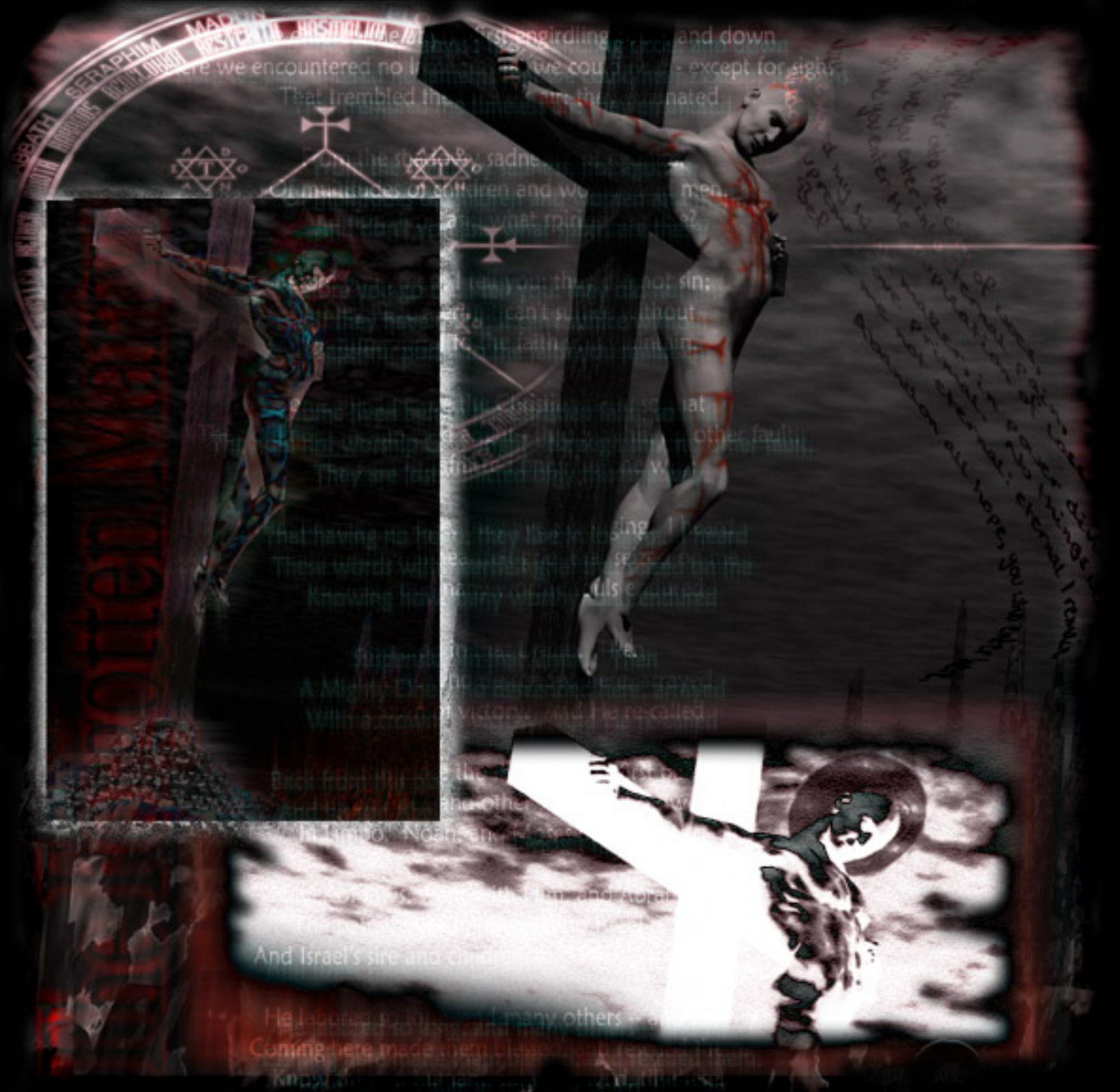


THE DARK TIMES

Volume I
Issue I

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Agents Wanted

While the Hoffmann Institute doesn't openly recruit, the staff of The Dark Times knows no shame. We'll take all comers. If you've got an idea, step right up.

What are we looking for? Well, there's the obvious: articles, adventures, plot hooks, supporting cast members, gadgets, conspiracy theories, the usual. Don't worry if it's not specifically Dark Matter. We have a crack team of experts who'll slave day and night bringing your masterpiece into our little universe. Or be shot.

But don't let their fate limit your imagination. We also need illustrators and other artist-types (beret optional), organizers (whip provided), researchers (bring your own weapon), and other hangers-on.

You can reach us via the website (thedarktimes.cjb.net) or email (mud_pup@hotmail.com or andersdl@plattsburgh.edu). We promise not to bite... hard.

Thoughts on the Matter

Welcome to the first issue of The Dark Times.

In March of 2000, Wizards of the Coast announced that it would no longer produce new gaming material for the Alternity Role Playing Game and its campaign worlds after the end of the year. Many game masters and players were upset by the news, while others knew that if Alternity was to live that it would be because of their hard work and dedication.

Subsequently, calls for E-zines (online magazines) and Netbooks (compendiums of similar-topic information compiled online and made available for download) surfaced on the Dark Matter mailing list. I saw a chance to gather together a group of individuals capable of producing a magazine dedicated to providing Dark Matter enthusiasts with everything from new equipment, campaign ideas and FX to fan fiction and ready-made selections of supporting cast members. The driving goal of the magazine: to produce material useable in a Dark Matter, or similar campaign setting, of quality equal to or superior than that of the "professionals".

Over the course of the creation of The Dark Times' first issue, major changes occurred including the structure of the magazine and the core staff, but one thing remained the same: an end product designed to supplement your Dark Matter campaign. On behalf of The Dark Times staff, enjoy.

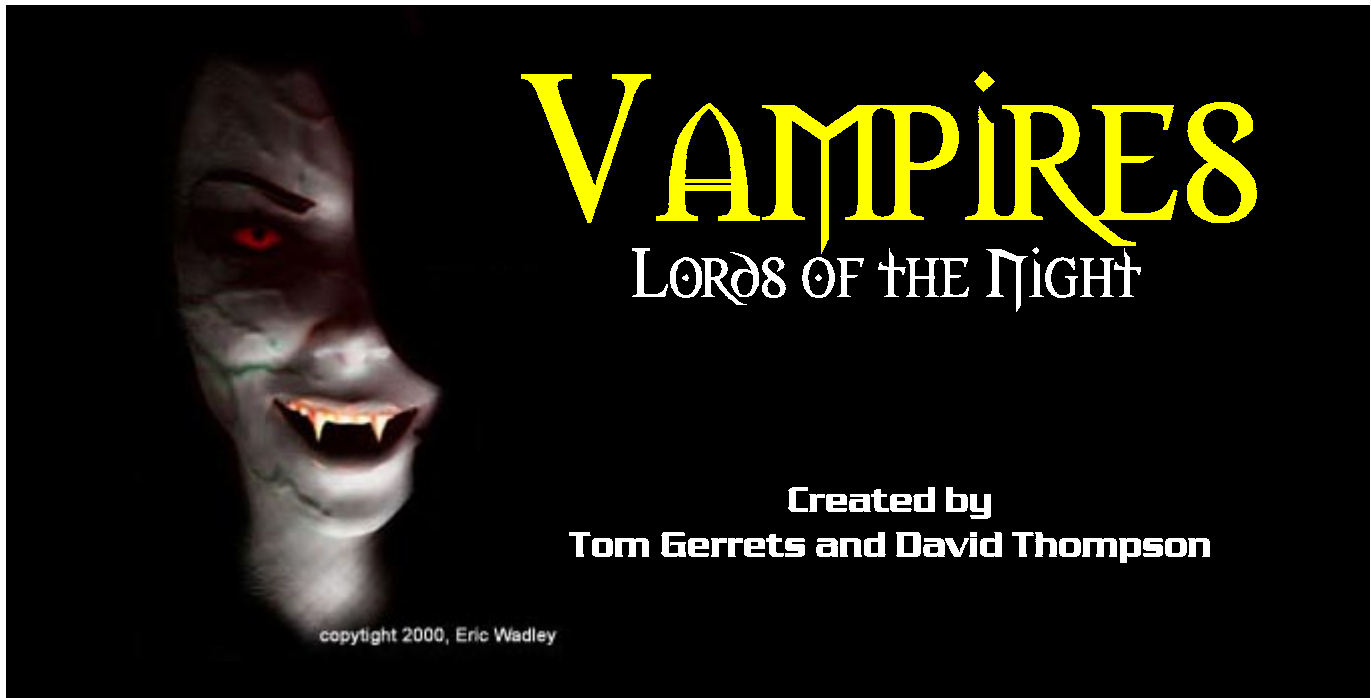
David Thompson
Editor-in-Chief

Editor-in-Chief/Online Layout
David Thompson

Assistant Editors
Mud Puppie
Billy Oppenheimer

PDF Layout
David Anderson

Column Managers
David Anderson
Martin Bailey
James Hobson
Shawn Hudson
Brad Stiles



VAMPIRES

LORDS OF THE NIGHT

Created by
Tom Gerrets and David Thompson

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“Say, my child, if you read this letter my unlife has probably ended already.”

In penning this letter to you, I also write my own death sentence, because I break one of the holy rules of vampiric society: Never produce anything that can awaken the mortals to our existence.

Their secrets have been upheld after the Inquisition. Nevertheless, I want to write you this letter, and apologise for burdening you with this mockery of life.

I couldn't raise you as I was supposed to do; I am a traveller by nature and I couldn't stay in your city due to a slight territorial dispute with the Prince that rules it. That's why I went to the Ancient World shortly after your creation and stayed in Austria for eighty years.

When I learned that some mortal vampire hunter finally ended the prince of San Francisco's unlife, I returned as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, as you've already found out by now, traveling is difficult for our kind, because of our vulnerability to sunlight; it took me some time to come to your city. As for weaknesses: don't trust everything the Hollywood directors try to make the mortals believe in their horror movies. Holy crosses or other symbols can't affect a vampire unless someone with True Faith wields them. And nowadays, True Faith is a rare quality indeed. The same is true for the bedtime stories and a vampire's reflection. Of course you have a reflection in the mirror; why shouldn't you? Okay, the mortals aren't completely crazy, so watch out for fire and sunlight; a wooden stake immobilizes, but won't kill you. On the other hand, the petty mortals can put the legend of running water killing vampires back in their box

of fairy tales. You don't have to breathe anymore because you're undead, so immersion in water won't hurt you. However, if you sink too deep in water you can be crushed just like a human and if you stay immersed in water for a longer period of time your body will decay. The stories about garlic are totally fictional.

By now you should have noticed that you are not alone in unlife. In fact, several thousand vampires populate this world. We even have our own religions. Some believe that we originate from Lilith, Mother of Darkness. More popular is the conviction that Cain, after slaying his only brother, became the first vampire and that all vampires are younger generations under the yoke of Cain's original vampire sons. There is a war going on between several factions of ancient vampires and some say that we all are pawns in their eternal war game called the Jyhad. I don't know if this is true, but sometimes, even I get the feeling that my actions are directed

by someone, or something, other than myself.

Anyway, let's get back to the dangers that you will face within the secret society. Vampiric society is very political and ruled by the older generations. There are several clans of vampires; all with their own unique abilities. I will tell you more about this later.

I think you already discovered the magical abilities of your blood when you feed it to humans. They become your willing slaves if you wish. This is good, because you also need protection when our enemy, the sun, has risen; humans can be very effective guards during the day. You should use your ability to create other vampires sparingly, because the vampiric society doesn't approve the mindless procreation of others...”

BY NOW YOU SHOULD HAVE NOTICED THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN UNLIFE.



“What are you reading, Harris?”

Harris jumped at the voice of his boss. The mayor looked even more sinister to Harris, his counsellor, after reading this letter he found in the desk of his boss...

“Nothing special, sir. I...eh...was looking for the annual figures of... ummm...” Harris stammered.

“Oh never mind.” Mayor Greene countered jovially. “It’s good I see you tonight, because I want to talk about your upcoming promotion.”

With quick and silent strides, the Mayor crossed the distance between the door of his office and the desk at which Harris was caught browsing through the personal files of Mayor Greene. Greene put an arm around the shoulder of his counsellor and lifted him effortlessly from the seat.

“Let’s go to the kitchen and talk about your promotion,” the Mayor said laughing.

Harris looked at his boss and found that he couldn’t avert his eyes from the sparkling eyes of Greene.

“Why talk about my promotion in the kitchen, sir?”

“Because I don’t want bloodspots on my Persian carpet, Harris.”

Harris tried to scream but an invisible claw tightened around his throat, while Harris felt Mayor Greene entering his mind like a snake slithering into a nest of young birds.

“Oh, by the way Harris, it’s nice for you to know that I was the one who ended the unlife of my creator, the writer of this letter. Interesting isn’t it?”

Mayor Greene laughed, revealing his sharp, white teeth.



Vampires are not the monsters Bram Stoker wanted you to believe they are. Unfortunately, vampires aren’t recognised that easily. They live among us, feed from us, and use us as pawns for their own demonic games. They have existed for centuries developing special powers, skills, weakness and flaws.

This article expands on the information presented within the *Dragon* article “Legacy of the Dragon” by Sean Reynolds (issue #264) and *Beyond Science: Guide to FX* and will be a blue print for future articles on vampires and vampirism in this magazine.

Vampires

The ability scores for a newly created vampire are based on those of the victim previous to transformation. Upon “awakening” as a vampire, the newly created will retain the ability scores that it possessed in life. However, the vampire’s strength, dexterity and constitution will increase as it matures. When the vampire is originally created, it uses its new constitution for the basis of its FX points. These FX points track the “life force” of the vampire and are modified by its feeding and sleep. It is also important to note that if a person possessed FX abilities before becoming a vampire, they will lose these skills upon their transformation. The exact reason for this is unknown, but it is theorized that the undead nature of vampirism is the cause.

Vampire Ability Scores and Aging

	Age	STR	DEX	CON	FX
Fledgling	0-100	--	--	--	--
Mature	100-200	+1	+1	+1	+1
Ancient	200-500	+1	+1	+1	+1
Eminent	500-1000	--	--	--	+1
Patriarch	1000+	+1	+1	+1	+1

The maximum that any ability score may reach is 16.

Attacks:

claws d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m LI/O
 bite d4w/d4+1w/d4m LI/O
 feeding* varies

*This attack can be made against a helpless person (sleeping, unconscious, etc).

Recommended Skills: Athletics-climb, -jump; Unarmed-brawl; Acrobatics-dodge; Stealth-hide, -shadow, -sneak; Stamina-endurance, -resist pain; Knowledge-language (specific); Awareness-intuition, -perception; Interaction-charm, -intimidate, -seduce

Defenses: Armor: d4 (LI) d4 (HI) d4-1 (EN)

Bonus FX Skills:

Mesmerism:
 Dominate

Vampiric Skills and Flaws

Contrary to the article in *Dragon* #264, every vampire starts with the following flaws: Vulnerability to Fire (9), Vulnerability to Sunlight (9), and Vulnerability to True Faith (6) (New



Flaw see below). The Pallor flaw is not a standard flaw. Vampires are pale, but can pass for humans easily. When a vampire has the Pallor flaw, the paleness is unnatural in appearance and unnerving to humans.

Perhaps the most widely known of a vampire’s weaknesses is the wooden stake. The actual task of driving the stake into the creature’s heart, though, is not an easy one. First, the stake must be prepared completely from wood. Second, a vampire will rarely stand idly by as someone tries to strike it (unless it’s somehow restrained). Instead, the creature, which is by no means ignorant of its weaknesses, makes use of its unnaturally dense skin and muscle tissue, in addition to its agility, to defend itself (which gives attackers +2 steps on any “melee weapons” roll made with a wooden

Vampiric Flaw	Bonus Points	Skill Ability
Animal Aversion	+3/6	WIL
Aura of Decay	+3/6	WIL
Bound to Homeland Earth	+2	WIL
Deadly Feeding	+6	CON
Fear of Holy Symbols	+3/6	WIL
No Reflection	+2/4	WIL
Pallor	+3/6/9	WIL
Stench of the Dead	+3/6	WIL
Terrible Thirst	+4/6	WIL
Unusual Vulnerability	+3/6/9	CON
Vulnerability to Fire	+3/6/9	CON
Vulnerability to Sunlight	+3/6/9	CON
Vulnerability to True Faith	+3/6/9	CON
Wasteful Metabolism	+3/6	CON

Bold flaws are described in Dragon 264.

stake specifically used to target the vampire). If the vampire is restrained, unconscious, or otherwise unable to defend itself, it takes one action to “stake” the creature. Once the stake has been driven through the creature’s heart, it will lose 1 mortal point per round until it has none remaining. At this time, it is immobilized and cannot move again unless the staked is removed. To actually kill the vampire, its head must be severed while the stake remains embedded within its heart.

