DIGITAL HERO #21

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When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

To the stars!… and realms most fantastical and wondrous….

We've been revving up the Hero production machine for the upcoming summer con season, so I'm going to have to step up the pace in WLWLOH as well. This month I'll tell you about two books soon to hit the game store shelves: *Galactic Champions* and *Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds*.

SUPERHEROES IN SPAAAACE!

Well, OK, not necessarily in space. *Galactic Champions* is your guide to the world of high-powered superheroing – both creating and playing characters in such settings, and developing and running campaigns featuring such high-powered, high Character Point total characters. Games like that often take place in settings that mix comics and science fiction – strange alien worlds and so on – but they don't necessarily have to.

Chapter One, *Awesome Cosmic Power: High-Powered Champions Games,* discusses and describes the Galactic Champions subgenre as a whole. It reviews the nature of the subgenre, the major character types and archetypes, and "bits" and elements of the subgenre. It also includes a section on character creation that provides some rules expansions and options for high-powered Champions games and characters.

Chapter Two, *Champions 3000: The Galactic Champions Universe,* describes the setting in which the characters from later chapters live and adventure. First it reviews the history of Earth and the Galaxy up until about 2700 (including an explanation of how and why superpowers and super-technology vanished from the Universe for centuries). Next it discusses the Galactic Federation period and how superpowers returned. The last section of the chapter discusses the current state of affairs in the Galaxy, the major governments and worlds, and other useful details.

Chapter Three, *Galactic Heroes,* describes two of the most prominent groups of NPC heroes in the campaign. The first is the Champions, reconstituted in the year 3000 by a descendant of the original Defender. The second is the Star*Guard, a group of cosmic guardians who wield powerful Star*Staffs in their war against evil and injustice.

Chapter Four, *Tyrants, Terrors, And Tormentors: Galactic Villains,* is the largest in the book. It contains over two dozen supervillains, ranging from master villains such as Mechanon 3000, to teams like the Sword Of Ackál, to a wide variety of solo villains such as Echo, Maraud, and Supernova. This is a GM's-eyes only chapter; don't read it if you're planning to play in a Galactic Champions game!

The concluding chapter of the book, *Gamemastering Galactic Champions,* is also for the GM alone. In addition to advice and options for running high-powered Champions campaigns, it includes the *GM's Vault,* wherein lie plot seeds and other secret information that players aren't allowed to know until they learn it in-game.

Galactic Champions cover by John Grigni
Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds cover by Keith Curtis

BATTLES FANTASTIC

If superheroes fighting amidst the stars isn't quite your cup of tea, how about sword-wielding heroes delving the depths of the earth, engaging in barroom brawls, and struggling to prevent an evil cult from returning its long-banished god to the world?

From the humble abodes of farmers, to the picturesque castles of nobles, to the mysterious and arcane towers of wizards – all these and more are places adventurers come upon during their travels through a Fantasy realm. *Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds* provides you with the maps and descriptions you need to flesh out these locations and more. Additionally, it contains three scenarios, each centered around its own single location.

In Chapter One, *A Night Out Of The Rain,* a storm leads the adventurers to take refuge in a roadside inn, only to discover one of the guests conceals a malevolent purpose. In the early morning hours, the undead rise from the earth to surround the place. If the PCs don't quickly determine the cause of the evil, the fiendish man will consummate his wicked desire and no one – including your PCs – will leave the inn alive.

In Chapter Two, *From Out Of The Depths,* a king hires the adventurers to discover what happened to a man who promised to discover silver in a mountain range. The man, however, was no innocent prospector, but rather the servant of a foul god who sought to unearth an evil long-ago buried deep beneath the earth. When the PCs arrive they discover the way lies open for this evil to return to the world… and it's up to them to close it.

In Chapter Three, *Eisburk-Beyond-The-Shoals,* the adventurers find themselves besieged with a young lord who had guested them in his castle – an army of Orcs and Goblins has surrounded the castle's walls! The army's leader offers no terms of surrender, promising the castle's inhabitants only death in the name of his father, a god no one has ever heard of. The PCs must fight beside the castle's defenders and prove their mettle as heroes, or else the castle falls and no one will survive.

Chapter Four contains eight more places you can use as the central location of an adventure of your own devising (and each has some plot seeds to help you with that devising): an abbey, a manor house, an ifrit's bottle, a tavern, an alchemist's shop, a prison, a farmhouse, and a wizard's tower. Alternately, you can just use them as places filled with interesting NPCs, each with his own story to tell, that the characters visit during their ongoing adventures.

The three adventures in *Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds* share a common background element: agents of a god, banished from the world by the other divine powers, seek to obtain pieces of a prophecy necessary to orchestrate the god's return to the mortal realm. Additionally, each of the locations in Chapter Four has a plot seed you can use to tie the prophecy and god to these locations. You can find out more about the god and this prophecy in the adventures that follow, but the god's name and precise nature are left vague so you can more easily fit the adventures into your campaign. If you don't have the time or inclination to come up with a god, the book provides one that you can use.

As a taste of FHB, later in this issue you'll find *The Migdalar Outpost,* a ninth miscellaneous location that I had to cut for space reasons. It's a little quirky in the Jason Walters style, but I have no doubt you'll find it intriguing and fun. ☺

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer

HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Because It's There
Advanced Rules for the *Climbing* Skill

As many of you are aware, I've been working on *The Ultimate Skill* in my "copious spare time." A lot of this work involves researching the various Skills to determine what can be done with them, what modifiers should apply, and the like. So far, the average Skill write-up has gone from the 200-400 words in the *HERO System 5th Edition* rulebook to an average of, by my rough guess to date, 5,000 words! In short, there's going to be a *lot* of information in TUS, folx.

I thought it might be fun to give y'all a quick glimpse into TUS. Here's roughly what the write-up for *Climbing* is like (though admittedly this is one I wrote early on, so it will probably need a little polishing when all's said and done). Naturally, it's all subject to change until you see it in print. ☺

CLIMBING

Type: Agility Skill (roll: 9 + (DEX/5) or less)
Cost: 3 Character Points for a base roll, +1 to the roll per +2 Character Points

Climbing allows characters to climb mountains, trees, buildings, and similar objects, typically at a rate of 1" per Phase (or less).

Climbing is primarily a physical Skill. However, it grants the character knowledge of related subjects, such as: climbing methods; climbing equipment; famous climbing sites and climbers. It also grants the characters the following abilities: knot-tying (though the knot-tying ability granted by Climbing is not as comprehensive as that granted by Contortionist or PS: Knot-Tying); the ability to use ropes to ascend, rappel, and so forth; the ability to perceive/find safe climbing routes; the ability to judge the weight-holding capacity of a ledge or outcropping.

The Climbing roll can be modified by: the type of surface being climbed; the type of equipment being used; the way the equipment is used; and the general Skill Modifiers.

Climbing is an Everyman Skill for all genres.

CLIMBING MODIFIERS TABLE

Incline	Modifier*	Example
45-60°	-0	Steep hill, average mountain
61-75°	-1	Steep mountain
76-90°	-2	Tree, building, very steep mountain
91-105°	-4	
106-120°	-6	
>121°	-8 if climbable at all	

Slipperiness of Surface		
Slippery	-2	Wet rocks
Very slippery	-4	Ice-covered rocks
Extremely slippery	-6	Glass skyscraper wall
Incredibly slippery	-8	Wet or icy glass skyscraper wall

Handholds		
Numerous	+4	Tree with lots of branches
Many	+2	
Average	-0	Tree with a few branches
Few	-2	
Almost none	-4	Flagpole

Equipment		Example/Notes
None ("free climbing")	-0	worse than Basic equipment
Basic equipment	+3	Rope, grapnel
Advanced equipment	+6	Rope, carabiners, belaying rings, and so forth
Very Advanced equipment	+12	Advanced climbing rigs, ropes, and so forth
Climbing footwear	+1	Cumulative with most other equipment bonuses
Climbing claws	+1	*Ashiko, shuko,* crampons; foot-worn claws are not cumulative with Climbing Footwear bonuses

Use of Equipment	Modifier
Basic rappelling	-0 for up to 10" descended, -1/+2"
Australian rappelling	-4 for up to 6" descended, -1/+2"

*: Modifiers are cumulative, but in most cases the GM should cap them at -10, the equivalent of an Extraordinary Skill Roll.

CLIMBING SURFACE

Climbing is usually only required if a surface is steeper than 45°. If there are plenty of easy handholds or the surface is otherwise easily climbable, characters may be able to ascend surfaces of up to 60° without rolling against their Climbing skill.

The modifiers to the Climbing roll listed in the table are based on the surface being climbed. Note that all modifiers are cumulative, so that, for example, scaling the outside wall of a glass skyscraper, a 90° extremely slippery surface with almost no handholds, would be as much as -12 to the Climbing roll. If it began to rain and the glass became wet, this would increase to as much as -14.

CLIMBING AND COMBAT

While climbing, a character is at half OCV and DCV if he has any freedom of movement (for example, while climbing a tree which he can hold onto with his legs, leaving his arms/upper body free to move), and 0 OCV and DCV if he has no freedom of movement (for example, while scaling a sheer cliff barehanded).

A character who fights while involved in an easy climb (such as up a ladder) suffers a -1 DCV. Characters involved in more strenuous climbs suffer the higher OCV and DCV penalties described above. Additionally, a character involved in a strenuous climb must subtract 2 DCs from all attacks he makes, and may not be able to use some Combat or Martial Maneuvers (for example, it's hard to kick when a character needs to keep both his feet firmly planted on a ledge, and hard to punch if he's holding onto a rope).

If a character is involved in a fight and is knocked off a ledge due to Knockback or the like, with the GM's permission he may make a DEX Roll to grab onto the ledge, a rope, or something else so that he's hanging on and doesn't fall. (The GM might not allow this if, for example, the character takes so much Knockback that he'd have no real chance to grab onto the ledge.) He may then, as a Full Phase Action, make a STR Roll or Climbing roll (GM's choice) to pull himself back up on top of the ledge (but of course, his opponent may not let him try to climb back up unhindered…). While holding on for dear life and pulling himself back up on top of the ledge, a character is at ½ OCV, ½ DCV.

EQUIPMENT

The *Climbing* Skill assumes that the character is "free climbing," *i.e.,* climbing with no equipment (or only with equipment for safety purposes, rather than equipment which actually makes climbing easier). However, for most difficult climbs and related activities, climbers use ropes (either regular rope or ropes made especially for climbing), and sometimes advanced equipment such as special climbing shoes or boots (which provide increased traction), clawlike devices (such as the *ashiko* and *shuko* used by ninja), pitons (climbing pegs), nylon webbing, crampons (boot spikes), carabiners (climbing rings for sliding rope through), climbing rigs and harnesses, belaying devices (used to hold a rope to stop a falling climber), protection devices (metal wedges, chocks, or spring-loaded camming devices wedged into crevices to offer additional support to the climber), ascending/descending devices, and so forth.

Unlike most Skills, Climbing does not suffer a penalty for using bad equipment – since "free climbing" is assumed, any equipment can help (or at least not hurt). However, the drawback to using equipment of poor quality is this: if a Climbing roll is failed, the odds of a fall are much greater (see "Consequences of Failure," below).

Most use of equipment does not require a roll. However, rappelling (also called abseiling) – the rapid descent of a surface by use of a rope – requires not only the use of equipment (a harness, rope, and anchor point for the rope), but a Skill Roll. Basic rappelling, which involves descending horizontally with the climber's feet towards the climbing surface, requires a Climbing roll at -0. This allows the character to descend at the rate of 10" per Phase; if the character wishes to descend more quickly than that, impose a modifier of -1 to the roll for every additional 2" descended. Australian rappelling, in which the character descends rapidly face-first with a quick reversal at the bottom to land on one's feet (used by Australian commandos to exit helicopters quickly, hence the name), requires a roll at -4. A character can descend up to 6" without additional penalty while Australian rappelling, -1 per additional 2". Basic and Advanced Equipment modifiers do not apply to Climbing rolls to rappel, since rappelling assumes the use of some equipment; Very Advanced Equipment will add +2 to the roll.

POWERS AND CLIMBING

Many Movement Powers, such as Flight and Teleportation, often render Climbing unnecessary. Similarly, Clinging allows characters to ascend sheer walls without having to worry about handholds or ropes; characters may buy Clinging with *Requires a Climbing Roll* (-½) and *Cannot Resist Knockback* (-¼) to represent a "super-Skill" at climbing.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

In most cases, a failed Climbing roll indicates that the climber has reached an impasse – due to lack of handholds or some other reason, he cannot climb any higher. If it is possible to do so, he may make a Climbing roll at +2 to descend the surface, and then another Climbing roll to find another route up the surface (the GM may impose negative modifiers on this roll if the alternate route would be particularly hard to find, or may rule that it cannot be made at all because there is no other route).

However, in some situations, particularly those where the character fails the roll badly (typically by 4 or more in most situations, or 3 or more in situations with especially difficult surfaces or where poor-quality equipment is being used, but GM's discretion always prevails), he will fall. If the character is using climbing equipment, that equipment will probably prevent him from falling very far, and thus from taking any damage. However, the GM may require an additional, unmodified, roll to determine whether the character set up his equipment correctly; if this roll is failed, the equipment breaks, separates from the surface, comes apart, or otherwise does not work properly, and the character falls. In the event of a fall, Breakfall may be used to stop the fall partway down (if this is possible, in the GM's discretion) or to reduce the damage taken from the fall. Refer to *Breakfall* in the *HERO System 5th Edition,* pages 175-76, for more information on falling damage.

BASE TIMES

Characters can climb most surfaces at the rate of 1" per Phase. The GM may alter this rate of movement at his discretion, or perhaps provide an inch or two "bonus" in a Phase when the character makes his roll by half or more.

CLIMBING BY GENRE

Cyberpunk/Near Future

In the near future, all types of equipment listed above are available, and even more advanced equipment may make climbing even easier and safer.

Dark Champions

All types of equipment are available.

Fantasy

In this genre, only Basic climbing equipment is available – ropes, grapnels, and the like. Advanced and Very Advanced equipment, such as climbing harnesses, is not available. However, in Oriental fantasy games, or games which take place in especially advanced fantasy societies, additional tools such as climbing claws or collapsible ladders may be used; see *The Ultimate Martial Artist,* pages 97-89, 209, 219.

In many Fantasy settings, magic may turn climbing into an easy task. Enchanted ropes and Spells of Spider Climbing make ascending even the sheerest rock face simple.

Martial Arts

All types of equipment are available if the game takes place in a modern-day setting; in fantasy/historical settings, refer to *Fantasy,* above.

Pulp

Advanced climbing equipment is available in this genre, but not Very Advanced equipment.

Science Fiction

In this genre, climbing equipment may be rendered unnecessary (except for recreational purposes) by the advent of personal anti-gravity packs and similar devices. Climbing equipment as advanced as Cyberpunk/Near Future will still be available for those who want it, though.

Superheroes

All types of equipment are available, and super-technology may even create better types of equipment than are available in the real world (such as "cling-grips" that make climbing skyscraper walls easy).

Western/Victorian

In this genre, only Basic climbing equipment is available – ropes, grapnels, and the like. Advanced and Very Advanced equipment, such as climbing harnesses, is not available.

You Gotti Have Charater by Jason Walters

"Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards" — Kierkegaard

The exquisitely well-dressed man held his hands up to the press in a gesture of patience, showing them his palms. A look of patient amusement crept across his handsome features as they crowded in, shoving cameras and microphones into his face.

"Mister Gotti!" shouted one avid young reporter at the smiling man. He thrust his mike eagerly forward as if he were some sort of fervent Victorian fisherman trying to spear a particularly stylish whale, "Now that you've been cleared of all those federal racketeering charges are you planning to reassume command of the Gambino crime family?"

Gotti looked down benevolently on the smaller man like an Italian Buddha.

"I'm still the head of *my* family," he answered with a chuckle, "my wife and kids at home. When they let me boss them around that is."

The reporters chuckled appreciatively. Gotti was so much more photogenic than the scowling and dour assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Giacalone that most of the assembled paparazzi ignored her as she came out of the double doors which lead to the courthouse steps where they were standing.

"Now that you're a free man, are you planning on exacting revenge on Vincent 'The Chin' Gigante for the murder of Frank DeCicco?" ventured another enthusiastic member of the press, a blond woman who had an equally bright-eyed cameraman hovering behind her.

"Investigating murders is the work of the police, not private citizens such as myself." He answered cheerfully. "I'm sure that this entire tragic matter with Frank DeCicco is merely due to some sort of.... unfortunate wiring problems with his car. I'm sure that it has nothing to do with my good friend Vincent Gigante. Actually, I was planning on getting a few of my acquaintances together to do a little something for Frank's wife and children as soon as I get home."

Once again the crowd of assembled media personalities tittered with laughter. They all knew that Gotti and his mob were going to slaughter their way through The Chin's Genovese Family at the earliest

possible opportunity, but the mafioso was just so charming that they couldn't help but laugh at his witty mannerisms. John Gotti was just so.... *perfect* as a mob boss that they all felt compelled to adore him.

But before any more questions could be asked a long back Cadillac pulled up in front of the courthouse. An extremely tough looking Italian man with a scar across his right cheek hopped out of the front seat and opened one of the rear doors. With the reporters in toe Gotti began to make his way down the steps of the courthouse like a king leaving his coronation.

"Well, there are a couple of my friends now." He offered as he donned his stylish fedora. "I would love nothing more than to stay and chat with you lovely people but I need to get back to my family. After months enjoying the hospitality of my fellow taxpayers I need to get home and help clean up the place. I hear that it's gotten messy in my absence."

With a final tip of his hat John Gotti, better known as the Dapper Don, got into the back of the long black car. Glowering at the crowd of reporters, the tough looking Italian man closed the door behind him before getting back into the vehicle's front seat. Then the automobile dashed off into the night, making New York City a little less safe than it was an hour before.

For decades Americans have been fascinated by the activities of notorious mobsters. Legendary Mafia bosses like Al "Scarface" Capone and Jack "Legs" Diamond were well-known national celebrities. But no organized crime figure of the last 20 years captured the attention of the public as much as John Gotti. By the mid-1980s, federal agencies with the help of local law enforcement had begun to dismantle organized crime families across the country. Yet in the midst of this effort, John Gotti stepped forward to capture the public's attention in a final bid for the Hollywood-style gangster and left his mark in the annals of history. Leaving a trail of bodies and embarrassed law enforcement agencies behind him wherever he went, Gotti became the darling of the New York media. With his habit of coming through criminal trials completely untouched, a penchant for fashionable attire, and suave public demeanor, the "Teflon Don" or "Dapper Don" became the icon of the modern American gangster.

artwork by Derrick Thomas

"Carlo Gambino, who was then head of the crime family in the '70s, got him a very smart lawyer, Roy Cohn. And, somehow, he managed to get a murder in which there were two eyewitnesses reduced to second-degree manslaughter,"
— Selwin Raab, crime reporter for *The New York Times*

"No matter how good a deal a prosecutor might offer, no member of the Gambino family could ever admit in a plea agreement that the family even existed."
— John Gotti to FBI prosecutor
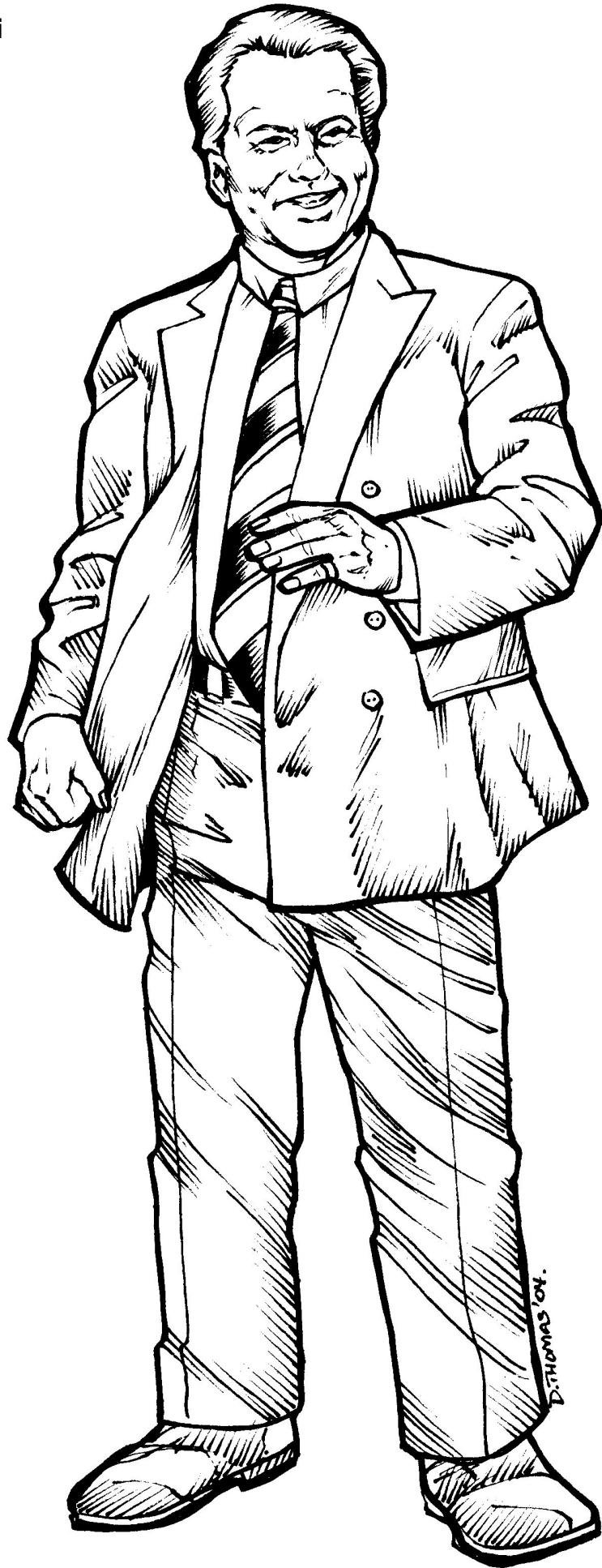
"There's probably a bomb under my car."
— Gambino gunman Frank DeCicco joked moments before his car blew up

"He was a rolling stone; he never provided for the family. He never did nothin'. He never earned nothin'. And we never had nothin'."
— John Gotti, when asked about his father

John Gotti

John Gotti
The Teflon Don, the Dapper Don

18	STR	8	13- Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 [2]
17	DEX	21	12- OCV: 6/DCV: 6
14	CON	8	12-
18	BODY	16	13-
13	INT	3	12- PER Roll: 12-
14	EGO	8	12- ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12- PRE Attack: 3d6
13	COM	2	12-
8	PD	4	Total: 8/13 (0/5 rPD)
7	ED	4	Total: 7/10 (0/3 rED)
3	SPD	3	Phases: 4, 8, 12
7	REC	0	
30	END	1	
40	STUN	6	

Total Characteristics Cost: 87

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	3½"/7"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
13	*.45 Semi Automatic Pistol:* RKA 2d6, 2 clips of 12 Charges (+0); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼)	[12]
27	*.9mm Uzi Machine Gun:* RKA 2d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 4 clips of 32 Charges (+½); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼)	[32]
4	*Aluminum Baseball Bat:* HA 2d6 (5½d6 with STR); OAF (-1), HA Lim (-½)	1
7	*Bare Knuckles Fighter:* HA 2d6 (5½d6 with STR); HA Lim (-½)	1
22	*Chainsaw:* HKA 3d6-1 (3d6+1 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½); OAF (-1), Required Hands Two-Handed (-½), Real Weapon (-¼)	6
4	*Kevlar Vest:* Armor (5 PD/3 ED); OAF (-1), Activation 11- (-1)	0
8	*Machete:* HKA 1d6+1 (2d6+1 w/STR); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), No Knockback (-¼)	2
20	*Tough Guy:* Physical Damage Reduction, 50%	0

	Perks	
50	*Capos and Soldiers:* 150 100-point followers	
6	*The Dapper Don:* Reputation: Stylish Mob Boss (large group) 11-, +3/+3d6	
10	Money: Wealthy	
3	Well-Connected	
1	1) *Corrupt Cop:* Favor	
1	2) *Corrupt Politician:* Favor	
1	3) *FBI Rat:* Favor	
29	4) Contact: Gambino Crime Family (Significant Contacts, Very Useful Skills or Resources, Slavishly Loyal, Organization) 13-	
5	5) Contact: Roy Cohn (Very Useful Skills or Resources, Limited by Identity, Very Good Relationship) 12-	

	Skills	
16	+2 with All Combat	
5	Bribery 13-	
3	Bugging 12-	
3	Bureaucratics 12-	
5	Concentrated Sprayfire	
3	Conversation 12-	
3	Demolitions 12-	
5	Forgery (Credit Cards, Identity Cards, Paper Money, Papers, Vehicle License Plates) 12-	
6	Gambling (Card Games, Dice Games, Sports Betting) 12-	
3	High Society 12-	
3	Interrogation 12-	
5	KS: Gamboli Crime Family 14-	
4	KS: Organized Crime 13-	
3	KS: Wiseguys 12-	
1	Language: Italian (basic conversation)	
3	Lockpicking 12-	
3	Oratory 12-	
3	PS: Mobster 12-	
5	Persuasion 13-	
3	Shadowing 12-	
7	Streetwise 14-	
2	TF: Common Ground Vehicles	
3	WF: Assault Rifles/LMGs, Blades, Clubs, Fist-Loads, Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Submachine Guns	

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 307

Total Cost: 393

200+	**Disadvantages**
15	DNPC: Victoria Gotti 8- (Incompetent)
5	Enraged: Plans Are Thwarted (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-
25	Hunted: FBI 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, PC is Very Easy to Find, Watching)
5	Physical Limitation: Limp (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
20	Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Gambler (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Violent (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Terrifying Mob Boss, 11- (Extreme)
5	Rivalry: Professional (other Mafia Dons, Less Powerful, Seek to Harm or Kill, Aware of Rivalry)
15	Social Limitation: Mobster (Frequently, Major)
58	Experience Bonus

Total Disadvantage Points: 393

OMERTA

Omerta: *o.mer.ta*
NOUN: A rule or code that prohibits speaking or divulging information about certain activities, especially the activities of a criminal organization.

