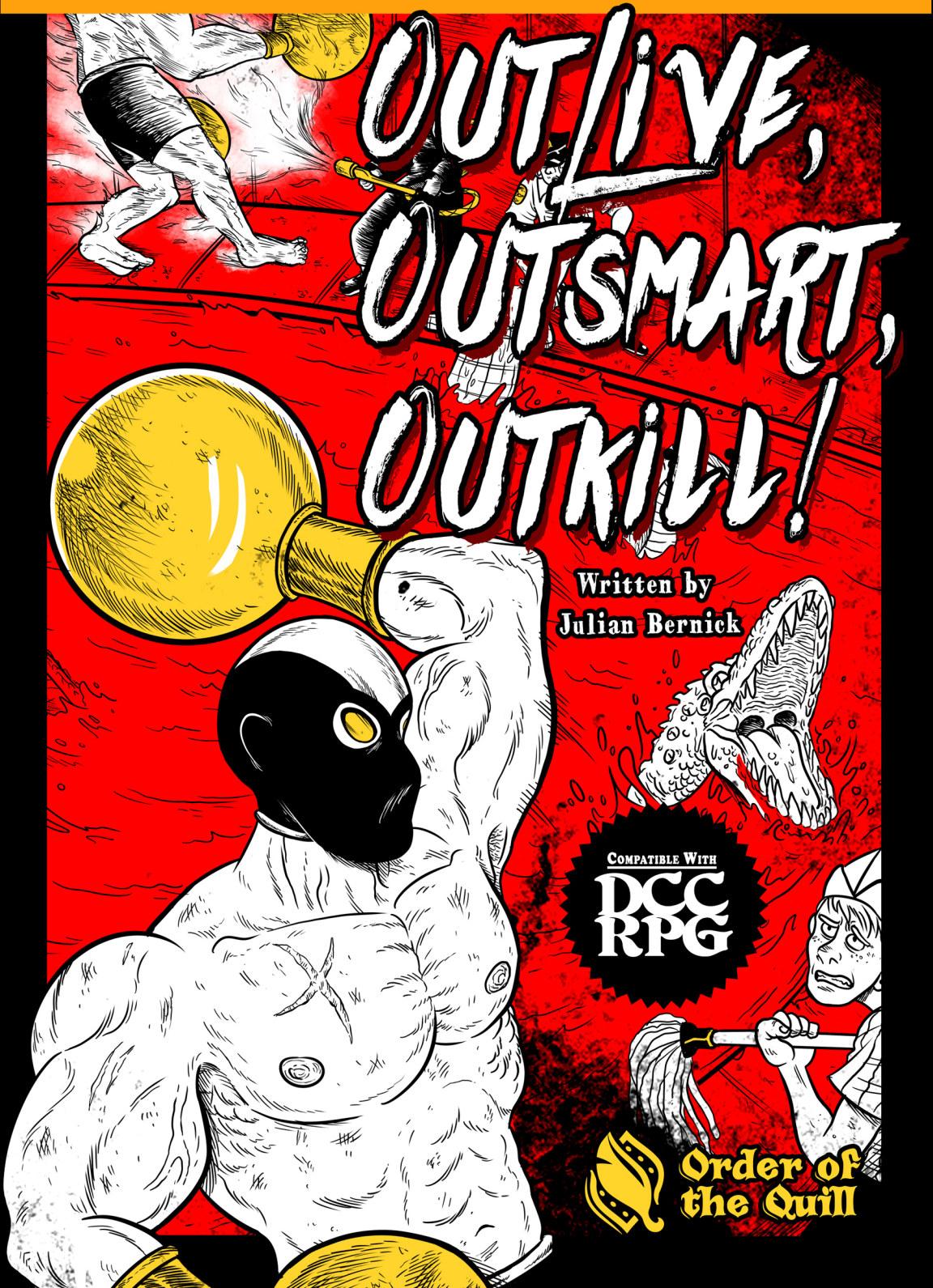


OUTLIVE, OUTSMART, OUTKILL!

Written by
Julian Bernick

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**

 **Order of
the Quill**



OUTLIVE, OUTSMART, OUTKILL!

**A ZERO-LEVEL FUNNEL ADVENTURE FOR
NOWHERE CITY NIGHTS**

JULIAN BERNICK

Edited by Jon Carnes, Gary Fortuin

Design by Clint Bohaty

Illustrations by Spencer Amundsen, Jack Kotz

Playtesters:

Hometown Crew: Jon Carnes, John Dahlstrom, Trevor Hartman, Aaron Kesher

GaryCon 2017: Todd Bradley, Dave Bresson, Dale Ehinger, Travis Lampe, Nate Sims, Jim Skach

GENCON 2017: Katydid, Andrew Muccigrosso, Matt Muccigrosso, Devan Nielsen, Emilia Prieto, Sparky



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NOWHERE CITY NIGHTS – OUTLINE, OUTSMART, OUTKILL

INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days? Nah... Nowhere City never had any good old days, no matter what the politicians say. It's always been a hellish cult-infested battleground contested by the power-mad forces of Chaos and the few, desperate defenders of Law. And this conflict comes with bloodshed, heroics, vile sorcery and plenty of NPCs who are meant to be killed. We hope you enjoy your stay. After all, we heard the roads and the airport just closed down due to a mysterious state of emergency.

This adventure takes place in the Proving Grounds, administered by the cult of Scutigera the Hunter. Following in the tradition of Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG funnel adventures, *Outlive, Outsmart, Outkill!* is an adventure for 20–24 zero-level characters. Unlike most adventures, the final showdown will pit player characters against player characters—unless the PCs unify against their cultist puppet-masters. This adventure should be able to be completed in four hours or less, making it ideal for a standard RPG convention slot.