Vampiric Flaws

Animal Aversion

Animals automatically shun the vampire with this flaw, sensing that the vampire is not alive and no longer contributes a role within the normal ecology. Trained guard animals, such as watchdogs, and feral animals will be unusually aggressive toward the vampire, while untrained animals (cows, horses etc.) will cower away; cats hiss and dogs bark excessively. When this flaw is taken for 6 skill points even untrained animals will react aggressively.

Aura of Decay

With this flaw, a vampire affects its surroundings with its lifeless aura. When the vampire walks in a park, flowers will shrivel and small insects that approach the vampire will fall lifelessly to the ground. Even people who enter the radius of this aura will sense an unnatural cold. The effective radius of this aura is 1 meter. When this flaw is taken for 6 points, the effective aura is 3 meters.

Bound to Homeland

Earth vampires with this flaw cannot enter their slumber as normal without a handful of Earth from their homeland placed within their resting-place. If the vampire attempts to enter its unnatural sleep, it will have to make an effective

Mental Resolve check with a +2 penalty. For every day of rest taken after the first without the necessary earth, there will be a +1 cumulative penalty. When the check fails, the vampire will enter an uneasy sleep and when he awakens for the night, he will lose 2 FX points instead of the usual 1 FX point (e.g. Wasteful Metabolism flaw). This is cumulative with the Wasteful Metabolism flaw.

Deadly Feeding

When the vampire with the deadly feeding flaw feeds on a victim, it injures his victim severely. For each FX point the vampire consumes in blood, the victim suffers a wound point. When the vampire has consumed 20% of blood from the victim, it deals 2 wound points for each FX point the vampire drains. Vampires with this flaw are often recognised by their serrated or unusually long needle like teeth. Often, a vampire with this flaw and the terrible thirst flaw usually don’t live long, because they are discovered very easily.

Fear of Holy Symbols

Although holy symbols don’t hurt a vampire unless a person with True Faith uses the symbol, some vampires are indoctrinated by the Hollywood movies and have a hysteric phobia for religious objects. Vampires with this flaw can’t enter holy ground (even when they don’t know they are treading on holy ground) and are repelled by holy symbols. When they face a holy symbol, they have to succeed in rolling a Mental Resolve check with a +2 penalty modifier or flee from the symbol at maximum speed for 1d4 rounds. Even when the check succeeds, the vampire tries to position itself in such a way that it can’t see the symbol anymore. When somebody with True Faith boldly shows a holy symbol the damage will be raised with +2 points (see Vulnerability to True Faith below). When this flaw is taken for 6 points, the symbols can actually hurt the vampire as if someone with True Faith wielded the symbol. If someone with True Faith wields the symbol, damage will be raised by +4 points.

No Reflection

A Vampire with this flaw does not have a physical reflection in mirror-like surfaces and only appears on photo and film like a vague shimmering body. When this flaw is taken for 4 points, the vampire doesn’t have a shadow either. In this case the vampire also has an obsession for breaking mirrors or disturbing mirror-like surfaces. The vampire will be obsessed with shattering a reflective surface unless a WILL check with a -2 bonus is made. Even when this roll is made, the vampire tries to avoid the mirror.

Stench of the Dead

The smell of the grave surrounds the vampire with this flaw. Animals are uneasy in its presence and people smell a distinctive odor of rot. If speaking with a vampire, this unnatural odor could be mistaken for extremely poor hygiene. Wearing a heavy perfume can mask the stench, but the perfume smell will be obvious. If the vampire doesn’t effectively hide the stench, all interaction rolls will have a +1 penalty. When this flaw is taken for 6 points even heavy perfumes can’t mask the stench completely and people tend

to evade the vampire. When a vampire doesn't wear a heavy perfume, all interaction skills will have a +2 penalty. Even when the vampire does wear a heavy perfume, interaction skills will have +1 penalty.

Vulnerability to True Faith

Vampires normally aren't hurt by holy symbols and can tread on holy ground whenever they want. However, when a person with True Faith presents a holy symbol to vampires or blesses holy ground, the vampire is vulnerable. Every vampire starts with Vulnerability to True Faith for 6 points. When someone with True Faith confronts a vampire with a holy symbol, the vampire needs to make a Physical Resolve check with a +1 penalty immediately. If it fails, the vampire will be hurt for $d4s/d4+2s/d4+4s$ for every round it is exposed to the holy symbol. For the flaw with 6 points, use a -2 penalty and $d4+2s/d4+4s/d4w$ and +3 penalty and +3 penalty and $d4+4s/d4w/d4+2w$ for the 9 points flaw respectively. Furthermore, the vampire needs to make a Mental Resolve check with a +1 penalty after being hurt by True Faith, or flee immediately from the item or person that harmed the vampire. Checks are made with a +2 penalty for 6 points and a +3 penalty for 9 points flaws. These penalties are cumulative when the vampire also has the Fear for Holy Symbols flaw.

When the vampire tries to enter holy ground that has been blessed by a person with True Faith, the vampire needs to make a Mental resolve check. If the check succeeds the vampire can enter the holy ground for 4/6/8 rounds before having to make a new Mental Resolve check. If the check fails, the vampire needs to flee from the holy site as fast as

Vampiric Skills

There are certain skills and abilities that all vampires have as a standard:

Fear Mask

Because a vampire is a natural predator of man, people have inherited an instinctive, primal fear for these undead hunters. When a vampire shows his true, bestial face people tend to react with irrational fear. If the vampire spends a FX point and 'charges' itself with bestial anger, it lets the 'beast' in him surface. His face changes into a bestial mask with predator eyes and hideous fangs and is only capable of making ferocious hissing sounds and low guttural growls.

General vampiric skill	Cost in FX	Ability
Blood Charm	1+FX	--
Create Ghoul	1+FX	--
Fear Mask	1FX	WIL
Heightened Senses	1FX	WIL, DEX
Improved Ability	--	CON+1
Improved Ability	1FX	STR or DEX+1
Infravision	1FX	--
Regeneration	1FX	--
Resistance to Harm	--	--

Bold general vampiric skills are described in Dragon 264.



He can maintain this for one round. Both people and animals that look at the vampire have to make a Mental Resolve check with a +4 penalty modifier or flee in terror for 2 full rounds. When they roll a critical failure they will fall helplessly to the ground, only being able to mumble and babble in sheer terror. When somebody has seen the true face of vampires more often they will get used to it. Every time a person successfully makes his Mental Resolve check vs. Fear Mask, the penalty becomes one step lower, for future exposure to Fear Mask. So, if for example, Father Matthew has boldly withstood the vampire's true nature, and looked the beast squarely in the eye twice in his career as a hunter of evil, his penalty would only be a +1 step penalty when facing his next vampire opponent who is wearing the mask. Note that this step modifier cannot be raised above a -2 step bonus. No matter how often someone views a vampire, human instinct will force people to flee the monsters. Intelligent vampires will use their Fear Mask only sparingly for obvious reasons: there is no better way in telling that somebody is a vampire than looking at the face of the beast itself. Fear Mask does not affect other vampires.

Heightened Senses

A vampire can raise one of his five senses (smell of the wolf, sight of the eagle, hearing of the bat, et cetera) temporarily by using this skill. Appropriate skills are used as though they were one level higher (if a vampire has no skill level, treat it as though it was a level one skill). Use of this skill costs one FX point and the effect lasts for 1d12 rounds. A vampire can use additional FX points to heighten two or more senses simultaneously. At skill level 6, two senses can be heightened for one FX point and the effect lasts for 1d12+8 rounds. At skill level 13, three senses can

be heightened for one FX point and the effect lasts for 1d12+20 rounds. However, the heightened sense is more susceptible for extreme input (the eyes for light flashes, ears for loud sounds, etc.)

Infravision

With this skill activated the eyes of the vampire take on an ominous red or feral yellow glow and he can see in darkness just like creatures of the night. This effect lasts for 1d12+4 rounds. At skill level 6, the vampire can see in the night like people can in daylight, and the effect lasts for 1d12+20 rounds. If a bright light flashes into the vampire's face when this skill is activated, the vampire is effectively blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Besides their general skills vampires can select Optional Vampiric skills making each vampire unique. The optional vampiric skills that a newly born vampire acquires are based on the skills his creator has. Newborn vampires cannot invest any skill points in skills that their master does not have. The maximum starting level in any optional vampiric skill is level 3. However, for each two adventure levels gained the vampire gains insight into his dark abilities and can invest in a new skill.

(When you prefer to play with a clan-based system, Optional Vampiric skills are primarily defined by clan type. More on this in future articles.)



Optional vampiric skill	Cost	FX points to spend
STR		
Animal Form	5	1
Claws	2	1
Might of the Dragon	3	1

DEX		
Hunters Speed	4	1
Wall Crawling	2	1

CON		
Animate Shadows	6	2
Embrace the Earth	2	1
Generate Mist	3	1+
Mist Form	5	2
Undead Endurance	3	1

WIL		
Alter Appearance	4	1
Command	1	1
Confuse Memories	4	1
Hide in Shadows	1	1
Flight	3	1
Invisibility	2	1
Levitation	1	1
Manipulate Shadows	2	1

PER		
Blood Telepathy	3	1
Call Animals	4	1
Fear	3	1
Mesmerize	4	1
<i>Bold optional skills are described in Dragon 264.</i>		

Optional Vampiric Skills

Alter Appearance

With this illusion-like skill, the vampire can change his facial features and look like a completely different person. In fact, the vampire doesn't change his face as such, but manipulates the mind of the viewer in seeing someone else. He can't mimic a person, but just takes on a 'common face'. People who see the 'altered' vampire do think that they are interacting with an unknown person and act accordingly. When people have an obvious reason to believe that the stranger isn't what he's pretending to be, they can make an Awareness or Perception check with a +3 penalty to see through the illusion. The Alter Appearance effect lasts for 6+1d4 rounds. Of course, spending additional FX points can prolong the effect. At skill level 6, the penalty for exposing a vampire who uses Alter Appearance turns to a +4 penalty and the effect is held for 12+1d6 rounds.

Animate Shadows

With this incredibly strong skill, the vampire can bring the shadows around him 'to life'. The shadows around the vampire solidify and come together to build a shadow-like monster or something else based on the task the vampire wants the shadow to fulfill. The Animated Shadow can perform simple tasks, such as fight a person, entangle a person, push a table, or create a shadow wall in front of me. Writing a letter or starting an engine are not simple tasks, and can therefore not be performed by the shadows.

Command

With this skill, the vampire can issue a single command word that has to be obeyed by the victim immediately. The effect of this command is one round. Command words such as: run, sit, jump, or freeze are obeyed. When the vampire uses words such as die, the victim will only fall comatose for one round and get up in the next. The vampire can use this power while talking by only slightly stressing the command word in a sentence, thus hiding his powers from others. When this skill is used, the victim is entitled to a Mental Resolve check with a +3 penalty modifier to escape the effects of the command. If the victim succeeds in this check, he does not gain any knowledge about the fact that he was a target of Command. At level 6, the penalty on the Mental Resolve check is +4 and at skill 12 this penalty changes to +5.

Fear

Effectively, this is a better form of the Fear Mask ability; it only works together with that ability. By using this skill, the vampire can induce fear not only in mortals but also in other vampires by showing his true nature. When a vampire is a victim of this skill, the victim vampire has to make checks as though they were mortals affected by fear mask.

Generate Mist

When a vampire uses this skill, his body starts to sweat a thick fog, which expands rather quickly. It is impossible to look further than 2 meters in this mist. The vampire who generated the mist can see through his own mist as if it was a clear night. For each FX point spent, the mist expands in a radius of twenty meters and remains in normal weather conditions for up to 10 rounds. The vampire who generated the mist can dispel his own mist at any time; the mist dissipates in one round. At skill level 4, the effective radius is thirty meters per FX point spent. At skill level 8, the effective radius is fifty meters per FX point spent and the duration is doubled. Vampires aren't affected by mists created by other vampires.

Hide in Shadows

With this skill, the vampire can actually blend into the shadows, making him virtually undetectable. The vampire melds into a shadow that covers at least half of his body and remains motionless. All checks to discover the vampire receive a +3 penalty. This penalty is cumulative with any other possible penalties which accompany the check. The

vampire can choose to move (not faster than slow walking pace) under the cover of the shadows, but checks for discovery will then be at a +1 penalty. The effect lasts for 1 hour or whenever the vampire chooses to move faster than a slow walking pace.

Manipulate Shadows

The manipulation of shadows is one of the reasons why vampires are called the masters of darkness. With this skill, they can cause shadows to thicken and float in any direction the vampire wishes, thereby obscuring light sources, or hiding specific objects in a corner of a room. Normal light sources give off a faint aura when the manipulated shadows are being used to obscure the light source. With this skill, the vampire can also let the shadows stick to his body and make him look bigger, or obscure parts of his body, making him look thinner. When somebody is actively looking at the shadows that are being manipulated in a clear light, they can see an inky darkness, which curls like black fog. Vampires who use this skill manipulate the shadows in a dark recess and let them 'roll' or flow out from this dark, undetectable spot. For 1 FX point, the vampire can manipulate an effective area of 10 square meters and the effect will last for five rounds. A vampire can spend additional FX points to prolong the duration or to affect a bigger area.



The Anatomy of a Vampire

In general, all of the biological systems of a mortal can also be found within a vampire, though these systems may be drastically modified.

Of special note are the sensory organs of a vampire. A vampire's senses of sight, smell, touch and hearing are vastly enhanced compared to those of a human. Additionally, vampires possess infravision, a special type of night vision.

It is also important to note that once the transformation process from a mortal to a vampire has occurred, the body will cease to age. Fingernails and hair will no longer grow. Hair will not gray with age, and bones will not become brittle. These are all effects of the unnatural transformation process of the undead creatures.

Because vampires don't make use of their intestines and other internal organs, these body parts shrivel over time. Any vampire who has lived his unlife for longer than two months, begins to sustain deterioration within its intestines and internal organs. This makes them more vulnerable to excessive pressure than humans, because they have less internal body mass and thus less counter pressure. When a vampire is more than twenty meters under water, the cumulative pressure of the water starts to take its toll. The vampire needs to make a Physical Resolve check to avoid taking pressure damage. Depending on the success, the vampire needs to make a new roll in 4/8/12 rounds. If the vampire fails this roll, he will automatically take d4-2 wound damage from the crushing weight on his body. A new Physical Resolve roll must be made in the next round. If a critical failure is rolled, the vampire takes d6+1 wound damage and he gets a +1 penalty on the Physical Resolve roll next round. This weakness is incredibly exaggerated during the years and resulted in the mistaken belief that vampires can't be immersed in running water. In fact, a lot of vampires are excellent swimmers.

This weakness also applies to other circumstances in which extreme pressure is put upon the vampire.

Circulatory System: Like a mortal, the circulatory system of a vampire carries blood through the body. Blood pumped by the heart enters the lungs; unlike humans, though, a vampire has no need for oxygen (see respiratory system). The blood is then pumped into arteries that carry it throughout the body passing through capillaries, where it transfers nutrients (in the form of blood taken from the vampire's victim) to the tissues. Veins carry the blood back to the heart, where the cycle begins again. Of note, is the fact that though a vampire's blood has the same rich red color as a mortal's, when viewed under transmitted light it has a distinctive golden glow about it.

Digestive System: Unlike humans, a vampire's digestive system does not chemically convert food for absorption by body tissues. Instead, the greatly modified digestive tract of a vampire has the single function of converting a victim's blood into nourishment. Like humans, however, nutrient absorption occurs mainly in the small intestine. Because a vampire will seldom consume actual food or water, the kidneys and stomach are vastly reduced in size. Additionally, because there is little to no food consumption, a vampire has

no real metabolism.

Immune System: The vampire's immune system, like a mortal's, defends the creature's body against foreign invaders. The body uses lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, and antibodies, protein molecules produced by lymphocytes, to defend itself. When lymphocytes recognize a foreign molecular pattern, or antigen, some release antibodies in great numbers; others store the memory of the pattern for future release of antibodies if the antigen reappears. Antibodies attach themselves to the antigen and mark it for destruction by other substances. Because vampires have no real metabolism (as they have no need for nourishment in the normal sense) the creatures are immune to metabolic toxins and poisons. A vampire's innate immunity system (skin, saliva, mucus, etc.) is almost entirely the same as a human's.