Once a gangster "gets his bones" or becomes bonafide as a member of a crime family he is then eligible to become a "made man" or a wiseguy, providing he is of pure Italian blood. Made men must swear a sacred oath to the organization to obey a code known as *omerta*. The rules of this code include:

Silence

A made man can never "rat out" any other mafia member. He can never divulge any mafia secrets, even if he is threatened with torture or death.

Obedience

A wiseguy must always be obedient to the family boss. He must obey the boss's orders, no matter what.

Assistance

A made man must provide any necessary assistance to any other respected or befriended mafia faction.

Vengeance

All attacks on family members must be avenged. "An attack on one is an attack on all."

10

"What sort of an organization is it where murder is a means of advancement?" — Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Giacalone

Background/History: John Gotti was born on October 27, 1940, in the Bronx, into a large blue-collar family. The fifth son of a sanitation worker with few prospects in life, Gotti was a grade-school truant who was running errands for local criminals by the time he was 12. A bully and habitual troublemaker, he quit school for good at age 16 to become a member of the Fulton-Rockaway Boys, a teenage gang named for an intersection in Brooklyn. Gotti rose rapidly to a position of leadership within the group, quickly differentiating his crew from other "turf-minded" teen gangs by engaging in more serious crimes such as stealing automobiles, fencing stolen goods, and rolling drunks.

By the time he was 21, Gotti had been arrested five times on various charges without ever being convicted. He had also fallen in love with a fiery raven-haired beauty named Victoria DiGiorgio. They married in 1962, almost a full year after the birth of their first child Angela. A second daughter named Victoria and a son named John were born in rapid succession to the newlywed couple. Out of a sense of responsibility to his young family John tried his hand at legitimate work, becoming a coat factory presser and a truck driver's assistant. But before long he was up to his old tricks again, stealing cars, robbing warehouses, and running numbers.

In 1966, Gotti and his wife moved to Ozone Park in Queens. There he hooked up with the fierce Gambino family, who at that time ran the most powerful crime organization in the country. Headed by Mafia godfather Carlo Gambino, it was run out of a social club called the Bergin Hunt and Fish Club. With his newfound connections Gotti quickly graduated from small-time heists to big-time felonies, working as a truck hijacker at the massive John F. Kennedy International Airport. Through a combination of forged signatures, armed intimidation, and simple brazen theft, Gotti and his cohorts made away with hundreds of thousands of dollars of merchandise including women's clothing, cigarettes, and stolen vehicles. Caught red-handed by FBI agents in 1969 he pled guilty, serving a three-year sentence at Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary in Pennsylvania.

Released from jail in 1972, the first order of business for Gotti was to get a legitimate job as a cover for his criminal activities. He was put on the payroll of Victoria's stepfather's construction company, although he never really worked there. Instead he assumed the position of acting capo of the Bergin crew, whose leader Carmine Fatico had been indicted for loansharking and could no longer frequent the club. The Bergin crew under

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Gotti was young, hungry, and looking for ways to make money. Like many younger criminals they naturally gravitated toward dealing in narcotics, where risk was low and profits high. Unfortunately for Gotti the unwritten law of the underworld as it pertained to drugs was, "You deal, you die." The older capos frowned upon drug use, which they saw as contributing to the breakdown of the family structure in America. Although he toed the line on mob drug policies, Gotti chafed at the restrictions, which he simply saw as an archaic impediment to wealth.

In 1973, Gotti finally got a chance to earn his Mafia "bonafides" by taking on an assignment to kill James "Jimmy" McBratney, a member of an Irish-American gang suspected of kidnapping and killing Carlo Gambino's nephew Manny. McBratney and a small group of accomplices had been systemically (and successfully) kidnapping Gambino family members for ransom without incident. He had just accepted a $350,000 ransom from the Gambinos for his latest capture when something went terribly wrong; Manny's corpse was found in a New Jersey dump. The FBI captured the other two members of this murderous little group but Gotti caught up with McBratney at Snoope's Bar and Grill on Staten Island, murdering him in front of a room full of witnesses. Although he was obviously guilty, the Gambino family proved itself to be good for services rendered. Underboss Aniello Dellacroce, an aging but still brutal Mafioso, supplied Gotti with a high profile lawyer named Roy Cohn who arranged for the mobster to serve a light sentence for second degree involuntary manslaughter. By the time Gotti finished serving a two-year prison stretch for the McBratney slaying in 1977, Carlo Gambino had died. Paul "Big Pauli" Castellano, Gambino's cousin, was anointed head of the family with Dellacroce as his underboss.

Things were looking up for John. He was made actual (rather than acting) head of the Bergin crew, with Dellacroce (a man he admired) as his immediate superior. He became a "made man" taking the Mafia oath of *omerta* along with eight other mobsters. Yet in 1980 tragedy struck. Gotti's friend and neighbor John Favara ran over and killed his 12-year-old-son Frank in a traffic mishap which was officially declared to be accidental. Four months later Favara was shoved into a car by some men as he left his job at a furniture plant. Although his body was never found, an informer later told the police that he had been chainsawed to death. Favara's body was cut into pieces which were placed into a car that was then put through a demolition machine which reduced it to a one-square-foot-block. No link to the Gotti family was ever uncovered.

By 1985 Gotti was running rackets at JFK Airport as well as other gambling operations throughout the New York metropolitan area. He

was a particular favorite of Dellacroce's, who saw him as a potential replacement for the family's aging leadership. Big Pauli Castellano on the other hand hated him or, more accurately, feared him (which in the Mafia automatically breeds hatred). With several profitable operations to his credit Gotti was a rising star within the family, and unknown to Castellano, he was also a potentially deadly rival. Tension between the two groups within the family finally boiled over in the 1985 with a dispute over Gotti's alleged involvement in heroin trafficking. Castellano wanted to adhere to the old mafia code, fearing that involvement in the drug trade would bring too much federal heat against the family, which was making more than enough money controlling discreet businesses such as construction and private sanitation services. Gotti, who was always hungry for money to cover his gambling debts, disagreed strongly with his boss. In a bold move, he decided to kill Castellano and assume leadership of the Gambino family. On December 16, 1985, Gotti and a small band of Gambino family co-conspirators waited for Castellano outside the Sparks Steak House in Manhattan. Castellano and his friend Thomas Bilotti were pumped full of bullets as they opened the doors of their car.

Gotti was now in position to seize control of the biggest Mafia family in the nation. At a party held at the Ravenite Social Club in Little Italy eight days after Castellano's death Gotti, with the consent of the various crew captains, or capos, of the Gambino family, was selected the new Godfather. But he had little time to savor his victory. In 1986, Gotti faced the first of a seemingly neverending series of intensive federal prosecutions over charges ranging from assault to racketeering. Based on the weight of evidence, it seemed certain that the young mob boss would be convicted and that the Gambino family would again be in search of a new leader. Yet it was soon evident that even from behind bars, Gotti was not about to hold still for being replaced. Given the Gambino's propensity for violence it was unlikely that any other New York crime families would interfere with their operations ("When the Gambinos spit, the other families drown," commented one wiseguy). With Gotti's handpicked caretakers – his brother Peter and a childhood friend named Angelo Ruggerio – looking after his affairs while he awaited trial, it seemed unlikely that there would be any internal opposition. Then in early 1987, to the shock and horror of government attorneys, Gotti beat the rap.

Next the feds attempted to convict Gotti on RICO (1970 Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act) charges. But the case was ill prepared and suffered greatly from infighting between the prosecutors and the investigating FBI agents. Gotti and his cronies were acquitted, giving him the moniker "Teflon Don," the boss against whom criminal charges simply could not be made to stick. He also picked up the nickname "The Dapper Don" because of his expensive taste in clothing, his clean good looks, and his polite manner.

Gotti greatly enjoyed the press coverage of his court trials, but his days were numbered. Before long, prosecutors were ready to file a new racketeering indictment. The FBI produced a solid RICO case against him based on 100 hours of incriminating tapes. Although Gotti had proven untouchable in past attempts to convict him, this time the government had a secret weapon: the testimony of Sammy "the Bull" Gravano, second in command in the Gambino family. Gravano, a suspected killer who confessed to 19 murders, cut a deal with the government, trading testimony which clearly defined the Gambino family's crime operations in exchange for a lighter sentence. The government also provided tape recordings on which Gotti could be heard ordering mob hits on his rivals.

On April 2, 1992, Gotti was convicted on charges that included five murders. He was sentenced to life without parole and incarcerated at the notoriously harsh Marion Federal Penitentiary, where he spent twenty-three hours a day alone in a small cell and was not allowed any contact with the rest of the prison population. The Gambino family seemed to be without a leader, but in the Mafia a boss either has to resign or be killed. Despite his prison sentence, Gotti was not about to retire. From jail Gotti appointed a committee that included his son, John Jr., then 28, to run the Gambino family. Eventually, he named his son the acting boss of the family. But at the end of his first decade in prison, the 61-year-old Gotti died on June 10, 2002 from complications of head and neck cancer. A few days later, following a two-day wake in Queens, he was laid to rest alongside his father and his beloved son Frank.

Personality/Motivation: John Gotti is what he appears to be – a ruthless, vengeful, and volatile criminal with no regard for human life or private property. Grasping and hungry, he has spent a lifetime trying to acquire wealth, luxury, and infamy without ever having to work for it in any honest sense of the word. Unlike many older gangsters he has no ethical qualms about selling drugs; the money is what matters most to him. A habitual gambler, he thinks nothing of spending every cent he has so long as he can go out the next day to steal it all back again. Becoming the Boss of Bosses has only allowed Gotti to write these desires large across the canvas of New York City in a way he could never do as a mere soldier or low ranking capo. Yet his reach always seems to exceed his grasp; if he can, he'll extend his criminal empire over the entire country.

Avoidance
A wiseguy avoids contact with the authorities.

11

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All of that said, John Gotti has some good points to his character. He is a loving father, loyal husband, and good friend to those who can put up with him (a surprisingly large number of men). He takes his vow of *omerta* at least somewhat seriously (except for killing Big Pauli Castellano) and expects his men to do likewise. When dealing with the public he is well groomed, soft-spoken, and politely chivalrous to women. When dealing with fellow mobsters he is far more direct and to the point… sometimes literally.

A master of getting around the legal system, Gotti feels himself to be untouchable and completely above the law. He revels in his public persona as the "Dapper Don" and has gone out of his way in his Queens neighborhood to be perceived as a philanthropist rather than a gangster, throwing free public picnics and giving to worthy causes. Yet Gotti's addiction to his own celebrity is proving to be the undoing of the very organization which has provided him with it. In the relatively short time since his ascension to the head of the Gambino Mob, membership in the family dropped from more than 250 men to less than 150. His constant presence on the nightly TV news has ended up exposing many of his capos and soldiers to scrutiny by law enforcement officials. Gotti constantly orders his men to visit the mob's Ravenite headquarters on Mulberry Street even though the area is known to be blanketed by FBI cameras. Although many of his wise guys know that quiet discretion is their best armor against law enforcement they dare not voice their fears to the godfather, and dare not show up, since Gotti decrees (and carries out) death sentences in such cases.

Quote: "Follow orders or I'll blow up your house. I got to make an example of somebody. Don't let it be you!"

Powers/Tactics: John Gotti is the Boss of Bosses, a godfather who directly commands 150-200 armed mobsters and has access to numerous more men via various favors owed to him by the heads of other crime families. He employs well over a dozen extraordinarily tough and/or skilled henchmen which act as his bodyguards, hit men, and executioners. His financial resources are vast, his web of informants considerable, and if angered, his reach can extend around the globe. He has his fingers in numerous criminal and noncriminal enterprises including prostitution, gambling, numbers running, extortion, construction, drug dealing, organized labor, hijacking, smuggling, and illegal weapon sales.

John Gotti is largely a behind-the-scenes player who relies upon his men to directly conduct the majority of his criminal activity. That said, nobody can claim with any honesty that Gotti is afraid to get his hands dirty. Gotti is a tough guy (*Physical Damage Reduction, 50%*) who is as equally at home dispensing death via his fists, baseball bats, chainsaws, machetes, .45 semi-auto pistols, and Uzi machine guns as he is ordering others to do it for him. He will often handle "distastefully" violent matters himself if it is convenient to do so. Gotti also personally possesses a wide variety of criminal skills such as *Bribery*, *Forgery*, *Gambling, Interrogation*, *Persuasion*, and *PS: Mobster* which he uses almost daily running his criminal empire

Campaign Use: John Gotti is a master mobster character suitable for use in a *Dark Champions* urban vigilante campaign. He is intended to be the apex of the pyramid for characters killing their way to the top of the criminal food chain, the ultimate prize waiting at the end of a long, drawn-out series of games in which the vigilante players attempt to do via illegal means what the criminal justice system has been unable to accomplish via legal ones. In the meantime Gotti will be attempting to get at the player characters as they attempt to get at him by blowing up their cars, setting fire to their homes, killing or kidnapping their DNPCs, luring them into deadly traps, lying about them to the press, and trying to get them captured by the authorities. They should be made aware that no matter what they do, Gotti is pulling the strings in the background, weaving them into a web of almost certain death.

If mercenary supervillains (or their equivalent) are available in your campaign universe Gotti will almost certainly hire several of them, possibly even giving them positions of respect and authority within his organization. If he suspects the PCs are out to get him, he may even hire their archenemies A wonderful example of this sort of campaign can be found in Marvel Comics *The Punisher* (volume 2) issues 14-18 during the story arc entitled "To Topple the Kingpin" in which Frank Castle, along with a like-minded group of vigilantes, attempts to kill their way to the top of The Kingpin's crime organization by starting with street level drug pushers.

Appearance: "Gotti looks like a movie star," said a detective who knew him quite well. "He wears hand-tailored clothes, drives a big black Lincoln, and likes good restaurants." John Gotti is a suave, good-looking man of Italian decent in his mid-40s who walks with a pronounced limp (which he picked up as a teenager while trying to steal a cement truck). He wears expensive handmade suits, designer shoes, and sports a stylish hairdo. When in public he is invariably polite, often soft-spoken, and is deferential to women.

Your Horoscope For: Capricorn by Allen Thomas

This installment of *Your Horoscope For* presents a one- or two-night scenario for *Alien Wars.* The adventure is set during the early days of Operation Future Peace, when the United Earth Armed Forces invaded the Xenovore Empire to ensure that the ravenous and ravaging Xenovores never again threatened Humanity's existence. To run *Your Horoscope For: Capricorn,* you'll need copies of *Star Hero* and *Alien Wars* (although you might get by with a copy of *Terran Empire* and some elbow-grease – see the Sidebar, *During The Terran Empire,* for help).

ADVENTURE SPECS

Designed for six 150-point characters, built according to the guidelines on page 15 of *Hero System 5th Edition* for Standard Heroes, the adventure provides an excellent starting point for a new campaign, or jumping-off point for the next chapter in an ongoing campaign. To some extent it draws upon the Das Boot (*Alien Wars,* page 176) and Slave Uprisings (*Alien Wars,* page 179) campaigns, both of which have plot seeds you can use as ideas for subsequent adventures.

The adventure assumes the PCs are a part of the military at the start, and from there they find themselves assigned to crew a Kingfisher submersible P/T boat, so at least one needs TF: Human Small Military Ships (or Submarines at your discretion) and Combat Piloting. Since the PCs are quickly separated from the rest of the force, Skills like Mechanics, Navigation, and Survival (Arctic/Subarctic) will prove invaluable, and if necessary, gently "nudge" your PCs to take some of these.

Tasked with a mission considered of secondary importance, the force is a hastily thrown together military unit, crewed by a ragtag group of men assigned to it mainly because they weren't doing anything better and the brass hate idle hands. This provides the perfect excuse for PCs with diverse backgrounds to find themselves lumped together in a makeshift squad without its full complement of troops. A group of PCs with an intelligence officer, marine, mechanic, **company cook that's "good with knives,"** or the like is perfectly plausible – and a group with a wide variety of skills will quickly prove advantageous. (On the other hand, a homogenous group of PCs – all marines, all special forces, and so on – is just as plausible, so long as one of the PCs can pilot the P/T boat.)

Adventure Background

In the earliest days of the Human invasion, the forward elements of the Combined Fleet pushed as far into Xenovore territory as possible, moving quickly and leaving behind enemy holdings to spinward and coreward. To assess the potential threat these enemy positions posed to future supply lines, UE Navy commanders assigned small task forces called long range reconnaissance patrols (LRRPs) to reconnoiter the areas.

Their mission was to journey to the star systems, determine enemy numbers and emplacements, and above all, avoid engagements with Xenovore forces unless they possessed overwhelming force or another advantage that guaranteed victory. The primary goal of the LRRPs was simply to chart unknown space and provide information to commanders so they could determine a course of action. All other objectives were secondary.

The PCs' LRRP is officially called Task Force NF/24/7 (after the starchart coordinates showing the LRRP's direction), and unofficially called Task Force No Fun 24/7. It consists of two *Centauri*-class battleships, the *Fomalhaut* and *Procyon*; four *Antarctic*-class light cruisers, the *Strang, Mlran, Africa,* and *Bavoroos*; and six *Asteroid*-class cargo ships, four carrying fuel, rations, and sundry other supplies, the other two serving as troop transports. Each transport carries a regiment of UE Army forces, and the PCs are billeted on one of the troop transports, the *Simplicissimus.*

Five Terran days ago, the task force entered an unnamed star system, six planets and planetoids in orbit around a Type G star. Immediately upon entering the system, the task force engaged two Xenovore Slave Ships and a Dreadnought, destroying them in a successful ambush. A quick scan of the system indicated the fourth planet out was habitable, and further investigation revealed the presence of Xenovores. Judging from radio transmissions and electromagnetic spectroscopy, the planet was lightly garrisoned… and in the commander's mind that made it the perfect opportunity to prove he deserved the promotion he'd been bucking for before assigned to doghouse duty with Task Force NF/24/7.

The commander, Vice Admiral Marsh Tillery, is a gloryhound who feels his current assignment is better suited to De Valiere's Terran Exploration Service than an academy-trained Navy officer of his self-perceived caliber.

artwork by Dave Schrasder
cartography by Ryan Wolfe

DURING THE TERRAN EMPIRE

Using this adventure in the *Terran Empire* setting requires a bit of finagling. During most of this period, the Xenovores are nearly extinct, present only in small primitive colonies scattered throughout their former empire.

The reason for the PCs' deployment to H'rotha is easy enough: recent scout ships have discovered the presence of the Xenovores on a potentially habitable planet, and the task force's job is to assess the extent of the threat and then take steps to eliminate it.

It's definitely possible Humans overlooked the Xenovores on H'rotha in the immediate aftermath of the war (a time of upheaval for Human civilization called the Anarchic Period), and maybe even overlooked it for centuries afterward, since H'rotha isn't exactly the most hospitable planet, but it's unlikely the Xenovores possess the starships they use to destroy the PCs' task force in Scene Two of this adventure. After all, if they did have a couple of Dreadnoughts ready for launch, they would've used them to attack the Humans during the Xenovore War, and not waited a

He has a very high opinion of his superior force, coupled with a very low opinion of the enemy – an attitude that will result in the PCs stranded on the ice planet, H'rotha, facing the Xenovores whose exact numbers are unknown, but are far larger than analysts initially estimated.

After Admiral Tillery and his staff officers quickly draw up battle plans, the PCs find themselves together in a squad assigned to a Kingfisher submersible P/T boat, one of six boats (considered on the Table of Organization a platoon of Mechanized Infantry) tasked with neutralizing an isolated Xenovore outpost. Analysts suspect it is a communications and perhaps an observation station, located on an island in what seems to be large inland sea… and if your PCs don't notice the many qualifiers in that assessment, they must be fresh out of boot camp.

THE PLANET H'ROTHA

The planet, H'rotha, has a history of civilization going back millennia. Tragically, that civilization all but destroyed itself seven centuries ago, and now the indigenous species, the H'rothans, are little more than nomadic hunter/herdsmen who wander the frigid wastes of the planet.

H'rotha is what the native species calls their world; Xenovores call it Xaeran Tre!larrin, literally Breeder's Domain; the UE Navy has officially named it Planet 11/32487/4-NF/24/7, and the troops have nicknamed it the Cold Sleep.

HISTORY

The H'rothan's former civilization had reached UTES 10 (ATRI 10 in Terran Empire terms), though they founded few off-planet colonies because their birth rate was too low to create the population pressures that usually drive outward expansion. A capitalist society under a one-world government, which maintained a global standard-of-living and prevented corporations from exploiting underpaid labor to generate revenue. Scientists and engineers were under intense pressure to discover new technologies, since technological innovation was a corporation's primary means to gain market share and increase earnings, and the last great push in research was antimatter power.

At a research lab along the equator, a new energies development cooperative stood on the brink of a breakthrough, when their researchers successfully created antimatter… but what they failed to create was a means of containing the energies released during the synthesis of antimatter.

Later scientists estimated the explosion resulting from the "successful" experiment had the same force as a 1000-megaton nuclear explosion, all of it detonating at exactly the

same, precise moment. It was an explosion literally felt around the world, detonating with so much force it skewed the planet's rotation by several kilometers. At ground zero the column rose straight up, ripped through the atmosphere, and only expanded into the traditional mushroom cloud after it reached the vacuum of space.

At least that's what the scientists theorized – the actual facts were impossible to determine and even describing the explosion in nuclear terms was misleading. This was an event the physics known to H'rothan scientists, despite their sophistication, couldn't come close to describing. Whatever the specifics of what happened, the explosion was less devastating than it might have been… at least in the short term.

Several days passed before scientists understood that their atmosphere was escaping from the planet at an alarming rate through the hole the antimatter explosion had created. The H'rothans lacked the technology to repair the hole directly – only somewhat experienced with terraforming, all they could do was create magnetosphere stabilizers and atmosphere generators in a desperate attempt to maintain planetary conditions capable of sustaining life. The magnetosphere stabilizers kept H'rotha from wobbling off course any more than it already had, and the atmosphere generators maintained a stasis by replenishing the gases and trace elements lost as they were sucked out into the void. They hurriedly built the two facilities, one at each pole, and prayed the hole would repair itself with time.

They did successfully create a stasis, but again they failed to take into account all the variables – on paper their equations balanced nice and peacefully, but in nature the stasis they created was no tranquil thing – and their machines not only made the hole permanent, but also precipitated an ice age. Climate stabilizers protected their largest cities, but glaciers crept out of the north and south until they covered the world in ice. H'rotha had once been a paradise; now it was a frigid desert of league after league of drifted snow, so cold it was barely habitable.

During this period of tribulation and catastrophic upheaval, large segments of the populace grew disgusted with their society. To never see the sun and spend the rest of their lives in overcrowded cities, encircled by walls of ice growing ever higher with each passing year – these were the fruits of science, capitalism, and competition, and they were bitter fruits indeed. From these disaffected masses arose a leader, a demagogue named Shorn'lachra which translates literally to: "The road up ahead goes through the past." His name was an old-fashioned H'rothan aphorism best expressed in English as: for the answers to future problems study the past. And that's exactly what Shorn'lachra did.

The primitive ancestors of the H'rothans had survived at least one previous ice age, and though the species had evolved considerably since those days, their geneticists were capable of returning it to that "primitive" state. Shorn'lachra beseeched his followers to sell all their worldly possessions to pay for genetic alterations – and when their funds came up short, Shorn'lachra extorted the difference from the government.

He and his followers underwent painful operations to alter their genomes, and though they themselves wouldn't benefit from the changes, their offspring would. Their children would have wooly hides and thick blubber to insulate them against the cold; an ability to live exclusively on meat; the increased likelihood to bear twins or triplets; nictating membranes to protect their eyes from blowing snow and hail; and enhanced nightvision to see in the pitch black night.

The operations completed, Shorn'lachra led his followers out of the cities and into the wastes to live a nomadic life. Those first H'rothans to leave the cities suffered terribly – not just from the harsh environment, but from the cancers and mutations caused by the radical changes to their DNA – but they survived long enough to have children, and their children grew up well adapted to H'rotha's arctic environment and suffered much less. Over the course of the next two centuries, the residents of the cities came out to join their nomadic brethren, interbreeding with this new species of H'rothan, until finally the cities stood empty – nothing more than grand testaments to a society that had failed its members and forlorn memorials to the foolishness of the H'rothans' ancestors.

The Coming of the Xenovores: For the next five centuries the H'rothans existed at peace with their environment – a hard but fulfilling life, and at least they didn't threaten the very world's existence. Thanks to their new lifestyle, the next catastrophe in their history was no fault of their own.

Almost five decades ago, the Xenovores came to H'rotha. Deeming the planet worthless because of the ice sheets that interfered with Xenovore bio-nanites, the minerals they mined for construction too far below the glaciers for easy access, the Archon ordered his forces to round up all sentient life and pack them into Slave Ships. He planned to use the H'rothans to provision the invasion force then establishing a beachhead in Humanspace, but before these operations commenced, the Breeders stepped in. They claimed H'rotha as Xaeran Tre!larrin, a sort of eminent domain that allowed the Xenovore bio-engineers to take over locations pertinent to their experiments with the species' genome.

Since then H'rotha has served as an experimental breeding ground for the Shark Genotype and aquatic war beasts, as well as a proving ground for underwater Hive Colonies and water vehicles. Because of its special status as Xaeran Tre!larrin, the native H'rothans have experienced much less predation than subjugated species elsewhere. To a large extent the Xenovores have had little impact on H'rothan life – at least, so far – and the H'rothans consider them just another predator, one that hunts in packs and preys on H'rothans exclusively.

GENERAL FEATURES

The sections below describe some of H'rotha's general features, from the planet's appearance from orbit, to the ruins that dot its surface.

