

NATURAL INSTINCTS

...wherein we face the wilder side of life on Poseidon.

Darkness...punctuated by sharp stabs of pain. Sounds too...birds and waves. Water laps around your legs. "Well," you decide, "I hurt too much to be dead." You open your eyes, spit sand from your mouth, and force yourself upright. Bright afternoon sun causes you to groan and shield your face as you look around. A long stretch of white beach, steep jungle-covered sea cliffs, and an infinity of blue ocean. Damn the pilot anyway, but at least he crashed close to shore. You wonder if he made it.

Up and down the beach there are a few others from your flight. Some are moving slowly about, others will never move again. A quick check: your clothes are more or less intact, but that's it. Your gear, even your bodycomp, must be at the bottom of the bay. As you trod through the wet sand to join the others, you try hard to forget everything you ever heard about survival chances and the wilds of Poseidon...

Natural Instincts is the very first published scenario for the Blue Planet RPG. This particular adventure is designed to accommodate any number of characters, and is meant for players with any level of gaming experience. The scenario is also designed to be used within an existing campaign, or as a stand-alone adventure. The characters can be a cohesive group that has been together for a long while, or they may have nothing more in common than the misfortune of traveling together on the same transport. There are any number of ways, as the game moderator, that you can introduce your players to this adventure, and so we encourage you to be imaginative and play to the strengths of your individual group.

Natural Instincts focuses on a tiny and mysterious tropical island that can be located at your convenience, anywhere in the wilds of the Pacifica Archipelago. As we present the adventure here, the players are assumed to be a group of air transport passengers that have found themselves marooned. The unfortunate castaways quickly learn they are not alone on the island, and the adventure unfolds as a direct consequence of how the players deal with what, and who, they discover.

To help you decide how to involve your players and how to make effective use of the maps and suggestions below, we offer the following summary of what has happened on the island thus far...

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The basic events are fairly straight forward, but the players will have to piece things together as they explore the island, and so the big picture will not become clear until the latter parts of the adventure.

The island is not entirely deserted. Lavender Organics, a long-time leader in commercial applications of biotechnology, chose the island as the location for a secret research facility. The lab has been in operation for almost five years and is used for projects of, shall we say, marginal legal compliance. The primary focus over the last several years has been the development of a new form of genetically engineered super-soldier. As this sort of research is expressly prohibited by GEO statutes, LavOrg management has relied heavily of the facility's isolation to keep its purpose secret.

Unfortunately, intelligence analysts at GenDiver discovered a pattern in LavOrg's supply and distribution network that gave away the existence of the lab. Further investigation and a few payoffs led to the discovery of the island's purpose and location. Acting with its typical paranoia, GenDiver sent in a black ops team to "secure" the facility.

The commandos began their assault about thirty-five hours before the player characters arrive on the island. They first landed near the lab's transmitter station on the ridge top above the facility (Island Map #4). Here they wired in a powerful multi-frequency jammer that remains active as the game begins. After sending an advance team to scout the grounds and blow the lab's reactor, the commandos stormed the lab. Acting within a loose interpretation of their orders, they assaulted the facility and executed the scientists. Before they could grab any data and pull out, however, the soldiers ran afoul of the lab's latest experiment.

Test subject JNR13, "Junior" to the lab personnel, is certainly the most formidable super-soldier design yet conceived. Unfortunately, though Junior is fully grown with innate combat reflexes, he is only two years old, and has the cognitive ability and social development of a toddler. For a complete description of JNR13 and his abilities, see below.

From his "quarters" in the facility's greenhouse, Junior heard the shouts, the gunfire, and the screams of the lab personnel - the only family he had ever known. Rage and instincts took over and JNR13 went on a killing rampage. Busting through the greenhouse's domed roof, Junior tore into the commandos like a wild animal. Leaving a trail of dead soldiers all the way to the beach, he finished with the squad guarding the commandos' jumpcraft. Unfortunately, Junior failed to reach the pilot before she activated the craft's emergency locator beacon.

Still operating on instinct, Junior disabled the hopper's electronic systems by the simple expediency of smashing them to useless fragments. He then disarmed the dead soldiers, hiding both himself and their weapons deep in the jungle. Alone again, and in the dark quiet of the forest, Junior eventually calmed down, becoming increasingly frightened as his battle rage receded.

Junior has never been outside without his friends from the lab, and so returned to the facility in search of them. When he found them murdered he became confused and brought his creators outside to "play" in the sun. He brought them some of his toys and picked wildflowers for them, but the stiff bodies remained still. Truly alone for the first time in his life, and with his demanding metabolism making him increasingly hungry, Junior was terrified.

When the player characters arrive, maybe fifteen hours later, a starving Junior will quickly discover their presence and quietly shadow them as they explore the island. He will be calmer, but still very frightened. His body will be screaming for food and he will begin to wonder if these newcomers might have something to eat. Eventually, when he, and you, feel the timing is right, Junior will cautiously approach the party in hopes of being fed.

Unknown to everyone but GenDiver, the signal from the emergency locator beacon set off during Junior's attack has summoned help. A second unit of commandos is now en route to the island. Unable to raise anyone from the first assault team, the second wave is taking no chances. The GenDiver soldiers are coming in platoon strength, and are armed for bear. As the characters begin to figure out what has happened on the island, they find themselves trapped in a rapidly closing vice. How the situation resolves itself depends on the decisions, and the friends, the characters make.

Presenting the Adventure

The body of this scenario consists of a string of encounters the players must explore and subsequently deal with as they proceed through the adventure. Though not by necessity a linear story, the scenario is most compelling if you present the encounters as described below. Included in the following descriptions are suggestions for running specific aspects of this adventure, gleaned from numerous convention playtests of the scenario. Use those you like, and disregard those that do not fit your players or your fancy.

A DAY AT THE BEACH

Natural Instincts presents the perfect opportunity to start an adventure "en media res," or in the midst of the action. Many movies begin this way, creating a sense of excitement and tension right from the start. Since we are assuming the players are castaways from a transport crash, we choose to start the game on the beach after the tired survivors have washed ashore and dragged themselves up on the sand (Island Map #1).

The players will undoubtedly have questions about the crash - what happened, did everyone survive, what gear did we salvage, where are we? The answers are simple. The cause of the crash is unknown - the pilot, if still alive, was far too busy ditching the craft to also have figured out what happened. The jumpcraft went down in deep water, far too deep even for any aquaforms in the party, and it was all the passengers could do to get out with their lives, let alone any equipment or cargo. The exact content of each character's pockets, belt pouches, holsters or whatever is up to you, but we recommend that most personal effects, heavy clothing, and even shoes had to be discarded to make the swim to shore. The fewer resources - especially weapons - the players have at the start, the more compelling the subsequent adventure becomes.

There were likely several other passengers besides the player characters, but unless you wish to include non-player characters for plot or story reasons, the other passengers should be lost in the crash. A body or two may have washed ashore along with some useless flotsam from the wreckage, but that is all. The pilot, if he or she survived, can tell the group that they were about halfway to their destination, but the island he thinks they are on is a tiny dot on the map, designated only by coordinates. The pilot knows they were lucky to reach even this deserted beach, and that a search, assuming the characters merit one, will not begin for at least a day or two.

It is early evening when the characters have finally pulled themselves from the surf, and the setting sun will soon drop behind the island's central ridge. The players will undoubtedly discuss their options, perhaps at length. One or more of the characters may have implant computers (BP 225), or may have been able to hang on to a bodycomp (BP 204). If this is the case, and the characters attempt an uplink, or try to link to each other, their efforts are foiled by the commando's powerful jammer.

The climate is mild and the skies clear, but even the greenhorns in the party will realize that fresh water and predators should be the group's first concern. As the sun goes down, those characters with experience on Poseidon know that the nocturnal predators will be stirring, and that the bodies that have washed ashore will soon be attracting unwanted attention. If for no other reasons than these, the players should be encouraged to head down the beach. This is fortunate, as their first encounter waits, literally, just around the corner.

Getting the players to head off in the right direction is not as difficult or as leading as it may seem. They only have three options, north, south or west. If anyone suggests they head west into the jungle, a little creative deterrence is in order. Any natives, or experienced Poseidoner's in the group, should know that the forest is a dangerous place, especially at night and without weapons. Successful Survival rolls will remind them of this. If they insist on entering the woods, Intuition rolls and the sounds of stalking predators can be used to give them second thoughts.

