

ACTION CHECK

ONLINE MAGAZINE

STAR*DRIVE

GAMMA WORLD

DARK • MATTER



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Action Check is an on-line magazine dedicated to the Alternity Science Fiction Role-playing Game.

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Happy Holidays!

Action Check On-Line Magazine is published bimonthly by Jeff Ibach
 Issue #15, November-December 2001

Editorial: Winter Contest !!!

Following up on a suggestion made by one of our subscribers (in AC#14's Reaction Score column), this issue's editorial is being devoted to a contest announcement. For many of us, winter is almost here and that particular season always seems to find its way into the adventures of virtually every roleplaying group at one time or another. There's just something about the sense of loss and danger surrounding winter wonderlands that appeals to the imagination and creativity of most Gamemasters.

So, in honor of Old Man Winter, Action Check would like to put out a call for creature submissions from any of the main Alternity campaign settings (Star*Drive, Dark*Matter, Gamma World, StarCraft, or Tangents) that have a winter theme to them. To qualify for the contest, the creature must possess some connection to winter, ice, cold, etc. It can be a mutant polar bear from Gamma Terra, an ice demon from Dark*Matter's xenofoms, or even a hardy alien from one of the winter worlds of Star*Drive. The choice is yours...

The rest of the ground rules are as follows:

- 1) Your entire submission must be 2,000 words or less. This is to ensure we have enough space to print all of them together.
- 2) The Alternity statistics should also be included. Please follow the format that appears in the *Alien Compendium* (1 or 2), *Xenofoms*, or Gamma World's Chapter 7 on the "Creatures of Gamma Terra." If you don't have access to those accessories, refer to the previous issues of Action Check containing new creature articles. We've done several and you should be able to follow that general format as well. Essentially, providing good ecological and habitat information about your creature will be a definite plus.
- 3) We must receive the submission by February 14th to make the deadline for publication in the next issue of Action Check. Anything received after that date will miss the contest, but we'll publish it in the following issue as a regular submission.
- 4) Your entry should not duplicate any previously existing creature in its particular campaign setting, though a crossover beast from one setting to another is acceptable as long as it comes with a good backstory on how it got there. Still, from a creativity and originality standpoint, these entries are less likely to win the overall contest.
- 5) The creature must be something that could provide an encounter challenge for a group of heroes. This doesn't necessarily mean a combat-oriented beast. Civilized creatures that are more inclined to interact with the heroes will also work out just fine. Ultimately we want each contest submission to provide new material for Alternity Gamemasters to throw at their players' heroes.
- 6) Action Check staff members are not eligible to compete, since we'll be acting as the judges for all submissions that we receive.

That's it. Now that you know the rules, let's discuss the prize. Well... errr, there really isn't a prize, per se, other than the extreme satisfaction of knowing you have been declared the winner and seeing your article appear at the top of the list. We'll also ask our on-call artist to provide a special rendition of your creature, as well as those that placed second and third, using the detailed description in your write-up. Questions about the contest and your final submission may be directed to actioncheck@hotmail.com.

-- Neil Spicer, Action Check Submission Coordinator

Action Check Submissions

To submit an article to Action Check magazine, read and follow the **guidelines** laid out at:

www.alternity.net

And send all submissions (in txt, rtf or doc) to:

actioncheck@hotmail.com

Regular Features:

The Oracle: Ask your Alternity rules questions to our all-knowing Oracle and watch the answers appear!

Transmissions: adventure hooks, along the lines of those previously found in Dragon Magazine for the various campaign settings.

Gridsites: Alternity related Web sites that deserve recognition and serve a specific purpose.

Creature Feature: Aliens, Creatures, Xenofoms, etc. for the Alternity campaign settings.

Futuretech: Gear, equipment, vehicles, weapons, armor and other hardware for the Alternity game.

Supporting Cast: NPC stats for insertion in Alternity games. All submissions must follow the Supporting Cast Template in the Alternity GMG!

Reviews: of Alternity or related-use product.

Special FX: New FX/Psi or mutations.

Plus cartoons, details of campaign ideas, star systems, full adventures, etc.

EDITORIAL



The Reaction Score

Letters from our Readers

Tell us what you think of this issue's articles, or even a previous issue or publication from Action Check. We appreciate any and all feedback. Your comments go a long way toward providing encouragement for our contributors as well as an indication of what the Alternity community looks for in a support publication.

MORE DARK*MATTER

First of all sterling work, AC14 was excellent for me. As a Dark Matter fan the last few issues have been quite light on that front, but this weekend's offerings have more than made up for that! - Darren

We're glad you liked it! We made a special effort to include a bit more Dark*Matter stuff in the Halloween issue (for obvious reasons), and in general, we've tried to encourage our contributors to send us more Dark*Matter material. We've never been opposed to publishing that campaign setting, but for some reason we just don't get very many submissions for it. Keep your eyes opened, though. There's certainly more to come.

GUIDANCE ON REPRINTS AND FUTURE SUBMISSIONS

I am about 60% through scanning 'The Kindness of Strangers' and I was just after a few bits of info from yourself or whoever does the final layouts. What format do you prefer? I have Office 2k so anything within that software is OK for me. What layout do you prefer, single column, 2, 3 or 4 etc.? Or do you wish for me just to send one big lump of text? Pictures, can you use the artwork from Dragon or not? If yes, which format is preferable to you and how much detail do you want: 200, 300, 400 DPI etc.? The file size isn't too much of a problem for me as I have a fast connection but do you have a maximum file size you wish to receive? SCM profiles in the Dragon magazine are in separate boxes to the main text. Do you wish for these to be sent as a picture or converted to text? In short, if there is anything I can do to save your time then I will happily try to help. - Darren

To take your questions in order:

1) Jeff Ibach handles all of the publishing details. He and our editor, Jim Sharkey, both prefer MS Word or rich-text format files. These simply make the editorial and layout procedures go much more smoothly. We can also handle pure text files (.txt), and even the text taken straight out of an email.

2) Jeff uses Microsoft Publisher to handle the layout of each issue of Action Check (including the reprints). He doesn't really need anyone to send stuff to us pre-formatted. It's his job to handle how we want to portray the article. In addition, we often get the assistance of our on-call artist, Dragan Ciric, to include new drawings and artwork to accompany the text anyway. So, your best option on any submission (reprint or otherwise) is to send it in as one big lump of text. Go ahead and include paragraph titles and indents, but aside from that, we'll take it from there.

3) Because many of the artists retain partial rights to the images that appear in Wizards' publications, we're not allowed to duplicate them in a reprint issue. Essentially, we only have the authority to reproduce the text. This does however include any relevant charts, tables, or maps that accompany such articles. We still get to print those. With regards to images in general, though, we can offer some guidance on the sizing of artwork that comes in as a regular submission of a new original piece. Something in the 300DPI range or a 640x480 pixel size is about the largest we can handle. We really appreciate smaller images that can fit more easily into a single column of our layout with the text wrapped around it. Sometimes we have to tweak the size of an image just a little bit to get it to fit into our format. Hopefully, no one holds that against us.

4) Overall filesize is a MAJOR concern for us. We need the final product to be as small as possible. Our Hotmail account only gives us 2 Mb of space to play with...but that's okay, we're actually happy with that limitation because we don't ever want to produce an issue of Action Check (reprints or otherwise) that goes very far over 1 or 1.5 Mb, else it makes it more difficult for some of our subscribers to download when they don't have a fast connection. If you plan to submit artwork, lengthy text articles, etc. do your best to find ways to limit the amount of space it will take up in the final issue.

5) Again, because of space considerations, convert everything into text if you can. If you want to save SCM profiles and other boxed text separately as "sidebar" files, go ahead and indicate that for us and we'll figure out where to place them when we do our own layout/formatting. If you really want to go the extra mile, include a short text file or something explaining where each sidebar needs to be placed. Without the

actual issue of Dragon or Dungeon magazine that contains each article to be reprinted, it might be tough for us to figure out what goes where.

Lastly, we appreciate all of the support that everyone has shown for the reprints. Thanks to all of you for your willingness to share this stuff with the rest of the Alternity community. Without you, none of this would be possible.

I am more than happy to acquire and scan material for future AC issues. But one problem is that I am not sure of what Dragon/Dungeon Magazine issues to get my hands on. If someone has a master list (or something close) of the Alternity articles (and the issues they were in) that were printed, then that is all I need to get started. I think I speak for several people when I say that we are willing to help, but we need to know where to look. – David

Actually, a number of people have been asking for this kind of information...including the Action Check staff! Even we don't know what Alternity articles appeared in every publication of Dragon and Dungeon magazine. Fortunately, the Alternity community is far-reaching and with a little collaboration we have at least this much of a list to share, including their current "reprint" status:

Already Reprinted:

- Dragon #250: World of the Mechalus
- Dragon #255: Starship Perks & Flaws (?)
- Dragon #257: World of the Weren
- Dragon #259: Armed and Dangerous – Fallout

II Weapons

- Dragon #261: World of the Sesheyans
- Dragon #263: World of the T'sa
- Dragon #273: Arms Race – New Weapons for S*D
- Dragon #265, #266, #267, #268, #269, #270, #272, and #273: Transmissions

Already Received & Awaiting Re-publication:

- Dragon Annual #4: The Kindness of Strangers, D*M adventure
- Dragon #268: FX Artifacts
- Dragon #269: Urban Legends, D*M adventure hooks & xenofoms
- Dragon #271: Top Secret, new careers, skills and equipment for Alternity
- Dragon #272: Gamma Squirrels, Mutant Moose – animal heroes for GW
- Dungeon #80: A Head for Business, D*M adventure

Received in Photocopy Form & Awaiting Re-typing:

- Dragon Annual #3: Star Frontiers Conversions
- Dragon #246: Omega Variant Solo Ad

venture

- Dragon #266: Back to the Future; 1950s roleplaying w/ Alternity
- Dragon #270: New Frontiers, conversion notes for Traveler
- Dungeon #78: Deepstrike, S*D adventure

Still in Hiding:

- Dragon #249: Sixguns and Sesheyans
- Dragon #253: Sufficiently Advanced Magic
- Dragon #257: Battlezone computer game conversion
- Dragon #258: No One Can Hear You Scream
- Dragon #260: Heroes & Villains of Zero Point
- Dragon #262: From Dungeons to Drive space
- Dragon #264: Legacy of the Dragon – Vampires for Alternity
- Dragon #265: The Voice, D*M solo adventure
- Dragon #267: Eye in the Sky: Spy satellites for D*M
- Dungeon #68: Convergence, S*D adventure
- Dungeon #83: London Calling, D*M adventure

Articles We Don't Have Permission to Reprint:

- TSR JAM 1999: Folds in the Tapestry, RPGA Alternity adventure
- Polyhedron #144: Arachna Australis, mutant spiders for GW

TEQUILA STARRISE

For one more time congratulations on the great work you give away for free every other month! You are one of those people that help keep the game alive! I was wondering if on the current issue of Action Check you could say something about the renewal of www.tequilastarrise.net, so that more people will hear about it and help it grow and expand! I'm at your disposal if you have any questions concerning the site (its current status and future plans) or myself! – Vassilis

Not only are we willing to say something about Tequila Starrise, but we want you to give it your own description! It's infinitely better if the webmaster himself provides the information about his site. Look in our Gridsites column in this very issue for a review of the jazzed up content of Tequila Starrise...the official Star*Drive fan site as sanctioned by Wizards of the Coast.