Appearance From Orbit: From orbit the planet appears as a light gray orb shot through with quickly-spinning swirls of dark streamers – the land obscured by the constant cloud cover – and rotating around the planet's equator is a blackish-gray eye, similar in appearance to Jupiter's red one, with a radius that fluctuates between five and ten kilometers. From this eye spews a miles-long plume where the atmosphere escapes into the vacuum. This is a continual storm caused by the permanent hole in the planet's atmosphere opened during the failed antimatter experiment.

Atmosphere: H'rotha has atmosphere with a slightly higher oxygen content than Earth's, but is otherwise the same. The unending storm and escaping atmosphere create conditions unlikely to sustain an Earth-type planet, and the task force's Science and Sensor personnel made frequent reports about the improbability of a naturally-occurring, self-replenishing atmosphere required to maintain Earth-like conditions.

However they found no evidence of atmosphere generators, since the generators are very well made and their operations are impossible to discover from orbit – the tumultuous atmosphere interferes with most sensors, making orbital scans difficult. After each report ending in a request for more time to study the phenomena, Admiral Tillery was rumored to have declaimed, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Science and Sensors also appended frequent caveats to their analysis of the H'rotha's surface and Xenovore installations, again noting that atmospheric conditions made accurate readings impossible. (To which Admiral Tillery replied, "We have been in orbit for days. The enemy is known neither for maintaining a defensive stance nor for its pacifist behavior. We have destroyed their only starships – if they could attack, they would.")

couple of hundred years for the Humans to show up! While a lack of starships is believable – perhaps the Xenovores ruling H'rotha dispatched their small fleet during the Xenovore Wars and it was destroyed in an engagement with the UE Navy, marooning them on the world – the destruction of the Human task force that brings the PCs to the planet is more problematic.

To destroy the Human task force once the PCs make planetfall, you have a couple of options. Maybe automated defense satellites, well shielded from sensors, are in orbit around the planet and fully functioning, and these destroy the task force. Maybe the task force is called away to fight off a sudden Thorgon incursion, leaving the PCs behind to deal with the Xenovores who just happen to have much greater numbers than originally thought. Or maybe (and admittedly somewhat contrived) the task force suffers either a sudden mutiny or catastrophic accident just after launching the PCs, leaving them stranded in hostile territory.

H'ROTHAN COLONIES

As stated in the history, H'rothans had founded a limited number of off-planet colonies, both on H'rotha's moons, other planets in the system, and in neighboring star systems. At their height they possessed Hyperdrive engines, although they never developed the technology as extensively as Humans, because as a species they weren't interested in expanding across the galaxy. The primary purpose of their colonies was to mine mineral deposits for export back to the homeworld, and not create new habitats where a H'rothan would spend the rest of his life.

When the catastrophe struck, the majority of colonists returned home. Most colonies were not self-sufficient, and even at the ones the colonists could have quickly made independent of the homeworld, the inhabitants weren't particularly interested. It's difficult for Humans to comprehend the despair that gripped the H'rothans in the aftermath of the antimatter explosion. In their heart of hearts, Humans are a pragmatic species and after a tragedy get back to the business at

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The penalties due to the frigid environmental conditions on H'rotha are summarized below. For more details about the long-range consequences of extreme cold, frostbite and the like, see *Environmental Effects* on pages 295-298 of *Hero System 5th Edition.*

Communications
On Surface: Double all Range Modifiers for electromagnetic-based sensors and communications (including HRRP and Mind Link defined as Radio Group).
From Orbit: Additional -12 penalty to all scans from orbit and surface-to-orbit/orbit-to-surface communications.

Normal Sight Modifiers (in addition to standard Range Modifiers)
"Clear" Day (Night): -2 penalty to PER Rolls (additional -4 without Nightvision).
Flurries Day (Night): -4 penalty to PER Rolls (additional -4 without Nightvision).
Blizzard Day (Night): -8 penalty to PER Rolls (lucky to see hand in front of face).

Movement Modifiers
Normal Snow (less than two-foot-deep; H'rotha Standard): -2" Running; -2 to DEX and DEX-Based Skill Rolls.
Deep Snow (greater than two-foot-deep): -4" Running; -4 to DEX and DEX-Based Skill Rolls.
Ice: -2" Running; successful DEX Roll to make Full Move; -4 to DEX and DEX-Based Skill Rolls.
Note: To increase variability and better represent drifted snow, you can treat the penalty as a 1d6+1 Running Drain for Normal Snow and Ice, and 2d6+1 Running Drain for Deep Snow. Make a new roll at the beginning of each Turn.

Climate: H'rotha is frigid; the entire planet has an arctic environment with temperatures ranging from -20° at the very warmest to -100° on an average night (and often dips below this, depending on season or geographical location). The sky is almost always overcast with dark thunderheads, an angry roil crashing with thunder and lit by lightning, which flashes between the clouds, but rarely strikes the planet. It snows two days out of every three – usually light flurries, but brief, intense blizzards are common. Direct sunlight is exceedingly rare; daytime is a murky gray, and the nighttime is pitch black, lightning the only illumination.

Geography & Terrain: H'rotha is 80% water with three large continents; however, because of the incessant cold, only 24% of the water's surface area is liquid. In orbital scans most of the planet's water appears as wide rivers, large lakes, and small inland seas, but in fact these are small parts of the planet's oceans, kept liquid at the surface by warm currents flowing up from volcanic vents on the ocean floor.

Glaciers, some the size of other world's continents, cover the rest of the planet's surface, except at places where old crumbling mountains break through the thick ice. The peaks are the location for the planet's only vegetation that isn't moss or fungus, with the lower slopes of the mountains covered with high-grown evergreens and undergrowth – these areas serve as a refuge for the planet's few land-dwelling herbivores.

Between the mountains, waterways, and lakes are desolate plains – flat expanses of drifted snow, reaching depths of ten feet or more, occasionally broken by high-reaching outcroppings of ice cut into weird shapes by the winds. The glaciers move much quicker than continents, pushed along by ocean currents, and the ground often trembles and quakes with glacier crashing against glacier.

Fauna: While the oceans under the glaciers and icebergs teem with life (including the Xenovores, their Sharkhemoths, and the Sub-Leviathans!), the lands are nearly lifeless. Only the H'rothans are found on the ice plains, and not even they make a home there.

The mountains have an ecosystem similar to that of subarctic regions on Earth – insects, small birds, and rodents being most numerous; over thirty species of an herbivore called *anrisset,* similar in appearance to a shaggy Terran goat and with the same appetites; and the largest predator is an ursine creature called *unrym,* closest in appearance to a Terran wolverine but less aggressive, that live in packs of ten to twenty.

The coastal regions are home to H'rotha's largest mammals, all of which are carnivores. At the bottom of the food chain are *juj,* small otter-like creatures with six small legs and long tails that hunt fish in the oceans; at the top are *rorge,* large bear-like creatures with overgrown heads that attack anything including H'rothans (and Humans), but mainly subsist on a diet of *juj* and carrion washed up from the oceans.

Ruins and Other Artifacts of the Past: The cities that survived the beginning of the new ice age still stand amid the glaciers that cover H'rotha. Seventy-four in total, these sprawling cities of high-rises and skyscrapers stand at the bottom of canyons formed in the glaciers, and the streets are perpetually flooded with standing water (melt off from the ice, two to four feet deep). Encompassing the cities are envelopes of

warm air, and the climate stabilizers maintain a temperature of between 30° and 40° Celsius. Automated laser cannons keep more "aggressive" glaciers from creeping over the city by melting away the ice as the glacier approaches. The H'rothans keep both the stabilizers and lasers in good repair and use the cities as storehouses for their history, communication centers for meetings of tribal elders, and oases during their treks across the ice – either as simple resting spots or as the only possible refuge during blizzards. The technology in the cities is UTES 10, although much of it has crumbled to dust, and the H'rothans only make a point of maintaining that technology their elders deem vital to their survival. (H'rothans don't prevent PCs from studying the technology, but any character doing so will have to listen to a never-ceasing litany about the dangers of technology.)

Each of the two atmospheric generators is located at a pole. Fully automated and run by artificial intelligences, the facilities are buried beneath the ice with only emission stacks and sensor arrays still visible. No H'rothan has journeyed to either of the facilities since the earliest days of the catastrophe, and who knows what alien forms of intelligence have spawned, growing into their own unique form of sentience, in the absence of their creators….

The final unusual feature is the crater caused by the antimatter explosion. With a radius of twenty kilometers, the crater stands free of ice and snow, and its surface still burns with radiation, reaching temperatures as high as 200° Celsius at its center. Weird ecologies have sprung up on the edges of the crater with mutated flora and fauna adapted to both the radiation and the furious storm, something like a blizzard during a tornado, that comes around every twelve days as H'rotha's blackish-gray eye circles around the planet's equator. Because of the strange energies radiating from the crater and their interaction with the planet's magnetosphere, all compasses point toward it (instead of north).

H'rothans

hand – they take things in stride and the culture only reinforces that attitude. H'rothans are much more passionate (one of the reasons competition was so incredibly fierce in their previous society), more deeply affected by events, and they couldn't simply shake off the tragedy and return to their previous lifestyle.

Even seven centuries later, a H'rothan takes a turn for the mournful when discussing the catastrophe that changed their planet. To Human eyes this seems an unhealthy and morbid dwelling on the past; to a H'rothan, though, anything but deep sorrow and bitter regrets for the actions of their ancestors is callous, unfeeling, and not entirely sane.

But of course, in your campaign maybe one colony did survive, and at some point returns to their homeworld, perhaps with marauding Xenovores hot on their heels….
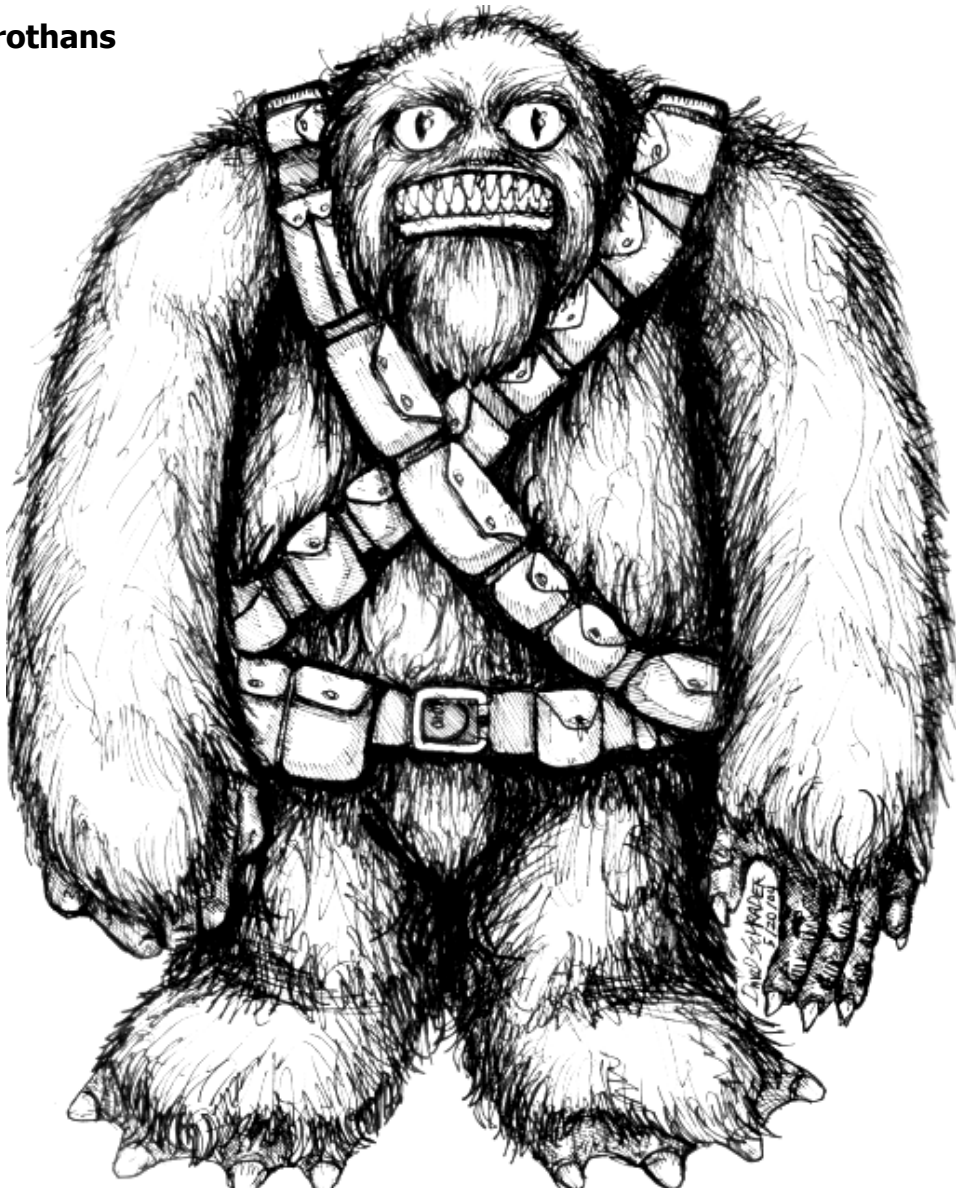
H'rothans

The H'rothans – which the Xenovores call Fr!Bro'se!an-nar (literal translation: gamey meat that doesn't plead) and Humans will find countless nicknames for in later years. These include Shaggies, St. Bernards, Abominables, Yetis, and Georges – are the native species of H'rotha and the planet's sole naturally-occurring sentient life form.

Biology: Standing between 8' and 9' tall, H'rothans are neckless behemoths of muscle and blubber, made only larger by the masses of woolly gray hair that cover their bodies. At the few places where their skin is visible – mainly the lips, palms, and the soles of their feet – it is dark gray and crisscrossed with deep creases. Their legs are short and bowed, ending in long spatulate feet with wide toes webbed with thick skin between the digits – all of this forming natural snow shoes. Their arms are long, reaching to their knees, and each hand has three thick fingers with two opposable thumbs on either side of the palm. Their mouths are wide and filled with long sharp teeth – a H'rothan goes through four sets of teeth over the course of his natural life span and multiple rows are often visible. Their eyes are round, giving them an innocent appearance wholly at odds with their size and teeth, and have slit pupils like a cat's, with irises that are usually green, yellow, or orange. They go undressed, wearing only two bandoliers and a single belt. Their natural life span is sixty Terran years, and a child reaches maturity at ten Terran years.

Society & Culture: There are approximately half a million H'rothans on the planet, and in broad terms their society is tribal. Each tribe has between sixty and a hundred members, the numbers maintained by shifting members from larger tribes to smaller tribes, and a popularly-elected chief leads the tribe assisted by a council of elders. The tribes can be categorized into three types: herdsmen that live in the mountainous regions above the ice, hunters that live in the coastal regions, and nomads that act as both traders and messengers between the mountain and coastal tribes.

H'rothan society is engineered from the ground up – in the last days of their former civilization, at the depths of their despair over what they had done to their world, Shorn'lachra gave his followers a new culture whole cloth, and it was quite a departure from their former capitalist society.

The only possessions a H'rothan can claim as his own are his rifle and whatever he can carry in his two bandoliers and on his belt, and this proscription includes marriage – since no female H'rothan will fit in a bandolier pouch, no male can take a wife (and vice versa). Raising offspring is the whole tribe's responsibility – again, a H'rothan child doesn't fit in a bandolier pouch, so a parent can't claim ownership.

Among the earliest signs to strangers that not all is what it seems with H'rotha are their oral traditions. First they possess an extensive, nearly exhaustive knowledge of their history (although they rarely speak of it unless directly asked) – they know far more than any oral tradition, however well-developed, can possibly record. The truth is the H'rotha maintain written records in the cities, and youths are taught from these. Second, they don't tell tall-tales – they have no myths or legends, and exaggerating events, even trivial ones like the size of a fish a H'rotha caught the day before, is grounds for a period of ostracism, lasting maybe a week and mainly in the form of the "cold shoulder," from the rest of the tribe. In other words, they place great value on the truth – the bare facts of an event – in a way unique to science-oriented societies, a condition that stems from applying the scientific method to daily life, despite their *seeming* lack of scientific knowledge. Which touches on perhaps the most unique aspect of H'rothan culture: their attitude toward technology.

Technology: In later years, the H'rothans would be one of the cultures used to justify changing the UTES (Uniform Technology Evaluation Scale) to the ATRI (Available Technical Resources Index), and in short, the H'rothans are neo-Luddites like none Humans had encountered previously.

Technically, going by the letter of UTES, the H'rothans are a UTES 9 culture (they have backslid somewhat since their height). Although there are no H'rothan scientists, when considered as a species, they possess the scientific knowledge needed to create all the technologies associated with that level of development. However, they only apply their knowledge in strictly limited circumstances, dictated by arbitrary rulings handed down from their founder, Shorn'lachra, and modified to fit extenuating circumstances by an intertribal committee of elders. In general, these limit personal technology to Gauss rifles and small portable heaters, and limit more pervasive technologies to maintaining the communication and manufacturing facilities present in the cities (especially those related to creating their rifles and forging steel), and keeping the climate stabilizers operational or creating new ones.

The H'rothans are perfectly content with these limits – despite knowing in theory how to create more advanced machines and the like, they remember the past and have no desire to return to their former culture.

To a stranger, however, none of this is immediately apparent, since the H'rothans don't talk about these things. They consider the whimsical scientific speculation Humans delight in meaningless, a waste of a time and energy; and they consider the discussion of technology, when not pertinent to the task at hand, the height of rudeness similar to a Human talking about something unpleasant or disgusting at the dinner table.

All a stranger sees are bandoliers and belts made from hide, some primitive jewelry and trinkets, a steel knife with a hilt hand carved from bone, and a Gauss rifle that seems out of place, but maybe the H'rotha picked it up from some other species. Then the stranger says something about the Xenovore bio-nanites, describing them as he would to an ignorant child, and the H'rothan says matter-of-factly, "You mean the aliens utilize biologically-based nanotechnology. Yes, we knew that." Or the stranger tries to explain how his laser rifle works and the H'rothan says, "You mean light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation."

H'rothans won't be drawn into an argument about the wonders of technology. If asked why they use Gauss rifles, instead of laser rifles or plasma blasters? "A man cannot eat an incinerated *juj*." Why not wear body armor to protect themselves from the *rorge*? "The *rorge* must eat too." And what about the Xenovores? "Perhaps our time has passed."

And they won't say any more about the topic (especially where it concerns the Xenovores which are quickly becoming a topic for heated debate, but only in private and not in front of strangers).

Whatever the case, before the coming of the Xenovores, nothing a Human could say would convince a H'rothan to abandon their traditions. No matter what marvel a Human were to boast of, the H'rothan would respond, "Ah yes, our ancestors said much the same thing… then they burned a hole in the heavens and brought down an age of ice. A marvel indeed." And in truth, the H'rothans do live in nearly perfect equilibrium with their environment and have little need for technology… until the coming of the Xenovores, that is.

Now some H'rothans, both young and old, are beginning to wonder about their technological knowledge and how they could use it to rid themselves of the invaders – however, for the time being, the Xenovores haven't shown themselves to be a threat to their entire way of life, and that's what it would take before H'rothans consider modifying their behavior toward technology.

H'ROTHAN PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+6 STR	6
+6 CON	12
+5 BODY	10
Thick Pelt and Blubber: Damage Resistance (4 PD/4 ED)	4
At Home in Cold: Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)	2
Adapted To Snow: Environmental Movement: No Penalties in Snow	4
Adapted To Snow: +2 PER with Normal Sight; Only To Offset Snow Penalties (-1)	1
Nightvision: Nightvision (Sight Group)	5

Skills	Cost
No H'rothan makes it to adulthood without the following skills:	
AK: Home Region (INT Roll+2)	5
Navigation (Land) (INT Roll+2)	7
Survival (Arctic/Sub-Arctic) (INT Roll+3)	8

Disadvantages	Value
Physical Limitation: Large (Infrequently, Slightly)	-5
Psychological Limitation: Eschews Technology (Common, Total)	-20

Total Cost of Package: 39

EQUIPMENT

Gauss Rifle: Use G-1000 High-Powered Gauss Rifle (*Alien Wars*, page 106)

Large, Steel Knife: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) (15 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 7 points.

Portable Heater: Change Environment 1" radius, +3 Temperature Levels (11 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Fuel Charge (easily obtainable; 1 Week; -0). Total cost: 5 points.

Miscellaneous other items including two bandoliers, one belt, and rations.

The Xenovores

H'rotha has become a sort of experimental lab for the Breeders, as they attempt to expand the Xenovore species so it can conquer not just the lands of subjugated worlds, but also the seas. This scenario introduces a new Genotype designed for an underwater environment, the Sharks, as well as new equipment, a vehicle, and a war beast.

Presence on H'rotha: There are approximately twenty thousand Xenovores on the planet, spread across fifteen Hive Colonies. Only one of the Hive Colonies, by far the largest, is on the surface, and it acts as a receiving station for off-planet visitors and supply drops. The remaining Hive Colonies are underwater, attached to the bottoms of large icebergs or glacial shelves that jut over the ocean.

Of the Xenovore population: 3% (600) are Breeders, Artificers, and Long-Lived – a higher percentage than usual because of the experimenting that goes on; 24% (4800) are Common, a little over half of these at the above ground Hive Colony; and the remaining 73% (14,600) are Sharks (or whatever new aquatic Genotypes you introduce over the course of adventures on H'rotha), all at undersea colonies.

Xenovore

Six Xenovore Dreadnoughts are stationed at the planet – three at the surface Hive Colony, one at the undersea colony the PCs stumble upon, and the remaining at two other undersea colonies. (The Dreadnought destroyed by Task Force NF/24/7 was from off-planet and making the return trip to its port of origin.)

Undersea Hive Colony: The undersea Hive Colony is the largest new technology on H'rotha. Modified bio-nanites have grown these using the minerals either frozen in the ice (often the artifacts of the H'rothan's former society), or from soil that has accumulated at the bottom of the ice as it passes over the land; and those colonies attached to icebergs have engines, long tubes that use magnetic fields to push the water through them, that allow them to adjust (slightly) the course of the iceberg.

As a rule of thumb you can use the following numbers for an undersea colony (these don't match up perfectly to the planetary population and are just a quick reference you can use in a pinch): 1000 Sharks, 160 Common, 3 Breeders (1 ranking and 2 apprentice), 5 Long-Lived (1 Polemarch and 4 administrators), 12 Artificer (2 ranking and 10 support technicians).

Shark Genotype

The Shark Genotype is a recent breed of Xenovore, selectively bred for life underwater. The Genotype's upper half is similar in appearance to the Common Genotype, but the legs have grown together and become a dolphin-like tail covered in chitinous plates. (Still new to this new form, the Shark's skeleton has two separate legs joined by a complicated network of muscles and ligaments.) Just above the Xenovore's lower body is a vestigial tail and stinger, shrunken to a long thin tendril that ends in a bony tip. With both gills and lungs, the Shark's lungs are external and the organs hang to either side of the neck, protected under flexible plates. Though the Genotype can breathe out of water, movement is limited – he must pull himself forward with his arms. A Shark possesses Electrosense, just like a Sharkhemoth, and can transmit commands via bioelectric pulses. The caste markings for the Genotype are three horizontal mauve slashes on the left and right side of its waist.

SHARK GENOTYPE PACKAGE DEAL	
Ability	**Cost**
+3 STR	3
+3 DEX	9
+5 CON	10
+3 BODY	6
Xenovore Claws: HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR)	10
Xenovore Skin: Armor (3 PD/1 ED)	6
Xenovore Digestion: Life Support (Can Digest Any Type of Protein)	1
Gills and Lungs: Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Oxygen)	5
Deepwater Swimmer: Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	3
Fish-Like Tail: Swimming +8" (10" Total)	8
Fish-Like Tail: Running -4" (2" Total)	-8
Electrosense: Detect Bioelectrical Fields 11- (no Sense Group), Sense, Targeting, Transmit	19
Underwater Sight: Nightvision; Infrared Vision (Sight Group)	10
Total Cost of Package: 82	
EQUIPMENT	
Gauss Assault Rifle: Alien Wars (p. 163)	
Modified Exoskeleton Body Armor: Armor (10 PD/10 ED); Activation Roll 11- (doesn't cover tail); *Alien Wars* (p. 164).	

Heat Worms

Heat Worms are artificially-created creatures, each the size of a bloated maggot and blood-red in color. They are bio-engineered to burrow into ice and then enter a chrysalis stage, during which they raise the surface temperature of their skin and melt the ice. In chrysalis the Heat Worms live for a week – floating in the water, radiating heat, and keeping the area liquid – before expiring.

Carrying them in an organic sack, similar in size and appearance to a Human lung, Xenovores use Heat Worms to melt through the ice on H'rotha, and the stats below represent a sack carried by an individual. (The Heat Worms hive colonies use effect a much larger Radius, and ending the effect involves releasing predatory fish that eat the Heat Worms.) When thrown, the sack bursts open, scattering the Heat Worms across the ground and quickly causing the surrounding ice to melt (the 4" radius applies not just along the horizontal axis, but also down the vertical, so they effectively create a half-sphere of water).

Though hot enough to melt ice, the Heat Worms do *not* raise the ambient temperature of the entire area.