These barriers hinder the entrance of disease but can rarely prevent it. Thus, it is the vampire's greatly modified adaptive immune system that renders the creature virtually immune to disease of all kinds. A vampire's immune system is so advanced that once it reacts to antigens, their mutated antibodies and lymphocytes immediately destroy the dis-

eases. Additionally, the cell structure of a vampire is vastly different to that of a human, as there is a massive imbalance between protective, mutated, white blood cells and red blood cells. These mutated white blood cells immediately destroy antigens that reproduce within other cells, such as viruses.

Muscular/Skeletal System: The muscular/skeletal system of a vampire is identical to that of a human. It consists of the body's skeleton and muscles, containing more than 200 bones bound together by ligaments. Movements of the bones are caused by contractions of the skeletal muscles that are attached to the bones by tendons. A vampire's fangs are retractable at will. Thus, a vampire normally has the infamous long fangs only when he desires or while feeding. Because vampires are ferocious natural predators who live mainly on their instincts, their fangs are often visible when they fight, are cornered, or when they are afraid.

Nervous System: The nervous system of a vampire is similar in theory to that of a human, but both voluntary and involuntary movements are greatly enhanced. Voluntary movement is caused by nerve impulses beginning in the motor area of the brain's cortex and carried by cranial or spinal cord nerves to skeletal muscles. The impulses within

a vampire's body are superior to a human's in both speed and acuteness. This enhancement carries over into the involuntary autonomic nervous system, which controls the muscles of internal organs.

Reproductive System: Though the vampire's pituitary gland still functions normally and the creature possesses common hormones such as testosterone and estrogen, a vampire simply cannot reproduce in the normal sense. The only way for a vampire to "procreate" is via their deadly bite.

Respiratory System: Within mortals, the respiratory system supplies oxygen to cells and releases carbon dioxide. This entire process is completely useless for a vampire. The creatures simply have no need for oxygen intake at all, and do not create waste such as carbon dioxide. Vampires do in fact still utilize their lungs, but only for speech.

Feeding and the Creation of Vampires

Perhaps the most well known aspect of the vampire is their feeding habits. Vampires must obtain their sustenance by feeding on living beings, and if they do not do this they will eventually die.

The most traditional method of feeding is through a major blood vessel, which can be found in the neck. Additionally, the neck is almost always unprotected and open to attack. Other major arteries may be chosen to better hide the punctures. Less common but regularly used arteries are the wrist, armpit and inside of the thigh.

The actual feeding takes place after the vampire has punctured the protective flesh of his target with his eyeteeth. The size and seriousness of the wound can vary greatly depending on the intent of the vampire. To actually create another vampire, the victim must be completely drained of its blood. This, however, is uncommon. More often than not, the vampire simply seeks to feed for sustenance, drinking only a small portion of the victim's blood. These wounds, though small, cause a great deal of trauma to the flesh of the victim. In addition to the wound, there is a discoloration of the skin and deep bruising. Victims usually feel some weakness from the blood loss and often appear pale and haggard if a vampire frequently feeds from the same victim, or drinks too deeply.

It is extremely important to note that a vampire cannot drink blood from a victim unless it is undisturbed for at least a short period of time, and thus it will almost never attempt to feed during combat.

The actual reason for the requirement of blood versus conventional nourishment is unknown. Obviously, as a member of the undead, vampires have a vastly different anatomical structure than that of mortals (more is contained within the necrology section). Though blood is the major source of a human's life, it is assumed that to extend its unlife the vampire has to steal the life from living victims (The Blood is the Life).

During and after feeding, a vampire's body undergoes

various different physical changes: the skin becomes less clammy and pale, obtaining various levels of almost mortal appearance. This process is reversed, though, when a vampire has not fed for a long period of time: the creature seems slightly slower in agility (though significantly superior to humans) and paler still than its normal complexion.

In the *Alternity* game, the vampire's blood (and thus "life energy") is represented by FX points. The actual number of FX points available to a vampire can be found on the **Vampire Ability Scores and Aging** chart. Vampires gradually lose FX points for entering their natural state of slumber and their altered state of hibernation. To regain these FX points, vampires must feed on a victim. The amount of blood a victim contains equals the victim's CON score. A vampire can drain 20% of a victim's blood without really hurting its victim. For each FX/Blood point drained the victim will sustain two stun wounds. When the vampire has consumed 20% of blood from the victim, the victim sustains 1 wound point and 1 stun point for each FX point the vampire has drained. In threatening circumstances, the vampire can choose to feed more quickly, but with dire consequences for the victim. If the vampire chooses to feed quickly, the victim will sustain mortal damage. For each point of inflicted mortal damage caused by the vampire's "feeding" attack, two FX points are regained. This will injure victims, but if a vampire wishes to continue feeding on a victim until there are no mortal points or blood points remaining, then the victim dies and may subsequently become a vampire (but only when a vampire spends an FX point to do so).

If the victim's body is not properly disposed of it will "awaken" under the control of the vampire who killed it by the sunset of the second night after his death. The occupant is now a newly created vampire fully aware of its new form and the powers that accompanies it. These newly created vampires usually remember how they died and are able to comprehend their new hunger and what must be done to satisfy it.

The Vampiric Slumber

A vampire has the ability to instinctively know when sunrise draws near. Thus, they are usually able to retire safely to their awaiting sanctuary. At the moment of dawn, vampires slowly sink into a deep slumber that they will not awaken from until the following sunset, unless severely disturbed in their slumber. Thus, as a vampire sleeps within this oblivious state, it is extremely vulnerable. Once the sun sets below the horizon, the vampire immediately awakens and is aware of its surroundings, not disoriented in the least. During this period of rest, a vampire gradually weakens to the point of losing 1 FX point and is forced to make a fatigue check if it has less than three FX points left in his FX pool.

Because they are so vulnerable during their rest, vampires often guard their lairs with cunning and deadly traps or ghouls. These traps are of the most lethal and protective available to the vampire, as they are its only hope once it

has succumbed to the calling of its deep sleep.

If a vampire is kept from its sanctuary as the sun begins to rise, the consequences are grim indeed. Direct sunlight upon the body of a vampire will almost always utterly destroy it (see the Vulnerability to Sunlight flaw), with the exception of only the most ancient of their undead race. Once the sun has risen above the horizon, but the rays have not yet touched the vampire's body, the creature will make haste to its sanctuary, disregarding virtually any other danger. A very few of the most ancient vampires are virtually unharmed by the normally deadly rays of sunlight. These few creatures, though they detest the sun and prefer not to be awake during the hours of light, can exist normally with only the slightest of effects.

Certain circumstances throughout the "life" of a vampire may cause the creature to enter an altered state of hibernation. Common reasons include vampire hunters or an insufficient feeding supply. Vampires have the ability to hibernate for periods well longer than any known living creature and in fact can sustain periods of centuries of sleep. When vampires enter this state of hibernation, they begin to lose one FX point per day until they reach 0. When this occurs, the vampire has truly entered a state of hibernation and all of the information that follows applies.

These states of hibernation are willingly entered and require no extra sustenance before it enters this state. The exact sanctuary or location where a vampire chooses to hibernate is a very important factor for obvious reasons. Vampires in this hibernation state are just as vulnerable, if not more so, than they are within their normal form of rest. Besides physical danger by vampire hunters, the vampire must also insure that the sanctuary must be free from sunlight and placed well within the earth. Caves and underground dwellings of all sorts, such as the catacombs of temples, serve well for this purpose. In this state, a vampire can use mental skills at the cost of wound points (1 wound point equals 1 FX point).

Vampires within this state of hibernation are completely aware of their surroundings, though they may be unable to act. Usually, a vampire can only rouse itself from its slumber if mortal danger is imminent, and even this causes the vampire a great deal of damage and harm. Vampires who wish to awaken themselves from their hibernation must take 1d4+1 mortal damage to do so.

Hibernation's effects on the vampire are damaging also. Unless the vampire forces itself to arise early from its slumber (as described above), the hibernation will simply run its course. The vampire will remain "asleep" until a time that usually ranges from 50 to 150 years (though a few vampires have been known to remain in hibernation for multiple centuries). Once the creature awakens, obvious physical deterioration will be apparent. Atrophy is visible within the creature's muscles and the flesh begins to sag. Additionally, the vampire appears even more lifeless as its entire body appears brittle and aged. Though the creature is physically weakened, it is not nearly as weak as a common vampire hunter might guess. Vampires lose 1 point of STR, DEX and CON for every century within hibernation, in

addition to being forced to make a fatigue check. Until it has been given time to completely rebuild its FX points, the vampire will continue to suffer these reduced ability scores.

Miscellaneous

Gear for the Vampire Hunter

According to the Dark Matter Arms and Equipment Guide (p. 13), Hoffmann Institute agents are supplied with special assignment gear when dealing with vampires. This gear, which includes such things as mirrors and crosses as well as weaponry (shotguns with phosphorus shells for instance), is equally ideal for vampire hunters in general. Other gear that should be strongly considered: sharpened wooden stakes and anything that can produce enough fire to at least hold the creatures at bay. The Hoffmann Institute also recommends the reading of *Detection of Souleaters* by veteran agent Madison Rochelle, though obviously this book may not be available to the common populace. Other commonly used items by vampire hunters include water blessed by a church or clergy member and items which stereotypically cause pain or somehow hinder a vampire, such as garlic. Whether these items actually have an effect is unknown.

New Skills

Specialised skill: Occult Lore, Vampirism

Related Ability Score: WIL

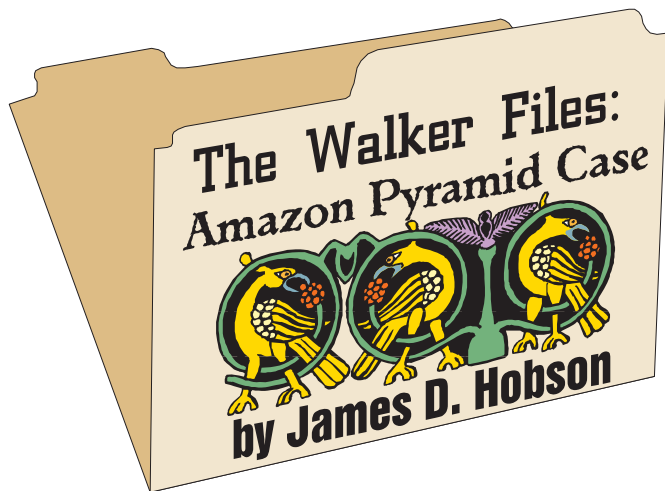
Broad Skill: Lore

Cost: 2

Profession: Free Agent

A hero with this skill has a working knowledge of undead creatures. This skill may be used to help determine the probable lairs, dining habits, and history of such creatures. Whenever a hero with this skill confronts the undead, he or she may be able to specifically identify the creature (with an Ordinary skill check). In addition, if the hero rolls a Good or Amazing result, he or she recalls one or more of the creature's specific weaknesses and natural defenses or immunities. Heroes with this skill often spend a great deal of time researching old and outdated text searching for the most hidden and forgotten secrets of necromancy. Especially useful are the works of veteran Hoffmann agent, Madison Rochelle.





Chris Walker

Journal #2: Amazon Mystery

Entry 1, 3 January 2002

As this is my first actual assignment, I came down to the Amazon, to a town called Tiquanas in northern Brazil. Arriving at the airport, my guide led me quickly to a car and then sped off into the jungle, he handed me the details Dr. N sent to him. About three weeks ago, a fisherman fishing on the Amazon discovered a plastic bag containing a leather-bound journal dated sometime in the 1920s. The journal contained the writings of an explorer who set off on an expedition into the Amazon Basin. He came across a small city resembling pre-Columbian cities in Mexico and Central America. The explorer witnessed human sacrifices, including of those of his expedition and also wrote detailed notes on the pyramid on which they were performed. Two weeks ago, a village on the edge of the deeper jungle was found abandoned. Investigators called in found no clue as to where the citizens went or what happened to them. The notes from them claimed that "it looked like they all just vanished in thin air, as no sign of a struggle or footprints existed leading from the town and all vehicles still remained." Pulling into the town, an eerie feeling came over me. Esperanto, my guide, showed me around and found only a few clues. In one house, I found a scrap of paper that Esperanto translated into, "Warriors of the past walk still." Another scrap, written in Spanish, read, "Eyes of fire, watching from the shadows, seeing our sins." Esperanto did also find footprints outside of town leading into the jungle. It was obvious the people

weren't wearing shoes, thought Esperanto said they were made by people who never wore shoes either. After calling Dr. N, the two of us are putting an expedition together to head into the jungle. It should take a few days, then we set out.

Entry 27, 31 January 2002

We found the villagers to be pleasant enough. I included a transcript with the report from an interview with a villager. He gave me some interesting details about a lost city. He called it a very large village, but I know what he meant. The tribal chief told me that the "old ones" live deep in the jungle, some days travel into the jungle. He went on to say that no one who traveled in the direction of the village had returned. We have about a week or two left before we head back to civilization, so Esperanto and I are heading in that direction. Think it important to say something about the people's beliefs, especially one in particular. Esperanto translated everything so this is all through him. They tell a tale about a large village (city) that existed long ago, and still exists they say. Before white men came, the ancestors of



Classification: TOP SECRET
To: Gail Morland
Thomas Curran
Gheorghe Zamfirescu
Samuel Layacona
Barbara Donizetto
From: Dr. Itohiro Nakami
Date: March 23, 2002
Re: Chris Walker Case Report

The following is the latest case from the agent known as Chris Walker. He sent this to me via secured sat link from his current classified assignment in Brazil. Enclosed is the information from him that I deem most pertinent to the investigation. With the strangeness of it, I felt it best to have this distributed among you all for feedback and theories on this.

All division supervisors are to provide any and all related information that might pertain to this case within 30 days to my office for inclusion to this case.

Read through this file carefully and distribute this only to agents with specialized knowledge that may help with this case. Submit these with each department's review of the case.

Sincerely,
Dr. Itohiro Nakami

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these people lived in that city. Then the came the old ones from the north, a people who lived since the creation of the universe. They took the village and exiled its inhabitants. They held the power of the gods and set up powerful magic so no one could find the city again.

Transcript: Conversation with village (Canayaso) elder, dated 29 January (VE translated by Esperanto)

CW (Chris Walker): Tell me again about the village.

VE: A large structure stands in the center, like a pile of stone. But more carefully laid together.

CW: Like this? (made a pyramid out of stones)

VE: That's it. But bigger. And they put things on the stone, like dirt drawings. With people and animals and other things no one knows about.

CW: Dirt drawings? Interesting. (pulled out a book of various pictographs from various cultures around the world) Like this, maybe? (showed a picture of Egyptian hieroglyphs)

VE: No, not like those.

CW: (showed picture of Mayan pictographs) Like these then?

VE: Yes, like those.

CW: Interesting. Do the old ones wear elaborate clothing and head-ware?

VE: Yes, they wear feathers and animal heads. They try to be like animals, calling themselves jaguar warriors and bird warriors. But they come out of their village sometimes and take people.

CW: Have you ever seen the city?

VE: (hushed) Yes, once when I was a young man. I got lost and tried to find my way home. It was large. Many people lived in it. But they never noticed me.

CW: So you got away then? Did you see anything... unusual?

VE: Yes, that night. They killed three men, two women, and a child on top of the pyramid. They

used the sharp stones that look like your friend's to cut the hearts out.

CW: To cut the hearts out. And then what?

VE: They burned them. They threw the bodies down into a hole after.

CW: Did the victims look like outsiders?

VE: Yes. But the funny thing was they all went willingly, like they wanted to die.

CW: Interesting, very interesting. Did you notice anything else?

VE: Only a clear stone skull.

CW: A crystal skull?!

VE: Yes, clear stone skull. The one who tore the hearts out held it up once. It's eyes were fire and it glowed with an evil light.

Entry 31, 4 February 2002

We found a small house today, in the middle of the jungle. Abandoned for some time, but someone drew some unique pictographs on the wall, all very Mayan looking. In



the middle of the jungle. That was interesting in itself to warrant study. But, upon further investigation, we found two other things. One, Esperanto found a skeleton wearing rags, probably safari gear. We didn't find any clue who he was, but I suspect he was the missing explorer. We found him with stone knives stuck in the back, and a spear lying nearby. The second thing we found was even more interesting, Drawings of the city, very detailed. Amazing in their detail. But they fell apart on when we picked them up. Jungle humidity Esperanto said. Wish we had them still. Showed in great detail the daily lives of these city dwellers. Remembering from my classes, the city held roughly 10,000 judging by the size from the pictures. A lot of Mayan and Aztec influences too. One picture showed a crystal skull. I saw the infamous Mitchell-Hedges skull once and the picture showed the same level of detail.

