

DEMONGROUND

Reflections of a Darker Future

NOVEMBER 1999
VOL 7

ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE!

In this Issue:

Trancemission

Cover Art by Bill Ellsworth

F.A.I.L. Life in the North Sea Settlements

Milieu by Lee Williams

The Secrets They Keep Hidden

Adventure by Marcus Bone

The Natives

Dark Race by Ryan Rank

Men in Black

House Rules by Mike Marchi

Non-Lethal Weapons

Equipment by Chris Carpenter

Extreme Ordnance

Equipment by Steve King

Plus:

The Mercenary Philosopher. Fiction.

Tabloids, plus a lot more...

<http://www.demonground.org/>



DEMONGROUND ISSUE 7

Table of Contents

Cover Art	1
<i>Trancemission</i> by Bill Ellsworth	1
Editorial/Opinion	3
<i>Winds of Change</i> by Marcus Bone, Mike Marchi and Geoff Skellams	3
<i>The Origins of Halloween</i> by Leanne Dempsey	4
Adventures	5
<i>The Secrets They Keep Hidden</i> by Marcus D. Bone	5
Milieu	12
<i>New Zealand in 2015</i> by Marcus D. Bone	12
<i>F.A.I.L. - Life in the North Sea Settlements</i> by Lee Williams	13
House Rules	17
<i>Men in Black</i> by Mike Marchi	17
<i>Unarmed Combat Damage</i> by Ryan Rank	20
NPCs	21
<i>Allen Whyte</i> by Lee Williams	21
<i>The Black Rain</i> by Lee Williams	21
Equipment	22
<i>Extreme Ordnance</i> by Steve King	22
<i>New Vehicles</i> by Lee Williams	28
<i>Non-Lethal Weaponry</i> by Chris Carpenter	29
Dark Races	30
<i>Haunters</i> by Eyal Faingersh	30
<i>The Mapinguari</i> by Lee Williams	31
<i>The Natives</i> by Ryan Rank	32
Contact Information	31
<i>Looking into the Future</i>	31
Fiction	34
<i>To The Circle That Binds It All</i> by Marcus D. Bone	34
The Loose Ends	41



DEMONGROUND is a year old! We had no idea, when we first embarked on this project in July of 1998, that it would be so well received. Until our first issue appeared online in October 1998, we still weren't sure if people would like what we were doing. And since then, every two months, we've presented another volume in an ongoing evolutionary process – trying each time to produce an issue that blew its predecessor away in quality, content and design.

So in the same spirit of growth, we've dressed the magazine up in a new suit of clothes. You may have already noticed the title has changed slightly. **DEMONGROUND: Reflections of a Darker Future.** This is the first of many changes you will see in this publication over the course of our second year.

The magazine before you is the seventh issue of DEMONGROUND. In a sense, it is also the last of its kind. This will be the last issue that you will find exclusively targeted at *Dark Conspiracy*. The next issue will be something more.

We've already laid the groundwork. Not only will Issue #8 be the first issue of the new millennium; it will also represent an expansion of focus. For over a year now, DEMONGROUND has been the best resource for new *Dark Conspiracy* material. Starting in January 2000, it is our intention to turn it into the best resource for the entire genre of Modern Horror role playing games.

We've made no secret of the fact that it has always been a dream of ours to take DEMONGROUND from its current electronic format and into hardcopy. There have been quite a few of you who have expressed this wish as well. While we are not quite ready to begin that phase, there are certain evolutionary steps we must take before that dream to become a reality.

First, due to the licensing laws that govern the gaming industry, our status as a magazine devoted solely to one game system actually prevents us from printing and selling the magazine without an agreement with the owner of the game.

Our second step is to make sure we have a large enough customer base to support a printed magazine. At present, there are not enough subscribers to make the move to hardcopy an option. Although the number of downloads con-

tinues to grow as word DEMONGROUND spreads, it will take a long time for the numbers to reach the critical mass needed to make the exercise worthwhile. We believe that we have a magazine that is good enough to compete in the RPG market.

It has been said in the past that the first edition of *Dark Conspiracy* was a little ahead of its time. The market place wasn't quite ready for the genre, and GDW lacked the financial fortitude to wait for the industry to catch up. In the few years that *Dark Conspiracy* was out of print, the number of modern horror games on the market increased dramatically. Games like *Conspiracy X* and *Delta Green* took advantage of the phenomenal success of shows like the *X-Files* to build a following. *Dark Conspiracy* was resurrected from the ashes of GDW because it still had something to contribute to this phenomenon. Now, Wizards of the Coast is even joining the fray with a new *Alternity Campaign* setting, *Dark•Matter*.

Every two months, *Dark Conspiracy* fans around the world download the latest copy of DEMONGROUND. They are not alone. We know that there are people who run other gaming systems, downloading the magazine, hoping to find some material to adapt for their games.

In any evolutionary process, the ability to adapt is the key to survival. That's what this is all about. Adaptation is a two-way street. If someone can adapt a DC adventure to work in a ConX game, then it stands to reason that the reverse is also true. The Modern Horror genre is extremely adaptable. What is horrific in one game is most likely horrific in another.

To that end, we have decided to extend the boundaries of the magazine to encompass other role playing systems of modern horror as well. For the moment, we have decided to accept any other game

Winds of Change

that focus on humans struggling against conspiracies from unknown sources - be they human, alien or supernatural in nature. We have already received the blessing of several other companies to support their products. Eden Studios has approved our use of *Conspiracy X*, *CJ Carella's Witchcraft*, and the soon to be released *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*. Pagan Publishing has granted us access to *Delta Green*, and Wizards of the Coast has allowed us to support *Dark•Matter*.

By expanding the subject matter, we will entice supporters of other systems to read the magazine. More readers mean more opportunities to inspire people to submit articles and artwork. Having a wider variety of materials will allow you to throw new things at your players – things that don't normally appear in your game of choice – something that is quite literally, from another world!

We have also encouraged the other companies to keep an eye on our pages for upcoming industry talent, the way DPI has done so far. We still believe that DEMONGROUND is a great place for people to stretch their creative legs. If you are willing to produce a quality piece of art or an innovative game resource for free, imagine what you'd do if someone paid you! By having more material to choose from, we can guarantee that we will always be able to provide you, the DEMONGROUND subscriber, the very best this Dark Future has to offer.

**Your DEMONGROUND Editors,
Marcus Bone, Mike Marchi &
Geoff Skellams ❖**

If you mention Halloween to most people, they will immediately think of kids dressed up in costume, travelling the streets, trick-or-treating in search of candy. But, like most traditions, there are historical reasons for celebrating this event.

The original Celtic festival was Samhuinn (pronounced "Sow-in") which happens just at the point in the year when the season subtly clocks over towards winter. The belief was that on this one festival, the veil between this world and the next was weakened sufficiently that the souls of those who died in the previous year could return and check up on their families and friends. The denizens of the Otherworld were also known to walk the earth. This was because the bringer of life, the Sun, has just begun his trip away from the Earth and metaphorically, his back is turned. The Mexican "Day of the Dead" is a close cousin. Other cultures also have an equivalent at various times of year. A folk myth (possibly Irish) says that the fairies travel from fort to fort once a year at this time and the deeply unpleasant Little Folk are a great danger to encounter alone at night. Samhuinn was most notably the final day of the pagan fourfold year. It's essentially a New Year festival.

The original festival was a party to honour the recent dead by calling them into their old homes and inviting them to share the ceremonial feast. It was also to honour the changing season and attempt to subtly encourage the Sun to continue his trip away from the Earth towards the Solstice, and then back towards the Earth to continue the crucial crop cycle.

Before the festival, young people would disguise themselves with masks and play elaborate practical jokes on each other, on the basis that they could not be revenged (or recognised) during the sacred festival (hence "Trick or Treat"). Anybody still doing this on Samhuinn Eve deserved whatever trouble they got into when they were mistaken by evil spirits as one of their own. Strangely enough, this is precisely the time that the current Halloween festivities take place.

The night of Samhuinn Eve, bonfires were lit in honour of the Sun and

part of the ceremonial feast thrown into the flames to be consumed by the dead. An ember from the sacred fire was preserved to keep the home fires alight in the oncoming year. People would make a "New Year Resolution" by making up an image of some ill favour they wished to avoid and burning it (probably a remainder of earlier human sacrifice). Frequently, oracles were consulted about the oncoming year's successes or otherwise. There was a widely held belief that the names of those who would die during the next year could be determined by consulting the spirits, or through various folk-spells.



Great precautions were taken to avoid attracting the wrath of the spirits that would be haunting the earth. The usual method was to do the solemn ceremonies and then have a huge feast and get blind drunk, so that if a demonic creature knocked on the door and demanded entrance, there would be nobody left conscious to open the door and invite them in as custom demanded.

As soon as the Sun came up the following morning (first day of the New Year), wise people would rise and look through the keyhole, and the first thing that they saw would determine the family's fate for the year to come. They would

The Origins of Halloween

By Leanne Dempsey

always make certain to thrust a chicken or cat through the door first in case any lingering demons were waiting to snatch the first living soul that came out. They would then get on with cleaning up the mess and recovering from the hangover.

The Americans are the most enthusiastic about the Halloween festival (word taken from All Hallows' Eve). They have turned it into a childrens' festival of the macabre. In many parts of the UK, they still celebrate Halloween with bonfires and the burning of paper images followed by a feast, a strong reminder of the original festival. In Ireland they call it Samhuinn, in Scotland Houghmany. Pagans regularly celebrate it with New Year festivals. The Catholic and Anglican churches still have All Souls Day (also known as All Hallows Eve) on 31 October where they visit the graves of deceased friends and family, followed by All Saints Day, a modified New Year mass, held on 1 November. The German Walpurgisnacht is a Halloween equivalent.

Jack-o-lanterns are a folk memory of candle lanterns lit in windows to guide the souls of the beloved dead. However, traditionalists could argue that the scary faces carved in them are likely to frighten the souls of the dear departed away, attracting bad luck for the household during the following year.

In the Southern Hemisphere, Samhuinn is properly celebrated on the flip side of the year, in April, because otherwise it is seasonally irrelevant. ❖



This is the fourth installment of the ongoing Vorceki Saga, started in DEMONGROUND Issue 3. The saga continued with Parts 2 and 3 appearing in DEMONGROUND 4 & 5 respectively. This penultimate adventure in the series should at last give the characters some idea about what is happening to the Vorceki and Terceki hybrids as they attempt to chase down and capture Major Janice Reed and the missing gate components.

Non-Player Characters

Rather than rehashing the same material over and over as each episode in this series progresses, the following is a short summary of the major NPCs that have been carried over from previous episodes. You can refer to the adventure in DG Volume 4 for the detailed information.

- Dr. Karl West (human): Primary/Initial patron - discovered alien DNA in humans.
- Major Janice Reed (Vorceki hybrid): Hot-tempered. She is also obsessed with finding gate components. To aid her in this quest, she has started a cult. Membership is restricted to Vorceki hybrids.
- Dr. Eagon Spangler (human): A loner. Founder of "The Resistance" Contact with "the dark" caused him to dedicate his life to fighting it.

A Long Time Ago...

Three and a half million years ago, an ancient alien race known as the Vorceki (the people), achieved space flight and discovered an even more ancient, even more alien, teleportation network. Using this network of gateways, the Vorceki combed the galaxy in search of other intelligent races. Failing that, they settled upon helping primitive, evolving races on the road to more advanced development.

Around this time, one of the Vorceki exploration teams discovered the biggest gateway yet - a super gateway capable of sending travelers not only to other parts of the galaxy, but to other dimensions as well.

A team of highly qualified explorers was selected. They entered the gate-

way, and returned a short time later. But they were changed by the experience. A dark influence gripped their souls, turning these explorers against their own people. They became known as the Terceki (ghosts) and set about trying to control the teleportation network to use toward their own twisted purpose.

Too late, the Vorceki realized what the Terceki were up to. The only course of action available was to destroy the gate network, in order to prevent the spread of the Terceki's evil influence. For the most part, they were successful, but their actions left many members of both races scattered and stranded forever on distant worlds.

In the process of its destruction, the gateway on earth blew apart into six segments, which were scattered across the face of the planet. On earth, a few of the Vorceki and Terceki survived the destruction of the gate.

Realizing that they would not be able to survive on the earth as the food supplies ran out and their equipment fell apart, both sides sought desperately for a way to survive and defeat the other. The Terceki tampered with the genes of some of the proto-humans and embedded their DNA into the genetic code of these creatures.

When these beings eventually evolved into intelligent life forms, the genetic codes would become active, triggering genetic "memories" and "programming". The surviving Vorceki learned of this plan when they finally defeated the last of the Terceki on earth. The Vorceki, weak and dying, could not find and destroy all the infected proto-humans, so they decided to counter by creating hybrids of their own. These proto-humans would bear in their genes the "memories"

The Secrets They Keep Hidden

by Marcus D. Bone

they would need to continue the fight.

The Recent Past ...

Millions of years after the tampering of the Terceki and Vorceki, their horrific labors have finally borne fruit. Some humans, infected with now active Terceki and Vorceki DNA, have set out to find the parts of the ancient gate and reactivate it. This yearning is part of their subconscious, but is growing stronger.

The players were first contacted several months earlier by Dr. Karl West, a physician from the Northeast United States who had noticed a disturbing increase in the recent incidence of birth defects. His research had led to the disturbing conclusion that the defects were not the result of a random mutation, but some sort of genetic marker built into the DNA of the child's parents, and passed on to the child.

They met Dr. Blake Lansing, a colleague of Dr. West's who had the same genetic marker as the deformed children, and claimed to be plagued by strange dreams.

Through Doctor West, the players and Dr. Lansing met briefly with David Beck, a man who bore the active version of the genetic marker. His body showed disturbing physical deformities - oddly discolored skin, thick tentacles radiating out from his torso, and in the center of his abdomen, a gaping razor-toothed mouth. David Beck exhibited a rather pointed dislike for Dr. Lansing - and was killed while trying to figure out which of his two mouths would do a better job of gutting the good doctor like a fish.

With information found in Beck's house, and the help of Dr. Lansing's dreams, the party found their way to



Florida, where they discovered a tracking device of alien origin.

Here, they met Major Janice Reed, a military agent for the U.S. Government who also appeared to have the alien DNA marker, and also claimed to be plagued by dreams.

She arranged for the tracking device to fall into the party's hands, on the condition that they would inform her if they found anything.

Following the signals emitted by this detector, they made their way back to Maine, and discovered an enormous gate component buried in the forest near Beck's remote cabin.

On the Hunt...

The party, acting as a specialist team aboard the STS Shuttle Orbiter arrived quite suddenly and unexpectedly in Woomera, Australia. The orbiter had been sent to intercept an alien spacecraft found drifting past earth. Upon boarding, the party was shocked to discover not one, but two more components for the alien gate.

After defeating the guardian robots protecting the cargo, they secured the two components aboard the STS and left. The orbiter was severely damaged by an energy beam from the derelict starship as they made off with their prize.

The orbiter plummeted to earth as a hurtling ball of flame. Only the tremendous skill of the pilot allowed them enough control over the crippled STS to make an emergency landing at the Australian Space Center.

In the Outback

While they staying as guests of Jeff Cohen (the NASA Flight Director) at the Space Center Dr. Lansing discovered, with the aid of the alien tracking device, that yet another piece of the gateway was nearby.

Determined to find it and aid it the components they already possessed the Doctor convinced the party to help him find it. Enlisting the help and permission of the Australian Space Program the party along with Bodyguard Wolfgang Zimmerman, Dr Lansing, and the crew of the Heavy Lift Chopper needed to re-

cover the piece, entered restricted airspace in the Australian Outback.

With the tracking device the Gate component was easily found and although they party discovered it was being used as an "altar" by a tribe of native Aborigines, they soon acquired it. However circumstances conspired to stop the party during its greatest hour. First the arrival of Major Reed and her Cult members, at the Space Center HQ. Who taking stock of the situation confiscated all of the parties gate pieces at the base and then ordered a vicious attack on the party still recovering the new component. Not only did this destroy the groups Chopper but also killed Wolfgang and the pilot.

Although the party soon discovered another Terceki hybrid who had been attracted to the altar to aid them and provide them with transport out, little did they realize that the Aboriginal tribe where in fact Vorceki, who would stop at nothing to recover their sacred artifact.

Through much trouble and tribulation the party at last made it back to the Space Program HQ, but not before losing the good Doctor Lansing and his fellow Terceki to continued Aboriginal Vorceki attacks.

Now the party must follow Major Reed and their gate component to Auckland, before she can discover that last section and it becomes to late to stop what evil lurks behind that closed dimension.

On to Auckland

Although Jeff Cohen is on his way back to America with his damaged shuttle the party still have the talents of Doctor West and Eagon Spangler to call on. These two will ensure that some sort of transport arrangements are made to get the party to Auckland International Airport as quickly as they feel ready.

Remember though the party are still unaware what motivation are driving the Major to gather the gate components, except that they feature in many of the Vorceki and Teereki hybrids dreams. Speed should be of an essence, as the party must feel as though they are in a

race against time in stopping Reed and her cult.

Because the players will be flying with commercial airlines they will be required to dispose of their firearms before entering any airport. Security is tight in most, especially at Auckland's (see below) and any weapon, including pocket knives will be confiscated by Airport security, and some rather serious questions asked of the person concerned.

To avoid these delays, Eagon will arrange a diplomatic package to be transported with the characters, this contains nothing more than a few letters and notes address to the American embassy, but is large enough to hold the players sidearms for entry into New Zealand.

Therefore, while the characters will be unarmed during their flights they will still be armed once at Auckland. Eagon will explain that they will be met by a consul of the American embassy in Auckland and that while both Dr West and himself will join the party as soon as possible. They must remain at Woomera while the wrangle over the destroyed Helicopter is sort out.

If he is asked to explain, Spangler will just state that the Australia Air Force doesn't take too kindly to the destruction of a million dollar aircraft, and the loss of two of their most experience officers. He will scowl and say that they should count their lucky stars that they aren't up on charges of reckless behaviour causing death.

The flight from Woomera to the Melbourne International Airport (via Adelaide) takes just over three hours and from there to New Zealand the trip over the Tasman Sea take 4 more. The plane flight itself is pleasant and comfortable with good service and great views of both countries landscape at takeoff and landing.

Upon landing in Auckland, the first thing that the characters will notice is the security. Armed guards are everywhere, one could believe that they are in Iraq or war torn Bosnia. In fact, it is a quite oppressive experience to enter through customs; the players' bags are searched up to three times each at various checkpoints



through the airport terminal.

Eventually one of the characters, preferably the one that has complained the most at the delays, should be detained for some “questionable” material. As with all bureaucracy, the wheels turn slowly and after a long delay a senior official will approach the party member in question and ask them to follow him to an “interview” room.

Of course, discussion here may get a little heated, the character knowing full well that they have done nothing wrong, yet it seems as if there is little choice but to comply.

Just as things seem about to get out of hand the group is approached by a woman with short cropped hair and dressed in a dark suit. Producing some official looking I.D., she flashes it at security guards and the party. She explains that she is with the U.S. embassy, and that the players have been assigned “special attaché” status with the embassy.

As the Security official protests the woman produces a multi-paged document explaining to man that he has no authority to detain any of the party. At this his face visibility reddens and tells the party to “Get out of his sight!”

Serving as ‘Special Attaches’... NOT!