The surviving characters will have a chance to join the forces of Law (the Gutter Knights of Nowhere City), Chaos (the Sorcerer cults of which Scutigera is one) or Neutrality (the mercenary Free Agents who take assignments for pay.)

This adventure assumes you are using the **Nowhere City Nights** Campaign Setting for DCC RPG. You can easily re-skin it for another modern setting.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The cult of Scutigera is dedicated to the rule of the powerful over the weak. To ensure they recruit only the strongest, most brutal initiates, the cult leaders established a yearly ritual in which unsuspecting civilians are abducted and put through their murderous paces in hopes of finding one suitably bloodthirsty individual to initiate into the cult.

The brutal contest also supplies cult leaders with entertainment as they gather to watch the event via a private streaming network. All rooms in the Proving Grounds have multiple hidden cameras installed to make sure that the viewers can see the action from every angle. Of course they are gambling on the outcome, so each triumph (and failure) must be clearly seen to ensure the wagers are paid without controversy.

The cult's Proving Grounds are located in the basement levels of an old armaments factory, situated in the desolate section of Nowhere City known as the Waste. The watchers are far away, in a comfortable penthouse apartment, enjoying hors-d'oeuvre and cocktails as they watch the contestants struggle for their lives. Should the characters manage to escape the Proving Grounds somehow, they might be even worse off-- alone and on foot in the Waste at night. (See *Nowhere City Nights*, p. 43 for more information on the "West Side Waste" and see the "Ending the Adventure" section for more detail.)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Unless noted otherwise, the building is lit by dull overhead fluorescent lighting. There are no visible vents or ducts by which characters may escape, though very persistent characters may locate some very small vents on the ceiling (far too small to crawl through.) The industrial-strength walls, floors and ceiling are impregnable for all practical purposes. The hidden cameras require a DC20 Intelligence check to locate, and can be disabled with 10 hit points of damage. Each room will have 4d7 cameras placed at random locations about the room, particularly close to expected areas of conflict, such as the Gunfreak's station in Area 3. Additionally, all rooms are equipped with loudspeakers, with which the viewers can taunt the PCs.

Ultimately, the cultists have taken great pains to ensure the characters can't escape the building and the Judge should keep this in mind if they seek means of egress. The cultists have also made it nearly impossible to use any "game-changers" such as the Gunfreak's machine gun outside that room. Any exceptions are noted in the room descriptions.

Princes of Corruption

Below are a few notable viewers of the mayhem in the Proving Grounds, all highly placed cultists of Scutigera. This is not an exhaustive list but a springboard for ideas during and after the adventure, perhaps allowing any survivors to track down and exact revenge upon their tormentors. Throughout the contest, the viewers may taunt the PCs, cheer them on or even offer them incentives to turn on their fellows. If a character actively tries to recognize a voice and might have a chance based on his background, ask for a DC 12 Intelligence check. If a character might recognize a voice by chance, simply call for a Luck check.

Master of Ceremonies (the first and primary speaker to the PCs):

Vance Cunningham, CEO of First Dynamics. Cunningham is a pillar of the community. He's aggressive and decisive in running his company, and he's a renowned philanthropist thanks to his third wife, Alyssa. Cunningham ran into a lot of legal trouble for illicit activities five years ago and was drawn into mob business and the cult. But instead of trying to extricate himself, Cunningham embraced the power games and backstabbing of the cult and is now one of the most powerful Cult Masters in Nowhere City. He has nothing but scorn for anyone who doesn't earn a salary bigger than his own and will taunt the PCs as losers and scumbags. If there's a recognizable alpha male in the PC group, Vance will cheer him on.

Spectator: Ty Winnick, attorney, is a sycophant and the youngest of the Scutigera inner circle. He mostly echoes the insults of his betters and might

occasionally be heard piling on ("Yeah, you tell 'em!") in the background. His distinctive, nasally voice, might be recognized by someone in the legal profession as he is currently working as an assistant county prosecutor. Ty will have made a bet on whomever he thinks is the smartest character, and will be cheering his success.

Spectator: Bella Bergstrom is a state legislator for the congressional district that includes Nowhere City's richest suburbs. She's relatively young, attractive, and has political aspirations that she hopes to achieve with the help of her cultist connections. Bella's voice won't be heard too often, and is probably not recognizable to anyone who doesn't work at the highest levels of state politics. But her distinctive high-pitched laugh, especially when something goes wrong for the PCs, might be recognized or remembered. Bella will bet on either the richest or the most attractive PCs.

Sergeant at Arms: Deputy Police Chief Birch Snyder is in charge of the logistics of the ceremony. If things start going wrong at all, he'll be heard whispering commands to others or barking orders to Arnold Traynor. Cops and others that work in emergency services (firemen, paramedics) might recognize his voice. An experienced gambler, he has spread his bets randomly on some unlikely candidates, betting that they will face less competition in the early going and hang back from the danger in the first rooms.

PLAYER START

The “contestants” have been abducted from their normal civilian routines and they awaken in the Proving Grounds with the clothes they were wearing at the time of their abduction along with one small object of their choosing. When the game begins, ask the players to write down one appropriately small object for each of the 0-level characters. (It is assumed that this object was missed during the search of the captives.) This object should be no larger than a smartphone. Smartphones are fair game, but please note: There is no wi-fi or any sort of in/out wireless connection to the Internet from the Proving Grounds, and all cellphone service is jammed.