Entry 33, 6 February 2002

We finally found the city. Decimated. And overgrown. We stumbled on it when we found a large stone with more Mayan pictographs, including one I saw in the book. No changes, just the type of stone. Unfortunately the book didn't say what the symbol meant. When we found the pyramid, it definitely wasn't small. It took some time to work my way to the top, but I found it worth it when I found the skull at the top. They had left it out on the altar. Also, three bodies lay there, dead maybe a month. But how they died is a mystery. Most of the bodies found in the city showed massive stab wounds. A few showed signs of disease. Only one percent of the city's population was found though. The city, when we searched, contained maybe a hundred bodies. And no sign was found of the rest. No mass graves, no burning piles. The rest of the inhabitants just weren't there. Esperanto found one clue, a message written in Portuguese, saying, "Where the gods lead us, we know not." My hypothesis would be the rest left the city, heading where I don't know. Probably deeper into the jungle. But, they'll show up eventually. With only a day or two remaining, I plan to scout the city before we go, get a rough idea of the layout. Oddly, it looks like a cross, with four main avenues and the temple at the center where the avenues meet. The northern avenue is half as long as the southern part, while the east and west avenues are the same length as the north. And it's laid with black stone, like basalt. Neatly put together. Also, at the end of the northern avenue, I discovered a round stone, a Mayan calendar stone. Beautifully preserved too. Not much weathering. But the placement was odd. I thought they were always at the center of the city, near the pyramid. But not in this case.

Entry 62, 11 March 2002

We made it back to the town. And I'm off again, to my next assignment. Hope this one turns out better. Nothing else in the city. And to top it off, the skull vanished last night, along with the pictures I took of the city. No evidence that I was ever there. Maybe I should have listened to Esperanto's warning about the jungle. He said the jungle is a funny place, it has eyes. And it won't let those people remove things that belong to it. I suspect someone followed us and

took everything in the night. The expedition didn't have it, I saw to that.

Adventure Hooks

Using this material, the Hoffmann Institute could very well send another team to investigate the city and find out what happened. Sounds rather tedious, but here are a few ideas how to build an adventure around it.

1. The heroes are assigned to follow-up. But the problems start even before they leave. Several mishaps occur and a whole lot of weird incidents start to happen. The agents meet a strange man at the airport, warning them not to go. The hotel the agents stay at the night before heading into the jungle, they find a knife in stuck in the door when they go up to the rooms. At work here is a cult of Mayan warriors whose ancestors fled Mexico when the empire fell. They protect the secret of their city and cult from outsiders, willing to kill to do so. To go even further, the city wasn't even abandoned. It was never inhabited. The locals in the area travel their frequently to practice bizarre rituals. That then turns the whole area against the heroes, who must escape alive. This certainly lends support to outsiders who walked willingly to death. And a cult of Mayans who would kill to keep the secret, especially making them locals, gives the heroes an even greater mystery to solve.

2. The city wasn't vacated because of the investigators. Or the gods. In fact, it was only empty because the inhabitants went off for a few days into the jungle. They went out into jungle and left the skull behind, maybe to protect the city. Then, they returned. Heroes sent to investigate find the city inhabited, but not by the primitives they expect, They might wield guns, or even alien technology. Perhaps there's even a doorway in the city, leading to contact with a malevolent force from beyond. That could explain the sacrifices.

3. A combination of the first two hooks. The city inhabitants lead an otherwise normal life, aside from the sacrifices. But, they have people on the outside, who see to protecting the secret. The abandoned city was part of a massive plan to make everyone believe the city was now vacant. And some cult member stole all the evidence from Walker's party, maybe even one of the local guides, who then passed it off to someone in the night, throwing suspicion away from himself. Would the heroes fall for the same trick or do they even find the city inhabited. They might stay for weeks investigating the city. This will make the people very unhappy, prompting warnings and other nasty surprises each getting more and more terrifying. Imagine the heroes surprise when they find their guide beheaded, disemboweled, and strung up. Might make them more paranoid.

There are other possibilities. Where do the nomads tie in? What about the skull? Where are the people who disappeared? These questions keep a group tied up with adventures for weeks. But probably not a good idea to go too deeply. These things have a nasty habit of killing those who peer too deep. Like a crocodile waiting to take those who get to close to the water.





Assignment: Operation Concord
Director: James Black
Team: To Be Assigned
Location: Europe
City: Folkestone
State: Hampshire
Country: England
Intake Date: 30th March 2001
Contact: Martin Bailey (Codename Manticore)

Comments:

An informant named Jason Gray, a service engineer for the Trans Manche company which operates the Channel Tunnel between the United Kingdom and France, has been killed in a freak accident at the Folkestone terminal.

Jason had contacted us with concerns regarding the number of trains entering and leaving the tunnel. Apparently, during the late hours of the evening, a freight train enters the English side of the tunnel, but doesn't ever reach the French side.

As far as Mr. Gray could tell, these trains re-appear from the English side of the tunnel approximately 24 hours later.

Mr. Gray also sent us a dead rat that he had found within the Tunnel. The rat showed obvious signs of mutation, and recent surgery.

The rat was later analyzed by Hoffmann Institute laboratories. The report concluded that the rat had been exposed to a large dose of gamma radiation. A dissection of the rat revealed that a large piece of circuitry had been implanted within the rat's skull.

Owing to Mr. Gray's sudden and poorly explained death, and the suspicious nature of the creature found within the tunnel, together with the missing trains, a team is to be assembled and sent to investigate.

Background

The channel tunnel development has been one of the wonders of the world and has taken two centuries of starting and finishing to complete a fixed link to France. There is a terminal at each end, Folkestone, and Calais.

There are two large tunnels (7.6 metres diameter) each contains a single-track rail line. The tunnels are 50 kilometres long and 30 metres apart and were bored through the rock strata, under the Channel, at an average depth of 45 metres below the seabed. The smaller service tunnel (4.8 metres in diameter) is located between the two rail tunnels, and is equipped with a wire guidance system for specially designed service tunnel vehicles. These are used to go to any part of the tunnel very quickly and to get people out of trouble. All three tunnels are connected every 375 metres by a cross-passage which gives access to the service tunnel in case of emergency. The cross-passages are also used for ventilation and maintenance service access. Every 200 metres, the two rail tunnels are linked by piston relief ducts. These are used for the regulation of the air pressure in the tunnels. All three tunnels are lined with specially-made concrete linings. These concrete linings let water into the tunnel, that can later be pumped out at a low cost. This is to prevent the dangerous build up of pressure behind the linings.

History

1904: A new phase in British/French relations developed at the beginning of the century and the development of railway technology encouraged engineers to propose more plans for a Channel Tunnel.

1922: Work began on a trial bore at Folkestone Warren, using a machine designed by Douglas Whitaker but after 128 metres of tunnel were completed, political objections halted further progress. Two decades of debate followed, but in spite of support for a Channel Tunnel from prominent politicians such as Winston Churchill and Aneurin Bevan, no further progress was made.

1947: After the Second World War, the idea was revived with renewed efforts by intergovernmental bodies, to establish the feasibility of a Channel Tunnel. Engineering and geological research continued.

1956: The Channel Tunnel Study group, a French/British consortium, came into being to coordinate investigations into all the marine, geological, economic, and engineering implications of a cross-Channel fixed link. This group put forward proposals in 1960 for a tunnel linking Folkestone and Sangatte, which would contain two single-track railway tunnels and a service tunnel.

1974: Work began on both sides of the Channel. A pilot



tunnel at Shakespeare Cliff was abandoned after 1400 metres, owing to the British government's withdrawal of support for the project for economic reasons. This section of tunnel would ultimately be used as part of the access shaft for the next Channel Tunnel construction works.

1980-1984: A joint study commissioned by the French and British governments indicated that a twin rail tunnels scheme was technically and financially viable.

1985: With support from the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the President of France, François Mitterand, for a privately financed scheme, the two governments invited tenders for a cross-Channel fixed link.

1987: Work on the Channel Tunnel started.

1993: Work finished on the Channel Tunnel. A fixed link between England and France was made.

1994: Her Majesty, the Queen of England and François Mitterand travelled to Folkestone England without having to go on water.

Systems

The fixed equipment installed after completion of the tunnels had to fulfill the following functions:

Electric supply for trains and auxiliary equipment:

The power required for the trains and auxiliary equipment is supplied by two principal power stations at each terminal, and linked to the national 400 kV networks (Seeboard at Sellindge in Kent and Electricité de France at Les Mandarins in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais). Each network supplies half the required power, but each is capable of supplying all of the power necessary for the whole system.

Electric supply for cantenaries: The cantenaries supply the traction power necessary for the shuttle trains and the through trains. The overhead power lines supply 25 kV; one of the most powerful 25kV cantenary systems in existence.

Control and communications systems: All the control and communications systems are carried in three fibre-optic

cables. These high capacity cables transmit digitally all the data for rail traffic management, and all the electrical and mechanical plant data in the tunnels. Speech communications are also transmitted by cable but, also, there are independent radio systems including: concession radio, track-to-train radio, and shuttle internal radio.

Tunnel ventilation

All trains using the tunnels have electric traction, so there is no engine exhaust pollution. The service tunnel vehicles have diesel engines designed to give very low emissions. Air is pumped into the service tunnel from ventilation buildings at Shakespeare Cliff and Sangatte. The service tunnel acts as the supply duct for normal ventilation. Air handling units located above the doors of the cross-passages every 375 metres, control the flow of air from the service tunnel to the railway tunnels.

Drainage systems

The drainage system of five pumping stations permits the removal of water from the tunnels. Water from normal seepage is directed via channels into storage tanks or sumps at the lowest points and discharged by pipeline to the pumping stations.

Fire-fighting

Smoke detectors are installed in all the technical rooms located within the cross-passages. Automatic extinguishing devices and remote control shut-off systems are also installed. A dedicated water supply line in the service tunnel is fed from storage tanks and pumping stations at the portals. This line feeds the fire hydrants in the cross passages and in the running tunnels.

Tunnel cooling systems

The temperature in the tunnels is maintained at an acceptable level of 25 degrees Celsius, by the circulation of refrigerated water in each section of tunnel via a discharge and a return pipe. Refrigeration plants at the former construction sites of Shakespeare Cliff and Sangatte, provide the chilling and circulation systems.

Service tunnel equipment

On each side of the service tunnel, technical rooms contain all the necessary electrical and technical rooms for the equipment requirements in the service tunnel.

Questions To Answer (Plot hooks)

- Obviously, Jason Gray was murdered. Who murdered him, and why? Had he seen too much?
- It would seem that there is more to the subterranean channel tunnel structure than has been given to the public. Where do these trains go? Do the tracks have a hidden destination? Do they travel to another European country? Which one, why, and who is responsible?
- Is there an entire subterranean base? Who operates it, and what are they up to? Whoever is down there is obviously performing experiments on animals... maybe they're also performing experiments on humans.



Train Specifications

General Data

Type of vehicle	Shuttle-Train Car
Owner	TRANSMANCHE LINK (TML)
Date of Order	1989
Quantity Ordered	254 cars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 108 single-deck carriers • 108 double-deck carriers • 19 single-deck loaders • 19 double-deck loaders

Technical Characteristics

Power trainline: 1500 Vdc
Welded steel frame bogies
Electro-pneumatic braking system
Stainless steel car body
Special bogies supporting 22,000kg (45,000lb) on each axle
Thermal insulation, fire resistance for 30 minutes
Noise insulation (at 160 km/h / 100 mph) inside the tunnel: less than 75 dB(A)
Detection systems for gas, smoke, and fire

Dimensions and Weight

Length	26 to 28m 85' 4" to 91' 10"
Width	4 100mm 13' 5"
Height	5,600 mm 18' 4-1/2"
Weight (empty)	59,380 to 130,910 to 63,910 kg 140,895 lb

Characteristics of Shuttle-Train

(Comprising 28 wagons and 2 locomotives)

Length	776 m 2,546'
Capacity	120 cars, 12 coaches, and 6 motorcycles
Maximum speed inside the tunnel	160 km/h 100 mph



The Vrtil Society

By Shawn Hudson

The Vrtil Society, as recorded during an interview with Lars Wehlmann. Hoffman Institute File DO-11E75-00141.

Agent Elaine Park, Hoffman Institute Interviewer: Tell me about the Vrtil Society.

Lars Wehlmann, former member of the Vrtil Society: The purpose of the Vrtil Society is simple: world domination and resurrection of the Third Reich. The Society takes a two-pronged approach in their quest, taking advantage of humanity's innate abilities as well as those offered by technology. On the one hand you have the vrtil, that energy that surrounds us, infuses us, and connects us. On the other you have the strange technologies that have been developed and reverse-engineered since the time of Hitler. The combination of these studies has led to gene therapy and psychosurgery experiments aimed at creating a Superman, and in raising the German/Aryan race to its rightful place as rulers of the Earth.



The Society was originally conceived to explore the origins of the Aryan race and was founded in Berlin by General Karl Haushofer, a university professor and director of the Munich Institute of Geopolitics. Through exercises and meditation, the Luminous Lodge worked at awakening vrtil. Many of Hitler's men were a part of the Lodge, and some have hinted that Hitler's powerful persuasive abilities were a result of these studies.

Park: So the Vrtil Society was originally a group dedicated to enhancing natural psychic ability?

Wehlmann: Very much so. But it had been infused with Hitler's racist notions. That the Lodge was able to, how you say, create results... impressed Hitler, and the group rose quickly in his hierarchy leading to the Second World War.

Park: Where did the Society's technological advances come from?

Wehlmann: In 1936, a minor member of the Vrtil Society claimed to have contacted a non-human entity, and convinced his superiors to explore a particular site in the Black Forest of Germany. They discovered an alien spacecraft at that site, virtually undisturbed. Hitler instantly assigned the members

of the Society to the project, known as the Haunebu Project. Along with several top researchers, and the same insight that led them to the crash, the Project was able to successfully repair the craft, and in August of '39, the craft took off for the first time. Hitler was very pleased, and spent some time deciding what to do with the craft. He never did find a role for it, too fearful of losing the craft before Society-inducted scientists could completely reverse engineer it. By the time the war ended, the Vrtil members were able to secret the craft away before the dark times.

Park: The dark times?

Wehlmann: In 1945 the Society nearly died after the Fall of Nazi Germany. No one knows where exactly they took the craft, but they succeeded in hiding it from the prying eyes of Communism and Capitalism. For seven full years, the remaining members hid away, moving from one Eastern European country to another, attempting to find a permanent solution.

It finally came in 1952, when once again a mysterious, non-human entity told a Vrtil member the whereabouts of a secret cavern, supposedly containing more technology that could aid the Society. The society followed the entity's instruction, and found the cavern. Inside were strange generators, obviously not of human origin. About 40 or so members entered the cavern to live there, and closed themselves off from outside contact.

Park: What were the generators' capabilities?

Wehlmann: Almost free, limitless energy. It took three years of dedicated work to discover how to operate the generators and harness the energy. By that time, smaller mockups had been built, approximately the size of an automobile. The generators did little aside from power the Society's living arrangements, but it did provide a decent lifestyle for the survivors. It had been a grueling three years. The Society had few means of providing food, and there were a fair amount of deaths in the first two years before things stabilized. Every little success with the generators created enough hope to keep the Society moving forward. A spark of energy could feed the members for a month, it seemed.

Park: I take it things changed after 1955 then?

Wehlmann: Very much so. It was decided that the time was right to begin going back out into the world. People had families, and despite their dedication and near fanaticism, the Society's members needed to see them. At that time, a man named Cristof Brunner, organized small procurement trips. He brought back food, materials, and other items that greatly helped to increase the Society's way of life. He was banned from bringing back other people, but after his great success in bartering for all manner of items, the Society agreed to allow him to recruit new members, as well as bring back family and friends.

Park: How quickly did the Society expand after that?

Wehlmann: By 1964, the Society had grown to nearly 1000 members. More people meant more research, and a better way of life overall. The Society was able to balance out its two priorities more, and members began renewed experiments with the vril.

Park: Did those experiments produce any notable successes?

Wehlmann: More than the Society could believe. Around the time of my birth, in 1967, nearly half of the Society had some kind of ability that you would label as "psychic." During the Society's recruiting, contacts were made with a mystic group in the Himalayas. This group aided us in our studies, as they seemed to know much about what we called vril. They referred to it differently, but we knew there was an obvious connection.

Park: What was this group's name?

Wehlmann: That I may not reveal.

Park: What happened to the Society's spacecraft?

Wehlmann: Well, by this time the Society had been able to refit the craft's energy source, making it far more efficient. Of course the Society could not decide what to do with it, much like the problem Hitler faced during the war. Finally a decision was made to create a ruling council. Thirteen members of the Society would serve, and Brunner was made

head. He created two Ministries, one dedicated to studying the vril, and the other to continued research. His vision seemed to be that of the Society at large, and he was able to assume much power. In 1970, he decided to take advantage of the rising worldwide paranoia and began "UFO" flights over European countries. There was little purpose for this, other than to serve as a cover for future operations and to spy on Communist military capabilities. Also around this time, in 1971 I believe it was, a breakthrough was made in the generators. I remember the excitement in the Society at the time, even though I was still quite young. Apparently the energy generated seemed to interface with our personal energy, and speculation abounded that perhaps it could lead to a longer life span for the Society.

