

protodimension magazine



Deepones
The World of Fantasy

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Strikeface

Fiction and Gear
By Phil Ward
For Dark Conspiracy®

Certified to NIJ level IV it says on the inside of the bread slice sized chicken-plate that's prevents my organs from splashing across our patrol route. Not that I can read it—I'm icon-literate like the rest of the home-schoolers in my fire-team—but I can't read. No point wasting education on a no-mark gnome when you can teach 'em just enough to do their job. The picture of a heart on one side and a bullet on the other makes it obvious which way round it goes.

Still damp from the shower pail, I'm hauling on threadbare BDU's from the last century, camo pattern washed out, all the better to slink through the dusty dawn. My rifle is an old M16A4, barrel worn out, tolerances all to crap after thousands of rounds down range. This old thing was probably used in the first oil wars, when we rescued freedom in that desert monarchy.

I'm a National Guardsman, patrolling the southern border of the greatest and most bankrupt democracy on the face of the planet. Not that I know what democracy means, my parent's proxied my vote when I was sixteen, they got twenty extra channels of daytime "stories" for it. Now, I'm no flag-waving Nazi—despite what IndyMedia says—I just wanted something a little better, so I signed up.

The Great Divide separates the second world America slid into and the third-world shanty towns just over the border in Mexico. Truth be told, there ain't much difference, but the ruling elite don't like the gomers hopping over the Rio Grande all by themselves, they'd rather have them shipped into the prestigious gardener academies or educated at private maid schools. Rio Grande is none too accurate anymore, since we cut off most of its flow to ensure our great nations Water Security, it's certainly easier to cross these days.

The rest of the squad are just like me, poor, uneducated, some of them are serving out penal sentences for misdemeanours, others are here looking to be sponsored for their high school equivalency courses. We're the lowest of the low.

'Cept of course for the people we're out patrolling for; illegal immigrants, terrorists, child kidnappers, satanists, drug mules, liberals. Whatever TNN's bogeyman of the day is. We're here to stop them getting over the line in the sand drawn by President Bush II's "Great Wall of Texas", when our father's voluntarily deployed here as part of the original volunteer National Guard I bet they didn't think there'd still be a guard presence here thirty years later.

But then I don't supposed they'd have predicted the selling of voting rights, the Corporate Security Force Bill, the suspension of Habeas Corpus, or any of changes that left us where we are now.

The LT led us in mandatory prayer, and we marched out into the desert, in the parched, red-dust wilds the locals called la Tierra del Diablo, the Devil's ground. This no man's land was supposed to be patrolled by hundreds of drones, operated by some desk jockeys in Nevada, but it turns out to be cheaper to send out a few hundred grunts with worn out rifles to walk the line.

CURRENT US MILITARY GEAR

In the world of Dark Conspiracy, the US Military may no longer be as powerful as it once was, but it is still the most powerful (human) military on the face of the planet.

INTERCEPTOR BODY ARMOUR

	Weight	Price	Armour	Notes
O TV	3.8kg	\$800 (S/C)	Torso 1	
+SAPI Plates	+1.8kg ea.	\$400 ea. (S/C)	Torso 2 (1-4 on a D6)	
+Groin Protector	+0.25kg	\$100 (S/C)	Legs (1 on a D6)	Limits movement to a trot
+Throat Protector	+0.25kg	\$50 (S/C)	Head (1 on a D6)	Cumulative with Helmets
IOTV	2.1kg	\$1000 (S/C)	Torso 1	
+ESAPI Plates	+2.5 kg ea.	\$600 ea. (S/C)	Torso 3 (1-4 on a D6)	
+ESBI Plates	+1 kg ea.	\$150 ea. (S/C)	Torso 2 (1 on a D6)	Cumulative with plates
+DAP Protectors	+1 kg ea.	\$220 ea. (S/C)	Arms (1-2 on a D6)	Reduces initiative by -1

The US Marine Corps' Modular Tactical Vest is a very similar system.

RANGER BODY ARMOUR

RBA:	Weight: 11kg	Price: \$250 (R/S)	Armour: Torso 1
Trauma Plates:	Weight: 3kg	Price: \$750 (R/S)	Armour: Torso 2 (1-3)

US military gear is stolen and sold off through the black market wherever soldiers are left unpaid and supply sergeants aren't closely supervised.

BODY ARMOUR

INTERCEPTOR BODY ARMOUR

The current Army issue body armour replacing the PASGT system, the Kevlar vest will stop 9mm rounds. Two Small Arms Protective Insert (SAPI) plates can be added in front and behind, and will stop three hits from a .308, though they will need to be replaced after. Optional throat

and groin protection also provide further protection.

The Improved Outer Tactical Vest carries Enhanced SAPI plates which are proof against Armour Piercing .308 rounds, and may also mount Enhanced Side Ballistic Inserts (ESBI) protecting the torso side and arm protection (DAP), which protects the outer and under arm area. Adding all this encumbers the wearer somewhat, reducing initiative by -1, and reducing movement to a trot.

RANGER BODY ARMOUR

Issued to the 75th Ranger Regiment during the 1990's and 2000's, it was a heavy Kevlar vest, which could carry a ceramic trauma plate over the vital organs, the plate would stop a .308 round, but would need to be replaced afterwards.

PERSONNEL ARMOUR SYSTEM FOR GROUND TROOPS (PASGT)

Used by the US army until 2003, consisting of both a vest and helmet nicknamed the "fritz" due to its resemblance to the



PERSONNEL ARMOUR SYSTEM FOR GROUND TROOPS (PASGT)

PASGT Vest:	Weight: 4 Kg	Price: 350\$ (S/C)	Armour: Torso 1
PASGT Overvest:	Weight: 7 Kg	Price: 750\$ (S/C)	Armour: Torso 2 (1-4)
PASGT Helmet:	Weight: 2kg	Price: \$300 (S/C)	Armour: Head 1 (1-4)

MICH-2000 HELMET

MICH Helmet:	Weight: 1.5 kg	Price: \$500 (S/C)	Armour: Head 1 (1-4)
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RAMTECH TRAUMA PLATES

RamTech Tall	Price: \$400 (S/C)	Weight: 1.5kg	Armour: Torso 2 (1-2)
+Multi-Hit:	+\$250	+0.5kg	
+Improved Armour:	+\$250	+0.5kg	3 Armour
Rotech Grande	Price: \$500 (S/C)	Weight: 2kg	Armour: Torso 2 (1-3)
+Multi-Hit:	+\$300	+1kg	
+Improved Armour:	+\$300	+1.0kg	3 Armour
Rotech Venti	Price: \$600 (S/C)	Weight: 2.5kg	Armour: Torso 2 (1-4)
+Multi-Hit:	+\$350	+1.5kg	
+Improved Armour:	+\$350	+1.5kg	3 Armour
Tactical Plate Carrier	Price: \$500 (C/V)	Weight: 3kg	
Covert Plate Carrier	Price: \$500 (S/C)	Weight: 1kg	

German WWII helmet, it was not proof against rifle rounds, but helped greatly against shrapnel. The vest could be enhanced with a heavy over vest, which reduces initiative by -1 and limits movement to a trot.

MICH-2000 HELMET

This replacement for the PASGT offers slightly less protection but provides better

situational awareness than the older model, it has a mounting bracket for NVG's, is compatible with communications gear, and gas masks. Notably it is not forced off the wearers head by the high collar of Interceptor body armour when prone.

RAMTECH TRAUMA PLATES

Available in three different sizes (Tall, Grande, Venti) these hard ceramic plates

are available in a variety of protective levels, and in single or multiple strike capabilities. RamTech and a number of other companies manufacture various Plate Carrier vests, including inflatable Life Vest variants, and even some covert civilian clothing. Minion hunters have been known to improvise plate carriers with duct tape, although this is not recommended.

Price and weight are for a single facing (front or rear), for improved safety, both plates should be fitted. Normal are considered destroyed after a single, although a kind GM may give them Armour 1.

ARMY COMBAT UNIFORM

The most recent combat uniform of the United States Army, the original Universal Camouflage Pattern (UCP) is slowly being replaced by the more desert friendly multicam, much more useful in the great dustbowl. At the GM's discretion, wearing ACU makes Stealth checks one level easier, or Observation tests made to spot the wearer one level harder.

ACU

Price: \$75

Weight: N/A



MI6 VARIANTS

Since Dark Conspiracy was published there have been many updates to the M16 Rifle family, even more variation is available in the civilian market, where the AR15 is the most popular black rifle. Simply reduce the ROF to Semi-auto only, and the AR15 equivalent will be available at a similar price and scarcity.

MI6A4 ASSAULT RIFLE

The M16A4 rifle replaces the M16's carry handle with a full length Picatinny rail (RAS) atop the rifle, and at the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions on the hand guard, allowing them to mount many accessories.

A fully equipped issue M16A4 usually mounts an AN/PAQ-4A IR Laser, 4x ACOG sight, and Front Grip.

BARRETT REC7

Barrett's piston drive M16 pattern rifle is available in 5.56 or 6.8mm with the latter undergoing testing with Special Forces units. The 6.8mm round delivers 50% more energy out to a longer range than the 5.56.

USCM M27 IAR

The Marines Infantry Automatic Rifle is intended to replace the Corp's ageing M249-SAWs. It is normally fielded with a 90 round magazine.

COLT SCW

An innovative M4 style weapon with a 10" barrel and folding stock, this weapon is being "evaluated" by Special forces and Corporate Executive Protection Teams, as it can be concealed under a heavy jacket.

Minion hunters find their small size helpful in getting close to a target.

MI6A4



--Recoil--

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng
M16A4	5	3	1-Nil	5	20/30	3	5	55*

+15m range for Aimed shots

Ammo: 5.56mm NATO
Weight: 3.8kg 5kg fully equipped
Mag: 30
Price: \$500 (-/C)
 \$3500 (-/S) fully equipped

USCM M27 IAR



--Recoil--

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng
M27IAR	5	3	1-Nil	3/4	20/30/90	3	8	40*

* Range is reduced to 30m and bulk to 3 with the stock closed.

Ammo: 5.56mm NATO
Weight: 3.7kg
Mag: 30 or 90 round box
Price: \$750 (-/C)

BARRETT REC7



--Recoil--

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng
REC7-5.56	5	3	1-Nil	4/5	30	2	5	55
REC7-6.8	5	3+	1-Nil	4/5	30	2	5	65

As there is no halfway difference between 5.56mm and 7.62mm damage, GM's should consider giving +1 damage on each dice, similar to the .22LR's 1D6-1 damage.

Ammo: 5.56mm NATO or 6.8mm SPC
Weight: 3.7kg
Mag: 30 box
Price: \$2400 (-/C)

COLT SCW



--Recoil--

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng
SCW 5.56	5	2	1-Nil	2/3	30	1	4	15*
SCW 6.8	5	3	1-Nil	2/3	30	2	5	25*

*Add +5m to range and +1 bulk when folding stock is extended

Ammo: 5.56mm NATO or 6.8mm SPC
Weight: 2.5kg
Mag: 20/30 box
Price: \$1500 (-/S)

FIREARM ACCESSORIES

ANGLED FORE GRIP (AFG)

A more tacti-cool version of the vertical foregrip (see Protodimension #4, p 33), the AFG can often be seen in service with elite forces, and the more image conscious Private Military Company, such as the Elite HoneyWell and Koch Jaeger teams.

Price: \$35 (S/C)

ACOG

The Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight is a battery-free telescopic sight that uses fibre optics to gather light, or tritium in low light conditions. Bible verses can still be found inscribed inside the casing of Trijicon optics, making them popular amongst the more spiritually inclined minion hunters.

Treat these as Telescopic Rifle Sights (per Dark Conspiracy 1st edition), but they can be used in complete darkness.

Price: \$1000 (S/C)

Weight: 0.4kg

REFLEX SIGHT

Red Dot sights, such as the Eotech range use a laser to project a holographic reticule onto the sight, this means the sight does

suffer parallax; if you can see the reticule, then the red dot is on the point of aim, no matter where your head is. They are extremely fast to aim in close quarters battle.

If used within 40m (at the GM's discretion), the first Quick Shot in a phase is treated as an Aimed Shot instead. If this seems too powerful, then treat as a laser sight; up to three shots in a phase count as aimed, rather than one.

Price: \$750 (S/C)

Weight: 0.2kg



DARK[®]
CONSPIRACY

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RENEGADE ETS

A Dissection
By T. Mike McCurley
For Dark Conspiracy®

RENEGADE ET

You are a being without a home, or at least one that you have ever seen with your own eyes. A child of humanoid ET's, you were born in the Mother Ship concealed in a parking orbit in the asteroid belt. Your parents told you little about the homeworld, always insisting that the future was in this star system, not a distant planet where at least a millennium had passed since the ship's departure.

Although you were to join the exploration teams making a thorough survey of the solar system, your training was cut short by the catastrophe that swept through the crew of explorers. Your own parents perished to guarantee that you escape and warn the humans. You did, but now you are a hunted fugitive.

Many humans are willing to help you, but the powerful mind that destroyed your parents and seized control of most of their surviving shipmates has infiltrated human society as well. Now you can no longer afford to trust the military and government representatives you once worked with. Only your own wits, and occasional help from the human empathic underground, has kept you alive this long.

Entry: No prerequisites.

Attributes:

-2 STR, -2 CON, +2 EDU, +4 EMP.

Note: Attributes greater than 10 are possible for Renegade ET's.

First Term Skills:

Act/Bluff 1, Animal Empathy 1, Computer Empathy 1, Disguise 1, Foreboding 1, Human Empathy 1, Project Thought 3

Contacts: One extraterrestrial, one military, and one empathic.

Special: This "career" is actually the basic skill lists and attribute modifiers for a humanoid ET character. No secondary activities are allowed in this term, but this does not count as a normal term in career generation. (That is, no die roll is made at the end of the term to terminate character generation.) All subsequent terms must be taken in other careers.

Because humanoid ET's are very long-lived, they suffer no adverse effects from aging during character generation.

Renegade ET's are hunted by the Dark Ones, and are subject to the same sort of occasional nasty surprises as are cyborg escapees.

No money is earned during this career.

The above is directly taken from page 6 of the PC Booster Kit, © 1992 by GDW, Inc, ISBN 1-558780125- 0.

But that is not the whole story...



Jenni 2K looked around herself in horror. The living room was a shambles, with blood and indeterminate organic matter clinging to the walls. The air reeked of cordite and bodily wastes. Only moments before it had been a calm meeting with three men claiming to be of assistance in procuring new identities for her and her companion. Now it was an abattoir.

She swallowed past a lump in her throat and tried in desperation to tune out the psychic screams that still hung in the air. Her hands trembled as she brought them up to cover her face. Huge sobs wracked her body and she fell to her knees, unmindful of the liquid that soaked through the fabric of her jeans. Jerking her hands clear, she retched noisily onto the floor as another wave of the still-extant terror washed over her.

Standing beside her, Jurgen switched magazines on the MP-5, snapping closed the action with a ratcheting sound. He gently placed a hand on the shoulder of the white-haired woman who knelt on the floor.

“Come on, kid,” he urged. He had always called her that. ‘Kid’. As if he were older than her. The few strands of grey that had begun to appear in his close-cropped hair were no match to the time she had known.

“We gotta go,” he said. “This was a setup from the start and they’ll have reinforcements on the way.”

Spitting out the last of the foulness from her mouth, Jenni nodded and stood on shaky legs. She reached out a hand and laid it on his powerful arm, feeling as always the restrained fury that Jurgen possessed. She took a slow breath in through her mouth, avoiding the worst of the smells in the room.

“Then let us be off,” she whispered.

They stepped clear of the now-abandoned house, feet kicking up dust on the ground outside. Jurgen paused to toss a canister of white phosphorus into the building and then led the way back to their waiting Lancer at a jog.

Jenni sighed aloud as the low-pitched whump of the grenade detonating sounded behind them. Flames spewed from the windows, visible now in the rear-view mirror as Jurgen accelerated sharply away from the house and onto the dirt access road. Gravel sprayed in their wake.

“I thought this time for sure,” she murmured.

Life as a renegade extraterrestrial is never easy. It consists of constant paranoia, frequent relocation, dangerous situations and clandestine meetings. Few people on Dark Earth trust outsiders these days -often with good reason -and continually moving from place to place, dealing with the entrenched mentality of the residents, can have a detrimental effect on the most secure psyche. Add in the fact that Dark Ones wait around seemingly every corner, and the life becomes almost a burden.

Little surprise that more of those who have ‘awakened’ to their new world commit suicide than are captured or killed.

The Renegade ET character class is more than a chance to play a PC with a high EMP score. It is a conscious choice to explore the persona of a character thrust into situations so fraught with peril that the mind boggles. Whether alone or with one or more partners, the ET is under constant threat of exposure. The reaction of the majority of the public to knowing the truth would be almost identical to discovery by the Dark Ones. Certainly the results would be the same. Imprisonment, torture, or worse. A simple execution would be a best case scenario.

Renegades are best used as part of a traveling team, where their talents can be used



within the protective circle of their teammates. Remaining in one place too long invites trouble. It is far too easy, even with well-forged documents, for a life of stability to be disrupted by the smallest of incidents.

The empathic skills of a renegade are their best feature, both from a gaming and a roleplaying aspect. They should not be regarded as the proverbial ‘mage’ to back up the warriors that make up the front line of the team, however. This is doing them a grievous disservice. It is with that in mind that we explore the career more fully.

BEGINNINGS

From where did the renegade originate? The original blurb describes them as having been on a “Mother Ship” when the Dark Ones began their psychic domination of the ET’s. Escaping with instructions to warn the humans, the renegade found that they were too late, as the Dark Ones had begun their infiltration of humanity as well.

This is a wonderful start to creating a character, but how much does it encompass? Does every Renegade come from the same background? Certainly not, no more than any other PC does.

