

A D Q

**Autoduel
Quarterly**
The CAR WARS[®] Magazine

**Tenth Anniversary Issue!
Fiction by Mike Stackpole
New Rules by Steve Jackson
The Japanese/American War**



**\$3.50
Vol. 10, No. 4**

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Winter 2042

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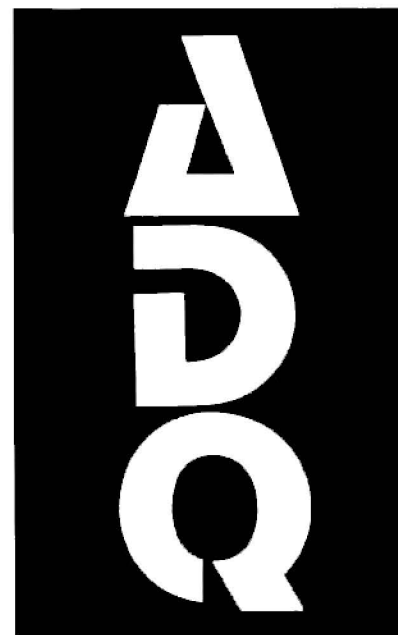
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This is the last issue of *Autoduel Quarterly*. Subscription rates for the new *Pyramid* magazine as of January 1, 1993 – In the United States: 1 year, 6 issues, \$23.70. Outside the U.S.: please add \$1 per issue for Canada and Mexico, \$3 per issue for foreign surface mail. International rates are subject to change as postal rates change.

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THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Happy Anniversary to Us

This issue is our 40th, and marks our 10th anniversary. Yea, whee, huzzah.

We're celebrating with a special issue. Up front, our dramatic, computer-generated cover is the work of Denis Loubet, who was one of the original *ADQ* artists (along with the long-lost "Speed" Webber). These days Denis is working for Origin Systems, the makers of the incredibly popular *Ultima* computer games. There's no way we could possibly afford to pay Denis what he's worth, but he agreed to do the cover for old-time's sake.

The features for the issue include the introduction to a major development in the *Car Wars* universe, the American/Japanese war, by *ADQ* stalwart Tim Jacques and star *Car Wars* writer Craig Sheeley. Tim and Craig promise that as the war unfolds it will include lots of adventure opportunities for duellists of all stripes, from the biggest military guns to the average street duellist.

Chris Burke has compiled an index of every *ADQ* article from the last 10 years. If you recall, the last time we did an index was to celebrate our 5th anniversary, and Evil Stevie Jackson himself checks in with a couple of new weapon designs that nobody else would dare to suggest.

But the highlight of the issue is the fiction feature by Michael Stackpole, famous game designer and science fiction novelist. Besides writing or designing more roleplaying and computer games than any

human should, Mike is the star author of the enormously popular paperbacks based on the *BattleTech* game from FASA. Mike's game designs include the *Renegade Legion* RPG for FASA, *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes* for Flying Buffalo and *Justice, Inc.* for Hero. He's the writer of the hit computer games *Star Trek 25th Anniversary Game* and *Wasteland*.

One word of caution is in order about Mike's story. It was written several years ago, when *Car Wars* was quite a different game than it is today. Consequently, everything in the story doesn't necessarily conform to *Uncle Albert's Catalog from Hell* or the *AADA Road Atlas* books. (In particular, I really don't think that the insurance industry of the 2040s works anything like it's portrayed in the story.) So enjoy the story – which is great – on its own terms, but don't get bogged down in trying to fit it into today's official *Car Wars* continuity.

That's All, Folks

Well, guys, this is going to be the last issue of *ADQ*.

OK, *nobody panic*.

SJ Games is *not* discontinuing the *Car Wars* line, and we're *not* giving up magazine support of *Car Wars*. Don't believe any wild rumors – here are the *real facts*.

Both *ADQ* and *Roleplayer* will be re-

placed by a new, larger magazine entitled *Pyramid*, which will cover our entire line, including *GURPS*, *Car Wars*, *Ogre Miniatures*, *Hot Lead*, our various board games and card games – everything (plus some coverage of other company's games). The debut issue of *Pyramid* is currently scheduled for release in April '93.

Current plans call for each bi-monthly issue of *Pyramid* to run 56 black and white pages plus an additional 16 *full color* pages (the color pages are for our miniatures games, mostly). That's equal to twice the current length of either *ADQ* or *Roleplayer*. Best of all, we plan to keep the per-issue cost of *Pyramid* at \$3.95 – only a fraction more than the \$3.50 we have to charge for the smaller, no-color *ADQ* and *Roleplayer*.

Subscribers needn't worry about the change over. Your *ADQ* or *Roleplayer* subscription will be automatically transferred over to *Pyramid* – you'll receive one issue of *Pyramid* for each issue remaining on your *ADQ* subscription. (Lifetime subscribers will get a lifetime subscription to *Pyramid*.) Or, if for some unimaginable reason you don't want your subscription carried over, you can cancel any time before June 1, 1993, and we will refund the unused portion of your subscription.

Whys and Wherefores

So why are we making the change to *Pyramid*? Several reasons.

For one, we're anticipating that our miniatures games – *Hot Lead*, *Ogre Miniatures* and eventually *Car Wars in 3-D* will be such big hits that they'll require regular magazine support. We could just launch a third magazine, of course, but three periodicals is a lot for a company of our size. It's much easier and more efficient, in all sorts of ways, to combine three little magazines into one big one.

Another factor in the decision is that magazines have a sort of "half life." Retail sales tend to erode steadily over time, even if there's no decline in quality or customer interest. It works like this:

Say Retailer X has a standing order for ten copies of each issue of *ADQ*, which he normally sells by the time the next issue gets in. But one month he's ordering *ADQ* along with the hot new RPG *Elves in Leather*. He knows that *EiL* will be a high



demand-item, but he only has the budget to order 12 copies. He knows he can sell 25 copies of *EiL* if he can find enough money to pay for them, so he starts looking for places to trim the monthly bill. He takes a few dollars here, and a few there, and he drops his order of *ADQ* from ten to seven. Nobody complains – the four or five people who are real fanatics about *ADQ* get their copies, and the people who would have bought the three extra copies don't notice it's gone (anyway, their game budget for the month went to *Elves in Leather*). So Retailer X keeps his *ADQ* order at seven per issue – at least until four or five months later, when he needs to trim the budget for a few extra copies of *Halflings on Harleys* . . .

In the short run this order-erosion is no big deal, but over 10 years (an astonishingly long life span for a gaming magazine) it can get to be a problem.

But if you're starting a new magazine, like *Pyramid*, you get to *be* that month's *Elves in Leather*, and you get lots and lots of orders (we hope). The secret to combat-

ing retail order erosion is to start out with really high orders to erode from.

All of the above, however, should *not* be translated into meaning that *Roleplayer* and *ADQ* were canceled because they were financial failures. They weren't. *Roleplayer* was still young enough that orders were going up, and *ADQ*, despite a decade of order erosion, had achieved a stable and consistent level of profitability. (In fact, I recently discovered that *ADQ* actually had one of the higher profit margins in our line, although its sales are only a tiny fraction of our gross.) Both *ADQ* and *Roleplayer* were successful, but we have every reason to believe that *Pyramid* will be still *more* successful, and that's what it's all about.

Final Words

As for me, I'm more than content with the way things are working out. I've had lots of fun editing *ADQ* for the last not-quite-three years, but everybody needs a change once in a while, and I'm looking

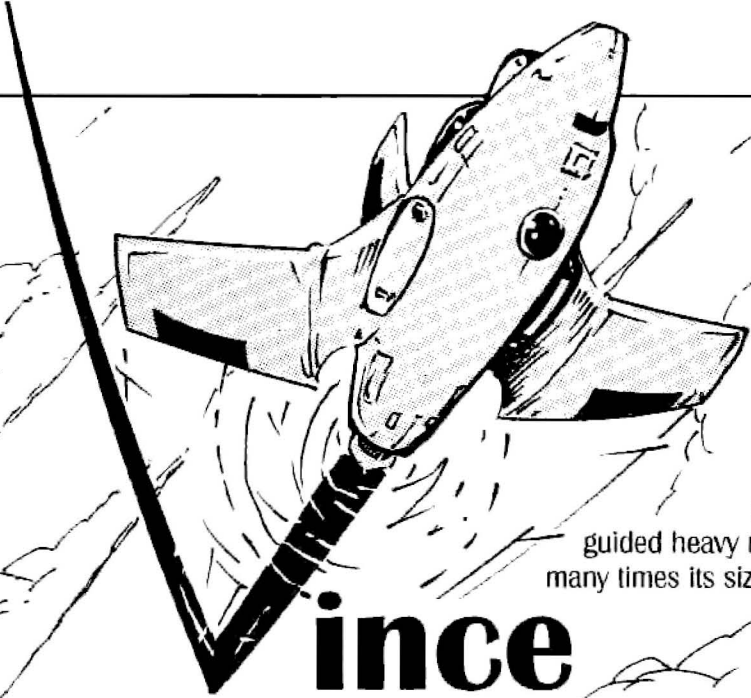
forward to spending the time writing and developing new game projects.

If the truth be known, *Pyramid* is at least half my idea. (This kind of trivia tends to get lost with time, so let's get the story on record.) One afternoon late last Spring, over the course of a half-hour or so, our then-sales manager and *ADQ* veteran David N. Searle and I came up with the whole plan for *Pyramid* – name, format, frequency, the whole enchilada. We started bouncing the concept around the office, and everyone we talked to agreed that it sounded like a good idea – if Steve would go for it. Eventually, we got up the nerve to present the idea to Steve, and whaddaya know, he went for it.

I have no aspirations whatsoever to be the editor of *Pyramid*, but I do expect to be an active part of the magazine, as a writer and the company art director. I'll probably keep my finger in the AADA too, at least for a while.

So take care, have fun and always, *always* drive offensively.

– CWM



The Vince

"Vince" means "to conquer," and Canuck Aerotechnology's new Vince is a conqueror. We think it just might be the most offensively irresistible microplane ever sold for under \$30,000. With six laser-guided heavy rockets, the Vince can conquer aircraft many times its size. Become a conqueror – fly the Vince.

ince

Vince – Medium microplane, large power plant with PCs and SCs, 3 standard cycle tires, 1 propeller mounted back, pilot, laser in universal turret under, LGL, 2 linked pairs HRs wing mounted front, 2 linked pairs HRs in ejectable rocket EWPs side mounted forward, link for all 4 EWP rockets, 2 HRs in ejectable rocket EWP top, link to both EWPs for ejection, ejection seat, HRSWC. Armor: F20, R19, L19, B20, T8, U30, 3 1-point wheelguards, 10 points propeller armor. Acceleration 5, top speed 180, HC 3, 4442 lbs., \$29,688.

CANUCK AEROTECHNOLOGY

AADA NEWS

With the retirement of *ADQ* in favor of the new *Pyramid* magazine, the AADA is being totally reorganized. Here's the scoop.

The first change is that starting with the 2043 tournament season, all AADA regional and national championships are *open* events. Any duellist can participate; he does not have to have an active individual membership in the AADA.

Local AADA chapters are being completely restructured. Effective immediately, active chapters no longer have any minimum membership requirements. Any duellist can submit a charter application and the \$15 charter fee and start a club with as few or as many active members as he likes. The \$15 charter fee will get him the hand-calligraphed charter certificate, the *AADA newsletter*, regular listings in the *AADA Newsletter* and *Pyramid Magazine* and the right to adopt a chapter name and host a club championship.

However, the AADA will only recognize club championships with three or more participants. In order for their championship to be officially validated, a club must send a report to the AADA briefly describing the championship duel and naming the winner. They must also send in copies of all the vehicle designs that participated in the duel, with the duellist's signature, name, address and phone number on the back. (These measures are to ensure that nobody can "buy" a second-round berth in the world championships by sending in \$15 and then declaring himself "club champion" without holding a real championship duel.) Chapters who hold validated club championships will be eligible for complementary *Car Wars* merchandise from Steve Jackson Games. For example, clubs that hold a validated club championship in 2043 will be receiving free *Car Wars Blank Map Sheets*.

We're also offering \$5 individual memberships. This will get you an AADA membership card and a year's supply of the newsletter. The \$5 membership is mostly intended as a convenience for isolated duellists who want to keep on top of AADA news and maintain some official connection with the organization.

While a subscription to *Pyramid* magazine is not required for AADA membership, *Pyramid* will continue to cover AADA events, publishing addresses for

active chapters, covering regional and club championships, and announcing the rules for the worlds. Also, the AADA newsletter will return, covering all of the above information, plus extras like classified ads, letters, vehicle designs and gadget ideas not found in *Pyramid*.

We hope and believe that these changes will revolutionize the AADA, and the elimination of the "five subscriber" membership requirement will revive excellent chapters like JADE and Driving Tigers, and make it easier for active newcomers like SAS Zebra to become an official part of the AADA.

The 2043 Tournament Season

The 2043 AADA World Duelling Championships will be held July 1 through 4, at the Origins convention in Ft. Worth, TX. The racing championships will be held one month later at GenCon in Milwaukee, WI, Aug. 17 to 23.

At this writing, the first issue of *Pyramid* magazine is scheduled to ship at the end of April. This issue will contain the complete rules for both championships (rules will also be published in the *AADA Newsletter*).

It is strongly recommended that all club championships be held and reported by March 15, so the champions can be reported in *Pyramid* #1. Club champions must be validated as discussed above. New chapters are allowed and encouraged to hold their club championships and submit their report and vehicle designs *at the same time* as they submit their charter application and fee, to save time.

Regional championships should also be scheduled by March 15, so they can be announced in *Pyramid* #1. If you're interested in hosting your regional, please send a letter to the AADA as soon as possible, and include your home and daytime phone number. Do not announce that you will be hosting a regional until you receive confirmation from the AADA. AADA chapters that sponsor a regional tournament will receive a one-year extension to their charter with the \$15 annual charter fee waived. Duellists who referee a regional event will receive a second-round seed at the 2043 world duelling championships.

All regional and club champions must be reported to the AADA *absolutely no later than June 15*.

Validated club champions will receive a one-year subscription to *Pyramid* magazine, and a second-round seed at the 2043 world duelling championships. Regional champions will receive a trophy from SJ Games, a third-round seed at the worlds, and a \$50 cash travel reimbursement if they attend Origins and participate in the world championships.

Local chapters are encouraged to organize club and regional racing championships, as well. Club racing championships must be validated like club duelling championships. Racing champions will receive the same prizes as duelling champions (although advanced seeds and travel reimbursements may not be possible – this will be announced in *Pyramid* #1).

All tournaments must conform to official AADA rules and guidelines. For a copy of the AADA tournament rules, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) to: American Autoduel Association, PO Box 18957, Austin, TX 78741.

NOVA Club Champion

NOVA is way ahead of the championship game – they've held their 2043 club championship before the end of 2042. The new NOVA champion is Michael Garrity. After the duel, Garrity's vehicle was found to have design flaws, and runner-up Chris French was announced as the new champion, but then tournament referee and sitting Central Regional champ Tim Jacques evaluated Garrity's design, using the rules for illegal tournament designs from ADQ 10/2, and upheld Garrity's win. Congratulations, Michael, but in the future watch those numbers.

Also on the NOVA front, NOVA met and defeated Ward Black and SAS Zebra in a challenge match held Nov. 7 in Des Moines. Hey Ward, with the new AADA membership standards, you can make SAS Zebra into a *real* AADA chapter now.

Active Chapters

The following local AADA chapters are active as of the end of 2042:

AVRO
President: Bruce Lam
1270 W. 51st Ave.
Vancouver, BC
CANADA V6P 1C5
Charter expires: 11/30/43



BLADE
 President: Grady Elliot
 2006 Woodriver Dr. #8
 Carbondale, IL 62901
 Charter expires: 9/3/43

DOOM
 President: Ben DeVeny
 Mejlgade 72, 4th
 8000 Århus C, DENMARK
 Charter expires: 10/31/43

GBAH
 President: Thorsten Haude
 Ginsterweg 3
 3014 Laatzen
GERMANY
 Charter Expires: 1/13/44

GHOST
 President: Brian Morrison
 57 Pheasant Hill Drive
 West Hartford, CT 06107
 Charter expires: 4/17/44

GODS
 President: John M. Hurtt
 2410 N. Hastings St.
 Orlando, FL 32808
 Charter expires: 4/17/44

GONADS
 President: Pat Barrett
 3807 N. Monroe Ave.
 Peoria Heights, IL 61614
 Charter expires: 2/10/43

MADD
 President: Craig Sheeley
 1619 South Broadway
 Springfield, MO 65807
 Charter Expires 8/31/43

MASTERS
 President: Michael Hughes
 169 Timberwood Trail
 Winnipeg, MB
 CANADA R2V 3X9
 Charter expires: 1/15/44

MORTIS
 President: Mike Nelson
 1845 E. Aurburn Dr.
 Tempe, AZ 85283
 12/31/43

NOVA
 President: Norm McMullen
 701 S. 22 St. #73
 Omaha, NE 68102
 Charter expires: 8/1/43

STOMP
 President: Kurt J. Aldinger
 201 Wagner Dr.
 Northlake, IL 60164
 Charter expires: 9/3/44

2042 World Racing Championships

The 2042 World Racing Championships, with the largest turnout ever for the event, were held at Origins/GenCon in Milwaukee. The championship was a two-round, two-day event, with both rounds being run on custom-designed tracks. Round One was a Division-15 cycle race run on a figure-eight track. After two sets of Round One qualifying, the 13 finalists went on to meet defending champion Jeff Rakow for the main event on a twisting, hairpin-filled racetrack.

