

GURPS[®]

For Love of Mother-Not

Solo Adventure in Alan Dean Foster's Humanx Commonwealth

By W. G. Armintrout

STEVE JACKSON GAMES



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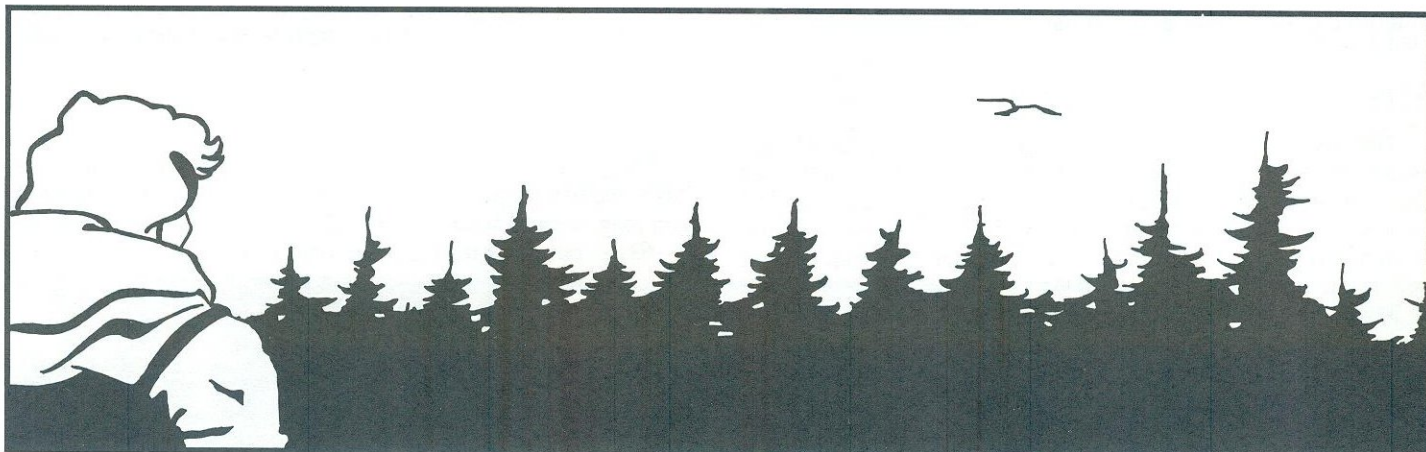
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Dedicated to O.W.A., who unknowingly bequeathed his noblest love to me.



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INSTRUCTIONS

For Love of Mother-Not is a solo *GURPS* adventure, based on the Alan Dean Foster novel of the same name. You'll control a player character — Flinx, Maliena, or a hero of your own design — and this book will serve as the Game Master.

As you move through this adventure, you'll be called upon to make choices. Each choice will send you to a different entry, which will give you more information and more instructions, and possibly call for more decisions.

The object is, of course, to survive and complete the adventure. If you don't succeed the first time . . . try again.

Good luck, and may Deity (or your Talent) protect you!

Getting Started

You will need a pencil, scratch paper, three six-sided dice and a copy of the *GURPS Basic Set*.

Ready-made characters. You will also need a character. A character sheet for Flinx, the hero of the book this adventure is based on, can be found on p. 64. If you would rather play another character, a character sheet for Maliena (another orphan living in Drallar) is provided on p. 63. Guidelines for designing your own character are given in the appendix.

How To Play

The adventure is divided into numbered paragraphs. *Do not read them in order* — they will make no sense at all. Rather, read the "Introduction" first, then turn to the paragraph to which it directs you. Read that paragraph, decide your course of action from that point, and then turn to the paragraph that your current paragraph directs you to. And so on.

Most paragraphs offer you at least two choices, and sometimes several. Sometimes you will choose freely; sometimes a roll against one of your skills or attributes will send you to other paragraphs. Sometimes your character will be involved in a battle or other contest, the outcome of which will determine which paragraph you will turn to next.

Plot Words

For Love of Mother-Not can be different every time you play. To make sure that you stay on one storyline through the entire adventure, you may be asked to write down one or more *Plot Words*. From time to time, there will be instructions for characters with certain of these special words.

Travel Points

If the adventure asks you to keep track of how many Travel Points you have, find a convenient piece of scratch paper and note your current score (the adventure will tell you). When the adventure says to update this score, make the appropriate changes to the number you've written.

Refresher Entries

When you reach some of the paragraphs in this adventure, you will find that the entry number is followed by a star — like this (★). This means that this is a *refresher entry*. Your character may discard all current Fatigue points, and on a successful HT roll may regain 1 hit point. These points also affect the use of Luck — if you have the Luck advantage, you may use it once

between refresher entries. (If you have Extraordinary Luck, you may use it *twice* between refresher entries.)

Fickleness Rolls

A *Fickleness Roll* is made to determine whether or not an unpredictable psionic ability is working. In this adventure, only make Fickleness rolls when the adventure asks you to. All Fickleness rolls of 8 or lower succeed; any higher result is a failure.

Defaults

For your convenience, when a default skill roll is given in the adventure, the penalties for the original roll are already included. If the regular roll is at a -2 penalty, for instance, and the default is to DX at -4, the -4 penalty already includes the -2 penalty on the original roll.

Character Points

If you finish the adventure and your character is alive, turn to the Character Points section on p. 55. These character points will be useful if you continue to use your character in a campaign — and are an indicator of how well you did (five or more is excellent).

"Unfair" Endings

The phrase, "*Close the book,*" means that your adventure has come to a premature ending. If you feel the ending is unfair, you may want to read the appendix section, "Why You Lost" (p. 62) — but *don't* read this section unless you want to learn the secrets of the adventure.

Repeat Games

After you've played *For Love of Mother-Not* several times, feel free to select your *Plot Words* or to choose your path, rather than always following the dictates of the dice. Explore all of the possibilities.

Eventually, you'll know the plot well enough to run this adventure for your friends. You can let them read the adventure (or read it to them), helping them with the game mechanics, or you can run this as a game-mastered adventure. The expanded psionic rules in the appendix should help you to GM Flinx's unusual abilities.

The Original Story

This adventure is based on *For Love of Mother-Not*, a Humanx Commonwealth novel by Alan Dean Foster. It takes place in the year 548 A.A. (that's 2948 A.D.). If you haven't read the book, play the game before you do — that will preserve the surprises.

Players wishing to recreate Flinx and Pip's literary adventure should watch for options marked with a check — like this (✓). When you come to an entry where one of the options is marked with a check, turn to that entry *no matter what the rules of that paragraph tell you to do*.

The continuing adventures of Flinx and Pip are detailed in *The Tar-Aiyem Krang*, *Orphan Star*, *The End of the Matter*, *Flinx in Flux* and *Bloodhype*. Complete rules for adventuring in the Humanx Commonwealth are provided in *GURPS Humanx*, the worldbook for Alan Dean Foster's universe.

Introduction

A star floats in the void.

Around it, in the spinning disk of motes that make up its planetary system, a pair of specks draws attention. One of them, racing first in the orbit shared by both, is a bright, small rust-red object. Call it a “moon,” though it doesn’t orbit its companion world — the word fits well enough. The name of the object is Flame.

Following in pursuit of Flame comes a world. The milky-colored sphere is flanked by twin arches, faery wings that in imagination’s eye might stroke the velvet darkness and propel this world called Moth after the racing Flame. In reality, the race is never won. The moon and world move in synchrony about their sun, and the wings — actually luminous rings, broken at their closest approach to the planet — never beat, but coast serenely in their orbit. Almost insignificant in contrast are Moth’s three real moons, the tiny moonlets known as The Gnats.

Moth is not a uniform white. The milk color comes from a constantly milling overlay of clouds, beneath which only the smallest patches of dark-green and even rarer brilliant blue ever peek. No mountain ranges reach high enough to tear the curtains of cumulus. On the night side, no city lights burn bright enough to pierce the roiling mist.

There *is* civilization down there. Nomads, improbably descended from ancient desert tribes, chase the great beasts of the northern hemisphere for furs and hides. Miners penetrate the ancient, worn-down mountains, attracted by abundant light minerals — silver, magnesium and copper. Offworld vacationers come to hunt game in the dripping woodlands, and to fish for the mammoth *pisces* in scattered lakes. Merchants gather here, bringing their fleets of KK cargo ships. A flotilla of shuttles operates between the orbiting behemoths and the single urban settlement on Moth, the city of Drallar.

It isn’t the beauty of the system or the local resources which attract the mercantile corporations. Moth is located at a crossroads in Commonwealth space, making it an ideal trading post. His Driest Majesty Dewe Nog Na, like all of his predecessors, has been quick to court foreign cartels with low taxes and special regulations.

Moth’s pleasant business climate offsets its depressing natural climate. Drallar, wrapped in its fleecy overcast, is a rich city of reaching towers and jeweled inurbs. The royal palace rises above all else, topped by a revolving minaret in which Dewe Nog Na occasionally comes to sit and ponder the wealthy city over which he presides.

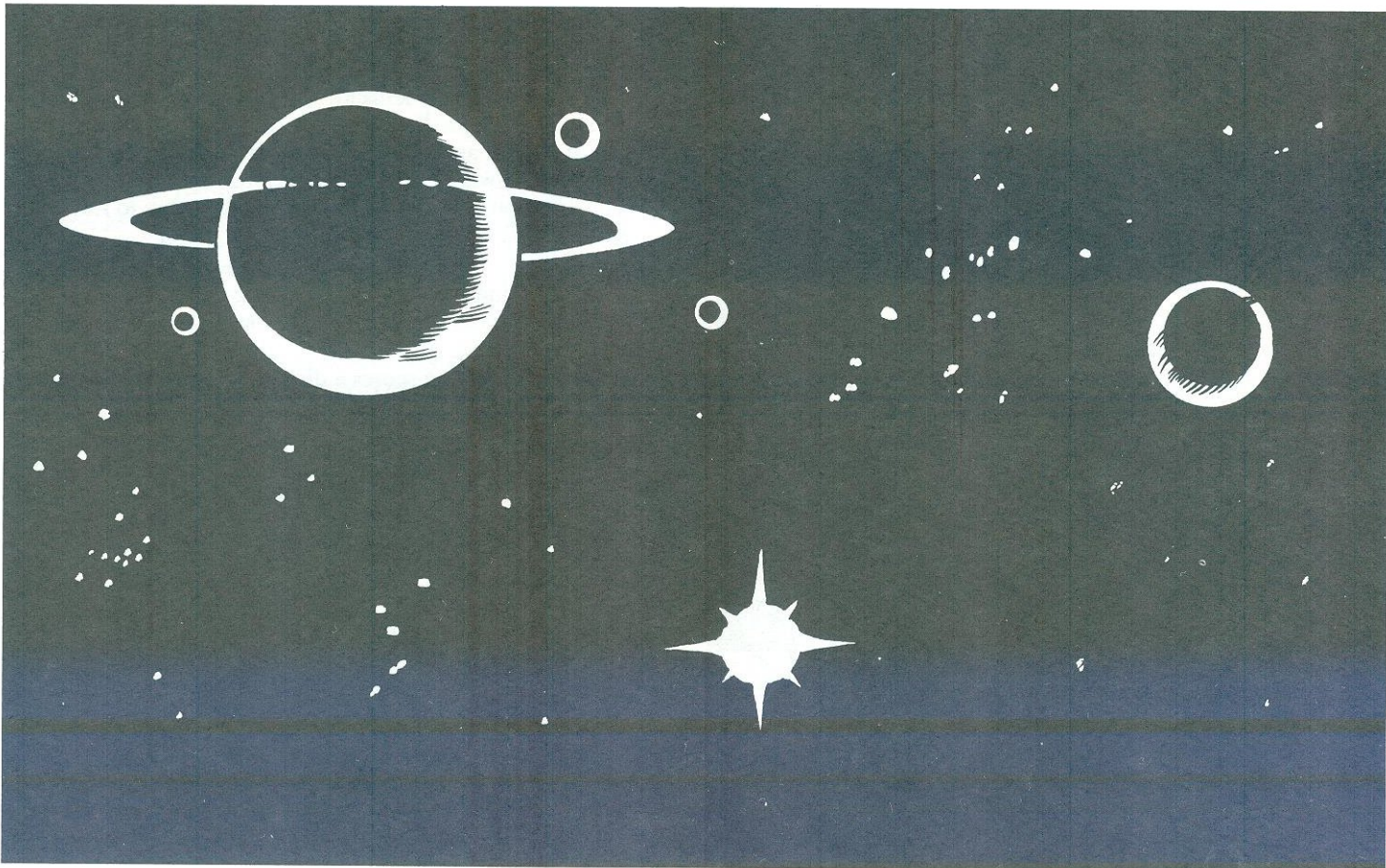
You are a part of this setting, a small and almost insignificant speck in Drallar, just as Moth and Flame are motes on the cosmic scale. Dewe Nog Na, in his revolving minaret, doesn’t know you exist. He lives in the world of inurb towers and corporate headquarters . . . and you live beyond their walls. Yours is the world of the “other” Drallar, where the mobs of the lost and the forgotten — abandoned by an underfunded planetary welfare system — live in the squalor of the marketplace and the factory. You live here with your guardian, Mother Mastiff — who isn’t really your mother — in a combination shop-stall and home, selling your trade goods to credit-rich offworld tourists.

If you have chosen to be Flinx, you will find his character sheet on p. 64.

If you want to create your own character, see “New Characters,” p. 58.

If you would rather not be Flinx, but don’t want to take the time to design your own character, a ready-to-play character sheet for a character named Maliena is provided on p. 63.

When you have your character, turn to 1.



1 The stall-home where you live is divided into two sections: the shop, and the home behind it.

The front half is ten yards across, and its shuttered bulk caps the dead end of a side street. Racks of goods from dozens of systems fill this space: sturdy goods of copper and silver, carved handicrafts of exotic woods, and flashy floatglitter models of Moth to sell to the souvenir-conscious.

The entrance to the shop is protected by a sturdy door and a well-designed lock, more sophisticated than most on this world. The exit — at the rear, just behind the platform where the chromed credcard reader sits — is not locked, and leads to the living quarters.

There are four rooms in back: kitchen/dining area, bathroom, the bedroom of your guardian, and a converted store room that you use.

Returning home late, as you often do, you slither beneath the thermo-sensitive blankets on the oil-bed cot and fall almost instantly asleep.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 582. If you fail, turn to 117.

2 The mudder skitters along just above the surface of the waves, headed for the northern shore. The mudder reacts to your presence — it speeds up and disappears, but as Lauren boosts the throttle, it reappears.

Light flashes erupt from the fleeing vehicle. The beams dissipate before they can do any damage — you're out of range.

"No long-range weapons," murmurs Lauren. She glances at you. "Think you can drive this thing for a little while?"

The controls look very similar to those on your mudder, but you've never driven a water vehicle before. Now is not the time for excessive caution. "I think so," you say.

"This boat is very responsive," she warns, "so watch it."

While you take the controls, Lauren goes astern and returns hefting a large, complex-looking rifle that seems too big for her. "At this range, I can pick their teeth. Hold her steady."

Try a Powerboat roll, at +5 since this is such a simple maneuver. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, at no penalty, or Boating at +2.

If you succeed, turn to 500.

If you fail, turn to 116.

3 You strain to detect any trace of emotion from Mother Mastiff.

Turn to 281.



4 You follow the kidnappers' vehicle through the city, until the trail leads to the very outskirts of Drallar. When the transport finally comes to a halt, it pulls up next to a mudder — a specialized vehicle for moving on Moth's off-road terrain. They're leaving the city!

You can't pursue the mudder in *this* vehicle. What do you want to do?

Drive away before they spot you (433)?

Try to ram the mudder so that it can't escape (272)?

Charge them while they change vehicles, jumping out of your vehicle to rescue Mother Mastiff in the confusion (523)?

5 "I'm trying to ram them and force them down," she says, laughing. "What else can we do?"

"But Mother's on that skimmer!" you protest.

She shrugs. "Can't be helped."

Turn to 416.

6 "Psst! Kid! Orphan-kid!" The man whispering to you from the shadows of the alleyway is Arrapkha, the shopkeeper two stalls up from Mother Mastiff's place. He makes household goods from hardwoods.

"Hello," you greet him.

"I shouldn't be out here like this." He glances around. "You know what people say. The best business is minding one's own."

"Where's Mother Mastiff?" you ask.

"I was working at my lathe," says the shopkeeper. "I heard shouts coming from Mastiff's shop — which in itself isn't strange, as you should know — but when they continued longer than usual, I grew curious. Then, when I was no more than halfway there, the sounds stopped."

"And then?" you ask impatiently.

"I think I saw running figures in the alleyway behind your home," says Arrapkha. "I'm not sure — the gap I peered through is narrow, the light was bad, and it was raining. And it may have nothing to do with your guardian, child."

"How many?" you demand.

He shrugs. "More than two. I'm not sure if they were human or not. It looked as if they might be carrying something which slowed them down."

You question him closely, but there's no more to learn.

Return to 433.

7 Heavy winds snatch at your flying vehicle. You've been trying to avoid this weather for hours, but it has boxed you in on all sides.

Suddenly, lightning scores a direct hit on your skimmer.

Turn to 383.

8 The lights blink on, shockingly bright. You tense beneath the table that shelters you, but there's no danger — the party of travelers has fled, taking Mother Mastiff with them.

Spying an open back door, you pursue.

Turn to 77.

9 When you refuse to stop, the Peaceforcer fires. So does his partner. Caught in the combined crossfire, there's no room to run or dodge. The bursts tear your body apart.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

10 The skimmer's automatic controls guide it in a gentle spiral as it claws for the altitude to rise above the woods. Flying beneath the forest canopy is dangerous and — if this is a rental vehicle — is prevented by a safety lock.

Soon, you are skimming fifty feet above the tops of the highest trees. From here, the forest looks like a leafy ocean, with its green waves frozen in a moment of time. Your passage stirs up flocks of birds, which spring into colorful flight and then disappear into low-lying banks of cloud. When mists drift across your path, they spot your windshield and leave the open cockpit cool and humid.

Turn to 426.

11 Who could want to harm old Mother? If there's an innocent in Drallar, he's it — in the deep forest, surrounded by vicious thugs, he'll be defenseless. You've got to save him — Mother's the only father you've ever known.

Turn to 534.

12 All you can see are two tiny red eyes staring at you.

Turn to 624.

13 “And don't give me any of that archaic nonsense about not wanting me along because I'm a woman,” she says.

“Oh, don't worry,” you say crisply. “The last thing I'd do would be to inflict archaic nonsense on you.”

That puzzles but satisfies her.

Turn to 516.

14 “I missed,” you confess, as your catamaran circles away from the mudder.

“Both shots?” You nod. Lauren looks grim. “That was a Marker rifle. If you'd hit the skimmer, we'd have some chance of tracking it and your guardian. But now . . .”

Make a Note: Your *Plot Word* is ANGUISH.

Turn to 574.

15 You look for a place to set this vehicle down, trying not to panic.

Try an IQ roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 487.

If you fail, turn to 448.

16 If you are at an inn or hunting lodge, try a Will roll at -2. If you fail, and if you have \$10 or more on your credcard, you can't resist eating a *real* meal. Deduct the price.

If you want to buy new equipment here, turn to 599.

If you want to steal a vehicle, turn to 489.

If you are ready to resume your travels, turn to 162.

17 The woman's mind is suddenly open to you. Revulsion emanates from her. Disgust and pity wash over you in waves. It is so new, so alien and sickening, that you don't know how to react. All you know is that your would-be saviors have no more affection for you, and perhaps less in the way of good intentions, than the elderly criminals.

As your frustration and despair build, so does your anger.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 203.

If you fail, turn to 98.

18 There's no sign of anyone in the alley. The hidden exit from Mother Mastiff's private room gapes open. You're too late.

If you return to check over the shop, turn to 481.

If you search Mother Mastiff's room thoroughly, turn to 141.

If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.

If you do none of these, turn to 433.

19 “How are we going to follow them?” you ask. “By the time we get back here, we'll have lost them.”

Alexis pats the tracking scope. “Not with this baby. She's so sensitive, I can almost read the composition of that skimmer's registration plates!

“Seriously, that skimmer has a unique metallurgical signature just like any vehicle does, and I've got that stored in this machine's memory. We can track it, all right, and at good range.”

You return to obtain a skimmer.

Turn to 633.

20 Erase all marks in the boxes below. Then roll two dice for each item. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the “nearby” score, make a mark in the “local” box — the item is nearby, and you can go to it.

If the roll is greater than the “nearby” score, the item isn't close by — place a mark in the “distant” box.

<i>Location (entry number)</i>	<i>Nearby Score</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Distant</i>
Communications Depot (626)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forest Station (469)	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hunting Lodge (80)	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inn (224)	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nomad Encampment (348)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood-Processing Plant (440)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To go to any local location, turn to the entry associated with it. For instance, if you wanted to visit an inn and if one were close by, you would turn to 224.

If you choose not to visit any of these places, or if there is nothing close enough to visit, turn to 531.

21 A storm of emotions assaults you: laughter, fear, pleasure, love, hatred, anger. Somewhere, a woman taunts her lover. Elsewhere, bankers quarrel. At the distant shuttleport, a mechanic howls as his foot is crushed beneath a toppling barrel. It seems as if all of Drallar is cascading into you. The feelings threaten to overwhelm you.

“STOP IT,” you order.

Try a Will roll, at -6.

If you succeed, turn to 530.

If you fail, return to 381.

22 The feeling continues to pour through you, but its origin remains hidden. It seems so close! You glance up and down the row of shuttered shops, lit only by the occasional gleam of light through a loose chink. Where is it coming from?

Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 265.

If you fail, turn to 169.

23 The creature startles your mount, and it nearly bucks you off. It wrenches at the reins, but you retain control.

The animal that surprised you is a squook. Like its near-relative the canish, the squook is a hyperactive ground-dwelling carnivore. The slim furred body is built low to the ground, and its powerful front claws are designed for burrowing in pursuit of other, herbivorous burrowers . . . although those same claws have uses other than digging.



The carnivore looks uncertainly at you, your mount, and — emerging from under your slickertic — Pip. Then, deterred by numbers, it jumps back to its burrow. From there, with only its head exposed, it snarls and yaps at you until you are out of sight. Turn to 198.

24 You expect your pet to halt before one of the faceless commercial buildings, but he continues to lead you into the residential and then the outer industrial sectors of Drallar. You slow to a trot, then a jog as the distance takes its toll.

Drallar is the largest city on Moth, but it's hardly a giant metropolis. You aren't surprised when, at last, you reach the edge of the city. Here, the forest marches forward to meet the ranks of buildings. Only a few residences, made of wood and plastic, are situated within the towering shelter of the evergreens.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 250.

If not, turn to 451.

25 "Where's Pip?" you ask. "Your pet, I assume?" The silver-haired man gestures. The wall at the rear of the room slides to one side, revealing a second, connected store room. On a table in the forefront stands a transparent cube a yard in diameter, topped with several small tanks. Hoses from the tanks run into the cube.

To the left of the table stands a bald, wrinkled man holding a small control box. His eyes shift back and forth from you to the cube. He blinks rapidly.

Pip lies at the bottom of the cube, apparently asleep.

"Your pet is resting comfortably," says the leader. "The air in the cage has been mixed with a mild soporific. If you try anything foolish, Westhoff will change the settings, and the air in the cage will be replaced entirely with the narcoleptic gas. Your pet would asphyxiate. It would not take long. The cage is weld-sealed, and there is no latch."

"You've made your point," you admit.

Roll one die.

On a roll of 1 or 2, return to 456.

On any other result, turn to 57.

26 One of the seated figures in the dining area whirls, stares at you, and starts to rise — *it's Mother Mastiff!* The three others react with grim surprise. A young man grabs Mastiff and tries to force your guardian into a chair, starting a scuffle. His companion starts toward you, pulling something out of a coat pocket. Two more strangers crowd in from a back hallway, moving toward you.

Try an IQ roll, at -1.

If you succeed, turn to 165.

If you fail, turn to 432.

27 Morose and desperate, you return to the marketplace to sip mulled wine and feed Pip. You have no clues as to where Mother Mastiff has been taken.

Suddenly, you feel a tickle in the back of your mind.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 115.

If you fail, turn to 475.

28 The stampeding herd has destroyed the enemy base. Almost all of the buildings are flattened. Survivors have fled into the woods.

"We need to charge this skimmer, or we're going nowhere," says your partner.

"I can walk if I have to," insists Mother Mastiff.

"It's all right," you say, pointing out the intact power station. The devilopes didn't attack it, possibly because it's automated and therefore offered no live targets. The few coherent survivors do not bother you as you charge the skimmer.

Turn to 580.

29 "When I tell you," she says, "go hard a-port." "It's getting awful close," you warn, eyeing the tracking scope.

"A fisherman has to be patient," says Lauren.

Turn to 558.

30 The other pilot is too canny. You lose them from your scope. The skimmer bearing Mother Mastiff could be almost anywhere.

Turn to 551.

31 If you are in a skimmer, turn to 131. Otherwise, turn to 285.

32 You move back, then charge at the door and try to kick it down as you've seen old Makepeace demonstrate.

Try a Karate roll, at -2. (For purposes of this adventure, you may substitute rolls for Brawling or DX, both at -4.)

If you succeed, turn to 375.

If you fail, turn to 217.

33 “Yes, yes I can,” you say, hesitatingly. Your guardian isn’t being honest — perhaps because the matter is personal? “You can tell me all about it some other time.”
Turn to 74.

34 Roll three dice. (If you have Luck or Extraordinary Luck and can still use them, you might use them now. High numbers are good. Luck rules are explained on p. B21; limits on luck in this adventure are explained on p. 2.)
If you roll an 8 or less, turn to 287.
If your result is 9 to 12, turn to 127.
If you roll 13 or higher, turn to 255. ✓

35 It looks like you’ll have to keep your old form of transport for a little while longer.
Turn to 162.

36 “Like hell,” replies Mastiff, with a sneer. “I’ve spent a lifetime filling up this head of mine. I don’t want somebody else messing around up there.” Behind the veneer of self-confidence, you feel his fear like a hot, brilliant flame. “We can make a deal. I’d be much more use to ye if I did what ye required voluntarily instead of like some altered pet.”
“You lie forcefully, but not forcefully enough,” says a man in the room. “We can’t afford a traitor.”
“Ye’ll not operate on me!” roars Mastiff, pounding futilely against the arms of the chair. “I have friends, connections . . .”
“So do we,” comes the calm reply.
Turn to 445.