DEE FROST AND THE SNOWMAN

By Neil Spicer with Artwork by Dragan Ciric

Deanna Frost – A Tech-Op SCM for Alernity Star*Drive

(Note: This SCM is designed using the alternate skill point system and the option for Cybertech. If you don't use these rules, adjust her skills and gear accordingly.)

Level 4 Human Tech-Op Robotist/Technician

STR 9 INT 13 (+2)
DEX 11 (+1) WIL 8
CON 9 PER 10

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2
Perks: Great Looks, Reputation
Flaws: Delicate, Moderate Obsession
(recreational X3D's), Powerful Enemy

Attacks:

Unarmed* 4/2/1 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
Pistol, 9mm 12/6/3
d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m

* +1 step penalty (untrained)

Defenses:

CF short coat d4-1 (LI), d4-1 (HI), d6-3 (En)
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+2 INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills

Skills:

Athletics [9]-climb [10]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]-pistol [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]-land [12]; Stamina [9]-endurance [10]; Computer Science [13]-AI [15], hacking [14], hardware [14]; Knowledge [13]-language: Standard [16], -system: Tendril [16]; System Operation [13]-communications* [14], sensors* [14]; Technical Science** [13]-juryrig [15], repair [14], robotics [16]; Awareness [8]-perception [9]; Street Smart [8]-criminal elements [9], grid savvy [9]; Entertainment [10]-dance [11]; Interaction



[10]-bargain [11].

* -1 step bonus when trying to overcome electromagnetic interference similar to a Tendril "Burn"

** -1 step bonus due to StarMech heritage

Cybertech:

Nanocomputer (good), subdermal NJack (good), external neural 3D dataslot (good)

Gear:

CF short coat, 9mm pistol, specialized toolkit (Technical Science-robotics), gridcaster, recreational X3D's.

Personal Information:

Sex: Female
Motivation: Winning Is Everything
Attitude: Conformist
Traits: Quiet, Romantic

Background:

Orphaned at the age of nine, Deanna "Dee" Frost has learned to live most of her life without developing strong relationships with other people. Instead, she possesses a strong affinity for intelligent machines and robots, emotionally attaching to them like surrogate family members. Her choice to pursue a roboticist career naturally followed, but the tragedies of her life still haunt her to the point that she often seeks refuge in mind-bending and mood-altering virtual realities.

Dee's mother and father served with the StarMech task force aboard the *SMS Augustine* during the GW2 cruiser's journey to the Tendril star system. Prior to meeting one another, both her parents held positions as junior scientists, their duties specifically involving the investigation of alien sites on Atlas. Fortunately, they were not aboard the *Augustine* during 2448 when an experiment involving one of the alien artifacts catastrophically destroyed the vessel. Instead,

they were enjoying their honeymoon on nearby Alaundril. Dee was born over thirty years later.

In 2489, two important things happened in Dee's life. First, the drivesat transmissions from Hammer's Star suddenly stopped. In combination with the continuing communications blackout from the Stellar Ring, the event brought mass confusion and even some amount of hysteria to the population of Alaundril and much of the Verge. Supplies had grown short and the meager equipment and provisions her parents kept for themselves following the loss of Governor Harrison and the *Augustine* were looked upon greedily by those with far less. Later during that same year, a series of riots occurred and looters broke into their shop. In the ensuing violence and fire, Dee lost her family and all of their possessions. She's kept the trauma bottled up inside ever since.

The second important event in 2489 involved Dee's relocation to a foster home on Darkhold, the seedy space station nestled among the asteroids of the Cyra Belt. A friend of the family agreed to provide for the girl and apprenticed her in the ways of designing robots as a form of therapy. Her skills rapidly improved and Dee further developed them by participating in after-hours jaunts at the local arena. Semi-professional roboticists would bring their latest models to compete with one another in contests of programming skill, artistic expression with life-like aesthetics, and even gladiatorial combat. By her mid-teens, Dee had already established a reputation as a prize-winning engineer.

Her success did little to balance her life, however. The ensuing victory celebrations lured Dee into the dark underworld of illegal X3Ds and so-called 'greyware'. Dee routinely uses such entertainment programs and facilities to lose herself from the pains and pressures of real life. To the casual observer this is not easily evident until one gets to know her. When she isn't 'simming' or 'chipping' Dee's demeanor is quiet and reserved, almost to the point of total shyness. But, when indulging herself at a social function, Dee can quickly become the life of the party, appearing much more animated and talkative. The transition can be disconcerting.

Currently, Dee has obtained corporate sponsorship to join the professional circuit for robot competitions. She continues to work hard at fielding prize-winning entries for each contest. Her favorite is a gladiator robot nicknamed the

"Snowman". Dee culled together bits and pieces of equipment over the past ten years to construct him, including salvaged components from former-Governor Harrison's war robots brought into the system aboard the *Augustine*. So far, Dee has won eight battles in a row with "Snowman", seven by knockout. This has earned her a few enemies along the way. One of her current rivals even hires out a group of thugs to keep tabs on her, learn her secrets, and harass her in any way that will lower her chances of winning another battle.

At a young 22 years of age, Dee stands 5'4" tall and weighs a meager 105 lbs. She has long dark brown curls, light brown or mocha skin, and dark eyes. Her style of dress changes depending on her current state of mind. She usually favors at least one of the bolder colors (i.e., red, orange, or yellow) when heading out to a party at the local dance clubs, or a plain neutral grey jumpsuit during her more mellow mood swings. Her personality can be characterized as quietly romantic if laying off the X3Ds, or akin to a party animal and predator when actively 'chipping'.

SCR-3, the "Snowman" — A Robot SCM for Altermity Star*Drive

(Note: This SCM is designed using the Dataware supplement and alternate skill point system.)

Level 3 *Commando*-series StarMech Military Robot

STR 15 (+3)	INT 14 (+2)
DEX 7	WIL 9
CON 12	PER 7
Durability: 12/12/6/6	Action Check: 15+ /14/6/3
Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4	#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2	Last Resorts: None
Perks: Redundant Systems	
Flaws: Secret Orders	

Attacks:

Grav Mace	16/8/4	
d8+ 2s/d6+ 2w/d8+ 2w		LI/O
Hvy Charge Machine Gun*	16/8/4	
d8w/2d6w/2d4m		HI/G
Arc Gun*	16/8/4	
d8+ 1s/d8w/d6+ 3w		En/G
Grenade (smoke)** x 6	16/8/4	Special
Special		
Grenade (frag)** x 2	16/8/4	

d4w/d4+ 2w/d6+ 2w HI/G

* -1 step accuracy bonus

** +1 step accuracy penalty

Defenses:

Light neutronite armor 2d4 (LI), 2d4 (HI), d6+2 (En), Good toughness
 + 3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 + 2 INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills

Body Type

Processor: Good (10 active memory slots)

Actuators: Hydraulic

Casing: Light neutronite casing (Good toughness): 2d4 (LI), 2d4 (HI), d6+2 (En)

Chassis: 3m tall, 2m wide (too big for most doors)

Data Port: Socket, telepresence link

Manipulators: Claws

Propulsion: Legs

Sensor: Holo, pickup/voicebox, motion sensors

Tools:

Key Skills:

- Armor Operation [15]-powered [16]
- Athletics [15]-throw [16]
- Heavy Weapons [15]-direct fire [16]
- Melee Weapons [15]-powered [16]
- Stamina [12]-endurance [13]
- Computer Science [14]-hacking [15]
- Knowledge [14]
- System Operation [14]-communications [15], sensors [15]
- Awareness [9]-perception [10]

Personal Information:

Motivation: Helping Others

Attitude: Ethical

Traits: Courageous, Kind

Background:

SCR-3 carries a number of nicknames from his illustrious career, including “Scar Three” during the latter stages of the Second Galactic War and now “the Snowman” from his appearances in gladiatorial combat arenas across the Tendril star system. He owes his continued existence to skilled roboticist Dee Frost who salvaged much of the robot’s memory core and central processor from the wreckage of the StarMech-cruiser *Augustine*. Now he serves as her bodyguard, friend, and primary source of income.

The “Snowman” actually began his career as a military commando in the ground forces of the StarMech Collective. His processor came

online in the year 2400 and he fought with distinction at the Battle of Songham in 2401, as well as the aftermath of the Expansion Pentad’s defeat in that star system. In late 2404, and after heavy wartime repairs, SCR-3 joined the research vessel *SMS Augustine* on its mission to the Tendril colony in the Verge. When the ship arrived in 2405, he continued to provide military security for Governor Robert Harrison’s regime and Dr. Elizabeth Danwin’s research for over forty years.

In 2448, SCR-3’s systems went offline following a massive explosion aboard the *Augustine*. Much of the ship disintegrated as a result of the experiments conducted upon an alien artifact from Atlas. Pieces of the *Augustine* rained down onto the planet’s surface, taking the robot with it. SCR-3’s hardened systems and portions of his memory core managed to survive the impact, but the rest of his chassis was reduced to scrap. Looters eventually discovered him and sold his components to Dee Frost in 2493.

Since that time, Dee has painstakingly restored SCR-3’s outer shell, spending most of her money on acquiring the hard-to-find parts with which his systems are more familiar. Her efforts have paid off in a completely renovated and “classic” robot that routinely wins awards at the exhibitions she attends. She renamed him the “Snowman” after entering him into a gladiatorial contest with a winter-white paint-scheme. The combat floor was also covered in ice to test each robot’s mobility, and thanks to Dee’s last-minute adjustments the “Snowman” won the championship.

Over time, SCR-3 has come to enjoy his new relationship with Dee. Other than his hard-coded combat skills, he remembers very little about his experiences in the StarMech military. He views her as his family now, and someone that generously rewards and takes care of him following each contest. He also worries about her in a protective “older brother” kind of way. He is aware of her addiction to recreational X3D’s and frowns upon it. Still, she rarely listens to his advice and SCR-3 focuses most of his energies on making sure someone looks after her when she “isn’t herself”.