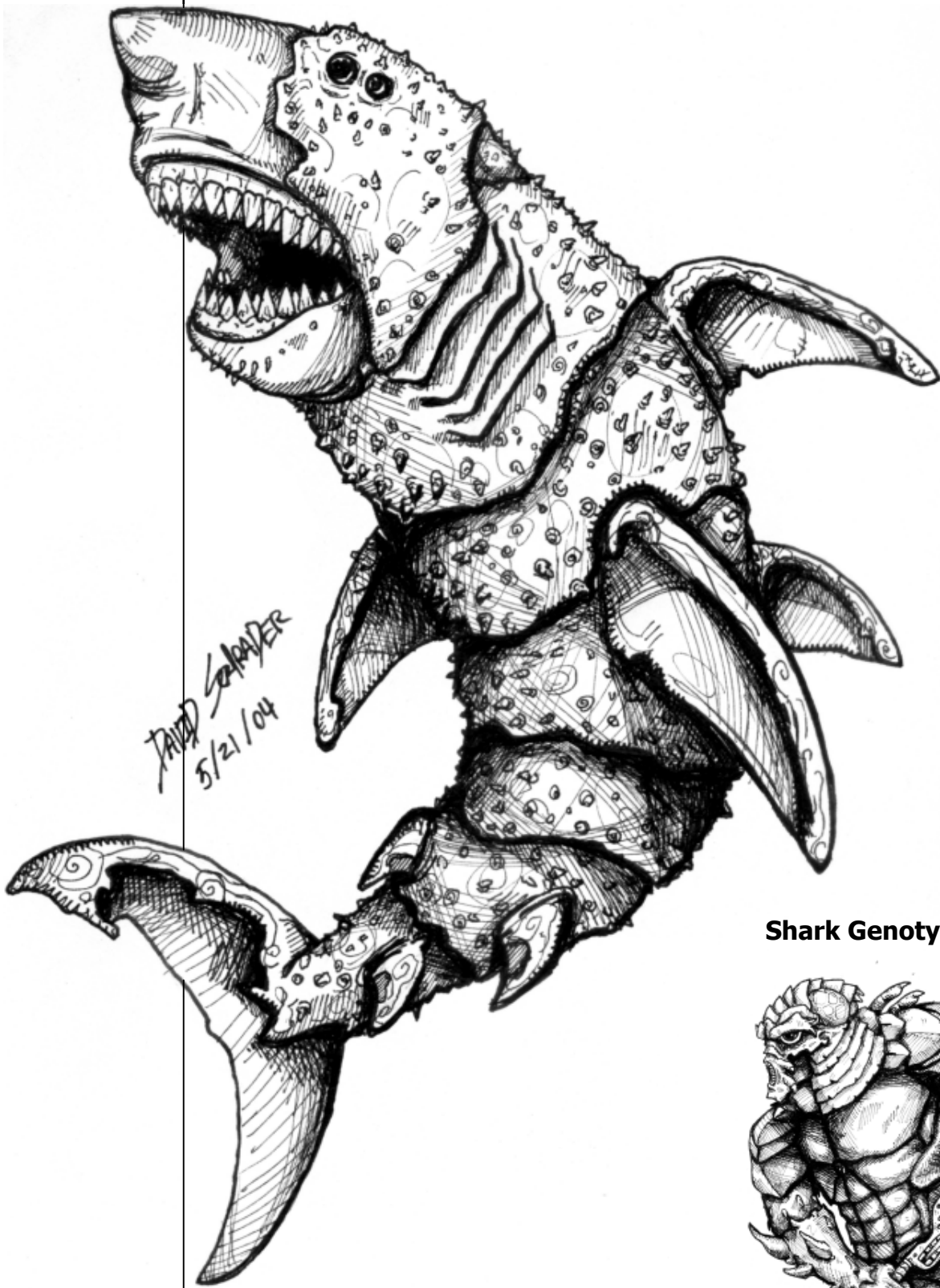| HEAT WORM |
|---|
| *Heat:* Change Environment 4" radius, change ice to water (15 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Week (-0). Total cost: 7 points. |

Heat Worm

Sharkhemoth

David Schrader
5/21/04

Shark Genotype

Sharkhemoth

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	6400 kg; 8d6 HTH [4]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
30	CON	40	15-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
15	PD	7		Total: 15 PD (3 rPD)
15	ED	9		Total: 15 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
16	REC	4		
70	END	5		
70	STUN	10		

Total Characteristics Cost: 154

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
  Swimming: 18"/36"

Cost	Powers	END
30	*Jaws:* HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
18	*Bony Exoskeleton:* HKA ½d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Inherent (+¼), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always On (-½), No STR Bonus (-½)	0
3	*Bony Exoskeleton:* Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
20	*Heavy:* Knockback Resistance -10"	0
16	*Underwater Movement:* Swimming +16" (18" Total)	2
-12	*Only Swims:* Running -6" (0" Total)	
6	*Shark's Senses:* +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	*Shark's Eyes:* Increased Arc of Perception (240°) for Sight Group	0
6	*Shark's Nose:* +3 PER with Smell/Taste Group	0
15	*Shark's Nose:* Targeting and Tracking for Normal Smell	0
17	*Electrosense:* Detect Bioelectrical Fields 11-, Sense, Targeting	0
35	*Lateral Line Sense:* Detect Physical Vibrations 11- (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Targeting	0
	Skills	
8	+4 OCV with Bite	
10	+2 DCV	
2	PS: Attack 11-	
2	PS: Guard 11-	
2	PS: Retrieve/Fetch 11-	
7	Stealth 14-	
3	Tactics 11-	
3	Teamwork 13-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 196

Total Cost: 350

75+ Disadvantages

35	Enraged: when Smells Blood (Berserk, Common, Go 11-, Recover 8-)
15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Enormous (up to 8m long; -4 DCV, +4 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Psychological Limitation: Voracious Appetite (Common, Strong)
20	Reputation: man-eater, 14- (Extreme)
10	Susceptibility: to not moving in water, takes 1d6 per Turn (Uncommon)
155	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Description: Xenovores use Sharkhemoths similar to the way they use Warhounds; however the Sharkhemoth is a much deadlier war beast with jaws strong enough to threaten many vehicles, let alone aquatic species. The Sharkhemoth is similar in appearance to a Terran great white shark – a perfect predator, xenobiologists have *not* been surprised at the shark's ubiquity throughout the galaxy – except it has two dorsal and three ventral fins, four eyes, and is covered with thick spiky plates of hard cartilage. While Xenovores often use other war beasts to bring down their prey alive for later consumption, the frenzy blood in the water causes in Sharkhemoths has proven impossible to breed out of the creatures, and the Sharkhemoth has so far been a failure in this traditional role for war beasts – the Xenovores can only use them to kill their enemies.

Squirm Mines

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
0	Size	0	½"x½"; 100 kg; -0" KB; -0 DCV
2	STR	-8	Lift 30 kg; 0d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	INT	0	PER Roll 11-
5	BODY	-10	
2	DEF	0	
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 2

Movement: Ground: 10"/10"
Swimming: 10"/10"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Powers	END
6	*Squirms Quickly:* Ground Movement +4" (10" Total); No Noncombat Movement (-¼)	0
6	*...Through Water Too:* Swimming +8" (10" Total); No Noncombat Movement (-¼)	0
16	*...Then It Blows Up:* RKA 4d6, Explosion (+½); No Range (-½), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	[1nr]
35	*Heat Sense:* Detect Heat Patterns/Traces 15- (No Sense Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc of Perception (360 degrees), Sense, Targeting Sense, Transmit	0
35	*Motion Sense:* Detect Movement 15- (No Sense Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc of Perception (360 degrees), Sense, Targeting Sense, Transmit	0
	Programs	
1	Locate Target	
1	Analyze Target	
1	Attack Target	
1	Guard Area	
1	Arm/Disarm/Detonate Upon Command	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 103

Total Vehicle Cost: 105

Val	Disadvantages
20	Vulnerability: 2x BODY from Fire/Heat Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 20

Total Cost: 85/5 = 17

Description: A Squirm Mine looks like two-foot-square, one-foot-high piece of putrid green gelatin with a thin membrane skirting its base and a mass of wriggling cilia on its top. Visible suspended at the gelatin's center, with the tendrils of a rudimentary nervous system running to its surface, is a spiny orb – its single explosive charge, the orb's hard casing shatters into small pieces of sharp shrapnel when it detonates.

Once activated, the Squirm Mine lies motionless until it senses an unusual heat signature combined with regular movement – usually a sure sign of a living being or enemy vehicle. Then it quickly undulates toward its target, and once it makes contact, it explodes. A Squirm Mine can discriminate between Xenovore personnel and other species, as well as the difference between Xenovore bio-engineered vehicles and other species' mechanical ones. A small device the Xenovores carry commands/programs the Squirm Mines – ovoid in shape with three studs, the device emits a rapid series of heat pulses to "program" the mine.

The Squirm Mine moves along land similar to a slug, secreting mucus and sliding along it; to swim, the membrane at its base undulates, pushing it through the water. The Squirm Mine's cilia serve as its sensory apparatus, acting as both motion and heat sensors; a miracle of Xenovore Breeder genetics, and UE forces have never determined a sure means of jamming the mine's senses. The gelatin body is vulnerable to heat and fire which cause it to shrivel up.

Squirm Mine

DAVID SCHRADER 5/20/04
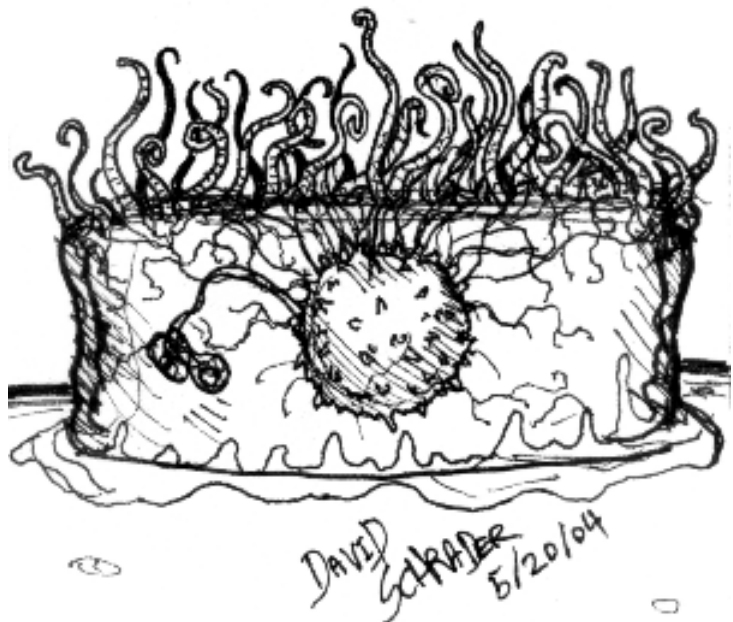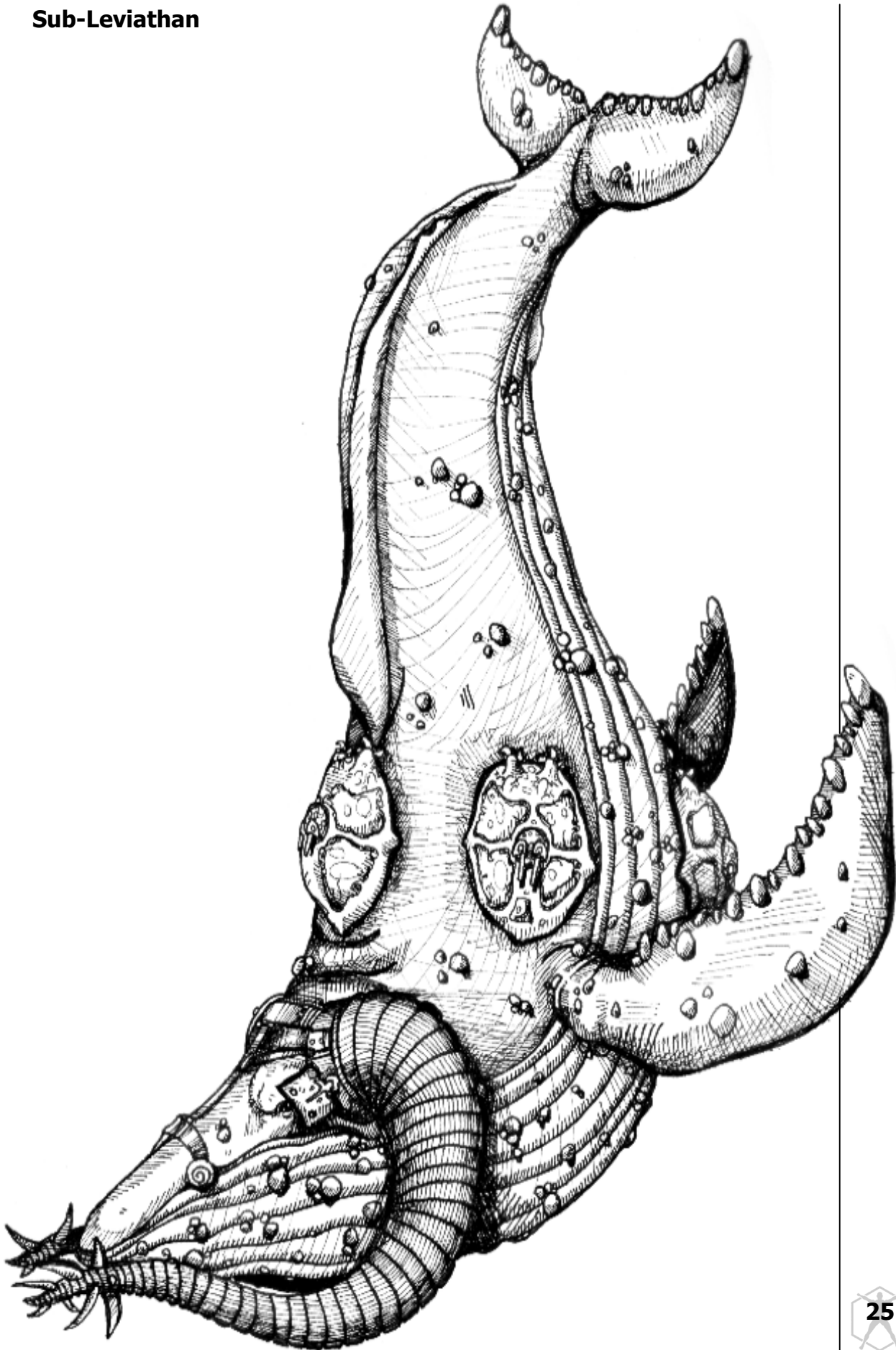
Sub-Leviathan

Sub-Leviathan

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
10	Size	50	10" x 5"; mass 100 tons; -10 KB; -6 DCV
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	6	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
30	BODY	10	
10	DEF	24	
3	SPD	8	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 98

Movement:	Ground:	0"/0"
	Leaping:	12"/24"
	Swimming:	17"/34"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Powers	END
15	*Strong Swimmer:* Swimming +15" (17" Total)	0
12	*Breach:* Leaping +12" (12" Total)	0
53	*Spiked Horns:* HKA 2½d6 (5d6 with STR), Area Of Effect (2" Radius; +1); Only With Move Throughs (-½)	0
30	*Thick Mutated Blubber:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
10	*Deep Water Swimmer:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Week; -0)	[1cc]
4	*Deep Water Swimmer:* Life Support (Safe Environments: Intense Cold, High Pressure)	0
15	*Echolocation:* Active Sonar	0
-12	*Aquatic Only:* Ground Movement -6" (0" Total)	0
	Perks	
140	*Crew Compartment (Dorsal):* Additional Vehicle (see below)	
10	*Crew Compartments (Port, Starboard, and Ventral):* 3 More Crew Compartments (Total of 4)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 277

Total Vehicle Cost: 375

Value Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Xenovore Vehicle (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
20	Physical Limitation: Needs to Eat to Remain Alive and Continue Operating (Frequently; Fully)

Total Disadvantage Points: 45

Total Cost: 330/5 = 66

Description: A Sub-Leviathan is a bio-engineered whale, similar in appearance and size to a Terran humpback whale, but with a pustulated rust-colored hide and long, misshapen horns that protrude from its head and curve down over its maw. Xenovore Artificers have hammered spikes of a titanium-alloy through these horns, creating a deadly battering ram useful for both undersea combat and for breaking through ice.

Just behind the Sub-Leviathan's forward fins are four shallow ovoid depressions, one dorsal, ventral, port, and starboard. These are where the Crew Compartments attach to the Sub-Leviathan's body, and at the center of each depression is a nerve ganglion that plugs into an attached Crew Compartment and allows the Xenovores inside to control the Sub-Leviathan. (Bred for ease of handling, with only limited mental facilities of its own, a Sub-Leviathan without an attached Crew Compartment drifts aimlessly feeding on plankton and the like, but does remain in the immediate area.)

The Crew Compartments are separate modules, each an irregular ovoid the same color as the whale's hide. It can hold four Xenovores comfortably and eight in tight quarters, and possesses limited movement abilities of its own. Propelled by twin propellers at the back, it can move through water slowly, allowing it to attach and detach to the whale or an underwater hive colony, as well as abandoning a killed Sub-Leviathan. It can "leap," booster rockets firing along its edge once it emerges from the water, allowing it to make a quick and effective amphibious assault. On top of the compartment is a turret-mounted Heavy Gauss Cannon. Each Crew Compartment has crude, newly-developed technology that replicates the Electrosense possessed by Sharks and the Sharkhemoths; it uses this to communicate (only primitively with simple commands) with Sharks.

In an aquatic battle, the Sub-Leviathan attempts to ram the target, while Xenovores in the Crew Compartments fire the Heavy Gauss Cannons. During a large-scale amphibious assault, the Sub-Leviathans breach, rising from 24 meters to 48 meters into the air. The Sub-Leviathan then corkscrews as it arcs over the water, and when a Crew Compartment rotates to the top, it fires its booster rockets and launches.

Sub-Leviathan Crew Compartment

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
5	Size	25	3.2" x 1.6"; mass 3.2 tons; -5 KB; -3 DCV
35	STR	0	Lift 3.2 tons; 7d6 HTH [0]
10	DEX	0	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
15	BODY	0	
10	DEF	24	
2	SPD	0	Phases: 6, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 49

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Leaping: 8"/8"
Swimming: 4"/4"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Powers	END
	Propulsion Systems	
2	*Thrusters:* Swimming +2" (4" Total); No Noncombat Movement (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Week; -0)	[1cc]
4	*Sea-To-Land Deployment Booster Jets:* Leaping +8" (8" Total); No Noncombat Movement (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
-12	*Aquatic Only:* Ground Movement -6" (0" Total)	0
	Tactical Systems	
45	*Heavy Gauss Cannon (Top Mounted):* RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (3 shots; +¼), 90 Charges (+¾); OIF (Bulky, -1), Real Weapon (-¼)	[90]
7	*Heavy Armor:* Hardened (+¼) for 10 DEF	0
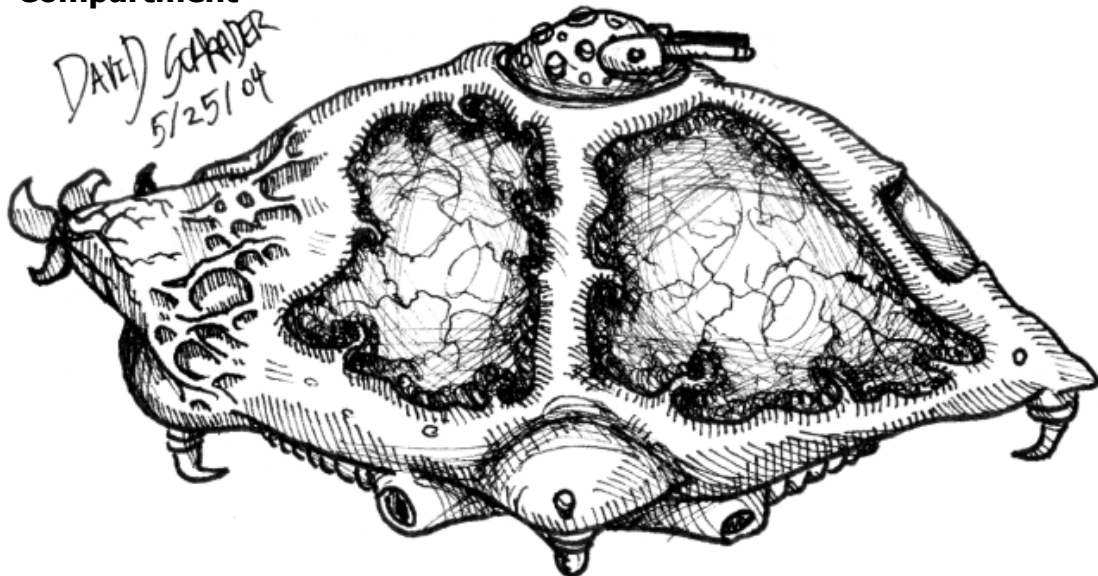
Cost	Powers	END
	Personnel Systems	
10	*Internal Oxygen Supply:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Week [*i.e.,* 672 Xenovore-hours]; -0)	[1cc]
9	*Shielded Hull & Climate Control:* Life Support (Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, High Pressure)	0
	Communication Systems	
7	*Scrambled Radio:* Radio Perception/Transmission, Concealed (-2 to Radio Group PER Rolls); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
11	*Active Sonar Arrays:* Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Telescopic (+8 versus Range Modifier); OIF (Bulky, -1), Affected as Sight Group as Well as Hearing Group (-½)	0
8	*Passive Sonar Arrays:* +4 PER with Hearing Group; OIF (Bulky, -1) **plus** Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF (Bulky, -1) **plus** Telescopic (+4 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
6	*Shielded Systems:* Radio Group Flash Defense (6 points)	0
19	*Electrosense:* Detect Bioelectrical Fields 11- (no Sense Group), Sense, Targeting, Transmit	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 116

Total Vehicle Cost: 165

Value Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Xenovore Vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 140/5 = 28

Sub-Leviathan Crew Compartment

UE ESTIMATES OF PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS

The CO provides the PCs' squad with Science and Sensor estimates of the locale around their drop – the measurements are, for the most part, correct. It's the actual physical features that are wrong (it's an iceberg, not an island; part of an ocean, not a sea; and so on).

The sea itself has a rough surface area of 370,000 square kilometers; it's approximately 1000 km long (north-south) and 400 km at its widest (east-west). Maximum depth, unknown; average depth, unknown.

Two waterways lead from the sea: one in the west, 4 km wide, with unknown destination; one in the north, .5 km wide, that ends at a second, smaller sea.

The island itself is roughly circular with a diameter of 20 km. The outpost is approximately 500 meters from the east coast (approximately 700 meters from the PCs' insertion point).

The Adventure

If Anything Can Go Wrong…

…it will. And if your players need evidence to prove the truth of this law, tell them to hold onto to their seats – pretty soon they'll be up to their necks in it!

After a briefing aboard the task force flagship, the *Fomalhaut,* the PCs receive their orders from their CO, Lieutenant Stan Kolowski.

A cargo pod will deploy them and their Kingfisher in a small inland sea (or perhaps a large lake); nearby the insertion point is an island where the Xenovore communication outpost is. Based on frequency and strength of radio transmissions, Science and Sensors estimate the communication outpost standard for the enemy, likely staffed with between ten and twenty Xenovores and a small pack (4 to 6) of War Hounds.

Immediately upon making planetfall, the PCs are to assemble with the five other Kingfishers, reconnoiter the immediate area, formulate and implement a plan of attack, seize the communication outpost, and using enemy resources, whether intelligence or sensors, identify any other threats in the area. They are to communicate their findings to either mission control aboard their transport or the UE Army regiment assaulting the Hive Colony, and then await further orders (which will either be prepare for surface-to-orbit pick-up or proceed to a secondary target).

They are also given a cursory briefing on the whole invasion plan. Five other platoons will drop at communication outposts, scattered across the planet. Two of these are Armor, three, Mechanized Infantry (one of these other Mech is made up of Kingfishers, like the PCs' own). The remainder of the PCs' regiment, the one billeted aboard the *Simplicissimus,* will be held in reserve. One full armor regiment, the one aboard the second troop transport the *Mutter Courage,* will drop in proximity to the sole Xenovore Hive Colony and lay siege upon it – optimistic estimates have the Hive Colony isolated within six hours and seized within two days.

Questions The PCs Might Have: The PCs might have some questions at this point; their CO, unhappy about the lack of solid intelligence, isn't in the mood for questions from the troops though, and his answers are terse… growing more terse after each subsequent question.

"Why on an island? Xenovores don't like water." Answer: "No intelligence – maybe natural defense against the natives."

"Why out in the middle of nowhere?" Answer: "Maintain planetwide communication net with relay station. Maybe cover blind spot in orbital surveillance."

"So is it a sea or a lake?" Answer: "No intelligence. Taste the water when we land and let me know."

"Thought we were an LRRP." Answer: "Secondary mission objective to seize enemy position where feasible. Admiral Tillery deems this feasible. Don't worry – there's enough medals for everybody, but the Admiral will get more."

Cargo Pod Set-Up: The modified pod used to drop the PCs holds the Kingfisher, and the PCs buckle up at their stations inside the Kingfisher. The cargo pod's sensor and systems are hooked into the Kingfisher's, so the pilot and co-pilot can monitor the descent as well as immediate environs. The pod's chemical rockets are automated (and overriding them is discussed below). Upon impact, the pod falls away, immediately deploying the Kingfisher, and SOP stipulates the first thing to do is dive, taking the Kingfisher below the water in case of enemy fire.

The PCs are the last to drop, and the six pods in their platoon are deployed in a scatter formation within a 100-meter-radius circular spread. The pods launch several seconds apart (distance increment of 30" [60 meters]), so there's a total distance of 180" between the first and last pod, and all pods will hit water within six seconds of the first.

Scene One: Planetfall SNAFU

The PCs cargo pod breaks cloud cover at 750" (1500 m), at the end of the first Phase 12, and that's about the only thing that goes right.

Passing through the cloud system makes for a bumpy ride, turbulence is brutal and electrical storms blind all sensors and cause interior lights to flicker. To make matters worse, as soon as they come out of the clouds, they catch the tail end of the first cargo pod's final transmission:

"*<bzzzt>*… I repeat we are over the island. Repeat over the isl— *<krsssshhh>*"

At which point the transmission suddenly terminates.

(For your information as GM: rockets launched from the "communication outpost" destroy the cargo pod. The PCs don't know about the rocket launchers yet – though players being players, they might have a good guess! – and the troops in the other cargo pods are frantic. If you need to nudge the PCs in a given direction during this scene, you can have the other platoons come over the radio with ideas for what to do now; otherwise just describe their panic.)