CHARACTER CREATION

Your “childhood” is encompassed in the basic skills, bonuses and penalties that make up this package. Let us begin by examining these in some detail:

- ☠ **A) -2 STR** Sad it may be, but the bodies of your kind are not built to the same physical peaks as humanity. Your society has long since left behind the reliance on physical prowess that others still possess. This could be due to your natural Empathic abilities, a higher overall level of intellect that allows you to construct labor-saving technological devices, or a myriad other reasons.
- ☠ **B) -2 CON** Similarly, you are not so resistant to strain or disease as some races. Perhaps you grew up in a sterile environment, kept clean of outside organisms. A slight difference in gravity could mean less effort was expended to perform basic duties and the arrival on Earth has meant you are not as hardy as you could have been. Again, your species may simply have “evolved beyond” the efforts that would result in a hardier physique.
- ☠ **C) +2 EDU** Here is where your people begin to shine. The very fact that you have become a star-faring race demanded a higher level of mental function than most on Earth. There are those among your kind that eclipse the brightest of Earth’s minds as a magnesium flare outshines a match. Abstract concepts are easier for you to grasp. Mathematical and scientific constructs are second nature. Memories are sharper and more distinct. Combined with Empathic abilities, this enables you to think as one mind, to connect thoughts with others with all the ease of a telephone circuit being connected.
- ☠ **D) +4 EMP** This is why your race was so important to the Dark Ones in their infiltration plans. Able to penetrate the minds of others, implant thoughts or emotions, and walk away undetected. You are connected to the very forces of life itself, at its deepest levels.
- ☠ **E) Act/Bluff 1** Early on, you learned that lying about your background would have to become natural for you. If you were discovered, you faced the gravest of threats. You learned to flim-flam your way through conversations, divert attention from yourself, and make others believe what you needed them to.
- ☠ **F) Animal Empathy 1** Constantly running means you wind up in strange places. Sleeping in barns, attics, and abandoned tenements. Skulking about



in sewers. Hiding from hunting dogs. Searching for food. All in all, you developed an affinity for understanding the minds of animals, be they rats or dogs, horses or antelope.

- ☛ **G) Computer Empathy 1** Records. The human world is awash in them. Payrolls, finances, birth and death, medical histories, school schedules, the list goes on and on. There are so many that it is impossible to keep every one on paper somewhere. They have become increasingly dependent on the computer for maintaining their lives. No one survives long on the run without at least getting to understand the way data is managed. It helps you with your cover identities, learning the local customs, keeping track of your pursuers, and much more. Tuning in to the very mind of the computer gives you an edge of which the most experienced hacker can only dream.
- ☛ **H) Disguise 1** As with 'Act/Bluff' above, you have found yourself in a world that does not trust any outsider, let alone one from another world. Whether to simply change your looks from pale to tanned, blond to brunette, or to conceal that third eye that your Granduncle warned you about,

the Disguise skill can become one of your closest friends. More than simply applying makeup and sticking on a fake mustache, the art of disguise is about presenting an image that others will believe. It is about blending in rather than sticking out.

- ☛ **I) Foreboding 1** Constant paranoia is your friend. Knowing what, where, when, and who the threats are can save you a world of trouble later. For now you can leave 'why' behind. You are who you are, and that is reason enough. Pay attention to that little voice in your head that tells you what is going on. Perhaps you see it as the voices of your ancestors, or your Guardian Angel (after spending a little time with the humans). Whatever it is, it works. You have an ability to determine when things are going to happen. It may be to you or it may be to others. Either way, it will affect you in the long run.
- ☛ **J) Human Empathy 1** Spend enough time around people, and you will begin to realize how they think. The little nuances that make every man and woman human will become apparent to you. Develop this talent and you will find yourself more able to live amongst them.

- ☛ **K) Project Thought 2** You can never let them think they have you. If you sense trouble, make sure that they believe you to be something other than you really are. Though some of your brethren believe this talent to be a violation akin to a mental rape, and others see it as a means to dominate, you have come to realize that it is simply another of the many valuable lessons learned from your family. With it, you can often pass unnoticed, obtain goods and services otherwise unavailable, defuse dangerous situations, and expose or conceal truth as needed.
- ☛ **L) Contacts** One ET, one military, and one Empathic.

 - ☛ **L1) Extraterrestrial** This could be from your own species or another. The contact may be similar in outlook to your own or not, but on some level you are connected. For one reason or another, you can depend on them to some extent. If nothing else, you have your self-same lack of humanity as a building block.
 - ☛ **L2) Military** Often this is one of the group who was assigned to liaise with your people upon arrival, but could as easily be a kindred



spirit who saw the truth and helped you for reasons of their own.

✖ **L3) Empathic** Nearly half of the people on the planet show some level of Empathic ability, from the lowest to those capable of amazing feats that are only beginning to be understood. Whether they are an underground resistance fighter, a well-schooled mystical researcher, or a fortuneteller who happens to be right more often than not, you have found a fellow traveler who can understand what it is like to have senses beyond those of many.

Having noted the many possible reasons for any variance, you can now see that the PC is more than just an empathic version of any other character. Ask yourself Why as you examine your choices for future careers and skills. Why do you take Project Thought and not Foreboding? Why is Stealth important to your particular PC? Each choice is simple enough in game terms, but represents years of hard-fought experience to your character. A few examples of how these choices come into play is presented later.

For now, let's take a look at a basic character, created by random die roll. We will call the Renegade "Joe". The player

decides that he wants a character who can fit in with the people around him and offer some technical assistance, rather than being a front-line fighter. He wants someone whose experience and knowledge is more often brought to bear.

Joe rolls the following for his primary stats: 4, 9, 6, 7, 5 and 8. He rolls a 3 for EMP.

Assigning the stats in a manner that matches the character concept, they are placed as follows:

The 9 goes to Intelligence. Joe is a thinker. He analyzes the situations in which he finds himself before taking action.

The 7 is assigned to Education. Having a broad knowledge base, in conjunction with his intellect, gives Joe a better chance of applying the correct action. +2 from his racial stats makes this a 9.

The 6 is placed in Charisma. It is important to the player that Joe be able to blend in, and he wants someone who is friendly and adaptive.

The 4 goes into Agility. Joe wants some measure of physical dexterity, but has to put the lower roll somewhere.

The 8 is placed in Constitution, which Joe decides is due in part to a morning exercise regime. -2 racially makes this a 6.

The 5, finally, goes into Strength, which the player had decided was least important to his concept of Joe. -2 racially leaves him with a 3.

Once the bonuses and penalties for race are applied, we have the following:

STR 3
CON 6
AGL 4
INT 9
EDU 9
CHA 6
EMP 7

Looking at the character so far, we can see that Joe is highly intelligent, with a well-rounded ability to apply that intellect. He is friendly enough that his intellect is seen as simply a part of who he is, rather than becoming all that he is. He keeps himself in acceptable shape, though he is no weightlifter. His less-than-perfect coordination hampers him in physical fitness, but he has become an avid runner -which also helps him when he has to escape.

He takes his introductory skills as assigned.

- Act/Bluff (1)
- Animal Empathy (1)
- Computer Empathy (1)
- Disguise (1)
- Foreboding (1)
- Human Empathy (1)
- Project Thought (3)

While none of his introductory skills play to his two biggest strengths (INT & EDU), Joe's player is certain that in the future, he will pick up more than a few of them.

Joe's player takes his introductory contacts as follows:

Extraterrestrial Joe leaves this one as a generic contact, to be determined later.

- ☛ **Military** Joe sets this as Lieutenant Anna Danvers, US Air Force Intelligence, reasoning that she would have been one of his early contact team. Due to Joe's constant hunger for knowledge, he became fast friends with Anna. Despite being unable to trust many of the military and government representatives with whom he had become acquainted, Joe has a solid contact in Anna.
- ☛ **Empathic** Joe decides that this is Doctor Ethan Strumm, a parapsychist assigned to work with him in determining his level of empathic ability.

Dr. Strumm also enjoyed chess, which Joe found a fascinating game. They played many matches against one another, during which they spoke for hours. Joe does not consider Dr. Strumm a friend, but he is definitely someone to whom Joe could turn for occasional assistance.

INITIAL CAREER

Extraterrestrial characters may not chose any of the following careers: no-menklatura, entertainer or politician (due to the high visibility and public scrutiny that goes along with them) or any military career (because their inhuman nature would show up during the initial physical examinations). Barring that, they can choose any career for which they meet the prerequisites.

Obvious choices are Underground Empath, Mystic, Drifter, or Criminal. Any of these will help explore the first few years of the PC's escape into the real world. Each of them is easily explained as a choice. For the more difficult choices, you go back to concept. What is it you want your Renegade to be?

Joe's player decides that Joe would initially try to blend in and learn as much as possible. Given his intellect, an obvious choice

would be an Educational career path. So Joe enrolls in Undergraduate school, having convinced his Military contact Anna Danvers to forge a set of identification papers that show him as being a high school graduate. This not only gives him some background, but also a reason for Danvers to contact him in the future as a story hook - "Remember when you needed a favor from me? Well now it's my turn."

For his first term, Joe may obtain 9 levels from the list of available skills. He chooses as follows:

- ☛ **Biology 1** Understanding of how living objects function
- ☛ **Chemistry 1** What interacts with what can be an important thing to know
- ☛ **Computer Operations 2** Joe has realized the importance society places on computerization
- ☛ **Psychology 2** Why do people think the way they do? How can it be exploited?
- ☛ **Language: English 3** Though he has a rudimentary ability to speak, this hones his talent

He is allowed one contact per term, academic or journalism. Choosing academic, Joe sets it up as a generic contact to be de-



cided later. He rolls a 3, determining that the contact is not foreign in nature.

For a secondary activity, Joe chooses Small Arms -Pistol (1), deciding that relying entirely on his good fortune to get him out of scrapes may not be enough. He joins up at a local range and begins learning how to use a handgun.

SECONDARY AND SUBSEQUENT CAREERS

Following the initial choice, it is a matter of continuing to assign careers to your character until you have reached the point at which you are comfortable. Remember that extraterrestrial characters do not age as do normal humans, and it is not necessary to roll for adverse aging effects during character generation.

By combining careers, it is possible to represent nearly any type of character you wish. Here are a few examples.

Underground Empath followed by Clergy? The PC began to see the work of a higher power in what was going on and became a follower of that power. Remaining connected to the Underground, she now helps them by counseling and exposing the Dark in a more traditional way.

Criminal followed by Medical school? Recognizing that her life in the shadows was not helping in the manner she truly wanted to, the PC decided it might be better to take a more active role in aiding people. Or perhaps, aided in years of hiding by organized crime figures, the PC has decided to repay them by becoming a resource that they can turn to when bad things happen to their street soldiers.

Factory Worker to Environmentalist? Stranger things have happened. Perhaps years of dehumanizing labor in the factory created a desire to get out and see what the world had to offer, or perhaps the knowledge of how much of the world's resources were being wasted in the factories led the PC to take an active role in preserving them.

Computer Operator to Private Investigator? After a long time of dealing with data, the PC began to notice how it could be used to track and manipulate people. She turned her knowledge to a different field, tracking data trails of the parties in league with the Dark and bringing them to public view.

COMBINING SKILLS TO HEIGHTEN EFFECTS

Note: The following is subject to modification/discard/etc by the GM of your particular game. It is presented as an exercise in roleplaying thought rather than hard-and-fast rules of any kind.

Consider your abilities as a whole rather than as a group of parts. So you have Disguise at level 2. Is this good enough to sleaze your way in to the Oval Office for a midnight snack with the President? Easy answer? No. Complicated answer? It depends on who you are.

From a roleplaying standpoint, multiple skills overlap and interlock to form new skillsets. Using the above example: You have Disguise 2. You also have Human Empathy at Level 4, Project Emotion 5, Project Thought 5, and Stealth 4. Here are a few interactions with just that short list:

Disguise + Project Emotion: A few rags, some dirt, and a constant, low-level projection of both fear and revulsion. Now you are the "stinky homeless guy over there". Depending on your surroundings, this may be enough to make you completely overlooked.

Project Thought + Disguise: Minimal work to blend in can be supplemented by

judicious use of your PT skill to make viewers believe you do belong there.

Stealth + Human Empathy: The art of hiding is infinitely easier if you know where your pursuer might be prepared to look. Drop in Project Emotion, and you can give them the feeling that something is wrong in an area away from you. Add Project Thought, and they suddenly believe that something horrible has happened in the BioPhysics lab, which leads to them running away from your hiding place.

Project Thought + Stealth: Constant repetition of the “I am a bush” mantra leaves your pursuer seeing nothing more than a shrub where you hide.

Now let's throw the whole group together: Disguise lets you clean yourself up and put on a business suit, as well as adapt the mannerisms necessary to appear important. Project Emotion is used carefully to give you an aura of import that others will respect. Human Empathy gives you the ability to sense when others are not quite as fooled by you as you might like, which is a cue for you to supplement your disguise with a little Project Thought. Stealth teaches you what would be the best avenues of approach in the building as well as showing you where the best hiding places are should

you fail. Now you're ready to go visit the President!

The above are just top-of-the-head examples of how your skills interrelate. Use of the many Empathy skills is more than just seeing your PC as some kind of blaster. Doing that is little more than trading your brain for a shotgun. Certainly, by following the rules, that makes for a usable character, but it has no soul to it. The essence of roleplaying is to bring this character to life, and the more you do when you create them, the more pleasure they will bring at the table.



DARK CONSPIRACY®



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My MADNESS DANCES

WITH ME

By Norm Fenlason

In the heart of my sorrow, my Madness
dances with me,

My love is lost, my life is worn, I suffer no
relief,

Show me no Compassion for I deserve none,
For my own hands have wrought my
madness,

And now we Dance.

My dance with Madness is sweet and
bitter,

My Love's screaming is all I've got left,
Remnants of the unfinished ritual crown
my arrogance,

The blood on my hands was not mine,
She Danced Then, not me.

In frenzy I seek the answers to rebuild
the Gate I lost,

Such knowledge is denied me, the stars
seem incomplete,

I must! I must! My Love lies waiting, con-
stantly calling,

With trembling fingers and tight throat I
Call,

My Dance goes on.

The midnight stars are right tonight,

My joy roughly carries me through the
steps,

The Call, the slash, the offering's blood,

I see my Love's face start to form,

The Dance so maddeningly quickens.

I hearken to the Call that comes, a
strange voice, not my Love's,

Betrayed, I sense the Dance's end, No! I
scream:

It's all wrong! My Love is not to be seen,
The foot that steps is clawed, the fingers
gray,

What Dance this I wonder?

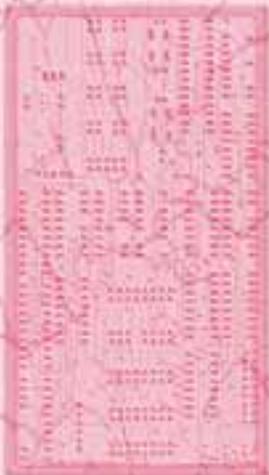
I can't resist as at last I can view,

My Love's visage staring blankly at me,
The Fingers grasp my neck, the claws dig
fiercely in,

But the Pain I feel comes not from that,
but the loss of my Soul instead,

At last my Dance is done.

CYBERTECH IMPLANTS



HighTek Implants
By Kevin O'Neill
For Dark Conspiracy®

INTRODUCTION

Dark Conspiracy® doesn't make much use of cybertech although its setting certainly allows for much more. In this article I've listed some common forms of Implant cyberwear, both legal and illegal, that could be commonplace within the game world. Some devices come from another GDW RPG, **2300AD**® (specifically the Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook), while the majority of the devices described here come from Rob Myer's former webpage for 2300AD. Sadly, his webpage has been defunct since 2005 and rather than see his work fade away, I have updated and expanded it for use with Dark Conspiracy.

His original page can be found via the *Internet Archive Wayback Machine* using the following URL:

<http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20050322051511/http://homepage.mac.com/robmyers/jiex/2302/janvier/index.html>

Following Rob Myer's lead, I've used the term 'Implant' to describe a small or tiny electronic device that is placed within the body, it's purpose being to enhance rather than replace the organ or limb etc. that it is embedded in. This is opposed to the 'Replacement' type of cyberwear that we are more familiar with from other RPGs

(i.e. cybertech that removes the organic material and completely replaces it with an electronic analogue).

As a side note, many of the devices here were thought to be firmly in the realms of fantasy in the 1980s-1990s but the 2000s have seen some of them being seriously researched with a view to having them available for mainstream use by the 2020s. Some of the descriptions take into account these real world developments.

Descriptions assume the use of the D20 rules for Dark Conspiracy (i.e. 2nd edition rules) whereby difficulty levels are Easy, Average, Difficult, Formidable and Impossible and skill levels of 0 are available (Skill level 0 indicates a basic familiarity with the skill but no training in it—you don't actually have the skill but you have some idea of what's involved. Normally an Unskilled Test would be rolled for if the character didn't have the Skill needed, that is to say, the character uses the Skill's controlling Attribute but with a Difficulty one level higher than normal. Skill level 0 removes the Difficulty level increase.

GAME BACKGROUND

In the 2010s-2020s, Cybertech is a polarizing topic amongst Mikes and Nomes, (the devices are far too costly for the Proles). For





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some, it's an incredible asset and a fixture of their daily life, particularly for those involved in business or those who have lost a limb or an eye etc. For the others, it's an unwanted addition to their world, seen as something artificial, even alien, implanted into the body and displacing the 'spirit' of the person.

No matter their particular view, Cybertech (coupled with advances in nanotech making devices smaller again) is here to stay and it offers a substantial increase in capability over any contemporary non-cybertech item.

The most potent cybertech is reserved for the use of the Corporations, they sell their 'next best' to government users and whatever is left is considered safe enough to sell to the general public. While development is ongoing, most of the legal cybertech devices are little more than updates or variations on earlier products and in the main, they are beneficial to society. There is also, however, a 'black' side to the R&D, fuelled by a persistent market for other types of Cybertech.

This Cybertech is of dubious value to society and is often classed as illegal as soon as a government learns of its existence. These devices are the 'big sellers' for the 'black' cyber-clinics, the backstreet

cyber-docs and even for some intelligence agencies.

The most well known form of Cybertech encountered on a daily level is the neural jack and the wireless jack. While the neural jack embeds a connection plug into your cranium, the wireless jack is much more discrete and can also make use of the wireless nodes found in the cities. Essentially an expansion of Bluetooth technology, the wireless jack is more aesthetically pleasing and a lot less obvious in any physical search. They have quickly become the more common form of connecting the user to a device and the most user friendly. However for networking, they become far less use when you're away from civilization, unless you have something that can function as a wireless transceiver or booster.

IMPLANTS VS. ORGAN REPLACEMENT

While complete replacement of an organ, such as an eye or ear, or a limb is possible with Cybertech, some individuals prefer not to have such an invasive procedure and opt for an implant instead. The benefits of organ replacement cyberwear are many, including increased durability, ease of upgrading and often multiple abilities rather than the singular ability of an implant e.g. a cybereye could have low-light vision, zoom vision and image transmission to the optic



nerve whereas an implant will only confer one of those abilities and cannot be upgraded to incorporate more (i.e. a second implant would have to be installed).

Implants however, are far less obvious (an important consideration for some) and consume far less power than organ replacement cyberwear, (being powered by the users own body heat and/or oxygen from their blood). They are typically less expensive and require far less post-operative care (some require none at all) and more importantly for some, they don't 'feel' as though you have cut off part of your organic body to replace it with a machine.