With Mike Montgomery failing to show up, 13 racers posted their qualifying speeds in order to determine position in the starting grid. Tim Jacques of NOVA started in the pole position, with a qualifying speed of nearly 240 mph. Second was Norm McMullen, also of NOVA, and rounding out the top spots were two-time defending champion Jeff Rakow, Cliff Christianson of NOVA, and Brian Morrison of GHOST. Buried deep in the pack was defending World Duelling Champion Todd MacDermid, whose strategy focused

more on destroying his competitors than outriving them. M.J. Daniels boasted the slowest qualifying speed: 2.5 mph (yes, his vehicle did have a higher top speed). Victory was based on points, with one point per vehicle passed, and five points for each lap completed.

Although weapons fire was prohibited until one lap had been completed, the first lap (and only lap, for some slower cars) was not without its violent moments. During the first second, one racer intentionally sideswiped another vehicle, in order to set off his bumper-triggered point-defense grenades! The victim of this sneaky but legal attack immediately crashed and burned, much to the chagrin of the four or five vehicles behind him. Although none of them joined the collision, avoiding shredded tires and a rolling vehicle was a difficult task on the narrow track.

The front six racers were unfazed by the violence going on behind them, and soon achieved racing speeds. All was calm, until the second turn. Tim Jacques, in the lead, was quickly being overtaken by Brian Morrison and Jeff Rakow. In a desperate attempt to kill them and disrupt the race as a whole, Tim pulled a D6 bend against a banked curve, totally blocking the track directly in front of Jeff and Brian! With almost certain disaster for all competitors awaiting, Tim checked his handling status, and found he needed to roll a 2. Fortunately for the rest of the field, he indeed turned up a 1, and got the "roll" result on the crash table. Avoiding Tim's incapacitated vehicle, Jeff, Brian and Cliff roared out into the lead.

The action following for the leaders was light, until the backstretch of the track. Brian opened up a tank of nitrous in his car, rocketing him into the lead, past the faster vehicles of Cliff and Jeff. With time (and Brian's nitrous) running out and one lap completed, Cliff began to catch up to Brian, leaving Jeff in the dust. Jeff's victory was due to the fact that he was able to pass one more car than Cliff or Brian, who had established a commanding 30" lead over Jeff by the time the race had ended. The only weapons fired during the whole race were the PD grenades at the start, and various flame cloud devices after one lap. Thus, the standing for the 2042 World Racing Championships: in third place, from NOVA, Cliff Christianson. In second place, from GHOST, Brian Morrison. And in first place, for the third year in a row, Jeff Rakow.

— Reported by Brian Morrison

Evil Stevie Returns: Three New Combat Options from the Original Designer

By Steve Jackson



Weapon Lockdown

"And Jay is in fighter-pilot mode again. The Mad Czech has locked down his front machine-guns, and he's dogging that Hotshot, hitting him over and over. That armor is spraying in all directions. The Hotshot swerves, but Jay's still on it, firing like the gun was part of him . . ."

A weapon is "locked down" when it is pointing straight ahead and physically locked into place. Originally, the lockdown feature was designed to protect weapon systems while the vehicle was being transported. But duellists discovered that sometimes they could fight better with the weapon locked down . . . aiming the whole car, with the weapon firing where the car is pointed.

Lockdown is available only for front-mounted weapons or turreted weapons which can point due front. It works only with direct-fire weapons. Indirect-fire weapons, such as the grenade launcher or any dropped-weapon projector, cannot be locked down.

Locking a weapon down, or unlocking it again, is a firing action. The weapon may not be fired on the turn when it is locked down or unlocked.

The driver gets +1 to hit when firing a locked-down weapon. Gunners cannot take advantage of this bonus. The firer gets no bonus from targeting computers or similar electronic targeting aids. A crewman who is firing "by instrument" for any reason cannot use lockdown; he must be able to see his target.

However, the locked-down weapon may only fire *straight ahead*. It can only hit a target that is directly in line with the centerline of the vehicle. Wheels and similar targets may not be attacked. Furthermore, the weapon is locked down vertically as well as horizontally. This means that a locked-down turret can *only* hit a building or the side of an oversized vehicle – it will fire over a shorter vehicle. (For simplicity, the referee may assume all non-oversized vehicles are the same height, or he may use the vehicle heights found in the Jumping and Falling rules in *UACFH*.) The exception, of course, is that a locked-down turret can fire at the turret of a regular vehicle, at the regular -2 penalty.

An area-effect weapon fired in lockdown mode has only a half-inch "sweep," rather than the normal inch, for purposes of area-effect fire.

If you cannot trace your direct line of fire to your target while attacking in lockdown mode, you lose sustained fire bonuses. You cannot fire close to him and count it as a turn of sustained fire. You don't have to hit, but you do have to be *able* to hit.

Spinal-Mount Weapons

"We're back at our High Eye over the interstate west of town, watching what is shaping up to a nice little convoy action. As you can see, we've got three trucks about eight miles out of town, with a couple of cycles as front escort. The problem is behind. We've got a mixed bag of hostiles in obvious pursuit, looks like about a half-dozen assorted pickups and cars, pretty heavily armed. They're taking an occasional long-range potshot at the convoy when they get line of sight, and they're gaining steadily. There's one lux-size vehicle at the convoy's rear, looks like it's supposed to be an escort, but it hasn't dropped any mines or fired . . . I don't recognize its make. It may just be a civilian that tucked into the convoy for cover. Hard luck, guy.

"Look at that, Eddie. That funny-looking lux is dropping back, away from the convoy. It's not running, just slowing down. The pursuers are firing at it now, though they don't seem . . ."

"Wait a second. Big explosion from the lux – see that? I don't see any fragments, though. There's another one . . ."

"Joe, let's look at the bandits. Those aren't hits on the lux. It's got some kind of humongous rear-firing gun. See there, the pickup on the right, trailing smoke? It just got hit a second ago, and Jesus!

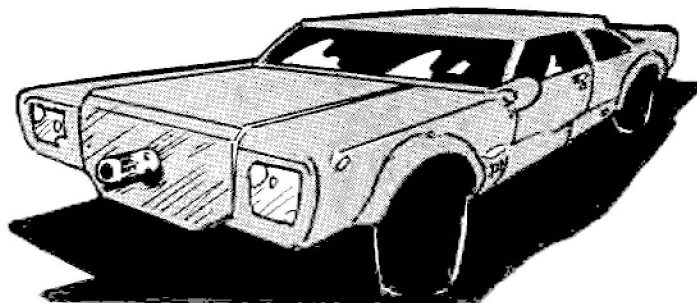
"Can you guys see that at home? The lead bandit just folded up and died in one shot. And quicker than water, his buddy T-boned him from behind . . . they're both on fire now. The pickup that got hit first is pulling off . . . Only three left in the chase now. They're firing back at that funny lux. The lux is the only defender that's fired yet, and holy creeping" <static>

"Ha, ha. Joe, they won't let you say that on the radio. That lux just squeezed off another shot and confettied another bandit. One shot. The survivors are pulling back now. That escort must have a tank gun in it!"

"But Eddie, they can't do that, can they?"

Actually, Joe, they can.

A very large weapon, such as an anti-tank gun or even a tank gun, can be "spinal mounted" down the middle of a vehicle. Es-



essentially, the vehicle is built around the weapon! This allows a much larger weapon to be carried than the vehicle's size would normally permit. There is no limit to the percentage of space that can be devoted to a single weapon if it is spinal-mounted! It also reduces the hazard of firing such an oversized weapon.

Spinal weapons must always be front-or rear-mounted. If mounted to the front, they are automatically considered locked down (see above) at all times. Rear-mounted ones can fire only straight back, as described above for locked-down weapons, but do not get any bonus to hit.

Spinal mounting requires more space than ordinary mounting, and costs much more money because of the heavy bracing required and the other modifications which must be made throughout the vehicle. A vehicle may not have more than one weapon in a spinal mount.

A spinal weapon may be damaged by fire coming in from either side, as well as from the direction where it's pointed. When an attack penetrates side armor, roll randomly; the weapon, seen from the side, is "parallel" with the gunner, driver, power plant, and/or cargo.

When a spinal-mount weapon has only 1 DP left, there is a chance that firing it will lead to disaster. Each time such a weapon is fired, roll 2 dice and pray. On a roll of 2 or 3, the weapon tears loose from its mounting, wrecking itself. It does 1d damage to some interior component of the vehicle (roll randomly). The vehicle undergoes a D6 hazard. And, adding insult to injury, the final shot always misses.

Weapons For Spinal Mounting

Legal weapons for spinal mounting are:

Autocannon. \$8,000, 4 spaces. No special rules; the only reason to spinal-mount it is to get it into a very small car.

Anti-Tank Gun. \$3,000; 4 spaces. Firing a spinal-mounted ATG is not a hazard except for a compact or smaller vehicle, for which it is still a D1 hazard.

Blast Cannon. \$6,500, 5 spaces. No special rules. Takes less extra space, because it has less recoil to deal with.

Heavy Recoilless Rifle. \$11,000, 9 spaces. As above.

Heavy Vulcan Machine Gun. \$8,500, 4 spaces. In a spinal mount, firing this weapon is no hazard for any vehicle larger than a compact. It's a D1 hazard for compact and smaller cars.

Gatling Cannon. \$9,000, 7 spaces. Firing this weapon is no hazard for an oversized vehicle, a D1 hazard for lesser vehicles larger than a sedan, a D2 for a sedan or mid-size and a D3 for anything smaller.

Rapid-Fire Tank Gun. \$12,000, 8 spaces. Firing this weapon from a spinal mount is a D1 hazard for oversized vehicles, a D2 hazard for lesser vehicles, and a D3 hazard for a mid-size or sedan (which *can* fit one in, but probably shouldn't, unless it's going to be used only while parked.)

Tank Gun, 75mm. \$12,000; 12 spaces. Firing a spinal-mounted Tank Gun is no hazard for an oversized vehicle. For regular vehicles, it's a D1 hazard. A luxury car is the smallest vehicle that can carry a spinal-mounted TG and still fit in a driver and a power plant.

Magnetic Cannon. \$253,000, 14 spaces. No special rules.

Heavy-Duty Flamethrower. \$2,000, 4 spaces. The low recoil makes this easy to spinal-mount, making it possible to fit it into a smaller car.

Military Flamethrower. \$3,000, 6 spaces. A vehicle as small as

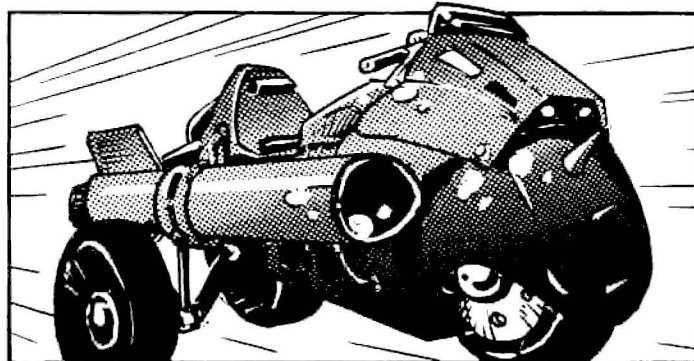
a compact can be built around a MFT, if it's gasoline-powered, but this is a risky combination . . . !

Experiments with a spinal-mount 90mm tank gun have so far been spectacularly unsuccessful.

Rocket Sidecars

"Maude, look at the sidecar on that thing. Looks like one big rocket. How'd ya like to be on the receiving end of that thing?"

"Druther get hit with it than ride it."



A rocket sidecar is an oversized rocket, rigged with wheels and a jettison joining. It's carried alongside a cycle, like a regular sidecar. When it fires, the wheels and extraneous equipment fall away. It doesn't roll to the target; it flies. The sidecar cannot be "reloaded" – it is a single-shot weapon in itself, just a big rocket with a few accessories.

The rocket itself is larger than any rocket which can normally be fired from a vehicle. It's too hot when it launches!

Equivalent in size to a heavy sidecar, the rocket sidecar (RS) is as follows: To hit 8, \$1,600, 600 lbs., spaces n/a, 3 DP. It's a one-shot weapon doing 6d damage. Its to-hit is slightly better than that of most rockets, because its huge size gives it more stability.

This basic RS has light suspension. Add \$500 for improved suspension (HC 1) or \$1,000 for heavy suspension (HC 2). Off-road suspension is not available. This is more than the equivalent suspension cost for a heavy sidecar, because the gear has to be entirely break-away!

Fireworks!

The rocket sidecar has a spectacular failure mode, more talked about than seen. If the jettison fails, the rocket will remain attached to the cycle, spinning it around and around like a giant fireworks. In game terms, this is a cumulative D2 hazard every phase until the inevitable crash, at which point the rocket goes off. This *will not* happen unless the device has been sabotaged, and this sort of sabotage would easily be noticed if someone bothered to check. But it's an evil thought, all the same.

AADA Status

Lockdown mode is legal in AADA tournament combat. Spinal mounts are legal provided the spinal-mounted weapon is a legal weapon. Lockdown mode and spinal mounts may be disallowed by the referee for races and other specific events.

Sidecar rockets are *not* legal in AADA-sanctioned tournament combat.

A STATE OF WAR

**By Tim Jacques and
Craig Sheeley**

On August 24, 2042, an unidentified assassin overpowered Heath Culp, a finalist in the 2042 AADA World Duelling Championships. Taking Culp's place in the duel, the assassin substituted a carefully-prepared and outwardly identical vehicle for Culp's tri-cycle. The "kamikaze car," as the vehicle is now universally known, was equipped with maximum rocket boost and loaded with bumper-triggered explosives. As soon as the duel started, the assassin piloted the vehicle up the ramp of St. Louis' arch arena and fired both boosters and jump jets, altering the vehicle's trajectory towards the Presidential Box. Security was unable to react, and the mass of the vehicle, combined with the power of the explosives, overpowered the box's armored defenses and completely destroyed the box and everyone inside. Among the casualties were President M. Culkin, Vice-President A. Carter, Secretary of the Interior J. Fonda-Turner II, Texan Ambassador H. R. Perot₃, as well as 15 Secret Service agents and eight arena officials and personnel.

Due to the extent of the destruction, no data on the assassin could be recovered. Cell samples taken from Culp's clothing, where the assassin had touched him, indicated a strong (60%+) chance that the assassin was Mongolian/Oriental; a cloning restoration is underway to establish a physical description.

Official White House reaction was handled by Secretary of State Barbara Baker, who expressed shock that such a thing could happen, and confidence that the President and Vice-President would be about their duties quickly, as soon as their clones could be activated. Unofficially, Secretary of War David D. Rake proclaimed that "the whole thing smells of a Texan/Japanese plot."

He was right.

Not five hours after the assassination, U.S. military bases along the West Coast were subjected to terrorist and insurgent attacks – sniping, bombings, servicepeople and their families murdered in their homes, arson and kidnappings. These incidents continued at unpredictable intervals, increasing in frequency. Speculation as to the terrorists' identity pointed to BLUD, ARF, ASP and even such fringe groups as the Irish Drinking Society Nutters. During the tenth hour of the crisis, the Black Asp interrupted satellite feeds to

deliver a furious harangue to the effect that: number one, ASP was not responsible for anything; and number two, ASP had just declared war on whoever was responsible, on the grounds of one-upmanship above and beyond the pale. "No one commits terrorism like that on my turf and gets away with it!" was the well-known terrorist's explanation.

Eleven hours and 48 minutes after the assassination, an Army Special Forces unit ambushed and captured a terrorist squad in the act of planting a bomb at Edwards AFB. The survivors were rigorously interrogated, and revealed that they were soldiers in the service of the Empire of Japan, and were following orders to destroy U.S. military power wherever and whenever possible.