The woman will lead the party to her car, a limousine, and inform the driver to take them to the Sheraton Hotel. As the car pulls out of its park, the woman will introduce herself as Carissa Grooms of the US embassy, liaisoning between the armed forces of the USA and New Zealand.

Explaining that she was asked by a friend to make sure they got into the country and received their “package,” she produces the diplomatic bag from beneath her seat and will offer it to the characters.

However, before she lets go of it, she will make the characters aware of one thing. In Auckland, they have no authority, in fact the whole “special attaché” spiel at the airport was nothing more than a convenient way to get the characters out with the least amount of hassle. She

explains the only reason that they are getting her help is that she owed a favor to this friend; one that is now repaid. She states that she will no longer be of any assistance to them and that they are on their own in the city. Only once the characters understand this, she will allow them to take the bag.

The trip to the hotel takes half an hour, right on the outskirts of the CBD (Central Business District), where the limousine will drop them off. Carissa will wish them luck on whatever their task and will drive off.

The hotel itself is rather impressive, both inside and out. The characters find rooms booked for them under their individual names. Each room is large with a double bed and all the amenities one would expect from a class establishment.

After the characters have settled in, it is time to get down to business.

Searching the City

There are a number of events that will occur while the players are in the city.

First and foremost, they are looking for Major Reed and in turn the stolen gate components. This is not such an easy task, as she really doesn’t want to be found. In fact it might be easier for the party to discover what she is doing here in New Zealand, rather than returning to her native America.

Most forms of inquiry into Reed’s whereabouts will meet in dead ends. The PCs simply don’t know anyone who they could ask.

Perhaps the best way for the characters to proceed is to use the Alien

Tracking device again. Hopefully, one of the players has thought of this, because Reed does have a number of the gate components already. If the players don’t think of this angle, have Eagon ring them to see how things are going and then as they explain that they have no leads have him suggest using the Tracking device.

When they do activate the device they are almost deafened by the immensity of the pinging it emits. Somewhere closer than they thought is part of the Gate!

Following the Device

The device will lead the players to the heart of the city. Here, they will see that the city is in a state of tension; armed police are every where to be seen and most corporate executives are escorted by bodyguards. Most other civilians that have business in the city move around briskly, as if they have no wish to remain here any longer than at all necessary. As the players continue, they will notice that much of the retail in the city is aimed at Asian visitors and residence, that is most shops have signs in various languages, and have multilingual attendants.

But perhaps the most alarming sights the characters will see is the location that the tracking device has lead them to. This is a huge building taking up some three or four blocks in length and ten to twelve stories high.

Yet something seems not right with it, and after a few seconds it will dawn on the characters why... it is but a shell of a building. Almost all of its windows have been blown out, and the ground floor has been sealed up with thick

**THE BRITOMART BUILDING
IS SLATED FOR DEMOLITION.**

**NO ADMITTANCE
UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.**

By Order of the Auckland City Council

boards. As the characters look around they will notice a large sign stating (see the previous page).

Entering the building

The characters will want to get into the building and find out the source of the tracking devices target, as it is unlikely to be Major Reed in there.

Unfortunately, as the building is well sealed, there does not seem an easy way in. In addition, the perimeter is patrolled regularly by security guards. All of the ground floor is closed off and there is no way that the characters could get in during the day without being spotted.

As the characters contemplate their options, they will be approached by a kid, not much older than 15, dressed in what must obviously be gang colours. Something about him seems “not right”; the PCs will feel there is something strangely familiar about him without being able to put their finger on it.

The boy will ask the party what they are doing, saying he has watched them take an interest in the Britomart building. No matter how they answer he will warn them that this is Terror Key territory and they better watch themselves. He will then flash them his colours and then back off eyeing them evilly.

Each character should make an Average: Observation roll when they see the kids gang badge. If they succeed, they notice immediately that it looks like tattoo sthe Aborigines from the previous adventure had on their stomachs.

Should, the PCs give chase, the kid will get away in the back streets of Auckland. If the PCs refuse to give up the chase, a policeman will stop them to “enquire” what their hurry is.

The only way the characters are going to get into the Britomart building safely is by setting up some sort of surveillance at night. Once they do so it won't take long before they get some results.

One of the characters will, with a Difficult: Observation, notice that a group of youths are making their way down the street, using the shadows to avoid being seen. The youths are obviously from the

THE BRITOMART PROJECT

The Britomart project was built in early in the 21st Century as Auckland's great attempt to beat the growing number of commuters. Auckland's traffic had increased at an extraordinary rate and the city could no longer cope.

Under pressure from the city residents and businesses, the Mayor was forced to act quickly on the issue of transport. He was however limited in his options; road rationing (where you could only drive on the roads on prescribed days or face a fine) would not work, nor could the increased use of buses (they too got stuck in the traffic).

The answer in the end was simple, to build a subway system. Fortunately, the city already had access to many underground tunnels built originally around the late 1800's when it was believed Russia would invade. The key to this ‘subway’ was to have four lines all converging in the central city, one north to the other side of the city's harbour, one south following the existing motorway, the third west out to the poor sections of the city, and the last east along the rich and exclusive bays. The idea was workers and shoppers could leave their cars in designated locations and take an express train into the city centre.

Although costing a huge amount of money, the Britomart Project was opened early in 2002 and was fully operational less than a year later. Almost immediately the effects could be seen, with traffic in the city cut in half. The mayor was hailed as a hero and ensured of another term at least.

For the next ten years, the Britomart project functioned perfectly, helping keep the traffic in the city to a minimum. Until almost a year ago.

With the rising political tension between the right wing government and the rural Maori population, many historical and politically important buildings become focal points for protests about equality rights and resources allocation. Many Maoris believed the new government was once again bent on repressing their culture and rights. As the clashes became more heated, violence broke out and many locations around Auckland and New Zealand became victims of a new type of protest... terrorism.

Early one April morning, just prior to the start of the first trains, a massive explosion shook the Britomart building, starting an intense fire that quickly spread through out the entire building. Three hundred people died that day, many of them Britomart employees, and many more were injured. Thankfully for its neighbouring buildings, emergency services were quickly on the scene and only the Toshiba building was damaged.

The incident shook the nation. Thankfully, the explosion took place prior to rush hour, otherwise the death toll may have been much higher.

But the Britomart saga didn't finish there. The council was unsure how (if at all) to proceed with the rebuilding of the Project. In the end, the decision was made for them. With the increase of terrorism in the city, many of the city's corporations moved out to take advantage of the government's “Land to Own” scheme. Many of the city's residents also moved away to safer environments for their families. So many people moved, the Britomart Project was deemed no unnecessary, with the money spent on better things.

So now the Britomart building is but a shell of its former bustling self, home instead to riff-raff and street kids. One day soon the building will be torn down and redeveloped; the land too valuable a profit to left much longer. Until then, it is a haven for those that wish not to be found.



ALLY AND THE 'TERROR KEYS'

The boy's name is Alfred, or Ally to his friends, and he is a Nukid (see Referee's Guide Master Edition p121/Basic Edition p49). He is part of a street "family" known as the "Terror Keys" because they say they hold the key to the city's underground.

The Terror Keys are actually a group of Terceki Hybrids that have come together by their genetic code. They have also been attracted to the Gate component somewhere in the Britomart building and have set up camp near it.

Use the stats for a Nukid from the Referee's Guide.

same gang as Ally; their colours can be seen. Just as they are about to get out of sight, one of them stoops and lifts a man hole cover. The rest of the Nukids enter the hole, disappearing one after the other. After they have gone, the characters will have no difficulty following them entering the sewers system.

Not too much further down the characters come across a large hole in the Sewer wall. This leads to the subway tracks and on into the building itself.

The inside of the Britomart building is as much of a wreck as the outside. After the explosion, little work was done to tidy any of the mess up and anything that was in any way valuable has been long since acquired by the buildings infrequent residents.

With seven underground levels, there is a lot of ground for the party to cover to find the location of the gate component the tracking device has located. Eventually however the characters will be attracted by light and sounds of the Nukids camp.

The camp is stretched across a large room that at one time held one of the many generators that were required. The locator indicates that the Gate compo-

nent is present of the far side of the camp. Somehow, the characters must get across without being seen.

The camp itself is in disarray with the Nukids each having a large area to themselves. The walls are decorated with graffiti and street art. Many of which have the same motif as the Terror Keys gang badge. If any of the characters stop and investigate these then they will see some of the pictures involve a large block, which is in fact one of the base components of the gate.

At the present time there are some twenty Nukids in the room, most of which are either sleeping or talking in groups of two and three. They are fairly safe here in the building, so do not set any sort of watch.

Getting across the room should not be much of a task, with two successful Average: Stealth checks being all that is necessary.

The Ambush

Once the PCs make their way across the room, they will see that there is a small doorway into a dark room beyond. As soon as they enter this room the party is ambushed.

From behind and in front, the Nukids have been waiting. Ally has the Clairvoyance skill and predicted that these outsiders would try and invade their domain. He and half a dozen fellow gangers have lain in wait for the characters, and although they aren't armed with anything larger than knives they will try to disarm the characters as quickly and safely as possible.

If any of the Nukids are hurt, Ally will try to stop the fight and ask the characters why they are there. If the PCs ask about the block, he will show them and

will say that for some reason the Terror Keys are attracted to it.

The block is at the back of this small room, which is full of pipes. The gate block is easily recognised, the silver black rock forms part of the wall at about waist height and beside is inlayed a plaque (see below).

The block is well sealed in the wall, not that the Nukids will allow the party to attempt to remove it.

The Phone call

Around about this time the characters will get a phone call from Eagon Spangler. He is quite distraught and quickly explains that something very bad has happened.

While the characters have been off on their little adventure, Eagon and Dr West entered the country. However as Dr Spangler will explain, they were intercepted by some of Major Reeds goons as they left the airport. While the Spangler was able to make good his escape, Dr West was not so lucky. The last thing Eagon saw was Dr West being loaded in the back of a air force truck.

This is bad news for the party. Dr West is the only one of the party that really knew what was going on with the hybrids and they should be aware that he is important to them if they ever wish to solve these genetic mysteries.

Since there is also little chance that the characters will be able to acquire the piece of the gate at the Britomart at the moment, they should now focus on rescuing the good doctor.

Saving Dr West

By the time the characters get back to the Hotel, they are met by Eagon. He is in a foul mood knowing how important

THIS BLOCK WAS DONATED BY THE AUCKLAND MUSEUM SOCIETY AS A TOKEN OF GOOD LUCK IN THE BRITOMART PROJECT.

THE HONORABLE LORD MAYOR 23RD SEPTEMBER 2000.



West is to the party; at the moment, he is at a loss to where West might be. He will make sure the characters know how urgent it is to find West and to get him away from Reed before she can learn too much about the Terceki and Vorceki Hybrids.

The characters will probably have no idea where Reed might be, but grilling Eagon for any information he might remember will result in the following.

- West was taken away in an air force truck.
- The abductors were all dressed in American Army uniform and spoke with American accents.

This may give the characters the idea to ring Carissa Grooms, the US embassy attaché, as she has dealings with both governments. The NZ government is allowing US army personal to operate in the city. If the players don't think of this then finally as a last resort Eagon will ring.

After a short conversation, in which Eagon impresses on her the importance of Dr West to their operation, she will give up the location of Reed and her soldiers – the Hobson air force base. She says that she will meet the party at the base and gives them directions.

It takes about half an hour to get to the air force base and Grooms is already waiting them. Before they enter the base, she will state quite seriously that they are in no way to start a fight of any kind. The New Zealand government would not look kindly on foreigners firing weapons on their military bases.

Tracking down Reed in the base isn't too hard. Eventually, the characters will find her in the mess hall with her fellow Vorceki cult members. The hall is about half full, most of which is New Zealand air force personnel.

As the party approaches the table she is at, they can feel the tension rising. A number of the cult members stand and ready themselves for a fight. Reed herself is a bit shocked; she doesn't know how the players have tracked her down and she is a bit out of her depth here, surrounded by people she can not trust (the New Zealand air men).

Carissa will remind the party that this is no place for a fight, while Reed gets to feet and straightens herself up. She looks up at the party and smile.

"I thought you would never find me. But I guess we both know what you are here for... don't we?"

As the characters will more than likely start to ask some pretty incrimination questions, Reed will take them outside to continue the conversation.

During this conversation she is quite arrogant, knowing that she has the party at a disadvantage, having now got over the initial shock of seeing the PCs here at the base. She is in her element; outgunned and outmanned, there is little the PCs can do but listen to what Reed has to say.

The conversation will go something like:

She knows how important Dr West is to the PCs, but he also needs to help her and her fellow Hybrids understand what is happening to them.

She has learnt from her "discussions" with West that the PCs have discovered yet another piece of the gateway here in Auckland.

While the good Doctor is important to their cause the gate component represents a greater need at this particular moment. She thinks that maybe some sort of exchange could be made, in which both parties would be happy.

Of course the PCs will hopefully not reveal that they aren't in actual possession of the Gate block. In case they do say something, have Eagon or Carissa stop them. It would be better if they arrange to bring the block to Reed sometime in the near future. She will agree to this and arrange for the characters to meet her, with the gate component at a large private airfield north of the city.

Getting the Block free

In reality, freeing the block from the wall isn't all that difficult. Any sort of portable power tool could be used to remove the block from the wall. As with the previous piece they discovered, once the piece is free, it seems much lighter than it really is.

The problem however will be getting to the block without being stopped by the Terror Keys. The party does have a few choices that would work, all of which involve getting the Nukids out of their camp long enough for the players to free the block.

The easiest way would be bribe the Nukids, and give them each enough money to get lost for a while. This shouldn't be too much cash, seeing that a hundred dollars to these kids is more than they will see in a month.

Another equally effect option, would be to attack one or more of the Nukids in the camp. Remember these are all children really and they will flee at any sign of real violence. Although this is morally wrong, it is perhaps the quickest way of getting access to the block.

In the end a combination of the two might be the most effective, by bribing most of them, and threatening those that won't leave.

Any other sort of idea might work equally as well, so feel free to let the players try. Eventually however the players should have their hands on the block and be ready to head out to meet Reed. Carisasa or Eagon can arrange transport.

The Finale

By the time they get to Reed, she and her crew are all ready and packed on the airfield. The party will have no trouble at all finding her and her plane, as she is going to leave as soon as possible.

The negotiation to get back West should be short and sweet, with Reed eager to get her hands on the second last gate component. She will very quickly meet face to face with the PCs and demand to be shown the block. As it is indeed what she has been looking, she orders one of her cult members to bring out Doctor West for the exchange.

Just as the swap is about to happen a war cry will echo from behind the PCs. As everyone turns to see what has disrupted the meeting, Reed will take advantage of the situation, grabbing the Gate component and dragging it towards the plane.

Almost immediately after the war



cry is heard, a number of old run down cars coming squealing onto the runway and come screeching to a halt near both groups.

It is the Nukids, enraged that someone has stolen their Gate component they have become even more wild as they have got closer to their natural enemy, the Vorceki cult members. They quickly disgorge from their vehicles and swarm to attack the soldier protecting the plane. A titanic battle is about to take place.

Although unarmed the proximity of the Vorceki drives Nukids on. The cult members for their part are all altered by this new threat, and driven by their hybrid genes drop their guns to attack their ancient enemy face to face. The two sides clash in front of the party separating them from Major Reed, who alone seems to be able to resist the primal urges to destroy the Terceki attackers.

As the battle progresses it is clear, the sheer numbers of Nukids is forcing the Vorceki cultists back, despite them being only youths. The aliens genes that make up both side have come to the fore as each side tears and rips it way into the other. It is a horrible sight.

During this time, the PCs will probably be at a loss about what to do. With

Reed having disappeared amongst the combatants, they at least have no trouble rescuing Dr West. The battle rages on however and then the whine of the planes engines can be heard. Then slowly but inexorably, the aircraft begins to roll forward; Reed can now be seen in the cockpit piloting the plane.

The battle seems to freeze for a second as the plane makes its way down the runaway, the PCs are helpless to stop Reed from escaping once again. Then like it began, the battle is entered anew as both the Nukids and the remaining Vorceki struggle to kill the other.

Dr West is shaken by unhurt and will quickly suggest that they make a get away before ether side begins to find them a threat as well. As the characters drive away they will see the last of Reeds Cultist get cut down and the Nukids, now altered even more in body and mind raise their heads as one and howl to the sky.

What the Doctor knows

Although the adventure is technically over at this point there are a few interesting bits of information Dr West can reveal about his time in captivity.

The main reason that Reed kid-

napped him in the first place was to conduct a number of tests on the Vorcekei. It seems that they genetic code in the Vorceki is replicating itself too quickly, and at the present rate will lead to total cell break down in the hybrids within a year. He also believes the Terceki will be facing the same genetic problems.

Dr West was unable to do anything about this, as mankind is yet to master that sort of control of ones genetic code.

This seems to also be the reason that Reed is so frantically trying to find the gate piece. She believes that by reassembling the gateway she will be able to rejoin with the Vorceki on other worlds, and in turn be able to stop the degradation of her cells.

She must be stopped from opening this gateway at all costs. To allow full Vorceki into our world would mean the end of mankind as we know it.

Where the characters go from here is up to them. But you will have to wait for the conclusion of this saga to find out whether Major Reed is successful. ❖

Details about New Zealand in 2015 are in the Milieu section of this issue of DEMONGROUND.

THE GATE

The complete gate consists of six components. The gate components are made of a material best described as “superdense matter.” Molecules that make up the components have been artificially “compressed,” allowing rapid energy transfer and a relatively small size. To offset its incredible density, each gate component creates an artificial gravity field. These fields prevent the components from plunging into the earth. This field also stabilizes the matter, preventing it from collapsing further (which could result in a nuclear reaction).

The gate’s components are best described as a “silvery black.” Strangely, the gate components seem to “drink” light, while at the same time almost seem to sparkle. The components are impervious to everything short of nuclear weapons or some other form of energy strong enough to destroy the material or cause the gravimetric field to collapse.

Furthermore, the smallest components, the two end pieces, are 5m tall and 5m wide. The gate is a sizable construct, although it is small compared with other Vorceki gates.

These gate components have no apparent instrumentation. Their surfaces are not smooth; the surfaces are marked with various orderly, precise lines, circles, and raised surfaces. Direct mental contact operates the gates, and they are equipped so that even beings with relatively weak empathy (in game terms, any intelligent creature that has an Empathy score of at least 4) can use them.

When all the pieces are within 500m of each other and they are sent the combination signal, they will form the gateway. In its entirety, the structure will seem to emit a faint, but powerful, hum, which can not be recorded by sound recording devices. When the gate receives an initialization signal, it will power up and present the user with a mental list of possible destinations. After that, the user can cause the gate to open to any viable destination. When activated, the destination appears as a “hole” in space time, between the main pylons.



In the Cities of New Zealand, security is high, the penalties for being caught with a weapon higher. It is though the country is under siege, and in some ways, that is right. No one knows who is a friend or who is the “eyes” for the other side. Grim faces are common place.

Much has changed in New Zealand since the idealic days of the 1950's and 60's. In those years, one was never without work and local and state funds supported those in their times of need.

Now however, the Government of New Zealand, like those in the rest of the world, has faced the economic realities. No more free education, no more free health and most importantly, no more work. Today, only 8 in ten people work and most of those earning less than the “average wage”.