Unknown to SCR-3, he also carries a set of secret orders now embedded in his memory core. The pyramid-shaped alien artifact that eventually destroyed the *Augustine* in 2448 also reprogrammed segments of his operating system. Though presumably extinct, the unknown

alien civilization from the Skyward Caverns on Atlas, or the remnants of their civilization, have discovered a means for communicating with and controlling SCR-3 through his telepresence link. Their influence over the robot is intermittent at best and it's unclear what purpose the programming serves. Usually contact with SCR-3 requires close proximity to the planet Atlas, but the presence of any artifact from the Skyward Caverns stands a good chance of activating at least a small portion of the new program-code in his memory core. So far, Dee suspects that the robot's systems are just a little "buggy" due to his age and some of the more complex and technologically advanced components she's added to his chassis over the years. But the incidents of strange behavior by the "Snowman", followed by his inability to recall anything about what happened or why, are beginning to occur more frequently and Dee worries that she might have to wipe SCR-3's memory core soon. Whether this will successfully remove the alien code is unknown.

The "Snowman" measures ten feet tall, six feet wide, and just over one and a half tons in weight. Roughly humanoid, he possesses two legs and two arms. The right hand is really just a claw, and incapable of fine manipulation tasks. A grav-mace is permanently implanted as his left hand, and the robot often puts it to use in the combat arena for killing blows. His upper torso also mounts the heavy weapons Dee gave him, including an arc gun and a heavy charge machinegun. The electrical discharge of the arc gun only functions in environments with an atmosphere and SCR-3's capacitors can only fire the weapon up to six times before becoming depleted. As a result, he favors the longer range and lasting firepower of the machinegun, often using it to devastating effect before closing upon an opponent. Even at 101 years of age, SCR-3 remains quite mobile



and has all of the deadly skills he received during the height of StarMech's military-industrial might.

Fitting into a Campaign:

A number of adventure hooks exist for dropping Dee and the "Snowman" into any GM's campaign. Heroes could encounter the duo at a gladiator competition, and Dee might hire them to safeguard her against rivals on the professional circuit. On the other hand, her rivals might hire the heroes instead, duping them into carrying out a sabotage mission against the Snowman.

They could also meet Dee at a popular dance club and have to deal with an accidental overdose of X3D's that she 'chipped'. The encounter could become even more difficult if SCR-3 comes looking for her, mistaking the heroes' assistance as an attempt to do harm to his mistress. Such an adventure might eventually involve tracking

down the source of the illegal X3D's and putting a street vendor out of business. StarMech officials might approach the heroes and request their assistance in locating several pieces of missing equipment from the

Augustine incident, leading them to the Snowman and his military processor. The plot could become more complicated as Dee tries to run away with her robot friend, and the heroes have to give chase. How they eventually turn over the robot to the Collective is anyone's guess.

Lastly, the heroes could easily become involved with SCR-3 if they are investigating the Skyward Caverns on Atlas. The secret orders inside his memory core are definitely leading him there and Dee can't be far behind as she comes looking for him. Once SCR-3 arrives on the scene he might assist or oppose the heroes in their efforts to learn more about the ancient alien civilization. Dee could also aid or hinder their efforts in dealing with SCR-3.



EVE

By Dragan Ciric with Artwork by you-know-who!

Eve – A Combat Spec SCM for Alternity

(Note: This SCM is designed using option for Cybertech, Mutations and material from Action Checks “Guns, Guns, Guns”.)

Level 5 Mutant (unique/engineered) Combat Spec
 STR 11(+ 1) INT 10
 DEX 11 (+1) WIL 8
 CON 9 PER 11

Durability: 9/9/5/5
 Action Check: (-1step bonus) 14+ /13/6/3
 Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 #Actions: 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2
 Perks: Great Looks
 Flaws: Powerful Enemy

Attacks:
 Unarmed 11/5/2 d4+ 1s/d4+ 2s/d4+ 3s
 Katana 13/6/3 d4+ 3w/d6+ 3w/d4+ 2m
 Defender4 Re-
 pulsar* 14/7/3 d6s/
 d4w/d4m

* from “Guns, Guns, Guns”

Defenses:
 CF softsuit
 d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)
 + 1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 + 1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Mutations:
 Improved Reflexes
 Cellular Manipulation*

Drawbacks:
 Wild Mutation (Cellular Manipulation)

Skills:
 Athletics [11]; Melee Weapons [11]-blade [13]; Unarmed [11]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]-SMG*

[14]; Vehicle Operation [11]-land [12]; Stamina [9]-endurance [10], resist pain [10];; Demolitions [10]-set explosives [11]; Knowledge [10]-computer operation [12]; first aid [11]; Security [10]; Awareness [8]; Resolve [8]; Interaction [11]-seduce [12], intimidate [12].

* -1 step bonus as Combat Spec

Cybertech:
 Nanocomputer (good)

Gear:
 CF softsuit, Defender4 Repulser SMG, katana, gridcaster gauntlet, motorcycle.

Personal Information:
 Sex: Female
 Motivation: Finding the Truth and Staying Alive
 Attitude: Anti-authority
 Traits: Distant, Suspicious



Background:
 Eve was a member of a secret agency known as “the Dwellers.” The government founded the agency to deal with an increasing number of criminal organizations. After discovering corruption deep inside the organization as well as her true origins, Eve rebelled against them and has been

on the run ever since.

“AngelFire” was a secret bio-engineering project with the aim to create supersoldiers. As a result Eve came to life. Even though the project wasn’t a complete success it became evident that Eve was faster than normal and had an extra organ of an unknown purpose. After spending one month in an incubation chamber Eve matured to

the approximate age of 21. During that time, the Dweller scientists implanted false memories into her brain. After spending several months in training Eve went on her first mission. During that mission the sudden adrenalin rush activated her extra organ, which unleashed a disruption wave on her team members and the criminals.

This proved to be an interesting discovery both to Eve, who considered herself a normal law enforcer, and the Dweller officials, who decided to keep an eye on her. In the following two years, she spent her downtime between missions trying to control her newfound power and researching her differences. Her investigation led her to the discovery of corruption inside “the Dwellers” and to the project known as “AngelFire2”.

Finding her way into their secret labs, she came to face to face with the one thing that shattered her entire world. One of the incubation chambers contained an exact copy of her. The corrupt agents and officials had also noticed her inquiries and planted a bomb in the lab. By sheer luck Eve discovered the device but failed to disarm it. She only managed to escape mere seconds before the entire compound blew up.

Framed for sabotage and marked for death Eve went into hiding. She spent several weeks on the streets hardly eating and unable to talk due to the shock. An elderly couple discovered her nearly starved to death and took her into their home. There, for the first time, she experienced the care and concern of true human beings. But her days of peace came to an end with the arrival of the Dweller agents. They murdered her benefactors and almost killed Eve, as well, but her cell manipulation mutation saved her once again.

After this incident Eve decided to take down “the Dwellers” and expose it to the public. Recently she acquired information about new bio-engineering projects but hasn’t discovered their location.

Eve stands 5’3” tall and has long blond hair with red ends, pale skin, and blue eyes. A large naga tattoo exists on her back and arm. She often wears a jet-black CF softsuit. Since going on the run, Eve has become distant and suspicious, drawing more and more into herself lately. Winning her trust is nearly an impossibility now. She

is, however, aware of her good looks and uses them whenever the need arises. Her experience with “the Dwellers” led to a strong anti-authority outlook on the world, causing her to question every organization in the belief that they might be corrupt as well.

Fitting into a Campaign:

Eve is best suited for a cyberpunk/ conspiracy campaign with a lot of backstabbing elements among the government and corporate agencies. She can be a friend or a foe.

Dweller officials might hire the heroes to track her down and silence her. Of course another team would be hired to silence the heroes afterwards. In addition, “the Dwellers” may have hired the heroes to transport some software or data in which

Eve has an interest, thereby making them a decoy, so they can apprehend her themselves. Heroes can also encounter Eve during a showdown with Dweller agents or they can accidentally hack a Dweller grid-site and acquire information that will be wanted by both Eve and “the Dweller” organization.



Cellular Manipulation (Amazing mutation – unique to Eve)

This mutation allows a mutant to project a wave of disruption that weakens the bonds between the cells in living organisms and causes severe pain.

The wave projects itself in a 30’ radius around the mutant. Anyone caught in the wave must make a Stamina-endurance check. Depending on the success of the skill check, victims suffer following penalties:

Critical Failure, victim falls unconscious and suffers a -2 step penalty on all actions for the next 24 hours; Failure, victim suffers d4+2s damage and a -1 step penalty on all actions for the next 24 hours; Ordinary success, victim suffers d4+1s damage and a -1 step penalty on all actions for the next hour; Good, victim suffers d4s damage and a -1 step penalty on all actions for the next hour; Amazing, victim suffers a -1 step penalty on all actions for the next hour.

This mutation can be used once every 12 hours. Any excessive usage causes d4 fatigue damage.



THE NORDICS

By David K. Tormsen with artwork by Dragan Ciric

A Xeniform for Altermity Dark*Matter

Along with the Greys, the Nordics are an archetypal extraterrestrial race, reported by both abductees and eyewitnesses. They look more closely human, and a very specific racial grouping of humans. Many at the Hoffman Institute put sightings of Nordics as just hoaxes or delusions based on human arrogance that implies extraterrestrials must closely resemble us. Another theory is that these aliens are in fact Nazis, the descendants of those that escaped to Antarctica after the Second World War. However, perhaps there is something more to these stories than meets the eye...

History

Around 15,000 years ago, an interdimensional doorway leading to a planet in the Pelaides system opened in northern Europe. A local tribe found the doorway and, discovering the temperate climate on the other side preferable to the increasingly harsh conditions on Earth, migrated into it. Over the next century, other tribes also migrated through the portal until dark matter levels fell and the doorway sputtered out.

On their new world, the Nordics were under the constant influence of dark matter, but at a rate that was small and without the fluctuating patterns on Earth. This increased their evolutionary rate, making them stronger and smarter, and also granting them telepathic powers. By the 19th century, they were beginning to explore interstellar space.

Eventually, in the early 20th century, they somehow returned to Earth. Many legends existed about the world of their birth, but they were unprepared for the cultural and racial variation that now existed on the planet. For a few decades, they made only sporadic visits, mostly to Northern Europe and Sandinavia.

In 1936 they contacted a certain member of the German Nazi party, and led influenced him to discover an alien spacecraft hidden in the Black Forest. They did this in the hope that the technology would allow their Earth-bound brothers to join them in space. But they were soon to

have a rude awakening about their "brothers." As the Second World War rolled on, they watched the Holocaust in Europe with mounting horror. Shocked by the wanton slaughter, they lost some of their illusions that the Northern Europeans were any better than the rest of the Earth-bound humans.

