX
Difficult Stunt	Variable	p. XX
Ears Like A Bat	1	p. XX
Enhanced Stunt	Variable	p. XX
Fiery Temper	1	p. XX
Infused With Science!	3	p. XX
Insanely Swift	2	p. XX
Like An Ox	2	p. XX
Natural Empath	3	p. XX
Old School Carnage	2	p. XX
Pyro-Punch!	3	p. XX
Quick Learner	3	p. XX
Right In the Sweet Spot	2	p. XX
School of Hard Knocks	1	p. XX
Sharp Tongued	1	p. XX
Something About Them...	1	p. XX
Table Turner	2	p. XX
Telekinesis Novice	2	p. XX
Throw Your Back Into It	1	p. XX

CINEMATIC	COST IN REWRITES	PAGE
Ally of Convenience	1	p. XX
Bad Dubbing	1	p. XX
Call the Understudy!	2	p. XX
Cheap Set	1	p. XX
Deleted Scene	3	p. XX
Fan Favorite	2	p. XX
Kill the Extra	1	p. XX
Omniscient Narrator	2	p. XX
Rear Screen Projection	1	p. XX
Scene Missing	3	p. XX
Starring a Full Cast	1	p. XX
Summon the Stuntman	2	p. XX
Take Two!	2	p. XX
'Twas Beauty Did Something to the Beast	1	p. XX
You Dropped This	2	p. XX

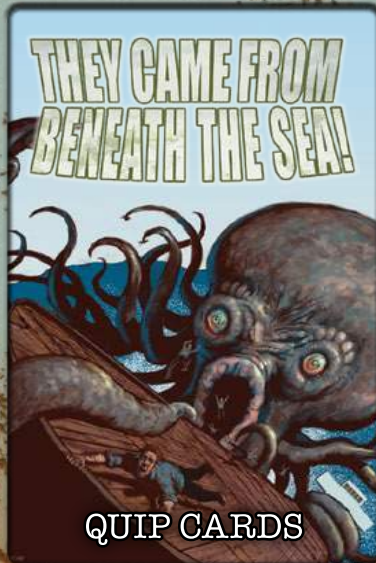
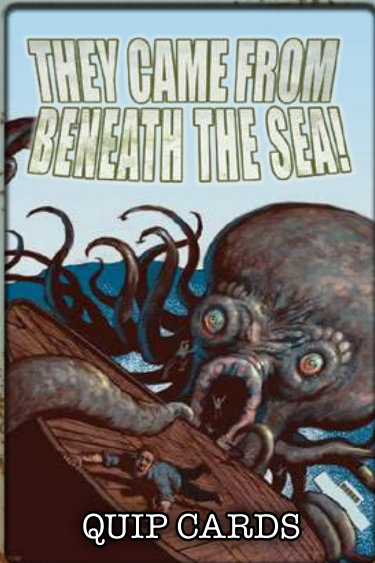
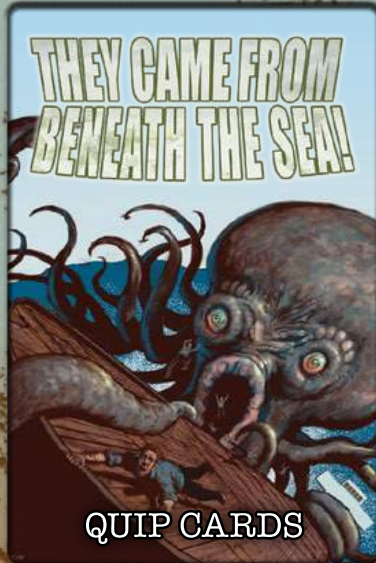
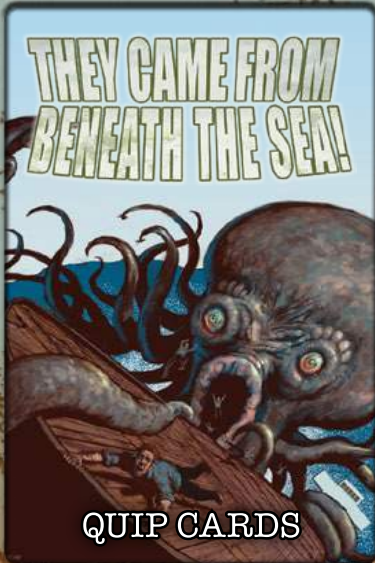
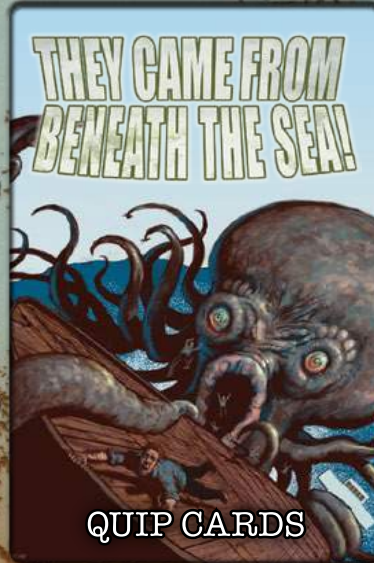
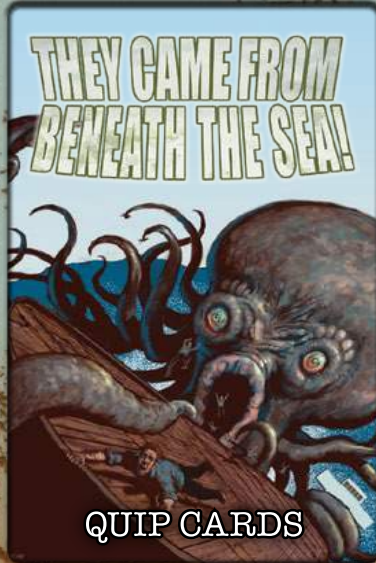
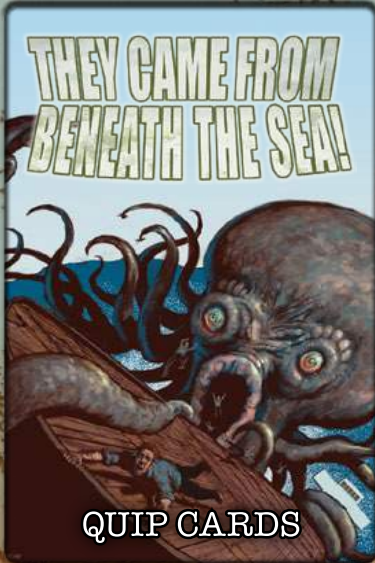
EVERYMAN STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
Aim For the Outfield	2	p. XX
Alien Outfitting	3	p. XX
Delayed Failure	2	p. XX
Fine Tuning	1	p. XX
Giving Punches Like You Take Them	3	p. XX
Improvised Weaponry	1	p. XX
Mental Mapping	1	p. XX
Obscure Insight	3	p. XX
Past Experience	1	p. XX
Plant Your Feet	2	p. XX
Scrounge	2	p. XX
Sudden Bravery	2	p. XX

G-MAN STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
All-Seeing Eye	1	p. XX
Chain Attack	2	p. XX
Do What You're Told!	2	
Full Weight of Law	3	p. XX
Government Trained Sharpshooter	1	p. XX
Hold 'Em!	1	p. XX
I, Spy	2	p. XX
Impeccable Grooming	2	p. XX
Inspiring Orders	3	p. XX
Peak Physical Fitness	1	p. XX
Prototype Weaponry	3	p. XX
Special Resistance Training	3	p. XX

SURVIVOR STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
Always Another Way	2	p. XX
Doesn't Work On Me	3	p. XX
Dumb Aliens...	1	p. XX
Enhanced Reflexes	2	p. XX
Fighting Retreat	2	p. XX
Inspirational Storyteller	3	p. XX
Phase Out	3	p. XX
Snap Out Of It!	2	p. XX
Step In	1	p. XX
Superior Spotter	3	p. XX
Telekinetic Shot	1	p. XX
You're Next	1	p. XX

MOUTH STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
Can't Outfox a Fox	2	p. XX
Clever Circumstances	1	p. XX
Dread Inspiring Fighting Style	3	p. XX
Ego Boost	1	p. XX
Exo Cultural Nuances	2	p. XX
Gift of Gab	1	p. XX
Golden Lie	3	p. XX
I Am Who I Say I Am	3	p. XX
I Wouldn't Do That	3	p. XX
It's Not as Bad as It Looks	2	p. XX
Missed Me!	1	p. XX
Not What You Think It Is	2	p. XX

SCIENTIST STUNTS	COST IN SUCCESSES	PAGE
Bane Bullets	3	p. XX
Disarm / Repurpose	3	p. XX
Forensic Eye	2	p. XX
Genhancement	3	p. XX
Major Adjustments	2	p. XX
Minor Adjustments	1	p. XX
Personal Teleporter	2	p. XX
Psy Ops Training	3	p. XX
Skilled Linguist	2	p. XX
Surgical Strike	1	p. XX
This Reminds Me...	1	p. XX
Total Conversion	2	p. XX



If being right
works when I
go to bed... it
still works at
breakfast...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I'll make my
final move if
it's the last
thing I do...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Like the math
whiz said,
count me in.

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

It's time we
taught them a
little human
know-how
as well as
some neat
engineering
tricks, also
knot-tying...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Just get this
through your
little hive
mind...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Sorry if I
parted your
scales too
close...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

It's time we
put the "I" in
survival...

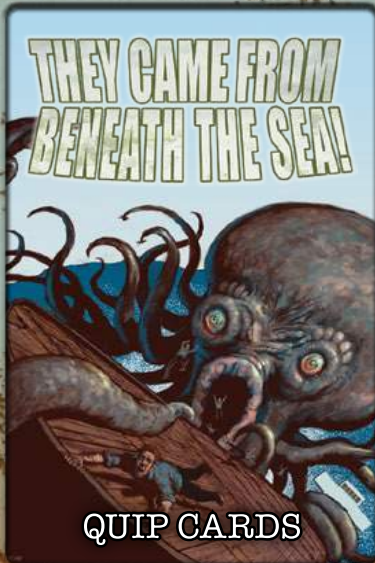
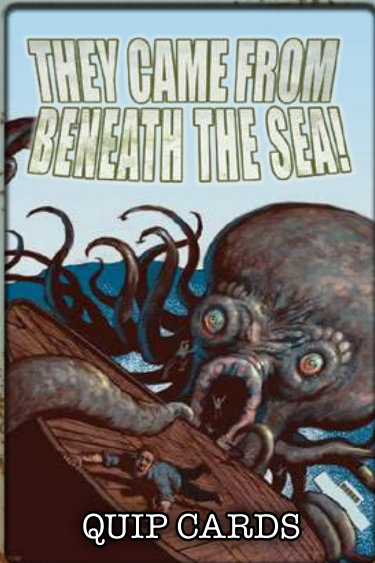
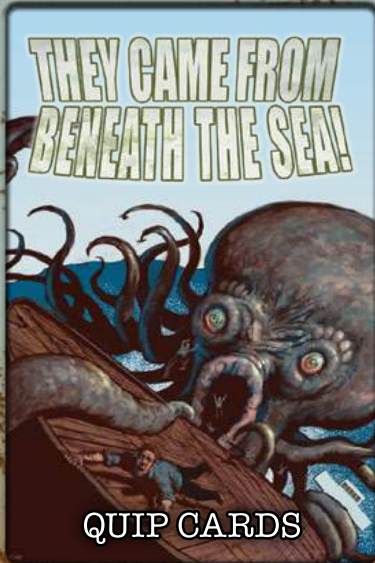
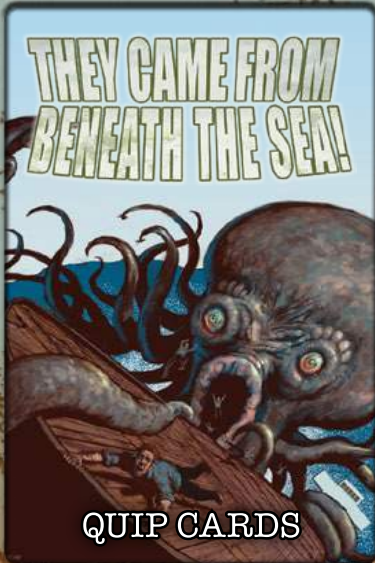
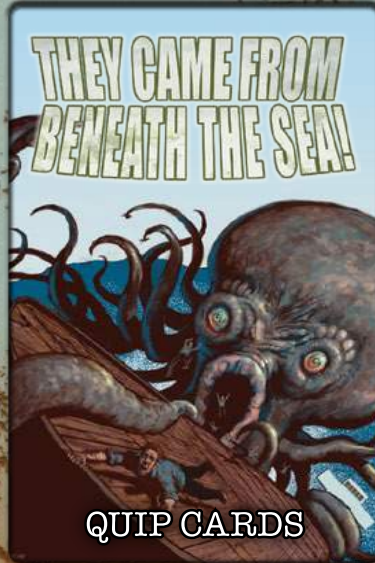
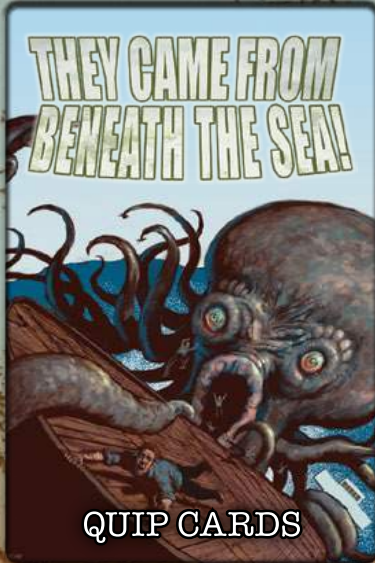
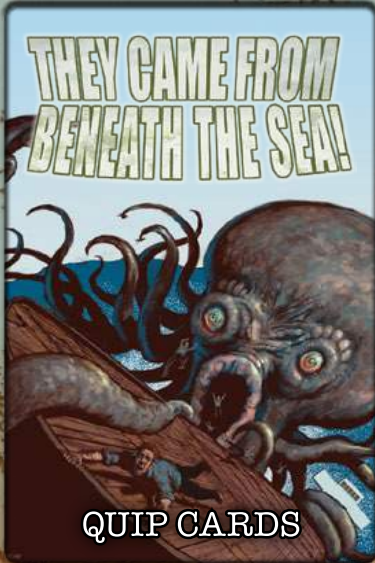
Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