Unfortunately, for the country once known as “God's Own”, there have been massive changes in the political structure. These changes are just a part of an ongoing saga that first started when England claimed New Zealand, back in 1840.

At that time, a treaty was signed and it seemed that the local Polynesian people, the Maori, would be willing to live hand in hand with the increasing numbers of Europeans flocking to New Zealand's shores. The Maori where seen as a more “advanced” aboriginal than others encountered in the Pacific; they embraced Christianity readily, accepted English rule and eagerly adopted the fire-arm. They also seemed willing to sell their land to the Crown and settlers, for one-tenth its cost back in Europe.

But it was soon realized that the Maori looked upon the land as a resource owned by all, not by an individual. While the different tribal groups staked claim to different territories at times, the Europeans did not understand that the Maori saw themselves as occupants rather than owners. This lead to conflict between the interests of the settlers and local tribes.

The arguments over what was primarily a land issue escalated to involve the rights of sovereignty and freedom. What started as distrust soon became a conflict of arms. In the mid-1800s, two wars were fought over the same rights and laws. Although the settlers had

“won” in the end, little was achieved by the deaths of the soldiers and Maori. Both groups still distrusted each other and all knew that eventually both sides would clash again.

For the next hundred years, the Maori faired badly; their culture and society almost lost to the increasing number of Europeans. As a race they almost died out. However in the late 1970s, the Maori people received something of a boost, as the treaty that they had first signed with the Colonists was at last seen in their favor, after many decades of trying. As the decade rolled on, the Maori culture again became seen as important, being taught in schools and given access to skills and resources they had long been lacking. The 80s and 90s continued these trends, with many of the tribal groups at last being given financial recompense for land illegally confiscated off them during the wars a century before hand.

But as the world entered the Greater Depression of the 21st Century, the good times for the Maori were about to end. Harder economic times hit all, and with it cam the tightening of the government's social and financial purse strings. To many of the Europeans, the cultural and economic wealth the Maori had acquired over the past decades should have been reinvested into New Zealand as a whole.

As a result of this ill feeling towards the Maori, a new harsher government was elected. This hard line group of politicians was made up of both grim campaigners and fresh new faces that had an opinion they wanted heard. At the time of the election, most New Zealanders wanted a change, but none were ready for what this change would cost.

The new government went about its task repairing New Zealand's damaged economy, starting what has become a period of isolationism for the country. Spending was cut to the bone, imports limited with tariffs and duties and in what

New Zealand in 2015

by Marcus D. Bone

was to be the biggest shock, the Maori were forced to return all the cash and assets given to them but years before-hand.

In an incredibly short amount of time, the Maori when from a thriving culture to almost extinction. This of course was not taken lightly, with appeal made to the World Court and United Nations. This all was in vain. It seemed that there was no option but for the Maori to return to being the dying race they once were. But, as New Zealand was about to find out, it was not going to go quietly.

What began as protests escalated into violence, and within a year the population lived in fear. New Zealand had become another Northern Ireland, this time not over ones faith, but one's skin color. Many speculate that if the government had attempted to prevent things, the instances of terrorism would never have occurred. Instead, they seemed more than happy to support those vigilantes, while the politicians focused on getting the economy back on track.

Today, it seems as if the violence is almost at an end; the Maori people realizing the war will lose them more supporters than it will gain. While the bombings have stopped, the war continues; this time in the private offices of the corporations and politicians. Favors are gained and called; people disappear in the night never to be seen again, and shootings are now put down to the occasional “mad-man”. The War of New Zealand has entered a new and deadly phase, one in which neither side can predict the conclusion.

On the streets the people have returned. The police are now armed with just pistols rather than assault weapons. But under the surface you can sense that everyone is nervous, just waiting for the violence to start anew. ❖



Somewhere east of Britain, out in the cold and stormy wastes of the North Sea, there is life. People driven from their homes by a harsh totalitarian state have found refuge amongst the rusting steel carcasses of some of the largest man-made structures ever built. This is a short guide to their world.

HISTORY

The rise of the Socialist People's Party had many ramifications for the population and the corporations of the UK.

One of the most famous fallings out was that between the SPP themselves and the American/Japanese conglomerate Consolidated Oil Exploration Corporation. Outraged at the plundering of their finances by the SPP's Tax Enforcement Department, ConOilEx took the unheard of step of decommissioning all of their North Sea oil and gas production platforms linked to the British mainland. Although nearly all of the pipelines actually came ashore in Scotland, at that time the London SPP government was exerting its authority over the whole of the United Kingdom. The board of ConOilEx ordered their rigs stripped of the expensive drilling equipment, and the platforms were shut down. This left thirteen of the largest deep sea platforms in the North Sea to rust, as the costs of dismantling all the rigs at one time were astronomical even for ConOilEx.

As the SPP began to tighten its stranglehold on the population, a steady stream of refugees began to slip away across the North Sea to Scandinavia. These people mainly used the ports in northeastern England and Scotland, places where the SPP net was loosest.

The story goes that one of the refugees, Terry Sadler, was sitting on the deck of a ferry bound for Stavanger in Norway when he noticed the shape of Britannia Two, one of the decommissioned platforms, in the distance. An idea started to take shape in the back of his mind and when he arrived in Norway he began to contact British expatriates, particularly those who worked in the gas and oil industry.

As many of the refugees were from Scotland, northern England and several

others still worked for Scandinavian based corporations, it was relatively easy to find out if it would be viable to found a permanent independent community on these empty platforms.

At first, Sadler and his group treated this as a sort of grand intellectual exercise. Plans were drawn up for converting parts of the platforms into such things as greenhouses, dry docks, repair shops, recycling plants etc. Soon the "madness" began to spread, and those concerned found themselves beginning to take the idea seriously. The plans were refined and word sent covertly back to Britain, by now in the throes of a totalitarian regime.

Then, something completely unexpected and unrelated to these plans happened. A group of ex-oil workers had won a huge sum on the lottery retired early. They decided to slip out of the country and invest their cash somewhere other than SPP Britain. They bought a small tramp-steamer ship, the Miyamoto, filled it with tools and supplies for a month and sailed out into the stormy North Sea. Their destination was the Britannia Four platform, far out into the sea area known as the Forties.

This original group, some thirty

F.A.I.L.

Life in the North Sea Settlements

by Lee Williams

strong, set about making the accommodation modules habitable once again. Word spread over the sea to Scandinavia, and soon Sadler and his expatriate group of planners started to arrive in small numbers to assist. The two groups got on well, and after six months of intensive work, the Britannia 4 was ready for its first residents.

Back in London, the SPP began to hear rumors about the platforms. However, they had plenty of other problems at the time. The platforms were outside the twelve mile territorial sea limit permitted by international maritime law, as well as still technically belonging to ConOilEx. The SPP would have been unable to act to stop the platform settlements even if they were not under pressure from all sides. Consequently, the platforms were all but forgotten by Tyler's besieged government.

Initially, there was plenty of space on the Britannia 4. The platform was ac-

"The night we first come oot here, the weather wasn't so bad. Even if it had been, we would ha' come anyway. After the bloody SPP showed their true colours we had to leave in a hurry, no room for us except in the new relocation camps in Kielder Forest. So anyway, we found a boat and slipped awa'. I knew some o' these places were abandoned so that's why we ended up here. Just as well we did find it too, otherwise we wouldha' ended up in Norway, and I hate ski-ing..."

Jimmy Seaton,
Chief Engineer of the Britannia Four settlement.



tually made up of several rigs, each one having a specific purpose during oil and gas production. The total number of crew before the decommissioning has been well over 2,500. The accommodation modules were situated on the opposite side of the complex from the production modules, for safety reasons. The first settlers took up as much room as they liked, but as more and more arrived, the controlling council took steps to share space equally.

By the following October, Britannia 4 was essentially full and the inhabitants prepared to batten down for the stormy conditions of the North Sea winter. Word was covertly sent to those still ashore to hide until better weather came.

About this time, there was a prison breakout from Slade Prison in the north of England. Some of the escapees made their way to the east coast and stole a boat and some supplies, and headed out into the night. Their destination was Norway, who had refused to sign a new extradition treaty with the SPP government due to the civil rights abuse stories told to them by the British refugees.

Unfortunately for them, the North Sea storm proved to be too much to handle, and the boat began to ship water. More by luck than judgement, they happened to see the lights of Britannia 4 and decided to try to reach it. This they just managed to do; the settlers took them in and gave them first aid and dry clothes. The escapees were thought to be merely refugees from the SPP and were made welcome.

The next day, the escapees were uncovered. One of the settlers recognised one of them as multiple killer Neal Calder, who had been incarcerated several years before after one of Britain's biggest man-hunts. (Calder had been a star pupil at Oxford university, but had been convicted of four murders he committed during the May Ball. Strangely, he was never seen to leave the ballroom even though the bodies were found in the corridor leading to his quarters on the third floor.)

Calder and his associates produced weapons, and demanded the platform's fastest vessel to be readied and turned over to them. The Britannia's small se-

curity team were unable to act, so the boat was loaded with food and tools.

Calder and his crew left immediately, heading south and were not seen again by the settlers for several months. During this time, the Britannia 4 was made more secure against hostile actions.

When the spring came, the original engineering team who re-commissioned the platform turned their attention to the Britannia 7. Located some 25 kilometers east of the Britannia 4, Britannia 7 was a smaller but more modern platform. In its production phase, it had housed almost 2,000 workers and it was fitted with a sea-level docking facility. This made it more desirable for settlement, as it meant that no special equipment was needed to offload passengers and cargo. A small survey party of 6 people was sent to Britannia 7 to check its condition. They were never seen alive again.

The Britannia 4 council were then contacted by Calder, who warned them not to send any vessels into his newly claimed territory. This warning was due, he said, to them helping him and his crew during the storm. He said that so long as the platform settlers steered clear of his new rig he would leave them alone. Any other vessels were fair game for Calder's new found interest in piracy.

Jimmy Seaton, chief engineer of Britannia 4 angrily demanded why they had felt it necessary to attack the survey team. Calder replied in a surprised tone that he had not done this, this message was meant as a warning, as his crew had not yet begun to raid shipping. Then, irritated by the accusation, Calder cut the link.

Two days later, the survey team boat was spotted approaching Britannia 4 at maximum headway. As the boat neared, it became obvious that it was not under control and could hit the platform. A speedboat was despatched with a boarding party, who were able to bring the survey vessel under control and into dock safely.

The boat was in a horrendous condition. The inside of the wheelhouse was completely sprayed with blood, which also lay in pools on the floor. In the galley, the body of a survey crew member

was found pinned to the wall by the cook's knives kept on board. Another body was discovered in the engine room, with its hand still on the emergency throttle control. The wheel had been tied and the engine set to maximum revolutions, presumably to get home as quickly as possible. No sign was found of the other four crew. A second team was sent to Britannia 7, this time with small arms. They completely vanished shortly after boarding the rig.

It was then decided not to send any more people to this platform, and instead the engineers and planners chose Britannia 2 as the second platform settlement.

The expansion onto the other deserted platforms continued over the next five years, and with each one, the conversion process took less time. This was due to the increased number of workers, as well as the experience gained from the previous projects. The expansion onto the other platforms also removed any threat of overcrowding from the Britannia 4.

Eventually all of the remaining Britannia platforms were made habitable, and the councils of the individual rigs decided to form a mutual aid group. Several names were suggested, but the one finally chosen was the *Forties Artificial Isle League*, or *F.A.I.L.* This acronym was apparently chosen to remind the platform settlers that failure was not an option. It also reinforced the concept of the platforms being actual inhabited islands, rather than simply huge piles of prefabricated metal in the middle of nowhere.

CURRENT EVENTS

Elsewhere on the harsh North Sea, Calder had been busy. In five years, he had gone from top dog in a bunch of escaped convicts to a modern-era pirate chief.

After the escapees had left the Britannia 4, they had sailed south-west towards the British coast. Off the Yorkshire coast, they found an abandoned gas rig, never completed by the builders due to the SPP government's lack of funding. Calder realised that this platform was close enough to the shipping lanes that he could actually make a living from piracy.



“Roll on, thou deep and dark grey Ocean”
- Neal Calder,
Leader of the
Tantulus pirate crew,
misquoting Lord Byron

This platform eventually gained a name; for reasons known only to Calder and his top lackeys the rig was dubbed “Tantulus”. His crews became more experienced, and their numbers began to grow.

With the way the world was going, no authority wanted to claim jurisdiction, as anti-piracy operations are very expensive. Technically, as this platform was outside the twelve mile limit, the new British government could do nothing, even if they had wanted to. The United Nations could have cleared them out under international maritime laws, but they were too busy with the increasing number of brushfire wars across the world.

Calder’s organisation was left to grow, raiding civilian shipping at will. Their numbers currently are thought to be around 600, with a number of vessels ranging from Zodiacs up to at least one service tender with a displacement of 4,000 tons. Many of the newer recruits are thought to be SPP enforcers; ex-criminals turned paramilitary police with bad attitudes. As most of them were offered amnesty by the SPP in exchange for service, they decided to leave when they saw which way the wind was blowing.

Now that the SPP no longer hold any real power in the Republic of Britain, the new government is beginning to take steps towards eliminating the piracy threat. Unfortunately, they consider all settlers to be involved in these criminal activities, and have even arrested those who have returned to the mainland after the fall of the SPP. This has made the Britannia settlers feel angry and let down.

They now intend to stay on the platforms until the London government realizes that they are a world apart from the piracy of Calder and his gang.

The government is putting funds into the development of the ES 001 patrol craft. This is a wing-in-ground-effect craft, which will be armed, armored and capable of accommodating a boarding party. The ES 001 is also much faster than any conventional vessel, able to reach aircraft speeds. The idea is to chase the pirates back to their bases, or until they run out of fuel. If the ES001s are fired upon, they will reply with heavy machinegun or even cannon fire.

The ES 001 has been so impressive in trials that several other European nations are interested in purchasing them for their own use. The settlers on the FAIL platforms are not sure what to make of this, as they feel the governments concerned might make a joint effort to evict them with the help of these fast and agile new craft.

The Britannia settlers face another obstacle to their continued freedom. ConOilEx and the other corporations who own the occupied platforms are making overtures to the London government about starting their North Sea operations up again. As the government is strapped for cash, as well as being more well-disposed toward capitalism than the SPP this would seem to be a good move for both parties.

This is bad news for the settlers. If they don’t move, the corps are within their legal rights to evict them, even going so far as to cast them adrift in boats. This has happened before in other parts of the world, and is a favoured tactic of the infamous ConOilEx security force. If they go back to the mainland, they could be arrested as pirates.

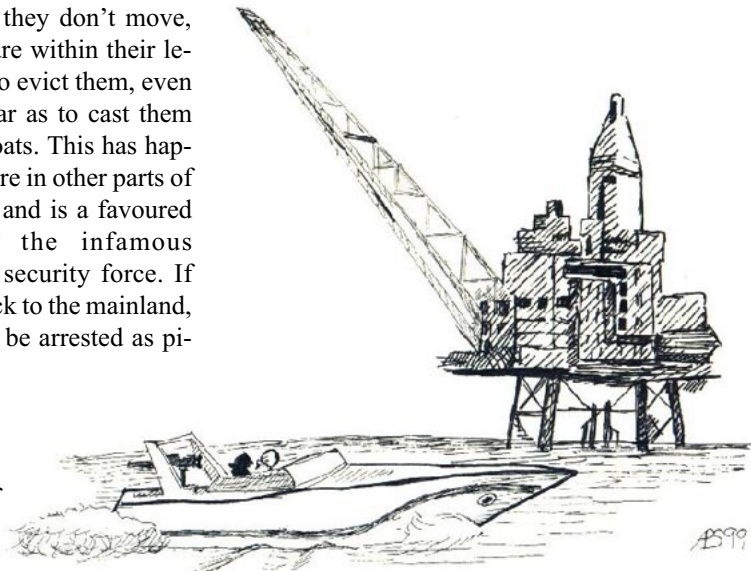
A n - other factor is quite a lot of them do not want to

go anywhere, even if the government promises not to lock them up. About a quarter of the FAIL population have taken to life on the ocean and wish to stay. They built the whole thing up, and it’s been home for several years now. Why should they leave?

There is still the grisly mystery of the Britannia 7. Nobody knows what has gone on there, and most people who are aware of what happened have no wish to know. There are stories from the people of the closest platform, Britannia 5, of strange lights at night and eerie noises. Waterspouts and weird eddy currents have also been seen around the support legs of Britannia 7, as well as occasional foul smells and what appear to be releases of toxic wastes. Nobody from the FAIL platforms has been there since the complete disappearance of the armed second survey team, possibly more because of what they might not find than what they will.

There have been a number of strange incidents in recent months that have the FAIL council concerned. They have received several strange radio messages, apparently originating from either the pirate platform or the Britannia Seven. These signals have all been garbled and broken up by static, and they have disappeared before the caller could be contacted.

Four pirate vessels have been found adrift in FAIL waters soon after these broadcasts. Boarding parties have re-





ported that the interior of the boats have been stripped out, and the entire cabin was coated in what looked like crystalline spider web. The last vessel was different in that it had a pirate crewman on board. When the FAIL boarding party found him, he was delirious and incoherent. All the FAIL crew could get out of him before he died was "Don't take me back. It's there! It's there!"

The FAIL council is unsure what to make of these strange events and is reluctant to investigate at this time.

OTHER INFORMATION

The current total population of the FAIL settlements is a little over seven thousand. Supplying the needs of the people is a full time concern. The larger rigs have huge hydroponic gardens, located deep inside the structures for added safety. On some rigs, the production modules have been removed, leaving large expanses of deck. These areas have been converted into greenhouses, which supply fresh fruit and vegetables during the warmer months and keep evergreen plants safe in the winter. Primitive but effective desalination equipment gives enough fresh drinking water for all.

The council of each platform is made up of a number of representatives proportional to the population size. The biggest council is that of the original platform, Britannia Four. The head of each council is also the representative of his or her platform at the weekly meetings of FAIL. In general, all of the settlements get along well with each other, although on occasion, friendly rivalry becomes more serious. When there is any kind of trouble, from drunken brawls to pirate attack, the security detachments are alerted. They are usually ex-servicemen or policemen, and they have a variety of weapons and equipment at their disposal. They do not normally carry firearms except in alert situations.

Safety is paramount on the platforms. Strangely, given their location and the unpredictability of the weather, a North Sea rig is a very safe place to be. The platforms are all raised high above the waves, and are anchored securely to

the seabed. In shallow waters rigs tend to have their support legs directly fixed to the bottom, whilst in deeper waters the rigs are floated out to the required location and then anchored to the ocean floor with many tethers. The smallest of these tethers is about two metres in diameter, and they are fixed to huge concrete blocks weighing hundreds of tonnes that have been sunk deep into the seabed.

Another safety aspect is the regular lifeboat evacuation drills. The Britannia rigs use the long drop style. Should it become necessary to abandon the platform, the crew make their way to the lowest habitation decks, where the lifeboats are ready. When each lifeboat is full, the steersman pulls the release mechanism and the boat drops some 40 metres into the sea. The crew are all strapped in safely and the boat is launched at an angle of around 30 degrees, which minimises the impact when it hits the ocean. The specially shaped extra buoyant hulls are able to take the impact with no damage. This system was developed after the infamous Piper Alpha fire disaster, taking on board the lessons learned from that tragedy.