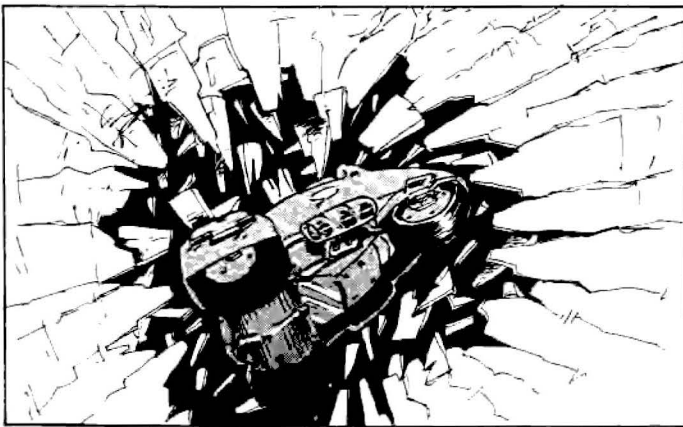
An emergency meeting of Congress was called to order at 0218, August 25. Congress was presented with the evidence gathered by the military, and voted to declare war. At 0310 EST, August 25, the United States of America officially entered a state of war with Japan.

The Origins of War: The Rise of the Protectorate

Since the 1980s, the Japanese have been a dominant economic power in the Pacific. Their relationship with the Americans began after World War II, when their former enemies became first economic advisers, then employers. For a time, the Japanese followed American economic policies and production methods closely; during this period, the words "Made in Japan" came to represent cheap and inferior copies of genuine (usually American) workmanship. This was to change.

During their industrial growth period (the 1960s and '70s), the Japanese improved their industrial and business techniques immensely. Often, these improvements were made at the expense of their trading partners, particularly the United States. Tariffs, import restrictions and government subsidies aided this economic growth. Dubious international business practices and trade laws produced a pattern of Japanese government interference that assisted Japan's economy and angered other nations. For example, Japanese patent laws declared that no international patent was valid in Japan. Only patents obtained in Japan would be legally binding – and it was impossible to obtain a Japanese patent unless a Japanese company owned, or would own the patent. In Japan, Japanese business could do no wrong; in an international scandal in the 1980s, it was revealed that one business had even consorted with one of Japan's deadliest enemies, the Soviet Union, selling it vital submarine technology. There was no censure; indeed, the government even defended the company's action! By 1990, Japan was the dominant economic power in the Pacific Rim.

As the collective memory of World War II grew dim, radical right-wing elements in Japanese society and politics grew stronger. These people clamored to return the Japanese military to a true international force, rather than just a sort of "national guard." They demonstrated side by side with their anti-war counterparts for the removal of American military power. Their influence was felt on many fronts; in one instance, school history texts



began deleting embarrassing facts about World War II and substituting soothing falsehoods instead, making the war out to be less of a defeat and more of a temporary setback.

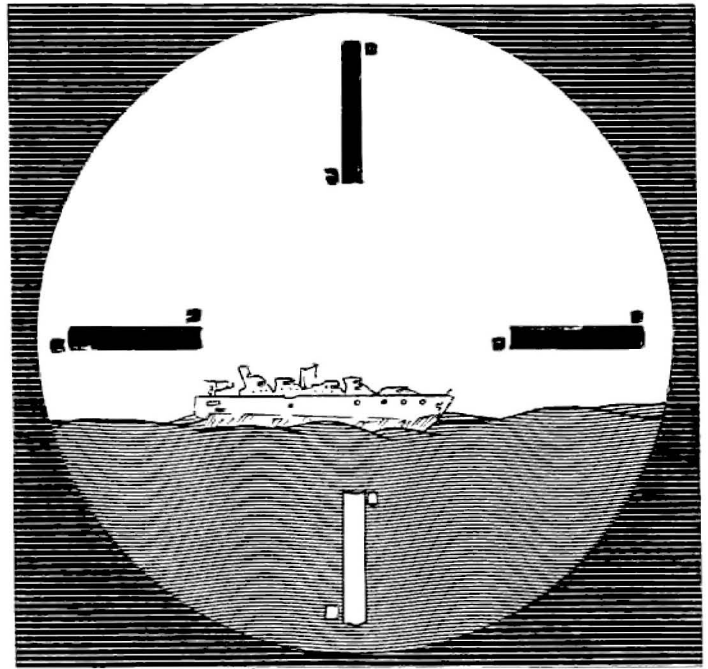
The right-wingers' prayers were answered when the Soviet Union collapsed and the U.S. started scaling back military spending in the late 1990s. The enormous U.S. deficit made the \$100 billion spent each year defending Japan a big target for budget-cutters in American government – after all, with the Soviet threat gone, why spend that money on needless defense? So the American military finally left Japan to its own resources, defensewise.

This was the cue for the hawks to begin rebuilding the Japanese military. Although the Soviet Union was gone, there were still threats to Japan, primarily the powers of China and Taiwan. A capable army and navy were necessary to insure Japan's safety. The engines of war were supplied by Japanese industry, which had already been manufacturing war material for the U.S. By the turn of the millennium, Japan had a decent-sized army and was building a major fleet, second in size only to the U.S. Navy. The hawks were able to justify this tremendous expenditure by pointing out that the reformed Russian Soviet Union, only a fraction of its former size but still formidable, was a real threat. The Wet Firecracker War of 2012, precipitated by the onset of the Grain Blight, vindicated all the expense, particularly the cost of establishing an SDI system over the Pacific Rim.

Japan was not as hard hit by the Blight as the rest of the world; there was practically no room left on Japan to grow rice, and most of its food was imported. Algae vats soon sprang up and artificial, algae-based foods were developed to replace natural ones – after all, the Japanese had invented tofu, the wonder curd, years before. With food assured, order was guaranteed, and Japan escaped the riots and anarchy that gripped the rest of the world. Times were hard: power and food were rationed, entire power grids had to switch over to alternate power sources while fuel cells, solar power and nuclear plants replaced the old oil-burners; luxuries were unheard of because industry and raw materials couldn't be spared to make them. Still, compared to the rest of the world, it was Paradise.

Within two years, Japan had recovered enough to move out into the Pacific Rim to assist its neighbors. The Japanese sent envoys to China, Taiwan, Indochina, the Philippines, and even Australia, inviting them to join the Japanese Protectorate. The terms were simple: joining the Protectorate meant being part of the Japan-sponsored trading circle, receiving favorable trade agreements with other countries, getting technical support and military protection from Protectorate (largely Japanese) sources, and in general being part of an elite trading consortium. The alternative was being shut out of any part of the Protectorate, not being allowed to trade with any Protectorate nation, and having any ships or aircraft venturing into Protectorate areas confiscated. An economic embodiment of the World War II "Tanaka Plan," it was the classic offer that no one could refuse; they couldn't afford to. Only Australia dictated its own terms for joining into trade agreements with the Protectorate, thereby protecting its own sovereignty and military boundaries – a decision which turned out to be very wise in the long run.

Actual military aggression was rare during the foundation of the Protectorate, and for the most part Protectorate soldiers were perceived as beneficial, since they stopped pirate depredations and bandit infestations. Most of the time, the mere threat of military power was enough to bring intractable nations into line. A few countries resisted, and were essentially conquered. These were terri-



ories that Japan had lusted after for centuries . . . Korea, Manchuria and Taiwan were seized and turned into virtual corporate states.

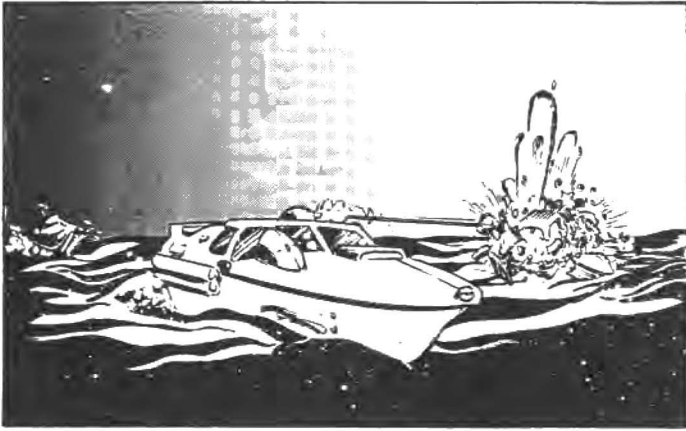
The New Tanaka Plan worked. By the year 2025, the Japanese Protectorate controlled the Asian Pacific Rim.

The Stage Is Set

The Japanese planners realized that they would need to fight the United States sooner or later; even in its weakened state, the U.S. was simply too powerful to ignore and too dominant in the other half of the Pacific Rim to isolate. So they made plans to start the fight, to put the war on their terms. They realized that the goal of decisively defeating the U.S. was beyond their grasp – that would require conquest on land, and there was no way that Japan could ship the necessary troops to America. Even attempting a land invasion would destroy their economy; commercial ships needed to sustain the economy of Japan and the Protectorate would need to be converted to troop transports, and the U.S. submarine fleet – still the world's most deadly – could be expected to inflict crippling losses before the Japanese could even land. No, the best that could be hoped for would be to deal the U.S. some sort of public humiliation – a defeat so demoralizing that they would never be able to oppose the Protectorate again.

With this goal in mind, the New Tanaka Plan was extended onto American soil. The Japanese came as employers and investors, not as invaders, establishing factories and businesses on the West Coast to make use of inexpensive American labor, and buying large tracts of land in Montana. Japanese corporations invested heavily in the oil companies that practically owned Alaska, and showed them how to cut their costs by offering inexpensive, well-trained and well-equipped security troops from Japan. Hawaii had long been a favorite investment area for yen; now the practice and its quantity intensified.

The plan called for insertion of loyal troops into enemy territory, and creation of a fifth column of friendly natives, loyal to their employers first and to their country second. These goals were easily met. With these objectives achieved, all that was needed was the order to commence war activities.



The Players

Both sides have their own problems with military strength. In a military situation, one soldier in the right place at the right time is worth a division of tanks elsewhere.

U.S. forces are limited. It has 13 Army divisions, with one tied to the East Coast and at least two required to remain near the Free Oil States. One USMC division was neutralized by being stationed at Quantico; the other would bear the brunt of the Japanese attack, based as it was in California, guarding U.S. naval assets. Although mobile, the Japanese counted on the rest of the divisions being hung up in transit across the nation to trouble spots – from Japan's point of view, it would not be possible for the U.S. to move them across the Pacific to threaten the Protectorate directly.

The U.S. Aerospace Force has three wings of scramjet aerospace fighters, at only 32 aircraft per wing instead of the usual 64. This is in addition to the cargo shuttles used to service and maintain the U.S. satellite defense interdiction network (SDI).

The real threat is the U.S. Navy. It is the only force in the U.S. arsenal that can seriously damage the Protectorate, short of nuclear war. The Navy *can* move troops across the ocean to menace Protectorate holdings, and has the firepower to devastate the Protectorate merchant marine, thereby crippling import-dependent Japan.

The Navy consists of combat groups. There are 7 carrier groups, each based around a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier which carries 80+ combat aircraft. There are 4 battleship groups, each centered on one nuclear-powered Iowa-class superdreadnaught. There are 5 cruiser groups, with 2 or 3 missile and combat cruisers at the core of each. The other ships in a group always include one AEGIS ship to coordinate fire, one mini-sub tender, one VTOL mini-carrier, one missile ship, and five to ten general-purpose frigates. In addition to these combat groups, large numbers of coastal patrol craft roam the Caribbean and the southern California coasts.

The most fearsome part of the Navy is the submarine force. Operating independently, the 80+ attack subs and 70+ nuclear missile subs are capable of destroying the entire Japanese merchant marine fleet on their own. To make matters worse, science has still not come up with a way to detect submerged submarines from orbit.

One item of historical curiosity is the U.S. Navy's adoption of so-called "mini-subs." Technically, they're only mini-subs because they're not full-sized nuclear monstrosities. Instead, they are fast, ten-man subs powered by fuel cells. The Navy uses them for clandestine reconnaissance and as a secret attack force. One or two always patrol with each naval battle group to protect it against enemy submarines. The historical curiosity comes from the irony

of the U.S. Navy adopting an idea that the Japanese Navy executed so poorly 100 years ago.

The Japanese forces are more numerous, but have an even larger area to defend – the eastern Pacific Rim is a big place. Most of their forces are flung so widely that the chance of their uniting enough to fight a real war on American soil is problematical at best. The Army troops are stationed as follows: 20% in China, 20% in Southeast Asia, 5% in Korea, 5% in Manchuria, 10% in Micronesia, 5% in Philippines, 10% on mobile duty between Protectorate stations and 25% held in reserve in Japan.

The regular army of the Protectorate is 600 divisions, only 200 of which are front-line combat units. 70% of the army is ethnic Japanese, while the rest are Protectorate Allied forces drawn from other countries and stationed in foreign locations – the Japanese learned from history that the best way to handle native troops is to isolate them from the natives. All Japanese divisions are mechanized, organized in a fashion similar to that of the U.S. army divisions. In general, though, their divisions feature less heavy armor than U.S. formations – the tanks are too heavy to ship easily across the ocean. Instead, they tend to concentrate on airmobile formations.

In a departure from the doctrine of a century ago, Protectorate Marines are more than a garrison force for the Navy. Instead, they are now an amphibious assault force – sort of a rapid deployment group that can be shuttled swiftly from one trouble spot to another. Protectorate Marines are deployed in 65 brigades of 3,000 men.

The Protectorate Air Force is arranged in the same fashion that hamstrung the old U.S. Air Force. An autonomous branch of the Protectorate armed forces, it is in charge of all fixed-wing aircraft save those employed by the Navy. It is monolithic, and features an astounding number of aircraft. When the fact that the aircraft are smaller and less expensive than those of five decades ago is taken into consideration, the 4,000 aircraft of the Protectorate Air Force represent less of an economic investment than might be imagined. These aircraft are divided into wings of 64 aircraft apiece, split into 40 fighter wings (largely defensive), 10 fighter-bomber tactics wings (largely offensive and usually directly attached to Army control), 5 wings of dedicated bombers, 4 wings of military transport craft and a half-wing of strategic aircraft (largely experimental and not considered to be of much importance during wars). Finally, the Protectorate fields around 20 scramjet fighters and 10 shuttles to maintain and protect the Japanese SDI system.

The Protectorate Navy is as huge as the Protectorate itself. By necessity, the Navy is spread out across the Pacific Rim, and can't spare enough forces to concentrate its combat groups in overwhelming strength. There are approximately 500 ships in the Protectorate Navy (most of them frigates and patrol boats). These include 12 nuclear carriers, most of them smaller than the American monsters (fielding 64 aircraft instead of the 80+ of the American carriers), five "battleships" (heavy guided-missile cruisers carrying rapid-fire 6" guns in addition to their missile armaments), 20 guided-missile cruisers, 15 fire-coordination ships (AEGIS-style) and a host of smaller ships. Combat task forces are formed around the carriers and "battleships," with a few cruiser groups. At least eight of these groups are stuck on-station, patrolling Indochina, the South China Sea, and the coast of Korea, or station-keeping off Australia (a dubious ally) and keeping the peace throughout Micronesia. At the beginning of the war, another capital-ship task force was dispatched to reinforce the Australian force, since the Australians have had a habit of siding with the Americans in the past.

The Protectorate is keenly aware of the fact that the U.S. submarine fleet threatens both the economic and military existence of Japan. To combat this, a crash program has produced a submarine fleet as large as, and even more advanced than, the aging U.S. fleet, although the submarines are smaller and less well-armed than the U.S. boats. It is believed that most of these submarines are off the Japanese coast to defend the sea lanes. It is a virtual certainty that some of these subs are ballistic-missile submarines.

The last and most important forces in Protectorate service are those located on United States territory. These are concealed under the guise of corporate security, and are deployed in the following numbers: in Hawaii, a battalion of special forces, a complete regiment of airborne infantry, a regiment of lightly-mechanized infantry (equipped with armored cars and light armor) and an air wing of 64 commercial combat aircraft; in Alaska, two to three companies of special forces, two regiments of mechanized ground infantry and two air wings of combat and commercial transport craft; and in the landbound stronghold of Montana, approximately two battalions of special forces, four regiments of ground vehicle mechanized infantry and light armor, two regiments of airborne infantry and two combat air wings.

Protectorate special weapons capabilities are unknown, but believed to be quite advanced. They certainly have nuclear weapons, but U.S. intelligence believes these are probably just tactical bombs, not strategic weapons.

The Protectorate does employ mercenaries, but only on a very limited scale. Non-Japanese mercs are not popular, and are considered to be less than honorable. Most of these mercenary units are stationed in non-combat positions, filling in gaps where Protectorate forces are unavailable or politically unpopular.

The Protectorate Offensive

The assassination of the president and vice president was apparently the signal to trigger general insurgency actions. Most of these actions have been directed at U.S. military installations, with the aim of destroying the United States' ability to wage war on the Pacific front.

These attacks – sporadic, ruthless, and extremely destructive – have besieged U.S. military bases up and down the Desert West and the West Coast. The naval bases at San Diego and San Francisco have been closed off by Marine garrisons, who are firing at anyone and anything that comes near and can't be positively identified. Reports from Hawaii indicate that the Protectorate forces there are engaging in open warfare, and have captured the naval base at Pearl Harbor. The Marine brigade in Hawaii has been defeated and has gone to ground, per operational doctrine, to function as the cadre for a partisan uprising.