Planet H'rotha Seen from Space

OTHER OPTIONS

There are a few additional wrinkles either you can introduce to make things more difficult, or the PCs may cause through their actions.

Combat Piloting rolls are perfectly appropriate to control the cargo pod's fall. You can have failed rolls result in it drifting off course or the chemical rockets failing to fire (they are jury-rigged after all), and successful rolls might gain them a few additional inches of Gliding.

The stress of the fall might start blowing "circuits" in the cargo pod or the Kingfisher, and the other PCs need to make successful Mechanics and/or Electronics rolls to hold it together. (This gives the other players something to do.)

The PCs, especially if the players have a calculator, might figure out pretty quickly they aren't going to make it to the water, and try a few different things.

Option #1: Drop right on top of the communication outpost. The advantage is they'll probably take out a few Xenovores; disadvantages, the Xenovore make their pod the primary target for rockets and getting the Kingfisher to the water later on is a bit problematic.

30

Sit-Rep

The sections below organize the events and information you need to deal with the PCs' attempts to save their butts. An attempt has been made to organize the information in the order you likely need it, but of course, no battle plan survives contact with the enemy….

Initial Velocity: For the sake of simplicity terminal velocity on H'rotha is 30"/Segment, just like Earth (say the slightly higher gravity is negated by slightly thicker atmosphere).

The cargo pod has reached terminal velocity by the time it breaks through cloud cover, so they have 2 Turns and 1 Segment before they impact… unless they can override the control system for the chemical rockets (discussed below).

Where Are We?: The Kingfisher's Advanced Sensor Devices provide a topography map of the ground if a PC succeeds with a Systems Operation roll at a -6 penalty (+20 for the island's size, -32 for the Range Modifier [750" = -16, x2 for H'rotha's atmosphere], and +6 vs. Range Modifier for the Kingfisher's sensors).

- With success, the PC knows they are over the insertion point – right where they're supposed to be, so they haven't drifted off course – and if the PC hasn't already guessed, tell him the "island" itself has moved with a successful Deduction roll.

- With success by 2 or more, the PCs topography map is good enough to show they are 250" (½ km) from the nearest water.

- With success by 4 or more, at the very edge of the topography map, the PC detects a very large, very fast-moving object, emerging from the sea and rushing upwards. (This is one of the Xenovore Dreadnoughts launching to engage the starships in the task force – it ignores the cargo pods and disappears into the clouds after 5 Turns.)

- With success by 6 or more, the PC knows they are *directly* above the Xenovore communication outpost, and sensors show the enemy has deployed rocket launchers. If he hasn't already guessed, tell him the rocket launchers likely destroyed the first cargo pod with a successful Deduction roll.

- If the PC with Systems Operation doesn't gain all this information on his first roll, he can continue to try to resolve a better topographical map on his subsequent Phases. He gains bonuses to his roll since he's spending more time and the ground is

getting closer (and so is impact!): simply give him a bonus of +2, +4, +6, and so on; or else you can figure out the Range Modifiers.

- Even once the PC has gained all of the information described above, he can continue to make rolls to get a better picture of the Xenovore outpost. Provide him with a feature or two for each success as the pod descends. (You might want to nudge the players in this direction or ask for a Tactics roll. Once they hit ground, they need to move quickly, and having general idea of the outpost helps – that way they can spend less time creeping up on the place and reconnoitering.)

Overriding the Chemical Rockets: Unless they want to impact with ground, deploying their Kingfisher on terra firma (what passes for it on H'rotha, at least) in the middle of the enemy camp, someone on the boat had better start overriding the controls for the chemical rockets. Engineers don't like it when grunts take things into their own hands, so they haven't designed the chemical rockets for easy manual override. The task requires 1 Minute and a successful System Operations roll. Taking 1 Minute is a Bad Idea – the difficult decision here is to take 1 Turn (-3 penalty) or 1 Phase (-6 penalty).

Stopping Descent: With careful management of their chemical rockets, the PCs can move their pod away from the Xenovore outpost and close to the water. The following outline represents the best case scenario – *caveat:* your session might deviate from this. This also assumes you aren't using Segmented Movement (described on page 239 of *Hero System 5th Edition*) and the PCs use Noncombat Movement for both Flight and Gliding. (If necessary, ask for a Tactics roll. If successful, inform the PCs Noncombat is the way to go – the cargo pod's DCV is too low to make much difference.)

To make a long story short, they aren't going to make it to the water, but don't tell the players this – they'll likely figure it out for themselves after a few Phases, but until then keep the drama high and the outcome uncertain. And how close they come to the coast becomes very important later on in the scenario.

From the top: the action starts on the first Phase 12 with the cargo pod ending its 30" of movement with breaking through the clouds, then they receive the radio transmission about the island and the PCs don't have an opportunity to take any actions – except maybe a Presence Attack to rally the troops or the like, and a hurried Systems Operation roll to resolve the topographic map, both actions at your discretion – until the next Turn.

At this point, they are 750" above the ground.

A PC overrides the rockets on his action on Segment 3, 4, or at the very least, Segment 6 (and assuming someone Holds his Action to fire the rockets on the same Phase). By the first Phase the rockets fire, Segment 6, the cargo pod has dropped 180" and is now 570" above the ground. Descent velocity is now 20"/Segment. The rockets don't fire again for 6 Segments, so the cargo pod is 450" above the ground when they fire on Phase 12. Because they use their Noncombat Movement, velocity is now 0"/Segment. The pod has used 1 of 4 Turns worth of Charges.

Concerning movement along the vertical: the cargo pod can Glide as it halts its descent velocity, so assuming the PCs are trying to land in the water, it moves 10" on the first Phase, and 20" more on the second Phase, for a total of 30" – or 220" away from the coast.

To make this easy, assume the rockets, so long as they're firing, counter the effects of gravity. The PCs need to save 1 Charge for their landing (though there's no reason to remind them of this), so they have 2 Charges to increase their altitude and the distance they Glide – basically they move straight up 20", then glide 20" to the east, falling 20" and gaining a total of 0" of altitude. They can do this for 2 Turns (4 Phases), so at the end of those 2 Turns they are still 450" up, but now 140" away from the coast.

Then they start falling again.

It takes them 6 Segments to reach terminal velocity, at which point they've fallen another 90" and can glide 20", so 360" up and 120" away from the coast. It takes them another 12 Segments to reach ground zero, so they have 2 Phases for a total of another 40" of Gliding, placing them 80" away from the coast. One Turn of Flight (if they remembered to save that final Charge for impact!) gives them another Turn of Gliding (40"), and they land 40" away from the coast… in other words, they impact on dry land, the cargo pod's shell falling away and according to SOP the Kingfisher should now dive – sadly it can't move through ice.

But as you'll soon see this is exactly what the adventure calls for….

FALLING CHART

The below charts the progress of the PCs' cargo pod according to the text description.

Turn	Height Up	From Coast	Notes
0	750"	250"	
1	450"	220"	
2	450"	180"	
3	450"	140"	
4	180"	100"	
5	~0"	60"	Rockets fire on Segment 6, halting fall.
6	0"	40"	Cargo pod lands on Segment 6.

What About The Xenovores?: The PCs have more to worry about than just falling. The Xenovore communication outpost is defended with two Rocket Racks. For stats use the Rocket Racks from the Slug Tanks (*Alien Wars,* page 165). Luckily for the PCs, they were the last to drop and the other cargo pods are effectively running interference for them – but if you want to add some tension to this scene, have the Xenovores fire on them. First the rockets must destroy the Cargo Pod, then the Kingfisher (of course, without the pod's chemical rockets, the boat makes a hard landing).

…And the Rest of the Platoon?: The first two are destroyed by enemy fire. The fourth fails to override their chemical rockets, lands in a field of squirm mines, and is subsequently destroyed. The third and fifth land in the water, deploy, and are immediately engaged by enemy forces.

In The Water: Against all odds, the PCs somehow manage to make it to the water… if the players come up with a clever and plausible plan, allow them to succeed. You can still proceed with the adventure. Where you go from here, though, likely depends on whether they figure out there's a Hive Colony beneath the iceberg.

Run the combat between the three surviving Kingfishers (and destroy the other two at your discretion) and the enemy forces, and once the Sub-Leviathan is destroyed, go from there. The Xenovores won't retreat to the Hive Colony – they fight to the death – so unless the PCs go under the iceberg on their own, they might never realize it's there.

If they don't, they and any surviving squads should proceed with the mission and you can go onto Scene Three.

Option #2: Split the distance. The advantage is the Kingfisher's Heavy Gauss Cannons have less of Range Modifier when assaulting the outpost; disadvantage, the boat's still kind of far from the water. (If you don't want the PCs to pursue either of these courses of action, have the sergeant, now in command of the platoon since the Lieutenant was on the first Kingfisher to drop, come over the radio and order them to try and make it to the water.)

One last piece of advice: if at any point, the players look bored with all the inches down, inches up, gliding this way, gliding that way – simply cut to the chase and have them land 40" away from the coast.

Scene Two: Total Boondoggle

As they near the ground or as soon as they hit it, the PCs receive a transmission from mission control aboard their transport ship. The transmission is garbled, the picture shaky, and it ends abruptly, the staff officer cut off in mid-sentence – but the PCs get the gist of it.

The object they identified going up in Scene One was a Xenovore Dreadnought that engaged their transport ship and has now destroyed it.

(And for your knowledge as GM: the rest of the task force has also been engaged. Their fate is left in your hands and can provide motivation for later adventures.)

The PCs receive further transmissions from the Kingfishers that landed in the water, indicating that they are engaged with the enemy, which they refer alternately to a whale or a submarine. If the PCs ask for instructions, they are told to proceed with the mission and seize the enemy outpost… it will take a little bit of skirmishing with the Sub-Leviathan before the NPC Kingfishers identify the underwater Hive Colony.

For the remainder of the scenario, the two Kingfishers engage the Sub-Leviathan currently patrolling the iceberg's perimeter, as well as a horde of Sharks and Sharkhemoths. They make intermittent radio contact with the PCs and run interference for their land-based actions – mainly preventing the Sub-Leviathan from breaching – but they are ultimately destroyed.

Map 1: Island Overview
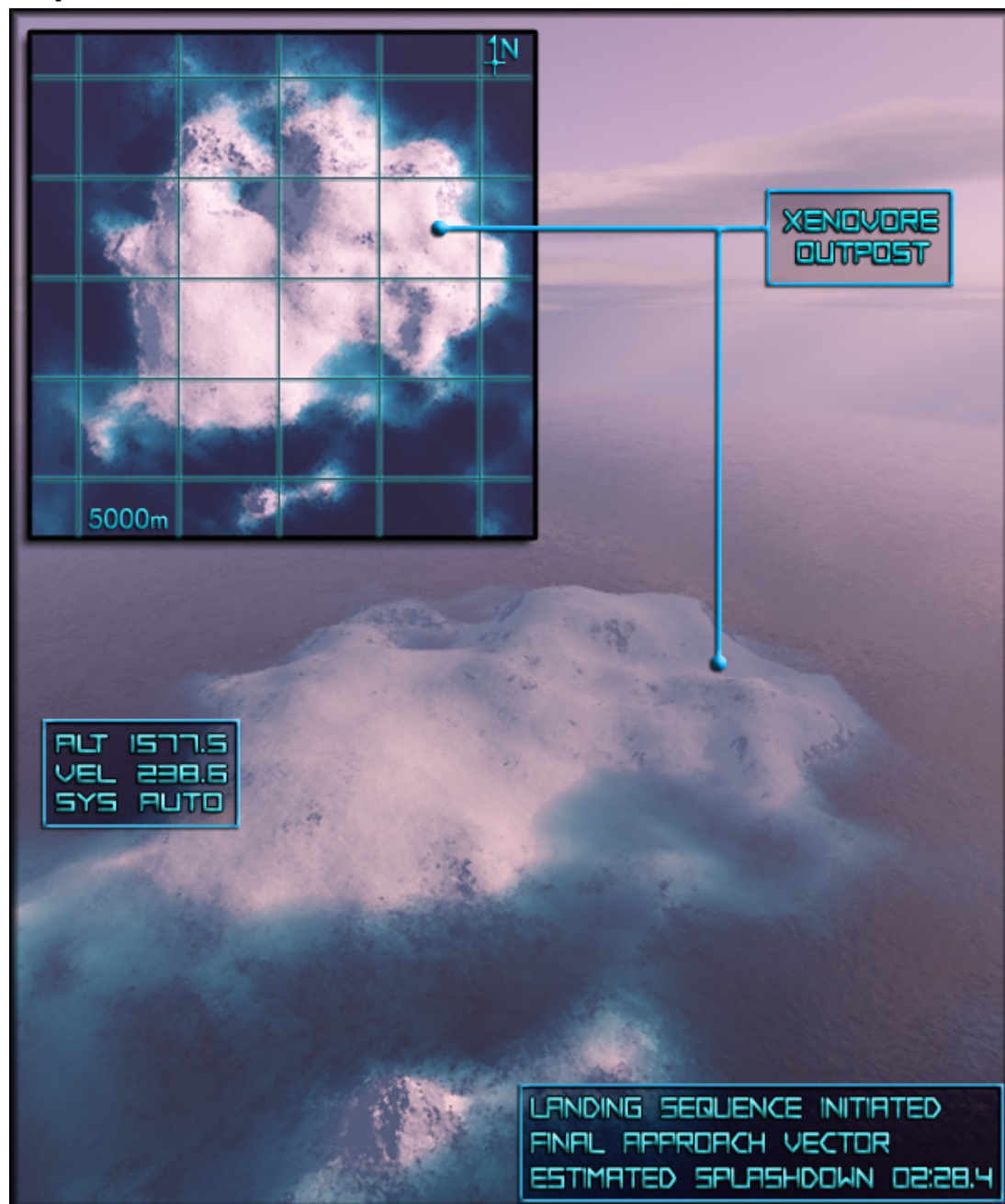
Scene Three: Xenovore Outpost

The communication outpost is 250" (500 m) west of the coast, and 210" west of the PCs (if they land the cargo pod as described above). Inside are 16 Xenovores: 10 Common and 6 Sharks. The fenced in area for the outpost is in the shape of a sideways figure-8, 20" long and 12" wide at its widest, 6" at its narrowest. In the west part of the figure-8 is the communication center; in the east part the stockyard, military nickname for food species internment camp, where the Xenovores currently hold ten captured H'rothans – an easy-access snack for those on duty at the outpost.

It's currently daytime and weather conditions are snow flurries, so visibility is reduced and both sides suffer -4 penalty to PER Rolls.

Rocket Racks: The rocket racks emerge from atop the communication outpost, and each Xenovore rocket rack has 12 missiles remaining. PCs on foot don't show up on Xenovore sensors, and the enemy doesn't fire on the Kingfisher (which does show up on sensors), because it's obviously not going anywhere. However if the PCs fire on the outpost with the Kingfisher's Gauss cannons, the Xenovores return fire with the rocket racks. If the perimeter guards spot the PCs, they call in coordinates and then the rockets fire on the PCs' position (apply a -4 penalty to the Xenovore's OCV). The rocket racks are DEX 8, SPD 3, OCV 3.

Minefield: The first obstacle is a field of squirm mines immediately outside the perimeter fence. There are thirty-five squirm mines patrolling a 10" wide path around the fence. Programmed to stay near the fence, they don't wander from this path, so they only attack a PC who steps into the minefield.

In the east part, half in the minefield, is the burning wreckage of one of the cargo pods. There are no survivors – the squirm mines kept coming until all movement ceased. The minefield wasn't intended for vehicles – it was meant for anti-personnel purposes – so the crashed cargo pod took out more squirm mines (fifteen of them to be exact) than what the Xenovores would have liked. Now the minefield is sorely "understaffed."

Though they won't come farther out than 10" away from the fence, the squirm mines follow any movement immediately along the perimeter, so one way past the minefield is to blow a hole in the fence, then one or two PCs move along the edge of the minefield, gathering squirm mines as they go and clearing a path to the hole in the fence. Then the other PCs run through, but they had better move quick! Another way: the burning wreckage extends 6" into the minefield, so the PCs can climb along it – squirm mines don't climb very well – blow a hole in the fence and jump through. Finally, a more straightforward way is to shoot the living daylights out of the squirm mines.

Xenovore Outpost

KINGFISHER *KER-BLOOEY*

If the PCs get their Kingfisher blown to smithereens, here are two things you can do to keep the adventure on track. First, one of the Kingfishers shot down by enemy fire wasn't destroyed. Instead the cargo pod was destroyed, the Kingfisher hit the ground, and though the crew died because of the impact, the boat itself only took minor BODY damage and is still seaworthy. Second, one of the Kingfishers that lands in the water survives and picks up the PCs on the coast after they neutralize the communication outpost. (The problem with this second one is you now have six or so NPCs to worry about.)

Of course, all of this assumes the PCs spot the minefield (the burning wreckage of a Kingfisher is a good clue though), and there are some Xenovores on patrol that might have something to say about both these plans.

Perimeter Fence: Grown with bio-nanites, the perimeter fence looks like thick, dark brown strands of cobweb stretched between slender spikes of flaking material, similar in texture and appearance to plaster of Paris. 2" (13 ft.) high, the perimeter fence is DEF 6, BODY 2, and electrified with EB 4d6, NND (defense is being grounded or insulated). The gate in the fence is on the north side, at the center of the figure-8.

Patrolling behind the fence are eight Xenovores with laser rifles (*Alien Wars,* page 163) and wearing exoskeleton body armor (*Alien Wars,* page 164). In teams of two, they circle the fence counter-clockwise. They are, for obvious reasons, on full alert. The Xenovores can fire through the fence, placing the barrels of their rifles in the open spaces. They receive half Concealment from the fence (the attacker suffers -2 OCV, see 5E page 249).

The Moat: A 2" wide moat surrounds the stockyard where the H'rothans are imprisoned. The moat is 8" deep, and leaves a 2" walkway just inside the fence in the eastern part of the figure-8. A 1" wide, 2.5" long metal plank stands to west of the moat, across the entrance from the gate in the fence around the stockyard.

Circling around the moat, submerged in the water, are 6 Shark Xenovores. These Xenovores do not reveal themselves unless the PCs come through the perimeter fence, at which point they emerge and open fire (maybe gaining a Surprise Bonus).

Considering the PCs' current predicament, the most interesting feature of the moat is the Heat Worms keeping the water liquid. With a successful PER Roll, a PC notices the blood-red maggots floating in the water. Determining they're warm is a matter of touching them (or you can allow a Deduction roll to identify their purpose).

At the bottom of the moat, on its north side, is a single tunnel (1" diameter) that winds its way through the iceberg and leads into the Hive Colony. If things go badly for the Xenovores topside, one Shark departs to inform his superiors of the situation.

The Stockyard: Just inside the moat is a second fence (same stats and appearance as the perimeter fence described above), and just beyond that are ten H'rothans, the last remaining members of their tribe. The H'rothans have gathered at the east-side of the fence, studying the burning wreckage. They don't suffer the same penalties as the Humans and Xenovores

due to the snow flurries, and are more likely to spot the PCs. If they do, they silently point down at the moat, attempting to sign that there are Sharks hidden in the water.

Unless the PCs provoke them or otherwise prove threatening, the H'rothans ally with their potential rescuers. If the PCs breach the fence surrounding them, the H'rothans attack whatever Xenovores they can get their hands on – likely reaching down in the water and grabbing a Shark. In the group are three women and seven men – their children were the first the Xenovores ate. Their leader is an elder named Brak'truan and he speaks for the group (although language is a problem).

A circular area, the stockyard has a diameter of 4".

Communication Center: In the western part of the figure-8 is the communication center, five spherical rooms radiating from a central, larger sphere – all of it made from bio-nanite grown walls that make it look like an overgrown wasp's nest, mottled gray, green, and brown. The place has a rough diameter of 10". The entrance – it looks somewhat like a Human epiglottis, a flap of fleshy material that covers an irregular circular opening – stands in the east, facing the stockyard. The walls of the communication center are DEF 6, BODY 8. The entrance is DEF 4, BODY 4.

One of the rooms, the east-most, is the entrance area; two of the rooms, those on the north side, are for storage; one, the south-most, is crammed with bunks for Xenovores not on duty; one, the west-most, is the control area for communications and the rocket racks; and in the center room is an elevator – a square platform, 3" to a side, that leads down through 50" of ice to the Hive Colony.

There are two Xenovores stationed inside the communication center. Both have laser rifles, but neither wears body armor. Once the Xenovores on guard spot PCs – at the very latest, once the PCs breach the perimeter fence – the Xenovores summon reinforcements and send the elevator down to the Hive Colony. A round trip takes 2 Minutes, so the PCs have 10 Turns to destroy the elevator before 9 more Common Xenovores arrive topside. Doing 6 BODY to the elevator controls renders them inoperable; it has DEF 4.

The storage rooms hold miscellaneous equipment typical to Xenovores – extra weapons, bio-nanite containers with arcane purposes, electronics, the H'rothans' equipment… and six sacks of Heat Worms, used to keep the moat from freezing over. If the PCs landed their cargo pod 40" from the water, they have one sack to experiment with, and four sacks to melt the ice and form a sort of canal (4" is plenty deep for the Kingfisher) to the water.

Map 2: Xenovore Outpost

XENOVORE OUTPOST

MINEFIELD PERIMETER

WRECKAGE

FENCE

MOAT

STOCKADE

ENTRANCE

BARRACKS

STORAGE

CONTROL AREA

ELEVATOR

N
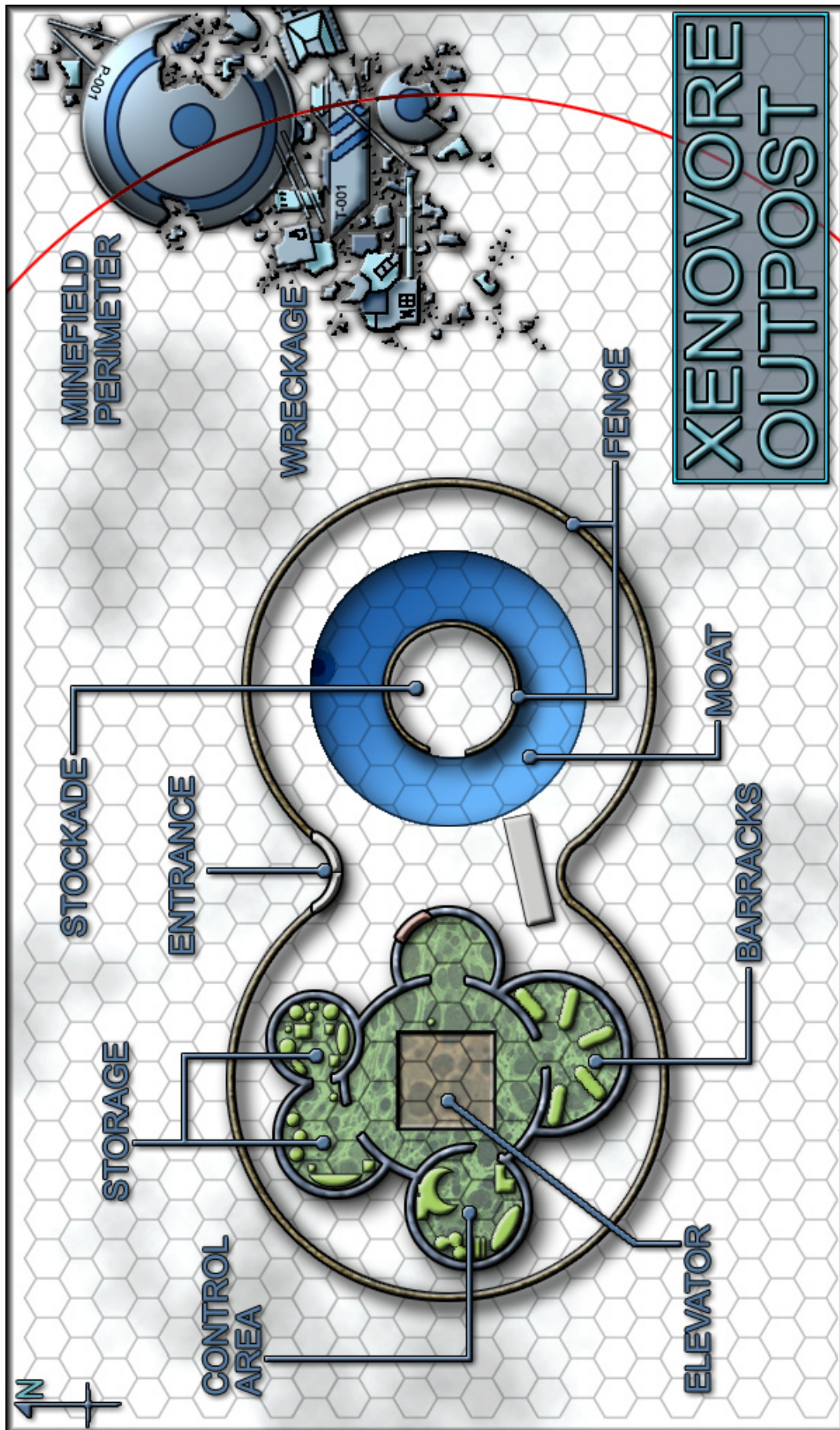
**Map 3: Xenovore Outpost
(Cutaway Diagram)**

XENOVORE
OUTPOST

XENOVORE
HIVE COLONY
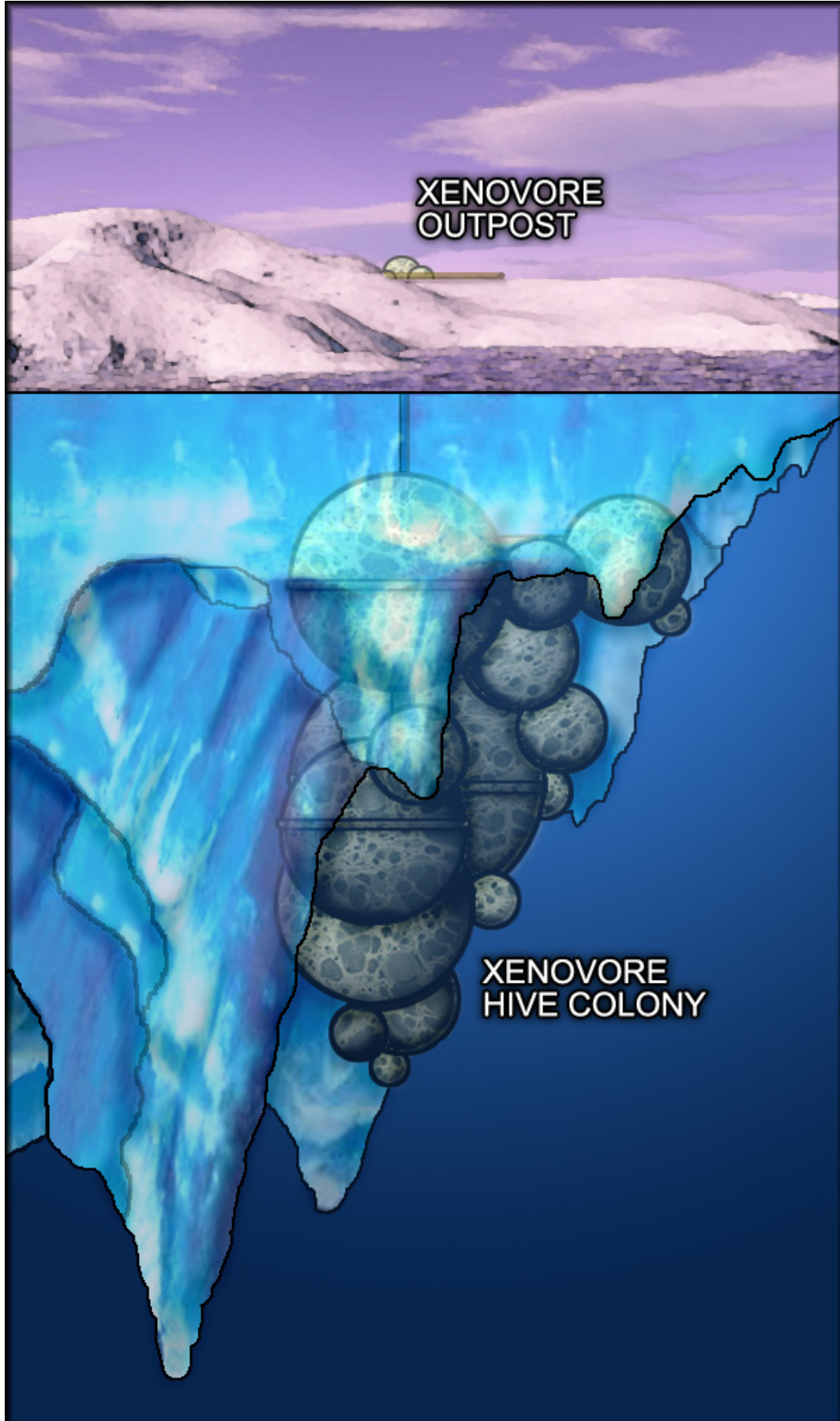
Scene Four: Shakedown Cruise

At this point, the PCs' mission has changed from search and destroy to evacuation, and they had better get moving if they want to take advantage of their fellow soldiers' sacrifice.