It is also unlikely that the players will choose to head south. In all the playtests we have had, the players seemed attracted to the apparent safety of the island's large bay. If you provide them with the island map, they are almost guaranteed to head this way, and a little creative description about how sheltered and quiet the bay appears will surely encourage them to look there for refuge.

PLAYING IN THE SAND

As the party moves along the shore they will find a small stream or two, and those with the Foraging skill will see edible fruits in the scrub of the tree line and small marine animals that can be easily caught and eaten raw. Though these morsels are hardly appetizing, the party will at least not die of dehydration or starvation.

As the characters round the point at the head of the island's main cove, Vision rolls will allow them to spot a dark object at the head of the bay, halfway between the water and the forest (island map - #2). The object is a vehicle of some kind, but the details are lost in the darkening shadows. Invariably one or more of the party will opt to approach the beached machine. As they do, they realize that the vehicle is a military jumpcraft (BP 238) - an armored personnel carrier. The craft is stealth equipped and has no insignia of any kind. There are belly and dorsal weapons pods, but they are sealed and appear inactive.

As they get closer still - twenty meters or so - the investigating characters will notice a number of figures slumped on the sand, randomly scattered around the APC. Closer inspection reveals that the figures are soldiers in phototropic BDUs (BP 216). The BDUs have matched the color of the sand and darkened in the twilight, camouflaging the bodies until the characters are almost on top of them.

Like the hopper, the soldiers also lack any insignia or identifying features. Each has a combat helmet and web gear, but no weapons - not a single one. They each have holsters and ammo pouches, but these are empty. Stranger still, the soldiers appear to have been killed by a pack of powerful and methodical animals. One has his throat ripped out, one has a crushed rib cage, and two have been eviscerated. There are four bodies on the beach and they have been dead at least fifteen hours.

As you know, Junior is responsible for both the carnage and the missing weapons, but it is important at this point not to give too much away to the players. If presented with an edge

of suspense and enough descriptive flare, this encounter should be enough to put the players on their toes and inject them with a healthy dose of caution. After all, night is falling and whatever took out a well-armed band of professional soldiers is still out there - somewhere.

Externally, the jumpcraft seems undamaged, but a quick look inside proves otherwise. The pilot, or what is left of her, is smeared around the cockpit. The control systems appear to have been bashed, bent, torn and twisted into uselessness, and only complete replacement will make the craft operational again. Navigation, avionics, communications, computer control - everything has been carefully destroyed. It is important to the progression of the plot that the players not obsess on salvaging the vehicle and using it to escape the island. A Piloting roll, or a few successful Electronics Repair rolls should be sufficient to convince players that the craft is useless for anything but keeping rain off their heads.

Any characters that do spend some time looking over the interior of the craft should be allowed Awareness rolls. Success means they notice that the hopper's emergency locator beacon (BP 211) appears to be functional and is sending out a distress signal. The beacon is a military unit and is operating in conjunction with the special ops team's jamming transmitter. Though the players do not know this, it is likely that even the least intuitive among them will make the connection between the beacon and the possible arrival of reinforcements.

A thorough search of the craft turns up no weapons, but does provide some valuable survival gear (BP 211). A standard medical kit, a pack of twelve water filter straws, two rolls of survival plastic, two locator beacons, four rescue balls, numerous blocks of fire paste, four flashlights and even sixty man-days of survival rations are carefully packed in various compartments about the hopper's interior. Though this equipment is certainly useful, it offers no immediate deliverance from the island.

It is probable that the players will scavenge gear from the soldiers' bodies. They can certainly use the web harnesses and the BDUs, but trying to access the combat helmets (BP 216) is another story. The characters can wear the helmets as protection, but they will be unable to access their onboard systems. Uplink interfaces fail due to the heavy jamming, and attempts at cable interface or voice activation meet with an insistent request for the "current operations access code." Without some sophisticated hard- and software, even an expert hacker will get only a repetitive response of "access denied" out of the devices. The helmets' visors remain active, however, and may be manually switched through their various modes. In the growing dark, this could be reassuring to any visually unmodified characters.

The downside to wearing the helmets is that each one is equipped with a remote access system. This means that not only can the helmets be tracked by the inbound soldiers, any audio-video feed the helmets' pickups record can be used to great tactical advantage by the commandos.

At some point, as the players ask questions and explore the area around the downed craft, ask for more Vision rolls. Any characters who succeed will discover an odd trail leading into the woods. The path is about ten meters wide, and totally clear of trees and brush. The trail is covered in grass-like growth only a few centimeters high, and appears to have been groomed. The path is strangely level and disappears into the darkened forest. The players may make Driving rolls to realize that the

path is most likely a hovercraft trail. In an effort to maintain secrecy, Lavender Organics has been making supply drops for the lab via submarine. A small hover-launch from the sub has been used to ferry the supplies first to the beach and then inland to the lab.

THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

The trail leads into the jungle, and is just over a kilometer long. It runs fairly straight, and ends at the clearing around the Lavender facility. There are three more soldiers' corpses along the road, one of which dangles from a tree into which it seems to have been carelessly tossed.

The path enters the southeast corner of the clearing, opposite several structures that dominate the open area (Clearing Map). There are a few trees scattered about, and a rather steep rocky exposure along the north end of the forest opening. The structures are made of industrial plastic (BP 214) and are detailed below in the facility map description. There are also five more soldier's corpses tossed about (Clearing Map X) as well as a neat row of civilian bodies (Clearing Map O) laid out in the northwest corner of the lab grounds.

By this time, and for best dramatic effect, it is fully night and the forest darkness is total. There is just a hint of moon glow to the east as one of Poseidon's moons will soon be rising. The clearing is only marginally brighter than the surrounding forest, and the phototropic uniforms on the soldiers seem to make the bodies just suddenly appear right before the characters' eyes. The effect is more than a little unnerving.

The smaller structure is a domed shed with wide double doors. Inside is a surprisingly mundane collection of tools, equipment and supplies; shovels, fire axes, plastic construction materials, jugs of stock chemicals, spare machine and electronic components, plastic cord, lanterns, yard tools and even a robot mower. Hopefully by this time, the players will be all worked up by the suspense and sufficiently paranoid. If so, you should anticipate a feeding frenzy as the characters pile into the shed, arming themselves with various implements of destruction. Let them have their moment - in the end it will likely make little difference.

The bodies of the soldiers are similar to those on the beach. They have been stripped of their weapons and were apparently killed by wild animals. The stacked civilian bodies are notably different. There are eight of them, five dressed in lab coats, two in civilian cloths, and one in a nightgown. All of them are riddled with bullet wounds. The bodies have been laid out in a neat row and wildflowers of various kinds have been placed clumsily in their stiff hands. There are several small piles of plastic soldiers, a hydroshot puck (UC #2), a plush dolphin, a toy spaceship, and a digital reader with numerous children's books stored in memory also laying randomly among the bodies.

Junior, in his confusion and fear, carried the bodies from the lab and gently placed them on the grass outside. In an effort to "wake" them, Junior brought his creators some of the things with which they often encouraged him to play. He brought them flowers too, an act that usually seemed to please them. Junior remains confused at why they will not wake up because they have never let him get this hungry before.

The remaining structures appear half-imbedded in the rock of the small cliff at the clearing's north end. The westernmost structure is a wide plastic passage leading into the rock face, the doors of which have been blown off their hinges and lay

half-melted in the exposed opening. The larger structure is a semi-circular wall about five meters high with a clear, domed roof. There appears to be vegetation pressing against the roof panels from the inside, and from a distance characters might be able to see several busted panes near the dome's crown.

At this point it is likely that the players will start making suppositions about what has happened. If their guesses are right, they may also start expecting to encounter JNR13 at any moment, and we certainly do not want to disappoint them. For best effect, however, you should wait until the characters have begun exploring the lab facility before introducing them to Junior.

WEIRD SCIENCE

At some point, even the most cautious players will decide to explore the facility. After all, there is likely to be food and maybe weapons, and well...all the dead guys are out here so maybe it's safer inside. The layout and contents of the lab are detailed in the map key provided below. Dramatically, this is the best time to introduce Junior.