The characters should be made as typical zero-level characters per the DCC RPG core rulebook, but, for occupations, substitute the backgrounds in *Nowhere City Nights* (p. 23.) For some additional flavor, consult the character quirks table in Appendix A to quickly generate some personalities. If the players want to select or generate their own quirks on the spot, that is even better.

AREA 1 - Player Start *It seems like only moments ago that the strange men jumped from their van and pulled you in, subduing you with a fast-acting chemical agent. Now you awaken in a harshly lit room with a tile floor, dull metal walls and no features save two doors on the far wall. Around you are many others, apparently abducted as you were. There is no clear rhyme nor reason to the assortment of people you see waking up around you.*

A male voice from above blares out through an unseen loudspeaker: “Welcome to the Proving Grounds of the Venom King. You have been brought here to compete with each other in a battle to the death. To win at this contest, you must survive this deadly obstacle course, kill your fellow competitors and present yourself as the last survivor in the Hall of Stars. These are your only instructions. There is nothing more to know. Knowledge is an illusion treasured by the weak! There is only strength! Go and kill for the Hunter from Beyond the Void!”

The first door (marked A) is trapped with an explosive tripwire on the doorframe. When the door is opened, the ensuing explosion does 1d6 points of damage to all within five feet of the door, with a Reflex save for half (round down). Locating the trap requires a DC 15 Intelligence check to locate, but any characters with a background related to engineering or explosives can get a bonus of +4 to their skill check. If located, any appropriate background gets the same bonus and DC to disarm. Beyond the door is solid impregnable wall.

The second door (marked B on the map) is trapped with a pit in front of the door. (The metal floor plates swing downward). The first player approaching the door will have to make a DC 15 Ref save or fall into the pit, taking 1d6 damage

from the fall of 10 feet and another 1d6 of damage from the spikes within. The unlucky characters in the pit must make a Luck check or be impaled—in which case removing them from the spikes and pit causes an additional 1d3 points of damage. To step over the pit and through the door (once opened) into Area 2 requires a DC 5 Agility check.

The bottom of the pit is illuminated by a light set into the wall. Beside that is a hidden camera as well as a TV monitor so that the assembled cultists can salute (or taunt) a dying character on his or her way off this mortal coil. (Judges may pick one of the Princes of Corruption from the above sidebar or improvise their own.)

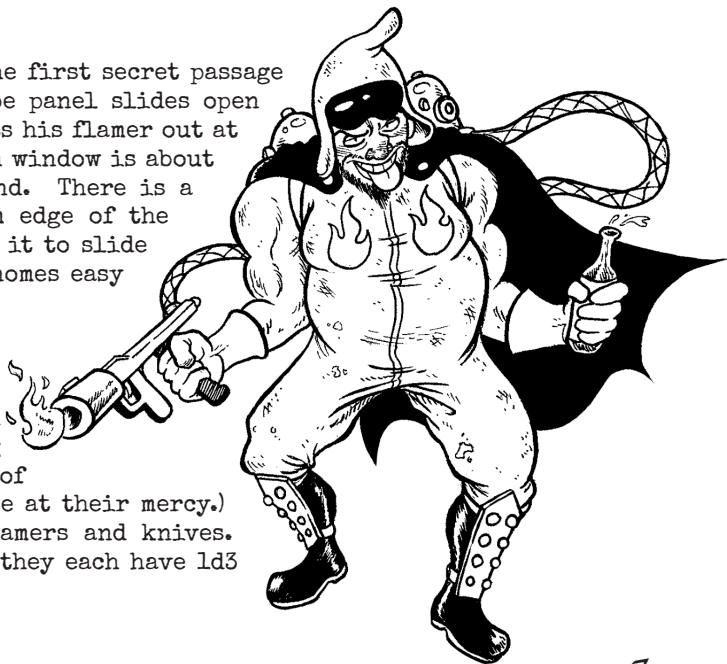
There is also a secret door on the Southern end of the pit that opens into a tunnel that runs beneath the corridor of the Fire Gnomes (see Area 2). A character making a Luck check may notice the secret door. Otherwise, characters searching the pit will find it on a DC 10 Intelligence check.

AREA 2 - Corridor of the Fire Gnomes *The door opens into a long narrow corridor. The corridor extends roughly sixty feet. At the end of the hall is a closed door, identical to the two you've seen so far.*

This deathtrap is the domain of the "Fire Gnomes", small men (about 4'10") who wield short-burst flame throwers, AKA "Flamers". The Fire Gnomes are demented survivors of countless winter carnivals, trapped in an endless bacchanal of violence. Shrunk and twisted by alcoholism and other addictions, they only dimly remember their prior lives as upstanding citizens of Nowhere City. Dressed in leotard, pointed hats and boots, these bearded men are profane, drunk and vicious.

When the party passes the first secret passage labeled A, a window-type panel slides open and the Fire Gnome blasts his flamer out at the nearest target. Each window is about three feet off the ground. There is a catch inside the bottom edge of the inner panel that allows it to slide open, giving the Fire Gnomes easy access to the hall.

The Fire Gnomes can be attacked through the open windows through which they're firing their flamers (though of course, attackers will be at their mercy.) They are armed with Flamers and knives. Aside from the weapons, they each have 1d3



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bottles of vodka in their compartment. Resourceful characters can use these as Molotov cocktails if they have a source of fire and a rag. These cocktails will do 1d5 points of damage on a successful (thrown) missile attack. If the thrower makes a Luck check, the target will also catch fire and suffer 1d3 points of damage for 1d3 rounds. (Used as a bludgeon, a broken bottle does 1d3+1 damage, but the wielder must make a luck check to see if the weapon survives each successful hit.)