A large proportion of the platforms' necessities and luxuries have come from land and a number of "suppliers" bring in these things for a small fee. Several have been arrested in the past as pirates due to the number of firearms they carry, though the reason they carried the weapons was in order to protect themselves from real pirates.

In general Calder's pirate crews tend to stay away from FAIL seas, except for occasional scouting missions in the winter. They will raid supply ships heading for the platforms given the chance, but since the end of the SPP era, the pirates have been less active on this front.

Calder himself is rumored to be a recluse, staying in his quarters and issuing orders by radio. A pirate victim was rescued by a FAIL security crew. He told the Council that his crew had been taken to the pirate rig. Suddenly, the air was filled with the sound of Calder himself chanting something over the pirate vessel's PA system. The seaman said he thought it sounded like some kind of

meditation. While the pirates were distracted, he took a survival suit and jumped overboard. The veracity of this story has yet to be proven.

What is true, however, is that Calder's boats and his platform are all in much better condition than would normally be expected. This suggests that somebody is supplying either equipment or money to the pirates. Certain elements in the FAIL communities suspect that ConOilEx are secretly backing Calder, and that there may be a full scale attack against them in the offing.

Contrary to stories put about on the British mainland, no member of the platform settlements has ever been a member of a pirate crew. This work of fiction, first concocted by an SPP media specialist, has been taken up by elements of the new government. It seems that sticking to this line enables them to lump together the actual criminals who operate in the North Sea with the population of the FAIL platforms.

The FAIL population is a group that no department in the current London government wishes to claim responsibility for. Social Security, Customs and Excise, even Environmental Health have all refused to accept the platforms as part of their remit. Even in the new political climate of the Republic, there are some things that politicians would rather ignore than investigate.

So at the moment everything carries on as normal for the platform communities. What the future may bring is unclear, but at least it should be interesting.

There should hopefully be a short adventure to expand on this article in the next issue of DEMONGROUND.

CREDITS

This article was inspired by the following sources:

Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson
Mindstar Rising

by Peter F. Hamilton

Hammerheads by Dale Brown
Freezone by John Shirley



One of the strengths of Dark Conspiracy, is the ability for it to model any horror or conspiratorial story line. I have seen it successfully used to run gothic horror, cyber punk, and X-files, as well as classic dungeon-crawl monster slaying. Lester Smith always said that DC is more a unifying principal than an actual game setting. In that sense, it's really more like Advanced Dungeons & Dragons than Shadowrun.

The strength of AD&D lies not in the underlying system, but in the many varied campaign environments available for the game. The campaign books provide flavor and ideas that the Referee is able to draw upon. Dark Conspiracy has that same potential. The rules are written so that any kind of horror or conspiracy story can be worked into the mix. Even other gaming systems make the transition fairly well.

As an example, the adventure I provided in DG6, Sins of the Fallen was the Steve Jackson game of *In Nomine*, dropped into DC. Other examples of this cross-pollination potential: The Hoffmann Institute of the upcoming *DarkMatter* game is just a well-connected empathic underground cell; as is Pagan Publishing's *Delta Green* group. The characters in *X-Files* work for the FBI. The characters in *Men in Black* work for yet another government organization.

Of all these, it is the Men in Black I'd like to focus on. We've all seen the movie. We've probably seen the cartoon, or the comic, or the role playing game. The premise of a super-secret government organization doing battle with alien invaders who are already here among us is not outside the realm of DC. It is in fact, smack at the heart of it! So, now we find ourselves with a great source of material and ideas to aid a DC Referee. Why not exploit it?

Men in Dark Suits

First of all, I should point out that there is already an entry for MiBs in the Dark Races section of the Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide (page 111). This is a perfect example we can use to demonstrate adaptation from another source.

If you look at the MiBs as listed in the Referee's Guide, you will find an alien race that is very human in appearance. The dark glasses they wear conceal their alien features. Their function in the world is to cover up evidence of Dark incursions.

Now let's look at the movie. The MiBs in the film are decidedly human, but the organization they belong to is inundated with aliens! It stands to reason, that while K and J are humans, there might be other agents in the organization that are actually humanoid aliens. The MiBs listed in the Referee's Guide could be those alien agents, working side by side with human recruits as well. The beauty of this interpretation is that it allows you to use the listing in the book, as well as the bevy of material associated with the movie without contradiction.

Now that we've successfully melded the two concepts together, what does that do for us? There are several ways you could use this material.

- MiBs could be used as implied in the Referee's Guide. They are stumbling blocks - obstacles to overcome - foes to outwit.
- The players could be members of the MiB organization. While this idea has its merits, I don't think it is the area with the most interesting application for DC.
- The players are former MiBs.

This last point is the use that I feel has the most potential. It allows your characters to accumulate the skills of the career, without forcing you to deal with the problem of generating a MiB organization and running a MiB campaign. Allow me to explain...

Men in Black

by Mike Marchi

Retired MiBs

How does one stop being a Man in Black? We saw it in the movie. Twice. The same device that the MiBs use to erase the memories of key witnesses to extraterrestrial activity is turned on the would-be retiree. S/He forgets everything that transpired during their entire tenure in the organization. The process is total and irreversible.

If the character forgets everything they learned during the time period, what good is this as a career choice? I believe that while all memories of events are erased, the retired agent would still retain any abilities and skills they developed during their service. They just wouldn't understand why or how they know what they know.

Often, these former agents will appear after years of covert service, back in the public eye. They are listed as coma patients who have miraculous recoveries, or perhaps criminals or psychiatric patients finally released after a long incarceration.

Designing the MiB Career

Men in Black are an elite organization. Entry into this career is best described as "by invitation only". Only the best and brightest, or the most outstanding in their fields of specialization are approached. Once selected, the candidate is tested. Failure means a visit with the Neuralizer and the candidate resumes his/her life as if nothing had ever happened. Success

means the candidate is welcomed into the fold and their old life ceases to exist.

During tenure as a MiB, the character is exposed to many things. They learn new skills along the way. Once learned, skills are not lost. But, because of the nature of the job, some things wind up a little different.

Entry Requirements

Before a character is approached for recruitment, s/he must be a specialist in some field. This specialization is represented by possessing a skill level of at least five in a non-combat skill. Combat statistics are a dime-a-dozen. The MiBs don't recruit people for their ability to shoot a gun or wield a blade. They also don't want people who are too old when they start the career. The job is very physical. No character is approached for recruiting after the age of 30.

Secondary Activities

There are no secondary activities allowed for a MiB. The job is everything, so there is no spare time for other pursuits.

Money

The MiB earns no salary or benefits. The organization trains, feeds and clothes the operative. Unfortunately, in the modern world, things like salaries and retirement plans can be traced. The MiB organization will not risk exposing itself by providing such things for their retirees. Any cash accumulated from careers prior to entry into the MiBs, or cash earned in careers afterward are retained.

Contacts

The character acquires no Contacts during the terms spent in the MiB career. Once retired, a MiB will have no recollection of anyone s/he has encountered during the terms of service. Therefore, there is no one to fill the role of a contact for the player. Any contacts from terms served prior to entry in the MiBs, or contacts earned in careers afterward are retained as normal.

There is one exception to the no-contact rule (depending on the cover

story assigned to the retiree). If the story involves a medical excuse (i.e. coma, or psychiatric care), it is possible that the doctor or psychiatrist assigned to the case may have some link back to the organization. This is entirely left up to the Referee.

Weapon Proficiencies

The MiBs, as seen in the movie, have a vast array of alien technology and weapons at their disposal. The interesting thing about most of these weapons is that they are so advanced and powerful that they actually require no additional skill to use them. Either the weapon is a smartgun, with built-in sensors and tracking mechanisms to aid in aiming, or the weapon is a death-ray, a weapon of such



devastation, that precise targeting is unnecessary.

Because of this, MiBs do not have any Small Arms skills available to them. Any skills acquired prior to entry simply remain at their predetermined levels.

First Term Skills

In the first term of service, the new MiB initiate is still undergoing training. The skills received in the first term are predetermined. Note the Disguise skill. This is the only time a MiB gets this skill. It doesn't take long to learn about dark suits and sunglasses.

Subsequent Term Skills

Subsequent terms are a little more complicated. Each term beyond the first, skills are taken from *each* of four sets.

1. Physical - Being a MiB field operative is a grueling job. As such, physical stats and hand-to-hand skills will undoubtedly improve over time. To simulate this, the player must take one of these physical advancement skills. However, because the physical aspect is not the major focus of the job, *the character is limited to a single point of physical advancement each term.*

2. Specialty - Some skill the characters already possess, brought them to the MiBs attention. The MiBs will want to capitalize on that investment, by encouraging the character to grow in that area. Therefore, one skill point each subsequent term must be applied to that area of specialization. Note, if the skill level should climb above the value of the controlling attribute, the standard rules apply, each skill point will only accumulate ½ Skill Level.

3. Willpower - The longer one is in the MiB organization, the more strength of character one develops. Each term of service, the MiB receives one point of Willpower.

4. Other Skills - The work of a MiB is varied. There is a great opportunity for advancement in a number of different areas. Therefore, up to four additional skill points can be taken from the subsequent terms Other Skills List.

A Final Note

You may wonder why I have chosen to have the MiB skills retained after the character retires. Simple. If the skills were erased by the Neuralizer, there would be no point to the career! The skill set provided creates characters that are well-suited for life as a Minion-Hunter. This is balanced by the loss of Contacts and Money for terms served in this career.

You may also wonder why I didn't include any information about being an active member of the MiB career. Frankly, I feel that is beyond the scope of this article. There are entire RPGs that address this concept - for example, *The MiB RPG* or *Conspiracy X*. If the Referee really wants to pursue this path with his DC games, I recommend they consult one of those other systems for tips and details.



Former MiB

Your life had been going well. You'd managed to earn notoriety as a specialist in your field. Everything was great. Then *it* happened. It doesn't matter what *it* was. *It* may have been a tragic accident that left you in a coma for years, or perhaps you were incarcerated in a psychological institute and your treatment left you with no recollection of the intervening time. Whatever you were doing during that time, you appear to have little to show for it. No money. No contacts. But you have skills! Perhaps they're remnants of things you did during that blank time – but you have no idea what that was, where you did it, or why? All you know is you came to awareness under a physician or psychologist's care, and a lifetime of memories that stops short when *it* happens, and resumes again a few days ago.

Entry:

Age 21 - 30. Skill level 5+ (specialist) in a non-combat area – after all, you have to have some skill that brings you to the MiB's attention.

Not everyone who wishes they were a MiB can become one. The Referee may require a Formidable 'Luck' roll to simulate the act of being singled out and allowed to begin this career.

Not everyone who becomes a MiB sought that career out. There is a possibility of automatic recruitment. If the Referee wishes, once a character satisfies the listed Entry requirements (age and specialty), a secret roll can be made to determine if the MiBs notice and attempt to recruit the character. A Difficult 'Luck' roll would then be required for the character to pass successfully through the testing process for admission.

First Term Skills: Initial training provides one point for each of the following skills:

Computer Operation Disguise Foreboding Melee(Unarmed)
Observation Stealth Willpower

Subsequent Term Skills:

Must take one (and only one) skill from the following list each term:

Agility +1 Constitution +1 Strength +1 Melee (Armed) Melee (Unarmed)

Must take one point in each of the following.

<Specialty> *The skill that got them noticed by the MiB in the first place*
Willpower

A total of four levels from any one or a combination of the following:

Acrobatics Act/Bluff Archaeology* Astronomy* Computer Empathy Computer Operation
Demolitions Electronics Foreboding Forensics* Human Empathy Interrogation
Lockpick Medical Observation Persuasion Pilot Psychology
Stalking Stealth Tracking Vehicle Vessel

**These skills are outlined in DG5 – "Getting Jiggy With It" and are only allowed with Referee approval*

Contacts:

There is no such thing as an 'active' character in the MiB organization. All characters that enter the MiB career will have to be retired from the organization in their last term as a MiB. Retiring entails being exposed to a MiB Neuralizer (a small pen-sized device that permanently erase a specific time span of the person's memory). For each term of service in the MiBs, four years of memories will be erased. Since no character will be able to remember their life as a MiB, no contacts are earned during a term in this career - *except the last one*. Although the character will not realize it, the doctor who will be caring for them upon their 'awakening' will probably be an associate of the MiBs - assigned to make their transition back to a normal life run smoothly.

Special:

- No secondary activities are allowed for a MiB – it's a full-time job.
- No money is earned while serving as a MiB – the funds would be too easy to trace. However, any funds accumulated prior to service will still be available in the character's savings accounts.
- By design, no skill improvements are provided for Small Arms – considering the nature of MiB weapons, there is very little skill required to operate them, and therefore, no chance to improve the skill. ❖



Many of us have wondered what is Unarmed Combat Damage (UCD). Is it points straight up, or is it a value of D6's that we should roll? Unfortunately, from what I have read, the book never answers this question.

Most of the characters generated have a UCD rating of 1. But occasionally we have a Martial Artist or something similar that has a UCD of 5 or so.

The straight point method is discussed in this paragraph. The first distinct advantage is speed. If there's no dice rolling involved, there's less math. The less math, the less time is taken up in combat. Very few people like long, drawn out combats. The second advantage is that it keeps the damage of a Martial Artist type character down to a realistic level. 5 damage for a punch is plenty. But there are disadvantages to this method, as well. The first one is that any Joe (or Jane) off the street could probably do more than one damage with a punch. A fistfight between two characters can feasibly last more than a half hour of game time. In a boxing match, that's possible because the athletes are trained for that. Not most people, though.

Now for the D6 Method. The advantage of this method is that a standard character off the street can actually do some damage to someone, and a fight does not last nearly as long in game time. At least if both combatants are not horrible rollers. But where this method falters is when there is a Martial Artist involved. Very few guns have a damage of 5D6, no person should be able to outpunch a gun, unless that person has been a martial artist his/her entire life.

Here is my method. I'm going to warn you, this is not a simple fix, but it is a compromise. First, look at the amount you made the roll by to hit. For every 3 numbers that you made it by, you can do one more damage above and beyond your UCD rating. Then you roll a D6 and check the table below to see how many of those points you actually damage the target by. Huh? Here's an example.

Take two characters of mine...Nickoli and Bill. Nickoli is a

Extra Damage Steps	D6 Divisions	Damage
1	1-3,4-6	0,1
2	1-2,3-4,5-6	0,1,2
3	1,2-3,3-4,5-6	0,1,2,3
4	1,2-3,4,5,6	0,1,2,3,4
5	1,2,3,4,5	0,1,2,3,4,5
6	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5,6

Martial Artist with a UCD of 5 and an Unarmed Melee Combat rating of 7 (14). Bill is a Criminal with a UCD of 1, and an Unarmed Melee Combat rating of 1 (8). For simplicity's sake, neither are wearing armor. Bill, meet Nickoli, Nickoli, this is Bill. Don't like each other, huh? Bummer...

Nickoli wins the Initiative, and

Unarmed Combat Damage

By Ryan Rank

hence gets to try to pound on Bill first. Nickoli rolls a hit on Bill with a 7. How many steps of three did that make it? 14-3 is 11. That one step. 11-3 is 8. That's two steps. 8-3 is 5...well, not quite three steps. Only two steps. So Nickoli has the potential to do 7 damage (5 UCD + 2 steps). We know that he does 5 base, but how much of this extra two does he do? Nickoli then rolls a 4 on 1D6. Checking against the table shows that he does 1 extra damage. So Nickoli does a total of 6 damage to Bill (5 base + one extra). Ouch.

6 is the top of the scale. It has to end somewhere. There are physical limits to what a person can do.

This is but one option to work on the UCD dilemma. I believe that it keeps the ungodly damage of a Martial Artist in check, while letting someone get in a lucky shot now and then. I think that it is a fixed enough number so that a character that should win, will probably win. But it is open enough to where someone can get lucky and beat up the martial artist. ❖

"You know, there's something cathartic about beating the snot out of someone occasionally. It's good for the soul."

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary/philosopher)



Whyte is a computer hacker and empath, who can be used to assist PCs if they have few or no computer skills. He has a certain amount of previous experience in dealing with Dark Tek systems, as well as more mundane computer hacking and code breaking.

Originally the website designer for a small British company specialising in business skills training, Whyte was drawn into a battle between a minion hunter friend and a Dark empathic cell. He used his skills to get into the Darkling system and scramble its memory cores, thus rendering the Minions unable to escape through their portal. Ever since, Whyte has been active in minion hunting circles.

It was through his contacts that he learned about empathy, and realised his computer talents were due to his possessing this strange ability. He has learned to make full use of this power, but it is not 100% reliable. Still, it makes his life a little more interesting.

He has a ready sense of humor, and can often be seen reading paperback books, usually techno-thrillers and modern horror. He is also addicted to card games, especially the collectible sort. These help to pass the time when he is away from his beloved keyboard. Strangely though, he is not at all computer-nerdish, just very good at his job.

Allen Whyte is of average height, fair haired and wears spectacles with blued steel frames and oval lenses. His usual dress style runs toward t-shirts with

eye wateringly patterned shirts over, or sweatshirts in winter, and pale denim jeans with Caterpillar boots. He is about thirty years of age.

His only bad habit is smoking cigarettes, usually the strongest and cheapest brand he can find.

Though Whyte knows something of the Dark threat and is willing to help in any way he can, he is not a combat type. He knows how to use a pistol, but he will not do so unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent a loss of life. His talent lies in other areas of expertise.

Motivations

8 of Hearts – Whyte gets on well with others, particularly if they show an interest in computers, collectible card games or cheap trashy paperbacks.

4 of Spades – he has vague ideas of running his own web publishing company if he can get the money together.

Skills

Allen Whyte is an Experienced level NPC. He has the

Allen Whyte

by Lee Williams

following skills ;

Computer Ops 10, Computer Empathy 7, Electronics 4, Human Empathy 2, Languages (Japanese) 4, (Afrikaans) 2, *Production (multimedia) 4, Small Arms Pistol 4, Wheeled Vehicle 2.

* see “Getting Jiggy With It” in Demonground 5 for details of this skill.

Equipment

Whyte always carries his top speeded laptop in a custom made kevlar briefcase (Armour Value 2). He has various other items in his pockets such as a cell phone, computer internals, discs etc. He carries a Browning 10mm compact pistol in a concealed waistband holster. When in dangerous territory he always wears a kevlar vest (AV 1).

FN-Browning Compact Ten									
-Recoil-									
Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	
10mm	SA	2	1-Nil	1	14	2	no	12	

One effect of the Greater Economic Depression in the USA was a huge rise in anti-Japanese feeling among the population at large. The worst example of this has been the rise of a violent terrorist faction known as the Black Rain.

Their name is taken from a late 20th-century movie about corruption in the highest levels of Japanese corporations, and their links with the criminal brotherhoods known as Yakuza. In this movie, one of the characters describes the atomic bombing of Hiroshima that he witnessed as a child in 1945; an after effect being a huge storm which filled the sky with black rain full of radioactive ash. Where this rain fell outside the blast area plants withered and died, and nothing grew again.

This image of a shattered and poisoned land appealed to the terrorists imagination, hence the adoption of the name.

Their worst aspect is that they have shown no remorse at all, despite innocent civilians have been seriously injured during some of their raids. Favourite targets are big city centre corporate buildings, which are often not particularly important to the corps concerned but are the public faces which the people associate

The Black Rain

by Lee Williams

with efficiency and wealth. Attacking these well-known symbols ensures maximum publicity, which is important to any group who fight the system.