Lavender Organics has always been known for their long-term outlook and for their diverse, "blue-sky" research projects. Initially the project that eventually created Junior was nothing more than a series of theoretical experiments in genetic engineering. When it began producing viable multi-species hybrid life forms, the project became a little less than legal and LavOrg decided to establish the secret lab.

Junior is the thirteenth soldier hybrid the project has produced and the only one to survive more than a few months. Despite their best professional objectivity, most of the team quickly grew attached to their unlikely creation. In the natural course of things, Junior grew to love them as well.

JNR13

Junior is an amalgamation of genetic code from over forty terrestrial and native Poseidon species. He is just over two and a half meters tall, and weighs almost 300 kilograms. Junior is humanoid, and though reminiscent of a bipedal saurian, he moves with the grace and speed of a big cat instead of the jerky fits of a reptile. His body is heavily muscled and covered with a rough hide that can turn a knife blade. His skin is also chromataphoric allowing him to blend into almost any background. His hands and feet are enormous with retractable claws, amphibious webbing, and opposable thumbs. He has a flattened, iguana-like tail and large gills down his back, making him as much at home in the water as on land.

The creature's bones have been virally reinforced and his neurons are naturally accelerated. His hearing and smell are hypersensitive and he can see into both the ultraviolet and the infrared. He is immensely strong and can move at over forty kilometers per hour in great, leaping pounces. Junior can claw his way straight up the trunk of a tree and can move with almost complete silence. He is warm blooded, but registers almost no heat signature, except from his tail which is used as a natural heat dump.

The creature's head is low on its shoulders with large deltoids reaching to the sides of his skull. He has numerous bony protrusions on his skull and along his jaw, and he has large canine teeth that make it difficult for him to speak even the few words he knows. His eyes are yellow but their slit pupils can open wide enough to turn them completely black.

Junior's Stats

Length 2.63 meters tall

Weight 281 kilograms

Movement 2/12

Awareness 55/6

Intellect 15/5

Initiative 45/6

Agility 60/6

Constitution 85/6

Endurance 60/6

Strength 35/6

Rounds 1

Attack Claws and crushing blows – 80

Damage Ranks 1/10 2/30 3/45 4/65 5/80 6/90 7/100

Damage Scale 2

Armor 1/15

Physically, Junior is a genetic engineering masterpiece and the supreme predator. Mentally, however, the creature is a vulnerable and innocent child. When he encounters the party, his reactions and subsequent behavior will be determined by how the characters treat him, and whether they gain his trust.

You should watch carefully for the most dramatic timing and present Junior at just the right moment. Our suggestion is that you wait until the players are about to explore the greenhouse that was used as Junior's room. Feeling safe there, Junior can be hiding in the room, listening to what the players are doing, waiting for the chance to approach.

A cool way to surprise the players is to have Junior hidden, submerged in the greenhouse's small pond. When one of the characters wanders close enough to the water, Junior erupts from below the surface, snatching the character up in a bear hug, holding the unfortunate character between himself and the party. Junior's speed and strength are great enough that the captured character cannot evade or break free, struggle as he might. Junior will not hurt the player if he is not threatened, and what he does in the next few minutes depends entirely on the actions of the rest of the party.

The players' first reactions will likely be of surprise and excitement, followed by confusion and maybe understanding as you describe the scene. As detailed above, Junior is a formidable sight. The confusion is in what the monster is wearing. Junior has on oversized military web gear, complete with buckles and pouches. Stuffed into one of the straps is a plush orca doll, muddy and ragged, but definitely a toy. He is wearing a baseball cap with a GEO logo, though it is busted out in back to fit on his oversized head. There is a toy submarine hanging from another strap and a large plastic spoon stuffed in his belt.

Junior will sniff the air, growl like a big cat, and dart his head back and forth as he watches the other characters. He will be apprehensive and startle easily until he begins to trust them. If the players work to calm him, after a while Junior will relax his grip on his captive and eventually lower him to the ground.

What Junior is really hoping for is food. His unique metabolism requires enormous quantities of energy, and he has literally begun to starve. If any of the characters are carrying some of the survival rations from the hopper, or food from the lab's kitchen, Junior will focus on them and approach cautiously, sniffing at the air and at the character. He will pull the big spoon from his belt and use one of the few words he knows. Junior will ask for "food", but the word comes out of his toothy mouth more like "foo." If the character understands and pulls a ration bar from his pocket, Junior will start to rock back and

forth from foot to foot calling “FOO FOO FOO FOO FOO FOO!” If the characters feed him, and better yet, if they take him to the kitchen and make him some real food, they will win a friend for life.

Junior will also react strongly to anyone displaying a GEO logo of any kind. Though he cannot yet read, the creature recognizes the organization’s symbol and will fawn over anyone wearing one. In hopes of facilitating the creature’s acceptance of his own design intent, Junior’s creators raised him on tales of hybrid heroics (BP 228) during the Blight, and his childish mind now practically worships them.

Such efforts have given Junior an emotional attachment and an ingrained respect for anything GEO. If by lucky chance one of the characters happens to be a Sylvan hybrid (BP 228), Junior will focus almost all his attention on that character, and will do almost anything he asks. In fact, Junior’s second favorite word is “Joe,” which is his best pronunciation of the initials GEO. Once the players have begun to win him over, he will point to any badges or patches the characters might be wearing and repeat over and over “JOE JOE JOE JOE JOE,” with an intimidating but happy grin on his face.

We suggest that you really ham up the role of Junior. Describe him carefully at the first encounter, exaggerating both his intimidating and child-like aspects. Growl and sniff, and beg for “FOO,” but keep the players on edge. Their interaction with Junior is the emotional focus of the adventure and if done right it can be the best part of the game.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE

Once the players have explored the facility and befriended Junior, but before they head out to explore the rest of the island, you should throw the final, and hopefully not unexpected, encounter at the castaways. The exact timing should be as dramatic as possible so be careful to pick just the right moment.

A heavy jumpcraft screams by overhead, and by the time the players can get outside, it has started to search the area. Several spotlights flare from its underside and so the characters will be unable to get any visual details in the glare. This also prevents them from seeing the rotary cannon that has deployed from a belly pod and is sweeping across the scene below. The assault team’s reinforcements have arrived and they are taking no chances.

The climax of the adventure will play out depending on how the characters react. If they hide in the facility they will be trapped and will have to somehow hold off the commandos. If they flee into the woods, they will have to evade commando patrols and contend with whatever wildlife you chose to throw at them. Either way, the characters’ chances are not as bad as they appear because Junior is about to level the playing field.

Several seconds before the jumpcraft screams overhead Junior’s head will snap up. He hears the aircraft well before the characters and is up and moving before they even know what is going on. Junior plunges into the night and is gone. He has left to retrieve the hidden weapons, and as soon as he can recover them and sneak back to the party unseen, he will return carrying an oversized duffel bag. All the weapons he took from the first team of commandos are in the duffel which he unceremoniously dumps at the feet of the characters. He then grunts something unintelligible, and tears off into the night - Junior is now operating on nothing but instinct.

The players will likely be delighted with this duffel of destruc-

tion, and load themselves up Rambo-style. There are assault rifles with mounted grenade launchers, handguns, ammo of the appropriate sorts, propellant cartridges (BP 217), and even diamond combat knives (BP 216). If the party is made up of primarily non-combatants then things are even - twenty-four commandos versus one combat monster - literally. If the party is heavy with combat skills then it can help Junior make things even harder on the soldiers.

There are basically two ways to resolve this adventure. The scenario can climax in a suspenseful game of cat and mouse as the characters attempt to evade the commandos, or it can end in a nighttime fire-fight that lights up the whole jungle. The players will likely make this choice themselves, based on the relative professions and skills of their characters. Either way the players go will force you to run the climax by the seat of your pants, as there are as many possible outcomes as there are gamers.

If the players decide to evade the commandos, they will likely try to disappear into the forest, and put as much distance between themselves and the facility as they can. The going is hard and slow because the forest is dark and the underbrush is thick. If they head up the mountainside, the steep terrain will slow them still further. You should feel free to introduce them to the local wildlife, or to put commando patrols on their trail. Carniflora, land lizards (BP 126,103), marsh devils (Arch 43), or any number of unidentified species might ambush or stalk the party.

