

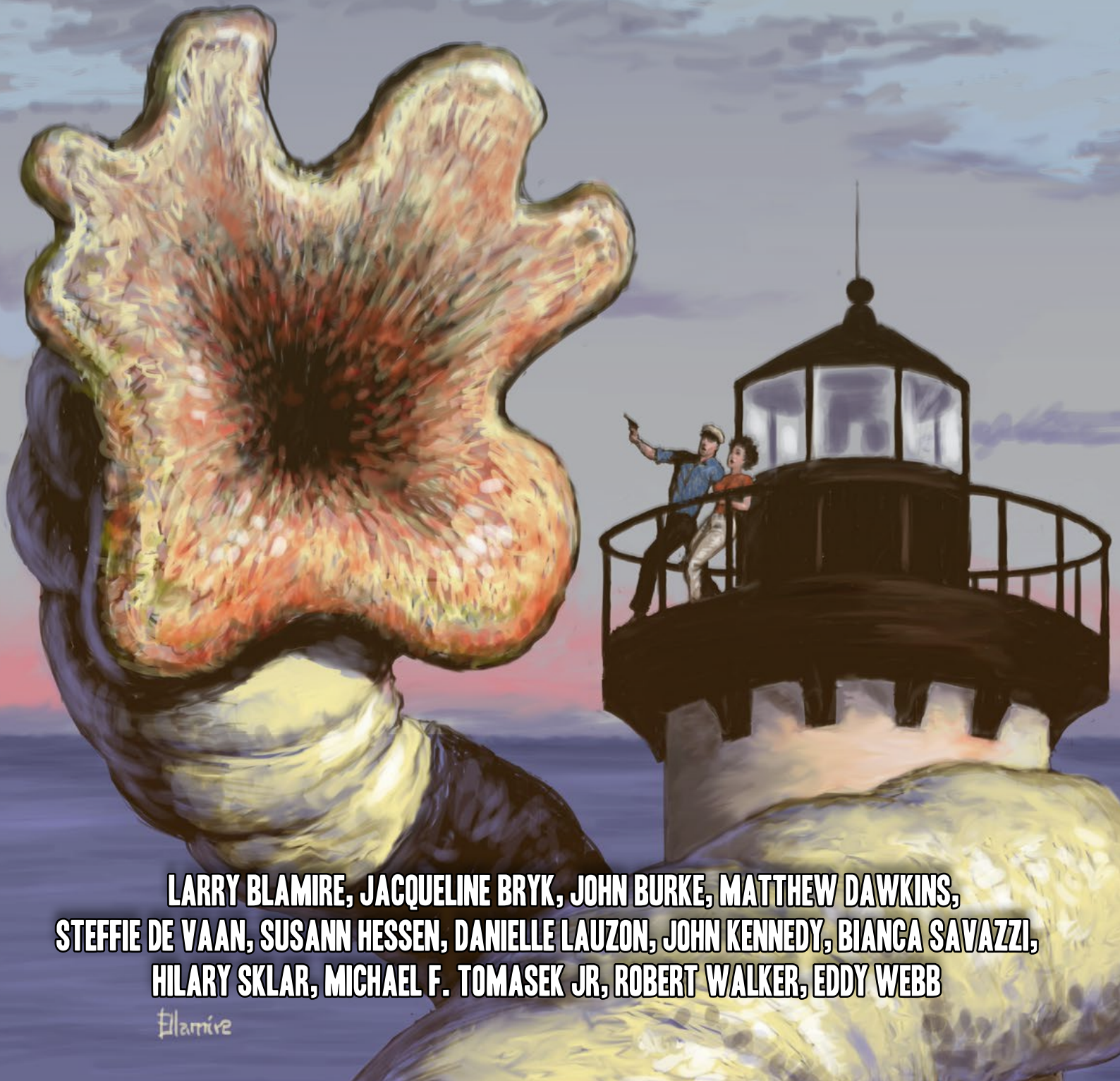
MONSTERS OF THE DEEP!



A SOURCEBOOK FOR
**THEY CAME FROM
BENEATH THE SEA!**

Flarrive

MONSTERS OF THE DEEP!



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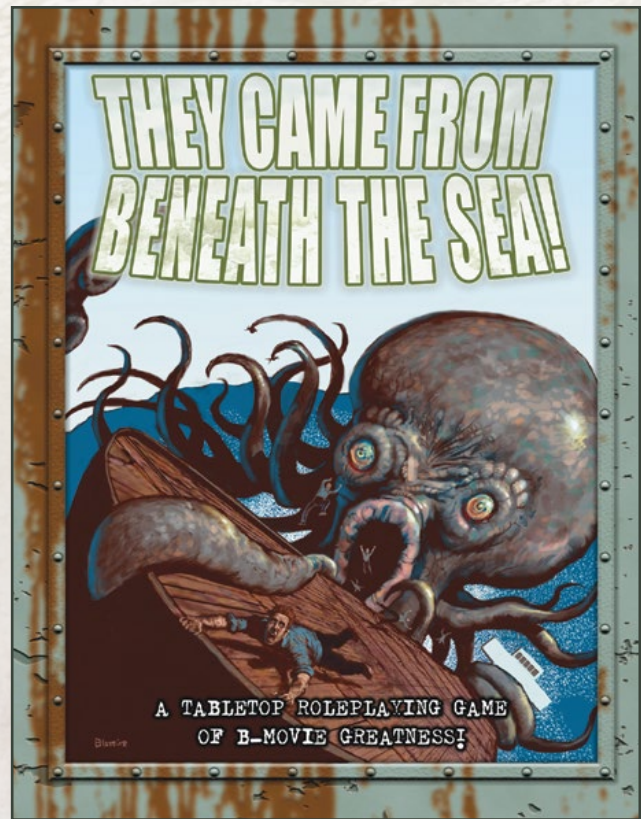
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THE RETURN OF BILLY SKIBBERS

He had walked the plank twice. Maybe this third time was lucky. Even keel-hauling failed to tame his mean disposition. An understatement, given the nastiness of this most notorious of brigands.

He stepped off. Not at the prod of the sword in his back - he didn't care about that. But because it was time...

...

The salvage tug chugged through black water. From the sound of the Calypso, it wouldn't be long before she was salvage herself. The two-man watch wished they were sleeping like their two mates. It had been a long job welding the hell out of the sixty-foot research vessel they now towed through the inky night. At the wheel, tug master Mike Jatson wondered if it wouldn't have been smarter to just scuttle the damn thing. Would this wreck even pay for their time?

They had caught confused bursts of a distress signal. Enough to find their way.

But by the time they came alongside, there was no sign of crew with both lifeboats gone. Looked like they'd left in a hurry. Jatson hoped

the fancy equipment would be worth something - what remained of it anyway. Some was damaged. Yet there'd been no weather to speak of...

The radio squawked. Ben Bleeckup, checking in from the bridge of the research boat.

"What's up, Ben? Towlines okay?"

"Towlines are fine, but somethin' banging around belowdecks."

Jatson sighed. They spent hours securing that boat. What could be loose?

"Alright. Shutting down. Take care of it."

Jatson yanked the engine telegraph to full stop, and the Calypso and her prize slowed. He was lighting his pipe when Abe Teller stepped into the pilothouse.

"That log didn't put you under?" asked Jatson, seeing the book in Abe's hand.

Abe had taken the science vessel's log with the express purpose of having something to put him to sleep. "It's... kinda curious, Mike."

The radio squawked. "Mike? Somethin' funny goin' on here," rasped Bleeckup.

"Funny, how?"

"Seaweed. Everywhere."

"What ya mean, everywhere? Wasn't there before."

"I know that."

Jatson shook his head.

The determined Teller continued, "They were studying artifacts from the wreck of an 18th-century privateer. Captain was so bad the crew mutinied and did him in."

"So?"

An abrupt sound came over the radio. Jatson squinted curiously at it as Teller went on.

"The research divers also found toxic waste drums dumped alongside the wreck."

"Ben, what's goin' on?" Jatson snapped into the radio.

"Mike, will ya listen to me?" pleaded Teller.

"Ben? Son of a - where is he? Ben?" Jatson left the bridge. With Teller tailing him, they worked their way aft. At the stern, they stared out at the darkened research vessel.

"What happened to the lights? Dammit, Ben," grunted Jatson, annoyance mounting as he turned one of the Calypso's stern lights on the craft.

As the research boat knocked the tug's bumpers, Jatson came up with a flashlight. "Grab that line, Abe."

"Mike, I don't like this."

"I don't either, but I wanna get home. Now hold it fast."

Jatson scrambled onto the foredeck of the darkened craft. As he did, Tommy, the fourth crewman, joined Teller at the tug's stern.

"Tommy, I say the word, get us underway. Wasted enough time." Jatson made his way toward the bridge.

Up in the darkened pilothouse, he flicked a switch, but... no lights.

"Ben Bleeckup? What the hell'd you do? I swear..."

Jatson opened a hatch and started working his way down the narrow, claustrophobic companionway. It was pitch black, and he raked his flashlight side to side as he went. The light began to sputter. He shook it, but it kept flickering on and off.

"Damn batteries."

The light died. Jatson heard something in the darkness, like a rusty breath of some kind. Nervously, he shook the flashlight.

The light illuminated the monstrosity that was Billy Skibbers. It was right before him, and the thing jutted its ghastly face at him with an "Arrggh!" followed by a laugh that could only be described as the sound of some sort of large dry husk ripping in two.

Jatson yelled and scrambled back up the steps.

He emerged with the once-human pirate on his heels. The thing pulled itself out of the hatch, rising to its full eight feet. The light from the tug illuminated the monster, showing its distorted face with three crooked eyes - one big round one in the forehead - and a mouthful of gnarled teeth. The horrified Jatson backed away. The thing swiped at him with a long arm ending in a hand mutated into a sharp hook, the blood dripping from it no doubt Bleeckup's. Its 18th-century garb was rotting and tattered.

Abe Teller yelled up to the tug's bridge to get underway fast, which Tommy did.

The salvage tug started just as the stalking Billy Skibbers cornered Jatson at the bow. It was about to grab him when the lines went taut and yanked the research boat, toppling the thing in a heap.

Jatson took advantage and, as the science boat picked up speed, timed his jump from its stem to the stern of the tug where he tumbled onto the deck. As the mutant pirate lurched after him, long arms reaching, Teller grabbed a particularly nasty-looking boat hook and jabbed at the monster, gouging its face.

The dry mad cackle that resulted was not what they expected.

As the boats bumped, the thing reached over and grabbed the tug's gunwale.

"Open 'er up!" hollered Jatson to the bridge, and Tommy did so.

Teller scrambled to undo the steel towing wires.

"What the hell ya doin'? We worked for that salvage!" screamed Jatson.

"Dead men can't spend!" Teller shot back as he tossed the second line free.

Billy Skibbers' grip slipped as the tug tore away from its salvage, letting it pass back into the night.

The last thing they saw was that laughing monster, until the darkness swallowed it up.

"Should've scuttled 'er," said Teller.





INTRODUCTION

But this is the second bunch of brains to come out here.
What happened to the first?!

- Seaman Jack Sommers, *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957)

Before you wait a cornucopia of aquatic horror. A Pandora's box of marine menaces. A collection of nasty fish people. **Monsters of the Deep!** is an expansive bestiary for your games of **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, and woe betide the poor heroes destined to face the creatures within.

As with the game described in **TCfBtS!**, the monsters and critters introduced in this book are placed roughly in the nebulous 1950s era of black and white B-movies with a lack of money and a lot of heart. Whether Directors introduce these monsters as horrifying adversaries or as laughable costumes with stitching coming apart with every step, the range of creatures on the pages of this book provide sufficient story hooks and dynamic threats, and might act as the central theme of any story (just picture the poster for *Revenge of the Turtledon!* or *The Day Melvis Came to Graceland!*) to keep you fueled for hours of gameplay.

This book is laid out in the following chapters:

- **Introduction** — It's where you are now, but you'll be stepping from the jetty before long. Arm yourself with a harpoon and a net, and get to work.
- **Destroyers** — These monsters seek only to destroy humanity and our way of life. Maybe they hate us for our intrusion into their domain, perhaps they just dislike our faces and want to wipe them off the map. Either way, few Destroyers are subject to reasonable debate.
- **Enslavers** — Among the most insidious of the alien races are those dubbed Enslavers. They see humankind as a worthy

stock, whether to build their underwater cities or as vessels to host their young. They'll make every effort to put humankind in chains.

- **Invaders** — Tyrants, aquatic police, and fish prone to avarice, the Invaders want nothing less than to dominate humanity and take what's ours. They see themselves as rightful heirs to our many land thrones, and won't stop until there's a crustacean in the White House.
- **Primordials** — Alien, unknowable, perhaps even unthinking, these ancient deep-sea races have bizarre aims and all spell a certain kind of doom for humanity. Whether we're caught in their way or the target of their indiscernible ends, these Primordials all pose a great risk to our species.
- **Spies** — Whether in service to other monsters or accumulating knowledge for their own diabolical ends, Spies fold themselves into our society, government, and positions of human powers and influence to increase their own. Spies come in many forms, with few of them obvious until it's too late.
- **Terrestrial Threats** — The worst kind of threat is a human one. As if we learned nothing from the devastating wars of this century, some humans are still inclined toward destruction of their own species, only now it's in service to watery masters. Be warned when reading this chapter, as you might come to suspect your neighbor of piscine allegiances!



HELL IS A HORIZON

The pilot of the large motor yacht thought his eyes were playing tricks on him.

The horizon was alive. The normally placid line between sea and sky seemed to vibrate with queasy activity.

And it was getting closer.

He was just wondering how a horizon could get closer when he saw that it wasn't something in the water, but something on it. And it was heading right for him.

. . .

Ocean scientist Lonna Durene had skimmed past the big yacht minutes earlier, her StreamCast Whizboat 500 easily matching most engines afloat. It was a mere glance at her oceanic science log that caused her to look back. Even then, it took moments for her to make sense of what she saw.

A blur of motion engulfed the big yacht, followed seconds later by faint, muffled screams whipping past on the wind.

The inquisitive Lonna wasted no time in turning her small craft and bouncing it

along over oncoming waves. In doing so, she lost sight of the yacht below the chops, and by the time she closed on it, the mad blur had subsided, with only a still boat remaining.

Lonna circled the yacht, calling out, but received no response. Pulling alongside, she made fast a line to a cleat on the larger boat's gunwale, and hauled herself aboard.

What she found was not pretty.

It didn't make sense at first, these strange puddles sprawled at intervals about the deck. Only when it became clear that the puddles were once people did Lonna tense up. A quick examination told her the impossible: All trace of blood and bone had been removed.

Calmly, she worked her way around the hideous flattened masses that were once passengers and crew and climbed the steps to the bridge. She immediately got on the radio and called the Coast Guard. Rather

than go into details about something she did not yet understand herself, she kept it a simple SOS and reported her position.

No sooner had she replaced the handset than movement on the horizon caught her eye. It was just in one spot. The line seemed to dance somehow. Lonna squinted. It was so far, that horizon. Yet it appeared to get closer.

Coolly, the scientist climbed back into her craft and started the engine. As she pulled away from the dead yacht, she looked again to that shifting horizon. It was beginning to clarify.

Rather than a single line, the horizon was actually hundreds of objects, each the size of a large dog, smoothly gliding as one at alarming speed across the top of the water as though weightless. Long, wiry, splayed legs bent flat on the ocean's surface propelled their slender crooked torsos.

Skating.

That was it. Lonna's sharp "science eyes" pegged them as outsized versions of sea skaters, halobates - the only truly oceanic insect. And judging from the yacht's carnage, their outrageous size was not their only aberration. Their naturally predatory nature had become amplified to the extent that they preyed on large mammals in the most horrific manner.

Lonna's professional fascination was mercifully shaken long enough to also observe that they were closing fast. It was deceptive - the only sound they made was a kind of soft, swirling hiss.

The scientist kicked her boat into high gear, virtually bounding over waves. But the eerie swarm of Skaters kept pace; there was seemingly little effort in their terrible ballet.

Lonna decided to shake them using sharp turns, cutting through her own wake before they could get there. This succeeded in blunting their momentum, but the things quickly rectified en masse, as with a single mind, like a murmuration of starlings in twisted form. Within seconds, they were back on her tail, closing fast.

One shot ahead of the others, skating up on her right. Lonna glanced at its round, cold black eyes, twitching antennae, and impossibly long legs in a wide X. She also saw the addition of a tube with mandibles telescoping from its snout. It whipped toward her.

Lonna barely batted an eye as she produced a flare gun in her left hand, just below her right arm which held the wheel. The flare smacked the thing directly. When it burst into flames, she was surprised how flammable it was.

This did not deter the others, as two more creatures broke from the pack to close in. Lonna cut hard a'port and once again gained much-needed space. She knew she couldn't keep this up forever. Her fuel wouldn't let her. She glanced at her spare can.

Lonna saw something dead ahead; her zig-zagging was bringing her back towards the yacht. She suddenly looked again at the spare fuel and had an idea.

Gunning her boat toward the yacht, Lonna tore off a piece off her shirt with her free hand. She snagged the spare fuel can, unscrewed the lid, and stuffed the cloth inside. Her peripheral vision told her two lead sea skaters were gradually overtaking her, one on either side. Lonna kept her focus and dug around for her lighter.

Just as she came up with it, a halobate snout shot out and slapped it from her hand. Keeping the wheel steady on the fast approaching yacht, she reached down, desperately feeling for the lighter. Snagging it, she quickly lit the material in the fuel can.

Which was good, because she was about to hit the yacht at high speed.

Lonna grabbed a life jacket and jumped. Holding it above water, she managed to swim just enough to one side so that the mad rush of skaters, homing in on her boat, kept going, right into the fierce explosion of flames that erupted. The big insects rushed into it, unable to stop, each bursting into flames like a string of giant firecrackers.

Lonna was just far enough out of harm's way to watch with some satisfaction. Then faint movement on the horizon drew her attention.

Was that the Coast Guard?

CHAPTER ONE

DESTROYERS

"You do not need guns."

"Maybe we think we do."

- Eros to Jeff Trent, Plan 9 from Outer Space (1959)

These threats from the deep are dedicated to humankind's destruction, whether through flood, nuclear war, or assault via the armies of the ocean. Most Destroyers are immensely powerful in body or possess weaponry dedicated to the sole purpose of killing.

Destroyers are the archnemeses of Survivors, loathing the kinds of humans who escape each and every scrape with a heroic scar and an inch more grizzle.

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.

BILLY SKIBBERS

"Took a lot to kill our Billy, it did. Like dyin' just t'weren't in 'im. Not that we hated 'im, though there was that, but we feared the great bastard. He'd kill ye for a wink, and cut ye for a nod."

— **Bloody Ben Casco**, late the Queen's navy and former privateer

Billy Skibbers is a monstrous, mutated 17th-century pirate, returned from the dead with the sole purpose of wreaking havoc on any and all ships and things afloat. This reanimated buccaneer operates only on its strongest instincts: to plunder for the sake of plundering, with any prior thoughts of booty and spoils long buried.

Born William Everett Skibbers in Cornwall, England in 1657, the youth was keen for trouble from the start, going to sea at age eleven and, being large for his age, throwing in with freebooters by the time he was fourteen.

Billy rose to second mate, then first, under Black John Hammer, and it wasn't long before he sliced his captain's throat during a disagreement over shares. No crew dared cross the six-foot-eight, 240-pound brute, who fashioned a fearsome hook to cup neatly over his left hand.

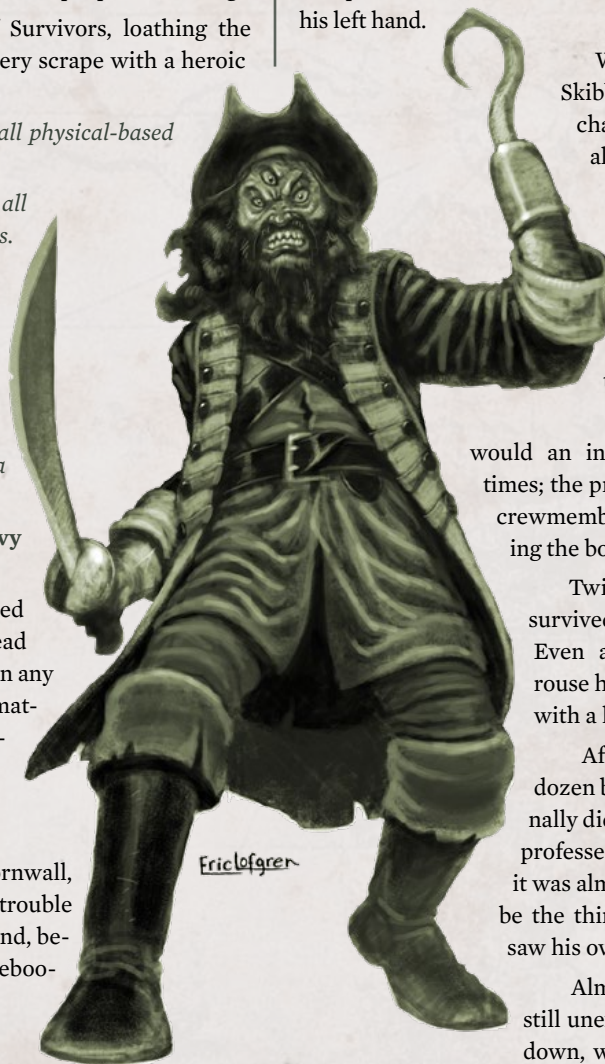
With no allegiances, Captain Billy Skibbers scuttled privateer and merchant ship alike (no matter their flag), along with a few naval vessels. He took no prisoners and showed no quarter, gaining wealth few buccaneers enjoyed. But his cruel treatment of his own followers created unrest and, despite their fear of the man, the crew sought to depose the ocean-going tyrant.

Not until Rasputin years later would an individual be assassinated so many times; the proverbial cat with nine lives. Many a crewmember paid the ultimate price for "rolling the bones" against Billy Skibbers.

Twice he walked the plank and twice he survived to return and terrorize the crew. Even a good keel-hauling did little but rouse his anger, which he tended to express with a hearty laugh.

After several more stabbings and a dozen balls of lead, a third plank-walking finally did Billy Skibbers in. But those present professed something strange. They claimed it was almost as if he wanted it that way. Maybe the third time was his charm. Perhaps he saw his own future.

Almost immediately following, in a still unexplained twist of fate, the ship went down, with only several of the crew escap-



ing by longboat. The wreck came to rest on the sea bottom not far from the weighted-down remains of Billy Skibbers. Over the years, oddly, not a single sea creature partook of the dead pirate's remains.

All remained as it was, like an eerie underwater museum, until fate stepped in again in the mid-20th century, when drums of toxic waste were illegally dumped nearby. The slow leak of chemicals did something over time, altering the pirate's remains in ways we still don't understand.

The thing that easily snapped the chain weighting it down was almost unrecognizable. An eight-foot-tall monstrosity, with lengthened arms and a hideous, distorted face with asymmetrical eyes (plus a bulging third eye on the forehead for good measure). Its teeth were sharp and gnarled. Most dangerous of all was the fusion of that deadly hook with Billy's left hand. Other than that, only his bushy black beard, tattered 17th-century clothing, nasty rasping laugh, and occasional "Arrgh!" betrayed the monster's buccaneer heritage.

When the research vessel *Sun Visor II* began exploring the wreck of his old ship, the reborn Billy Skibbers crawled up the side in the dead of night and stalked the crew one by one. When the thing's presence was known, the crew battled hard, but not enough to overcome the monster.

Billy Skibbers has one driving purpose, one thing it lives for: to overtake and destroy any and all craft with which it comes into contact. Especially insidious is its method (all that remains of Billy Skibber's piratical wiles) of letting a ship drift as bait until a rescuer comes, then springing from hiding to wipe out the crew.

GOALS

There is only one mission for the monstrous mutated freebooter: eliminate any and all people it comes into contact with. Billy Skibbers only other interest seems to be wealth, especially of a shiny, glittering variety. Beyond that, Skibbers lacks a sense of reason.

STORY HOOK

After an unexpected storm catches it, a yacht finds itself adrift, engine kaput and radio dead. Hope appears in the form of a large freighter, but as they drift up to it, it shows no signs of life. The yacht crew succeeds in securing to the ship's side, and a group of volunteers boards the big vessel. There are indications of great disturbance on board, but no signs of life. Yet there has been no storm in the area.

SYSTEM

Billy Skibbers is a reanimated pirate, eight feet tall and well over 300 pounds, with a deadly ingrown hook — thus an obvious physical threat as well as a wily one, with a single driving purpose to plunder and kill. Though incapable of intelligent speech, it does seem to possess a hearty, even diabolical enjoyment in what it does, its laughter peppered with numerous "Arrghs."

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Persuasion 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Might 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Beyond Reason: Skibbers cannot be reasoned with unless offered precious gems or metals, which transfix its third eye for the remainder of the scene or until it suffers harm.

Gunfire Immunity: Given how many times Billy was shot in its first life, standard gunfire has no effect, suggesting its nervous system just isn't the same as it once was. Other projected weapons, such as harpoons, missiles, and arrows, do however affect it.

COLOSSOMANTIDS A.K.A. THE ISLANDS

"It's a paradise over there. I'm telling you, Nancy. You won't believe it until you see it!"

— Joe Medinelli, host of the Colossomantids

Nobody knows if the Colossomantids came from space, another dimension, or if they're just another deadly threat cooked up in the trench. What is known is that Colossomantids are real, dangerous, and coming to a landmass near you.

These insect-like creatures grow to be hundreds of feet tall and strong enough to carry entire islands on their barnacle-encrusted backs. A Colossomantid begins as a crawling larva, around one foot in length, which burrows into the soil beneath a coastal landmass. It leeches the nutrients from the soil, killing all plant life, bugs, and small animals in the affected area. The land becomes dead and brittle, eventually breaking off from the main landmass to form a small island. The larva then bursts into its larger form, sprouting massive legs and arms, and its love of flora is replaced with a voracious need to consume fauna. It drags itself out to sea, transforming itself as well as the land to which it is attached.

Colossomantids appear, at first, as mysterious islands near coastal towns. Initial investigations report idyllic islands, beautiful and verdant, where exotic trees sprout colorful and delicious fruits, reversing the harm it inflicted on the land in larval stage. On closer investigation, the fruits are found to contain the larval form of microscopic insects, dubbed "headscratchers" by fascinated scientists. They seize control of their target and force them to act as hosts, inviting others to join them out on the island. Some even form companies, offering guided sightseeing tours of the new paradise. None who accompany these tour guides of doom ever return.

Even other aliens of the deep have been taken as hosts by the Colossomantids, luring their own kind back to be devoured in the creature's gaping maw to feed its endless hunger for flesh and bone.

While the islands may appear as curiosities, it is clear to more astute human observers of the pernicious predators that they breed at an alarming rate, though how they do so is a mystery. If allowed to continue, it is estimated the Colossomantids will encroach upon all surface land on Earth within thirty years, leaving no place safe and reducing humans to grinning ornaments, throwing themselves happily into the bowels of the beasts.

GOALS

Turn the whole of the Earth into their feeding ground and the human race into their herd.

STORY HOOK

The Golden Paradise tour company is one of the biggest draws in town, offering trips to the island that used to be Poindexter's Rock but, almost overnight, has bloomed into a lush garden brimming with wildlife and rare plants. The townspeople are intrigued, while the former sheriff, a conspiracy theorist, continues to picket the site of the tours, wearing a sandwich board emblazoned with "DoN'T EAT THE FrooT!"

SYSTEM

Colossomantids do not possess true stats. Their attacks, using their limbs, or ramming their islands into ships or submarines automatically destroy them at a rate of one per turn. Consider large Colossomantids to have a standard dice pool of 9 on all physical actions and a Scale of 5. Larval Colossomantids are too weak to resist any attack and have no defense against them.

SPECIAL RULES

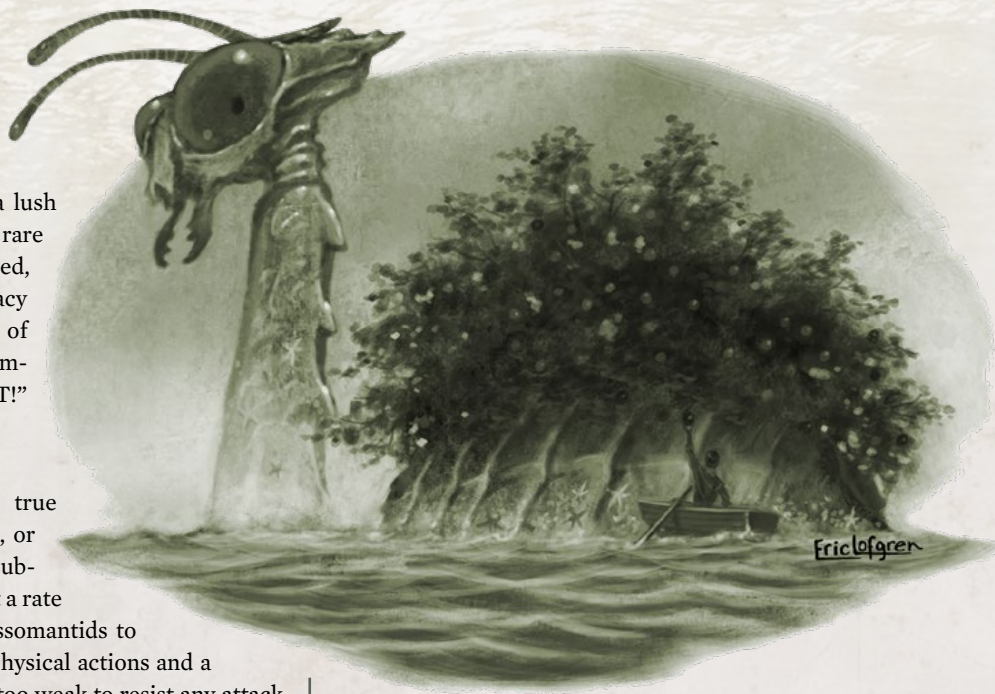
Headscratcher Hosts: Named for their victims compulsion to repeatedly scratch their heads, headscratchers are tiny larvae that grow into microscopic insects. When ingested, they invade and overwhelm the minds of their victims. Any character who eats the fruit from a Colossomantid island must succeed on an Integrity + Composure roll (Difficulty 4) or become infested with headscratchers. Success means the character spews the squirming fruit from their mouth. Those infested gain an incredibly upbeat, salesperson-like demeanor and speak effusively about the benefits of a trip to the island. The infested retain all stats they possessed before infestation, except they now feed the Colossomantid they serve by throwing victims into its maw.

Infested characters can have headscratchers surgically removed on a Medicine + Intellect roll (Difficulty 4). The procedure takes one scene to complete.

If the island moves away or the host is separated from the island by more than one mile, the headscratchers die, causing pain and then unconsciousness in the host for a scene, returning to normal afterwards.

Exoskeletal Armor: Colossomantids are enormous (Scale 5) and plated with an impenetrable carapace that deflects torpedoes and resists the blasts of depth charges. The only true way to destroy a Colossomantid is to feed deadly toxins or explosives into the maw.

The Maw: Usually located in an underground sanctuary of which only the hosts know, the maw of the Colossomantid appears at first as a hole in the ground. Closer inspection reveals a fleshy passage lined with razor sharp fangs. The maw can send forth a set of inner jaws to snap at any character within 10 feet of it, requiring a protagonist to succeed on an Athletics + Dexterity roll to dodge its attack. If struck, the protagonist is considered Grappled, and must make a contested Close Combat + Might roll on each of their turns and the maw's turns against its physical dice pool of 9 to avoid being



dragged into the maw itself. Other protagonists can attack the grasping jaw as normal, and it retracts after taking three damage. Falling into the maw means instant death for any individual, unless a Cinematic is used to prevent it.

Scything Claws/Hunt by Stealth: If attacked by outside threats, the Colossomantid deploys its mantis-like scythes from its sides and slices open any and all ocean-going vessels threatening it. However, these attacks cause the Colossomantid to reconsider its position and move away, giving the appearance of an island drifting out to sea.

Larval Extraction: It is possible to extract larval Colossomantids from the ground before they hatch. If a scientist identifies the tell-tale signs of their presence, they can order a geophysics survey, which locates the larva to be extracted. However, endangering the larva may draw the attention of its "mother," summoning it to the area.

DR. HOPPER

"I always knew that his love of frogs would get him into trouble."

— Simon Gorman, Lab Assistant

Dr. Josef F. Roschleiber devoted his entire scientific career to the field of atomic exploration. However, war's end and "Operation Paperclip" carved him a new destiny in the U.S. as Dr. Joseph F. Roglover. Studying the effects of radiation on amphibians in a secret New Mexico military base, Roglover was a harsh taskmaster who forced his staff to work long hours. Roglover believed that by fortifying living matter with atomic energy, one could create stronger and more powerful beings. If his theories proved correct, soldiers wouldn't need protective equipment. Postponing human trials, the U.S. Army instead tasked Roglover with experimenting on frogs, leading the scientist to spend most of his waking hours with amphibians. Those working with Roglover said he seemed to develop a kinship with these creatures on a level he never achieved with any of his human coworkers. Following several months of tireless experiments and sleep deprivation, an accident caused a leak in the nuclear reactor at the center of Roglover's lab. As personnel evac-

uated, Dr. Roglover refused to leave his experiments behind, and as he grabbed his beloved frog, Hopper, the scientist met his end.

Months after the military scrubbed the site, dumping the irradiated refuse in the sea, the incident, known only as “Meltdown in Frogtown,” seemed a distant memory. However, local coastal townsfolk began telling stories of a 50-foot-tall frog creature destroying fishing vessels on the coasts and haunting the rivers.

GOALS

Irrationally deciding his former colleagues betrayed him, Dr. Hopper uses U.S. waterways to hunt down his lab assistants and seek revenge. He blames them for his transformation into such a horrible monster.

STORY HOOK

Agent Griff Palmer inspected the destroyed ranch-style suburban home of Dr. Emile York. The whole place was coated in a viscous slime, and appeared as if it had been stepped on by an enormous creature. There, in what used to be the kitchen, was a human hand sticking out from the rubble, clutching a photograph. The picture featured several men in lab coats standing outside an army base in the American Southwest. The back of the photo contained a list of every scientist who worked with the late Dr. Roglover. The first three names were crossed out. Did Hopper leave this behind as a clue?

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Enigmas 4, Integrity 2, Science 5, Survival 2

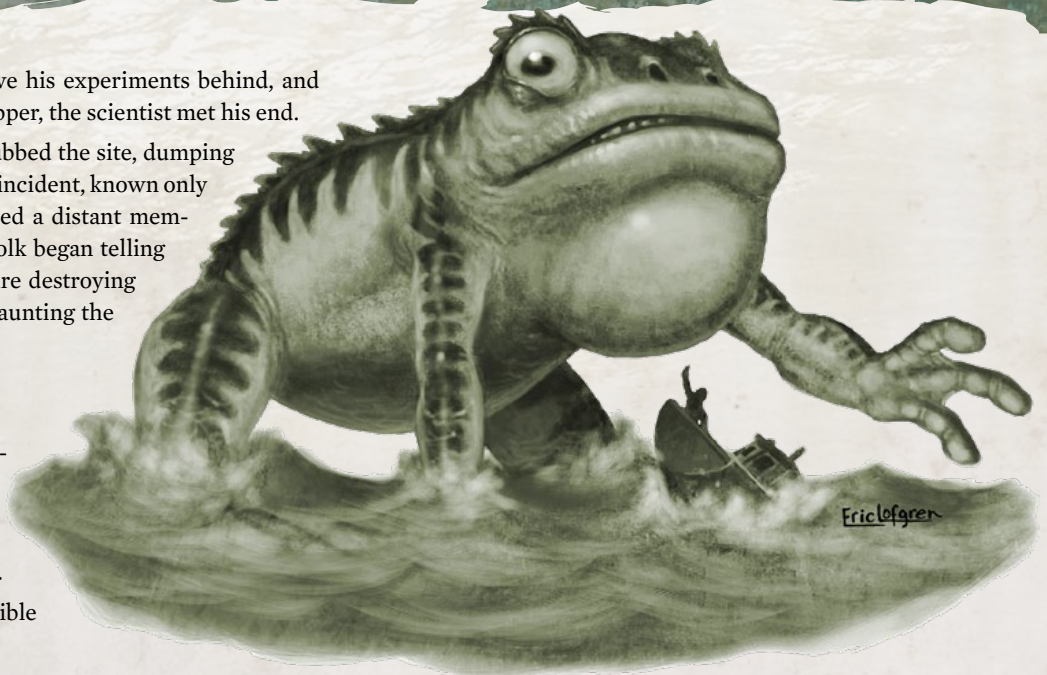
Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 2, Resolve 4; Might 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 15

SPECIAL RULES

Tongue Lashing: Dr. Hopper attempts to grab a target at medium range with his tongue, grabbing them and yanking them into his mouth with a successful Close Combat + Dexterity roll against the opponent’s Defense pool. The target initially takes no damage as they are pulled into Dr. Hopper’s mouth, but they are unable to move. The character must make a Survival + Stamina roll (Difficulty 3) each turn to resist Hopper’s digestive acids. If the character fails, the frog’s stomach acid inflicts 3 damage with the Continuous (round) tag. To escape Hopper’s stomach, the character must inflict 5 damage to Hopper from the inside, motivating the monster to spit them out. Hopper can only hold one character this way at a time.