37 Mastiff has been a hard master, working you long hours for little reward or encouragement. Now that you have some idea of what’s become of him, you feel a weight lift — good riddance to the tyrant!
Then you reconsider. Life without Mother Mastiff will mean scrounging in the streets, and going back to the auction block if the authorities catch you. On top of that, Mother’s friends may come looking for him — not out of friendship, but for professional reasons. If you were to fall into the hands of one of them — Radium-Jaw Pickering, for instance — your life wouldn’t be worth a half-dozen credits.

And what if Mastiff’s not really done for? What if he’s alive, and escapes, and comes back . . . and finds that you didn’t try to come after him and save him?
You don’t want to rescue him — but it might be safer than *not* rescuing him.
Turn to 534.

38 The gunman reaches down, taking your weapons. (Erase them from your record sheet.)
“Leave him there,” calls a female voice.
“But . . .” says the gunman.
The woman cuts him off. “Don’t upset him. We’re leaving.”
You lie in agony on the floor, waiting for your shocked synapses to resume carrying messages from your brain to your muscles. In minutes, you can wiggle your toes, then bend your arm. Shortly after that, you are on your feet. Your legs tremble, but they’ll carry you.
But why didn’t they take you prisoner when they had the chance? Why did they let you live?
Turn to 77.

39 You find your small friend curled up, shaking with fright.

Make a note: Pip will not be able to help you in future encounters, until after you reach the next *refresher entry* (if you don’t know what this is, see p. 2).
Turn to 625.

40 The bodies have been almost flattened by the pressure of a great weight.
Turn to 332.

41 Something is resting on your chest. Looking down you see Pip lying there — bruised and dazed, but alive. You help him crawl to his usual post on your shoulder.
Turn to 341.

42 A bolt of energy explodes nearby, forcing you to take cover. The thug’s companions — around half a dozen, carrying a slumped prisoner you recognize as Mother Mastiff — rush to a parked mudder, all the while keeping their weapons pointed in your direction. The vehicle drives into the woods at top speed.
Turn to 77.

43 A grim Lauren Walder calls you back to the bow. “It’ll keep working us until we make a mistake,” she says. “Then it’ll take us the way it took the poor souls still stuck on that mudder.”
“Can’t we get into shallow water where it can’t follow us?” you ask.

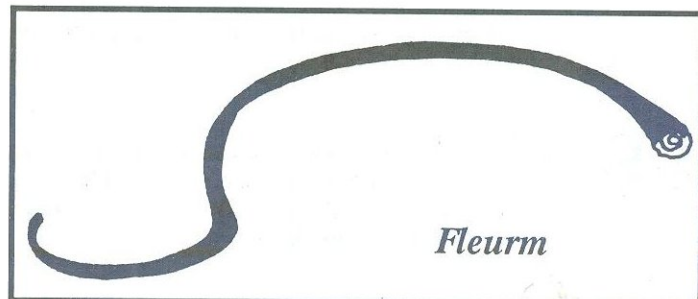
“Maybe,” she says. “And maybe not.”
Try a Powerboat roll at -4, representing the voyage back to shore. It defaults to IQ or DX, both at -9, or Boating at -7. You may use your own skill, if you wish, or Lauren’s (see p. 61 for her stats). If you have Luck and can use it, this might be a good time.
If the roll is successful, turn to 427.
If not, turn to 484.

44 You sleep right through this adventure, and miss all the excitement.
Close the book.

45 “Get out!” yells Mother Mastiff at the creature.
“Stop it,” you tell your guardian. “That’s Pip. He’s my new pet. He might think you’re trying to harm me. I don’t know how he’ll react.”
“We’re going to find out,” replies Mastiff grimly. “I’ll not have some monstrosity crawling about my house!” The broom makes another swing.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 121.
If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 417.
If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 345.

46 Once again, your efforts meet with failure.
Turn to 433.



47 Eventually the door gives, crashing inward. It had only been locked, not boltsealed. You crouch in the doorway, staring into the dimness. Pip's head moves anxiously from side to side, his concern matching your own.

The stall looks undisturbed.

If you search the stall, turn to 606.

If you proceed to the living quarters, turn to 109.

48 You freeze! There's a sophisticated detection system operating here.

If you give up the theft, turn *immediately* to 162.

Otherwise, you must deactivate the alarm system.

Try a new Traps/TL8 roll, at -4 (defaults to IQ or DX at -9, or Lockpicking/TL8 at -7). If you are breaking into a forest station, there is an additional -1 penalty. If you have an Alarm Deactivation Kit, apply its bonus.

If you succeed, and you are at a forest station or an inn, turn to 180.

If you succeed, and you are at a communications depot, turn to 274.

If you fail, turn to 81.

49 Suddenly, you can feel her, just for an instant. There are no emotions there, no feelings of any kind. You hope that good medical treatment will help her, but it's almost as if she's been mindwiped — and not selectively, either. Thinking about her makes you uncomfortable.

Turn to 634.

50 Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at +4 since avoiding ground animals is easy. The roll defaults to IQ at -2, Piloting (any type) at no penalty, or Driving (any type) at -3.

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 529.

If you fail, turn to 560.

51 Your attack is ill-planned. The man hears you, steps aside, and catches your jaw with a thrown elbow.

You take 1d-3 crushing damage.

If you are unconscious, turn to 38.

If you are dead, *Close the book*. Otherwise, turn to 252.

52 Casually, you ask about recent passersby.

Roll one die. (If you have Luck and can use it, you may want to use it now. High rolls are good.)

On a roll of 3 or less, turn to 412.

On a roll of 4 or better, turn to 110.

53 Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 533.

If you fail, you can't think of anything creative — return to 613.

54 You can't do it. There's something between you and this creature, a bond that you know you can never break. Even Mother isn't as close to you as you now feel to this little animal. If his owner were to find you, you'd never give your pet up!

Turn to 76.

55 "The plan's simple," says your partner, as you sweep low over the road. The occupants of the mudder crane their necks back, looking up at you. The cover is partially closed, hiding your guardian from view.

"There's a narrow spot in the road ahead," he says. "If I plant this hoverdisk in that place, then they have to stop. They can't go around, because the slopes are too steep and dry. And they can't go forward, unless they move us out of the way."

"Then what do we do?" you ask.

"Talk with them," he says. "They've got to have some sense. They'll see reason."

There's a flash of light from below.

Roll one die.

On an even roll, turn to 525.

On an odd roll, turn to 256.

56 Aural leads you to a vehicle you remember seeing earlier — a copper-colored, egg-shaped skimmer with an odd lozenge logo. There's a long scrape along one side.

Turn to 332.

57 "What do you want from me?" you ask. "Redemption," he says softly.

"I don't understand."

"You will. We're interested in your erratic but inarguable abilities — your Talent."

"You've done all of this just to find out about my Talent?" you say, amazed. "But I'd have told you anything you wanted to know."

He shakes his head. "You say that, and might believe it, but your mind might react otherwise."

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about," you reply.

"You are an emotional telepath, correct? And what else? Telepathy? Precognition? Pyrokinesis? Telekinesis? Dimensional perceptivity?"

You laugh. "I don't even know what all of those words mean. I can only read people's feelings, sometimes. The rest of that is fantasy, isn't it?"

"The potentials lie within every human mind," he says quietly. "When awakened, further stimuli can bring such abilities to life. We wish to test you, probe the limits of your Talent and test for other, hidden abilities as yet undeveloped."

Try a Detect Lies roll. It defaults to IQ at -6, or Psychology at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 382.

If you fail, turn to 308.

58 As you maneuver toward safety within the open spaces of the forest-top, your skills aren't sufficient. The skimmer is sloppy, turning wider and slower than you expect. You overshoot your safe haven, crashing into the tops of the trees.

Turn to 471.

59 Lauren cuts the engines. The unpowered catamaran drifts back toward the spot where the predatory fish was last seen. Without having to be told, you reload the harpoon gun. "Where's the penetral?" you ask.

"It's slowing," she says, "coming after us as expected. Are you ready back there?"

"Yes," you reply.

"It's under the boat!" she yells.

Turn to 411.

60 When your credcard shows that your account is capable of paying, the shopkeeper lets you leave with your new possession.

If you leave now to rescue Mother Mastiff, turn to 485.

If you continue your business in Drallar, return to 352.

61 You have to fly low to the ground — otherwise, the devolopes won't follow the scent. Flying low through the forest is dangerous, made even more so by the fact that this model of skimmer can't fly below a certain speed. If it flies too slow, it will stall and crash.

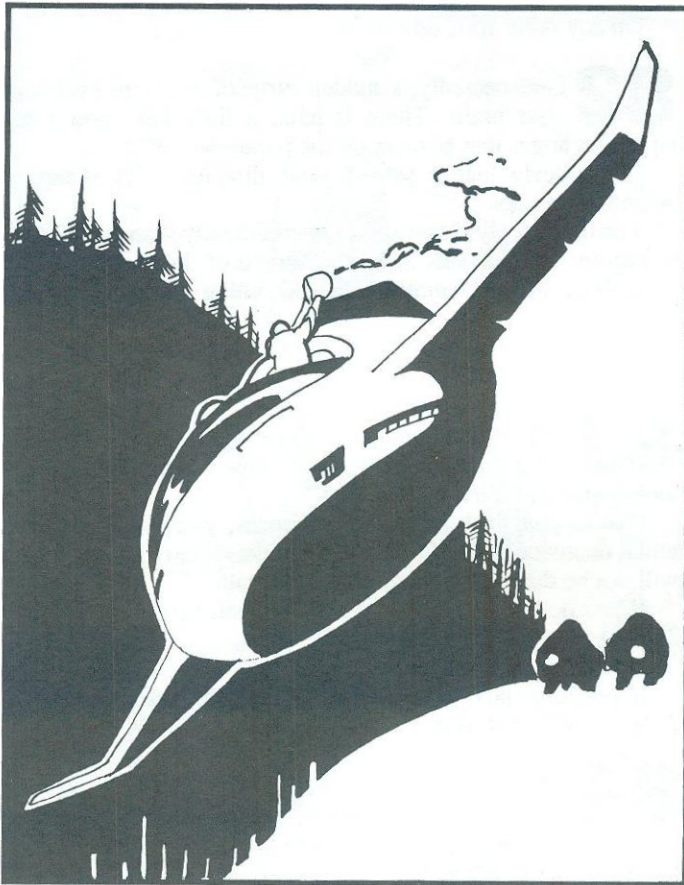
Decide whether you will pilot the skimmer, or let your companion so do. The one who is not piloting stands in the back of the skimmer, doling out the stinking concoction.

Behind you, the herd is rising. Uncertain bellows change to roars of desire and rage.

Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll for the person operating the skimmer, at +2. The roll defaults to Piloting (any type) at -4, or IQ at -4. (Stats for your companion are found on p. 61, if you need them.)

If you succeed, turn to 322.

If you fail, turn to 302.



62 This man is out of action.

If you are at an inn or hunting lodge, turn to 140.

If not, turn to 42.

63 The pure emotion — not a horrified cry, but the mental image of the person making the cry — overloads your Talent's ability to shield your mind.

You suffer 2d worth of Fatigue points.

If you collapse, turn to 590.

Otherwise, turn to 344.

64 The slicing pain stabs through your lethargy. You stagger to your feet, shaking your arm to dislodge the scavengers. Blood sluices down your arm.

You take 2 hits of damage. Lose sufficient Fatigue to restore your effective ST to 2.

Turn to 223.

65 "Everything will be explained to you," promise Stanzel.

You are bundled into an air car and taken to the shuttleport side of the city. This section of Drallar is bloated with stark, blocky business buildings, peopled mostly with machines — dark, uninviting, and alien. Your vehicle comes to a halt before a dingy warehouse.

If you are incapacitated, turn to 366.

If you aren't, turn to 504.

66 Life in the woods seems almost too easy, you think as you journey. Whatever nature produces, it gives away free for the asking — there's nothing to steal. It seems so different from the marketplace, more benign. You feel yourself starting to relax.

If you are in a skimmer, turn to 350.

Otherwise, turn to 503.

67 Studying the map, you see what you missed before — a second trail, leading off in a totally unknown direction. You've got to backtrack, and get back on the trail Mother Mastiff's captors must have taken.

Roll one die, and subtract the result from your current Travel Score.

If you are on foot, turn to 389.

Otherwise, turn to 162.

68 A triumphant Aural reels back up the ladder, along with a drugged, weak — but smiling — Mother Mastiff. The smoking skimmer disappears below tree level.

Turn to 349.

69 You find your guardian strapped onto a bed, in what looks to be an operating room. A sinister globe dangles overhead.

"How'd ye get here without any money?" exclaims a startled Mother Mastiff. Your guardian appears unhurt but tired.

"I have other abilities, you know," you reply.

Mastiff laughs, a dry cackle that's very familiar. "Ye were always good at helping yourself to whatever ye needed."

Whoever did this to Mother Mastiff and to you should pay for what they've done — that, and you want answers! A fury rises in you. Why did all of this happen?

Roll three dice. If you have the *Plot Word* DELAY, subtract 2 from the roll.

If the result is 10 or higher, turn to 336.

If not, turn to 238.

70 There's a shout as they catch sight of you. A ground transport pulls in front of them, its doors swinging open to collect the fleeing attackers. You spot a limp figure being manhandled into the vehicle — Mother Mastiff!

Then the transport speeds away, faster than you and Pip can pursue.

Roll one die.

On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 611.

On any other roll, turn to 410.

71 The shock of something whacking your arm brings you sharply awake, wincing. You hear rather than see something fall off the bed, behind you.

Mother Mastiff stands in the room, wielding a broom. "What is it?" you ask.

"Hush, be quiet!" comes the reply.

Turn to 576.

72 If you have the *Plot Word* FLIPPED, turn to 397. Otherwise, turn to 369.

73 You stagger to your feet, shaking from shock. The carcass of your former mount lies crushed beneath the fallen tree.

"Pip?" you cry. Then, with real fear, "Pip!"

Roll one die.

On an even roll, turn to 455.

On an odd result, turn to 39.

74 If you have a partner (Mother Mastiff and Pip don't count), turn to 227. Otherwise, turn to 571.

75 You've been through too many street fights to do anything stupid, such as making a direct approach to the table where you last saw Mastiff. Instead, you retreat and drop to a crawl, taking the long way around the room and hoping to sneak past the guards.

Make a note: You may subtract 1 from the die roll when making *random firing* die rolls. The text will tell you when these occur.

Turn to 493.

76 "What do I call you?" you whisper to the sleeping animal. He makes no reply. You've never had the chance to name anything before. An idea comes to you from one of the library chips of pre-civilization books, the name of a character who seemed a lot like you. "Pip," you say, trying out the sound of the name. "That's what I'll call you."

The street in front of the shop remains deserted. The lock responds to your palm. You quietly make your way back to your cot. You build a nest of clothes in a box for your new friend and gently settle him in it.

Your eyes close before your head touches the pillow.

Turn to 297.

77 There's no time to get in your vehicle. You rush after the mudder on foot, desperate to find what direction it's running in.

If your *Plot Word* is SOUTH, turn to 240.

If your *Plot Word* is NORTH, turn to 477.

If your *Plot Word* is WEST, turn to 118.

78 You now know that Mother Mastiff has been taken into the deep woods in a mudder. Knowing where the Koyunlu plant is, they must be traveling . . .

Turn to 363.

79 You awaken lying in the street before the shop-stall. Several minutes have passed.

Lose sufficient Fatigue points to restore your effective ST to 2.

If you haven't already battered the door down, you do so — wearily — now.

Turn to 47.

80 The hunting lodge is a large, rambling structure of native wood and stone. Several land vehicles are

parked near the front — none bearing official markings. Steps lead onto a covered porch, populated by the kind of rustic furniture popular among tourists.

When you enter the lobby, a uniformed man is quick to greet you. "Welcome," he says, scanning you from head to foot. "How may we help you?"

By the pleasant aromas in the air, you can tell that the lodge serves hand-prepared meals — and it must be mealtime. The dining area is in view to your right. This lodge caters to offworld travelers, providing fishing and hunting guides as well as plush, expensive rooms.

Turn to 52.

81 A bell ringing shrilly in the night tips you off — they know you're here! Grabbing for Pip, you flee into the woods on foot.

Roll one die.

On an even result, turn to 424.

On any other roll, turn to 35.

82 Unexpectedly, a sudden surge of emotions bursts into your brain. There is hate, a little fear, and a self-righteous anger that borders on the paranoid.

The elderly leader senses your disquiet. "Is something wrong?" he asks.

You don't reply. Instead, you methodically scan every face in the room. None seems to be the source of the feeling you are receiving. And the emotions are becoming stronger, more intense.

The source is just outside the door of this room.

Turn to 398.

83 "Oh, nothing much," you explain. "That's interesting . . ." says your merchant, a sly look coming into her eyes.

Due to your lack of credit references, you must pay a rental deposit equal to 25% of the purchase cost. The actual rent will not be due until you return to the stall.

If you do not or cannot pay this deposit, turn *immediately* to 216.

Otherwise, the rental is yours.

If you leave now to follow Mother Mastiff, turn to 485.

If you continue your business in Drallar, turn to 352.

84 "You remember that partially deforested section we flew over earlier?" your partner asks. You think for a moment, then nod. "We're going back there. I have some volatile allies in mind."

You take off to find the allies your partner has in mind: Demichin devilopes. A herd of the mammoth herbivores — Moth's dominant native lifeform — left the trail of devastation you spotted yesterday.

You find them in minutes. The black mounds — each creature is 30 feet long, and when standing, 20 feet tall — stud the end of the trail, where they are sleeping off their satiation. Each has a downsloping, heavily muscled neck that droops from between a pair of immense humped shoulders to end in a nightmarish skull from which several horns protrude. Some of the devilopes have only two horns. Others have as many as nine. The tree-sized forelegs — taller than the hind legs — allow the big animals to knock down the great evergreens and strip them of leaves and bark.

"They'll sleep like this for days," explains your companion. "That is, until we wake them up. We're going down there."

If you agree, turn to 564.

If you protest, turn to 246.

85 The warm rain of early summer pounds down around you. The street is empty. You search your mind for some clue to the direction of the source of the loneliness.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -4 since direction sensing is difficult.

If you succeed, turn to 592.

If you fail, turn to 22.

86 As the jet boat screams in a tight curve, the distant *crump* of the harpoon's delayed explosives goes off in the guts of the penestral. Polyline spews from a drum inside the hull.

Make a note: You've just used one harpoon. Keep track of how many you've fired.

If you are piloting the catamaran, turn to 589.

Otherwise, turn to 384.



87 Suddenly the lights go out. The room is now lit only by the fog-dimmed light from faraway windows.

If you have the *Plot Word* DROPPED, and if you aren't paralyzed, turn *immediately* to 343.

If you are paralyzed, turn to 241.

Otherwise, turn to 581.

88 The people in the mudder remain silent, no matter what you say to them. It's an eerie, silent showdown — a mudder and a hoverdisk, in a narrow ravine.

Turn to 556.

89 You consider closing the protective dome, but that would seal some of the fliers inside your vehicle. You slow down, unable to see your path clearly.

Turn to 399.

90 You awake with a silent start, and glance rapidly around the room. Rubbing your throbbing eyes, you swing your legs clear of the bed and sit up.

Then you stop and look around. *Something is wrong.* "Pip?" you cry. Your pet is not in his usual sleeping spot, nor is he hidden under your blanket. You're confused, then puzzled. He goes out on his own some nights, but he's always back by dawn. "Pip, breakfast!"

"Disappeared, has he?" calls out Mother Mastiff from the kitchen. "Wouldn't upset me if the little nastiness never did come back."

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 439.

If you fail, turn to 284.

91 You race away. If any shots were fired, they missed you. From behind the angle of a storage shed, you watch helplessly as Mother Mastiff is thrown into the mudder and driven into the forests that surround the city.

Turn to 433.

92 Fortunately for you, muccax love mud. The ugly beast surges forward before you even apply the spurs, hopping 15 feet in the air. You angrily whack its bony head. Excited hops like that in the forest, with you in the shoulder-mounted saddle, could decapitate you. The muccax bleats apologetically.

When you finally do apply the spurs, the dim-witted animal grunts and proceeds in leisurely ten-yard bounds. You now see why they recommend goggles and a heavy slickertic when riding muccax — with each leap, the splayed feet send up a spray of water and mud.

Make a note: If you do not own Heavy Riding Gear, you are severely drenched — apply a -2 penalty to both IQ and DX in all encounters, until you either purchase Heavy Riding Gear or get rid of your muccax.

Turn to 426.

93 In the distance, you see figures in the mist running away from you.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 565.

Otherwise, turn to 70.

94 Your unsteady hand is too unpracticed at piloting. Suspended below, Aural pantomimes the actions she wants you to take. Time is running out.

Try a second Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at -2. The roll defaults to IQ at -8. If you succeed, turn to 68.

If you fail, turn to 573.

95 The pounding continues, until it becomes actual pain. You take 1d-3 points of Fatigue.

If you now get out of bed, turn to 466.

If you try once more to sleep, turn to 44.

96 If you have a vehicle or a riding animal, turn *immediately* to 162.

Otherwise, you're in a desperate situation. You've got to have some kind of transportation, and there's only one way to get it. You hang around the area until nightfall.

Turn to 489.

97 Your mudder rocks as a heavy branch crashes into it. Seconds later, the vehicle won't respond to your commands. It's pinned under fallen debris.

Turn to 625.



98 A buzzer roars to life on one of the consoles, filling the room with insistent discordance. The silver-haired man stares at it, then at you, then at the Peaceforcers. "For heaven's sake, don't upset the youth!"

"What's going on?" You are almost crying. "Why won't you leave me alone?"

"These *Meliorares*," she spits the word out, "seem to think you're important. That's good enough for me. I'm no specialist."

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 488.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 106.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 243.

99 You awaken suddenly from a deep sleep. Something is wrong. A heavy pressure sits on your shoulder — it's Pip, but that's not the problem. Stealthily, you open an eyelid.

Mother Mastiff is advancing cautiously through the doorway, with a broom outstretched. Your guardian pokes it at you.

Try a Dodge roll.

If you succeed, turn to 199.

If you fail, turn to 71.

100 You could be in trouble — *if* the man calls the authorities, and *if* they believe him, and *if* they can track you down . . .

Roll one die. If you ran away from the man, add 1 to the roll.

If the result is higher than a 5, turn to 462.

Otherwise, turn to 78.

101 Even as you dive and roll for cover, you begin to shiver uncontrollably — a side effect of a shocked nervous system.

Make a note: You have a temporary penalty of -2 to DX, and -1 to IQ, until you reach the next *refresher entry* (see p. 2 if you don't know what this is).

If you are at an inn or hunting lodge, turn to 493.

If not, turn to 42.

102 It takes you precious seconds to find the gun — time that should have been spent aiming.

Make a note: When you fire your first shot, apply a -2 penalty for these lost seconds.

Turn to 206.

103 Knowing the marketplace as you do, you know you'll be lucky to get a fair price for what you've found.

Decide how much of your goods to sell at one time, and select one of the merchants from "The Marketplace" (p. 55) to approach.

Then try a Contest of Skills, pitting your Merchant skill (defaults to IQ at -5) against the shopkeeper's. You have a -2 penalty to your roll, since you are in a hurry, and much of your merchandise is second-hand.

If you win the Contest: For every point by which you win the Contest, you are offered 10% more than your goods are worth.

If you lose: For every point by which you lose the Contest, the price goes down by 5%.

One Contest (only) may be rolled for each merchant. You are not forced to accept any offer.

When you are done, return to 352.

104 If your Move score is 5 or higher, turn to 372. If it isn't, you aren't fast enough — turn to 457.

105 As you track down Mother Mastiff and the kidnapers, you become more and more familiar with the charms — and the dangers — of the wilderness.

Roll one die. Count down the boxes below until you count a number of boxes equal to the number rolled. Cross that box out, and turn to the associated paragraph. If the box is already crossed-out, roll again. If all the boxes are crossed out, begin fresh by erasing all the marks.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 66. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 407. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 228. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 178. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 31. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turn to 244. |

106 All of a sudden, the female Peaceforcer's face takes on a strange look — somewhere between terror and trance. She is staring at something in the rear of the room.

“What is it, Rose?” asks the male Peaceforcer.

She is staring directly at the transparent cage containing Pip. The plippit is standing up, making aggressive motions with his paws. His jaws work as if he might be hissing or growling, but you can't hear anything through the pancyrylic cube.

The Peaceforcer begins to whimper. The Meliorare leader's eyes suddenly light up. “Induced hallucination?” he theorizes.

Turn to 268.

107 In the poor illumination from a streetlamp too many yards distant, you make out the shape of the creature. It isn't very large.

Turn to 624.

108 Returning with you to her lodge, Lauren makes arrangements to check out the lodge's skimmer and tracking equipment.

“It's your neck,” says a reluctant assistant manager. “Suppose someone asks which way you went?”

“Tell them I'm headed . . .” Your cough interrupts her. She looks at you and nods. “. . . across the lake.”

He shrugs. “Take care of yourself, Lauren.”

Turn to 514.

109 The door opens at a touch. The place is a shambles. In the kitchen, pots, pans and food are strewn everywhere. Clothing and personal items lie in the hall. The destruction is worst in Mother Mastiff's room. The bed looks like the scene of an attempted murder.

Across from the bed, the concealed “slip-me-out” exit is open wide. An outside breeze blows through.

If you search this room, turn to 141.

If you follow the slip-me-out, turn to 232.

If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.

If you do none of these, turn to 433.

110 “We don't get very many people out this way,” the man says. “That's what's so funny. There was a group in here just recently that might be your quarry.”

You swallow carefully, and describe Mother Mastiff.

The man nods. “With a mouth like a veteran spacer.”