Presumably, at least some of the party will choose to run past the panels—if so, each PC should make a Luck check as they run by each panel. The first PC failing the Luck check will be flamed at that panel.

The flames are not a serious fire hazard for the building, but they are plenty deadly on zero-level characters. The fire bursts out in a direct line, doing 1d6 points of damage to near targets and 1 hit point to targets within ten feet. If a flamer is taken from a Fire Gnome, the PC who took it should make a Luck check. If the PC misses the Luck check, the flamer has one jet (charge) left. If the Luck check is made, the flamer has 1+1d3 jets left.

At the end of the hallway is a secret trapdoor just before the door to the next room. This leads back beneath this corridor to the pit trap from Area 1. Should the PCs make their way through this bottom passageway and come out through the secret door, the Fire Gnomes will bide their time until the PCs have entered the GunFreak's room in Area 3. Then, they will enter the open hall and attack the stragglers in the rear of the group. For obvious reasons, they will try to keep characters between them and the Gunfreak and they will not venture into Area 3 while the Gunfreak is alive. If questioned, they possess no useful information; they were passed out drunk when placed at their posts and have no knowledge of the rooms beyond the Gunfreak's.

Fire Gnomes (3): Init +0; Atk flamer (d6/1) or knife (d3); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 3; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

AREA 3 - Gunfreak's Room *The door opens into a large open area with a door placed on the opposite corner of the room. Across the length of the room from your entry is a horrifying sight. Some sort of abused person, naked and filthy, is chained to a machine gun mounted on a turret, beyond a low wall of sandbags. Staring at you with hollow eyes and howling through lips sewn shut, the naked man swings the gun toward you.*



The Gunfreak is a homeless killer who has been abducted by the Scutigera cult and abused beyond all sanity. His hands are chained to the gun and his mouth has been sewn shut, making verbal communication impossible. He has only one mission left in his short miserable life: Kill the characters and avoid worse torments from the Scutigera cultists.

The Gunfreak will wait until characters enter the room and target the biggest group of them in a roughly ten-foot square, thereby dropping a 10 foot square “kill-zone” (2d6) attack on them. Any character in the killzone can roll a DC 10 Reflex save to take $\frac{1}{2}$ damage.

Since this attack uses a full clip, characters may try to time a charge of the Gunfreak after he has fired. Charging characters must make a Luck check to see if he is able to reload before they are able to attack him. If able to reload, the Gunfreak will target the biggest group charging him with a kill-zone. (For multiple characters charging in a group, check against the lowest PC's Luck.)

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If a character can get within reach of the Gunfreak, the Freak is at his mercy, as his hands are chained to the gun and he has no melee weapons in any event. His only attack is to swing the barrel of the gun around and try to bash opponents for a +0 attack at 1d4 points of damage.

The Gunfreak's vision is poor enough that he won't fire at interlopers at far range (at the door to Area #2). He will only see them at about 50 feet or closer, so attempts to deceive him by throwing out a body and then charging while he reloads will not work. But the blur and the sound certainly alert him to the presence of victims. Characters in a direct line of fire behind a kill-zone attack need to make a Luck check or take d4 points of damage from stray bullets.

The gun is fixed in place behind the sandbags and cannot be unfastened from its turret fixture on the floor. Clever characters may be able to draw opponents in from other rooms and use the gun on them or even on each other!

Gunfreak: Init +3; Atk Automatic Turret Gun (see below); AC 9; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV N/A; Act 1d20; SP Kill-zone; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.
Special: Kill-zone attack targets a 10'x10' area with no attack roll. All characters in this area, must take 2d6 damage or make a DC 10 Ref save for $\frac{1}{2}$ damage.

AREA 4 - Pollutigator Pond *This door opens into a wedge-shaped room with two narrow walkways, each running from the entry to two separate doors at the opposite two corners of the room. A triangular pond fills the middle of the room and long, dark shapes can be seen moving just beneath the surface of the pond. Manning each walkway is a masked dead-eyed brute of a man. Both are half naked and the hands of each are secured in some sort of round, steel gauntlet. Each bellows mindlessly, clanging their gauntlets together and waits on his ledge for you to approach.*

The two Bruisers in this room have been altered by drugs and occult psychotherapy until they, like the Gunfreak, have no conception of their own identity or how to communicate with others. They exist only to kill with their gauntlets, guarding the walkways to the doors beyond.

In the pool are Pollutigators, reptiles mutated by the toxic waste beneath the old armaments factory. They have been trained to ignore beings on the ledge, but attack any food (or being) that comes into the pool, which is 10' deep. Thus the favored tactic of the Bruisers is to knock their victims into the pool: Any PC struck by a Bruiser must make a DC 12 Fort save or be stunned and dropped into the pool. Those PCs who are killed by a Bruiser's blow are automatically carried into the pool by the force of the steel-gauntleted punch.

There are four Pollutigators in the pool, and it's very possible that all four will be temporarily occupied with victims dumped into the pond. Devouring a victim takes 3d4 rounds. If a character is brave (or crazy) enough to enter the pool while all the Pollutigators are feeding on others, the character must roll a Luck check to see if he is attacked or not. If successful, the PC can swim to the far end of the ledge and, with a DC 10 Strength check, can raise him or herself to the top of the ledge.

The Bruisers avoid the pond carefully, and with good reason. If they are knocked into the pool, they will suffer the same fate as a hapless PC. This is not an easy task as the Bruisers are heavy and well-practiced in fighting on the ledge. Efforts to topple them in require a DC 17 Strength check and will open a character up to a punishing blow (at +2) from the targeted Bruiser.