We'll cross
those T's when
we come to
them...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I've spit in
the eyes of
hurricanes
bigger than
you...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk



If you're going
through me,
you'll have to
go through me
to do it...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I have one
rule: If I can
eat it, I can
kill it...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I don't know
much about
science or
monsters
but... I'm
willing to
learn...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Just one
question...
Which
garnish?

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I'd sooner
wear commie
clothes than
give up my
humanity...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Mister, that
won't buy you
a half stick
of gum at the
Half Stick of
Gum Store...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Maybe I'm
just not
comfortable
with the
phrase
"aquatic alien
overlords."

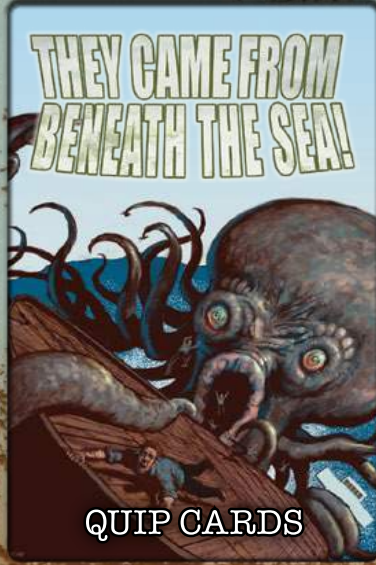
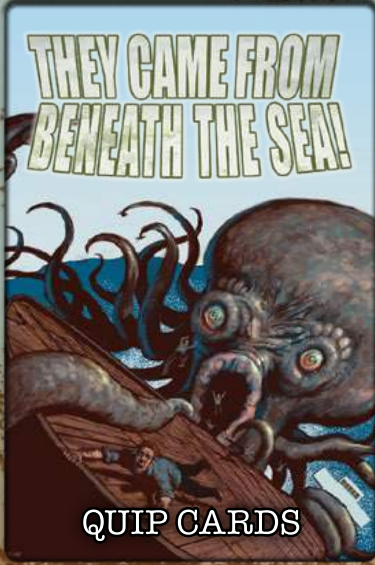
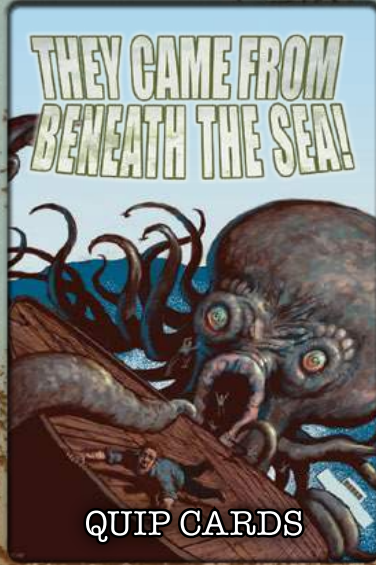
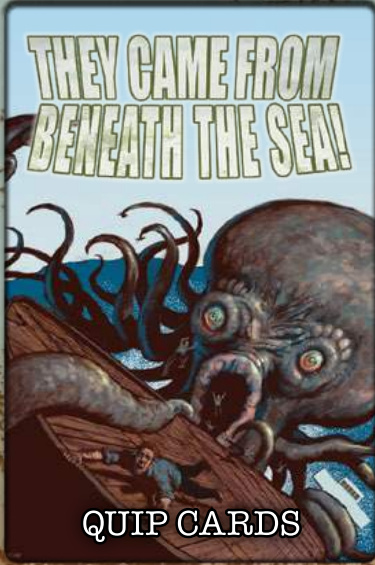
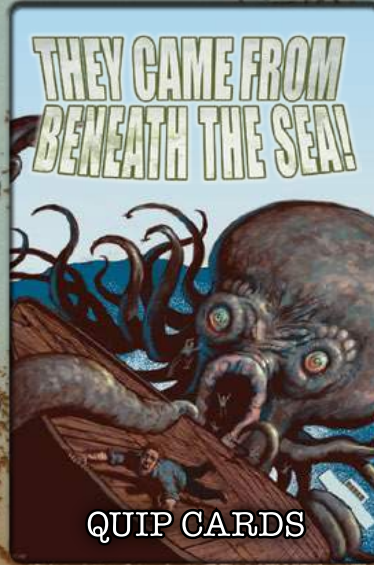
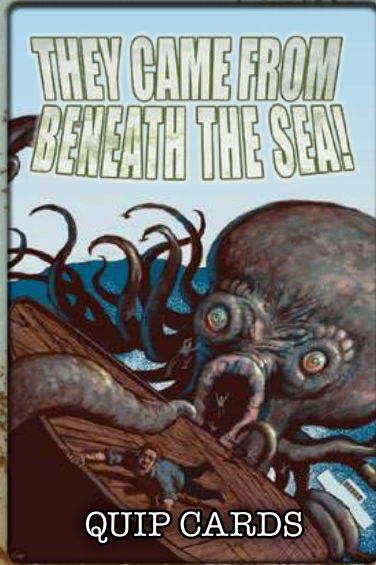
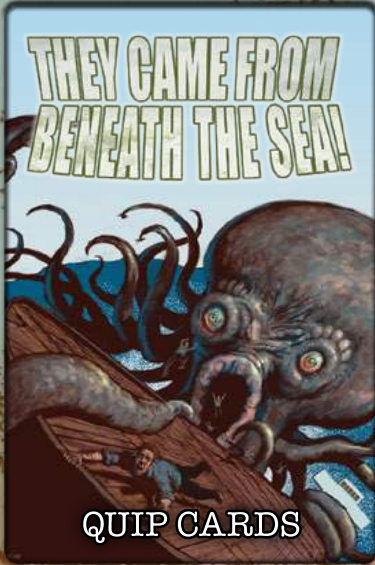
Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

If I'd known
you were
coming I
would've
baked a
sweetbread...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

I've smoked
worse things
in my pipe...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk



Hope I didn't
ruin your
little fondue
club reunion...

Vows, Defiance,
and Tough Talk

Don't look now
but my skirt
just got a little
longer...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

I'm afraid this
is something
even the jaded
face of science
hasn't gazed
upon...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Sometimes
the solution
is in front
of us the
whole time,
laughing...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

I don't think
I've ever
bargained
with anything
quite so
hideous...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

We're going to
need a bigger
intellect...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

There's
enough
science in
there to ice a
cocktail...

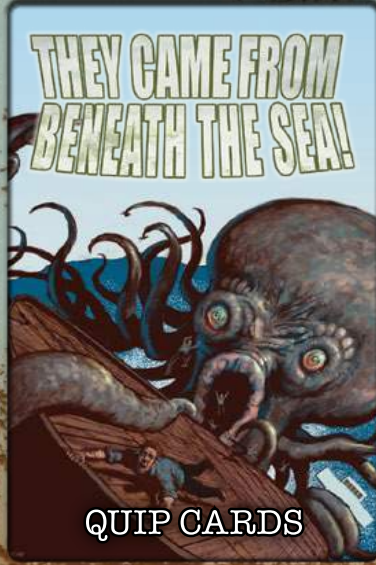
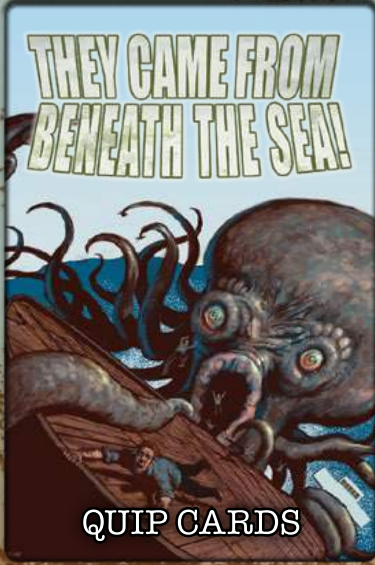
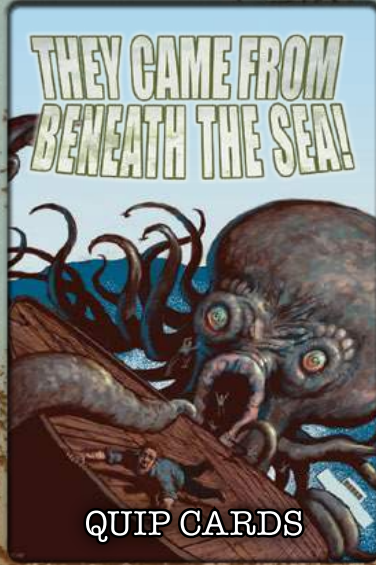
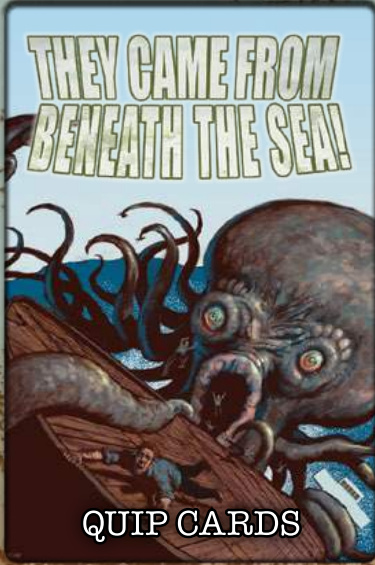
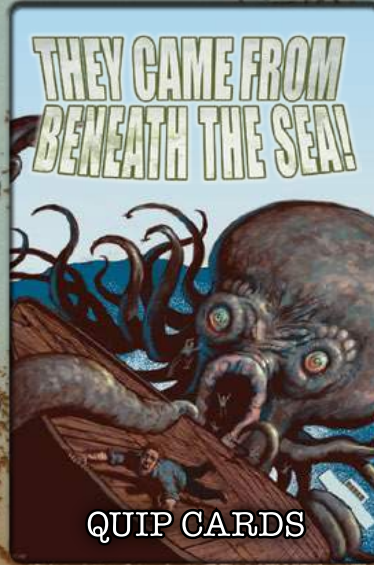
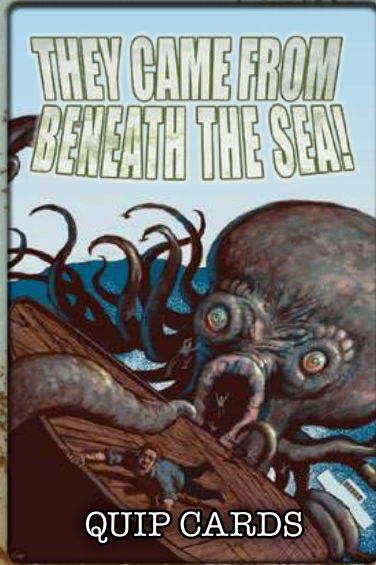
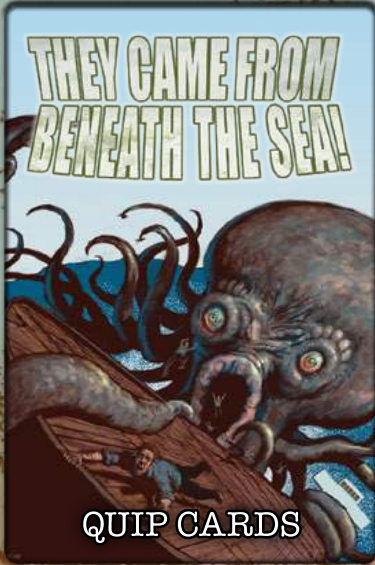
Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Let's just
say this is
one deadly
sea creature
we won't be
inviting home
for dinner...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

These things
really put
the hell in
hellspawn...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent



We might
as well be
throwing
cufflinks...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

If the sun still
gets up in
the morning
and has
breakfast... so
will we...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Some
exchange
recipes...
others
exchange
minds...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

If we don't...
this could be
the start of
the beginning
of the end...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

It's time we all
snapped our
suspenders in
unison...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Boy... you
think you
know an
ocean...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Without an
answer... we'll
only have a lot
of questions...