Though Black Rain attacks have tailed off recently, they are thought to still be active. It is not known if the group are subject to any Darkling influence.

This is a Dark Conspiracy supplement for players and referees who just love high technology and big things that go BANG!

There are several important things to consider when using this article.

1. All entries herein are balanced against each other and to the book. Since most games tend to scale either up or down from the book, scale this too.
2. It doesn't mean *everything* in this article exists. Referees are encouraged to leave out items if they don't fit the game, location or anything else. Certain items are supposed to exist in tandem (DarkTek and certain weapons/ammo) so be aware of this.
3. Some items here may not have a sufficient description, limitation or whatever. If this happens, you can either:
 - a) Leave that item out.
 - b) Buy a book that contains it
 - c) email the author, or
 - d) Make it up. Who's gonna know?

Part 1 - Guns and Ammo The Stuff Large Holes Are Made With!

There are some details here for some of the common weaponry the players may come across around the world. Simply put, these are generic stats for types of weapons. They are listed in blocs, and then under categories.

Western Bloc vs. Eastern Bloc

Western Bloc weapons tend to be lighter and smaller than their Eastern Bloc counterparts. They are made of predominantly plastics in either matte black or jungle/camo print colors. Many of them have "Made in Taiwan" stamped on their undersides. Western Bloc weapons tend to use caseless ammunition in the common types.

Eastern Bloc weapons are often heavier, bulkier and made from metal with wood inlays rather than plastic. However, they seem to be more reliable, and often have a higher magazine capacity. They look aged in many ways, but are tried and true designs.

The statistics given are for Western Bloc weaponry. To adjust for Eastern, boost the Bulk, Magazine and Reliability ratings for most cases except Shotguns, Submachineguns and Exotics. In the case of Machineguns and Assault Rifles, increase the Penetration and lower the range to factor in the larger, heavier Soviet/German ammunitions.

Submachineguns are roughly the same (give German ones higher magazine capacity) and shotguns don't change. Adjusted stats for Eastern Bloc weapons should never include Unreliable.

Exotics have their Bloc listed if appropriate.

Pistols

Type: Light Pistol
Bulk: 1
Ammo: 9mm
Mag: 8
Damage: 1
Pen: nil
Recoil - SS: 3
Range: 40
Cost: \$ 100-300
Reliability: Very
Notes: Compact, extremely reliable.

Type: Medium Pistol
Bulk: 1
Ammo: .375
Mag: 8
Damage: 1
Pen: 1
Recoil - SS: 3
Range: 40
Cost: \$250-500
Reliability: Standard
Notes: commonly available handgun.

Type: Heavy Pistol
Bulk: 1
Ammo: .38
Mag: 8
Damage: 2

Extreme Ordnance

by Steve King

Pen: 1
Recoil - SS: 3
Range: 50
Cost: \$N/A
Reliability: Very
Notes: Police/Military IRecoil - SSue gun. Not purchasable and illegal to own

Type: Heavy Pistol
Bulk: 1
Ammo: .45
Mag: 6
Damage: 2
Pen: 1
Recoil - SS: 4
Range: 40
Cost: \$400-700
Reliability: Standard
Notes: largest of the commonly available handguns

Type: Very Heavy Pistol
Bulk: 2
Ammo: Magnum Special 60
Mag: 6
Damage: 3
Pen: 1/1
Recoil - SS: 5
Range: 40
Cost: \$800-1200
Reliability: Very
Notes: Rare weapon, generally only issued to Special Forces.

Rifles

Type: Light Rifle
Bulk: 5
Ammo: .22
Mag: 8
Damage: 2
Pen: 1-1
Recoil - SS: 4
Recoil - Brst: N/A
Range: 100



Cost: \$300-800
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Typical civilian sport/target rifle.

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: .22
 Mag: 12

Damage: 1
 Pen: nil
 Recoil - SS: 1
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 200
 Cost: \$3000-5000
 Reliability: Extreme
 Notes: Target rifle as used in sporting events

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: .357
 Mag: 8

Damage: 3
 Pen: 2-1
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$500-1500
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Typical hunting rifle

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 4
 Ammo: .357
 Mag: 6

Damage: 3
 Pen: 1-1
 Recoil - SS: 5
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 100
 Cost: \$800-1600
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Short rifle. Due to design, recoil is higher and range is shorter. A version of this is available with increased range but significantly higher recoil (150m, Recoil - SS 8)

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 4
 Ammo: .45
 Mag: 6
 Damage: 4

Pen: 2-1-1
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 200
 Cost: \$5000+
 Reliability: Very
 Notes: Light sniper's rifle. May be available from contacts

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: 8
 Mag: .45

Damage: 3
 Pen: 2-1
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$500-800
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: common rifle used by 3rd world military. Often are poorly maintained and unreliable.

Type: Heavy Rifle
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: 5.56 NATO
 Mag: 6

Damage: 6
 Pen: 3-2-1
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 300
 Cost: \$N/A
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Heavy Sniper rifle. Unavailable legally. Uses special compensators, which WILL be unavailable. Without these, reduce range to 200, damage to 5, Pen to 2-1-1, and Recoil - SS to 6. Also gives the shooter a -1 penalty to their skill (due to lack of sights for the rifle).

Type: Heavy Rifle
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: .45
 Mag: 10

Damage: 4
 Pen: 2-2
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$800-1400

Reliability: Standard
 Notes: common rifle of western forces

Assault Rifles

Type: Light Assault
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: .45
 Mag: 12

Damage: 3
 Pen: 2-1
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: 7
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$800-1000
 Reliability: Unreliable
 Notes: Common 3rd World assault rifle. Fires 3 round bursts.

Type: Light Assault
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: .45
 Mag: 16

Damage: 4
 Pen: 2-2
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: 6
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$800-1600
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: common western forces Assault rifle. Fires 3-round bursts.

Type: Heavy Assault
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: 5.56 NATO
 Mag: 30 (clip) or 150 (belt)

Damage: 5
 Pen: 2-2-1
 Recoil - SS: 2 (6)
 Recoil - Brst: 4 (10)
 Range: 200
 Cost: \$1500-2500
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: typical pintle-mounted weapon. Less effective without mount. Fires 5 round bursts.

Machineguns

Type: Light Machinegun

Bulk: 7
 Ammo: 5.56 NATO
 Mag: 50 (drum) or 200 (belt)
 Damage: 5
 Pen: 2-2-1
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: 6
 Range: 150
 Cost: \$2000+
 Reliability: Standard (drum) or Unreliable (belt)
 Notes: common vehicle or bunker machinegun. Must be mounted. Fires 10-round bursts.

Type: Heavy Machinegun
 Bulk: 8
 Ammo: 5.56 AP or HEDP
 Mag: 50 (drum) or 200 (belt)
 Damage: 4 (AP) or 6 (HEDP)
 Pen: 4-3-2 (AP) or 4-2-1 (HEDP)
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: 7
 Range: 200
 Cost: \$3000+
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Heavy vehicle MG. HEDP rounds cannot be belt-fed. Fires 10 round bursts. Must be mounted.

Submachineguns

Type: Light Submachinegun
 Bulk: 2
 Ammo: .22
 Mag: 20
 Damage: 2
 Pen: 1-nil
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: 4
 Range: 30
 Cost: \$600-900
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Small submachinegun, favored by criminals for concealability. Fires 5-round bursts. A modified version that fires 10-round bursts exists, however its range drops to 20, Burst to 6 (cannot fire single), and gives a -1 on skill.

Type: Heavy Submachinegun
 Bulk: 3

Ammo: .357
 Mag: 30
 Damage: 3
 Pen: 1-nil
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: 6
 Range: 30
 Cost: \$1200-1800
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Typical submachinegun used by military forces. Fires 5-round bursts.

Shotguns

Type: Shotgun
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: 12ga
 Mag: 1 (single shot) or 2 (double barrel)
 Damage: 4 (12ga) or 9 (buckshot)
 Pen: 3-4-nil
 Recoil - SS: 5
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 30
 Cost: \$250-700
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Basic civilian farmer's gun.

Type: Shotgun
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: 12ga
 Mag: 6 (pump action or SA)
 Damage: 4 (12ga) or 9 (buckshot)
 Pen: 3-4-nil
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 40
 Cost: \$600-1000
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Common shotgun. Criminal underworld tries to modify these into street sweepers but with limited success.

Type: Autoshotgun
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: 12ga
 Mag: 6
 Damage: 4 (12ga) or 9 (buckshot)
 Pen: 3-4-nil
 Recoil - SS: N/A
 Recoil - Brst: 6
 Range: 20
 Cost: varies

Reliability: Unreliable
 Notes: This is a modified version of the basic shotgun, for use by underworld. Due to its modifications, it is extremely unreliable and risky to use. The burst is a 5 round burst (assume the 6th shot misses by default)

Type: Autoshotgun
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: 12ga
 Mag: 6
 Damage: 4 (12ga) or 9 (buckshot)
 Pen: 3-4-nil
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: 5
 Range: 40
 Cost: \$800-1600
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Police/Military autoshotgun. Should be unavailable through legitimate channels. Fire 3-round bursts.

Exotics

Type: Crossbow
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: Crossbow bolt
 Mag: 1
 Damage: 1
 Pen: Nil (1 against soft armors like a flak jacket)
 Recoil - SS: 6
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 15
 Cost: \$350
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Can't jam a crossbow. Treat a jam as a breakage. This is a standard off the shelf crossbow firing bolts. It is possible to improvise parts of a crossbow. For each improvisation reduce the range by 5. Typical improvisations is homemade wire, or improvised bolts. It takes a full phase to reload a bow.

Type: Compound Bow
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: Arrows
 Mag: 1
 Damage: -1
 Pen: Nil
 Recoil - SS: 4
 Recoil - Brst: N/A



Range: 20
 Cost: \$300
 Reliability: Very
 Notes: It is possible to fire 2 shots/phase with a bow, if the archer already had the first arrow nocked. Can't jam a bow - treat a jam as a breakage.

Type: Homemade Bow
 Bulk: 6
 Ammo: Arrows/Bolts
 Mag: 1
 Damage: -1 (see Notes)
 Pen: Nil (a crossbow has a penetration of 1 against soft armor)

Recoil - SS: 6
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 10
 Cost: N/A
 Reliability: Unreliable
 Notes: This is the sort of bow you'd find in the hands of people in the wilderness. It is made of wood, with a length of twine or leather for a string. Crossbows would have wood and wire. These should be special case weapons - before firing, roll 1d6. This indicates the power of the arrow/bolt. If the roll is a 1, the shot drops out about 10 feet from the archer (it misses everything, but it re-usable). If the roll is a 2-4, the shot will only cause 1pt of damage. If the roll is a 5 or 6, treat the shot as if fired from a regular bow.

Type: Nailgun
 Bulk: 8
 Ammo: 3inch nails
 Mag: 20
 Damage: -1
 Pen: special (see Notes)
 Recoil - SS: 5
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 5
 Cost: Varies
 Reliability: Unreliable

Notes: This is a generic statistic for a construction item that could be used as a weapon by a person in a desperate situation. This weapon, capable of semi-automatic fire, can throw a nail through a piece of 2x4. Although it is certainly capable of sending a nail much further

than its listed range, after that distance the nail becomes merely a flying nuisance. The great advantage of the nailgun - if the target is struck by the nailgun in Melee combat (make a Melee hit roll instead of a Small Arms one), the nail will penetrate all but the hardest of armors, and cause 2d6 damage. And of course, provides the user with the immortal line - "I nailed him!"

Regular Advanced Technology

GE/Colt MiniGat

Type: Heavy Machinegun
 Bulk: 8
 Ammo: .22 caseRecoil - SS
 Mag: 120
 Damage: 2
 Pen: 1-nil
 Recoil - SS: 1 (treat as 5-round burst)
 Recoil - Brst: 3 (20 round burst)
 Range: 50
 Cost: \$5000+
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: The General Electric/Colt MiniGat has a high rate of fire, making it a great weapon against hard targets. Needs no mount, and its small, reliable ammo is cheap and light. The MiniGat is also an efficient defensive weapon.

H&K CPS

Type: Heavy Pistol (Shotgun)
 Bulk: 3
 Ammo: buckshot
 Mag: 4
 Damage: 5 (buckshot)
 Pen: 2-nil
 Recoil - SS: 8
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 20
 Cost: \$2000+
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: The CPS, or Concealable Personal Shotgun is an advanced design based on a personal defense concept. Due to its buckshot load, aim is no longer a factor. Simply treat as a 5d6 shotgun blast at short range, and 5-round burst at medium. Recoil is so high due to the lack of bracing possible with a handgun. The CPS cannot fire slugs.

Colt .336 Citigun

Type: Light Pistol
 Bulk: 1
 Ammo: .336
 Mag: 12
 Damage: 2
 Pen: 1-nil
 Recoil - SS: 2
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 50
 Cost: \$700
 Reliability: Very
 Notes: Finally, someone seems to have gotten just about everything right. Colt's .336 Citigun is a fine example of the right way to make a gun. With a high magazine capacity, good stopping power and low recoil, the only thing letting it down is the availability of Colt's state-of-the-art ammunition, which is availability R and costs \$200 for a box of 100.

Walther Darkwing

Type: Light Rifle
 Bulk: 5
 Ammo: .60 Special
 Mag: 6
 Damage: 4
 Pen: 1-2-3
 Recoil - SS: 3
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 250
 Cost: \$3000+
 Reliability: Standard
 Notes: Walther's entry into the Rifle market has proved successful with the Darkwing rifle. The Darkwing incorporated image-enhancers into its integral sighting system, making it provide the equivalent of a laser sight without the red dot. The .60 Special ammunition means that when you hit your target, it doesn't stand up. A perfect snipers weapon.

M-184E Thunderbolt

Type: Heavy Pistol
 Bulk: 3
 Ammo: Enhanced .45
 Mag: 6
 Damage: 4
 Pen: 2-nil
 Recoil - SS: 1
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: 70

Cost: \$N/A (prototype)
Reliability: Very Unreliable
Notes: The Thunderbolt is a brand-new type of handgun. Incorporating ElectroThermal Enhancement on its ammunition, the M-184E needs no hammer and no chambering. It activated the rounds with an electric "spike" that ignites the charging bud and fires the round. This reduces on the inaccuracy caused by a hammer, plus increases the exit velocity by around 30%. However, the technology is still so new that over half the rounds will not fire. Once a round has failed, it must be ejected (treat as a reload action) before firing can resume. It can only fire 1 shot per round, and its internal battery is only good for 6 + 1d6 shots. (If the battery runs out and the weapon is fired, treat as a failed round). The battery can be replaced in 1 round (so in effect it takes 2 rounds to fully reload the weapon). The best thing about this technology is that with the incorporated silencer, the gun sounds no louder than a hissing air "whump" sound.

Hyperpenetration Round

Type: Ammunition
Cost: \$400
Avail: Rare (and illegal)
Notes: The hyperpenetration round is a specially made .45 round. The round consists of a sheath of lead surrounding a cadmium core. If the round encounters a "soft" (unarmored) target, it strikes as normal, however, if it strikes a hard target, the lead sheath with stop, allowing the cadmium core to punch through the armor unhindered. In game terms, when someone fires a hyperpenetration round, either add 1 to the weapons penetration factor, or assume the target is one armor level lower than it really is, whichever the GM prefers.

Hyperpenetration rounds only exist in .45, and cost \$400 per box of 50. They will ONLY function in a pistol at present, and are not compatible with the M-184E Thunderbolt.

Remington Motion Restraint Canister

Type: Ammunition
Cost: \$75/\$150
Avail: Rare
Notes: The Remington MRC is a type of grenade that when it explodes, it throws out a fine mesh of nylon that effectively ensnares objects in its target zone. It causes 1 point of concussion damage to anyone in its actual strike zone, but not beyond. The MRC comes in two varieties, a 5m-diameter rifle variant, and a 10m-diameter hand grenade type. The MRC cannot be fired from a grenade launcher other than the rifle launcher (if someone does, treat as a jammed weapon for the launcher). The nylon mesh is light and strong. A victim can escape in 3d6 - Strength phases. If a victim wants to escape faster, a Difficult STR roll is required, assuming the victims have an effective means of cutting the mesh. Without a cutting mechanism, increase the difficulty by one level. For each level of success, reduce the amount of rounds required by 2. If this figure reaches below 0, the victim is unaffected by the mesh, otherwise they are caught for at least 1 phase. The mesh cannot ensnare a machine such as a car.

Anyone caught in the mesh is at half agility and strength, and performs all skills relating to Strength and Agility at an adjusted level (except for the purposes of trying to escape the mesh). Movement in the mesh is limited to 2 meters/phase. The rifle grenade has a range of 100m and costs \$150. The hand grenade version costs \$75.

Arc-Regent Laser Cannon

Type: Heavy Weapon
Bulk: 10
Ammo: Power Pack
Mag: 10 "charges"
Damage: "X"
Pen: : Special "X" - "X"-3 - nil (see Notes)
Recoil - SS: 1
Recoil - Brst: N/A
Range: 25
Cost: \$10,000+
Reliability: Standard
Notes: The Arc-Regent Laser

Cannon resembles a flame-thrower. It is in some ways an improvement over the Armington lasers, in others it is not as effective. The Arc-Regent is far more portable than the Armington, and uses a lot less power. It also does not need recharge time between shots (although it can only fire once per phase).

It works on the principle of releasing stored energy at a variable level. In game terms, the Arc-Regent is fitted with a power gauge. The user turns the gauge from 1 to 5, the number indicating how powerful the blast will be. The number on the gauge is the amount of "charges" the gun uses in the shot, and also sets the damage in d6. For example, Big Bill Bison has an Arc-Regent that is fully charged. He spies a Dark Elf behind a tree. Wanting revenge, he turns the gauge up to 5, and fires. This blast will use 5 of the available 10 charges, and will do 5 damage to the Dark Elf. Ouch!

Penetration is also calculated in this way. Simply deduct the number listed from the charges used in the blast to work it out. In the above example, we assumed the Dark Elf was unarmored. Now assume its wearing a flak jacket (armor 2). The 5 damage blast will penetrate the armor, but only 2 damage will get through.

The power gauge can *not* be pushed above 5. If the gauge is set to a higher number than the "charges" left in the weapon, the shot will flash from the muzzle and do nothing at all. To recharge an Arc-Regent requires it to be hooked up to a strong power supply for 1hr per "charge". "Charges" will only hold in the Arc-Regent for a maximum of 24hrs, after which time it will lose 1 "charge" per 12hrs.

Extra-Terrestrial Technology

"Blaster" Pistol

Type: Pistol
Bulk: 2 - 6
Ammo: Unknown
Mag: 1d6 + 4
Damage: 10
Pen: Special
Recoil - SS: 2



Recoil - Brst: -
 Range: 50
 Cost: N/A
 Reliability: Unreliable for humans, Very Reliable for ETs
 Notes: This is the classic "Blaster" seen in so many sci-fi movies. Think of Han Solo's Blastec DL-44 from Star Wars here. Small gun, big boom! The Blaster Pistol should be almost a second-line weapon for ETs - they have more advanced ones (the Death Rays) but these guns should be powerful enough to match almost anything they shoot at. Determine penetration by reducing the damage caused by a Death Ray like this: No armor= 10 pts, AV1= 8 pts, AV2= 6pts, AV3= 4 pts. Let the shots blow holes in objects in their way, but not penetrate through them, no matter how thin they are (use common sense - cardboard won't do anything, but a decent sheet of plywood would stop the first shot...).