When the PCs return to their boat, the comm console is blinking furiously with red emergency lights, indicating urgent messages are waiting. Both are from the two Kingfishers in the water, and both are the final transmissions from each.

Neither message provides concrete description of enemy forces: whales, submarines, sharks, and "mer-Xenovores" are all mentioned; and the last transmission was just seconds ago. Also mentioned is the presence of an underwater Hive Colony. This should confirm the PCs' suspicions and let them know they need to get the heck out of dodge.

LAUNCHING THE BOAT

Getting To The Water: Ideally, the PCs landed within 40" of the coast, grabbed the sacks of Heat Worms from the outpost, and now use those to get their boat in the water. If they landed further than 48" from the coast or didn't get the Heat Worms at all, Plan B is to harness themselves and the helpful H'rothans to the boat and drag it to the coast (talk about Task Force No Fun 24/7). It takes 2 Turns to get the tug lines set-up (get them out of the boat, tie the knots, get everyone in position, and so on) and assuming there are 6 PCs and 10 H'rothans (or thereabouts), they can drag the boat along the snow and ice at the Combat Movement of the slowest one pulling.

The Xenovores: As the PCs approach the coast, be sure to describe the dead Sharks and Sharkhemoths either floating lifeless in the water or washed up on shore – the two NPC Kingfishers went down fighting.

At some point, the Xenovores on the Sub-Leviathan deploy. In a perfect world, this happens at a dramatic moment like: right as the PCs reach the coast, they witness the Sub-Leviathan breach, rising twenty or thirty meters into the air, and then see the Crew Compartment launch – just in time to take themselves out of the fight, as the Kingfisher slips into the water and makes a quick getaway.

If the PCs wind up dragging the Kingfisher all the way to the water, however, you should have this happen before they reach the coast and let the chips fall where they may….

Evacuating The H'rothans: *Alien Wars* is a military science fiction setting – the sort of setting where not every scenario has a happy ending. The Kingfisher takes a crew of six, and there is room for twelve *humans* in tight quarters. The best the PCs can hope for is to get four H'rothans below decks, meaning if more than four survived the attack on the outpost, then there are some hard decisions to make.

The PCs can attempt to escape the Xenovores without submerging; this allows the H'rothans to ride on the fore and aft decks. This also means the Kingfisher can't bring its Gauss cannons into play against underwater enemies – it's going to have to rely on torpedoes – and that might not be enough.

The PCs can cram everyone below decks, but you should apply penalties to everything they try to do, from negatives to Combat Piloting and System Operations rolls (-1 for each H'rothan after the first four), to extra time to reload Gauss cannons and torpedoes (+1 Time Increment for every two H'rothans after the first four).

The PCs might come up with other plans – perhaps more cinematic things like give the H'rothans life support masks and tell them to hang on for dear life – and you should adjudicate these actions in light of your campaign's tone.

The H'rothans quickly understand the situation, and those left behind don't protest. Content at least some of them will survive, they simply make their way back to the outpost and get ready for a last stand.

ONCE IN THE WATER

Once in the water, you need decide how many enemies are waiting for the PCs – whatever the number, it should be overwhelming. The goal here is to escape, not eliminate the Xenovores, and so long as the PCs have that goal, escape shouldn't prove a problem. The Kingfisher, once it accelerates to its Noncombat Movement, quickly outpaces the Xenovore forces.

There's one Sub-Leviathan. It's taken heavy damage and currently has 6 BODY – should be easy pickings for the PCs.

There are as many Shark Xenovores and Sharkhemoths as you deem appropriate – forty Sharks and five Sharkhemoths is probably enough to discourage the PCs from spending too much time skirmishing.

When this whole thing began, the Xenovores at the Hive Colony recalled the other four Sub-Leviathans, with their accompanying Sharks and Sharkhemoths, which were on patrol or maneuvers to each of the cardinal directions. Whichever direction the PCs choose to go in, they encounter one of the Sub-Leviathans, even if only at the edge of their sensors.

Conclusion

The good news: the PCs have rescued innocent H'rothans from the maw (literally) of death; they've crippled the Hive Colony's communications, so it can't recall the Dreadnought and dispatch it in pursuit of the Human invaders; and they've survived this first brush with hostile forces on H'rotha. Not to mention, if they ever get off the ice planet alive, they've gathered valuable data for the Terran Intelligence Command.

The bad news: the PCs, the lone survivors of their platoon, are now cut off from their task force without any knowledge of what's going on elsewhere on the world. There's no one to arrange for planetside pick-up… no one to supply drop them with more ammunition. There isn't even anyone to give them further orders!

In truth, they can't be certain their task force still exists. The PCs identified one Dreadnought firsthand… what if there were others?

Though all of that makes bad news for the PCs, it's good news for you, because this is an excellent start for an *Alien Wars* campaign….

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES….

The next adventure likely involves the H'rothans, who will want the PCs to patrol the coast, searching for a tribe that will take them in. For ideas where to go after that, here are some plot seeds.

The Lost Regiment: Half-way across the planet, north-by-northwest of the PCs' current position, there's supposed to be an Armor regiment laying siege to a surface Hive Colony. The PCs were ordered to get in touch, but communications have proven impossible. Then the PCs spot a lone figure, far too small for a H'rothan, standing on the coast and waving them in. He claims to be a survivor from that regiment, broken when the Dreadnoughts descended over the battlefield, and it has been fighting a running battle ever since. He offers to lead the PCs to the regiment's main force and the CO, Colonel Gregori Narkova. But is he telling the truth? Could he be a deserter? Or could he be a spy, a cowardly man who has sold out Humankind. Xenovores don't usually employ spies, but nothing else has been what it seems on H'rotha….

A Meeting of H'rothan Elders: The H'rothans prove vital to the PCs' survival, but despite the native species frequent help and generosity, they have refused to take up arms against the Xenovores, only fighting the ravagers when they happen to encounter them. But recently the PCs have heard a rumor that the H'rothan elders are meeting to discuss the matter. Will this debate cause a schism in the H'rothans? They cannot make war on the Xenovores without abandoning their taboos about technology… but is short-term peace worth the possible long-term consequences? And the PCs haven't been invited to the meeting, but will they go anyway, their cause too important to respect tradition and the rules of courtesy? If so, how will they convince a H'rothan to guide them to the meeting place? And will the PCs showing up uninvited help their cause… or hurt it?

The Rogue Platoon: As the PCs drop anchor off the coast, preparing to do some trading with a friendly tribe of H'rothans, they see the tribe's chief approaching. Behind him the rest of the tribe is gathered – Gauss rifles aimed at them! The H'rothans have found the remains of a neighboring tribe, all its members slaughtered, and among the dead, they've found Human bodies. The uniforms indicate they belong to the regiment dispatched to seize the surface Hive Colony, and judging from the tracks, it's a platoon of Mechanized Infantry. All the evidence points to the Humans as the killers, and after awhile, not even the PCs can deny the truth. Will the PCs search out the rogue platoon and bring them back to H'rothan justice? Will they take justice into their own hands? Will they forsake interspecies brotherhood and side with their fellow Humans, who might claim to have a way off the planet… or who might even claim to be acting under orders?

An Escape Pod: As the PCs travel H'rotha's waterways and seas, their sensors pick up a distress beacon – a starship escape pod has crashed nearby. Military protocol dictates the PCs respond, and any survivors might have information vital to their survival – in fact, this might be the PCs' first contact with other survivors of Task Force NF/24/7 since the botched planetfall. But it could also be a trap. Worse yet, the PCs must leave the cozy confines of their Kingfisher – and its four Gauss cannons – to follow the beacon and retrieve any survivors.

An aside: this is an excellent plot seed to use if it's time to introduce new characters to the group – whether because there's a new player in your group, or attrition among existing characters – just make sure to spring the Xenovore ambush *after* the PCs meet with the survivor(s).

UE Vehicles

Two new UE vehicles play a part in this scenario, and the character sheets for both are below:

CARGO POD

Description: A black spheroid large enough to contain a main battle tank, the Cargo Pod is used to make orbit-to-surface supply and ordnance drops. The Homing Beacon allows troops on the ground to locate the pod; its signal frequency is changed once every four to six weeks in an attempt to prevent Xenovores from growing too familiar with the signal. During full-scale offensives, Cargo Pods are also used to transport troops. For that purpose, the pod is fitted with 18 hibernation bunks, used to put soldiers into cold sleep and protect them from G-forces during re-entry, and the Homing Beacon is removed to decrease the chances of enemy detection. Other configurations for making planetfall exist throughout the Xenovore War, including the one used in this scenario and described in Scene One.

The Cargo Pod has very limited movement abilities; its Chemical Rockets are primarily intended to slow its descent, so cargo isn't damaged upon impact with the ground. The Chemical Rockets are also capable of adjusting its descent – this is represented with the Gliding Power. In short, the Cargo Pod can move up or down using its 10" of Flight; it can move along the horizontal axis using its 10" of Gliding.

If for some reason the Chemical Rockets fail to fire, a force-absorbing gel, similar to that used in G-force dampening chambers, fills the space between exterior shell and the interior space where cargo is kept. However this only works against impact with the ground – not projectiles or explosions, and once enemy fire breaches the exterior shell, the gel falls away exposing the cargo.

CARGO POD

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
8	Size	40	6.4" x 3.2"; mass 25 tons; -8 KB; -5 DCV
50	STR	0	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH [0]
8	DEX	-6	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
18	BODY	0	
10	DEF	24	
2	SPD	2	Phases: 6, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 60

Movement:	Ground:	0"/0"
	Gliding:	10"/20"
	Flight:	10"/20"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Powers	END
10	*Chemical Rockets:* Flight 10"; Only Along Vertical Axis (-1), 4 Fuel Charges (easily obtainable fuel; 1 Turn each; -0)	[4cc]
6	*Chemical Rockets:* Gliding 10", 1 Fuel Charge (easily obtainable fuel; 1 Minute; -¾)	[1cc]
-12	*Only Flies:* Ground Movement -6" (0" Total)	0
-2	*Only Flies:* Swimming -2" (0" Total)	0
14	*Homing Beacon:* Radio Group Images, +8 to PER Rolls, 1" radius, MegaScale (1" = 10 kilometers; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (Bulky, -1½), No Range (-½), Set Effect (-1)	0
15	*Force-Absorbing Impact Gel:* +20 DEF; Only to Absorb Force of Impact (-1)	0
7	*Armor Plating:* Hardened for 10 DEF	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 40
Total Vehicle Cost: 100
Value Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Human Military Vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction)

Total Disadvantage Points: 25
Total Cost: 75/5 = 15

Cargo Pod

DAVID SCHRADER
5/25/04

LM-665 "KINGFISHER" SUBMERSIBLE PATROL BOAT

Description: The LM-665 "Kingfisher" is used for patrolling inland waterways and lakes, and sometimes coastal regions. A submersible, the Kingfisher can stay underwater for up to one month with its full crew complement of six. Two guns on pivot mounts are located on the fore and aft decks, respectively. The G-456 Heavy Gauss Cannons have a limited arc of fire (180°) due to the conning tower lying between the two decks. Gunners can operate the guns from below decks, and the guns function in an aquatic environment. Each Kingfisher also has six mini-torpedoes, intended for use against Xenovore aquatic war beasts. You can find another illustration of the Kingfisher on page 180 of *Alien Wars*.

On-Board Supplies: On-board supplies for the Kingfisher depend on mission parameters; the boat assigned to the PCs has the following (this is in addition to standard issue for soldiers which the PCs are assumed to have at the start of the adventure):

- 12 more torpedoes. Loading a full complement of 6 torpedoes requires two crew members, one assigned to each launch tube, 1 Minute (5 Turns).
- 2400 rounds of G-456 ammunition. Reloading a cannon requires one crew member, 1 Turn, and the crewman can perform the operation without leaving the boat.
- 1 Month of rations for six [*i.e.* 180 man-days].

Battle Stations: SOP assume a crew of six: one pilot, one co-pilot for sensors, navigation, and torpedoes, and one crew member assigned to each G-456.

Kingfisher

DAVID SCHRADER
5/26/04
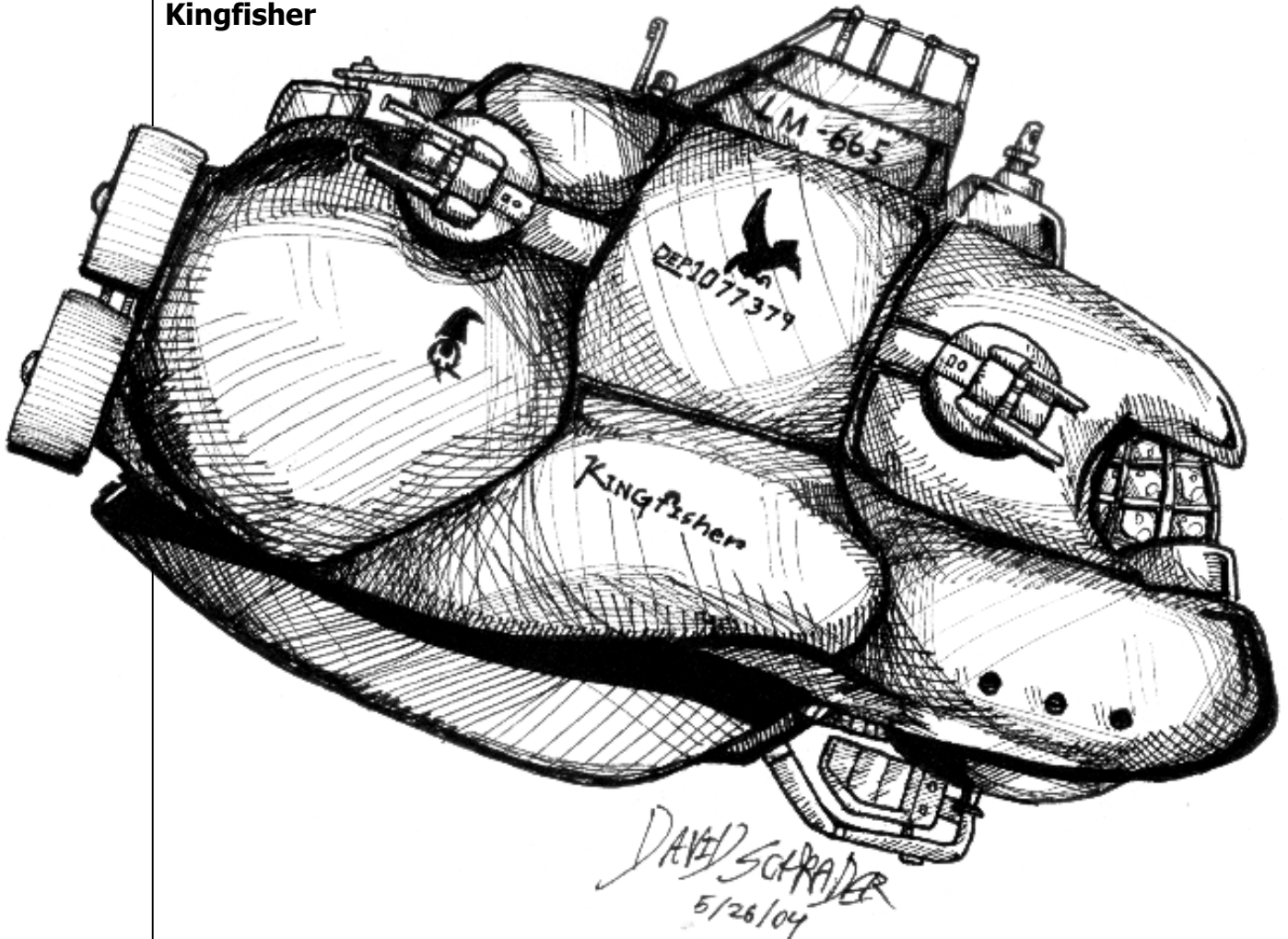
LM-665 "KINGFISHER" SUBMERSIBLE PATROL BOAT

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
6	Size	30	4" x 2"; -6" KB; -4 DCV
50	STR	10	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
16	BODY	0	
12	DEF	30	Does Not Cover Fore And Aft Decks (-0)
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristics Cost: 90

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Swimming: 15"/60"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Powers	END
	Propulsion Systems	
12	*Propeller-Driven Military Vessel:* Swimming +13" (15" Total), 4x Noncombat; 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Month; -0), Limited Maneuverability (-½)	[1cc]
-12	*Water Vehicle:* Ground Movement -6" (0" Total)	0
	Tactical Systems	
60	*G-456 AP Heavy Gauss Cannon:* RKA 3½d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (3 shots; +¼), 150 Charges (+1); OIF (Bulky, -1), Limited Arc of Fire (180°; -¼), Real Weapon (-¼)	[150]
10	*G-456 AP Heavy Gauss Cannon:* 3 more G-456s (total of four)	[150]
46	*S-50 "Shark-Killer" Mini-Torpedoes:* RKA 5d6, Armor Piercing (+1), Indirect (attack originates at same point every time, but can strike target from any angle; +½), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF (Bulky, -1), Extra Time (travels at the rate of 20" per Segment, taking a minimum of one Extra Segment to reach its target; -½), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
18	*Heavy Armor:* Hardened (x2; +½) for 12 DEF	0

Cost	Powers	END
	Operations Systems	
9	*Scrambled Radio:* Radio Perception/ Transmission, Concealed (-6 to Radio Group PER Rolls); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
21	*Advanced Sensor Devices:* Detect Physical Objects (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Range, Targeting Sense, Telescopic (+6 versus Range Modifier); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
11	*Secondary Active Sonar Arrays:* Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Telescopic (+8 versus Range Modifier); OIF (Bulky, -1), Affected as Sight Group as Well as Hearing Group (-½)	0
8	*Secondary Passive Sonar Arrays:* +4 PER with Hearing Group; OIF (Bulky, -1) **plus** Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF (Bulky, -1) **plus** Telescopic (+4 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
15	*Shielded Systems:* Radio Group Flash Defense (15 points)	0
5	*Shielded Systems:* Power Defense (10 points); Only for Operations Systems (-1)	0
	Personnel Systems	
9	*Life Support:* Life Support (Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, High Pressure)	0
10	*Sealed Environment:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Month [*i.e.* 180 man-days]; -0)	[1cc]

Total Abilities & Equipment: 222

Total Vehicle Cost: 312

Value Disadvantages

25   Distinctive Features: Human Military Vehicle (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction)

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 287/5 = 57

Leftover Hero by Jason Walters

Migdalar Outpost

Heads: for better or worse we all have them. Well, almost all of us. The Migdalar (see *Monsters, Minions, and Marauders*, page 67) are an unspeakably evil race of headless psychics who live far, far underground in labyrinthine cities filled with slaves who have been rendered mindless by the Migdalar's awesome psionic powers. A majority of these slaves are adventurers who have had the misfortune of encountering a member of this horrifying species in a deep dungeon, thus ending their vagabond careers a bit earlier than planned. The Migdalar's favorite foods are the protein rich brains of intelligent humanoids, especially elves, from which they create any number of impressively complex dishes such as mousses, quiches, and fondues. Needless to say, there aren't a lot of elven slaves to be found in a Migdalar municipality.

Yet there is much more to this sinister race than psionics, servitude, and sustenance. For even in the cruelest of societies there occasionally arise some outstandingly vile specimens who are deemed to be socially unacceptable by even the standards of their exceedingly fiendish peers. Additionally, in a powerful villainous society like the Migdalar's, being extraordinarily evil generally also means being extraordinarily formidable. The question of how to fairly yet firmly deal with superpowered malcontents is a difficult one for any lawful civilization, even one as base as theirs.

The Per'validus family has been banished from the city of Infar'shunt-Sa for several reasons, the most important of which is becoming too powerful. Their exceedingly well connected family matron Per'validus-Matris encouraged her hatchlings from an early age to uncompromisingly focus on improving themselves. By the time they had come of age her three boys – Malum, Demens, and Tristan – had become masters of physical combat, mental combat, and spellcasting, respectively. But this obvious threat to the power of the Cranium Throne isn't the only reason for their expulsion. The Per'validus family is *weird*, even by the standards of a race that have no heads and eat brains for supper. They enjoy strange pastimes, have eccentric habits, espouse odd beliefs, and even wear clothing.

For the crime of being not just dangerous but also downright bizarre, the three boys along with their mother have been ordered to establish an outpost far away from Infar'shunt-Sa near the surface world. From there they can watch the comings and goings of the surface dwelling races, reporting back to the city in case they discover something bad (like a well-armed adventuring party) or something good (like a well-armed elven adventuring party) heading in the direction of the city. That was years ago now and the Per'validus family has pretty much taken their orders in the spirit they were given. The last three war bands to pass by their home sacked the underground city with nary a peep from the outpost.

The Per'validus Family

Being unspeakably evil, the inhabitants of the Migdalar outpost have three simple goals which they strive for in their daily lives. Firstly, they want to live as pampered an existence as they can possibly get away with. This is accomplished by the use of a small army of human household slaves who accompany them around the complex. Each Migdalar has five on hand at all times with some spares tucked away in case one wears out or he is seized by a sudden irresistible craving for brains. Secondly, they want to be entertained. Once again slaves play a large part in this, serving as pawns in their private battles or as subjects for esoteric experiments and exercises. Finally, they want to be well-fed, a goal which their slaves also help with one way or the other.

Per'validus-Malum has spent his life training as a warrior. He is heavily muscled, very serious, and has extraordinarily long fangs and claws which end in sharpened points. Yet Malum's lifelong obsession has been the acquisition and use of human weapons, a *very* un-Migdalar pastime to put it mildly. Trained from a young age to use all of his arms in combat, he wears a special harness around his body which holds two longswords, a battleaxe, and a mace. He looks forward to fighting any PCs that have taken the Heavy Warrior package deal (*Fantasy Hero*, page 64), after he turns them into mindless slaves that is. Then once he has defeated them it will be time for a rejuvenating meal!

Per'validus-Demens has developed his already powerful Migdalar mind far beyond that of the majority of his kind. This has given him not only expanded mental powers but a compelling craving for intellectual stimulation as well. Demens eagerly looks forward to expanding his well-stocked library with any non-magical books the PCs might be carrying. He will also use his powers to enslave any particularly intelligent looking non-spellcasting PCs so that he can delight in a few learned

conversations before enjoying a meal of their brains, preferably served with mushrooms and apples in a delightful pate. He wears a red four-sleeved smoking jacket, a matching fez (which perches on his acephalic ridge), and smokes an extraordinary pipe which stretches in a graceful loop up over his shoulders.

Per'validus-Tristan isn't much of a wizard by human standards but when compared to others of his own kind he's a prodigy. He knows this and he wants others to know it too. Tristan wears a specially constructed flowing blue robe with pentagrams, moons, and stars embroidered on it which he leaves open at the chest so he can see out. He is always on the lookout for spellcasting PCs so that he can acquire their magic items before eagerly consuming their minds, although he may spare a particularly powerful PC for later use in combat.