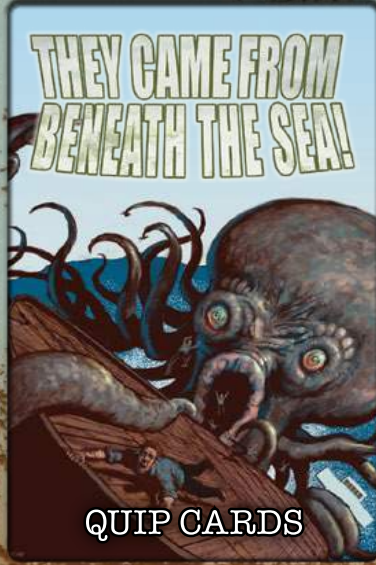
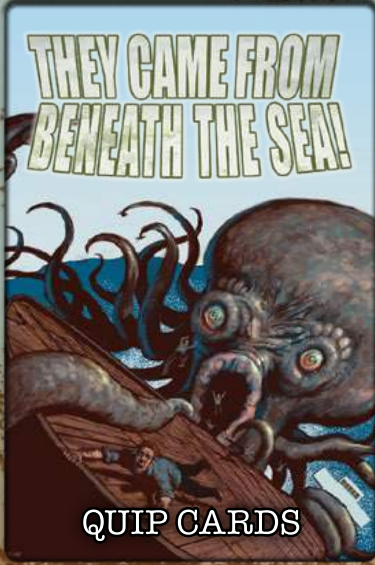
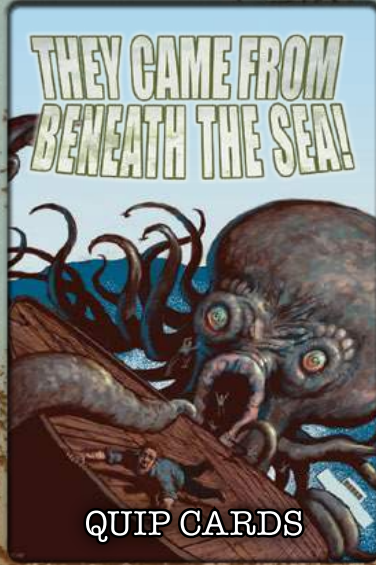
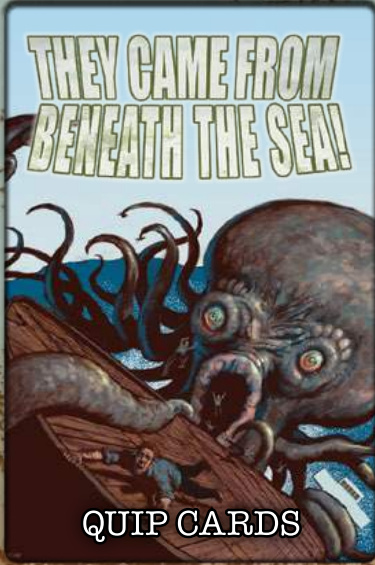
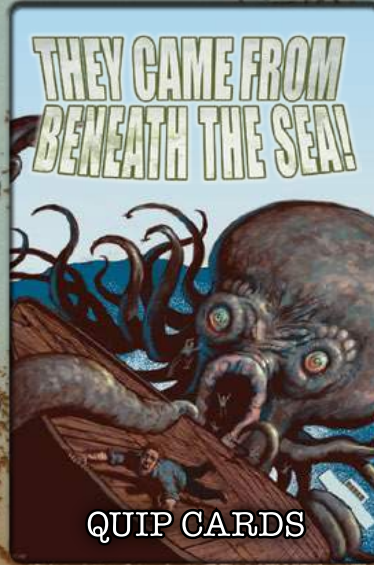
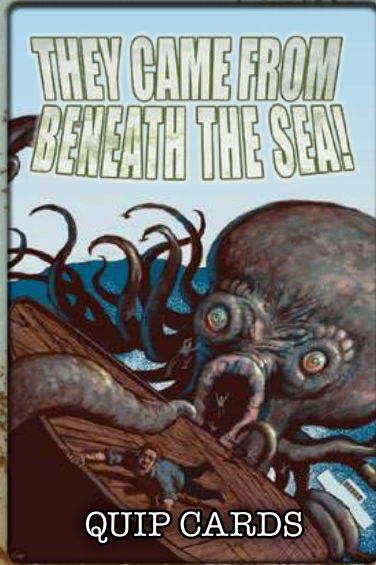
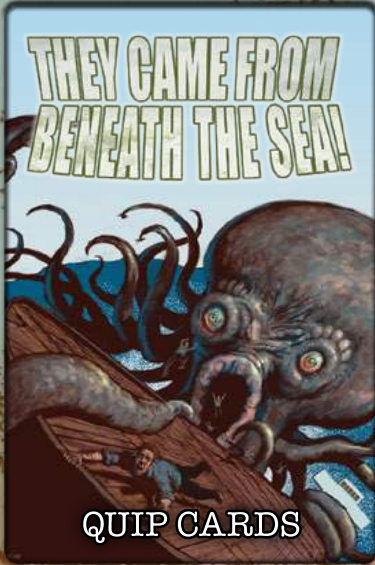
Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Something
tells me
those aren't
antennae...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

Correct me
if I'm wrong
but I think
everything I
ever feared is
correct...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent



The term
"ultimate
aquatic
horror" comes
to mind about
now...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

If I didn't
know
better, I'd
swear we're
surrounded
by monsters...

Please Enjoy This
Great Portent

This isn't the
pie I signed on
to bake...

Quip Your
Griping!

Wake me
when the
world is
saved...

Quip Your
Griping!

If it isn't one
thing, it's
another, and
probably
another after
that...

Quip Your
Griping!

Sometimes we
learn the hard
way, especially
after we've
already
touched
something
gross...

Quip Your
Griping!

I don't make
the rules,
I just test
them...

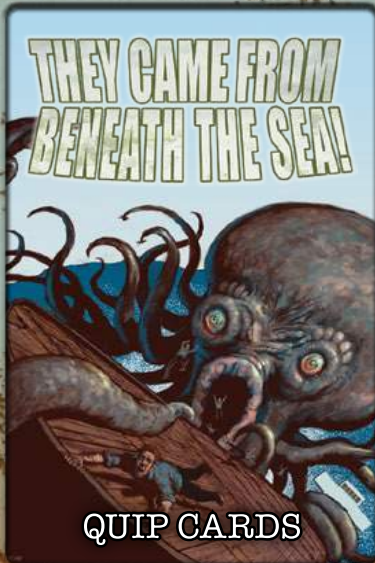
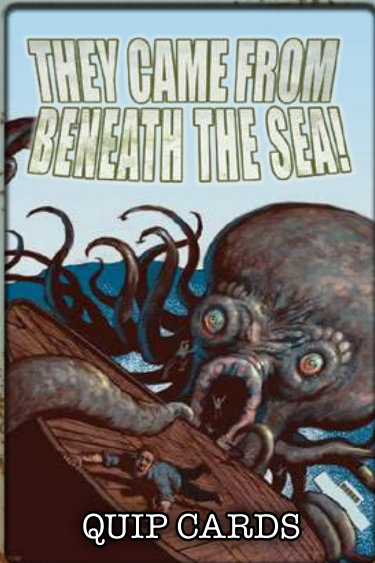
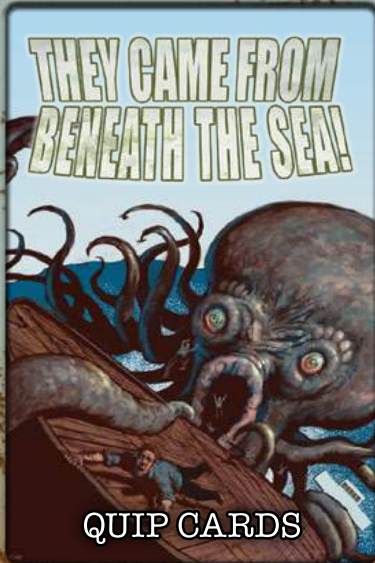
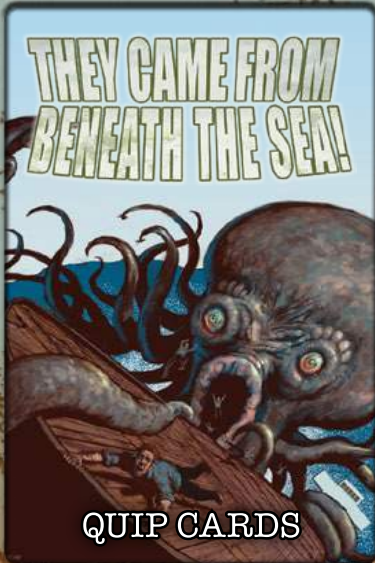
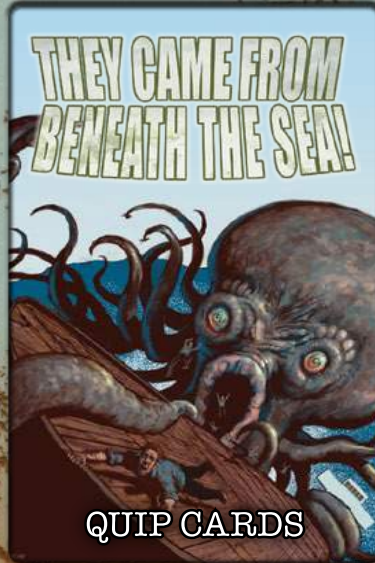
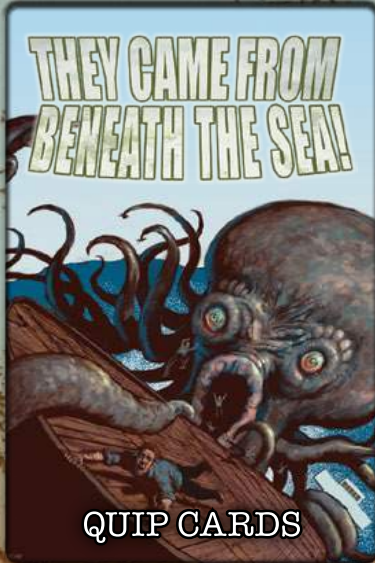
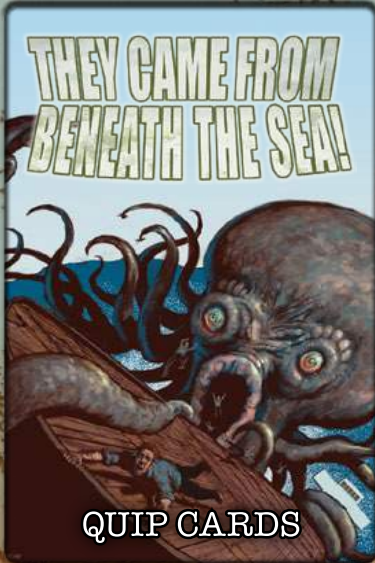
Quip Your
Griping!

We could sure
use a good
atom bomb
right about
now...

Quip Your
Griping!

Remind me
to stay home
next time
we're battling
repulsive
things...

Quip Your
Griping!



This whole
day's been
stepping in
one monkey
pie after
another!

Quip Your
Griping!