Commando patrols will be equipped with night-vision gear, allowing them to move faster than the characters. If any of the characters are still wearing helmets scavenged from the dead soldiers, the commandos will know exactly where they are and the pursuit will be close and hot. The jumpcraft is loaded with every sort of scanner as well - light intensification, infrared, etc. - so it is possible that even the hopper will be used in the search.

If the players get the jump on the soldiers and get into the forest before the commandos set up a perimeter, they have a chance to get away clean. In fact, the commandos might not even know the party is on the island. If they somehow give away their presence, however, the characters will have to show initiative and work together to find a safe place to go to ground. If they run into trouble getting away, feel free to have Junior burst in on the scene in savage defense of his new friends. If the characters manage to keep their wits about them, they will likely have the opportunity to escape in the bloody chaos that ensues.

If the players decide to fight it out, their characters had better be skilled combatants and they had better have a plan. The commando team is well trained, well equipped, and most likely has the characters greatly outnumbered.

Typical GenDiver Commando

Mental Attributes: Awareness 65, Charisma 45, Education 50, Experience 62, Initiative 65, Intellect 43, Will 64.

Physical Attributes: Agility 72, Appearance 50, Constitution 65, Dexterity 50, Endurance 75, Speed 85, Strength 80.

Modifications: Uplink Neural Jack, Programmed Reflexes, Myo-lecs, Accelerated Neurons, Myo-skeletal Enhancements

Skill Groups: Athletics 40, Command 20, Firearms 60, Military Weapons 60, Survival 40, Vehicles 20.

Skills: Aquatics 20, Parachuting 20, Physical Training 20, Computer Operation 20, Demolitions 40, Incorporate Culture 50, GEO Culture 30, Military Culture 60, Electronics Operation 45, Military Hand-to-Hand 60, First Aid 40, Stealth 40, any Vehicles skill 30.

The players will likely either try to make a defensive stand, or ambush the soldiers. Either way, the players are in for a pitched battle. Realistically, the characters have little chance in any kind of stand-up fight. However, they have a secret weapon - Junior. If things look bad for the party you should feel free to bring the creature into the fray.

However Junior gets involved, you should not worry too much about running him through action rounds (BP 306) or rolling for attacks, damage and such. He should be used dramatically with an eye to a cinematic climax for the adventure. The players might see his shadow in a tree, and suddenly a soldier is yanked up into the branches with a choked cry. Maybe they see a commando sneaking about the compound and then find his crumpled body moments later when they follow. Perhaps some of the characters are taken prisoner, and on the march back to the lab, Junior attacks out of the dark. More likely, maybe the party only hears shouts of confusion, screams of terror, and lots of automatic gunfire in the distance. However you choose to run the climax, make sure Junior's involvement is dramatic and exciting.

GOING HOME

If the characters are careful and a little lucky, and if you allow Junior to help out, at some point the party will find itself alone again on the island when morning breaks. If they have evaded the raiders, the soldiers will have gone, but if Junior has had his way, there are likely none left alive. If the characters merited a search party, then it should arrive by late afternoon, having homed in on the powerful radio signal coming from the island. If they are on their own, perhaps they can repair the downed hopper, or maybe they are still stranded when Lavender Organics shows up to see why they have lost communications with the lab. Though the Incorporate will obviously not be pleased with the circumstances, they are honorable and will return the castaways to civilization - after a thorough debriefing of course.

Junior's fate is not so simple, and you should choose from the following options based on the personality of your gaming group. The humorous ending is that Junior refuses to be separated from his new friends, and insists on leaving the island with them. Obviously this will cause all sorts of future problems, and could actually be the basis for a series of subsequent adventures. You should be careful, however, as this ending could effect the tone of your future games. The angst-filled ending is that the creature is led or tricked into leaving with LavOrg, ostensibly to live a life of captivity as an experimental subject, but one without the parental affection of his creators. The emotional ending is to have the party discover a mortally wounded Junior soon after the commandos are defeated or depart. He is bloody and scared, but glad to see his new friends are safe. We encourage you to play out the death scene, tugging on any emotional connections the individual players may have made with Junior during the adventure. This is a rare opportunity to add genuine emotional content to a gaming experience and is therefore the option we recommend.

MAP KEY

The maps provided with this adventure are key to the plot, and can be an important part of the presentation of the scenario. We have provided two versions of each map, one for

you and one for the players. This allows you to share the maps with the players without giving away any undiscovered locations. We recommend taking the player maps to your local copy shop and having them enlarged for use during the game. This will give the players something to focus on, adding texture to the story. The key features of each map are described below along with tips on how to present certain elements to your players.

The Island

The island is a small, jungle covered rock, indistinguishable from the thousands of others just like it around planet. The wide beaches are of coral sand, and the jungle is a thick blanket draped over steep hillsides. There are numerous tiny streamlets around the margins and a few small clearings dot the forest. The map scale is in kilometers and the contour lines measure elevation changes of fifty meters each. The lightest band represents open beach, the darkest areas are exposed rock peaks, and the rest is rainforest canopy.

#1 This is the suggested site for landing the castaways at the beginning of the adventure. It is indistinguishable from any other stretch of beach, except for its tempting proximity to the island's sheltered bay.

#2 This is the site of the downed APC hopper and the characters' first encounter.

#3 This is the location of the Lavender Organics compound and the lab facility. The lab is described in detail below.

#4 This is the location of the lab communications uplink, and is where the commandos have spliced in their jamming equipment. The site includes an integrated computer, a local signal transceiver, a one-meter uplink dish and a small solar array that powers the system.

The Clearing

The clearing is an open space in the forest canopy, and except under close inspection from the sky, it looks like any of the others that dot the jungle. The major features are the storage shed, the greenhouse, the lab entrance and the scattered bodies.

#1 This small domed building is really only a swing space for storage and is full of an assortment of heavy tools, spare parts and equipment. There are shelves and bins of repair stock, hand tools, bioplastic cord, and jugs of various chemicals. There is a rack of small power tools, several sealed crates of prepackaged meals and even some spare office furniture. There are several power cells, lots of plastic hoses and pipes, and even a robotic mower. You should feel free to modify the content of the shed to fit your whim, but we suggest using modified luck rolls (BP 304) if the players start looking for specific items.

#2 The large domed structure is the portion of the greenhouse that extends out from the rockface. Its wall is made of thick industrial plastic (BP 215), and is four meters tall. The curved panels of the dome are made of clear bioplastic, and arch up to a height of about six meters. Junior has busted out several panels, and shattered the edges of several more, leaving a gaping hole in the curved roof.

#3 This structure is a wide hallway that leads into the facility. It is also thick-walled and made of industrial plastic. The heavy double doors were once airtight, but they have been blown off their hinges, and now lie half-melted in the dark opening.

X and O - The bodies of the soldiers and lab personnel are represented on the map by X's and O's respectively. As described above, the soldiers are simply broken and slumped where they lie, and the lab workers have been laid out in a row and festooned with flowers and toys.

The Facility

The Lavender Organics laboratory is a small, self-contained facility built into the living rock of the clearing's small cliff face. It houses a staff of eight and supports one of the most sophisticated genetics labs outside Dyfedd (Arch 106). The facility's infrastructure - electronics, fixtures, and furnishings - is entirely modular and computer integrated. Unfortunately, the facility is currently without electrical power.

There is a small fusion reactor (UC#1) located about 500 meters northwest of the clearing, connected to the lab by underground cables. Under normal circumstances the plant supplies ample power to the lab. As part of their assault, however, the commandos blew out the reactor's control systems, causing an emergency shutdown. Only skilled technicians with the appropriate replacement parts have any chance of repairing the reactor. Therefore, except for devices and equipment with onboard power supplies, the facility will likely remain dark and without power for the duration of the adventure.

#1 Mud Room - This small chamber is lined with rain coats and muddy boots. There is a low bench along one wall, and a shelf with flashlights, canisters of bug repellent, and three personal communicators. The door leading from the mud room to the interior is also an airtight design, but it sits ajar.

#2 Entrance Hall - This long passageway is carpeted and ends in yet another airtight door. There are several plastic crates along the wall, having apparently been stored here temporarily. One contains ready-to-eat food stuffs, one contains medical supplies, and the third is full of various chemical reagents.