Park: Was the speculation correct?

Wehlmann: In the end, yes. Personal devices were eventually created that each member possessed. These devices helped us to not age. They also became what you might call a personal assistant, but not until much later, in the '90s.

Park: I take it that the Society began more and more contact with the outside world?

Wehlmann: Yes. Our knowledge of technology allowed us to make quite a lot of money worldwide, and we purchased a German castle to serve us as an aboveground base of operations. Brunner created a third Ministry, dedicated to intelligence gathering. One of the Society's first setbacks occurred at this time. Oliver Widmayer, the Minister of Intelligence, attempted to capture a leading member of the Himalayan mystic group, and it failed horribly. From that time on, we've had many troubles with the group. It caused the Society to scale itself back, and caused great caution.

Park: What was it like growing up in the Society?

Wehlmann: You develop a great love of all things beautiful, I can say that. Our home was dreary, even if well-lit, and not the way you might imagine an underground complex. But very few of us were ever allowed to leave, and so we saw the same places often. Brunner correctly monitored what we were allowed to learn and see of the outside world. I grew up studying the vril even though I never developed very impressive abilities. I was amongst those who were never allowed any knowledge of the outside world. It did little to dissuade my longings, as you can obviously see. My only vril ability was a minor ability to have visions. I had no way to control them, and they were always of the Earth above. It was a useless ability in the Society, really, since by this time we had already mapped the entire world, and my ability was quite unnecessary.

Park: When did the Society begin to expand its operations again?

Wehlmann: After a great amount of argument, the Council decided during the 80's to begin moving more actively. We had by this time built three more craft, and had an agenda. We began kidnapping people and subjecting them to all sorts of tests. As I now know, it was like a textbook alien abduction. Our abilities allowed us to scan these individuals, plucking the genetic traits from them that we wanted. Aryanism was back on the rise, our racial superiority seemed obvious. We had no problem admitting that we as individuals were not perfect, but it was our heritage that had gotten us this far, according to Brunner and the Council. I understand that your American scientists mapped the human genome during the late '90's. Vril Society scientists accomplished that feat before 1990. We really were technologically superior in many ways. Our genetics and physics research was extraordinary, aided by our harnessing of the vril. By the mid-80's, nearly every member of the Society displayed some latent ability to manipulate the vril. It had been some time, though, since we'd had contact with the entity, and in 1983 it finally happened.

A young member of the Society claimed to have contacted the entity. The entity told him that it was time to wipe the Earth clean. We had proven our ability to survive underground safely, and the time in 1983 was right to set off a global thermonuclear war. Needless to say our more human elements fought this, and despite many arguing for it, the idea was never implemented. We had the capabilities to start one, that was for sure, and then sit back while the rest of the world bombed itself into oblivion. Doubts were raised as to whether or not we could survive, however. We were in a remote location, which I can not reveal, but suffice to say remote enough that many argued that a nuclear war would not disturb us.

Park: And so it never happened?

Wehlmann: An attempt occurred. Three members attempted to secretly create a small nuclear device, but they were discovered. I cannot say what happened to them... they simply disappeared. Rumor has it that there exists a secret room, a room of mirrors that the Council uses for its own purposes. But no one aside from the Council has ever seen it, and so I cannot say whether the three rogues met their fate in that room or not. One way or another, they simply disappeared.

Park: Did this happen often?

Wehlmann: That was the only time I knew of.

Park: Did the Society watch idly during the reunification of Germany?

Wehlmann: Far from it. In 1988, the Society began planting agents in the German governments, both East and West. While we were not responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall, we were certainly in favor of it. The time had come to begin to prepare the world for when we might reappear, and a

unified Germany was the key, according to Brunner.

Park: You say that as if Brunner made the decision by himself.

Wehlmann: Of course he did. The Council had long been on his side. By the time we began infiltrating Germany, the Council might as well have not existed.

Park: Did others notice this?

Wehlmann: No. It seemed as the Society was somewhat conflicted over many things, but there was little overt splintering. To be sure, there was some, but not much, and Brunner opted to let it exist.

Little happened during the 90's. We spent much time trying to understand the political situation, as well as continuing our obsession with creating an engineered Superman. As the '90's ended, Brunner upped the number of operations we conducted using our craft, as we seemed to be closer and closer to a success.

Park: Did you achieve success?

Wehlmann: I do not know, ma'am. It seemed inevitable, but an opportunity arose to leave the Society, and I took it. Because I am little other than intelligent, I was given the opportunity to serve as a minor bureaucrat in the German agricultural ministry. I am now on the run, and I do not know when, or if, I will be able to live my life independently for much longer. Even if I should, I may well lose my mind. It seems that every shadow contains a member of the Black Sun.

Park: The Black Sun?

Wehlmann: Sorry, it was what we called the Ministry of Intelligence and its members.

Park: We in the Institute may have discovered a possible site of your base, Mr. Wehlmann.

Wehlmann: I am no longer of the Society. It is not my base, but I find it difficult to believe.

Park: A mining team disappeared in the Ural Mountains last week. We have already sent two investigative teams, and both have disappeared. Is this the home of the Vril Society?

Agent's note: At this point in the interview, Wehlmann became catatonic. He slipped into a deep coma, and is still under observation by Institute doctors. We have yet to corroborate our beliefs that the Urals are home to the Society.

GM's Notes on the Vril Society

The Vril Society should provide several different avenues for a Dark Matter GM to explore. They have their

hands in high technology, psionics, and government interference. While not as powerful as a group like the Bilderbergers or Masons, the Vrill Society has the potential to match up well with a group

Link to "Raw Recruits"

The Vrill Society recruited Dr. James Carad some time ago to aid in the identification and recruiting of psychic talents. They've assigned one of their second-generation craft to the Midwestern US region, and Carad is able to call it in when necessary. The UFO from "Raw Recruits" is that craft. The agents may be assigned to follow up on UFO activity in the region, or they might catch wind of another suspicious recruiting instance. A dropped Vrill life-extender (see below) might lead them on a chase resulting in the capture of a Vrill Society/Black Sun member.

Journey to the Ural Mountains

After the interview with Wehlmann, the agents may be assigned with finding the Vrill Society's secret base. This would be a much more action-oriented campaign, as the agents would be required to climb mountains as well as fight in them. The entrance will have to be secret, of course, but as a GM you can make it as difficult or easy for them to get in as you'd like. The inside is based around a large central cavern, with telluric generators located in the middle. Living quarters ring the area, giving the impression of a "pit" in the middle. On a seemingly blank wall of stone, a secret entrance known only to the Council leads to the hinted-at mirror room. This area can contain anything the GM wishes, from an ultra-high tech communications center to medieval torture chambers. One room must be present however, and that is the room that the Council uses in their attempts to contact/commune with the mysterious entity that has guided the Society. The Council has had very little success, but the room remains an almost sacred place. An artifact may be hidden there, whether alien or Nazi in origin.

Vrill Life-Extenders

These devices are small, disk-like devices that are slightly larger than a person's palm. They have three small buttons. The first emits a scanning ray that analyzes biological information. This information is useless without the second button, which causes the disk to project a small, 2D display that hovers over the disk. The information displayed is in three parts: general biological information (height, weight, etc.), abnormalities (injuries, cysts, tumors, and the like), and psionic information (a rough guess at the person's potential, but nothing specific). The final button, which is larger than the other two, accesses the device's PDA-like functions. The functions are voice activated, and keyed to the owner's voice. The PDA functions are standard, but the scanning functions are limited to only a select few.

The primary function, of course, is its ability to extend life. Treat it as a Good immortality ability (life span is 10 times longer than normal, hero receives a -4 bonus to Stamina-endurance checks due to mortal damage).

The device also brings with it a penalty: each use of the scanning function causes 2 stun points. There is also a 1 in 4 chance that the artifact will not function properly. Any time the user rolls a Critical Failure during a skill check, the artifact has a 1 in 6 chance to activate in some erroneous or harmful manner. In general, activating it at all would be harmful, as it would expose the user.

The Black Sun members

(treat as Good Spies)

STR	10	INT	12
DEX	11	WIL	10
CON	10	PER	11

Action Check: 13/6/3 # **Actions:** 2

Skills: Acrobatics-daredevil; Melee-blade; Modern-pistol 2, SMG; Stealth-hide; Stamina-resist pain; Systems Operations; Investigate-cryptography; Resolve; Culture-etiquette (specific country); Knowledge-language (specific country); Lore-psychic lore; Telepathy-contact

Most Vrill Society members who live in their base fall into one of two categories: Good Scientists or Good Occultists.

Good Scientist

STR	10	INT	13
DEX	12	WIL	11
CON	10	PER	10

Action Check: 13/6/3 # **Actions:** 2

Skills: Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-deduce; Technical-repair 2, knowledge 2, [xenoengineering 4 or Life Science-genetics 4]; [Physical Science-physics 4 or Medical Science-medical knowledge 4]; Investigate; Teach-tech op; Administration-bureaucracy; Interaction; Lore-fringe science 2, UFO lore 2

Good Occultist

STR	10	INT	12
DEX	11	WIL	11
CON	10	PER	12

Action Check: 12/6/3 # **Actions:** 2

Skills: Choose from either ESP package or Telepathy package.

ESP: ESP-Mind Reading, Psycholocation 2, Precognition 2

Telepathy: Telepathy-Contact 2, Mind Shield, Suggest 2

All: Knowledge-deduce; Investigate-research; Teach-psionics; Interaction-charm; Lore-occult lore, psychic lore 2; Deception-bluff; Resolve-mental 2

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The Campaign History

Being a new GM, I've found that creating several documents about my campaign world to be of immense help in providing me with both material for my adventures and consistency between all the various parts of my world. One of these documents is the History of the World, and this column will deal with the kinds of things you might want to include in one.

While the campaign I've used as a model for this article is a near future "beat the bad guys before they take over the world" scenario, most of the ideas presented here may be applied to other worlds as well.

In my campaign, there are two versions of the history, one for the players, and one for myself. The first contains any information that any of the players is likely to know about, is easily accessible, such as might be seen on nightly news broad casts, or that the heroes have discovered in the course of their adventures.

The other version is for my eyes only, and contains the things that have happened behind the scenes, things the players probably won't know about, or that may happen in the future. Items from my version are moved to the player's copy only when they discover them, or live through them!

Where you start your history depends on what type of campaign you are running. For my near future story, I started on January 1st, 2001 and moved forward to the "present day" of my world, around the year 2099. For a Tangents style campaign, one might start at the time that the world in which the heroes find themselves diverged from the real world, while a fantasy campaign might begin at the beginning, when the world was created.

Your history can cover a year, a century, a millennium, or an eon, whatever the story you are trying to tell requires. You may start out with the idea that you only need a decade's worth of material, only to discover that in order for the world to get from where you started it to where you want it will take fifty years.

The very first step in creating a history is to get ideas down on paper, or the computer screen if that is your medium. Start with the big events or trends, the ones that shape your world's social, economic, political or ecological climate, but don't ignore the tiny details that might spring up from time to time, even if it looks silly or unimportant (you can always throw it away later, or use it in another campaign!). These details often make the difference between a dry historical recitation, and a story that people will want to read. Don't worry about order, dates or logical consistency at

this point; your goal is merely to get as many ideas down as possible. Arranging them is for when the idea factory starts slowing down.

When you've gotten the major historical ideas down, go back and refine them. Add minor events that might have led up to the major ones, along with the fallout of disasters or discoveries. Consider including random irrelevant details and happenings that have no impact on or relation to your plot. Not everything has to have some bearing on your campaign; these random bits can add flavor to your world by showing what kind of people make up the population, and also serve to distract your players by giving them some extra things to think about. And of course, don't forget the little items that will serve as adventure hooks.

You might also include items from the backgrounds of characters in your campaign. If a player has a concept for a character whose life was changed or influenced by a significant event that isn't in your history, it may be worthwhile to work it in, even if you have to change it a bit.

The next stage is to start looking at where things will fit, and what things will fit together. Make sure that your events more or less logically follow from one to the other, and that they show how your universe got from where it started to where it is now. While no one expects a duplication of real life, making your history logical contributes to the "suspension of disbelief" that will help your players delve into the adventure, making the experience more enjoyable for them and you. Don't forget that real history is filled with progressions of events that, at first glance, may not appear logical. Don't be afraid to include things that will need to be explained, perhaps by the adventurer's discoveries.

Add people and place names. Include references to quotations from the political or religious leaders or your world. One of the things that I've found adds a little flavor is to include brief "news" stories along with the history about some event or events that took place during that time period. I use this to provide brief glimpses into the life of a single person, family or town. Give life to the individuals who populate your world. Let your players know that there are real people here. Insane or genius background characters and unusual or inexplicable events also add depth to your world, as well as providing possible adventure hooks.

This is probably the time to add dates to your history, if you haven't already. Since you now know what has happened in your world, you also have a better idea of how to

place those events in relation to each other. If you need to, come up with plausible explanations for things that may not be perfectly related, even if you are not going to reveal that information to your players.

Finally... well, there really is no "finally" here. Your history will no doubt be changed, added to, maybe even deleted from, many times during the course of your campaign. It is a living document, just as your world will live in

the eyes of your players' heroes. As your story progresses, add the heroes' exploits to it, including the repercussions of their actions, even if the heroes aren't aware of them or they only amount to brief footnotes on the historical scale. Don't forget your villains either; their actions also affect the world in which they live, and will almost certainly affect the courses of action taken by the heroes.

text continued on page 31

2001	Reason prevails. Actual start of millennium celebrated on January 1st, 2001.	Dec 31, 2000 - Jan 1, 2001 - A Famous Host hosts largest New Year's party ever, with an estimated 4 million people clogging the streets of New York.
2000-2017	In the aftermath of the New Year's attack, and amidst escalating terrorist attacks the world over, along with demands for the control of alcohol, tobacco, narcotics and the Internet, governments begin to exert even more control, institute even more regulation and become even more powerful, gradually eroding personal freedoms and increasing government intervention in personal lives, and later in business and commerce, much to the detriment of both consumers and business. Economies slow down, giving government even more justification for more control. Ironically, information systems still thrive, largely because of the ability of computers to track the information needed by governments to maintain control. In addition, because of the gradual increase in the average age of the population, gerontology research continues apace in an attempt to make older people more comfortable and perhaps more productive.	Serbian terrorists release nerve gas from the top of the Empire State Building to protest US interference in the region. Few people died, but many were affected for the rest of their lives by debilitating disorders. Airports and other ports all over the world institute markedly increased security. 2009 - Recession in Europe, and to a lesser degree the US, causes mild inflation when the Euro fails to fulfill its promise.
2010	Space exploration is virtually halted, with only China and France even attempting to maintain small-scale orbital laboratories. The US and other countries maintain only enough space presence to continue maintenance of the communications satellites upon which the growing grid depends, and to continue espionage and observation operations.	July 17th, 2012. The first baby is born in space to Chinese parents. The child is returned to Earth safely after one month in space.
2014	Full deployment of fiber optic communications, developed at the end of the previous century, enables the interconnection of computer networks in the "first world" countries in a much more controlled and integrated way than ever before.	
2017	Worldwide stock market crash. Trillions of dollars disappear almost overnight from the world's economies when governments can no longer maintain the fiction that the paper that they print has any worth. Ruthless governments take the opportunity to clamp down hard, using survival and protection as an excuse for ultimate control.	October 9th, 2017. Apparently caused by the continued eroding faith in the Euro, American and Japanese markets lose up to 34% of their value in less than a week. Other markets around the world close, fueling the panic. When they do reopen, the carnage continues. All attempts to stem the flow fail. Martial Law is declared in New York, Chicago, Tokyo, London and Stockholm as banks fail.
2018-2020	Post crash chaos the world over as governments struggle to retain control and provide basic necessities to their populations. Depression affects most of the advanced nations, while poorer nations, such as some African and South American countries, fare much better than their richer neighbors, which had much more to lose.	
2020-2025	Governments become even more despotic as the depression continues, spurred on by the willingness of the people to put up with almost anything just to stay alive. Business and industry, ostensibly held and controlled by individuals, are forced to produce and distribute according to government fiat. Rigorous control over "free" enterprise is maintained in order to avoid more depression at the hands of the evil capitalists. Businesses are forced to produce goods, and people become willing slaves, "for their own good", in order to produce the goods, services and utilities required by civilization. Flow of what wealth remains is upward, into the hands of world leaders. Over the course of the next 15 years, governments of the various countries of the world become one, controlled in large part by an oligarchic group of what used to be world leaders. The fiction of separate countries is maintained because of its usefulness in controlling the populations by exploiting nationalistic, racial and religious differences. Aging world leaders appear to be remarkably well preserved. The Worldwide computer grid becomes even more pervasive, extending its influence to all but the most backward areas of the world.	March 22nd, 2021 - The U.S. Congress passes the "Welfare Relief Act of 2021", which despite the name almost completely rescinds most forms of welfare and government assistance. It makes unemployment a crime for men over 25 years of age and single women over 27. Married women are exempt. The minimum wage is rolled back to its late 20th century value, and the maximum wage is set at \$35.00 per hour.
2026	A small research team in Australia develops a fission-fusion hybrid, which has the potential to produce vast amounts of cheap energy. Unfortunately, before it can be perfected, a nuclear explosion on a par with Hiroshima destroys the laboratory where the new technology is being developed. Experts examining the scene over the next two years conclude that the reaction was not nearly as stable or efficient as originally hoped, and the explosion was most likely the result of instability introduced by tampering with the reaction to make it appear to be producing the desired results.	April 25th 2026 - A nuclear explosion destroyed the PanTech Nuclear Research Laboratory complex outside Sydney early this morning. A delegation of U.S, British and Japanese scientists and government officials were in Sydney when the explosion occurred. They were scheduled to tour the facility that afternoon in hopes that the new technology could be reproduced economically.