In Montana, the Protectorate forces have fortified the entire state and are using it as a base for launching air and ground strikes. Across the rest of the country, secret commando forces are committing terrorist assaults on other military bases, road infrastructures (predominantly bridges) and airports. In space, secret Japanese kill-sats have been activated and committed to destroying American SDI and surveillance satellites.

U.S. Response

The general response from the Federal military has been one of shock. Unprepared for a guerrilla war, Federal forces have backedpedaled into defensive positions – “circling the wagons,” so to speak. Every U.S. military base has gone on full wartime footing, and is closed to outside traffic – which means that the soldiers inside every base are shooting at anything that they even suspect could be an enemy.

Only the Navy and the USAF have initiated positive responses to the war. The USAF, confronted with the attack on the SDI setup, has launched a full wing of its scramjets into orbit to “blast everything that isn't ours” out of the sky. Initial reports indicate a probable loss of 40% of the Protectorate satellites, as well as confirmed loss of five commercial broadcast satellites, three weather monitors, eight independent communications beacons, and an abandoned Soviet science station. Commercial damage in the conflict is estimated to exceed \$1 billion in the first six hours of battle. Apparently the USAF was speaking quite literally when describing its battle plans. The Protectorate has so far declined to engage in scramjet combat – a wise move given the current mood of the USAF.

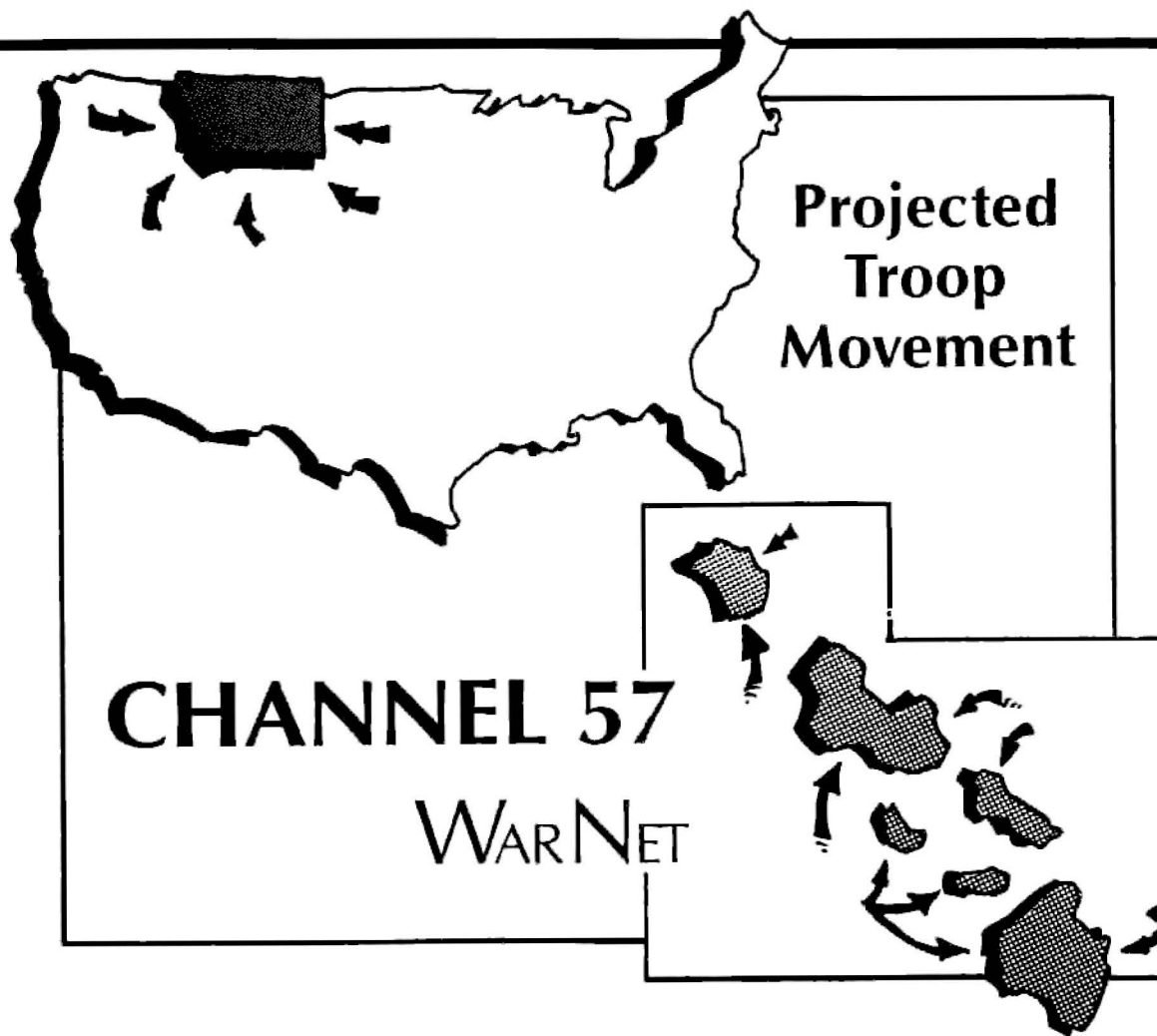
The Navy has put every vessel and base on full battle alert, and all ships in the Pacific theater are converging on assigned positions in mid-Pacific. No naval battles have yet occurred, but tactical predictions call for submarine attacks on both the U.S. Navy and Protectorate merchant marine ships at any moment.

Official AADA Announcement

As of midnight, August 26, 2042, the federal government of the United States of America has issued a blanket letter of marque and reprisal against the Japanese Protectorate. This letter is issued to any and all citizens of the United States of America. The conditions of this letter are as follows: \$500 in cash for the capture and remission of living operatives of the Japanese Protectorate to the military intelligence authorities of the United States of America, and 2% of the estimated market value of equipment and installations belonging to the Japanese Protectorate upon positive proof (both physical and photographic) of destruction of said equipment and installations.

The AADA fully supports this policy, and has volunteered its services to the government of the United States of America. AADA offices are now deputized as government intelligence collection stations, and are authorized to receive evidence of property destruction and live prisoners of war.

The AADA condemns the Japanese Protectorate for this cowardly and unsportsmanlike action against the United States of America, and wholeheartedly supports the position and goals of the USA.



Adventure Ideas

A-Hunting We Will Go

How can any duellist ask for more? The Japanese have really slipped up, going terrorist in the U.S., where every other car sports more armament than most World War II-era Japanese tanks. To sweeten the deal, the Feds are giving \$500 for live Japanese soldiers and operatives, and 2% of market value for wanton destruction of Japanese Protectorate installations! That's a \$1,000,000 return for fragging a \$50-million factory, which is a fairly small factory. Get the car loaded up, drive out, and be paid to have fun! An adventure for the whole family. The referee's setup is a small Protectorate-owned installation, say, a factory guarded by armed soldiers (largely Japanese workers, not front-line troops) and a few security guards.

The Hunters Hunted

Say you don't live near Montana, the West Coast or Hawaii, where all the major Protectorate bounties are running around. Protectorate terrorists are hitting practically every important transport and military target in the country, and these installations are everywhere. Just set up a watch outside of one and wait for Protectorate terrorists to wander in. Of course, there is always the risk of having them find you before you find them . . . and the referee knows that that's exactly what's going to happen. The Protectorate troops are special forces (Handgunner 4, Running 3, Stealth 4) and equipped to the teeth with the latest in expensive destructive and stealthy

gear, including HLAWS, Gyro-sluggers, limpet mines and lethal grenades. Have two of them for every duellist vehicle, put the action at night in close terrain (like woods), and have at it.

The Montana Irregulars

The Big Sky Liberation Army needs men and guns. It plans a major series of partisan assaults on nearly every target in Montana, and welcomes any true-blue Americans who are willing to risk all in order to kick Protectorate keister.

Terrorist Attack

The AADA has made itself a legal and open target by siding with the U.S. They need AADA members to help protect AADA offices; these volunteers are paid \$100 per day and get free ammo and half salvage rights to any terrorist equipment captured in an attack. Let the volunteers get settled in, then hit them with a team of Protectorate special forces like those described in *The Hunters Hunted*, above, only send in 4 Protectorate special forces men per duellist vehicle and give them some tripod-mounted military armament, too. *Car Wars Tanks* or *Uncle Al's Catalog From Hell* feature this expensive and lethal military gear.

Stay Tuned

The AADA will use this space in future issues to keep its membership informed on the progress of the war, and on duellists' opportunities to defend their homes.

Oldest Trick in the Book

By Michael Stackpole

I slid into the leather-lined custom Kevlar bucket seat and closed the car's door. It thumped solidly shut, sealing out road noise and exhaust fumes. The metallic clicks and clacks of my safety harness accompanied the whispered hiss of the cockpit pressurizing itself. I punched my preignition code into the dashpad, bringing up my electrical system, then I snapped the complink line into the socket on my helmet.

I stabbed the celmodem button on my dashboard with the middle finger of my left hand. I frowned as the device dialed in and established the connection between Opsbase and the Badger. The knuckle on that finger hurt as if I'd punched someone, but I hadn't. I made a fist and studied the knuckle from every angle, trying to figure out if it was swollen. I couldn't tell and refused to believe it was arthritis setting in. Yeah, my mother's hands had ached like that when I was a kid, but she was *old*.

"About time you got into your rustbucket, Allard." The snippy young woman's voice told me I'd get no sympathy, despite the fact that the call at home had roused me a bit earlier than I'd allowed myself to become accustomed to. A Wolfhound trainee in her last six months before hitting the streets, she clearly hated being my Ops shadow. "The Lobo is 5.2 miles from your present location, which I notice is remaining incredibly stable."

"Worrying like that will wrinkle your pretty little face, Wendy." I keyed the ignition code, waited a second and tapped in the confirmation code, then the full dozen cylinders under the Badger's hood roared to life. "Want to give me cross-streets?"

"Sending to your Tacmap." A laser mounted in my helmet splayed a green and red map of the city on the faceplate. It isolated one small sector, then blew it up and started painting in details. Two Farmer's Equity Wolves became red arrows moving through the green streets. Red diamonds marked some of our sheep – Allcity used that sort of symbolism to remind me how valuable they were to the company – and the other cars were represented by asterisks, making them accidents just waiting to happen.

The Lobo got a solid red ball that flashed a lot. "Got him, Ops."

"Get him, Allard! Make it fast because the delay will make us liable for 1.7 more payouts."

"Your wish is my command."

The Badger swung around the semicircular drive in front of my house and cruised out into the street. It had a silver body with three black stripes running from the grill over the roof to the trunk. Blockier than most cars nowadays, and made more so by the heavy ramplates up front and in the rear, it moved through the streets like a living fossil. It made all the other cars look sleek and fragile, and I realized the same could probably be said of me in comparison to most of the folks in my trade these days.

It struck me as funny, as I drove through the awakening city, that my occupation had not existed in the time of my grandfather. When insurance companies succeeded in pushing the government to give them a guaranteed monopoly by requiring all drivers to carry insurance, things looked good indeed. The normally uninsurable were forced to pay incredible amounts of money for their coverage, and the vertical integration of repair facilities, scrap

yards and car dealerships meant the insurance companies could minimize costs and maximize profits.

Very quickly they realized they had also locked themselves into stagnation because they had no way to increase their company rolls. Their rates had been stabilized at a uniformly high level, so no driver had any reason to switch companies. While reducing rates might inspire a change, that would also gut a company's profit margin, and the insurance companies had no reason to repeat the disaster that fare wars had caused among airlines late in the 20th century.

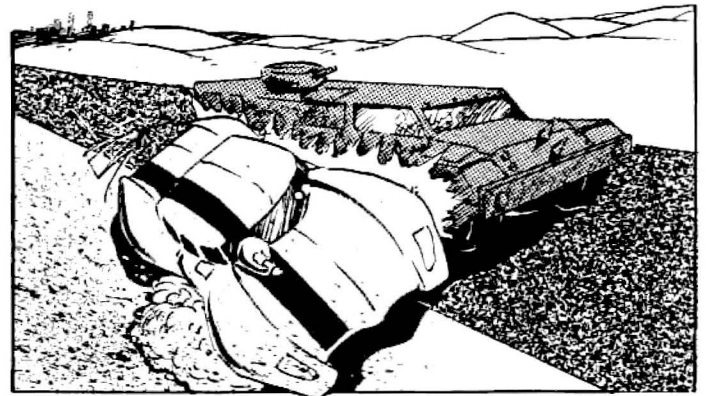
Someone – probably the same guy who started calling customers "sheep" – realized that because all insurance had been made "no fault," if one company's clients suffered an inordinate number of accidents, it would have to pay out, hurting it in the pocketbook. The clients would lose time, as well as their lives in a few cases, so they would be partial to switching to a company that would offer them protection. That it was the same company that had hit them wouldn't matter as long as they'd not be inconvenienced in the future.

This strategy led to the creation of Wolves. Allcity struck first, bringing in a whole bunch of drivers with horrible driving records. They set them loose to ram anyone who wasn't with Allcity. They stopped traffic faster than a blizzard in Dallas and backed two carriers out of that market within two weeks. Other companies quickly responded and a bump-and-grind war began for the budgets and savings of the driving population. Rate increases to support the companies' Wolves – fairly quickly professional drivers were hired for those positions – were approved and the companies recorded skyrocketing sales.

Wolves began to protect their own sheep as well as hunting the sheep from other flocks. This began the stagnation anew, and the companies did not like it. They knew they had to do something, and that something involved limiting the Wolves.

Enter the Wolfhounds.

I turned easily onto First Avenue and cruised on up north toward Greenway and the Lobo I was tracking. A Lobo is a rogue driver who is indiscreet and indiscriminate in his hits. Most of them are drunks who think of parallel parking as something that



can be done in three dimensions. Very few are dangerous and many are little more than nuisances. I had one who turned out to be an old woman who was legally blind. She only came out when her dozen cats needed food or litter, and then she only went to the store, which meant her trips were random and very hard to track. Had I not gotten a lucky break – being out getting fish food as it turned out – I'd never have gotten her.

Nabbing her earned me two weeks on the Riviera and that was where I met Jeanne.

Turning right onto Greenway I spotted the Lobo and began pining for the days when little Mabel Krantz had been marauding. This Lobo drove a jacked up 4x4 that rode almost five feet off the ground. He had ram bumpers, same as me, but he'd roll over me if I tried to let the Badger take a bite out of him. The .50-caliber machine guns I had mounted fore and aft would be useful only at longer range because of the maximum elevation I could crank them up to, and this guy looked like he'd take a lot of killing before he stopped.

"Found him, Wendy. Looks nasty." I squinted as the truck cut around a car. Mounted on a post in the bed of the pickup I saw a Vickers machine gun. A blond kid cranked it around and let a burst rip through the roof of a Ford Mosquito II. That car wandered off aimlessly into oncoming traffic.

I hit my horn, then engaged targeting by looking down at the target icon at the base of my faceplate. The faceplate grid shifted around with two bands above and below marking how high and low my guns could go. A red cross hovered in the middle and tracked along with my right eye. I hit the firing stud on my steering wheel just as the kid with the Vickers in the back sprayed a stream of bullets across my windscreen. They made me duck away even though the glass held.

Normally my shying would have made the shots miss, but the driver juke'd in mirror with my flinch. My fire walked up the front of the truck. The armored grill deflected most bullets, but one or two got through. The radiator exploded in a cloud of yellow-green steam and fluid gushed like blood from beneath the front bumper. My bullets likewise skipped off his windshield, but the ones that passed over his cab succeeded in making his gunner shorter by about a head.

The truck bigfooted over a compact, turning it into a sub-sub-compact, then headed straight for me. As he closed, the crosshair trained on his truck tracked up into the red zone, depriving me of a shot. My only chance against him was gaining some distance so I could take a shot. Spinning the wheel to the left, I cut across three lanes of traffic, through the turn lane and started west on Greenway. Hitting the gas, I pulled out in front of him and assumed all was going well until he began to drift back to the east-bound lane.

Glancing down at the menubar, I shifted my display back to Tactical and I suddenly saw in laserlight what he spotted from his cab. Five hundred yards in front of us a schoolbus was releasing a stream of kids into a packed schoolyard. The bus itself was represented by a series of three asterisks. When I stared at its image for two seconds, it highlighted. A side readout told me that the bus was insured by Mutual Trust & Care.

"Let him go, Allard."

"You looking over my shoulder, Wendy?"

"You've done your job. You get another bonus point for your retirement package." Her voice began to take on an edge when she realized I hadn't stopped. "Leave him alone."

"Kids, Wendy."

"MT&C has the school's liability, Allard."

I'm closer and can see some of the kids laughing and running. "They're Rowan's age, Wendy."