#3 Office - This room was once the lab office space, and is now a ransacked mess. The desks and partitions that once dominated the space have all been pushed to one side in a haphazard pile, partially blocking one of the doors. Office equipment and supplies of all kinds are scattered around the floor - data spikes and body comps (BP 204), plastic printouts, coffee cups, framed pictures of loved ones - anything that once may have been on or within the desks.

If the characters have either modified or enhanced vision, or are using flashlights, allow Vision rolls with one level penalties. Successful characters will notice dark blood stains on the cleared area of the floor, and on the open wall. Closer examination will reveal countless, chest high, blood covered bullet scars on the plastic wall panels. This is where the commandos lined up the lab personnel and shot them.

Your players will likely search through the office clutter in hopes of finding some clues to what was going on at the facility. In 2199, very little is ever printed out as hard copy, and so their best bet is to search through the scattered data spikes. Each desk probably had several dozen spikes stacked in neat little racks, but they are now scattered about in a chaotic mess, and so a methodical search will take some time.

Most of the bodycomps laying about will ask for access codes before activating. Stubborn players, or any with computer skills or their own computers, will eventually find one that will work. The majority of the spikes, if not actually encrypted, contain huge files full of enigmatic data. Some are of a personal nature - the latest entertain-

ment programs, games, or letters home. If any character insists on going through the main menu of each spike, or makes a really good Luck roll, he can find the personal journal of Dr. Jasmine Mendina.

This particular selection of log entries only goes back a few months, but if the characters spend an hour or so reviewing it they can glean just enough to get an idea about what the lab was up to. The entries are strictly audio, lacking any pictures or holographic recordings. The players will learn that the lab was experimenting with artificial life forms, and that one, coded JNR 13, and referred to as "Junior", is still alive. The journal entries give the impression that the staff had become very fond of Junior despite his design purpose. Dr. Mendina talks a lot about his psychological development at length, but says little about his anatomy. Therefore, when the players first encounter the creature, his formidable appearance is still an intimidating surprise.

#4 Kitchen and Lounge - This room contains a compact but well equipped kitchen space and a comfortable dining and lounge area. There is a large assortment of ready-to-eat and preserved foodstuffs, various beverages and even some beer. There is a large holographic projector on the wall and an integrated entertainment system.

There are a couple of half-eaten meals and a pot of stale coffee on the table. There is also a large block of industrial plastic, seemingly out of place at one end of the table. As part of his socialization, the lab personnel have taught Junior to eat with the big plastic spoon he carries, and they will not let him eat anywhere but at the table, with the staff. The plastic block is the only "chair" that will support Junior's weight, and though he finds eating this way frustrating, he tries his best. In fact, it is Junior's hesitation to break these rules that has so far kept him from raiding the kitchen to assuage his growing hunger.

#5 Locker Room and Showers - This space contains several rows of lockers, showers and lavatory stalls for the lab staff. The lockers contain personal items of clothing and toiletries. With the power out, the plumbing is inoperable.

#6 Quarters - These small rooms are the personal quarters for the staff. Each is equipped with identical furnishings - a bed, wardrobe and desk - but each also reflects the life and personal tastes of its occupant. There are pictures on the walls, diverse items of clothing, bodycomps, mementos from home, and various other personal knick-knacks.

#7 Genetics Laboratory - This room is without a doubt a sophisticated genetics research lab, and any of the characters with notable genetic modifications will easily recognize it as such. There are various pieces of apparatus along the outer walls, and a small clean room dominates the center space. In the clean room is more equipment, and a large culture vat of the type used in major genetic transformations and therapies.

Most of the equipment is dark as the power is out, but a few individual systems with backup power supplies have shining indicator lights and remain functional. There is also a natural, pale illumination in the room. A large circular skylight directly above the clean room is letting in moonlight, lending an eerie cast to the quiet chamber.

#8 Workshop - This is where the lab personnel fabricated and repaired small electronic devices and lab apparatus. There are workbenches covered with spare parts and raw materials of all kinds, and a large collection of power and electronics tools. There is also a small chemistry bench and a well stocked supply of reagents, glassware and assay devices.

#9 Greenhouse - This small greenhouse was originally part of a more extensive genetics lab, but has since been converted into its present

form as a living space for Junior. Early on, the lab staff discovered that the serene aspects of the surrounding forest had a calming effect on the young Junior. Taking advantage of this to facilitate his development, they converted the lab into a combination conservatory and living space for their unlikely child.

The room is the largest in the lab, and before Junior busted through the roof it was accessible only through a reinforced and electronically locked door. The door now stands ajar, and the room is lit by the moonlight streaming through the overhead panels. The air is heavy with humidity, and there are insect noises, and a heavy organic smell - part rich garden, part genetic monster.

The northwest half of the floor is covered in plastic tile, while the remainder is covered in short, soft grass. Small trees and thick bushes line the outer wall, and a tall plastic wall divides the tiled section into halves. There are two taller trees in the middle of the room and a small pond containing several lazy local freshwater fish species. The pond is only about two meters deep, but as suggested above, it is one of Junior's favorite hiding places.

The western section of the room is where Junior sleeps and keep his worldly possessions. There are oversized toys of various sorts - spaceships, action figures, sports equipment, a digital reader containing countless children's books. There is an old Peacemaker uniform jacket, and even an oversized, solid plastic dummy training rifle. There is also a large futon-like mattress in the corner, with a badly wrinkled cover and a concentrated ode de Junior.

The most telling features in the room are the pictures hanging on the wall. There are dozens of childish brush and finger paintings, most of unrecognizable subjects, pasted up haphazardly on the wall over the bed. The paintings surround, and partly obscure, a large, vintage GEO recruiting poster from the Blight Years. The huge, plastic poster reads "We want you...Fight the Blight", and depicts an improbably large Sylvan Hybrid (BP 228) in full battle regalia, carefully posing for the camera. The poster is part of the lab staff's attempt to facilitate Junior's acceptance of his design intent. As simple as the approach may seem, do date it has been quite successful. The poster, and other similar programming gimmicks, are what have given Junior his infatuation with Hybrids and the GEO.

NATURAL LAW

This adventure has been presented in a way that allows you to involve any characters you wish. We have been running this scenario at gaming conventions, but we have been adding a compelling twist. We call our convention version of this adventure Natural Law, and use a specific set of eight pre-generated characters, and a slightly altered premise.

Three of the characters are GEO law enforcement personnel, and the remaining five are hardened criminals bound for Böse Strand (Arch 116), Poseidon's notorious penal colony. When their transport crashes and the characters find themselves stranded together in increasingly dangerous circumstances, the obvious conflicts of interest serve to provide an entertaining and original take on a one-shot adventure.

If you would like to run Natural Instincts as Natural Law, there are only a few things you need to change. You can have your players make up their own characters or you can use the ones provided here. If you use the pre-generated ones, we suggest you also provide the players with copies of the introduction that follows, as it does a good job of setting the stage.

When the characters first wash ashore, the prisoners will be wearing bright orange coveralls that say "Prisoner - GEO Justice Commission" across the chest and back. They will also be locked in indus-

trial plastic (BP 215) handcuffs and leg shackles. As a result they had to be pulled from the wreckage and towed ashore by the GEO officers.

You are encouraged to include non-player character prisoners if you like, as they are particularly useful in demonstrating how dangerous the woods can be to a bound and unarmed fugitive. We have found that hungry carniflora eating errant prisoners that run for the tree line has a rather sobering effect on players who think they can simply flee into the forest and escape.

We suggest you make sure that only one of the officers comes ashore with a gun. The prisoners are already at a disadvantage, and too many firearms pointed at their characters can rob the players of any hope of escape. The panicked crash and the struggle to the shore would be chaotic enough to make losing a few handguns more than reasonable.

Most of the initial encounters can be run as described above. How the GEO officers treat the prisoners and how the prisoners respond will certainly color these situations, but that is intended as part of the fun. When the party meets Junior for the first time, however, things can get tense. Both the officers and the prisoners are wearing prominently displayed GEO logos on their clothing, and this will greatly excite the creature. Junior is not sophisticated enough, however, to understand the difference and will be just as happy to befriend the prisoners as he will the officers. This can make for some tense moments and exciting play depending upon how cooperative the players have decided to be.

By the time the second unit of commandos arrives, the players will have likely established some sort of detente, or the prisoners will have started to make good on their escape. Either way, Junior will happily provide all the characters with weapons and assistance, adding to the danger and chaos of the situation.