Shady Characters



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Welcome to the this, the first installment of “shady characters”. This column will be all about providing characters and templates which can be slotted in to any GM’s Dark*Matter game. Each month, there will be a mixture of articles which are linked to other columns in Dark Times, and more generic fellows that can be useful in almost anyone’s campaign. This month, we have....

Chris Walker

A field agent for the Hoffmann Institute. He is also known as Dr. Henry Raven. You can read more about his travels in **The Walker Files**.

Dr. Arman Dieter Haufstrumm

A German Egyptologist who’s family has ties to the Nazi party of the World War II era. He might be on the verge of the biggest discovery of his, or any other anthropologist’s, career.

Carl Haushoffer

A professor at the University of Munich, is believed to be an ancestor of one of the founders of the Vril Society. Shawn Hudson’s article will give you some more great information about this organization that you can use in your Dark Matter campaign.

Luis San Domiguez

An ancient vampire, awoken from his slumber by the Dark Tide, who’s eager to play... (Complete rules for creating vampires are available in “Vampires: Lords of the Night” by Tom Gerrets and David Thompson.)

Eric Schmitt

A neo-nazi werewolf, created by the cruel experiments of the Final Church.

Chris Walker

Level 8 Human Tech Op, Hoffman Institute Agent

Ability	Score	Res.	Mod
STR	7		+0
DEX	9		+0
CON	11		
INT	13		+2
WIL	9		+0
PER	11		

Durability: 11/11/6/7

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4

Reaction Score: Good/2

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

of Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 2 (Cost: 2)

Attributes: Yearn to Learn, Honorable, Curious, Precise Perks: Fortitude, Observant, Psionic Awareness Flaws: Bad Luck, Phobia to Snakes (4 pt.)

Attack Form	Score	Base Die Type	Range (S/M/L)	Damage
Unarmed	4/2/1	+d4LI/O	Personal	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
9mm pistol	10/5/2	+d0HI/O	6/12/50	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m

Defenses: None

Skills

Athletics [7], Modern Ranged Weapons [9], Pistol [10], Rifle [10], Vehicle Operation [9], Movement [11], Swim [12], Trailblazing [13], Stamina [11], Endurance [14], Knowledge [13], Language-Spanish [17], Life Science [13], Social Sciences [13], Anthropology [19], History [14], Linguistics [15], Awareness [9], Intuition [12], Perception [13], Investigate [9], Research [12], Search [10], Lore [9], Occult [11], Psychic [12], UFO [10], Resolve [9], Mental [11], Physical [11], Culture [11], First Encounter [13], Interaction [11], Interview [13]

Equipment

Hiker’s backpack, various notebooks, notebook computer with computer disks and CD-ROMS, tape recorder with tapes, video camera with tapes, spare batteries for all electronic devices.

Background

The agent at the Institute known as Chris Walker is currently Dr. Henry Raven. He is only the fifth agent to bear the name, and only the fourth to actually change his name.

Born in a small town in Rhode Island, Henry, or Hank, harbored a great interest in the study of man. In high school, he excelled in his studies and upon graduation,

entered Yale University. Ten years later, he completed his graduate studies and followed his mentor, Dr. Theodore Algar, on a dig in Spain. In one of the caves, the team discovered what appeared to be an altar and walls filled completely with primitive pictures showing human sacrifice. Henry alone felt some sort of power in the cave, faint but present.

Once he completed his doctorate studies, Dr. Raven began to research ancient beliefs of vanished cultures. Slowly, he actually began to travel to other parts of the world, gathering stories from various peoples about paranormal activities, especially visions of the future, telepathy, and other psychic phenomena. His studies attracted the Institute ten years ago, when he was invited to take a position as a researcher in the Archives Division, Department of Documentation.

Moved to active field agent status five years ago, he received assignments mostly related to paranormal activities in the United States. His reports showed an attention to detail, though his curiosity almost got him killed on more than one occasion.

Six months ago, upon Chris Walker #4's disappearance on a case (details classified), Dr. Raven was recommended by Thomas Curran, division supervisor, Analytical Division. From then on, Dr. Henry Raven vanished, and the globe trotting Chris Walker surfaced again. The transformation was not only in name and position, but also in appearance.

Dr. Henry Raven: A tall, thin man, Henry wears glasses and often dresses very informally, preferring t-shirts, with colorful pictures and sayings. He still has a full head of red hair, but also sports a thin mustache.

Chris Walker: A tall, lean man, with long blond hair, preferring to wear casual dress clothes in public. In the bush, he wears fatigues and wears an Army issue boonie hat.

*Contributed by James Hobson
(Peter_Sokolov@WEBCV.NET)*

Lombardo Customs

We specialize in discreet custom vehicles for discerning customers.



Dr. Arman Dieter Haufstrumm

Level 4 Human Tech Op, German Egyptologist

Ability	Score	Res. Mod
STR	8	0
DEX	9	0
CON	8	
INT	14	+2
WIL	11	+1
PER	10	



Durability: 8/8/4/4

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4

Reaction Score: Good/2

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

of Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 2 (Cost: 2)

Attributes: Perks: Photographic Memory Flaws: Delicate, Fragile, Slow

Attack Form	Score	Base Die Type	Range (S/M/L)	Damage
Unarmed	4/2/1	+d4LI/O	Personal	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Defenses: None

Skills

Athletics [8], Vehicle Operation [9], Land [10], Helicopter [10], Stamina [8], Movement [8], Swim [9], Knowledge [14], Deduce [15], Language-German [17], Language-English [16], Language-Arabic [17], Language-Aramaic [15], Language-Hebrew [15], Language-Ancient Hebrew [15], Computer Operation [15], Social Science [14], Anthropology-Egypt [18], History-Egypt [17], Linguistics-Semitic [18], Awareness [11], Intuition [12], Perception [12], Investigate [11], Cryptography [12], Research [12], Lore [11], Occult [12], Resolve [11], Mental [12], Interaction [10]

Equipment

Various texts on Ancient Egypt, rumpled clothes, some Egyptian Artifacts, Apple Powerbook G4 w DVD and all the trimmings. Compiled Egyptian library on several CD and DVD discs.

Background

Arman was born in 1967 as the only son of Johan Karl Haufstrumm and Liesel Tresa Haufstrumm in the East German City of Fürstenwald, which is about 40 km ESE of Berlin.

His father chose the name Arman, which means "army man" in German, because he wanted his boy to grow up fine and strong and to serve in some future "Fourth Reich". Arman's father was a member of the Hitler Youth. He has had strong political beliefs all his life, but since his son was such a physical disappointment, his father never took the time to impart his beliefs to his son. Arman's father worked as a postal clerk until 1995 when he retired shortly after the death of his wife.

His grandfather was also politically active. He was a member of the Nazi party, and was a devout believer in all of the policies of Hitler and the Nazis. His grandfather's role within the party is unknown and he died in 1943, during the firebombing of Dresden by the Allies.

Arman does not hold with his father's politics, and in some ways, he actively rebels against them. While he was not willing to break with his father 100% and become a student of Jewish history, he did the next best thing, and became an Egyptologist.

Arman attended the University in London between 1985 and 1988, and from there went to Berlin to teach between 1988 and 1993. He was there in '89 when the Berlin Wall came down, and like many East Germans, he was ecstatic about the newfound freedom his country enjoyed.

As an intellectual, he could not believe the freedom of thought that was permitted after the fall of the Communist Leadership. Unfortunately, after a few years, there were no funds to keep him employed during the rebuilding of the East German infrastructure. Arman was forced to look for employment elsewhere.

He happened upon a lucky break when the Smithsonian Institute was looking for Egyptologists to work a dig near Kôm Ombo in southern Egypt. It was here that Arman gained his only practical experience with archaeological digs. With the exception of a brief trip back to Fürstenwald in 1995 to attend the funeral of his mother, Arman spent the rest of 1993-1997 in Kôm Ombo. In 1997, the University of Chicago offered Arman a position as a professor, which he graciously accepted, despite the strong protests of his father. By this point, Arman had written several papers on the Egyptian people, which received acclaim within the academic community, and was becoming accomplished in a variety of Middle Eastern languages.

Arman also became quite a good translator of Egyptian hieroglyphics, and translated several sites that had previously stumped archaeologists. Arman attributed his success to the fact that his father taught him the rudiments of cryptography, which, when combined with his knowledge of the Egyptian culture and mindset, gave him all of the tools he needed. Ever since, Arman has stayed on staff at the University of Chicago, and has continued to write more papers on the Egyptians.

Contributed by Tripp Elliott (elliotkm@erols.com)

Carl Haushoffer

Level 12 Human Diplomat (Mindwalker), German History Professor

Ability	Score	Res.	Mod
STR	8	+0	
DEX	9	+0	
CON	8		
INT	10	+0	
WIL	13	+2	
PER	12		

Durability: 8/8/4/4

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk: 4

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Psionic Energy Points: 7

Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

of Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 2 (Cost: 2)

Attributes: On a Mission, Unscrupulous, Egotistical, Leader

Perks: Faith

Flaws: Obsessed (2 pt.), Infamy (2 pt.)

Attack Form	Base Score	Range Die Type	Damage (S/M/L)
Unarmed	4/2/1	+d4LI/O	Personal d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Defenses: None

Skills

Athletics [8], Vehicle Operation [9], Land Vehicle [10], Stamina [8], Knowledge [10], Computer Operation [11], Language-English [12], Language-German [15], Social Science [10], History [14], Awareness [13], Intuition [14], Lore [13], Fringe Science [15], Resolve [13], Mental Resolve [15], Teach [13], German History [17], Deception [12], Bluff [14], Interaction [12], Charm [14], Intimidate [15], Leadership [12], Command [15], Inspire [14], ESP [10], Mind Reading [12], Telepathy [12], Suggest [14]

Equipment

Historical texts, rumpled clothes, various cultural artifacts, laptop computer, cell phone

Background

A descendant of Karl Haushofer, Karsten has spent most of his life trying to discover the last remnants of the Vril Society. Karsten is gifted with abilities that he knows must have been a result of his grandfather's studies of the occult. While he disapproves of what Karl was a part of; he does recognize, with reluctance, the great boon these abilities have been. Many people know of the connection between Karsten and Nazi Germany, and at times he has been treated badly because of it. This made growing up difficult, but Karsten recognizes that it has been good for him. Karsten has traced the Society's movements right until they disappeared in 1952. He suspects that they

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headed east, behind the Iron Curtain someplace, possibly Russia, possibly India/Mongolia. Karsten is frustrated by the lack of clues, but refuses to believe that the Vrill Society is dead. He has recently been contacted by the Hoffmann Institute after the Institute interviewed a man claiming to be a part of the Vrill Society. The man is being held in Paris at the Institute's branch office. Karsten has dropped everything to get to Paris, including his current teaching schedule at the University.

Contributed by Steven Spiroff (sspiroff@yahoo.com) and Shawn Hudson (stludson@bigplanet.com)

Luis San Dominiquez

Level 16 Vampire Free Agent, Traveller (Ancient Vampire)

Ability	Score	Res. Mod
STR	11	+1
DEX	12	+2
CON	12	
INT	11	+1
WIL	10	+0
PER	9	

Durability: 12/12/6/6

Action Check: 15+/14/7/3

Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4

of Actions: 2

Vampiric FX points: 14

Last Resorts: 2 (Cost: 3)



Attributes: Personal Power, Corrupt, Curious, Foppish

Attack Form	Score	Base Die Type	Range (S/M/L)	Damage
Unarmed	14/7/3	+d0LI/O	Personal	d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s
Dagger	15/7/3	+d0LI/O	11/22/44	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w
S. sword	15/7/3	+d0LI/O	Personal	d4+1w/d6+1w/d6+3w
Saber	15/7/3	+d0LI/O	Personal	d4+1w/d4+3w/2d4+2w
Pistol, flintlock	14/7/3	+d0 HI/O	4/8/16	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m

Defenses: Armor: d4 (LI) d4 (HI) d4-1 (EN)

Vampiric FX skills

All general vampiric skills, Animal Form, Claws, Hunters Speed (2), Embrace the Earth (3), Alter Appearance, Mesmerise, Dominate, Command, Invisibility

Vampiric Flaws

Vulnerability to Sunlight (9), Fire (9), True Faith (9), No reflection (4), Aura of Decay (3)

Skills

Athletics [11], Climb [14], Jump [14], Melee Weapons [11], Blade [15], Unarmed Attack [11], Brawl [14], Acrobatics [12], Dodge [15], Manipulation [12], Lockpick

[16], Pickpocket [15], Prestidigitation [13] Primitive Ranged Weapons [12], Flintlock [13], Vehicle Operation [12], Stamina [12], Business [11], Illicit Business [13], Knowledge [10], Language-Spanish [13], Awareness [10], Resolve [10], Mental [13], Physical [13], Street Smart [10], Criminal Elements [12], Interaction [9], Bargain [10], Seduce [10], Leadership [9], Command [15]

Equipment

Several wooden stakes, knife, sword cane, ancient gold wax-seal ring, a lot of ancient weapons in his Casa Ancienades (ancient art gallery), ancient books and works of art.

Background

Luis was a scoundrel thief in his former life who had no value for life. He was turned into a vampire more as a lesson to other thieves in Madrid who wanted to disobey the vampire lord that ruled the thieves guild of Madrid in 1650. His creator used him as a fledgling vampire for the most severe and humiliating tasks to teach Luis the respect needed to serve a vampire.

When the Inquisition swept over Europe, Luis' master was discovered as a vampire, and burned during the witchtrials. Luis barely escaped the cleansing of the Inquisition, by hiding on an exploration boat which was headed for South America. He settled in Brazil, in the city which would later become Sao Paolo and built his own criminal empire of street thugs and coastal pirates (which wasn't hard because of his vampiric powers). Luis found out that the world around him changed rapidly and he that couldn't keep in line with all the changes. For several decades, he suffered from a severe case of paranoid schizophrenia. This resulted in extreme bursts of rage and violence, which threatened to expose him for the vampire he was.

When Luis learned of other vampires who had entered his territory, he decided to enter a long vampiric slumber, and put some distance between himself and the changing world. The two recently arrived vampires seized the opportunity and took control of the Sao Paolo underground.

As Luis slept (for some centuries), the population of Sao Paolo took up arms against their criminal oppressors and extinguished the criminal dictators.

Thirty years ago, Luis awakened from his vampiric slumber prematurely (Wash of the Dark Tide) and faced a whole new world. He was fascinated with the incredible changes the world had undergone in the last 150 years, and was eager to learn all the things this new world had to offer.

Overjoyed with the fact that almost nobody believes in vampires anymore, Luis has taken the opportunity to extend his criminal activities in the past thirty years. He now has contacts with many organized criminal gangs. Today, Luis pretends to be an art dealer with a penchant for ancient clothes and a very broad knowledge of old

paintings and works of fine art. His favorite lair is his gigantic house on the outskirts of Sao Paolo, which also functions as an art gallery.

He sees the world almost as a collection of chessboards over which he faces many opponents. Some of these opponents elude him, but he knows they are there. He pictures himself as a king in these mental games, staying out of reach from his opponents' chess pieces, and using his pawns to further his own nefarious schemes. He is happy in South America but recently his undead eyes turned toward the United States, the land of infinite possibilities. A couple of his ghouls and servants have been sent to the USA to infiltrate the bigger strategic, political organizations and to find out how big the vampiric resistance will be when Luis decides to penetrate this continent and bring it under his yoke.