Frog Splash: Dr. Hopper can leap great distances to land on targets with deadly force. As his action, Dr. Hopper moves to any spot at long range and lands, crushing whatever he lands on. Characters must make a successful Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 3) or receive 5 Injuries. If Dr. Hopper lands on the character, they are knocked prone for a turn, in addition to the damage incurred.



Sizeable: Dr. Hopper is 50 feet tall but not particularly broad. He acts as a Scale 4 threat.

GALAPAGOS REX

“We’re setting out at 0830 hours tomorrow to inspect the uppermost peak, which the Doc says doesn’t conform to the usual laws of geography. I think that means it shouldn’t be there.”

— **Diary of Private First Class William “Willy” Ramirez, United States Marine Corps**

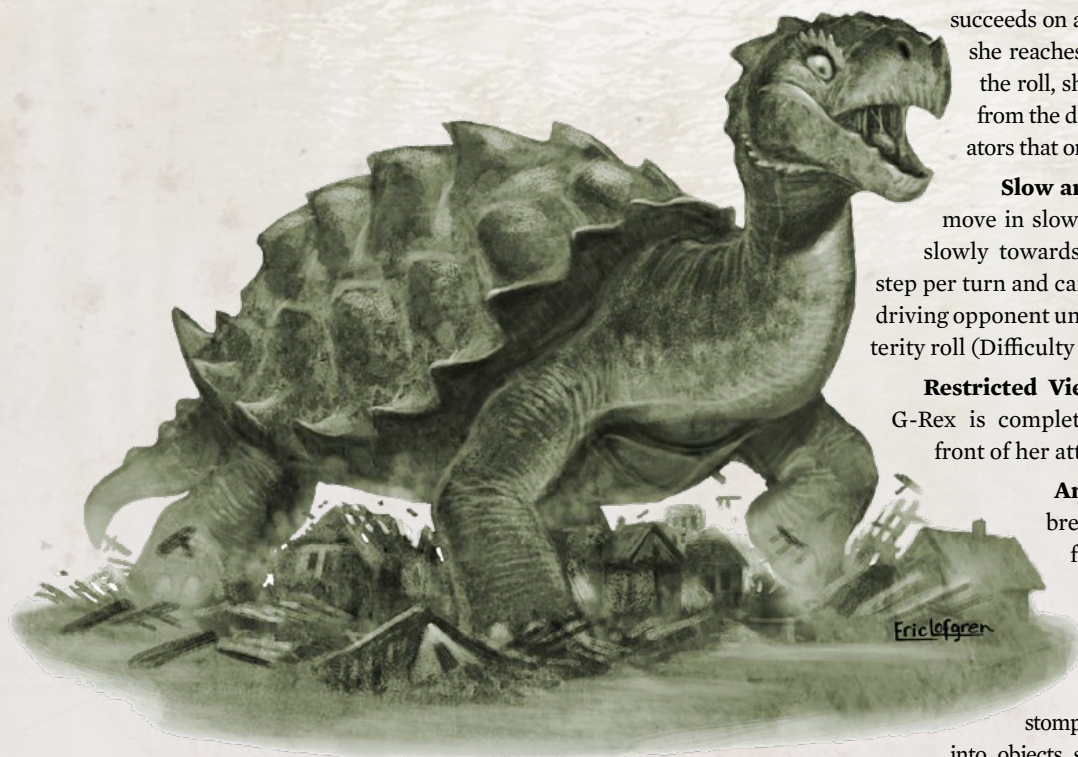
Global warming might just be a theory bandied about by one or two oddballs in the public domain, but official sources indicate there’s more to it than some are prepared to believe. While the full consequences are uncertain, the phenomenon clearly affects animal and plant life, current and ancient alike.

Galapagos Rex is a species of enormous turtle dating to the Triassic Period. There have been mentions of giant sea turtles in antiquity, which could be sightings of G-Rex. Now though, as the world warms up, these things wake from their long hibernation cycles, hungry and looking to breed.

Many monsters want to take over and become the new dominant species on the planet. To G-Rex, such politics are irrelevant. They already see themselves as the dominant species. Their huge size makes humans, and many aliens, seem like little more than ants to a fully-grown specimen. Unfortunately for us, those ants can be crushed to paste to feed the G-Rex and their young and, as they wake from hibernation, their nesting cycles begin anew.

G-Rex attacks appear at first to be large rock formations near coastal towns. These seemingly innocent sightings quickly turn out to be the crest of a G-Rex shell. Once they reach the surface, they’re about as difficult to hurt as a mountain, with all but the most fearsome ordinance simply bouncing off their hide and barely attracting their notice.

While they don’t seem to demonstrate any deep intelligence or agenda, to them, the neighboring human settlements are an ideal site for a nest and the local population is just the sustenance their offspring need.



succeeds on a Composure roll (Difficulty 3). If she reaches the water before succeeding in the roll, she flees back out to sea and away from the dreadful noise of the ancient predators that once troubled her.

Slow and Ponderous: G-Rex seems to move in slow motion, stomping steadily and slowly towards her nest. She takes only one step per turn and cannot catch up with a running or driving opponent unless they fail an Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 2).

Restricted View: Around her massive shell, G-Rex is completely unsighted. Only things in front of her attract her view.

Amphibious: G-Rex can hold her breath indefinitely and can swim faster than any ocean-going vessel.

Slam Dunk: The enormous feet of G-Rex can bash a protagonist into bloody paste in a single stomp, but she can also slam her head into objects such as battleships or other vessels while swimming in order to damage them. Against G-Rex, battleships are considered to have Health 7, while tankers, destroyers, or ocean liners would have 5. Smaller vessels are instantly capsized and smashed by her enormous head slamming into them from below.

Squash the Nest: Once positioned over a town, G-Rex slams her body down and attempts to squash it into shape to serve as a nest for her clutch of young, with the remains of those unfortunate enough to be caught below serving as the nutrients her babies need to aid their crawl to the sea. Everything below her when she performs this attack is instantly destroyed and protagonists caught in the disaster area immediately take five Injuries, which they can attempt to resist as normal.

Steam Cannon: G-Rex has demonstrated the ability to draw in and superheat seawater, expelling it as a cloud of steam full of hardened salt crystals, dealing three Injuries to anyone she hits. Any protagonist within long range in front of G-Rex must make an Athletics + Dexterity roll to evade the blast or find cover. Botching the roll here knocks the character unconscious.

G-Rex must recharge this attack by spending one turn inhaling seawater before using it again.

BABY-G

Once her nest is complete, G-Rex gives birth to between four and eight young, each taking one scene to emerge from beneath her. Each one is 10 feet in diameter and, while they lack the shell of their mother, they have an Armor rating of 3. They have the following stats:

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Survival 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning, 1, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 7

Anyone doing damage to a Baby-G is immediately targeted by G-Rex on her next turn as it cries out to her for aid.

GOALS

The closest thing the G-Rex has to a goal is to protect her young and feed them with as much human paste as she can gather.

STORY HOOK

Dirk McGriffin is a modern-day adventurer. When he hears of Death Peak, a coastal rock formation that has claimed dozens of climbers and is rumored to move around, despite being miles from any fault line, he cannot resist. The local geologist may be raving about the fact that the damn thing shouldn't be there in the first place, but that just makes it even more attractive to Dirk. He sets off for the sleepy port town of Waters' Nest to prepare for the climb up Death Peak!

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 5, Close Combat 4, Survival 5

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 5; Might 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 5

Health: 18

SPECIAL RULES

Look at the Size of That Thing!: From base to crest, Galapagos Rex is hundreds of feet tall and encrusted with diamond-hard rocks. Hand-wielded weapons are no use against her. Cannons, alien weaponry, or battleships are required to damage the creature, her armor being impervious to small arms. She's a Scale 5 Destroyer.

Predator's Wail: With an accumulated Science + Intellect score of 20 successes in studying G-Rex, protagonists can discover that she fears high-pitched noises and giant birds. With the right resources, the protagonists could arrange for a suitable display to frighten her out to sea.

Any blast of sound at the correct pitch within long range of G-Rex causes her to retreat in the opposite direction from the sound until she

HELL SKATERS

"I thought they were short water skiers. I said 'Gosh, look at them all.' Figured it was part of the entertainment for the Pebbly Yachting event. They were heading right towards the visiting dignitaries on the pier. Seconds later, there were no visiting dignitaries on the pier."

— Commodore Quilling Molts, Jr., Pebbly Yacht Club

Halobates, also known as sea skaters, are small ocean insects that use their six legs brilliantly. The front two catch prey, the back two steer, and the middle two propel the insects across the surface of the water. Sea skaters are predatory, generally seeking out fellow halobates, other insects, small fish, and the occasional jellyfish. They have been here more than 40 million years.

The discovery of a large, hitherto unknown species of sea skater comes as alarming news, particularly since their predatory tastes seem to extend to human beings. To make matters worse, Hell Skaters (as they've been dubbed by Dr. Lonna Durene) find their size to be absolutely no hindrance in achieving great speed skimming across water.

Hell Skaters have an additional, insidious modification. Their mouths can extend quickly to fasten onto their prey, giving them a mosquito-like appearance. Conveniently, this is also their feeding tube. It also introduces a solution capable of dissolving any hard, organic material, resulting in the consumption of both blood and bone. As expected, this leaves behind a horrific mess.

Hell Skaters travel in swarms across the oceans looking for any living thing, unafraid to target boats, particularly craft lower to the water. They've been aerially observed moving in a triangular formation, with one of the three points taking the lead. Their method of changing direction is remarkable in that they simply follow a different point of the triangle. This instantaneous shifting in mid-skate has prompted scientists to speculate that Hell Skaters possess a hive mentality, though definite proof is lacking as of yet and their method of communication unknown.

The adult hell skater ranges from three to five feet in length and sits about one to two feet off the water. The long, propelling middle legs can reach ten feet in total length, helping Hell Skaters achieve speeds of up to 70 knots.

At this point, scientists are puzzled by the origin of such insects, ridiculously larger than any known species. With halobates being many millions of years old, where have Hell Skaters been keeping themselves? Such extreme development would seem to have evolved over time, yet why are these monsters only starting to appear now?

As research continues (the capture of a live one is vital), so do defensive measures. They have been proven flammable, a crucial key to staving off attacks. As Hell Skaters skim the oceans of the world, sea traffic is in grave danger, particularly vessels lower to the water. This has resulted in the United States, Great Britain, Germany and others outfitting small fleets of swift "fireboats" equipped with flamethrowers similar to deck guns.

Some countries have issued bounties on Hell Skaters, encouraging private and civilian "sea hunters," with some of the more reckless and inexperienced causing more harm than good. On the plus side, Australian hunter and sports fisherman Blate Esham has achieved a high number of hell skater kills, making him something of a celebrity.

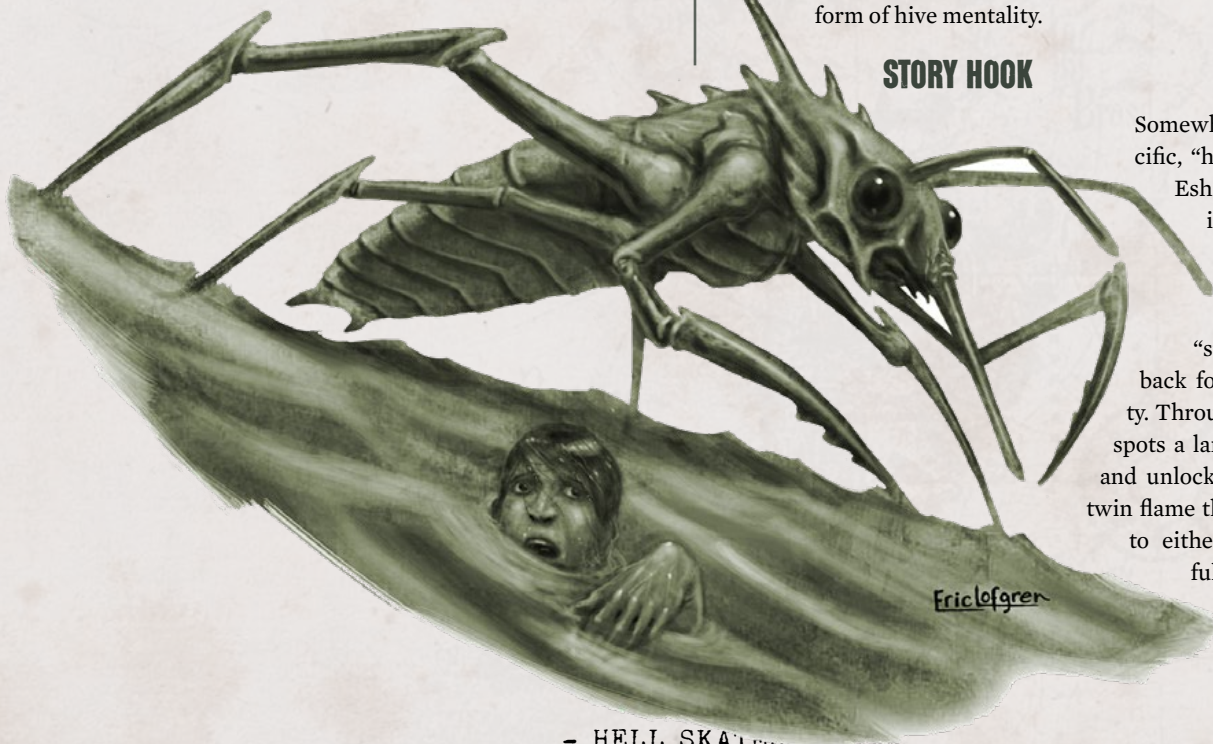
Dr. Durene, tracking the creatures from their early appearances, notes that swarms are increasing in number, as are the numbers within each swarm. She also states a concern that Hell Skaters may have a detrimental effect on sea life populations.

GOALS

Hell Skaters behave like most predatory insects in their motivation to hunt and consume and reproduce. Beyond that, little is known about their origin or the reasons for their sudden appearance. Their size, roughly that of a large dog in adulthood, and insatiable appetites make them an obvious threat to humanity and may upset the balance of ocean life. It is believed they possess a form of hive mentality.

STORY HOOK

Somewhere in the Pacific, "hell hunter" Blate Esham speeds along in his knife-like hunting craft, a large sack of hell skater "stingers" in the back for proof of bounty. Through binoculars he spots a large swarm ahead and unlocks safeties on the twin flame throwers attached to either side, hefts his full-auto flare gun and guns the engine. He's



about to close in when a yacht comes into view off the portside. A party of vacationers is on board, seemingly oblivious to the oncoming swarm.

SYSTEM

A hell skater is a predatory insect ranging from three to five feet in length and one to two feet in height at adulthood. Despite their size they are surprisingly lightweight, which aids in their ability to travel at high speeds. Their two long middle legs propel them over the surface of the water like ice, forming a triangular swarm capable of 70 knots and able to change direction in an instant by following one of the other two points.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 5; Might 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

Like Dry Tinder: Something in the hell skater biology makes them particularly vulnerable to fire. Small fleets of fireboats seem the best way of combating them. Any fire-based weapon conveys a +3 Enhancement to the attack.

Look at Them Go!: Hell Skaters move rapidly across the water, closing in from medium range in a single turn.

MERDAN

“Hey there, pretty lady. I’ve searched all seven seas and never seen anything quite like you.”

— MerDan

The romantic notion of a merman looking for love has filled the pages of many pulp novels, the kind many suburban housewives read on vacation. When they learn of MerDan, they might think either their prayers have been answered or their husband’s worst nightmares have come true.

MerDan was first spotted in New Orleans. People assumed he was a tourist attraction, with his handsome, athletic, and perfectly chiseled body meshed with a sleek, fishy tail and fins. They said he had smooth lines and the voice of an angel. He promised anyone he could find to take interest in him that he could take them away from their drudgery at home and show them a whole new world under the sea.

Whether it’s charm alone or something more, MerDan was responsible for the New Orleans Incident, in which thousands of people followed him to their deaths underwater. Their bodies, when recovered, all had huge smiles on their faces.

At first, the world’s governments thought MerDan was an anomaly — some poor sap mu-

tated by mad science into a musclebound fishman. Unfortunately, he’s a little more than that. Multiple MerDans have been reported around the globe, speaking hundreds of languages, often in several places at once. Top secret agents have linked them back to the Prefecture of the Pod, another way for them to put humans under their fiendish flappers.

MerDan is genetically engineered by the Pod as a weapon and has next to no knowledge of their activities. While he understands he was created by the Pod, he has no real concept of what or where they are. Following a fleeing MerDan only leads to his handlers, who operate undersea labs in their areas where the living weapon is tested, returning the data to their superiors once the attack is complete.

It’s not clear, even to MerDan himself, what the Pod plan to do once they depopulate the targeted areas, or if there is any plan at all. Perhaps their own, hyper-advanced scientists are simply testing their bizarre new weapon’s effectiveness against human populations. It’s not entirely clear if they’re even killing each person MerDan lures into the water, or if they take some below for future scientific experiments or slavery.

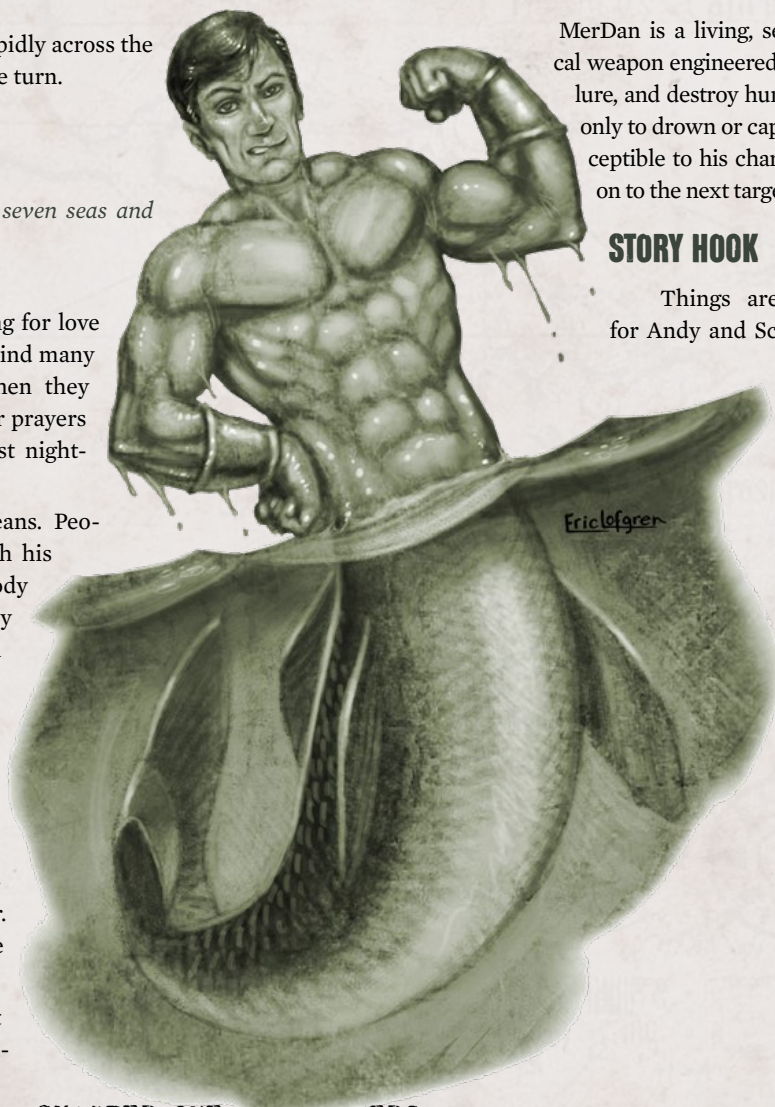
If you see MerDan, don’t look, don’t listen, and — whatever you do — don’t go into the water.

GOALS

MerDan is a living, sentient biological weapon engineered to manipulate, lure, and destroy humans. He exists only to drown or capture those susceptible to his charms, then move on to the next target.

STORY HOOK

Things are bad enough for Andy and Scott as two gay



men in 1950s America. When Scott starts disappearing after work to hang around down at the docks, Andy becomes suspicious. Then he hears rumors of a handsome man swimming around the bay, talking to the dockers and people frequenting the beach. Is this why Scott has been going off alone at night? Is it somehow linked to the disappearance of Sergeant Malone's wife from the military base? Andy gathers his friends and heads down to find out. He'll give that swimmer a piece of his mind!

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 3, Empathy 4, Integrity 2, Persuasion 5, Survival 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Mysterious Allure: MerDan gives off a cloud of alluring pheromones, adding a single level of Complication to any social interaction protagonists may have with him.

Pod Technology: MerDan shows some telltale signs of an agent of the Pod. If threatened, he may defend himself with Raaurak's Ray or attempt to escape in an amphibolyer (TCfBts! p. 188).

Song of Unnatural Beauty: MerDan's voice can incapacitate even the hardest of protagonists with its soothing tones, or bring a smile to the most grizzled face. MerDan rolls Empathy + Presence against a target's Integrity + Resolve. If MerDan wins, the target is incapacitated for a number of turns equal to the difference between their successes rolled and those rolled by MerDan. If the target succeeds, they cannot be affected by this ability again for the remainder of the story. A botch by MerDan means the protagonist has permanent immunity to this ability; a botch by the protagonist means they fall fully under MerDan's sway for the remainder of the scene.

If the target is immersed in water while incapacitated in this way, they start drowning to the soothing sounds of MerDan's greatest hits.

Swift Escape: MerDan has a swimming speed of 50 feet per turn and, if confronted, first attempts to swim away to safety rather than fight, easily escaping to medium range in a turn.

Kiss of Life: If instructed to kidnap a target rather than kill, MerDan kisses them and imparts the ability to breathe underwater for the remainder of a scene.

OYSTEROID

"There it was, biggest thing I've ever seen, hurtling straight towards the city! But instead of coming down, the crazy thing was coming up! Does that make sense?"

— Gil Mastermanton, professional diver

Oysteroid is an enormous oyster, the origin of which is still unknown, that occasionally threatens cities by hurtling toward them at great speed, to potentially damaging effect.

The discovery of the Oysteroid goes back to the early days of Professor Lydex Van Kester. As a young astronomer, he scored a coup by building his own large, powerful telescope to study the heavens at his leisure. One day, after adjusting the telescope, he returned to his observatory to discover the mechanism had slipped. As Van Kester was based right on the coast, it so happened that the massive telescope was pointing down, right into the water. Before correcting its trajectory, he happened to glance into it and to his pleasant surprise discovered a world of wonders beneath the sea.

For years, science hinted that our own final frontier was right below us, and now Van Kester saw it for himself. From that point on, Van Kester watched "the watery heavens" (as he called them) every chance he got.

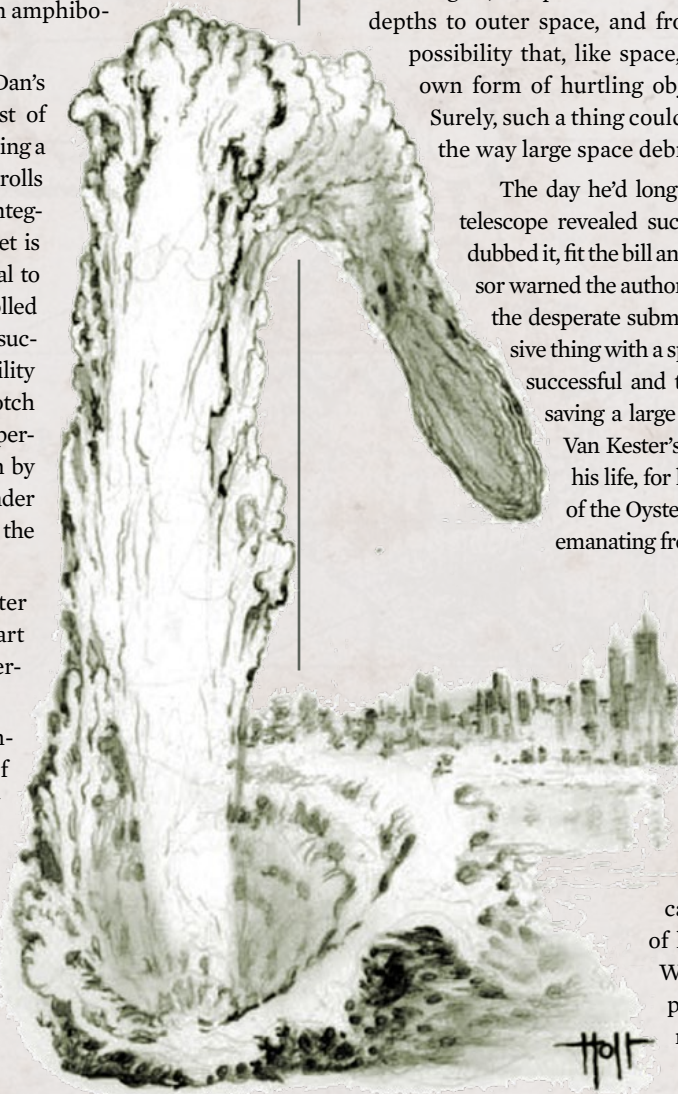
In doing so, the professor continued to compare the ocean's depths to outer space, and from one such musing arose the possibility that, like space, the underwater world had its own form of hurtling object, like meteors or asteroids.

Surely, such a thing could pose problems to coastal cities the way large space debris might.

The day he'd long feared came when Van Kester's telescope revealed such a thing. The Oysteroid, as he dubbed it, fit the bill and was headed his way. The professor warned the authorities of the threat and took part in the desperate submarine mission to deflect the massive thing with a special torpedo. The operation was successful and the Oysteroid was diverted, thus saving a large coastal city. Tragically, Professor Van Kester's own scientific curiosity lost him his life, for he attempted to solve a key riddle of the Oysteroid: the mysterious intense glow emanating from its "mouth."

Science has since managed to determine that the Oysteroid's movements are influenced by the moon. Submarine expeditions are mounted to land on and explore the thing, even as defensive measures are installed by coastal cities to prepare for the next "event."

Most disturbing are indications that there may be forms of life living inside the Oysteroid. Whether they're intelligent, and perhaps guiding the creature, remains to be seen.



GOALS

Until scientists know different, the Oysteroid has no intentional goal, merely reacting to the moon's pull or possible living entities inside. Either way, it's hazardous to coastal cities, likely having no more will than a meteor. The secret may lie within its inner workings.

STORY HOOK

Young Tommy Halfreffer is excited to get his new telescope (just like the kids on TV!), and when the family goes on a boat ride, naturally he takes it along. Imagine his surprise when he points it into the water and sees an immense shadow slowly heading his way. But will the adults believe him? They never believe anything.

SYSTEM

The Oysteroid is an enormous oyster, measuring some 90 feet in diameter and approximately 40 feet in height. It lives a sedentary existence opening and closing its shell to allow an intake of fish and other sea life, which it apparently subsists on. There is a glow emanating from its interior, as well as an indication of life forms, yet to be determined.

Skills: Athletics 1, Close Combat 4

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 5; Might 5, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 15

SPECIAL RULES

Large Projectile: The Oysteroid could be a vessel containing a crew, or a projectile fired by a large underwater cannon. Whatever it is, when it strikes people or land, it rolls Close Combat + Might and is treated as a Scale 3 monster to determine damage and Injuries incurred. Anyone who sees the Oysteroid rocketing toward them makes an Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 3) to evade the massive beast.

Repelling the Oyster: The Oysteroid can only be diverted and injured by powerful explosives or artillery. Small arms fire cannot penetrate the oyster's closed shell.

Raw Innards: Within the Oysteroid are a crew of homicidal gill-kin (see **TCfBtS!** p. 202) who have constructed these vessels as assault ships, but haven't quite perfected the landing mechanism.

Open Maw: If the Oysteroid is dealt a blow while surging toward land, the shell opens to catch any humans or vehicles in its path. Anything that falls into the Oysteroid must escape with a successful Athletics + Dexterity roll within a turn or find the shell clamping shut, rolling Close Combat + Might at a Scale of 2 to determine the damage and Injuries to anything caught within.

RATBALL

"All I can hear at night... SQUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

— Testimony of Amelda Frye, witness to the destruction of Placid Point

For as long as there have been sailors, there's been the maxim that rats will always be the first to abandon a sinking

ship. In the past, this was simply a quaint tale told by old sea dogs to crowds of eager land-lubbers. In the nuclear age, the saying has come back to haunt coastal towns in the form of a mutated, rolling ball of matted fur, filth, and gnashing teeth.

Ratball is one of the most aptly named aquatic threats. Thousands of rats, possibly millions, have fused together to form a tumbling mass of flesh, fur, mud, and nuclear waste. The rodents within, joined in a bizarre hive mind, seek only to devour, defile, and add to their putrid bulk.

Nobody knows how long it took for Ratball to form or, indeed, how many rodents have been warped into its bulbous form over the years. What is certain is that it is growing. With each new sighting, the rolling rodent increases in mass and span. It not only squashes buildings, eats innocent humans, and leaves behind a trail of deadly, radioactive waste, it also has a strange lure to other rodents lurking in the sites it attacks, drawing them in and adding them to its rotund form.

Possessing the ability to survive under the sea, Ratball's attacks are difficult to detect and impossible to predict. It tumbles and bounces on the sea bed until it detects signs of life from people paddling and swimming on a nearby beach, then it rolls straight up the coast, smashing and consuming everything in its path before rumbling, infuriatingly, back into the sea from whence it came.

CIA sources suspect the radioactive Soviet hand is behind this abomination as it has, so far, only terrorized the coastline of the good-old U.S. of A. Unfortunately, even if it was somehow contained, it's unlikely that asking it would do any good, and the Bolsheviks certainly wouldn't admit to their handiwork. Nor would the many survivors of its attacks, left insane at the mere sight of it and warped by its body-twisting radiation, offer much in the way of useful testimony.

With that in mind, the official policy of all public and private American security agencies is to destroy Ratball before it destroys the free world. Official records on the thing simply instruct any operative to wipe the abomination from the face of the Earth.



GOALS

Consume, expand, consume, expand, consume, expand.

STORY HOOK

The annual Swim Across the Cove race between Placid Point and Hermann's Rock draws in swimmers from across the U.S. to compete for the \$1,000 first prize. As the race comes to a climax, a bubbling originates from the shoreline. Something follows the swimmers to the finish. Something big.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 4, Integrity 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 5, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 8-12 depending on its size.

SPECIAL RULES

Oh No: Ratball starts off small but can grow to become a Scale 3 creature before its component parts start to shed.

Rolling Movement: Ratball moves by rolling its vast bulk forward, undulating the many hundreds of rat tails on its outer layer to direct its movements. For this reason, its movement speed doubles when rolling downhill (thereby imposing a Complication on attempts to avoid it) and halves when rolling uphill (thereby conveying an Enhancement to the protagonists on similar attempts). It cannot climb stairs or other obstacles large enough to block its movement. Ratball takes two turns to move around corners and can only otherwise travel in straight lines.

Squash Flat: Ratball's main method of attack is to squash its prey before devouring the liquified innards. It attacks by rolling over people during its movement, and at Scale 3 can attack up to five humans abreast within short range in a single turn. Anyone caught under its bulk when it moves is hit by the attack, knocked prone, and must resist damage as normal against its Close Combat + Might.

Gnashing Mouths: Any protagonist attempting to attack Ratball in close quarters suffers a reactionary attack from the thousands of mouths lining its exterior. The protagonist must roll Athletics + Dexterity (Difficulty 3) to dodge the attack or suffer a level of Injury, which can be resisted as normal.

Radioactive: Any protagonist struck by Ratball's attacks must succeed on an Athletics + Stamina roll or become poisoned, taking the Stunned Condition for the remainder of the scene. The Condition can be treated by a character who uses Medicine + Intellect (Difficulty 2).

Rodent Fear: Ratball fears fire and always moves away from any nearby fire, even something so small as a lighter flame. Any attempt to intimidate Ratball with fire gains +2 Enhancement.

Siren of Rodents: Rats and other rodents are drawn to Ratball like moths to a flame. Roll five dice at the end of Ratball's turn — it summons that many rats to the area, which it can roll over and consume to gain 1 Health point per rat consumed. It can use this ability to grow above its starting Health and increase in Scale for the next scene in which it appears.

SCALY WOMAN

"It was like a drug. I became obsessed with the science of it all. I needed to study myself, observe myself. I was the guinea pig. I knew it was wrong; human lives were being lost. Not the first time, in the name of science, I suppose. But it was too late. I ultimately realized that the thing I was becoming was myself."

— Dr. Luessa Strohm, ichthyologist at Sea Land World

As a young girl, Luessa Strohm told everyone she wanted to "sleep with the fishes," and when she found out what that meant, she promptly changed it to "swim with the fishes." But in truth, her initial instinct was correct. She felt so deeply drawn to the undersea world that really, she would have stayed down there if she could. Was this desire born of heredity or environment?

As she grew older, it became clear that the ocean would become her life's work, and she graduated from ichthyology school at the top of her class (though "bottom" would have been more apt, she thought, given her longing for the dark depths).

Luessa was elated when the opportunity arose to become resident scientist at Sea Land World, and she found ample time to concentrate her studies on a wide variety of her beloved sea creatures. She could not, however, shake the growing feeling that something in her makeup was enabling this aquatic obsession. This led to her performing tests on herself.

The breakthrough came when her sciencing proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that she was in fact genetically predisposed to aquatic life. The traces of our oceanic origins, detectable in all humans, were somehow more abundant in her. This was why she felt so "fishy." Excitedly, Luessa wondered if the slightest chemical "bump" might just push her a step closer to the life she so longed for.

Thus began a series of injections, over time, and a careful cataloguing of data, all faithfully recorded on audio tape.

At first, she wasn't aware of the changes. Subtle things, like moving her mouth in that funny fish-like way, or a "swimming" motion while walking down a Sea Land World hallway, to the concern of several colleagues.

Then came the blackouts.

Luessa experienced episodes of missing time, blocks she couldn't account for. She'd wake up and find the lab in shambles. Soon, there were reports of mysterious attacks. Sea Land World had a phantom. The common denominator was claw marks on the victims.

The obsessed scientist was determined to know the truth, no matter the cost. She needed to know if she was in fact responsible, and if so, in what form? What might she look like? It would be so thrilling to finally see herself with scales and fins, perhaps like a beautiful mermaid.

With that in mind, Luessa rigged a camera to snap a picture by way of several pulleys and a string attached to her wrist. For many hours she lay quietly, waiting for the next blackout.

She woke the following morning thinking her experiment a bust, until she saw that a photograph had been taken. Hurriedly she developed the film. The results both terrified and thrilled her.

This creature was no mermaid. Luessa had become a primitive aquatic monster. Scaly Woman, she dubbed herself. The long-dor-

mant genetic material, triggered by chemical injections, had turned her into a seven-foot tall fish woman with webbed claws, green scaly skin, bulging fish-like eyes, and a wide, sharp-toothed mouth flanked by spiny gills.

Luessa's initial horror was soon overpowered by a strange sense of pride. It was, after all, what she'd always dreamed of. Just not as pretty. But at what price? She was obviously a dangerous creature. She vowed never to give herself the injections again.

Unfortunately, that resolve didn't hold. She was hooked. Escaping the destiny of her primitive self was hopeless. For hours, in the dead of night, Scaly Woman swam with the other denizens of Sea Land World. She was soaring. It was like flying. Only in water. She even slept with them too. The occasional attack on humans, she could not help. But it was a small price to pay.

GOALS

As a mild-mannered scientist, Dr. Luessa Strohm is of course harmless, but as Scaly Woman she reverts to her most primitive instincts, capable of savage unleashed fury. Survival is her primary goal, and enjoying the life of a fish. Humans are immediately perceived as enemies, likely to fall victim to her unreasoning wrath.

STORY HOOK

A group of average fun-loving teens thinks it would be a swell idea to hide somewhere in Sea Land World and get locked in overnight. In a place as seemingly vast, the ruse works like a charm and the teens emerge from hiding. They immediately begin running around, acting crazy and generally having a good time. Oh, those wacky teens.

But a couple of them are nervous in such a dark and labyrinthine place. Some hear noises and some see shadows, as the heartier ones laugh it off.

There's a loud crash. Something fell, somewhere in the dark. Someone needs to go look.

SYSTEM

Scaly Woman is an aquatic monster of great strength, about seven feet tall and 250 pounds, with wiry, powerful physique and a thick, scaly hide capable of withstanding ordinary bullets and blades. Her large, sharp claws can easily tear a living thing to pieces. Though having obvious gills, she seems capable of long stays on land, suggesting optional air-breathing capabilities indicative of her primordial human stage.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Command 3, Science 5, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 9

SPECIAL RULES

Bigger Than Most: When the Scaly Woman comes out to play, her impressive size daunts most opponents. She is considered a Scale 2 opponent.



Razor Sharp Claws: The Scaly Woman attacks only with her sharpened claws, which can cut through thin metal with ease. Anyone engaging her in hand-to-hand combat incurs a Complication to their rolls and loses a full Injury level whenever she cuts into them. Scaly Woman's claws have the Piercing tag.

Shock Treatment: The Scaly Woman is vulnerable to electric charges, with any attack or ambush using electricity gaining +2 Enhancement when used against her. If successfully hit, she becomes paralyzed for the duration of the turn.

SILICLONES A.K.A. THE GENES

"You can call us Gene. We only pretended to be Mike. What is your name? Mary? You should be Gene."