If the prisoners escape the control of the officers and decide to approach the soldiers in an attempt to parley their escape off the island, it is likely they will be killed outright, or captured and questioned, and then killed. This course of action is not a viable alternative for the prisoners, and you should drop hints to that effect so that the players have a chance of making an informed decision.

In the end, assuming that enough of the characters survive to make it matter, the officers still have a job to do, and the prisoners still do not want to go to Böse Strand. If the prisoners acted in good faith and helped the officers survive the encounter with the commandos, a good word from the officers might earn said prisoners a little clemency - they could be sent to a less fearsome detention center. If the prisoners made things harder on officers, or escaped into the jungle, it is up to you and the officer players how to resolve the situation.

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N A T U R A L L A W

Böse Strand. The name frightens even the most hardened criminals. Böse Strand means “evil beach” and only the most unredeemable convicts are sent to this dangerous penal colony. If looks could kill, the GEO officers in the back of the prison transport would be stone cold corpses. On the other hand, if the officers had their choice, they would simply dump their convict cargo in the ocean and head home. Instead, they have the thankless duty of shuttling a jumpcraft full of prisoners to one of the nastiest places on Poseidon.

A thump, then a rending sound from the starboard fans. An alarm sounds from the cockpit, and emergency lights flash on. The jumpcraft plunges hard to the right and loses altitude in a stomach lurching dive. The pilot yells something at her passengers but her voice is lost in the scream of failing motors and the sound of your own shouts. The hopper is going down and all you can do is hang on as the plunging craft tries to rip you from your crash harness. The falling craft slams into the ocean with a horrendous impact. Water rushes in and everything becomes a flood of blurred light, surging pressure and flailing bodies. The jumpcraft is sinking fast as every action is leaden motion and your world washes into watery chaos. Welcome to Poseidon...

THE PROS

Bryan Flanagan

Flanagan is a GEO deputy marshal, but a newcomer to Poseidon. On planet only a few weeks, and newly assigned to the Dyfedd extension office, the Marshal assumed this prisoner transfer would be a milk-run. Well, he was wrong - dead wrong. The young Marshal is about to get his first real taste of life on the waterworld...

Tekukuni Maru

A native of Poseidon, Maru is a good officer who joined the GEO Native Patrol because he believed it was the best way he could serve his people and protect his planet. Though he does not yet regret his choice, he is becoming increasingly disillusioned with the GEO as he continues to suffer pressure from family and friends over his decision. Making matters worse, he has recently been assigned to play wet nurse to this hotshot newcomer Marshal. Christ, the guy still has the Spots...

Andrea Temple

“The Air Command wants you!” read the poster. “You’ll fly with the best,” assured the recruiter. “Assigned to Poseidon Transport Wing,” said her orders. Jeesh, how can a hot young hybrid pilot become the best-of-the-best flying mail runs on this backwater swamp of a planet. To add insult to injury, these unappreciative passengers probably don’t realize a lesser pilot would have been unable to ditch the hopper, crashing and burning instead. Hell, she just saved their lives and they don’t even know it...

THE CONS

Jimmy “Dijon” Lester

Hijacking, smuggling, smash and grab - all in a day’s work for this once promising athlete turned pirate. Though things seldom seem to go his way, Lester is forever optimistic. Unfortunately, with the “Strand” looming on the horizon, even Jimmy is finding it tough to look on the bright side. Well, he’s always found a way to get by before, so this time shouldn’t be any different. That’s if he can survive his first ten minutes on the “Island.”

Demitri Fusilov

Enforcement, extortion, even murder - they’re all Fusilov has ever known working for the Gorchoff Family, and frankly, they’re all he’s ever been good at. Hell, half of the guys he knows on Poseidon are now on the Strand, so Demitri figures his arrival will be a sort of homecoming. Besides, it will all be worth it if he can only get a crack at that smug-ass Marshal before the trip is over...

Kamagata Hetsoru

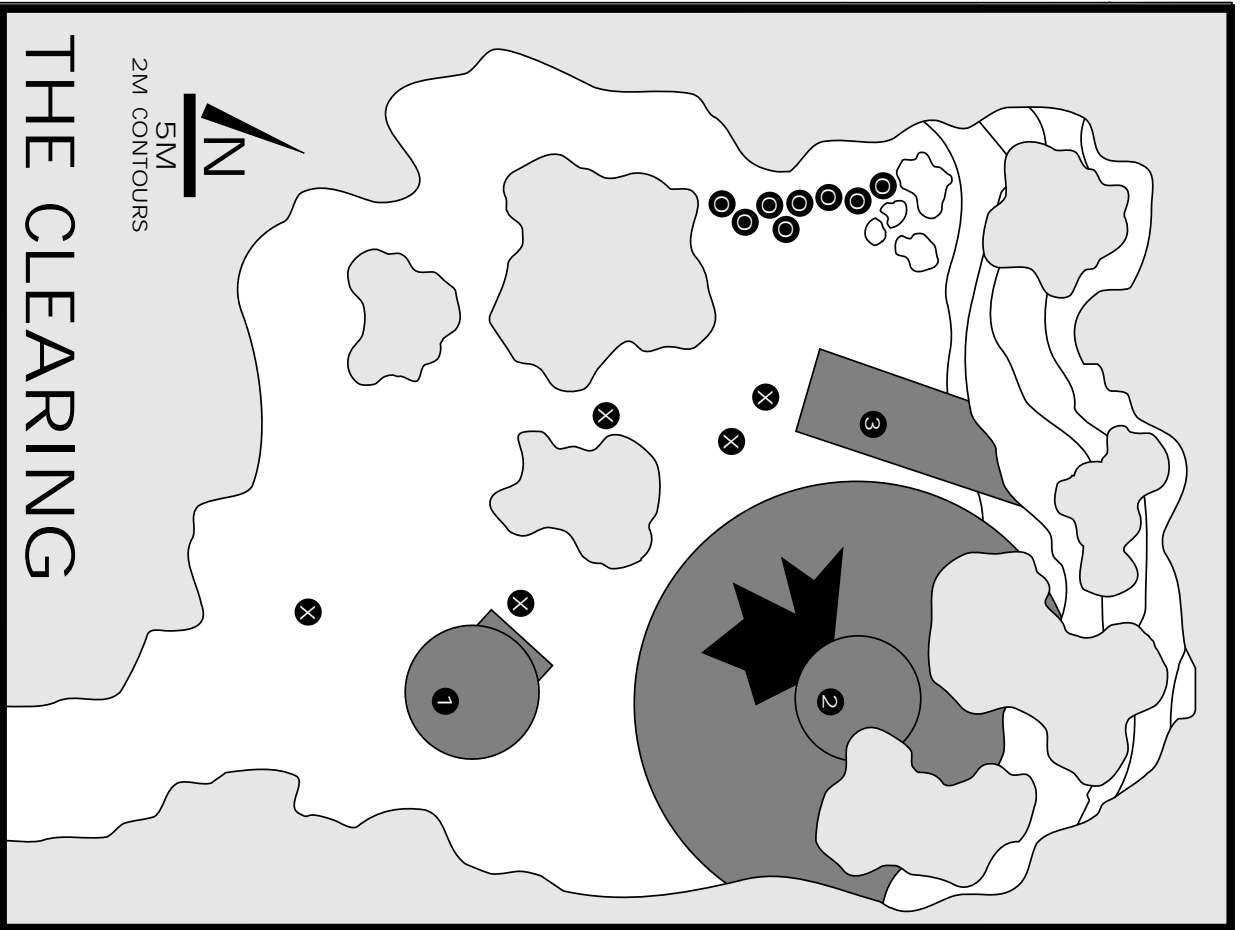
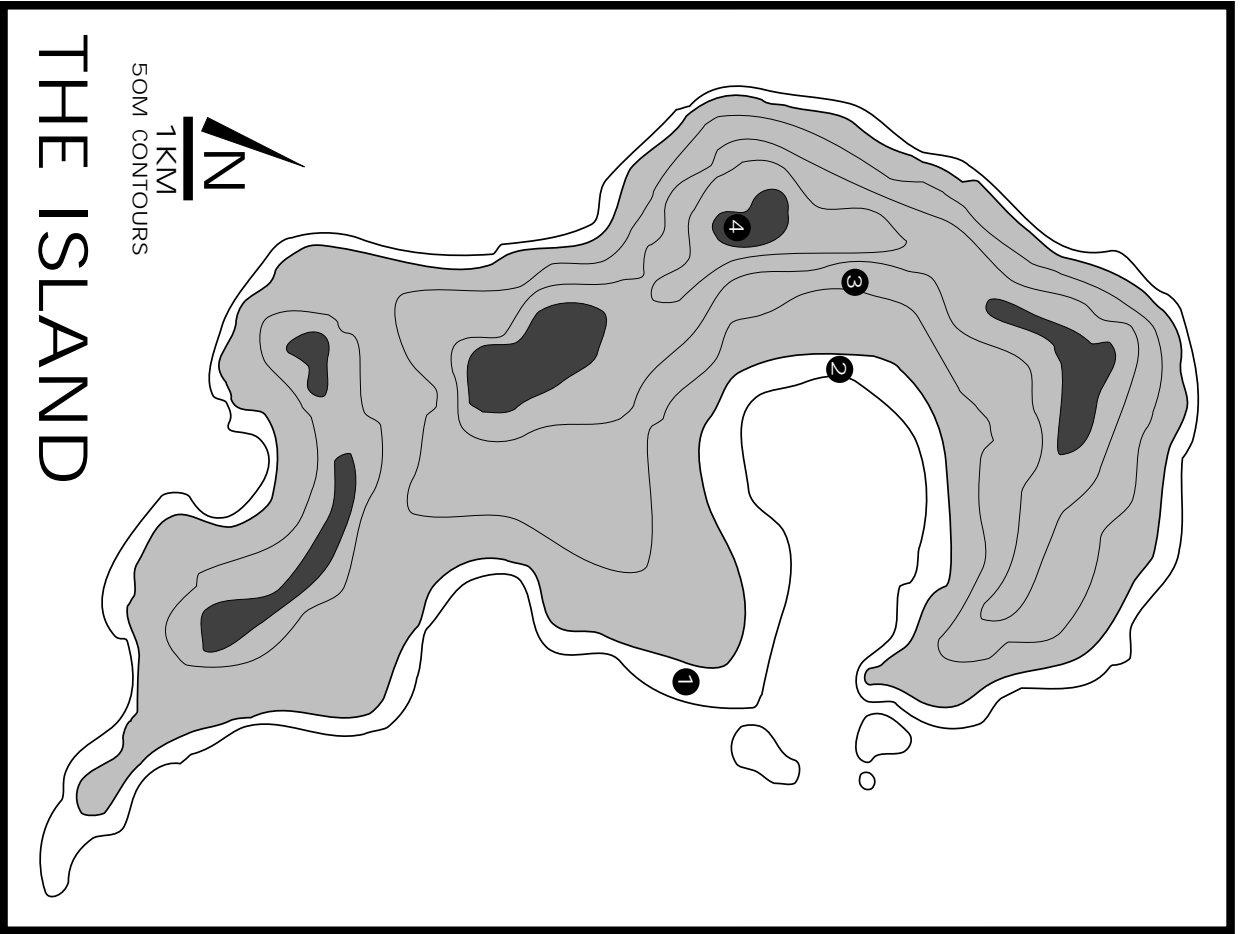
Hetsoru is not typical of the sort of criminal that is sent to Böse Strand. He is intelligent, well educated, dedicated and a fervent champion of native rights. He is also calculating, ruthless and brutal, and he has exploited these endearing traits to their fullest in his crusade to protect Poseidon. In the short time Hetsoru ran his cell of the Blue Water Circle, he quickly brought them to the top of the GEO’s most wanted list. Too bad Hetsoru has never been a very good driver...