After disappearing for a few years after the War, they resumed operations in the 1950's. In 1952, they even contacted by a local human; a Polish-American man named George Adamski. While they were sure to obscure his memory after the contact, he retained some knowledge of their physical appearance. His imagination filled in the mental blanks, leading him to believe he had made contact with Venusians, and they had taken him on trips into space, notably to the moon, where he supposedly saw cities, forests and lakes. His story was, of course, "disproven" for these reasons.

In 1958, a rogue Nordic known as Nacoma Ofzupita broadcast a radio message to Earth in English, German and Norwegian (the languages spoken by those people most similar to the Nordics) as well as in Orijzi, the language spoken by the Nordics themselves. The message was intended to warn the humans of an upcoming nuclear war. Although the Nordic authorities incarcerated him, his influence re-ignited the exploration movement.

As they resumed widescale exploration, the Nordics continued to constrain most of their activities to Europe, but also increased exploration in North America and the South Pacific. Slowly, though, they did expand their activities into Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East. Gordon Cooper, astronaut aboard Mercury 9, intercepted a Nordic signal and was unable to make sense of it. Other astronauts as well as Soviet scientists also received those same signals. They are in a Nordic version of Morse code, only much more complex. In 1969, Nordic ships joined Greys in observing the American astronauts walking on the moon.

Over the years the Nordics have expanded their exploration program, performing abductions on humans and eventually Sasquatch. They spread across the world, and

accidentally knocked out several space probes. Today they are continuing this trend, but have for the most part reduced their wide-scale operations. This has led to problems, as the radioactivity of their craft is dangerous to humans.

In the 1990's a certain group of Nordics known as the Ofzupitans have begun to expand their influence among the New Age community, using their Psi powers to communicate with channelers and other such people, notably Jani King, who "channels" a Nordic known as Ptaah, a being who is an adept user of *Telepathy-Possess*. Indeed, most of the New Age movement is a bastardized version of Nordic religion, philosophy and fringe science. Although the Nordic authorities have launched a major campaign to bring this sort of activity to an end, they are fighting a losing battle.

Appearance and Physiology

The Nordics look very similar to human beings, but are rather homogeneous in appearance. They range between 5 to 7 feet tall and are well built. They almost always have pale skin, large blue or green eyes, and long blonde or red hair. When seen, they are known to wear silver spacesuits or robes. In other cases, they have worn minimal clothing or even nothing at all.

The Nordics appear to have made no visible environmental adaptations, with a static low level of melanin and almost uniform facial features. Perhaps their homeworld is of uniform climate, or perhaps they have adapted in other less visible ways. Their increased evolution rate caused by their homeworld's dark matter levels has granted them increased Strength, Constitution and Intelligence, and has rendered them all able to communicate telepathically. Also, they seem remarkably resistant to radiation, suffering neither burns nor cancers up to R6.

Society

Little is known of Nordic society on their homeworld, however they seem to be advanced, enlightened and emancipated. They are obviously quite liberal with their sexuality. It seems they view humans as slightly inferior to themselves, though this is an emotional judgment on their part rather than an intellectual one. Their operations on Earth allude that while they are curious, they are also quite cautious.

One sector of Nordic society, the Ofzupitans, is different however. Like the Iltan of the

Greys, they support open communication with humanity. Unlike the Iltan, they are mainly interested in spreading their religion amongst the humans. On the Nordic homeworld, their bizarre religion is restricted to the fringes of society, and thus their missionary work with the humans is distasteful to most other Nordics, who are normally atheist or belong to more traditional religions (which tend to resemble a strange mix of Orthodox Christianity and Shinto). An Earthly version of the Ofzupitans would be that of a slightly crazy Scientologist attempting to convert isolated Amazonian tribes.

Certain Nordic women have been known to be sexually attracted to human males, in a similar way to how women in westernized countries on earth are attracted to rugged or even savage men, the "jungle man". A noteworthy example includes the abduction of Brazilian farmer Antonio Villas Boa in 1957, which led to a very close encounter indeed. The Nordic authorities are known to disapprove of this activity, but do not attempt to police it to any great degree.

For the most part, the Nordics have little in the way of arcane or faith FX, concentrating mainly on psionics. Some Ofzupitan mystics have perfected certain Enochian and Hermetic spells, while there are examples in mainstream Nordic society of Monotheistic Faith FX, although the authorities write them off as new forms of psionics. The Nordics have access to PL6 weapons, armor and computers, and typically fly PL7 spacecraft.

The Nordics refer to themselves as the Orijzi.

Relationship with Strangers and Illuminati

For the most part, the Nordics do not affiliate with other Strangers, even to the point of avoiding them. The only race they seem to have a relationship with is the Greys and that is a cold one at best. They have a non-aggression pact with each other, but seem to disapprove of each other. The Greys see the Nordics as a threat, while the Nordics see the Grey influence on Earth as a corrupting alien influence. The Nordics have no known relationship with the kinori or the mothmen, but have been known to abduct and study Sasquatch. The Nordics seem to have a great fear of the étoile, and often fight the influence of their sandmen. Perhaps they have met the étoile before in some of their other explorations?

The Ofzupitans are believed to have contacted and worked with St. Germain in the

spreading of the New Age movement, while the conventional Nordics have made contact with the UMMO entity, as well as minor contacts with MUFON. Otherwise they ignore most other secret societies and illuminati. Notably, they avoid the Nazis like the plague, whether in the CIA, South America, New Zealand, the Urals or Antarctica.

Nordic craft

Nordic craft are strange. They are known to sporadically give off bursts of electro-magnetic radiation of varying intensity. While the Nordics themselves seem to be unaffected by this, they have averse reactions on humans and machines. Abductees and eyewitnesses have been left with radiation burns and sometimes cancer, while radiation burns have been left on trees, crops and buildings.

Like Grey scout ships, Nordic craft have been known to produce a mild EMP, and when in close proximity, human vehicles have had their engines suddenly cut out, computer data has been wiped, and power blackouts have been reported. These effects have been the source of some concern for many people, especially after the TWA flight 800 crash off Long Island in 1996, which was caused by a Nordic fly-by.

They have the ability to deliberately increase the radiation their craft emits; they can use this as a formidable weapon. Nordic craft vary in shape from eggs to cigars, and often glow with a weird red, yellow or white light. Many sightings have been written off as ball lightning due to this. They vary in length from 40 to 200 feet, and often leave behind a glowing trail in the air as they travel.

While they are just as fast as Grey scout ships, they lack the maneuverability of them. On the other hand, they are tougher, composed of an advanced polymer, which is as strong as diamond. Inside, there is invariably an examination room; it seems most craft are scientific vessels.

It is as yet unknown whether the Nordics employ some sort of FTL drive to travel from Pe-laides to Earth, or whether they simply utilize doorways.

Encounter

Nordics normally use their psionic powers to attack, but Combat Specs often carry PL6 charge weapons when fighting humans. Unarmed they are formidable opponents. When alone they prefer sniping and hit and run tactics,

but will attack head on when possessing the advantage of numbers. Most of the time, they prefer to stay in their craft.

But what do they want?

The majority of the Nordics roaming around Earth are simply scientists, taking samples of our DNA in order to use them in medical experiments. The human genetic code being more diverse than that of the Nordics, the Nordics are susceptible to many diseases that human beings are not. While they have advanced vaccines, they are slowly losing the battle against superbug diseases on their homeworld. Combining their advanced medical technology with the rich human genome, they have made substantial breakthroughs.

The Ofzupitans are a different matter altogether. On the Nordic home world, they are the members a large but minority religion, whose practitioners preach ascension to higher levels of consciousness, the subjectivity of reality and other nutty topics. It is a religion that very much supports conversion efforts, but abhors violent proselytism. Having expanded to their multiple limit on the increasingly agnostic or traditionalistic, they have been forced to look outwards for new members.

Earth, with its troubles, uncertainties and need for belief, was the perfect candidate. Finding kindred spirits in eastern religion, paganism and the psychedelia of the bohemian 1960's, they soon established a presence on Earth, spreading their particular brand of wisdom by way of their human confidantes, the self-proclaimed "channelers". While they are basically harmless compared to other more serious threats such as the Sandmen, they are very much determined in their struggle for "enlightenment" of the human soul. They have had some detrimental effects on human society, notably the decrease in skepticism and critical inquiry, leaving people vulnerable to pseudoscience and the guiles of diabolic cults.

Adventure Hook

Hoffman Agents are brought in to investigate a spate of UFO activities in a small town in Maine, or Scandinavia, or the British Isles. This has coincided with a New Age convention in town, and has been accompanied by unexplained blackouts, car engine failures, and a plane crash.

If the agents dig deep enough, they find that some of the New Agers claim to have made contact with extraterrestrials resembling humans, while some local residents have suffered strange burns. If they follow the New Agers, they find them meeting with Ofzupitan Nordics, who are handing out their equivalent of religious pamphlets and holding "soul cleansing" meetings.

However, just as the Hoffman agents seem convinced these Nordics are basically harmless, a squadron of cigar-shaped craft flies low over the town, causing power blackouts and radiation damage. The Nordic authorities have come to put a stop to the convention and arrest the Ofzupitans. Do the Hoffman agents cooperate with the authorities, or the kooky Ofzupitans?



tack [13]-power martial arts [16]; Movement [12]-race [13], swim [13]; Stamina [12]; Modern Ranged Weapon [9]-pistol [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]-space vehicle [10]; Knowledge [13]-computer operation [14], first aid [14], language (Orijzi) [14], language (specific human) [14]; Awareness [8]-intuition [9]; Resolve [8]; Interaction [10]-charm [11].

Psionic Skills

Telepathy [10]-contact [13], data-link [11], possess [11].

Note: These statistics are for a non-professional Nordic. Professional Nordic combat specialists, scientists and mindwalkers have abilities exceeding these stated here.

Or...

The Nordics are not aliens at all, but rather Nazis. In the closing days of the Second World War, Hitler and a few of his trusted confidantes and scientists, as well as a few hundred Nazi soldiers, left Germany for their secret base in Antarctica. There they continued their research in antigravity and eugenics. The Nordics are actually pure Aryan ubermensch, and their craft are the result of Nazi antigravity research.

These Nordics have close relations with Odessa, and their operations over the last few years have been to harvest fresh DNA from areas with high Aryan populations (Scandinavia, the British Isles, North America, Australia and New Zealand) and areas rife with specific genes for their experiments (Brazil?) They could still be based in Antarctica, or they could have moved off world, to the moon or perhaps Mars (where the Greys would undoubtedly give them a wide berth).