“How long ago were they here?” you ask. He tells you.

Turn to 376.

111 There's been little sign of life for some time. The nomads seem to be early risers. In the late afternoon, four vehicles straggled into camp — beat-up, dirt-crusted mudders — along with a dozen men from a hunting party.

If you penetrate this set-up, turn to 209.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

112 This man is out of action.
If you are at an inn or hunting lodge, turn to 87.
If not, turn to 42.

113 You find the forlorn corpse of one of the gliding rodents inside the main aircoop. Apparently the safety system failed, and the blocked ventilation caused the sensitive power systems to overheat.

The problem is easily fixed, and the skimmer again rises into the air. The engines sound a little rough, though . . . they haven't survived unscathed.

Make a note: On all future Travel rolls, apply a -3 penalty to the result.

Turn to 198.



114 You are taken into the warehouse, up in an elevator, then through a labyrinth of corridors and storage rooms. Your group halts before an unmarked door, where the old man talks into a speaker grill. The door opens, and you are admitted.

The new room is like the others you've seen, except that a row of working equipment manned by grim, elderly technicians runs along the right-hand wall. From a door at the rear of the room emerge three figures. One carries himself like a born leader, and you mark him immediately — a tall man, old like the others, but standing straight and handsome.

“What a pleasure to finally meet you,” says the man. “We've gone to a great deal of trouble.”

Turn to 456.

115 You feel a strand of emotion, latch on it and bring it into focus — and suddenly, for the briefest of moments, you are there! You see it all from Mother Mastiff's view: the mudder lurching through the woods, the two men who fight to hold your guardian down, and the tight-lipped woman who slips close with the hypodermic and gives the mind-numbing injection.

As you lose contact, you conclude that the mudder, wherever it is going, is in the wilderness and heading away from Drallar. You fight to establish a direction . . .

Turn to 363.

116 She depresses the contact stud of the rifle. A tiny projectile speeds after the mudder. “A miss,” she says unhappily. “Try to hold a steady course.”

“Yes, ma'am,” you say, apologetically.

Make a note: You learn your lesson — apply a +2 bonus to all further Powerboat rolls in this encounter, due to your increased respect for the power and maneuverability of this vessel.

Turn to 500.

117 A rough hand shakes you awake. “Get ahold of yourself,” says Mother Mastiff, wiping at your face with a clean rag. You realize that you've been crying in your sleep. “What's the matter?” asks the familiar gruff voice.

“Oh, I'm right enough,” you say. You dimly recall a nightmare about a huge and empty cavern, and . . . a burning hunger.

“Is there something troubling you?” asks your guardian.

You can see it coming. Unless you can convince Mother that you're all right, your guardian will bring you a hot cup of *effrinzia* tea. You'll sleep till morning, and wake up with a fuzzy mouth. You *hate* that stuff.

Try a Fast Talk roll to dissuade your guardian. (Defaults to IQ or Acting, both at -5.)

If you succeed, Mastiff lets you return to a normal sleep — turn to 201.

If you fail, your guardian forces the tea into you — turn to 44.



118 The mudder runs due west, into the ever-continuing forest. You wonder if the trail will ever end, short of the beach of the far-distant ocean.

“Just a minute,” says someone, coming up behind you. You turn to see who it is, and find yourself staring.

The young woman is a few years older than you are, though you and she are the same height. Her slim form is encased in a calf-length neofilm gown, the expensive fashion material as sheer as the finest silk, but embedded with programmable fibers that invisibly shape and perfect any figure. Improbably, the off-the-shoulder dress displays a pattern of camouflage colors perfect for concealment in the forest — a display that gradually modifies its patterns as you watch. You also note her khaki slickerboots. An emerald-set headband holds back her shoulder-length silvered hair.

She’s the most amazing sight you’ve seen in these woods.

“You can call me, ‘Aural,’” she says by way of introduction. “I’m sort of a scientist.”

Turn to 579.

119 The flying machine stays aloft, but it wanders away from the canyon with the mudder. With one eye on the controls, you keep the other on Alexis — and slug him hard, for good measure. “Snap out of it, Alexis. I need you to fly this thing.”

Roll two dice.

On a roll of 6 or less, turn to 459.

On a higher roll, turn to 492.

120 The other skimmer jerks. Smoke pours from the levitating panels. It starts to glide downward toward the forest.

Aural slides open a panel in the floor of her skimmer, revealing an opening to the outside. She tosses a rope ladder through the hatch. “You or me?” she asks.

If you descend the ladder to rescue Mother Mastiff from the smoking skimmer, turn to 354.

If you let Aural do this, turn to 547.

121 The flying snake has been patient, but Mastiff has him backed into a corner. The hard bristles of the broom promise injury if they strike his wings. He opens his mouth. A thin, tight stream of liquid jets forward.

Hearing a faint hissing sound, Mother Mastiff jumps back . . . then throws down the broom. Half of the bristles are dissolved, as well as the lower end of the metal pole.

“The thing spits acid!” says Mastiff.

Turn to 288.

122 A couple of blocks away, flames shoot skyward from the top of a warehouse, in defiance of the steady, light rain. A fire-control skimmer hovers off to one side, its crew spraying the flames with fire-retardant chemical foam.

“I was just entering my office,” you hear one passer-by say, “when that building blew up. It was four or five stories tall. The top three must’ve been incinerated. There’s charred debris all over the streets. Knocked me right off my feet.”

“Storing explosives or volatiles inside the city limits,” snorts his companion. “Bad business. Bad.”

If you have the *Plot Word* GRIEF, turn to 341.

Otherwise, turn to 41.

123 Collision with the animal, at this speed, could wreck your vehicle. The automatics can’t handle this situation. You wrench at the controls.

If you are in a mudder, turn to 495.

Otherwise, turn to 50.

124 “I’m OK,” you say, shrugging him off. You start to move in the direction of the scream.

“Listen, if I can help . . .” says the stranger. Pip stirs from beneath the slickertic. “Ummm . . . never mind,” he says, backing away.

Turn to 420.

125 “Tell me what’s going on here,” you calmly ask. The gunman pauses for a second, before finishing the action he intended — drawing a bulky pistol. You can tell that he means to use it on you.

Make a note: By confusing him, you’ve gained a split-second of extra time to avoid the gunblast. Add a +2 bonus to your coming Dodge roll.

Turn to 457.

126 The shopkeeper eyes you. “You’re not going to do anything funny with my goods, are you?”

Try a Fast Talk roll (defaults to Acting-5 or IQ-5).

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 490.

If you fail, turn to 83.

127 The green-furred mammal waddles toward you, its intelligent-seeming eyes locked on yours. You note the red rings in the fur around its eyes, the yellow band

on the snout (and the sharp teeth revealed for an instant), and the stout body culminating in a stumpy, blue-banded tail. The ears are tall and leathery, and move about constantly after stray noises, like the detectors on a warship. The front paws are black-skinned, as if they wear tiny gloves, and each toe looks almost like a finger. You wonder if the paws can serve as hands.

Your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT. Write this down.
Turn to 498.

128 You locate a public com booth on a service street, and slip inside. The spanda-wood door expands slightly as you close it, sealing the booth. The booth's ventilation membranes keep you from asphyxiating.

You slip your battered credcard into the receptacle, then punch the keyboard. A middle-aged woman appears on the screen. "Yes, sir. What may I do for you?"

If you ask to speak with Missing Persons, turn to 335.

If you report a crime, turn to 152.

If you hang up, turn to 177.

129 You can't get the engine to start. As time passes, your chances of being caught increase.

Try a Stealth roll, at -2. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -7.

If you succeed, return to 274 and try again.

If you fail, turn to 81.

130 You are lying on your back. It is cold. Rain soaks your face. When you try to sit up, something is wrong with your sense of balance — sitting up makes you feel faint. Then your vision clears. You are on the street. An old man bends over you.

Try an IQ roll, at -3 due to your pounding headache.

If you succeed, turn to 422.

If you fail, turn to 464.

131 After so many miles of featureless wilderness, you are surprised to fly over a small settlement. There are a dozen or so cabins, a cluster of vehicles, and one or two armed men standing around. You don't remember seeing this community on any maps you've studied.

When they start firing at you, you guess why — this is a smugglers' post! You swerve to avoid their fire, racing to regain the cover of the deep woods.

Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at +3 (even though you are an easy target) since they have only seconds to fire on you. The roll defaults to Piloting at -1, IQ at -3, or Driving (any type) at -4.

If you succeed, you escape unharmed — turn to 198.

If you fail, turn to 138.

132 A shaken Lauren Walder takes the controls from you. "We almost died back there," she says, as the frustrated penestral dives once more.

At her direction, you head aft and strap yourself into the harpoon gun mount. "Fire when I tell you to," says Lauren.

Turn to 411.

133 The energy charge of your skimmer runs low, until you're beyond the point of return. The other skimmer must be similarly low. Finally, the dot on the screen slows and then stops.

And that's when the pain hits . . .

Try a Will roll, at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 254.

If you fail, turn to 467.

134 Suddenly, something slams into your mind . . . Try a Will roll, at -2 due to surprise.

If you succeed, turn to 461.

If you fail, turn to 303.

135 Mother and the kidnappers are moving toward the south.

Your *Plot Word* is SOUTH. Write this down.

Turn to 286.

136 There's a man beneath the rubble of a collapsed building. He's obviously dying. When you stare at him, his eyes meet yours. He *knows* you.

Turn to 615.

137 If you check the living quarters, turn to 233. If you inspect the shop-stall, turn to 149.

If you go back to sleep, turn to 95.

138 You don't make it to cover in time. The smugglers' fire is fast *and* accurate!

Roll one die.

On a roll of 1 or 2, turn to 154.

On a roll of 3 or 4, turn to 358.

On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 373.

139 "Who are you?" You're suspicious. "You aren't with the people who abducted Mother Mastiff?" you say. "If you're trying to get revenge on her through me, it's not going to work."

"No one wants to harm you," replies the man. "My friends and I mean you and your pet only well."

Try a Detect Lies roll. It defaults to IQ at -6, or Psychology at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 163.

If you fail, turn to 406.

140 If you've killed or "put out of action" five enemies, turn to 368.

Otherwise, turn to 493.

141 There are gaps in the closet. Mother Mastiff or someone took enough clothes to last a short while. This is a good sign — they wouldn't bother bringing clothes if they planned to kill your guardian.

Pip climbs onto the night table. He rocks back and forth.

Try an IQ roll, at -1 due to your distraction.

If you succeed, turn to 450.

If you fail, turn to 622.

142 When you see the first signs of human habitation, you veer toward them.

If you have the *Plot Word* WEST, turn to 289.

Otherwise, turn to 267.

143 The stupava doesn't mind the mud — its splayed, partially webbed feet carry you over bogs and sumps easily.

"Heigh there!" you shout softly, following the command with a sharp whistle. The bird caws once, jerks its head against the bridle, and dashes with you on its back into the woods. You become accustomed to the steady *whack-whack* as its feet march through the soggy forests.

Turn to 426.

144 If you do not own a vehicle or a riding animal, turn to 489.
Otherwise, turn to 16.

145 At full speed, your catamaran cartwheels across the lake and smashes itself into splinters. Neither you nor Lauren Walder live to learn the fate of Mother Mastiff.
Close the book. Your adventure is over.

146 Pip, thrown clear when you fell, has been hovering dazedly nearby. Now, called by your surge of alarm, the minidrag shakes off his lethargy. As the squook charges toward you, the flying snake comes at it head-on. The carnivore, not knowing what to make of the new apparition, continues its charge — and for a disorienting moment you sense its overpowering lust for blood.

Then Pip spits. The thin stream of acid strikes directly in the eyes of the attacker. Howling with pain, its eyes already foaming red, it continues its charge — and when you step aside, it rushes blindly into the woods.

In less than a minute, its thrashings cease.
Turn to 585.

147 “Where did Alexis go?” you ask sleepily. “Back to his digs,” says Mother Mastiff. “He can’t gallivant all over Moth with us, or someone will steal his claim.”

“He’s a good fellow. I’ll miss him,” you say. “Wish he’d said ‘good-bye’ to me before he left, so I could thank him for all he did.”

Turn to 571.

148 You identify yourself. “I want to know what’s going on,” you demand. “I’m sick and tired of this. Release Mastiff.”

There’s a pause, before a tremulous older voice makes an amplified reply. “Don’t be upset, child. Stay calm.”

“Stay calm!” you reply. “How can I stay calm, when you’ve kidnapped my only parent?”

Try a Will roll.

If you succeed, turn to 556.

If you fail, a hot anger boils up from inside you — turn to 362.

149 Quietly, you open the connecting door and step out into the shop. The metal shutters are drawn tight at night, protecting the goods from prowlers. Nothing is out of place.

Unlocking and opening the outside door, you look out on a cascade of water. The angled street sluices the downpour away efficiently. Wise men do not prowl Drallar on a night this dark and wet.

If you look around outside, turn to 275.

If you don’t care to, turn to 614.

150 You scavenge the shop-stall, looking for merchandise you can sell quickly for needed cash. Given time, you could sell everything for the price deserved . . . but you haven’t that time, especially if the gendarmes stop to wonder about who is selling a kidnapped shopkeeper’s goods.

Try a Merchant roll.

If you succeed, turn to 173.

If you fail, turn to 197.

151 Agony rips through your body.
Try a HT roll.
If you fail the roll, turn to 442.
If you succeed, turn to 229.

152 You aren’t a novice to the ways of Drallar.
Try a Streetwise roll, at +1. (Defaults to IQ-5).
If you succeed, turn to 483.
If you fail, turn to 591.

153 “Like hell,” replies your guardian. “I’ve spent a lifetime filling up this head of mine. I don’t want somebody else messing around up there.

“Look, I’ll be glad to help ye. Wouldn’t I be much more help to ye if I did what ye required voluntarily instead of like some altered pet?”

“You lie forcefully, but not forcefully enough,” says a man in the room. “We can’t afford a traitor.”

“Ye’ll not operate on me!” Mastiff pounds ineffectually at the arms of the chair. Just as the image fades, you sense an undercurrent of sheer, raw *terror* at the thought of being operated on.

Turn to 445.

154 Fire rips down your right side, as a smuggler’s beamer opens you up like a surgeon’s laser.

Ordinarily the beamer would do 2d of damage; due to long range, however, you only take 1d impaling damage.

If you are unconscious, turn to 220.

If you are dead, *Close the book.* Your adventure is over.

Otherwise, you ride on — turn to 198.

155 The little symbiote moves aside just as the weapon fires. The eerily silent burst disintegrates a chair. She swears, and fires again.

Try a Will roll, at -6.

If you succeed, turn to 612.

If you fail, turn to 628.

156 Makepeace whistles, eyeing you and the creature. “I’ve heard of such things being kept as pets, but it’s rare. The decision’s made by the animal, not the owner. You can’t tame ’em. Speaking of can’t tame ’em, that reminds me of a night in the Old City of Bandragore . . .”

You feel a long, bawdy story coming on. On another day you might have stayed, but not this one. “Thanks for your time, Mr. Makepeace,” you say, “but Pip and I have to go.”

“Just watch yourself,” he tells you. “You never know when it might turn on you!”

Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 264.

If you fail, turn to 296.

157 A man stands just below the platform — squinty-eyed, pasty-faced, wearing an oil-stained leather apron under a transparent slickertic. His hands are thin but gnarled. You guess his age at sixty.

Your *Plot Word* is TECH. Write this down.

Turn to 524.

158 Mother and the kidnappers are moving west.
Your *Plot Word* is WEST. Write this down.

Turn to 286.

159 You send a mental quest in Mother Mastiff's direction, wondering if your fickle Talent will work for you now.

Try a Fickleness roll.

If you succeed, turn to 603.

If you fail, turn to 476.

160 You gesture excitedly and shout, "There they are!"

Your partner squints, then looks down at the scope. "You've got mighty sharp eyes."

"Prerequisite for survival in Drallar," you explain.

If your *Plot Word* is NORTH, turn to 2.

Otherwise, turn to 218.

161 The one thing puzzling you is the nightmare. It springs into existence every night, twisting hot wires around your brain.

It's always the same: Lots of twisting, abstract forms and dark, swirling colors, with you in the middle, racing down a long, ominous corridor. At the end are answers, understanding, and salvation. But the faster you run, the slower you advance. The floor that isn't a floor dissolves from under your feet. You fall through it.

Turn to 90.



162★ For you, a thoroughly urbanized youth, the forests of Moth are full of revelations. The nights are especially difficult. The silence hits you with deafening force — you sleep fitfully, and Pip, sensing your discomfort, likewise loses sleep.

Try a HT roll, at -5. Apply a +1 bonus for each previous attempt you've made at this roll (in previous visits to this entry). If you have any of the following equipment, you may apply other modifiers to this roll:

Moth Survival Belt	+5 bonus
Tube Tent	+3 bonus
Cerebroneural Depressants	+8 bonus*

* uses up one dose

If you fail the HT roll, you suffer 1d-3 points of Fatigue due to lost sleep — turn to 105.

If you collapse from exhaustion, you sleep through the day — turn to 531.

In all other cases, turn to 105.

163 You sense that the man is being basically honest with you. His intentions toward you seem benevolent.

Turn to 406.

164 Aural insists on taking her skimmer — a copper-colored egg, custom-built, with a closed cockpit and treated with a special polymer to reduce wind resistance. "I wanted to have guns put on her," confides the young woman, "but I couldn't swing the permits. Even His Driest Majesty wouldn't go for that. It's a shame." She slugs the control panel.

"We'd better start trailing them," you suggest.

She nods, and the skimmer lifts off the ground. Soon, the two of you are looking for the kidnapper's mudder.

Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 507.

If you fail, turn to 607.

165 You realize what's going on — the man is reaching for a gun!

You search the nearby walls and floor, find the switch you're looking for, and stab at it. The lights go out, leaving the room lit only by the dim, mist-filtered light from the windows.

Turn to 581.

166 "Just a minute," you say. "I appreciate the offer, but . . ."

"I'm coming with you," the other says. "You don't know this country."

"I'm not going on a sightseeing trip," you reply.

Your companion frowns. "I don't like these people, whoever they are. I don't like them because of what they've just done here, and because of what they seem to have done to you. Because of that, I'm going to help you as well as myself. Don't try to deny that you couldn't use a little help. I have access to equipment you're going to need."

"Seems competent," you think. "Worth trusting for a few minutes, anyway."

If your *Plot Word* is SOUTH, turn *immediately* to 557.

Otherwise, turn to 516 if you are female, or 13 if you are male.

167 Erase any marks in the boxes below. Then roll two dice for each item. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the "nearby" score, make a mark in the "local" box — the item is nearby, and you can go to it. If the roll is greater than the "nearby" score, the item isn't close by — place a mark in the "distant" box.

Location (entry number)	Nearby Score	Local	Distant
Communications Depot (626)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forest Station (469)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hunting Lodge (80)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inn (224)	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nomad Encampment (348)	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood-Processing Plant (440)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To go to any local item, turn to the entry associated with it. For instance, if you wanted to visit an inn and if one were close by, you would turn to 224.

If you choose not to visit any of these places, or if there is nothing close enough to visit, turn to 531.

168 You nod reluctantly, and stare into the eyes of your animal friend. To your questing Talent, Pip's mind is a tiny, compact jewel — complicated, yet limited. You aren't sure if he can comprehend what you want him to do.

Try an IQ roll at -3, to communicate the detailed plan to Pip. If you succeed, turn to 517. If you fail, turn to 346.

169 You search but find no signs of life, unless you can count the waste paper floating in the brimming gutters. There is nothing alive on this street except you.

Another wince of emotion lances into your brain, temporarily crippling your thoughts.

You take 1d-2 points of Fatigue.

If you collapse, turn immediately to 191.

Otherwise, turn to 561.

170 The barely dented vehicle taunts you — you can't find anything wrong with it! At last, unable to repair it, you set off through the woods on foot.

Turn to 625.

171 "You don't have any choice but to come with me," says the elderly man. "Not if you want to see your pet alive again."

If you now agree to come with him, turn to 496.

If this is the moment you attack, turn to 431.

If you try to bluff him, turn to 480.

If you run for it, turn to 219.

172 You lift the fungoid, waiting for him to guide you in the right direction. His tentacles flap aimlessly. Pip is not a tracker. By the time you *can* get a tracking animal, the persistent rains will wash away all trace of scent.

If you return to search the shop, turn to 481.

If you follow the slip-me-out, turn to 232.

If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.

If you do none of these, turn to 433.

173 You find 2d × \$100 worth of goods which you can immediately sell. (When your guardian finds out, you may be drawn and quartered — but that's for later).

Turn to 103.

174 There's a man in the hallway, curved into a fetal shape on the floor. Pale hands beat at his chest. He breathes shallowly.

Further down the hall, you see a welcome shape — Pip! Your little friend lurches toward you, waving his tentacles happily.

Turn to 615.

175 "Here, take the wheel." Lauren abandons the controls and rushes aft, forcing you to grab at the wheel.

"What'd you do that for?" you call after her.

She doesn't answer you.

Turn to 29.

176 You lunge forward, but not in time. The man draws a bulky gun from his pocket.

Turn to 457.

177 You worry that the authorities might trace the call, and send a gendarme to question you. On reflection, however, the possibility seems remote — there's a lot of crime in this city, and not a lot of attention to spare for an orphan's problems. They probably have already forgotten about you.

Return to 433.

178 While the skies of Moth are always overcast, this day has been especially gloomy. But when the distant rumbling begins, you know that a storm is brewing.

This one promises to be violent — even for Moth.

If you are in a skimmer, turn to 7.

Otherwise, turn to 395.

179 "Over against that packing and away from the consoles. All of you," the woman commands, gesturing with her gun. The elderly technicians comply with her order.

"You too," orders the woman, throwing you a hard look.

Try an Emotion Sense roll.

If you succeed, turn to 17.

If you fail, turn to 203.

180 Carefully moving from cover to cover, you are now among the parked vehicles.

Try a Streetwise roll. If you succeed, turn to 535.

Otherwise:

If you take a skimmer, turn to 502.

If you would rather steal a mudder, turn to 274.

181 Turn to 614.

182 You recognize the layout — the compound is protected by sparksound projectors. Each device projects a wide, flat beam of high intensity sound. Immobile objects don't register. You guess that the effective range is fifty feet beyond the outer buildings. The systems are commonly programmed to concentrate on human-size intruders, ignoring all others.

You explain the setup to your companion.

Turn to 347.

183 The trail has come to an end. It seems that someone has taken Mother Mastiff away into the endless woods of Moth. Perhaps on a drier world — or on one of the few Mothian deserts — the trail would have remained fresh, but not here.

If you try your Talent, turn to 499.

Otherwise, turn to 433.

184 Mother Mastiff has since turned out to be an excellent guardian. A retired survey pilot, she somehow ended up here on Moth, where her shop of exotic imports and exports keeps both you and her alive.

She sees to it that you study the rental chips she brings home from the library, adding to the dry educational lectures with her own stories of the Commonwealth frontier.

Thanks to this training, give yourself eight character points in the skills of Astrogation, Astronomy and/or Computer Operation.

Turn to 364.

185 As you stroll through the marketplace, it's hard to keep your concentration on what you're here to do — your mind is alive with captured emotions intercepted from passersby. It seems as though your fickle Talent has strengthened and magnified, though when you try to read any specific person it's as unpredictable as ever. Could Pip have had this dramatic an effect on you?

You ask if anyone recognizes the animal, but keep away from official channels. He might have been reported lost or stolen for all you know, and you have no intention of surrendering him to anyone. The market folk stare at him, most recoil from him, but none identifies him.

"Why don't you ask Makepeace?" one of the vendors eventually suggests. "He's traveled offworld. Maybe he'll know."

You find the old mercenary sitting on the street corner, along with several of his equally ancient cronies. Moth is a popular retirement home for certain professionals — those who enjoy lax law enforcement and cheap living.

"Bless my soul," says the old soldier, leaning close to Pip — but not too close.

"You know what he is?" you ask.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 248.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 575.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 327.

186 "Well, we can't chase them in this," says Alexis disgustedly, patting the armrest. "Hoverdisks are fine vehicles, but they aren't fast."

"We've got to try," you insist.

He looks at you with surprise. "Of course! Did I say we wouldn't? We'll head right back. I've got a friend who might let me borrow his skimmer for a day or so."

Turn to 19.

187 "I want to tell my guardian where I'm going," you bluff. "I'll be right back."

The man takes a step forward. "There's no need to disturb your parent. In a moment, the shop will be open for the morning. Why disturb business? We just want to talk to you."

Try a Detect Lies roll. The roll defaults to IQ at -6, or Psychology at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 163.

If you fail, turn to 406.

188 You adjust the controls, rising just high enough so that the gliders cannot reach you. You wouldn't want one of them to smash into your windscreen.

Roll one die.

On a roll of 1 to 4, turn to 198.

If you roll a 5 or 6, turn to 568.

189 The other is reaching for a bulky gun, protruding from his pocket. To fire first, you'll have to outdraw him.

If you have the Fast Draw skill, turn *immediately* to 419.

Otherwise, try a Contest of DX. His score is $2d+4$.

If you win, turn to 419.

If you don't win, turn to 457.

190 There's time for a hasty second shot. Try a second Guns/TL8 (Dart Rifle) roll. The recoil has spoiled your aiming bonus — this time, you get a -1 penalty. The roll defaults to Guns/TL8 (Any Rifle) at -3, or Guns/TL8 (any type) or DX, both at -5.

Then turn to 527.

191 You groggily regain your strength, sprawled on the ground where you fell when the emotions assaulted you. The gnawing emptiness is still out there.

Roll one die. This is the number of Fatigue points you lose, thanks to your involuntary rest. Regardless of what you roll, you lose sufficient Fatigue to restore your effective ST to 2.

If you are outside the shop, turn to 592.

If you are inside the shop, and now go outside, turn to 275.

If you are inside and stay here, turn to 614.

192 The two skimmers slam sideways into each other. Metal crumples. You are thrown half out of your seat.

Roll one die for the other skimmer. If you roll a 5 or 6, turn *immediately* to 120.

Then roll one die for your skimmer. If you roll a 5 or 6, turn *immediately* to 283. Otherwise, turn to 320.