Now I know
how a sardine
feels, except
for the whole
oily part...

Quip Your
Griping!

And to think
I had to
skip marine
biology...

Quip Your
Griping!

If you're going
to defeat a
fish, you'd
better start
thinking like
one...

Quip Your
Griping!

If you're
counting on a
patsy, count
me out...

Quip Your
Griping!

You don't have
the tartar
sauce for
something
like this...

Quip Your
Griping!

If we have
another close
one, would
you mind
taking it?

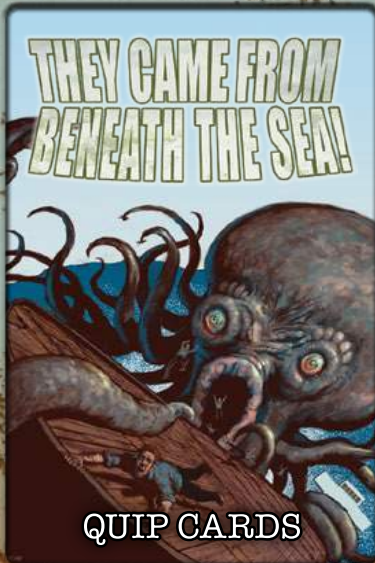
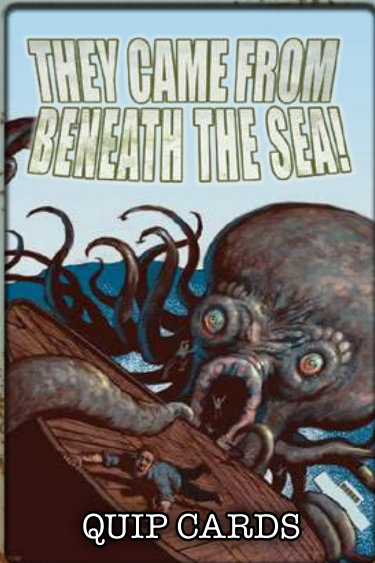
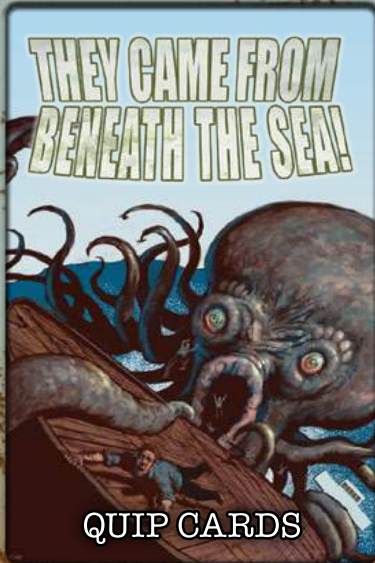
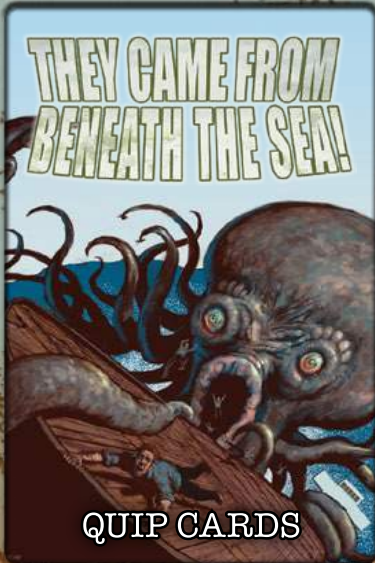
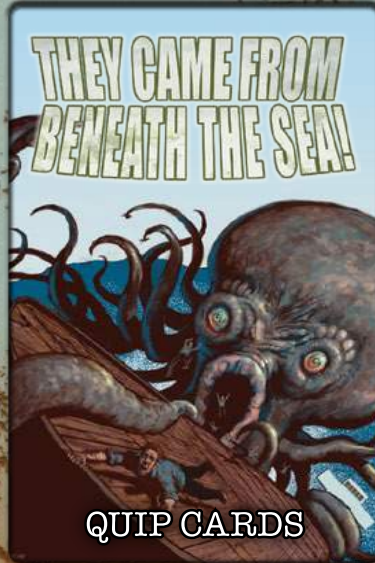
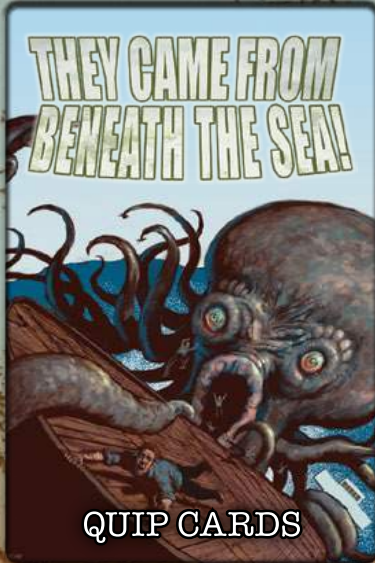
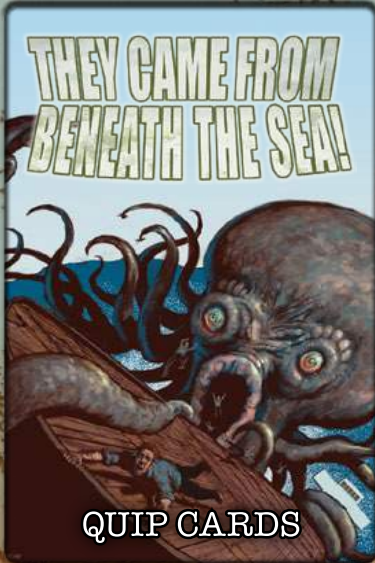
Quip Your
Griping!

If I never
see another
terrifying sea
thing, it'll be
too soon...

Quip Your
Griping!

I like drinking
water alright,
but fighting in
it is something
entirely
different...

Quip Your
Griping!



If you need
me, I'll be in a
dry, monster-
free place...

Quip Your
Griping!

Next time
you're having
a pool party...
don't invite
me...

Quip Your
Griping!

That's one
claw that
will never
click like a
maraca...

Quip Your
Griping!

I'd question
my own
sanity if it
wasn't one of
my favorite
things...

Why So Glib?

I didn't know
aliens came in
disgusting...

Why So Glib?

Didn't expect
to touch
anything with
fins when I
left for work
this morning!

Why So Glib?

I've seen
some aquatic
nightmares
in my day but
this takes the
caviar...

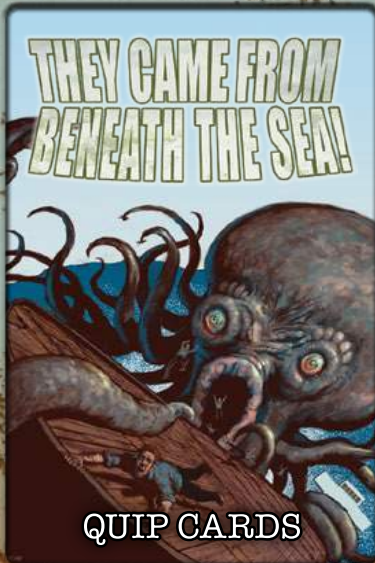
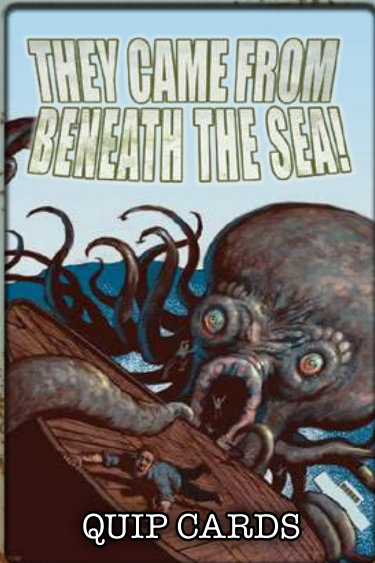
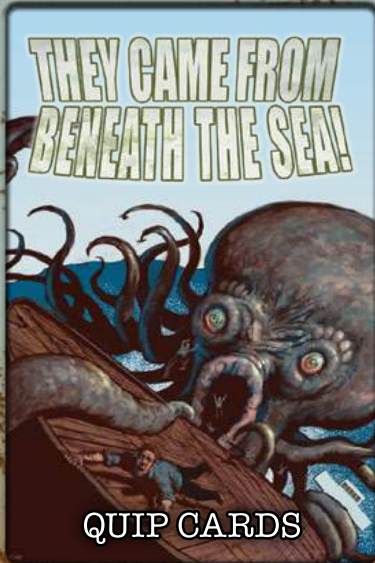
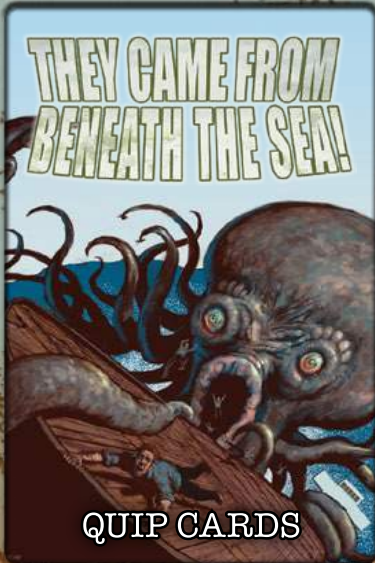
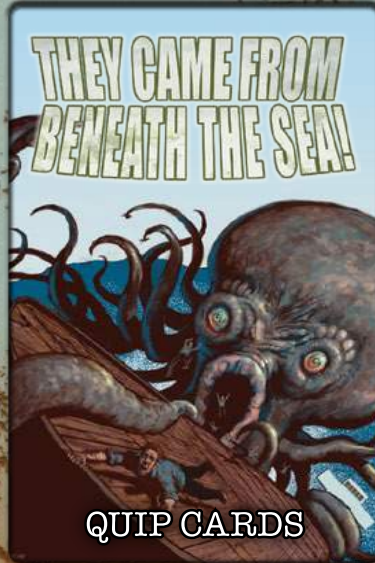
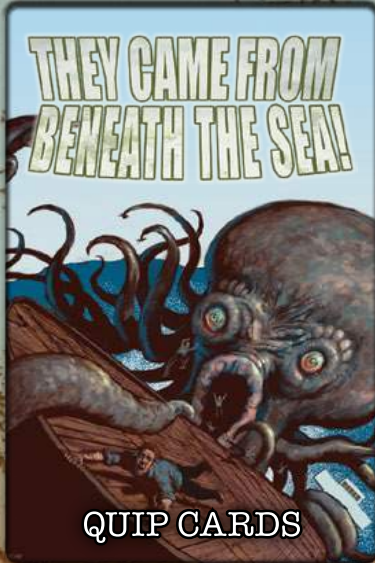
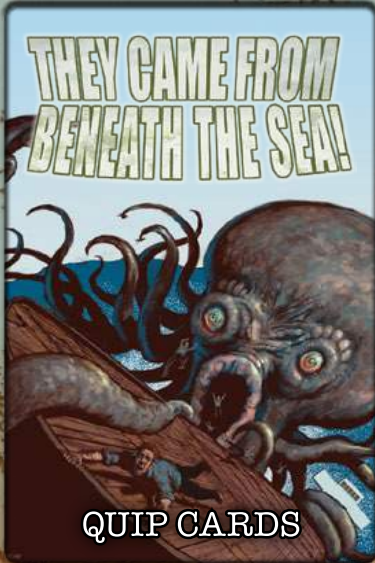
Why So Glib?

I just find
it hard to
communicate
with anything
that's
dangling...

Why So Glib?

Don't look
now, but we've
got dinner
guests!

Why So Glib?



The bottom of
my shoe has
scarier things
than this...

Why So Glib?

If I didn't
believe my
own eyes, I
wouldn't be
seeing this!

Why So Glib?

Not exactly
what I had in
mind when I
said let's put
our heads
together...

Why So Glib?

It's almost
enough to
make you
dislike giant
bulbous eyes...

Why So Glib?

Never thought
I'd be fighting
underwater
in a rented
dinner jacket!

Why So Glib?

Not to be nosy,
but... do those
eyes belong to
you?

Why So Glib?

When I look
something
in the face, I
prefer it has a
face!