Nordic Game Data

STR 13 (d4+ 11) INT 13 (d4+ 11)
 DEX 9 (d6+ 6) WIL 8 (d6+ 5)
 CON 12 (d4+ 10) PER 10 (d4+ 8)
Durability: 12/12/6/6 **Action Check:** 13+ /12/6/3
Move: sprint 24, run 15, walk 4 **#Actions:** 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 **Last Resorts:** 1

Attacks

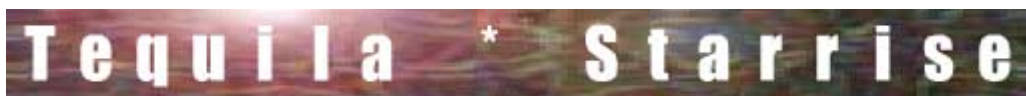
Unarmed 14/7/3 d6s/d6+ 2s/d4w LI/O
 Ranged Weapon 10/5/2 Varies HI/O

Defenses

+ 1 resistance to psionic attacks
 -2 step bonus to feat checks to resist poison, radiation and temperature

Skills

Athletics [13]-climb [14], jump [14]; Unarmed At-



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VEDA

By David K. Tormsen

A new Faith FX Skill

One thing that vexed me about the arcana in Dark Matter was the absence of any Asian magic. There were allusions to it though, such as the “tattoo magic” practiced in Hong Kong and Toronto, and the alleged practice of Tantric rituals at the Sturgis Class Motorcycle Rally.

Having seen the good work that Christopher West and Ron Bedison did on their Witchcraft Faith FX article, I decided to create my own. Having chickened out of borrowing a detailed and explicit book on Tantra from the local library, I decided to create an adaptation of certain Vedic rituals and powers for the Dark*Matter game instead.

Veda is an ancient art of magic, which is deeply tied with the Hindu faith. It can be used for both good or for evil, and thus can be used in conjunction with anything from Enochian to Diabolism with little in the way of visible ramifications. A true guru would always be wary of the effects of karma, however, for fear of consequences in future lives.

What decidedly little influence the Hoffman Institute has in India has garnered enough information that there is an underground magical war erupting across the country. Gurus allied with the Rosicrucians are combating a growing number of gurus allied with such insidious illuminati as the Final Church and the Thuggee.

This covert war could extend around the world, spreading into the Himalayas, South Africa, the East Indies, Great Britain and the United States. In certain war-torn regions such as Kashmir it could be fought openly on the day-lit streets, but the knowledge simply never reaches the rest of the world

An epic campaign based on Vedic FX could include other groups with connections to the

Vedic gurus, from the Christian, Islamic, Sikh, Jewish and Zoroastrian scholars of Monotheism Faith FX, to the forces of MI-6 and the British Secret Service still active in India, to the kinori.

Anyway, I hope that Veda can help add a new flavor to your Dark*Matter campaign.

Faith FX: Veda

Skill Name

Cost:

Veda

13	
Indra’s Discus (WIL)	3
<i>Krishna’s Strength</i> (WIL)	4
<i>Herb of the Monkey God</i> (WIL)	3
<i>Third Eye</i> (WIL)	5
<i>Kali’s Wrath</i> (PER)	4
Atman Devi (PER)	3
<i>Gopi Seduction</i> (PER)	4
<i>Ascetic</i> (WIL)	5

Skills that cannot be used untrained are shown in blue.

Veda, meaning Knowledge, is an important force in the lives of many Hindus, decreeing how they live their lives and take part in their faith. They have existed for millennia, and date back to the Aryan conquest of India. In the Dark Matter campaign setting, Veda is also a powerful arcane force. It is both heavily ritualized and reliant on Faith. It also has both good and evil applications.

While the Vedas, or sacred Hindu texts, don’t play a frequent role in the average Hindu’s spiritual life, they remain the most revered of all spiritual documents. There are four texts, the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda, which detail important Hindu rituals, hymns, formulaic verses and incantations respectively.

Other sacred texts include the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas, which detail the knowledge of the Hindu pantheon and tra-

dition necessary to a successful practitioner of Veda.

Practitioners of the various forms of Veda are called many things, among them yogi, sant, rishi, sadhu and swami. However, most adherents of traditional Veda refer to themselves as gurus.

The guru is concerned with connecting the individual soul with that of the universe, and thus to reap the benefits of it. There are various ways to accomplish this, be it within the throes of sexual pleasure or through the withstanding of physical pain. However, gurus rely mainly on the power of words.

In ancient times, Vedic rituals involved sacrifices, but even then the power of the word, or mantra, was paramount in the entire procedure. Modern gurus rely solely on meditation and the incantation of mantras (notably the sacred word Om).

The power of a Vedic spell is directly proportionate to the mantra needed to cast it. A Marginal mantra requires only a few spoken words to cast, and will typically take a single round to perform.

An Ordinary mantra requires a longer wording. In game terms this means 2 successes on a complex Resolve-*mental* check, and 1 success on an Entertainment-*sing* skill check.

A Good mantra requires a complex Resolve-*mental* check of 4 successes and an Entertainment-*sing* check of 2 successes.

An Amazing mantra is a daunting undertaking. It requires not only a Resolve-*mental* check of 6 or more successes and an Entertainment-*sing* check of 3 successes, but it also requires a ritual sacrifice in order to appease the gods. This can take hours, even days to fully perform.

Mantras can be supported by ritualistic items. The burning of incense, holding of blessed items and close proximity to a cow would all provide a -1 step bonus to the spell. While performing a mantra inside a temple, bathing in

the waters of the Ganges River, or after having a holy symbol such as a svastika tattooed on the guru's body will give a -2 step bonus. Such support is cumulative.

Once the mantra has been completed, the spell can be cast. If a mantra is not fully completed, the spell suffers penalties. If the mantra is between 0-32% completed (i.e., if only one Mental Resolve check has been performed for a Good mantra), the guru cannot cast the spell. If he has completed 33-65% of the mantra the spell suffers a +2 step penalty, and if it is above 66% but has not been fully completed, the spell suffers only a +1 step penalty.

Indra's Discus

Conjure Spell. 1 FX point

Indra's Discus creates a sharp metal disc that will fly through the air to strike the guru's opponent, causing d4w/d6+1w/d4m LI damage. Armour is effective at reducing this damage. This spell requires only a Marginal mantra to perform.

Critical Failure: The discus appears and strikes the guru, inflicting Ordinary damage.

Increased Skill: At rank 4, the guru is granted a -1 step bonus to the skill check, -2 step bonus at rank 8, and a -3 step bonus at rank 12.

Krishna's Strength

Transform Spell. 1 FX point

Krishna's Strength gives a temporary increase to the guru's strength ability score. The guru will gain +2 to his Strength ability score for 1 hour. This affects all feat checks and skill checks attempted by the guru. There is no visible sign of the guru's increased strength; however, giving the guru the advantage of surprise. In game terms, this grants a -1 step bonus to attacks in the first round of a combat scene.

This spell requires an Ordinary mantra of 2 successes of Resolve-*mental* *resolve* and 1 success of Entertainment-*sing*.

Critical Failure: The guru suffers a temporary (1 hour) decrease of his Strength ability score by 1, and suffers d4+1 stun damage.

Increased Time Length: At rank 4, the time length for the increase in strength is increased to 3 hours, and 6 hours at rank 8.

Increased Strength: Temporary increase in strength increased to +3 at rank 12.

Herb of the Monkey God
Conjure Spell. 1 FX point

This spell creates a small quantity of a shredded green herb that, when ingested or smoked, has healing abilities. It can heal d4+1 wounds or 1 point of mortal damage on an Ordinary success, d6+1 wounds or 2 mortals on a Good success, and d8+1 wounds or d4+1 mortals on an Amazing success. Herb of the Monkey God does not heal stun or fatigue damage. A Good quantity of the herb can be divided into two Ordinary quantities, and an Amazing quantity can be divided into three Ordinary quantities or one Good quantity and 1 Ordinary quantity.

Herb of the Monkey God requires an Ordinary mantra, of 2 successes of *Resolve-mental resolve* and 1 success of *Entertainment-sing*.

Critical Failure: The guru is covered in coarse brown fur that gives a +2 step penalty to any Interaction checks. The fur can be shaved off, but it will continue to grow for about a week afterwards, before eventually vanishing.

Heal Stun or Fatigue: At rank 4, the ingestion of the herb can forego the healing of 1 wound point in exchange for the healing of 2 stun points, or the healing of 1 mortal point for 1 fatigue point.

Cure Disease: At rank 8, the guru can cure diseases and other physical afflictions. An Ordinary success improves a target condition by one level, by two levels for a Good success, and by three levels for an Amazing success. At rank 12, the improvement for each is increased by one, and the herb can combat parasites such as Ekimmu and Sandmen nanites. Target parasites must make a Constitution check or be destroyed.

Third Eye

Transform spell, 2 FX points

This spell opens a guru's *Third Eye* (literally an eye in the middle of the guru's forehead), temporarily granting him 1 rank in either: *Telekinesis-pyrokinesis*, *ESP-clairvoyance*, *Telekinesis-levitation* or *Telepathy-illusion*. Whether or not the prerequisite broad skill is possessed is

irrelevant, and if the specific skill is possessed, the rank is simply increased. This spell lasts for 1 hour, at which time the *Third Eye* remains open and visible in the middle of the guru's forehead, with appropriate situational effects.

This spell requires a Good mantra, of a *Resolve-mental resolve* check of 4 successes and an *Entertainment-sing* check of 2 successes.

Critical Failure: The guru suffers temporary erratic blindness, suffering a +4 step penalty to all skill checks. This lasts for 30 minutes.

Increased Length: At rank 4, the length of time the *Third Eye* remains open is increased to 2 hours.

Increased Rank: At rank 8, the temporarily attained ranks in the selected psionic skill are increased by 1. At rank 12, it is further increased by 1 rank.

Kali's Wrath

Summon Spell. 2 FX point

This spell allows the dark goddess Kali to enter the body of the guru for 1 hour. For the most part, the guru will act as normal, with no seeming effect to his actions. However, if the guru comes into contact with a demon, diabolist, or other determinably evil entity, the guru will suddenly appear to go insane. He will immediately attack the subject of his wrath, and will gain a -3 step bonus to all attacks against the target. He will also gain a 50% increase in his unarmed attack damage. This advantage does not extend to obviously evil beings in normal situations. However, if there is the presence of blood in the guru's immediate area, he will gain the advantage detailed above for any enemy.

This spell requires a Good mantra, of a *Resolve-mental resolve* check of 4 successes and an *Entertainment-sing* check of 2 successes.

Critical Failure: The guru will attack any living being (including comrades, friends, and relatives) that come near. The guru will return to normal after 1 hour.