193 Try a Streetwise or Tactics roll, both at -2. These rolls default to IQ at -7, or Strategy at -8.

If you succeed, turn to 75.

If you fail, turn to 519.

194 The factory apparently has no night shift. As sundown percolated through the murk, the workers went off shift and disappeared. The only protection for the vehicle park — and its collection of company-emblem mudders — appears to be a fence, and a trio of guards with lanterns who periodically circle the premises.

If you sneak into the compound, turn to 209.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

195 "No, but I think I know what the word means," you say. "'Meliorare' sounds like 'ameliorate' — that means 'to improve,' right?"

Turn to 553.

196 A heavy limb crashes down, knocking your mount to the ground. You try to leap clear, afraid of being trapped beneath the heavy bulk.

Try a Dodge roll.

If you succeed, turn to 73.

If you fail, turn to 342.

197 You find $1d \times \$100$ worth of goods which you can immediately sell. (When your guardian finds out, you may be drawn and quartered — but that's neither here nor there.)

Turn to 103.

198 It's time to check in with the nearest community — how else can you find any real clues? What if you've already passed Mother Mastiff and the kidnappers? What if they've veered in some new direction?
If you own a *Guide to Moth*, turn to 380.
If you don't, turn to 142.

199 You roll away just as the stiff bristles sweep through the air where your arm was — and Pip! The startled symbiote rolls backward and falls off the bed.
“Mother, what is it?” you ask.
“Hush, be quiet!” comes the reply.
Turn to 576.

200 You drop to your knees and worm through the emergency exit, emerging in the back alley.
Turn to 93.

201 Your unpredictable Talent is functioning again. The emotions stab at you, creating an ache somewhere in your brain.
You've felt loneliness before — your own, as well as the feelings of others that you've felt through your Talent. This is different. The feelings are bright and pure, unlike complicated human emotions. You recognize the loneliness, and identify a second element . . . a gnawing hunger.
You have always lost contact in seconds before. This time, the feelings grow stronger. Minutes pass.
If you get out of bed, turn to 466.
If you stay in bed, turn to 95.

202 You dart in behind the man, and use your stiletto the way you've been taught.
Try a Knife roll, at -3 due to the darkness. The roll defaults to DX at -7.
If you succeed, turn to 546.
On a failure, turn to 313.
On a critical failure, turn to 51.

203 Return to 447.

204 It's a squook. Like its near-relative the canish, it's a hyperactive ground-dwelling carnivore. The slim, furred body is built low to the ground, and its powerful front claws are designed for burrowing in pursuit of other, herbivorous burrowers . . . although they have other uses.
There's no time to fight. Your only chance to avoid its charge is to roll away. Try a Dodge roll.
If you succeed, turn to 301.
If you fail, turn to 261.

205 You don't find a vehicle, even though you search for what seems like hours.
If you try to use your Talent now, turn to 499.
If you return to the shop-stall, turn to 433.

206 The gun you find is longer and narrower than the dart rifle she used earlier.
In seconds, you're on top of the mudder and its skimmer companion. Startled passengers fire a fusillade of poorly aimed shots. “Fire!” Lauren orders.
Try a Guns/TL8 (Dart Rifle) roll. Due to the size of the target (+3), the speed and range of the mudder (+0), the pitching of

the jet boat (-2), the glare of the lake (-4), and your opportunity to aim and brace (+4), you receive a net +1 bonus. The roll defaults to Guns/TL8 (Any Rifle) at -1, or Guns/TL8 (any type) or DX, both at -3.
If you succeed, turn to 527.
If you fail, turn to 190.

207 You try to identify an alarm system.
Try a Traps/TL8 roll, at -4. This roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -9, or Lockpicking/TL8 at -7. If you have any type of Emission Detector, apply the bonus.
If you succeed, turn to 182.
If you fail, turn to 347.

208 In a busy plaza, you accost a man exiting a public transport. “Excuse me, sir,” you say, for what seems the hundred-thousandth time. “Did you happen to see my guardian last night?” You describe Mother Mastiff.
“Now, that's funny of you to mention,” the man says unexpectedly. “See, I'm the night guard at Koyunlu, on the outskirts of town. I'm just on my way home. Last night I saw a strange commotion. There was a lot of shouting and yelling and cursing.
“I took a look with my nightsight — that's my job, you know — and I saw a bunch of people getting out of a rented city transport. They were switching over to a mudder.” He shrugs. “I don't know if they're the people you're looking for. They weren't thieves or vandals, so I didn't watch them for long.”
You ask what the voices sounded like, hoping to hear a description of Mastiff's distinctive tones.
“I see what you're thinking, kid,” grins the man. “They were too far away for that. But I can tell you this — someone in that bunch could swear like any dozen sewer riders.”

Try an IQ roll, at -1.
If you succeed, turn to 257.
If you fail, turn to 409.

209 Silence is golden.
Try a Stealth roll, at -2. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -7. If this is a nomad encampment, you have an additional -3 penalty; if a hunting lodge, there is a +2 bonus.
If you succeed, and this is an inn, turn to 324.
If you succeed, and this is not an inn, turn to 274.
If you fail, and this is a nomad encampment or a wood-processing plant, turn to 424.
If you fail in other circumstances, turn to 81.

210 Suddenly, the paralysis beamer is in your hands. You smash the barrel into the other man's guts and depress the firing contact. There's a flash, and the smell of scorched cloth.
Turn to 62.

211 “No,” you say.
Turn to 553.

212 Your vehicle lurches, and acrid smoke fills the passenger compartment. You're in trouble now!
If you are in a skimmer, turn to 15.
If you are in a mudder, turn to 593.

213 You feel the blazing passions of mating . . . but the feelings are alien. The lovers aren't human, but ornithorpe. You hastily retreat from the carnival of lust. You've never sensed an alien mind before.
Return to 381.

214 “Nobody goes out there except explorers and herders, hunters and sportsmen — crazy folk from offworld who like that sort of nowhere land,” he said. “Biologists and botanists — not normal folk like you and me.

“Luck to you,” said Arrapkha. “I’ll remember you.”

Make a note: To show your progress in trailing Mother Mastiff and those with your guardian, you now have a *Travel Score*. The *Travel Score* is a measure of how far you’ve traveled — at this moment, your score is 0.

Mother’s group also has a *Travel Score*. In order to catch up with the other group, you need to increase your *Travel Score* until it equals or exceeds their *Travel Score*. Mastiff’s captors’ *Travel Score* is currently 1d+17.

Turn to 162.

215 If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 532.
If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 595.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 569.

216 See “The Marketplace” (in the *Appendix*, p. 55) for a list of selected stalls in the Drallar marketplace, the items for sale there, and the identity and skill level of the shopkeeper.

All prices listed in the appendix are approximate. Actual price depends on how well you are able to haggle. In addition, riding animals and vehicles may be rented rather than bought.

If you wish to purchase weapons, and if you have *Pacifism* (Any Kind) or *Code of Honor* (Thief), turn to 443 for special instructions.

If you want to purchase vehicles or riding animals, turn to 421 first for special instructions.

When you have determined which items you want to purchase from a single stall, try a *Contest of Skills*, pitting your *Merchant* ability (defaults to IQ at -5) against the shopkeeper’s.

For each previous *Contest* with this merchant for which you didn’t buy anything, apply a +2 bonus to the shopkeeper’s roll (he’s getting tired of you).

If you win the Contest: For every point by which you win, you receive a 5% break on the listed price. The maximum advantage is 60% off.

If you lose: For every point by which you lose the *Contest*, the price goes up by 10%. There is no maximum increase.

If there’s a tie: You may buy the item(s) for the standard price.

You are not forced to purchase any items, regardless of the outcome of the *Contest*.

After negotiating the rental price for any vehicle or riding animal, if you accept the offered price, turn to 126.

Otherwise, when you are done with all of your shopping, return to 352.

217 You’re no Makepeace. Your inaccurate kicks rain on door, frame and wall. Stumbling after a particularly bad blow, you tumble and fall in the mud.

Roll your basic *Thrust/Crush* damage. This single roll represents all of the kicks you’ve made. *Halve the result, rounding down.* You also suffer 2 points of *Fatigue*.

Exception: If you scored a critical failure, you do no damage to the door. You still take the *fatigue*, however.

If you are unconscious, turn *immediately* to 79.

If you do 4 or more hits of damage to the door, turn to 312.

Otherwise, turn to 47.

218 “They can’t go much further,” says Alexis. “Not in a mudder.” He chuckles. “They’re about to run out of mud.”

Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 294.

If you fail, turn to 55.

219 Turn to 431.

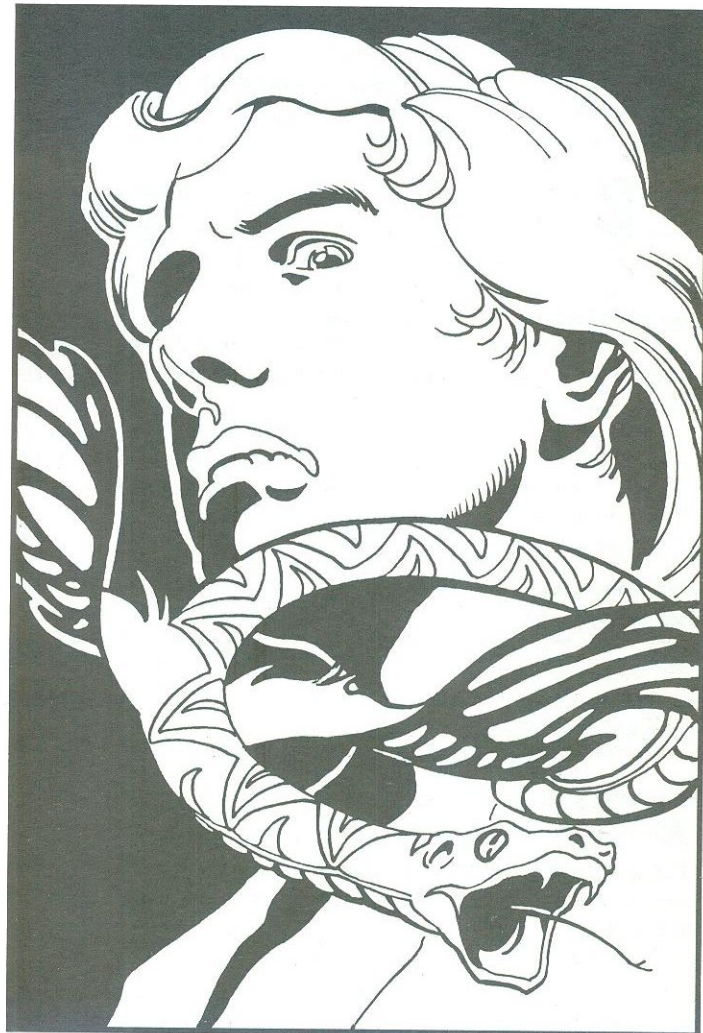
220 When you awaken, there is no sign of danger. Pip is with you.

Make a note: When you make your next *Travel* roll, roll one die less than you normally use. This reflects your lost travel time while unconscious.

If you are driving a skimmer or mudder: It is damaged. Roll one fewer die than before, when making all *Travel* rolls.

If you are riding a stupava or muccax: Roll one die. If the roll is a 4 or less, your mount returns; otherwise, you are now on foot. (Obviously, your mount cannot return if it has just been killed.)

Turn to 198.



221 “Very well, keep the controls,” she says angrily. “Now, head for that mudder!”

Turn to 310.

222 You grab . . . and lift Mother Mastiff clear of the skimmer, just before it makes its final dive below the treetops. Aural reels you in.

You now have the *Plot Words* RESCUE and FIRE. Write them down.

Turn to 349.

223 As you groggily shake your head, you see something move toward you from the garbage heap, lit by the dim illumination of the far-off streetlamp.

Turn to 34.

224 The inn you are approaching is one of hundreds that form an informal backwoods network in the sparsely inhabited parts of the vast forest. Such establishments provide temporary homes to hardwood merchants and loggers, sightseers, fishermen and hunters, prospectors, and other nomadic types.

The structure is rustic on the outside, with a compound for riding animals and a shelter for vehicles. When you and Pip enter, however, you find the interior to be modern — even the stone fireplace is more for show than function.

“Hello,” says the innkeeper. “That’s an interesting pet you have there.”

When you ask about food, you learn that the inn has autoserve machines. The innkeeper asks if you want a room, but you decline.

Turn to 52.

225 It’s a hard sprint to a busier avenue, where you at last find a willing vehicle. You jump in, slamming your credcard into the receptacle. You head in the direction that you last saw the kidnappers’ vehicle head, hoping it isn’t too late to find your guardian.

Roll one die. This is the amount of time it took you to find the transport — time that now counts against your efforts to find Mother Mastiff and the kidnappers.

Now try a *Streetwise* roll, at -3. Alternately, you may substitute skill rolls for Strategy (at -6), Tracking (at -7) or IQ (at -8). The number rolled earlier now counts as a penalty.

If you succeed, turn to 4.

If you fail, turn to 338.

226 The trail comes to a blind and confusing end. No one has seen any sign of a mudder, or of a group such as you describe.

Try an IQ roll.

If you succeed, turn to 290.

If you fail, turn to 67.

227 You soon fall asleep. When you awaken, you’re back in civilization. The skimmer has landed at a hunting lodge, where your partner has made arrangements for getting you and Mother Mastiff back to the city.

If your *Plot Word* is NORTH, turn to 512.

If your *Plot Word* is SOUTH, turn to 147.

If your *Plot Word* is WEST, turn to 333.

228 The forest remains tranquil. You’ve even picked up an escort — a few dozen gliding rodents, soaring with outstretched leathery flaps on the warm updrafts. They squeak angrily when you approach too closely.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn *immediately* to 609.

If you are in a skimmer, turn to 188.

Otherwise, turn to 198.

229 Even as you dive and roll for cover, you begin to shiver uncontrollably — a side effect of a shocked nervous system from the close blast of a paralysis beamer.

Make a note: You have a temporary penalty of -2 to DX, and -1 to IQ, until you reach the next *refresher entry* (see p. 2 if you don’t know what this is).

If Pip is with you, and capable of action, turn to 215.

If your pet is out of action, turn to 468 instead.

230 The repairs to Aural’s skimmer take longer than expected. There’s a shortage of mechanics in this neck of the woods. At last, the vehicle is ready to fly again.

Turn to 514.

231 You shrug off his arm. “Stay out of this, mister. Five innocents have already been snuffed.”

“But it’s my civic duty . . .” says the man.

“It’s *Quarm*,” you lie. Quarm — the most dreaded assassins in the Commonwealth.

“Oh,” he says.

“But thanks for all your help, sir,” you tell him. “You have no idea how much of an aid you’ve been.”

Turn to 78.

232 You drop to your knees and worm through the emergency exit, emerging in the back alley. You hope you’re in time — you’ve run hard from where you first heard the mental scream, but breaking down the door delayed you.

Turn to 18.

233 You inspect the kitchen, bathroom, and the single narrow closet, being careful not to awaken Mother. You find nothing out of the ordinary.

If you use your Talent on Mother Mastiff, to see if your guardian is the source of the broadcast, turn to 159.

Otherwise, return to 137.

234 Your harpoon arches high above the giant target. “Steady,” advises Lauren. “This boat only carries six harpoons.”

If you’ve exhausted all six harpoons, turn to 43.

If not, turn to 470.

235 Some of it looks familiar — a tendrilled globe, for instance.

You last saw that globe — or one like it — suspended over the table to which Mother Mastiff was strapped when you rescued her!

Turn to 308.

236 Pip hung on for dear life when you fell, nearly strangling you with the grip of one tentacle around your neck. Now the fungoid starts to glow, and you feel your shoulder vibrating.

The squook, gathered for its charge, blinks suddenly and stares at your friend. It snaps once or twice, making a high-pitched barking noise. Then it slinks away into the woods.

Turn to 585.

237 “Mother” Mastiff — the nickname sticks, as the shopkeepers have always kidded Mastiff about

his kindly concern for orphans and strays — runs an out-of-the-way shop in the Drallar marketplace, where he repairs and sells exotic technology (and anything else he can find).

While serving as his unpaid assistant, you learn useful skills. Give yourself 8 character points in the skills of Electronics, Electronics Operation, Mechanic and/or Jeweler. Select specializations for those skills which require them.

Turn to 364.

238 If your *Plot Word* is BEHEMOTH, turn to 28. Otherwise, turn to 387.

239 Purchasing your own transportation is probably out of the question, but renting might be possible. Animals are easier on your credcard, and unlike mechanical vehicles, cannot be traced by their emissions.

Turn to 216.

240 There's no question of their destination. Cross-checking the witness of your eyes with the basic geography known by every Moth schoolboy, it's obvious. They are moving toward the only break in the rising gray peaks on the not-so-distant horizon — Mount Footasleep, and the only way across, Coccyxcrack Pass.

For the next few miles, there'll be no problem in tracking them.

"Just a minute," says someone, coming up behind you. You turn to see who it is, and find yourself staring.

He's a young man, dressed in an outfit that defies simple description. The base layer looks to be a plain tunic tucked into a grey pair of shorts. However, the clothes are nearly hidden beneath a criss-crossing thatchwork of belts, straps and ropes



fastening a potpourri of packs, sacks and cylinders — some dangling, some attached to a light back-worn frame that towers above head-height, and others wrapped tightly in place.

At the moment, he's the best sight you've seen in a long time. "Alexis!" you call, recognizing an old patron of Mother Mastiff — Alexis Schmidtel, a prospector/explorer who stands out even from the crowd of idiosyncratic prospectors and loners on this planet.

Turn to 579.

241 You lie in agony on the floor, waiting for your shocked synapses to start carrying your muscle commands again. In minutes, you can wiggle your toes, then bend your arm. Soon you'll be on your feet again. But where are the gunmen?

Turn to 8.

242 If you are in the wilderness, turn to 96. If you are at a forest community, turn to 16.

243 "Rose, look out!" At the warning cry from his companion, the woman whirls. There is something in the air, humming like a giant bumblebee, moving rapidly from place to place — a pink and blue blur against the ceiling. "How did it get out?" asks the Meliorare leader.

Turn to 268.

244 The journey remains tranquil. Turn to 198.

245 You wonder at the images flooding your mind and at the range from which they're coming.

You feel an emergence from a wet and pounding world to a bright, cold one — no, those feelings aren't yours. A baby is born among the nomads, far to the west, beyond the city's boundaries.

You feel laughter welling out from a crystal tower where merchants live. Next come anger and fear, stemming from somewhere quite near — a tavern brawl.

Then, suddenly, all the emotions are gone.

Turn to 518.

246 "What about your unusual pet?" your companion asks. On the long trip, you've revealed some of what you know about your symbiote. "Do you think he could penetrate that compound undetected?"

"I can't risk Pip," you explain, "sending him alone in there."

"But if his special powers make the difference in whether or not Mother Mastiff escapes?" asks your partner.

If you agree to send Pip in alone, turn to 168.

If you refuse, turn to 583.

247 Your lunge misses. Your outstretched fingers touch Mastiff's for seconds . . . your parent's hands reach for yours, but the grip is too weak and too late . . .

The smoking skimmer plunges for the ground and, moments later, explodes.

The force of the explosion blows you clear of the ladder. You fall to your death. *Close the book.*

248 "Aye," says Makepeace. "Those are wings bulging its flanks, are they not?" You nod. "Then it's surely an Alaspinian miniature dragon."

"I thought dragons were mythical creatures," you say.

“So they are. It’s only a name given from resemblance,” says Makepeace.

“I suppose you know he spits out a corrosive fluid?” you say.

“Corrosive!” The old man leans back and roars with laughter, slapping his legs and glancing knowingly at his buddies. “It’s a venomous acid and a neurological poison, with no known antidote! If a minidrag were to spit in your eye, you’d be a kicking, quivering mess on the ground inside a minute — and dead in not much more than that.”

You tell him what happened to Mastiff’s broom.

Turn to 156.

249 Lauren orders you to cut the engines. The unpowered catamaran drifts back toward the spot where the predatory fish was last seen. Lauren reloads the harpoon gun. “Where’s the penetral?” she calls.

“I think it’s slowing,” you say, watching the tracker.

She nods. “That’s to be expected.”

“Slowing, slowing . . .” you say. The dot disappears from the scope. “I think it’s under the boat!”

“Full speed ahead!” shouts Lauren.

Turn to 558.

250 Pip settles back on his haunches, sniffing the air repeatedly. He motions you forward, but when you begin to move, he shakes his head and begins sniffing again. At last, he stares at you with sad eyes, then sneezes.

Turn to 183.

251 Suddenly, your mind is filled with Lauren — real memories, not Talent-produced images. You remember the scent of her hair, her no-nonsense adventuresomeness, the way she felt about people and animals. She wasn’t like the girls your own age. It’ll take a long time to get her out of your heart.

Turn to 571.

252 A bolt splits the air at table level. Roll two dice to determine the result of the random firing by your enemies. If you have just attacked an enemy, add a +2 bonus to the roll.

If you roll a 10 or higher, turn to 151.

If not, turn to 493.

253 Try a Riding (Stupava or Muccax, depending on what you are riding) roll at -2. The roll defaults to Riding (any type) at -5, Animal Handling at -5, or DX at -7.

If you succeed, you escape unharmed — turn to 198.

If you fail, turn to 138.

254 The emotions are coming from close by, and they’re familiar. Mother Mastiff . . .

Try an Emotion Sense roll. Apply any penalty assessed in the previous paragraph.

If you succeed, turn to 418.

If you fail, turn to 273.

255 At first you suspect it to be a fleurm, or one of the lowly creature’s poisonous relatives, but the light sparkling from the scales alerts you — this is a reptile, and almost a yard in length. Nor does its motion seem in any way slowed by the chill in the shadowed alley. It can’t be cold-blooded.

Then you spot the pleated blue and gold wings, about eight inches back from the triangular head. The leathery wings go into action, and with a noise like a giant bumblebee the creature is airborne. A flying snake!

Your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN. Write this down.

Turn to 498.

256 “Keep away from that hatch,” you warn Alexis, indicating the clear porthole in the bottom of the hoverdisk. “They’re shooting paralysis beams, and they’ll shoot right through something transparent.”

“Right,” says Alexis. He brings the flying saucer down easily on the road, blocking the canyon. He picks up a microphone from the control panel. “Can you hear me?” The amplified voice bounces off the rock walls of the tiny canyon.

The mudder jolts to a stop, yards away from where you sit. You and Alexis duck as paralysis beams flicker toward you. The beams reflect uselessly from the surface of the hoverdisk.

“Stop the firing,” says Alexis into the mike. “If you get us, who’s going to move this bulk out of your way?”

The firing stops.

“Let me talk to them,” you insist. Alexis gives you the mike.

Try a Fast Talk roll, at +2. It defaults to IQ or Acting, both at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 148.

If you fail, turn to 88.

257 That’s got to be Mother Mastiff, you think to yourself.

Mother Mastiff has been taken into the deep woods in a mudder. Knowing where the Koyunlu plant is, therefore they are moving . . .

Turn to 363.

258 You are clearly falling behind — many more days like this, and you’ll never find Mother Mastiff!

If you are riding a mucax or a stupava, turn to 616.

Otherwise, turn to 242.

259 “Now, stay calm,” says the man. His voice is shaking. “Don’t get agitated.”

“I’m not agitated,” you insist. “I just want my pet back. Where have you taken him?” You step forward. As you do so, the man quails and retreats.

Turn to 431.

260 Your eyes meet and recoil from the cold stare of the stranger. He’s a tall man, scarred, with a metal hand attached to the stump of his right arm. You feel cold emotions wafting from his mind.

Your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND. Write this down.

Turn to 524.

261 The heavy animal, awkward aboveground, charges past you as you roll to the left. You feel fire streak down your side as one flailing claw rakes your body.

You take 1d-1 cutting damage from its claws.

If you are unconscious, *immediately* turn to 220.

If you are dead, *close the book* — your adventure is over.

Otherwise, as you stagger to your feet, it charges again.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 146.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 236.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 601.

262 Mother Mastiff is close to a century old. She acts tough, but her digestion has been bothering her for decades . . . and you can't picture her escaping in the woods, not with her cane. Beside, she's so scrawny. Everyone forgets how frail she is, simply because she acts like such a tough old bird.

You've got to help her.
Turn to 534.

263 If you are turning away after charging the mudder, turn to 527.
If the mudder has just disappeared, turn to 543.

264 You realize that Makepeace is only joking.
Turn to 296.

265 There is nothing or no one on this street besides yourself.
Turn to 561.

266 You cut loose with your weapon at the revealed enemy. The light and sound of your own attack outline you against the darkness.

Try a roll for the weapon you are using (if you have a laser pistol or a paralysis beamer, the skill is Beam Weapons/TL8, defaulting to DX-4).

If you succeed, the surprised victim receives no Dodge roll — roll for damage. (If you fired a paralysis beamer, make a HT roll for your enemy instead. His score is 10.)



If you miss, or do no damage, turn to 51.
If you do 1 to 7 points of damage, turn to 279.
If your opponent succeeds at his HT roll, turn to 304.
If you do 8 or more points of damage, or if the enemy fails his HT roll, turn to 62.

267 Roll two dice.
On a roll of 2 or 3, turn to 626.
On a roll of 4 or 5, turn to 80.
On a roll of 6 or 7, turn to 224.
On a roll of 8 or 9, turn to 469.
On a roll of 10 or 11, turn to 440.
On a roll of 12, turn to 348.

268 "What the hell's that?" she blurts.
"The youth's pet," says the Meliorare leader.
"Be careful. It's dangerous."

"Oh, is it?" The muzzle of her odd gun tracks Pip. Meanwhile, the buzzer on the console continues to sound its alarm.

"No!" The silver-haired ancient rushes toward her. "Don't!"

Reacting instinctively, the Peaceforcer fires. A brief burst of high-intensity sound strikes the Meliorare leader. His stomach explodes through his spine. The gun makes no noise, except for a slight punching sound when the burst strikes home.

An elderly woman screams.

Try a Will roll, at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 537.

If you fail, turn to 628.