— Recording recovered from the laboratory of Dr. Mary Smithers (missing)

Silicon-based life is incredibly complex. The world's top egg-heads have speculated that each individual cell-sized organism comprising a silicon-based lifeform could be individually sentient. One such researcher was Dr. Mary Smithers, who claimed to have unearthed evidence that such lifeforms not only exist, but that they have lived among us for some time, learning and watching.

Dr. Smithers' research indicated that these entities exist as an amalgam of thousands of smaller organisms, which she called Siliclones. They can fuse together to form whatever shape suits their goals, altering their appearance and identity to suit. Siliclones

shed any excess mass into white, plastic, worm-like entities called plastids that crawl away from their bodies to be stored for later use.

In a mockery of human genetic make-up, these building blocks gone wrong refer to themselves and other Siliclones homogenously as Gene. It is uncertain just how far their replacement of human society has spread, but there are rumors that some small countries have already fully fallen to their influence and are in the process of replacing their entire population, human and animal, with Genes. If so, it is clear they will not stop there and will continue to cover the entire world.

The one advantage humans have against the Genes is that individuals replaced by a Gene aren't difficult to spot. They lack the specialized knowledge and abilities of those they replace, and it quickly becomes clear when the local doctor suddenly doesn't know what he's doing, or the teenage girl working at the Malt Shop stops turning up for her shift because she doesn't know where it is or how to ride a bike.

Siliclones may look like one person, but they are composed of millions of small organisms working together. For this reason, they occasionally refer to themselves as "We" or "Us" rather than "I." Furthermore, Siliclones lack human emotion entirely, and the faces of their constructs are almost always fixed in a game show host grin. They attempt, as far as they are able, to project a pleasant and upbeat demeanor and never use contractions. Always saying "We are" instead of "We're," for example.

Despite these telltale signs of replacement, vigilance is required against the Genes. Anyone acting strangely, like they suddenly don't know how to operate their car or speedboat, could be a replacement bent on destroying and replacing everyone on Earth. Beware though, the rampant paranoia spread by the presence of Genes in an area is almost as dangerous as the deadly aliens themselves.

GOALS

The goal of the Siliclones is to become not only the dominant form of life on Earth, but the only form of life on Earth, eradicating all others, even down to the plants and animals.

STORY HOOK

Mayor Tralee doesn't seem like herself these days. Time was, she was never off the radio, giving some speech or other about some great initiative she was putting in place to reduce littering or some friend of hers who was opening an automobile factory nearby. Those broadcasts stopped some weeks ago and rumor has it she's not seeming like herself lately. Of course, everyone that's gone to check on her comes back saying "We are fine."



SYSTEM

Siliclones all have the following stats, regardless of who they have replaced.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Command 2, Enigmas 3, Integrity 4, Larceny 2, Persuasion 3, Science 4, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 4; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5

Health: 4-8 depending on the size of the Siliclone.

SPECIAL RULES

Change Form: The Siliclones can take any form they wish, not just that of humans. They may resemble any solid object of the same mass. To form a larger object, they require more Siliclones, which they absorb in the form of plastid worms. If shrinking down to smaller size, they shed those worms, which crawl away and hide until needed. Any vehicles or objects simulated by Siliclones are non-operational.

Plastid Worms: Plastids are slender tubes of Siliclone cells that slither into and away from larger Siliclone constructs.

While in this form, Siliclones have a reduced movement speed and a Health of 1. If smashed in this form, the Siliclones inside are killed. When evading plastids, the fleeing character gains +1 Enhancement.

Learning on the Job: Siliclones must adapt to even the most rudimentary of human technology as they go. To use anything from an automobile to an instomatic blender, the Siliclone must succeed on an Enigmas + Intellect roll. Once successful, the Siliclone may operate that technology as normal. Of course, while making this roll, protagonists can observe the Siliclone studying and trying to figure out the object, often giving them away.

Survival Experts: Siliclones can survive in harsh environments, able to live underwater or above with equal ease. They are undamaged by extreme heat and cold or even radiation. Siliclones are immune to all forms of poison and disease, even those employed by other aliens.

Natural Weaponry: When defending themselves, Siliclones extend their fingers into knife-like claws, giving victims +1 Complication in attempts to defend against them. They can also detach part of themselves and throw it like a spear using Aim + Dexterity for a ranged attack, with the target having to buy off Complication 2 to avoid their clothes being shredded full of holes. The siliclone sacrifices 1 Health until the detached part is returned to the whole, with Health lost cumulatively for each additional thrown weapon.



LIGHTWALKER

The freighter Lydian Cross was making its way through a dark night when its captain entered the bridge.

"Nearing the Cape, sir," the helmsman said.

"Should see the Bristoe Light any time now," the Captain said.

"There she is, sir."

A bright light appeared ahead in the darkness.

"Set course accordingly. Don't want to run into those nasty rocks."

The helmsman did. And the Lydian Cross floundered on "those nasty rocks" with great loss of life and property.

...

It was the fourth such sea disaster in as many weeks, and the shipping industry was alarmed. And rightly so. Each ship had responded to the position of a known light, yet each disaster occurred some fair distance away.

...

Then, the following letter was dispatched to all major shipping companies: "You have witnessed but a taste of my terrible wrath. Unless

you submit ... one million dollars at a location to be named, more ships will find their way to a deep and early grave. I am ... Captain Light."

The shippers contacted the world's law enforcement who went into action in a flurry of activity. The big question was: where to start? What, exactly, were they up against?

...

The Port Point Light off the coast of New Gauche served for many years as a deterrent to the treacherous reefs and shoals in the area. Lighthouse keeper Lars Norgen, thirty years of keeping under his belt, walked up the winding steps, hoping the bloody fog had lifted.

Stepping out onto the gallery, Lars took in the calm night and saw the fog had dispersed. Then something caught his eye. About a mile up the shore appeared a light. It was sweeping, like a beacon.

...

Lars headed out in his motor launch. The light puzzled him. It couldn't be a vessel as he was certain there was land there. Yet there were no buildings, certainly none with a sweeping light.

By the time he reached the mysterious light, the fog had lifted even more.

And he saw the lighthouse.

Lars stared at the impossibility. Who would erect it? And so fast. How was that possible?

Realization sunk in. On this shipping lane, such a light would be a terrible deceiver. He remembered the recent disasters.

Lars turned his launch around. He had to alert the Coast Guard.

. . .

When the radio squawked, Lars was having dinner. The Coast Guard had arrived. But what they said made no sense.

Lars raced to the gallery and stared. The phantom lighthouse was gone.

. . .

Thanks to the vigilance of a single keeper there had been no disaster that night. But how it was orchestrated, they had no clue.

. . .

Meantime, some shipping companies had coughed up their million-dollar payments, getting the money to the mysterious extortionist through arcane and labyrinthine routes not divulged to the authorities; a condition of the deal.

But not all. Some holdouts objected strongly to being held hostage, fearing the perpetrator would only return for more.

. . .

Coast Guardsman Erich Theiss drove his jeep through some remote coastal hills. He was part of the regular patrols now taking place in search of the elusive wrecker, the mysterious Captain Light.

They still had no idea how the villains managed it, but they figured their base had to be coastal.

Theiss recalled a hidden valley he'd once encountered in these hills and on a hunch pulled his jeep up and walked, making his way through a narrow gash.

He could not believe his eyes.

Theiss gazed at the lighthouse sitting dead center in the little valley. At first, he didn't notice the odd differences, because the first thing one sees of course is a lighthouse. But that was only part of it. The upper part.

The thing's base was broad and metallic - had to be, carrying an entire lighthouse. Massive

hydraulic legs, four of them, curled up like an insect. There was a crudeness to the machine, as though it had been pieced together from construction equipment, with the legs resembling the jib and boom arrangement of a crane.

Theiss began to walk closer. There was nothing to mask his approach - the thing was out in the open. But he was compelled to find out more.

"Halt!" came the barking cry from up top. Out onto the gallery stepped a man in a strange black uniform with red belt and beret, his rifle trained down on the Coast Guardsman.

"Who approaches the Lightwalker of the great Captain Light?" demanded the guard.

"You're under arrest in the name of the Coast Guard," Theiss said. Behind the guard, he saw activity in the watch room; the crew of pilots operating the monstrosity no doubt.

The guard laughed mockingly. "Stay where you are. Captain Light shall get a good laugh out of this." Activity in the watch room, visible through the glass, culminated in a remarkable figure stepping out onto the gallery. His red hood covered his features, topping a bold black uniform with red belt and cape.

"Who dares approach the-?"

"I asked him that, your greatness."

"Oh."

"He says he's a Coastguardsman come to arrest us."

Now it was Captain Light's turn to laugh mockingly. "You poor, small, single individual. How I pity you. Prepare to take a prisoner!" he brayed at his men. "Then I, Captain Light, shall have more bartering to do." Once again, the diabolical madman laughed abrasively.

"Sir, you'll have to stop laughing," uttered a guard, pointing to the hills.

A helicopter was making its way up the coast.

"Curse their timing. Get underway!"

"What about him?" asked a guard.

"Leave him. He shall live to tell others what he has witnessed this day."

And with that, the pilots worked controls in the watch room and the massive hydraulic legs straightened up, lifting the base and lighthouse.

Theiss watched in awe as the mighty Lightwalker crawled away, under a cacophony of pounding engines.

CHAPTER TWO

ENSLAVERS

"By the time I get through with you, Mr. Electronics Engineer, you'll be lucky if they let you test batteries for flashlights."

- Major Bergen, The Giant Claw (1957)

Among the most loathed of alien races, the Enslavers intend on subjugating humanity, making us their playthings, and frankly, working us a lot harder than we're comfortable with. They have ways of physically and mentally dominating we puny, fleshy humans, and taking the role of tyrant comes ever so easy to them.

Enslavers and Mouths do not get along. Enslavers believe the most dangerous weapon available to the human race is freedom of speech and thought, and these pundits with their flapping gums are the worst of the worst.

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.

THE ALGAE OF DOOM

"Kid, if you find yourself infected by this gunk, you're better off putting a bullet in your head. It's ironic, really, that these communists found something that gives them even less freedom than their own country. Put them out of their misery, fellas. Not even they deserve this."

- Major Jackson Donovan, United States Marine Corps, onboard the Soviet Antarctic research vessel Neostorozhnyj

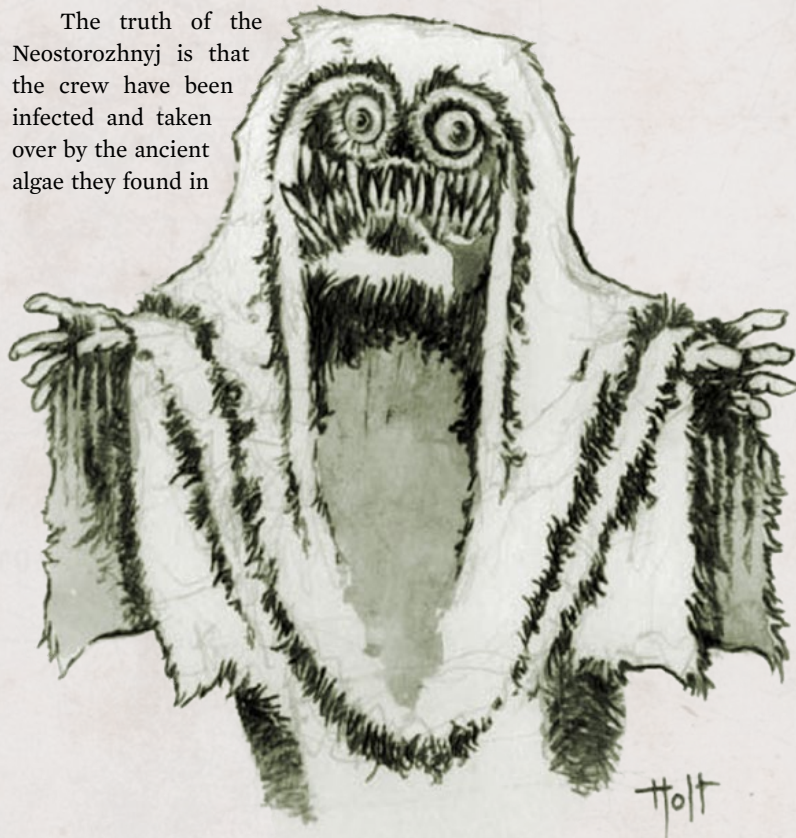
There are things beneath the Antarctic ice better left alone — things ancient and merciless and anathema to a loving God, which humanity is better off without. One such thing was uncovered by the Soviet research vessel Neostorozhnyj in a deep ice sample taken from beneath Queen Maud Land in Antarctica. It may have seemed to the untrained eye like nothing more than old, rotten soil, but this substance was nothing less than a menace to the whole of the human race!

The last clear message from the unfortunate vessel intercepted by American ears at the new research station at McMurdo Sound simply stated that all was well. The craft sent no further messages, and three months later, the Kremlin quietly registered the ship lost at sea. Little did anyone then know the role this innocuous vessel would come to play in the months ahead.

Several weeks later, the vessel appeared, headed for San Diego. It refuses to answer any calls, and a small team of Soviet Spetsnaz agents failed to report back after being inserted on October 21, 1957. Where communism has failed, it is time for America to step up and do her part.

At the current date, the ship will reach San Diego in two weeks. The Coast Guard has confirmed that the ship is making course corrections to compensate for the current. The FBI has started preparing a team consisting of several G-Men and hand-picked civilian specialists to board the ship.

The truth of the Neostorozhnyj is that the crew have been infected and taken over by the ancient algae they found in



formant form beneath the Antarctic ice. Intelligent and malevolent, the algae intends to run the ship aground at San Diego harbor and spread itself rapidly to the whole civilian population. From there, it plans to spread along various infection vectors across the entire North American continent, and take control of the world's mightiest superpower from inside.

The algae themselves are dim-witted creatures, but when they infect a human being, they steal their brains and use them for their own nefarious plots. A single, overriding consciousness controls all the algae creatures, but this consciousness communicates its thoughts and plans from host to host by touch, not thoughts or speech. An infected host resembles nothing so much as a shambling, human-shaped, slimy green mound of algae. The original host body is thoroughly infested, algae growing in every cell.

The algae is a slothful being, and its one desire in life is to be pampered by beautiful and handsome young humans who care for its every need. It wants control of the United States and its military so as to protect itself and give it the resources to live a life of appropriate luxury, installing hosts in all positions of power and living in opulent Victorian decadence.

It has one problem, though, which poses a significant hindrance to its victory, and that is its own slothful and indulgent nature. When it infects a human being, it seizes control of them, body and soul, but then that appendage of the greater whole does not want to work, either, and desires equally opulent appointments. What is the point of being rich and pampered if one must also live and toil in modest conditions, as well?

GOALS

The algae of doom wants to live pampered, spoiled lives in safety and wealth. To achieve this, its goal is fairly modest: take over one of the world's two superpowers, so that nation's nuclear arsenal can keep at bay those who would overthrow these slippery masters. It is the United States it has set its sights on, as the more prosperous state with the more appealing coastlines in warm regions. If it fails to seize America, though, it would be more than happy to settle for the Soviet Union. Even China or the UK would work in an emergency.

STORY HOOK

Major Donovan was always a bit of a strange fellow, but now he's gone. He's been gone for over a month. Nobody has seen him, and last time he showed up, he looked a little green around the gills — literally (except for the gills part). That does not mean his presence is not still felt, though. As far as anyone can tell, he has turned into a hermit with a voracious appetite for fine food, and a half-dozen youngsters who vanished are suspected of entering his villa and never reappeared. What is going on at the military base in Greenwater Grove? And why are all of the retired major's former subordinates starting to act so strange?

SYSTEM

Algae infection can happen to the best of people. Most algae host, though, is a salt of the Earth, average sorts, often sailors and the like. As the algae is one single being, albeit one that communicates slowly, they all share the same skills and mental traits, but the Physical and Social Arenas vary from host to host. The skills of the

algae of doom are those of its sum total of hosts, but limited by its unwillingness to exert itself. As it has taken hosts of all sorts and sizes, its abilities are far-reaching, but shallow. The average host has the following statistics:

Skills: The algae organism possesses all skills at rank 2.

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

Slow Hive Mind: The algae of doom is a single, distributed being, its mass distributed among hosts or free-floating, contributing to a single mind. However, it is not telepathic. The algae communicate by touch, some transferring between hosts to spread their knowledge to the entire network. Thus, individual hosts can be isolated to prevent their memories from spreading. Upon touch, all knowledge instantly transfers between the algae involved, whether in a host or separate. All algae infecting a host are in constant contact.

Algaefication: When the algae touch a non-Encountered host, it automatically takes control whenever no Encountered characters are physically looking at them. When the algae touch an Encountered character, they must roll Stamina to resist. On a failure, the individual becomes ill and falls under the algae's control whenever it would be most dramatic. On a success, they instead fall ill, but recover by the next scene. When a player character touches the algae, they fall ill and must heroically resist its influence until the algae are slain or a cure is found, but never succumbs unless the player so wishes. Whenever anyone succumbs to the algae's control, the host's Mental Arena attributes change to match the algae of doom: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2. In addition, all their Skills change to match the algae's rating of 2.

Algaefication is incurable, with a few rare exceptions whenever it would be most interesting or convenient for plot purposes. At any rate, when the host actually starts sprouting green vegetation — which can happen near-instantly, or never, but usually takes between an hour and a year — they are too far gone, and must be put down.

BOX JELLIES

"Ladies and gentlemen, behold the latest fashion in communist depravity — the mind control hat! Seemingly harmless, this hat actually extends delicate wires into the spinal column of the unfortunate wearer, rendering them under the complete control of a Soviet radio operator with the correct code phrases! Please observe as I don the device."

— Col. Rhuanda Starr, misguided US Army specialist on Soviet mind control

When does a hat wear a man? For this question, we must also ask: When is a hat not a hat? And to answer both, we must delve into the darkest depths of drapery, and hear of the highest horrors of haberdashery — for what but the vilest could countenance such

corruption of a noble calling? And the answer is the hat jelly. For naturally, the only minds that can conceive of perverting the use of honorable headwear are those so cold and alien as to be comprehensible only to the most depraved minds of obscene scholars and freelance authors for science-fiction periodicals!

No heinous hand of Soviet origin fashioned these things, for the box jellies — so named for their method of delivery — are their own masters. For half a millennium have they plotted and schemed, influencing the world of human fashion toward their own ends and mastering their own physique so as to turn themselves into humanity's overlords.

From the depths of Lake Michigan, they came, and to the porch they venture, delivered in hat boxes, to lure American men and women into donning this fiendish fashion. Truly, in these days, dressing to kill is more than a saying. For those who prove vigilant against the siren's call of this irresistible hat, a time comes when more direct measures are needed, and more, there are some whose style of dress is such that the sudden appearance of headwear would arouse suspicion. Death comes to those resistant ones in small packages.

GOALS

Nothing less than the dominion of the entire Great Lakes region will satisfy the box jellies, and New England, with its long and fabled history of haberdashery, is also tempting. Like wholesome American-made hazelnut snacks, each head they conquer is a delectable morsel that whets the appetite for more. It has been the jellies' great misfortune to be born as aquatic beings, with a natural barrier making the development of technology difficult, and they feel that humanity must be gracious enough to share their advanced technological culture. After all, it is a nice civilization they have there. It would be a shame if something were to happen to it.

STORY HOOK

As an intrepid investigator heads to his dear old aunt's house for some tea, he cannot help but notice the new hat she wears. It seems these are all the rage, and someone has been handing them out downtown, even forcing them on the heads of unwilling passers-by, who then have rapidly been charmed by the fashion. But why is Aunt Flora acting so strangely? And are those tendrils draped over her forehead? And where did these hats come from? What mad hatter is handing out such bespoke accessories for free?



SYSTEM

Box jellies are no warriors, but they do have personal strengths and weaknesses. Each box jelly has the statistics below, with an additional point in the Attribute of the Director's choice and two more ranks to distribute between their Skills.

Skills: Command 4, Culture 1, Empathy 3, Larceny 1, Medicine 1, Persuasion 4, Pilot 3, Science 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1; Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Health: 1

SPECIAL RULES

Head Control: The box jellies control whomsoever wears one on their head. The jelly and host are separate individuals, with separate Attributes, Skills, and Health, but the jelly cannot take any physical actions on its own when so attached. It can use whichever set of statistics are superior for any given action, but must draw entirely either on its own or its host's abilities in any given round — it cannot mix them. The victim must roll their Integrity + Resolve with a Difficulty of 2 and a Complication of 2 to resist the control for a scene. Encountered characters have an Enhancement of 2 on this roll. If they succeed but do not overcome the Complication, they cannot take any actions for the scene, being too preoccupied with resisting the jelly's malign influence, but they can speak. The victim can remove their box jelly master as a Reflexive action. Anyone else can remove a jelly from a willing victim as an Ordinary action. If the victim is struggling, then the jelly must be slain to free them.

THE CULTURAL BARRELEYES

"I hate spiders. I passed out when these fishbowls on eight legs spilled into the room. When I came to, I saw I was being dragged by my legs. I managed to struggle free and ran back home, apparently, they knocked everyone else out but only took me and my grandma. If they want slaves, why did they not take my dad instead of Granny?"

— Oliver Scolero

These semi-transparent fish have finally made their way out from the sea by occupying machines that look like fishbowls with legs. Their goal? Kidnap humans and steal cultural landmarks for their underwater zoos. When they came across abandoned military weapons in the ocean, they began collecting anything the humans discarded, and over time, became incredibly fascinated with them. Recycling the metal discarded by humans and using stolen technology from the Glowing People, the barreleyes have constructed parks and museums they hope to fill with human artifacts.

Those with arachnophobia (fear of spiders) may struggle to watch the barreleyes in their exoskeleton machinery. It has a total of eight legs, all of them double-jointed, allowing the barreleye to use it for walking as well as other utility.

The barreleyes need these flexible legs, as they cannot see otherwise. Their eyes fixate upward through their transparent heads — though they can angle the bowls ever so slightly forward, it takes a great amount of effort. Their homes and cultural parks look like glass bowls suspended from the ceiling, since it's easier for them to swim underneath to look at the humans inside. Due to their not being able to look forward (without concentrating so hard they can't do anything else while straining their eyes), the barreleyes have developed a symbiotic relationship with the sea scorpions who can see due to their quirky, yet advanced eyes. These sea creatures are rarely seen without each other, as they cover for each other's weaknesses.

It is thought that barreleyes communicate via sound, but no scientist so far has been able to record their soundwaves to determine at which level they speak. They can hear human speech and whistles, though the loudness of the sound does not seem to affect them.

GOALS

The barreleyes strive for a glorious collection of humans to entertain them for generations. Since humans are also a cultural symbol, many even desire a private collection. It's common for the barreleyes to compete among one another and trade for humans they view as rare. Some force their collections to participate in games, where they pit the humans against one another, and the winner takes all.

STORY HOOK

Another missing person's case. Neil pins a photo of the most recent victim on the city map to show where all of the recent people were last seen. "It doesn't make sense," Kevin bellows between taking puffs of his cigar, "These people got nuthin' in common! We can't create a victim profile. They just gotta be unrelated cases!"

He slams his oversized fist on the table, waking poor Johnny from his well-needed nap. Neil strokes his chin as he constructs his theory into words. The five o'clock shadow prickling his fingers was an indicator that they had all been at the station for too long.

"Perhaps ... their differences *are* what they have in common. What if the perpetrator is purposefully going after people who're unlike one another?"

"Whad'ya mean? You think the perp's tryin'a throw us off his trail?"

"Perhaps so. Or maybe that is part of his victim profile — to kidnap as many different people as possible."

SYSTEM

Skills: Culture 4, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Humanities 1, Survival 3, Science 2, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 12

SPECIAL RULES

When a barreleye enters a scene, what you see is what you're going to get. The Director has to describe what the barreleye has in their exoskeleton arms, see **Octopus Exoskeleton** below.

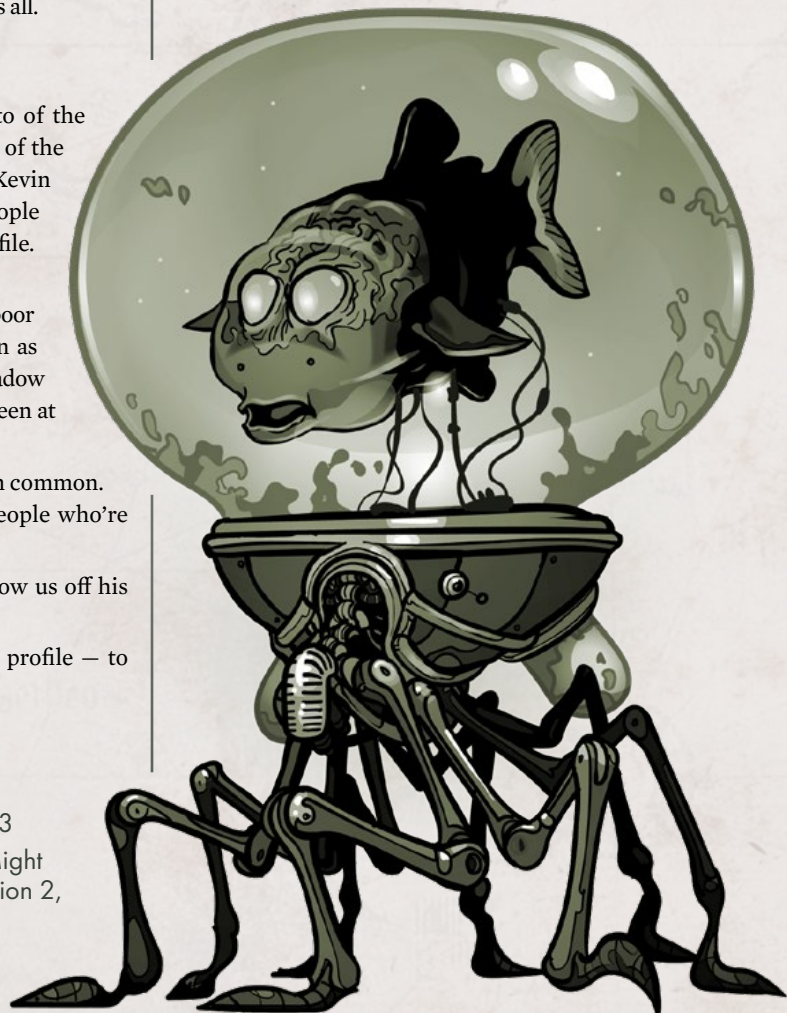
Barrel Eyes: In a relaxed state, their eyes look upwards. Don't make the mistake of assuming the two black circles on their face are eyes — those are nostrils.

Octopus Exoskeleton: In order to walk properly, a minimum of six of the exoskeleton's legs must be free (not holding anything). The exoskeleton doesn't have any pockets or storage places, erroneously believing women's fashions are the most practical, so the barreleyes must either hold the items in the beginning of the scene or delegate that task to their sea scorpion companions.

Having all arms free means the barreleye moves at 20 miles per hour (speeds which almost contend with racing for the title of fastest man), while if moving with six legs their speed is halved to 10 miles per hour, the running speed for the average joe.

Stun Gun: When a cultural barreleye shoots a target with their stun gun, any adult human can fight through the pain, but the difficulty of the subsequent action is increased by 2.

The barreleye can use one to two arms to hold stun guns. They can turn their stun guns into a lethal weapon by charging a shot for one turn, doubling the voltage. Oddly, the stun ray isn't conductive as electricity is, allowing these creatures to fire their guns underwater.



Another One for My Collection!: Imagine the most fanatical collector you know, whether they like to collect inanimate objects or hoard animals. Now envision them collecting humans instead, but maintaining their odd collector's quirk.

The barreleyes don't view humans as sentient beings worthy of respect, and so collect them based on the immense variety of human appearances. A human with cultural knowledge also impresses them, so the barreleyes tend to treat them more gently. Any characters who wish to impress the barreleyes with some interesting trivia can attempt to win their favor by rolling Culture + Cunning or similar rolls. Enhancements and Complications depend on whether the collected human is for a private collection (the human should fulfill specific demands) or the shared community parks (prioritizes diversity).

POLITICAL ANGLERFISH CONVERTER

"Debate club gets pretty intense, and Gavin's gotten super into it, perhaps a bit too much. Like, he continues to rant outside of the club and refuses to shake hands with the opponents — really bad form.

We were changing for gym class, and Charlie spotted a skin-tag on Gavin and dared me to rip it off. I did, and Gavin went ballistic. I dropped the tag and it looked like a blue maggot wriggling on the floor! I swear, if Charlie didn't trap it in the soda can, that thing might've latched itself back on Gavin because it was crawling to get him. Gavin's finally calmed down and even stopped talking about the upcoming elections."

— Jimmy Benson, one of the three students being interviewed after bringing a live P.A.C specimen.



The P.A.C.I.F.I.C. project (short for Political Anglerfish Converter, Imparting Factionalism into Consciousness) was a horrible experiment gone wrong. The project went so awry that nobody is willing to take responsibility; all governments point fingers at one another and at terrorist groups in an effort to pin the responsibility on someone else. The specimen looks a small fish or maggot, with two eyes and semi-transparent skin tinted blue. When attached to a person's neck, the P.A.C. mimics the skin color perfectly. They cannot change color afterwards, making them easier to spot if latched onto someone with a fading sunburn.

How did these terrors make their way from the lab into the sea? No one knows for certain, but some anti-government groups claim the government released the P.A.C.s into the ocean to kill the project off. The P.A.C.s showed vulnerability to high concentrations of salt during early stages of research, showing no clear signs of life after a day in saltwater, therefore releasing them *should* have killed them.

Much like humans, each anglerfish holds different political ideals. Perhaps the P.A.C.s are sentient enough to form their own beliefs, or maybe the experiment implanted different manifestos into the anglerfish minds. Consensus is that those who created the P.A.C.s hoped to brainwash citizens to embrace highly controversial ideals. But instead of infecting them with patriotism, these fish turn people against each other based on who they think has the nicest tie, best taste in music, or drives the nicest car. Yes, the P.A.C. factionalism isn't always based on political ideals, but instead can be just as fanatical about fashion or other small things, threatening to tear the world apart.

GOALS

Each anglerfish wants to create an army to fight for the ideal they developed following repeated experimentation. They plan to achieve this through enslaving humans and forcing them to fight for their cause. They aren't subtle in their approach either, as they cause their host to feel more energetic. With restless legs syndrome, there's no time to stay in the drive-in cinema when you *have to* get out there and change the world!

STORY HOOK

"Brainbox for President! Automated logic is the only thing that makes sense!"

Washington D.C. has always had people with strong political opinions, but even homemaker Amanda smelled something fishy when she saw the same people march for days under different banners. Most of the messages were absurd, but among the pointless demonstrations, there would occasionally be those in support of non-existing candidates in the election. Who's this Brainbox, and why did her husband's face pale when he heard that name? Why were his supporters so rabid, yet fickle in their opinions?

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 1, Close Combat 1, Command 2, Humanities 1, Integrity 3, Survival 4

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 5; Might 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Host Me: These creatures are called anglerfish as they act in a similar way to the biological, untampered-with male anglerfish in appearance and in the way they attach themselves to another life form, fusing together with the attached host to rely solely on its victim to provide for them both. While in the female anglerfish's case, she has the benefit of now being able to mate whenever she's ready, the humans and the P.A.C. do not share any symbiosis.

Whoever the responsible party is in bringing the P.A.C. to the world wrote extensive documentation on its lifecycle. The P.A.C. affects the host from the moment it attaches itself to the host's skin by gnawing into the victim's body. The P.A.C. usually waits for their prey to come to them, as they are quite small and can't outpace a human on land. When it attaches itself to a protagonist, the character must roll Survival + Stamina to see if they feel the P.A.C. attach itself to their body. On a success, the protagonist feels the anglerfish making contact and can remove it immediately.

Many don't notice the bite, as it doesn't hurt more than a mosquito's. It takes the anglerfish about three days to bury itself inside its host, usually opting for the neck, which subsequently bulges with what appears to be excess skin. When integrated with its host, the P.A.C.'s body changes color to match its host skin and is no longer transparent. After two months, removing its body from the host shows that it no longer has any organs. Its skin-tag-like body decreases in mass until it's half its original size. When the anglerfish is fully integrated itself into its host, its influence is permanent.

Extreme Factionalism, or Sheer Stupidity: A victim with a P.A.C. attached suffers an Complication 2 on all Resilience rolls until the P.A.C. is detached, representing the drives the anglerfish instills in its host. Should two or more P.A.C.s of differing or opposing beliefs attach themselves to the same host, the Complication increases to 3.

It's Too Salty: The belief that releasing the anglerfish into the ocean would kill them wasn't completely unfounded. The P.A.C. aren't so sensitive to salt that it kills them, but if submerged in saltwater or covered in salt, they enter a lucid state. Their hold of the host weakens, and the Complication of **Extreme Factionalism, or Sheer Stupidity** reduces to 1. All the anglerfish's dice pools are halved, rounded up, if they remain covered in salt for over an hour. At this point, they float on the tide and only wake when they hit land or a ship.

PERNICIOUS PLANKTON

"For too long, plankton has been prey to anything that might wish to eat us. Well, no more! We shall put plankton on top of the food chain!"

— Zarg, plankton queen

In the waves outside of the Labrador islands, danger lurks. The most innocent of all God's creatures, the plankton, has become a menace that could mean the end of all humankind. Tired of being at the bottom of the food chain, these innocuous creatures have learned to seize control of the nervous systems of their natural predators. Now, these sinister submarine scoundrels seek to enslave the local population like a modern Atilla.

The islands of Labrador are an idyllic slice of coastal life, but now they face the perils of whales, sharks, and seagulls under the dominion of a strange and alien intelligence — an intelligence that demands tribute. If the tribute is paid, the people living here can



travel freely. But if not, any attempt to leave faces a lethal response from the marine marauders. Worse, each island must furnish the plankton with one of their children as tribute each year that passes — and New Year's is coming quickly.

Deep beneath the waves, the plankton has awakened to their ability to seize control of whatever eats them. As their control passes up the food chain, they gain greater and greater ability to menace humankind, though they cannot survive in a human body — or perhaps the process of cooking eliminates their presence.

Deep in Planktonheim sits Queen Zarg, supreme sovereign of the plankton, wearing the form of an enormous blue whale, and every hour, her minions haul treasure chests before her to show her the tribute they have extracted. And she laughs, and turns her attention to the stolen children, who will be her agents on land, to ensure the continuity of her rule.

GOALS

The plankton tire of being eaten. They want to be on top of the food chain, and they want to throw their weight around. Ultimately, they want to be the bullies the world fears, but in the meantime, they want to ensure nobody threatens their dominion of the islands off of Labrador.

STORY HOOK

Young Alfred Burkemeister has traveled to the Labrador coast for vacation to pursue his passion for marine life, and vanished. Now, his mother, the wealthy European countess Agatha Burkemeister, is offering a handsome sum for his return. But the locals are cagey about young Alfred's whereabouts. What calamity has befallen the spoiled young foreigner?

SYSTEM

The Physical Arena Attributes and Health of a given plankton colony are those of the animal they inhabit, but only Queen Zarg herself deviates from the statistics given beneath. The Queen inhabits a blue whale, and has 4s in all non-Physical Attributes as well as all Skills.

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Empathy 1, Integrity 1, Medicine 1, Persuasion 3, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

SPECIAL RULES

You Are What Eats You: The plankton can take control of any non-intelligent animal that eats them, instantly. When attacking a valid host, the Director can declare that the plankton are attempting to force feed themselves to it. Mark damage dealt by such attacks separately — it still contributes to the creature's defeat in combat, but other damage does not contribute to the force-feeding attempt. If they succeed in dealing damage to an animal equal to or higher than its Stamina, the plankton seizes control of that beast, adding its Physical Arena Attributes and Health to their own statistics. All damage dealt by the plankton in force feeding attempts is then removed. If the animal takes more damage than its Health before it can fall under the plankton's control, the attempt fails instead.

Outside of a host, the plankton can be killed by heat, cold, poison, or any other diffuse, area-affecting attack. No rolls are necessary to slay such fragile motes.

POSEIDON

"Once, your primitive ancestors worshipped my kin and I, and we led them into a golden age of philosophy and enlightenment. Now, it is time once more that your kind be brought to heel. Behold, mankind! Without a firm guiding hand, how eager to throw itself into the shadow of nuclear annihilation!"

— Poseidon, ancient Greek god

Once upon a time, humanity knew to fear the gods, and offer prayer and sacrifice to appease them. But their time passed, and humanity rose up, overthrowing their old masters and embracing a new providence. The others left, but Poseidon, bitter and cold, was locked deep beneath the sea, in the vault of Tartarus beneath the Mariana Trench. When Professor Wilma Sullivan descended into the Challenger Deep in her bathyscaphe, the *Pandora*, in the first bold conquest by humans of this forbidding abyss, the ancient divinity at last found its freedom. Stowing away atop the *Pandora*, Poseidon escaped his watery prison and began plotting his return to glory.

From far-off Neptune, Poseidon came to rule the world, and in secret he plots, offering his blessings to those who would obey. From his Hawaiian villa and connected undersea base, he and his new queen organize a vast network of sailors, fishers, and business interests, all of whom rely on Poseidon's gifts to speed up their vessels, and ensure safety and prosperity. With his exceptional intellect, as well as his formidable strength of will, he has unlocked vast mental powers, and can affect the oceans to a great extent, as well as destroy those who would oppose him.