"Blaster" Rifle

Type: Rifle
 Bulk: 4 - 8
 Ammo: Unknown
 Mag: 2d6 + 8
 Damage: 10
 Pen: Special
 Recoil - SS: 2
 Recoil - Brst: 6 (3 round burst)
 Range: 50
 Cost: N/A
 Reliability: Unreliable for humans, Very Reliable for ETs
 Notes: The Blaster Rifle is no different from the Blaster Pistol except for higher bulk, more "ammunition" and capable of automatic fire. Use the Penetration system from the Blaster Pistol, however, these will go through objects in the way, at the loss of one penetration factor per object they blow holes in (don't forget most armor has 2 sides...)

Sonic Screamer

Type: Pistol
 Bulk: 4
 Ammo: Unknown
 Mag: 10
 Damage: 0 - 4 plus Special (see notes)

Pen: N/A
 Recoil - SS: 0
 Recoil - Brst: -
 Range: 25, in a 90 degree arc (see Notes)
 Cost: N/A
 Reliability: unreliable
 Notes: The Sonic Screamer is a small handheld gun that works solely on sound waves. With a small finger control, the shooter can adjust the intensity of the sonic blast. Adjusting this has no effect on the "ammunition" - each shot only uses 1 "round" from the weapon. When fired, the Screamer sends out a wave of sound. This can cause (at the shooter's option) anything from no damage to 4 damage to any living target, regardless of armor. The added bonus of the Screamer is that it can cause unconsciousness in its targets. When "struck" by a Screamer, the target must roll a check vs. Constitution, failure meaning the target becomes unconscious. This roll varies dependant on damage caused. Use the table below.

The Screamer can be used for a prolonged firing - it can be left on for 3 rounds on 0, 2 rounds on 1, and 1 round on all other settings. If used like this, each consecutive round a creature is caught in its effect, the Constitution check becomes one level more difficult. (from Impossible, the next is "must roll Critical Success against Impossible task to succeed"). Firing it twice (it can be fired once per phase) does NOT have this effect, no matter how high the Initiative of the attacker is compared to the victims. The Screamer fires in a forward arc with a

range limit of 25metres. It is an Easy task to keep any one particular victim in the firing arc. The Screamer exists in one other form - a cube that has the same range, but affects -everything- within 25metres of it. The cube acts as prolonged fire on any damage level it is set on. Due to its nature, it is not poRecoil - SSible to change this setting once it is activated. To destroy a Screaming Cube, it needs a single point of damage to get through its armor (Armor 1) - hitting it with a baseball bat is sufficient.

Psychron

Type: Pistol
 Bulk: 1
 Ammo: N/A
 Mag: N/A
 Damage: special
 Pen: N/A
 Recoil - SS: N/A
 Recoil - Brst: N/A
 Range: unaided visual
 Cost: -
 Reliability: special
 Notes: The Psychron is a focus for empathic energy. To use a Psychron, the shooter must make a difficult Domination roll, or a Formidable Willpower roll. Willpower drain has no effect on this roll. To fire the Psychron, the shooter makes a Project Thought roll, noting the overall total of the roll. There is no hit roll required. The target must then make a Willpower roll. Deduct this result from the roll of the shooter. If the number is positive, the target takes this much "damage". To find out the victim's "health", multiply their Willpower by their Empa-

Sonic Screamer Damage Table

Damage	Constitution Roll	Sound Emitted
0	Formidable	Ttoo low for humans - will be heard by some creatures though
1	Difficult	Low volume
2	Average	Medium volume
3	Easy	Loud scream
4	Easy (only a critical failure)	High-pitched whine almost too high for a human to hear

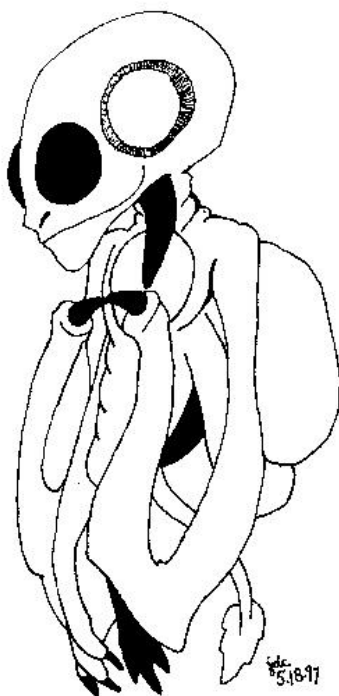
thy. This is not physical damage - the target will feel mental fatigue. Once their "Health" drops to 0 or below, they black out. The side effect of this weapon is that *any* empathic creature within visual range of the shooter (including the target, if applicable) will feel an empathic "spike" which could cause fear, aggression, or any other multitude of possibilities.

CREDITS & REFERENCES

All material presented here is the authors own work. Some information was obviously gained from various sources, and here they are:

The basic statistics and layout for the entries is a direct adaptation of the Dark Conspiracy 2nd Ed. layout.

The Nova .336 Citigun, GE/Colt Minigat, Remington Motion Restraint Canister, the Hyperpenetration Round, and the concept behind the M184a Thunderbolt were adapted from the Cyberpunk Sourcebooks, which are a trademark of R.Talsorian games, and of which I am an avid fan. ❖



Land Rover 110 Defender

This is the latest, and probably the last variant of the world famous Land Rover. Millions of these rugged 4x4 have been sold since it was first produced in 1948, but it was recently announced that the vehicle will go out of production by the end of 2002.

As transportation in Dark Conspiracy, it is hard to see what could be more useful. All models have excellent cross country mobility and a large capacity for either passengers or cargo, and in recent years they have become something of an urban status symbol too.

The details given here are for the long wheelbase County model, which has a top specification interior but is no less rugged than the other types. Any modification you can think of is probably available for the Land Rover, which is why they have always sold well to military forces. ❖



Price:	£23,600	Combat Statistics
Fuel Type:	Diesel	Config: Standard
Load:	900kg if no rear passengers	Suspension: W 3
Vehicle Weight:	2 tonnes	
Crew:	1 plus up to 9 passengers	<u>Armour Values</u>
Night Vision:	Headlights	HF 1
Cruise Speed:	90/25	HS 1
Combat Move:	95/35	HR 1
Fuel Capacity:	75	
Fuel Consumption:	6	

"This is a really nice piece of kit. They'll go just about anywhere, and they're as close to be indestructible as you can get. Why choose anything else?"

Aaron Spengler
Game Keeper on Lord Chelmsford's Estate



Many of these weapons are real, and were designed to be used in a non-lethal capacity, such as crowd or prison inmate control. Others are potential developments from current technologies or simply fabricated from pure fantasy. There is a lot of potential in the following list. Whether your players are looking for a way to capture an Igor, or you're looking for a way to ruin their day without necessarily killing them, there is an appropriate toy listed here... Use them as you see fit.

Non-Lethal Weaponry

by Chris Carpenter

Sting Ball

A sting ball is a grenade, about the size of a small orange, normally colored black or grey. It is fired from a special launcher, which is larger than a regular grenade launcher in diameter



A sting ball is fired into a crowd (range 30) where it explodes, spraying small rubber balls in a 12-meter burst.

Anyone caught in the primary or secondary burst takes 1 point of damage. All make a difficult roll against their CON. Those failing lose all remaining actions for that combat turn. 2 out of 3 NPCs armed solely with melee weapons who fail will willingly surrender or flee. Any sort of armor or adequate shielding negates all effects.

Cost: \$550 (-/c) launcher
\$20 (-/c) per grenade, sold in cases of 10

Foam Grenade Mark I

The foam grenade mark I is a grey cylinder with one green stripe, about the size and shape of a 12oz soda can, with a thick pull ring on one end.

The grenade is thrown (or dropped) after the ring is pulled, and it usually has

a 3-5 second delay. The grenade emits enough water-based foam (the consistency of shaving cream) to fill a 5x5x5 meter area.

The foam degrades naturally within 30 minutes, or can be washed away with water. Tasks performed in the foam are one level more difficult, where appropriate, especially movement.

Cost: \$5 (r/c)

Foam Grenade Mark II

The foam grenade mark II is a grey cylinder with two blue stripes. It is about 20 cm long, the same diameter as 12 oz soda can, and has thick pull ring on one end.

The grenade is thrown (or dropped) after the ring is pulled, and it usually has a 3-5 second delay.

The grenade emits enough foam to fill a 5x5x5 meter area. The foam expands and dries quickly, to the same texture as packing peanuts. It is not water-based, but petroleum-based solvents make short work of it, (leaving a sticky, flammable mess.) It can also be carved away with a sword or knife, but this process is slow, especially in tight quarters like air vents.

Anyone trapped in the blast can generally pull themselves free with little dif-



ficulty from the dried foam. The foam has an armor value of 1 for projectile and fragmentation weapons.

Cost: \$15 (-/s)

Foam Grenade Mark III

The foam grenade mark II is a grey cylinder with three red stripes. It is about 20 cm long, the same diameter as 12 oz soda can, and has thick pull ring on one end.

The grenade is thrown (or dropped) after the ring is pulled, and it usually has a 3-5 second delay.

The grenade emits enough foam to fill a 5x5x5 meter area. This foam is designed to stop people, it is extraordinarily sticky and viscous, and looks like cookie dough (but smells like rubber cement.) Nothing but rigorous scrubbing and peeling will remove this from a person or equipment, but baby oil is said to speed the process.

Characters trapped in the goo (by accident or design) will spend 15 + 1d10 minutes removing themselves from it. Characters who fall down into the goo, sticking 3 or all 4 limbs are trapped, and require outside assistance. Actions are one level more difficult while "stuck," 2 if prone (if the action is even possible...)

The foam has an armor value of 1 for projectile and fragmentation weapons. Cost: \$35 (-/r) ❖



The Haunters are a special type of Empathic Igors. They are one of the primary sources of legends about demons and imps tormenting people, and they've been doing it from the dawn of history. A Haunter is a disturbed individual who gains pleasure by inflicting indirect misery and suffering upon a chosen victim. Haunters work alone.

Haunters

by Eyal Faingersh

Haunters ruin people's lives. A Haunter who is seeking a victim will begin by randomly probing the minds of people in a crowd, searching for someone who appears to have very little natural defense to this contact. They choose a victim who is vulnerable to their empathic powers, and then follow them around to learn more about their life and personality.

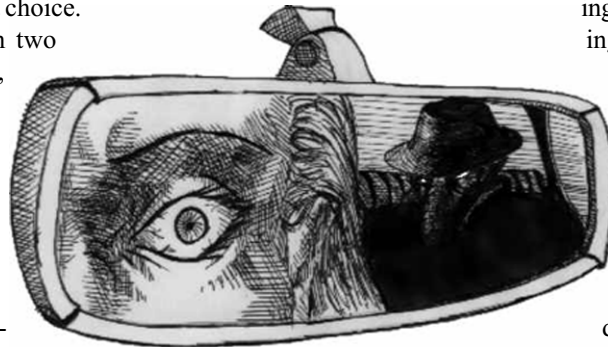
The next move of a Haunter, after he chooses a victim, is to orchestrate a life-and-death situation, with the victim cast in the role of a crucial decision-maker. The victim has to make a choice. The choice should be between two negative results (for example, whose life should be saved, and who should be left to die).

The Haunter will then take actions to make the victim feel that they made the wrong decision. For instance, the victim chooses to save one person over another, and the person he saves, dies hours or even days later. The irony of the death is the key - choosing a single person to pull from a burning car, only to have the person apparently die of a brain aneurysm the next day - something that would have happened even if the original accident never occurred. The consequences of the victim's choices should be felt to their fullest.

Next, the Haunter starts to torment the victim's mind, causing an internal conflict that will eventually drive the victim insane. This is done by projecting thoughts and dreams that recreate the horrific event, by projecting images of the dead people the victim failed to save, by chanting their names over and over, or by appearing to the victim in the form of the dead, or even as a demon sent to torment the poor victim.

The victim life should, at that stage, be all but ruined. He can't live his life normally, consumed by guilt over the choice he has made and its consequences. His whole time is spent wondering how the outcome may have changed if he had acted differently.

To enhance the Victim's internal conflict, the Haunter might initiate another disaster - another opportunity for the Victim to choose, even atone for his former failure. It is obvious, though, that once again the worst occurs, and the torment will go on and on.



By this time, the victim is so caught up in doubts and self-loathing that they may well turn to alcohol or drugs to help him to forget, even for a moment. At this point, the Haunter may actually approach the victim, offering to strike a bargain with the victim. In return for certain favors, the Haunter may agree to leave the Victim alone for a short while.

The grand finale of the Haunting should take place when the victim breaks down. They may choose to suicide or may simply go insane. By this point, the victim is so driven by the horrific images they are forced to see that they become very easy to manipulate. The Haunter can persuade the victim to commit a terrible crime, by making him "hear" voices. As long as the path of crime is less painful than the alternative, the victim will gladly

accept the instructions.

The Haunter's one weakness is that he must remain near the victim to maintain the empathic link and monitor his Victim's activities. Thus, an empath can easily sense the empathic activities and the misery radiating from the victim if he gets close enough. Non-empaths who try to help the Victim can get suspicious of the stranger that keeps hanging around the victim. (Is the person actually a 'friend' of the victim?)

Some haunters have been known to pose as therapists and psychologists, casting themselves in a role of allegedly helping the victim, but in reality, only adding to their torment. The Haunters must concentrate in order to affect their victim. It is at this moment, they are the most vulnerable. Thus, keeping a low profile is crucial to the success of their attack.

Haunters may believe that they work completely alone, and indeed, most do. But there are a few who are actually manipulated by Dark lords. To improve their usefulness, a Dark Lord might enhance the Haunter's abilities, allowing their already dangerous ability, to become even more destructive. One enhancement might be enabling the Haunter to receive sustenance - to actually feed on fear. Such individuals need no food, drink or sleep; they only need a victim to feed from.

Few Minion Races can compete with the "creativity" of the Haunter. Because they begin as human, it is believed that the emotional energy produced by a Haunter is much more devastating on the victims. For this reason, some Haunters are under the protection of minions of a dark lord who want to keep this Human pet alive and kicking.

Stats: As per appropriate NPC
#Appearing: 1 ❖



The Mapinguari

by Lee Williams

DARK RACES

The Mapinguari (pronounced MA-pin-guarEE) features in the folklore of the Amazonian Basin. This huge area of tropical rainforest and swamplands is the home of this legendary beast, said to be a humanoid form that walks on all fours.

According to eye-witness accounts, Mapinguari are roughly the size of a large human and are covered with long matted red fur. They can run almost as fast as humans on the ground, but are also capable of climbing and hiding in the lower branches of trees.

The two main features of this creature are its cry, which is said to sound like the screams of dead and dying human souls, and its extraordinary stench. The creature's cries can strike terror into the hearts of those who hear them, whilst the smell of the Mapinguari is strong enough to disorient both animals and humans, and in extreme cases may cause unconsciousness. It is not known whether this is a natural capability or the result of genetic tampering at some time in the past.

Although the Mapinguari appears to rely on these abilities for defence, it has been known to strike out with its front limbs when threatened. However it does not appear to be carnivorous, seeming to prefer a vegetarian diet. This has led sci-

entists to speculate that Mapinguari may be a mutated species of the giant Ground Sloth, which roamed all over both American continents in prehistoric times and became extinct before the last ice age. Other evidence to support this claim includes mysterious footprints indicating a creature weighing in at around 350 kilos, the same size as the Ground Sloth. This is only guesswork on the scientists' part though.

Whichever way you look at it, you wouldn't want to make one of these annoyed.

MAPINGUARI

Strength:	10
Agility:	4
Constitution:	16
Initiative:	4
# Appear:	1
Attack:	50%
Skill/Dam:	2/3D6
Move:	5/10/25
Hits:	40/80

Special

Cry – when the cry of the Mapinguari is heard for the first time, the character must make a Fear check at Impossible level. If successful, actions may be carried out as normal. Every time the cry is heard thereafter the Fear check will be at Average level.

Stench – a character who is within a 10 metre radius of the Mapinguari must make a Constitution check at Formidable level or they will become disorientated and lose all actions for 1D6 combat rounds. A Catastrophic Failure will result in the character losing consciousness for 1D6 + 4 minutes. Gas masks may prevent this. ❖

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

With the expansion of DEMONGROUND's focus starting with issue 8, we thought it would be an idea to provide the web addresses for the new games that we have already been given permission to support. If you are not already familiar with these games, then we encourage you to take the time to have a read through them. Even if you have no intention of starting a new campaign with a new gaming system, you may well find something that you can use in your existing campaign.

Dynasty Presentations - Dark Conspiracy

<http://www.dynastypresentations.com/>
<http://www.dynastypresentations.com/consumerProductsDC.html>

Eden Studios

<http://www.edenstudios.net/>
Conspiracy X - <http://www.conspiracyx.com/>
All Flesh Must Be Eaten - <http://www.allflesh.com/>
Witchcraft - <http://www.edenstudios.net/witchcraft/index.html>

Wizards of the Coast - Dark•Matter

<http://www.wizards.com>
<http://www.wizards.com/Alternity/Welcome.asp>
<http://www.wizards.com/darkmatter/welcome.asp>

Pagan Publishing - Delta Green

<http://www.tccorp.com/pagan/index.html>
<http://www.delta-green.com/>



The Natives (as they call themselves), are the true natives of the planet Earth. The human race is the race of aliens, although human history would state otherwise.

The Natives

by Ryan Rank

A Brief History

The Natives let the Humans live on Earth in peace. But some time in the 1100's, the Humans attacked. The Humans attacked out of fear - fear of something different. By that time, Human "scholars" had determined that they were the true natives of Earth.

The Human attack was successful largely because of the technology in weaponry available to them (see: Native Physiology). The Humans used mostly swords, spears, bows & arrows, etc. Because of the non-heat premise of the weapons, and the lack of preparedness of the Natives, the attack was almost a total victory. Almost all of the Natives were killed.

Almost.

The night after the attack, the few survivors of the Natives got together. The eldest of the Natives took charge of the meeting. They set three major agendas that night. The first one was to construct a Labyrinth. They would live in that labyrinth in secrecy for the rest of their existence, or until the end of the Humans' existence. They would construct this labyrinth from their dead. This way they would never forget about the slaughter. The second agenda was to bury this Labyrinth...this newly constructed Labyrinth. They must bury it, argued the Elder, so the Humans would not discover them.

And the third objective was simple. Revenge. They could not do a direct attack, however. They would never have the numbers to survive, much less win. What they would do is construct what would later be known as the Wicked One. This Wicked One would be made up of both Natives and Humans.

The Wicked One would have the ability to change time, and the space around him. "How?" asked many of the survivors. The elder had a response. They would kidnap and kill the wizards of the

Human Race, and use their minds to create the abilities of this being.

And so the prophecy was written. Now all that is needed is time, patience, and perseverance.

The Natives in the Modern Day

The modern day Natives have not forgotten about the Massacre that fateful night in the 1100's. They live in what they now call the Labyrinth of the dead. And if that was not enough of a reminder of why they are taking this revenge, the Humans built a city right on top of the buried Labyrinth. Now the Natives need to deal with the Human's pollution, as well. The motivation for revenge is there now more than ever before.