Any character in the pool (and surviving) can make a Luck check to find a hidden treasure at the far end on the pool's floor—a functioning spear-gun, wrapped in a waterproof plastic wrapping. (The spear-gun does D7 damage and has a range of 10/20/30. After firing, characters would need to make a DC 10 Intelligence roll to re-load with the spear.)

The Bruisers fight to the death. They fear the noise of the machine gun in Area 3, but might be coaxed out to stand in the doorway where they would be vulnerable to the machine gun. They shun the trapped door B (see below.) If avoided or passed somehow, they will follow the PCs into the cage maze and beyond. The Pollutigators will not leave the pool under any circumstances.

The door marked A leads to the Cage Maze (Area 5). The door marked B is trapped; opening it unleashes a torrential flood of water. All characters within 5 feet will have to make a DC 15 Ref save or be washed into the Pollutigator pool. Beyond this door are only water tanks and pipes that feed water into the trap.

Bruisers (2): Init +4; Atk Punch+2 (1d4+2); HD 2d8; hp 9; MV 30; AC 12; Act 1d20; SP: Stunning punch; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will -2; AL C.

Special: After being struck by a Bruiser's punch, any unarmored human-sized creature must make a DC 10 Fort save or be stunned (unable to act or move) for 1 round and fall into the Pollutigator pond.

Pollutigators (4): Init +6; Atk Bite +8 (2d8+2) and tail lash +2 (1d8+2); HD 5d8; hp 24; MV 40; AC 16; Act 2d20; SP On land, halve the movement and attack bonus; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

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AREA 5 - Cage Maze *This door opens into a brightly lit room composed of five foot square cages with floor to ceiling bars. Across the room and straight ahead about twenty feet, an exit door can be seen. As you stare for another moment into the room, you see that each of the cage "walls" contains a hinged door with a handle. On the floor of each cell is a number, written large enough for you to read them all from where you stand.*

(Refer to the Cage Maze Map for the key to the various numbers of the cage room sections. Note that the players should be given a rough map with all the numbers in order for them to determine how they want to move through the room.)

This cage is an insidious test of courage, cleverness and luck. Some of the doors are trapped, always the same way: Opening the latch to the wrong cage shocks everyone in the existing cage for 1d4 hp of damage. (e.g, if standing in the #3 square, but opening the door to #4, everyone in the #3 square will be shocked.) Opening the door to the right cage does not trigger a shock. Once the trap is triggered, the door can be left open. Once closed again, the door re-sets and (if a door to a wrong square) will shock again if re-opened.

PCs will presumably follow the paths based on these various clues, with the following effects:

Those who follow the prime numbers through the right cages (1, 2, 3, 5, 7) will go to the cage #7 with the secret door which opens into the trash room (Area 6). The secret door requires a Luck check to notice if in the same square or a DC 10 Intelligence check to find while searching. A careful PC inspecting the door will pick up a whiff of the offensive sewage smell beyond.

Those who follow the pattern of numbers escalating by 10 through the right cages (1, 11, 21, 31, 41) will go to the West wall. A Luck check or a DC 10 Intelligence check if searching allows characters to find a small secret panel set into the wall. This conceals a space about the size of a shoebox which has a key to the Traynor's booth door in Area 7. This space also conceals a can of high-sugar high-caffeine Blastoff cola ("Get ready to blast off!"). Any character drinking the cola is rejuvenated with energy and vitality (treat as 1d4 healing). Also in this space is a 10-inch hunting knife in a leather sheathe (d5 damage).

Those who seek to attain the door on the Northern wall have no pattern to follow, and thus the doors to 4, 6 and 8 are considered "wrong doors" and opening these will shock characters. However, persistent characters may take their damage and still pursue the visible door. That door is trapped and will shock everyone in the #8 cage for 5 points of damage. Beyond the door is only a blank wall.

The doors resist all efforts to break the locks or bend the bars. Make a DC 22 Strength check to try to bend one set of bars. Each time such an attempt

is made, the character must make a Luck check to see if the effort triggers a shock. The bars are spaced too narrowly for any human, including a Fire Gnome, to get through.

AREA 6 - Trash Room *The concealed door swings open into a noxious pool of sewage flanked by piles of fetid wet trash. The floor is covered with murky water, rippling with garbage and bobbing floaters. Large chutes in the ceiling appear to have dropped trash into messy piles, some of them as high as eight feet tall, jumbled with all sorts of refuse. The overhead light flickers in an eerie way but you can still make out a door on the wall to your left—hopefully an exit from this stench-ridden chamber.*



The noxious smell of this room is detected even before the door is opened. Upon entering the room, each person must make a DC 5 Fort save or spend one round retching helplessly. This is very inconvenient when the rats attack!

Characters who try to escape up the chutes are not in luck. They lead to a large landfill a half-mile away and end in a large metal aperture which has several tons of rancid garbage above it. (DC 20 Strength check to somehow wrench open.) If PCs somehow open the aperture, all PCs in the chute will be buried under several thousand pounds of waste and killed (no save).

Lurking in the sewage are chemically enhanced rats, each the size of a cat. They are utterly fearless. The initial pack has 8 rats but note that exploring the trash heaps risks unleashing more rats upon the hapless explorers. The rats will generally wait until all the PCs have entered the room; up to three rats may attack one victim at once.

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Enhanced Rats (8): Init +2; Atk Bite (1); HD 1d1; hp 1; AC 10; Act 1d20; SP Disease; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -2; AL C.

Special: Any survivor of a rat-bite needs to make a Fort save @ DC 15 or contract a terrible wasting disease. Only professional medical care will save the character; if untreated PC will die in d3 weeks.