His influence has been felt all over the world, and the discovery of Poseidonists in the Senate has led to the United States Armed Forces funding a research project into Poseidon's powers, hoping to find a weakness. This project is headed by the illustrious Professor Wilma Sullivan, considered the greatest expert on marine mythology in the world. She has stated her intention to redeem herself for having unintentionally released Poseidon upon the world.

Unfortunately, Professor Sullivan is also Poseidon's new queen. He shares with her his advanced education, and by expanding her mind with new knowledge, she, too, has developed formidable psychic powers. In time, hers might grow to match his. She reports all her team's developments to her lover, sabotaging any promising leads as best she can.

GOALS

Ultimately, all humans must bow before the supreme wisdom of Poseidon. His superior intellect accepts nothing less. His mind, body, and spirit are far more evolved than that of humanity, who are like unto children and cannot be trusted to take care of themselves. Look at their legacy — war, pollution, atrocities, and now they stand poised at the brink of nuclear annihilation! Without a stern yet fair guiding hand, they cannot survive much longer. Only a few among their ranks, those at a higher level of evolution than their peers, can be trusted to act as his stewards, Wilma Sullivan chief among them. These rare specimens of humanity must be elevated above the rest until the time comes when the rest of the species evolves to their level, in another few centuries.

STORY HOOK

A new wealthy man about town, Donald Posey, has shown up in New York City. The fellow is handsome, strong, and frighteningly clever, and he has the bearing of old money. He is a natural, and has started gathering quite the following from the young people among the upper crust. In fact, they almost seem to worship him, and the trend spreads, with youngsters complaining how their parents just don't understand them and their choice of music and fashion. But is Donald Posey a trustworthy man — or a power-hungry fool? And why have some of his most outspoken critics suddenly changed their minds?

SYSTEM

Poseidon is near the peak of humanoid potential, and Wilma Sullivan is headed there fast.

POSEIDON

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 5, Close Combat 5, Command 5, Culture 5, Empathy 1, Enigmas 3, Humanities 4, Integrity 4, Larceny 1, Medicine 2, Persuasion 4, Pilot 5, Science 4, Survival 5, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 5, Resolve 5; Might 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 25

WILMA SULLIVAN

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 3, Culture 2, Empathy 5, Enigmas 2, Humanities 3, Integrity

3, Larceny 2, Medicine 2, Persuasion 5, Pilot 2, Science 5, Survival 2, Technology 4

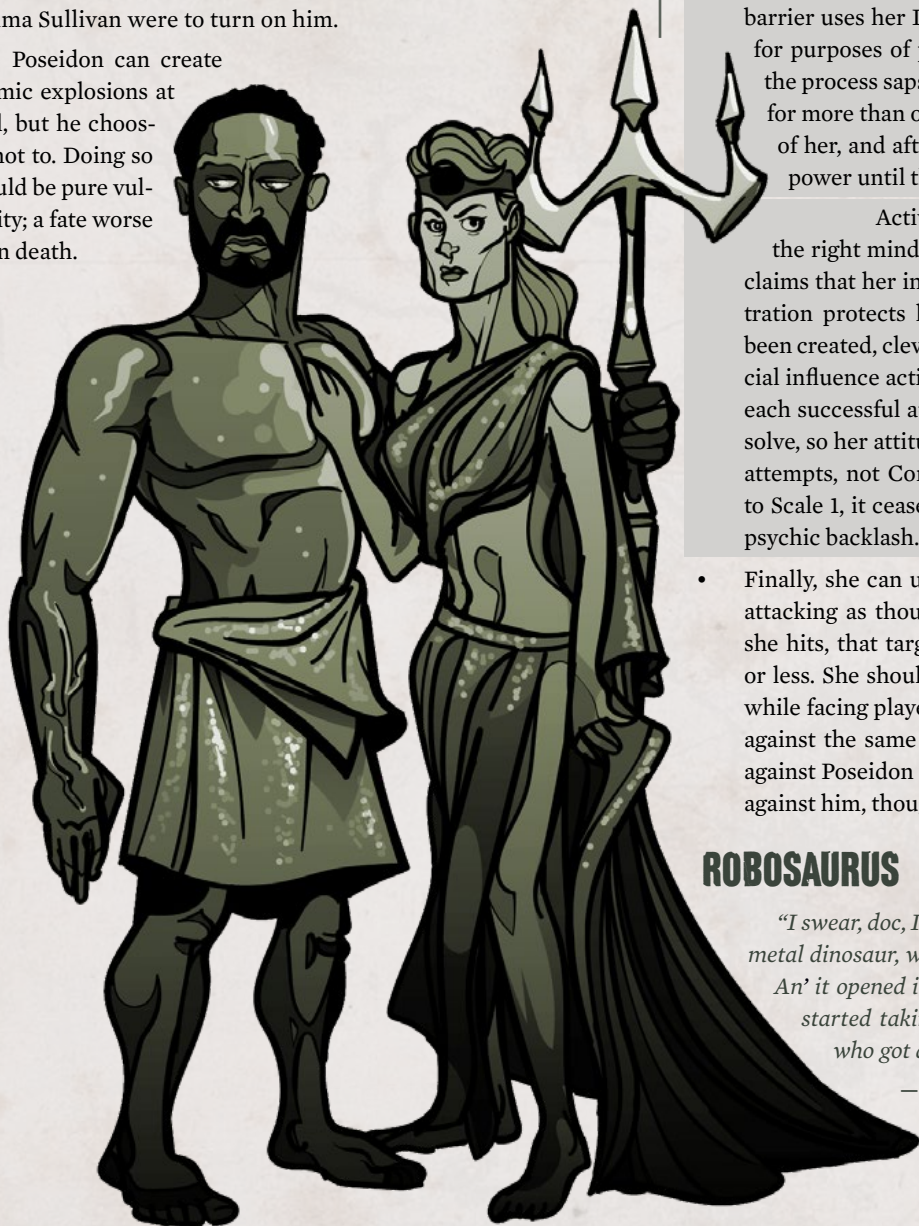
Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 5, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 15

SPECIAL RULES

God-Like Alien: Poseidon's mental powers are supreme, and function at Scale 5, which is also his combat Scale. He can perform any physical feat he desires. He can control minds. He has telekinesis. But his powers do have weaknesses. Firstly, he can only do one thing at a time. He can affect multiple targets or a wide area, but cannot, say, summon a tidal wave and hold an infantry squad immobile simultaneously. Secondly, though his senses are keen, they are not inhumanly so, and he cannot use his powers subconsciously. He can be surprised. Thirdly, his reserves of mental energy are vast, but depletable. Overuse of his abilities tires him. Finally, it is possible to force him to focus on defense, and so render him unable to attack, by a sustained effort, such as if Wilma Sullivan were to turn on him.

Poseidon can create atomic explosions at will, but he chooses not to. Doing so would be pure vulgarity; a fate worse than death.



Lord of the Seas: Poseidon can control the weather, tides, and currents at sea separately from all his other abilities. He can sense the oceans as a whole, but does not have detailed knowledge of individual craft or animals. He can sense regular traffic, though, and uses that to draw conclusions. He can change the weather at sea, but has no other unusual control over the air above the water.

Awesome Mental Powers: Dr. Sullivan is learning Poseidon's advanced intellectual wisdom, and has unlocked powers far beyond human ken. But she is still mortal.

Wilma Sullivan has four tricks up her sleeve:

- Firstly, she can control minds, up to one Encountered or five un-Encountered characters, each of which must be Scale 1. Each must roll Integrity + Resolve to avoid falling under her spell.
- Secondly, she has telekinesis. She can lift a single object, or affect a whole area, moving all the matter within, up to a weight or radius of Scale 2.
- Thirdly, she can establish a formidable mental barrier around herself, protecting her from nearly all attacks. The barrier uses her Integrity + Resolve to create and is Scale 3 for purposes of protecting her from physical damage, but the process saps her willpower and she cannot maintain it for more than one scene. Creating a barrier takes a lot out of her, and after its use in a scene she cannot repeat the power until the following story takes place.

Activating the barrier requires her to get into the right mindset, so Dr. Sullivan always arrogantly proclaims that her invincible resolve and unshakeable concentration protects her from all harm. Once the barrier has been created, clever adversaries can undermine her with social influence actions, reducing the barrier's Scale by 1 with each successful attempt. Strong feelings undermine her resolve, so her attitude can only grant Enhancements to these attempts, not Complications. When the barrier is reduced to Scale 1, it ceases to exist and she visibly recoils from the psychic backlash.

- Finally, she can unleash her raw psyche on a single target, attacking as though she was using a firearm of Scale 3. If she hits, that target is automatically killed if it's Scale is 2 or less. She should only rarely (and with warning) use this while facing player characters. She can maintain this attack against the same target from round to round, and does so against Poseidon to keep him occupied if convinced to turn against him, though it can hardly harm him.

ROBOSAURUS

"I swear, doc, I ain't been drinkin' again! It was real! A giant metal dinosaur, waddlin' on outta the lake, big as a mountain! An' it opened its mouth, and small robots come on out and started takin' everyone back inside! I was the only one who got away!"

— Mae DeWinter, village drunkard

Millions of years ago, dinosaurs ruled our planet, and our primitive ancestors hid in fear in their caves as these



awesome titans of the primeval world roamed free. How long ago these fantastic beings ruled, and yet how recently in our ancestral memories! And how close to the surface that ancient terror lies buried, how easy it is for modern man to return to the era of stone knives and bear skins in the presence of a being that reminds us of that which hunted our ancestors.

Deep beneath the Atlantic Ocean, the exiles of an ancient robot race from long-lost Atlantis, the Atlantoids, find their society crumbling in the face of dwindling resource stockpiles. Desperate, they turn to the only beings that can help them — humanity! With their last few scraps of iron and coal, they construct a mighty robot to abduct surfacers to work the underwater mines — a terrific stegosaurus, the greatest of their kind! And the name that brings terror to the lands above is ... Robosaurus!

A titanic terror designed to harbor several dozen smaller robots and as many captives, Robosaurus now stalks out of the water and onto American beaches. There, it opens its terrific jaw and fin-headed mechanical monstrosities emerge to seize any unfortunates nearby and carry them back inside the monster's maw. Then, its foul task complete, Robosaurus once more departs beneath the waves, walking along the bottom, headed to the domed robot city of Robopolis. There, the captives are fitted with large diving suits and oxygen canisters, and forced to work in the dreadful mines of Robot Chasm, where they extract the coal and steel needed for Robopolis to exist.

But the needs of the Atlantoids are ever-growing, and the mines will soon yield all they can. Soon, the Atlantoids hope to construct a dozen Robosauri and expand, until all iron and coal beneath the world's oceans are theirs, and a billion humans toil in misery for all eternity.

But the Robosaurus is not a docile being. It plans to take over Robopolis for itself. It sees its robot kin as being as far beneath itself as they regard humanity, and considers its dominion just and inevitable. It is unstoppable and indestructible, but it possesses one fatal flaw: its computer matrix is less flexible than those of its creators, and might short-circuit if exposed to a logical paradox!

GOALS

Self-preservation is the solitary goal of the robots of Atlantis. Until now, they have relied on the stockpiles brought from Atlantis aeons ago, but that supply is now nearly empty. With their cold machine-logic, they have determined they need a long-term supply of the iron and coal they use to make their chasses and fuel. And the most logical way to extract these resources without expending them in the effort is to use organic equipment in the process — and the best organic material is the intelligent sort.

As for Robosaurus, it wants to mass produce itself and seize control of the robots' civilization.

STORY HOOK

A young local girl, Petunia Wheeler, has made an unlikely new imaginary friend: a giant metal stegosaurus! She meets it at the shore, she says, and talks to it. She tells it all about the world above the water, and in return, the dinosaur gives her sweets and tells her stories about sea animals. But Petunia is growing unhappy — the grown-ups don't believe her story, and her dinosaur friend did not show up when she tried to show her father she was telling the truth. The parents, of course, are starting to worry, too — Petunia spends so much time down at the beach that her friendships with other children are faltering. Surely, she needs some kind of help, but what sort? And why is Petunia caught trespassing on the local military base?

SYSTEM

These are the statistics for most Atlantoid robots. Administrative units have 1-3 dots more in the Social Arena attributes, and as many to distribute between Command, Integrity, and Science.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Pilot 2, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 1, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Health: 8

Robosaurus itself is beyond the realm of mere rules. As a monstrosity as large as the largest bus, or as large as a mountain (it can be hard to tell), it is immune to mere damage. Its attacks are natural disasters, and the presumptuousness of deploying atom bombs and expecting them to harm it amuses the Atlantoids. Instead, Robosaurus is scenery, a large and malevolent obstacle. Surviving its attacks is a dramatic scene, and slaying it has less to do with rolling dice and more to do with solving a mystery. Three things can defeat Robosaurus: the control center in its creators' city can shut it down; entering the Atlantoid base inside it can allow a bold group to sabotage the beast; and reaching its bridge and speaking directly to it, it can be "talked to death" by catching it in a contradiction that its mechanical mind cannot process.

SPECIAL RULES

Hardened Shells: As super-durable robots, Atlantoid constructs are immune to all environmental concerns such as heat, cold, pressure, atmosphere, toxins, and diseases. They cannot be injured by unarmed attacks, but such attacks can still trip or otherwise hinder them. However, their electric computer-brains do not withstand paradoxes well, and can be forced to shut down by demonstrating that their actions are contradictory to their own goals and ideals. Of course, the robots can simply shut down their hearing to avoid this, but then they cannot communicate.

SEE-THROUGH SEA SCORPIONS

“What are you talking about, Molly!? That’s no alien, it’s just an ugly plastic bag flying in the wind!”

— Karl Vende Putte’s last words before his untimely death at the claws of the sea scorpions

Also known as assassin scorpions, these mutated amphipods are almost invisible and have therefore lived a lonely existence. They live together with other creatures who can see them, most notably the cultural barreleyes. Though they cannot speak, the sea scorpions communicate with the barreleyes by writing on stones or in the sand. Their impeccable usage of grammar would make any language teacher proud.

Though they share the barreleye’s fascination with humans, the sea scorpions are more interested in what humanity has produced in form of art and fashion, rather than the actual humans themselves. Since they want nothing more in the world than to be seen, they have taken a strong interest in plastic and other colorful materials they use to drape over themselves. By wearing these colorful goods, they hope it’ll make them visible to more creatures, but some poorly sighted humans think they are nothing more than a heap of trash.

Mocking a sea scorpion for its looks can result in a horrible death, where they skin the bully and wear the features with the most variety in color. Treating them sweetly, however, also has dire consequences. You’ll live, but may end up in a barreleye’s zoo or as a glorified pet the sea scorpion obsesses over, never willing to let go. Even if you’re a beloved pet, they’ll pump you full of histamines should you misbehave in their home. Most simply throw the human out of their glass confinement to drown.

GOALS

To help their friends in their collection of humans and to be seen by the world. While outsiders wish to harness the sea scorpion’s near-invisibility, the mute creature wants to break free of its lonely existence. While it’s easy to feel sorry for them, remember that most of their knowledge of humans comes from the cultural barreleyes. They therefore share similar views of what a person’s life is worth.



STORY HOOK

Project Chameleon, a government-funded project to harness the power of invisibility from one of the aliens they’d discovered in the nuclear test sites. DNA is a new science, but they spent no time wasting before they tried to turn prisoners into fish-scaled weapons. That’s what the rumors are, but how do one even capture something one cannot see? Perhaps it’s these escaped convicts that’s caused a ruckus in town lately. Or could it be the invisible scorpions?

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 4, Empathy 1, Humanities 1, Larceny 5, Survival 3, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 13

SPECIAL RULES

Surprising Size: See-through scorpions vary in size from that of the average scorpion (therefore, tiny to most humans) to approximate humanoid size. When they’re the size of humanoids, these scorpions are treated as being Scale 2.

See-through Body: The Sea Scorpion’s almost invisible body makes it the perfect assassin. Most humans are incapable of seeing them if they’re not wearing anything. Characters can roll Survival + Cunning to spot the creature, but only if they know what they’re looking for. Anyone trained to spot concealed movement, such as military personnel or skilled hunters, gains an Enhancement of 2 when attempting to track a sea scorpion’s movements.

Stealth is Nice, But: Since the scorpions wish to be seen in their plastic apparel, they hold off reacting violently to gauge human response to their “fashion”. A kind or curious response may be enough for them to take interest in the person and try to kidnap them.

Razor-sharp Pincers: The sea scorpion’s pincers are so sharp, that even if they are as careful as can be, their pincer attacks have the Piercing tag (see **TCfBtS!** p. 94). If grappled by a sea scorpion, characters can escape using an Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 2), but the scorpion inflicts a single Injury in the attempt.

Tail Stinger: Sharp as the sharpest dagger, the perfect weapon for an assassin is one nobody sees coming — literally. The scorpion’s stinger contains a venom similar to the stinging nettle, which is by itself, is not lethal with a damage rating of 1 and a rash lasting for the duration of two scenes. However, the force of the tail strike is such that it has the Deadly tag (see **TCfBtS!** p. 93). The stinger is therefore more like a speeding bullet than a venom delivery mechanism.



THE OYSTEROID MENACE

Professor Lydex Van Kester pulled his eye from the telescope so abruptly he almost left it there. Unlike the telescopes that studied the heavens, this massive device pointed downwards, allowing the scientist to spend hours gazing into the ocean's depths. But what he saw now chilled him to the bone.

. . .

It took some doing, but the professor finally succeeded in getting the attention of civic leaders and the joint chiefs as well as several other chiefs. He stood gravely before the assembly in a large, important room.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the day I long dreaded is finally here. I have oft feared that our greatest threat would come, not from space, but from the oceans of our own planet. My underwater telescope has just confirmed that that an enormous object is hurtling our way from the darkest depths. It is an oysteroid."

The room buzzed with excited unintelligible words. Finally, Admiral Crockmeier spoke up.

"Just what exactly is an oysteroid, Professor?"

"It is a massive oyster, grown wildly out of proportion, weighing thousands of tons and at least nine hundred feet across, with a diameter twice the size of its radius."

The gasps filling the room sounded like a train pulling in.

"What could have caused such a freakish thing?" asked the Admiral.

"That, we do not know. If I could land on it, study it. However, unless we divert it, it will destroy a major city."

"Which city?"

"I don't know, but it's major."

. . .

Preparations were immediately underway to outfit a new ultramodern miniature nuclear submarine with special torpedoes designed to deflect the monstrous oyster, possibly destroy it. In record time, it was complete and ready to travel.

"How much time do we have left, Professor?"

"About two weeks," he replied. As they stared, he added, "Things move a lot slower underwater."

Soon, the sub was on its way with a special team, the Operation Oysteroid Prevention Squad (O.O.P.S.), headed by Admiral Crockmeier and Professor Van Kester, who insisted on going. As they descended, things grew murkier until visibility was at a minimum, forcing them to rely on sonar.

"Something dead ahead, sir - only it's not dead," chirped sonar operator Havelquist with his usual sonar humor.

"Why, it's enormous," offered the Admiral, staring at the big sonar screen blob.

"The oysteroid!" squawked Professor Van Kester, far too loud for such a confined space.

"Prepare to launch deflection torpedo one!" barked Crockmeier.

"Wait. We have time. Let's not be so hasty," suggested the scientist with odd sudden calm.

"We have visual contact, sir," said the helmsman at the sub's front window.

They gathered forward and beheld the impossible sight of the vast oyster in their path.

"What a monster. Exactly what are we waiting for, Professor?"

"If I could just have a chance to - to study it, just a little-"

"Out of the question."

"Think of what it could mean for science. By taking some samples I could determine what made it this way, and why it's heading for a major city."

"Too risky. I say we deflect it while we can."

"Just - just *one hour*. Look how *slowly* the ridiculously big thing moves."

"Alright. One hour," begrudged the Admiral, "But not an hour more."

. . .

Minutes later, Professor Van Kester was packed into the latest awkward, bulky, uncomfortable underwater exploration suit science had to offer. Quickly the airlock was flooded and soon the dedicated man of science was jetting toward the massive oysteroid.

His eyes grew larger and larger behind his visor as he got closer and closer to the gigantic oyster. The mouth of the enormous

shell opened and closed slowly, taking in all forms of sea life unfortunate enough to cross its path.

The sub crew stared, riveted to the spectacle of the brave scientist, tiny by comparison, closing on that vast maw. At the last moment, Van Kester shifted his jets, taking him above the monster's mouth and onto the surface of the upper shell.

His voice crackled over the sub radio. "I hereby claim this oysteroid on behalf of-!"

Admiral Crockmeier grabbed the handset. "Listen here, Professor, we're not setting up a colony on this thing!"

"Oh, yes, quite," sputtered the scientist. "I got carried away. It's exciting-"

"Just get your sample and get back here. We're running out of time!"

The Professor scraped the shell, depositing samples into a bag. "This is not enough. I must see the inside!" He worked his way down the slope of mountainous shell toward that opening and closing maw.

"Professor! Professor Van Kester, it's too risky!" yelled the Admiral over the radio.

But the dedicated scientist was too absorbed, too lost in that crazy thing called science, to care about his own wellbeing. He jettied off the shell, drifting down till he was level with the oysteroid's mouth, then slowly turning - turning to face that great unknown. The maw was no longer opening and closing. It was now opening wider, as though the thing sensed far more important game.

Still, Van Kester hovered before it in the water. To the horrified crew of the sub, he appeared small and insignificant before this great god of a mollusk. This was easily the widest the shell had opened, and it revealed that there was some sort of strange light emanating from deep within, an impossibly bright glow at these murky depths.

"Professor!" yelled Admiral Crockmeier one final time.

But the professor didn't hear, as the oysteroid's blinding glare reflected on his face mask, until the scientist's bulging eyes were completely obscured behind it. And yet, as the giant came on, Van Kester willingly moved to meet it, as though unable to help himself.

Soon. Soon he would have the answer. That was all that mattered as the massive maw opened a bit wider and then began to close on the tiny figure, close for one final time.

"Fire," uttered the Admiral quietly, without a hint of enthusiasm.

CHAPTER THREE INVADERS

"I feel like I'm leaving a world of untold tomorrows
for a world of countless yesterdays."

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

Fresh from the horrors of World War II, all of humankind relate to the dread of invasion and subjugation — only now the threat comes from the waves instead of to the tune of jackbooted marching. Among the most calculating of aliens, the Invaders attack humanity with a purpose. They see no need to aimlessly destroy or collate information: they want what we have, whether land, gold, fashion, or music. Invaders don't know the meaning of the word "quit," redirecting their tyrannical aims toward other species if humankind proves too resistant.

Invaders have a bone to pick with Scientists, as this strand of human has a habit of devising gadgets and gizmos fit to repel their attempts at seizing the world as their own. The Invaders love to seize Scientist laboratories and claim their technological wonders.

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.

AGGRESSIVE NATIVE TERRORS AND REGIONAL CHICKEN TACTICAL INSURGENCY CORPS (A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C.)

"They are extraordinarily like children, these little people of the Antarctic world — either like children or like old men, full of their own importance."

— Apsley Cherry-Garrard, British Antarctic explorer in 1910

Discovered in 1840, the Adélie penguin is notorious for its curiosity, stubbornness, and occasional tantrums. Groups of these little birds cluster on the shores of Antarctic islands and ice floes, hunting krill, laying eggs, and shoving one another into the water when it suits them. They are terribly clever even without mad science. Once uplifted, however, Adélie penguins pose a surprisingly vicious threat, despite their diminutive stature.

No one knows who first uplifted the humble Adélie penguin. Perhaps some top-secret Operation Paperclip scientist's

experiment at McMurdo Station got out of hand. Maybe a Soviet black-ops researcher went too far. Whatever the reason, an entire colony of Adélie penguins received the gift of human adolescent intelligence — and they're only getting smarter.

The Aggressive Native Terrors and Regional Chicken Tactical Insurgency Corps, or A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. for short, takes their name from the insults regularly hurled at them by residents of Antarctic research stations. A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. takes these insults as a mark



of pride — the humans finally acknowledge them. Some younger members of A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. deliberately stay within sightline of McMurdo station and squeak insults back as loudly as they can. Older members consider this good training and continue to allow it. Sometimes, members of McMurdo station take potshots at the penguins — but such is life in the southern wilds. A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. penguins who are hit are carried back by their friends, to be bandaged up and made fun of by their fellows.

It isn't their taunts and games that makes the A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. dangerous, however. The penguin commandos make excellent spies and saboteurs, and have successfully made off with supplies, weapons, and schematics from McMurdo, Oasis, Station A, and Byrd stations, among others. The penguins want what we have, and they're starting with all Antarctic research stations before moving to South America and working their way up. Since the US, UK, and USSR operate these stations, the little insurgents have caused no small amount of finger-pointing in international circles. No one wants to believe their station was raided by smart Adélie penguins, to say nothing of smart Adélie penguins with military-grade weaponry and atmospheric diving suits.

While A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. mostly bothers the research stations on Antarctica itself, and on the surrounding islands, they are currently experimenting with the possibility of going further. Crews of three to 10 penguins pilot the atmospheric diving suits like submarines, while even larger "hangar crews" make necessary adjustments. If the penguins can figure out how to get their ersatz fleet somewhere more populated, the citizens of Earth will tremble. Probably.

GOALS

A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. penguins want what they deserve. What they think they deserve depends on the day, but it usually involves stealing things from humans. Also, big guns, sandwiches, and atmospheric diving suits. Also, they deserve to not be eaten by walruses and whales. A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. commandos are capricious creatures and get attached to new ideas and objects easily. They just as easily discard them.

STORY HOOK

Everyone thought Doctor Walgate was crazy. He spent too much time in isolation down there at the South Pole, the poor man, and just needs some time in the sun to recover. It's not his fault he thought the Adélie penguins, with their maddening chirps and squeaks, were out to get him. The town hails him as a scientific hero and tries their best to accommodate (or ignore) his ramblings about the "feathered demon children" — that is, until a JIM atmospheric diving suit washes ashore, and clever little birds pile out. The A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. are determined to make this new sunshine-filled warm place their home, whether the residents like it or not.

SYSTEM

A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. commandos always arrive in groups, but usually shove one of their number forward to test the area. If the sacrificial penguin survives more than a few steps into the area, the rest follow. Members of A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. fight in small tactical groups, but don't hesitate to leave a fellow soldier to their fate if it means keeping themselves safe.

Skills: Aim 2, Close Combat 3, Culture 1, Integrity 3, Larceny 4, Medicine 1, Pilot 1, Survival 3, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

Penguin Submersible: If up to 10 A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. commandos pilot an atmospheric diving suit like a JIM or a Tritonia, the suit behaves as a single entity with the following traits:

Skills: Aim 4, Close Combat 4, Pilot 4, Survival 4, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 10

Yes, Hello, I Am A Penguin: When the penguins attempt to distract humans during a heist, players must roll Integrity + Resolve (Difficulty 2) to not just fall in love at the sight of penguins waddling about and lose sight of the ongoing theft. This form of hypnotic distraction lasts one turn.

Water Wings: Whether fleeing a sinking diving suit or just an irate polar bear, A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. commandos have all of the grace and speed of their less-enlightened brethren, providing all humans an Enhancement when trying to catch up to them on land. A.N.T.A.R.C.T.I.C. penguins can flee a scene with no roll if they are in the ocean or a sufficiently large body of water, however.

AMPHIBIOUS SEA-DRAGONS

"Was that tree there yesterday?"

— Famous last words

Since European colonists first started landing in faraway countries and cutting down their trees, the forests have been fighting back. Colonists and their descendants blame these deaths on freak accidents, human retaliation and guerilla warfare, ghosts of the native population, or good old-fashioned murder between white people. None of these are wrong, per se, but they do not account for the murders committed by the friends of the trees.

As long as there have been forests, there have been amphibious sea-dragons to spend time among them. The sea-dragons are gentle, intelligent creatures who commune with the trees and one another in whispery, leaf-quiet, lyrical voices. During the winter, sea-dragons usually return to the sea, as their bodies do not retain heat. Amphibious sea-dragons come onto land to breed, usually in remote forests or valleys. Sea-dragons bury their eggs until they're ready to hatch (sprout?) in midsummer, and mark the egg-pits with strange structures made from fallen branches and twigs woven in intricate patterns. Hikers sometimes mistake these for yeti camps or signs of sinister cults. A sea-dragon on land looks like an old sycamore or plane tree, spotted, leafy, and always rustling. Sea-dragons are content to sit in one spot and observe their environment before slowly moving once night falls.



Amphibious sea-dragons are not, by nature, violent or aggressive. Yet, since humanity has spread faster across the planet, they feel threatened by the smart, soft primates. The sea-dragons do not recognize the tools humanity uses, and the sounds of chainsaws and heavy machinery frighten and enrage them. Humans have already chopped down scores of amphibious sea-dragons, some of them males guarding and feeding an egg-cluster. Amphibious sea-dragons hate and fear humanity as prey hates and fears a predator — but this prey has the ability to fight back. Most sea-dragons try to avoid attacking humans by moving farther inland into more remote areas, but this is a dangerous proposition. The sea-dragons are not immune to landslides, floods, and other natural dangers that wildlife face, and being too far from the sea too long can be deadly. Some are left with no choice but to fight for their woods.

Survivors of an amphibious sea-dragon attack describe earthquakes, trees collapsing, and complete, terrifying silence. Amphibious sea-dragons do not have any sort of battle cry, and prefer to do things as quickly and quietly as possible so they can get back to the business of mating. If tearing up the earth makes more room for their egg-pits, so much the better.

Amphibious sea-dragons are anywhere between 10 and 50 feet tall (long, when in the water), and usually travel in pairs. They do not speak any known language, though they understand verbalization in almost any human tongue. A destroyed sea-dragon falls into pieces of rotting wood, soaked in briny water. Their offspring appear to be small saplings or shrubs of different kinds, but they all grow into the same sycamore-like camouflage. When not breeding on land, amphibious sea-dragons spend most of their time in estuaries, lagoons, and river details, enjoying the brackish water and company of creatures like manatees and dolphins.

GOALS

Ultimately, amphibious sea-dragons want themselves and their breeding grounds to be left alone. Whether or not this is incompatible with the modern world is best left up to those affected by the sea-dragons. Amphibious sea-dragons view humans as a funny nuisance at best and child-murderers at worst. While they don't want to kill all humans themselves, if humans disappeared from the planet they would not be terribly upset.

STORY HOOK

Don't go into the woods. They're haunted. There's an old burial ground out there — no, shut up, it's true, my brother told me. There's a big ol' chieftain ghost who wears feathers and leaves and sways in the wind. He don't talk but he looks at you and then you're *dead*. Hey, mister, where are you going? I told you not to go into the woods!

SYSTEM

Amphibious sea-dragons travel in pairs, or with their offspring. They mostly travel at night to avoid disturbing the local wildlife — and in recent years, to avoid detection by humans. Amphibious sea-dragons do not attack unless provoked, although “provoking” a sea-dragon can mean anything from cutting down its mate to looking at it funny.

Skills: Aim 2, Close Combat 3, Integrity 5, Medicine 2, Pilot 1, Survival 5

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Health: 9

SPECIAL RULES

Eyes in the Forest: Amphibious sea-dragons can cast their senses through the network of trees around them, which is why logging is so terribly painful and frightening to their species. Amphibious sea-dragons can see and hear anything in a scene that takes place in a wooded area, so long as they are in the same wooded area where the scene takes place.

The Trees Talk: Amphibious sea-dragons can telepathically communicate with their mate and unmated offspring at all times, as well as other sea-dragons in a scene.

Dragon's Bite: When humans threaten their habitat, sea-dragons attempt to wrestle the interlopers with their branches, requiring an Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 2) to evade, and drag any grappled victims to their maws, which resemble gaping holes in the trunk of the sea-dragon “tree.” Anyone placed within one of these mouths finds the mouth biting down on them with a damage rating of 3.

Wrath of the Wilderness: An amphibious sea-dragons can attack assailants with her tail by pulling it out of the ground on the first round, and slamming it onto the ground repeatedly for any number of rounds thereafter. Anyone in the blast radius of an amphibious sea-dragon's tail must make an Athletics + Stamina roll to remain standing. Even if the character succeeds, the shockwave applies a damage rating of 2.

Dragonflight: Amphibious sea-dragons, when not rooted in the ground or immersed in the water, hover slightly above the surface. A sea-dragon cannot sustain this flight for longer than a scene at a time and must rest by rooting herself or immersing herself in water for another scene.

Omniaudio: Amphibious sea-dragons can understand any language.

DAPPERCRABS

“Fashion is theft, darling. You just have to know who to steal from.”

— Redeye, founding member of the dappercrabs

While the crab people do not embrace or eschew fashion, there are always outliers. The dappercrabs arose as a gang among the youth of the crab people, then grew to a social movement. Today, they spend much of their time among humans, trying their hardest to fit in. Many spend time in subcultures like the beatniks and the greasers, while others wear crinolines and summer suits. Usually they keep their mandibles to themselves, but sometimes they just can't help it.

Dappercrabs sound harmless, but their sense of boundaries can politely be called “nonexistent.” If someone leaves their clothes out on the beach while they go swimming, and a dappercrab covets those clothes — well, then Jimmy's or Dolores' clothes will not be there upon their return. Most dappercrabs content themselves with stealing articles of clothing left out by their owners. Some pilfer from small shops or department store dressing rooms. No dappercrab would be caught without a fashion magazine — most of which they've also stolen, probably from newsstands or doctor's offices. Even if they've stolen old copies,



dappercrabs define their style by their favorite magazines, and often mix and match different fashions, occasionally to comedic effect.

Sometimes, though, a dappercrab can't wait to find an outfit in a store. Sometimes, someone else has on a nicer dress or better shoes or a prettier string of pearls. Sometimes, a human out-dresses a dappercrab and that *cannot* be allowed to stand. Dappercrabs are most dangerous when slighted by the larger world of fashion. Mandibles come out, eyes flash, and the dappercrab gives no quarter.

Luckily for humans, it's not difficult for the educated observer to spot a dappercrab. They are perpetually overdressed, constantly showing off, and always scanning the crowd for more inspiration. Sometimes, they carry their favorite fashion magazines. A dappercrab on the hunt tends to fixate on the most stylishly-dressed individual in the scene — failing that, the loudest or most unusually-dressed. Sometimes they click their teeth or snap their fingers, especially if fixated on a target.

Many dappercrabs have makeshift closets, either underwater or in abandoned buildings. Some have apartments and homes on land, but most do not. They keep their prizes in piles, Dior gowns thrown in with brightly-colored swimsuits and flipflops. Dappercrabs with larger, more colorful, and more expensive-looking hoards are well-respected by their fellows. Occasionally they trade, accentuating one another's styles with odd finds. A group of dappercrabs is called “a sample sale.”

GOALS

Dappercrabs, like most crab people, enjoy learning about and being around humans. Unlike most crab people however, they want to stand out for their style. A dappercrab must be the most striking person in any room, regardless of race or species, and being out-dressed upsets them. Dappercrabs prefer nonviolent methods, but will resort to violence if they feel their style is threatened.

STORY HOOK

It's the 29th Miss America pageant at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, and all activity surrounds the 50 contestants. One by one, though, they disappear. New contestants in strange, bright clothing from 20 years ago and hats from last fall arrive and announce that they're filling in. Who are these invaders and why do they want the Miss America crown — and what have they done with the contestants?

SYSTEM

Dappercrabs rarely move in groups, preferring to spend time in the company of humans. Sometimes they show up in pairs or slightly larger configurations at big events, but usually they're on their own.

Skills: Close Combat 2, Culture 3, Humanities 2 Integrity 3, Larceny 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 4; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 8

SPECIAL RULES

Pret-a-Porter: When stealing someone's clothes, a dappercrab can make a successful Ambush action without rolling.

How Indecent!: When taking someone's clothing by force, a dappercrab can leave them a set of less impressive clothing instead. This may be something like a beach cover-up, a t-shirt and pedal-pushers, or a muumuu.

DAZZLE SHIPS

"We had ships like this back in the Great War — I guess they're calling it the First World War now — but they were put out of commission. Seeing them back on the seas is like a bad omen. It feels wrong — nightmarish, almost."

— Alice Laurence, US Navy veteran

During the First World War, both the United Kingdom and the United States experimented with dazzle camouflage. Developed by a marine artist, dazzle camouflage used the natural inconsistency of maritime lighting to mislead and baffled observers as to the location, size, and direction of a ship. Dazzle camouflage consisted of complex patterns and shapes intersecting and interrupting one another, usually in contrasting natural colors. Dazzle ships were repainted or taken out of commission following the end of the Second World War, and no navy has used dazzle camouflage since.

Well, no human navy, anyway.

Sailors and fishers report seeing strange ships on the horizon, ones that draw the eye in distorted and baffling directions. Beachcombers might see the same ships at dawn or dusk, floating just on



the horizon and refracting light in odd ways. Some report that they look crystalline or misshapen somehow. The government dismisses these claims, saying that the onlookers were blinded by the sun or simply saw a ship they didn't recognize.

In truth, the governments of the world don't recognize these ships either. They simply call these craft "the dazzle ships," as they appear to be wearing dazzle camouflage. Dazzle ships come in all different sizes and can appear as warships from any nation — or, rarely and frighteningly, none at all. Sonar listening devices do not pick up any sound from dazzle ships. The ships also do not appear on radar of any kind. They are, for all intents and purposes, completely invisible except to the naked eye.

Dazzle ships do not appear to *do* anything, necessarily, other than watch. Watching them back induces nausea and headaches. Getting close enough to hail a dazzle ship means being fired on by one of many mismatched guns. Sometimes they follow military ships at a distance, though never for long. They do not spend time near lighthouses, and they often sail away to some unknown destination after a month or so.