What they have been doing throughout history to build the Wicked One changed with the times. At first they secretly went in and kidnapped those with the powers of the mind and killed them. They then stripped the empathic brain tissue out of the dead body. They store it in containers deep within the heart of Labyrinth.

That was fairly successful at that time. But that period of Human history was soon to come to an end. The fact that most of the wizards of the time were fake had negative affects on the results of the construction of the Wicked One.

After the medieval times, the construction of the Wicked One was all but curbed. All that the Natives were able to work on with the Wicked One was its body. They took parts of the Human bodies that were buried in cemeteries on top of the Labyrinth and used them as some of the body of the Wicked One. They also took some of the bodies of the Native dead to construct it. But the most important part of the Wicked One had not yet been constructed.

Then the Dark Ones came. The Natives saw this as an opportunity to expand on the power of the Wicked One. They stopped using the direct approach of kidnapping the Empaths of the Human Race. They started an Empathic Underground in their area. Those empathes disappear one by one. They are considered casualties of the war with the Dark Ones. Oh, what those empathes don't know....

One other very important note about the Natives in the modern times is that they do not have the technology that the Humans have. They are still in the Medieval times using daggers, swords, etc. The reason for this is that they don't feel that a gun would be useful...they cannot be affected by a gunshot (see: Native Physiology), so it is a useless weapon.

Native Physiology

The Native body is a wonder. It cannot be affected by heat. The body bends around the heat, creating a hole in the body so that the hot object is not touching the body at all. This is a completely unconscious act on the part of the Natives, so dodging a gunshot (bullets are hot) is a non-issue. They are, however, just as vulnerable to non heated attacks as the Humans are. They can be cut just like anyone else. They can be shot with a bow and arrow just as anyone else can be.

The average natural life span for a Native is approximately 150 years. But since the Human attack, that number has dropped dramatically. Because some of them go out for food or reproductive materials (see below), they get killed by the wildlife in the area, as they are VERY careful to avoid Human eyes.

Reproduction for the Natives is actually quite unusual for most types of life. The natives actually manufacture their offspring from various, rare, minerals in the ground. The question arises why don't



they create enough of themselves to overtake the humans. The answer is this: they can't get enough minerals to. They need to go outside the labyrinth to get the minerals to create their offspring. The size of a newly created Native offspring is actually about the size of the Human infant. They eventually grow (it takes about 20 years to grow into a full adult) to about 6'0" in height. The size, strength, weight, and many other attributes about them are very Human like.

Despite the way of reproduction of the Natives, they are not asexual. There are males and females in the race. There needs to be one of each sex present to create an offspring. Typically, these two parents are very close. After the child is created, the parents need to do a series of dances and mating rituals in order for the child to come to life.

By far the strangest part of the Native body is that after it dies, it still avoids heat. Hence, some of the strange properties about the Labyrinth...

The Labyrinth of the Dead

With the entire Native race working on the labyrinth in the 1100's, it only took about 2 weeks to fuse the bodies together. Surprisingly, though, they did not create tunnels in this Labyrinth. All they did was to fuse all the bodies together. The elder and some of this closest aides did a se-

ries of rituals to create the tunnels in the Labyrinth. But these tunnels have a special property. They shift at the will of the Elder. The Elder always knows when there is an unwelcome visitor.

Because they are constructed of the dead Natives, the walls avoid heat. If someone shot a bullet through the wall, the wall will open up and the person will be able to see for a distance of about 15 feet before the wall on their end will close. They also radiate cold. The outer part of the labyrinth is a temperature of about 35 degrees Fahrenheit and it gets colder as they get closer to the center of the Labyrinth.

There is one other very strange property of the walls of the Labyrinth. People can pass through them. They leave no holes where they pass through. They also cannot pass through at anything faster than a walk, Human and Native alike. The reason for this is because of the ritual that the Elder performed back in the 1100's. Those kinds of small shifts, the Elder cannot control. But the ones that do have to pass through have to be able to hold their breath long enough under strenuous conditions to get through to the other side or they will die, similar to drowning.

The Labyrinth of the Dead has protected the Natives for the past 1000 years. If the plans of the Natives go through, it will not have to protect them any longer.

The Wicked One

The Wicked One is extremely powerful. He has the ability to change time as he sees fit. But he does have to keep some things limited. For example, he cannot go back and eliminate the Human race coming to earth, for he does not know what it will bring. He has to play it safe when it come to changing time. He usually only changes recent events...virtually never beyond a week in time.

His second awesome power is that of changing space around him. It only works up to 5 feet away from him, but it is still a powerful weapon. He can bend the paths of bullets, bend a sword so that it will not hit him; it's virtually impossible to hit him if he's expecting it.

But he is not without flaw. He can be surprised. He can be snuck up on just like anybody else. But it has to be a one hit kill in order to defeat him. If he survives the first hit, he will go back in time and make sure that he was not surprised. No one is expected to survive a head-to-head encounter with the Wicked One.

His physiology is unique among the Natives. He has the body of a Native, and the brain of a Human. Also, he did not grow. He is about six feet tall, just like the rest of the Natives, but he was constructed like that. Since he was constructed from so many different Native bodies, he is very easy to identify. He is the Frankenstein of the Natives. Only the Natives want the Wicked One. ❖

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Because DEMONGROUND is a fanzine, it's important for us to know what you, the fan, actually think of what we're doing. None of us get paid for doing this, so the only reward we get is knowing that people have read and enjoyed all the work that has gone into creating every issue.

We're interesting in hearing your opinions on what we doing. If you have any thoughts on the format of the magazine, or if you just want to offer encouragement or suggestions on what you would like to see covered in future issues of DEMONGROUND, then we want to hear from you. It's your encouragement that keep us (the editors, writers and artists) coming back issue after issue.

Please drop us a line at demonground@demonground.org with your comments. If you would like us to pass any comments onto a specific author or artist, then let us know and we will forward your comments on. If we particularly like your letters, we might even publish them in a future issue of DEMONGROUND.



Becky was awakened to the dim pre-dawn glow by the sound of someone pounding on her front door. At first Becky thought it was just part of her dream (for surely, no one would be after the Harris' at this time of the morning), but the insistent knocking had at last dragged her from her rest.

She rolled over in the bed stretching her arm out to wake Colin. But instead, she felt only the soft sheets and cool, empty pillow. Her eyes opened with a start, and she sat bolt upright in bed, trying to find a trace of her husband, somewhere in the gloomy twilight.

It was then she remembered; there was no Colin in the house, not for over a week now. He had been involved in a serious accident and then had somehow disappeared from the hospital. No one knew where he had gone, least of all, the police who had given up as soon as the investigation had become too convoluted and confusing.

The knocking on the door started again, startling her back to reality. Whoever was downstairs wanted to get in... badly. Torn between the urge to ring for the police or find out it was, she slid out of bed, flicking on the lamp as she did so. The light, piercing and bright, helped her focus her thoughts.

Who the Hell could that be? Whoever it is, is damn inconsiderate! Even as her anger began to form, it faded in light of another thought. What if was the police with information about Colin? or even Colin himself!

"Becky... Becky... Becky" she whispered to herself, hands rubbing the sleep from her eyes, "You're going mad, girl..."

Either way, she wasn't going to solve the mystery from here in bed. She stood and pulled on her dressing gown, then made her way downstairs.

* * *

Whoever was pounding on the door, wasn't about to give up until someone answered. As Becky approached the door, she paused for a moment, contemplating whether she should just ring the

police. But as the hammering came again she realized that whoever it was would have battered the door down by the time any help had arrived.

"Who is it?" She asked timidly.

There was a second of silence and then a deep, husky voice replied, "Mrs. Harris? ... Mrs. Harris please open the door. It's important... I need to know..." the voice trailed off.

Becky took another step closer to the door. The voice did seem somewhat familiar, but she could not quite place it.

"Who are you? What do you want? I'm armed you know!" She called to the person outside, as her eyes frantically searched the foyer for some sort of weapon to defend herself with.

"Rebecca... it's me Hector Tanscon, the private detective... you hired me yesterday".

Of course, now she recognized the voice, the short P.I. that had offered to find Colin. But what was he doing here at this time of the morning? Surely it could have waited a few more hours.

"Please Rebecca... for the love of God, let me in... we need to talk... please."

He was pleading with her now, his voice cracked and stressful. He slapped the door once more and called out again. "Someone got my partner, like the others ... got them all ... I'm next Goddamn it ... next ..."

Becky reached forward, and began opening the locks on the front door. Then, waited one second longer before opening the door for the detective.

As it opened, Hector fell forward, collapsing into Becky. Unable to hold up the thickset man, she fell backwards, the P.I. landing on top of her. The two of them sprawled on the ground, knocking aside the coat stand at the door.

It took a moment for Becky to re-

To The Circle That Binds It All

Missed Part 3

by Marcus D. Bine

gain her composure, pulling herself from beneath Hector, then kicking out and rolling him away. Hector just groaned and looked up at her with a pitiful look in his eyes.

"What have you done?" He asked pathetically. "What have you done to my friend?"

Becky just stared back at him not comprehending what he was babbling about. What friend? What had happened?

Hector continued his lament. "You did this to me... what have you gotten into? What the hell is happening here?"

Becky wished she knew what was going on. This man, who yesterday had come to her with promises of assistance, now lay on the floor of her hallway, crying like a child and accusing her of some conspiracy.

She regained her feet and looked down of this wretch of a man. It saddened her to think a man could become such a mess in such a short span of time. She leaned down and took Hector by the shoulder, assisting him to his feet.

"It's okay, now... it will be fine," she said trying to smile.

He allowed her to help him up and lead him towards the kitchen.

"No," he said quietly, having regained some composure, "Nothing will ever be all right, again".

* * *

Colin was stunned.

Everything had happened so fast. From the car accident until now, even though more than a week had passed, it felt like no time had past at all.

Now a perfect stranger stood before him, saying something about him being the key to it all. The missing link that fin-



ished a chain of events that he knew nothing about.

Miles, the man in question, now stood in front of him grasping his shoulder tightly.

“Colin,” he said staring into Colin’s eyes, as if searching for something hidden within, “I have a lot to tell you and little time in which to do it...”

Colin nodded, he was still feeling nauseous, but was feeling better by the minute.

“Come and sit down. Here on the bed will be fine.”

Colin sat himself down on the edge of the bed, as the three other occupants of the room shuffled around to make room for him.

“Now Colin, can you tell me where you were the night of 16th January 2005?” Miles sounded like a detective. Colin smiled at the thought.

“Hell, that was ten years ago, I can barely remember yesterday!” he replied.

“No matter,” stated Miles seriously, “I can tell you exactly where you were and at what time you were there.”

Colin shrugged his shoulders. “Please enlighten me.” He was in no mood for mind games, and the quicker he found out why he was here, the better.

“On that night Colin,” began Miles, “you had left a party... alone in North Sundale, Illinois.”

Sundale... that rang a bell somewhere in the back of his mind, but at the moment his memory was like mush, images intermixed where they could not have possibly been. Then after a brief second it came to him.

Colin smiled remembering his past. Ten years ago, he was young and had a habit of frequenting some of the hippest parties and clubs around. He had a reputation as quite a wild man back then; before he had met Becky of course. Although he couldn’t remember that exact night, he certain remembered some of the manic night up at North Sundale.

Miles continued speaking, unaware that Colin was lost in his own past.

“Colin, a lot has changed in the world. What we once thought of as sim-

ple truth, is now regarded as a fiction. And what we once thought as fiction now passes for reality. Colin, we are not alone, and you are living proof of that.”

That last statement broke Colin’s reverie. He looked up at Miles incredulously. “What do you mean I’m living proof. Proof of what? The only thing I can see any *proof* of, is that kidnapping is still prevalent in today’s society.”

Miles stared back at him, shaking his head like a parent addressing a child who knows not what they did wrong.

“Listen Colin. There are many things I don’t understand in this world; like why the earth rotates around the Sun. Sure I believe it, but don’t ask me why it is so. I just don’t question certain things. Colin, this is one thing you’re just going to have to believe. Perhaps if I tell you of that night. On the bridge...”

* * *

The story Miles told Colin was almost impossible to believe. The 25 mile drive home that night from North Sundale would have been like many others. Obviously, something must have been wrong if Colin had left a party as early as 1:00am! He remembered the route clearly as Miles recalled the events. Down I 78, through the Gully Pass intersection and then onto the bridge over Watts Creek.

It was there that it happened, not that Colin had any recollection of anything actually occurring on that bridge. Yet as the details were revealed something rang true in the back of Colin mind.

The bridge was busy that night. Colin’s car was followed closely behind by two University professors, coming home late from a board meeting. On the other side of the bridge, heading back the way Colin had just come, were two more vehicles, one a family; the Newports, travelling to a new city and a new life, the other an off duty patrolman heading home after a long shift.

One moment they all drove in darkness, only their headlamps lighting the way, the next moment, the bridge was bathed in light, blinding the drivers and

occupants.

Colin must have skidded to a stop, as did all the other cars on the bridge. Only the Newports failed to adjust, and with a squeal of brakes slammed into one of the bridges arches. Stunned by the light, and the hum of something above them, the occupants of the bridge, strained to see the source.

The patrolman was the first out of the car, running to see if the Newports were all right. Colin on the other hand opened the car door and looked up to see the shape in the sky above. Glancing behind he noticed the two professors had done the same.

The source of the light was an immense disk that floated just above the bridge, emitting a low hum that seemed to rattle his brain. The patrolman also looked up for the first time as he reached the Newport’s damaged car, and instantly he too was mesmerized by the light and sound.

Miles told the story as if he had been there and watched as the disk slowly descended onto the bridge. As it descended, the light grew more and more intense until it had swallowed each of them up.

Colin shook his head violently to dismiss the memory. Yes, he had been there, terrified by what the saucer represented, every nightmare and horror story was coming true that night on the bridge.

“But how do you know this happened?” He asked wiping a tear from his eye. “Where you there? Did you see what I saw?”

Miles answered slowly taking his time. “No Colin. I was not. But *he* was.”

Miles raised a hand, pointing a finger at Dr Curtis.

* * *

It had taken quite a while for Becky to calm Hector down. He had been quite hysterical for a while there, almost dropping the cup of steaming coffee she had offered him. After the second cup, and a shot of brandy, he seemed better.

She asked him to explain what was wrong, and why in Earth’s name had he come banging on her door at this hour of

the morning. He looked at her blankly for a moment, as if trying to piece together what had happened, and then she could see that it all came flooding back to him. His hand shook, threatening to empty the contents of his mug all over himself and Becky's couch.

Hector shook his head and stared straight through her as if she didn't exist. Then he began to tell her what had happened in the last few hours.

By the time he finished, Becky didn't know whether to believe him or call the cops. Surely, his tale couldn't be true - and more to the point, it couldn't involve Colin. Could it? Why would anyone want to lop off Hector's partner's hand over something Colin had, or knew? Colin was just a midlevel executive for a company of tens of thousands. What could he possibly know that anyone else didn't?

All these questions flashed through her mind. But somehow she knew it must be true. She could think of no other reason Colin wouldn't have called. But if someone was after Colin, what could it be for?

"So now you know." Hector was speaking to her. "I thought you'd know why... why Jimmy had to die?"

She could see that he was about to break down again "He was a good kid, never hurt anyone..."

"I know that." She said trying to calm him down. Somehow she had to change the subject. "Have you rung the police, maybe they can help?"

Hector laughed. "The police? The police can't help, they'll just take some pictures and get a statement, then 'file' it."

"Becky," he continued, "did they do anything for you? These days the only thing the police are good for are leads for underhanded con men like me!"

She looked at him, her eyes opening wider in realization.

"Don't look so surprised. You think I do this for fun did you?"

"But surely... I wouldn't have..." Her voice trailed off. She knew yesterday that he had duped her. It was all just some sort of scam for money.

She should have been angry - really angry with him - with herself. But somehow she couldn't. He was here now, wasn't he? Obviously, something had driven him to come to her... he couldn't be all bad.

"Anyway. Now that I know you had nothing to do with this, Becky. I'm going to do something about it." The look in his eyes had changed, from bleary and red they now grew as hard as steel.

"I'm going to find the men that killed that poor boy and teach them a lesson they'll never forget."

"But they'll kill you, Hector! These are obviously real killers you're dealing with".

"What do you care? And who knows? I might find your husband along the way!"

"I care enough to not want to see you end up dead. You may be a complete bastard, but you seem nice enough on the inside."

Just then Hector's Cell phone rang, both of them jumped at the sound that rung out in the growing light of dawn.

Hector reached into his top pocket of his coat, which lay across the chair next to him. Lifting the phone to his ear, he looked at Becky. *If only you knew*, he thought, *if only you knew*.

* * *

"That's right, Colin. I was there that night on the bridge."

Dr Curtis looked at Colin, trying to decipher some reaction from him. Finally Colin seemed to understand.

"You were there that night. But surely that was all a dream I once had?"

As he realized that he was now entering a world much deeper and darker than any he had ever suspected, Colin's eyes began to dart around, looking for some sort of exit. The Doctor noticed this and moved to calm him down.

"Relax, Colin. You're safe with us, here."

As if that sentence was some sort of omen, an explosion rocked the ship, making the room sway as it reverberated through the hull.

"What the Hell..." Miles was cut off by another explosion, much smaller this time. Colin felt as if he was going to be sick again. Around him only Suva, the large Fijian seemed to be reacting at all, the others were too stunned to even try and regain their feet.

Suva threw open the door to the cabin peering out into the much dark corridor.

"Looks like we got company, Man" he yelled with a deep accent.

Miles seemed to recover quicker than the rest, and moving to Suva's shoulder yelled at the rest of the men in the room.

"Come on, move your arses!"

That spurred them into action. Curtis grabbing Colin as he tried to stand. Kerry, the youth that had been sitting in the corner, leapt up and retrieved something large and black from beneath his chair.

"Come on guys," Miles yelled, "If this is who we think it is, we ain't got time to dally."

All at the door now, Miles pushed the Doctor and Colin ahead of him down the corridor. Kerry followed closely with Suva taking up the rear of the strange line.

"What's happening?" Colin gasped as he ran down the corridor close behind the Doctor. If anyone heard him they weren't answering.

The corridor itself was narrow - barely large enough for two men to walk side by side, so running down the passage wasn't easy. Colin banged his elbows, shins and knees on the metal frames of the ship as he continued to follow Curtis' lead. At one point, he would have tripped and fallen flat on his face if someone, Miles presumably, hadn't grabbed him. He barely had time to say thanks before he was again running to catch the Doctor.

Ahead of him, Curtis dashed through a side door, beckoning Colin to follow. The room he entered was obviously some sort of dining area; a large table surrounded by half a dozen chairs. Behind him the rest of the rag-tag crew entered the room. The last of them, Suva,



glanced over his shoulder to see if they had been followed.

"Not yet!" He said to no one in particular.

Miles answered. "No, but soon." He looked at Colin "You must be really important for them to attack in broad daylight."

"Jeez, thanks." Colin answered sarcastically.

"Maybe we should give him to them?" The voice came from behind him, the kid Kerry.

"What?" Colin started, but Miles cut him off.

"He ain't going anywhere. Besides, we got two of them here." Miles pointed to both Colin and the Doctor. "We don't know what the hell would happen if these bastards got them both!"