My options are fading fast. If I pulled into the truck's six o'clock position and let him get farther out, I could try to back shoot him. Still, one juke and I might hit the bus. Worse yet, I had no guarantee that I could kill him or that his truck wouldn't roll on and hurt someone. Ramming was out because I was too small, but I *could* deflect him.

"She's dead, Allard. Don't do anything. She's not coming back."

I punched the accelerator down and sideswiped an old Impala as I arrowed in toward the bus. Trimming my speed, I swung around, letting the rear end fishtail so I was pointed straight at the truck. Given how high it rode off the ground, I knew it couldn't be that stable. If I waited for the right moment, which would be about the time it hit my nose, I could goose the engine and push forward, which ought to be enough to tip the damned thing over.

Of course I'd be dead, and that would do nothing for my day, but what the hell. The day had started poorly, so it might as well end bad, too.

Bracing for that impact, time seemed to slow for the truck and me. Everything else seemed to be moving as fast as normal or faster. Outside sounds made no sense as I watched the truck bearing down on me. Through the steam I could see snatches of the driver's face, and I could count his whitened knuckles clutching the wheel.

I wondered if his hands hurt the way mine did.

Twenty yards until impact and bits and pieces of my life started to flash before my eyes. I saw the good things – Jeanne on the beach where I met her, then her smiling in the hospital as she introduced me to our daughter, Rowan. I saw Rowan shrieking with delight riding a pony at an Allcity picnic, and her angelic little face in the golden glow of a nightlight.

I smiled, because of what I remembered and because I hadn't seen what I labored so hard to forget.

Ten yards. I squinted, reminding myself I could not hit the gas at the first impact, but that I needed to wait until the big tire had begun to drive the Badger's nose into the street. I had to keep my foot down and the wheel straight no matter what pain I felt when the tire crushed the cockpit. It wouldn't take that long to do what I had to do, and I *had* to do it.

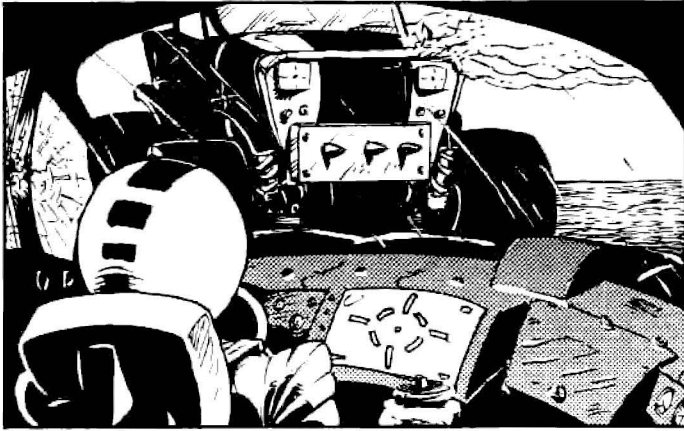
The tire hitting my front bumper shocked me into reality. I saw each tread in exquisite detail as the truck's wheel started to climb upward. The truck's ramplate rose up and out of sight above the edge of my windscreen. Drops of radiator fluid hit the Badger's hood and bubbled away to vapor. I pitched slightly forward and cursed having disabled my airbag because of my propensity for ramming targets.

I wondered if it would hurt when the tire drove my head down between my shoulder blades.

Then the impossible happened; the wheel reversed itself. It spun back and the Badger's nose came back up. The truck rolled back a bit, then came forward and bumped up against the Badger like Rowan's pony nuzzling me for a sugar lump. I wondered for a second what had prompted the Lobo to stop, then I took a second look at the truck and laughed aloud.

The steam had become thicker and had taken on a black tint. The engine had melted down fifty yards away. The truck had coasted up to the point where it hit me.

"Allard, what's happening? Did you stop him?"



"Keep your shorts on, Wendy." I shook my head. "He stopped because of what I did earlier. He never really had a shot at the bus."

"I will want a full report," she snarled, sentencing me to the only hard labor she could inflict on me. "If I can find any indication . . ."

"Take it out of overdrive, Wendy." I smiled and wished she could have seen my grin. "MT&C didn't take a hit, but I'm sure the boys down in promotion will love the fact that an Allcity Wolfhound stopped a Lobo from aching a school bus. Work with me on this."

Pure fury arced through her voice. "I am counting the seconds until you retire, Allard. You just don't understand – you old ones just don't understand."

"That's right, they don't make them like they did in the old days," I agreed with her, then broke the commlink. "In my day a *soul* came standard."

I gave the Lobo a lift to our training center – he had shown some talent – then headed off to Ford Park. I assumed Wendy was furious with me for cutting my cellular link. I didn't know which bugged her more, my having cut the link, or my being *able* to cut it. No one is supposed to be able to break a celmodem link once the car is up and running, but I'm related to the guys who own Allard Technologies and who make all the fancy chips running the Badger. I've got more tricks in store for her, but I'm saving them in case my appeal of the mandatory retirement clause in my contract falls through. If I have to go, after all, I want her to have something to remember me by.

Ford Park is pretty nice as tiny municipal parks go. Graffiti and gang tags deface most of the buildings, but no one really hangs out in it. Ever since all the Wolfhounds operating the city declared it neutral territory where we can rest and recreate, the parking lot tends to be relatively uncluttered with cars. If you aren't a Wolf, a Wolfhound or crazier than a psychotic Lobo, you don't come here.

I slid the Badger in next to a tan midsize with custom trim which explained why it was known as the Diamondback. On the other side of it I saw a white sedan called the Typhoon. They belong to two Wolfhounds I've known for 15 years and who are my oldest friends save one, despite the fact that they work for other companies. Sitting down to breakfast with them could have gotten me fired, but not all of Allcity's administrators were as anal-retentive as Wendy the Wolfhound Puppy.

Besides, fire me and I'd get picked up by someone else. Allcity knows I earn my paycheck, which is why I get the big bucks, and

yet another reason they don't want me working for another company.

Steve Twain waved me over to the concrete table where he sat with Jack Hawthorne. I pointed to a roach-coach, but he tossed me a cold plastic pint of orange juice. "Old folks like you need your vitamins."

I growled at him. "Wise guy, all I need." I would have flipped him off, but my knuckle still hurt. "You got any ibuprofen tabs to go with this?"

Twain, who is tall and rangy without being gangly or geeky, shook his head. "That Lobo didn't tag you, did he?"

"Nope, not even close."

"Not how it looked on Diamondback's Tacmap," Hawthorne hooted. He's smaller than me, at least build-wise, with that slender sort of quickness that's almost as serpentine as his car's nickname. He also tends to speak of himself in the third person, which can be annoying until you get used to it. "As nearly as Diamondback could see, the Lobo and that bus made you into a Badger sandwich. By the way, Diamondback's supervisors thank you for the save."

"Nice to know I have fans somewhere." I opened the orange juice and drained about half of it. "There are times when I think I got Wendy as my Ops liaison just so I'd take that early retirement package Allcity has been offering."

"She just wants you to retire so she can get your slot on the streets. She's ambitious."

I frowned. "Heck, I might just make her dream come true."

"Don't give up." Twain shot me a smile. "We made the oath at Blood Lake that we'd force the companies to make good on their promises. Others took the bronze ring and got out, but not me."

"Diamondback is in for the long haul."

"I'm in as well." I let out a sigh and massaged my knuckle. Despite our affirmations, we all knew what the true score was. We were old men in a young men's game. The Lobo I had dropped off at the training center would come out of there faster on the trigger than me. He'd also have a vehicle with sharper weapons and more options than I did. "We're all fighting off the ravages of time, but of course, you two are cheating."

"Cheating? Just because my Typhoon has the sort of sophisticated weaponry needed to vaporize a Lobo's truck you think I'm cheating?" Twain took on an air of wounded pride, but all three of us knew he'd modified his vehicle over and over, and the fixes had been coming faster and faster as we all approached the magic age of 36. "Change with the times or die with them."

I shrugged and appropriated half of the egg 'n' muffin Hawthorne had laid out on a clean napkin. "Beams and bombs are fine, but I prefer something with true stopping power. The .50s do me fine. What, no hash browns? How can it be a meal without potatoes?"

Hawthorne opened his mouth to protest my remark or my appropriation of food or both, but he never spoke. I twisted around and followed his line of sight to where a sleek black car pulled into the parking lot and blocked all three of our cars. Whoever had done that clearly had a deathwish, and I was prompted to laugh until I saw a flash of red on the hood and the doors. I couldn't see very clearly, but the design did appear to be that of an hourglass.

The door hissed with the sound of pressurized air, then it opened and a tall woman emerged one long leg at a time. She wore a tight black driving suit that shone like well-polished leather. Aside from a number of silver zippers, the only color on the outfit came in the form of a red hourglass on her flat abdomen.



She pulled off her black helmet and shook out long locks of raven's-wing black hair. She regarded us with eyes that would have been cold even if they weren't ice-blue. The black of her hair and ruby red of her lips contrasted sharply with the pale, corpse-like pallor of her skin. Somehow I had the feeling I was looking at the lead driver for Team Death, and I got the distinct impression she was watching us like a fat man eyeing the dessert cart in a fancy restaurant.

It took me only a second to identify her, and that sent a shiver through my body. I didn't see the other two start, but I know seeing her had to have been as much of a shock for them as it was for me. We'd all heard stories about a woman who hunted Wolfhounds. She called herself the Black Widow and had amassed a string of kills sufficient to fill a graveyard all on its own. We'd all debated the odds of someone being able to do what she had been rumored to do, and put them at a half-million to one. But seeing her in the flesh quickly converted to me into a long-odds bettor.

She stalked from the parking lot across the narrow strip of lawn to our table. Her long legs ate up the distance with ease and the "Keep Off The Grass" sign passed contemptuously beneath her notice. All around us the knots of Wolves who had once hoped to become Wolfhounds began to dissolve and a double-dozen cars left the lot, leaving us alone with her.

She stopped and planted her hands on her hips. Her shadow fell across our table and goosebumps rose on my arm where it touched me. "How fortunate to find you all here." Her throaty voice reminded me of Jeanne, late at night, when we were both exhausted,

but it lacked the warmth and love I had heard in my wife's whispers.

I smiled to force away the dread creeping into me. "We are in a service industry, after all, so your pleasure is our duty."

She ignored me, which did not entirely displease me. "Twain, you will be first. On the west side. Tomorrow. I will give you the details later." Her arctic gaze focused on Hawthorne and me. "I'll decide which of you is next at *his* funeral."

She turned her back on us and started back to her car. Twain looked stunned and Hawthorne wasn't taking it much better. I felt empty inside, but I'd grown used to that since the accident, so I decided I wouldn't let fear fill me. Anything would be better than fear and, in that moment before panic could set in, I settled on using stupidity as filler.

I boosted myself off the table and ran after her. I grabbed her with my left hand around her upper arm. Her muscles felt like corded steel and she ripped her arm free as she spun. I tried to tell myself that she couldn't have pulled away if my hand didn't hurt, but even stupidity is better than self-deception, so I dropped that idea.

Despite the anger in her eyes, her stare didn't warm up at all. "That was very foolish, Mr. Allard."

"Why?" I apparently have a talent for stupid. "Are you going to kill me *more* because of it?"

What might pass for amusement flickered across her face before it congealed back into a non-expressive mask. "It's not cockiness or bravado. You are afraid, yes?"

I nodded. "I'm afraid, yes."

"And you admit it?"

I nodded again. "I'm not afraid of the truth. The truth and I are old friends."

She hesitated, just for a second, then smiled. "Ah, yes, the death of your wife and child. You are alone."

"Even death can't be as bad as being alone."

"Well then, Mr. Allard, you and I have something in common, for I am alone, too." She traced the line of my jaw with a cold finger. "In honor of that fact, perhaps I will take you last."

"I won't be easy to kill, you know."

She smiled with a predatory grin. "In the Badger? The technology in that beast was old when you killed my father. Taking you won't be a kill, it will be an execution. Pity to destroy an heirloom, but vengeance cannot be thwarted."

My jaw dropped open. "Tiffany?"

She nodded and half-lowered her eyelids in a salute. "Yes, for all the good it will do you, I am Tiffany Morgan. Until we meet again."

She kissed me on the cheek and turned away laughing.

I massaged my left hand as she returned to her car and abandoned us.

The chatter through the celmodem a day later suggested the Typhoon had been reduced to a twisted skeleton of fire-blackened metal. The description fit, sort of, but only if someone gathered up all the little pieces, welded them back together and had a good imagination.

I have a good imagination. I flipped my commlink over the adjustors' Tacfrequency and caught about every third word. It was enough to give me a good picture of what happened. Tiffany had found him on the west side, as she had predicted, and had gone at it with him, hot and heavy. In the end she lasered his minedropper's magazine and set off a string of explosions inside the Typhoon. It tore the car apart from the inside out.

The casket would be light.

I pulled up beside the Diamondback and got out to survey the wreckage. It looked even more torn up than I had imagined. "It must have been fast."

Hawthorne agreed. "The Diamondback doesn't want to go that way. The Diamondback's motto is 'Live fast, die young and leave a beautiful corpse.'"

"We're doing the first, it's too late for the second and, Lord have mercy . . ." A lump rising in my throat cut my voice off as I thought about the bloody sheets some EMT drivers had thrown over Jeanne and Rowan. "Dammit, there's no such thing as a beautiful corpse."

We looked at each other and I knew we were thinking the same thing – a thought so horrible we would never say it out loud. The Typhoon's minedropper was mounted in the rear. Steve had always bragged that it was there as a little surprise for anyone who came after him. He'd never used it because, like Jack and me, he'd never run from anyone in his life. We'd all survived Blood Lake, which meant we didn't have to run from anyone.

Until now. Until the Black Widow.

I slapped Hawthorne on the shoulder. "Don't worry. She burned off a lot of luck taking Steve. You'll do her."

"The Diamondback will be ready."

I nodded and climbed back into the Badger. I wended my way home, using back streets and alleys, less to elude Tiffany Morgan than to avoid the normal gangle of erratic drivers on the

streets. I pulled into the garage without incident and used the remote to close the door behind me. I shut off the engine and sat in the dark for a while. Remembering.

Sighing, I slid from the car and entered the house. Jeanne had picked it out and decorated it, so I remained living in it despite its being far too big for me alone. Actually I'm not alone, but the house is still too big and I still can't bring myself to leave it and the memories behind.

The other resident has no choice.

He's a fish, which limits his options considerably.

I placed my helmet on top of the washing machine, then walked through the kitchen and into the living room. I flicked on the overheads and smiled at the flash of gold in the aquarium that makes up the whole wall on the right. His fantail wagging back and forth as if he were an enthusiastic puppy, my koi, *Kami*, hovered in place and watched me.

I held my hand up to the acrylic surface of the tank. "Sorry I'm late."

I took the nuzzling of my hand's image to be forgiveness, but I fed him just in case I was mistaken. My grandfather gave him to me when I was only ten, and over the next 25 years he'd grown quite large. Grandpa helped me name him, and we both agreed that the Japanese word for *spirit* seemed like a good idea. Given that his longevity seemed almost supernatural, I suppose we chose correctly.

Seeing as how he only has room in his skull for a spoonful of brains, the food I dumped into his tank distracted his attention while I went around to the room on the other side of the wall. Before the accident it had been the family room, but since then I had let it become a techno-jungle filled with wires and displays and devices both arcane and ancient. The latest Allard Technolo-





gies prototypes sat on shelves side by side with antiquated computers and even a few dusty plaques I'd been awarded after five and ten years as a Wolfhound.

I sat down and fired the computers up. Using security codes I was not supposed to have, and special ROM chips burned with the icebreaking equivalents of old family recipes, I started a search for anything and everything I could dredge up on the Black Widow and Tiffany Morgan. As the machines hummed and blinked I felt guilty at not having done this search yesterday, because something might come up that would have saved Steve. I didn't know clearly why I had not done the research before, but I suspected that until I'd seen the Typhoon littering the streets like a jigsaw puzzle, part of me wanted to ignore the threat she represented.

Data started scrolling up across the main screen, and as I started to read it I realized I must have supplied a chronological parameter in my search keys. Things started 15 years earlier and centered around Blood Lake. For remembering about that I didn't need a computer.

I'd been a Wolf for two years – ever since I turned legal – and Allcity gave me a peculiar set of orders. They ran the operation almost like a road rally, with me getting directions in stages, picking up fuel and meals at checkpoints. I'd never done anything like that before and I was smart enough to know the route had me going all over hell-and-gone for no reason apparent to me.

Oddest of all was the absolute prohibition against duelling on the road. I saw very few other vehicles for most of the trip, though I did spot them with more frequency as I worked my way north. Finally, at the last checkpoint somewhere in southern Iowa, I met up with Hawthorne and Twain and a lot of other Wolves.

We were briefed by a guy who said he represented a consortium of insurance companies. They were pooling their resources to rid themselves of a problem that plagued the nation. We had been sent to Lake Okoboji, Iowa, to make history. If we succeeded, we would also become Wolfhounds and we would never want for

anything for the rest of our lives – within certain limitations, of course.