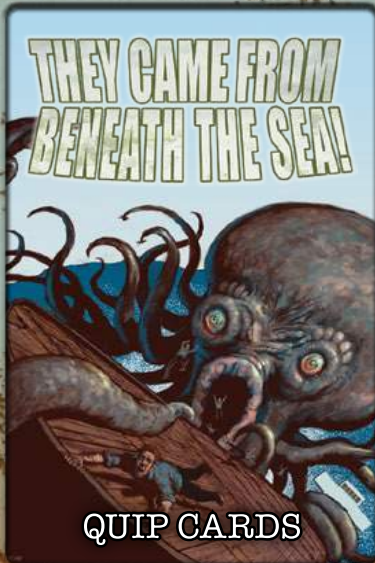
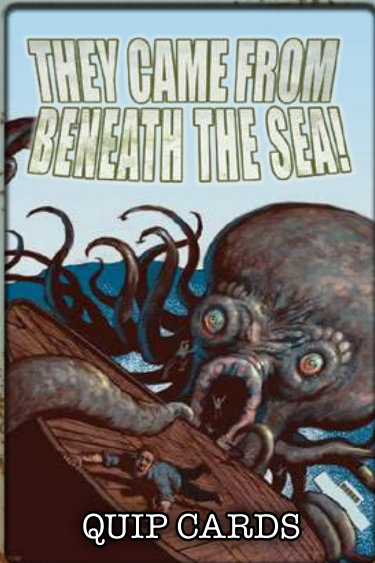
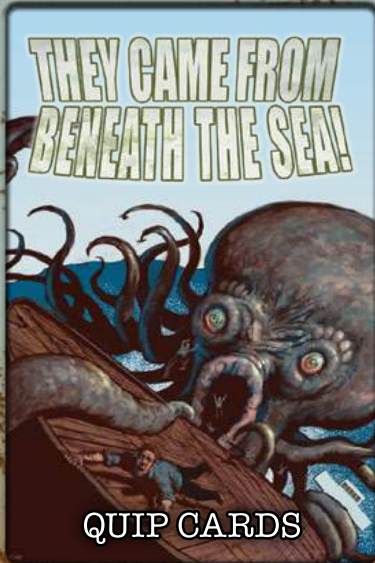
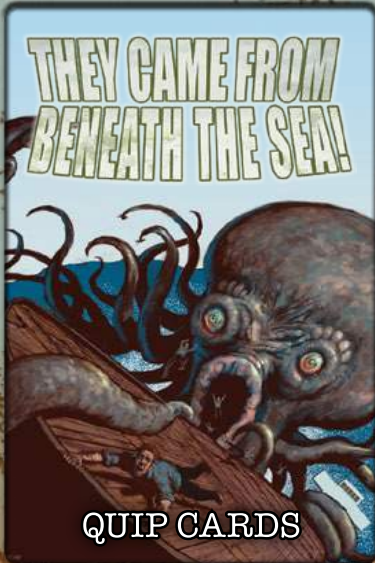
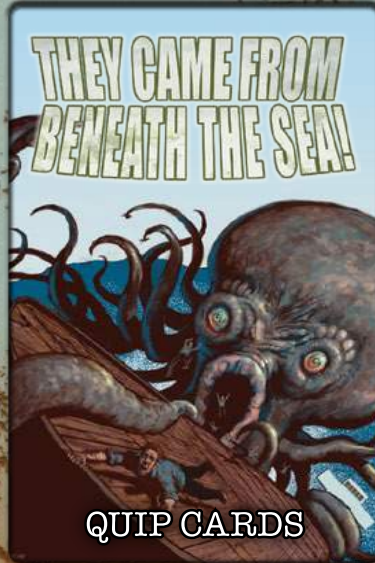
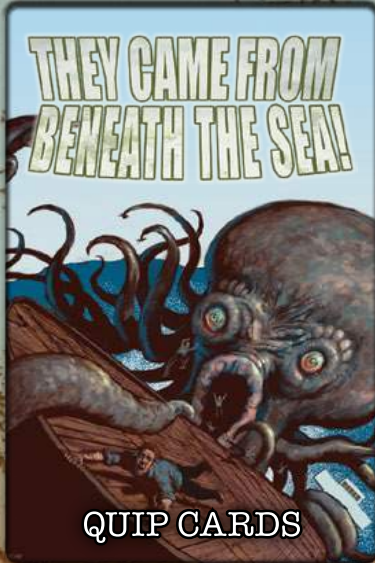
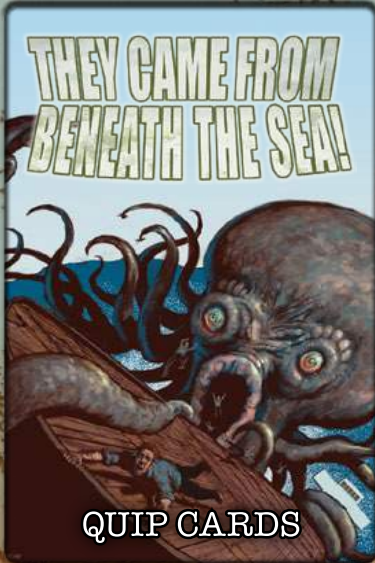
Why So Glib?

If you're the
dessert, can't
wait to see the
topping...

Why So Glib?

Can't miss it —
just turn left
at the next
indescribable
horror...

Why So Glib?



I don't know
whether to
fight it or have
it for lunch!

Why So Glib?

Is this any
way to run
a subversive
alien
takeover?

Why So Glib?

These things
really put the
"F" in fish
don't they?

Why So Glib?

Don't make
me open a
container
of fisticuffs
on your
posterior...

Why So Glib?

How about
some ham
with those
eggs?

And Before You
Pull That Switch

And to
think people
laughed when
I named my
fists...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Let's slap
tentacle...

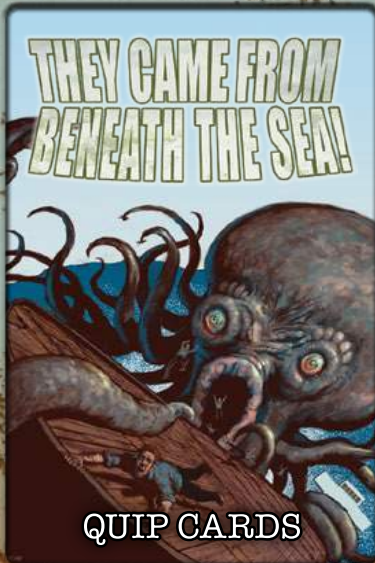
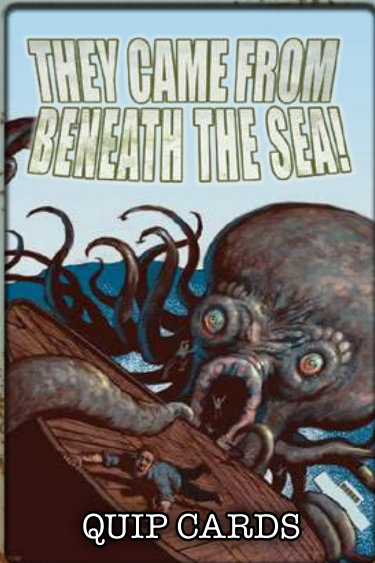
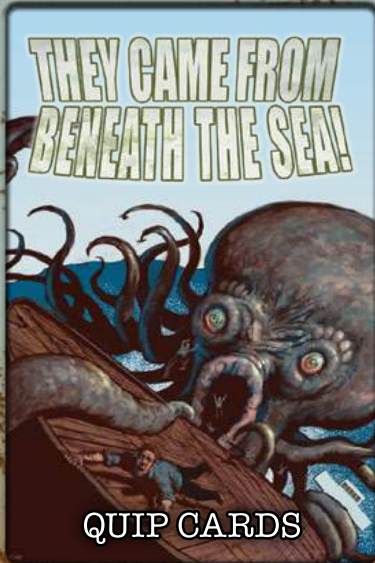
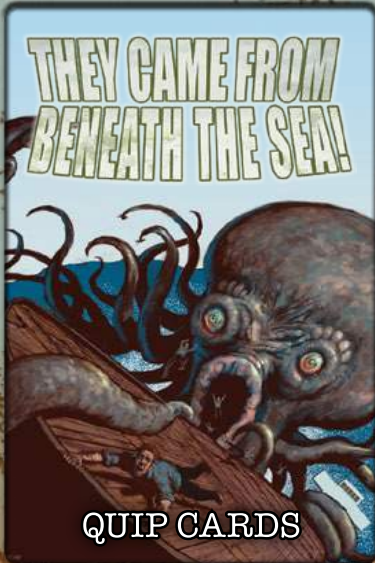
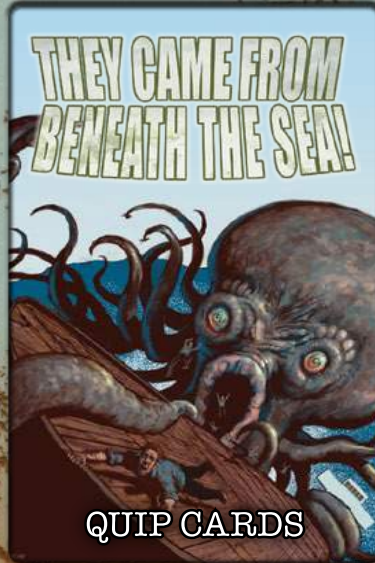
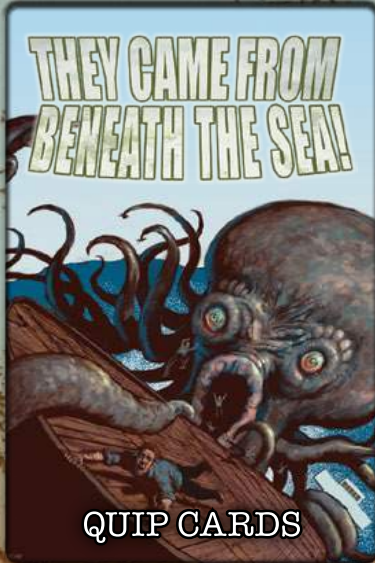
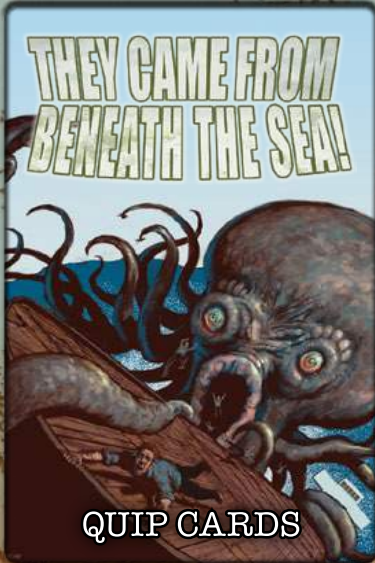
And Before You
Pull That Switch

Please, don't
get up. Ever.

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Sorry to
throw a
hairnet on
your evil
plans...

And Before You
Pull That Switch



Don't kill us,
we'll kill you...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Pardon me,
but is this
your fin?

And Before You
Pull That Switch

I know white
goes best with
you... but I
brought red...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Hold onto
your bunsens,
kids!

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Time to cut
some apron
strings...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

There's more
than one
way to skin a
cephalopod...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Time to pay
the organ
grinder...