Increased Damage: At rank 4, the guru gains another 50% to his Unarmed Attack damage rating, and a further 100% at rank 12.

Step Bonus: At rank 8, the -3 step bonus to all attacks against evil targets is increased to a -4 step bonus.

Atman Devi

Conjure Spell. 1 FX point

This spell grants the guru protection from the Goddess Devi, in the form of ethereal armor that surrounds the guru. This acts as d6-1/d6-2/d6-2 protective armor against all mundane attacks. It also grants a +1 resistance modifier against psionic and FX attacks. The armor is invisible and intangible, and cannot be used by anyone else. It lasts for 10 minutes, and then dissipates.

Atman Devi requires an Ordinary mantra, of 2 successes of *Resolve-mental resolve* and 1 success of *Entertainment-sing*.

Critical Failure: The guru suffers d4 stun every minute for 5 minutes.

Increased Length: At rank 4, the length of time the armor exists is increased to 20 minutes, and at rank 12 it is increased to 1 hour.

Increased Defense: At rank 8, the protective armor is increased to d8-1/d8-2/d8-2

Gopi Seduction

Transform Spell, 2 FX points

This spell employs the playing of a musical instrument in such a beautiful fashion as to reduce all those of the opposite sex into loyal devotees. Anyone of the opposite sex within 30 meters of the casting of the spell is affected. They are allowed to make a mental resolve check (at a +1, +2 and +3 step penalty relative to the success of the skill check for the spell) to resist the effects. If they fail, they will find themselves willingly at the whim at the guru. The guru can then command the devotee to perform certain tasks, which they will set upon enthusiastically to the best of their ability. Overly evil (“kill that nun over there”), ridiculous (“fly away”) or lewd (“get down on your knees”) commands will grant the devotee another mental resolve check to attempt to break the spell. Devotees can make another Mental Resolve check every day in an attempt to break free of the spell. If it succeeds; the devotee’s free will is restored.

This spell requires an Amazing mantra, a *Resolve-mental resolve* check of 6 or more suc-

cesses and an *Entertainment-sing* check of 3 successes, and requires the ritual sacrifice by fire of one banksia plant in a traditional ceremony (taking about an hour to perform correctly). Also, a flute or other wind instrument must be played for the spell to be cast, although an *Entertainment-musical instrument* skill check is not necessary, the resulting melody will be naturally beautiful.

Critical Failure: All members of the opposite sex will refuse to do anything the guru requests for 24 hours. (Note: Attempting to use reverse psychology will require a *Deception-bluff* check).

Ascetic

Transform Spell, 2 FX points (1 permanently lost)

This spell makes it seem as if the guru has vanished from society. He is not invisible, but no one ever registers his presence. He does not appear on electronic recordings, and all documents and records that pertain to his existence vanish, including Social Security, bank accounts, criminal records and work records.

The guru now exists solely for those immediately concerned with him, i.e. his family, his friends, his immediate colleagues and his greatest enemies. But, for all intents and purposes, he does not exist in society. This does not effect his movements. Anyone meeting the guru casually will have that particular memory cloud over the course of a week, and completely wiped by a month. For the guru to exist for someone, he must be around to reinforce the memories at regular intervals. For game purposes, it is a combination between the 3-point Hidden Identity perk and the Obscure psionic ability.

This spell requires an Amazing mantra, a *Resolve-mental resolve* check of 6 or more successes and an *Entertainment-sing* check of 3 successes. It also requires the ritualistic burning of one of the guru’s most treasured possessions, to symbolize the destruction of the person he used to be.

Critical Failure: The guru permanently loses one FX point but receives no other effects.



DVERGAR

By David K. Tormsen with artwork by Dragan Ciric

A Xenofom for Alternity Dark*Matter

Dvergar are technically not one organism but thousands all physically and mentally joined to form a single sentience. They are a species of maggot-like creatures that have learned to work together as a single organism, and have the ability to metamorphose into a human form.

They came to Earth via a Doorway in England during the Dark Ages, and have since then spread across the world, although their numbers are very low. They are saprophytes, and must feed on recently dead flesh to survive and regenerate. Some simply feed on stray animals, but an increasing number are developing a taste for human flesh.

Description

In its natural state, a dvergar looks like a large pile of maggots, all covered in a thick brown liquid. It will move about like an amoeba, engulfing dead flesh in order to digest it. In this state it can squeeze through the smallest opening, and slide along the ground at great speeds. As it moves along it will leave behind a trail of viscous ooze. Note: While in its natural form it suffers a +3 step penalty in any skills requiring the use of tools.

A dvergar also has the ability to take on another form: that of a human. It will form into a humanoid shape, then produce biological teguments in order to further the façade, creating hair, skin, nails, eyes, etc. These do not have any real purpose other than to help the dvergar blend in. When in human form, it can easily pass a cursory inspection, however certain signs might give it away. Invariably it has a very oily complexion, waxy hair, slightly yellow eyes and a fleshy physique. When angry, upset or in pain, its skin will tend to ripple as its aggregate maggots become agitated.

When a dvergar is knocked unconscious or killed, it reverts to its maggot form. A dvergar avoids water like the plague, as being fully im-

mersed in a liquid will begin to break down both the biological teguments that make it look like a human, and the viscid bonds between the maggots. The dvergar is slowly torn asunder, and ceases to exist as a unified sentience. In game terms, the dvergar suffers d8+2 wound damage per round when over 50% immersed in water. When immersed in a corrosive liquid like acid, it suffers the damage above plus all inherent corrosive damage.

Encounter

Some dvergar are amiable enough that they live out their lives among humans, occasionally visiting the local pet store for some fresh meat in order to survive. Some have even turned vegetarian, living on only vegetable matter and certain vitamin pills. Others, however, are not so civilized. These wander around the world often masquerading as door-to-door salesmen in order to enter their victims' homes, where they proceed to slay and devour the inhabitant. These are the ones that most concern the Hoffmann Institute.

Habitat/Society

One interesting thing about Dvergar is their dislike of one another. While their aggregate maggots will individually seek out their own kind, once a sentient entity enters existence he will shun all others. It has been hypothesized that this is due to the fact that if two dvergar were to get too close together, they would merge and create a single entity. Understandably, the dvergar are not keen on this, as they would lose their own identity.

Thus, the dvergar have no society of their own. They simply find a niche in the world of humanity and live there. A dvergar doesn't even reproduce during its lifetime. This usually only happens at death. A slain dvergar will cease to exist, but almost always some of its aggregate maggots will survive. They crawl away individually or in groups and head towards a place rife with dead organic matter, and then breed furiously. It is very



easy for the dvergar's killer to miss a maggot or two crawling away, as they are quite fast. Eventually, the maggots reach a population large enough to support sentience once again, forming a new dvergar. The newborn dvergar will have fractured memories of the life of its predecessor, and thus each generation slowly gets wiser and wiser.

A few dvergar have even begun to exhibit psionic potential, but remain hopeless at Arcane and Faith FX. However, the dvergar have learned to manipulate their aggregate maggots in certain ways to replicate magical effects. Mindwalkers attempting to use their psionic abilities against the dvergar find it quite difficult due to the unique way that dvergar consciousness works.

Maggot Control

Stamina Specialty Skill, 5 skill points

Basically a hive mind, a dvergar depends on its aggregate maggots for its existence. This sort of physical make-up has advantages, as a dvergar is not subject to the same restraints as the human body. While all dvergar have at least one rank in this skill, some dvergar have learned to condition themselves in a way that allows control of their aggregate maggots in a more direct manner. In simple terms, Maggot Control allows the dvergar to metamorphose from its maggot form into the form of another organism (often a human) and vice versa.

A dvergar cannot metamorphose into an object with greater mass than itself. If, say a dvergar about the same mass as a human were to metamorphose into an elephant, it would not possess the natural constitution and strength of the pachyderm, and would suffer an appropriate (GM's call) penalty to its strength and constitution ability scores. Similarly, if it were to turn into a small dog, it would be a particularly hefty one.

When a dvergar does not possess this skill, it cannot turn into a human form, and thus is disadvantaged: they cannot exist undetected within human society. Dvergar like this often live in wilderness conditions or in the sewers underneath cities, living off sewer workers, kinori and molemen that stray off the beaten track. They are quickly found and destroyed by government and Institute forces.

Additional Forms: At rank 4, the dvergar is able to metamorphose into an additional form. For example, a dvergar could have a primary form of a young white man with blonde hair, and the secondary form of an old black woman with a lazy eye. If pursued, it could dart into an alleyway, change form, and exit the alleyway, saying, "He went that

way" if questioned by its pursuers. At Rank 8 and 12, it will gain the ability to metamorphose into another additional form.

Engulfing Fists: At rank 6, the dvergar is able to return his fists to their maggot-like form while fighting, and incite them into a ravenous frenzy. On contact with any fleshy matter, the maggots immediately begin to consume it. This upgrades all unarmed attack damage that the dvergar inflicts by one degree: Stun to Wound, Wound to Mortal.

Create Vermin: At rank 10, a dvergar is able to siphon off some of its aggregate maggots to create another, smaller, life form. The resultant vermin is subject to the dvergar's control and can accomplish small tasks as requested, but it is not sentient and incapable of speech. It can re-merge with its creator at anytime to receive new instructions. It has two forms, the first being a smaller version of the dvergar's maggot form; the second being that of a small creature like a rat, snake or bird. The dvergar suffers a permanent loss of one constitution point when using this ability.

Dvergar game data

STR 7 [d4+ 6]	INT 11 [2d6+ 4]
DEX 13 [d10+ 7]	WIL 10 [d6+ 7]
CON 15 [2d6+ 8]	PER 9 [2d4+ 4]

Durability: 15/15/7/7	Action	Check:
14+/13/6/3		

Move: Sprint 22, Run 18, Walk 4	Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2	Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed	7/3/1	LI/O	d4s/d4+ 1s/d4+ 2s
Gun	14/7/3	HI/O	As Weapon
Engulf*	13/6/3	LI/O	d6w/d6+ 3w/d4m

* *Only available while in its natural form.*

Defenses

+ 2 resistance modifier versus ranged attacks
 + 3 resistance modifier versus psionic attacks

Skills

Athletics [7]-jump [8]; Modern Ranged Weapons [13]-pistol [14]; Vehicle Operation [13]; Movement [15]-race [16]; Stamina [15]-maggot control [16], endurance [16], resist pain [16]; Knowledge [11]-language (specific) [12], computer operation [12]; Awareness [10]-intuition [11]; Resolve [10]-physical resolve [12]; Culture [9]-etiquette (specific) [10]; Deception [9]-bluff [10]; Interaction [9]-charm [10].