Of course, the PCs may strike upon the idea of digging in the trash heaps to get something valuable, even if only a crude weapon. If so, let the PC make a Luck check. If the check is successful, roll a D14 modified by Luck and consult the following table:

Mining the Trash Heaps...	
Roll	Result Description
1	Trash room fail! You accidentally opened a nest of 1d8 more Enhanced Rats. Half of them attack you, while the rest attack your companions in the room.
2	An arm in a plastic bag. Yep, a severed arm. It's still mostly frozen so if you're truly demented, you could use this as a club to bash people for d3 points of damage.
3	Tucked in amidst all this garbage is a wallet with no credit cards-- but it does contain \$500 in cash.
4	You find a kitchen knife; barely usable as a d3 stabbing weapon.
5	Amazingly, someone has thrown away an entire set of the 1960s science fiction Stellar Track VHS cassettes, with the hard-to-find cast commentary! This could be worth \$2000-3000 if you could get back to "civilization".
6	Tattered and grease-stained RPG rulebook. Can be used to bludgeon for d3 points of damage. Also opens up worlds of adventure! a news van to the race's destination or trying to follow the racing parties if possible.
7	Diary of Greta Cunningham- this teenaged girl's diary has lots of juicy details, particularly the tidbits about her father, the CEO of First Dynamics, being a Nowhere City mob boss. Could be worth a lot to the right people. (See the Sidebar on Princes of Corruption for more info on her father, Vance Cunningham.)
8	Tire iron - Good for bashing people (D5)
9	An old set of 6 pool balls (all solids)—can be thrown for d3 points of damage.
10	Crowbar- Good for bashing people (D5) and perhaps other stuff.
11	Fire extinguisher- one use left and can be used to bash someone for d5 damage.
12	Fireman's axe (d7) - useful in oh-so-many ways!
13	This samurai sword must be a fake but down here no one will know the difference. It does D7 points of damage.
14	Somebody wanted to ditch this pistol, fast. It's a pistol in a plastic bag (no fingerprints) with a full clip (10 shots.) Somebody just won the lottery! D8 damage. Range 40/80/120.

If characters roll the same result twice, the Judge should insert a different object of similar properties.

The cult masters enjoy the resourcefulness of the contestants and are content to let them find weapons to use on each other. But after 2-3 rounds of searching, they tire of this and unleash their Small Combat Drones upon any laggards. A compartment will open in the Western wall and a drone will launch, flying at a height of about 10 feet. It will prioritize attacks against those refusing to move onto Area 8. If destroyed, the cultists have three more SCDs to torment the player characters with.

The cultists have paid well for the fun of piloting the drones; each is fitted with a high-tech camera and a loudspeaker with which to taunt the PCs. If disabled, resourceful characters with an appropriate background might be able to loot them for parts and, with a DC15 Intelligence check, construct a crude gun with 4 shots doing 7 damage.

Small Combat Drones (4): Init +2; Atk small arms fire +0 (1d7); HD 1d6; hp 2; MV Fly 60; AC 14; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort -2, Ref +2, Will N/A; AL N.

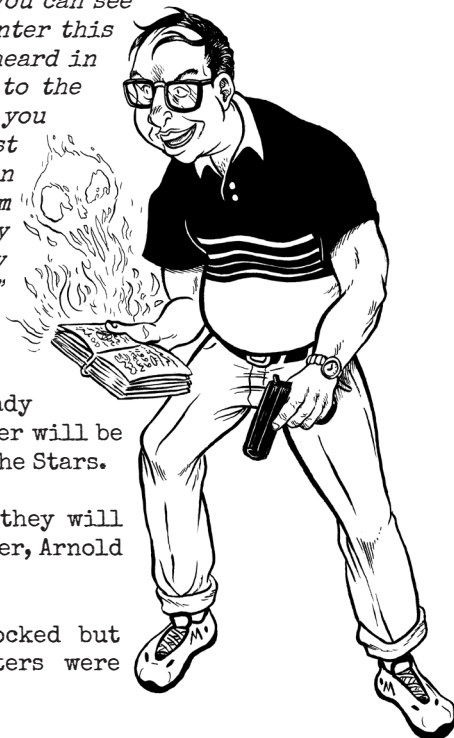
AREA 7 - Final Showdown in the Hall of Stars

You throw open the door and enjoy the relief of reasonably fresh air billowing out at you at last. Beyond the door, you see a large dimly lit room. Curiously, the ceiling is decorated with small lights that form constellations, the largest of which is in the shape of a centipede. The room is otherwise empty save for one door in the right hand wall and, about 20 feet off the ground, a window of smoked glass, through which you can see one vaguely man-shaped figure. As you enter this empty room, you hear the same voice you heard in the room in which you awoke: "Welcome to the grand finale, little ones. Here and now you may prove yourself in final combat—against each other. When there is only one left, then we shall have a champion worthy of the Venom King. Do you see a door? Oh yes, you may try that exit if you wish but it is guarded by one of our own. Enter it at your own peril!"

The intention should be clear by now: The remaining PCs should fight to the death. If they take this path (or if there is already only one remaining) then indeed, the winner will be considered the chosen of the Hunter From the Stars.

If the PCs choose to try the other exit, they will find themselves in combat against a sorcerer, Arnold Traynor, who is fighting for his very life!

The door to the sorcerer's booth is locked but can possibly be opened if any characters were



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resourceful enough to equip themselves with lock-picks at the adventure's start, or if they have a crowbar, fireman's axe or other way of destroying the lock or doorknob mechanism. (Judges should use their discretion for more exotic ways of opening the door; generally anything that can severely damage an average American type deadbolt should be considered capable of opening this door.)