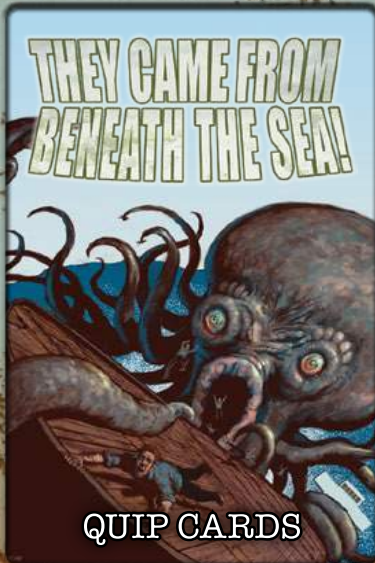
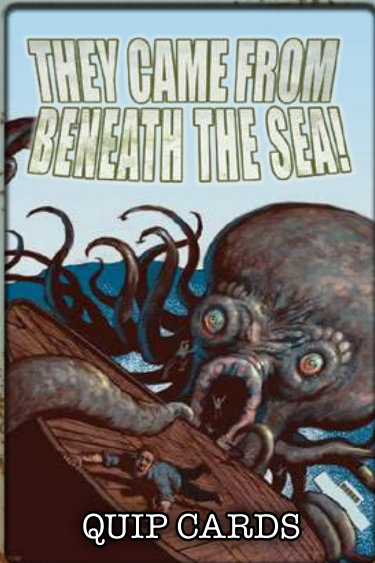
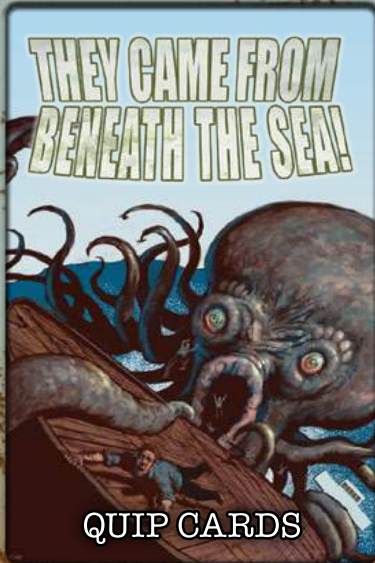
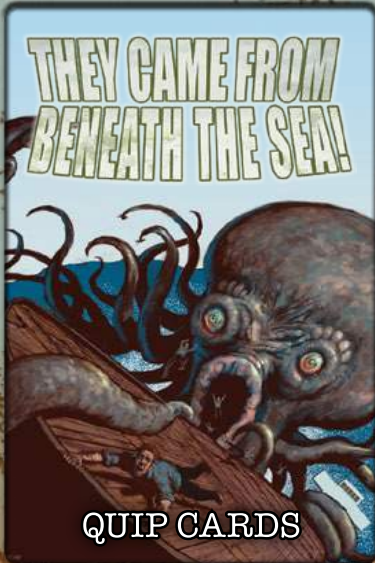
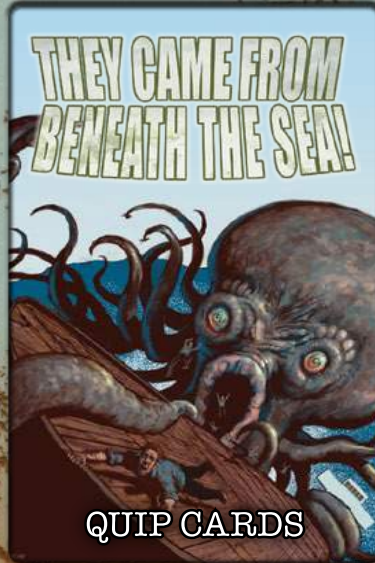
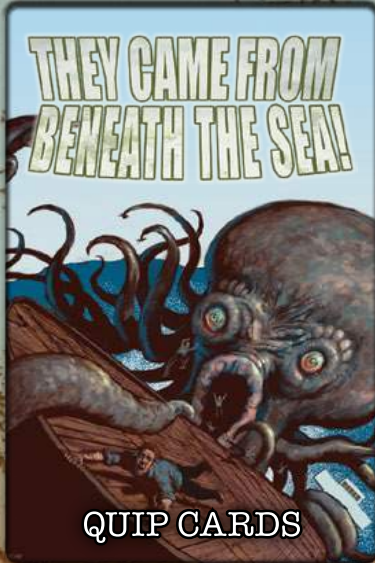
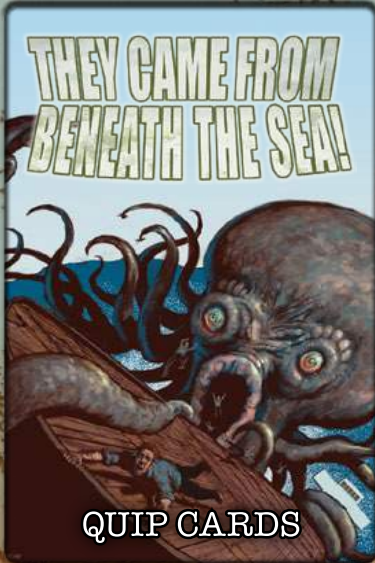
And Before You
Pull That Switch

Glad I'm not in
your webbed
feet...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

I'd like to stay,
but I've got
a date with
the rest of my
life...

And Before You
Pull That Switch



Never did care
for seafood...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Wave when
you get to the
explosion...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Hope you
like smoke
with your
shrapnel...

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Must be
Friday!

And Before You
Pull That Switch

You just
don't have
the tentacles
needed.

And Before You
Pull That Switch

Have you
been monster-
fighting long?

The Flirtation

If all
opponents
of undersea
invasions
look like you,
count me in...

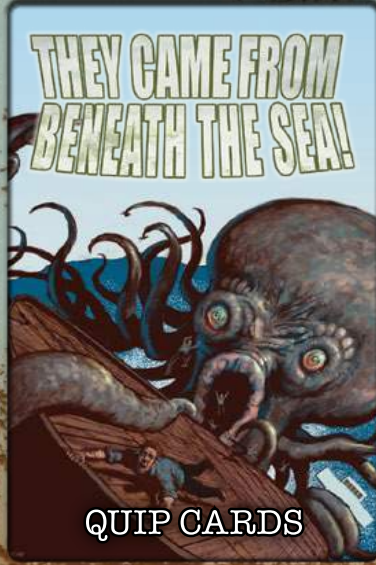
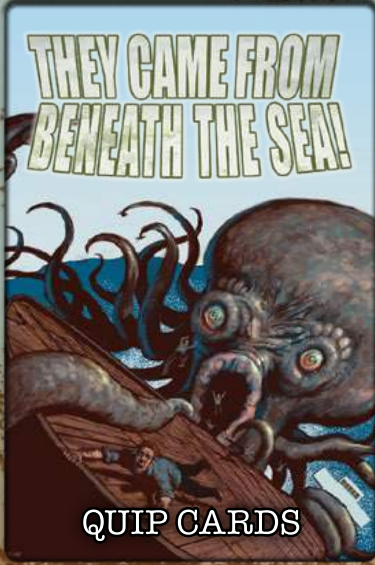
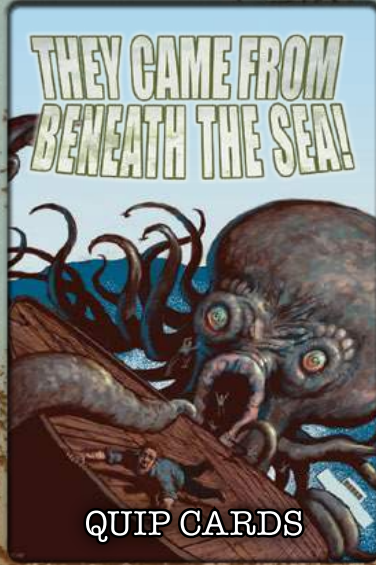
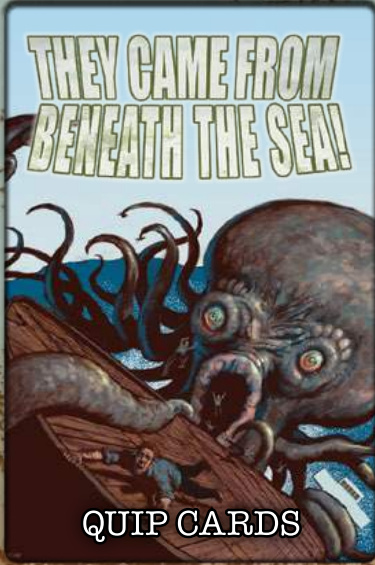
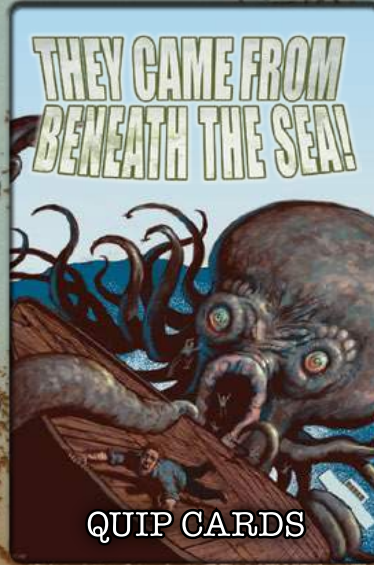
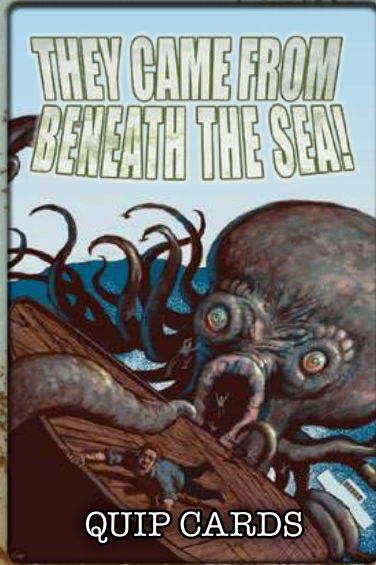
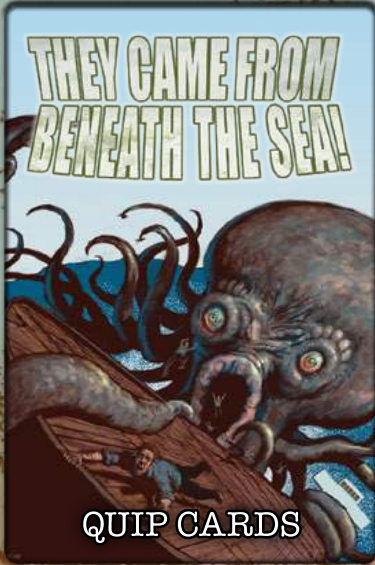
The Flirtation

We must
compare
encounters
with the
unknown
sometime...

The Flirtation

Where have
you been all
my longevity?

The Flirtation



I know one
figure I'd like
to check...

The Flirtation

Careful,
things
might be
overheating...

The Flirtation

There's no
one I'd rather
battle deadly
creatures
with...

The Flirtation

Well... the end
of the world
just got a little
bit brighter...

The Flirtation

I've never
been happier
to be free of
something's
slimy grip...

The Flirtation

You know, you
make those
loathsome
horrors look...
even more
loathsome...

The Flirtation

If we get
through this,
the sushi's on
me...

The Flirtation

Well now...
what oyster
did you come
out of?

The Flirtation

Underwater
hell doesn't
seem so bad...
now...

The Flirtation

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!



QUIP CARDS

That's not the
biology I had
in mind...

The Flirtation

So... what are
you doing
after foiling
an invasion?

The Flirtation

Alien
takeover's no
match... for
the takeover
of my heart...

The Flirtation

You know...
you have
just the right
number of
eyes...