I wondered what could be worth everything he was promising, limitations or no. I wondered this especially in light of our location, and I knew I wasn't alone. After all, there was nothing in Iowa except cornfields and cows.

And road pirates.

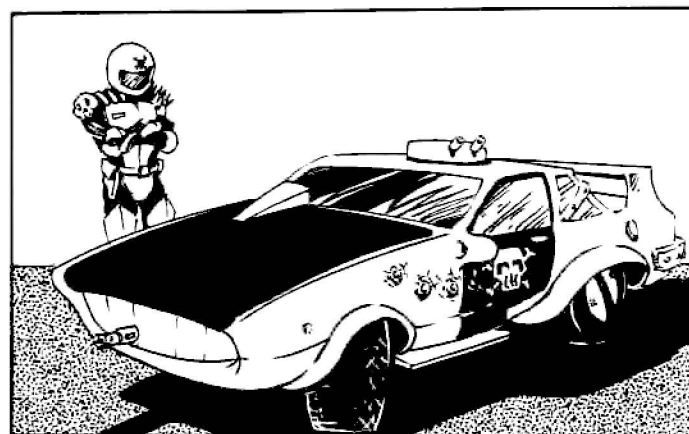
Road pirates were the bogeymen of the open road, the reality that penny-ante biker gangs only aspired to. Stories about them used to frighten children, made teenagers hope Dad *did* have a use for the car on Saturday night and made adults dread commuting. Their gypsy armadas roamed the highways, attacking and looting anyone who had the misfortune of cruising into them. They moved quickly, which meant organizing a response was difficult, and the damage they did was usually not worth the concerted effort to hunt them down once they had fled the immediate area.

Henry Morgan had changed all that. He claimed to be a direct descendant of the pirate Henry Morgan, scourge of the Spanish Main. Morgan, Tiffany's father, had brought together a number of road pirate crews and had traveled south to sack Veracruz, exactly like his namesake. Reinforced by several Central American and Sonoran bandit groups, Morgan returned north of the Rio Bravo and ravaged whole cities.

I'd seen Tucson after they hit it. Buildings still stood and damage to real estate seemed minor, but that was only because the hills made it difficult to gauge the extent of the damage. From up on Mount Lemon Tucson had appeared at night to be an amoeba of light extending out in all directions, but after the assault by Morgan's people, the amoeba had a huge bite taken out of it extended from the southeast corner well into the heart of the Old Pueblo.

Though their homes still stood, the people had been devastated. Children hid from sight when any car rolled by, then popped up and threw rocks. Dead bodies lay in the streets and packs of feral dogs scavenged meat from any available source. Widows and orphans had stared at my car, their hollow gazes piercing the reflective windshield coating of my old Shadow. I saw the despair in their eyes and prayed I'd never know such pain, yet after the accident I'd looked into a mirror and my face merged into theirs in my mind.

I remember the war there – and you had to call it a *war*, because it moved well beyond autoduelling as it was known before or since – in little flashes, little black and white tableaux frozen in the stark strobes of muzzle flashes. Blood made the ground into a stinking marsh, with twisted bodies and broken limbs lying half-sub-



merged like dead trees. Lake Okoboji ceased to exist as blood, flesh, glass, steel and burning gasoline reduced it to a hellish charnel pond. We ended up calling it Blood Lake because even obscurities failed to adequately describe the place after three days of battling.

What was left of Okoboji township wouldn't have filled a small envelope. Twisted hulks and burning buildings littered the landscape. Less than a dozen of Morgan's people had survived, if you don't count a four-car breakout that occurred in the wee hours of day three. We didn't much care because we had Morgan's body, and I had dispossessed him of his Badger after I killed him in a duel where he destroyed my Shadow. We had won, though only the 36 of us who lived would count it a victory. The 260 or so Wolves who wouldn't be leaving Blood Lake had no opinion on the matter, but their next of kin doubtless did.

I got up from the computer, went into the kitchen and nuked a potato for dinner as I considered the import of Tiffany Morgan's surfacing. It had been rumored that Morgan's family had been involved in the breakout, and Tiffany's survival seemed to confirm that idea. Adjustors did recover a lot of loot from Blood Lake, but not nearly all that Morgan had reaped through his conquests, hence another rumor that somewhere out there lurked a "treasure," just waiting for someone to locate it. Assuming Tiffany had done just that, she had quite the little war chest to use in avenging her father.

When I returned to the computers, the Black Widow's list of kills started to scroll up the screen. I knew all the people on the list – Blood Lake Wolfhounds were a small enough fraternity that I could remember them easily – but I'd only been close with a few of them. Counting Twain, she'd nailed about two-thirds of us. Out of the last dozen, Hawthorne, Stowe in D.C., Beach up in New York and I were the only Wolfhounds still active. The rest had accepted early retirement, at a reduction in our promised pension rate, and were living all around the country.

The media accounts of the other deaths were as inaccurate as I

expect with reporting, but even accounting for that built-in margin of error, things did not make sense. If all the reports were true, Tiffany had more lives than a cat because she'd been reported dead a half-dozen times. Also, autoduellists usually have one style, one signature that marks them. Twain was a beamer and Hawthorne is a junk-dumper and flamer. I'm a rammer. Picking a style and sticking with it allows you to concentrate on maximizing the equipment you have, and autoduelling vehicles' replacement parts are a tad more expensive than, say, golf clubs. Ping Eye-IXs excepted, of course.

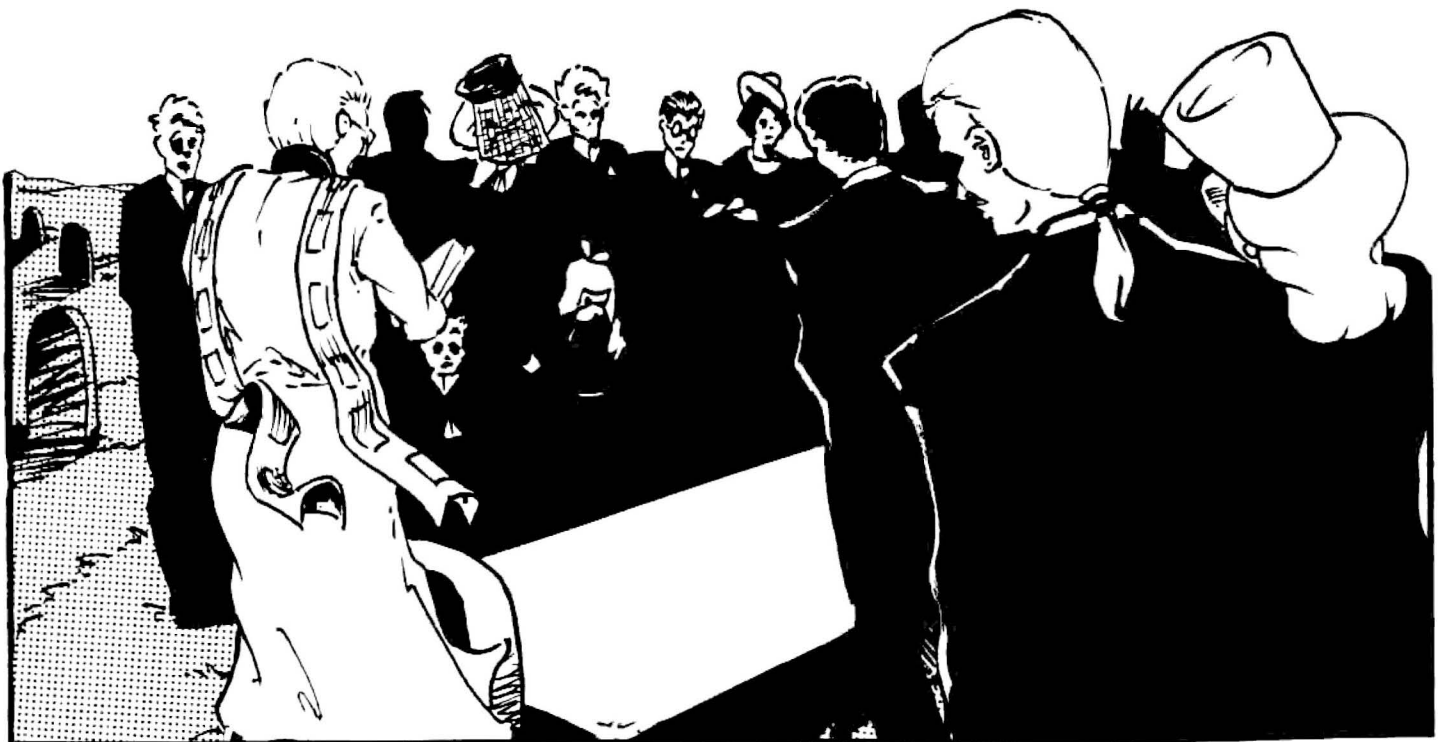
Tiffany, if the press reports had the least little bearing on reality, varied tactics and matched her opponents by going head-to-head in their speciality. That meant she had to be very good and had to have a whole fleet of cars available to her. If her pedigree was good, she could master that amount of variety. If she had tapped the treasure, she would have had the fleet.

I felt cold and I shivered. Not that shiver you get when someone walks over your grave. This one was worse. Like someone was driving over it.

The day of Twain's funeral dawned cold and a wet, wind-driven rain made it remain that way. I hung back from the crowd because officers and execs from Farmer's Equity were all over the place and I didn't want them to think I was gloating or indulging in some other sort of ghoulish behavior. I didn't expect trouble, but I didn't want to intrude and didn't come forward until the mourners had mostly dispersed.

I wandered down from the knoll behind the grave and said a silent prayer. I don't like graveyards – never have – but I've become familiar with them against my will. Crossing myself, I looked up at Avanti Twain, then down at her two boys. I tried to remember what she had said to me when I buried Jeanne and Rowan. I couldn't, and I knew if I opened my mouth, I'd say the wrong thing.

She watched me with red-rimmed eyes from beneath a black



veil. "Did he really have to do it?" The fearful look in her dark eyes told me she wasn't asking about his death.

"Do what?"

"Sleep with her the night before she killed him?"

I failed in my attempt to keep the shock from my face. *She takes this Black Widow stuff seriously.* "I don't know, Ava."

The wry grin that answered me carried with it a wisdom ancient and too feminine for me to comprehend it fully. "You do know, Mick, deep down if not consciously. You Wolfhounds are at the top of the food chain in our world. Or you were. She kills with impunity and robs you of your manhood. By taking her you reclaim it." Her voice broke and a man I recognized from her wedding as her father came up and rested his hands on her shoulders.

His eyes asked me to leave, but I couldn't, not yet. "Ava, that could be it, or it could have been a million other things. The answer doesn't matter because the fact of that one act does not change the fundamental truth about Steve; he loved you and your boys more than anything else in the whole world. He was a great man and neither you nor your boys can ever forget that."

I shook my head. "You were there for me when . . . after the accident. If you need anything."

Avanti shivered. "A generous offer for a man who will be dead inside a week."

Her bitter cut stung me. "Fine, I'll make you the beneficiary of my life insurance."

"Allcity likely has the same cutout clauses in your policy, so that's hardly a comfort." She kicked a rock down into the grave and it thumped off the casket. "You really want to do something for me, give me something to remember?"

I nodded.

"Don't be like my late husband." Venom dripped from her words. "Don't be running from her when she kills you."

I saw Hawthorne die.

I'd not seen him at the funeral and, from what I learned later, he was lowering her into his bed about the same time Steve got lowered into the cemetery's basement. The next day, around mid-morning, they met over in the South End and started a running battle that carried into the warehouse and dock section of town between Bay Road and 68th Avenue.

I was chasing down a Lobo-wannabe hit-and-run driver when the Diamondback shot through the intersection up ahead. I hit the gas and nudged the Concorde into a lamppost, then pushed on one block east. The Black Widow cut through that intersection about a second before I made my left-hand turn. That put me in her six, but I pulled into a parallel lane, then pulled another left at a cross street and after a quick right, rolled on about three blocks back of the Diamondback.



Once I saw where he was headed, I broke off the chase and cut up into the Bluffs along Hillside drive. I reached a turnout that might once have been a scenic viewpoint, but the docks shot that idea, unless the viewer was into rust and dead fish. Normally the area would have been a strange attractor for industrial chaos, but Hawthorne had planned ahead. He'd worked a deal with the longshoremen to clear him out an impromptu arena ringed by warehouses on three sides and the bay on the fourth. A number of oil drums stood scattered around the arena in a haphazard pattern, which meant their placement wasn't haphazard at all, but carefully calculated to produce some desired effect.

As the Black Widow slid into the arena, two forklifts deposited heavy loads in the only opening to cut off her retreat. No doubt that's what they thought, anyway, but when her car charged straight in at the Diamondback, I wondered if Hawthorne hadn't grossly overestimated his opposition. Her car still looked pristine while his had a fair number of laser scars on the rear end, but that was to be expected if he were running away so he could spring this trap on her.

Hawthorne responded quickly to her frontal assault by launching a small missile at her. Tiffany's forward lasers burned it out of the air, giving Jack time to turn and start weaving through the slalom course of barrels. His side-mounted flamethrowers set several on fire. One exploded immediately, washing the wharf with a flaming black tide. The others just cooked and waited.

Tiffany slowed to take stock of the changing situation. She lasered one of the barrels into a fireball in front of the Diamondback, but Jack cruised on through the curtain of flame, his windshield wipers flicking fiery oil off almost casually. The Diamondback came to a stop next to another barrel, mocking her and daring her to ignite it. When Jack figured he'd proved his invulnerability to fire, he began to roll again, circling like a shark.

The fire's oily smoke cloud slowly drifted in my direction like a thunderhead. I saw bright jets of flame and hot red laser bolts shoot back and forth within it. Occasionally a barrel exploded, launching a burning mushroom cloud into the sky. Breaks in the smoke allowed me tantalizing glimpses of the fight, then the wind shifted out toward the bay and gave me a clear view of the end of the battle.

As it unfolded, I found I could have predicted the outcome easily. I could have taken off but, while I had no desire to see my friend die, I could not leave. I wanted to see how she did it.

I wanted to see how she would do it to me.

Both cars twisted and turned through the burning landscape. A barrel exploded next to the Black Widow, bathing the left half of her car in fire. Carbon caked the window on the passenger side, leaving her blind. Hawthorne immediately moved in to attack her on the blind side, but she anticipated him. Using her tighter turning radius, she hit the gas and spun the wheel slipping past him and eluding the flame jets erupting from the Diamondback's flanks.

That put Hawthorne in her six, which is right where she wanted him. He didn't know that because he failed to recognize the fact that she was not running from him. She was *leading* him and he didn't realize that where she led, he had no desire to follow. All he could see, all I could have seen at that point, was her in front and targeting crosshairs painting her rear bumper.

The Black Widow cut left and I saw a glint of silver as the mine dropped from behind her license plate. Before Jack could do anything about it, he passed over the mine and I guess, given what happened next, it attached itself to the underside of his car. As he spun the wheel to the left to follow her, the Diamondback entered

the black cloud. I knew he had to be turning hard to get back on her tail, and that probably triggered the inertial switch in the mine.

I saw the flash before I heard the report. When the mine detonated it launched the Diamondback skyward. It rolled up and out of the smoke cloud, panels and doors and tires all flying free as it spun. I tried to see if a body flew out, but with all the smoke and the pieces of disintegrating car in the air, I didn't see Jack. When the flamethrowers exploded and took the gas tank with them, I hoped I *wouldn't* see Jack.

The fire didn't survive the Diamondback's landing in the bay. I don't think Jack did, either.

Kami seemed to sense the tension in me as I worked hard that night. I microwaved more spuds, but forgot them and ended up eating them like lukewarm apples while I sat at the computer. Kami pressed himself as tightly to the glass as he could, wagging his fins in a display that might have lifted my spirits or prompted laughter another time. The display of affection did make me feel better for a moment, then it sank me into depression as I realized I had no idea who would take care of him after Tiffany killed me.

I called in a whole slew of favors, and promised many more, to get the information I studied on the screen. A friend of a friend knew the man who had put Tiffany's cars together, and I boosted some data out of his computers in the dead of the night. The technical readouts confirmed what I had suspected from the news reporting and watching the battle with Hawthorne. The information was not encouraging, unless I suddenly developed a desire to spend eternity in a small box with a lousy view.

Tiffany's cars all started with a basic package that put a loaded gas engine into a sedan chassis, and linked that to twin anti-missile lasers forward. The power plant meant she could power the lasers as soon as the engine turned over, which made sense because any sort of a lag-time with anti-missile lasers meant they could be defeated by overwhelming them with targets. Beyond that, the designs differed and were altered to mimic the vehicle she would be fighting. It looked as if she had three she kept in rotation being refitted, and a fourth – the one she'd driven up in on the first day – that used lasers the way a porcupine used quills.