269 The predator startles your mount. It rears, bucks, and you fall. As your transport animal disappears into the forest, you find yourself on your hands and knees, face-to-face with your attacker.

Turn to 204.

270 Your blow misses, and carries you forward. Desperate, you grab for the gunman's pistol, trying to wrestle the muzzle away from your chest.

Try a Contest of ST. The thug's ST is 2d+8.

If you win by 3 or more points, turn to 210.

If he wins by 3 or more points, turn to 457.

If neither of the above occurs, turn to 436.

271 Up close, you can see that the animal faces are screwed up in agony.

"They must have moved at the wrong time," she says. "Your friends were firing shots everywhere. They didn't have to be so damn indiscriminate."

Turn to 280.

272 You accelerate the transport, steering it directly for the amphibious vehicle. Startled enemies run from your headlights, dragging a figure you recognize as your guardian.

Then, abruptly, your vehicle's brakes engage! A warning message blinks in red letters on the instrument board:

COLLISION IMMINENT!

The safety programming of the rental transport has defeated you.

If you charge after the kidnappers on foot, turn to 523.

If you flee before they shoot you, turn to 91.

273 Vague feelings — not your own — penetrate your sensing mind. Mastiff's not in pain. There is worry, and fear. Someone is planning to do something horrible to your guardian.

Turn to 445.

274 Selecting a two-passenger mudder, you slip into the cockpit and remove the control panel. Jumping the simple electric motor should be easy . . .

If you have a Handpicker, turn *immediately* to 473.

Otherwise, try a Streetwise or Lockpicking roll. They default to IQ at -5.

If you succeed, turn to 584.

If you fail, turn to 129.

275 You quietly retreat to your room, where you don a slickertic and draw it about your shoulders. The faint electrical charge embedded in the thin plastic keeps the moisture away. Offworlders joke that the slickertic is Moth's planetary costume.

You make your way into the open street, carefully closing the door behind you.

Turn to 85.

276 "Let's get them outside," says the female Peaceforcer.

The silver-haired man pleads with her. "Please, we're just a bunch of harmless old scholars. This is our last chance. This youth" — he indicates you — "may be our last opportunity to prove . . ."

"I've studied your history, read your reports." The woman's voice is icy. "What you did is beyond forgiving. You'll get just what you deserve, and it won't be a chance to experiment further on this poor, malformed child."

"Please, somebody!" you demand. "I don't know what you're talking about. Won't somebody tell me . . ."

"Explanations aren't my department," says the woman. She shivers. "Fortunately."

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 203.

If you fail, turn to 98.

277 The muccax's toad-like leap carries you into the lower canopy of the forest. You are buffeted by stout branches and impaled by knife-ended twigs.

You take 1d-2 crushing damage.

If you are unconscious, *immediately* turn to 220.

If you are dead, *close the book* — your adventure is over.

Otherwise, turn to 198.

278 "It runs from here to the North Pole," he said. "Three thousand, four thousand kilometers as the tarpac flies, and not a decent-sized city to be found." He rubbed his hands. "There's mud up there so deep it could swallow all of Drallar, not to mention things that eat and things that poison."

Turn to 214.

279 You've wounded him. Roll one die. Add 1 for each enemy previously wounded (but not killed).

If you roll 1 to 4, turn to 252.

If you roll a 5 or a 6, turn to 62.

280 After making arrangements for the safekeeping of the wervil bodies, Lauren leads you back toward the lake. There's a dock that was hidden from your view before, and a jet boat.

"Belongs to my hunting lodge," your companion explains, indicating the vessel. It's a single arch, each end spreading out to form a supportive hull. The open-topped cabin is cut into the upper arch. Some type of crane gear is mounted at the rear.

"We'll catch them inside an hour," says Lauren. "A mudder is fast on water, but not so fast as this." Deactivating the magnetic couplers, she starts the engines. Propelled by submerged jets, the catamaran knives forward onto the lake. A circular tracking screen comes to life, indicating the locations of the other fishing vessels — and one, unexplained object.

"Who do you suppose that might be?" asks Lauren, smiling. She increases speed, and the boat leaps forward. The gap between pursued and pursuer shrinks rapidly.

Try a Vision roll, at -4 due to lake glare (without the polarizing wind screen, the penalty would have been even worse).

If you succeed, turn to 160.

If you fail, turn to 515.

281 There is nothing. Nothing from Mother Mastiff, nor from anyone. Your Talent mocks you. *Note:* you now have the *Plot Word* CAPRICIOUS. Write this down.

If you return to check over the shop, turn to 481.

If you search Mother Mastiff's room, turn to 141.

If you follow the slip-me-out into the alley, turn to 232.

If you do none of these, turn to 433.

282 You've always been good at prying information from strangers. They trust you instinctively.

You catch some sleep, curled inside a public com booth, waiting for the first light of morning. Then, as the streets begin to fill with traffic, you begin buttonholing individuals and knocking on doors.

Try an IQ roll, at -3.

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 208.

If you fail, turn to 385.

283 "Crud," says Aural, as smoke belches out from behind the control panels of the custom skimmer. "We're out of the fight." She activates toggles, causing vents to open and a ventilation system to kick on.

"What now?" you ask, choking on fumes.

"Repairs," she says. "Then we're coming back." She smiles. "That was a limpet beacon I locked onto their hull, when we collided. Smart, right?" The beacon, magntically locked onto their hull, broadcasts a signal which you can track.

Turn to 230.

284 Your fickle Talent fails to find any trace of Pip. Turn to 300.

285 After riding through miles of uninhabited woods, you are surprised to emerge from the trees into a clearing. There are a dozen or so cabins, a cluster of vehicles, and one or two armed men standing around. A quick check shows that this community isn't on any maps you're carrying.

When they start firing at you, you guess why — this is a smugglers' post! You swerve to avoid their fire, racing to regain the cover of the deep woods.

If you have a mudder, turn to 365.

Otherwise, turn to 253.

286★ You sum up everything you now know: Mother Mastiff, your guardian, has been kidnapped by people unknown to you, for reasons equally unknown. Your clues hint at a destination in the deep woods, far from the city — and far from anywhere you’ve ever been before.

If your *Plot Word* is SURVEY, turn to 555.

If your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND, turn to 37.

If your *Plot Word* is TECH, turn to 11.

If your *Plot Word* is CRONE, turn to 262.

287 The creature is pink, an almost fluorescent color that seems brighter than the dim light could make it be. It slowly draws forward on three root-tentacles, all the while keeping its five tiny bud-eyes fixed on yours. It looks for all the galaxy like an animated mushroom.

Your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID. Write this down.

Turn to 498.

288 “Get out while ye have a chance,” advises your guardian.

You laugh, but try to be understanding. “Mother, Pip is only defending me. And he didn’t really hurt you.” The creature returns to his perch on your shoulder, which seems to be his preferred spot. “He’s naturally friendly.”

“Naturally ugly, you mean,” says Mastiff, returning cautiously. “It can’t stay here.”

“Yes, he can. He’ll stay with me all the time,” you promise.

You stroke your pet, while giving Mastiff your most mournful expression.

Mastiff grumbles. “If ye’re determined to keep it . . .”

“He might become very angry if we were to be separated,” you point out.

“Very well,” says your guardian. “But don’t come near me with that monster on your shoulder. Get out of here for the day.”

“Yes, Mother,” you agree.

“Do you know what it is?” asks Mastiff. You shake your head. “Find out. Ask around the marketplace. When you find out, come back, and I’ll *think* about letting the two of ye back in here.”

You leave.

Turn to 185.

289 Roll two dice.
On a roll of 2 or 3, turn to 626.

On a roll of 4, turn to 80.

On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 224.

On a roll of 7 or 8, turn to 348.

On a roll of 9 or 10, turn to 469.

On a roll of 11 or 12, turn to 440.

290 While you are examining the map, the solution comes to you. You’ve overshot — now Mother Mastiff and her captors are behind you! You’ve got to double around and get back on their trail.

Your *Plot Word* is DOUBLE BACK.

If you are on foot, turn to 389.

Otherwise, turn to 162.

291 Someone lets out a violent curse, knocking over a table and chair very close by. You rise to a crouching position, waiting.

The sound of stumbling comes closer. You put your hand on a nearby chair and push it into the darkness. A dazzling flash envelopes the chair — and you trace the origin to a dark silhouette directly in front of you.

If you attack him, turn to 608.

If you remain hidden, turn to 493.

292 Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.
If you succeed, turn to 390.

If you fail, return to 456.

293 When Pip returns, the heavy weight descending on your shoulder nearly sends you reeling. Nor does your companion look too well.

“Stuffed yourself like a durq, huh?” you ask him. Pip tries to move, then gives up on the effort. It’ll be a while before he can get about on his own.

Make a note: Pip cannot aid you in your encounters, until you reach the next *refresher entry* (if you don’t know what this is, see p. 2).

Turn to 198.

294 “They must know that too,” you say. “Could they switch vehicles somewhere out here?”

Alexis shakes his head. “Only if they had one hidden away here. And there’s not many places to hide one.”

Turn to 55.

295 Your maneuver isn’t sharp enough — the gaping maw of the penestral bursts out of the waves just yards astern of the speeding boat.

“Get us out of here!” yells Lauren, abandoning the harpoon gun to come forward.

Try a second Powerboat roll, at +2. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -3, Boating at -1.

If you succeed, turn to 132.

If you fail, turn to 484.

296 Now at least you know what your pet is. The next question is — what does he eat? “If it’s live food, I don’t think I can help you much,” you mutter.

The food stall you enter is one you know well, now empty between mealtimes. To your relief, Pip proves to be omnivorous. Almost anything you set in front of him is eaten . . . though he does have favorites.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 526.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 388.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 404.

297★ Hours pass as you slumber. Try an IQ roll. Alertness modifiers count. If you have the Laziness disadvantage, apply a -5 penalty to the die roll.

If you succeed, turn to 99.

Otherwise, turn to 71.

298 The flying snake spins in midair, then speeds until almost out of sight.

“Pip, wait!” you call. He obediently stops, hovering until you catch up, then flies ahead again. You follow at a run.

Turn to 24.

299 Your guardian is not in this building. You continue to search for Mother Mastiff; camp personnel are too busy escaping to note your presence.

As you make your way through the tumult, your unpredictable Talent functions again. You sense Mastiff's mind — and you gain a definite sense of direction! You take off like a shot.

Make a note: You now have the *Plot Word* DELAY.

Turn to 69.

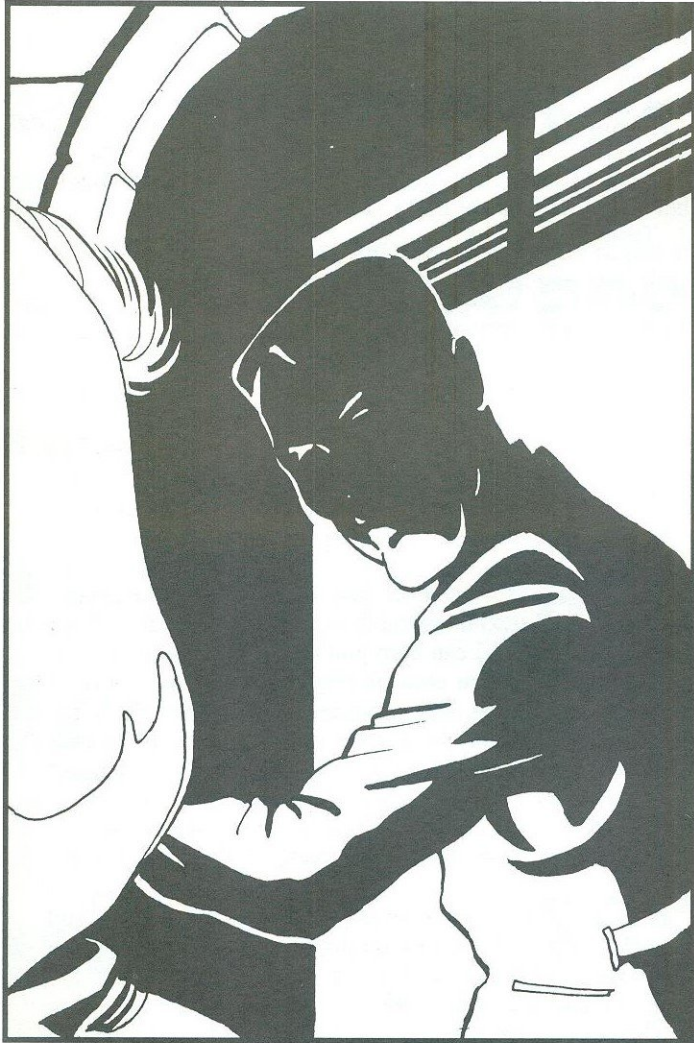
300 “Don’t bother yourself over that devil-thing,” says your guardian.

“He could be in the alley behind the shop,” you reply. “He likes to hunt in the trash heaps.” The alley has always attracted Pip. At the same time, it poses danger. A tumbling box or bottle could easily trap your pet.

Slipping down the narrow passage between the shops, you find yourself in the dim, damp alley. “Pip?”

A short, gray-haired man stands beneath an archway a short distance away. “I know where your pet is,” says his soft voice. “I’ll take you to him.”

Turn to 406.



301 The heavy animal, awkward outside its subterranean habitat, charges past you as you roll to the left. By the time it has turned around, snapping its long and toothy snout angrily, you’ve regained your feet.

It charges again.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 146.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 236.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 601.

302 Dodging between the great boles of forest evergreens, it’s necessary to reduce speed to avoid a collision . . . and suddenly the skimmer plummets like a rock.

Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll for the person operating the skimmer. The default is Piloting (any type) at -4, or IQ at -6. (Stats for your companion are found on p. 61, if you need them.) If the character has a DX greater than 12, give him a +2 bonus for this roll.

If the roll is successful, the pilot applies emergency full throttle — the only move that can save you now. Return to 61.

Otherwise . . . turn to 586.

303 You lean against a nearby wall for support. “You feeling poorly, child?” asks the man you’ve been questioning.

You suffer 1d-2 points of Fatigue.

Turn to 461.

304 You’ve given him a good zap. Perhaps that will knock some sense into him.

Try an IQ roll for your enemy. His score is 1d+7.

If he succeeds at the roll, turn to 457 (but apply a -2 penalty to his coming skill roll).

If he fails the roll, you hear him noisily scuttling along the floor — away from you! Turn to 62.

305 Try a Fast Talk roll. (It defaults to IQ or Acting, at -5.)

If you succeed, turn to 231.

If you fail, your words aren’t convincing — turn to 100.

306 They’re still in the lead. At least you know that they’re out there . . . somewhere.

Turn to 242.

307 You force yourself to endure the impact, steeling yourself as the harsh feelings wrench through your brain. Whatever is out there, it’s powerful.

Take 1d-2 points of Fatigue.

If you collapse, turn immediately to 191.

If you now go outside, turn to 275.

If not, turn to 181.

308 Should you trust the silver-haired man and submit to these tests? What about Pip? Do you have any alternatives?

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -1.

If you succeed, turn to 82.

If you fail, turn to 398.

309 Suddenly, the air is full of *whooshing* sounds. Head-sized round shapes erupt from the ground, exploding from vertical burrows you hadn’t noticed before.

These poppers — narrow, black-bodied creatures with multiple arms and thin snouts full of teeth — decimate the swarm of fliers. They explosively deflate sausage-shaped air sacs attached to their spines, becoming airborne.

If you have the *Plot Word* FUNGOID, turn to 198.

Otherwise, turn to 577.

310 You throw the wheel hard over. The catamaran spins so sharply that the portside lifts into the air.

A high rooster-tail plume of spray hides you temporarily from sight.

Meanwhile, Lauren has produced a new gun from one of the lockers — longer and narrower than the dart rifle.

In seconds, you're on top of the mudder and its skimmer companion. Startled passengers fire a fusillade of poorly aimed shots. Lauren's gun fires twice.

"Now, hard to port!" she screams above the roar of the engine.

Try a Powerboat roll, at +2 since this is a simple maneuver. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -3, or Boating at -1.

If you succeed, turn to 527.

If you fail, turn to 337.

311 Try a Contest of DX, using a score of 14 for the gendarmes. They are used to arresting adults, not slender, combat-trained youths like yourself, so give yourself a +2 bonus.

If you win, turn to 352.

Otherwise, they take you prisoner. Turn to 509.

312 The door gives, flying inward. It was only locked, not boltsealed. You crouch in the doorway, staring into the dimness. Pip's head moves anxiously from side to side, his concern matching your own.

The stall looks undisturbed.

If you search the stall, turn to 606.

If you proceed to the living quarters, turn to 435.

313 Your thrust is clumsy. As the blade slips between his ribs, the man screams. You dart away, snatching your stiletto clear from the dying man.

This one is out of action.

Turn to 252.

314 Mother Mastiff took you home with her, to the stall-home where she sells her goods to the off-worlders who come to the Drallar marketplace. She's a good guardian, and a strong bond forms between you. She grants you independence to explore the city and learn about life on your own. She also sees to it that you learn a trade, assisting her in the shop.

Give yourself 8 character points to spend on any of the following: Fast-Talk and Merchant skills, and the languages of Symbospeech, Thranx and/or Moth Nomad.

Also give yourself 2 character points to spend on anything you might learn while exploring this rough city on your own. Be sure to select specializations for those skills which require them.

Turn to 364.

315 Lying next to a doorway are a pair of furry shapes you remember noticing earlier. The short stubby legs are curled beneath the fuzzy bodies. Their fur is a rust red except for yellow circles around the eyes, which are shut tight. Permanently.

You are astonished to see tears in Lauren's eyes. "Sennar and Soba are wervils — or were," she says bitterly. "I raised them from kittens. Found them abandoned in the woods four years ago. Everyone liked to feed them. They loved to go places with me."

If you are at a nomad encampment or a forest station, turn to 40.

If you are anywhere else, turn to 271.

316 Like a dim light in a large cavern, you finally detect a faint but familiar presence — Pip! By the pattern of his mind, he must be dreaming . . . or drugged.

A chime sounds from the machine with the glowing light. The silver-haired man beams. "Using your Talent, it seems," he says.

Return to 456.

317 Pip tightens his grip on your shoulder, indicating with his head a particular direction. He glances into your eyes — an impression reaches you . . . a scent . . .

Pip is tracking them!

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 298.

If not, turn to 587.

318 "That's enough, Pip," you call after the gal-livanting minidrag. "Leave them alone."

A reluctant flying snake rejoins you, while the rodents chitter victoriously.

Turn to 198.

319 Somewhere, a man is beating his wife. There's nothing unusual about such impressions — you've intercepted feelings like these before. But this comes from across the city, further than you've ever sensed anything.

The angry woman grabs for a long-hidden dart gun. The scared husband pleads with her. Then the frightened mind goes blank . . . the blankness you've learned to associate with death.

Return to 381.

320 "Blast it," snaps your companion. "Let's try that maneuver again!"

If you let her, turn to 416.

If you try to take the controls away from her, turn to 449.

If you ask what she thinks she's doing, turn to 5.

321 "They're on vacation — my grandparents and my uncles and aunts," you explain. "They argue a lot. They didn't want me to come along, but when they get to their hunting lodge, I'm going to drop in and surprise them. They can't send me away after I'm there, can they?"

"I get it," says the man. "I won't tell anyone."

Turn to 16.

322 For those at the base, the rumble of what seems to be a distant storm continues to grow — until the earth trembles, and the alarm system goes off. Warning sirens sound mournfully. Security guards begin firing on the berserk develope herd as the bulls and cows rip into buildings, trample vehicles and wreak destruction.

Turn to 548.

323 "What was the purpose of all that?" you ask, as your catamaran circles away from the mudder.

"That stunt was our insurance policy," says Lauren. "This gun is a Marker. It fires a capsule that holds a specially sensitized gel. The transparent epoxied bonder sticks to anything on contact. With tracking equipment, we can follow them."

"But not in a boat," you mention, eyeing the skimmer.

Lauren's eyes haven't left the mudder. "They've just taken your guardian up in a hoist. Now it's clear shooting — I'll pick off whoever I can on that ladder. Bring us about . . ."

Turn to 574.



324 You attempt to enter. As you move forward . . . Try a Traps/TL8 roll. Defaults to IQ at -5, DX at -5, or Lockpicking/TL8 at -3. There is an additional -3 penalty to the roll, *unless* you are breaking into a communications depot. If you have any type of Emission Detector, apply its bonus here.

If you succeed, turn to 48.

If you fail, turn to 81.

325 The guests' mudders remain parked in front of the main building. No gate protects them. You don't see any skimmers — they must be kept somewhere out of sight. If there are guards, you don't spot them.

If you penetrate this set-up, turn to 209.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

326 The predator startles your mount. You try to keep it under control as it rears . . . Try a Riding roll, at -1. This roll defaults to Animal Handling at -4, or DX at -6. There is an additional -3 penalty if your Riding specialty is not in riding this type of animal.

If you succeed, and are riding a stupava, turn to 23.

If you succeed, and are riding a muccax, turn to 479.

If you fail, turn to 269.

327 "Certainly," says Makepeace. He reaches out and strokes the green-furred creature under the neck. Pip stretches, and begins to purr softly.

"It's a plippit," says the old mercenary. "Native to Rexilure, a world so obscure I doubt you've ever heard of it. He'll love to eat marsh-apples."

"You've been to Rexilure?" you ask.

"Naw," he denies. "But I had a comrade from there once. They have the oddest tales about these creatures — how they can change at will into anything they please, usually huge and terrifying. Actually, they haven't never changed at all." He taps his scalp. "It's all in the mind of the beholder."

You explain what the plippit did to Mother Mastiff.

Turn to 156.

328 The flying disk falters, slides sideways, rights itself, and then impacts — with force, but not shattering force — into a hilltop.

Turn to 459.

329 Reeling from the impact, you stay on your feet.

Turn to 381.

330 He draws his gun and fires before you do.

Turn to 457.

331 Not buying weapons before going on such a dangerous journey would simply be stupid. You overcome your qualms about weapons.

Return to 216.

332 Anger flashes in your friend's eyes. "Your friends were in such a hurry to get out of here," she says, "they didn't care what was in their way."

If your *Plot Word* is WEST, turn to 164.

Otherwise, turn to 280.

333 "Hey . . . where's Aural?" you ask, noting the absence of the exotic young woman.

"Just took off," says Mother Mastiff. "Small loss, I say."

It doesn't take any Talent to detect that sparks have flown between your friend and your guardian while you slept. Poor Aural. You hope that she keeps herself safe, on this wild and sometimes unpredictable world.

Turn to 571.

334 *Make a note:* Your skimmer is now damaged. Roll one die fewer than before, when making all Travel rolls.

Turn to 198.

335 "Just a moment, please." The screen flashes, and then clears. The person staring at you is male, bald, and a bureaucrat.

"What is it?" he asks, barely civil.

You report that your guardian disappeared under suspicious circumstances. "I don't know how to start looking," you say.

"This sounds like a police matter," says the man, suddenly interested.

Turn to 152.

336 When your parent is freed from bonds, the three of you head for the skimmer. Mastiff refuses help, but is weak and can barely walk — you almost have to hold your guardian up.

As you escape, something draws your attention.

If your *Plot Word* is BEHEMOTH, turn *immediately* to 136.

Otherwise:

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 174.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 458.

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 494.

337 (You now have the *Plot Word* FLIPPED.) You throw the wheel hard over, and the jet boat rocks. You feel it starting to flip . . .

“Too hard!” screams a panicked Lauren.

Try a second Powerboat roll, at +1 in this desperate situation. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -4, or Boating at -2.

If successful, the vessel recovers from its threatened flip — turn to 263.

If the roll fails, turn to 145.

338 There’s no sign of them. Hours pass as you fruitlessly search.

If you try your Talent now, turn to 499.

Otherwise, turn to 433.

339 As you lie there, the fleurms cautiously move toward you. Tiny teeth slice into your skin.

If you are conscious, turn *immediately* to 64.

Otherwise, try a Will roll in order to force yourself to full wakefulness.

If you fail, turn to 425.

If you succeed, turn to 64.

340 The vehicle compound is what attracts you. The fence looks to be of a standard design. The gate has been closed for the night with a large lock. Within are three private mudders and a skimmer.

If you penetrate this set-up, turn to 209.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

341 Slowly, reluctantly, your brain fills in the blank spaces pockmarking your memory. Third floor, you were up there . . . and the Meliorares were getting ready to run some tests on you. Then the Peaceforcers broke in, and the fighting started. You remember screaming . . .

And now you’re here, and your head is throbbing. You feel for a bruise or bump, but there’s nothing. The pain seems concentrated on the *inside*. People are emerging from the burning warehouse now: medical personnel in white slickertics. Two medics are escorting a stumbling woman in shredded clothes.

Try an Emotion Sense roll. There’s a +2 bonus to this roll.

If you succeed, turn to 49.

If you fail, turn to 634.

342 You gasp as the falling weight strikes your back. Your shoulder is in agony.

You take 1d-2 crushing damage.

If you are unconscious, turn to 220.

If you are dead, *Close the book*. Your adventure is over.

Otherwise, turn to 73.

343 You grab the gun. It’s a paralysis beamer. Erase the *Plot Word* DROPPED.

Return to 87.

344 “Are you all right, kid?” asks a passing stranger.

Turn to 124.

345 You detect amusement from your symbiote, who pokes his head out from between your legs. Pip makes a noise that is half cough, half croak. Mother freezes.

The color drains from your guardian’s face. “That . . . that monster!”

“He’s only a little monster,” you reply.

“Mockmush! It’s eight feet tall, and it breathes fire. I saw it!” claims Mastiff.

Turn to 288.

346 “It’s no use,” you say at last. “Pip’s incredible, but he’s not like you and me. He just doesn’t understand what we want him to do.”

“Then we have no choice,” says your partner.

Turn to 84.

347 You and your companion return to your skimmer, concealed in the nearby woods. Over a hasty dinner of concentrates, you talk.

“We can’t do this alone,” says your companion. “With a place this size, there must be as many as a hundred people in there. We need a distraction.”

Roll one die.

If the result is an even number, turn to 84.

Otherwise, turn to 246.