The Flirtation

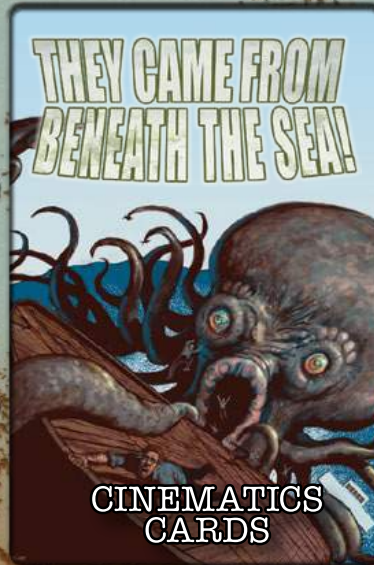
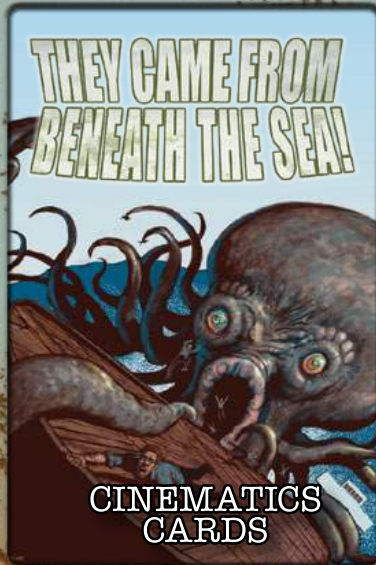
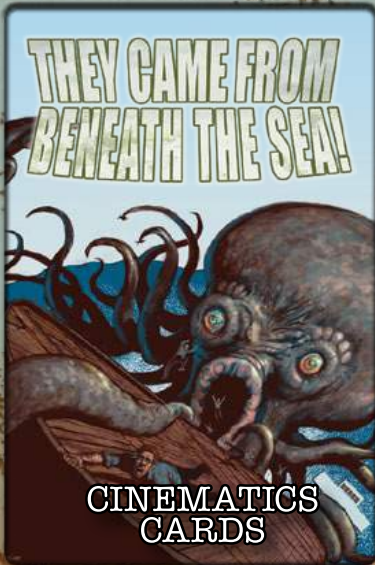
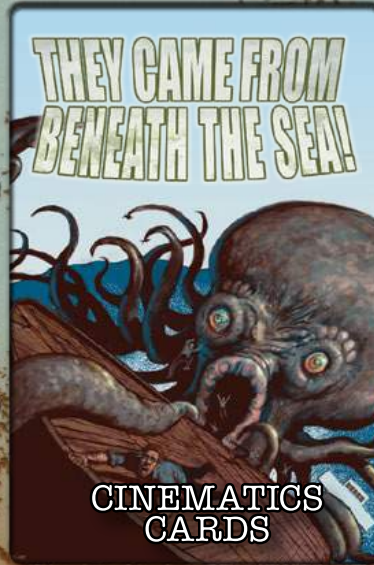
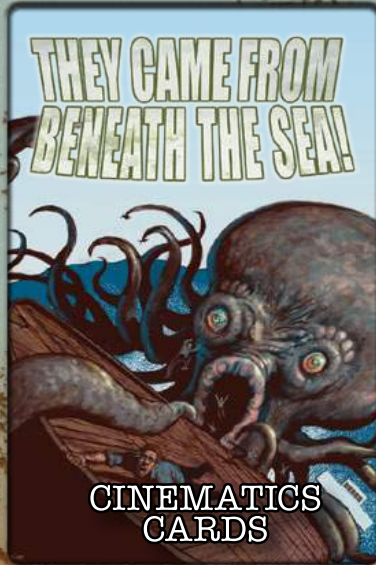
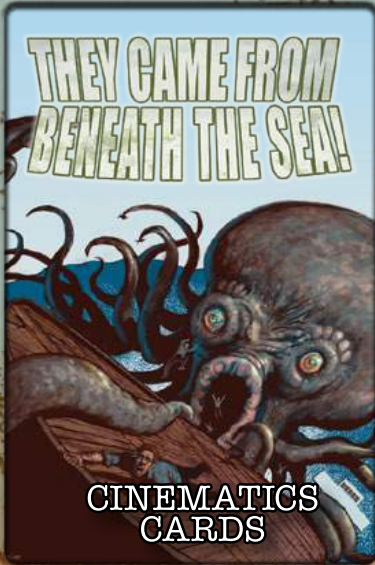
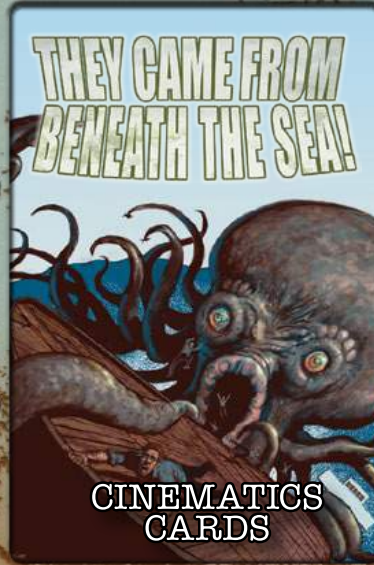
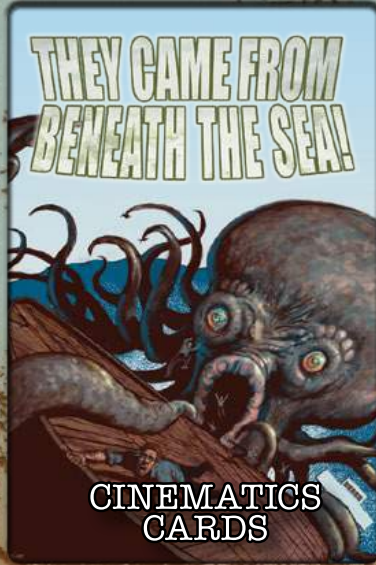
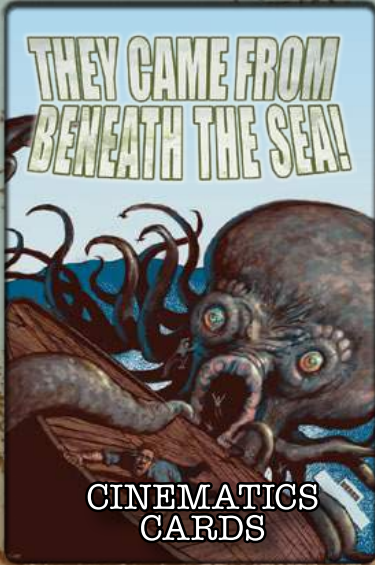
There's
something
about the
smell of fish
that just gets
me going.

The Flirtation

You remind
me of all the
things I love
about my
mother.

The Flirtation





ALLY OF CONVENIENCE

Cost: 1 Rewrite

Any player whose character has the Encountered status can choose to make an alien creature into an ally for the scene's duration. They may use their unwitting alien ally to escape a particularly troublesome or perilous situation, open a door, undo a lock, operate an escape vehicle, or read a vital piece of text.

BAD DUBBING

Cost: 1 Rewrite

Players with this Cinematic can activate it at an opportune time and the Director will then dub over the alien conversation in English for their benefit.

CALL THE UNDERSTUDY!

Cost: 2 Rewrites

A player can use Call the Understudy at any point during the scene, but once she does, the understudy portrays her character until the scene ends. The player can then rearrange the character's Skills as she sees fit. Any time an Understudy suffers damage, she is incapacitated and removed from the scene. The actual actor shows up for the next scene unharmed.

CHEAP SET

Cost: 1 Rewrite

A player with this Cinematic can, once per chapter, call upon some object or set piece to break or fail. A character might crash through a wall, pull a door off the hinges, shatter a car window with a single punch, or bend a metal (cardboard) bar with ease. Alternately, the character can target a device or prop in the hands of another character — a gun misfires, an evil device malfunctions, or a heavy extra falls through the floor.

DELETED SCENE

Cost: 3 Rewrites

Once per story, the player with this Cinematic can declare a Deleted Scene. This allows the character to replay or add on to a scene that has already happened, in order to introduce a new element, set up a future advantage, or provide Enhancements to an action. The character using this Cinematic must have been present in the scene that they wish to replay, or make an appearance in some direct or indirect way in the now-expanded scene. For example, the scene might now include a phone call or cutaway to the character using the Cinematic.

FAN FAVORITE: FAVORITE HERO

Cost: 2 Rewrites

When a character undergoes a Death Scene, the player can declare the character to be a Fan Favorite. The character's Death Scene continues as normal, but the character can return the next time Starring a Full Cast is invoked (typically during Wrap-Up), or during the next movie. If a character manages to undergo a Death Scene and then return to action during the same movie, Fan Favorite remains in effect for that character for the remainder of the movie and the character cannot enter another Death Scene. Her Health track cannot get any worse than That'll Leave a Scar.

FAN FAVORITE: FAVORITE VILLAIN

Cost: 2 Rewrites

If the player designates a villain or a supporting character as a Fan Favorite, that villain will return in the sequel, regardless of what happens to him during this movie. The villain might die in an explosion (no body found means he's not really dead!), get sucked into a whirlpool, or be enveloped in Suspended slime and taken to the watery depths. If the player uses Fan Favorite in this way, every character immediately gains 2 Experience points.

KILL THE EXTRA

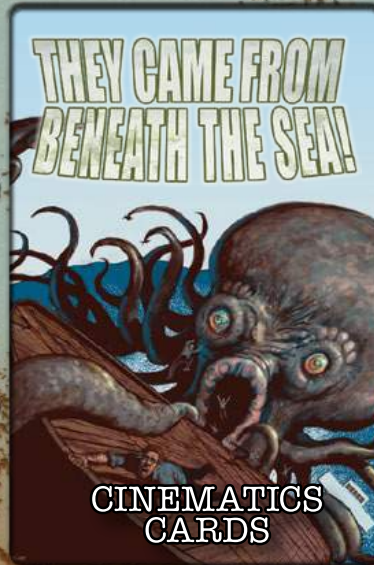
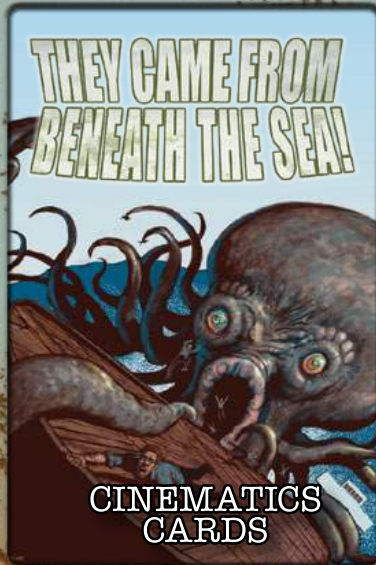
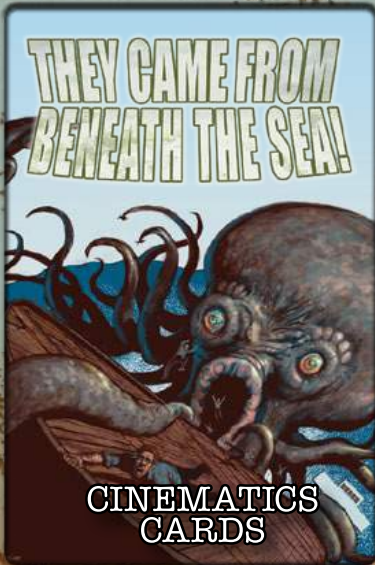
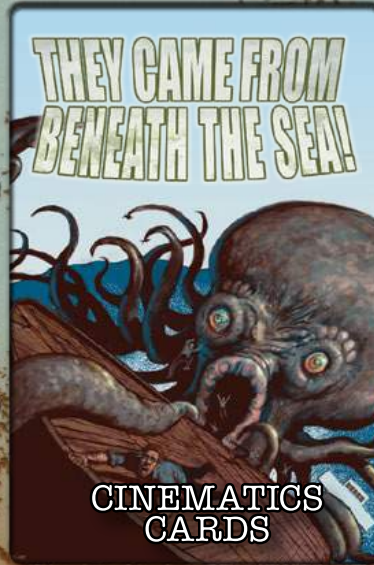
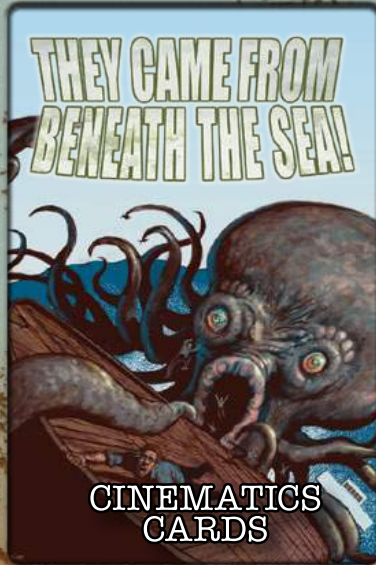
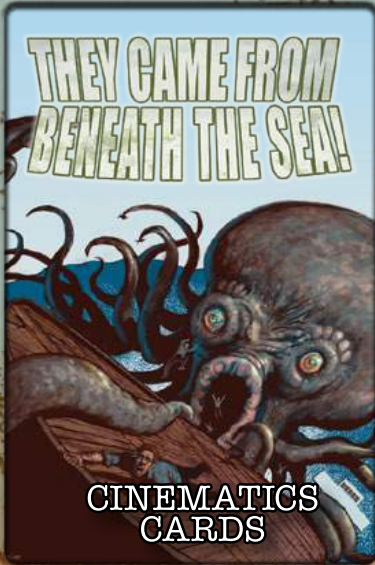
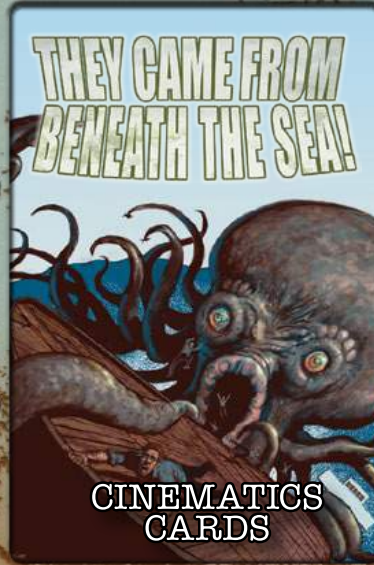
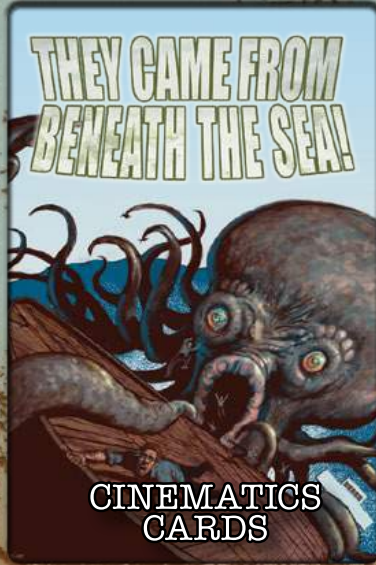
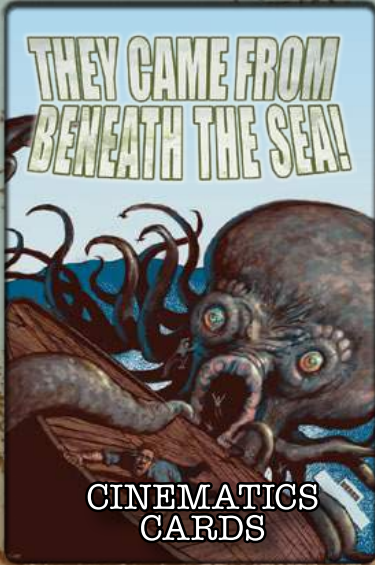
Cost: 1 Rewrite

Players who choose this Cinematic start play with a supporting character attached to their own. A sidekick of sorts, who participates in their misadventures without being too closely involved with the party. However, should their character come into immediate danger of death, the star can activate their extra to take the hit.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR

Cost: 2 Rewrites

This Cinematic can only be invoked for one character per story. Once a character invokes it, they are the Narrator for the duration of the film. Narrators have the ability to describe what is happening on screen, and more, importantly, *why* it is happening. During narration, dialogue can still occur (though it isn't always audible to the audience), and the Director can have other players make rolls for their characters. Generally, though, if the Narrator says it, it happens. If the Director wants to change the Narration, they must add a point to the Writers Pool and call for a Rewrite, telling the Narrator what needs to change in their last line.