LEGAL CYBERTECH IMPLANTS

AUDIOPHONE IMPLANTS

AudioPhone implants replace a telephone headset or a microphone and headphones. The microphone is implanted in the upper lip or cheek, and the headphones are implanted in the outer part of the ears. Each is a small bead five millimetres long and three millimetres wide, and has a range of two metres.

The transceiver or relay for the implants must be within this range and consists of a discrete, lightweight and shock-resistant box with a rechargeable battery. In the

workplace it is typically connected to the users computer (and will recharge the battery while connected) but it can be removed and clipped to the clothing for those times when away from the computer. Typical use will see the battery power the transceiver for up to 4 days.

Weight: transceiver, 0.1kg

Price: implants, \$550 (S/V)
transceiver, \$180 (S/V)
surgery for implanting \$375

BLACK BOX RECORDER

This cranial implant records biometric data and the last five minutes of sound and vision heard and seen by the character. It stops recording (and saves the data) if the user panics or if they think a command. The device is also semi-autonomous, it will automatically record if the user dies and will audio-visual for up to five minutes as long as the user's eyes and ears are not damaged or closed/blocked. It does this by supplying its own power to the optic and audio nerves.

Black Boxes are used by field agents, police officers in high threat response units and other individuals who may need a downloadable record of their actions. This device requires a Neural Jack or a Wireless

Jack to send data to another device (e.g. the computer used to analyze the recordings).

Some post-operative care is required after being implanted, hence the increased medical cost .

Price: implant, \$2600 (R/C)
surgery for implanting \$1200

CHIPPED SKILLS

Modified from 2300AD Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook for Colour Enhancement cyberwear.

A big advantage of the Neural Jack (see below) is that it can serve as a receptacle for a software plug-in that expands a character's memory. This software has come to be called a 'chip' and the information it contains a 'chipped skill'. A chipped skill will lend a person knowledge of some field they don't already know or knows less about than is contained on the chip. However it can only give basic understanding in that skill so for example, a person with the aircraft pilot chip would 'know' how to make a plane take-off and land, maintain engine speed, climb, dive, turn and so on, but they would not know how to combine these maneuvers to win dogfights.

Any Skill from the basic game rules can be chipped. Chips typically contain information equivalent of a level 0 to 3 Skill.

Some rare chips even contain knowledge equivalent to a Skill level of 4 and it's rumoured that corporations have chips to a Skill level of 5.

There are various limitations that should be considered however, for example Demolitions and Heavy Weapons Skills are not going to be available for public sale and Empathy Skills could not be placed on a chip at all. High levels of certain Skills only come with experience and a deep level of understanding of the subject matter so a high level chip for these Skills should be unlikely or if they are available, they should be unusable by a character if the chip Skill is more than 2 levels higher than their own Skill level. Using the Physics skill as an example, someone who has not actually studied Physics (i.e. no Skill level) is just not going to be able to relate to (let alone understand how to use) the knowledge of Physics that a character with Physics level 3 would understand. A chipped skill can give the basics but it cannot give the understanding of such complex Skills.

As long as a character has a chip plugged into their neural jack, they are considered to have the skill level contained on the chip. In other words, the chip's Skill level is not added to the character's Skill (if any),

but is used instead of the character's Skill level.

Once the chip is removed, the character returns to their normal level in the Skill. It takes approximately 30 seconds to insert or remove a chip and another 30 seconds for the user to become 'aware' of the new knowledge. The Skill is then used instinctually and doesn't require the user to 'think' about using it.

Characters can eventually learn a Skill from a chip if they spend enough time with it plugged in. In such cases, the Referee should simply consider the chip as an official training program and have the character spend the normal experience point costs to learn the skill, as described in the basic Dark Conspiracy rules for acquiring new skills.

Price: Skill level 0, \$100 (V/V)
 Skill level 1, \$175 (C/C)
 Skill level 2, \$250 (C/C)
 Skill level 3, \$325 (S/S)
 Skill level 4, \$500 (R/S)
 Skill level 5, \$1000 (-/-)

Availability for controlled Skills e.g. Demolitions, should typically be (-/S) at all levels below Skill 5 where it will revert to (-/-).

COLOUR ENHANCER

Modified from 2300AD Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook for Colour Enhancement cyberwear.

These eye implants are a small wafer of photosensitive material mounted to the back of the eyeball. They allow the user to change the colour of incoming light so that they can see the target object in either black and white (to reveal greater detail and to make it easier to spot camouflaged targets), or shifted colours i.e. changing the seen colour to another in the spectrum so that the brain can better differentiate between objects in the field of view. For example, the character could change black to orange so that they will have an easier task to notice a black wetsuit on the surface of the ocean. It can also make it easier to see an object hidden behind shrubs because the colours of clothing don't exactly match the colours of plants, this also makes it easier to spot camouflaged objects and so on.

In terms of the rules, it makes Observation tasks one level easier and at the Referee's discretion may allow a Failed Observation task roll to be less severe in outcome. Some post-operative care is required after implanting these devices into the eyes. A person could save money and have just one eye modified for half the cost



of both the device and surgery although there is a 2 in 10 chance (i.e. roll 1 or 2 on 1D10) that the differing input from the enhanced and the non-enhanced eye could confuse the brain, this results in Automatic Failure of the task. This can normally be avoided by closing the non-enhanced eye but during times of stress, the character might forget to do this and a Difficult [INT] check may be appropriate to decide if the character has indeed remembered.

Price: implant \$650 (R/S)
surgery for implanting \$1200

CREDIT CHIP

Credit cards can be stolen or copied and DNA, fingerprint and retinal scans can be forged. In an effort to provide safer transactions for people, financial institutions offer a credit chip implant. This device is implanted under the skin in a random place on the body and it transmits a unique encrypted code (that makes reference to a library of stored individual biometric data) to a transaction scanner to allow the credit/debit of money to and from the user's account. This credit account subdermal chip means characters need never worry about losing their credit cards again and it significantly reduces the risk of stolen transaction data.

To prevent illegal transactions between individuals, some governments have insisted that the chips be unable to communicate to each other without bridging through a transaction scanner. It is not possible to bypass this function, the chips are designed to prevent such operations. Because of this restriction, the financial institutions will know if the transaction is legal or not. It also means the financial institution has access to the user's entire buying history with one simple scan.

Price: implant \$250 (C/C)
surgery for implanting \$300

DIRECTION SENSE

This is a small electronic compass anchored inside the skull and hooked into the brain with a standard electronic/neural link. It provides the host with a very accurate sense of direction even when inside large buildings or underground. However, rapidly fluctuating magnetic fields can result in nausea so users are advised to stay away from high tension power lines, powerful radio transmitters, large magnets and the like.

Space travel and travelling to proto-dimensions may also effect the device as the user passes through the different geo-magnetic fields. The more powerful the mag-

netic field, the more severe the nausea. Some post-operative care is required, hence the increased medical cost.

To correctly sense direction in a stable environment is an Average [INT] task. In the presence of a strong magnetic field the task is Difficult [INT] and the presence of a very strong field makes the task Impossible [INT].

Price: implant \$800 (C/C)
surgery for implanting \$1200

MEDIMONITOR

A biometric monitor with a small transmitter that calls for medical assistance if the user's vital signs show any indication of trouble. While the user can rely on the public ambulance service, they can also opt for a privately supplied service that may also include the use of an air ambulance where available. Medics arrive as soon as possible after a call is received but times vary depending on which service is used.

If you opt for just the public ambulance service, you won't pay anything for using the service because it's paid for by your taxes. However, there are times when an ambulance may not be

available due to high demand. To counter this problem, some people prefer to pay for private ambulance service.

Response times are as follows:

- **Public** 2D10+4 minutes in a town, 1D10 x 6 minutes in a suburban area, and 1D6 hours elsewhere within range of a medical centre. Note that due to demand on the public service, there is a 1 in 10 chance that an ambulance will not be immediately available—roll 1D10, if result is 1, then double the result of the rolls for time given above.
- **Private** 1D6+4 minutes in a town, 1D6 x 6 minutes in a suburban area and 1D6/2 hours elsewhere within range of a medical centre.

The private service times are dependent upon their vehicle coverage and what level of medical cover you've paid for. If you're in an area with no vehicle patrols, times will be the same as for the public service—unless you pay for enhanced ambulance coverage (if you have private cover in the city and you are in a village 20km away, it's obviously going to take extra time to get to you). With the enhanced coverage, you will be given a higher priority and an ambulance will be despatched exclusively for your use. Times for this enhanced medical

coverage are the same as normal private cover.

If you decide to pay for the premium service, an armoured ambulance with a security and rescue team will make limited trips into contested zones to recover you based on their threat assessment—if it's too risky, you're on your own.

Price: implant \$1200 (C/C)
surgery for implanting \$300
public ambulance cover, free
private ambulance cover, \$2,000
per year
enhanced private cover, \$4,000
per year
premium ambulance cover,
\$10,000 per year.

Prices are paid at the beginning of signing up for the service and at the start of every new year in the game.

METRONOME

Useful for musicians and other performers, this implant sends a regular beat to the auditory centre of the brain. The user can change the beat as necessary by thinking a message to the device.

It adds +1 to the character's performance skill for playing a musical instrument or acts that require precise tempos.

Price: implant \$750 (S/S)
surgery for implantation, \$300

NEURAL JACK

Modified from the GDW 2300AD Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook.

This is an electronic socket hardwired to a person's brain to allow that person to plug cable connections into a piece of equipment in order to control that equipment by thought or to receive information beyond that normally obtainable with the human senses. The jack can also be used as an access point for certain types of software that expand a person's skills. Although a person could have more than one jack implanted, it has been found that people quickly suffer information overload when operating more than one jack at a time. This has sometimes led to psychosis so most doctors recommend no more than one jack be installed.

When jacked into a piece of equipment, a person's control of that equipment is both quicker and more accurate than if they were using manual controls. A jacked character treats any task rolls involving the use of the equipment as if they were one difficulty level lower than normal.

The major drawback to being jacked in is that the person can get so involved in

the equipment's control system and feedback that they can lose their awareness of their surroundings (potentially putting themselves in danger). Any tasks requiring the character to use their own body while jacked in requires an Average [INT] check to accomplish. If the check fails then whatever task they were attempting becomes one level of difficulty harder.

The other drawback of jacking in, is the relative lack of devices equipped to plug into. Less than 20% of civilian ground vehicles are equipped for jacking and only 25% of civilian and government computers are. Civilian aircraft average approximately 10%. Leisure devices such as music players, game consoles and exercise equipment, however, tend to have a higher percentage of ports for jacking in, anything up 50% of these devices are so equipped.

The Corporations are, unsurprisingly, interested in the benefits of directly interfacing with equipment. In the Corp world, up to 75% of workspace computers are equipped for jacking and their security equipment is 50% likely to be fitted with jack connections.

Almost any piece of mechanical, electrical or electronic equipment can be jacked for about 50 percent of the normal price of the equipment. In the case of jacked fire-

arms (commonly called 'smartguns'), the price of the jack is closer to 100% of the weapon and the legality is often questionable. Jacked firearms can have sensors and controllers on the trigger mechanism and ammunition feed in addition to those fitted to the weapon sights. A jacked shooter sees through the weapon's sights without needing to physically aim through them and, as a consequence, is able to aim more quickly than a non-jacked shooter who visually sights down the barrel. A jacked shooter gains an Initiative bonus of +2 for any firearms combat when using their 'smartgun'.

This also allows a jacked shooter to point the weapon out a window or around a corner and see what the weapon sees without ever having to expose themselves to the enemy.

When a character has a neural jack installed, the Player must decide where the jack will be located on the character, the most common places being at the temple or on the forehead (for ease of access), or in the hollow at the nape of the neck (where it can be hidden by hair or clothing). Some post-operative care is required after the jack is fitted.

Price: implant \$2500 (C/C)
surgery for implanting \$1200

NIGHT LENSES

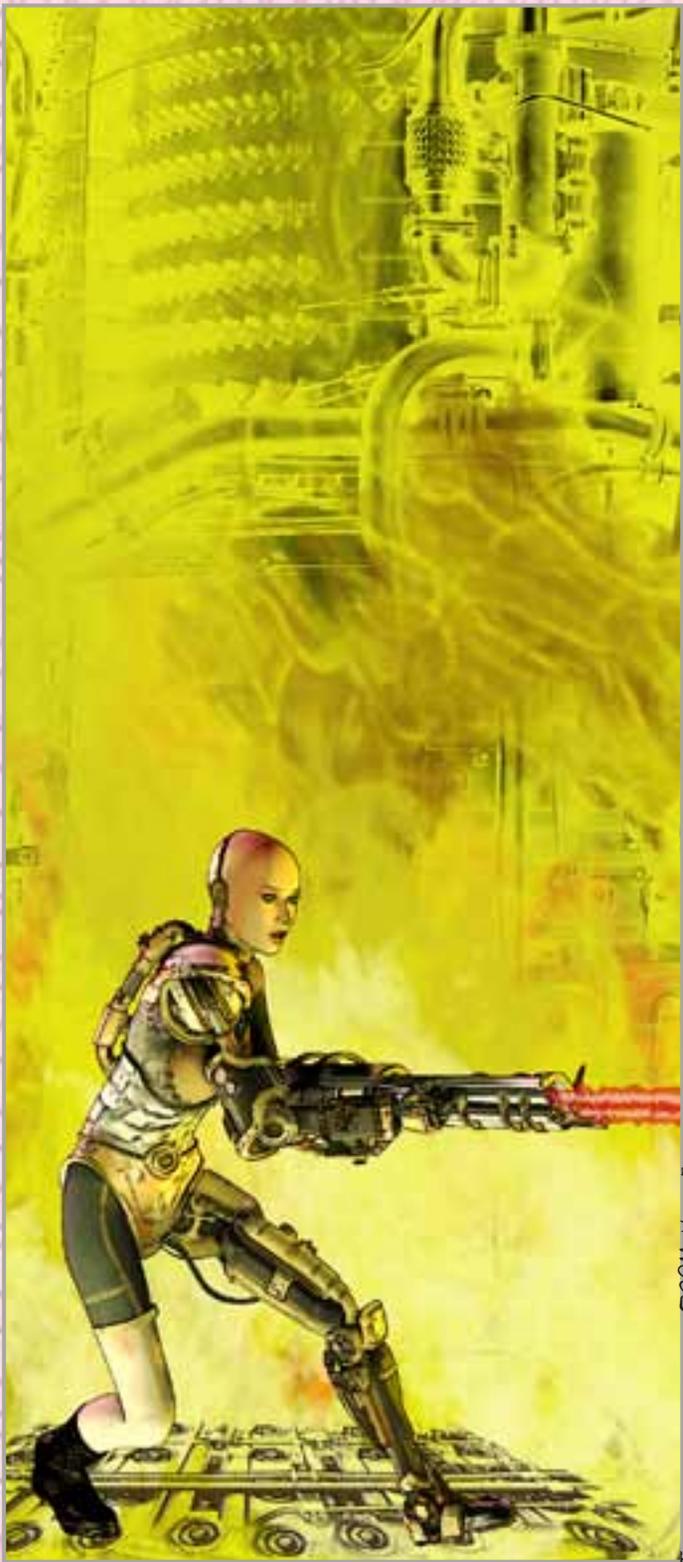
These eye implants are basically a thin film utilizing OLED technology to convert infra-red signals into visible light. Several layers of OLEDs convert the IR signal into minute electrical charges, the charge increasing every time it passes through another OLED layer. At the last layer the signal is converted into a spectrum the human eye can see although the Night Lenses still produce the green tinted light of traditional light amplification devices (i.e. Starlight night vision devices).

While they will work in complete darkness, the image is typically too hazy for anything except finding your way around large objects (i.e. at least knee high) and they can be washed out by very hot surfaces or infra-red light beamed directly at the eyes.

Some post-operative care is required after implanting these devices into the eyes. A person could save money and have just one eye modified for half the cost of both the device and surgery although the loss of depth perception would be worse than normal for night vision devices and will increase any difficulty levels by one.

Price: implant \$1550 (R/S)
surgery for implanting \$1200





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OPTIC NERVE INDUCTOR

A thin, flat ring wrapped around the optic nerve behind the eye, the Optic Nerve Inductor manipulates the optic nerve into fooling the eye into seeing the image projected half a metre in front of the face, thereby removing the need for a video monitor or television. The image transmitter for the inductor must be within two metres. It is a discrete, lightweight and shock-resistant box with a rechargeable battery. In the workplace it is typically connected to the users computer (and will recharge the battery while connected) but it can be removed and clipped to the clothing for those times when away from the computer. Typical use will see the battery keep the transmitter powered for up to 4 days. Some post-operative care is required after implanting these devices into the eyes. A person could save money and have just one eye modified for half the cost of both the device and surgery.

Price: implant \$1750
surgery for implantation \$1200

SECURITY PASS

Identity cards and badges are easy to steal. DNA and retinal scans can be forged. Businesses and government organisations in search of a more secure form of

identification sometimes use security pass implants. A small chip is implanted under the skin in a random place on the body, it transmits a unique encrypted code in response to the signal from door scanners, secure computers, secure filing cabinets and so on granting immediate access for the user.

Security passes are not used on personnel for whom stealth or anonymity are an issue: field agents and senior personnel are unlikely to have them. It should also be noted that some organizations require an additional level of security. If the user is in a state of panic, the Security Pass implant will not function. While this can cause some delays if a person is late for work and worried about getting there before the boss, it is seen as a small price to pay for the prevention of the user being forced under duress to open secure facilities.

Price: implant \$450 (R/C)
surgery for implanting, \$300

TIME SENSE/REMINDER

This implant is a small electronic clock anchored inside the skull and hooked into the brain with a standard electronic/neural link. It provides the user with a very accurate sense of time and the ability to set multiple reminder sensations for up to

forty-eight hours in advance, i.e. it has a built in alarm clock. The clock is tied to Earth GMT, so is of less use in outer space or in proto-dimensions. Some post-operative care is required after surgery, hence the increased medical cost.

Price: implant \$775 (C/C)
surgery for implanting, \$1200

WIRELESS JACK

An alternative to the neural jack, the user's brain is connected to a small wireless transceiver placed under the skull (rather than to a jack plug socket protruding through the skull). The transceiver's encrypted wireless link to a base station has a range of 5 metres for the basic model and 15 metres for the enhanced model (corporations and some governments are rumoured to have jacks that have a range of 30 metres or more). Some post-operative care is required after surgery, hence the increased medical cost.