Luis doesn't have knowledge of organizations like the Hoffmann Institute, but he does know of the Knights Templar and the Rosicrucians (from his Middle Ages experience) and he senses that although a lot weaker than they used to be, they still exist. Today, he sees these two adversaries as minor opponents who already have few pieces left with which to play.

Contributed by Tom Gerrets (tom@tgerrets.demon.nl)

Eric Schmitt

Level 5 Werewolf Mutant Combat Spec

Ability	Score	Res. Mod
STR	12	+1
DEX	9	
CON	13	
INT	9	
WIL	10	
PER	8	



Durability: 13/13/77

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6

of Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 1

Flaws: Rebellious, Temper (+2 penalty if mocked; 4)

Mutations:

Advantageous: Adrenal Control, Improved Constitution, Natural Attack, Night Vision.

Drawbacks: Major Physical Change (wolf-man form), Toxin Intolerance.

Attack Form	Score	Base Die Type	Range (S/M/L)	Damage
Brawl	14/7/3	-d4 LI/O	Personal	d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s
Claws*	12/6/3	+d0LI/O	Personal	d6+3s/d4+1w/d4+3w
Dagger	13/6/3	+d0LI/O	Personal	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w

.38 Revolver 10/5/2 +d0HI/O 6/12/40 d4w/d4+1w/d4m

*Usable in wolf-man form only

Defenses: Leather jacket: d6-3 (LI) d4-3 (HI) d4-2 (EN)

Skills

Athletics [12]; Melee [12]-blade [13]; Unarmed [12]-brawl [14]; Acrobatics [9]-dodge [10]; Modern [9]-pistol [10]; Vehicle [9]; Stamina [13]-endurance [14], resist pain [15]; Knowledge [9]-black metal music[12], computer [10], English [12], German [12], Nazism [10]; Awareness [10]; Street [10]-criminal [12]; Interaction [8]-intimidate [13], taunt [9]

Equipment

Leather jacket emblazoned with Tötenkopf skull & bones, Nazi-era replica dagger, .38 revolver, expensive shades.

Background

A group of teenaged skinheads in rural Robeson County, North Carolina were approached by a high ranking occultist of the American Nazi Party in October of 1997. With help from the rising Dark Tide, this introduced the little band to the realities of diabolism and odinism, bringing them into the fold of the Final Church. He then sent them out as a death squad, roaming North Carolina and occasionally South Carolina and Georgia. Calling themselves the "Knights of Thor", this band of so-called killers never had much luck. Their plans never seemed to work out, police and other agencies always seemed to show up just in time to prevent any major crimes they attempted, and none of them ever managed to get any occult ritual to work.

In 1999, they had hit their all time low. They had become nothing more than vandals and drifters. The group's high points were the spray-painting of swastikas on high schools and churches in Georgia and assaulting minorities -- one of their number, Donovan Green, was arrested August 9 in Bessemer City, NC for attacks in the neighborhood where the Knights were living. During the following year, the Knights continued to roam, causing minor trouble and growing more and more disgruntled. Then, in December of 2000, the group's original benefactor returned. He took the group to an abandoned farm near Foxfire, NC. There he revealed to them the secret of summoning Bering demons and initiated them into the ranks of the Novo Ordi Templi (or New Templars).

After their mysterious advisor had left, the Knights of Thor headed to the state capital, Raleigh, with plans of a killing spree ending with a grand sacrifice of children of minority races and the summoning of nothing less than Dispatser himself. So, after stealing a van, they headed out.

Unknown to the Knights, their friendly contact did not care what they did or even if they could use what he had

continued on page 30

Welcome to Bloomingdale

Pop. 388

Enjoy Your Stay!

“Located in the scenic foothills of the Adirondacks, Bloomingdale’s rustic surroundings provide a welcome escape from the hustle-and-bustle of city life while retaining its finer sophistications.” - Bloomingdale Arms brochure

Bloomingdale is a small tourist town, catering to the upscale weekend warrior: fishermen, rock climbers, and families looking for the Adirondack experience without the black flies. While not nearly as large as other nearby resort towns like Saranac Lake or Lake Placid, Bloomingdale has several boutique shops, restaurants, and a general store where The New York Times and the Boston Globe are available on a regular basis.

The village has a long history, centered around the Vanderbeek family. In the late 1700’s, Hans Vanderbeek chose the area for his family farm. For many years, they were the only inhabitants in this small valley. The original family home was located where the current Bloomingdale Arms hotel is situated.

Over the years, additional families moved into the area, purchasing land from the original Vanderbeek plot. A small farming community developed which eventually developed into the village of Bloomingdale.

By the early-

1800s, the Vanderbeeks were quite prosperous. Real estate had replaced farming as the base of their wealth. In 1839, the entire family moved to Manhattan.

Map Highlights:

1. Bloomingdale Arms

Located at the end of Martin Street, the Bloomingdale Arms is the only hotel in town. Originally built as a hunting lodge in 1843, it was converted to a hotel in the mid-1970s. Built by the Vanderbeeks on the original site of their ancestral home, the hotel continues to remain in the family.

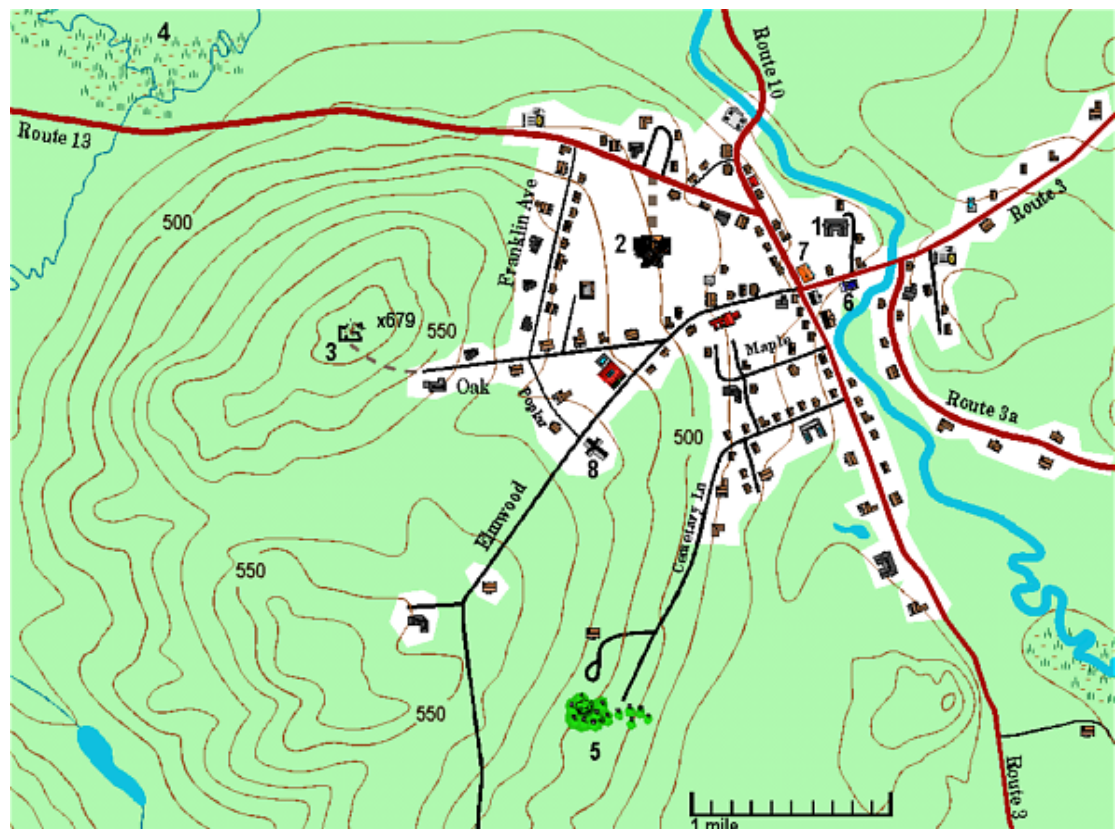
Physically, the hotel retains the unique character of the Adirondack lodge. It’s a large building (three stories), the exterior predominantly rough-hewn log in construction. It sits on manicured grounds near the Bloomingdale River. Trails wind through the woods, leading to several select fishing locations on the river.

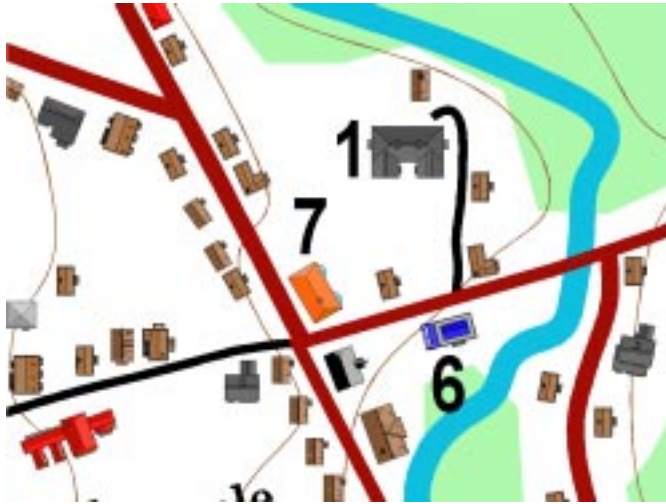
The first floor of the hotel contains the lobby, dining room, great room, and kitchen. Stairs and elevators located at the end of the lobby lead to the other floors of the hotel. The great room is the center of activity at the hotel. Trophy animals line the walls, and a large fireplace dominates the east wall. Clusters of leather chairs dot the room, providing moderate privacy for smaller groups.

On the opposite side of the building, the dining room echoes the great room. A cooking fireplace rests in the west wall. Two sets of French doors open onto an enclosed porch on the east end.

The second floor of the hotel is entirely guest rooms. Each room has a full bath.

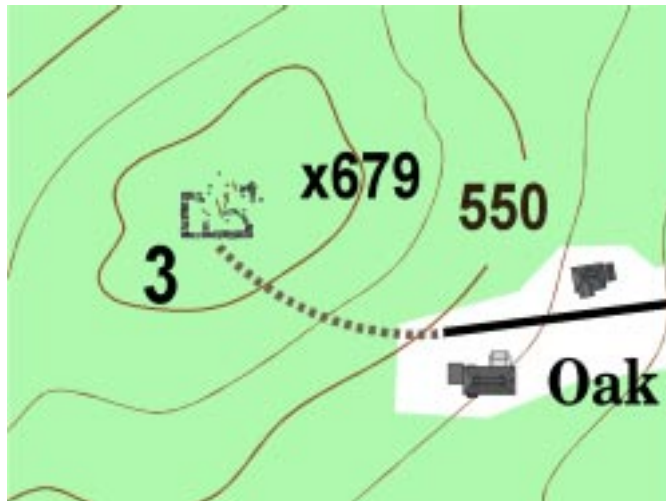
The third floor houses the staff and has several guest





rooms. Staff apartments occupy the east side of the building, guest rooms the west.

The basement is accessible via a single stair from the first floor. Access to the basement is restricted: a locked door guards the stairwell. A beer and wine cellar takes up the east end of the basement, as well as providing a suitable rationale for restricting access. The furnace room is located between the bases of the two fireplaces and provides access to the fountain tunnel. A general storage room surrounds the elevator shafts.



At the west end of the basement, there's a secret room, known only to a few hotel employees and townsfolk. A hidden stone door prevents nosy guests from finding the secret room. Inside the room, an ancient altar, dating back to when the Vanderbeeks originally settled the area, occupies the west end of the room. Once a month, there'll be fresh blood on the altar. A clear trail from the well in the north-east corner to the altar should leave no doubt as to what happens to the body.

2. Building Ruins

At the center of the village rests the remains of the rectory. The building burned down in a suspicious fire in 1954 and has rotted there since. Older townspeople are very wary of the building and will cross themselves when walk-

ing past it. The younger members of the community claim not to believe the rumors that surround the building; yet they avoid it just the same. The rectory grounds are an unkempt mess: trees, bushes, and weeds grow in thick profusion, preventing easy access. Even the driveway, which has gone untended for nearly fifty years, has become impassable due to vegetation.

3. Cabin Ruins

Located at the end of Oak Street on top of one of the Twin Sisters hills is the former home of Johannes Vanderbeek, Hans Vanderbeek's brother. Johannes had been studying to become a doctor before the Vanderbeeks left the Netherlands and served as the area's doctor and veterinarian for many years. While a headstone exists in the family cemetery (5) for Johannes, legend claims he was never buried there.

The ruins are quite old and have disintegrated to just the foundation of the cabin. Little has grown in the clearing around the cabin; what has managed to is stunted and sickly.



4. Bear Swamp

Out on Route 13 about two and a half miles, the road runs along the edge of Bear Swamp. Originally named for what the locals thought were bears, its legends have faded over time. Unknown creatures have been known to come out of the swamp from time to time, attacking the locals. The swamp is a rather noxious place and swamp gas permeates the area, making it impossible to see any distance in the swamp, even in full daylight.

5. Cemetery

As would be expected of a village this old, the cemetery is ancient. Rusted iron fencing encloses the cemetery, although it's fallen down in many places. Headstones in the cemetery date back to the original settlers and continue to the present.

6. Police Station

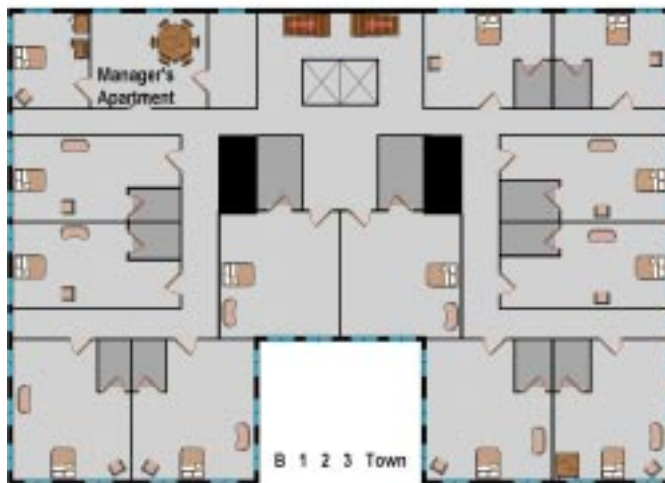
Opposite Martin Street, the police station houses Bloomington's finest. The village has only one police officer and one police car. The station has one holding cell; prisoners are usually transferred to county facilities within days.



7. General Store

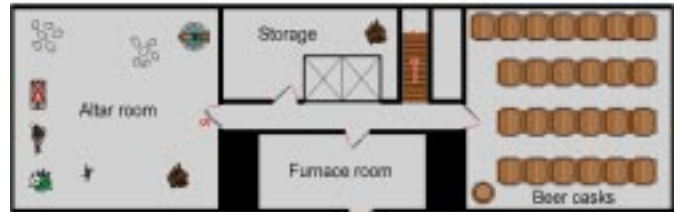
Maas Provisions, located at the intersection of routes 3 and 10, is a very well stocked general store. Several major newspapers are delivered daily; its specialty foods section rivals that of large grocery stores in major cities. The second floor, accessible via a central staircase, is a small but complete outdoor and sporting gear store. Everything from mountain bikes to climbing gear, bow hunting to fishing equipment and more is available. Maas doesn't carry a wide selection of brands; instead they stock the top one or two products. As a result, prices are at the very top end of the scale. And what's not in stock can usually be had within a few days.

Note: while Maas does have a few hunting rifles and handguns, gun laws require background checks. While it's possible to purchase a gun, it takes several days to get them delivered.



8. United Methodist Church

The majority of Bloomingdale's population is Catholic. They used to worship at St. Mary's of the Woods, but when the rectory burned down, they all transferred to churches in Saranac. St. Mary's was eventually purchased by the small Methodist population and renamed the United Methodist Church. The building required extensive rehabilitation before it was suitable for re-use and several tons of fill and rock were used to repair "anomalies" in the foundation.



Plot Hooks

Dr. Vanderbeek

Johannes, as it turns out, didn't die. He disappeared in 1833, when he would have been 67, on a trip to Saranac Lake. After a few years, he was assumed dead and a headstone was placed in the family plot for him.

Shortly after Johannes' disappearance, the townspeople noticed a marked drop-off in the number of people dying from incurable diseases. Naturally, gossip and rumor linked the change to Johannes, but nothing could be proven.

A new Dr. Vanderbeek, John, has recently arrived in town, claiming to be a descendent of Johannes. The history is sketchy, but plausible. John has taken up residence in the hotel and is working on building a new home on the site of Johannes' cabin.