GOALS

No one knows what the dazzle ships — or their pilots — want. No one knows who's piloting them, if in fact there is anyone at all. The dazzle ships do not communicate, and their routes are circuitous and strange. Intrepid ship-watchers can spot them near salt marshes, high cliffs, and estuaries of all kinds. They rarely, if ever, come out of open water.

STORY HOOK

Three dazzle ships appear just off the coast of Lewes, Delaware. They sit quietly in the water and appear to be ... watching? All three ships are completely still. One day, a group of kids in the ring-leader's dad's motorboat goes to check them out. All that's left of them is the scent of gun smoke and pieces of the smaller craft. The ships still haven't moved. What do they want? Why are they here?

SYSTEM

Any craft that gets close enough to hail a dazzle ship is almost immediately targeted by whatever ordinance the dazzle ship is packing; this can be anything from a 14cm/40 11 Year Type naval gun used by the Japanese in WWII, to the 5in/31 caliber gun used by the United States until 1910. A fast boat might be able to avoid being shot, and divers are too small to effectively target. Dazzle ships never appear in groups of more than five.

Skills: Aim 5, Integrity 5, see Special Rules

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 5; Might 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 5, Manipulation 1, Composure 5, see Special Rules

Health: 20

SPECIAL RULES

Ships are Larger than Boats: For the purposes of attacking and defending, dazzle ships are a Scale 3 monster.

Ghost Ship: Dazzle ships are left deliberately vague to be whatever sort of haunted monstrosity a story requires. If you

decide the dazzle ship should have a crew, use the mob rules from **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** p. 97, or choose an alien race to populate the vessel.

Camouflage: Dazzle ships are completely invisible to any form of detection, except the naked eye.

Eye Strain: Looking at a dazzle ship for longer than a round causes headaches, clenched jaws, and nausea, taking on the Stunned Condition (see **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, p. 96). Player characters can roll Integrity + Stamina to ignore this effect.

DIRE SEA SPONGES

"I think I need another sponge."

— Doctor Jamil Paval

All-natural sea sponges have been a luxury item in many homes for the past century. Divers in the Mediterranean and North America pull these exfoliating delights up from coastal reefs and sea floors for pampered enjoyment and profit. As with all luxury items, demand increased, and synthetics just weren't cutting it. Divers went all over coastal areas finding new supplies, but governments were wary about over-picking these natural filters.

Acne Company, determined to edge out competitors, performed experiments on increasing the reproduction rate of ordinary sea sponges. Soon Acne Company had the most sponges on the market. Everyone agreed their sponges were the best, so good in fact that everyone wanted more than one for their shower needs. To say they were successful is a misnomer.



They did indeed create a sea sponge with rapid reproduction and growth rates, but in doing so, they introduced a high level of mutation and fast evolutionary processes.

The results of Acne Company's meddling are dire sea sponges. These sponges are larger, faster growing, and faster reproducing than the average sea sponge. Additionally, the dire sea sponges have developed a minimum sentience and an incredible psychic ability. Dire sea sponges emit a low frequency wave that is strikingly similar to deep sleep brainwaves in humans. With these waves, dire sea sponges have been able to implant deeply seeded messages and commands within the human mind, effectively brainwashing them.

Acne's top leadership have been completely brainwashed by the sponges. Acne sponges are sold in a salt-water container, and instructions indicate that the sponge must always remain moist. Engineers under dire sea sponge control are working to engineer newer and better sponge habitats as well as helping the sponges achieve greater sentience.

Right now, the sea sponges are barely at survive and reproduce stage. People who buy one sponge invariably buy a second and place them together. Then they miraculously have three to four sponges in a matter of weeks. They gift these to friends who then have even more sponges. And while the commands to help the sponges reproduce are not a danger in themselves, the implication that even more people are under the influence of a rapidly mutating species' mental control is horrifying.

Sponge reproduction rates are already getting out of hand, leading divers and Acne employees to dump extras back into the sea at an alarming rate. Unchecked, sponges could overtake a home or place of business in just a few months. Rapid reproduction in the sea could cause catastrophic issues for marine habitats, especially since there are few natural predators to the sea sponge. With their rapid expansion and ease of mental control, sponges are positioning themselves to be a staple in every shower across America. It's only a matter of time before their cognitive levels make them dangerous beyond hope.

GOALS

A dire sea sponge's primary goal is to reproduce. Scientists and those monitoring the situation believe secondary goals are freeing non-dire sea sponges from captivity and eventual death, overtaking human communities, and eventually eradicate the human plague on Earth.

STORY HOOK

Janice Langstrom was the first in her women's group to buy an all-natural sea sponge. The Acne salesperson was convincing. She loved it so much she needed more. And soon it was all the rage to have two or more sea sponges. When Janice's husband was found dead in her backyard drowned by the garden hose, everyone was sad and blamed Janice for killing him. Which she fully admitted to doing. When it happened to Harriet and Adelle's husbands, the officials stopped the presses from reporting on it. Now the community is in lockdown, but people still die under mysterious watery circumstances.

SYSTEM

A single dire sea sponge is a trivial threat to deal with. Even dozens of dire sea sponges pose no physical threat to a person. The

real threat is their ability to control people. Anyone could be under the sway of a dire sea sponge to protect it. The following statistics are provided for any mind control abilities it might use.

Skills: Persuasion 5, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 2; Might 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Health: 2

SPECIAL RULES

Subsonic Mind Control: By emitting subsonic waves, the dire sea sponge can exert mental control over a human. The victim must roll their Integrity + Resolve to withstand it. Each additional sponge in the vicinity adds 1 Complication (to a maximum of 5 Complication) to this action as they collectively brainwash their victims. Once controlled, a sponge can send simple commands to their minions as a reflexive action as long as they are within 10 feet. Most sponges insist their minions carry at least one or two of them around to ensure their victims do exactly what they want.

FLESH-ANIMATING ALGAE

“The most interesting thing about the phenomenon is that the flesh stops animation if the algae washes away. Cleanliness is key here.”

— Dr. Felicia Hellerstein

The flesh-animating algae first appeared in the last handful of years, in areas of largely still water subject to excess nitrogen runoff. Large swaths of the stuff would float around lakes and into the ocean, and wherever these algae blooms went, they sucked all the oxygen out of the water, causing fish and amphibians to die rapidly.

Scientists, looking for a way to utilize the plants if they were to grow in such an abundance, collected samples and performed experiments seeking ways to turn them to the good of all. What if they could bring life to fish in ponds and lakes instead of killing them? This question garnered a great deal of support, and soon several labs across the country had funding to engineer helpful algae. After years of research, the University of California Santa Barbara campus reported success in making an alga that seemed to keep fish alive in low oxygen environments. Shortly after the report, the school shut down their research program and all news of the algae went silent. Funding for other research across the nation died down, and the bloom in algae research died away.

The UCSB lab inadvertently created flesh-animating algae. Their species didn't keep fish alive, but instead reanimated corpses. This was discovered in an unfortunate accident shortly after publication, as a graduate student was feeding the algae and fell off the lab stool cracking his head on the way down, bringing 10 gallons of algae on top of him. Within moments he was up and about. Unsure of what had happened, the scientists didn't notice that poor Gregory had died in the accident. They simply put his mumbling speech down to a lack of morning coffee.

Gregory spent the next two days hungering for human flesh to sustain him while the semi-sentient algae learned all they could about human norms. By the time the government was involved, Gregory had eaten half his neighbors. Nothing would bring him



down except a good blast of water. Once the algae were no longer in contact with his skin, his lifeless corpse dropped to the ground. The algae escaped into the sewer and proliferated from there, making it into the ocean where it resiliently took up residence.

Now, the algae seek out humans to animate and experiment with. Swimmers as surfers are a main target, the algae first clinging to a body and weighing it down, then if the person drowns — as opposed to just getting out of the water and washing off — the algae reanimates the flesh and rides them ashore. The algae animates any number of dead sea animals in order to bring them to their preferred human hosts.

GOALS

Understanding flesh-animating algae's goals is hard for humanity. They only have a semi-sentience to them, making their goals seem like survival. Though when they are animating a human, they seem to have a greater capacity for intelligence. Animated animals act only to bring the algae closer to humans, and animated humans seem to want to better understand the algae itself. Maybe they simply seek self-preservation and proliferation, or perhaps there's something more sinister afoot.

STORY HOOK

Frank Atwater died in a tragic boating accident. It was a pleasure vessel, he was fishing, and he caught something he just couldn't handle. They never found his body, and people just assumed that whatever he had caught on his hook had him for lunch. So, imagine Lilith Atwater's surprise when her husband shows up three days later rummaging through the garage, his skin pallid and covered

in a green film. She called the police, but by the time they arrived, Frank had killed his wife, and algae had animated her corpse. They told the police a nice story, mistaken call, no problems here, that kind of thing. Officer Fanny Jenkins wasn't fooled. She knew Frank was supposed to be dead, so she called it in. That's why you're here.

SYSTEM

The following stats indicate an average person animated by flesh-animating algae.

Skills: Close Combat 3, Science 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 5, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES

Unliving Flesh: Corpses animated by algae are already dead, and damage does little more than slow them down in the case of a lost limb. Attempts to physically harm the animated come at a Complication of 3, representing such issues as rubbery flesh, the creatures getting faster as they lose arms, and the requirement for a great deal of force to knock one to the ground.

Cleanliness is Key: The flesh-animating algae is at its weakest against blasts of clean water. If a corpse is washed clean by mostly fresh (not salty) water, it abandons its body, leaving the former host dead. Attacks made with things that would never constitute a weapon (water from a hose, a squirt gun, etc.) can deal damage normally to one of these animated corpses.

GREAT BAY LOBSTERS

“The aliens look like lobsters. An unassuming form, but don't let it fool you, they are cunning predators.”

— Col. Patricia Stevenson, USMC

During World War I, submarines operating in the North Atlantic Ocean between North America and the British Isles encountered strange malfunctions and several were lost at sea. While originally blamed on German U-boat attacks, investigation by the respective governments into the disappearances after the war indicated that these submarines were not engaged in combat when they went dark. Rescue operations and recovery missions have found little to no evidence, except a single L-class vessel near American waters with its hull torn open, and no bodies inside.

Later, during the Second World War, the American navy was alert to special forces that could create that kind of damage, sending scouts along with submarines to try to catch whatever weapon the axis might have. So, when they came across the alien species that appeared to simply be large lobsters, they were not wholly unprepared for the havoc the creatures wrecked on their boats. They fired missiles, but the swarming creatures were too small to target, which only led to confusion and near misses on allied boats. In the end, a single vessel survived, and had two specimens on board for further study.

Scientists determined that these lobsters were not lobsters at all, but an alien life-form that looked (and tasted) surprisingly like

terrestrial lobsters. The area where they attacked was quarantined and then attack ships were sent to neutralize the threat. The aliens dispersed, and little was seen of them again.

Unfortunately, the creatures had already developed a taste for human flesh from their first couple of encounters with what they felt were a canned delicacy. They followed the attack ships home and made a place for themselves in terrestrial lobster breeding grounds. Soon they started breeding with the locals and bolstering their population, then they went hunting. Human flesh — especially their muscular legs and arms — is a fine delicacy in the eyes of alien lobsters. The lobsters have elaborate traps set just to catch humans, so they can eat them. Some have even set up habitats on islands in an attempt to breed and harvest farm grown humans. These ultimately fail, as humans are crafty creatures with opposable thumbs. The lobster aliens are researching sedatives to keep their food docile, and it's only a matter of time before they figure out a way.

GOALS

Great Bay lobsters seek out human flesh as a delicacy. They ultimately hope to create captive grown humans for efficiency sake, and their main driving goal is to find an effective sedative that doesn't prevent things like breeding or inhibit growth. Great Bay lobsters believe were-lobsters are possibly some kind of distant cousin. They don't associate with them, but they won't eat one. Crab people on the other claw are just as delicious as humans, and it isn't because of jealousy at their opposable thumbs.

STORY HOOK

A small town in Maine is dealing with several missing persons cases. Each one with circumstances more bizarre than the last. Witnesses report seeing people dragged away in nets fashioned from old



fishing line, some last seen petting a suspicious looking dog, and in one case a report of a meatloaf left near a rocky shore all point to some nefarious actor setting out traps designed to capture people. The authorities are at a loss, as the officer in charge, Lt. Jane Grabhorn, went missing yesterday morning.

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Enigmas 3, Integrity 3, Science 2, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 4, Resolve 3; Might 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 4

SPECIAL RULES

Swarming: A single Great Bay lobster isn't much to deal with. Their diminutive size and functional limitations make them a laughably easy opponent in a one on one duel. Great Bay lobsters know this limitation, and are far too smart to get caught alone, meaning that you'll never see less than three to four lobsters together at any one time.

Smarter than the Average Lobster: Great Bay lobsters are intelligent aliens capable of using tools. They might not be much in a claw fight, but they deploy any manner of primitive tools to attack and kill humans. Lobsters can have any melee weapon with a 1 Enhancement and up to 2 Tags. Additionally, each group has one lobster that carries a primitive tranquilizer dart with damage rating of 2.

JELLY MEN

"That man over there in the jacket is giving me the heebie-jeebies. He hasn't done anything except motion for me to come over, but I swear he isn't wearing any clothes under that coat."

— Josh Hardy, beach goer in Gulf Shores, Alabama

Stories of the jelly men started circulating around 10 years ago. It started as an urban legend, or a bit of a spoof story. All along the coastal region in the Gulf of Mexico, from Florida to Yucatan, stories sprang up of a mysterious man walking alone on the beach wearing a trench coat. If anyone approached this man, he gave them a hug, followed quickly with a terrible sickness which often lead to death. Witnesses state that the man would walk into the sea and disappear.

Versions of this story made their way up and down the coasts of North America, stretching even into South America by way of beach-goers in Brazil and Venezuela. Sometimes it was a woman in a black gown, sometimes a surfer signaling for help. Regardless of location, the story always described a deadly illness that followed contact. Anyone who heard the story wrote it off as stories told to spook swimmers and get a laugh. Clearly anyone on the beach in a trench coat or a gown is part of a hoax, as everyone knows proper swimwear is trunks or a bikini.

Yet, these stories are not a hoax, nor a joke. Jelly men are aliens resembling large jellyfish. More than a decade ago, the jelly men first attempted contact with humanity. They had been watching swimmers and fishermen for some time and attempted to blend in during their first attempts at contact. They came ashore wearing

whatever cast-off clothing they found adrift in the oceans, often oversized canvas jackets from rain-lost ships. Jelly men communicate through psychic impressions passed through electrical transmissions. In the water, these transmissions can conduct a few feet away and reach their intended target, but without the aid of salinized water, the jelly men must come into physical contact with whomever they wish to communicate with. They had no idea that their touch would be so deadly to humans. They don't cause disease, instead the toxins in their skin is so poisonous to humans that just a small dose is enough to lead to fevers and destruction of internal organs. If left unchecked, the victim usually dies.

After the few attempts went so awry, the jelly men became cautious of communication attempts. They tried all sorts of methods to send their psychic impressions to humans without also killing them, but without physical contact, their attempts were fruitless. The harder they tried, the more stories spread. Before long, coming into contact with a human was an endeavor in itself, as people would run away from the slow moving not-quite human looking man in a trench coat trundling along the beach.

While communication seemed impossible, the jelly men did learn something valuable from their experiences. They finally had a way to combat the humans who were in the seas polluting their home and killing their brethren. Jelly men attacked fishing vessels, military vessels, and pleasure boats across the Gulf Coast, targeting those doing the most harm, in their eyes. With a single touch, a human would fall ill and without proper medical attention would die shortly after. Those rare few who received medical attention drew the jelly men's attention, which usually led to more touches and eventually everyone dies.



GOALS

Communication is still the jelly men's main goal. Defending against humans responsible for making the seas unsafe for marine life is a secondary goal, and not one that all jelly men agree on how to handle. Killing them is easy, but if only they could communicate maybe the humans would stop on their own.

STORY HOOK

Dr. Lolly Humperdink is the head of the marine lab in Destin, Florida. Three nights ago, she reported a suspicious man hanging around her lab to the police. The report indicated that he seemed to want to come in, but kept to the shadows. Dr. Humperdink tried to call out to him, invite him in for coffee or cake, but he refused to speak. He did though try to reach out to her for a hug, but since she had barely met the man, she refused. She was worried he might be disoriented or homeless. Last night, Dr. Humperdink fell ill with a terrible fever. The police refuse to release information about the incident, though she told a reporter that the man is responsible for her fever, and he just wanted to talk.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Empathy 3, Integrity 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 5; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Stinging Tentacle: The jelly men's flesh produces a potent toxin that acts like a jellyfish sting. This toxin has a damage rating of 4 with the Continuous (hour) and Deadly tags. If the contact site receives proper care, such as a good washing or antiseptics, it no longer affects the victim.

He Just Wants a Hug: The jelly men are adamant in their attempts to communicate with humans, and so each time they touch one they send a simple message, "Please do not be afraid, we want to be your friends." This message comes in the form of psychic impressions of friendliness, safety, and a warm embrace. In water, the jelly men's psychic impressions may reach their target with a successful Empathy + Presence roll against a Difficulty equal to the target's Composure.

NARCISSUS PILCHARDS

"It's terrifying having your life stolen. It's infuriating knowing it was stolen by a goddamn fish. Like, am I really that replaceable?"

— Heather Bailey, surfer and victim of a Narcissus Pilchard

Every Friday night in the drive-in, cars pack in by the row to see films like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *I Married A Monster From Outer Space*, and *The Brain Eaters*. Popcorn and soda flow just as freely as the booze horny high schoolers smuggle in, and for a few blissful hours, one can lose themselves in a world of sensation. Most eyes focus on the screen. Some people focus more on their make-out partners. In all cases, no one pays attention to who might be watching *them* from the darkness.

Narcissus pilchards are so named because of their resemblance to the little bait fish that distracts predators by reflecting sunlight



into their eyes. The fish flit through the sea trying to survive, swimming in massive groups at high speeds. By contrast, the narcissus pilchards take their time, getting to learn the habits of their prey. Make no mistake, these larger silver fish are predators. They devour people's lives by living them.

Narcissus pilchards in their natural form look like a mass of tiny eels or sardines, wriggling in a vaguely humanoid shape. They have no hair or indeed features to speak of. When they walk, they squish and leave puddles in their wake. Some give off a scent like a mass of dead seaweed floating in a brackish tide pool. Humans who have seen narcissus pilchards in their natural state report being disturbed and even terrified by their monstrous forms.

This just won't do for the narcissus pilchards. During WWII, the OSS (the predecessor of the CIA) captured several suspected German agents who turned out to be young narcissus pilchards trying to coexist during the war. Under interrogation, the monstrosities explained they were once the rulers of the seas, honored guests of the land-folk, and the most beautiful creatures on Earth. At some undetermined point in the past, the land-folk betrayed them, and the narcissus pilchards went to war. This went badly for both — the land-folk the spies referred to died out, and the narcissus pilchards who survived had to latch on to swarms of prey species to continue their existence. They lived this way for centuries, eventually learning how to change their shapes.

What the OSS agents realized after weeks of interrogating the narcissus pilchards was that the monsters were *jealous*. They felt that humanity usurped both themselves and their beloved, treacherous land-folk, and the narcissus pilchards want to be back on top of the food chain. While their report made it to the desk of the director of the

newly-formed CIA in 1947, the OSS agents who questioned the narcissus pilchards disappeared from base and were never heard from again.

Very few narcissus pilchard infiltration and invasion operations are this dramatic. The fish watch their targets for hours or days at a time, peering at them from under boardwalks or behind the tree lines of drive-in movie theatres. They collect knowledge on their targets' habits, preferences, and general existence. Once a narcissus pilchard feels confident they know their target, they transform and slip into the target's life for an hour at a time, maybe two. If the target is a surfer, for example, the narcissus pilchard may ride their bike through town and talk to their target's friends or crush while the unsuspecting human is out on their board.

At this point, it appears as though the human is living a double life. The narcissus pilchard may become so good at imitating their target's routine that the target's friends and loved ones accuse *them* of being the impostor! This is, of course, also the flaw in the narcissus pilchard's plan. Humans improvise. A narcissus pilchard commits routes, plans, and habits to memory, and becomes agitated if a canny investigator forces them to deviate in any way from their sacred routine.

As of right now, the narcissus pilchards have not managed to infiltrate beyond a local scale. However, if they continue to invade unchecked, important government and military officials may find themselves supplanted by clever narcissus pilchards. It's only a matter of time.

GOALS

Narcissus pilchards want to assume their legendary place as the most beautiful creatures on Earth. It's not clear if this is true or just a quasi-religious myth all narcissus pilchards hold close to their fishy little hearts, but every single member of this race operates under that belief. Narcissus pilchards view humans as usurpers, but in order to take their kingdom back, they must usurp the usurpers and play by their rules. While they could take the forms of beasts of land and sea, narcissus pilchards just find it easier and more gratifying to take the forms of humans.

STORY HOOK

Your friend's teenage daughter comes home after a late night at the drive-in to find another body sleeping in her bed. The town pharmacist seems more tired than usual. You see Mr. Johnson watering his lawn — and then five minutes later, you see Mr. Johnson on the other side of your small town, coaching a little league team. Who is real? Who's not? Where did these doubles come from and what do they want?

SYSTEM

Narcissus pilchards do not engage in physical combat unless they must. They prefer stealth, lies, and subterfuge. Uncovering one narcissus pilchard in a community is a guarantee that others are already living out the lives of other unfortunate humans.

Skills: Close Combat 2, Culture 4, Enigmas 3, Humanities 4, Integrity 2, Larceny 4, see Special Rules

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 5, Resolve 3; Might 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 3, see Special Rules

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

Shapeshifting Sardines: To successfully transform into a target, a narcissus pilchard does not need to roll. To keep their disguise in difficult situations (such as a character challenging their disguise), they roll Integrity + Composure. A narcissus pilchard can reveal their true form (forms?) as a reflexive action.

Behavior Mimicry: When transforming to mimic a target, the narcissus pilchard must decide how to behave. They have a pool of 10 temporary Skill ranks and five temporary Attribute points to add to their sheet. While they do not have to use all of them, they cannot hold any in reserve to use for future transformations. If the narcissus pilchard decides to transform into another target, their sheet resets and they gain the temporary point pool again, to spend how they like

Omniglot: Narcissus pilchards can speak and understand any language that they've observed people speaking for at least one scene.

Pattern Recognition: When deciding how a target would act in an unusual or threatening situation, the narcissus pilchard makes a contested roll of Enigmas + Manipulation versus the suspicious party's Enigmas + Intellect. If they succeed, they appear to be who they say they are.

SEPIA INTELLIGENTES

"I saw that squid-looking thing holding this wrench in its tentacles before it swam off. I swear it was using it on the boat, I wouldn't make that up."

— Jacob Dingle, Deckhand on the fishing vessel, Bonnie

Scientists consider cephalopods the smartest invertebrates on Earth. That isn't a high bar to beat, as most invertebrates are barely sentient slugs floating through life just trying to survive. The truth that many scientists don't share is that this group of eight-armed ink-boxes rank among the most intelligent animals on Earth. If we compare all groups that communicate, primates rank at number one, if only because their opposable thumbs make their tool use more apparent. Cetacea (whales, dolphins, porpoises and the like) are often ranked above cephalopods, but only barely. It might be a mammalian bias amongst scientists measuring such things.

Of the cephalopods, cuttlefish are by far the smartest, and of those, sepia *intelligentes* are geniuses, even by human standards. Of course, running across one of these elusive beings is unlikely as they are well aware of humans and avoid them at all costs after watching their lesser intelligent brethren stolen from their homes and devoured body and ink. Japanese scientists studying cuttlefish anatomy discovered this species entirely by accident.

This much larger species was in a catch of smaller cuttlefish and exhibited strange qualities. The first of which was that it survived for hours outside of water, something no other of its kind was capable of. This was because of a thin breathable lining around the whole creature's body which retained water. It seemed to continue trying to communicate with the lifeless cuttlefish around it with flashes of color and complex arm movements, but when it realized they were dead, it tried to escape. Right in front of the scientists, it started dragging itself along the table with its tentacles. The scientists kept and observed the creature until it died a couple of



years later. It exhibited a shocking level of intelligence, though the records from that are now classified information.

Sepia intelligentes aren't just a smarter cuttlefish. They are intelligent beings with language and tool-using capabilities. Their intelligence rivals that of humanity, who they hate with a passion for destroying their homes with acid, waste, and over-fishing. For the past 50 years, these cuttlefish have been plotting the downfall of humanity and world domination. And they would be much closer to their goal if they only lived a few years longer. The average lifespan of the *sepia intelligentes* is three years. Hardly enough time for a proper experiment, much less fully realized plans for world domination. This problem is merely a speed bump, as they are excellent problem solvers.

Cuttlefish gain sensory acuity before hatching, which means lessons begin in the shell. Each cuttlefish is tasked with a single science or area of learning which is taught to them the moment they can start processing sensory data. Cuttlefish come out of the egg specialized and trained in one particular area of science, physics, mathematics, or engineering. Cuttlefish don't have time to run linear experimentation, so progress is made through parallel experiments and accepting the most common result as fact. Their memories are excellent, and they never forget something they've learned. This lends itself to a great institutional memory for passing down information generationally. Most endeavors are a family affair with parents passing down building projects or science to children and grandchildren, and if they live long enough to meet them, great grandchildren.

Cuttlefish aren't reinventing the wheel though. They steal plenty of science and technology from humans, interpreting

schematics and visualizations as best they can. The best way to handle technology though, is through reverse engineering, so stealing equipment from boats and boats themselves is a common practice.

GOALS

Sepia intelligentes are focused on world domination. They believe humanity has had its chance at running the world and are failing terribly. Cuttlefish projections have the world at uninhabitable temperatures within a century at the rate humans are burning up fossil fuels, and that isn't a future they can conscientiously leave to their far descendants. Eradicating humanity isn't necessarily the only way. If they could find a way to communicate and express their concerns, they'd be all about it, but humans lack the visual capabilities to understand most of the cuttlefish's nuanced communication methods making their attempts complete failures.

STORY HOOK

The USS Hollern, an aircraft carrier on routine tour through the north Pacific Ocean has been silent for a week. The last communication indicated some kind of food poisoning from bad seafood, but when nothing came after that, the Navy sent a vessel to investigate. When it arrived a few days later, they communicated that the entire ship was empty, and they were boarding. No one has heard from that ship since. The news surrounding the radio silence has been tight, not revealing too much information, but now information is being leaked that there was more to the last message from the rescue team. They mentioned something about signs of a firefright, and blue and red blood everywhere.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 5, Close Combat 2, Culture 3, Larceny 2, Science 5, Technology 4

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Camouflage: Cuttlefish are masters of disguise not only due to their rapidly shifting skin, but also their highly advanced stealth suits. Cephalopods gain +3 Enhancement to all Stealth actions.

Inky Blast: In times of trouble, the cephalopods can shoot a stream of black ink at their assailants. In the water, this spreads out creating 4 Complication to anyone attempting to navigate or they get lost. Outside of water, it's mostly just smelly.

Tentacles: Having eight prehensile arms comes in handy when a mature cuttlefish knows she only has a couple of years of work before passing on. Keen multitaskers, cephalopods can roll the highest of their dice pools when taking a mixed action.

Watch out for that Bite: Cuttlefish are carnivores and prefer to catch and eat live prey. They have evolved sophisticated farming techniques, but when in danger, they can fall back on their innate venom as a means of defense. They don't actually bite, but instead have venom glands all around their tentacles, which just happen to surround their mouths, a common misconception. Cuttlefish venom has a damage rating of 5 and the Deadly tag.



THE PHANTOM OF SEA LAND WORLD

The security guard strolled the curving tunnel. Strange pools of light wavered from the shadows of the hundreds of fish in the large windows. By day, the tunnel was one of Sea Land World's many wonders. By night...

The guard paused, suddenly aware of footsteps other than his, only dragging. And wetter.

He continued, flashlight searching, unaware that one of the flickering fish shadows was much larger than the rest. The guard turned - too late.

His scream echoed through the massive facility.

...

Newcott Walkes, on much-needed vacation from the Department of Touristry, picked the wrong place to visit. Sea Land World had caused a sensation. The brainchild of C. Parker Runn, it had taken five years to build, and boasted labyrinthine passages through and even under its aquatic wonders.

Last night's attack was the first fatality; previous victims reported a large shadow, but the common thread was deadly claws.

C. Parker Runn was beside himself, and several others, mostly forensics experts who now turned crime scene samples over to the scientist called in.

"Well, well, Dr. Karsly Morbin," leered Newcott at the attractive woman in lab coat. "Not just a damatologist, I see."

"It pays to know ... several disciplines," she purred.

The electricity was evident, even to the frustrated Runn. "See here, can't all this electricity wait?"

"Relax, Runn. We've worked together before. They say second time's a charm."

...

Newcott watched Karsly study samples late at night in one of many Sea Land World labs put at their disposal.

"Hmm. Results tell me the perpetrator may not be human, at least not all."

"Make sense, Karsly," grunted Newcott, taking her in his arms. They were about to kiss when a noise froze them.

"Security guard maybe ... maybe not." The hardened Touristry man took out his automatic. "Stay close."

Newcott and Karsly peered down the darkened tunnel. Flickers of moving fish shadows obscured anything lurking.

Slowly, they moved down the corridor. Twice, Newcott had to stifle Karsly from exclaiming the Latin names for various fish.

Then they heard it. Dragging footsteps. Wet.

Echoes confused their sense of direction, and the pair looked around. It could be anywhere.

A sudden roar. A swipe of claws.

The couple jumped back. Newcott fired.

In the flash, they saw the thing flinch. Yet still it came.

Newcott and Karsly slowly backed away as the creature moved from the light of one sea window to the next; enough to make out the aquatic horror.

Nearly seven feet tall, humanoid in shape, the scaly, clawed fish-thing had two bulging eyes bulging and a wide mouth flanked by spiny gills. It roared again, each time Newcott shot - point blank, yet its thick hard scales barely dented.

A distant door slammed open. Security guards had heard the shots.

The monster started and rushed the other way. It moved surprisingly quickly down the dark tunnel. Newcott and Karsly followed; they couldn't lose it now.

The creature's long stride kept it well ahead of them. It disappeared down a side corridor, followed seconds later by a door slam.

Touristry man and science woman rushed down to the closed door at the end and whipped it open.

Their jaws dropped when they found themselves in a large function room filled with dignitaries enjoying late night cocktails. C. Parker Runn turned to stare at them curiously.

Newcott and Karsly looked down. The wet footprints got dryer as they trailed off - and distinctly smaller...

...

It seemed impossible. Yet there was no other answer.

As the thing fled down that darkened corridor, it changed. It changed into a person.

"But, Karsly, for heck's sake, wouldn't it be a naked person?" puzzled Newcott. "I think they'd notice a naked person joining the gathering. Unless they're showbiz folk."

"Unless the thing - or person - hastily donned something, something giving the appearance of

clothing, long enough to quickly pass through and out the other side," offered the scientist.

...

The intrepid pair sat before C. Parker Runn in his elegant, aquatically-themed office with head of security Rhail Duram and Sea Land World's primary ichthyologist Dr. Luessa Strohm. The latter spoke, and she was getting a strong reaction.

"Believe it or not, what you're suggesting is not out of the realm of possibility."

"Doctor, do you mean to tell me there may be a person here who can change into a fish and back again?" sneered Duram.

"Imagine, if you will," Dr. Strohm went on, "a throwback of sorts - a human line that has carried ancient genetic material dormant for millions of years. It is, after all, where we came from."

"But what would trigger it? Why now?" asked Karsly.

"Who can say? Chemical, environmental..."

"So, it could be ... any one of us." Runn sounded almost reflective, and Newcott studied him suspiciously.

The pragmatic Duram was having none of it. "A lot of nonsense, if you ask me."

...

Despite the head of security's objections, Newcott and Karsly formulated a plan, one they decided best kept between them.

They made it known, casually, that Karsly was working on a breakthrough that may give a chemical clue to just who the fish thing was.

That night, they again burned the midnight oil, though electricity was working, and Newcott watched Karsly struggle over her Bunsen burner.

They never even heard the wet footsteps.

The lab door burst open.

There stood the creature in all its glory. Now, in bright light, they saw it clearly for the first time. Its shape was distinctly feminine.

"The Scaly Woman!" coined Karsly instinctively.

The Scaly Woman stepped toward them and roared, claws raised for the kill. It hit the large heavy-duty mirror, casting the couple's reflections, and before it could register surprise, an electrified cage dropped from above, trapping the thing.

Newcott and Karsly stepped forward, marveling at the amazing sight. The claws grabbed the bars and it roared at the resultant shock.

Then it began to change, until Scaly Woman turned back to her human form.

"I'll get Dr. Strohm some clothes," offered Karsly with compassion.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIMORDIALS

"Show yourselves, and I promise you a painless death."

- Ro-Man, Robot Monster (1953)

Should one fear or contemplate the utterly alien? Is it right to hate something likely beyond such basic human emotion? The answer to all these questions is "yes, definitely," because aquatic threats known as Primordials threaten your homes, your friends, and your way of life. The Primordials are ancient beings, or at least undefinable ones. Their purposes and origins are unknown to all but the most ostracized of scientists. All one can truly know of the Primordials is they show no pity and they're incapable of compassion.

Everymen are the natural opposition of the Primordials, with the former being those who have inherited the Earth, and the latter being those that lost it, once upon a time. The vitriol between the two is less down to nuanced opposing views and more an opposition based on instinct to survive.

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.

THE CREEPING CORAL

"Sure, it's pretty and it's most unusual. But it's smothered my prize chrysanthemums!"

- Nora Arkwright, homemaker

There are many types of coral, most of which are colonial invertebrates. An individual organism is not interesting or viable, but colonies of them function as a single whole. They are often beautiful, and this encourages humans to gather them and use them for decorative purposes. Despite their rigid appearance, corals are delicate and vulnerable to minor changes in their environment, especially pollution, excessive sunlight, and changes in temperature. Corals have been around a long time, at least 500 million years, for most of that time they have been marine animals but, recently, they have started to colonize the land.

Creeping coral differs from other kinds in that it has evolved to survive on land. The first time it came to the attention of the authorities was the "outbreak" in Coastal City a couple of years

ago. A crack team of scientists solved this issue and it was successfully hushed up by G-men in the know. Meanwhile, scientists continue to study corals under environmental pressure, but have not yet discovered how to predict or detect the latest outbreaks of land invading mutations.

Marine biologists have observed the creeping trait in many families of corals. The outbreak in Coastal City was hard coral; brittle and fast growing, easy to disrupt via the application of the right vibration frequency. It was a good thing they caught it quickly and the mutation had concentrated on spreading rapidly rather



than going slowly and consolidating its hold. The individual organisms within a coral colony share nutrients and information via a complex network of gastrovascular canals. Had the coral men and women in Coastal City had time to develop this, they would have been far harder to eradicate.

Soft corals are, arguably, more of a threat. They took over a golf course in Oregon, completely ruining the business and handicapping the membership. Scientists recommended a thorough spraying with bleach or vinegar. The golf club are reluctant to try this, believing those cures would be just as bad for the greens as the coral itself. Instead they have been exploiting the beautiful, unusual, and scenic appearance of the growth by charging the public to come and look.

Soft corals creep slowly. Some scientists believe the Oregon outbreak originated in the Oregon Coast Aquarium. A small frag may have attached itself to a golfer's shoe and the infestation grew from there. Observations suggest this coral grows at a rate of one foot a week, but, as the area covered by the coral gets larger, the growth appears to accelerate as each polyp reproduces at the same rate.

None of the corals observed creeping up to the present have been carnivorous. They gain nourishment from photosynthesis performed by algae contained within the structure of the individual polyps. Some sea dwelling corals feed on passing krill or even small fish, and scientists are concerned, lest some of these carnivores start to creep.

Right now, the creeping coral does not present any active danger. It does, however, tend to smother any flora that gets in its way.

GOALS

Coral is not conscious, and it has no goals. Once a colony succeeds in creeping onto land, it enlarges at an accelerating rate. Different varieties have different rates of expansion. All creeping corals require plentiful sunlight and water.

STORY HOOKS

Nora Arkwright found a strange and attractive plant in a corner of her suburban plot. At least she thought it was a plant. It didn't occur to her that it might be an animal. A lovely mauve color, with delicate branches, it glowed with a faint luminescence at dusk and at dawn. Her gardening friends thought it was most delightful and she broke off little pieces for them to plant. It became quite the 'thing' in Nora's circle, and everyone wanted some.

The problem is, it just keeps on growing. Nora's chrysanthemums have gone now, and Mr. Beaufort down-the-way's prize-winning roses. Nothing grows in their gardens now except the strange new plant and the neighbors have started to complain. Worse still, it's fast approaching an agricultural area and the farmers are far from happy about this.

SYSTEM

The creeping coral can come from any body of water where coral survives; every ocean on the planet and any number of public and domestic aquaria. No one is sure why some corals are evolving to survive on land, perhaps it is the increasing pollution observed

in areas of ocean close to the coast. Perhaps it is something in the sewage. Whatever caused it, coral has mutated so it can survive on land.

Many forms of creeping coral are attractive so humans, who are often reluctant to deal with the problem in its initial stages, while the colonies are small and easy to eradicate.