Arnold Traynor is a frumpy middle-aged man who was once considered promising within the cult because of his natural sadism and bullying mentality. However, over the years it became apparent that he was neither very bright nor bold. He has been assigned to this post in an effort to let him prove his worth by defending the exit from the Proving Grounds. If the PCs manage to enter the stairway to the booth and confront Traynor, he will fight back with spells first, then finally his revolver. He will fight to the death and will kill all PCs, even if there is only one left—he does not trust the PCs or his masters to let him live under any circumstances (as well he shouldn't.) If the PCs find a way to appeal to his paranoia, they might succeed in convincing him to flee with them (DC 20 Personality check), especially if they have him outnumbered or at a disadvantage. In the long run though, Traynor is self-centered and treacherous.

In any event, Traynor is ready for them. He has been watching their antics closely throughout the Proving Grounds via the same live feed as his masters.

Arnold Traynor, 2nd level Sorcerer of Scutigera: Init +0; Atk Pistol (d8); HD 1d4; hp 6; MV 30; AC 10; Act 1d20; SP Spells @ spellcheck +0; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

Spells: Charm Person, Color Spray, Ventriloquism, Invoke Patron- Scutigera and Scurrying Hell (see Nowhere City Nights, p.66. If you don't own NCN, choose another patron or other appropriate spells.)

The Observation Booth contains Traynor's spellbook and his cellphone, which is fully jammed until removed from the general area of the Proving Grounds. The communications console has a hardwired internet connection as well as a two-way video communication channel with the cult leaders. There is an exit to a stairway leading up as well, which opens onto an old parking lot in the back of the armaments factory. The surviving characters will soon understand that they are in fact in the middle of Nowhere City's most dangerous neighborhood: The so-called "Waste" (West) side.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

...and Starting a Campaign

There are many ways this adventure can end. If the Judge and players wish to start a long-term campaign, the easiest way to end it is as follows:

As you spill into the unlit parking lot outside the strange windowless building, a black SUV with tinted windows roars up. A dapper man in a white suit steps out, holding a semi-automatic pistol. "Get in!" he shouts. "We can protect you, but we have to go now!"

The Holly House chapter of the Gutter Knights has been tipped off to the annual Proving Grounds contest and location for the first time. The man is Joey Zhang, a Free Agent hired by Holly House to find the Proving Grounds and rescue the victims therein. If the PCs go with Zhang, they will be brought to Holly House and debriefed by the head of the chapter, Penny, a rugged chain-smoking veteran of the Shadow Conflict. Penny will offer the PCs a chance to join Holly House, now that they know of the Shadow Conflict. If they refuse, perhaps because of reluctance to give up all worldly wealth, she allows them to be recruited by Joey Zhang, who generally aids Holly House in their battle with Sorcerers.

Having learned of the secret underground war in the shadows, the PCs might also rather try to find a way to master sorcery. For \$1000, Zhang's gang will put them in touch with a contact who might recruit them for one of the Weeper's cults, but this will have to be done far away from the Knights of Holly House

...in a Convention or Short-term Game

In a one-shot session, when you are not concerned with leveling the characters up in a future session or starting a campaign, simply let the players narrate what happens to each of the survivors after the ordeal. Does a survivor join the Scutigera cult (if offered admittance?) Do they wish to strike back at their kidnapers? Do they run and hide as far away as possible?

If a Judge has a lot of time left to fill, feel free to play out their escape from the West side. Have each of the survivors make a Luck check. For every failed check, the group will have one random encounter. For encounters, judges can use Plot Hooks for the Wild, Wild Waste starting on p. 44 of *Nowhere City Nights*. Simply roll a D20 to determine which plot hook they will find!

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Appendix A: Add some character to your zero level Citizen with a quirk.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Alcoholic	37	Veteran of foreign wars
2	Stamp collector	38	National guard reservist
3	Comic book collector	39	Pool player
4	Obsessed with trains	40	Obsessed with poker
5	In a rock band	41	Gambling addicted
6	Plays instrument	42	Excellent cook
7	Hard drug addict	43	Obsessed with blackjack
8	Hordes pets	44	Illiterate
9	Enjoys woodworking	45	Literary snob
10	Ardent feminist	46	Science nerd
11	Hate-filled internet troll	47	Vegan
12	Ardent Libertarian	48	Vegetarian
13	RPG nerd	49	Gluten-free
14	Foodie	50	Raw diet
15	Hipster (mustache)	51	Lactose intolerant
16	Hipster (beard)	52	Caveman diet
17	Porn addict	53	Eats only desserts
18	Always broke	54	Tarantino fan
19	Miserly	55	Utterly useless individual
20	Corporate asshole	56	Always goes with the crowd
21	Loves wine	57	Always goes against the crowd
22	Published poet	58	From very wealthy background
23	Frustrated writer	59	From very poor background
24	Delusions of grandeur	60	Weightlifter
25	Paranoid delusions	61	Dude who doesn't drink
26	Workout / exercise freak	62	Was the popular kid in high school
27	Amateur boxer	63	Wears only jeans
28	Low level criminal record	64	Always dresses in three piece suit
29	Hardened criminal (active)	65	Wears track suit
30	Hardened criminal (reformed)	66	Wears nun's habit (may be nun)
31	Pothead	67	Punk rocker
32	Pot dealer	68	Deadhead
33	Heavy metal dude	69	HipHop fan
34	All sports fan	70	Will always be a virgin
35	Golfer	71	Annoying Jazz guy
36	Runs for local political office every year	72	Dixieland band enthusiast