348 The rancid smell reaches you before you catch sight of the circle of metal trailers, huddled around a mud-filled clearing. Deep ruts show where tracked vehicles have passed through, and you note the flattened print marking the passage of mudders — a hunting party must be out in the wilderness somewhere.

Two dozen of the nomad folk — women and elderly men — are gathered around a trio of smoky fires, stirring pots and stretching hides on wooden frames.

One of the old men, his dark face made even darker by the contrast of a pure white beard, slowly rises and stomps in your direction. He hawks and spits at your feet. “Can I help you, *ghareeb*?” he asks.

Try a Moth Nomad language roll. There is no default — if you don’t speak this language, you automatically fail this roll.

If you fail at this roll, apply a -1 penalty to the next die roll.

Turn to 52.

349 “Do you know why they abducted you, Mother?” you ask.

“My tale’s a long one,” says your guardian, after a pause.

“It’s enough for ye to know now that it involved an old, old crime I once participated in, and a thirst for revenge that never dies. Ye can understand that.”

Try a Detect Lies roll, at +2 since you know your guardian well. The roll defaults to IQ at -4, or Psychology at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 33.

If you fail, turn to 472.

350 The unending forest canopy suddenly gives way to an immense green crater — the scar of a fire. Curious, you bring the skimmer close to the surface, where resurgent life bursts from under the gray ash.

More is resurgent down here than vegetation. A brown streak suddenly leaps at your speeding skimmer . . .

Turn to 123.

351 As you reach for the animal, the memory of the horrible loneliness returns. This creature is an orphan, just as you’ve been. You can’t ignore his needs, even if he is only an animal. You know what it’s like to be unhappy.

You keep him.

Turn to 76.

352 You can't stay in Drallar — you've got to find Mother Mastiff. But you can't just take off half-cocked, either. "Prepare yourself properly, then proceed" — that's what Mastiff has always taught you. Before leaving the city, you make your arrangements.

If you purchase materials in the marketplace, turn to 216.
 If you sell some of the shop goods to raise cash, turn to 150.
 When you are ready to enter the forest, turn to 618.

353 The penestral collapses in the water, sending up huge but gradual waves which the catamaran rides with ease. This time it does not return to the depths, but remains thrashing on the surface.

Lauren fires a special harpoon into the creature. With a hum a compressor on board the ship starts up, pumping air into the carcass to keep it afloat.

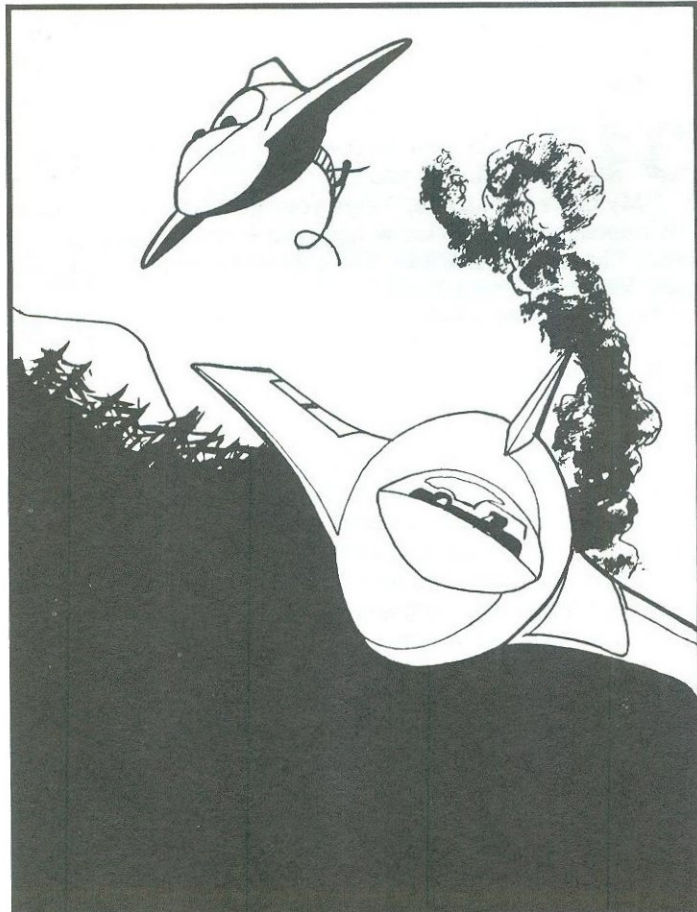
"Why bother with it?" you ask,

"You might be right — for hereabouts, this isn't much of a fish," she says. "But this is a food fish, lean and not fatty. It'll feed hundreds of indigents in the local towns, and the rest will be sold with the credit going to the lodge. Congratulations on participating in a catch!"

You now have the *Plot Word* PISCES. Write it down.

A crowd is waiting to greet you when you tie up at the pier.
 Turn to 427.

354 You descend on the spidery ladder, as Aural tries to hold a steady course over the wrecked skimmer. The kidnappers on the crippled skimmer are too busy looking for a clearing to make an emergency landing in to notice your descent. Soon you are directly over Mastiff — who is unguarded.



You only have one chance to grab Mother Mastiff and lift your parent to safety.

Try a DX roll, at -2. If you have Free Fall or Acrobatics skills, you may substitute a roll against one of these skills, at no penalty.

If you succeed, turn to 222.

If you fail, turn to 247.

355 Try a Dodge roll.
 If you succeed, turn to 506.
 If you fail, turn to 151.

356 Make a Travel roll, to determine how far you've come along the trail of Mother Mastiff.

Conditions

Travel roll

On foot

Roll one die and halve the result, rounding up.

Riding a muccax

Roll one die.

Riding a stupava

Roll two dice.

By mudder

Roll three dice.

By skimmer

Roll four dice.

Your new Travel score is figured by adding the result above to your current Travel Score.

Turn to 631.

357 Try an Emotion Sense roll. Due to your excitement, there's a -3 penalty to the roll.
 If you succeed, turn to 374.
 If you fail, return to 406 and do not attempt this action again.

358 A burst grazes Pip, sending him hurtling into the woods.
 "Pip?" you cry. Then, with real fear, "Pip!"
 Roll one die.
 On an even roll, turn to 455.
 On an odd result, turn to 39.

359 Your Talent instantly steps in to modulate the emotional pulse, shielding you from its raw power.
 You recognize the source. Something's happened to Mother Mastiff!
 Turn to 420.

360 You begin to cry.
 Turn to 460.

361 Try an IQ roll.
 If you succeed, turn to 54.
 If you fail, turn to 351.

362 You hear a sudden scream over the mudder's speaker system. "Stop it," says the old voice, gasping slightly. "Don't do that any more. We're not harming anyone."
 "What did I do?" you ask. "I'm not doing anything."
 Turn to 556.

363 Roll two dice.
 On a roll of 5 or less, turn to 158.
 On a roll of 6, 7 or 8, turn to 429.
 On a roll of 9 or more, turn to 135.

364 Pip and Mother Mastiff face off in your room. If your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND, turn *immediately* to 474. Otherwise:

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 629.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 392.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 549.

365 Try a Driving (Mudder) roll, at +3 due to the clear terrain. The roll defaults to Driving (any type) at -1, or IQ or DX at -2.

If you succeed, you escape unharmed — turn to 198.

If you fail, turn to 138.

366 Your arms and legs are tingling with fiery pain as the paralysis effect begins to wear off.

Make a note: Your DX and IQ are both at -1, and you suffer 1d of Fatigue. If this is enough to cause you to collapse, reduce the Fatigue so that your effective ST is 1.

Turn to 114.

367 “It runs from here to the far-distant west sea,” he said. “Ten thousand miles as the tarpac flies, and hardly nobody lives there.”

He grimaced. “Except for the wild nomads. This would be their summer hunting season. They shoot anything that moves.”

Turn to 214.

368 You grab Mastiff and run from the room. You think you’ve killed or incapacitated all of the kidnappers, but you’re not certain.

You now have the *Plot Words* RESCUE and BATTLE. Write them down.

The return journey to Drallar is anticlimactic. At the first safe stop, you switch vehicles. The rental skimmer makes the trip shorter, and easier on your guardian — who pays for it.

Turn to 349.

369 Lauren rushes aft. She walks out on one of the crane-like structures projecting from the back of the boat, and straps herself into a pivoting gun mount.

Turn to 29.

370 The great mass stirs itself, quakes of flesh rippling its black hide and dislodging furry fliers. “They’re awake!” you warn, backing for the skimmer.

“I’ve got what I need,” says your companion. “Now run for the skimmer — we’ve got to take off before they catch us!”

Try a DX roll, to see if you can make it to the skimmer and lift off in time.

If you succeed, you make it — turn to 61.

If you fail . . . turn to 586.

371 You control the harmful burst, sorting out once again the strong loneliness, the weaker but still present hunger, and the one element lacking — any sense of threat. Nevertheless, the emotional assault causes you to step backward, away from the source.

As you do so, it moves toward you and into better light.

Turn to 34.

372 You move faster than the man can react, throwing a right hook at his chin.

Try a Brawling, Judo, or Karate roll. (Use a default of DX -4 if you have none of these skills.)

If you succeed, turn to 62.

If you fail, turn to 270.

373 If you are riding an animal, turn to 552. Otherwise, turn to 212.

374 Try as you might, you sense no inimical feelings emanating from this man. If anything, he seems frightened of you. Return to 406.

375 You’ve watched the old mercenary attentively. Accurate kicks pound the resisting door.

Roll for the damage — you do basic Thrust/Crush damage to the door. (This is listed on your character sheet, under “Basic Damage.”) This single roll represents all of the kicks you’ve made. If you used Karate skill, you also do bonus damage equal to your Karate score divided by 5 (round down).

You also suffer 1 point of Fatigue.

Exception: If you scored a critical success, you take no Fatigue. You also do double damage to the door — double the result of the damage die roll.

If you collapse from exhaustion, turn *immediately* to 79.

If you do 4 or more hits of damage to the door, turn to 312.

Otherwise, turn to 47.

376 If your *Plot Word* is DOUBLE BACK, turn to 134.

If not, turn to 356.

377 You force yourself to cry, until the tears stream down your cheeks. “I can’t find my guardian . . .” you sob.

“Poor kid,” says one of the gendarmes.

“Why didn’t you come to the authorities?” asks the woman.

You rub your reddened eyes. “I . . . I was afraid.”

They question you briefly, then let you go.

Turn to 578.

378 The other skimmer — a plain rental model — descends carefully through the forest canopy. You spot it landing next to the mudder.

“What can we do?” you ask. “They’re transferring my parent into that skimmer, I’m certain. Can we track a skimmer with your instruments?”

“Nah.” She shakes her head. “It’s not dependable, not if they try and shake us.”

“Should we try and go down?” you ask. “It’s risky, but we might be able to get to Mother Mastiff in the confusion . . .”

“Quiet,” says Aural. The other skimmer is rising back out of the forest. She taps at the foot pedals, and her custom skimmer sweeps down at the other. “Dogfight!” she yells.

Reminder: You may use Aural’s Luck (see her stats on p. 61) once in this encounter.

If you let her dogfight, turn to 416.

If you try to take the controls away from Aural, turn to 449.

If you ask what she thinks she’s doing, turn to 5.

379 You turn and run for it. Behind you comes a stampede of running feet. “Stop, kid!”

Make a note: Because you are a running target, you are more difficult to hit. When the man shoots at you, apply an additional -4 penalty to his roll.

Turn to 457.

380 The map is a fraction of an inch thick. A series of contact switches run down the left side of the plastic. When you touch the uppermost one, the sheet lights up. Additional switches produce a view of the forest, and then a close-up of your current location.

If you have the *Plot Word* WEST, turn to 167.

If not, turn to 20.

381 You close your eyes, but vivid pictures continue to flow past them — images conveyed by the strange mind, coming at you by the dozens.

Roll one die, and compare the die roll to the numbered boxes below. If the numbered box is not crossed out, cross it out, and follow the instructions after it. If the box is crossed out, roll again. If all of the boxes are crossed out, erase the marks.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Turn to 319. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Turn to 213. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Turn to 21. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | Turn to 444. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | Turn to 413. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | Turn to 245. |

382 He wishes to do more than just test you! There's a lot of instrumentation in this room for just a few simple tests.

If your *Plot Word* is LODGE, turn to 235.

Otherwise, turn to 308.

383 Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at +5 since climbing to a safe altitude is easy. The roll defaults to Piloting (any type) at +1, IQ at -1, or Driving (any type) at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 423.

If you fail, turn to 391.

384 If this is the second successful hit on the penestral, turn to 353.

Otherwise, turn to 470.

385 "Excuse me, sir," you say, accosting a stranger stepping from a transport. "I'm looking . . ."

"Go take a flying leap," growls the cloaked man, as he disappears into an adjacent doorway.

You glance at Pip. He shakes his head. This business of questioning strangers isn't getting you anywhere.

Return to 433.

386 You think you detect something . . . Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.

On a critical success, turn to 115.

If you succeed, turn to 475.

If you fail, turn to 46.

387 You're not sure just what Pip did, but you can hear and see the results. Gunfire continues to pour from the buildings, the firers shooting at shadows and each other. The searchlights have been shot out. No lights show from the central tower.

"We need to charge this skimmer, or we're going nowhere," says your partner.

"I can walk if I have to," insists Mother Mastiff.

"It's all right," you say, pointing out that the automated power station lies away from the rest of the compound. You are able to charge the vehicle without incident, while the confused sniping within the base continues.

Turn to 580.

388 The fungoid lumbers on his stumpy tentacles toward a small loaf of bread, sits down next to it, and stuffs broken pieces into his almost hidden mouth. Pip avoids all forms of animal protein, but samples daintily from a bowl of berries and cut fruit.

Turn to 559.

389 Moving on foot in this wilderness isn't going to get you anywhere. You need real transport — now. If you wish to buy or rent transport, turn to 599.

If you want to pick up your transport in a more old-fashioned way — by thievery, that is — turn to 489.

390 The enthusiasm is so confusing — this man is overjoyed to have you here! Mixed in among the emotions you sense are pride, achievement, victory . . . and cool, calculating ruthlessness.

On one of the monitoring instruments, a light glows green.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -5.

If you succeed, turn to 316.

If you fail, return to 456 and do not try again in this encounter.

391 The skimmer lurches sickeningly as it collides with the upper foliage of one of the forest giants. As you reverse the controls, the machine quivers . . . and a bell-like tone signals the impact of something solid against the underside.

Roll one die.

On an even roll, turn to 568.

On an odd result, turn to 334.

392 Pip undulates back to the top of the bed, pulling himself awkwardly along with his tentacles. As his cap comes into view, Mother Mastiff swings again. The fungoid rebounds against the wall.

Turn to 45.

393 Your hand is forced — you can no more ignore such hot pleadings than you could pass over an unstamped credcard abandoned on the street.



Take 1d+2 points worth of Fatigue from the painful emotional broadcast.

If you collapse, turn to 191.

Otherwise, you plunge into the street, becoming drenched in the rain. Turn to 85.

394 You escape from the chaos. Minutes later, you see a mudder escaping — the kidnappers!

Turn to 77.

395 The storm's effects are difficult to discern. Being on the forest floor is like being on the sea bottom during a sea storm — the violence occurs far above, and only the wreckage topples down to your level. You can hear the creaking of timber straining in the winds. Detritus pelts you, shaken from the upper canopy.

Then the lightning begins. The tall trees attract the lethal bursts. When the electrical bolts discharge into the great trees, the evergreens explode — sending limbs, bark and leaves hurtling in all directions.

High above your trail, a tree catches a fatal strike. At ground level, you see steam spurt out of the yards-wide trunk. An instant later comes the crack of thunder, followed by an avalanche of debris.

If you are in a mudder, turn to 544.

Otherwise, turn to 617.

396 "Stay right here," says Alexis excitedly, grinning. "I'll be right back."

"But we can't waste time," you complain.

"They're not going anywhere," he says enigmatically.

"When I come back, I'll have something we can tag after them in."

Shortly after, you hear a high-pitched whine in the air, coming toward you. It's a tiny saucer-shaped flying craft — not a skimmer, as there're no signs of wings or contragravity bulges. Three large air intakes are spaced regularly around the clear bottom of the structure.

"She's a hoverdisk," says Alexis, helping you strap in to a seat in the cramped little cockpit. "Skimmers are impractical for prospecting, you know. Most don't hover, and those that do spend too much energy doing it. This baby will hover all day, because that's what she's made to do."

"Is she yours?" you ask.

He shakes his head. "Borrowed her. You know me — I've always got good friends." He activates a signal scope. A bright blip is moving away from you, toward the mountain. "The prospecting scanner detects a metal-and-plastics object moving toward Cocyxcrack Pass. What do you think?"

"Let's get them," you say.

The tiny hoverdisk scoots forward, breaking out of the woods and heading over the jagged foothills toward the mountain pass.

Try a Vision roll, at -2 due to distance.

If you succeed, turn to 160.

If you fail, turn to 597.

397 With surprising strength for a woman, Lauren knocks you aside and takes the controls. "I need you aft," she commands.

At her direction, you head for the back of the catamaran. At the end of the cabin is an open framework suspended over the water. Mounted there is some form of cannon, and a pivoting chair for the operator.

"Belt yourself in," says Lauren. "That's our harpoon gun. Fire only when I tell you to."

Turn to 411.



398 "Nobody move!" snaps a determined voice. The couple who burst through the door are strangers. They are dressed like offworld tourists, but each holds a strange weapon — larger than a pistol, smaller but longer than a rifle.

"MO section, Commonwealth Peaceforce," barks the man. "All of you are under government detention." He grins crookedly, almost savagely.

It seems that you've been rescued, although you've never heard of an "MO" section of the Commonwealth law enforcement arm.

Turn to 447.

399 The fliers are harmless, you soon discover. Their square teeth are designed for cracking the hulls of nuts and seeds, and they show no interest in live flesh such as yourself. They have large bright-yellow eyes, and two thin legs suitable for grasping branches.

Roll one die.

If you roll an even number, turn to 309.

If the number is odd, turn to 463.

400 You cannot buy weapons — not yet. It is a point of pride that you use weapons only when they prove necessary, and even then you use a minimum of force.

Return to 216.

401 If you have a gun and want to use it, turn to 189. Otherwise, you'll have to attack with bare knuckles or whatever bladed weapons you brought with you — turn to 176.

402 “Look, I’ve got to go,” you insist. “If I get too far behind them . . .”

“Take it easy,” the other insists. “Let them relax and think they’ve escaped. I promise you that we’ll catch them. I’m going to help you.”

If you decline this offer of help, turn to 166.

If you accept, and if your *Plot Word* is SOUTH, turn to 557.

If you accept and you don’t have the *Plot Word* SOUTH, turn to 516.

403 The waves of hunger are coming from somewhere close at hand.

Turn to 540.

404 Pip settles back on his haunches, licking his hand-like forepaws while eyeing the feast you’ve conjured up. Then the meal begins. You’re soon convinced that there’s very little a plippit won’t eat. He even tries gnawing on a bowl.

Turn to 559.

405 You cautiously make a low approach to the base in the skimmer, clipping the treetops and pushing the stall limits of the craft. If the people in the compound detect you, they give no sign.

You nestle the vehicle within yards of the outer clearing, between two sheltering evergreens. Swatting at night fliers, you listen for any clue to the mischief Pip should be causing.

“If we haven’t heard anything soon . . .” you begin.

You are interrupted by the sound of sirens in the compound. The alarms are followed by gunfire. Pip’s distraction has caught their attention. Your insides twist, as you picture your symbiote alone in such a situation. *Never again, Pip, you vow. I’ll never let you do this again.*

Turn to 548.

406 If you agree to go with the man, turn to 496. If you use your Talent at this time, turn to 357. (You may only try this once.)

If you attack the man, turn to 431.

If you continue speaking with him, turn to 545.

If you flee, turn to 604.

407 Suddenly, the air turns gray with thousands of furry bodies no bigger than your little finger. They swarm about you on tiny membranous wings, so dense that you can hardly see.

If you are in a skimmer, turn to 536.

If you are in a mudder, turn to 89.

Otherwise, turn to 399.

408 Lights have been constantly visible, as the post remains open throughout the night. The rangers are the law and order in the wilderness, as well as the protectors of wildlife and tourists. The garages were shut at sundown, and you’ve seen no sign of life there since. Within must be the mudders and skimmers of the ranger force.

If you penetrate this set-up, turn to 324.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

409 You can barely contain your excitement. “That’s Mother Mastiff! That’s got to be Mother and the kidnappers!”

“Kidnappers?” says the man. “Say, kid, we’d better report this to the gendarmes.” He starts to place his arm around your shoulder.

Turn to 613.

410 If you hail a public transport and try to follow, turn to 541.

If you want to use your Talent now, turn to 499.

If you return to the shop-stall, turn to 433.

411 The water astern begins to bubble. Lauren wrenches the boat around, at the same time as the surface of the lake explodes in your face. “Fire!” she yells.

Try a Gunner (Harpoon) roll. Due to the size of the target (+6), speed and range of the target (+4), lake glare (-4), and a snap shot (-4), you have a bonus of +2. The roll defaults to Gunner (any type) at -2, or DX at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 86.

If you fail, turn to 234.

412 “Sorry,” says the man. “Can’t say I’ve seen anyone with that description. A mudder, you say? What’s this all about?”

“Nothing, really,” you say, trying to allay his sudden curiosity.

Try a Fast Talk roll. The roll defaults to IQ at -5, or Acting at -5. If you are at a forest station, there is a -3 penalty to the roll.

If you succeed, turn to 321.

If you fail, turn to 566.

413 A shining point of light catches your now-open eyes, and you focus on it like a drowning man reaching for a life preserver. The light comes from an open window in a nearby apartment building. There’s a party there — what a strange night for one, you think.

Feelings from there rain down on you:

The wife, tempting her new lover.

Her husband, provoked to rage.

The suicidal office clerk, remembering the accounts that never balance.

The homely girl, dreaming of being noticed by the new employee at her father’s factory.

Try an IQ roll, at -3. (Strong or Weak Will won’t affect your efforts to understand and control this storm of images.)

If you succeed, turn to 530.

If you fail, return to 381.

414 Your little friend disappears in a shower of gore. *Note: You now have the Plot Word GRIEF. Write it down.*

“No! No! NOOOO!” you scream. You charge the female Peaceforcer. Her partner orders you to halt.

Try a Will roll, at -7.

If you succeed, turn to 9.

If you fail, turn to 628.

415 You dodge clear of the plummeting limbs — some as thick in diameter as you are.

The rumbling is like a barrage now, as the storm rips into the woods in its full intensity. The debris continues to pelt you from above, and there’s no place to turn for shelter — any protecting tree might turn into a collapsing hulk!

Suddenly, a blur crosses your path, then another. It's a stampede of panicked wildlife. One of them veers toward you. It's a squook, and it looks angry.

If you are in a mudder, turn to 123.

Otherwise, turn to 326.

416 Your golden egg drops toward the open-topped silver skimmer. The enemy pilot, spotting your dive, wrenches his craft away from yours. Enemy beam fire plays ineffectually on your skimmer's hull.

Try a Contest of Piloting, pitting Aural's skill against the enemy pilot's. His skill is $2d+3$; Aural's score is given on p. 61.

If Aural wins the Contest by 2 or more points, turn to 192.

Otherwise, turn to 320.



417 The slow fungoid regains his perch on the bed. Suddenly he glows, and a soft throbbing fills the room. Mastiff wobbles, then topples backwards into the hallway.

"I'm . . . can't move . . ."

Turn to 288.

418 Suddenly, it's as if you are there, looking out of Mother Mastiff's eyes:

A short, oriental woman in flowing robes is speaking. ". . . it will be necessary for us to place certain small devices in your brain, to ensure your complete compliance with our directives."

If your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND, turn to 36.

Otherwise, turn to 153.

419 Your gun speaks. Try a skill roll for your weapon. (If you have a beamer, the correct skill is Beam Weapons/TL8.) There are no modifiers, unless you've been given some previously.

If you fail, he gets to fire at you — turn *immediately* to 457.

If you succeed, make a Dodge roll for your opponent. His Dodge score is 6.

If he dodges successfully, turn to 457.

Otherwise, make a damage roll for your weapon. If you do 1 to 7 points of damage, turn to 632. If you do 8 or more points of damage, turn to 112.

420 There's no question about the source of the emotional blow — *home*. Mother Mastiff's shop-stall. You head there on the run.

When you arrive, the shop is shuttered for the night as usual. You slam your palm against the door lock, but it refuses to open — it's locked from within.

If you call for Mother Mastiff, turn to 542.

If you attempt to batter down the door, turn to 32.

If you immediately circle around to the back alley, turn to 93.

421 Try a Streetwise roll. (It defaults to IQ at -5.) If you succeed, turn to 239.

Otherwise, return to 216.

422 Fear returns for a minute, but this is no Meliorare — his shabby clothes mark him as a refugee of a more conventional type. "Are you all right?" he asks. Other strangers gather behind him.

"I'm not . . . I think . . ." You swallow. Your mouth isn't working right. "What happened?"

"You tell me," says the man.

Turn to 122.

423 You manipulate the controls in what you think is the proper direction. The overloaded cleaning mechanisms eventually clear the windscreen, revealing that you are at a safe altitude. You continue on your journey.

Turn to 198.

424 "There's somebody out there!" Lightning flashes from a pair of beamers.

Try a Beam Weapons/TL8 roll, at -7, for the two enemies shooting at you. Their skill level is $2d+8$ (roll for each).

If either roll succeeds, try a Dodge roll to avoid being hit. If you fail any Dodge roll, you take 1d impaling damage.

If you are dead, *close the book*.

If you are unconscious, turn to 437.

Otherwise, it looks like you'll have to keep your old form of transport for a little while longer. Grabbing Pip, you flee into the woods, dodging further gunfire.

Turn to 162.

425 The pain is not enough to rouse you from your slumber. In the morning, a startled shopkeeper finds your skeleton picked clean in the alley. Your crumpled slickertic is found next to your remains, but Mother Mastiff is reluctant to believe that you're dead. For many nights to come, Mother remains awake into the late hours, hoping for the sound of your homecoming.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

426 As you move beyond the first fringes of the forest, the words of Arrapkha — an old friend of Mother Mastiff, and a neighboring shopkeeper — come back to you:

"You're out of your mind, kid," he said, shaking his head dolefully. "Do you know what the forest is like?"