Whether the coral is hard or soft, each polyp reproduces once per day. It grows slowly, imperceptibly at first but, once a colony is well established, it doubles in size each day. Once the colony is about a yard across, it develops internal communication via gastrovascular canals. These not only allow the individual polyps in the colony to share nutrients but also serve as a crude form of communication so anything "experienced" by one polyp is "experienced" by the entire colony.

It is possible to break up and destroy some hard-coral colonies by means of creating vibrations at a specific frequency. Finding the correct frequency is a matter of trial and error and, unless those combatting the coral take further steps, the colony attempts to reform. Spraying with vast quantities of vinegar or bleach destroys any kind of coral. Extreme bright light kills them, albeit slowly. Complete darkness removes their source of energy, but it is important to ensure not even a few polyps get light as they can share nutrition with the rest of the colony.

CYOMOTHOA TRADUCERE

"By using a secret procedure developed in our medical laboratory we can induce these parasites to function as virtually any organ necessary to human survival."

— Dr Theo Arnold of the Anton Jones Biomedical Surgical Foundation, Ohio

Several cyomothoa species parasitize or have symbiotic relationships with fish. In the case of cyomothoa *exigua*, the female louse clamps onto the fish's tongue and cuts off the blood supply. When the tongue, deprived of blood, drops off, the louse acts as a replacement tongue for the fish. The male, meanwhile, lurks on the fish's gill arches until it is time to breed. These lice are harmless to humans (and don't appear to do massive amounts of harm to the fish they inhabit). They exist in most places around the world and are safe for human consumption, though they are not precisely appetizing things to find in your tin of large chunk tuna or your expensive fish dinner.

These, however, are the lice known to common science. So much that lies in the deepest part of the seas remains undiscovered and, among the emerging species is cyomothoa *traducere*. A deep-sea expedition first encountered the species in 1950 but, their existence is a closely guarded secret as the authorities fear mass panic could break out if the public learned of parasitic lice capable of replacing human organs. Research, however, continues apace as researchers fervently hope they can induce these lice to make kidneys, hearts, livers, and other organs fit for the emerging science of transplantation surgery.

What the scientists have not discovered is that these lice have a crude form of consciousness. By playing nice with the scientists, they hope to gain a foothold on land, gradually taking over more and more of the organs of their human hosts.



GOALS

Eventually the lice intend to replace the human species as the alpha predators on the planet. To date, they have made themselves useful in helping scientists develop the nascent art of organ transplant.

STORY HOOK

Evan Blake was one of the first patients to receive a kidney transplant. Surgeons the world over hailed his recovery as an outstanding triumph for medical science. He often features on talk shows as the miracle man, thanks to the surgeons and science. What even Evan does not know is the kidney the surgeons implanted was a female parasitic louse. The male louse attached to his ribcage and the kidney and the male louse have already mated.

Hundreds of tiny, kidney-shaped lice force their way out of Evan's stomach, live on TV and scuttle off toward the audience.

Poor Evan.

SYSTEM

Outside a host, the parasite is a small (no more than 7.5 millimeters long), undifferentiated louse that's no threat to anyone, though it can deliver a nasty nip. Once developed in the lab and implanted into a test subject, however, it starts to work its agenda, doing all it can to persuade the host to convince others of the benefits of having a brand-new parasitic louse organ. Refer to the selection of average humans in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!** (p. 213) and use any as a louse host.

The organ the louse replaces functions perfectly for the duration of a story, eventually, the louse decides it is time to breed. Currently there is no room inside the host for the offspring and they take the exit of least resistance. They march, two by two, until they can enter a new host which, at this stage, they can do through any orifice.

One solution is to refuse to implant the male parasite. This does not work, as the female needs a substance secreted by the male in order to thrive. Removing the male once the organ has grown to its optimal size and is functioning well, is an option, though removing a creature deeply embedded in vital tissues is never without risk.

SPECIAL RULES

Developing a louse is a difficult task even for the best scientists, though the louse uses its crude intelligence to inspire the scientist while she sleeps. Implanting the louse without harm to the host is a tricky surgical procedure. Removing the louse is easier, but leaves the subject without whichever organ the louse was replacing. This is generally fatal.

THE EYE OF THE STORM

"Can you hear it? It sings an ancient song that brings joy to the hearts of the worshipful. Soon the storm will be here and with it, it's great and awesome Eye."

— **Worshipful Mother Antiope Constantines**, local cult leader

It has always been here. A massive creature straight out of folklore, it emerges in the wake of powerful storms to feed upon the lightning they bring. A massive eyeball with tentacles as long as a ship, the eye is ancient beyond reckoning. It emerges from its lair deep beneath the ocean and follows in the wake of hurricanes and thunderstorms, its path of destruction often obscured by the storm's wake. Capable of walking on land, its limbs drain the life energy of its victims and consume sources of electrical power to feed its growth.

No one knows where it came from. One legend suggests the eye itself was once part of a larger creature, and its worshippers believe it to be the eye of Leviathan after Yahweh tore it from its skull and cast it deep into the ocean. It survived and became a creature of its own, with its own terrible intelligence. An impossible creature of another age, it feeds before disappearing into the depths once the storm is over.

The eye has its own worshippers, who paint enormous eyes on their bodies and gather on beaches as the storm approaches. Standing there as the wind batters their bodies, they hope to see their great deity lift itself up out of the water and crawl on land on a mass of tentacles. They believe those drained of their essence by the beast live forever in its underwater paradise, and their bodies are left on the shore for the authorities to find once the weather calms.

In the modern era, the eye has discovered that humanity has developed to the point where they can channel lightning of their own. The eye wraps its tendrils around power lines and absorb the electricity into its eyeball, creating a nimbus of power around it as it stalks the land. Once it feels it has drained enough energy from the local area it returns to the ocean depths to wait again.

GOALS

The eye of the storm needs energy to survive. Its whole body is like a battery, and as it drains energy from its victims its eye glows an ominous red hue. It did not seek to attract worshippers but those who see its awesome presence can sense the divinity in the creature. It does not care where it draws its energy from, and does not care for the whims of its worshippers any more than it does for its victims it finds at sea or the power lines it wraps its tendrils around.

STORY HOOK

Muthanna Al-Mohammad is an engineer who spent his life repairing power lines near the coast of Calais. He had a promising career but few took him seriously due to his claims about a monster he encountered five years ago. He saw the eye of the storm when he was sent to find out why the local power station was losing power at an extraordinary rate. When he went to check on the station, he discovered an enormous shadow on the horizon each time lightning flashed.

He watched helplessly as the creature snatched up his fellow workers and drained them of their lives. He only survived because he hid from the creature, but no one believes his story, suspecting that the line workers were electrocuted during the storm. Now he devotes his life to finding a way to lure the creature back on land so he can kill it. He has fashioned an enormous spear of copper and steel that he believes will kill the beast and discharge its electricity into the atmosphere, but few humans take him seriously. Now he is the first to volunteer to maintain France's power whenever a storm strikes on the off chance that the eye appears and he can have one final battle with the beast.



SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Command 5, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 3, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Health: 20

SPECIAL RULES

Big Brown Eye: The eyeball is the size of a tank, albeit a floating one with dangling tendrils. It's considered a Scale 3 monster.

Essence Drain: The eye wraps its tendrils around its victims, draining their energy into itself. Victims take 1 damage. Every 3 damage the eye absorbs from its victims increases its Health by 1, up to and over its maximum.

Nimbus of Power: Electricity flows differently in the presence of the eye. As the beast gets closer, anything using electricity shorts out. The eye is also capable of channeling electricity along its tendrils, sacrificing 1 of its Health to inflict 4 damage to its opponent.

Enormous Intelligence: Despite not having a body, the eye of the storm possesses a sinister intellect. It can be reasoned with, though it does not speak save for brief telepathic flashes it sends to those nearby. It can be bargained with, but will still desire to feed, and is not above breaking its word.

THE GULLBATROSS

*"Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned 'round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread."*

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The gullbatross is neither a gull nor an albatross. It is a curse. No one remembers how it got its name.

In some parts of the world, including St. Abbs in the Scottish borders, the coastline is so rugged and the winds so wild that gulls get stuck, beak first, in the vertical cliff face and, unable to extract themselves, die in situ. Slowly they rot till only the bones remain. Their rotten flesh trickles down the rocks into the stagnant pools below. There, at certain seasons and phases of the moon, the remains of the stranded gulls coalesce into an undead shadow substance that drifts out to sea. This is a rare occurrence.

Those of a melancholy humor exert a strong attraction on the gullbatross. It seeks them out when they gaze into the depths, whether this be from the deck of a ship, a bridge high above an estuary or a cliff top. It seeks them out and attaches itself to them where, out of the corners of the eye, or with the aid of sophisticated scientific equipment it appears as a dark, turbulent shadow hanging around its victim's neck. Those who claim to be psychic can often detect the gullbatross.

Attempts to remove the gullbatross include talking therapies, drugs, exorcisms, and electroconvulsive shock treatment.



All of these have failed. The gullbatross only abandons its victim at the point of death, though students of the phenomenon argue the gullbatross stays with its victim in the afterlife. Notably, those who don't believe in an afterlife tend not to believe in the gullbatross either.

GOALS

The gullbatross has a clear goal; to stick with its victim and make the person's life as miserable as it possibly can. While the victim may have suffered suicidal ideation prior to their union with the phenomenon, no one has ever managed to kill themselves or indulge in any significant self-harm with the gullbatross attached.

Unlike many monsters, the gullbatross is not a threat to humanity. It is, however, a threat to individual humans, though it causes misery rather than death and destruction.

STORY HOOKS

Melinda was a moody teenager. She never seemed to enjoy anything. Things got worse after her parents took her on a wonderful boat trip as a special treat for her sixteenth birthday. At first, Melinda seemed to be trying. She enjoyed her breakfast and watching the sea lions and pelicans frolic in the bay. Then she went up on deck for a breath of fresh air and spent several long hours staring, moodily, into the sea.

Matt and Gill, Melinda's parents, noticed her long absence shortly after lunch. Hastily finishing their cocktails, they set out to search for her. They found her on the observation deck, still staring moodily over the rail and into the sea. They tried to reason with her. They tried bribing, threatening, shouting. Eventually they persuaded her to come back into the lounge for a soda. But she never smiled or laughed again. And bad luck follows her everywhere she goes.

Matt and Gill took her to therapists, psychiatrists, faith healers; they tried everything they could think of. But the teenager remained cursed by this terrible malady. Psychics said they could see a dark bird hovering around her like a necklace. Her friends, even her special boyfriend, Geoff, abandoned her. Being teenagers themselves, they didn't mind her moodiness, but the bad luck was a real problem.

Take Melinda for a ride in your car and it breaks down. Take Melinda to the drug store for a milk shake and the cops raid the joint, or everyone ends up with food poisoning. Take Melinda to the hop and the band fails to show up then the juke box blows a fuse. On top of the bad luck, she's always reciting awful, old fashioned poetry.

Melinda says she is happiest in her room, reading poetry, especially poetry by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

SYSTEM

Those haunted by the gullbatross suffer from profound depression. It is difficult to motivate them to do anything at all and they resent all attempts to motivate them. Their resentment can lead to extreme violence if someone or something provokes them beyond their narrow limits of toleration. Victims tend to develop a fondness for the poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and an irrational fear of a being they refer to as "the man from Porlock."

Infestation by the gullbatross alters the character's stats in the following manner:

CHARACTERS LOSE SHORT-TERM PLAYER ASPIRATIONS, REPLACING THEM WITH:

- Stare miserably into the depths, or the distance, if no depths are available
- Learn the whole of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner by heart

THESE CHARACTERS LOSE:

- Resolve -2
- Presence -2

(If this takes the statistic below zero, it counts as zero)

The only way to remove the curse of the gullbatross is by gathering all who care about the victim while the victim recites the entirety of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, from memory, without aids and without anyone falling asleep. Any interruption by the Man from Porlock (real or imaginary) means the recitation must start again from the beginning.

GIANT HAIRY SPIDERS FROM THE TRENCH

"I do not believe they mean us harm, but they do seem to think of us as food."

— Warren Phelps, witness

Many creatures in the deepest ocean trenches remain unknown to science. It is like another world down there, at least as alien as the landscapes of Mars or the Moon.

Scientists have long believed spiders are unable to survive in a marine environment because they rely on their book lungs to deliver oxygen. Recently, though, there have been reports of giant hairy spiders clambering onto beaches. None have, to date, been available for science to study and many scientists are skeptical about their very existence. As more reliable reports come pouring in, the scientific community are making it clear they would like to have a specimen to study. This, however, is proving difficult.

These spiders have been living and evolving in the depths for around 400 million years. Reports put them at between 18 and 24 inches across and up to 30 inches tall. They are invariably dark and hairy. Many of the sightings have been in areas with large tidal ranges, where they come scuttling out of the ocean at low tide. The most popular theory is that they breath oxygen trapped against their abdomen through a specialized form of web. This means, even when they live at the greatest depths, they need to surface from time to time. Or maybe only once in a lifetime. Nobody knows.

Some scientists theorize their chitinous exoskeletons are what allow them to live at great depths and still come to the surface. Others disagree, arguing the strange shards of shell found in the areas these creatures frequent indicate they have learned to use tools and make armor.

One thing is known for certain: they feed like any other spider. They suck the insides out of their victims and, at least on land, the spiders display a preference for warm blooded flesh.

GOALS

The giant hairy spiders from the trench display a primitive intelligence, like chimpanzees, dolphins, or small children. Curiosity is a strong motivating force for them. They currently explore the land.

Their drives, personalities, and demeanor are those of a playful kitten. If a human plays with them, they give a friendly (but venomous) bite. Humans fail to notice the spiders' intelligence, perhaps due to the difficulties of spider/human communication.

The spiders are not intrinsically aggressive but, when hungry, they hunt and kill warm-blooded creatures. Unless they are hungry or threatened, the spiders frolic on the beach for an hour or so, maybe making a few forays into nearby commercial premises, before returning to the sea.

STORY HOOKS

Beachcombers out on Long Beach just after dawn came upon three eviscerated cadavers. They contacted the police, who cordoned off the area. The police did not release many details to the press or the public. Rumor has it, all that remained of the bodies were dehydrated shells with all the blood and meat inside sucked dry.

Brent Jones, one of the beachcombers, says the bodies didn't look like drowned bodies at all, and as Brent is the infamous Long Beach drowning killer, he's seen quite a lot of drowned bodies in his time. He snuck back to the area the following evening, when the police were mounting a skeleton watch and says he saw a group of giant spiders scuttling out of the ocean and up onto the beach. He hid and watched. He says they looked quite playful until they spotted a lonely cop. Brent didn't hang around to watch what they did to the unfortunate individual. The cop's partner discovered his desiccated remains when she arrived to relieve him of his watch.

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 4, Enigmas 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

When threatened, the spiders weave webs they launch like lassos to entrap whatever is threatening them. If the threat continues, they use their venomous bite. The spiders' teeth are not sharp or strong, and ordinary clothing protects against the damage. Normal winter clothing provides a +2 Enhancement, thin summer clothing provides a +1 Enhancement.

Spider Venom: The venom does 2 damage to its target. It is non-lethal (TCfBtS! p. 94) and imposes the Paralyzed Condition (TCfBtS! p. 96). Untreated, this wears off after a scene resolves.



Without treatment, the bite wound becomes infected inflicting 1 additional damage per day the victim fails to receive adequate medical attention.

Swarm!: Giant hairy spiders sometimes swarm houses and the families within. When acting as a swarm, treat them as a Scale 2 threat.

HELLBUGS: THE DEVOURING PACK

“No! You cannot take me away! They’re still down there! I don’t suffer from the Bends, there’s a nest of them by the phone cable and they were the ones that ate Revan!”

— Aditya Siwat, shortly before arriving at a hospital for evaluation

Lurking beneath the surface of the ocean floor, the hellbugs are ravenous instinct given form. They do not expand their colonies out of desire for territory or treasure, but to survive. Their minds focus on acquiring food to help the colony thrive, and when provoked they attack like a monstrous wave of teeth and claws that devour their prey and carry it off in pieces to their queen.

Carnivorous insects resembling a cross between a cockroach and a flea, these aquatic predators swarm out of their dens to feed on everything around them. They skitter across the ocean floor and surround their opponents as they ravenously tear off chunks of flesh, which they pass to their fellow hellbugs to skitter off with and take back to their colony. In a matter of minutes, they strip their prey down to the bones. The remains are discarded on the ocean floor, which is often the only warning sign of a nearby hellbug colony.

As underwater development continues and undersea cables laid across the ocean floor, hellbug colonies are disturbed by what they see as interference with their native habitats. Starving hellbugs, sensing they must move the colony or risk destruction, swarm to the surface where they go on a feeding frenzy of everything nearby. These predators survive on land and drag their victims screaming into the water where other hellbugs lie in wait. They are the size of dogs but their bites are capable of piercing through armored wetsuits, and when they swarm their opponent, their heavy shells weigh down their prey.

GOALS

The survival of the colony and its continued expansion are the driving goals of the hellbugs. They have queens, but their queens only seek to continually reproduce more members of the colony. If the colony comes under attack, the hellbugs swarm to eliminate the threat, but otherwise they continue their existence of feeding and reproducing until the colony dies off.

STORY HOOKS

Starlight Bay in Singapore has become a bustling tourist attraction with its scenic beaches and clear waters promoted by the resort’s owners as having curative properties. As hundreds of tourists flocked to the bay each month, the owners expanded the resort into the water. This action disturbed a nearby hellbug colony.

The hellbugs need resources to grow their colony and expand across the ocean floor, devouring everything in their wake. The ocean floor is stripped of coral, fish, and other living things and

those that remained have fled from around the colony. The hellbugs attack swimmers who go too far out into the water and are set to invade Starlight Bay. The resort’s owners are vaguely aware of the threat but do not take it seriously, though local authorities are starting to become nervous over the number of missing swimmers and fishers.

SYSTEM

Hellbugs exist both in drone and queen forms.

HELLBUG DRONE

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 4

HELLBUG QUEEN

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 4, Command 3, Empathy 3, Science 2

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 10

SPECIAL RULES



Weight of the Swarm: The hellbugs swarm their opponent, latching on with their powerful pincers and weighing them down. In combat the hellbugs give a +2 Complication to all attempts to resist being grappled.

Tenacious Chewing: The hellbug's bite is painful and crushing, with its teeth ripping apart anything that stands in the way of the hellbug and its food. A hellbug's attacks always have the Piercing and Deadly tags.

Pack of Dogs: When operating as a pack, hellbugs are considered a Scale 2 threat.

Call the Warriors: A hellbug queen is seldom alone for long, and can summon warrior drones to defend herself at a moment's notice. Each turn a hellbug queen can summon a number of drones equal to the number of perceived threats around her, increasing her own personal Scale to 2 through the empowerment from her subjects.

Jagged Chelicera: Protruding from the side of the queen's face are a barbed pair of feeling appendages that the queen uses to pull its prey into its jaws. If the queen successfully bites a target it may make one additional attack against the target that combat round.

Imposing Bulk: The queen's size — twice that of a normal hellbug — and spines make her difficult to force her to move when she does not wish too. Attempting to shove or move the queen inflicts a +2 Complication on the attempt.

SALAMEN

"Did that freaky thing just say my name before diving back into the water?"

— Naomi Park, aquatic researcher

They sit on piers and crouch on rocks by the shores of lakes, their smooth skin glistening in the moonlight. The light reflects briefly off their eyes and their terribly sharp fangs as they sit peacefully before diving back into the water to hunt. Though their faces are reptilian, their eyes appear distinctively human, and some have been known to mumble words from time to time before howling with anger as they move in to attack. They were on this world before the rise of humanity, and unless dealt with properly, will surely remain here after them.

The salamen are not just amphibious creatures from the depths of the ocean. The truth behind their creation is much more sinister, as salamen create others of their kind by dragging their victims into lairs and cocooning them in slime. Slowly their victims' bodies change as their skin becomes thinner and bumpy, while their minds devolve and memories vanish in a haze. When a salaman emerges from its cocoon, they barely remember what they once were. Their faces elongate into a snout with jagged fangs protruding from their maw. A fin emerges from their back and a long serpentine tail trails behind them as they walk, leaving



a thin trail of slime wherever they go. Their eyes are one of the few elements of them that remain human, as they retain the color and shape from their former lives.

Salamen appear in the histories of ancient civilizations, with the iguanoids viewing them as savage things fit only for destruction. In the past, it was iguanoids, large crabs, and dinosaurs falling prey to the salamen. Now, it's humankind. To the governments of the world, they are a plague that requires a quick and decisive resolution. Those taken by the salamen must be rescued quickly before the changes to their bodies become permanent.

Some who have fought the salamen notice peculiar quirks about the monsters. Occasionally they repeat phrases, or hum familiar tunes. Some salamen have been known to stalk their former romantic partners, and seek to drag them off to transform them. While some believe it is possible to reawaken the lost memories inside of a salaman, all too often the attempt ends in the salamen flying into a murderous frenzy.

GOALS

Primitive desires drive the salamen. Though they gather in small tribes, their minds swim with bestial needs and fears, as well as memories threatening to bubble to the surface. No one knows why the salamen choose their victims as they do, though it is not uncommon for salamen to choose those with whom they once shared familiarity.

A salaman tribe grows to support a few members before they move on to a new area. They stick to coastal regions and swamps, though a salaman can survive for a short period of time on land. They can survive for longer if kept properly hydrated and fed.

STORY HOOKS

Brandon Hawksburg had his whole future ahead of him, but after hitting someone with his car his major league career

disappeared. All that remained to tell of his once promising career were trophies from his victories on display at the local high school. When Brandon's trailer burned down, everyone thought he had gotten drunk and left the stove on, starting a fire.

The salamen kidnapped Brandon and turned him into one of their number. Now he stalks the town of Cedar Creek from a distance, the animal in him hoping to take his revenge upon the families of the officers that ruined his career. He broke into his former high school and stole back some of his trophies, which now sit in a place of honor in his lair where he drags his victims back to either feast upon their bones or transform them into more salamen.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 4, Empathy 2, Close Combat 4, Integrity 2, Larceny 3, Survival 3

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 1; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

The Cocoon: A character taken and coated in salaman slime transforms into a salaman unless they succeed on a complex action with three milestones, each with a Difficulty of 2 and a Complication of 1, representing the slime tightening during an escape attempt. Escape requires successful Close Combat + Might rolls to overpower the slime. Failure to beat all three milestones means that at the end of the story, the character becomes a salaman regardless of whether they escape.

Narcotic Venom: The bite of a salaman inflicts a euphoric effect like a strong painkiller. It is non-lethal (**TCfBtS!** p. 94) and imposes a Stunned Condition for the remainder of the scene unless the victim is exposed to a stimulant that counters its effects.

TURTLEDON

"A turtle as big as a station wagon! I've heard the stories. I'm sure what's stinking up Keller's Pond is nothing more than a vicious skunk that drunk fishers came up with to pass the time."

— Sgt. Simmons, unimpressed Sheriff's Deputy

An ancient predator commonly recognized through its siblings living in zoos and aquariums throughout the United States, the turtledon is more than just an oversized snapping turtle. Though some think the large talons on its feet are dangerous, it is the turtledon's massive jaws that set it apart from its brethren. The size of an automobile and surprisingly agile for its size, the turtledon lurks at the bottom of ponds and lakes until the need to feed brings it once more to the surface to satisfy the primal hunger filling its belly. With jaws like an industrial vice and breath smelling of death and decay, the turtledon is a massive predator that gasses its prey before tearing the victim to shreds with its razor-sharp jaws.

Making their homes at the bottom of still bodies of water, the turtledon spends most of its life asleep. They prefer to feed on fish and plants but devour anything edible in the vicinity, including humans. Its massive form burns through calories at an outrageous

rate as it ages and after feeding the creature become sluggish. The turtledon sleeps at the bottom of its hiding place when not hunting, leaving visitors unaware of the threat lurking beneath the surface.

A turtledon appears slow when it emerges from the water, its massive frame supported by beefy claws that pull it across the ground. In an instant it can move swiftly, capable of closing the distance to deliver a fatal bite with its massive jaws. The turtledon does not just rely upon its bite; it also stores a noxious gas within a sac inside its throat. This gas overwhelms its victims, causing them to claw at their throats as they struggle to breathe through the putrid mist. As their victims gag, the turtledon lunges for the kill.

Its thick shell and scaly body make it considerably difficult to harm. The only weak points on its body are the inside of its mouth and the underside of its body, though reaching these areas can be a deadly endeavor. A team of G-men saved a group of anthropologists by luring a turtledon into the path of a train, but the locomotive derailed and its cargo spilled into the nearby area. The turtledon managed to crawl away from the wreckage before dying in its pond, but not before removing the arm of an agent who thought they could move in for the kill.

GOALS

Turtledons require food and a place for them to slumber. Though they try to stay away from civilization, they are often found by accident. They can sleep for months on end. They do not act maliciously when they feed, but still gorge themselves on anything that crosses their path. Few things deter a turtledon from eating, although they try to refrain from straying too far from water.

They only leave their homes to eat and mate, and a turtledon almost always stay near the pond of its birth until it dies of old age. As pollution and environmental damage sweep across the continent, many turtledons find their homes becoming too polluted for them to remain habitable. Once driven to the surface, they then seek a new home. A turtledon was once found living in an old millionaire's home, though it was only discovered when the millionaire and his date jumped into the pool for a midnight swim. They were never seen again.

STORY HOOKS

Old Willoughby has managed the same property ever since his ancestors came out to the region as homesteaders. His parents warned him about the watering hole at the property's rear, and taught him to leave an offering of pot roasts and several bushels of apples to keep the turtledon living within sated. He even affectionately refers to the creature as "Tommy" and watches it feed on its bounty of food from afar.

For years the Pluxco Corporation has been after his property, and they were instrumental in costing Old Willoughby his job. Now he does not have the funds to keep feeding Tommy and he knows it has begun leaving the watering hole to find sustenance. Old Willoughby has managed to lure a few company men from Pluxco onto his property with offers to give them a tour of the watering hole. Soon he will lose his land to the bank, and he views the creature as a threat that other men have unleashed onto the world for taking away his family's lands.



SYSTEM

A turtledon is over 10 feet long from snout to tail, and its shell has jagged thorns running along it. Its head is mostly grey bone and scales, and its feet have long claws that it uses to pull itself along on the ground at speed. When it sleeps it pulls its limbs and head into its shell and appears like jagged rocks on the bottom of the pond.

When a turtledon engages its opponents, it belches its noxious breath at them first to stun its prey. This gas is highly flammable, but dissipates quickly. It then moves in for the kill, rushing at its opponent once it gets close enough to deliver a powerful blow with its jaws.

Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 4

Attributes: Might 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 12

SPECIAL RULES

Horrendous Chomp: The bite of the turtledon can sever limbs and crush car doors to pieces. The turtledon's bite does 3 damage when it hits, but it must be at close range to make contact. Chomp attacks have the Piercing tag.

Rancid Breath: The turtledon's breath is so overwhelmingly powerful anyone without suitable protection is overcome with

the disgusting stench. Those afflicted by the turtledon's breath are afflicted by the Paralyzed Condition for the scene unless they are wearing masks or other protection that makes them immune to smelling its effects. The gas is flammable, allowing defenders to ignite the turtledon if they can light a flame while the breath exhales.

Dense Shell: The creature's hide is dense and there is the chance for projectiles to bounce off its hide and ricochet around the environment. Attempting to shoot the turtledon gives the attacker a level 2 Complication, representing the armored hide and possible of ricochets.

Large and in Charge: Turtledons are large, Scale 2 creatures, due to their bulk and hardness.

Zoom: Turtledons move ponderously, posing little threat to fleeing foes, until they belch their rancid breath. From that point, they can close a range gap from medium to close in a turn.

VORGO, SUPERMAN OF THE PREHISTORIC

"At first, I thought it was one of the farm hands sleeping off a bender down by the quarry, but when we tried to take his money, he tore Rodney in half and flipped our mustang into the water with his hand. He's your problem now, sheriff!"

— Sam "Ramrod" Fletcher, greaser thug

Statues of cave people stand in museums across the globe. They are depicted as simpletons who are constantly amazed by things such as fire, electricity, and other comforts of the modern

era. But Vorgo is from a different era entirely. His body is covered in smooth fur and his feet are webbed, allowing him to move swiftly underwater. Vorgo is descended from a rare offshoot of his kind that homo sapiens is grateful went extinct for surely, if they had survived, they would have replaced them as the dominant strain of humans on the planet.

Standing at almost seven feet tall, Vorgo was a member of a tribe of beings who possessed incredible strength, intellect, and durability. They developed tools to help them hunt but did not need to as they were capable of tearing apart saber-toothed tigers with their hands. They lived on the coasts and are able to survive underwater where they built their homes in caves. They possessed the ability to manipulate objects with their minds, and though they communicated with high pitched sonar they also passed along subliminal imagery to one another with their minds. What stopped Vorgo's people from taking over the planet was an act of rare chance; the changing weather and rising water levels caused them to go into hibernation in caves along the coast. Vorgo's people became buried in an avalanche and would have remained forgotten if not for the fact that they survived in hibernation beneath the earth. The surviving cave dwellers were discovered by narcissus pilchards, the fish bringing the sleeping people's bodies to underground chambers rich in oxygen. The pilchards recognized these cave people as a potential rival to humanity and hoped that one day they would be able to awaken on their own to reclaim the land from the upstart homo sapiens.

A crew of construction workers working on a coastal resort awakened Vorgo after they set off a blast that shifted the rock around his sleeping body. The workers were stunned to discover a human being alive beneath the ground. Before they could alert the

authorities, Vorgo tore apart his unintentional rescuers. Escaping into the night, he now survives in a nearby quarry as he seeks to make sense of the modern era.

Vorgo is not the last of his kind. He can feel the minds of his people sleeping beneath the coast in their caves, though he does not know where they are. He spends his days digging away at the ground hoping to rescue them from their imprisonment. He has studied humanity from afar and knows how to raid houses at night for sustenance, but he does not care for the strange people that have overtaken the land. He hopes to awaken his sleeping people and then establish new hunting grounds for his kind.

GOALS

Vorgo is not good or evil; he simply exists. He does not want to rule over humanity but does not care much for them. He finds the modern world strange and he finds the minds of humans to be alien and discordant. He longs for the simple days when he could read the minds of his people and know what they meant instead of listening to the dizzying babble coming out of the mouths of humanity.

He seeks to reawaken his people. He wants them to be free from their imprisonment, and he wants them left alone. If he finds anyone interfering with their slumber he goes into a rage and fights to protect them with every fiber of his being. He views humanity as a competitor and in his mind, he must do what it takes to save his people.

For now, he is content with conducting his digs as he sees fit. When he must eat, he prefers to hunt, and finds the convenience of cattle yards to be the equivalent of a fast food stand. He does not respect the property of others and takes what he wants, though he stays away from situations where he might become easily trapped.

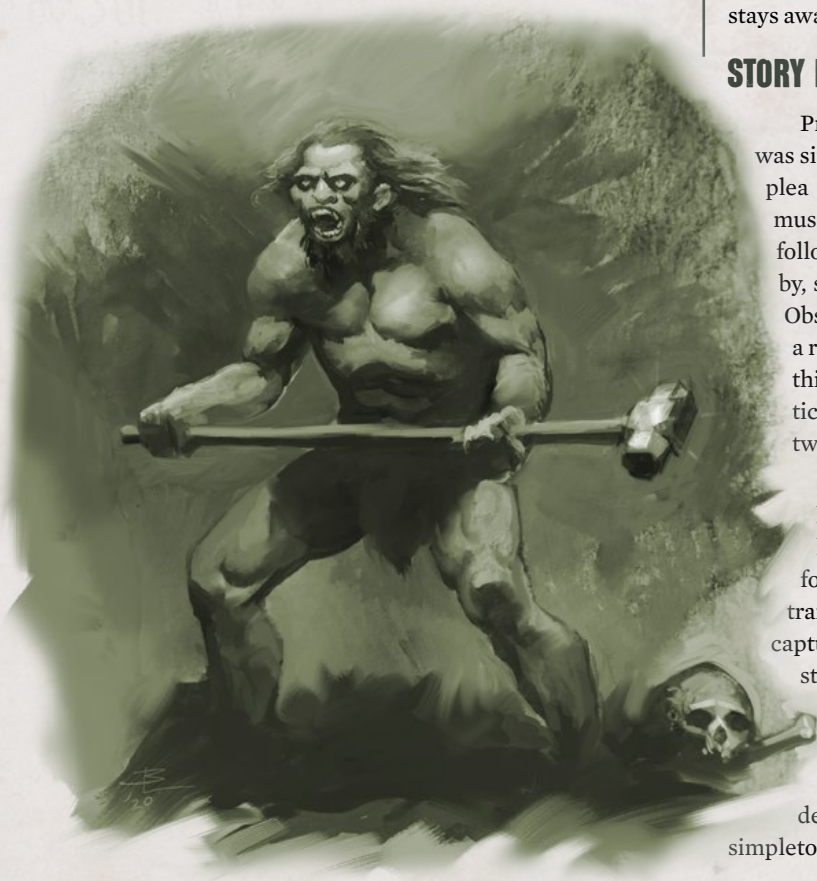
STORY HOOKS

Professor Walther Simms has studied Vorgo ever since he was sitting in county lock up and heard about a distressed kid's plea that it wasn't *him* who'd rustled the cattle, but a hairy, muscular giant. Simms listened with great interest and began following up on the legends of the mountain man living nearby, sobering up for an extended period to conduct a search. Observing the giant from a distance, he saw Vorgo tear apart a rancher who trekked into the mountains trying to find the thing that had been feeding on his cattle. When Vorgo noticed Simms, he attacked the professor and broke his arm in two places with a single swat of a fist.

Though Simms survived his encounter with Vorgo, he has become obsessed with capturing him and others like him. Recognizing a being like Vorgo would mean much for his research, the unscrupulous enterpriser hopes to tranquilize the creature and bring him back to his lab. More captured Vorgos will mean a much bigger payday for the struggling professor, to boot.

SYSTEM

Vorgo is a dangerous opponent for those who underestimate him. Though his appearance suggests he is a simpleton, his fierce intellect and incredible strength give him



the advantage. He was a hunter and knows how to lay traps, and he has lined the area around his home with snare traps. His enhanced senses mean he can detect footsteps from far off and he can detect the thoughts of those around him.

If cornered, Vorgo would rather fight to the death before allowing himself to be captured. Anyone seeking to disturb his sleeping people becomes his enemy for life, and his wrath is so great he will stalk his enemies back to their homes to finish them off before they can alert others to his existence.

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Culture 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Integrity 3, Larceny 1, Medicine 2, Persuasion 2, Survival 4

Attributes: Might 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Health: 13

SPECIAL RULES

Ultrasonic Whine: Vorgo doesn't grunt like a stereotypical cave dweller, his typical speech patterns emerging as a high-pitched whistle

that sends dogs into a barking fit. He hasn't learned the ability to converse like a human yet.

Mental Communication: Vorgo can communicate telepathically with his own people and with animals. With the assistance of a scientist, he may be able to do the same thing with modern humans.

Telepathic Nudge: Vorgo learned from his father was how to focus his telepathy to distract his target, so they would often look away or become confused before he would close in for the kill. The trick works well on cows and deer, and just as easily on humans. By observing his target, he can briefly intrude upon their thoughts, requiring them to roll Empathy + Composure to understand the intrusion for what it is and remain unaffected. If the roll fails, their senses black out for a single turn, usually making them fall over unless caught.

Psychic Impressions: Any object handled by Vorgo is still psychoreactive for the remainder of the scene, and when someone touches this object, they can roll Enigmas + Intellect to read the thoughts and images Vorgo was experiencing the last time he touched the object.

A Big Guy for You: Vorgo is a Scale 2 creature, tall, ripped, and monstrously strong.



SHELLRAISERS

"Ye've nothin' tae worry about... tell' the moon hits 'em."

The scruffy wiry Jackins drained his glass and peered questioningly at Carpairs who nodded. Jackins refilled as his host weighed his words.

"And what exactly happens at moonrise?" asked Carpairs.

"I'll not be scarin' ya, good sor. Or yor pretty wife - ye bein' on vacation and all."

"You'll not, I assure you," bristled Carpairs as he again refilled the unseemly beachcomber's glass. "And Blaisy can take care of herself."

His dubious guest in the South Seas dive squinted hard at him. "Think I'm a teller of tall tales, don't ye, Mister fine Carpairs?" Jackins chuckled. "Mark me ... moonlight hits 'em, they will grow." His chuckle rose like an unwelcome flame. "They will grow," he cackled, raising his glass.

...

"Oh, it was useless," sneered Carpairs, flopping on the bed below the large overhead fan. "Nothing about the site of the meteor fall, just a lot of superstitious rubbish."

"What sort of rubbish?" asked his wife Blaisy Carpairs, as she loaded film into six or so cameras on the bureau, lined up as though for inspection.

"Something the natives refer to as... Shell-raisers. Something about the moonlight. Nothing for your article I'm sure, my dear."

"I don't like to overlook anything, John, you know that. That's why-"

"Your reputation, yes, yes, I know. Really, darling, don't you think a nice yachting event, or a much larger island perhaps?"

"Filthy with tourists, no thank you. Mendoza suits my needs just fine."

"We still have no idea where this meteor, if indeed it was a meteor, is supposed to have landed."

"We shall have to find it then, won't we." Blaisy snapped a camera shut for emphasis.