SKY RANGERS

By Dwayne Leonard

“The Sky is the limit!”

In the future parachutes are obsolete and a new form of jump trooper has arrived on the scene. These are the Sky Rangers.

Equipped with jet packs the SR (Sky Rangers) are the ultimate insertion forces. Their jet packs allow them to enter areas that even normal drop troops would have trouble gaining access to. When their mission is complete or if withdrawal is necessary the SR troopers can quickly fly out of the area under their own power.

Typically the Sky Rangers operate in 6 man squads. This provides them a good chance of success as well as reasonable backup when dealing with hostiles.

Sky Rangers are almost always issued the same equipment with a few exceptions. This includes a first aid kit, comm gear, jet pack, laser rifle, and a CF softsuit. Depending on the

mission one or two soldiers might carry Mass Rifles because they do higher quality damage.



This is an alternate career from those listed in the player's handbook and various other supplements. While ideally suited to Free Agent or Combat Spec professions I have listed the base cost for use with other professions as well.

Numbers listed in parentheses are the skill level gained
F stands for Free Agent cost and C is for Combat Specialist cost

Other skills valued by the Sky Ranger are Navigation and Investigate. These skills are not required but they do help better define this career.

For human characters this profession would be 6 points cheaper than the listed costs. This is because by default humans already possess the Awareness and Knowledge broad skills.

Attribute	Skill #	Base Cost	F	C
Dexterity	Acrobatics	7	6	7
	-Daredevil (1)	4	4	4
Dexterity	Ranged Weapons (Modern)	6	6	5
	-Rifle (1)	4	4	3
Constitution	Survival	5	4	4
Intelligence	Knowledge	3	3	3
	-First Aid (1)	2	2	2
Will	Awareness	3	3	3
	-Perception (1)	2	2	2
Total Costs		36	34	33



BAH HUMBUG!

A STAR*DRIVE Transmission By Neil Spicer

Bah! Humbug!

December 13, 2502 – 'Tis the season to be jolly! But the Christmas spirit seems on the verge of collapse inside the Lucullus star system. Although celebrations have already started on the former Solar colony of Penates, a shipment of the latest toys from the StarMech Collective have now gone missing. Originally Rudy Schumacher, captain of the starship freighter *Charity Stripe*, intended to deliver the toys as a goodwill gesture to a Pict orphanage in Key West.

After collecting charitable donations from a number of enterprises, Capt. Schumacher purchased the most recent StarMech creations developed for the robotic toy market from merchants in the Tendril star system. Known as "Humbugs" these new toys are all the rage this year. Designed for ages 5 to 10, they act as robotic companions and closely resemble the Mechalus pet known as a gearwerk. The Humbug memory cores also come with a wide variety of educational and entertainment programs guaranteed to hold a child's interest for years to come.

Unfortunately, the orphans of Key West might never see these marvelous robots under their tinsel trees. The *Charity Stripe* ran afoul of an apparent pirate attack, a very common occurrence in Lucullan space. Representatives of the Free Traders Guild stumbled upon the vessel at the edge of the system and registered salvage rights with the Galactic Concord after confirming there were no survivors on board. Their rivals in Pict territory, however, claim the Free Traders may have attacked the vessel themselves in order to loot the cargo. The Concord recently dispatched a law enforcement team to look into the situation on their behalf.

Gamemaster Hints

The heroes might be assigned this relatively simple case by the Galactic Concord as part of the law enforcement team sent to investigate the disappearance of Captain Schumacher and the Free Traders' claim. Or, the heroes could also be the original discoverers of the *Charity Stripe*'s demise, encountering it in their own travels through the Lucullus star system. Either way, they will want to find out what really happened. The following are simply a few of the possibilities, many of which could be combined to make an even more complicated plot:

- The Picts are correct and a group of Free Trader corsairs are responsible for attacking the *Charity Stripe*. They removed the bodies, stole the cargo, and intend to purposefully disappoint the Pict orphans unless the heroes take action against them. The Concord, Solar Union, and other Verge diplomats would like to avoid a flare up in the tensions between the two factions and might reward them for stepping in to settle the issue.
- The Free Traders are right and someone else attacked the *Charity Stripe*. The unknown assailants didn't touch the cargo, but just took the bodies. In reality, the Externals are responsible, intending to reanimate the dead as Kroath for the upcoming Exeat, or holy war, against the Verge. The Free Traders removed the robotic toys intending to resell them for profit, as well as the ship's telemetry data that recorded the original attack. By tracing the selling of the toys on the black market, the heroes could interrogate members of the Free Trade Guild and learn enough to hunt down the Externals.
- The Medurr are responsible for the attack. An overzealous member of the saurial race, and rival of the Stykor Clan, has engaged upon a spree of striking ships in the area hoping to obtain human weapons technology for study back in the Imperium. The heroes have to diplomatically handle the situation to delay the Free Traders and

Picts from seizing the ship before they can begin their investigation. Enough clues exist to point them to the Medurr but before they can return with the information, they too are attacked by the 'dragon'-raiders.

- The StarMechs and people of Alaundril are behind the incident. Their Humbug robots aren't toys at all, but rather spies designed to infiltrate the various factions in Lucullus that support piracy. The Lucullan corsairs have disrupted trade in the Tendril system for years and the StarMechs are providing assistance in rooting out the villains once and for all, in exchange for political considerations from the Alaundril government. Unfortunately, a Pict representative on Captain Schumacher's vessel discovered the true nature of the robot-toys and triggered their defense routines. The robots overwhelmed the crew, disposed of the bodies, and repackaged themselves to await discovery and eventual proliferation on the Lucullan black market.

- Captain Schumacher is the real culprit. Originally from the Rignunmor Star Consortium, he came to the Verge to make his fortune as a cheat and a swindler. The charitable donations obtained to purchase the Humbug toys flowed directly into his pocket. In their place, he loaded a bunch of empty cargo containers labeled as Humbugs then staged the whole 'attack' before escaping with his crew in another ship. He resurfaces to reclaim the wreckage when the heroes get involved, feigning an unusual case of selective amnesia about the attack, unable to even recall how he disappeared from the ship.

- The backstabbing Picts are behind the whole thing. They lied to Captain Schumacher about the orphan situation in Key West just to lure him out to Lucullus so their own corsairs could steal the toys, his money, and even his ship. By blaming the Free Traders, they hope the Concord will crack down on the competition, giving the Picts an edge in piracy activities throughout the Lucullus system and beyond.



GRIDSITES

By Vassilis Stratigakis

The Official Star*Drive Website

This issue's featured gridsite is none other than www.tequilastarrise.net. Originally created by Vassilis Stratigakis and then sanctioned by Wizards of the Coast as the official Star*Drive fan site when the Alternity product line ended, Tequila Starrise now represents your best opportunity to ponder all things related to Alternity's flagship campaign setting. The following is a personal invitation extended by Vassilis to come join the Star*Drive community:

TequilaStarrise.Net began as a project to do in my spare time. I never thought it would grow so much that I would no longer have spare time at all! After winning the "Official Star*Drive Fansite" title, I knew this project should be taken more seriously. Having Alternity.Net as a model, I started creating a community site where users could take a more active role and help advance their favorite game. I like to believe that this site is now on a good track! So what should Star*Drive and Alternity fans expect from TequilaStarrise.Net?

Besides a detailed presentation of the Star*Drive setting, users have the chance to submit their own *TransVerge News, articles, stories, downloads* and anything else they have created for their game. The *Web Links* section makes it easy for anyone to submit his own website and thus attract more visitors. Users have full control over their account including a *customized home page, theme selection, detailed user info, stellar nation allegiance*, and a fully customizable *personal block!*

There's also a *forum* present for all kinds of discussions, an *art gallery* where the users can send their own art, and a *review sec-*

tion where you can post your opinion about an Alternity product. More features will be added in the future. Currently I'm working on getting the following on-line:

1. A *project area* similar to that on A.Net
2. A *character gallery* (a place where users can upload their characters)
3. An *External War Section* (with info on the External species and the ongoing war).
4. New *Verge System Descriptions*
5. A *Chat Room*

More features are sure to come, but at the moment TS.Net lacks two important things. User input and user feedback. And, since Action Check was kind enough to post this I'd like to take the chance to say this to all Star*Drive fans out there. I NEED your input and feedback. Please submit any Star*Drive or Alternity material you have created for the Alternity system or the Star*Drive campaign in particular. Participate in discussions in the forum and send any suggestions you have. Is there something not present that you would like to see? Do you have a cool idea that you'd like to see being implemented in the current site? Well what are you waiting for?

This site is still at its beginning and I know it still needs a lot of work! But I believe that this should be a team effort so that this site can become a thriving community. Having said that I'd like to thank the Action Check staff once again for this opportunity and I hope I'll see you all at TequilaStarrise.Net!

Vassilis Stratigakis AKA Gabriel Connor
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ASK THE ORACLE

By Neil Spicer

ASK THE ORACLE

Q: What do you call the abbreviation preceding a starship's name? What abbreviations do the stellar nations and Verge governments use? And, what are their meanings?

Presumably you're referring to the abbreviation on a ship like the USS *Kitty Hawk* or USS *Carl Vinson*. This is often called a ship's "designation", sometimes referred to as a "prefix", or occasionally called its "registry". Not all of those terms are synonymous, however. A ship registry, for example, doesn't have to include such an abbreviation. Many civilian vessels just use a name like Exxon's *Valdez* and then add the name of their homeport. Commissioned vessels of the United States military use USS, which stands for "United States Ship." They also designate civilian-manned ships, of the Military Sealift Command or other commands, operating under "active service" with USNS or "United States Naval Ship." Other nations have adopted their own prefixes, or use none at all. For instance, the best-known prefix outside of the US is the one used by the British: "HMS" (His or Her Majesty's Ship). Ships from former British Commonwealth nations use a variation: HMCS for Canada, HMAS for Australia, and HMNZS for New Zealand. The Imperial German army used "SMS" (Seine Majestats Schiff...which still translates to His Majesty's Ship), but the more modern Bundesmarine uses "FGS" (Federal German Ship). Israel and India both use "INS" to mean Indian Naval Ship or Israeli Naval Ship. So, it continues to vary from nationality to nationality. Some don't even bother with the prefix at all.

Now, I know that's not where your original question was going but I mention all of that to set the stage for the real answer. Starships never really received such prefixes except in a fictional sense. The space shuttles for instance aren't referred to as the USS *Columbia* or USS *Atlantis* yet; they just go by plain *Columbia* or *Atlantis*, or more rarely as STS or Shuttle Transportation System. The USS *Enterprise* from Star Trek fame borrowed the prefix used by the US Navy at the time. It's almost universally interpreted to mean something other than "United States Ship", though. Most people agree that the "SS" stands for "Star Ship"...and the "U" must have something to do with the United Federation of Planets. It's very nebulous because they often refer to it as "the Federation Star Ship *Enterprise*," but de-

spite that, most other prefixes assigned to vessels in science fiction borrow the "SS" at the very least. And Star*Drive is no exception.