If your *Plot Word* is NORTH, turn to 278.

If you have the *Plot Word* WEST, turn to 367.

If you have SOUTH as your *Plot Word*, turn to 570.

427 If your *Plot Word* is ANGUISH, turn *immediately* to 602. Otherwise:
If you have a skimmer, turn to 610.
If not, turn to 108.

428 “Walk back to base,” he says. “This time, we’ll borrow a skimmer like I should have done in the first place. Then we’re going to chase your friends, come high water or anything.”
Turn to 19.

429 The kidnapers are moving northward.
Your *Plot Word* is NORTH. Write this down.
Turn to 286.

430 You point back towards where the fight occurred. “It’s not me lying on the ground back there,” you point out.
“I see,” says the other.
Turn to 402.

431 “Stanzel!” cries out the old man before you get very far.
There’s a flash. Agony grips your back. Your arms and legs freeze in place, causing you to helplessly plummet into a pile of moldering trash.
“You shouldn’t have made me do it,” says the man, kicking fleurms away from your helpless body. “That was only a paralysis pistol. You’ll recover shortly.”
An equally elderly woman — Stanzel — comes to his side. “The transport is coming,” she says.
Turn to 65.

432 If you speak with the approaching man, turn to 125.
If you attack the man, turn to 401.
If you would rather flee, turn to 379.

433 You’re on your own now — no guardian for protection, and only the money from your credit-card to survive on. What will you do?
You may try each item once. Contact the police (128)?
Question strangers about the disappearance (282)?
Talk to Mother Mastiff’s neighbors (6)?
Search the shop-stall for clues (141)?
When you are finished, turn to 27.

434 The new blast knocks you back against the shop wall. You buckle to your knees.
Take 1d+2 Fatigue.
If you collapse, turn to 339.
Otherwise, turn to 223.

435 The door opens at a touch. The place is a shambles. In the kitchen, pots, pans and food are strewn everywhere. Clothing and personal items lie in the hall. The destruction is worst in Mother Mastiff’s room. The bed looks like the scene of an attempted murder.
Across from the bed, the concealed “slip-me-out” exit is open wide. An outside breeze blows through.
If you search this room, turn to 141.
If you follow the slip-me-out, turn to 200.
If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.
If you do none of these, turn to 433.

436 “What’s going on here?” demands a rough voice. The asker is a wilderness prospector, an outdoorsman who knows how to handle the hunting rifle he’s carrying. The men behind him also know how to use their guns.
The man struggling with you turns and runs, shoving you to the ground as he does so. You struggle to your feet, grabbing the paralysis beamer he’s abandoned.
Make a Note: Add a Paralysis Beamer to your possessions.
Turn to 42.

437 Angry woodsmen turn you over to the local rangers. They are very curious about you, since you match the identity of someone wanted by Drallar gendarmes for questioning.
Turn to 509.

438 You climb down from the vehicle, determined to discover the cause of its sudden power failure.
Try a Mechanic (Skimmer) roll, at +3 since the problem is simple. The roll defaults to Mechanic (any type) at -1, Engineer (Skimmer) at -1, Engineer (any type) at -5, Piloting (Skimmer) at -5, or IQ at -2.
If you succeed, turn to 113.
If you fail, turn to 170.

439 Your Talent can find no trace of Pip anywhere.
Turn to 300.

440 The wood-processing factory is an odd collection of buildings — some large, some just shacks — with a variety of towers, chimneys and silos attached in what seems to match no plan or purpose you can imagine. A fence surrounds the compound where vehicles and animals are kept.
You enter a main office, and speak to a balding man holding a sheaf of papers. After introducing yourself, and asking innocent questions, you casually inquire about recent passersby.
Roll one die. (If you have Luck and can use it, you may want to use it now. High rolls are good.)
On a roll of 1 to 4, turn to 412.
On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 110.

441 “Not until I know what you’ve got in mind,” you reply.
“You’re wasting time,” she says. “I’ll take the controls.” She moves to push you from the pilot’s seat.
If you resist, turn to 619.
If you let her, turn to 453.

442 You topple onto the rug, paralyzed. You retain consciousness, but cannot move a single muscle.
If Pip is with you, and capable of action, turn to 215.
If your pet is out of action, turn to 38 instead.

443 Try an IQ roll. (If you have already made this IQ roll, do not roll again — use the original results.)
If you succeed, turn to 331.
If you fail, turn to 400.

444 From the faraway city center come the impressions of a man planning a murder — fancifully, as if he’s inventing an entertainment for friends. Casual as the feelings are, you sense that this man has killed before . . . and will kill again.
Return to 381.

445 The feelings are gone, and you cannot make them return. “We have to hurry,” you tell your companion. “They’re going to hurt my parent, and soon.” You stare into the forest, in the direction you know you must take.

“Let’s find out what we’re getting ourselves into, first,” says your companion. Together, you outfit yourselves and leave to reconnoiter the place where the enemy skimmer landed.

It is nearly midnight when you reach a place from which you can see the enemy base. It looks like a hunting lodge, though one larger than any you’ve yet seen: main lodge buildings in the center, guest cabins to one side, garages and sheds to the other, all in a large cleared area. Closest to your position, two long, narrow structures are set next to a hangar and a small power station. The one item that looks out of place is a central tower.

Searchlights probe the darkness between buildings. The compound has no fence, nor do you see any signs of an alarm system.

If you own *Daynight Binoculars*, turn to 630.

Otherwise, turn to 207.

446 “Mother” Mastiff — the nickname catches on in the bazaar, perhaps because Mastiff hates it so — is a tough, uncaring but competent guardian. His shop, dealing in imports and exports, handles a rough crowd, many of whom are on the wrong side of Drallar’s law.

“Keep your mouth tight,” Mastiff warns you often, usually after you’ve seen more than he wanted you to. “Stick by me, and I’ll stick by you. Or else.” And he draws a metal finger across his throat in an ages-old gesture.

In this environment, you develop special skills. Give yourself 8 character points in the skills of Criminology, Blackjack, Brawling, and/or Knife Throwing.

Turn to 364.

447 Roll one die. Cross out the box with that number, and turn to the associated paragraph. Important: If the box you roll is *already* crossed-out, turn immediately to 528.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1, 2 | Turn to 588. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Turn to 179. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4, 5 | Turn to 276. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | Turn to 520. |

448 The green canopy rolls on — there’s not a break in sight! As you lose power, the skimmer turns its nose down and smashes into the forest.

Turn to 471.

449 “You’re mad,” you yell, struggling to pull Aural away from the skimmer’s controls. “You’re going to kill us all.”

“Stop pawing me,” replies the young woman. “Save it for later, OK?”

Try a Contest of ST, to take the controls from Aural. Her stats are found on p. 61.

If you win by 3 points or more, turn to 478.

Otherwise, turn to 416.

450 You rush to inspect Pip’s find. A thin plasticine bottle of cologne lies on its side, uncapped. If Mastiff had the presence of mind to leave a scent trail, and if Pip can follow the trail . . . “Pip?”

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 298.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 172.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 587.

451 Pip hesitates, then soars to treetop height and begins to zoom in an anxious searching pattern. When you call him back, he ignores you. Only when he is satisfied, does the minidrag settle back on your shoulder.

Turn to 183.

452 One by one, the lights wink out in the individual guest rooms. The lobby light remains on — the front desk will be manned all night.

If you are checking out a hunting lodge, turn to 325.

If not, turn to 340.

453 With Lauren’s hand on the controls, the catamaran spins hard over so sharply that the portside lifts into the air. A high rooster-tail plume of spray hides you temporarily from sight.

Hurriedly, she tells you to grab a rifle from one of the storage lockers. “Fire it at the skimmer, at point-blank range,” she orders. You rush to follow her directions.

Try an IQ roll.

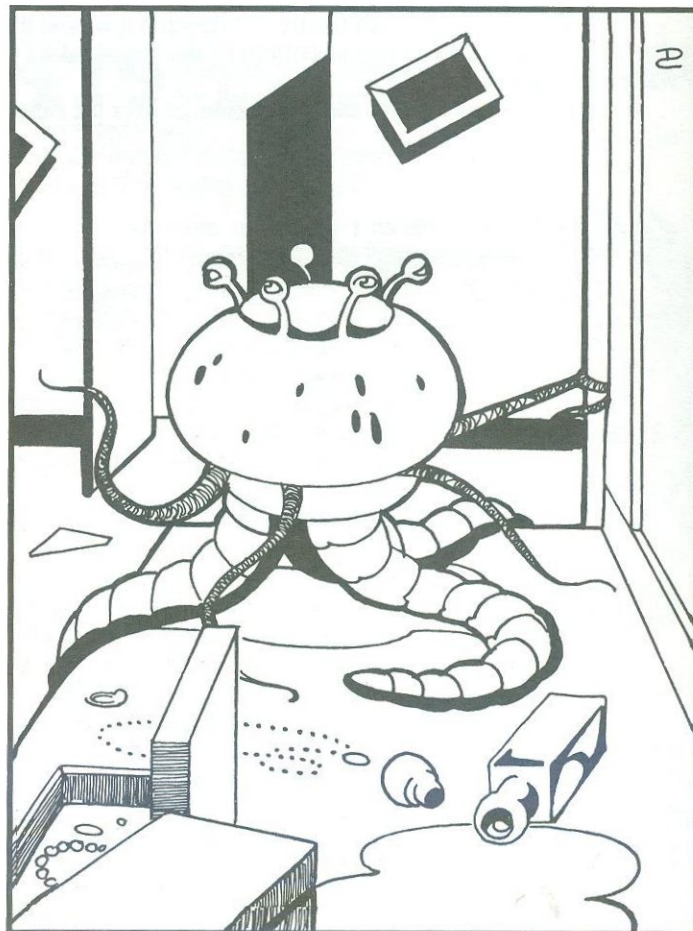
If you succeed, turn to 206.

If you fail, turn to 102.

454 You sense no intelligence in your new-found friend. Nevertheless, there *is* something there. The creature’s eyes stare into yours from inches away, and you feel the other’s mind beam coherent, organized thoughts at you. No, not thoughts — *emotions*, but as clear in their own way as human speech.

He likes you.

Turn to 550.



455 It's a relief when your symbiote comes into view, unharmed.
Turn to 625.

456 If you use your Talent at this time, turn to 292 (you may only select this option once).
If you ask about Pip, turn to 25.
If you ask about Mother Mastiff's kidnapping, turn to 620.
If you ask what they want from you, turn to 57.

457 A sharp crackling ricochets around the room, accompanied by a brief flash of light — a paralysis beam.

Try a Beam Weapons/TL8 roll for the gunman. His Beam Weapon skill level is 2d+6. There are no modifiers (unless you've been given some previously).

If he succeeds, turn to 355.

If he fails, and if Pip is with you and capable of action, turn to 215.

If he fails and Pip cannot help you, turn to 468 instead.

458 Ahead in the corridor is a cloud of smoke. You hear gunfire, along with shouts of pain and confusion. Out of the smoke stumbles a man clutching a bloody chest. Spotting you, he freezes.

Behind him, a small green figure lopes into view — Pip! Your symbiote scampers to your side and climbs to his shoulder perch.

The wounded man slumps to the floor.

Turn to 615.

459 "What's wrong with you, Alexis?" You slap him until he stops shaking.

"Paralysis beam," he says finally. "I flew too low, and they shot me through the transparent bottom of the hoverdisk. That was sure stupid of me."

You hear a low rumbling, and see a skimmer over the canyon where the mudder is.

Turn to 627.

460 "You haven't given me much information," grumbles the clerk, turning to his files. "I can tell you that no one matching the general appearance of your Mother Mastiff has been arrested in the city recently. In fact, I don't see any record of a person of that description taken into custody by any official source. Does that help you at all?"

You nod slowly. If it hasn't given you any leads, it has at least narrowed the possibilities. "Thank you."

"Now if you'll give me your name," he says, "I can send out a gendarme . . ."

If you speak with the police, turn to 509.

If you hang up, turn to 177.

461 "Mother?" you say, unthinkingly. You stare in the direction of the broadcast emotions.

If this is a communications depot or a wood-processing plant, turn to 538.

If you are at a forest station or a nomad encampment, turn to 600.

If this takes place in a hunting lodge or an inn, turn to 26.

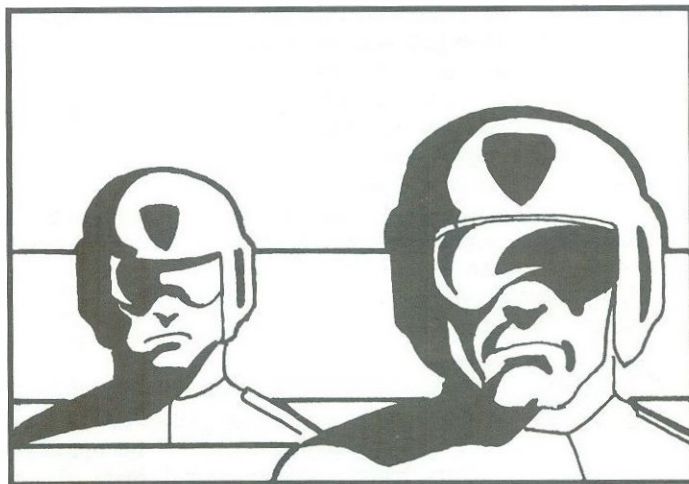
462 You're cautious, but no one can be cautious forever. One day you make a wrong move and plainclothes Peaceforcers move in on you from both sides.

"We want to discuss something with you," says a woman, flashing an identification badge. The others move to pin your arms before you can escape.

If you try to talk your way out of this, turn to 598.

If you make an immediate escape attempt, turn to 311.

If you go peacefully, turn to 509.



463 The cloud of fliers seems endless. Your progress is slowed to a virtual crawl.

Make a note: When you make your next Travel roll, subtract 2 from the result due to lost time.

If you have the *Plot Word FUNGOID*, turn to 198.

Otherwise, turn to 577.

464 "Get away from me! Leave my mind alone!" you scream, warding him off with flailing fists.

"I didn't mean nothing," says the man indignantly, walking rapidly away. The other strangers who had gathered around you scatter quickly, eyeing you cautiously.

Now that the man has fled, you realize that he couldn't be a Meliorare as you first thought — he's just a shabby derelict.

Turn to 122.

465 The impact causes you to stumble, but you retain your footing. You manage to throttle down the mental scream until your mind stops hurting.

You suffer 1d-2 Fatigue points.

If you collapse, turn to 590.

Otherwise, turn to 344.

466 It is pouring rain outside, lit by what dim light of Moth's moonlets leaks through the clouds. By the illumination of a glow globe in the kitchen, you pull on pants and a shirt. Ragged snores come from Mother Mastiff.

Turn to 137.

467 The pain is sharp, hot, and unexpected as always. You wince and screw your eyes tight.

"What's wrong?" your companion asks. You can make no reply.

Make a note: You suffer 1d-3 Fatigue points, and a special -3 penalty on the coming Emotion Sense roll.

Turn to 254.

468 If this encounter is taking place at an inn or a hunting lodge, turn to 87.

Otherwise, turn to 42.

469 The forest station is a neat, simple structure that seems perfectly suited to its forest environment. The building is a low, rambling structure with double-glazed windows. Garage facilities are in one wing, and offices in the others. Painted in varied shades of forest green, the post is nearly invisible at a distance.

You enter, and proceed down a central hallway to a desk marked "Information." A uniformed ranger sits behind the desk. "Yes?" he asks, looking up and giving you his full attention.

Casually, you ask about recent passersby.

Roll one die. (If you have Luck and can use it, you may want to use it now. High rolls are good.)

On a roll of 1 to 4, turn to 412.

On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 110.

470 The penestral dives.
If you are piloting the catamaran, turn to 249.
Otherwise, turn to 59.

471 As you scream, safety systems take over and smother you in a protective cocoon of foam.

When you come to, all is still. The wrecked skimmer lies on its back, a twisted and broken wedge of scrap metal.

"Pip?" you cry. Then, with real fear, "Pip!"

Roll one die.

On an even roll, turn to 455.

On an odd result, turn to 39.

472 "Yes, yes I can," you say. You know that Mother Mastiff had a diverse and checkered youth — the kidnapping must be related to something from that period. "You can tell me about it some other time."

Turn to 74.

473 Turn to 584.

474 "I'll kill that pest!" roars your guardian. He charges after Pip, wielding the broom like a soldier. "Get my blaster while I hold it off."

If your *Plot Word* is ALASPIN, turn to 629.

If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 392.

If your *Plot Word* is PLIPPIT, turn to 549.

475 There's a quick snatch of emotions: Mother Mastiff struggling against assailants who hold your guardian down, and then the quick painful thrust (a needle?) . . . the thoughts grow confused.

You realize that Mother's somewhere in the woods beyond Drallar, and growing more distant every moment. And the direction . . .

Turn to 363.

476 The mind remains closed to you. However, the feelings you are still receiving don't come from here — they lead you outside.

Return to 137.

477 You cross a slight rise. A gap in the trees reveals a sight that takes your breath away. It looks like an ocean, though it can't be — there aren't any oceans north of Drallar. It's a lake, one of hundreds between here and the arctic.

You half raise your arm to shield your eyes. Though no direct sunlight penetrates the constant overcast, the light that does get through is trapped between the mirror-like waters and the reflective cloud banks. The result is a glare, and the reason for the name of this series of lakes: The-Blue-That-Blinded.

The travelers you have been pursuing for so long are already well out on the surface of the lake. If you don't follow soon, you'll lose the trail.

"Just a minute," says someone, coming up behind you. You turn to see who it is, and find yourself staring.

She seems to tower over you, although she's really not that much taller. Black hair falls in tight ringlets to her shoulders. Her bush jacket is tucked into pants that are themselves tucked into low boots. She's slim but not skinny. Her skin is dark, tanned by lake glare.

She's the most stunningly beautiful woman you've ever met.

"My name is Lauren Walder," she says. "I'm the general manager at Granite Shallows. It's a fishing lodge not too far from here." Her voice is full of barely controlled fury.

Turn to 579.

478 You sit down at the controls, gingerly feeling your way around the skies. The other skimmer darts away, disappearing to the west.

"Follow them," says Aural angrily.

"In a moment," you say, glancing down at the tracking scope of the skimmer. "Let them think we're not following. Then we will, on instruments."

"Only if we can keep their trail," says the young woman gloomily. "My plan was better."

Try a Contest of Tracking skills. (For our purposes, this Tracking roll defaults to IQ at -5, or Strategy at -4.) The enemy pilot's effective skill level is 2d.

If you lose the Contest by 2 or more points, turn to 30.

Otherwise, turn to 514.

479 Startled, your muccax bleats and makes a leap for the sky. You hold on for dear life!

Roll two dice.

If the number rolled is 8 or less, turn to 513.

If it is 9 or higher, turn to 277.



480 “He’s just a pet,” you counter. “What if I refuse to go with you? There are plenty of other pets to be found.”

“Not like this one,” says the man in his frustratingly knowledgeable voice. “He’s a part of you, isn’t he?”

“How do you know that?”

“Despite what you think of me right now,” he says, “I am wise in certain things. If you’ll let me, I’ll share that knowledge with you.”

If you now agree to come with him, turn to 496.

If this is the moment you attack, turn to 431.

If you run for it, turn to 219.

481 You take an inventory. Nothing seems to be missing. Whatever has happened, it isn’t thievery.

If you search Mother Mastiff’s room, turn to 141.

If you follow the slip-me-out, turn to 232.

If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.

If you do none of these, turn to 433.

482 You topple onto the rug, paralyzed. You retain consciousness, but cannot move a single muscle.
Turn to 241.

483 Instinct and experience combine to tell you that bringing the police into this case could be very unfortunate — for you *and* for Mother Mastiff. After all, you aren’t sure what the nature of your guardian’s difficulties is . . . Mother’s activities are not always legal.

As for yourself, you know the police fairly intimately, having been arrested more than once. You’re probably on the official question-list right now. If the authorities get their hands on you, they’re likely to take you into custody for prolonged questioning — and you’ll be unable to do anything to save Mother Mastiff.

Turn to 591.

484 The massive fish crushes the jet-powered catamaran between its jaws. No survivors are found.

Your adventure is over. *Close the book.*

485 It only takes minutes to reach the city’s edge. Beyond looms the forest. Above the nearer bushes and trees soar ever larger trees, until the tallest are more than 300 feet high. The pavement vanishes, leaving in its place a muddy trail that leads into the woods.

If you are riding a stupava, turn to 143.

If you are riding a muccax, turn to 92.

If you have a skimmer, turn to 10.

If you have a mudder, turn to 623.

486 The mental blow sends you to your knees.
Take 1d Fatigue.

If you collapse, turn to 339.

Otherwise, turn to 381.

487 Spotting a clearing, you dive for it, hoping that your power will last long enough to make a controlled landing.

Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at +2 since this vehicle is easy to handle even in a crisis situation. The roll defaults to IQ at -4, Piloting (any type) at -2, or Driving (any type) at -5.

If you succeed, turn to 521.

If you fail, turn to 58.

488 Suddenly, there’s a high keening sound almost beyond human ability to hear. The air in front of you shimmers . . . and then an odd, fungoid shape appears, waving its tentacles menacingly toward the Peaceforcers.

“Teleportation,” says the Meliorare leader thoughtfully.

Turn to 268.

489 You wait until midnight. Pacing through the night mist with Pip on your shoulder, you make a complete circuit of the area.

If you are casing out an inn or a hunting lodge, turn to 452.

If the place is a nomad encampment, turn to 111.

If it’s a communications depot, turn to 522.

If you are stealing from a forest station, turn to 408.

If it is a wood-processing plant, turn to 194.

490 “Just going for a little vacation,” you explain. “I’ve finished my schoolwork, and deserve a break.”

“Well,” she says, more relaxed, “I only rent the best.”

Due to your lack of credit references, you must pay a rental deposit equal to 10% of the purchase cost. The actual rent will not be due until you return to the stall.

If you don’t or can’t pay the deposit, turn *immediately* to 216.

Otherwise, the rental is yours.

If you leave now to follow Mother Mastiff, turn to 485.

If you continue your business in Drallar, turn to 352.

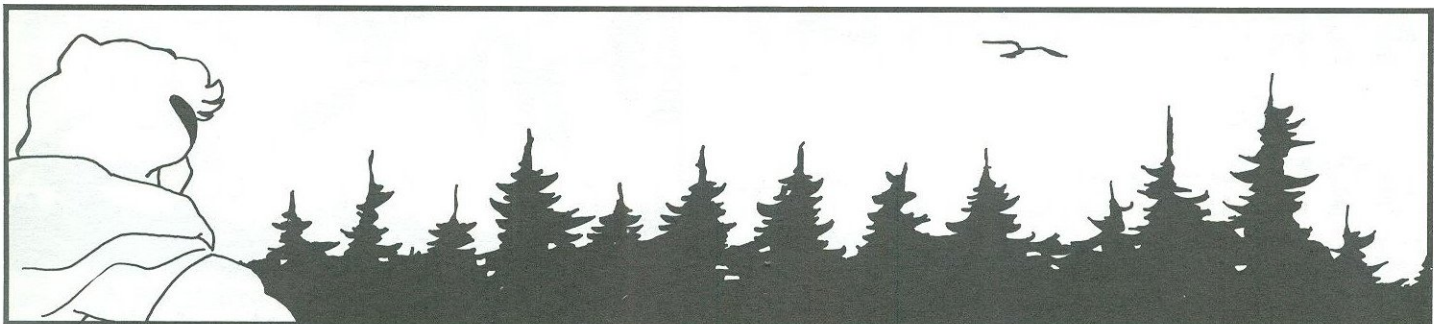
491 The course leads you across Dead-Place-On-Map, one of the few dry, desert areas of the planet. Below is a wide trough of sand and gravel, scarred with channels carved by rare flashfloods.

“I’d hate to get stranded down there,” you say.

Alexis nods. “I’m flying as high as I can,” he says. “Even the dust is corrosive. Many a skimmer’s gone down over the Dead-Place, and never been heard from again.”

You are relieved when the pursuit continues, past the desert and again into the forest.

Turn to 133.



492 Alexis hasn't awakened, and this machine still needs to be flown.

Try another Piloting (Hoverdisk) roll, at +5 since the hoverdisk is simple to operate. The roll defaults to IQ at -1.

If you succeed, turn to 119.

If you fail, turn to 328.



493 It's like a thunder storm indoors: for minutes, only the greyness of the dim room, then the stunning flash and electric sizzle of a paralysis beam. For that moment, the shadow figures feeling their way about the room are frozen brightly into your eyeballs . . . and then the image is gone, leaving you blinking to get rid of the dazzle. In the background come the subtler sounds: diners scurrying for cover, tables being knocked to the floor, silverware clattering, and the hoarse breathing of the frightened and the injured.

Roll one die. Add 1 to the die roll for each enemy you've killed or put out of action in this encounter. (If you have Luck and haven't used it since the last refresher entry, you may want to do so now — anything higher than 3 is good.)

On a roll of 1, 2 or 3, turn to 252.

On a roll of 4 or 5, turn to 291.

On a roll of 6 or higher, turn to 8.

494 A blue and gold jewel flies down the hallway directly at you — Pip! As the minidrag settles on your shoulder, you can see the damage he has wrought. Bodies litter the building, all with the unmistakable signs of acid death.

One victim, propped against a supporting bulkhead, looks up feebly. The venom did not strike him cleanly in the eyes — death is taking longer than the few instants the acid usually requires.

Turn to 615.

495 Try a Driving (Mudder) roll, at -1 due to the emergency. The roll defaults to Driving (any type) at -5, IQ at -6 or DX at -6.

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 529.

If you fail, turn to 560.

496 "All right," you say, moving toward the old man. "But you'd better be telling the truth."

"About not wishing to harm you or your pet?" The man's smile grows wider. "I promise you that I am."