As I thought about Tiffany, something Avanti Twain had said at the grave came back to me. I punched up my life insurance contract and searched it for waivers and riders. I found the cutout clause she'd referred to and reading it I understood the bitterness in her voice. What it said was, in essence, that any Wolfhound killed while engaging in an autoduel that was not designated part of an assignment, either before or after the engagement, would not be covered under the insurance that was part of his employment contract, but would be covered under supplementary insurance. In effect it meant that any Wolfhound out duelling for fun would not be covered by his employer.

I'd not heard of that clause ever being invoked before and, in fact, the two duels I had fought without sanction were sanctioned by Ops after the fact. In both cases I had fought against a driver who was insured by another company, so Allcity was glad to pay for the repairs to the Badger and claim bragging rights. Ops had told me at the time that had I aced someone insured with Allcity, all sorts of stuff would have hit the fan.

I hacked into the Farmer's Equity database and ran a check on Tiffany Morgan. The file had been encrypted and was set for deletion, but I snuck it out anyway. Morgan, it turned out, had been covered by Farmer's from the time she hit the city until Twain was planted, then her coverage with them ended. MT&C's computer

yielded similar information about their coverage of the Black Widow, and I noted her policy with them ran out in another 36 hours. I didn't bother to check Allcity's computer, because I knew what her file would look like there, and I had no desire to learn the time of my own funeral in advance.

Evil thoughts began to ricochet around inside my skull, and I didn't like how they all slid together like a nice, simple jigsaw puzzle. A Wolfhound has a very limited career span, and because the job is so dangerous the companies have built an incredible number of incentives and bonuses into the contracts. Were I to phone in my resignation, aside from delighting Wendy, I'd pull down a cool million dollars a year in benefits and pension. If I lasted one more year, that amount would go up by a factor of ten, and continue increasing ten percent a year for every year beyond that in which I worked for Allcity as a Wolfhound.

Conventional wisdom broke the costs of training a Wolfhound down rather simply. If a Wolfhound survived five years, he would have paid off the cost of his own training and salary during that time. The next five years would recoup for the company the costs incurred by all the Wolfhounds who didn't make it to the original five-year mark. Every year after that meant the company would be losing money, but the vast majority of the money going to the Wolfhound would be offset by his services.

Retiring, especially at the magical old age of thirty-six, meant something else entirely. I sat back in my chair and wondered why I'd not seen it before. If I lived to make the insurance companies pay out on the wild plans they'd offered all of us before Blood Lake, I'd be an arterial gash in their cash flow. In basic, book-keeper terms it was not cost-effective for Allcity for me to retire. If I died in an unsanctioned autoduel, payout would be negligible and the company might actually see a profit out of my death.

I didn't want to think my employers were heartless and cold enough to encourage the slaughter of people who had made money for them, but I was finding damned little evidence in their defense. At the very least they turned a blind eye as Tiffany shifted insurance from company to company. She would do it just to spite the families of those she killed and if she never filed a claim to repair the damage she suffered, the companies would have no reason to flag her as a risk.

I had a day and a half until she was fighting with Allcity backing her. That wasn't much to give me comfort, but it proved just enough to allow me to drop off to sleep. Sleep I needed badly because I expected tomorrow to be a very busy day indeed.

As was the day, so was the night. It seemed as if I had barely laid down and let sore, aching muscles relax when she came to me in the dark. Her naked, moonlit flesh felt as smooth as ivory and almost as cold while her midnight hair became lost in the shadows that half-hid her. I half-thought I remained drowsy and dreaming until her touch ignited in me flames I had thought dead. When I awoke enough to realize she was not Jeanne, I wished my body had not begun to respond to her.

Tiffany Morgan proved as good in bed as she was behind the wheel. I can't say we made love because making love is sharing: two people giving *to* each other *for* each other. Tiffany and I were *taking*, each grabbing a different portion of the act for ourselves. Each of us satisfied the other, but less as an act of love than to assure us we could make the other respond, against the other's will.

We fell exhausted in each other's arms and held each other as lovers might. We clung tightly to each other, but not out of any

blossoming affection or positive emotion. We remained together for survival.

After all, we each were safe as long as our mortal enemy remained at our side.



Tiffany found me in my study. She wore the top to a pair of my pajamas, but had not bothered to button the front closed. I finished feeding Kami, then turned to look at her. She looked nothing like my wife had and somehow I felt as if I had betrayed Jeanne the night before.

Tiffany caressed the tank. "So this is Kami. The beneficiary of your insurance, I suppose."

I nodded. "He's all the family I have left."

"So, we do not have that much in common after all." She folded her arms beneath her breasts. "You didn't even leave me a fish."

"That's a quarrel you have with your father, not me." I let anger into my voice because I wasn't going to be made to feel sad or ashamed for what I did at Blood Lake. "I know how you felt because of losing my wife and daughter. I even know how you feel about me because I've also sworn to kill the hit and run guy who killed Jeanne and Rowan, if I ever find him." I stopped, horror choking me.

Tiffany read my mind and shook her head remorselessly. "Did I kill them? No. Had I thought of it, I might have. I would have enjoyed it, too, but I did not."

I nodded solemnly and gave myself a chance to regain control. Something in the bloodless way in which she responded to my unspoken question started another puzzle assembling itself in the back of my mind. "This vendetta, your killing all the Wolfhounds from Blood Lake, it's not at all what it seems, is it? There's more, isn't there?"

Her blue eyes glittered like ice at dawn. "Is there? Care to hazard a guess at it?"

"Killing the Wolfhounds gets you two things. The first is the ire of the insurance companies, but since you're saving them a lot of money, by accident or design, that gets canceled out. The second

thing is a gross reduction in the level of opposition within the cities and countryside." I ran a hand over my unshaven jaw. "That means that someone like you could reconstitute a road pirate band the likes of which have not been seen since Blood Lake."

She dropped to the floor and sat cross-legged with Kami hovering over her like a crown. "I assumed one of you would figure it out one day, and I decided to tell that person a secret and then make him an offer." Tiffany pointed to the carpet at her knees and I sat at her invitation. "The secret is this: the insurance companies have aided and abetted me since before the breakout. They made a deal with my father, promising my safekeeping, with no strings attached. They got me out, housed me, fed me and took care of me."

My stomach started to turn itself into a big knot. "And they trained you."

"They did. They had anticipated the vast cost of having the Blood Lake survivors all reach retirement age, and when you all exceeded life expectancy, they put me into action taking you out. They felt that the revelation of my identity would make it all seem logical, both because of my father's skill and my obvious desire to avenge him." She clucked as if the insurance execs had been total fools. "My father had figured this all out at Blood Lake and told me to go along with them. He told me to be a pirate in Wolfhound's clothing. So I took their help and their training and I am doing their bidding – for now. Then I will turn around and create a pirate band that will control the companies. The tail will wag the dog, and the dog will howl delightfully."

Tiffany raked her fingernails through the hair on my chest. "And now the offer; come with me. If you tell the other Wolfhounds what I have told you, they will join us. Together we will be invincible. We will turn the tables on the people who have so sorely used you and betrayed your friends." She smiled. "And I will even help you hunt down the creature who killed your wife."

She almost had me, and likely would have if she had not made that final comment. I believed what she had said about the companies betraying me and the other survivors of Blood Lake. That made sense far too easily and my response was to want revenge. In fact, nothing short of my death would deny it to me. Her offer did seem the best way to get back at my false friends.

Offering to help me avenge myself on Jeanne's killer went too far. Tiffany had intruded into the part of my life I had tried to keep free of the fire and death of Blood Lake. Her comment soiled Jeanne's memory and heightened my own sense of having betrayed her. If I joined Tiffany, I would end up doing the things her father had done, doing to people what that unknown driver had done to my family and me. I knew, either accepting or refusing her offer I undoubtedly would die, and I realized I wanted to die as the man Jeanne had loved, not someone she would have despised.

"No sale, Tiffany."

"You would be my consort!"

"Not interested."

Anger began to smolder in her eyes. "Too old-fashioned to accept a woman as your leader?"

I shook my head. "Old Wolfhounds aren't very good at learning new tricks. Pillaging and reaving are just not my thing."

She stood without using her hands to push off the floor. "That decision means you'll be dead by nightfall."

"Good, it means I won't have to spend another night with you."

She hissed and slipped out of my pajama shirt as if the sight of

her naked body would somehow inspire contrition in me. "We could have been very good together."

"No, Tiffany, we would have been very *bad* together." I looked up into eyes as flat as those of a shark. "That's something I'm willing to die to avoid."

Duelling with her on old State Route 666 would have been appropriate, but I'd worked on my car the day before with a stretch of Route 60 running from Globe to Show Low in mind. It would take me through the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, and I had enough clout with the NAA Reservation Police to get the road I needed cleared. I knew the road and I figured she didn't, which gave me an edge I planned to exploit.

Wendy had wondered why I was traveling so far out of my normal zone of responsibility when I left the city and headed up into the Rim country. I waited until I'd reached my starting point, then told Wendy she should let Tiffany know where I was. After that I turned off my identifier chip – an option afforded only a select few Allard Technologies customers – which really sent Wendy through the roof.

I let her rave for a couple of minutes, then I took my celmodem link down. I still had targeting functions available and a generalized map of the area that could come up if I picked the Tacmap function, but I knew I wouldn't use it. Route 60 runs mostly uphill and where it levels out it runs like a snake along the side of a cliff. The drop-off goes down anywhere from 20 feet to a thousand yards, and little white crosses dot the side of the road where folks have shot off it and died.

I saw her coming from about two miles off, so I hopped back in the Badger. I checked the LAW rocket I had strapped into the seat beside me, then started my car and headed out. She caught up with me quickly enough and gave me a nudge with her sedan's ramplate. I assumed that was as close as she could get to a caress in a car. I took it as a sign our competition was to begin, so I let things rip.

I hit the brakes.

Tiffany's car slammed into the back of mine, boosting me forward while slowing her. I punched the gas pedal down and shot off up the hill. I cut into the left lane and hugged the cliffside, pumping my brakes to make the corner cleanly. Though the road evened out into a short downhill straight, I held back and waited.

As I had expected, Tiffany had poured on the gas to regain the ground she'd lost. As she came around the corner she had to oversteer to avoid going off the cliff. She started to skid, then steered back to the right to break the fishtail. As she did so, she shot past me on the right and I slipped into her six. I let a burst go with my .50 cal's to chew up her rear end, then cut back to the left as she braked and sideswiped her on the driver's side.

I hung with her on the downhill, occasionally drifting over to bash her already battered flank. As we came into another left turn, I let the Badger wallow wide and nudge her to the outside, so she dropped back and almost tried to come inside on me. With the massive sandstone boulders that dot the inside shoulder blurred as we shot past them, she thought better of trapping herself between them and me.

She contented herself with sitting on my tail and probably hoped for a laser shot or two. I juked all over the road to prevent her from getting anything good by way of a shot. Being out in front I managed to keep the speed under control and she knew better than to bump me the way she had before. She stayed back and waited until I made a mistake or the road gave her an opening that she could use to put me away.

We both saw it coming. As the road works its way up the Mogollon Rim, it enters a series of steep switchbacks. They come regularly and either one of us could have powered up them as if they were a straightaway, but I kept things calm. The climb put a severe strain on both our power plants, but I knew from the specs I'd seen that Tiffany's car had more than enough power to go up the hill and still fire those lasers.

I just hoped she realized that, too.

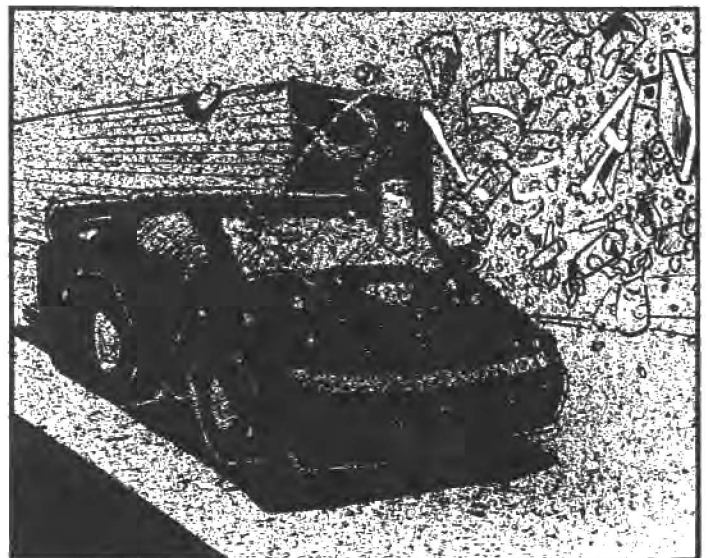
We came up to a big turn that would take us all the way around the lip of a canyon and on into its depths. We'd both seen it from across the river far below as we worked our way along the outside of the path carved by the river's broad turn, so she knew I'd have to be hugging the inside for a long time in negotiating the turn. Under normal circumstances she would have shot past on the outside, but the nature of the turn put me in one place and I'd be there long enough for her to melt everything from the dashboard back with her lasers.

As we swung into the curve, she came up close and when she filled my rearview mirror, I hit the Badger's trunk release. It sprang open and all sorts of junk I'd stuffed into the trunk was sucked out by the wind. Tiffany triggered her lasers and burned through most of them in a nanosecond, because wadded newspapers, tin cans, tangled fishing tackle and faded plastic aquarium vegetation doesn't absorb that much energy.

The beams hit the mirror affixed to the underside of the trunk lid and reflected back at Tiffany's windshield. She shied from the light as I had the Vickers' fire at the beginning of the week. Her car cut in toward the cliff, then she bounced it back out to the left as her bumper caught the first rock. I steered wide, then snapped the wheel to the left and slammed my right rear quarter into her driver's-side door.

The Widow's ramplate blasted the wooden guardrail on the cliff edge into splinters. The black automotive wedge sailed off into space, then sank below the level of the road. That much I saw and I waited to hear the sound of her car hitting the ground. The longer I waited the lower I put her chances of survival.

By the time I slowed the Badger and came back for a look, I'd put the chances of her surviving at one in five hundred thousand. I tried to see where the car had landed, but in the growing twilight,



I couldn't see anything. That bothered me for a moment or two, then I decided it was fitting that she remain in an unmarked grave.

It didn't strike me until much later, as I pulled the Badger into my garage, that I'd once told Twain that the chances of anyone killing as many Wolfhounds as Tiffany had were roughly a half-million to one. The fact that the same numbers defined her success and her survival started me thinking. As I thought, the little puzzles I'd assembled in my head started blending themselves together and that prompted even more thinking.

All that thinking gave me a headache. I didn't like the things I was thinking, so when I got home I took two ibuprofen tabs, fed Kami, then headed off to bed. I forced myself to *stop* thinking so I could get some sleep.

Sleep I got. And nightmares.

The gunshot woke me, and lying there I waited for pain and the sensation of warm blood pouring out of me. Neither came, so I jumped out of bed and ran out into the office.

The carpet was wet.

I stalked back to my room and pulled on jeans. I looked out my window at the silent black car sitting in front of my house, then went into the kitchen. I dug around for a weapon, found what I wanted and, as an afterthought, I pulled a carving knife from the rack on the wall. Barefooted I went out through the garage and ignored the boneyard chill seeping out of the ground and into my toes.

I slowly circled the Widow, which sat like a big, silent slice of shadow on the street. I let my left hand trace the immaculate finish on the tail. Squatting down I counted four laser ports on the rear end of the vehicle, which meant this one was a newer model than any of the ones for which I had plans. Though the car sat dormant, the exhaust pipe was hot enough to blister my fingers, so I rose and sucked on them as I walked around to face the driver.

I waved at the black windscreen with the knife. "Nice touch, shooting my fish. It almost makes me believe you're the same Tiffany Morgan I killed earlier today. The problem is, of course,



that she never got emotionally involved. She was too smart for that, which means she's a lot smarter than you."

"Vengeance will be mine," came the driver's computer-modulated voice.

I raised an eyebrow as I thought I recognized a hint of Wendy's scorn in that voice. "If the companies could create one Tiffany Morgan, they could create more. Which are you? The second? The seventh?"

"The last and the best. Get your car. I'll give you a headstart."

I nodded and, flicking the knife into my lawn, I walked back to the Badger. I pulled the LAW rocket out of the passenger seat, then returned to a position about 20 yards away from the Widow, off on the driver's side. "Sorry to disappoint you, but a friend asked me not to run from you."

"Even you're not that stupid, Allard. I will shoot the rocket down and then run you over."

I smiled. "Do your best, Wendy."

I gave her five seconds to fully grasp the gravity of her situation. In the backlight of the laser sight on her faceplate I could see her frenzied stabs at the ignition keypad as she tried to turn the car to bring me into the arc of fire of her front-mounted lasers. I heard the engine click and the starter grind, a cough, and then nothing. The smile on my face grew, then I triggered the very special rocket I'd gotten from the sort of friend most people don't want to have.