When you look through the published Star*Drive material you come across a host of such prefixes. Most of them look something like the CSS *Shrike*, BSS *Conjecture*, OSS *Shiva*, etc. The first letter generally refers to the stellar nation that built the ship. Usually, the "SS" still stands for "Star Ship," but in the *Shiva*'s case it stands for "Sacred Ship." So the other two examples are really the Concord Star Ship *Shrike* and the Borealin Star Ship *Conjecture*. Despite this simple explanation, someone at Wizards of the Coast decided to tinker around with the designations. In later products we have reference to the CSV *Vition*, which is deployed in the Hammer's Star system to defend against future External incursions. Presumably, the "V" might stand for "Vessel", but that's not a known fact. Later, the *Star Compendium* product also introduced us to a whole different range of ship designations for VoidCorp. On pg. 59 in that book "VCM" is used to designate a military vessel in service to VoidCorp and "VCT" is used for civilian ships.

Standard naming conventions adopted by today's military also rely on a naming style like USS *Tortuga* LSD-46 to properly classify it as the United States Ship *Tortuga* Dock Landing Ship #46. This is the vessel Rich Baker served on before joining Wizards of the Coast and he makes reference to it in his "Warships" supplement. The LSD designation is meant to classify the hull type of the ship, thereby leaving the prefix free of having to provide that information. For instance an aircraft carrier in the United States Navy called the USS *Nimitz* CVN-68 signifies it as the United States Ship *Nimitz* Multi-purpose Aircraft Carrier (Nuclear-P propulsion) #68. It makes sense that the stellar nations of the Star*Drive campaign setting would do something similar. So the CSS *Shrike* would probably be something more along the lines of CSS *Shrike* SCD-27 or Concord Star Ship *Shrike* Drive-Capable Scout #27. The *Star*Drive Campaign Setting* manual lists the CSV *Vition* with the additional designation of BBD 674 to signify it's the Concord Star Vessel *Vition* Drive-Capable Battleship #674. The VoidCorp ship designations follow a similar pattern in the *Star Compendium*. Refer to that product for a full description of the various ship hulls that could be used. The following table is a list of recommended

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ship designations for the various stellar nations of the Star*Drive setting:

Stellar

Nation Ship Designation, Translation, and Examples from Previous Star*Drive Publications

AO	AOV, "Austrin-Ontis Vessel", no known examples
BR	BSS, "Borealin Star Ship", BSS <i>Conjecture</i> , BSS <i>Abstraction</i>
HC	HSS, "Hatire Star Ship", no known examples
IN	ISS, "Insight Star Ship", ISS <i>New Hope</i> (formerly VCM BA00006 <i>Fortress Ship 6</i>)
ND	NDS, "Nariac Domain Ship", NDS <i>People's Justice</i>
OL	OSS, "Orion Star Ship", no known examples
OT	OSS, "Orlamu Sacred Ship", OSS <i>Shiva</i> , OSS <i>Nabulas</i>
RC	RCS or RCV, "Rigunmor Consortium Starship or Vessel", RCS <i>Voyageur</i> , RCV <i>Eclipse</i>
SM	SMS, "StarMech Ship", SMS <i>Augustine</i>
TE	ITV, "Imperial Thuldian Vessel", ITV <i>Man ti core</i> , ITV <i>Centurion</i>
US	USS, "United Solar Ship", USS <i>Kiku</i>
VC	VCM or VCT, "VoidCorp Military or Transport", VCM <i>Poison</i> , VCT <i>Sojourn</i>
GC	CSS or CSV, "Concord Star Ship or Vessel", CSS <i>Shrike</i> , CSS <i>Monitor</i> , CSV <i>Vition</i>

This next table is a list of recommended hull designations, many of which have their roots in modern day American classifications as well as those listed in the *Star Compendium* for VoidCorp. The inclusion of a "D" at the end of a hull classification code is often used to denote a ship with stardrive capabilities (e.g., BBD as a drive-capable battleship). Vessels without a "D" are generally assumed to be system patrol craft only, but not every stellar nation uses this convention as they don't wish to advertise the capabilities of their ships to potential enemies.

Hull Type

Abbreviation	Description
AE	Ammunition Ship
AFS	Combat Store Ship
AGER	Environmental Research Ship
AGS	Survey Ship
AH	Hospital Ship
AK	Cargo Ship
AKR	Vehicle Cargo Ship
AP	Transport
AR	Repair Ship

ARS	Salvage Ship
ATS	Salvage and Rescue Ship
BA	Fortress Ship
BB	Battleship
BC	Battlecruiser
CA	Heavy Cruiser
CL	Light Cruiser
CV	Fleet Carrier
DD	Destroyer
DE	Corvette
DN	Dreadnought
FF	Frigate
LKA	Assault Ship
LV	Light Carrier
PC	Cutter
PL	Light Freighter
PM	Medium Freighter
PZ	Bulk Freighter
SC	Scout
SD	Defense Satellite
SDB	System Defense Boat
SO	Space Station

Q: In Issue #5 of Action Check, Maris Carnes had a skill of body training. Could you explain the skill? Keep up the good work!!

Maris Carnes is a Thuldian Supporting Cast Member submitted by our own Jeff Ibach back in October of 2000 for AC#5. Her specialty in *-body training* falls under Athletics and fits the profile of a generic Athletics-*specific* (?) skill costing a single skill point to purchase. There are no significant game-related benefits from having such a skill, though it can occasionally come into play to determine how well a hero performs in a particular sport.

For instance, a Diplomat hero fitting the corporate executive career might play a round of golf while conducting business with a prospective client. The Gamemaster could call for a skill check in Athletics-*golf* to see how well the hero performs on the course. The results could either impress the client and make him more open to future Interaction-*bargain* skill checks, or anger him at being soundly beaten and thereby trigger his Temper flaw.

In the case of Maris Carnes, Athletics-*body training* is really more along the lines of the body shaping and muscle toning found in a personal physical-fitness regimen. This doesn't provide any bonuses to combat skills. Rather, it just signifies the ability to participate in a certain sport or athletic endeavor. Maris is really into physical fitness, to the point that she's developed it into an art form. Thus, she bought the specialty skill. What use does it have? That's purely open to the interpretation of any creative Gamemaster.

Q: On page 30 of the GMG, there is a paragraph on "Generalizing Skills". It says to do so by making the desired skills open skills to increase availability. Since the cost of a skill outside of a particular profession is always list price, why change the profession code to open skill for a particular skill?

The whole premise behind having different costs for skills is to indicate the training and natural inclination for various professions to acquire them more easily than the general public. That's why they pay one point less for the skill. The concept of "generalizing" the skills implies that all heroes, regardless of profession, should be allowed to purchase them at the same reduced cost as the professional...not the original list price for non-professionals. So, by converting the skills to "Open," it implies that you would set the "open cost" to the price associated with the profession(s) that used to own it.

Q: Does armor prevent damage from hazards (acid, falling, electricity, fire)? What are the firepower ratings for the different hazards?

Okay. First, the firepower ratings for many of the different hazards are relative to the Gamemaster's discretion. A particular type of acid, electrical discharge, or flame could easily take on any of the various firepower ratings...even if a hero is only exposed to them in "hazard" form as opposed to an actual weapon. Refer to the *Arms & Equipment Guide* for some examples of how weapons use various types of energy and have different damage ratings based on the focused power of the attack. It is entirely possible for such firepower ratings to occur naturally. A lightning strike on the world "Storm" mentioned in the Star*Drive novel *Two of Minds*, for instance, stands a very good chance of carrying a Good or Amazing firepower rating.

Falling damage, on the other hand, is a little different in that the length of the fall and what a hero lands on can actually determine the amount of damage taken. Also, on pg. 58 of the *Alternity Gamemaster's Guide*, it clearly states that, "Armor can't counter fall damage, but it may negate some or all of the extra damage inflicted by spikes or other nasty devices waiting at the bottom." With that in mind, a firepower rating becomes irrelevant for falling damage. There's nothing to upgrade or downgrade. A separate firepower rating could be assigned, however, to the spikes or other devices at the end of the fall. Tungsten-Neutronite spikes, for example, would be sure to come with a better than

ordinary "firepower" rating...and provided the hero survived the initial fall, he'd better have some really good armor to keep from getting mortally impaled.

Now, with respect to whether armor protects against the remaining hazards, let's look at each one carefully:

Acid damage is explained on pg. 57 of the *Alternity Gamemaster's Guide* as an energy attack. It states that, "Corrosive substances may destroy equipment at your discretion. Guns and heavy armor are fairly resistant to acid, but more vulnerable items could be wrecked by immersion." This implies that an armor's energy (En) rating can be used to resist damage inflicted by acid, but some armors could become damaged at the Gamemaster's discretion. House rules often call for a one-point deduction to each category of protection when the armor fails its durability check. Usually such checks aren't required for splash damage, though full immersion would certainly merit one. For instance, if a hero wearing a CF softsuit (armor of Ordinary quality, rating of d6/d6/d6-1, approximate durability of 5) fell into a vat of acid (also of Ordinary quality), he would have to make a Constitution feat check. Let's say our hero achieves an Ordinary success. Typically, the acid would inflict damage of 3d4w on the first round, but the *Gamemaster's Guide* does indicate, "Deadlier chemicals could inflict higher damage...d6 or d8 increments." If the acid caused 10 points of damage and the CF softsuit blocked 4, the hero would suffer 6 wounds. At the same time, his armor would have to make a Stamina-endurance check with a skill score equal to twice its durability (i.e., 10). If the armor failed the check, its rating would become reduced to d6-1/d6-1/d6-2. If steps weren't taken to remove the corrosive substance, the opportunity would still exist for further damage to both the hero and his armor, though the potency of the acid will decrease over time. Refer to the *Gamemaster's Guide* for that information.

For electricity and fire, the situation doesn't always involve the potential degradation of the victim's armor, though the Gamemaster is certainly free to rule accordingly. Fire could certainly pose a risk to armors comprised of flammable materials, and electricity might scramble or even destroy the electronic devices built into other suits. Regardless, electrical and fire hazards are still protected against by the armor's energy (En) rating. Armors composed primarily of conductive metals (such as plate or chain mail) could easily impose an additional penalty to the victim's Constitution feat check in the event of an electrical hazard, however. And the same penalty could apply to flammable armors in the event of exposure to fire.