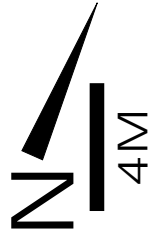
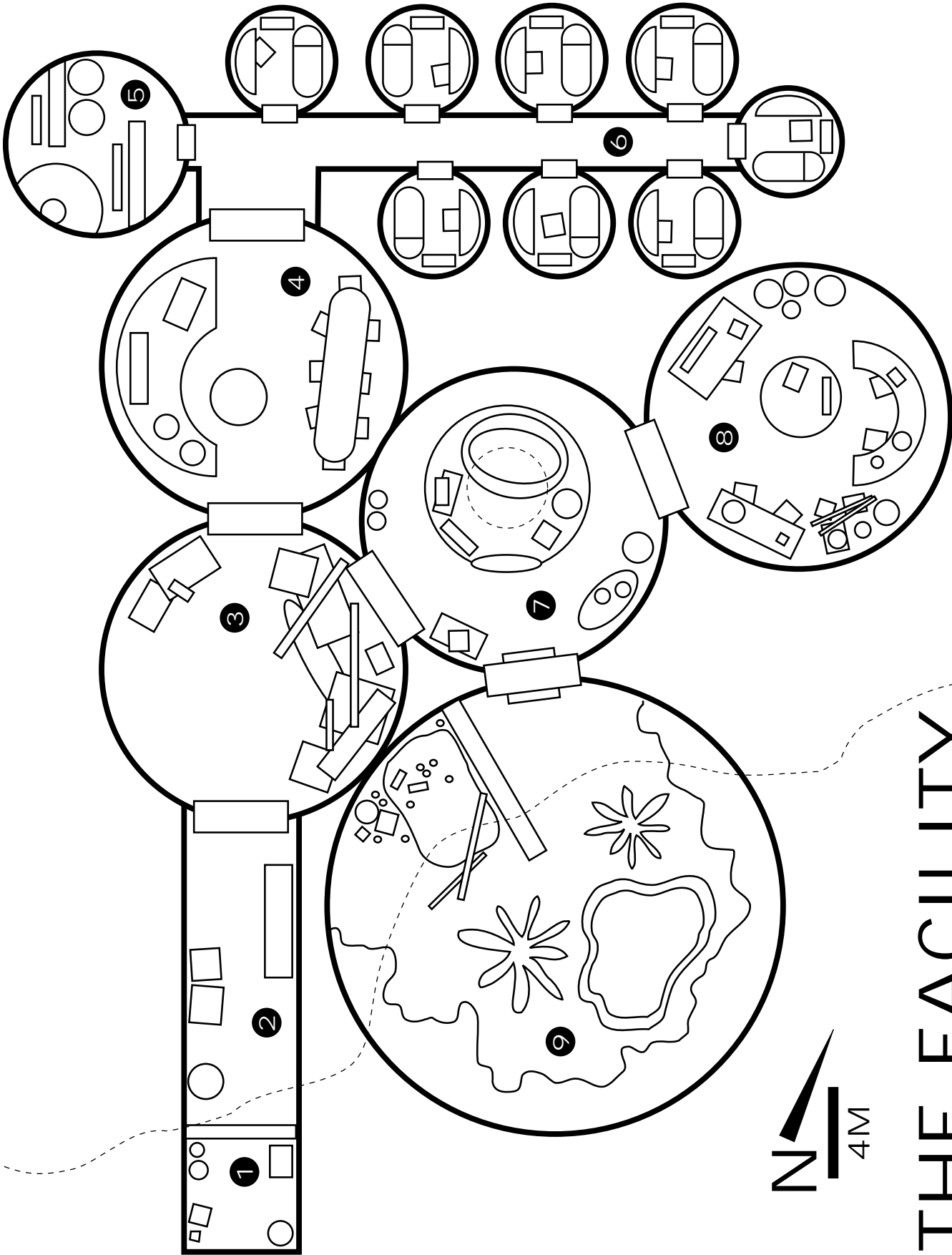
Sergei Lermantov

Unassuming in manor and demeanor, Lermantov is a calculating manipulator of rare ability. A mid-level boss in the “Family,” Lermantov was responsible for over a dozen major rackets on Poseidon, and putting him away was the focus of a year long sting operation. Lermantov is a spineless, sniveling man, loyal only to his own skin. The fact he never betrayed the Gorchoff’s is a sign of how much he fears them. His only hope is the rumor that the inmates of the Strand never mess with members of the Family. Well, that’s the rumor anyway...