73	Volunteers at foodshelf	87	Effortlessly stylish
74	Volunteers at animal shelter	88	Has traveled all over the world
75	Volunteers at homeless shelter	89	Cheats on taxes
76	Prominent oldschoool RPG artist	90	Pathological liar
77	Podcaster	91	Star Trek / Doctor Who fan
78	Football Fan	92	Doesn't speak English
79	College football fan	93	Doesn't have a driver's license
80	Baseball fan	94	Knows the capitols of all fifty states
81	Basketball fan	95	Very short
82	Hockey fan	96	Very tall
83	Soccer fan	97	Freakishly skinny
84	Wears one of those animal type hats	98	Furry
85	Wears fur coat	99	Tells fortunes
86	Obsessed with shoes	100	Undercover alien from another world

AREA 1

10' Pit Trap

Secret Tunnel

AREA 2

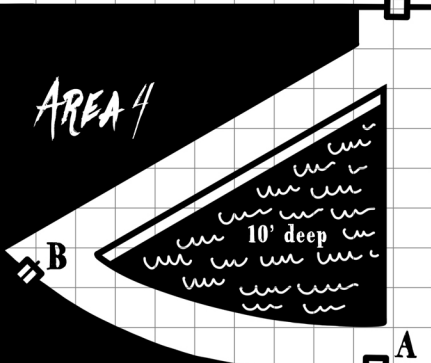
THE PROVING GROUNDS



AREA 3



AREA 4



AREA 5

AREA 6

CAGE MAZE

AREA 7

Traynor's Booth

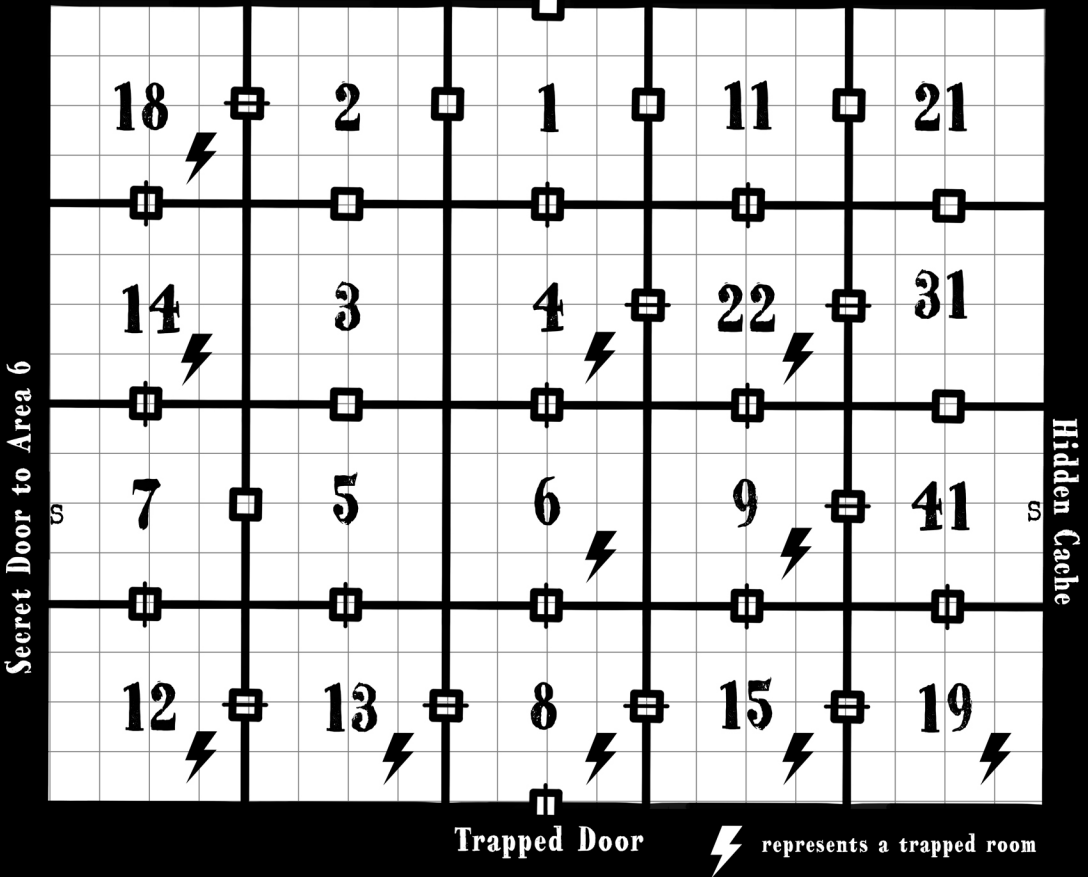
Map Key

- Door
- Trapped Door
- Trapdoor in Floor
- Trapdoor in Ceiling
- Stairway
- Hatch in Ceiling
- Spikes
- Sandbags
- Water
- Secret Door

each square approx 5'

AREA 5 THE CAGE MAZE

To Area 4



NOWHERE CITY NIGHTS - OUTLINE, OUTSMART, OUTKILL

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OUTLIVE, OUTSMART, OUTKILL!

Can you survive the Proving Grounds?

Outlive, Outsmart, Outkill! is a mad parody of today's cynical reality TV world. You want sadism, isolation and high stakes betrayal? In Nowhere City, you can take it all the way. The elite sorcerers of Scutigera have abducted a random assortment of civilians and forced them to compete in this lethal contest... while they watch. There's no fame and money at stake and there's no second place. In this contest, the winner gets to join the Sorcerer Cult-- and everyone else DIES!

This is the first published adventure for Nowhere City Nights, a 21st Century setting for DCC RPG.

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