Coincidentally, a hotel patron disappeared after taking ill. The patron's wife had been sent to Saranac Lake for medication. When she returned her husband was gone. The hotel staff claimed not to know who she or her husband was. A check of the registry showed someone else in their room; inspecting the room turned up no clues. The wife stayed in Bloomingdale for two weeks before returning home, vowing to find out what happened.

Swamp Monsters

The mysterious lights and sounds coming from Bear Swamp have started again, frightening the locals. More important, the tourists are staying away. Pets have started to vanish and the townspeople have noticed that even the roadkill seems to have disappeared.

Resources

- www.urbanlegends.com - Comprehensive urban legend site. Most are downright silly but many are good fodder.
- www.snopes.com - Terrific urban legend site. The disappearing hotel patron legend is given in greater detail.
- www.terraser.com - Maps on demand. Download free topographic and satellite photos of nearly everywhere in the US.
- www.profantasy.com - Home of Campaign Cartographer 2, used to draw the maps. Also makes a free viewer you can use to look at and print the original maps.



Tools of the Trade

by David Anderson

Three Blind Mice

Working as a team of independent researchers and inventors, Three Blind Mice (TBM) are a shadowy organization. They have no central location or meeting-place; all communication takes place as highly encrypted email and IRC over the Net. Occasionally, a member of the organization will contact the Hoffman Institute directly, or through one of its agents with the results of their work. They don't take commissions and they ignore any attempts to contact them.

Skeleton Key 2.0

Based on the skeleton key concept of old, this new version developed by TBM molds itself to work with nearly any mechanical keylock. Approximately the size of a match box, it is somewhat akin to an automatic lockpick. Instead of the user operating it, though, the skeleton key automates the lock. The skeleton key only works on non-electric/electronic type locks.

The skeleton key requires no skill on the part of the user. Heroes without the Manipulation-Lockpick skill are conferred the ability score of 16/8/4; those with the skill may use it as an amazing (-3 step) lockpick. Success with the skeleton key is not automatic: the varying degrees of success correspond to the length of time it takes the skeleton key to learn the lock. On an amazing success, the skeleton key learns the lock almost instantaneously. Good successes range from 5 to 15 seconds; ordinary successes from 15 seconds to 5 minutes. An LED on the key indicates success: green for picked locks; red for failures.

Ghostlight

Resembling an ordinary flashlight, the Ghostlight emits a beam of coherent light and energy just outside the spectrum of visible light. Combined with the accompanying set of polarized glasses, they allow the user to "see" the spirits. The combination of flashlight and glasses act to highlight and enhance the natural energy fields of spirits as well as the aura field around living objects. As a result, the auras of humans drown out the spiritual energy field in the same way that headlights or daylight overwhelms night vision goggles.

Lucas Throckmorton of TBM explains the concept: "Our studies of the numerous, well-documented, ghost photographs led us to investigate the conditions under which the photographs were taken, as well as the equipment used to take them. We discovered that several fortuitous accidents by the lensmakers and film makers led to the combined equipment being highly sensitive to ghost images."

As with other TBM gear, this version of the Ghostlight is a prototype. Detection of ghosts is a practiced skill (Awareness-intuition); the Ghostlight provides a good (-2 step) advantage to heroes with the skill.



Shady Characters

continued from page 26

pretended to teach them. He only cared about the experimental mutagen he had secretly administered to one of the group's members, Eric Schmitt. Developed from papers obtained by the U.S. government during Operation: Paperclip, this serum could supposedly create the mythical creatures known as werewolves from any person with true Aryan blood.

A week after their first attack, the Knights discovered the effects of the experiment: on the first night of the full moon, as they waited in their stolen van in a residential neighborhood, Schmitt changed. After a short, brutal attack, the incoherent lycanthrope fled the scene.

Eric Schmitt stands a heavy-muscled 6'7" tall, he has what could be termed a "baby-face" if it were not for his shaved head and constant, Teutonic glare. He also has the words "Skin" and "Head" tattooed across his fingers. Schmitt normally wears heavy black boots with red laces, black jeans fading to gray, and his signature leather jacket over a black or red t-shirt.

Due to the serum, he has recently become a mutant. His first transformation occurred the night before the adventure trigger, while he was supposed to be on guard as the rest of the Knights ritually sacrificed young Michelle Jones. His second transformation, as the formula coursed through his veins, took place in the confines of the Knights' stolen van. It was not a pretty sight.

When under the strengthening influence of the mutagen, Schmitt does not actually transform into a wolf as his altered mind believes. His form is more like that of Lon Chaney Jr.'s character in *The Wolf Man*, though his enhanced speed and peoples' natural resistance to the unnatural tend to confuse reports of Schmitt's attacks. Schmitt now believes he is a true descendant of the ancient order of the Knights Templar, and that his mutation is but the outward sign of his superior Aryan blood. He also believes he is the only one who can properly continue the Knights of Thor's diabolic summoning ritual (though in reality, he has no FX powers, and will ultimately fail). Anyone speaking against his ideals or in a disrespectful tone towards him, causes Schmitt to fly into a rage if he can't succeed in a Will feat check.

*Contributed by Joseph Nijyu
(joseph_nijyu@HOTMAIL.COM)*



The Vril Society

continued from page 19

Ordinary Soldier

There are also a fair number of Ordinary Soldiers used for security.

STR 10 **INT** 9
DEX 11 **WIL** 10
CON 11 **PER** 9

Action Check: 13/6/3 **# Actions:** 2

Skills: Tactics-infantry; Unarmed-brawl; Modern-pistol, rifle 2; Stamina-endurance, resist pain; Knowledge-first aid; Interaction

Equipment kits

Black Sun agents

- A. Pistol. 9mm with 2 clips of standard ammo.
- B. Submachine gun. HK MP5 9mm with 2 clips of standard ammo.
- C. Cell phone. Vril Society cell phones almost always employ portable scramblers. These scramblers confer a +3 step penalty to Awareness-perception or System Operation-communications skill checks relying on a telephone line-tap.
- D. Life Extender. Black Sun life extenders have the biological/psionic scanning capability.
- E. Knife. A standard issue Black Sun blade is always flat black in color, but is otherwise an ordinary knife.
- F. Some agents will have access to energy pistols similar to Grey energy pistols. Statistics are as follows:

Vril Energy Pistol

Acc: 0

Md: F

Range: 20/40/100

Type: En/G

Damage (O/G/A): d4+1w/d6+1w/d4+1m

Actions: 2

Clip Size: 6

Clip Cost: N/A

Hide: +1

Mass: 1.75

Avail: Only to Black Sun agents

Vril Society Soldiers

- A. Pistol. 9mm pistol with 2 clips standard ammo.
- B. Rifle. 5.45 mm Assault Rifle with 3 clips (90 rounds) of standard ammo; similar in make to the Russian AK-74.

Ammo: 5/45X39mm

Acc: 0

Md: F/B/A

Range: 70/140/350

Type: HI/O

Damage (O/G/A): d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m

Actions: 3

Clip Size: 30

Hide: -

Mass: 5kg

C. Two-way Radios with portable scramblers.

D. Body Armor. Battle vest.

E. Night-vision goggles. Infrared goggles as per the Player's Handbook.



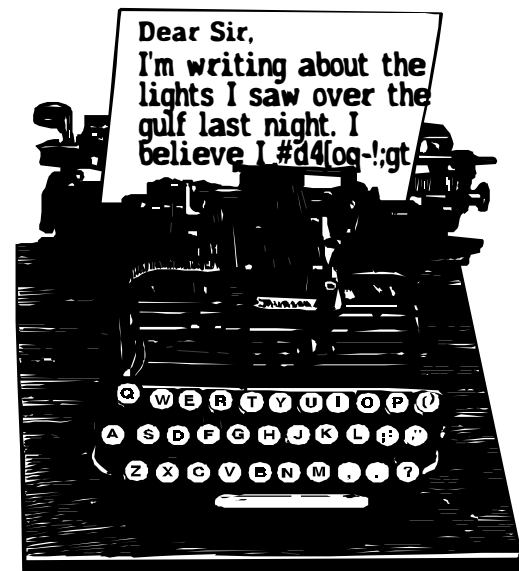
Game Mastery: The Campaign History

continued from page 21

As an example, I've included the first two or three decades from my own world's history. The history of my world takes the form of a time line with three columns. The first is the date, or range of dates, about which I wish to impart some information. The middle column is some general information about that time period, and the last column takes the form of the news story I mentioned above.

The timeline format is certainly not the only way to present your history. Other options are an historical narrative, such as might have been set down by a religious order, a song or poem passed down from generation to generation by a bards, a computer record discovered by your heroes, or any of a number of other types of document. The main objective is for you to have a source of background material for use in your campaign and your players a place to refer when playing their roles.

Having the history of the world set out before my campaign started has been an immense help to me personally, and I hope the ideas presented in this article will help you as well.



CONTRIBUTORS AND OTHER FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE

David Thompson

guntheory@o2tent.com/guntheory@crosswinds.net
Currently, David resides in the city of Omaha, NE and works at US Strategic Command for the USAF where he exploits satellite imagery of the Commonwealth of Independent States. His free time is balanced between completing his BS in criminal justice, immersing himself in Dark Matter and the Forgotten Realms, and hanging onto his last fading bit of childhood. David has been abducted by the grays over 20,000 times, because they keep forgetting that they didn't like what they found the last time. Personal Website: The Land of Thetan

David Anderson

andersdl@plattsburgh.edu
A former Texan, David escaped to the north in 1979. Once there, he discovered role playing games, new wave music, and computers. It's been all downhill since. Involved in far too many projects, David "works" as a system manager and programmer for a university in upstate New York. It's so far from civilization that David will shortly be reliving the early 80s when they finally arrive there. Personal Website: Midora Games

Mud Puppie

mud_pup@hotmail.com
aka: Terminator, Redbone, Sergeant <HA!!!>, and a whole slew of cuss words...
Presently, Mr. Mud is living in the beautiful suburbs of Darmstadt, Germany, where he provides law enforcement support for US Army soldiers, their families, and assorted civilians, while he and his co-workers also do their best to protect the rest of the world from democracy... ummmm... errrr... never mind... you know what I meant... Mud's an Alternity newbie as of September '99, but is as active as he can be by helping other people flesh out their ideas since he apparently can't come up with any of his own... more next month...

Billy Oppenheimer

paladin_top@hotmail.com
(outgoing security level MJ-12)
Currently, 'Billy' resides in Area -- and works for the USAF in an undisclosed project that may end -----.
His assignment is ----- -----. His free time is almost balanced between dodging his superiors, adding to the Dark Matter world, and refusing to grow up. Billy has 'acquired, inspected, and returned' many homo-sapien-sapiens over the last few years with the express intent of ----- -----. MESSAGE TRACE INITIATED. MESSAGE ROUTED THROUGH: SYDNEY, CLEVELAND, PARIS, ROSWELL, SAN FRANCISCO, LUNAR 1, MOSCOW... MESSAGE TRACE LOST...

Martin Bailey

Martin.Bailey@pentyre.co.uk
Martin Bailey lives in Hemel Hempstead, England, which is like America, but colder, wetter, and without guns. Running a busy local games club, he enjoys RPGs, miniature wargames, and board games. He is a software engineer, who lives with his wife and cat. With about a decade of RPG experience, he rubs his hands with glee, plotting his upcoming Dark*Matter campaign.

James Hobson

Peter_Sokolov@WEBTV.NET
When not at work on the Walker files or any other projects, James can often be found running from men wearing white and carrying around large nets and straightjackets.

Shawn Hudson

stludson@bigplanet.com
Founder of the Oklahoma City University cell of the Invisible College, Shawn Hudson is a native of Germany whose incredible intellectual skills got him moved out of the country before his second birthday as part of Operation Paperclip. Shawn is a senior History and Broadcasting major, who still hasn't moved out of the dorms for fear that he might turn into a responsible adult if he did. Shawn's hobbies include playing and watching sports, running his home Dark Matter campaign, creating the Next Great Indie Movie(tm), and ogling all the Miss Americas at OCU. A production assistant at the Oklahoma City FOX television affiliate, Shawn calls any connection to Rupert Murdoch and his minions as purely coincidental. Personal Website: The Mouth of Babes

Brad Stiles

bstiles@bs.win.net
After leaving the Marine Corps, because he couldn't stand to be around so many liberals, Brad has taken up residence in Louisville, KY, where he works for a benefits outsourcing company as a computer programmer, perfecting computer systems that allow Human Resources departments all over the nation, (and the world) to screw over their employees more efficiently. His most recent project was an experiment in residential lawn maintenance abatement, which wasn't well received by the members of his community.

Tom Gerrets

tom@tgerrets.demon.nl

Tripp Elliott

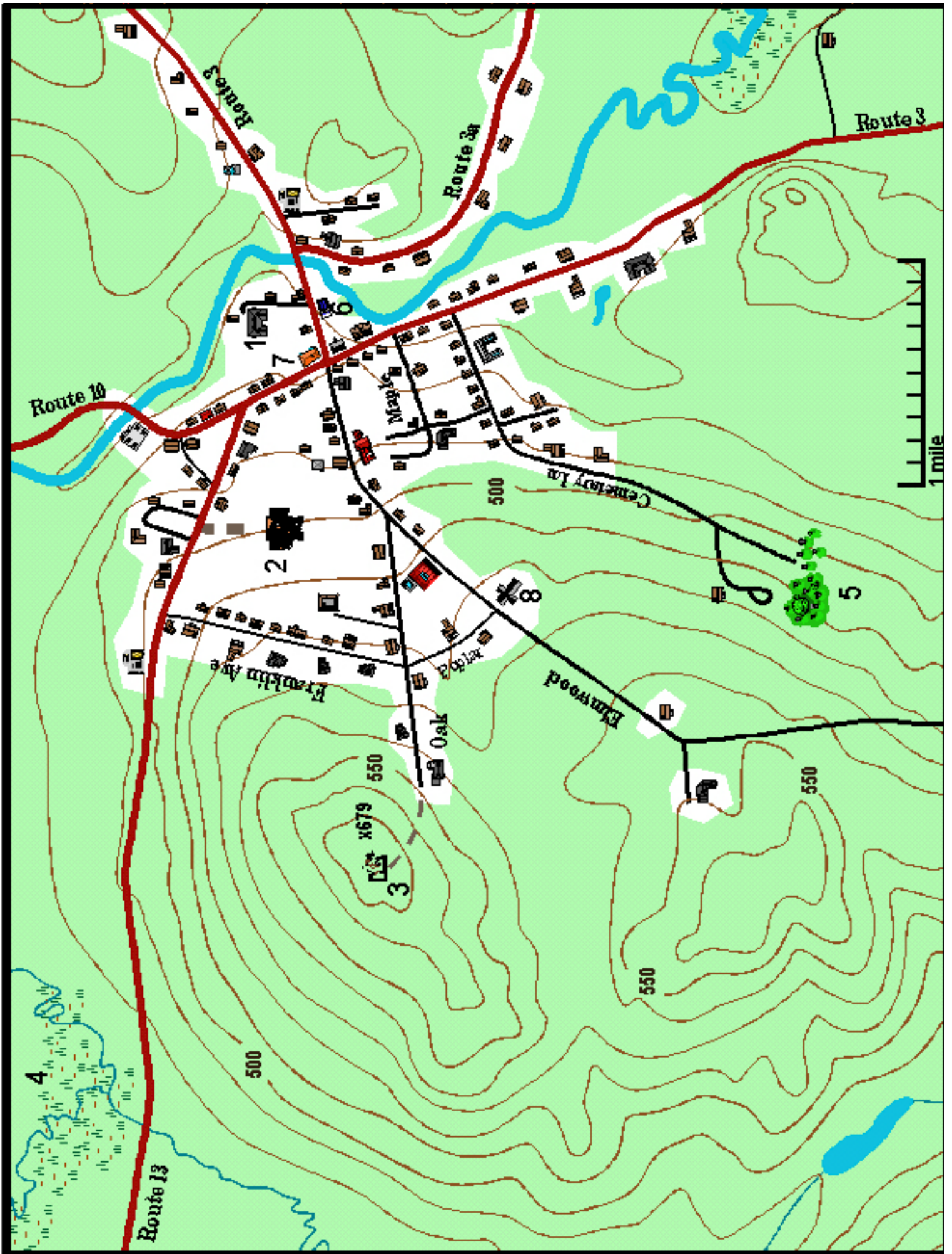
elliottkm@erols.com

Joseph Nijyu

joseph_nijyu@hotmail.com

Steven Spiroff

sspiroff@yahoo.com





B 1 2 3 TOWN

Great room

Foyer

Kitchen

Dining Room