Price: implant, basic \$3200 (S/V)
implant, enhanced, \$9600 (R/C)
surgery for implanting \$1200

ZOOM LENSES

This implant consists of a nano-forged lens with a minute cavity filled with a non-toxic oil. The user learns to squeeze their

eye muscles in a certain manner, causing the lens to flex. This creates a zoom effect and allows the user to focus in on small details. The character can read large text such as that on a newspaper at 150 metres or spot sub-millimetre details on objects held in the hand. It is equivalent to the 3.5 power telescopic sight for firearms that's listed as the standard in-game rifle scope, this means the user could spot an adult human at a maximum range of 900 metres. They won't be able to positively identify individuals but they can tell it is an adult human and the predominant colour of their clothing, if they have long or short hair and so on or if it looks similar to a specific person.

After implantation, the character must spend an hour every day for one week learning to manipulate the lenses before any benefit can be had from them.

The only other limitation is that if the character has both eyes implanted, they must give the lenses a few seconds to match their adjustment before trying to examine any minute detail or to see distant targets i.e. those further than 300 metres away. This is a Difficult task in stressful situations (such as combat or when the character is exhausted) versus Dexterity (AGL in 1st Ed.) and the difficulty level in-

creases to Formidable if stress levels should increase (e.g. the character gets wounded while attempting to use the lenses).

Some post-operative care is required after implanting these devices into the eyes. A person could save money and have just one eye modified for half the cost of both the device and surgery.

Price: implants \$1400 (C/C)
surgery for implanting \$1200

ILLEGAL IMPLANTS

"...a player character can never be too sure just what the doctors are taking out - or what they're putting in - while the character is under anaesthetic."

-2300AD, Earth/Cybertech
Sourcebook, p.74.

Any person willing to trust their body to an illegal cyber-doc should worry that they might not get exactly what they ask for (or pay for). Some Corporations supply untested or illegal cyberwear to the black market cyber-docs to obtain free trials of the devices (which means they've probably got a tracking bug implanted inside you as well). Any illegal cyber-doc is not going to be bothered by legal or moral restrictions and as a result, a number of cruel, unusual and dangerous devices have been created that the Player Characters may encounter in their travels. They (or NPCs) may find

unwelcome additional Cybertech implanted as an incentive to do a Corporation's (or private interest group's) dirty work. If the individual is unhappy with this after the fact, they should remember that it's difficult to complain to the authorities when you've had illegal surgery conducted at an outlawed clinic that constantly changes its location.

ADRENALINE STIMULATOR, LEVEL 1

This implant stimulates a brief burst of adrenaline, giving the user a +1 bonus to initiative for three combat turns when they concentrate on activating it (this takes one action in the round before the implant takes effect).

Price: implant \$2200 (R/C)
surgery for implanting, \$1000

ADRENALINE STIMULATOR, LEVEL 2

This implant stimulates a brief burst of adrenaline, giving the user a +2 bonus to initiative for three rounds when they concentrate on activating it (this takes one action in the round before the implant takes effect).

Price: implant, \$3200 (R/S); surgery for implanting, \$1000

APPETITE SUPPRESSOR

Initially regarded as beneficial for weight management, this implant suppresses the user's appetite but it was soon found that people were starving themselves through simple negligence. They would forget to turn the device off because they never felt hungry. Governments decreed the device to be too dangerous for unsupervised use and now they can normally only be found in medical clinics that treat obesity or in black cyber-clinics. The degree of suppression can be set when the device is implanted but can be adjusted later via surgery if desired. Rumours persist of certain groups using these implants to starve people as a form of punishment or torture, even to the point to of death.

Price: implant \$1200 (R/S)
surgery for implantation, \$1400

DETONATOR

The classic "brain-bomb" of bad science fiction. The Detonator is a small explosive charge moulded to the base of the skull and detonated by an encrypted signal. This is enough to completely shatter the victim's neck vertebrae and lower skull and sever the spinal chord. It explodes with such force that it can injure bystanders with shards of bone (treat like the frag-

ments from a frag grenade with a range of 2 metres).

Price: implant \$1100 (-/S)
surgery for implanting \$3000

DRUGPAK

Primitive in comparison to the Pleasure Stimulator listed below, the DrugPak implant is still very effective. The drug of the user's (or antagonist's) choice is held in a twenty dose implant placed in their body and triggered by an encrypted key. Typically, the user must purchase the next dose from the owner of the key code. When the implant's supply of the drug runs out it can be replenished using a hypodermic needle.

Price: implant \$1250 (-/S)
surgery for implantation, \$1000
drug resupply, whatever the market wants to charge.

FACIAL CONTORTER

A thin mesh of wires under the skin of the user's face that "freezes" muscles in the position they are being held in when the device is activated. Originally developed to help victims of strokes or those suffering from persistent muscle twitching, it had been found useful for disguising the user by changing the appearance of their

face and so most governments banned their use except under strict medical supervision. To recognize someone using a Facial Contorter to disguise themselves is an Average [INT] task. If the person has also used other means to disguise themselves (e.g. wearing clothes they normally wouldn't, changing the cut and/or colour of their hair etc. etc.), then the task becomes Difficult [INT]. If the user has the Disguise skill and makes use of it, the test is automatically Difficult and with a normal successful check on the Disguise skill, the task becomes Formidable. An outstanding success on the Disguise skill, makes the identification task Impossible.

Any failure on the Disguise skill merely renders the identification task Average [INT] while a catastrophic failure makes the task Easy. Some post-operative care is required after the mesh is implanted.

Price: implant \$3500 (-/R)
surgery for implanting \$5000

HEARTSTARTER

A medical device developed originally to restart the heart in the event that the user suffered from coronary failure. It automatically activated if the user's heart stopped for two minutes. In the form described here however, it is modified to

allow a person to fake a heart attack if they need to 'play dead' for whatever reason. Basically it's a thought-triggered electric shock device that stops the user's heart for two minutes, then restarts it. Most police services and governments view the device as counter to the maintenance of law and order and ban it's sale and use.

For the user's heart to restart without damage is a hazardous task (Average [CON]), and the difficulty of the check increases one level each time the HeartStarter is used within a two-day period. Once increased, the difficulty also takes two days to drop a level.

Price: implant \$1400 (R/S)
surgery for implanting \$1200

HEARTSTOPPER

The HeartStopper was originally developed as the HeartStarter (see above). It was, however, modified by an unknown corporation to allow its espionage agents to fake a heart attack if they needed to 'play dead'. In its most common form, it is a thought-triggered electric shock device that stops the user's heart for two minutes, then restarts it. It has also been further modified by some corporations and criminal groups as a torture or a compliance device, allowing them to remotely stop

and start the victim's heart. Because of this, most governments and even some corporations have rated it as highly illegal.

For the user's heart to restart without damage is a hazardous task (Average [CON]), and the difficulty of the check increases one level each time the HeartStopper is used within a two-day period. Once increased, the difficulty also takes two days to drop a level.

Price: implant \$1700 (R/S)
remotely controlled implant
(with separate remote control),
\$2800 (-/R)
surgery for implanting, \$1200

LIBIDO SUPPRESSOR

Popular with puritanical parents sending their children to college and with personnel working in remote locations, this device is quasi-legal because most governments cannot prevent the corporations supplying them to their workers and those who are implanted often ask for the device of their own free will.

It suppresses the libido and neutralises pheromone responses and in game terms, this means a PC or NPC is an Impossible skill check to seduce. In roleplaying terms

it means a PC is immune to the 'charms' of other PCs.

Price: implant \$1200 (R/C)
surgery for implantation \$1000

PLEASURE CENTRE STIMULATOR

The ultimate drug, this implant stimulates the pleasure centre of the brain directly for one second when an encrypted key is transmitted to it. The host will do almost anything to have the Stimulator triggered, making them easily controlled. Range is up to 50 metres.

The potential for coercing people into criminal acts has seen this device universally banned. Possession of the control device usually mandates a prison term of 3-5 years in Western nations.

Price: implant and control device,
\$2700 (R/S)
surgery for implanting, \$1000

PAIN CENTRE STIMULATOR

The ultimate torture device, this implant directly stimulates the pain centre of the brain for one second when an encrypted key is transmitted to it. The host will do just about anything to prevent having the implant triggered, making them easily controlled. Range is up to 100 metres but

further development has seen a modified Stimulator accessible by a particular tone sent by a mobile/cellular phone. This allows the tormentor to be hundreds of kilometres away from the victim (assuming the victim has a mobile phone).

The potential for remotely forcing the victim into criminal or terrorist activity has seen this device banned and publicly reviled by all Western governments. Possession of the control device constitutes and immediate prison sentence of 8-10 years in Western nations.

Price: implant and control device,
\$1500 (R/S)
phone accessible implant,
\$1900 (-/R)
surgery for implanting, \$1000

PAIN KILLER

Implanted at the base of the skull, a PainKiller overrides pain signals at a thought command. This means the character can ignore any effect of pain upon their task rolls. Some post-operative care is required after the implant is fitted.

Price: implant \$1300 (S/C)
surgery for implantation, \$2300

REALITY FILTER

Originally created as the next 'big thing' in personal entertainment, the Reality Filter is a complex cranial implant that alters the user's perceptions to allow them to live in a fantasy world constructed over their experience of the real world. Cartoon, sword and sorcery, film noir, nature, old world and beautifying filters are all popular. Filter programmes can be downloaded from the internet for a price, purchased directly from software companies in Third World nations.

The system itself is quite safe (users won't walk out in front of cars or hug muggers since these things are represented as equally dangerous items in the fantasy world), but persistent use has led to many people rejecting the real world in favour of their fantasy version. Although not a health hazard as such, a few cases have been reported where children have been absent from school and even their own homes for days to indulge in their fantasy version of the world. This has prompted most North American and European governments to restrict sales of the Filters to adults. Demand amongst teenagers, however, is high and 'black' clinics are just as happy to take money from a teenager as from an adult.



Rumours persist of un-named corporations hacking Reality Filters to create deluded assassins or suicide bombers.

Some post-operative care is required after the implant is fitted.

Price: implant, \$12,500 (-/S)
filter programmes, \$120-\$400 (C/C)
surgery for implanting, \$3000

HACKING WIRELESS IMPLANTS

Most implants use a strongly encrypted very short-range radio networking technology. Hacking this system is difficult and requires that the hacker have their own transceiver within range (usually 1-5 metres). For systems that use a transmitted key (such as the Credit and Detonator implants), it is a very time consuming task to try and find the one combination among billions that will break the key.

Task: To hack a wireless key implant. Formidable [Computer]. Pre-requisite, Computer skill at 4+. (Note 1st ed. uses Computer Use skill.)

For systems that maintain a link to a transceiver (such as the Wireless Jack and Optic Nerve Inductor), keeping a hacked connection to the implant open is an ongo-

ing task. The wireless connection must be authenticated every 30 seconds, and if the task attempt takes longer than this the connection is automatically cut off.

Task: To hack a wireless link implant. Impossible [Computer], (repeat every 30 seconds). Pre-requisite, Computer skill at 5+. (Note 1st ed. uses Computer Use skill.)



DARK CONSPIRACY®



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110101

Fiction that Bugs You
By Capt Obvious

Capt Obvious has contributed some fiction as a lead in to his and Lee Williams' upcoming Dark Conspiracy adventure: Overnight Stay.

110101 could hear the humans coming. Letting one of the last group of two legged aphids escape had been an unavoidable mistake, but this new problem was irritating. These were not drones to be harvested, but had the smell and sound of hunters. 110101 fluttered its inner wings loudly, expressing itself and also deliberately attracting the humans' attention. With a reasonable amount of care, this threat could be reduced to another meal.

Several cycles prior, 110101 had been tasked to hunt down and destroy the renegade 100101, a traitor who had broken from the Hive, stolen a small death ray and disappeared into one of the more forsaken parts of this planet. 110101 followed and searched the region, unsuccessfully.

Usually, information flowed perfectly from above but not in this case – the traitor had too hidden well and the smell of its trail was lost. It would require more presence than just 110101 to find the renegade, but there would be no help beyond what 110101 could create for itself.

So 110101 found a suitably moist cavern and laid a clutch. Humans would shun the chosen nursery, since they excreted some of their own foul liquid on a regular enough basis that turned the stream in the tunnel into a toxic moat. But spawn required food,

which while plentiful and close had been a calculated risk to gather.

So one had brought more back. 110101 allowed the first hunters to catch a glimpse, then quickly moved deeper into the tunnels and away from the caustic bowl where the larvae awaited their next feeding. Three larger well-armed males followed, but 110101 had the advantage of being in its own home. This one-sided pursuit was also pleasurable, since 110101 could smell the hunters' frustration tinged with fear. Using the tunnel ceilings and impenetrable darkness, 110101 was quickly able to circle behind the pursuers and get back to the brood.

Two more hunters—females—squatted at the edge of the bowl, concentrating on what could only be some primitive explosive device. 110101 resisted the urge to close the distance and rend them both limb from limb.

Obviously, they planned to destroy all of the children.

Luckily, their attention seemed to be split between their device and the squirming mass below and ever so slowly, so quietly, 110101 crept up behind them, unwilling to risk discharging the death ray. One of the humans finally sensed the presence behind

her and turned suddenly. Too far to strike it with a leg, too close to shoot, all 110101 could do was chirp suddenly.

The effect was beyond the wildest desired parameters – the standing human made a shrill noise and stepped backwards, tripping over the other and tumbling headfirst down into the bowl. In falling over its partner, both of their weapons and the device followed the first human down the slippery slope. The brood became agitated at the avalanche and many were close enough to pin the hapless and somewhat broken hunter. The second human also let out a shrill noise, apparently confused about what to do next. 110101 had only to take two steps forward and shove the second human so that it followed the first.

Their continued shrilling attracted the attention of the three males, who made no attempt to conceal their rapid return. Confident that the larvae were feeding and moving to a fighting position in the approach tunnel, 110101 was able to use its death ray with very satisfying results on the first male warrior to appear but the remaining hunters threw something blindingly bright. Several projectiles also struck 110101's extremities, causing severe pain.

With the odds now calculated against it, 110101 returned to the brood and scooped

up its prime larva, the strongest and the best of the clutch. With upper arms cradling the treasure and middle arms wielding the death ray, 110101 sought the safety of the stream tunnel but the last two humans had gained the lip of the bowl.

More projectiles struck 110101's carapace, some penetrating into both the mesothorax and metathorax. In the exchange, another human hunter fell to the death ray. Then the device detonated.

No creature should be forced to watch its young expire.

With a shattered carapace, 110101 crawled the last few meters out of the cavern and back to the stream tunnel. With all the tenderness left in its veins, 110101 slipped the prime larvae into the stream and let the current carry it away to a better place.



Hive Queen

KTCHIK'KA KEK

INSECTOID E.T. (BREEDER QUEEN)



toid Grubs emerge and begin feeding upon the food stockpiled for them by their older siblings. Typically, each ship houses a single Breeder Queen, who rules with the legendary iron glove.

Occasionally, though, due to temperature variations during the insemination of the eggs, a new Breeder Queen is hatched. As a Grub, these Queens are indistinguishable from the drones. However, after their chrysalis phase, they can no longer hide their identity. In the past, new ships were ready for these Queens, and the entire process began again.

STR	5	EDU	7	Move	4/12/20/30
CON	5	CHR	2	Skill/DAM	6/4
AGL	6	EMP	4	Hits	12/24
INT	7	Init	4	# Appear	1

Now, separated from their homeworld by millions of light years, the existing queens have become jealous of their daughters. It

is normal for a battle to ensue for supremacy. The loser is eaten.

Sometimes, as in the case Ktchik'ka Kek, the younger queen is exceptionally intelligent and driven to reproduce. She escaped her mother's ship before she could be compelled to combat, and lacking a new ship upon which to found her dynasty, she made her way to Earth.

Needless to say, the bounty available on the blue planet is considerable. Once

SPECIAL: Armor value 1 (melee). Animal Empathy 10 (insects-see main rulebook). Project Thought 6. Breeder Queens can emit a paralytic pheromone, which requires creatures to make a Constitution (DIF) roll each round they are exposed. The paralysis is total. Breeder Queens can store an entire human's blood supply in their second stomach and regurgitate it at will.

The life cycle of the Insectoid ET is not so different than a terrestrial insect. Born from eggs laid by the thousands, the insect

Bugs Left Out of 7
By Dave Schuey
For Dark Conspiracy®

Ripley: But each one of these things comes from an egg, right? So who's laying these eggs?

Bishop: I'm not sure. It must be something we haven't seen yet.

—from **Aliens** (1986)

she has established herself, her brood should be unstoppable. Should the voices of the Dark Ones come calling, she believes she can not only withstand them, but offer a deal for the humans upon which she feeds.

She is cunning and desperate, as the fire to reproduce burns within her. She feels the need to have her eggs fertilized by one of her species, but has also done enough research to know that the seed of terrestrial insects will also do, should it come to it. Her contingency plan is to find the most suitable Earth insect she can and crossbreed a race of giant warriors to protect her.



OUT HERE IN THE BLACK

By Peyton Bisailon

Travelling through the highways and
byways
looking for a place called home
roaming wild like a nomad
since we've got no other place to go
the highways are dead
at the moment
the life having long since drained
of those who now live
in the shadows of the cities
away from the grounds
where the demon's play

We stop at an old gas station
it's long since raided
and gone to nature
We sift through broken glass
to find relics
of days gone past
of days gone by
of days that were once golden
now tarnished by black

A pack of smokes, a bottle of jack
Can make the sunshine bright
out here in the grounds
The highways and byways of an an-
cient world
will never be traveled upon
like they once were
of nights now here
of nights we live in fear
of the creatures
who live in the black



Flash Backs

Welcome to **Flash Backs**, a series of ongoing reviews looking back at classic modern horror roleplaying scenarios and support products—be they great or not so...

In this first 'season' of reviews, I'll be focusing on the small run of official **Dark Conspiracy** (DC) supplements that were published by **Game Designers' Workshop** (GDW) from 1991 to 93. In the previous column I took a look at *Among the Dead*, one of the better adventures (or mini campaigns) offered during the line's production run. For this issue, I will avoid another campaign-like book, and instead review one of the most interesting adventures release for the game—both in format and content—the folio scenario *Ice Daemon*.