...

Carpairs stepped onto the bright screened-in porch of the little rented bungalow and took in the smooth Pacific lapping the shore. He could

not argue with the shabby place's beachfront view. It wasn't till he'd mixed a morning martini that he noticed his wife was already out there, strolling the beach, the usual five or six cameras about her neck.

"Snap any meteors, darling?" he inquired dryly.

"Several. Turned out they were the wrong ones," Blaisy called back over the sough of waves.

. . .

While Blaisy took some shots of a small waterfall, Carpairs mopped his brow.

"They have waterfalls in the Bahamas too, you know," he chided.

"There's something strange here, John." She gazed around, as though seeing what he couldn't. "I can feel it."

Carpairs merely shrugged with his eyebrows as he lit a smoke.

. . .

That night, after a knock on their bungalow door, a hesitant Carpairs ushered in a scraping and bowing Jackins. Blaisy sat up and studied the grinning wretch.

"You have something?" she inquired.

"An eyewitness, mum."

As her husband removed cash from his pocket, the photographer studied the beachcomber hard. "How much?"

. . .

The elderly islander stood waiting in the field behind their bungalow as the Carpairs approached. With moon behind clouds it was not easy to spot him, or anything else for that matter.

The man's English was good, and he described the night the meteor fell, then gestured, and they followed.

. . .

To their surprise he led them to the shoreline in front of their bungalow.

"There," he said, indicating the waves rushing in.

"That's where it fell?" asked Blaisy. "You're absolutely sure?"

The man nodded.

"Here, why are you not afraid to tell us like everybody else?" queried Carpairs.

"I have lived long," said the elderly man as he turned and disappeared into the jungle.

Blaisy gazed at the dark water as though she might see some sign of where it hit.

"Odd luck that," offered her husband, lighting a smoke. "Tough to photograph down there, not without a diving bell or some such. Who knows how deep the bloody thing is?"

"It might not be deep at all," she spoke with odd quiet as she stared into the night.

. . .

It was the middle of the night when Carpairs woke. He saw the other side of the bed was empty, got up and strolled shirtless into the front room.

Blaisy was standing outside on the porch, facing out to sea.

"You alright?" he asked, joining her. "Beastly heat. On the water no less. Here, what are you staring at?"

"The shells."

Carpairs followed her gaze to the beach where he could make out numerous shells scattered about.

"Oh yes. Quite a few, eh? Too bloody dark to shoot, don't you think?"

"Quite large, those shells. Unusual, wouldn't you say?" observed Blaisy, still staring.

Carpairs sighed, "I'll make us a drink."

She was aware of the clinking of martini behind her, but her eyes looked to the sky where shifting clouds allowed a hint of moon to show through.

"Maybe you can get some interesting shots in the morning, darling. Arrange the shells a bit, you know. Course, you wouldn't, that's right. Keep 'em natural. As they were. That's all right."

Carpairs brought two drinks over. She took one, but placed it on the porch railing.

"When the moonlight hits them..." she murmured as though in a dream.

"What? Oh yes, that superstition. Shellraisers or something-

"Shellraisers," she said, barely audible.

Blaisy walked down the steps.

"You haven't touched your drink, dear."

She didn't seem to hear but walked among the shells as if in a trance, looking down, studying them. They began to gradually get paler and she realized it was because the clouds were exposing the moon. As moonlight hit them, the shells seemed to glow.

Blaisy stepped back now, stumbling to the porch as Carpairs looked a bit lost.

The shells began to move. Just slightly.

Then, as the couple watched, they began to rise into the air. And beneath each was a pale form, indeterminate, but of vaguely human shape.

Carpairs' drink fell. Blaisy stared. The apparitions beneath the shells began to move slowly toward the bungalow.

"I'll use a flash," said Blaisy coolly as she began snapping away.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPIES

"There's no room for personal feelings in science, Judith!"

- Bernard Quatermass, *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955)

Tenacious little bastards with eyes fixed on humanity's secrets, the aliens known as Spies are divided between those who steal our information due to a sense of obsessive greed, and those who deliver the acquired knowledge to destructive masters. Humanity fears Spies more than other aliens due to their ability to hide in plain sight, replace the average Joe and Jane, and remind us of the Red Menace and the feelings of weakness we experience when we realize our most dearly held secrets are now the possession of fish people.

More G-Men have lost their jobs and lives at the hands of alien Spies than due to tobacco-related illness, and that's a lot. Behind the Cold War, another conflict rages, but this one is between our people in suits and sunglasses and their people wearing synthetic, or real, human skin.

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.

BUBBLE-BEINGS

"Jeepers! That guy in a trench coat just shoved that cop and leaped over that bus!"

- Ricky Thompson, paper boy

No one is entirely sure where these sentient masses of seafoam and errant garbage originate. However, one theory put forth by Prof. Werner Stugart suggests that these creatures may be the byproduct of chemicals and waste dumped into the world's waterways. Given the name "bubble-beings" by the G-men who have investigated the phenomena, these creatures are able to form into a roughly human shape, and if suitably disguised, one might never even realize that these aquatic humanoids are standing a few feet away.

Wary of large groups of average citizens, bubble-beings have been discovered primarily living among the homeless in oceanside boardwalks and railyards. While mostly keeping to themselves, these creatures have made willing contact with humanity from time to time. A government investigator recently discovered that a little

girl vacationing with her family in Ocean Park lost her doll in the sea and reported it returned the next morning by a strange-looking "bubble-man" in a trench coat and fedora. Last year, Rockwell Cove reported several pharmacy robberies, initially believing the crimes to be committed by "hopheads." When police recovered the inventory, they discovered the medicines were being used to treat ailing residents of a homeless camp. When police asked who was providing these medications, those interviewed described someone they called "Doc," a lumbering man in a dirty lab coat and scarf who smelled like low tide.



While most reports and appearances of bubble-beings show them to be benevolent, they will act violently if scared or threatened. A recent interaction with government investigators left one agent drowned on dry land and three other agents injured. Though they look and operate as if made of seafoam, these creatures have mass and weight and can seem to control the density of their bodies. Those who have been unfortunate enough to run afoul of these tragic creatures have said that being assaulted by one is “like being smacked by a wet mop.”

GOALS

Bubble-beings are tragic creatures who, above all else, seek humanity. Without any concrete origin, they search for community among humans. Unfortunately, due to their otherworldly appearance and their lack of human communication, they are often shunned by the outside world.

Bubble-beings can communicate with one another through a melding of their foam forms. A simple “hand” touch or a “melding of bubbles,” allow others of their kind know which areas are safe and which humans are good. Many bubble-beings wait and watch average citizens from a distance, having already integrated themselves into hobo camps in coastal population centers, observing and mimicking the actions and customs they see.

Bubble-beings spy not for domination, but to imitate humanity in hopes of becoming human.

STORY HOOK

Mrs. Velasko didn't care for the tenant in apartment 11. He reeked like he'd been rolling around in the dumpster behind Captain Jiffy's Seafood Hut. He also looked strange. Sure, the Albatross Arms Apartments were home to some real weirdos, but this guy was on another level. For starters, he always seemed moist. Not sweaty necessarily, just wet. And he was always bundled up in a hat, overcoat, and glasses, even in the summer like he was hiding from something. No sir, she didn't care for Mr. White, with his bizarre choice of attire and his stink, but he paid rent early and in cash, which is better than most of her tenants.

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 1, Culture 1, Empathy 5, Enigmas 2, Integrity 2, Larceny 2, Persuasion 4, Science 1, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Sphere of Death: A bubble-being must have their target at close range and within line of sight, allowing them to create a bubble around their victim's head, which drains the oxygen from their lungs. The victim rolls Survival + Stamina (Difficulty 3). On a failure, the character gains the Paralyzed Condition until the end of the next turn, and takes 2 damage every turn they remain inside the bubble.



CRUSTACEANAUTS, A.K.A. THE BRINIES

“Watch these adorable creatures of the deep grow and grow! Not only do they make perfect pets, but they'll feel like members of the family!”

— Brinies Advertisement in the back of *The Mausoleum of Blood* comic book

The YukCO Corporation has been in the novelty business for decades, but sales have sky-rocketed since they bought a bunch of freeze-dried brine-shrimp and began hawking them in the back of comic books. Unknown to the harried executives at the company or the warehouse crew shipping the inventory, brinies are not a mere novelty but part of a sinister plot to take over America via commerce. Pushed out of their home by other undersea kingdoms, the crustaceanauts have seen fit to infiltrate land-dwellers in hopes of making a permanent home for themselves on the surface. The U.S. Government isn't sure how brinies found their way into the homes of good Americans, but they've been investigating the recent purchase of YukCO by a shell company known as Exemplar Unlimited, which has seemingly come onto the market out of nowhere. Insider sources say that former executives at Exemplar and YukCO have now taken posts at some of the largest corporations in America.

The brinies themselves appear freeze-dried, but when placed in a tank or a glass of water, they grow to the size of a large spider. These creatures have eight legs and are reddish in color, appearing at first glance to be a cross between a brine shrimp and a crab. The simple appearance of these creatures belies their intelligence and true intention. If gone unnoticed, these creatures will be in every home in America, replacing the family dog and eventually replacing you.

GOALS

Brinies find their way into the American home via novelty ads in the back of comic books, but after they activate in a container of ordinary tap water, these creatures continue to grow until they are the size of a tarantula, eventually crawling into the mouth of the closest sleeping human, sapping his or her nutrients, which they then use to create a perfect copy of the slumbering victim while the original is left a withered husk. The humanoid crustaceanaut then disposes of the former human's shell and goes about inhabiting the life of the person it replaced. This crustaceanaut will then do whatever it can to bring others of its kind into its new home, neighborhood, or rotary organization. The goal of brinies is to infiltrate human society and make a new home on the surface world. They've not reached the stage of wanting to eliminate all of humanity yet, but are quickly shifting from the Spies to Invaders type.

STORY HOOK

Ms. Simon, the biology teacher, sure has been acting weird since yesterday. We were supposed to present more science fair projects to the class, but instead, she put on a filmstrip about the mating rituals of the mantis shrimp. When Tommy asked her what had happened to the project he'd left at school overnight, she told him that it was "a brilliant piece of work" and that she felt inspired to bring more brinies into class for a schoolwide program. "The classroom today, tomorrow the world," she said in a monotone voice. Ms. Simon is so weird.

SYSTEM

The average Briny has the following stats:

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Culture 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 1, Integrity 2, Larceny 2, Persuasion 2, Science 2, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 4

SPECIAL RULES

Take my Skills: Brinies taking the form of humans possess their original Skills, Attributes, and Health, but for every three Skill ranks the human had ranked higher than the crustaceanaut, the monster gains 1 Skill rank to assign to any Skill of their choice.

Open Wide: If a character wakes in the middle of a briny attempting to absorb them, the character must make a Close Combat + Dexterity roll with an opposed Difficulty over the course of three rounds. If the player rolls successfully for three rounds, the briny skitters away in search of slumbering prey or a glass of water in which it can recuperate. If the player fails, the briny enters them and can only be extracted through use of a successful Medicine + Cunning roll at Difficulty 2 (to detect and remove the creature safely and swiftly) or Close Combat + Dexterity roll at Difficulty 4 to cut it out without training. If the briny remains inside the human until after the scene, the transformation begins and the Difficulties of the above rolls increase by 1 until the end of the story, when the briny takes over completely.

LIGHTWALKER

"Soon the whole world will know what you now know, and what I know, since I'm the one telling you, that I, Captain Light, will rule the ocean's trade routes like a frog rules a lily pad, only better! Beware! Just because! The Lightwalker is coming! Thank you for listening."

— Captain Light, costumed master villain, speaking with megaphone from the top of his Lightwalker

The Lightwalker is a mobile lighthouse created and run by part-human mastermind Captain Light for the express purpose of extorting the world's shipping industry by causing shipwrecks via the confusion of a misplaced beacon.

Little is known about Captain Light, as his actual identity is a secret, the solving of which is now priority. It's generally believed he himself is the creator (as he reminds us repeatedly) of the Lightwalker which is both his primary weapon and base of operations. The invention, while clever in its conception, is not exactly a technological marvel, having been engineered from existing heavy construction equipment such as cranes and excavators.

The entire construct, including lighthouse, base platform and four hydraulic legs, is just over 300 feet in height when legs are curled up at rest, and about 330 feet when legs are raised as in walking. The base is about 50 feet wide and the entire machine weighs 9000 tons. Its fuel source at this point is unknown but presumed to be gasoline or an unknown mixture thereof.

The Lightwalker is piloted by a crew inside the lantern room (the glassed-in area beneath the cupola) where Captain Light himself spends most of his time, unless he strolls out onto the gallery (railed-in platform surrounding the lantern room). The rest of the



crew serve various functions throughout the several levels and are protected by a contingent of armed guards.

A self-proclaimed master of style, the vain, scaled Captain Light insists on gaudy uniforms for himself and crew. He, of course, has the most outlandish, in black, with a bright red hood covering his face, a flamboyant red cape, wide red belt and shiny red boots. The work crew (“Lightworkers”) are in red uniforms with black belts, while the guards (“Lightsoldiers”) are distinguished by black uniforms with red berets and belts. Arms consist of rifle and machinegun, with several larger mounted machineguns at several windows and one atop the gallery.

A typical Lightwalker operation is as follows. Waiting for the dead of night, the machine moves as unobtrusively as possible (difficult, given the noise of pounding legs and hydraulics) to a coastal position just close enough to a known lighthouse, where it plants itself to flash its beacon, creating enough confusion to wreck a freighter on rocks or reef. Once a shipping company pays extortion to Captain Light their ships are no longer targeted.

There is speculation Captain Light may harbor political ambitions but until more is known about the man it's mere conjecture. Even now, Interpol, the FBI and several private agencies are hard at work to discover his identity and history. It has been suggested he may be a former shipping clerk with a grievance or, from the “captain” moniker, ex-military (or ship's captain) but nothing concrete so far.

GOALS

The mission of Captain Light and his Lightwalker is to extort the world's shipping industry to amass a fortune for either plain old greed or purposes unknown. At this point, suggestions of conquest or political motivations are unfounded.

STORY HOOK

In the middle of the night, escaped con woman Bassy Hinds manages to steal clothing and get rid of her prison garb somewhere along the coast. As she seeks a temporary hiding place among the sand dunes it comes to her attention that there's a lighthouse nearby. Suddenly, she spots another one, a half mile off. The crafty Bassy recalls reading about Captain Light and the Lightwalker and a sly grin forms.

SYSTEM

The Lightwalker is commanded by costumed mastermind Captain Light and operated by a work crew of around twenty men, overseen by a chief engineer who also manages the beacon. Two pilots drive the machine from an operating “dashboard” in the lantern room. Security consists of twenty-five armed guards (Lightsoldiers), under the command of a lieutenant, equipped with rifles, machineguns and sidearms, with several permanently manning installations of heavier machineguns at windows and atop the gallery.

LIGHTWORKERS

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Command 2, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 1, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 5

LIGHTSOLDIERS

Skills: Aim 4, Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Command 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 6

LIGHTWALKER

The Lightwalker is a 300-foot, 9000-ton, mobile lighthouse, operating on a system of hydraulics and run by a crew of about 60. Speed is limited because of its size and is believed to reach an estimated 20 miles per hour. It moves almost exclusively at night, dependent upon hidden locations by day. Beyond this walking structure, no permanent base of operations is known.

Though well-armed for infantry-fighting it would be no match for direct assault by armed forces with sufficient firepower, including heavy artillery, tanks, planes or battleships. Subterfuge is its strong suit.

Skills: Aim 3, Close Combat 4, Intimidation 5, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 1, Resolve 4; Might 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Health: 20

SPECIAL RULES

Well That's Big: The Lightwalker's size and weight make it a Scale 3 threat. Theoretically the structure's Scale could be larger, but due to the complex nature of the hydraulics, pistons, and pullies maneuvering the lighthouse, it's relatively easy to bring down.

It's Right There!: Though reasonably well-armed for infantry-fighting, the Lightwalker would be no match for direct assault by armed forces with enough firepower. Subterfuge is its strong suit. Captain Light, despite his eccentricity, his absurd haughtiness and a recklessness bordering on the foolish, is a master chess player. Or at least checkers. Unless looking for the Lightwalker, all initial inspections of the lighthouse exterior draw no raised eyebrows.

No Natural Weapons: The Lightwalker might stamp down on a target, but can only do so slowly (and methodically) due to the way its controlled. Captain Light has not fitted the lighthouse with any artillery, making it more of a cumbersome stealth vessel than a walking weapon.

MELVIS AND THE DEEP-WATER BAND

“Ah, huh, huh, thank you a whole bunch.”

— Melvis, Siren of the Darkest Trench

Born of one of the darkest and deepest of all the kingdoms of the oceans, only known to other deep-sea people as “The Darkest Trench,” the aquatic trisivir spy named “Melvis” has recently been making waves touring the coastal sock hops, school dances, house concerts, and milkshake shops. This musical menace sings a baneful song as all sirens of history have, wooing unsuspecting dancers and party goers, gleaned as much information from them as possible, and moving along before anyone suspects anything out of the

ordinary. He and his “band” who wear “masks” that look strangely like “anglerfish heads” and are highly realistic, and always “stay in character” by “never taking them off,” have been meandering around the eastern seaboard in search of unsuspecting port towns. These locations have been deemed acceptable for the nation of sirens for easy overthrow.

Melvis and his band is made up of specially trained trisivir, an evolutionary offshoot of the quasivir, a well-known mercenary aquatic species. The trisivir have a penchant for ingenuity, possessing the ability to quickly adapt their bodies to their environment much like frogs or other amphibians.

With the advent of the “devil’s music” known as rock and roll, Melvis has subsumed a conglomeration of well-known musician’s awkward pelvic thrusts and strange linguistics. This is much to Melvis’ benefit, as the bumbling meat suits he and his “band” use for landside travel is prone to odd jerks and spasms. The sirens use the cover of “artistic aloofness” to manipulate fans and canvas over their glaring lack of understanding of the guttural human tongue. Melvis and his musicians tend to wear flashy outfits commandeered from a stage band who had an unfortunate run-in with the fishy spies one late night as they packed up their gear. Melvis himself found a thick pair of sunglasses on the corpse of a recently consumed musician. He now wears them to cover up his horrifyingly large yellow eyes.

Freshly outfitted with transportation and musical equipment, the sirens began practicing their skills of above-water tunes. Much to their advantage, music is a universal language, and the sirens of the Darkest Trench have quickly taken to the raucous nature of rock music and the social nuances of the artform. Using their hypnotic croons and peppy beats, the troupe draws in large groups of swooning young people desperate for companionship and rebellion all for the cost of a cover charge and some flyers, which due to their commanding stage presence is easily procured.

By the glorious wonder of the radio waves, Melvis and his motley crew routinely send reports back to his fellow comrades of the

deep. The Darkest Trench is looking to find the easiest way from their home of crushing depths up into shallower waters only to take what they need and then head back before they themselves get a horrible case of the bends. Not all its denizens possess the quick adaption of the trisivir, making the band’s mission much more essential. Melvis and his Deep-Water Band were sent topside mostly to find the best locations to invade for this ease of consumption. The denizens of the Darkest Trench have found multiple options for beachheads along the eastern coastline and are exploring possible freshwater opportunities along the Midwest Rt. 66 waterways. The depth of the Great Lakes is currently being explored as an optional outgrowth of their kingdom.

GOALS

The empire of the Darkest Trench is made up of simple folk. With the crushing weight and perpetual darkness comes the ease of existence, a nice meal, a fine mate, the good things that make up life under the sea. The sirens of the empire are only looking for unsuspecting prey that won’t put up too much of a fight and accept their place amongst the food chain as the lesser beings they are.

One option though has been cropping up over and over in Melvis’ mind: if these weak humans are so susceptible to the whims of musical control, why not get the band a “record deal” or even better, possibly get on the radio waves to sing their song of control to placate these low beings right into their gullet.

STORY HOOK

One hot summer Saturday night, a new band rolls into town at the local hot spot “The Crazy Fish.” This rocking concert hall is throwing a good old sock hop. These swinging cats play their new tune “The Sea’s Own,” hoping to get the kids grooving. Guys, gals, and all other lovely folk are cordially invited to swing, twist, and rock the night away.

When a group of unsuspecting teens go missing it is up to your local heroes to try to see where they went. They headed out down the beach with Melvis and his rocking crew, but they haven’t returned. When one friend finds a bloody pair of blue suede shoes, this sultry night might just take a turn for the worst.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 1, Culture 4, Empathy 3, Humanities 3, Larceny 4, Persuasion 2, Science 1, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 3, Resolve 2; Might 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Siren’s Call: Melvis and his fishy friends all sing quite the ditty. Their raucous shows provide an outlet for letting off steam and provides the band an opportunity to sway concert goers to their will with Command or Persuasion while they are



singing. Resisting attempts to follow the band comes with a +2 Complication, if you've listened to a whole song. This ability can also be used to pull away unsuspecting meals away from the crowd.

MR. FROSTY THE QUASIVIR

"There's something strange about that Mr. Frosty! No one is that happy."

— Hazel Gardner, Neighborhood Watch

The ice cream man, known collectively by everyone in the neighborhood as Mr. Frosty, because of the name on the side of his truck, looks about as wholesome as a person could get. Little do they suspect that Mr. Frosty's lower half is sharp-toothed fish, because frankly, why would they?

Frosty is an aquatic being from the Darkest Trench, known as a quasivir, related to Melvis and his trisivirs. As well as being highly intelligent, they have developed the ability to use their lure; an appendage meant to entice prey, as an advanced human-like decoy. Quasivir scouts often take to the land in trucks, like Mr. Frosty's, to better blend in and gather information for those who hire them. Their lures provide an excellent means of obtaining information and their human shells allow them to perform some basic tasks and carry on limited conversation. They can pass reasonably well among other humans — as long as no one catches a glimpse below the ice cream man's navel.

While they're still learning the depths of mundanity human conversation sinks to quasivirs can communicate in a variety of different languages, both aquatic and Earthling. Quasivir spies have been known to work with other aquatic aliens in plans for world domination. Rumors continue to circulate that these horrific creatures have also sold information to human government agencies.

With all this said, why an ice cream man? Mr. Frosty is the ringleader of the quasivir Spies, and it was his initiative that saw these fish people take on roles in moving land-bases, such as ice cream vans, milk-floats, and garbage trucks, to ask questions, spy, and befriend humanity. Nobody suspects the ice cream man of asking children what their parents do for a living, and then planting bugs on wafer cones to listen to government officials discuss confidential information over dessert.

Mr. Frosty coordinates the other landside quasivirs, and at this time has the only amphibious ice cream van on the road. The good news for him, is children are rarely believed when they tell adults about the van that quite happily dove off a pier and into the sea.

GOALS

Quasivirs act as spies for other underwater civilizations, selling information to any number of creatures who wish to harm humanity. They have also developed a taste for human flesh and are content with snagging loose drunks, or lone children now and again. Spies like Mr. Frosty can work as main antagonists or act as a part of a side quest that can lead characters to uncover further mysteries.

STORY HOOK

While the other kids flocked to the Mr. Frosty truck in droves, Edmund was terrified of the handsome man with the vacant eyes and wide grin. He had read in his science book about creatures in



nature that could disguise themselves to fit in. And there was something about "Mr. Frosty" that reminded him of a spider. Yep, Mr. Frosty was a creep and Edmund was going to find out exactly what he was hiding.

That evening, shortly after Mr. Frosty served his last rocket-pop, Edmund hopped aboard his silver Schwinn bicycle and followed the calliope jangling of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" that always heralded the ice cream truck until it reached a remote corner of the docks. Edmund almost fell asleep waiting for something to happen, but when he finally saw it, he knew he might never sleep again. The giant, slimy anglerfish emerged from the truck like a crab shucking off its shell, the lifeless puppet of Mr. Frosty hanging from the creature's forehead. He knew he had to tell someone about this, but who would believe him?

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 1, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Culture 1, Empathy 1, Enigmas 2, Integrity 2, Larceny 4, Persuasion 4, Science 1, Survival 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 2; Might 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Sock Puppet: Mr. Frosty and his fellow quasivirs wear effective disguises (from the waist up). Players must roll Empathy + Cunning (Difficulty 3) to determine whether *this* ice cream man is in fact a fish.

Strawberry Sauce: Each quasivir uses a lure, in much the same way as an anglerfish does for their prey, to have its victims return to it again and again. Mr. Frosty uses strawberry sauce on his ice creams. Upon consuming the sauce, a character must succeed on an Integrity + Stamina roll to avoid returning to the truck the following day, where they might fall subject to the quasivir's recording bugs or his hunger.

If you don't eat your meat, you can't have any pudding: The quasivir's preferred means of attack is to draw a victim into a confined space, where it shucks off its human suit and its true mouth (around where the human's feet would be) lunges to snuffle and drag the prey between its teeth. Quasivirs need to successfully grapple opponents for this bite to occur. A successful bite from Mr. Frosty inflicts an entire Injury level of damage.

PROJECT NEPTUNE

"I enlisted to serve my country in any way that I was asked. But I never signed up to become a monster!"

— Pvt. Jim Wilkins – U.S. Army

When the aquatic creatures started making landfall, the military was among the first to take notice. Not wishing to be caught unaware, they immediately established a science division meant to study these creatures. This contingent of scientists riled by moral questions regarding these creatures split from the government and created their own paramilitary force known as F.I.S.H.

At the same time, the U.S. Navy was hard at work using alien DNA to create a series of super-soldiers to fight the aquatic menace. This top-secret project became known as Project Neptune, an elite group of genetically modified soldiers. The soldiers were to have all of the strengths of the invading species and none of their weaknesses. Unfortunately, the surviving soldiers mutated into aquatic chimera, discovering the hard way what they had signed up for. Some now have crab claws where their hands should be, squid tentacles jutting from their backs. Others have deformities not so easily concealed. After a tragic fire, Project Neptune and its monstrous progeny were covered up. U.S. agents are currently hunting the soldiers who escaped the military base in hopes that the government can forget the last remaining vestiges of these monstrous soldiers.

The Neptune soldiers, however, will never forget and continue to spy from the shadows to evade capture and hopefully find a cure for their condition.

GOALS

The outcasts from Project Neptune were meant for "liquidation" so that the American public would never know the lengths to which the government had gone to stave off the alien menace. These former soldiers now hunt the scientists who performed these experiments on them. For some, they hope for a cure, for others, simple revenge.

STORY HOOK

Mary Ellen had worked for the library for just six months and had become particularly fond of Mike. He came in to read and perform puppet shows for the kids. He was

handsome, kind, and charming. The only weird thing was, she never saw him without puppets on his hands. Mike always told her that it was for the sake of the children that he didn't want to "ruin the magic."

Though the two had chatted several times, she grew to realize that Mike didn't regularly volunteer solely to entertain children. This particular realization came one morning when she watched him cut a puppet show short when that old German professor entered the library looking for a quiet place to do his research. Mike looked like he'd seen a ghost and immediately followed the old man to one of the reading rooms. When Mary Ellen went to check on the two men, she screamed when she saw what Mike had been hiding. Mike held Professor Zurberer by the lapels by two large crab pincers where his hands should have been. "Mary Ellen! Don't look!" was the last thing she heard him say before she fainted.

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 4, Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Command 3, Culture 2, Empathy 2, Integrity 3, Larceny 3, Persuasion 4, Science 1, Survival 4



Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 4; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Brothers in Arms: Project Neptune soldiers may feel like monsters, but they are still highly trained government personnel. Because of this, Project Neptune soldiers are well matched when it comes to facing government agents or members of the U.S. Military. When Neptune soldiers face G-men, those player characters suffer a +1 Complication to all rolls, as the Neptune soldiers anticipate every move.

A Hand Up: All Project Neptune soldiers suffer from alterations to their bodies. These alterations have unfortunately resulted in monstrous appendages, some more easily concealed than others. If the appendages can be easily concealed under a large coat, under a hat, or inside an oven mitt or puppet, player characters gain a +1 Enhancement to detect the Project Neptune soldier as something other than human, while more egregious appendages grant anyone attempting to see through the ruse a +2 Enhancement.

Salt in my Veins: All Project Neptune soldiers contain sea creature DNA and thusly have no trouble swimming or fighting in water. All Project Neptune soldiers receive a +2 Enhancement to any action taken in water.

THE RED CORAL SOCIETY

“Those things came out of nowhere! They just swooped down and grabbed the young person, too bad for them, I knew there were aliens! Gee golly!”

— ACB Nightly News Report Interview with Ted Phillips, veteran and local drifter

From high atop skyscrapers and gargoyle embossed cathedrals the members of the Red Coral Society wait for the proper moment to initiate their attacks. The notion of “death from above” is not commonly associated with a threat from the briny deep. This is what makes the members of the Red Coral Society so incredibly dangerous. These fish operate an ocean-wide elite hit team specializing in extraction and infiltration. Privateers and mercenaries to the oceans’ various empires, kingdoms, and communities, this crew’s services come at a pretty penny, but they are well worth their salt. They specialize in procuring lost items and human beings that need “liberation.”

The Red Coral Society excels in this trade due to their peculiar ability to fly, a gift endowed to them by their thick membranes, which connect their appendages together and cover multiple parts of their body. Much like a beta fish, these flowing creatures train their entire lives to become one of the elites. The Society only takes the best and brightest within their ranks, protecting the lesser members of their kind and pushing them on to become great. Many of their kind die within the training, but such is their way. Combat is celebrated and part of the Society’s culture. Their physiology provides the strike team the ability to catch costal winds and soar high above naive citizens, eventually nesting amongst city skylines to gather knowledge about their targets and eventually bombard humans with their spiny weapons of war.



Their ability to mimic any solid organic matter is among the deadliest of their maneuvers. A closely guarded secret, the dedicant is injected with a strange concoction upon members initiation within the organization, overtaking and growing into the body of the newly minted Red Coral’s body. This horrific and incredibly painful transformation is the final test to becoming part of the team. It changes the genetic material of the individuals’ body creating the camouflages they are so known for. The scales can within the matter of minutes take on a range of colors, patterns, and textures, becoming the perfect cover for the individual in question and provide a protective layer akin to Kevlar cloth perfect for deflecting advanced attacks. The only drawbacks of the webbing are that its cumbersome flowing nature slows down the members, as it must be ceremonially wrapped and tucked to be efficient. The scales, when not in use, slowly excrete an ink used as lubrication for the members and is colored a dark red. Members of the Red Coral Society prefer places of worship or other older style buildings as it is easier to blend in within the more archaic structures.

The Society then gathers up the material they have extracted or eradicated and brings the bounty back to the contract holder in turn for their previously bartered price.

GOALS

The Society of the Red Coral work contract to contract and their abilities are sought after across the ocean floor. They have been exploring opportunities to swear fealty to one of the more prestigious empires, though none have acquiesced to their price of autonomy or have been deemed worthy enough of the noble group. Their fierce need for independence and their “only the strong

survives” ethos tends to grate on other empires. It is only a matter of time until the team find their fit within one of the many undersea kingdoms, even if it is only for a short time to build a means of defense in numbers and a bolstering of resources.

STORY HOOK

A wealthy heir has gone missing and their family is desperate to find them. This beneficiary of a shipping magnate has disappeared without a trace. The only clue our heroes have found so far is some spots of a red liquid across the absconded beneficiaries’ pristine apartment. Does this mean the person in question has been injured or possibly even killed? Or is it evidence of something far more sinister that cannot be easily understood by the naked eye? Can this band of courageous humans find this lost soul or are they bound to be lost forever to the scurvy seas?

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 5, Close Combat 5, Culture 1, Enigmas 4, Integrity 3, Larceny 4, Medicine 3, Survival 3, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 4, Resolve 5; Might 5, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 14

SPECIAL RULES

Soak: When attacked any member of the Red Coral Society gains a +2 Enhancement to all close combat rolls.

Soar: With a flick of their webbed appendages members of the Red Coral Society can catch the night winds and soar high into the cities they generally enjoy attacking. Once on the wind they can easily glide up onto a building and use their superior eyesight to watch their mark.

Sneak: Easily observing and manipulating their scales to change with their surroundings, the members of the Society can change the scales they use as protection into a perfect replica of the material they are currently residing in. Though up close it is obvious that is it just an enemy that has taken on the qualities of the neighboring environment. Characters suffer a +2 Complication when attempting to hit a member of the Red Coral Society at range.

RIVERS

“Why hello ma’am, are you or your home in need of some cleaning services? Where are my manners, dear? I do apologize, my name is Mrs. River and I am the leader of this here cleaning service.”

— Mrs. Renee River, Owner of the Rivers Cleaning Service

Few are more deadly and powerful as the water-born race of monsters known only as the Rivers. These dreaded imposters enter a town and slowly annihilate the populace by using a combination of plague and sabotage. What little is known of them is that they

can shift to the form most advantageous for their infiltration, masquerading as helping citizens new to town. They feel that humanity is stealing the essence of the seas, pilfering its most sacred of items: water. They insinuate that they are looking for a good partner, wishing only to assist and solidify any cracks in the local social services, usually within the government, personal businesses, or essential infrastructure, and are just trying to “break this bad luck streak.” They often use this excuse as a social cue for any weird occurrences that preemptively occur around them before their endgame.

Rivers tend to look much like attractive humans with deeply colored eyes the hue of a stormy sea. Upon closer inspection a River has silvery gills above their collar bones and a row of small dorsal fins down the length of their spine. They also have nictitating membranes that cover their eyes when hunting or when they are under attack. Thankfully Rivers are incredibly rare, being highly selective of their own mates who they spawn with for the entirety of their existence. The gestation period for a River is over 18 months, much like their cousins the great white shark.

Maximizing their exposure to the populace is key to a River. Their presence is a storm of disease and pestilence, creating an unknown illness akin to the stomach flu, or in stronger strains of the species, tuberculosis or pneumonia. They follow their own personal playbook to the letter during this time, driving their assistance ever deeper into the community to extract more information and propagate further destruction within the chaos. Under the pretense of assistance, a River will attempt to get into any desalination plants or water purifying machinery as well. Using their own disease-ridden bodies, they infect and attack any machinery essential to maintaining a clean source of water to the townsfolk.



Once completely infecting a location with their personal plague, the River then observes and records the collapse of the society. It is often mused that a River will do this out of the joy it causes them. Rivers find the chaos they create as “fun,” much like how porpoises will play with their food before gulping it down.

Once their task is complete, the River exalts in the deafening silence it has created before becoming bored, either returning to the ocean or traveling onto the next location they perceive is ripe for aquatic justice.

GOALS

The destruction of humanity is the only goal a River has, but to achieve that, these Spies must seamlessly blend in with the humans they despise. Humans are nothing more than parasites looking to control and subjugate the people of the sea. Therefore, they must be stopped at all costs. Rivers see themselves as scions to the earth and her waters, the true people destined to rule over the seven seas after human’s pitiful existence comes to a swift and merciless end.

STORY HOOK

When a hospital becomes overrun with a new disease, a group of doctors and nurses are desperate to find a cure. Looking throughout their town they come to realize that all this drama only began when a new teacher came into town. A bright and caring fellow, he couldn’t possibly be the culprit, could he? When a beloved town elder passes away from the illness and the teacher only known as Mr. River seems to be poking into places he shouldn’t, the health care providers begin to suspect the ever so helpful educator is up to no good.

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 2, Close Combat 2, Command 2, Culture 2, Enigmas 2, Humanities 2, Integrity 2, Larceny 4, Medicine 5, Persuasion 4, Science 3, Technology 1

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 3, Resolve 4; Might 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 15

SPECIAL RULES

Dismantle and Disseminate: A River craves the silence that comes with a decimated human colony. They have learned to take apart human built machinery with ease. Any machine destroyed by a River can only be repaired by suffering a +2 Complication, due to the Rivers’ thoroughly destructive nature.

I Am: Rivers walk and talk much like any other humans with whom they unfortunately cross paths. They can procure what mannerisms are needed to properly infiltrate a community including knowledge of gossip and local folklore only known to lifelong citizens of an area to better connect to their victims. Catching a River out in their subterfuge requires a successful Enigmas + Manipulation roll (Difficulty 3) as they’re incredibly good actors.

Typhoid Mary: Rivers contaminate the waters in their surrounding areas with an illness like a stomach flu

in symptoms, but alarmingly lethal in nature. To resist the disease, anyone who drinks the water must roll Survival + Stamina (Difficulty 2). Infection removes one Injury level per day (or scene, depending on what’s more dramatically appropriate), unless stabilized with a Medicine + Intellect roll (Difficulty 2). Once the River is killed or driven off, the infection disappears. Individuals who drink the water and don’t succumb build an immediate immunity.

SWAMP RIDERS

“Its skin was falling apart, like something out of a movie. It looked like the bottom hull of my great uncle’s fishing boat too, barnacles and the like all over it and smelled like 25 miles of low tide.”

— Angela Connors, Louisiana Sewage Plant Director

There are spies of the deep that are highly specialized in their skills and prove quite the match for their enemies. There are even those who could take over towns and ravage whole communities, or those who infiltrate and consume the flesh of others to survive, using the whims of human emotions to their benefit. Then there are the swamp riders. These lowly creatures take anything and everything they can from humanity and desperately try to use it to their benefit. Incredible survivors and jittery maniacs make up this species of spies, stealing and conniving their way on land and into the nightmares of innocent bystanders.