Per'validus-Matris is proud of her family, her home, and their wicked achievements. She keeps her household very clean, cooks inventive brain meals for her sons, and makes sure that the mindless slaves generally stay on the ball. She enjoys singing, especially children's songs, and has a repertoire of hundreds of songs in dozens of different languages. Matris wears a specially constructed flower print apron which has a window cut in it for her face.

THE MINDLESS SLAVES

Matris runs a tight little outpost, so there are certain rules common to all mindless household slaves. With the exception of those kept in the coatroom, they are shaved completely hairless, periodically dipped in a delousing barrel, and dressed in livery specific to their master. All household slaves are human as the minds of that species are the most malleable as well as the least tasty, but entertainment hall slaves can be of any race.

The Outpost

The Per'validus home is located somewhere in the upper reaches of a dungeon which is near a major metropolitan or heavily populated rural area. Originally a natural cave formation, additional room has been hollowed out of the living rock by their slaves to allow for more living space. In most of the outpost the ceilings are around ten feet in height, although the entertainment hall's roof is a dome which peaks at thirty feet. It is lit by flickering man-fat lanterns which have been hung on hooks at ten foot intervals throughout the complex.

The Migdalar are justifiably paranoid about their security. The outpost has over a dozen heavy, lockable double and single wooden doors that separate various rooms from one another. Partially this is to allow a series of defenses against any intruders, but it also helps protect

them from one another. For when the various members of this monstrous household aren't scheming against the surface races they're scheming against each other. Assassination attempts carried out by slaves against other slaves or other family members are considered a normal, healthy expression of anger in the Per'validus household.

1. COATROOM

The first room one encounters when entering the outpost from the dungeon proper, the coatroom is a 13½ hex rectangular room with two very stout locked wooden doors on the far side. A couple of peepholes have been drilled into them at chest height. Long wooden benches run along either side on the east and west walls. A variety of oddly shaped three-toed footwear are neatly set underneath the bench on the western wall. These include blue slippers, hobnailed boots, manleather pumps, oddly shaped sandals, and more sensible shoes carved from blocks of wood. The heads of two stuffed dwarven adventurers glare down from above the double doorway on the north side of the room, horned helmets still perched upon their heads.

A number of very unusual items of clothing hang from grasping taxidermy hands of various sorts (including human, elven, orc, and halfling) which have been mounted palm upwards against the western wall. The first of these is a blue wool robe with various mystical emblems woven into its fabric. The stuffed head of an angry looking man whose black hair is worn in the "bowl cut" style is attached to the top, while peepholes have been cut into the fabric at chest level. The second is an oddly bulky suit of laced up black man-leather armor which has the head of a confused looking bald chap attached to its neck. Holes have been cut where the man's nipples would have been. The third is red robe made of silk to which the cravat-wearing head of a surprised fellow with curly brown hair has been fastened. Like the others it has a couple of eyeholes cut into the fabric.

The final item of clothing in this room is a long flower print dress made of a light, almost transparent cotton. The head and skinned upper torso of a startled looking young woman with curly red hair and lipstick has been sewn to it inside of the neckline. Unlike the others, it has been carefully placed on a wall-mounted mannequin constructed out of a human woman's skeleton.

A circular rug of bushy dwarfskin lies in the center of this room. On top of it two large men are curled up in a ball, each chewing happily away on a large haunch of some unidentifiable meat. They are incredibly hairy, with unkempt manes that flow past their shoulders and beards which come halfway down their chests. Naked

While engaged in a perfectly innocent hack-n-slash dungeon crawl, the PCs stumble across the Migdalar outpost via its coatroom. A great deal of violence, psychic domination, and brain eating ensues.

Children have been going missing from a rural village for several weeks, seemingly wandering off into the woods then vanishing. The only clue to their whereabouts is a strip of strange cloth apron which has been found near the entrance to the old goblin city whose ruins lie below the forest floor. The PCs are asked to investigate.

Tired of their daily routine, the Per'validus family has decided to conquer the rest of the dungeon complex. Over the last month they have turned most of its monstrous inhabitants into mindless servants, eating or killing anything that got in their way. Unsatisfied but emboldened, they're casting their eyes up toward the surface world. A small band of evil but brave creatures including a lamia, an ogre, several orcs, and a troll have journeyed to the world of men to warn the PCs of this impending threat and ask for assistance.

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Map: Migdalar Outpost

Map labels (on the map):
- Spare Slaves
- 6 Storage
- Tables Around
- 4 Tristan's Quarters
- Bookshelf
- Weapon Rack
- 3 Malum's Quarters
- Bed
- Mirror
- Bed
- Bed
- Sink
- Counter
- Cookbook
- 2 Kitchen
- Hearth
- Pantry
- Naturally-Occuring Glacier
- Skull Thrones
- 7 Entertainment Complex
- Bookshelves Around
- Bookshelves
- Chair
- 5 Demen's Quarters
- Escape Tunnel
- Stalagmites (typical)
- Mannequin
- Benches E/W
- 1 Cloakroom
- To Nearby Dungeon Complex
- Migdalar Outpost of the Per'Validus Family
- Map is at Standard Hero Scale, 1 hex = 2 meters

Object	DEF, BODY	Object	DEF, BODY
Bed, bone framed	2,3	Door, heavy wooden	4,4
Bed, wood frames	3,3	Hearth	5,10
Bench, long wooden	3,3	Keg, pickled person	4,5
Book	3,1	Lantern, manfat	2,3
Bookshelf,wooden	4,5	Mirror, girly full-length	2,1
Bottle, glass	2,1	Podium, stone	4,6
Chair, heavy upholstered	4,6	Podium, wooden	3,3
Crate, small wooden	4,4	Table, heavy wooden	4,5
Countertop, stone	5,11	Table, small wooden	3,3
Dwarf's head, stuffed	3,3	Throne, large bone	3,7

save for large spiked collars fastened around their throats, their teeth have been sharpened down to jagged points. These are the Per'validus' house "dogs" who assist them on their safaris for adventurers in the dungeon as well as their nighttime hunts for peasants in the lands above. They can be treated as guard/combat dogs from page 161 of the *HERO System Bestiary* for game purposes. They bray loudly should the PCs enter, alerting the residents inside before rushing to the attack.

2. KITCHEN

The warm, sickly smell of cooking manmeat wafts from this chamber as does a genuinely lovely singing voice, which hits every note possible for an accomplished soprano. Crooning away various lullabies to her child slaves, Matris prepares another day's meal for the outpost: brainloaf for her boys and manhocks for the slaves. She is assisted in her work by five bald human slaves between the ages of six and eleven in floral print pajamas, who dutifully scrub the floor, chop meat, and clean pots as she attends to the finer points of her gruesome Migdalar cuisine. Should any of these children live long enough to reach puberty they will be immediately slain, then fed to the other children. "Waste not, want not" is Matris' domestic motto.

The household pantry is built into the southern thumb of this room. The Per'validuses were lucky enough to strike the side of a naturally occurring subterranean glacier when they were digging the outpost, so they are able to store their food indefinitely. Looking something like a giant frozen honeycomb, Matris keeps several dozen fresh corpses buried in its surface at all times. Heads out, of course.

A hearth burns cheerfully away near the pantry. It has specially constructed cubbyholes for baking bonemeal bread, spits for roasting hocks of manham, and cooking pots of humanstew. A stone podium has been placed nearby which holds a massive cookbook containing the accumulated wisdom of ten generations of Per'validus culinary secrets. A long stone counter which ends in a wash basin rests against the western wall. Everything in this room is kept spotlessly clean.

Matris sleeps surrounded by her child slaves on a comfortable circular bed located in a hollowed out crevasse in the north wall. It is upholstered in pink silk and festooned with dozens of small frilly pillows.

3. MALUM'S QUARTERS

Per'validus-Malum makes his home in an irregularly shaped 30-hex cavern which has been specially furnished to meet his particular needs. A firm straw double mattress bed sits against the room's south wall in a frame constructed from the femur bones of ogres. A long wooden weapon rack containing various polearms, two-handed swords, horsemen's maces, and other such sizable armaments have been mounted against the western wall. On the northeastern section of the room a large corkboard map detailing the upper levels of the dungeon complex as well as the surrounding countryside has been hung from the ceiling by a length of iron chain. Tiny daggers are driven into various key positions annotating particularly rich hunting grounds.

A massively muscled half-ogre slave stands silently in a nook which has been carved into the southeastern wall, naked save for a black leather collar festooned with steel rings. Four other male servants dressed in black leather loincloths stand motionlessly in the room. Each holds a wooden tray in his arms containing cranial sweetmeats, muscle ointments, weapon lubricants, or some other such substance. If Malum is in his quarters, he will be flexing his four arms into various bodybuilding poses, admiring himself in front of an incongruously feminine full-length mirror near the northeastern doorway.

4. TRISTAN'S QUARTERS

A long bookshelf upholstered in human skin runs along the back of this 25-hex torso shaped room. It contains a wide variety of spell reference books, most of which have been written in the Migdalar tongue but also containing works in human tongues, Dark Elf, Lamia, and several other obscure languages. Most of them are artifact catalogues, experimental notebooks, alchemical treatise, and the like, but one work entitled *The Book of Lesser Elements* contains a short essay about the demi-elements of Ice, Light, and Shadow followed a wide variety of useful scrolls which can be cast with the appropriate skill rolls. These include Hailstorm, Roddik's Blizzard, Create Light, Shadow Eyes, Sunblind, and Shadow's Terror (*Fantasy Hero Grimoire*, pages 108, 110, 111, 113, 115, and 116 respectively).

A summoning pentagram has been optimistically painted onto the floor in the center of the room. A half dozen tables covered in various types of experimental equipment have been pushed haphazardly against the walls. One table has even been crammed against one of the doorways leading to the entertainment hall, blocking entry. It isn't a very organized laboratory; spell components are spilled into piles here and there, glass vials gurgle happily above candles, and glass tubes vent semi-poisonous gasses every which way. Four slaves dressed in blue robes move slowly about the room from table to table, making check marks on clipboards as they examine Tristan's various largely useless or insane experiments. A fifth slave is seated calmly next

ZUG ZUG: TURNING THE MIGDALAR OUTPOST INTO OGRE'S LAIR

Ogres aren't very bright, especially when you compare them with the Migdalar. But they do have a strikingly similar sense of decor when it comes to things like bone thrones, stuffed dwarf heads, and maps with daggers thrust into them. To turn the Migdalar outpost into an ogre's lair, first remove all books. Books are right out. Replace them with things like iron maidens, torture racks, and sculptures made out of blood splattered platemail. The color coded robes in the coatroom should be replaced with uncured lice infested bear hides and the human "dogs" with actual ones. Mindless servants can be replaced with cringing goblins, who make really terrible slaves but also don't taste very good.

The rest of the cuisine stays, though. Ogres like humanstew, manjerky, and manhocks just as much if not more than the next monster does. The adventurers on the wall can stay too, except that they are all fighters who are kept in tiny cramped steel cages well away from any weapons. After all, who wants

their food frozen when they can have it fresh?

to an unfathomable series of burners, beakers, and bellows which churn with some toxic looking yellow liquid. His blood is slowly being pumped out through a needle in his left arm while this fluid is being introduced through another in his right.

Tristan's bed is an unmade mess of spell components, small puzzles, curved daggers, pendants, and other such small wizardly miscellany. Tossed in amongst them is a perfectly serviceable *Ring of the Traveler's Confidence (Fantasy Hero Grimoire,* page 125) which the Migdalar sorcerer pulled off of his lunch last week. If he is working in his quarters, Tristan will be examining this ring through a truly insane-looking set of mirrored telescoping glasses which are held onto his chest by a wide leather belt.

5. DEMENS' QUARTERS

An extremely large and comfortable looking chair dominates the chamber from its center. Made from soft brown manhide, it has a long wooden lever on one side which allows its user to adjust the angle of his reclining for maximum assuagement. Should Demens be in his quarters he will invariably be relaxing in this "recliner." A slave dressed in red silk robes with a fez perched upon his shaved brow stands perpetually next to the Migdalar, holding a silver tray upon which sits a single crystal glass of fresh elven cranial fluid. Another identically attired slave holds his book for him, slowly turning the pages when mentally commanded to do so. The third acts as a footstool, while the fourth keeps his pipe constantly lit and stocked with fresh tobacco from a tall humidor which rests nearby. A fifth female slave dressed in a frilly red maid's outfit mindlessly circumambulates the room with a feather duster.

All four walls of this room are covered by oak bookshelves which run from ceiling to floor. They contain all manner of volumes including histories, travel guides, philosophical speculations, exciting fictions, biographies, and encyclopedias of fantastical beasts. Unlike the rest of the outpost, this chamber is irradiated by various ornate candelabra which have been positioned strategically in carved nooks to provide maximum illumination. It also contains the outpost's emergency exit, a small tunnel which runs due east away from the Per'validus home until it emerges from behind a secret door into a nearby dungeon corridor.

6. STORAGE

A half dozen mindless replacement slaves are stacked like cordwood in an alcove in the northwest corner of this small room. A barrel of disinfectant sits nearby next to a shaving station which contains a bucket of freezing water, a

strop, and an enormous straight razor attached to the wall by a short chain. The rest of the chamber contains boxes of candles, spare jugs of manfat for burning, racks of extra weapons for the slaves, carefully crafted family silver (which is worth a small fortune), and a large wooden coffin into which various interesting odds and ends picked off of adventurers have been haphazardly tossed. These include holy symbols, lockpicking kits, bone scroll tubes, flint and steel, lengths of rope, and the like.

Manleather which has been cured for trade with neighboring monsters has been placed in medium sized wooden boxes, about ten skins per. Likewise manjerky has been carefully packed in salt before being sealed into a small shoe box sized crates. Other completely unmentionable delicacies have been pickled in small kegs before being placed in an alcove in the northeastern portion of the room.

7. ENTERTAINMENT HALL

This very large 400-hex circular room is mostly empty. Four ample thrones built out of human skulls sit in a straight line on the far side of the chamber some twenty feet from its north wall. They are upholstered with comfortable cushions of manskin which have been dyed blue, black, red, and floral print respectively. Behind them some ten doorways of various sorts lead off into various flickering glooms. Above these doorways hang the carefully stuffed heads of some two dozen adventurers of every conceivable type which have been mounted onto circular backboards. Wooden placards with numbers engraved on them have been hung around their decapitated necks, sometimes followed by a couple of words in a strange language. If any of the PCs have the ability to read Migdalar, these are invariably small phrases such as "fought well" and "delicious."

On the south side of the chamber eight equally spaced adventurers hang limply several feet in the air from pairs of strong taxidermed human arms which stretch straight out of the wall, fists clenched. Though their eyes are open, they wear expressions that are completely blank, nor will they respond to normal stimuli. All of their body hair has been meticulously removed. Starting from the eastern side of the room there are two human wizards dressed in plain blue robes, a half-orc heavy warrior in black reinforced chainmail, a dwarven fighter in black plate and chain, a bard in red brigandine, a light warrior in red cuir-bouilli, a halfling woman warrior in chainmail with a floral print apron over it, and finally a gnomish woman rogue wearing a floral print sun dress. Various weapons such as short swords, spears, flails, and so forth have been mounted onto holsters made from skeletal fingers between them.

Family night at the Per'validus home invariably involves a series of battles to the death between various captured adventurers, who are used like meat puppets by their respective Migdalar masters. They also make an excellent first line of defense against meddling interlopers as well. Should the Per'validus family be alerted to the PCs' presence before they can gain entry to the entertainment hall, they will enter to find all four members of the family seated on their respective thrones and these adventurer-slaves armed for a fight to the death on behalf of their masters. For write-ups of these NPCs please consult the Human Adversaries section of *Monsters, Minions, and Marauders.*

The Entertainment Hall
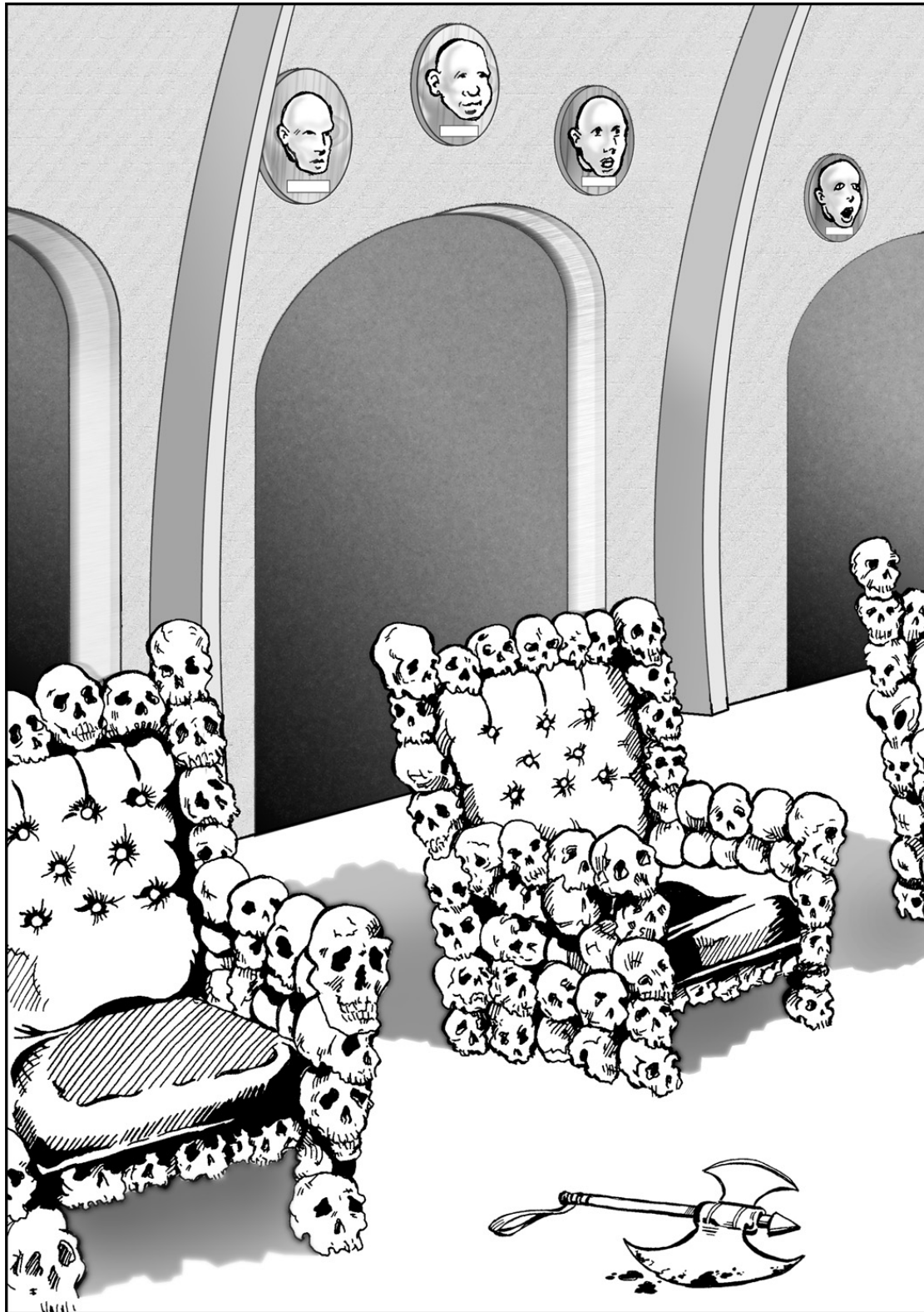
Tracking a man known to be a member of the banished god's cult, the adventurers delve deep into the earth – only to stumble onto the Migdalar's outpost. The cultist has preceded them and already fallen prey to the Per'validus family; they can see him mindlessly obeying the orders of one of the creatures, clearing some rubble away from a cavern under the supervision of Per'validus-Malum. Now they must make a decision – turn around and retreat from the unspeakably evil family, or swallow their disgust and attempt to save the cultist, who seems to have met a fitting end for his crimes. And what will Per'validus-Tristan make of his conversations with the cultist? Will the Migdalar find the nature of the god suitable to one of his rarefied sensibilities? Certainly promises of increased wizardly power get the attention of the human-eating Migdalar-*cum*-mage.

Per'validus-Malum (Lord)

20 STR	20 DEX	25 CON	17 BODY
20 INT	20 EGO	20 PRE	6 COM
6 PD	6 ED	3 SPD	
10 REC	50 END	40 STUN	

Abilities: *Migdalar Brain:* Multipower, 50-point Reserve; 1) *Control The Mind:* Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic; 2) *Trick The Mind:* Mental Illusions 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 3) *Ravage The Mind:* Ego Attack 4d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 4) *Torture The Mind:* Ego Attack 2½d6, Continuous; 5) *Explore The Mind:* Telepathy 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 6) *Find The Mind:* Mind Scan 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 7) *Shackle The Mind:* Major Transform 1d6+1 (Humanoid to Migdalar's Willing Slave, Mind-Curing Spells), Works against EGO, not BODY, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense Applies); Limited Target (Sentient Humanoids), Limited Range (20"); *Mindspeech:* Mind Link, Any Eight Minds at Once, Class of Minds, Specific Group of Minds, Number of Minds (x8); *Claws:* HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); Reduced Penetration; *Fangs:* HKA 1d6; No STR Bonus; *Tough Skin:* Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED); *Tough Mind:* Mental Defense (10 points Total); *Underground Dweller:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing); *Migdalar Eyes:* Nightvision; *Migdalar Eyes:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group); *Migdalar Limbs:* Extra Limbs (2), Inherent; Followers (7); Ambidexterity (-2 Off Hand penalty); +1 with Migdalar Brain Multipower; +3 with Hand-to-Hand Combat; Interrogation 13-; KS: Military History 13-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Underground) 13-; Tactics 13-; Two-Weapon Fighting (Hand-to-Hand) ; WF: Common Melee Weapons

Per'validus-Malum (Lord)

Per'validus-Demens (Adept)

15 STR	15 DEX	20 CON	12 BODY
20 INT	20 EGO	20 PRE	6 COM
5 PD	5 ED	2 SPD	
8 REC	40 END	30 STUN	

Abilities: *Migdalar Brain:* Multipower, 75-point Reserve; 1) *Control The Mind:* Mind Control 12d6, Telepathic; 2) *Trick The Mind:* Mental Illusions 12d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 3) *Ravage The Mind:* Ego Attack 6d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 4) *Torture The Mind:* Ego Attack 3½d6, Continuous; 5) *Explore The Mind:* Telepathy 12d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 6) *Find The Mind:* Mind Scan 12d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 7) *Shackle The Mind:* Major Transform 2d6 (Humanoid to Migdalar's Willing Slave, Mind-Curing Spells), Works against EGO, not BODY, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense Applies); Limited Target (Sentient Humanoids), Limited Range (20"); *Mindspeech:* Mind Link, Any Eight Minds at Once, Class of Minds, Specific Group of Minds, Number of Minds (x8);

Per'validus-Demens (Adept)

Claws: HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR); Reduced Penetration; *Fangs:* HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus; *Tough Skin:* Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED); *Tough Mind:* Mental Defense (10 points Total); *Underground Dweller:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing); *Migdalar Eyes:* Nightvision; *Migdalar Eyes:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group); *Migdalar Limbs:* Extra Limbs (2), Inherent; Followers (7); Eidetic Memory; +3 with Migdalar Brain Multipower; High Society 13-; Interrogation 13-; KS: Literature 13-; PS: Librarian 13-; Literate; Stealth 12-; Survival (Underground) 13-
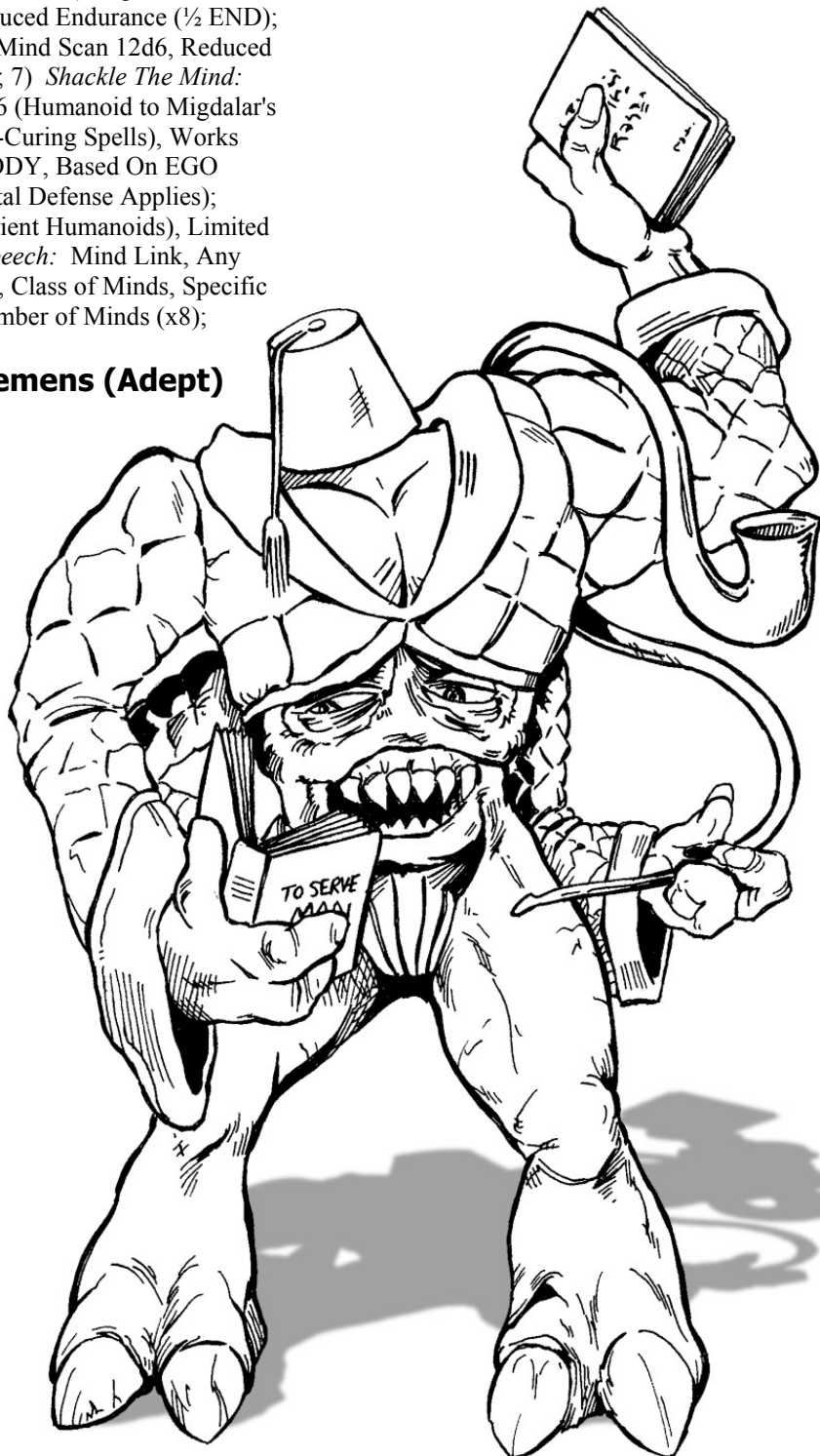
Per'validus-Tristan (Mage)