The folio format itself deserves some explanation, especially as, in my opinion, it is quite an innovative and interesting design during a time when most game companies were looking more and more towards full colour hard-backed supplements. The basic design is similar to the old Dungeons and Dragons adventures one might recall from the early 1980's; a tri-fold cardboard cover which wraps around (but otherwise unattached) to the staple-bound adventure text. This 'cover' is full colour and on one side

has the end pages (what one would call the traditional cover and back of the product), while on the other are the full colour maps of the important area(s) described in the adventure. The third panel details important information from the adventure, be it additional maps or statistics and descriptions of key Dark Lords or Minions. This panel is also perforated allowing the Game Master (GM) to remove it prior to play. By doing so, they are actually creating an adventure specific GM's screen, which is a definite added bonus when running the scenario.

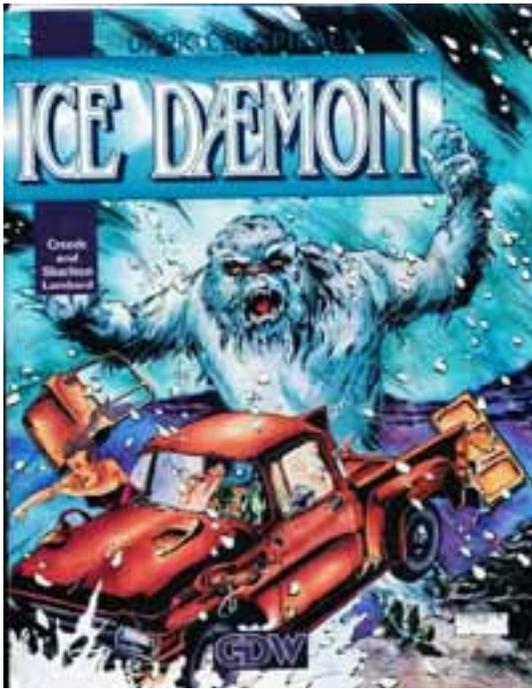
ICE DAEMON (1992, GDW)

CREEDE AND SHARLEEN LAMBARD

Ice Daemon is a 16 page adventure published in 1992 by GDW for the Dark Conspiracy gameline. It is the first of a new type of folio style adventures produced for the company (a format that would be used in one other Dark Conspiracy adventure—*Nightsider*—and at least one of the company's adventures for the **MERC: 2000** gameline). With a pretty typically level of gaming art (for the period), the illustrations, both cover and interior, are a little below what GDW usually produces in its products (whether this was due to the lower

Another Classic RPG Review
By Marcus Bone
For Dark Conspiracy®

*Remembering Classic Modern
Horror RPG Material from
Years Gone By*
#2 *Ice Daemon*



Ice Daemon, 1992 GDW (GDW 2111) - ISBN 1-55878-124-2

Design: Creede and Sharleen Lambard

Development: Nick Atlas

Editing: Dave Nilsen and Lester Smith

Cover and Interior Color Illustrations:

Allen Nunis (pencils & inks), Steve Bryant, and Kirk Wescom (colors)

Interior Illustrations: Rick Harris

Art Direction: Steve Bryant

Graphic Design and Production: Amy Doubet, LaMont Fullerton, Rob Lazeretti, and Kirk Wescom

Typesetting and Proofreading: Steve Maggi

Proofreading: Stephen Olle

price point of the adventure, or the way in which it was produced, I can not speculate). Fortunately the cartography is still top-notch and the entire adventure's presentation does have a good 'unified' style and theme; ice blues mixed with washed out colours on the cover and end pieces, and easily read black & white text.

THE HOOK

I love the introduction to this adventure, to me it brings out one of the best aspects of horror gaming—the ability to throw the characters in the deep in at any time, and in any place. *Ice Daemon* does just that, starting the adventure in Texas during what could easily be one of those cut scenes when the Referee says—*you head out from X and arrive in Y a few days later. Sure you're tired, and a little short on ready cash, but you made it in good time.* In particular the characters here are travelling in the desert heat, likely bored, hot and more than a little irritated.

Into this comes a strange weather pattern—high cumulus cloud—that at first sight seems to indicate a welcome thunderstorm. But, as they soon find out, and is reported on the local news, this storm quickly brings colder than expected weath-

er that soon has the group reaching for the car heater!

This style of '*surprise, you're in an adventure now*' setup, as I said, really appeals, especially in *Dark Conspiracy*, where the evil facing the world is usually only encountered in seemingly chance encounters by most of the population. Here you get the mental image of a Dark America, which, while it might be bad by our standards, is still a place where you can life; work and raise a family in ignorant bliss— unless you luck out and have an encounter like this.

THE CHASE

The adventure proper starts when the group are forced to seek shelter from the worsening storm, which as you can well imagine, is causing havoc on the usually parched country side. Here the party meets Albert Vincent, a helpful though cowardly young man who will assist the group in getting better prepared to face the sudden change of weather. Within this shelter the characters will have a chance to discover that the weather system seems to be focused a few miles north of their location, and centres (as the reporter or weather channel graphs will report) on a spot which

seems to blink like a beacon on the weather radar.

Here Albert's role comes to the fore and he can be used to prompt the characters to investigate this strange occurrence, either getting them out into the weather, or dying a horrible death at the jaws of the Ice Wolves. Once outside any suggestion that the weather might be natural is dispelled when the group encounters the aforementioned Ice Wolves. These large, aggressive beasts will attack immediately, and once killed will reveal tracks heading off in the direction of the blinking beacon seen earlier.

Following this, the characters come across an odd mound clouded in ice and snow, and more impressively a collection of creatures that could only be described as Yeti! These shaggy beasts seem to originate, although with the wolves from within the mound, and as they seem not aggressive or even to interested in the characters, access to this 'complex' is easy enough.

Once within the characters will quickly realise that they in the midst of some odd research facility, and will find a Greenhouse growing hydroponics, Mess and Bunk halls, and a storeroom.

Exploring this complex is easy enough, until the group encounters either more wolves, or one of the humans who work along side the Yeti. If this does happen, a sharp and deadly firefight is likely to quickly break out, and the chances of the party ever discovering the truth behind the complex and the weather are remote. On the other hand, if the group succeeds in keeping from being discovered, they will soon discover what can only be called the Portal room.

This chamber houses numerous databanks and computer stations, and is dominated by a strange platform through which Yeti seem to suddenly appear. Here also is a small alien, the titular Ice Daemon, who with its empathic powers has infiltrated a corporation and is now funnelling its resources to create the complex and the dimensional platform. As the group watches the 'parade' of arrivals, it soon becomes clear that some sort of invasion is in progress, one that must be stopped!

It is likely that the climax of the adventure is one large battle, from which the Ice Daemon will flee, escaping through the portal (in a rather Deus ex machine moment). After its departure the real threat to the party appears—the Ice Wyrm. This

massive creature is described as "*is 10 meters tall and has a snake-like shape. Its long muscular body is armoured with sharp, chitinous plates. and ends with a spiked tail that it lashes as a weapon*" and much too small for the room started to destroy the complex.

After what is likely to be a long and bloody fight, the characters must then stop or destroy the beacon—the now obvious source of the increasingly cold weather. Once achieved, Texas will slowly return to normal, although the Ice Daemon still remains at large.

EXTRAS

Ice Daemon rounds out with notes on awarding experience, and a couple of pages of descriptions on the main enemies in the adventure; the Yeti, Ice Wolves, Ice Daemon and Wyrm, although details on their stats are listed on the third panel of the wrap-around cover (see below). Included here also, is information on the various item of Ice Dimension Darktek the group might have seen in action or have come to possess. None of this is very new or interesting, but it is good to see it collected together like this.

As I described earlier, *Ice Daemon* was published in a folio format, and for the most part follows the format I mentioned there. In particular the third panel deserves a special mention; perforated it detaches from the other section (which forms the front and back cover of the product when closed, and on the 'inside' a full colour map of the Ice Daemon's complex), and details all the stats for the Minions and the Dark Lord. This is extremely handy and removes the need to flip back and forth between statistics and location description when actually running the game.

OPINIONS

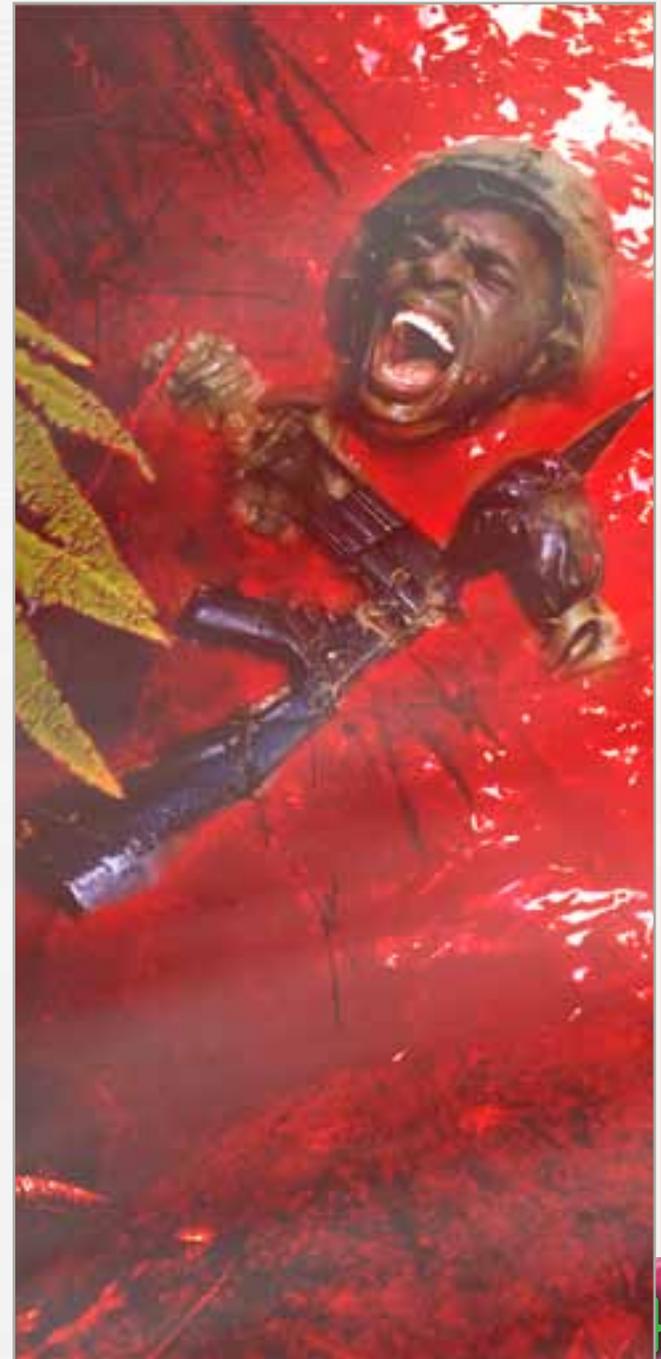
I have fond memories of *Ice Daemon*, having run it a couple of times. It is a brief (4 or 5 hours in my experience) adventure that gets right to the point and into the action. Players have said that it is atmospheric (especially when run in winter) and has a nice climatic ending.

From a personal point of view, the scenario does what it says on the cover, and I could only gripe about a few things. The way Albert is used in the set-up confuses me a little, and I get the feeling he might have been a bit of a late inclusion aimed at ensuring the players get quickly on with the plot. I've always used him as a bit more of a more rounded character, having his

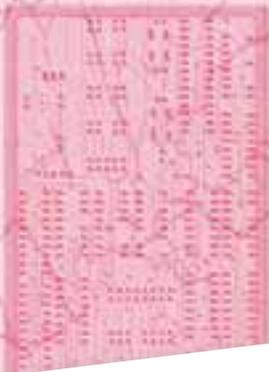
own motivations and needs to both assist and hinder the party, this moves him away from just be a simple 'trigger' (i.e. get on with the adventure or more die) and more of a 'red herring' and plot devise (i.e. could he have something to do with the sudden snow fall).

In this I've also always set the beginning of the adventure in a small township, demonstrating how ill equipped the townsfolk are in dealing with the snows and sleet. This, I feel, helps place a sense of urgency, between the rapid collapse of the town and the attacks of the wolves, on the characters to solve the mystery. I'm probably being a little harsh here, as *Ice Daemon* is only 16 pages long, and does a good job of creating enough of a narrative to at least build on with ideas like this.

That said, one aspect of the plot I can never abide by is the 'miraculous' escape of the Ice Daemon needing to trigger the arrival of the Wyrm. Suffice to say that there are a myriad of options a Referee has to make this scene feel a little less 'contrived', but personally I'd have preferred if they were included in the adventure. Beyond that, however, I think *Ice Daemon* is a pretty good example of an adventure of this sort, and demonstrates one style of plot that is, in my opinion, sorely missed in this day and age of gaming.



Using Thermal Imagers in RPGs



A Tech Check
By Kevin O'Neill

*With other uses you may
not be aware of...*

A question that I've been asked (and also seen arise on forums) every so often in modern RPGs is "What's the difference between a Starlight scope and a Thermal Imager?" I served in the Reserve forces of the Australian Army during the 1980s and 1990s and had the opportunity to use both Starlight and Thermal Imaging devices of US, British and Russian manufacture on a number of occasions, so the game group would typically ask me this question. This article reflects not just information available from books or the web but also my own personal experience with such devices and while I am not attempting to completely address that question in this article, I will be discussing the basics of Night Vision Devices so as to give a better idea of why a Thermal Imager can be put to so many different uses (besides the obvious one of using it as weapon sights for night vision).

Night Vision Devices, a brief history

Originally, the devices developed to allow modern armies to see in the dark were fairly simple. An Infra-Red (AKA 'black light') spotlight was mounted on a weapon and a scope that could detect Infra-Red light was used to sight the weapon. Military vehicles too, starting using IR spotlights and IR vision devices for night use. While



WORLD WAR 2 GERMAN 'VAMPIR' NIGHT VISION SCOPE
(GENERATION 0 DEVICE)

using the Infra-Red (IR) spotlight wasn't a big problem on the battlefields of the 1940s and early 1950s, by the 1960s there were enough scopes with IR detection that using an IR spotlight was akin to waving a white-light flashlight around in the dark – you would be seen by someone. That and the battery packs were large and heavy (see image above).

These systems are described as being Generation 0 night vision devices.

To counter this problem, some nations such as the USA, developed weapon scopes that would increase the output of light that was gathered by the scope itself. To do this they used a system of electronic plates within the scope that would emit two photons for every one that struck the front of the plate. By having several plates within the scope, the output was increased dramatical-



ly and basically allowed the viewer to see in the dark without having to use an active light source such as a spotlight. Because the US Army pushed for the development of such devices with the aim of a soldier being able to see in the dark with 'nothing but the light of the stars', these devices have become well known by the US term 'Starlight'. This has been generically applied to any such device, so you may hear reference to Starlight scopes, Starlight goggles and so on but they are also referred to as Image Intensifier, Image Enhancement or Low Light Imaging devices.

This solution was not ideal however, as the devices were quite bulky and heavy devices (less so than the Gen 0 units but

enough to still be a problem) and battery life was relatively short. Like the Gen 0 devices, the image resembled a TV picture but it was in shades of white and green and with noticeable fuzzy edges to any object being viewed. Not only was the image hazy, any sudden movement of the viewer would cause blurring of the image and any sudden increase in light would swamp the detectors within the scope and cause the image to wash out (which could take several minutes to clear). These systems are described as Generation 1 night vision devices.

Later technology (Generations 2 to 3), removed most of the problems associated with the Gen 1 viewers but Starlight scopes

still suffer from one major problem, lack of clear detail in the viewer image. The closer you get to an object with a Starlight viewer, the more light is reflected back from the object so any fine detail gets washed out in a haze of white in older generations or gets lost in the general background shade of the object in later generation devic-

es. The major strength of Starlight devices is also the major disadvantage; they work by multiplying the light reflected back from objects in the environment, when there's no light they don't work. That is to say, they will not work in complete darkness.

Starlight vs. Thermal Imaging

Thermal Imaging technology appears on the surface to be a backward step, it makes use of IR light like the Generation 0 night vision devices described above. The difference however, could not be greater. It's worth a brief explanation of Infra Red light to show just why there is a difference. InfraRed light is electromagnetic radiation with a wavelength longer than that of visible light, starting from the nominal edge of visible red light at 0.7 micrometres, and extending conventionally to 300 micrometres. These wavelengths correspond to a frequency range of approximately 430 to 1 TeraHertz, and include most of the thermal radiation emitted by objects near room temperature (clipped from Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infrared>). So what all that science-speak really means is, InfraRed light is composed of a specific range of radiation that also includes thermal radiation, i.e. heat.



TYPICAL IMAGE FROM A GEN 3 STARLIGHT NIGHT VISION DEVICE
(US FORCES IN IRAQ)

Whereas the early IR detectors just picked up the reflected IR light (i.e. the heat), Thermal Imagers measure the amount of heat given off by the object to build the image rather than just the IR light reflected back from the object. This means you are looking at the difference in heat and not at the light reflected off objects (it's this 'reflected light' that gives you the shadows and details you would normally see with visible light).

Older generations of TI suffered from image washout if an object gave off too

much heat, detail would be lost because the TI could not discriminate between the small differences in heat radiation that would provide detail. Modern TI's are able to discriminate between heat wavelengths in increments of just 0.2oC (0.4oF) and typically allow the image to be displayed in colour or black & white. This allows for a far greater representation of the object to the human eye. The outcome of this is that compared to Starlight devices, detail can be presented in a form that comes closer to photo quality and not the faintly hazy, TV style image typical of a Starlight device.

The other benefit of Thermal Imagers, is that they can be used by day and not just at night.

Unlike the descriptions given in some RPGs, Thermal Imagers will work anywhere, day or night, but like any optical device they are restricted to line of sight. So for example, the use of TI's in a thick forest may be limited but it can still be done. The range of the device will be limited by the density of the forest, just like the human eye, they can't see through a solid object that's in the way.

The latest models of civilian thermal imager are literally digital cameras that will record still and video images of the objects you have been viewing so you can review them at will or dump them into a computer for further analysis. Depending on the manufacturer, this may be by USB cable or by memory card (and sometimes both). In the 2010+ timeframe, TI's can be found in sizes ranging from a typical modern handycam personal video camera, to a small digital camera size and in handhelds that are only a little bigger than a 2000s era mobile/cellular phone.