Appallingly nimble and quick to agitation, these monsters are more shock troop than spy, but their desire to explore makes them a valuable tool when used within the right situation. Pride and disgust are not emotions that swamp riders possess, marking them as intriguing tools in the battle against humanity. Covered in barnacles and seaweed, the swamp riders have a symbiotic relationship



with these creatures. When on land, the swamp riders' scaly skins blister and crack, causing their wounds to smell of infection and ooze pus. Their immune systems are bolstered by their symbiotic relationship, the sea organics on their hides making them sturdy enough to ward off death from these injuries, and driving them to do their missions efficiently and mercilessly. Other aquatic critters survive off the refuse and seaweed that abundantly grows on the swamp riders, and in turn they help spy and reclaim small items for the beasts.

Acquiescing to work for anyone who can stand to be in their presence, these beasts work best in coastal cities with less fortunate, ignored human populations. They penetrate cities and towns' lower reaches via sewer systems and access tunnels, mastering the forgotten and overlooked places of society. From water reclamation plants to seaside wharfs, these lowly beings search and destroy anything in their way of their goal. While not the most delicate of resources, what they lack in tactical performance they make up in sheer horror, using their grotesque appearances to strongarm information out of people and smash and grab anything they crave. These attacks are generally chalked up to local folk that may be deemed undesirable or unsettling. Drifters, hobos, and anyone down on their luck commonly, and unfairly, end up blamed for swamp rider assaults.

Swamp riders are known to skulk in waiting for weeks for the perfect moment to pounce upon their quarry. Often using water run-off drains and sewer manhole covers as entrances to the world above, their spindly like bodies easily slide through tight spaces and what they cannot fit through they easily dismantle with the acidic mucus they exclude through their porous membranes.

GOALS

The swamp riders' goal is one of continued survival, and acquisition of any item or goal they covet or have orders to collect. Nothing will stand in their way once they fixate on a person or object they want. They often obsess over the objects of their desire and stalk or hunt down their quest for an indefinite amount of time.

STORY HOOK

Travelers have been moving through the sleepy town of Sundale, Louisiana, and the citizens there are on edge. A string of robberies marked with swamp gunk has rocked the tiny town and the police and press have been searching for the culprits for the past week. When a famed painting goes missing from the mayoral estate it is up to the local law enforcement to bring to heel the assailants. When people go missing a week later, the smell of rot left in their wake, these gumshoes believe there could be a connection.

SYSTEM

Skills: Athletics 5, Close Combat 3, Command 1, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Humanities 1, Integrity 1, Larceny 5, Persuasion 3, Science 3

Attributes: Intellect 1, Cunning 5, Resolve 5; Might 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Health: 9

SPECIAL RULES

Little Friends: Swamp riders have a symbiotic relationship with animals inhabiting their bodies to observe and record the behaviors of humans surrounding them. Swamp riders gain a +2 Enhancement on all Empathy and Larceny rolls unless their small friends have been blasted off.

Burning Tide: A swamp riders exudes a noxious liquid incredibly corrosive to any person who encounters it. Player characters must succeed on an Athletics + Dexterity roll to avoid the tide, or receive burning mucus in their eyes that deals 1 damage and the Blinded Condition for the remainder of the scene.

Gnashing Mandibles: Swamp rider mandibles are terribly sharp and grinding, dealing two Injuries any time they successfully attack someone at close range.

THERMIDS

"We care not for the pleas of men. Your lives are ash and your world is cinder."

— Supreme Commander VI'Tlk

Thermids are a race of lava creatures that have laid dormant under the ocean for centuries. Tectonic shifts in the Earth's crust have awoken this race of walking magma-men. Thermids are eight feet tall with broad shoulders, a muscular trunk standing on thick legs and long primate-like arms. Their entire bodies look like cracked and continuously flowing lava. Thermid society is a war-like theocracy hinging on the belief that they have been awakened to raise and rule a new supercontinent called "Volcana," a land of fire stretching westward from the underground volcanoes of Wyoming to the middle of the Pacific Ocean. These creatures believe that Earth was once a single continent inhabited by thermids and an amphibious race they called AH-land-TOYS. The legend says that after a great war, the continent cracked and the thermids were doomed to slumber under the ocean until their time came again.

Thermids can cool their skin to form an outer shell, which makes them look not unlike a statue. Thermid spies have been using this technique over the past few years to infiltrate human cities disguised as public art, topographical abnormalities, and architectural elements. Several of these new art "installations" have been spotted near the United Nations building in New York as well as near the underground nuclear missile silos in Deer Trail, Colorado, causing many in the military to wonder if this is a communist plot or some subversive art collective with a bad sense of humor. In their cooled state, the thermids can communicate with one another through seismic vibrations, letting one another know the lay of the land and additional pertinent information. While this seismic language can be recorded by humans using scientific equipment, at first glance, it appears to be just irregular rumbles underneath the Earth's surface. By the time experts decipher these communications, it may be too late for humanity.

GOALS

Thermids wish to open the chasms in the oceans and on land ever wider so that lava flows below the sea recreate their mythical supercontinent. Some thermid spies have heard of human weapons capable of opening the oceanic chasms. Others are hoping to



awaken a godlike Primordial that will help the Thermids detonate volcanoes around the globe.

Thermid spies place themselves near military bases and weapon installations in order to gain information that can then be passed onto Thermid invaders to herald the forthcoming "Fire Age" told in their ancient myths. For some reason they despise the Red Coral Society, perhaps because both monsters attempt to emulate statues.

STORY HOOK

Nobody knows where the mysterious statues came from, but overnight they seem to have sprung up all over town! The Mayor of Nautilus Cove has been on the phone all morning trying to figure out if it's a part of some public arts initiative like with the WPA or some prank. Why do they all look the same, and are they smiling?

SYSTEM

Skills: Aim 3, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Command 2, Empathy 1, Integrity 2, Larceny 2, Persuasion 2, Science 1, Survival 4

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Health: 14

SPECIAL RULES

Hard Like Rock: Thermids are insanely strong and since they are made up entirely of lava, they cannot be dispatched by normal means. They are each Scale 2 threats.

Hot Potato: If a thermid attempts to touch a character they must make an Athletics + Dexterity roll (Difficulty 2) to move out of the way or risk suffering a Continuous (round) 3 damage. If they intend to escape the thermid's presence after suffering damage, the player must roll Athletics + Dexterity at a penalty of 1, or take Continuous (round) 2 damage until they are successful or dead.

Water Way to Go: If thermids are hit with a sustained water source like a firehose or water cannon they become Paralyzed. The thermid rolls Survival + Stamina (Difficulty 3) to reheat itself on each subsequent turn, and when successful, the paralysis ends. After three rounds of remaining paralyzed, the thermid becomes a permanent statue.



TERROR OF THE TINS

Ed Tellson shunted the two cars back along the siding, then stepped out on the catwalk of his road switcher, hopped off the end steps, and strolled over to throw the track switch. He knew the fast passenger train that was coming would not want to get caught behind his slow-moving switcher.

He had a few minutes so he let the big diesel engine idle while he had a smoke. The box cars he found left behind by a big freight in a hurry. He had to get them down coast to the busy port where they'd no doubt be loaded aboard ship. He didn't mind. It was nice to be out of the yard for a change; a break from switching, which the middle-aged African-American had been doing most of his long career.

He wandered away from the oppressive hum of idling diesel and was beside the first boxcar when he realized he might want to know the contents before he kept smoking. He flicked the butt away just to be sure. The boxes were unmarked, so it was anybody's guess.

He checked his watch. Still a couple minutes.

Tellson started. He thought heard something. A voice.

It was a rural area: dirt roads, fields, trees, shack or two. Not much there.

He heard it again. He was leaning against the boxcar and he turned now. It sounded like it came from inside.

. . .

The yard man slid open the big door, spilling light into the darkness. Tellson's eyes adjusted. Big metal containers bounced back the light from outside. They were lined up, several rows deep, each about eight feet high by 12 feet long, maybe a couple feet thick. They were unmarked. There was no sign of any freight hopper.

"Help... Help..."

He heard it for sure that time. Muffled, weak, but quite real.

It was coming from a container.

. . .

Tellson pressed his ear against the shiny metal. He heard it again. Inside.

"What-what are you doing in there?" He couldn't believe he was asking this.

"Thank heavens. Someone hears me." The voice sounded relieved. "Please ... get us out."

"Us?" The yardman was bewildered. Freight didn't ask to be let out.

Quickly, he started looking for a seam, an opening in the big metal case. He found none.

"I don't know - I don't know how to open this."

A roar startled him.

The passenger train rocketed by, trying to make up time.

Tellson spent a few more minutes trying to open the damn thing. If he waited longer, he'd run into northbound traffic.

"Look, man. I'm going to get you where I'm going and get help. You hang on. Okay? Hang on."

There was no answer, which Tellson hoped wasn't a bad thing.

...

Back in the cab, the yard veteran had the road switcher off the siding and back on the mainline. He opened her up, throttling down the road faster than he ever had. He wondered how there was even air in that damn container.

It was almost an hour before rural became industrial and his track joined a network of others converging on the busy port. Soon, the abundance of cranes cutting the sky heralded the shipyard, and before long he was on a siding.

...

Tellson hopped down and rushed to the first boxcar, this time flashlight in hand. He threw open the door with a rumble and hopped inside. He scanned the big container, still finding nothing in the way of a door. He looked up.

The yardman jumped, grabbing the upper lip of the thing, struggling to hold on, as he scanned with the flashlight. Then, he spotted something down at one end that he'd missed from below: a large metal loop of some sort.

Tellson shimmied along until he could examine the big ring. On a hunch, he dropped the flashlight and grabbed the thing with both hands. With strength built from years of rail work, he strained with all his might. When he felt it shift, he tried harder.

The ring turned, slowly. As Tellson worked it, it rolled along the front of the container, like a massive zipper, peeling the thing open. He stayed with it, curling the big metal sheet into a tight roll until the case was completely opened. He let go, dropping exhausted to the boxcar floor.

He couldn't believe his eyes. A dozen people, lined up, jammed in there like...

"Thank you! Thank you!" choked a weak, but grateful man.

"What's going on? Who put you in here?"

"I'm afraid we did," purred a feminine but queasily strange voice.

Tellson turned to see a slender woman accompanied by two equally slender men. He had not heard them enter the car. Each carried a small wand.

"Sardinites!" coughed the weakened prisoner.

"I see you've found the key so to speak, Mr. Tellson. How unfortunate for you."

"How do you know my name?"

"We Sardinites are telepathic of course. We shall have to reseal this tin. I'm afraid there's no room for you, however, so we must find an alternate disposal. What a pity you'll not enjoy our underwater cities."

As she spoke, Tellson noticed something odd, unreal, about her. Before she could raise the wand, he shot out with lightning speed and tore away her human disguise, revealing a very narrow and hideous fish being: the Sardinite in true form.

She, or it, screamed in blood-curdling outrage, dropping the wand. Before her two cohorts could react, Tellson whipped her torn disguise at them, snatched up the wand and instinctively pointed it. A small bolt of electricity snapped at one of the Sardinites, knocking him against a wall, as the freed people from the tin, having recovered their senses, rushed the remaining creatures.

...

"The strange oil they packed us in kept us in a stupefied state, easy for transporting to their underwater hellholes," explained one of the rescued.

"Come on," uttered Tellson, brandishing the wand. "There's a lot of other boxcars."

CHAPTER SIX

TERRESTRIAL

THREATS

"How do men have souls?"

"If I could answer that, I'd be more than human."

- Allan Kelley to Carol Kelley, *The Beast with a Million Eyes* (1955)

These treacherous cowards are the lowest of the low. To accept alien invasion is one thing; to collaborate with the enemy quite another. Many of these groups sponsor aliens, serve them willingly, or worship beasts from beneath the seas. Yet, despite the pain of betrayal, it is far harder to eliminate these double-dealing humans than it would be a werelobster. Ethically speaking, rather than physically — most humans are squishy and burst under slight pressure.

Human foes are considered Spies (see **TCfBtS!**, p. 202) for the purposes of their preferred foe. While some seek the destruction of our planet, most work with aquatic monsters for more mercenary aims.

B.A.K.E.

"Dr. Arthur Rideout and his cronies at F.I.S.H. would have you believe that we must pursue non-violent ends to help our aquatic overlords. In fact, it is only through violence that the Earth will go back to the way it is meant to be! Wet!"

— Dr. Samuel Delamere-Leng, fish sympathizer

After the creation of F.I.S.H. — the Federation of Intelligent Sealife and Humans (**TCfBtS!**, p. 211) — and the release of its manifesto to the world, there was a falling out between the members of the organization. The creator of F.I.S.H., Dr. Arthur Rideout, preached that nonviolent solutions must always be favored when trying to bring about the rights of their aquatic neighbors. Even if those neighbors were inclined to use heat beam weapons and murder people, F.I.S.H. believed they must stay strong in their nonviolent convictions whenever possible, so they could retain the moral high ground.

Which is exactly what a bunch of scientists sitting in an ivory tower would say, at least according to the dissidents. Many members

of F.I.S.H. were fanatical to the cause, but not to the tactics. They believed that trying to stay nonviolent in a world recovering from a second World War and teetering on the precipice of nuclear annihilation was idealistic nonsense, something that would never work in the real world. Even the selfsame intelligent creatures that F.I.S.H. sought to protect understood the value of well-placed violent acts — they



certainly didn't shy away from the occasional weapon of mass destruction. The rebels within F.I.S.H. believed that only through strength and weaponry could the ideals of the organization be realized, and they started to meet in secret to discuss their concerns.

The center of this dispute was Dr. Samuel Delamere-Leng. He and his wife, Meredith, joined the FISHSTICK project that eventually became F.I.S.H., but while Meredith believed wholeheartedly in Dr. Rideout's nonviolent message, Samuel's experience in the Korean War convinced him that violence was the only meaningful way to enact large, global change. The domestic conflicts grew as FISHSTICK evolved into F.I.S.H., until eventually Meredith confessed to having an affair with Dr. Rideout. Samuel served his wife divorce papers and left F.I.S.H. to form his own organization: B.A.K.E., the Bureau for the Aquatic Kontrol of Earth.

Samuel used his former contacts in the U.S. military to equip his growing army. Many refused, considering him nothing more than a dangerous lunatic, but a few saw the truth of his vision. His converts sent him vital equipment and material, with a couple actually leaving military service to join up with him. He used this initial "investment" of weapons and manpower to launch attacks on F.I.S.H. shipments and bases, taking their weapons and laboratories for his own use, including kidnapping key scientists from F.I.S.H. to fuel his weapon research. At this point, F.I.S.H. considers him a nuisance, but steadfastly refuses to engage in the provocation, continuing to only use violence for protection and as a last result. For the past few months, there has been an ongoing cycle of B.A.K.E. attacking F.I.S.H. and F.I.S.H. simply reallocating their resources somewhere else.

At some point, Dr. Delamere-Leng will get around to taking control of the world in order to protect it for all intelligent aquatic life. But for the moment, he is completely focused on the utter eradication of F.I.S.H.

GOALS

B.A.K.E. allegedly has the goal of bringing about a resolution between humanity and the invaders by making sure the invaders have overwhelming military might. Dr. Delamere-Leng claims that only when all the world understands they have no options in the matter, then the invaders will be on equal ground and can start a sincere effort at negotiations for peace.

But in truth, Samuel is obsessed with F.I.S.H. While he claims they're simply a rival organization that needs to be removed, in truth his tactics against them are irrationally aggressive. He keeps taking louder and more violent actions against his former organization, often to the detriment of the very peace he claims to be trying to bring about. Some close to him mutter that he won't stop until his ex-wife and Dr. Rideout are both dead. And maybe not even then.

STORY HOOK

During a story in which F.I.S.H. features as an antagonist faction, or even as a background player in an ongoing series, B.A.K.E. suddenly attacks! But once the people of F.I.S.H. are eradicated, it's clear that this new faction isn't interested in protecting humanity for the aquatic menace, but rather wants to help them with even more violent actions. This can lead to unusual circumstances, such as the player characters teaming up with F.I.S.H. soldiers and scientists to deal with the more serious and immediate threat, before getting back to the original concern of them collaborating with creatures that want to kill all of humanity.

SYSTEM

B.A.K.E. comprises both military personnel and scientists.

B.A.K.E. 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

B.A.K.E. 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; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Health: 5

B.A.K.E. has access to vehicles, weapons, and equipment typical for a small paramilitary unit. In addition, they possess some specialized scientific equipment consistent with their collective expertise, which is largely for analysis and the creation of new weapons. When they don't get their supplies by stealing directly from F.I.S.H., they occasionally replenish through both military supply depots and civilian retail establishments — sometimes through purchase or generous "donations," but often through outright theft.

THE RED DEATH

"Do svidaniya."

— The Red Death, before he kills another capitalist swine

When Stalin was possessed by brain-eater eels (**TCfBtS!**, p. 147), he was not alone. Some of his strongest and most dedicated bodyguards were similarly possessed by the creatures. But one not only lasted, but thrived after his death. Somehow, he became even deadlier and more aggressive under the brain eel infestation. The KGB, recognizing the unnamed man's accomplishments, quickly converted him into an agent, making him one of their top assassins. Given the code-name "The Red Death," he was able to kill a large number of Stalin's detractors, cementing the dictator's role and keeping his secret safe. Now that Stalin is secure in Russia, the Red Death has been sent to the capitalist West, in order to find any others who would threaten Stalin's plans — or the plans of the brain eels.

GOALS

The Red Death only has whatever goals his masters give him. As a mobile corpse, he doesn't have many wants or wishes of his own. Sometimes he is given orders by his Russian masters in the KGB. Sometimes Stalin contacts him directly with his own inscrutable plans. And once in a while, the brain eel in his head decides it has its own agenda. In the end, the Red Death only cares about one thing — the next kill.

STORY HOOK

A number of high-profile assassinations of U.S. government officials have occurred all over America. More than once, police or Secret Service agents report shooting the assassin, a large man with a thick Russian accent. He falls dead at the scene, his body is taken into custody, only to find the corpse missing the next day and another dead politician on their hands in a different city. Who benefits from the destabilization of the U.S. government? Is it the reds, the aliens, or something even more insidious? And how to do you stop someone who cannot die?

SYSTEM

The Red Death is a relentless, powerful killing machine in the guise of a man.

Skills: Aim 5, Athletics 5, Close Combat 5, Integrity 5, Science 5, Survival 5, Technology 5

Attributes: Intellect 5, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Might 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 5

Health: 7

SPECIAL RULES

Undead: If the Red Death is Taken Out, he immediately dies. For all intents and purposes, he is completely dead. If his head is not destroyed, however (the home of the brain eel), he comes back to life within 24 hours. Even if he is dismembered, he can reattach or regrow lost limbs and body parts and continue his spree of terror.

Trained to Kill: On any roll to attack or kill someone, the Red Death gets +3 Enhancement, even if he has no weaponry on hand. The Enhancement given for equipment increases to +3 in his hands. (Total Enhancement never goes above +3, however — he only uses equipment

for specific narrative reasons, such as needing a gun to kill someone at range or a sword to cut someone open.)

REVEREND AQUARIUS

“Why do you have to be so harsh? Just, like, be groovy, tune into the waves, and drop out of reality. Don’t you want to float on the ocean of the universe? Otherwise I’ll have to, like, kill you. And that would harsh my buzz.”

— Rev. Aquarius, attempting to gain a recruit to his cause

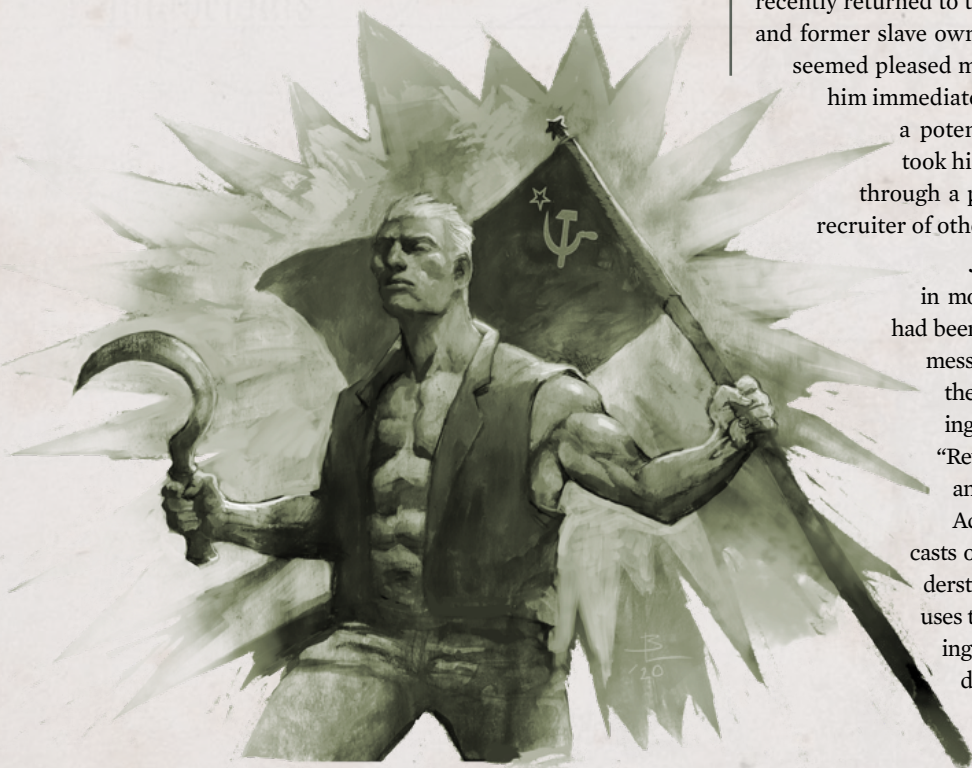
With the rise of the beatniks and hippies, many Americans became concerned that these counter-culture rebels would orchestrate the overthrow of their entire way of life. Particularly as they explored their bastardized version of Eastern philosophy, the so-called “Age of Aquarius” that would bring about a new age of love and harmony ... by any means necessary. Nearly all beatniks and hippies, however, are more interested in their own personal enlightenment or the progression of issues of social justice, rather than the militant overthrow of the United States.

And then there’s Reverend Aquarius.

Jacob Fletcher was born in Cleveland, Ohio, a boring child to boring parents with boring jobs. Jacob wanted something exciting, and dreamed of becoming a sailor, like Captain Nemo or Horatio Hornblower. But he lived nowhere near an ocean, and was frequently found exploring Lake Erie or the Cuyahoga River just for something to do. He became fascinated with the hypnotic effects of the waves, more than once using their gentle rhythm to soothe his soul. He even started to convince himself he saw visions of gods or aliens or alien gods, as his undernourished imagination ran wild.

He wasn’t entirely surprised when gods or aliens or alien gods came out of the lake one night and bestowed upon him a special gift. But he wasn’t expecting them to be so ... frog-like. In truth, Jacob was discovered by an anuradon expedition (**TCFBtS!**, p. 192) recently returned to the surface after learning their hated enemies and former slave owners, the iguanoids, had awoken. The human seemed pleased more than disturbed, so instead of eradicating him immediately, the anuradon leader decided to make him a potentially useful agent for their schemes. They took him back to their underwater base, and put him through a painful conversion procedure to make him a recruiter of other mindless humans.

Jacob came from the experience transformed in more ways than one. He was convinced that he had been taken to an alien spaceship and turned into a messiah by the Great Frog Gods, in order to gather the faithful for the coming Age of Aquarius. Moving from Ohio to California and dubbing himself “Reverend Aquarius,” he used his passion, charm, and implanted hypnotic skills to recruit a cult of Aquarians from the burnouts, pariahs, and outcasts of society. The cult centers around vaguely-understood New Age concepts, which Rev. Aquarius uses to create a completely fictional theology centering around water and waves, along with a healthy dose of sex and drugs. His Aquarians number close to a hundred now, and he’s ready to start the next phase of whatever plan the Great





Frog Gods have in mind. He isn't *entirely* sure what his masters intend to do with the world once they have it, but he's sure it'll be groovy, man.

GOALS

There are several sets of goals in play, which are all slightly connected and slightly at odds. First, Rev. Aquarius has told his flock that the Great Frog Gods want him to gather those who exist on the fringes of society so that when the Age of Aquarius comes, they can rebuild the world the right way, in their image: all the drugs, sex, and food you could want, as long as it's not frog legs.

However, Rev. Aquarius himself doesn't entirely believe this. He believes the Great Frog Gods are angry, patient gods that seek to destroy rather than create. Further, he wasn't given any clear direction on what to do when his own enlightenment came to pass. So, he's making it up as he goes along, gathering his cult of Aquarians as both groupies and revolutionaries. He makes sure to keep them angry at society so they can devote themselves — and likely die — in whatever way his masters deem necessary.

In truth, the anuradons don't care about Aquarius or his cult. They simply want to see what damage this human will do to society, observing the results to see if it's an experiment worth replicating in other parts of the world. The moment Rev. Aquarius becomes a liability, they will have no compunction to liquidate him and his hedonistic followers.

STORY HOOK

The player characters hear of a "sit-in," a passive protest at the local aquarium. The protestors are all counter-culture types, with chants and signs designed to encourage people to free the "enslaved" animals of the aquarium. But in truth the whole protest is a ruse by Rev. Aquarius to locate new members for his cult. He ends up considering one of the player characters as a viable candidate. Do the characters accept, attempting to infiltrate the cult to see if there's some more nefarious direction behind it, or do they try to break up the protest, rousing Rev. Aquarius' anger?

REV. AQUARIUS

Rev. Aquarius is a slightly-enhanced human, but he's not great at combat. He's a lover, not a fighter, man.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Command 5, Culture 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Humanities 2, Integrity 3, Persuasion 5

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 4, Resolve 4; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Hypnosis: Rev. Aquarius has +2 Enhancement on all Command and Persuasion rolls, which increases to +3 with his cultists.

Cultists: Rev. Aquarius has easy access to rabid, fanatical minions, which he calls "Aquarians." If anyone aside from Rev. Aquarius attempts to order them to take an action or change their minds about something, the roll is at +2 difficulty.

AQUARIANS

Skills: Aim 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Culture 1, Enigmas 1, Integrity 2

Attributes: Intellect 2, Cunning 2, Resolve 3; Might 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Health: 5

SQUID RIDER

"Like the bike? Bet you ain't never seen a motorcycle as green as this one. I painted it the same color as my one true love, the Squid that Sees All. And She tells me that you need to die."

— Squid Rider, ready to take out another rival to his affections

Love, as they say, burns like a flame. And no love burns brighter than that of Jimmy Lewis, the self-appointed Squid Rider. His story started simply enough: a lone biker riding the roads of America in search of something worthwhile — a rebel without a clue.

One night, Jimmy spent his last buck on a room at a seaside motel. He crashed in the lumpy bed, took some of the last of his LSD, stared at the ceiling, and wondered what he should do with his life. Just as he was about to doze off, he heard his door open. He swore he had locked it, and he wasn't expecting any visitors, so he pulled the Saturday Night Special from under his pillow, pulled back the hammer, and was ready to fill his intruder full of lead. Instead he found the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. The creature's face was perfect, and her figure was lean with just the right amount of curves rippling under a tight white dress. The fact that her skin was green didn't bother Jimmy at all. Without a word he dropped the gun, the intruder took his hand, and they made love all night long. The next morning, Jimmy's mysterious lover had disappeared.

Over the next week, the same pattern repeated — Jimmy would drive to some remote location, take a tab of acid, and soon his lover would be there. Eventually, Jimmy resisted the siren call and



demanded to know who the mysterious creature was. She revealed her true form, an upright squid with flailing tentacles and piercing black eyes. She called herself the Squid that Sees All. If anything, this was even more beautiful to Jimmy than her human form.

The Squid that Sees All said that, if Jimmy truly loved her, he needed to travel all over America and help those of her kind in need. Jimmy agreed, and the Squid disappeared. Jimmy's supply of LSD disappeared the same night.

Now Jimmy does as commanded. Calling himself the Squid Rider, he arrives in the nick of time to save some alien monstrosity from the savages of humanity, a shining knight on a deep-green motorcycle. To an outsider, Jimmy appears to be a drug-addled maniac, but he is absolutely convinced that he is acting in the best interests of his underwater alien lover. And in this strange world, who's to say he's wrong?

GOALS

The Squid Rider's goal is haphazard, but simple to understand – if he arrives on the scene and it seems like the humans are getting the upper hand against some aquatic invaders, he steps in on the side of the sea monsters and attempt to turn the tide. He is utterly convinced that he is doing the will of the Squid that Sees All. Whether she exists is another matter entirely.

STORY HOOK

As the player characters prepare to perform the final blow against their enemies, a man in a leather jacket and a dark green motorcycle roars onto the scene. He casually pulls out a pistol and starts shooting at the humans, telling the sea monster to run for it! If the combat gets too intense, the strange man drives off again. This is a great device for when the players are having an easy time with an adventure, or if you want to inject a bit of randomness to an otherwise straightforward story. The Squid Rider's motives can be as obvious or as inscrutable as you need them to be.

SYSTEM

The Squid Rider is a normal human, although one on a wide variety of recreational pharmaceuticals.

Skills: Aim 4, Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Command 1, Culture 3, Enigmas 3, Integrity 5, Larceny 5, Medicine 2, Pilot 5, Survival 5, Technology 2

Attributes: Intellect 4, Cunning 5, Resolve 5; Might 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Health: 6

SPECIAL RULES

Doped to the Eyeballs: Any attempts to convince or sway the Squid Rider has a 2 Complication of “On Drugs” – if the Complication is not bought off, the Squid Rider agrees to the suggestion, but he'll think he's actually been commanded to do so by the Squid that Sees All.

Sees All: Whether it's because of some mystical connection to his lover, a strange insight that comes excessive use of psychoactive drugs, or pure dumb luck, the Squid Rider knows just when to arrive and leave a scene. On any rolls to get the drop on someone or to flee a scene (including initiative rolls), he gets +2 Enhancement.

TASKFORCE LIR

“I'm not authorized to give you that information, ma'am. I understand you're upset about these natatory non-citizens, but please leave the neutralization of such entities to the professionals.”

– Agent J-14, rank Epsilon, just doing their job

Officially, sea monsters don't exist. Just ask any law enforcement agency, and they'll happily tell you that what you saw wasn't an alien or a robot, but a weather balloon reflecting the light from Venus. Or they'll just throw you in the drunk tank and tell you to sleep it off. And nearly all the police and government agents you might run into either truly believe that such things are not real, or have personal experience with them instead of any sort of official party line.

But that doesn't mean the U.S. government is *actually* completely unaware of such entities. For years, the CIA and FBI have maintained a variety of wiretapping and eavesdropping programs designed to uncover communist cells within and outside America. A few agents, as a result of such surveillance, have uncovered incidents that cannot be easily explained. These reports were either dismissed by superiors, or quietly buried before they ever went up the chain of command.

One day, CIA operative Janice Long met with a friend of hers, FBI agent Frederick Cohen. Over coffee and then whiskey, the two compared notes, and discovered that there was, in fact, some kind of coordinated effort to overthrow the U.S. government. They were unsure whether the efforts stemmed from behind the Iron Curtain or beyond the stars, but certainly *something* was going on. And it was unlikely that either of them would be able to convince their respective agencies to take action. Not yet.

The two agreed to carefully reach out to other intelligence operatives, and start sharing data to build up a cohesive picture of the invasion. They called themselves “Taskforce Omega,” but the name was actually somewhat tongue-in-cheek, as neither of them had any

authority for an official cross-agency taskforce. Still, Long let Cohen organize the collation of data, while she handled analysis.

Over the course of a year, Long worked after hours from her home, endlessly pouring over badly-typed transcripts, listening to manhandled spools of audio tape, and talking to shady individuals in heavily-coded conversations. And what she discovered disturbed her. Everything she had pointed to three conclusions. First, there absolutely was some kind of invasion happening. Secondly, there was more than one of these aquatic factions, which could result in several different invasions simultaneously. And third, that Cohen was feeding her false information.

By the time she confronted Cohen, it was too late. Cohen was secretly a robot duplicate from the year 3000 (**TCFBtS!**, p. 189). He knew about Taskforce Omega, which in his history was created solely by Long and resulted in the devastation the robots sought to prevent. His task was to subvert her network before it got started. He then sprung his trap, trying to kill Long and completely end Taskforce Omega.

Unfortunately, Cohen did not anticipate Long's paranoia. She was prepared for a double-cross, and survived the elaborate deathtrap. When Cohen believed her dead, she spent weeks working her way close enough to Cohen to destroy him completely. She recovered his records and took over his organization. Rebranding it "Taskforce Lir," after the Irish god of the sea, she began her plans to redirect the organization from within. However, she's only just begun the process, so many of the agents and plans in place still work for in the interests of the invaders.

Lir is organized by a series of disconnected cells, each reporting to central command (which is now run by Long). Agents are given alpha, beta, or epsilon clearance — only epsilon agents are able to contact each other or central command, with beta agents acting as liaisons between alpha and epsilon agents. There are Lir agents all over the world, and because of their decentralized nature, they have a large degree of autonomy. Long plans to slowly "flatten" the structure so she can have direct access to every agent in the network. She knows this drastically increases her exposure to both sea monsters and her own government, but that's a risk

she's willing to take to carefully dismantle the single largest act of treason in U.S. history.

GOALS

The goals of Taskforce Lir are extremely schizophrenic. On a basic level, agents are tasked to locate individuals who have had exposure to aquatic invaders (or, in the taskforce's overly-complicated parlance, "natatory non-citizens"), and assess if they are a threat or a potential ally to the invaders. If the former, they are eliminated, and if the latter, they are recruited. At a higher level, the goal is to find an invading faction that has the best interests of the United States in mind (or at least will damage the USSR the most), and then give that group unfettered access to the whole taskforce's resources.

However, with the quiet changeover in leadership, the group is now working at cross purposes. As reports filter back to Long, she makes sure that strong allies to humanity are brought into the taskforce, while dangerously unstable or treacherous agents are assigned to suicide missions.

STORY HOOK

After the player characters encounter an alien faction (such as the robots from the year 3000), they are confronted by a group of men and women in black. The characters are taken by the agents to be interrogated, and it's soon clear that they will be left in some abandoned area to be devoured by an alien menace. However, as the characters are affecting their escape, a *different* group of agents in black suits arrive and assist them before disappearing into the night. This can be an ongoing story hook, as the characters are confronted by the two factions of agents until they are drawn completely into the Lir civil war.

SYSTEM

All Lir agents have similar statistics. You can adjust some numbers to make different groups distinctive, but as both sides are from the same faction, it's expected that they will be somewhat similar.

Skills: Aim 4, Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Command 3, Enigmas 4, Integrity 4, Larceny 3, Medicine 2, Persuasion 3, Pilot 2, Science 1, Survival 2, Technology 3

Attributes: Intellect 3, Cunning 5, Resolve 5; Might 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Health: 5

SPECIAL RULES

All agents of Lir have special gadgets and equipment to use in their operations. Once per scene, the Director can give an agent a +2 Enhancement on a specific type of roll, as the agent produces a secret tool that helps them in their task. For the rest of the scene, the agent can continue to use that Enhancement on the same or similar rolls, but cannot produce a different gadget in the same scene.

Example: Agent F-9 is shooting at civilian targets, but keeps missing. She puts on her glasses, which contain secret magnifying lenses that improve her Aim. She gets +2 Enhancement to all her Aim rolls for the rest of the scene. If, in that same scene, she got into a fistfight with a squid, she couldn't reach to her bootheel and produce a hidden set of brass knuckles — she's already had one secret gadget that scene.



MONSTERS OF THE DEEP!

Clain Hoake stood on the pier, one foot up on a wooden crate as he lit his pipe and puffed smoke rings into the pink dusk sky. Finally, things were returning to normal. Finally, the war was ending.

The shockwave broke his peaceful tobacco enjoyment, the pipe dropping from his mouth, through a gap in the planks, and with a plop, hit the sea. "Darn, not another one..." As Clain looked up from the pier to the roiling waters, he saw what could only be described as a massive turtle coasting along the crest of a tidal wave, an army of jellyfish balanced precariously on its shell, while a glowing seahorse trumpeted the sea monsters' arrival.

Clain blinked. He was sure that was just tobacco in his pipe, but he couldn't believe his eyes. He and his friends had only just driven back vile werelobsters, predatory shark clans, and communist crab people, and now a new wave of monsters rose up from the deep to flood humanity with their briny aggression!

Monsters of the Deep! is an expansive bestiary for **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, including a variety of new monsters big and small to include in your stories as goons, or to base your plots around as central antagonists.

As with the threats introduced in **They Came from Beneath the Sea!**, the monsters in this book can be played for farce, with the Director emphasizing the rubbery costumes coming apart at the seams, or for horror, with the Director describing in precise detail what the Algae of Doom does to its victims (and it isn't pretty!).

They Came from Beneath the Sea! uses the Storypath System.

MONSTERS OF THE DEEP! INCLUDES:

- Disgusting Destroyers such as Billy Skibbers, the Colossomantids, and the Siliclones!
- Edentulous Enslavers including the Algae of Doom, Poseidon, and the Box Jellies!
- Insidious Invaders including the Sea Dragons, Dire Sea Sponges, and Jelly Men!
- Putrid Primordials such as the Turtledon, the Creeping Coral, and the Gullbatross!
- Spumy Spies not limited to Melvis and the Deep-Water Band, Mr. Frosty, and the Red Coral Society!
- Terrible Terrestrial Threats including the Red Death, Reverend Aquarius, and B.A.K.E.!
- And many, many more...

THEY003