15 STR	15 DEX	20 CON	12 BODY
20 INT	20 EGO	20 PRE	6 COM
5 PD	5 ED	2 SPD	
8 REC	40 END	30 STUN	

Abilities: *Migdalar Brain :* Multipower, 50-point reserve; 1) *Control The Mind:* Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic; 2) *Trick The Mind:* Mental Illusions 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 3) *Ravage The Mind:* Ego Attack 4d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 4) *Torture The Mind:* Ego Attack 2½d6, Continuous; 5) *Explore The Mind:* Telepathy 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 6) *Find The Mind:* Mind Scan 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 7) *Shackle The Mind:* Major Transform 1d6+1 (Humanoid to Migdalar's Willing Slave, Mind-Curing Spells), Works against EGO, not BODY, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense Applies); Limited Target (Sentient Humanoids), Limited Range (20");

Mindspeech: Mind Link, Any Eight Minds at Once, Class Of Minds, Specific Group of Minds, Number of Minds (x8); *Claws:* HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR); Reduced Penetration; *Fangs:* HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus; *Tough Skin:* Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED); *Tough Mind:* Mental Defense (10 points Total); *Underground Dweller:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing); *Migdalar Eyes:* Nightvision; *Migdalar Eyes:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group); *Migdalar Limbs:* Extra Limbs (2), Inherent; Followers (7); Magesight; Spell Augmentation; +1 with Magic Skill Rolls; +1 with Magic Spells; +1 with Migdalar Brain Multipower; Conjuration 13-; Elemental Magic (Fire) 13-; Interrogation 13-; Inventor 13-; Literate; Stealth 12-; Survival (Underground) 13-; Wizardry 13-

Spells: Fireball; Vashtori's Second Spell of Beast-Calling; Wizard's Eye; Wizard's Power; Wizard's Shield

Per'validus-Matris (Mom)

15 STR	15 DEX	20 CON	12 BODY
20 INT	20 EGO	20 PRE	6 COM
5 PD	5 ED	2 SPD	
8 REC	40 END	30 STUN	

Abilities: *Migdalar Brain :* Multipower, 50-point Reserve; 1) *Control The Mind:* Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic; 2) *Trick The Mind:* Mental Illusions 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 3) *Ravage The Mind:* Ego Attack 4d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 4) *Torture The Mind:* Ego Attack 2½d6, Continuous; 5) *Explore The Mind:* Telepathy 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 6) *Find The Mind:* Mind Scan 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END); 7) *Shackle The Mind:* Major Transform 1d6+1 (Humanoid to Migdalar's Willing Slave, Mind-Curing Spells), Works against EGO, not BODY, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense Applies); Limited Target (Sentient Humanoids), Limited Range (20"); *Mindspeech:* Mind Link , Any Eight Minds at Once Class Of Minds, Specific Group of Minds, Number of Minds (x16); *Claws:* HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR); Reduced Penetration; *Fangs:* HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus; *Tough Skin:* Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED); *Tough Mind:* Mental Defense (10 points Total); *Underground Dweller:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing); *Migdalar Eyes:* Nightvision; *Migdalar Eyes:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group); *Migdalar Limbs:* Extra Limbs (2), Inherent; Followers (7); Perfect Pitch; +1 with Migdalar Brain Multipower; Interrogation 13-; KS: Migdalar Cooking 13-; PS: Mother 13-; PS: Singing 8-; Persuasion 13-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Underground) 13-

Per'validus-Matris (Mom)

Here There be Dragons by Michael Surbrook

Grendel

Background/History: Grendel is one of the three great monsters fought by the Geatish hero Beowulf in the epic poem *Beowulf*. Described as a descendent of Cain (the first Biblical murderer), Grendel is a physical embodiment of evil, a terrifying monster who exists only to kill and ravage mankind. Making his home in a desolate moor, Grendel stalks the fens and marshes, haunting the great hall of Heorot and killing all he catches.

Grendel meets his end at the hands of Beowulf, who wrestles with Grendel within Heorot itself, eventually tearing one arm off. Grendel flees Heorot and ends up dying back in his lair.

Personality/Motivation: Grendel is evil personified. The poem describes him as a "fiend," a "fierce spirit," a "grim spirit," a "creature of evil," "the enemy of mankind" and so on. He is the bane of King Hrothgar, preying on the inhabitants of Heorot for 12 years or more. His motivations for doing so seem to stem from a simple desire to cause pain and suffering, and that to Grendel, King Hrothgar's warriors are easy prey to be taken whenever he chooses.

Quote: It is unknown if Grendel is capable of speech.

Powers/Tactics: Grendel is huge – much larger than any man, and *very* strong. The poem describes him shattering iron bound doors "with a touch," and of reducing a man to a bloody pulp in a matter of moments, devouring him totally – right down to his hands and feet. In his first raid on Heorot, Grendel killed 30 men, eating 15 of them in the hall and dragging the other 15 back with him to his lair. However, Grendel's most potent power is a spell he has cast upon all edged weapons, rendering them useless against him. Axes, swords, and daggers – anything with an edge will just bounce of off his hide, doing no damage.

Because of his great size and strength as well as his Blade Bane, Grendel doesn't bother with any sort of special tactics. He prefers to simply smash and grab as many available targets as possible before retreating to his lair to feed upon his victims at his leisure. When fighting, Grendel will try to grab his target, and then use his rending attack (which will do 3d6+1 of killing damage before STR is added) to reduce the target to shreds. If given a chance, Grendel is more than willing to eat his victims on the spot.

Campaign Use: Grendel is the perfect example of the unique monster so common to folklore. He is a huge, horrific man-eating creature who is virtually unstoppable. Only a true hero – in this case, Beowulf – is capable of stopping a being such as this. If creating similar creatures, you should try to make the monster special in some way, either through size, cunning, or some sort of unique ability (such as Grendel's Blade Bane).

Appearance: [King] Hrothgar spoke... "I have heard landsmen, my people, hall-counselors, say this, that they have seen two such huge walkers in the wasteland holding to the moors, alien spirits.... The other wretched shape trod the tracks of exile in the form of a man, except he was bigger than any other man." (from the translation of *Beowulf* by E. Talbot Donaldson)

The poem never actually describes Grendel to any degree. About the only idea we have of what he looks like is the passage quoted above. It is obvious from the poem that Grendel has a huge, manlike shape with eyes that burn in the darkness. At one point the poem states four men are required to carry Grendel's head upon a framework of spears. Other details are left to the reader's imagination.

artwork by Jennifer Rodgers

Grendel

The name "Grendel" may be derived from certain Anglo-Saxon words such as "grennian" (to gnash the teeth) or "grindan" (to grate, scrape, gnash or grind).

Grendel

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6.4 ton; 8d6 HTH [4]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 1
28	CON	36	15-	
23	BODY	26	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-/14-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
16	PD	8		Total PD: 20 (4 rPD)
10	ED	4		Total ED: 14 (4 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9 12
14	REC	0		
56	END	0		
57	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 143

Movement:
Running: 12"/24"
Leaping: 4"/8"
Swimming: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
37	*Claws:* HKA 1½d6 (3d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
17	*Rending:* HKA +1½d6 (6d6 with STR); Must follow Grab (-½)	2
9	*Tough Hide:* Armor (4 PD/4 ED)	0
18	*Blade Bane:* Armor (18 PD); Only Versus Edged Weapons (-½)	0
40	*Blade Bane:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%; Only versus Edged Weapons (-½)	0
12	*Great Size:* Knockback Resistance -6"	0
5	*Lives In A Lake:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing)	0
5	*Ageless Evil:* Life Support (Longevity: Immortal)	0
12	*Long Legs:* Running +6" (12" Total)	2
6	*Strong Swimmer:* Swimming +4" (6" Total)	1
9	*Keen Senses:* +3 with Hearing PER	0
5	*Can See In The Dark:* Night Vision	0
9	*Reach:* Stretching 2", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Skills
Cost		
10	+2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat	
8	+4 OCV with Grab	
5	Climbing 13-	
7	Stealth 14-	
6	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 13-	
7	Tracking 13-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 227

Total Cost: 370

200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Monstrous Shape and Visage (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
15	Physical Limitation: Cannot Stand the Light of Day (Infrequent, Fully)
10	Physical Limitation: Enormous (7m Tall; -4 DCV, +4 to PER Rolls to Perceive) (Frequently, Slightly)
4	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap; Can Only Leap Half as Far as STR Indicates (Infrequently, Slightly)
20	Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer, Enjoys Feasting on Men (Very Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Mankind, Mirth, Merriment, and Life (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Haunter of Heorot, 11- (Extreme)
66	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 370

Lambton Worm

Lambton Worm

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 tons; 10d6 HTH [5]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 0
30	CON	40	15-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
20	PD	10		Total: 20 PD (3 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	16		Phases: 4, 8, 12
16	REC	0		
60	END	0		
65	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 166

Movement:	Running:	12"/24"
	Leaping:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
11	*Constriction:* +15 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Grab (-1)	0
25	*Bite:* HKA 1½d6 (3d6+1 with STR)	3
3	*Thick Hide:* Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
18	*Heavy:* Knockback Resistance -9"	0
5	*Gills:* Life Support (Breathe Underwater)	0
52	*Regeneration:* Healing 6d6 (Regeneration; 6 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-¼)	0
12	*Slithering:* Running +6" (12" Total)	2
4	*Water Snake:* Swimming +4" (6" Total)	1
17	*Reach:* Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0
	Skills	
10	+2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat	
2	Concealment 11-; Self Only (-½)	
3	Stealth 12-	
5	Tracking 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 167

Total Cost: 333

75+ Disadvantages

10	Physical Limitation: Huge (16m long, -6 DCV, +6 to PER Rolls to Perceive) (All the Time, Greatly)
10	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Always Hungry, Goes Out of Its Way to Find Food (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Notable Liking for Milk (Common, Strong)
10	Reputation: Bane of the Lambtons 11-
183	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 333

Lambton Worm

Ecology: The Worm lives in Durham County, England, near the River Wear. It preys on sheep, cattle, and the local villages, but can be appeased by offerings of milk. The creature usually hunts at night, and rests by day on its hill, basking in the sun.

Personality/Motivation: It is thought the Lambton Worm was sent to punish John Lambton, heir to the Lambton estate, for his wild behavior and disrespectful attitude towards the church. The Worm itself preys on anything it can catch, and unless kept satisfied with a daily offering of milk, will go on a rampage, eating and destroying anything it can find.

Powers/Tactics: Due to its great size and regenerative abilities, the Worm is fairly fearless and will not hesitate to lash out at an attacker. Normally it tries to crush its prey in the manner of a constrictor snake, but it will bite as well. Because of its regenerative abilities, the Worm will not flee an encounter, even if greatly wounded.

Campaign Use: The original Lambton Worm was said to exist in the early Middle Ages, during the time of the Crusades (the exact date isn't clear, although one date, Easter Sunday 1420, is plainly wrong, as the Crusades were long over by then). It was caught in the River Wear by John Lambton, who went fishing on a Sunday instead of attending church. The young Lambton pulled up a slimy black snake, and promptly tossed the horrid creature down a well. He then left to go on Crusades, as a way of repenting for his wicked deeds. When he returned a number of years later, it was to find that the worm had grown to immense size (it was said to be able to circle Pensher Hill anywhere from three to ten times) and was laying waste to the region. Taking the advice of a local witch, John had a suit or armor outfitted with long sharp blades and lured the Worm into the River Wear. There he hacked at it with his sword, while the Worm tried to crush him in its coils. Cut to pieces by the blades and John's sword, the river washed the Worm away before it could rejoin its halves.

Because of the Lambton Worm's large size and high Body score, it is unlikely anyone will ever be able to lop it in half with a single blow. You may want to allow blows that do more than a certain amount of damage (say half of the Worm's Body) in a single stroke to cut the worm in two. The Worm's regeneration power may need to be adjusted as well, depending the needs of the campaign. The listed power was created with the idea the average sword stroke does about six BODY.

Appearance: The Lambton Worm is an immense snakelike creature, so large it is said to encircle a local hill nine times. It has a slimy body, a long narrow head, nine holes or gills located along the neck, and it breathes forth foul vapors capable of withering leaves and grass.

Gargouille

Ecology: A singular creature, the Gargouille lives in the River Seine, where it preys upon passersby. It floods farms, overturns boats, and will readily devour anyone and anything it can catch. When not bringing devastation to the local area, it dwells in a cave on the banks of the river.

Personality/Motivation: Typical animal motivations. The Gargouille seems to be driven by hunger, and has a ravenous and seemingly insatiable appetite.

Powers/Tactics: Although the Gargouille is equipped with strong jaws and sharp teeth, its favored form of attack is to spew a great jet of water out of its throat. This water jet is continuous and unceasing, and the Gargouille uses it to knock down and scatter foes as well as to flood farms and villages.

Campaign Use: The Gargouille was reputed to have lived in the sixth Century A.D. in the vicinity of Rouen, the capital of Normandy. It terrorized and flooded the land, and was finally defeated by St. Romain, archbishop of Rouen. Accompanied by a condemned murderer, St. Romain confronted the Gargouille, made the sign of the cross before the dragon, tamed the creature, and led it back to town where it was promptly killed. This story is very similar to the tale of the Tarasque, another water dragon that inhabited the River Rhone. See the Tarasque for more information.

You may or may not want to utilize the optional disadvantage which allows for holy objects and characters to utterly pacify the Gargouille. If this is disadvantage is used, you need to decide what constitutes a "holy" object or character. In general, the character should be truly saintly, which means most player characters will *not* fall under this category.

As a final note, the Gargouille's habits have been immortalized by stone carvers all over Europe. The gargoyle waterspout, a common feature of cathedrals in the middle ages, derives its name and function from the dragon.

Appearance: The Gargouille is a tremendous water dragon, with a long swanlike neck, slender jaws, gleaming eyes, and fishlike fins instead of legs. The dragon is a pale blue in color, and covered in fine scales.

Gargouille

Gargouille

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 tons; 10d6 HTH [5]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 0
33	CON	46	16-	
30	BODY	40	15-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 14-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
35	PRE	20	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
10	COM	0	11-	
25	PD	15		Total: 25 PD (9 rPD)
25	ED	18		Total: 25 ED (9 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
18	REC	2		
66	END	0		
72	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 228

Movement:	Running:	4"/8"
	Leaping:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	18"/36"

Cost	Powers	END
156	*Water Spout:* EB 12d6, Continuous (+1), Double Knockback (+¾), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Reduced By Range (-¼)	0
30	*Draconic Weapons:* Multipower, 30-point Reserve	
3u	1) *Bite:* HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
1u	2) *Tail Lash:* HA +5d6 (15d6 with STR); HA Lim (-½), Only with Extra Limb (-½)	2
9	*Thick Scales:* Damage Resistance (9 PD/9 ED)	0
20	*Heavy:* Knockback Resistance -10"	0
3	*Deep Water Swimmer:* Life Support (Extended Breathing 1 END per Minute, Safe in High Pressure)	0
-4	*Slow on Land:* Running -2" (4" Total)	1
10	*Fins:* Swimming +16" (18" Total)	1
6	*Sharp Senses:* +2 PER with All Senses	0
5	*Tail:* Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)	0
17	*Reach:* Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0
	Skills	
4	+2 OCV with Bite	
4	+2 OCV with Waterspout	
3	Concealment 12-	
2	Survival (Marine) 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 269

Total Character Cost: 497

75+ Disadvantages

10	Physical Limitation: Huge (16m long, -6 DCV, +6 to PER Rolls to Perceive) (All the Time, Greatly)
10	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Always Hungry, Goes Out of Its Way to Find Food (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Protective of Its Territory (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Beast of the River Seine, Extreme 11-
342	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 497

OPTIONS

Cost	Gargouille Powers
-15	Physical Limitation: Rendered Powerless and Docile by the Presence of Holy Objects and/or People (Infrequently, Fully)

Tarasque

Tarasque

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 tons; 10d6 HTH [5]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 2
30	CON	40	15-	
26	BODY	32	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 13-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack: 5½d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
18	PD	8		Total: 30 PD (16 rPD)
18	ED	12		Total: 26 ED (12 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
16	REC	0		
60	END	0		
66	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 180

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 0"/0"
Swimming: 10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
51	*Flame Breath:* RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (18" Line; +1); No Range (-½), Reduced By Range (-¼)	9
70	*Weapons of the Tarasque:* Multipower, 70-point reserve	
9m	1) *Bite:* HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½)	4
5m	2) *Claws:* HKA 1½d6 (3d6+1 with STR)	2
2m	2) *Tail Lash:* HA +4d6 (14d6 with STR); HA Lim (-½), Only with Extra Limb (-½)	2
22	*Spiked Carapace:* HKA 1d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Inherent (+¼), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always On (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½), No STR Bonus (-½)	0
24	*Scaled Hide:* Damage Resistance (4 PD/4 ED)	0
15	*Carapace:* Armor (12 PD/8 ED), Activation Roll 11- (-1)	0
10	*Heavy:* Knockback Resistance -6"	0
8	*Deep Water Swimmer:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing, Safe in High Pressure)	0
8	*Amphibious:* Swimming +8" (10" Total)	1
6	*Sharp Senses:* +2 PER with All Senses	0
5	*Can See In The Dark:* UV Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	*Six Legs And A Tail:* Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Poor Manipulation (-¼)	0
9	*Reach:* Stretching 2", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Skills

15	+3 with Hand-To-Hand Combat	
2	Concealment 11-; Self Only (-½)	
3	Stealth 13-	
4	Survival (Marine) 12-	
4	Tracking 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 277

Total Cost: 493

75+ Disadvantages

10	Physical Limitation: Enormous (roughly 4m long; -4 DCV, +4 to PER Rolls to Perceive) (Frequently, Slightly)
10	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Always Hungry, Goes Out of Its Way to Find Food (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Protective of Its Territory (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Beast of the River Seine, Extreme 11-
338	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 493

OPTIONS

Cost	Tarasque Powers	
35	*The Devil's Warnings:* Talent: Danger Sense (sense, any danger, immediate vicinity) 14-	
30	*Tusks:* HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½)	3
-15	Physical Limitation: Rendered Powerless and Docile by the Presence of Holy Objects and/or People (Infrequently, Fully)	

Tarasque

Ecology: A unique creature, the Tarasque (pronounced tar-ask) lives in the river Rhone, where it preys on travelers of all sorts. The creature eagerly devours humans, horses, cattle, and game and will ravage the countryside, destroying buildings and bridges to get at its prey. The Tarasque cannot be reasoned with, and unlike many other dragons, cannot be appeased with offers of fair maidens and the like.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations. Unlike many other dragons, the Tarasque does not collect or guard treasure and seems to be driven more by hunger than anything else. It guards its territory jealously and will destroy and devour any intruders.

Powers/Tactics: The Tarasque's usual method of combat is to lay waiting in a river, thicket, or lake, and then spring upon an unsuspecting victim. Its great jaws and sharp teeth are usually more than sufficient to eliminate any foe, but if confronted with a large number of targets (or if heavily outnumbered) it won't hesitate to use its fiery breath or its tail to reduce the number of opponents quickly. If sorely pressed or wounded, the Tarasque will retreat back to its river.

Some say the Tarasque has two huge forward pointing tusks it uses to impale opponents, while others say the Tarasque is a creature of the Devil and the Devil will warn the Tarasque of traps and ambushes. One description of the Tarasque states it is a male, while another describes it as the daughter of Leviathan.

Campaign Use: The original Tarasque was said to live in France in approximately the first Century A.D. (about the same time as La Velue). It inhabited the river Rhone in France, devastating the surrounding countryside and slaying all that tried to kill it. Finally, St. Martha, armed with nothing more than a jar of holy water, pacified the beast and led it back to a local village. There, the villagers set upon the now docile creature and killed it. The parallels between this story and that of the Gargouille should be readily apparent to the reader.

You may or may not want to utilize the optional disadvantage which allows for holy objects and characters to utterly pacify the Tarasque. If this is disadvantage is used, you need to decide what constitutes a "holy" object or character. In general, the character should be truly saintly, which means most player characters will *not* fall under this category.

Appearance: The Tarasque is a huge water dragon, bigger than any horse or oxen. It is covered in thick scales, with a lionish head, a mouthful of sharp teeth, bear-like paws on it six legs, a long snaky tail, and a thick turtle-like carapace covered with spikes on its back.

La Velue: The Shaggy Beast of La Ferte-Bernard

Ecology: Thought to be a survivor of the Biblical Flood, the Shaggy Beast is an amphibious creature, dwelling in the river Huisne by day and coming out at night to raid stables and villages. It prefers the tender flesh of children and young maidens, but will gladly feast on men, horses, deer, and cattle. It is said the Shaggy Beast is invulnerable everywhere *except* for its tail.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations. The Shaggy Beast is primarily driven by hunger. It will raid storehouses, stables, and villages for its prey, catching and killing all it can eat. If it can't eat all it has killed, it will drag the rest back to its river lair and feed on the corpses later.

Powers/Tactics: Due to its thick hide, the Shaggy Beast is very willing to engage in combat with heavily armed and armored humans. In general, it prefers to use its great mass as a weapon, trampling grouped foes while biting at those who are not in its direct path. Quills hidden in its fur also provide an excellent defense, and if charging through a mass of targets it is sure to try and brush against as many as possible (Consider this a side effect of the creature performing a Move By or Move Through.). The Beast's tail is a rather fearsome weapon in its own right and the Shaggy Beast will use it to cripple men, topple horses, and destroy walls and fences. If sorely pressed or angry the Shaggy Beast will breath forth a cloud of fire.

Campaign Use: A unique creature from French legend, the Shaggy Beast was said to exist in the first Century A.D. The creature was described as being invulnerable, and anyone wishing to use the Shaggy Beast in a scenario may want to adjust the creature's defenses in order to bring it in line with the power level of his campaign. To fully simulate the original legend, the damage done by the Susceptibility may need to be increased, or at the very least be subject to the Standard Effect Rule (resulting in 15 BODY of damage to the Beast if its tail is ever severed).

Appearance: The Shaggy Beast is as large as a bull with a rounded body covered in thick greenish fur. It has a snake's head and a tail "shaped like a serpent," while its hoofed feet resemble those of a tortoise. Within the Beast's fur are long stingers (or quills) that can prove lethal to the unwary.

**La Velue: The Shaggy Beast of
La Ferte-Bernard**

SHAGGY BEAST

"The Shaggy Beast" is the creature's English name, the French called it "La Velue." It is also known as the "Peluda."

La Velue: The Shaggy Beast of La Ferte-Bernard

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	STR	25	16-	Lift 3.2 ton; 7d6 HTH [3]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 4
28	CON	36	15-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 13-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
14	PD	7		Total: 32 PD (22 rPD)
14	ED	8		Total: 32 ED (22 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
13	REC	0		
56	END	0		
57	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 141

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Leaping: 0"/0"
Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
20	*Weapons Of The Shaggy Beast:* Multipower, 20-point Reserve	
2u	1) *Bite:* HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR)	2
1u	2) *Tail Lash:* HA +4d6 (11d6 with STR); HA Lim (-½), Only with Extra Limb (-½)	2
20	*Quills:* HKA ½d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (3 shots; +¼), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Inherent (+¼), Invisible To Sight Group (Quills are Hidden in the Shaggy Beast's Long Fur; +½), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always On (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½), No STR Bonus (-½)	0
27	*Flame Breath:* RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (12" Line; +1); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), No Range (-½), Reduced By Range (-¼)	12
4	*Scaly Body:* Damage Resistance (4 PD/4 ED)	0
43	*Invulnerable:* Armor (18 PD/18 ED); Activation Roll 15- or Locations 3-16 (-¼)	0
10	*Heavy:* Knockback Resistance -5"	0
8	*Deep Water Swimmer:* Life Support (Expanded Breathing, Safe in High Pressure)	0
2	*Faster Than You Think:* Running +1" (7" Total)	1
2	*Amphibious:* Swimming +2" (4" Total)	1
6	*Sharp Senses:* +2 PER with all Senses	0
5	*Can See In The Dark:* UV Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	*Tail:* Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)	0
9	*Reach:* Stretching 2", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Skills
10	+2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat	
2	Concealment 11-; Self Only (-½)	
3	Stealth 13-	
2	Survival (Marine) 11-	
5	Tracking 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 186

Total Cost: 327

75+ Disadvantages
5	Physical Limitation: Large (4m long, -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to Perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly)
7	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Prefers to Prey on Children and Maidens (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Monster of the Huisne 8, Extreme 11-
25	Susceptibility: 5d6 BODY if Tail is Severed (Instantly, Uncommon)
165	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 327