To increase the utility of such devices for military or security forces, some companies repackage TI electronics into older devices. For example, some US companies use the



TYPICAL CIVILIAN BLACK & WHITE THERMAL IMAGING DEVICE, USED FOR MARITIME SAFETY
 (MILITARY DEVICES USUALLY OFFER BETTER CLARITY)
 NOTE: FLIR - FORWARD LOOKING INFRA RED

AN/PVS-7 Starlight goggles as a base, taking out the Starlight electronics and replacing them with TI electronics. This means that the training on the Starlight version is still valid and no new equipment is needed for power or storage and so on. For one such company that does this, check the following webpage

<http://www.imaging1.com/thermal/infrared%20goggles.html>

It should be noted that with thermal imaging, any object that does not reflect back heat, such as the typical glass window, will appear as a solid colour in the imager with no detail. Older models of TI displayed



COMMON COMMERCIAL USE FOR COLOUR HANDHELD THERMAL IMAGER, DETECTING OVERHEATING IN ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS.

their image in black & white or green, black & white with white indicating hot and black indicating cold. Any object, such as a window pane, that didn't reflect back heat would show up as completely black. Because more modern TIs allow inverting the colour, the user could designate white as cold and black as hot, the display could show the same window pane as a white object instead of black. Medium to heavy rain or snowfall can interfere with the heat received by a TI and render them less effective however as will heavy fog. The other advantage modern TIs have is the ability to display the image in a range of colours other than those mentioned above.

So what can you really do with a thermal imager besides see at night?

Thermal Imagers can be used in quite a few ways that aren't immediately thought of and certainly not mentioned in most RPGs. While they cannot see through walls (as much as Hollywood would like us to believe that they can) they can detect if someone was leaning against the wall minutes earlier and they will detect large heat sources within a building (because the walls themselves will be warmer than they should be). Because of this, some fire brigades use them to gauge the heat intensity of possible building fires particularly

if there is little obvious sign of the fire. They also use them in the traditional sense of seeing through smoke etc. and also for checking buildings, rubble and so on to ensure the heat has been reduced (and therefore the likelihood of the fire reigniting).

Some police units have used TIs to detect unusual heat patterns in houses as a potential clue for detecting drug growers (because all the extra lighting and power for indoor growing heats a room above what is considered to be normal temperature).

Freshly dug earth will give off a different temperature than dirt that has been undisturbed, a TI will detect the difference (they have been used in former Yugoslavia for the detection of mass graves and the US police use this method to look for backyard caches).

In a somewhat similar manner, they can be used to detect the difference in a solid wall and a part of the wall that may be hollow (as in a hidden compartment) by the temperature difference. This technique is also used for detecting hollow areas under snow and ice and can also be used to help locate hidden cavities in a car body for example.

Modern imagers are sensitive enough to pick up even minor temperature variations





PELICAN FOOTPRINTS. TAKEN BY AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER STEVE LOWE USING A CIVILIAN THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA AT LONDON ZOO, 2008.

in electrical gear. In this manner they are being used to detect overloads in electrical switchboards or poor connections on circuit boards (see image above) as well as locating air & temperature leaks around windows, refrigerator door seals and so on as the airflow passing through the gaps shows up cooler than the frame material. US police officers have found that TIs will detect skid marks from accident/crime scenes via the thermal differences due to the tyre rubber being left on the road, even if someone had tried to scrub the skid marks off the road surface.

Pollutants such as oils and chemicals have different thermal properties to the ground and so can not only be detected, but if they have flowed along the ground or been spilt, they can be traced back to their source. This is also effective in water apparently although the length of time between the spill and its detection will be crucial to prevent the evidence literally floating away.

And here's one your Players might like a lot. Obviously at night, a medic can't necessarily tell if or where someone is bleeding without appropriate lighting and even Starlight goggles can't properly discriminate between a blood spot and dark clothing. A thermal imager can detect the presence of blood in poor or no light, again due to the difference in temperature between it and the surrounding material (be it clothing, skin or any combination of these etc. etc.) US police officers have found that even if blood has been hastily cleaned off walls or floors, enough of it remains to cause a temperature difference so that its presence can be detected (you won't

know specifically that it is blood, but you'll know something was on the wall/floor that doesn't match the rest of the panel).

And here's some uses your Players might love... or hate. Heat can take some time to dissipate; a Thermal Imager can pick up footprints from a warm-blooded creature on surfaces colder than the creature. Depending on the ambient temperature, the heat signature may last for many, many minutes. Another application being developed is to replace the more traditional methods of security check at sensitive facilities with a thermal imaging system. A heat picture known as a thermogram, is taken of a worker's face. Like fingerprints, each individual's thermogram is different enough to accurately identify one person from another and a thermogram is incredibly hard to fake. Thermogram scans can replace fingerprint, signature & iris scans and passwords as a method to check the correct individual is trying to enter your facility and they don't even require any interaction from that individual. You can scan each worker as they pass through a security checkpoint by simply taking a picture of them and comparing it to a thermogram held in the security database.

Other uses include detecting liquid levels in tanks or containers (as the denser

liquid gives off a different thermal signature to the air filled portion) and detecting injury sites under the skin (typically because an injury site generates more heat than uninjured areas as the body tries to repair the damage). In a similar manner, the imager can be used to detect repairs done to a vehicle or building because the rebuilt section typically uses different materials to the original material (either due to age or composition etc. etc. of the repair material) and these will have different heat properties to the surrounding material. Another significant police use is in detecting people hiding in bushes or in dark places (by day as well as by night). Whereas a Starlight device would should a mass of shrubbery and nothing else, a thermal imager will detect the heat rising from the fugitive as they hide behind the shrubs.

In conclusion, the Thermal Imager should be seen as a tool with varied applications. Not only can you use it to see in the dark, you could use it to see an object that appears to be invisible to the human eye (if it gives off heat, the imager will detect it), it can be use as a diagnostic tool as well as for exploration (the ruins of a stone building will give off a different heat pattern to the surrounding soil even if the stone is buried – thermal imaging satellites have been used recently to discover ancient towns in South

and Central America). It can be used for security scans.

The only consideration a Game Master may need to take is the training a PC has had, just because you've detected a heat difference with a TI, doesn't necessarily mean you immediately recognize what it indicates. For example, a police officer knows a suspect is in the area, the officer uses a TI to scan the surroundings and notices a heat patch under a car. Is that the heat given off by a large dog that's sleeping under its owner's car, or is it a person trying to hide from the law?

Detecting the heat is automatic for the imager but does the user recognize it for what it is? Does the user even see it? Task rolls for observation may be required for the user to notice an anomalous heat source and perhaps education or intelligence task rolls may be required for the user to identify what the heat source is if they have noticed it. Or the imager could be used to make the task roll easier because of its increased detection ability. Either way, a Thermal Imager can be a powerful tool to both help and hinder the PCs.



A Little Fear Rising

An Interview with Jason L. Blair
By Marcus Bone

*Jason L. Blair is the author and
publisher of:*

Little Fears: Nightmare Edition

Catch up with Jason on his website:

www.jasonlblair.com

The game Little Fears stormed onto the RPG scene in the early 2000s. Written by Jason L Blair it is a gritty, and sometimes terrifying, look at children and the root of their fears. Despite its subject matter, or perhaps because of it, Little Fears quickly garnered a devoted and vocal following, even amidst some backlash from the roleplaying community itself.

Recently Little Fears - in the guise of a Nightmare Edition - has returned, bigger and better than ever, and I thought it would be a good chance to have a chat with Jason about his game, its past and plans for the future.



PDM:

First, please let me thank you for taking the time to do this interview, I know you're a busy man. So, let's start with the basics - care to introduce yourself?

JLB:

My name is Jason L Blair and I released my first game, Little Fears, back in 2001. Since then, I have worked in both the tabletop and video game fields as a writer and game designer working on story development and scriptwriting.

PDM:

I'm sure, like most of the readers, you're a long time gamer. How were you introduced to our wonderful little hobby?

JLB:

My brother introduced me to gaming. I'd been a fan of board and card games for years prior, getting the gaming bug as a child, but he kept asking me to join his roleplaying group and I eventually did. My first game was Justifiers but I quickly went on to add Marvel FASERIP, AD&D Second Edition, Vampire: the Masquerade, Cyberpunk 2020, and others.

I prefer to play, actually, as I'm big into character but I do (more than) my

fair share of running, especially my own designs.

PDM:

On that last point, running the game you've written yourself, what was it that inspired you to be an author?

JLB:

I've wanted to be a writer since I was a child. I started writing when I was in elementary school—even won a prize for this tall tale I wrote in Fifth Grade and got to read it over the PA. I started designing games as soon as I started playing them, I'm sure.

My first published work was a book of poetry, back in September 1999. Little Fears followed a couple summers later.

PDM:

And here I was wondering where you got all those ideas for Little Fears!

In all seriousness, just what were the origins of Little Fears? What made you want to delve into a world of horror, especially children driven horror, and what were your goals in producing such a game?

JLB:

Little Fears started out as a simple monster-hunting game. Then, as the inspiration and cosmology grew, it became more and more. The only goal I had was to finish it. I knew, in order to have any chance at a creative work life, I needed to take some big risk. Releasing Little Fears was my attempt to claw up the ladder and I managed to do just that.

PDM:

And you did this all as a self publisher?

JLB:

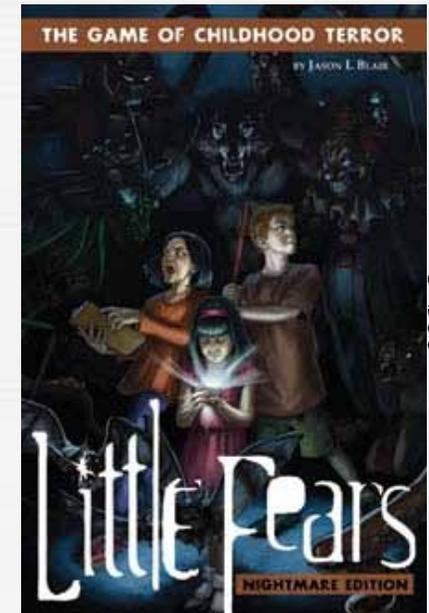
Back in 2001, print-on-demand and digital delivery were in their infancy. Physical books were the only real option if you wanted to be taken seriously. I invested a fair bit of money into the art and production as well as promotion of the books which was a big gamble for me. It paid off, which is good, but I didn't realize just how foolhardy my gamble was, which was bad. If Little Fears hadn't caught fire, if I had ended up with 3000 books in my upstairs office and a five figure balance on my credit card, my life would've changed also but not for the better.

Everything on Little Fears was right to the wire. I had a table reserved at the

Origins Game Fair in Columbus, Ohio and my book run wasn't done printing when the show came around. I drove to the printer and pulled the first 300 copies off the machine—well, they were already packaged to be honest, but they really were only 10% of the initial run—and carted them to Origins in the back of my aunt's car. I'm fortunate the printer I used happened to be only an hour away from where I lived.

PDM:

This is going to sound like a stupid question, but what was Little Fears reception like? And what did you make of the controversy that arose around it?



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JLB:

The reception was crazy. Folks really dug the game. I had no idea what to expect for sales figures—I just wanted to cover my costs: hotel, travel, and table—and I heard figures from some of the bigger publishers for their new releases, and sales of my little game were passing them up. Folks were playing the game at industry parties and I saw games going on at the open tables. Game industry folks were bringing their other game industry friends to buy my game. I was floored. I had no idea the game would take off like it did.

There was some controversy, in online forums mostly, and I had one retailer who returned his copies. The vast majority of folks, including child psychologists, social workers, and even child-advocate and author Andrew Vachss gave me a thumbs-up on it. Again, totally floored me.

PDM:

So here you are with a RPG hit on your hand, I have to ask, but what sort of opportunities did creating Little Fears open up for you?

JLB:

Every creative door I've managed to sneak through was held open because of Little Fears. Even now, ten years later, I can



trace my video game work and even my fiction and screenplay options to the gaming industry and Little Fears.

PDM:

Excellent! It is great when you see people getting opportunities because of their experience and ability as game authors!

On that note, these days, gamers would call Little Fears an 'indie' game. Is that the way you saw it back then? How about now? Is Little Fears (both the original and Nightmare editions) something you'd like to see as part of the 'indie' movement?

JLB:

Back in 2001, there was no "indie game movement" really. Little Fears made its print debut a month before Sorcerer, the grand-daddy of the indies, did. (Though Sorcerer had been in digital distribution for some time before.) The Forge hadn't really taken off either yet. Ron Edwards and I founded the Forge booth at GenCon 2002 so I think, yes, Little Fears has ties to the indie community certainly. Association with the indie community did well for me but I was never as deep into the indie community as others. I was on the periphery; Little Fears was on the periphery. By the

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time the big indie superstars came around, I was an outsider looking in, I think, at least from a community standpoint.

Little Fears Nightmare Edition, the new version of the game, is even more indie than the first but, really, I'm just doing my own thing at my own pace with it.

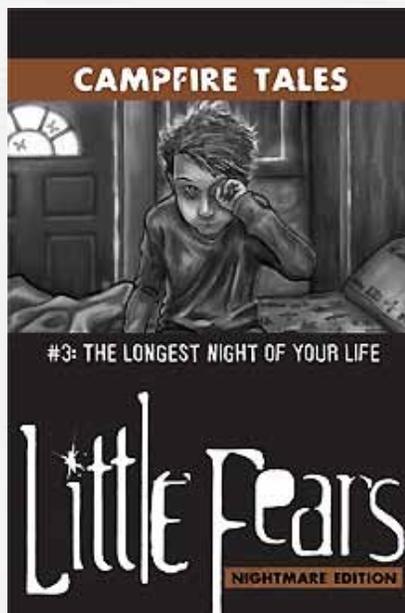
PDM:

Amazingly, it's been almost ten years since Little Fears was published and in fact I see you are planning on releasing an anniversary edition of your original game shortly. You said that Little Fears open doors for you, what exactly has Jason L Blair been up to in the last decade?

JLB:

In 2004, I release Wyrd is Bond, a game about magic in the inner city. In 2005, I joined Human Head Studios and worked on some stuff there. I released Frankenstein's Children, a board game, as well as Villainy!, a card game. I spent two years on a game called Normal, Texas but it was shelved just prior to release. That's a great misfortune because Normal, Texas is a fantastic game. It's possibly my best design and I'm seeing some things I did in it creep up in other games. Its cancellation stung.

I have done some video game work as well, story development and screenwriting mostly, though some game design as well. I developed the story and wrote the script for High Voltage's upcoming shooter



Conduit 2, which is being published by Sega in the coming months.

Currently, I'm working on new stuff for Little Fears Nightmare Edition, the tenth anniversary re-release of the original Little Fears, and some unannounced freelance work as well as a fiction line I hope to shop around in the fall.

PDM:

I have to ask, why the return to the Little Fears universe? And what are your goals with the Nightmare edition?

JLB:

I had spent some time away from the tabletop industry and really wanted to get back into it. I had learned a lot about game design and writing and wanted to put that into practice. Revisiting my first game release seemed like a smart idea. Also, I'd been teasing a "Nightmare Edition" of the game for years and it was high time to fulfill that promise.

PDM:

I guess that means you got a lot in mind for Nightmare Edition and its setting. What have you released so far?

JLB:

Aside from the corebook, I released three PDFs, called Campfire Tales. These are standalone episodes you can work into an existing season or use as one-shots.

PDM:

Which obviously leads me to ask - What are your plans for Nightmare Edition?

JLB:

I'm finishing up Book 2 currently, titled *Among the Missing*, and it details the role missing children play in the world of *Little Fears Nightmare Edition*. It also includes expanded Friendly and Hostile GMC rules which I think are pretty cool along with new good guys, new bad guys, and an episode called "The Long Way Home."

PDM:

That's a lot of stuff! I know I'm looking forward to seeing it!

We've both mentioned the anniversary edition of the original *Little Fears*. I know you've said in the past that this version was a product of its time and place in your life. Why are you going back to it?

JLB:

The original *Little Fears* was a big moment for me, personally and professionally. I owe a lot to that game. I wanted to do something that honored its tenth anniversary. That, and I know there are folks who would like to get their hands on the original rules aside from lo-rez scans of the old book. Happy Birthday *Little Fears* isn't a reprint of the original though. It's its own thing.

PDM:

And do you have any plans to release more material for the original *Little Fears*?

JLB:

We'll have to see how it's received. I don't know that I want to have two concurrent *Little Fears* lines on the market but we'll see what happens.

PDM:

Wrapping up, I wonder if I can ask you to think back, and tell us some of the best and worst times you've had with *Little Fears*?

JLB:

The best was its initial release. Summer 2001 was a magical time for me, personally and professionally. The low point was not following up with the planned supplements. That's one of the reasons I try to be as honest as I can with fans because I don't want to promise then not deliver. If something happens and I can't make a promise, I tell them as soon as I can.

PDM:

Thanks again, for taking the time to talk to me. I'm sure fans of your games and writing will have appreciated your reflections on the past and your plans for the

future. Oh... so in parting, what does the future hold for Jason L. Blair?

JLB:

I don't know but I'm hoping for and working towards good things.



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Major Salt

United Nations Investigation into Alleged Ugandan Defense Forces involvement in the Kampala Atrocities, Deposition Excerpt #35

The following transcript contains verbatim questions and answers from the Kampala Evacuation period, specifically concerning accusation that the Ugandan Rifle Regiment deliberately fired on unarmed Ugandan civilians. Specifically, the Commission's attempts to interview an American citizen (name unknown, nom de guerre 'Major Salt') who ordered Ugandan troops to use automatic weapons to stop a food riot. To date, the United States Government and military have denied any knowledge of this individual's identity. The questions are put to Dr. Louis Calame, a Swiss citizen in charge of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) prior to the collapse of Uganda as a Nation-State.

Q. Why were you in Uganda?

A. I had been dispatched by the ICRC to collect pathology samples and medical reports on the 'Z5' outbreak in Uganda. I was not sent to be in charge of the medical operation and only took over after Dr. Cohen and his team disappeared.

Q. How were you involved with the individual known as "Major Salt"?

A. I took de facto charge of the remaining medical personnel, when we evacuated the uninfected to Kampala International Airport.

Q. Would you briefly describe the situation?

A. The nature of the outbreak had turned those who became infected into highly aggressive psychopaths. They were moving towards the airport and killing everyone in their path. [Redacted] The government had lost all control and the Ugandan Rifle Regiment had formed a protective perimeter around the 'safe zone'.

Q. What was the status of the ICRC food supplies?

A. The mob cared nothing about the food supplies. Have you read the pathology reports I supplied? [Redacted] That alone should provide more proof than anything I could tell you about the next six hours.

Q. Can you describe "Major Salt"?

A. A Caucasian male, probably North American born, 1.9 meters tall, under 90 kilos, brown hair, brown eyes, approximately 35 to 40 years old.

Q. What was his role?

Mercenary Fiction
By Capt. Obvious

A. He was the training officer or an advisor to the Ugandan Rifle Regiment.

Q. Was "Major Salt" working for the United States military, the United States Government or a private military contractor?