The Widow exploded brilliantly, leaping into the air and sort of hunching in the middle before the back half bounced and spun back down the road. The tailpipe, with the potato I'd stuffed into it to keep the engine from starting, twirled off into the night and wrapped itself around a streetlight. The 'vette's front end stood on its nose, then flopped over and spilled a burning corpse into the gutter.

I tossed the launching tube into the fire and shook my head. "And the moral of our story, Wendy, is this: old age and treachery beat youth and beauty every time."

I took Kami out and buried him between Jeanne and Rowan. There was no printing on the headstone for him, but he was never much for reading, so I didn't think he'd mind. I said a few prayers, then returned to the Badger and came home long enough to make some calls and pack a few things to take with me. The phone started ringing as soon as I hung up for the last time, but I didn't answer it.

I didn't know if the story *my* Black Widow had told me had been true or a mad fantasy she had cooked up to justify her hunting down and killing Wolfhounds. It didn't matter, really, because the whole idea of reforming Morgan's band had been a nightmare. I thought so when she said it, and I still thought so. The thing of it was this: it was no longer *my* nightmare.

If the companies could create a Tiffany Morgan to destroy the Wolfhounds, then I decided the Wolfhounds could create a new Henry Morgan to destroy the companies. That, certainly, was a mad fantasy – so said all the Wolfhounds who agreed to meet me at Blood Lake so we could start to make it come true. There would be no more Tucsons – no more senseless slaughter of innocents. We knew the companies better than anyone, and we could hit them right where it hurt the most, without dragging ordinary folks into our war.

It would be a nightmare all right . . . the companies' nightmare. After all, they'd paid in blood for it, so that left it up to old Henry Morgan to see to it that they got their money's worth.

Ten Years of ADQ

A Cumulative Index to Autoduel Quarterly

Compiled by C. J. Burke.

Key

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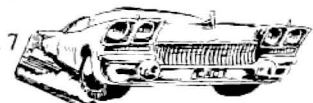
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BACKFIRE

"Hello? Oh, hi, Chris. What's up? . . . Are you kidding? 10 years? Already? Geez, where does the time go? Yeah, sure, I'd love to write a little piece. Yeah, I'll get it out to you right away. Talk to you later. Oh, and congratulations."

Adventure gaming is no longer a young man's job. At least it isn't for me, because if *Autoduel Quarterly* is 10 years old, than so is my career, because this humble quarterly digest of *Car Wars* rules, scenarios, and weirdness is where I got my start.

I was not the first editor of *ADQ* (that singular honor goes to David Ladyman), but I took over at Vol. 1, No. 2 and continued until somewhere in Vol. 4 or 5. That's about 4 years of the "North American Road Atlas & Survival Guide," "Uncle Albert's Auto Stop & Gunny Shop," "50 Years Ago Today," and - of course! - the American Autoduel Association.

Those were, uh, interesting times. *Car Wars* was taking off like an overpowered subcompact, and there was a huge demand for new *Car Wars* stuff: expansion sets, counters, arena maps, gasoline engines, helicopters, boats, tanks, hovercraft, new weapons, ammo types, armor types - you name it, they wanted it. So we pumped it out, issue after issue.

Not all of it was perfect. You devious gamers out there found some ingenious loopholes and improbable combinations of equipment that we didn't think of, and it tended to unbalance the game.

And some of you got mad. I tried not to take it personally. I noted with some amusement that just one or two issues back, Craig Sheeley answered an "ADQ&A" question with, "Well, since we're stuck with the stupid rules Scott Haring made up all those years ago. . ." It's nice to be remembered.

But most of you just dove in, and ate up all the fun we were trying to dish out. I owe a big thanks to all the readers, cartoonists, writers, designers, and just plain fans that made *ADQ* a success from the start, and have kept it strong 10 years down the road. And a big thanks to all the *Car Wars* players who have enjoyed the game for all these years.

And one last big thanks, and hearty congratulations, to the folks at Steve Jackson Games for 10 successful years with one of the neatest games out there. As I used to sign off those Driver's Seat columns all those years ago . . .

Keep On Duellin'!

- Scott D. Haring
Sepulveda, CA

These days Scott Haring is the editor of The Gamer. Scott is much too polite to plug his own magazine in his letter, so I'll do it for him - buy The Gamer, it's simply the best independent gaming magazine in the country today. Indispensable reading.

- CWM

Ten years? You have got to be kidding.

A decade ago, I was editing *Space Gamer* magazine, welcoming a brand-new "sister" publication, *Autoduel Quarterly*, and writing its first Road Atlas entry. The *Car Wars* world was breathlessly entering its third year, 2033. Someone in the first "ADQ&A" column asked whether or not it was legal to build a power plant with a driver's seat in the middle so the driver could have extra protection. *ADQ* editor David Ladyman agreed that local AADA chapters did "sound like a good idea."

Ten years have roared by, collecting speeding tickets and frightening farm animals. *Space Gamer* is gone. David Lady-

man and I have moved on to other things. But *Autoduel Quarterly* is still driving straight ahead, cruise control set five miles over the speed limit, exploring *Car Wars* and the world it describes.

Congratulations, guys. I'm looking forward to another ten years. (Maybe by then they'll all forget how I fouled up the valves on the helicopter power plants!)

- Aaron Allston
Round Rock, TX

Well, Aaron, the next ten years belong to *Pyramid*, not *ADQ*. But just as we at *ADQ* have always tried to live up to the high standards set by our predecessor, *The Space Gamer*, we hope that future editors of *Pyramid* will look to *ADQ* for inspiration.

In case you've been living in a can for the last decade, you should know that these days Aaron Allston is one of the most highly respected freelancers in the business. His work for TSR, Hero Games, SJ Games and many others is considered classic.

- CWM

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1. Does a twin laser's damage bonus automatically destroy a point of metal armor?

2. Do extra magazines for a weapon on a turret count against a vehicle's spaces? How about AFV turrets or EWPs?

3. Can other vehicles besides AFVs use laminate armor?

4. How much does a spear for a speargun weigh?

5. Can any vehicle use jet engines?

6. What are the firing arcs for a passenger in a sidecar?

7. Are high-intensity optics still available?

8. What are the helmet and insurance laws for Illinois in 2041?

– Eric Vernon
Chicago, IL

1. *No. Metal armor is destroyed only when the appropriate number comes up on the dice.*

2. *If you have space for the extra magazine in the turret it doesn't count against vehicle spaces, it counts against the turret spaces. If the extra magazine isn't in the turret, it counts against the vehicle spaces, and also against the 1/3 spaces per side rule.*

3. *No.*

4. *Car Wars does not take into account the weight of ammo for hand weapons.*

5. *Only fixed-wing aircraft. Sorry.*

6. *Normal arcs in front, back, and the side away from the driver. You could theoretically fire over the driver with a ring mount or pintle mount (if the sidecar has no top armor), but the driver probably won't be thrilled about the idea.*

7. *No. Pulse lasers are the current equivalent of high-intensity optics.*

8. *There are none in most places, but referee's option.*

– KS

1. Does a VFRP suffer the ripple fire penalty for firing all 6 rockets at a single target?

2. Can an ML/HML round use Probe warheads?

3. Do proximity-fused high-explosive rounds act as regular high-explosive rounds vs. ground targets?

4. Would HARM missiles lock on and fire at "friendly" vehicles that are using radar if both vehicles had IFF?

5. Does a Radar ATAD have its own radar, or must it be linked to a radar to function?

6. Could a hot-smoke projector face left or right?

7. What are the rules for the improved hovercraft verticle stabilizer?

8. Do spikes affect tank treads?

9. Do Fire-Retardant Insulators still take up only 1 space no matter how many components are protected?

10. Do fire extinguishers protect EWPs and weapon wings?

11. Are there any rules for Barbed Wire? Razor Wire? Trenches?

12. What is the range of SAMs? Can they be made high speed? Long range?

– Thad B. Dunn
Walton, KY

1. *No.*

2. *No. The Probe warhead is only for rockets, not missiles.*

3. *No.*

4. *Yes, they would. IFF won't help. A HARM missile option that won't let the missile lock onto friendly vehicles might make a good Uncle Al's gadget.*

5. *It has its own radar.*

6. *Yes.*

7. *Due to a production error, a few words of this device's discription were cut out of Uncle Al's Catalog From Hell. Our apologies. It increases the HC by 1, and reduces the d of every maneuver by one at speeds of 60 or more.*

8. *Normal spikes, no. Explosive spikes, yes.*

9. *No. It takes one space per component protected.*

10. *Yes.*

11. *Not yet.*

12. *SAMs don't have a speed or a range. Despite the name, they're really rockets, and as rockets they can't be made high-speed or long range.*

– KS

1. What are the stats for Velvet Glove Trimmings?

2. Are tow truck accessories from ADQ 3/3 official?

3. Can laminate metal and laminate plastic be compiled into composite?

4. Are car turrets streamlined?

5. Can a gatling cannon be mounted on the sides of a large tank?

6. Can a tank be made over 200 spaces?

7. Does man-portable radar have range as long-range or regular radar?

8. Can you reload a laser LAW?

9. Can a waterproof tank gun be fired under water?

10. Can a radio jammer leave certain channels open for use?

– Daniel Swaney
Ventura, CA

1. *Rothschild Autoworks no longer offers the Velvet Glove package as such, but you can spend as much extra on luxuries as you like, once you've paid for your basic vehicle.*

2. *No they're not. Not even the batteries that make such a wonderful damage sink.*

3. *No.*

4. *If you buy streamlining, that includes any turrets you may have. There's no space reduction in the turret for having a turret on a streamlined vehicle.*

5. *Yes. There are very few things that can't be mounted on the side of a large tank.*

6. *If you have the cash, go for it.*

7. *Regular radar.*

8. *A laser LAW can be recharged, but not in combat.*

9. *No.*

10. *It's theoretically possible, but the jammer in UACFH just jams them all.*

– KS

1. Can a cyberlink be used with both weapons in a co-axial mount?

2. Can a coaxial mount be smartlinked to an identical weapon in a Car Wars turret in an AFV turret? And can all weapons so linked share the benefits of a cyberlink?

3. For a 105 MM gun using beehive, how do you target objects in the path of the round?

– Carl Taylor
Carrollton, TX

1. *Yes, but only if the weapons are identical.*

2. *Yes and no – a Cyberlink only works for a single weapon, or a set of identical weapons in the same location.*

3. *The path is 2" wide, and the to-hit for every target in the path is 2, modified for target and size only.*

– KS

ADQ CLASSIFIED

WANTED! ATTENTION! NOTICE! WANTED! WANTED! (Couldn't help myself.) European duellists: the Danish Organisation of Offensive Motorists is still lethal! We welcome serious new members, guests, correspondence and worthy challenges. DOOM c/o Ben DeVeny, Mejlgade 72, 4th, 8000 Århus C, DENMARK.

DFW AREA: Players wanted who are willing to set up a time to play *Car Wars* and who'll actually show up. I know there must be somebody in this city who plays, but you sure are making yourselves scarce. Call Ralph at (817) 282-7246.

HEY DUELLISTS, BIKERS, MERCENARIES and other assorted scum in the Twin Cities. I know you're out there, but where are you? I'm looking for other people who enjoy driving too fast and wasting everything that moves. Let's get together and destroy something. Call me at 631-5514, or write Leon Stauffer, 3003 N. Snelling, St. Paul, MN 55113.

SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN or Southwestern Ontario duellists wanted to form club. Please write: Jeff Donais, 876 Marion Ave., Windsor, Ontario, CANADA N9A 2H9. Or phone (519) 252-6786 (h) or (519) 254-9555 (b).

EUROPEAN DUELLISTS: The Danish Organization of Offensive Motorists is looking for somebody to pick on. We are dangerous and serious. Would-be members, competitors or guests are welcome to write to: DOOM, c/o Ben DeVeny, Mejlgade 72, 4TH, 8000 Århus C., DENMARK.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: We're looking for a few good men (or women) to complete the baddest new club this side of . . . Omaha? Become one of the few, the proud, the heavily armed! Join the ARMADA! in the San Gabriel valley, Los Angeles area. Contact Sean Jettero Heller Motylinski, (818) 284-7293, 501 W. San Marino, Alhambra, CA 91801.

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Looking for duellists to add to new chapter AVRO. Spectators welcome. Contact Bruce Lam at 1270 W. 51st Ave., Vancouver, BC, CANADA V6P 1C5, or call (604) 266-9024.

BANGOR, MAINE needs *Car Wars* players! I would like to form an AADA chapter in this area. Sniveling cyclists

need not apply, unless they like steam-rolling buses . . . Contact T.H. Knight, 99 Fling St. Apt. 3, Brewer, ME, or leave name and number on machine at 990-3416 (refer to Joshua).

TRIAD AREA IN NC: Duellists wanted. Please send all letters to: 418 Bunker Hill Rd., Colfax, NC 27235. Or call (919) 993-2909. Ask for Brett Froelich.

ASP AGENTS have sabotaged my home base, and I've been forced to relocate. To all of my pen pals, my new address is: Tim "The Weasel" Jacques, 513 Wilshire Dr. #6, Bellevue, NE 68005.

I AM RECOVERING from a house fire, and trying to replace lost *Car Wars* materials - especially early ADQs. Also, I am interested in starting an AADA chapter for Cicero/Chicago/western suburbs. Contact James "Frankenstein" Watson Jr., 4900 W. 28th Place, Cicero, IL 60650.

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO: Looking for fellow duellists and other sociopaths. Seeking to organize a local AADA chapter, but will be satisfied to meet others interested in wanton destruction. I refereed the *Car Wars* events at ConWest last year, and will again this year. Contact "Wrong-Way" at 12931, Central Ave. NE #43, Albuquerque, NM 87123. I'm also looking for *Vehicle Guide 2*, *Uncle Albert's 2038 Catalog*, ADQ 8/1, 8/2 and the issue with the original laser LAW and VLAW.

EH BRAH, you live in Hawaii. You like broke da adda guys ca' wit one gun. Eh, we lookin' fo' you. Try call Lee "Da Haole" Ayres at (808) 422-6296. O' if can write, my address is 31 Halawa Dr., Honolulu, HI 96818. I tryin form one chaptah. (For the Pidgin impaired: Hello, guy. Do you live in Hawaii? Do you enjoy Autoduelling? We want you. Call or write Lee "The Caucasian" Ayres at the above address or number. I want to form a chapter.)

CENTRAL ILLINOIS Duellists! Tired of getting squeezed every time you go out for a drive? Have the balls to give the scum of the world what they deserve! Join GONADS and get the support you need, because at GONADS we always work in pairs! GONADS - we're not mean, we're just nuts! Contact Pat "Toecutter" Barrett, 3807 N. Monroe Ave., Peoria Heights, IL 61614, or call (309) 685-2908.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED: NOVA has an open forum policy. We are interested in communicating with any and all duellists on any subject. Just write to NOVA, c/o Norman McMullen, 701 S. 22 St. #73, Omaha, NE 68102.

I'VE RECENTLY QUIT *Car Wars* and want to sell my *Car Wars* products. My collection includes *Tanks*, *Aeroduel*, *Boat Wars*, *Car Wars Deluxe Edition*, *Compendium* Second Edition, many ADQs, and other supplements. Write to Joshua J. Eide, at 1533 6th St., S. Fargo, ND 58103, or call (701) 232-2321.

ANAHEIM, FULLERTON or Buena Park area duellists, write to Alexander Lau, 214 W. Sirius, Anaheim, CA 92802. Or call (714) 971-9855. Any age welcome.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY duellist looking for fellow duellists to form new chapter. Please call (510) 827-3696. Ask for Hank or leave a message.

DEUTSCHLAND: Ich suche duellisten in ganz Deutschland, die bereit sind, neue chapter zu gründen. Contact GBAH, c/o Thorsten Haude, Hildesheimer Str. 52, 3014 Laatzen, 0511/8 79 14 52

Conventions

THE SIU STRATEGIC GAMING SOCIETY is hosting Egyptian Campaign '93 this Feb. 5 through 7, in the ballroom of Southern Illinois University's student center in Carbondale, IL. Cost is \$15 at the door or \$12 pre-registered. Doors open noon on Fri., 8 A.M. Sat. and Sun. *Car Wars* tournaments hosted by AADA chapter BLADES, game auction, miniatures contest and guest speakers. Send SASE to Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425, or call Joel Nadler at (618) 529-4630.

THE DENVER GAMERS ASSOCIATION presents Genghis Con XIV, at the Marriott Hotel Southeast, at I-25 and Hampden, Feb. 12 to 14, 1993. RPGA Tournaments, auctions, figure painting contest, miniatures events and the Puffing Billy tournament for railroad gamers. Pre-registration \$15. Contact The Denver Gamers Association, P.O. Box 440058, Aurora, CO 80044, or call (303) 665-7062.

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