REAR SCREEN PROJECTION

Cost: 1 Rewrite

With this Cinematic, a character can declare any trip that might conceivably have a rear-screen projection “safe” — even if the characters are driving through hell. Any attacks that happen during such a trip disable or damage the vehicle, but not the passengers. The player can declare Rear Screen Projection to be in effect at any time during a travel sequence.

SCENE MISSING

Cost: 3 Rewrites

A player with this Cinematic can use it, once per story, to get out of whatever sticky situation their character is currently in.

The character and any other player-controlled characters in the scene cannot be harmed, killed, or otherwise made to suffer direct damage. The scene ends (and the appropriate title card flashes on-screen), and then the film resumes with the characters unhurt and in a new situation some time later.

STARRING A FULL CAST: THE INTRODUCTION

Cost: 1 Rewrite

The first time all of the characters are together and interact with each other, the group can activate this Cinematic to add one Rewrite per character to the Writers Pool. This requires that every character has a chance to speak, that everyone is together and interacting (rather than everyone being the same physical space but paired off and cross-cutting between smaller groups), and that the group as a whole discusses some mutually relevant matter.

STARRING A FULL CAST: LET'S ALL PITCH IN

Cost: 1 Rewrite

When all of the characters are together and confronted by the same complicated or problematic situation, they can work together to help solve it. This requires that the situation is a problem for all of them, though it doesn't have to be a problem in the same way. Mechanically, one character acts as the primary actor in solving the problem, setting the dice pool. Everyone else rolls the same dice pool, contributing successes to the overall result. Each member of the group should describe (after rolling the dice!) how their character's efforts help or impede the group effort.

STARRING A FULL CAST: WRAP-UP

Cost: 1 Rewrite

When a story ends, the players can choose to employ this Cinematic.

All surviving characters must be gathered together, and must discuss, in brief, their experiences during the story and how they have changed. The player is encouraged to display this in the portrayal of the character rather than simply telling the other players. At the end of the scene, each character gains one additional Experience point.

SUMMON THE STUNTMAN

Cost: 2 Rewrites

A player with this Cinematic can, once per story, call in a stunt performer to undertake a physical action or a series of physical actions on their character's behalf. The stunt performer isn't being paid to act, and so cannot speak on camera.

As such, their utility is limited to physical feats: running, jumping, swimming, driving, and fighting. Stunt performers can suffer horrific injury, but no wounds or damage transfer to the character.

TAKE TWO!

Cost: 2 Rewrites

Sometimes it's wise to shoot two different versions of a scene. Actors have chemistry that no one expected, prompting a slight reinterpretation of the lines. A stunt performer breaks a leg, requiring an action scene be scrapped.

Whatever the justification, with this Cinematic, a player can require that scene be played twice, with potentially radically different results. This Cinematic can be used once per story. With this Cinematic, a character can start a scene over just as it ends.

'T WAS BEAUTY DID SOMETHING TO THE BEAST

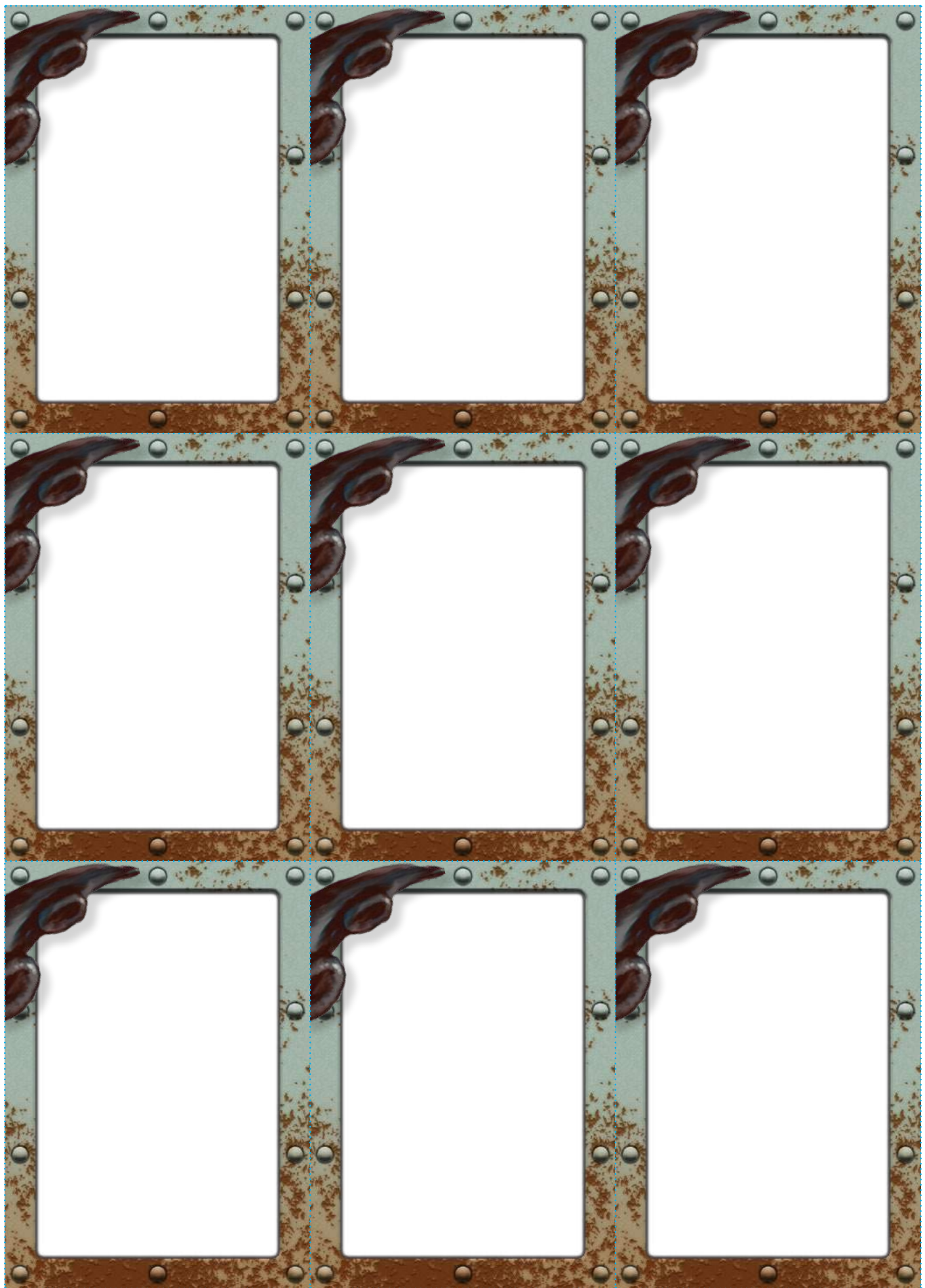
Cost: 1 Rewrite

Players with this Cinematic can activate it to initiate a romantic plot or subplot that, with the connivance of the Director, could alter the entire complexion of the conflict going forward. Or it might not. That depends on the motivations of the characters involved. Usually it involves aliens and involves slime.

YOU DROPPED THIS

Cost: 2 Rewrites

Encountered characters for whom this Cinematic is played gain an alien artifact at start of play or over the course of play and will always, very conveniently, be furnished with the exact knowledge they need to utilize it. Perhaps the encounter itself imbues the character with the special alien energy needed to fire their weapons or activate their devices.



THEY CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA!

NAME: _____
 PLAYER: _____
 CONCEPT: _____
 ARCHETYPE: _____

SKILLS

- | | | | |
|--|-------|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AIM: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> INTEGRITY: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CLOSE COMBAT: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMAND: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> PERSUASION: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CULTURE: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> PILOT: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EMPATHY: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ENIGMAS: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL: _____ | ○○○○○ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HUMANITIES: _____ | ○○○○○ | <input type="checkbox"/> TECHNOLOGY: _____ | ○○○○○ |

ATTRIBUTES

FAVORED APPROACH

<input type="checkbox"/> FORCE	INTELLECT ●○○○○	MIGHT ●○○○○	PRESENCE ●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> FINESSE	CUNNING ●○○○○	DEXTERITY ●○○○○	MANIPULATION ●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> RESILIENCE	RESOLVE ●○○○○	STAMINA ●○○○○	COMPOSURE ●○○○○

PATHS

ARCHETYPE: _____ ○○○○○
 ORIGIN: _____
 AMBITION: _____ ○○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

SHORT: _____
 SHORT: _____
 LONG: _____

CONNECTIONS

TRADEMARKS

QUIPS

TROPES

FAVORED STUNTS

- Just a Flesh Wound ○○○ +1 Archetype Die
- That'll Leave a Scar ○○○ +2 Archetype Dice
- Last Ditch Effort ○○○ +2/+3 Archetype Dice
- Remember Me ○○○ +3 Any Dice Pool
- Death Scene

RELATIONSHIPS: _____

 ARMOR: _____
 GROUP REWRITE POOL: _____
 EXPERIENCE: _____

They Came from Beneath the Sea! is a dramatic and farcical tabletop roleplaying game encompassing the wonder, horror, thrills, and humor of 1950s and 1960s science fiction. This game allows you to play with all the great content from the B-movies of decades ago, and promises a dynamic, fun time for all involved!

In **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** you play humans in a world under attack. The attackers? Aliens from beneath the sea (obviously). Adventures range from the one-shot defense of a small coastal town, to the lengthier liberation of a cruise ship infested with gill-folk, all the way to the story in which characters seize an alien submarine and ride it all the way down to the sea bed to take the fight to the invaders. In this game, your protagonists are strong-jawed war veterans, cunning and resourceful explorers, utterly insane scientists, and blue-collar heroes, just looking to defend their patches of land.

They Came from Beneath the Sea! contains a mix of serious threat and unbridled farce. While the book plays it straight with no winking at the camera, your game will include ludicrous statements and events taken with all the gravitas of your boat being set on fire. While this game provides rules for funny quips and amusing cinematics for incorporation in a scenario, we leave it to the players and Director to discover the correct level of humor for your game.

They Came from Beneath the Sea! uses the Storypath System, provided in full in the pages of this book!



THEY CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA! INCLUDES:

- Five playable Archetypes — the Everyman, the G-Man, the Mouth, the Scientist, and the Survivor!
- Rules for character creation and play, using the **Storypath System** fully detailed in this book!
- Cinematic powers such as the ability to insert deleted scenes in your game, cut to black when everything is looking a bit too grim, and redirect shots to kill the extras!
- Quips to throw in at appropriate (and sometimes inappropriate) moments, giving your characters the chance at an award-winning scene!
- The history and setting of the 1950s world presented in this book!
- Scores of aliens promising the fall of the human race, presenting a broad array of dangers and objectives for repeat play!
- Two ready-to-play scenarios, straight out of the book!

THEY001

\$45.00 US