A. I do not know.

Q. Specifically, what was "Major Salt" doing during the massacre?

A. I repeat, the Ugandan soldiers were protecting the uninfected. Several of them told me that the Regiment's Colonel had stayed behind to lead a rear guard and been overrun while destroying a bridge. The other Ugandan officers had been killed afterwards. I believe Major Salt had taken charge of the survivors.

Q. Did you see any civilians slaughtered?

A. Yes, but it was not a slaughter. The mobs were beyond all reason; I have told you this already. Gunfire was only effective when they were shot in the head. I watched many keep coming towards us after taking enough bullets to knock over an uninfected human. Furthermore, [redacted].

Q. Do you know "Major Salt's" identity?

A. I can honestly say that he never told me his full given name. I will reiterate his actions were necessary and correct for the situation.



Hundreds Dead in Kampala Food Riots US Ordered Shooting

NAIROBI—In what may be called the largest massacre to date in the embattled nation of Uganda, witnesses have reported the deaths of hundreds of unarmed citizens as they were gunned down during riots at the Kampala Airport. Ugandan troops providing protection from roving warbands to relief workers distributing food and supplies were directed to open fire on the rioting civilians by their US advisor. Known only as 'Major Salt' the American's relationship with the US military has not been established. The Pentagon has made no comment. Major Salt is still at large and is being sought by INTERPOL for questioning and possible charges of mass murder. (see Salt on page 7.)



Only known photograph of suspect known as "Major Salt".



THE TABLET OF LENG

BY TAD KELSON

An Adventure that is intended for Investigators in the Modern Age, or similar timeframes, with a taste for the art or ancient worlds, and a theft to prevent.

INTRODUCTION

The art and archeology worlds are a buzz with a singular and rare find, a stone tablet found deep in the mountains of Tibet that is purported to be over 5,000 years old, making it one of the oldest human artifacts discovered. The tablet is being transported to the Investigator's City, to await an auction by major museums to house it, along with the rights to study and publish based on the results of the study and research.

KEEPER INFORMATION

This adventure is intended for the Modern Era instead of say the classical (1920s) Era of Call of Cthulhu. It presumes all the standard Mythos elements are present, just somehow concealed from people today, perhaps spells or just Mankind's ability to ignore what makes no sense or does not fit into it's preconceived notions of what Reality truly is.



While it is not targeted as a Delta Green adventure, it should be adaptable by Keepers with that product easy enough.

THE PROBLEM

The Tablet of Tibet (as the papers are calling it) could be more accurately described as The Tablet of Leng, as it contains detailed information on the Plateau of Leng and the known inhabitants there. A group of Tcho-Tchos led by several Men of Leng are en-route to the city once the news gets out about the tablets existence and where it was located at, in order to steal it and take it to Leng for themselves.

Once they are there they will break into the Auction House and take the Tablet and leave as soon as possible after that.

WHAT HAPPENED

While on an expedition in the Mountains of Tibet, an archeologist (name unimportant to this adventure) came upon a forgotten and abandoned monastery. Taking shelter there led to exploration and the discovery of what became known as The Tablet of Tibet. Now stateside, it is up for auction to the highest bidding museum for historical, investigative, and display purposes.

HOOKS

These are the various ways it is suggested to get the Investigators involved in this mystery.

Hook 1: The Art World (Investigators are artists, sculptors, etc.)

Hook 2: Antiques, Archeology, Tibetan Artifacts (Archeologists are appropriate)

Hook 3: Security, Private Protection, or Auction House employee (For those with more muscles than skills perhaps)

Each of the three potential hooks can be used to draw the Investigators into the scenario, if they do not get involved on their own.

Chose which one seems most appropriate and craft some comments to the players stating what is coming to town and why they might be interested in attending the opening night party at the Auction House, to unveil the upcoming treasure that is going on the block in a weeks time.

PLAYER INFORMATION

SET UP

Once the Keeper determines what Hook to use to draw the Investigators into the adventure, he

can set up the initial unveiling of the Tablet to the Auction House Party Attendees. At the party will be many local dignitaries, members of the local art scene, posers and wannabes, along with foreign nationals in turbans and strange ill fitting boots and their dwarfish personal assistants. This party will last several hours at the Art Auction house with the Tablet displayed early in the evening (no pictures allowed) and then it will be put away into storage awaiting the actual auction in a weeks time, giving all the attendees time to mingle and conduct business and assignations as suits their ilk and personalities.

Read to the players or summarize as desired:

As you all arrive at the Auction house it is buzzing with activity, there is wine and champagne flowing as well as the beautiful of the city all mingling, waiting for the grand announcement alluded to in the invitations that were sent out across the area. Close to 8 PM the owner of the house gathers all in attendance and with quiet dignity, whips the canvas covering off the centerpiece of the evening, which had armed guards standing about it up till this point.

A stone tablet, obviously old and engraved with strange iconography, is re-

vealed under bulletproof glass. The House Owner describes it as an antiquity found in Tibet and under auction to the top museums of the nation for study and review. However they are privileged to display it for a short while, no cameras please, to allow the people in attendance at the party to see what the find is.

The armed security sets up a viewing line and eventually the characters are able to stand about 5 foot away and admire the find. It is several feet in height, appears to be almost 3 or 4 inches in thickness, and it looks to be old weathered granite with deeply carved markings of some sort. They could be some ancient antediluvian language or some protohuman tongue. The characters have only a minute or so to look it over before the line moves them onward. After an hour or so of viewing the stone tablet is trundled away under safekeeping and the rest of the night consists of mingling and networking with the artisan world.

UPCOMING AUCTION

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Tablet of Tibet

(As the auction house refers to it).

This is a stone tablet that was located in a forgotten monastery hidden deep in the Tibetan Mountains. It is inscribed with an obscure dialect of Sanskrit, and has been tentatively aged at well over 7,500 years in age. The stone is a variant of Granite and is extraordinarily well preserved, with the various markings and inscriptions easy to see, but due to the strangeness of the dialect, very difficult to translate. Initial conclusions state it is talking about a lost or hidden plateau deep in the mountains that is inhabited but strange and bestial men that cause fear in the monks that took the pains to create this tablet. There are other portions of the stone tablet that are not deciphered yet, they might be in a code or a different dialect or language altogether, however there are some similarities to cave paintings and markings dating back over 15,000 years in age, making this a singular find if authentic. Both the historical value as well as the potential linguistics makes this a rare find for what ever museum successfully bids on it.

THE THEFT

Sometime within 4 days of the Tablet arriving in the Investigators City, it will be stolen back by The Men of Leng with support from Tcho-Tchos. They have access to a unique spell that will mask what

they are doing and will allow them to steal back the Stone Tablet. The Men of Leng are more evolved and as such have an understanding, basic, of modern technology and are able to follow the newspapers reports stating where the Tablet is located at. With that knowledge, the Spell they have access to, and the muscle in the forms of the Tcho-Tchos they plan to forcible break in and take off with the Tablet, fading into the night and then the journey back to where they entered Earth from, to then travel to The Plateau of Leng and their cities there.

With their spell, Confound The Senses, the Men of Leng plan to pull off the heist without interruption of the local police or any security they presume. When the spell is in effect the Men of Leng and their Tcho-Tchos are able to move about the Auction House Freely and find the Tablet, with the spell in place electronic safeguards are also confounded, so the Tcho-Tchos are there as muscle to break into any physical defenses as well as to carry the Tablet out.

The theft takes place over the course of four evenings. Each night up to the last one a trial run, using the spell and making it seem like a Cry Wolf scenario is going on. With the spell in operation, the Men of Leng and the Tcho-Tchos can work to figure out how to pick the door locks, what

security walks where, etc., to reduce the chance of something going wrong. If the Player characters are Security Oriented they might be called in after the first night or so to investigate what is going on with the recordings and devices. They will naturally find nothing wrong, which matches what the experts brought in after the first night by the Auction House would also determine. On the Fourth night, they will break in and within an hour of being inside, and after the deaths of three armed guards, will make off with the Tablet.

Depending on what the Characters have been up to till this point will determine when they find out. Most likely they will find out the next day and then, with a cold, unknown trail to follow, most likely will discern no clues.

This will bring the adventure to a close at this point, which should frustrate the characters, but that is what happens sometimes, the strange and inexplicable.

If instead the players are in the Auction House, staking it out, etc. they will see the 5 Men of Leng in their odd outfits, supported by 10 Tcho-Tchos conducting the theft. (Note Use of the Miri Nigri is purely optional and upwards 5 of them if the Investigators are the types to carry Light Machineguns as a part of their normal at-

tire only). They move to the side entrance, one of the Men stands still and after several minutes of strange gestures with his hands, motions the others to lever up the vehicle entrance security door. Once inside it will take about an hour before they emerge. Of course what happens all depends on the players. If they follow then they can observe the force breaking into the vault area with primitive tools and some odd looking laptops (a special effect to defeat the vault security and tied to the Men of Leng and not useable by regular humans due to conceptual differences). If at any time the Players confront the thieves strange orders will be made by the Men of Leng to their servants who will rush the players with bronze knives and pick axes ready for a battle to the death. Play this out, but odds are 10 Tcho-Tchos will give pause to the players. Perhaps discretion will function better than valor in a circumstance such as this. Play it out how it goes, and if battle is taken remember the 5 Men of Leng all have small caliber pistols such as .32s or .38s to lend distant firepower to the struggle.

They can always follow the party, once they exit the Auction House, as they are on foot for about a mile until they reach a decrepit house, in the back of is a tunnel cut into the ground, the other end of which

after a few days of walking, takes them to the Plateau of Leng.

So to have a real hope of stopping the theft, the players will need to make their move in that time frame. Otherwise something like scooters or motorcycles in the rough hewn dirt tunnel to catch up with the thieves would be necessary.

CONCLUSION

This adventure is meant to be a frustrating one to the Investigators. If they are curious, wonder what is going on, they should have a chance to thwart the theft. If not then the day after the theft occurs, there is a front page article in the local paper stating that person or persons unknown broke into the Auction House forc-

ible, murdered three armed security guards and made off with the Tablet that was set to be auctioned off in a few days. Police have no clues at this time and there are no suspects in the case as of yet.

Any further wrap up or involvement will involve The Keeper running with it in the context of their own ongoing campaigns.

OPPOSITION TO THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

MEN OF LENG

These Men of Leng are not working for the Moonbeasts, instead they represent a separate division within the complex politics that dominates the Plateau. As such they are more evolved, more technological-

ly advanced, as well as self-serving and not very willing to being a Moonbeast's dinner anytime soon. They statistics are the same, and there are no more than 5 of them on this adventure, with the eldest one knowing the Confound The Senses spell.

SPELL: CONFOUND THE SENSES

☠ **SAN Cost:** None

☠ **Magic Points Cost:** 5 Points plus 5 per hour maintained

This spell will confound the senses of all in the target area. It is primarily used to negate or evade electronic or technological surveillance, something The Men of Leng have need of on the Plateau of Leng and in their war with The Moonbeasts. It causes all electronic devices and surveillance gear

MEN OF LENG

STR	11	CON	11	SIZ	13	POW	11 (15 Eldest only)
DEX	11	APP	7	MOVE	8	HP	12
Weapons:	Smaller Caliber Pistols 25%, Bronze Knives 35%						
Armor:	None						
Spells:	Only the eldest of the Men knows the one spell Confound The Senses						
San Loss:	Covered is None, Uncovered and revealed 0/1d5 SAN						

(Stats and descriptions found in H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands Supplement)

TCHO-THCOS

STR	9	CON	9	SIZ	9	POW	9
DEX	8	APP	6	MOVE	8	HP	9
Weapons:	Stone knives, Pick axes Skill 40% with all						
Armor:	None						
Spells:	None						
San Loss:	n/a (note they have 0 SAN and follow the Men of Leng orders to the death)						

(Stats and descriptions found in Core Rule Book)



MIRI NIGRI

STR	7	CON	11	SIZ	7	POW	11
DEX	17	APP	3	MOVE	9	HP	12
Weapons:	Claw 35% 1d3 Damage						
Armor:	None						
Spells:	None						
San Loss:	0/1d2 to see a Miri Nigri						

(Stats and descriptions found in The Creature Companion Core Game Book)

to essentially malfunction, static on cameras, white noise on audio sensors just low enough to confound them, but to not set them off.

THE STONE TABLET OF LENG

This stone tablet was carved by monks devoted to fighting the Men of Leng and those allied with them. Where the monastery was located at, the Plateau of Leng was close in time and distance and it was a fairly simple matter for Men of Leng to cross over into this world in search of victims or the unwary. With this in mind the monks inscribed information regarding the Plateau of Leng as well as various spells they were aware of that were efficacious in combating this ill.

To understand the Tablet will take at least 3 weeks for someone fluent in the oldest versions of Sanskrit. Otherwise 10 or more weeks of translation time will be needed. The Tablet discusses the Plateau of Leng, the Spiders, the Men, the Tcho-Tchos as well as Miri Nigri and their personal and societal habits, all in disturbing details.

Confers the following bonuses to various knowledge skills:

- ☠ Occult Skill +5%
- ☠ Mythos Knowledge +1%
- ☠ Ancient Tibetan Magic Practices +5%
- ☠ Dreamlands Knowledge +5%
- ☠ San Loss 1d3/1d6
- ☠ Spells contained on the Tablet include:
 - ☠ Brew Dream Drug
 - ☠ Dream Vision
 - ☠ Implant Suggestion
 - ☠ Journey to the Plateau of Leng (Per the spell Journey with a fixed destination all other effects the same)

CREDITS

The original Mountain Image sourced at

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nyainqentanglha.JPG>

Declared to be in the Public Domain

- ☠ References used in creating this adventure include the following:
- ☠ Call of Cthulhu Core Rules Version 5.5 1998
- ☠ The Creature Companion Core Game Book 1998
- ☠ H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands 1992
- ☠ GURPS CthulhuPunk Sourcebook 2001



Ammunition

Ammo-a-plenty
By Zvezda and Kevin O'Neill
For Dark Conspiracy®

Ammunition. In earlier times, ammunition was the term applied to any and all stores required by the military. It was an Old French word (derived from Latin) basically meaning 'provisions'. These days ammunition means 'bullets and bombs' and all the high tech weaponry you possess is actually useless (except as a club perhaps) without ammunition. In the context of this article though, we use the term specifically to mean bullets for firearms.

Dark Conspiracy doesn't place a lot of emphasis on ammunition and this means that a lot of the versatility of firearms is lost. To address this, the following article describes some of the types of ammunition available in the real world and also the rules to allow its use in the game. Some have definite benefits though there may also be a penalty involved but the thoughtful Player might find that having different types of ammo gives their PC a range of options that have often been ignored in RPGs.

Choosing the right ammunition can often be as important as choosing the right weapon. So here are some of the most commonly encountered bullets which could be



of use to a minion hunter. While non-standard ammunition has some obvious advantages it does come with more than one drawback. First of all non-standard ammunition considerably decreases a weapon's reliability, especially in full-auto fire. In most countries it is also very difficult to obtain these bullets since most of them are restricted to law enforcement use and are not available on the open market. A fact which makes these bullets also a lot easier to trace. The ammunition uses the optional non-lethal and quick kill rules from Twilight 2000. To avoid making up prices for every calibre there simply is a modifier by which the basic price is multiplied. So a case (1,500 rounds) of Armor Piercing 9mmP would go for 1,170\$.



01-Rubber Bullets: Rubber bullets are used by private security and law enforcement to sting and bruise opponents rather than maim and kill them. They are made of plastic and have a slightly lower charge. The bullets are meant to cause a lot of pain but no serious injury. Even though the rubber bullets are not expected to penetrate deep into the body of a target they still can cause considerable damage like fractures and organ injuries.

The weapon's damage rating is decreased by 1 for close and medium range. Therefore an M-16 assault rifle loaded with rubber bullets does 2D6 damage. Weapons with DAM:1 inflict 1d6-1 damage. On long range 2d6 are subtracted from the weapons DAM, the bullets are useless beyond long range. The damage occurring from rubber bullets is considered non-lethal. In case that a hit is scored at the "head" or "chest" hit locations, Quick Kills are rolled according to the basic rules. If the roll is successful the target dies. The lower charge decreases the reliability of automatic weapons considerably.

Availability: All Weapons

Price: 2x



02-Armor Piercing Bullets: A hard bullet made from steel or tungsten alloys in a pointed shape typically covered by a thin layer of lead and/or a copper/brass jacket. The lead and jacket are intended to prevent barrel wear from the hard core materials. Other designs feature a sabot which holds a projectile that is smaller than the bore diameter to maximise the kinetic energy to penetrate the target. AP Ammo modifies the PEN value of a round by -1. Therefore a PEN rating of 2-3-Nil would become 1-2-Nil. A weapon with a Pen of Nil changes to (Dam-1) for close and Medium. Other ranges Remain Nil. A nine millimetre SMG would have Dam = 2; Pen = 1-Nil. A special case are small calibre armor piercing pistol rounds. These ignore light body armor at close and medium distance but are stopped by armor above AV1. So for example, the 9mmM round does 1D6 damage with a Pen of Nil becomes Pen = 0-Nil against AV-1. It would penetrate AV1 without losing the damage. It won't penetrate AV-2 at all however or be very dangerous beyond medium range besides it's one point of blunt trauma damage.

Availability: All Fire Arms

Price: 6x



03-Expanding Bullets: Are designed to expand on impact. Typical rounds include Jacketed Soft Point, Jacketed Hollow Point and variations of those like Geco or Black Talon. The purpose of these bullets is limited penetration and to deliver a larger wound diameter. Expanding bullets, like the hollow or soft points, are designed to open up or 'peel open' on impact, thus increasing their diameter sufficiently to stop within the target. These bullets are used extensively in hunting rounds and are widely available.

Expanding rounds inflict +1d6 damage to an unarmored target but all Pen ratings are increased by +2. If one of the Pen ratings equals or exceeds the Dam value it drops to Nil. In case that an armored target is struck by an expanding round the weapons original (unmodified) blunt trauma damage is applied. The base range is decreased by 10% when expanding rounds are used. An M60 machinegun with expanding ammo would have Dam: 5; Pen 4-Nil and a Rng of 59m. When a target with a Kevlar Vest (AP:1) is hit at Long Range distance it would suffer 4 points (not dice) of blunt damage.

For shootouts within nuclear power plants or airliners expanding bullets with a default PEN rating of Nil for all ranges are available at a x5 price.