Colin was getting angry. "Look, we aren't possessions you know!"

"I know," answered Miles, "but to them out there, you are a threat that they will stop at nothing to possess."

Colin looked back at him oddly "What does that mean?"

"Never mind. If we stay here like this, we're all dead!"

Miles pointed to the boy and the Doctor. "Look after him, he's the key. Give Suva and me a few minutes to distract them and then meet us at the Old Star. Oh, and be safe" He winked at Colin, and ducked out into the dark passageway with Suva close behind.

No sooner had they both vanished from sight than a audible slap was heard, as if someone, or something had clapped their hands.

Colin turn and asked Curtis what the hell was happening and who was after him. Well, he would have if any sound would've come out of his throat. There was a moment of shock, and he raised his fingers to his lips. Yes, they were still moving, it was just that no sound was coming out. He looked at the Doctor, who in turn seemed to be mouthing something back.

"... worry about it." All of a sudden he could hear the man talking to him.

"What?" he asked, again. This time, he could hear himself loud and clear.

Curtis motion for him to keep his voice down and the whispered to him. "I said, don't worry about it. Miles can do that."

"Do what?" He asked quieter this time.

"It's hard to explain". The Doctor answered.

Kerry Graham came closer to them. "Miles is a Sorcerer." He said matter-of-factly.

Colin almost burst out laughing. "What, like Merlin or David Copperfield?"

It was Curtis who answered. "Not at all. You see, Miles has the ability of open a window to other worlds".

Colin just nodded dumbly. Compared to some of the other things he had witnessed this day, this all made perfect sense.

"What you've just seen is Miles allowing a bit of another dimension into our own. A world where there is nothing but silence."

"Okay... now comes the silly question. Why?"

"The weapons these creatures use are based on sound," replied Curtis matter-of-factly. "The silence extends only so far, that's why we can speak now, and can no longer hear any of the fighting that must surely be taking place."

Colin thought for a second. This is getting weirder and weirder. He was afraid to ask what the "creatures" were that Curtis had mentioned.

There was a pregnant pause as Colin wondering where the conversation would go next. Both Kerry and the Doctor were listening for any sign of what was happening outside their room.

Colin looked around, and noticing a large window, realized that he still didn't know where he was. Outside were a lot of boats; most of which were larger than pleasure craft but smaller than container ships. The majority of these vessels where docked at various points outside. While the exact location didn't spring to mind, it was obvious that he was in some sort of harbor, his harbor if he was not mistaken. *Ah, he thought, at least I'm still on earth... I hope!*

"Time to go." It was the Doctor.

Colin shrugged his shoulders. "Why not?"

Kerry led the way, looking careful through the doorway before proceeding. Colin followed, then the Doctor. Colin himself was soon lost; each corridor looking the same to him. He was thankful that Kerry knew his way about.

At last they seemed to be getting somewhere and ahead of him the youth took a sharp right. Seconds later, Colin also turned the corner... but the boy wasn't there. He couldn't have just disappeared. The air here was hot and smelly, a breeze seemed to be at his neck.

"Behind y..." there was a cry from behind him.

Colin turned to see... nothing but stars and light. The crack of his skull sounded distant. He felt is knees give way and his body drop to the ground.

* * *

Hector listened to the receiver, half expecting to hear the harsh rasping voice that had told him his friend and partner was about to die because of him.

"Hector? Is that you?" It was a man's voice.

He exhaled, realizing only now that he had been holding his breath.

"Yeah," he answered hoping to sound to relieved.

"Sergeant Gonzales, down at the precinct. You said that if I heard anything about the Harris case that I should get in touch..." The man paused for a second "Sorry to disturb you at this hour of the morning but you said it'd be worth my while."

"Yep... it will." Especially if I catch those bastards, he thought. "I was awake anyway, what have you got?"

"Well, you remember that Harris was in a car crash a week or so ago? It seems the guy that hit him was already dead!"

"What?"

"You heard me. Already dead. Now I don't know about you but that gives me the creeps. He can't have been dead already... could he?" He sounded



as if he thought Hector knew more than he was letting on.

"I don't know Gonzales. You're telling the story".

"Yeah, I am. Anyway, the only lead we got on this stiff is that he used to live and work down at the old Blade Mill, some sort of on site security guard... you know the place, on the corner of West and Parish."

The copper wet his lips. "One of the new boys said maybe we should go check it out, but we ain't got enough men on the beat for the important stuff, let alone every Tom, Dick and John Doe that ends up on our doorstep. Not until the morning, anyhow." Hector got the man's drift. "Anyways, I just thought you may want to know that's all... every little bit helps."

Hector couldn't help but think that Gonzales had a double meaning in that statement. "You're going to get something really nice for your birthday for this one" Real nice if it went the way he wanted it to.

Hector flipped the cell phone up and disconnecting the call. He looked at Becky and smiled.

"Thanks for the coffee and for listening to an old drunkard get something off my chest, but I got to go, okay?"

"What?" Becky was astonished at the man's sudden change of heart; not a hour ago he was a mess, crying on her shoulder, and now she was meant to believe that he was fine?

"I better get going." He said slipping on his coat.

"Oh no, you're not! That call was about the killers, wasn't it?"

"Not at all." He said getting a little frantic not to arouse her interest.

"Yes it was. I can tell and that means it had something to do with Colin as well, didn't it?" Her eyes pierced his, like she was trying to read his mind.

"Goddamn it, Becky! Leave this one alone, okay? It's for the best"

"What's 'for the best' is if I can find Colin and bring him home to his family; the ones that love and care for him. I'm not letting you leave until you tell me what that phone call was about!"

Hector looked at her, and then real-

ized how serious she was. He shook his head and flopped back down on the couch.

"Alright Becky. You win. Yes, it was about Colin."

He quickly explained that they had identified the corpse of the man driving the other car, when Colin's original accident had occurred, leaving out that he was already dead by the time the crash took place. He also failed to mention that he had got the information on the sly and was paying good cash for it, instead saying that the police had asked if he would check it out, saving them some time.

Becky didn't seem to care why anyway. "Well I'm coming along too." She said suddenly.

"Over my dead body you are! It could be dangerous. This ain't going to be a Sunday walk in the park. There could be killers there!"

"Or Colin could be there." She replied. "Regardless I'm coming along."

"No..." But he didn't to finish.

"Look I'll stay in the car?" She offered.

"Oh hell, alright, but you *will* stay in the goddamned car. This ain't no two-bit fiction book here, lass. This is real life." What did he care anyway? once the shooting started she'd get out of the way.

"Give me a sec..." Becky said as she started up the stairs. "I'll meet you in the car"

Hector made his way outside. *What the hell have I got myself into?* he thought.

* * *

The images inside Colin's head swirled... memories of his childhood, his first love, the day his oldest girl was born.

Then it focused on that night. The saucer and the light, being taken up inside and on the table... the creature coming closer to him. The pain of the probe in his ear. Then he remembered the creature whispering to him and from somewhere inside his brain there came an answer. Not a voice, not his voice at all, but a sound like willows in the breeze...

Realization dawned on him. In his

dream, they hadn't examined him at all. No, they had put something inside him. And that something had talked back!

He felt his mind blur at the thought and suddenly shafts of red light pressed against his brain. It took him a moment to realize that he was looking at the inside of his eyelids, squeezed tight to keep out the light. With a willpower he never knew he possessed, he slowly opened his eyes to look at his surroundings

He looked around him, finding that he lacked any sort of movement and knowing instantly that he was somehow strapped down on a bench or table.

I'm getting too used to this, he thought through the pounding of his head. It felt as if the back of his skull had been caved in by some blunt object, he could image the size of the lump.

"Colin... Colin is that you?" There was a voice near to him. Turning his head with the greatest of efforts he saw Doctor Curtis in obviously the same position as he.

He was strapped down by the wrists and ankles and a larger third strap held down his abdomen. Near the top of the bench was some a sort of trap or snare, looking as though once in use, someone could move the captives head without them struggling. It looked also as if the Doctor hadn't been so lucky, his scalp was covered in dried blood and his spectacles lay damaged across the bridge of his nose.

"I'm alright," Curtis whispered, sounding anything but. He had obviously noticed the concerned look Colin had gave him.

"It looks as if Kerry faired worse I'm afraid." The doctor motioned with his head to the corner.

Colin followed the look to see the boy's body, lying broken and limp. He grimaced at the body, praying silently that he wouldn't end up the same way.

Looking back at Curtis, Colin shook his head at it all.

"They put something in my brain, didn't they?" He asked already knowing the answer.

"Yes they did Colin. That night on



the bridge they put something in all of our brains, all those that survived, that is.”

“What? The others died?”

“If they weren’t before, they are now, I fear. My colleague that night, Fraser, he may still be alive but they will soon find him as well. But yes, they are all dead. The Newports died that night, we guess, either in the crash, or soon after. Only their daughter survived and yet she took her own life years ago. And as for the Patrolman, Johnstone, well he was the one that alerted us to your presence.”

“How?” This was getting so weird that Colin was sure it must be a dream, or hoped it was one anyway. “More importantly Why? Tell me why this has happened?”

“Well, Colin. From what Miles and I have surmised we were abducted that night by a group of ‘Aliens’, for the lack of a better word. It seems that these aliens are, or were involved in a great war that spanned many dimensions.”

“Like the ones Miles can tap into?”

“Yes, places like that. From what we can understand, the aliens that abducted us were minions of a greater alien, it was this greater being that was losing the war against another of his kind. It seems that fearing for himself, or his race, he abducted a few insignificant humans to be used as vessels for his knowledge, or maybe even his soul...”

“And those vessels are us?” A chill shuddered down Colin’s spine.

“I believe so. Unfortunately for us, it looks as if the war was going worse for it than the being expected and so it possessed the closest minds it could -- ours. We each had a cap of information inserted in our brains. Although what it truly holds, I don’t know”

“I’ve got to ask how you know so much? Surely Cambridge doesn’t teach Alien Gods 101...”

“I broke my cap, somehow the information inside revealed to me much of that night and what the aliens had in store for Earth. Be thankful you’ll never know.”

“Oh I am. Trust me on that.”

“You don’t know how lucky you

are. The caps also link us somehow, I could sort of sense when something is wrong with a cap, or another capped victim is near. So far you are the only one that we were able to save. I’m sorry you’re here.”

“Oh man I really hope this is a dream.” This was all way too much for Colin. “So why are we here, you think this ‘Being’ wants its information back?”

“No unfortunately, we think that the aliens and their master have all been destroyed by their enemy. We believe that the creatures that have us now are servants of that Dark Lord and are now cleaning up the mess the aliens left behind. Nothing noble in it I’m afraid we are just the leftovers of a war we never knew existed.”

Colin was scared now. “So we are going to die because one powerful bastard hated another powerful bastard in a world we’ve never seen?”

“Looks that way.”

“Talk about depressing. You think that these creatures might just take the caps and let us go?”

As if on cue, the door to the chamber opened and three figures entered the room, each dressed head-to-toe in cloaks.

Curtis smiled at Colin. “Well, here’s your chance to ask them.”

* * *

The car pulled up outside the Blade Mill. From over here in the car park both Hector and Becky could see that something was going on inside. Every few seconds bright lights flashed, brightly illuminating the windows.

Hector reached into the back grabbing, from beneath the seat, a shotgun. Checking it was loaded, he opened the car door.

He glanced at Becky, who just smiled back.

“Remember. You’re to stay here no matter what, okay? If I’m not back in 20 minutes, ring the cops.” He flung her his cell phone. “Until then, hang tight, you’ll be safe here.”

“Of course I will.” She said, smiling

back weakly.

Hector slammed the door shut, and breathed deeply a few times. He slowly walked towards the large doors in the side to the building. At least it was getting closer to dawn, he thought, as the sun of a new day reached its lazy fingers over the land.

Back in the car, Becky began to think that coming along had been a bad idea. It was obvious that Hector had come to spill some blood and yet she had still insisted that she’d tag along.

“At least I’ve got this.” She whispered, reaching into his bag and withdrawing a small P framed pistol. Let them try to take her.

* * *

Whatever Hector had expected to find, it sure in hell wasn’t this.

He had pulled the doors open and peered into the darkness. All of a sudden, the bright light had flashed showing him as clear as day the scene inside the Mill.

The first thing he noticed was the three cloaked figures that huddled around one of two large tables. One of the figures had a large rod in his hand, which seemed to be the source of the light. This light intensified as the figure placed the end of the rod on the shape that lay on the table in front of it.

The sight was shocking. The shape on the table was, or had been a man. Now all that remained was the shell of one. The corpse’s eyes bulged from its sockets, and its hair stood on end. What these people were doing was worse than criminal.

On the second table something moved, there was obviously another person strapped down on it.

“For Christ’s sake help me!” the voice, that of a man, pleaded.

Hector was pissed, what sort of screwed up hit men were these guys?

“Right. Nobody move... hands up and I don’t start blasting!” he yelled at the three figures.

But they didn’t seem to want to listen. Scattering to the left and right, the

figures turned to attack Hector.

"Damn." He whispered under his breath, and pulled the trigger of the shotgun. He allowed himself a wry smile as the central figure crumpled to the ground as the buckshot hit. The rod from its hands flew across the room.

Looking up from his target he realized in his haste that the other two figures had disappeared. Scanning around he could find no sign of them.

Hector took a few nervous steps forward, and then a few more. Not being able to see any other threats, he advanced to ensure that crumpled figure on the ground was truly down.

As he got closer the man on the table started to cry out. Hector tried to hush him, raising a finger to his lips. But to no avail. He looked at the man worried that he would give away his position. And there was a look of terror in his eyes.

"NOOOOOOOO!" The man on the table screamed.

Hector knew he was done for, somehow one of the other hit men had got behind him. Even as he turned he knew it was futile.

* * *

Becky heard the scream and gasped. Hector was gone.

Then it dawned on her. That wasn't Hector's voice. It was Colins!

* * *

Perhaps it was the look of horror on Hector's face that stopped the creature from killing him outright.

For a creature it was. Having pushed back the coat from around its face, it exposed what could only be described as a horribly disfigured man. Its face was black, as if it had been burnt, and small tusks grew out of his cheeks. The creature looked at Hector and sneered. Its teeth were sharp and milky white.

Advancing on him slowly it reached into its pocket retrieving a small box, no bigger than a mouse. Hector backed way, passing by the man on the table.

"Run for it man why you still have a chance," he said.

The creature, upon hearing the man on the table speak, looked down at him

snarling like a wild animal.

Behind it two ear-splitting reports sounded, and Hector felt a breeze rush past his throat. A split second later, the creature shuddered as something hit it from behind. Feeling the pain, it turned to face the new threat.

That was all the invitation Hector needed. Raising the shotgun to eye level, he pulling the trigger, emptying the second barrel into the back of the creature. Even as the full blast of the buckshot crushed it's spine, it still stood for a second longer, before crashing to the ground.

Looking up from the corpse, he saw Becky in the doorway, a small pistol in hand, shaking as if wet from a winter rain-storm.

"Easy," he said. "There's still another one on these... things in here."

"Not anymore." Came a voice from beside Becky.

"Miles..." said the man strapped on the table.

Hector shook his head. Looking down on the man he said. "And by the looks of it you are... Colin Harris if I'm not mistaken."

And Colin just smiled. ❖

"I'm stunned sometimes by the ignorance of some people. They think that because they get a hint of *deja vu* every now and again that they are empaths. Once they think that, they seem to think that they are automatically capable of hunting minions with the best of us.

"These people have absolutely no idea what they are doing. Not only that, because they haven't got any idea what they are doing, they put themselves and others in unnecessary risk. Most of them don't survive their first encounters with the Dark Ones. Some of us don't survive the rescue missions either.

"It would be a wonderful world if we could require someone to take a test before they went out and tried to save the world. But, it isn't going to happen. So we just have to hope that we're not the ones that have to pay the price of stupidity in the face of the enemy."

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary/philosopher)



THE LOOSE ENDS

Credits

Demonground Editorial Team

Marcus Bone
(marcusbone@demonground.org)
Michael Marchi
(mikemarchi@demonground.org)
Geoff Skellams
(geoffskellams@demonground.org)

Article Authors

Marcus Bone
Chris Carpenter
Leanne Dempsey
Eyal Faingersh
Steve King
Michael Marchi
Ryan Rank
Lee Williams

Cover Art

“Trancemission” by Bill Elsworth

Banner Art

“There goes the Neighborhood” by Eyal Faingersh

Interior Art

Andy Simmons, Eyal Faingersh and James D. Collins.

Interior Graphics

Mike Marchi
Geoff Skellams

New Zena Marley quotes written by Geoff Skellams.

Submissions

Like all fanzines, we need articles by you to keep this magazine alive.

We’re looking for articles solely related to the *Modern Conspiracy/Horror* genre. Any material that would help a new referee or player would be ideal.

Use the departments from this issue as a rough guide to the areas of material we are looking for. In particular, we need articles for all the game systems we are supporting:

- All Flesh Must Be Eaten**
- Conspiracy X**
- Dark Conspiracy**
- Delta Green**
- Dark•Matter**
- Witchcraft**

If you think you can help, then please send your submission to us at demonground@demonground.org.

We would prefer all submissions to be in a format readable by Microsoft Word 97. Our main preference is a Word 97 file.

If you are sending in a number of articles, please send each one in a separate file. This saves us a lot of time and effort.

If you are sending in tables, please send them as a word processor table or a tab-delimited text file. Do not send HTML files.

Please keep the formatting in your submissions simple. We will format your submission when the magazine is being laid out.

We reserve the right to edit your submission and to correct spelling and grammar if necessary. If you have a problem with us doing this, please contact us and we will see if we can come to some sort of arrangement.

We look forward to seeing your submissions. Your involvement is important, not only to the success of this fanzine

Copyright

The copyright for the articles and artwork in this issue of Demonground remain with the original authors/artists. Used with permission.

All other trademarks or registered trademarks are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.

All trademarks are used without permission for the purposes of illustration only. The use of these trademarks should not be seen as a challenge to the respective owners.

LEGAL INFORMATION

The Dark Conspiracy game in all forms is owned by Dark Conspiracy Enterprises. © 1991 - 1998 Dark Conspiracy Enterprises. Dark Conspiracy is a trademark of Dark Conspiracy Enterprises. Dark Conspiracy Enterprises permits web sites and fanzines for this game, provided it contains this notice, that Dark Conspiracy Enterprises is notified, and subject to a withdrawal of permission on 90 days notice. The contents of this site are for personal, non-commercial use, only. Any use of Dark Conspiracy Enterprises’ copyrighted material or trademarks anywhere on this web site and its files should not be viewed as a challenge to those copyrights or trademarks. In addition, any program/articles/file on this fanzine cannot be republished or distributed without the consent of the author who contributed it. Dark Conspiracy Enterprises PO Box 2310 Key West FL 33045.

We began with the intention of producing the best source of new material for the Dark Conspiracy™ roleplaying game.

One Dark World wasn't enough.

Now, we intend to become the best source for the entire genre of Modern Conspiracy/Horror games.

Here are some of the game systems you'll find gracing our pages in the future:

- Eden Studios' Conspiracy X™
- Pagan Publishing's Delta Green™
- Wizards of the Coast's Dark•Matter™
- and of course...
- Dynasty Presentations' Dark Conspiracy™



The reflections begin January 2000

www.demonground.org