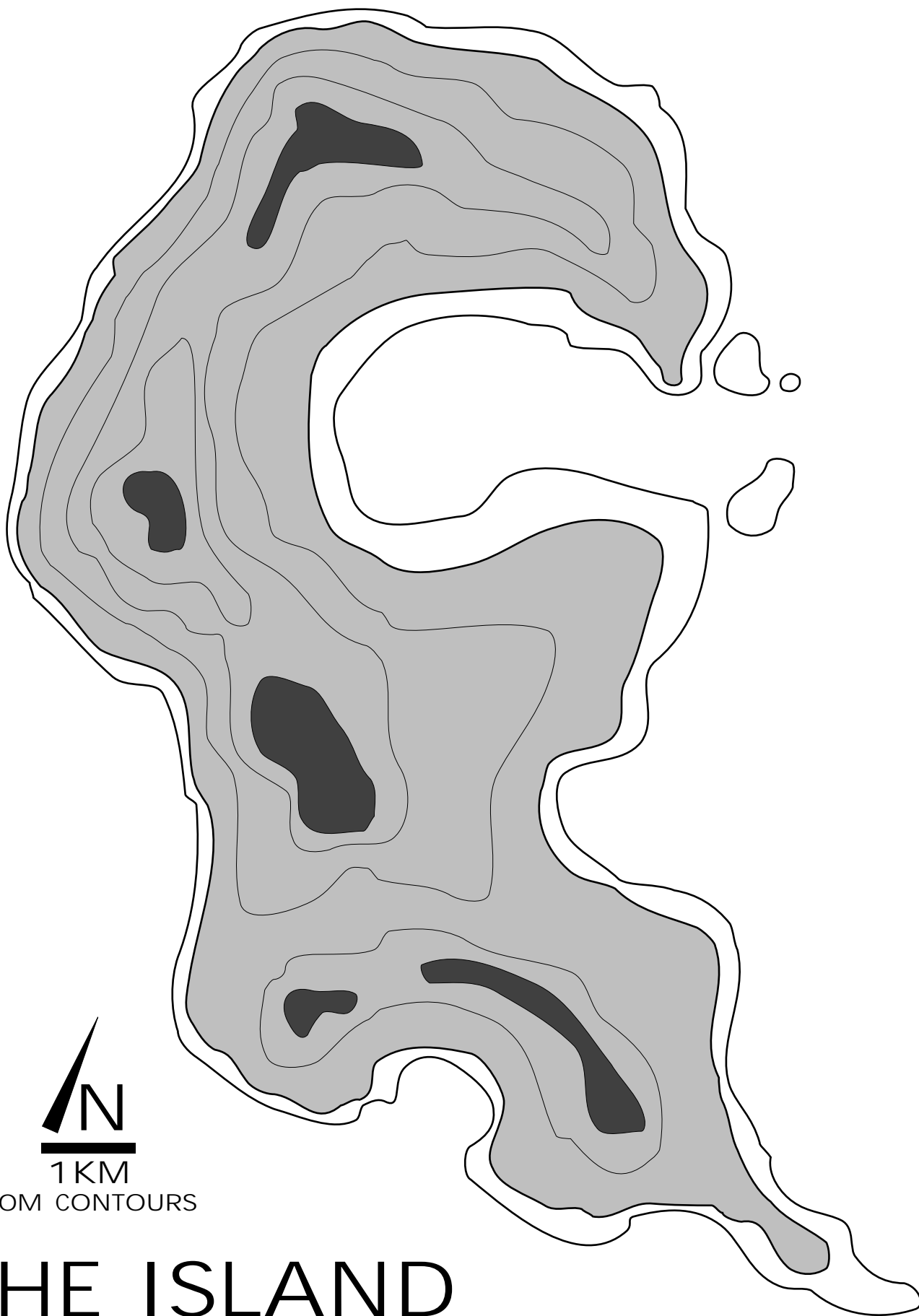
Archibald Twinkle

Twinkle is a deviant sociopath with delusions of persecution and dreams of vengeance. He is a computer programmer and technician of rare ability, and has sold his skills to anyone that would pay the price. His last job involved hacking the lifesupport of a GEO facility and cost twenty-three innocent lives. Given a chance, both Flanagan and Maru would be half willing to dump his carcass in the sea. Archie’s biggest worry, however, is that during the trial his real name came out, and now no one calls him Weasel any more. This, even over being sent to Böse Strand, is what has the twisted little man the most upset...



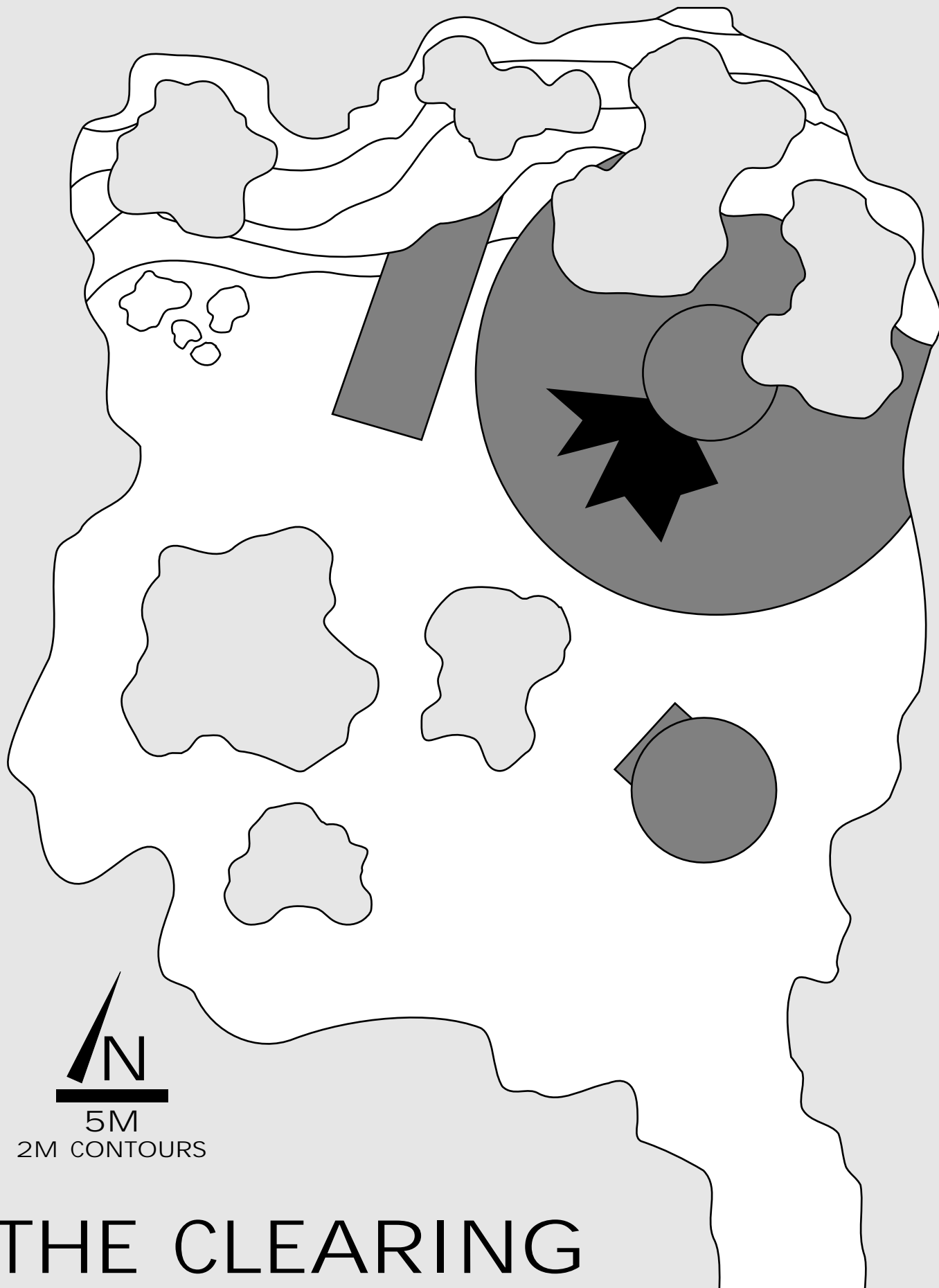


THE FACILITY




N
1 KM
50M CONTOURS

THE ISLAND



5M
2M CONTOURS

THE CLEARING

THE FACILITY