Availability: All

Price: 5X



04-Dum-Dum: The Dum Dum bullet is a home made manstopper round. An X is cut in the nose tip. The effect of the Dum Dum round is the same as that of an expanding bullet, it peels open on impact, thus increasing the diameter sufficiently to stop within the target. It is however a lot less reliable than commercial rounds. The damage of Dum Dum rounds is increased by +1d6. The Pen rating on the other hand drops to Nil for all ranges. The blunt trauma damage is not changed. The Weapons Base Rang is decreased by 20%. An Automatic (a roll of 17 to 20 without specialization on the d20) miss with a DIY Dum Dum round always results in a jam with an automatic or semi-automatic weapon.

Manufacture: Average Small Arms, or Easy Gunsmith. Critical failure detonates the cartridge. Outstanding success only effects the time which is needed to modify the bullets.



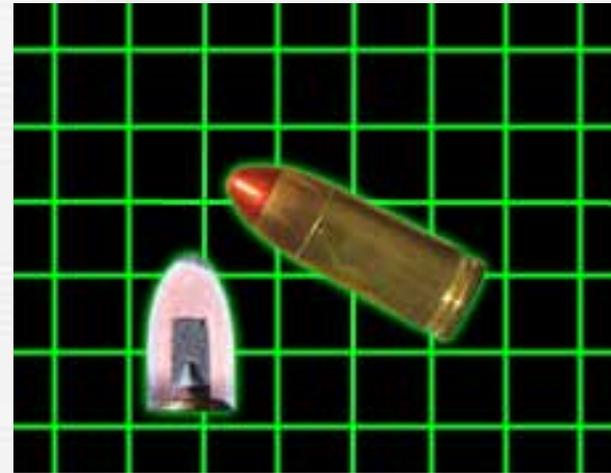


05-Overpressure Ammunition: The method, of increasing the kinetic energy of the bullet, turned out to be very effective in the original quest to improve stopping power. The charge of overpressure ammunition is increased while often the bullet weight is decreased. These rounds are carefully tailored for modern service handguns and may not be safe in all firearms. Thus they are not offered to the general public. Overpressure ammunition can be home manufactured with the right tools and skills.

The Damage is increased by +1d6 but the PEN rating goes up one point too. The round should only be used in very reliable hand guns. If jamming rules are used the weapons tendency to malfunction is increased drastically by the use of overpressure ammunition. The recoil ratings are increased by +1 for single shots and +2 for bursts.

Availability: All

Price: 5X (Average: Gunsmith with the right tools and materials)



06-Tracer Ammunition: Tracer bullets have a small pyrotechnic charge in their base which burns very brightly and leaves a visible trace on the bullet's way. This allows the shooter to follow the bullet's path and if necessary to correct the aim. It is also possible to use tracers to direct fire at a given target, because the traces of the bullets are visible to other combatants. If a stationary target is partially obscured but marked by tracer bullets the obscurity rules no longer apply for that target. It can be fired upon at no additional difficulty level. Targeted shots are obviously still not possible since shooters might know where the target is but can't see it clearly.

To avoid detection of the shooter most tracers have a delay element which prevents the bullet's path from becoming visible too soon. These bullets start leaving visible traces at medium range. Before that they have no effect. An other version are dim tracers which burn very dimly but are clearly visible through night-vision devices.

All tracers have a good chance of setting combustible material (like Mummies) on fire.

Availability: All (Delay Tracers: Rifles Only)

Price: 4X



07-Armor Piercing Incendiary Bullets: API rounds are intended to be used against armored, flammable targets like vehicles or more recently robots and drones. The rounds combine the effects and abilities of armor piercing and incendiary rounds. The PEN value of a weapon using API rounds is modified by -1 for every range band. Weapons with a listed PEN of Nil change to $PEN=(DAM-1)$ for close and medium range and $PEN=Nil$ for ranges exceeding medium. Besides being considerably more effective against body armor, API rounds are not of great use against soft targets, since they will most likely pass through them without detonating. If a person is wearing body armor the round will detonate on impact and set the hit location on fire. When used against vehicles the bullets unfold their full potential. If the round manages to penetrate the armor of a vehicle 2d6 are added to the final penetration value on the "Vehicle Damage Resolution Chart" (pg. 114 & 328 in 1st ED rule book) to determine the number of damage results. The same rules apply if used against vehicular robots. When used against non vehicular robots API bullets deliver 2d6 points of additional damage to a hit location if the round penetrates the robot's armor. If the round is stopped by the armor no additional damage is rolled.

When striking a solid target the bullet will burst into flames. Flammable substances like cargo and so on are set on fire if damaged by API rounds. The incendiary component burns at a very high temperature and can last for up to 10 minutes if not extinguished. Being lighter and less accurate than normal bullets the base range for API rounds is decreased by 25%.

Availability: Rifles Only

Price: 9X



08-Match Grade Ammunition: Ammunition which is suitable for a competitive match is called Match Grade Ammunition.. This ammunition is made with high precision. These rounds have a low tolerance and a very high level of accuracy. The production of match grade ammunition requires extremely tight tolerances and constant quality control. Therefore these bullets are exceptional expensive. Match Grade Ammunition adds +2m to a Pistol's base range. Rifles which use Match Grade Ammunition can add +5m to the base range. If reliability rules are used in the game Match Grade Ammunition considerably increases the weapon's reliability.

Availability: All

Price: 5X



09-Glaser: The Glaser round consists of number 12 shot pellets encapsulated in a thin metal jacket with a plastic cap to seal them in. When it hits an uneven or semi-liquid medium the cap fractures, spilling the shot out of the bullet. The shot transfers the energy into the target some eight times faster than if the bullet had remained intact. This speed of energy transfer causes massive systemic shock and stops the subject almost instantly.

The round does have some drawbacks however. The first is the cost: up to ten dollars a bullet, even though they are available in virtually every calibre from .22 to 7.62 x 39mm. If hostage or an other friendly is accidentally hit, they are most likely dead. An other problem is that the bullet is totally defeated by any angled cover; it has virtually no capacity to penetrate doors, windshields, or wallboard!

Glaser rounds don't increase the actual Damage of the bullet. The big advantage of the Glaser round is that the Quick Kill target number is always 8 or less on a d10 regardless of the weapons actual damage. This means if a creature is hit in the chest or the head the a roll of 1d10. If the roll is 8 or less the creature is dead. Glaser rounds are useless against armored targets. The Pen is set to Nil for all ranges and no blunt damage is applied to an armored target. If an other body part than head or chest is hit, the damage is rolled just as normal but considered to be double for the determination of a knock down. The range of the weapon is decreased by 20%.

Availability: All

Price: 10\$ A bullet sold in cases of 5-50 (50\$ or 500\$)



10-Long Range Precision Bullets: Are designed for high accuracy at very long range. These include rounds like Very Low Drag Bullets and so on. Generally this type of ammunition shoots flatter and is less affected by wind conditions than other bullets. To achieve the exceptional accuracy the projectiles are a lot longer than standard bullets and usually don't work in box magazines or similar devices. Ideally they should be used in single shot weapons or loaded individually into bolt-action rifles. The base range for this type of bullet is increased by 25%. Modifications of a scope apply before those of the bullet. A scoped rifle with a base range of 90 ($90+15=105$) would have Rng 131.

Availability: Rifles Only

Price: 8X



11-Reverse Ogive Rounds: The idea behind these bullets was to produce pistol ammunition which would meet police requirements. The goal was to develop a bullet with increased stopping power and the ability to penetrate body armor. The design has a reverse ogive shape where the front section of the bullet is concave rather than convex. This gives the bullet the ability to penetrate soft body armor and at the same time deliver more severe tissue damage than regular rounds. The damage of weapons, which use Reverse Ogive Round instead of normal bullets, is increased by +1d6. The Pen ratings remain as they are. When the gun has no Penetration the new Pen value will be one point lower than the damage for close range shots, for the next range band it will be Nil. The rounds can be used normally on ranges close and medium but have no effect beyond medium range because they quickly lose velocity.

Availability: All guns

Price: 8X



12-Incendiary Rounds: These bullets contain a compound that bursts into flames after a distance or on impact. Additionally they produce a loud bang and bright flash when striking a target. A creature hit by an incendiary round suffers 1d6 of burn damage every turn (beginning the same turn as the hit had occurred) on the wounded body part. If a creature which is especially vulnerable to fire is struck by an incendiary round the full damage of the shot is considered fire damage and therefore doubled. The base range of a weapon firing incendiary rounds is reduced by 10%. Combustible material near the impact area of an aimed or stray incendiary bullet will immediately start to burn.

Availability: All

Price: 6X

LOSS AND NOT FOUND



Fiction
By CW Kelson III (Tad)

The sickly sweet stench of the fatty candles mingled with stale incense and unwashed bodies. Wafting up from far down, deep in the basement of the nearly abandoned tenement, the dwellers are hidden down under the city far away from the light of light and reason. They huddled together as rats do, for comfort, for protection from those things that stalk the underbelly of the great city stories of distance above.

A fire flicked fitfully in the center of the cleared out space, casting a spell of writhing tendrils on soot stained mold-infested walls. The basement hides from the prying eyes of the authorities, were any to be interested in such.

A crude spit, a tire iron run long wise through some unidentified chunk of meat, turned with a vice grip wrapped with wire and held over the flame on crumbling concrete blocks, is turned by one of the bodies down there. It is a crush of flesh, but a respectable distance is kept from the largest of them all, perched on a mound of debris in state behind the spit turner. The leader of this fell band, or just the alpha male of a pack of wild animals that happen to walk semi-erect.

Either way it sits in state, awaiting the food being seared and charred in the crud-est of fashions. A murmur of noise rises

once in a while from the huddled masses on the outskirts of the enclosure, some squabbling over scraps of space or remnant of tidbits thrown into the crowd. Sometimes a head will turn towards the pile of debris and stare just long enough to be noticed but not long enough to challenge.

The leader pays no heed to the antics, instead focused on the condition of the turning meat dripping hot fat, just as bacon does into a campfire, waiting till it is done to its stomach's content. Then after a passage of time, the hulking figure draped in rags; and in the fitful light of the fire; an old firefighters heavy leather coat, ripped in places and stained beyond repair with oil, dirt and splattered blood. Finally the figure moves over to the flames and clouts away the spit turner before diving into the meal of burnt and raw flesh cooked over the open flame.

A sob comes from beyond the mass of bodies at the sound of filed teeth tearing into the flesh still smoldering and smoking from the open fire roasting.

Pause:

Far above the sobs, there in the rain coming down in acidic streaks, a small group comes across a door bolted shut to hold what is behind it, inside. Tools are applied



and it opens across from several flights of rusted iron stairs above the tableau. These intruders into the under belly of the city accompanied to the shrieks of tortured metal forced to open against its will.

There are three of them stepping onto the metal-railed landing. Brandishing flashlights to light the way into the darkness, they descend, moving downward with unsteady feet on the treacherous footing. Far below something heard the door opening, and it was curious as to what was coming into the hunting grounds.

The body was just lying there in a sketch of dried up moss and lichen. Desiccated and dried out, like an insect's husk, after all the fluids have been leeches out of it. The twisted vines forcing their snakelike way through the concrete tube walls of the sewers and hen into the now deceased. Death had come a long time before. The trio of intruders, all dressed in well worn surplus military gear, with their stubby carbines ten years old, and combat webbing holding up other sundries, all with their eyes and minds on task, all at the ready. Each took turns looking down on the corpse. Investigating, one reached down and pulled hair dry as corn silk left in the scorching sun, the skin underneath

is stretched out over the bone in a paroxysm of death.

"This is one of them, missing for two days now, cause of death is unknown."

One of the three, all males, stands back up,

"Lets keep looking."

Back behind the intruders lurking in the darkness, a silent furtive figure moves. An old woman is there skulking, staying clear of light and with soft gliding steps, leaving no clue for alert ears to ascertain. Unable to see what she appears, even the gender is an approximation. Still something in the hunched over posture, something in the tilt of the head all suggests great age and a feminine sense of cunning and wile.

The three men move down the sewer line, stalked from behind, still looking for the other missing people.

Still looking for their lost loves.



ON THE BUS GOING SOMEWHERE

This is A Dark Seed. It is intended to aid the GM in gaming, with creatures, settings, situations, micro-adventures, etc. It is for assistance only. Please refer to life for details on what else to do in the meantime.

On The Bus Going Somewhere is an interlude adventure, meaning it is meant to be run or played as an interlude between main adventures.

This is the sort of thing that happens during downtime between Minion Hunts for most Characters, an encounter with a murderous voracious Darkling. It is a single occurrence, single setting, something to fill in the blanks when all else fails, or to throw a curve into the works of the players and their characters.

THE SITUATION

The characters, or at least one, will end up on a bus heading somewhere. It could be cross town, cross county, cross country, it just matters that a PC ends up on a bus with an empty seat next to them. This is where the Ravager sits down at. The Ravager is on the bus as a tail to an important figure for a Humanoid ET Cell. The human being tailed is a member of a underground cell that recently came into possession of documents that links a Federal Agency to the ETs. Disclosure of this document would

set back the ET plans by several years. So this Ravager has been sent to infiltrate the cell, most likely by seducing one member of it and gaining swift access in that fashion. The chosen target is on the bus (most likely a female but tailor to individual campaigns/flavor) and the Ravager is about to make the move. Use a skill level of 5 for the infiltration, small talk, hand touching, etc. The Ravager was prepped with a small cologne like spray that contains human pheromones, to aid in sealing the deal in a manner of speaking. The only thing slowing it down, is that there is someone else sitting next to the target. To this end the Ravager will end up asking the PC to move perhaps, or to help them in distracting the person next to the target, stating this is someone they have looked at from afar and have decided to declare their affection for. This should sound fairly convincing, however the Willpower Test may affect how well the PC might react and so might aid or hinder the efforts.

OPTIONS

Presuming the PC does not penetrate the Ravager's disguise and is convinced of the sincerity, play out the PC asking if the other person sitting next to the target would move, or what ever the player decides. At that time the Ravager moves over,

A Dark Seed
By CW Kelson III (Tad)
For Dark Conspiracy®

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starts chatting up the target (aided with the pheromone spray applied to its self just before sitting down as unobtrusively as possible (use a skill of 4 if the character is actively observing the initial exchange) and by the end of the trip the Ravager and Target should be hand in hand, having fallen deeply affectionate (on the Target's side) with the Ravager. This will be the last the PC should see the target alive, and likely the first and last time they will see the Ravager as well.

Note: The target utterly fails the Willpower roll and believes the Ravager is just what it is pretending to be, an attractive male interested in her and her beliefs and struggles.

It is possible the Character might want to continue following up. In that case use the following simple statistics if desired for the Target.

MICHELLE POSEN

Michelle Posen, average height and appearance with mousy brown hair and tanned complexion. She favors heavy boots, dungaree type cargo pants and oversize well worn plaid shirts. She has no weapons, only a messenger bag when out about town with a few essentials.

Experienced NPC, Motivation Ten of Hearts (Very Sociable), 25 years old, very naive, consider to have the following careers already;

One Term Street urchin, One Term Prole, One Term Environmentalist. This scenario takes place within a year of what would be her second term in Environmentalist (in game terms).

The Underground Cell she belongs to is a Democratic Liberator type, consisting of about 15 total members in the PCs city. They are poorly armed and with little resources, but great heart in all the members. They are focused on local environmental concerns with some Government Contacts (where the documents in question fell into their hands from), as well as local Law Enforcement. They have little to no combat skills and a single Ravager is more than enough opposition to take them all out.

After about a week the news will have reports of a serial killer stalking the area. This is the Ravager systematically killing and eating the entire cell he has taken captive once infiltrating it. The killings will continue for about two weeks until it is done and recalled.

OPPOSITION

A SINGLE RAVAGER

The Ravager has standard statistics and is armed with three weapons, one a flat blade (Similar in appearance and size to a Bowie Knife) made from some Extraterrestrial Substance that allows it to ignore all metallic armor (Damage 1d6 and ignores all Armor[Negates if there is any metallic component to it]), the second weapon is a Monofilament Machete as per the Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition Referees Guide, and a large caliber handgun made of carbon fibers and is invisible to conventional security systems (Same statistics as a Desert Eagle .44 Mag. with no appreciable weight and special carbon fiber rounds [total of 12 rounds in the weapon and no reloads] that changes the PEN factor to a straight 1).

It has an undershirt of advanced weave granting an Armor Value of 1 to the Torso/

RAVAGER

STR:	14	EDU:	6	Move:	3/10/20/35
CON:	13	CHA:	8	Skill/Dam:	8/2d6
AGL:	10	EMP:	7	Hits:	12/24
INT:	7	Init:	5	# Appear:	1

(Per The Dark Races Compendium Vol 1 pg 80 or Dark Conspiracy Second Edition Referees Guide).



Vitals. Otherwise it has a small communications device to keep in contact with its ET Handler and to get further directions if necessary.

Specials: Illusory Appearance (See Book Entry for details and effects)

Use the skill of 8 for all combat functions using weapons as well.

Appearance:

As Human: He stands a shade over 6 and a half feet tall, with the rugged looks of the outdoorsman, or the stolid individualist. He has on cargo pants, quality leather shoes, polo shirt and heavy jacket more suited to the outdoors than an office. His hair is dark, thick, and wavy, with looks that most would find compelling.

As Ravager: Almost 7 foot tall, thick skin the color of dried blood, backward curling short rams horns that are ridged and with some dull metal tipping each one, potentially as a sense of decoration. The thick muscled hands and blunt fingers end in sharp claws and there is some strange leathery like near armor on the body that is more ape in musculature than human. The face is inhuman and the teeth are those of a rending carnivore, thick to crush bone as well as tear and sunder flesh.



DARK CONSPIRACY III

Are you ready?





After Armageddon

by Clark Ashton Smith, 1912

God walks lightly in the gardens of a cold, dark star,
Knowing not the dust that gathers in His garments' fold;
God signs Him with the clay, marks Him with the mould,
Walking in the fields unsunned of a sad, lost war,
In a star long cold.

God treads brightly where the bones of unknown things lie,
Pale with His splendor as the frost in a moon-bleached place;
God sees the tombs by the light of His face,
He shudders at the runes writ thereon, and His shadow on the sky
Shudders hugely in space.

God talks briefly with His armies of the tomb-born worm,
God holds parley with the grey worm and pale, avid moth:
Their mouths have eaten all, but the worm is wroth
With a dark hunger still, and he murmurs harm
With the murmuring moth.

God turns Him heavenward in haste from a death-dark star,
But His robes are assailed by the dust of unknown things dead;
The grey worm follows creeping, and the pale moth has fed
Couched in a secret golden fold of His broad-trained cimar
Like a doom unsaid.

The Martian
by Clark Ashton Smith
from:

www.eldritchdark.com