Up close, the man is smaller and older than you thought — shorter than you are, in fact. He's joined by an equally ancient woman, who steps out of the shadows. "This is my friend and associate, Stanzel," he says, introducing his partner. Neither of them seems to be armed.

"I don't want to hurt you," she says, eyeing you curiously. "None of us do."

"But why are you doing all of this?" you ask.

Turn to 65.

497 The stinging blow doubles you over with its force. You suffer 1d Fatigue.

If you collapse, turn to 590.

Otherwise, turn to 344.

498 As it moves toward you, you feel something unlike anything you've ever felt before — waves of friendship, emanating from the strange creature. You help it to a place on your shoulder. As you do so, the burning pangs of loneliness fade. In return, there is a new clarity in your mind.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 454.

If you fail, turn to 508.

499 Turning in a slow circle, you fight to pick up any lingering trace of emotion from Mother Mastiff.

Try a Fickleness roll. (see p. 2.)

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 386.

If you fail, turn to 46.

500 She pushes the button. The gun goes *phut!* and something tiny bursts from the muzzle.

"This is a dart gun, and the darts are poisonous," she explains. "That was a warning shot. There — they've found it, in the back of the pilot's chair. I think I see your parent too."

She frowns.

"Uh oh. They're using your guardian as a shield, protecting themselves from my fire. Nice people. Now they're putting up the mudder's top, and they've activated some kind of transparent shield. Well, that's no problem . . ."

Suddenly, a deep humming becomes audible. A skimmer descends from the cloudbank and hovers over the mudder, releasing a flexible ladder.

"Who are these people?" asks a frustrated Lauren. "Mudders, kidnappings, dead wervils — and now a rescue ship. We've only one chance. Charge straight at them!" she orders.

If you comply, turn to 310.

If you insist on an explanation first, turn to 441.

501 The woman who pushes through the crowd toward you is eye-catching. Her luminescent blonde ringlets stand out dramatically against the jet-black slickertic, complementing her pale, almost albino complexion. She is dressed well but not expensively. Something about her tells you that she's tough — a survivor.

Your *Plot Word* is SURVEY. Write this down.

Turn to 524.

502 Sliding behind the controls of a sleek six-passenger skimmer — a *Stratoglider* model — you search the control panel. Somewhere there's a locking alarm system that you need to foil.

Try a Traps/TL8 roll, at -1 (the system is unsophisticated, but tricky). The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -6, or Lockpicking/TL8 at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 584.

If you fail, turn to 81.

503 Suddenly, a brown-and-black blur emerges from a hole in the ground beside the trail, and launches itself at you.

If you are driving a mudder, turn to 123.

If not, turn to 326.

504 “I wish you’d tell me what’s going on,” you complain.

“It’s not our place to explain.” The man glances at his companion, then asks, “Have you ever heard of the Meliorare Society?”

Try an IQ roll, at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 195.

If you fail, turn to 211.

505 The direction of the broadcast comes as a complete surprise. You’ve lost their trail completely — they’ve looped.

Make a note: If you have the *Plot Words* NORTH, SOUTH or WEST, erase them — they are yours no more. Roll one die, and consult the table below to determine your new *Plot Word*. If you regain the same *Plot Word* that you just erased, roll again.

1,2	NORTH
3,4	WEST
5,6	SOUTH

When you make the next Travel roll for your enemies, roll one extra die.

Turn to 567.

506 If you are at an inn or hunting lodge, turn to 87. If not, turn to 42.

507 You spot the mudder — lumbering through a clearing, far below your speeding vehicle. Aural banks around, and circles over the spot. “I can’t go any slower, or we’ll stall this bird out,” she says.

“What about instruments?” you ask. “Can we track it from up here?”

She activates a small tracking scope. “Don’t think so. This is aerial only, I think.” A bright blip appears, moving toward your craft. “Look — it’s another skimmer.”

“Moving directly for us,” you say.

Turn to 378.

508 Whatever this creature is, he feels at home now. You sense nothing but contentment from his jewel-like mind.

Turn to 550.

509 The authorities are very interested in your story — so interested, in fact, that they keep you in their custody for almost a week.

When you finally return to the shop-stall, you clean up the mess and try to return to some semblance of normal life, hoping that Mother Mastiff will someday return. Pip huddles disconsolately in a corner, mirroring your sadness.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

510 Try a Streetwise roll (defaults to IQ-5).

If you succeed, turn to 578.

If you fail, turn to 462.

511 You shut your eyes, straining to catch the kinds of emotions Mother Mastiff must be generating.

If you have the *Plot Word* CAPRICIOUS, turn *immediately* to 3. Otherwise, try a Fickleness roll. (If you don’t know what this is, see p. 2.)

If you succeed, turn to 386.

If you fail, turn to 281.

512 “But where is Lauren?” you ask Mother.

“Gone fishing,” says your guardian.

“You let her leave? While I was asleep?” You are upset.

If you are male, turn to 251.

If not, turn to 571.

513 The leap carries you safely away from all danger. Turn to 198.

514★ The whine of the skimmer’s engine drowns out the gentle hum of the tracker. Your companion runs an instrument check, then pivots the vehicle and climbs to 100 feet.

You study the tracking screen. The dot representing your quarry is at the extreme range of the scope — hours of travel distant. “They’ll move off the screen soon,” you complain.

“Don’t worry. I’m sure they’re convinced by now that they’ve lost us,” says your partner.

“They’re zigzagging,” you point out.

“Taking no chances.”

Days pass as you pursue the contact.

If your *Plot Word* is SOUTH, turn to 491.

If not, turn to 133.

515 “There they are,” says Lauren, squinting as she points out the dark outline against the reflective waters.

Turn to 2.

516 “But right now,” she says, “I want to show you something.” You are led back to where all of this began.

If your *Plot Word* is NORTH, turn to 315.

Otherwise, turn to 56.



517 Beaming reassurances, Pip hurries away in the direction of the base. You soon lose sight of him in the darkness, but you can sense warmth in the cold night.

Turn to 405.

518 The rain continues to fall, as you stand in the refuse-heaped alleyway.

If you use your Talent in an attempt to reestablish the heightened abilities you temporarily experienced, turn to 572.

If you listen again for the source of the loneliness and hunger, turn to 403.

If you explore the alley, turn to 540.



519 You drop to a crawl, moving cautiously toward your guardian.

Turn to 493.

520 A furtive movement catches your eyes. At the back of the room, unnoticed by the Peaceforcers, an aged technician makes a retreat through the crates.

He abandons a control box. Next to the box is a transparent cage. Within it is your friend Pip. The animal stirs lethargically, and seems to be struggling! You feel upset, and aren't sure how to control yourself.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 203.

If you fail, turn to 98.

521 The aerodynamic vehicle rocks to a bumpy landing, brushing past branches and uprooting one small tree. Happily, the skimmer itself seems undamaged by the descent.

If this accident involved flying rodents, turn to 438.

If not, turn to 625.

522 No lights are visible, and you see no signs of alarm beams. The fence arches outward at the top, a design that makes climbing over it difficult. The gate has a simple mechanical lock. Within are a variety of large and small mudders.

If you penetrate this set-up, turn to 324.

If you change your mind, turn to 162.

523 You charge the group, watching them dive for cover as the headlights swing onto them. Your luck holds. They've left Mother Mastiff standing in the open. You pull alongside and jump out to rescue your guardian. The kidnappers react — two thugs jump you, dragging you away. Pip is struck and spins off into the darkness.

Something hits you sharply. As the darkness closes in, you hear someone yell, "It's the kid!"

Take 2 hits as a remembrance of this experience.

If you are alive, you wake up, cold and dirty, hours later. The kidnappers are long gone, apparently vanished into Moth's endless forests. Turn to 433.

If you are dead, your adventure is over. *Close the book.*

524 "A mere 50 credits," says the government official.

"Fifty credits, then," says the stranger. A deep voice from the back of the courtyard challenges the bid, and the prices spiral — to 60, 80, 100! Then there's a commotion. Uniformed gendarmes press into the crowd on the trail of a fugitive. When the disturbance settles down, the bass-voiced second bidder has disappeared.

"He's yours," says the official to the original bidder. "Pay up, and mind the regulations."

The government clerk looks up. "Name?"

"Mastiff," says your new master.

"Last name?" the official asks.

"Just Mastiff," your benefactor replies.

The bored clerk smiles. "Mother Mastiff now, I think." Completing his entries, he punches a key, and a printer spits out a seemingly endless sheaf of forms. "That's all. The two of you can go."

If your *Plot Word* is SURVEY, turn to 184.

If your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND, turn to 446.

If your *Plot Word* is TECH, turn to 237.

If your *Plot Word* is CRONE, turn to 314.

525 Alexis jerks, then twitches in his seat. His arms slacken, falling away from the hoverdisk's controls.

"What's wrong?" you demand. The air vehicle cants to one side.

"Can't . . . can't . . ." he chatters.

You've got to grab the controls, or the hoverdisk is going to crash into the hillside.

Try a Piloting (Hoverdisk) roll, at +3 even for this desperate situation, since hoverdisks are simple to operate. The roll defaults to IQ at -3.

If you succeed, turn to 119.

If you fail, turn to 328.

526 Raw meat attracts the snake. You cut the meat into small chunks, which Pip gulps whole. He likes fruit and berries, but shuns vegetables. Raisins and guarfish flakes are also consumed gleefully — perhaps he likes food with a high-iron content.

Turn to 559.

527 Engines screaming, the catamaran spins to its left. A plume of spray nearly drowns those climbing the rope ladder into the skimmer. The others are cowering, afraid that the jet boat will collide with the mudder.

If you know that your shots missed the skimmer, turn to 14.

If you do not know this, turn to 323.

528 You feel unsteady on your feet as well as in your mind. Where you expected rescue, there is only new hurt and fresh indifference. Worse than indifference — these people see you as some kind of deformed, unhealthy creature. The universe, as represented by organizations legal and illegal, seems wholly against you.

Turn to 98.



529 You deftly swerve around the carnivore — a brown-furred squook, spooked by your passage. It races away into the woods.
Turn to 198.

530 As you feel the emotions stampeding through your head, a new part of your mind awakens. Like a wet blanket against a blazing fire, the new barrier dampens the intense impressions, regulating them until you can withstand them and sort them out.
Then, suddenly, the emotional storm is over.
Turn to 518.

531 That night as you sleep, your unpredictable Talent begins to function again.
It's Mother Mastiff! You get a vague sense of direction and distance . . .
Roll one die.
On a roll of 1 or 2, turn to 567.
On a roll of 3 or 4, turn to 594.
On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 505.

532 An airborne Pip darts forward, a thin stream of liquid jetting from his open jaws. The gunman screams, drops his gun, and tumbles to the ground. He's quite out of action.
Your *Plot Word* is DROPPED. Write it down.
Turn to 468.

533 At your mental prompt, Pip shrugs out from beneath your slickertic. "Damn! That's alive!" the man says. He's very obviously and suddenly suspicious of someone with such a strange pet.

"Very alive. Thanks for your help, sir." You turn and run, before the man tries to be of any more help.
Turn to 78.

534 It's time to make a fateful decision, one on which your entire life may hinge.
If you decide to pursue Mother Mastiff and the kidnapers into the forest, turn to 352.
If you decide to remain in Drallar, turn to 510.

535 A tip: Skimmers usually have more elaborate alarm systems than the less expensive mudders.
Return to 180.

536 At your speed, the little creatures colliding against the windscreen quickly form a layer of obscuring blue film. Simultaneously, the control panel flashes a warning light — the cloud of creatures has confused the automatics, forcing them to cut out. You grab the controls.
Turn to 383.

537 The Peaceforcer curses, eyeing the ruined body of the Meliorare. Then she aims for your pet.
"Pip! No!" you yell, rushing at the woman. The other Peaceforcer trains his weapon on you. As your pet tries to dodge the gunblast, the woman's finger tightens on the trigger.
Try a Will roll, at -5.
If you succeed, turn to 612.
If you fail, turn to 628.

538 "Your friends are still here," the man explains, motioning toward an open door. As he does so, a stranger steps through.
The new man is a thick-bodied, middle-aged man whom you've never seen before. Seeing you, the stranger's eyes grow wide. "It's the kid," he says, reaching for something in his jacket.
If you attack him, turn to 104.
If you run, turn to 379.

539 Then the eyelid rolls shut like a curtain falling. "Hurry up," you call softly. "I think this one is waking up."
Your companion nods. "It's done. We can go." Back in the skimmer, a noxious mixture is made of devilope blood and musk — the green fluid's scent almost chokes you.
"The oil will get the interest of the males of the herd. That's not enough — we want to craze them. Scenting the blood and the musk, they'll believe a female is in danger. The mares will be enraged then, too."
You lift off in the skimmer.
Turn to 61.

540 You take a step forward, then another, and one more — and something moves aside within the pile of garbage in front of you. You strain to see in the dim light, bracing yourself in case an unusually aggressive fleurm attacks.
Try a Vision roll, at -4 due to the darkness.
If you succeed, turn to 107.
If you fail, turn to 12.

541 Public transports are hard to find at this hour, particularly in this part of the city.

Try a Streetwise or Area Knowledge (Drallor) roll, at -1. (Streetwise defaults to IQ-5.)

If you succeed, turn to 225.

If you fail, turn to 205.

542 “Mother Mastiff, it’s me! Open up!” you cry. There’s no reply.

If you now batter down the door, turn to 32.

If you circle around to the back alley, turn to 18.

543 The skimmer, hesitating momentarily after the loss of its companion vehicle, climbs for the cloud layer and speeds away to the north. “We’ve got to follow them,” you say.

“We have to get out of here alive first,” Lauren says. She indicates a red dot on the tracker. “That big fish is a penestral. It’s following us now, and will try to hit us from astern.”

If you are piloting the boat, turn to 72.

If Lauren is piloting the boat, turn to 175.

544 Try a Driving (Mudder) roll, at -2 due to the emergency. The roll defaults to Driving (any type) at -6; or IQ or DX, both at -7.

If you succeed, turn to 415.

If you fail, turn to 97.

545 Roll one die. Cross out the box with that number, and turn to the associated paragraph. Important: If the box you roll is *already* crossed-out, turn *immediately* to 259.

1, 2 Turn to 596.

3, 4 Turn to 139.

5, 6 Turn to 187.

546 The man is twice your size, but his flesh is no tougher than anyone else’s. He exhales once, a sharp wheeze, and then collapses in a heap.

He’s out of action. You dart away, into the darkness.

Turn to 140.

547 “You’re insane,” you say, taking the skimmer’s controls as she slips out the hatchway. “You’ll get us all killed.”

“Probably,” agrees the young woman.

The kidnappers on the crippled skimmer are too busy looking for a clearing to make an emergency landing in to notice the neofilm-gowned figure descending on the rope ladder. It’s up to you to position the skimmer so that she can rescue your parent.

Try a Piloting (Skimmer) roll, at -2. It defaults to IQ at -8.

If you succeed, turn to 68.

If you fail, turn to 94.

548 In the confusion, you easily penetrate the base and land the skimmer. Logic helps you locate the building that must contain Mother Mastiff.

Try an IQ roll, at -3. (If you have Luck, this would be an excellent time to use it.)

If you succeed, turn to 69.

If you fail, turn to 299.

549 Pip crawls out from under the bed, shaking head. Mother Mastiff cuffs him again with broom. He yelps and scurries back under the sheltering cot. Turn to 45.

550 The muscles clinging to your shoulder relax, the tiny eyes close. The creature is asleep.

You pause to take stock. You’ve never seen an animal this, and no education chip you’ve studied has mentioned a thing quite like him. If he’s from offworld and worth something no doubt his owner will come looking for him.

If you take him with you, turn to 76.

If you choose to gently dislodge the sleeping creature place him back in his refuse pile, turn to 361.

551 To your disgust, the trail grows completely cold. So cold, in fact, that you’ve lost all hope of finding Mastiff.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

552 Your mount groans, and slumps to the ground. You abandon the dying animal, running as fast as you know how.

Roll one die.

On a roll of 1 to 3, you escape on foot — turn to 198.

On a roll of 4 or 5, turn to 154.

If you roll a 6, turn to 358.

553 “What’s it got to do with me?” you ask. “Everything,” says the man. He starts to speak more, but Stanzel hushes him.

Turn to 114.

554 Agony rips through your body. Try a HT roll.

If you fail the roll, turn to 482.

If you succeed, turn to 101.

555 Mother Mastiff is more than your guardian — she’s your best friend, closer than anyone you know on your own age. You don’t know what kind of trouble she could be in (she’s never explained to you how a crack survey pilot ended up grounded on this mossy ball of rock), but if you can help her you want to. Life without her just wouldn’t be the same.

Turn to 534.

556 Then you hear a low rumble. A skimmer appears overhead, then descends and lands behind the mudder. Firing cover shots to keep you and Alexis cowering in the cockpit, the kidnappers transfer to the other vehicle.

Turn to 627.

557 “Besides, I couldn’t let down an old comrade,” he says. “And remember — I owe you one.”

Turn to 396.

558 The water astern begins to bubble. “Now!” Try a Powerboat roll, at +4. The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -1, or Boating at +1.

If you succeed, turn to 86.

If you fail, turn to 295.

559 It looks like your pet will be able to live on table scraps. Mother Mastiff will like that.

When Pip is stuffed to nearly twice his normal size — and when you feel a little melancholy from your wine — you gather your pet and leave. It is raining outside. Pip slips under your slickertic as you put it on, seemingly unaffected by the rain.

Suddenly you are hit with a raw, unexpected hammer-blow. The soundless screaming is inside your head. Something about it is familiar.

Try a Will roll, at -4.

If you fail, turn to 497.

On a critical failure, turn to 63.

If you succeed, turn to 465.

On a critical success, turn to 359.

560 You swerve, and in your alarm turn too far. With a sickening crunch, your vehicle impacts against a tree. The massive bole quivers, sending down a rain of debris from high above.

You dive from the wreckage as the predator leaps into the open-roofed passenger compartment. The impact with the ground causes you to gasp and stumble. As you crouch dazedly, your brown-furred enemy leaps after you.

Turn to 204.

561 A narrow gap, running between Mother Mastiff's shop and old lady Marquin's place next to it, catches your eye. It leads to the service alley behind the stall-home. By turning sideways, you can slither through.

Now you stand in the pitch blackness of the alley, between the shop and an office building. The reek of rotting garbage drifts to you. Stacks of broken packing crates and dented barrels line the road. You also hear the rustle of movement within the detritus.

Fleurms — furry, legless mammals a yard long, and as thick as your thumb — infest the composting refuse. Drunks have sometimes been eaten to the bone by the scavengers, but the shy, almost blind creatures pose no serious threat to you since you are conscious and moving.

As you open your mind, searching once more for the emotion source, a surge of red-hot feelings crashes into your receptive mind.

Try a Will roll, at -5 due to the burning intensity.

If you succeed, turn to 329.

If you fail, turn to 486.

562 You are floating inside a giant bass drum. Someone is pounding on it from both sides. The rhythm is erratic, the sound soul-deafening. It hurts. *What is happening?*

Turn to 130.

563 The bureaucrat nods. "What is your guardian's name?"

You hesitate. "Mother Mastiff is the only name I know."

"Is Mastiff a last name, or an honorific?" he asks. "I'm assuming the 'Mother' is an honorific."

You stare dumbly at the clerk, suddenly aware of how little you know. "I . . . I don't know, for sure."

"Well, then," tries the clerk, "what's *your* last name?"

You don't know that, either.

Try a Will roll.

If you succeed, turn to 460.

If you fail, turn to 360.

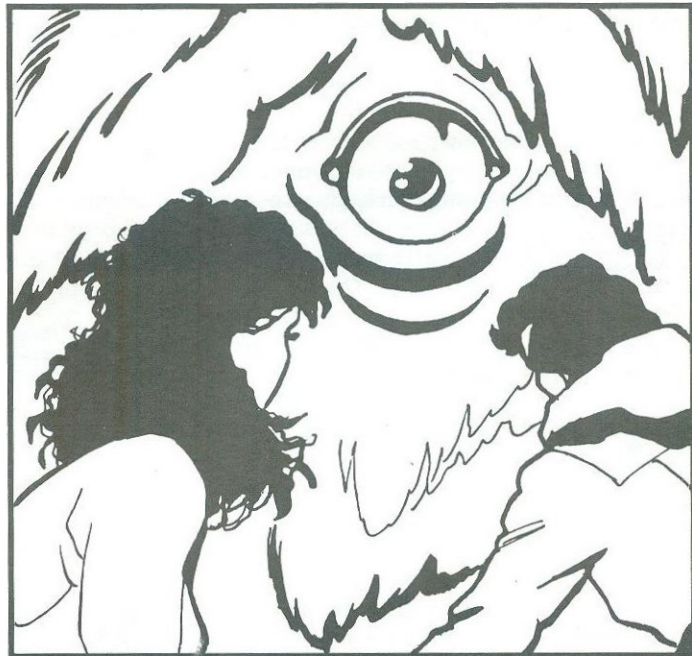
564 *Make a note:* Your Plot Word is BEHEMOTH. Your companion lands the skimmer among the herd. You get out and very carefully stalk your way between the beasts. Your companion fires three tranquilizer darts into the skull of a devlope mare, then does surgery with a knife. "We need blood and musk," is the explanation.

A loud, sharp grunt comes from directly behind you. Turning, you find yourself staring in horrified fascination at a plate-sized crimson eye. An absurdly tiny black pupil floats in the center of that blood-red disk.

Roll one die.

On a roll of 1 to 4, turn to 539.

On any other roll, turn to 370.



565 In an instant, Pip is airborne and in pursuit of the enemy. You run after your pet.

Turn to 70.

566 You make up an explanation. The man scowls. "Doesn't sound right to me," he says. "Are you sure everything is all right?"

He's suspicious. You leave the area as quickly as you can, in case he decides to call the rangers. You don't want trouble.

Turn to 531.

567 Make a Travel roll, to determine how far you've come along the trail of Mother Mastiff.

Conditions

On foot

Riding a muccax

Riding a stupava

By mudder

By skimmer

Travel roll

Roll one die and halve the result, rounding up.

Roll one die.

Roll two dice.

Roll three dice.

Roll four dice.

Your new Travel score is figured by adding the result above to your current Travel Score.

Next, roll two dice and add the result to Mother Mastiff's captors' Travel Score.

Turn to 162.

568 A half-hour later, your control panel lights up in warning shades of red and amber. Hastily scanning the entries, it looks as though *everything* has gone wrong — your engine is overheating, and the skimmer is losing altitude.

Turn to 15.

569 The plippit runs at the man, hissing. Eyes bulging from his head, and staring at an empty point in space several feet above your small green pet, the gunman gasps, then turns and runs. His weapon clatters to the floor.

He runs out of the room — and away from the action.

You have the *Plot Word* DROPPED. Write it down.

Turn to 468.

570 “It’s deadly, but that’s not half the story — heading south, you’ll run smack dab into Mount Footasleep and a whole range of jagged peaks.” He whistled. “And if you head east of there, you reach Dead-Place-On-Map — where nothing lives. It’s stark desert.”

Turn to 214.

571 ★ The next few days pass in a blur. The trip back to Drallar is uneventful, though you do everything you can think of to throw off any possible pursuing enemies.

The shop is the same as you left it — a shambles. You and Mastiff team up to clean it. Your neighbor Arrapkha assures you that no one has been inside since you left. He was in the alley keeping watch when you came home.

One day passes, then another. Mother Mastiff regains strength rapidly. You begin venturing into the marketplace as you used to, but are careful not to stray too far from the shop, just in case.

Note: This Refresher Entry covers several days. Regain any HT and ST you’ve lost due to Fatigue or injuries.

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 161.

If you fail, turn to 90.

572 No matter how hard you strain, your mind remains empty of any feelings except your own . . . and one other.

Turn to 403.

573 You are too slow. Before you can lower Aural to the burning skimmer, the vehicle plummets into the woods.

Then it explodes.

When the smoke clears, there’s no sign of Aural. No body is ever found for Mother Mastiff, either.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

574 She’s interrupted by a loud beeping from the control console. Lauren swears.

Something immense and silvery-sided erupts from the lake’s surface. You see a vast argent spine shot through with flecks of gold that shine in the diffused sunlight. Screams and shouts come from the mudder and skimmer. Then the creature and the mudder are gone, together.

Violent waves, created by the surfacing and the submergence of the vast creature, race toward you.

Try a Powerboat roll for the operator of the catamaran, at +2. (Lauren’s skill level is listed on p. 61.) The roll defaults to IQ or DX, both at -3, or Boating at -1.)

If the roll is successful, turn to 543.

If it fails, turn to 337.

575 “Nah,” says Makepeace. He stares at one of the eye-buds in the cap. “Is it a native?”

“I’m not sure.” You tell how you found him.

The old soldier belches, and sits back on his stool. “It might be a Drothinian. Eh, boys?” The other oldsters nod slowly. “Do you know the old tales?” he asks you. You shake your head.

“There’s an old Moth legend of a creature like him, part mushroom and part octopus, supposedly dwelling in the distant parts of this world. Nobody has ever claimed intelligence for them, but they are said to build cement-like cities on mounds in the center of the Great Marshes.

“Has he done any ‘magic’ for you?”

You tell what happened to Mother Mastiff.

Turn to 156.

576 The broom-swinging attacker is Mother Mastiff . . . who isn’t actually your mother. It was almost seven years ago now that, as an orphan, you were sold by the state. Taxes in Drallar are so low because the government spends next to nothing on its citizens. The local solution to the problem of homeless children is to offer them at auction to the highest bidder — not slavery, says the government, but merely assigning welfare responsibilities to wealthy benefactors.

You remember standing on the platform within the Circle of Compensation, as the hostile crowd jeered and hooted at you and the others for sale. You swept the crowd with your eyes, hoping to be bought by someone kind.



“What’s the minimum asking?” growls a voice from the crowd.

Try an IQ roll. (If you have any form of Luck, use it now. The roll does not count against your limit, since this is a flashback.)

If you succeed, turn to 605. ✓

If you fail, turn to 157.

If you critically succeed, turn to 501.

If you critically fail, turn to 260.

577 At last, the swarms are gone. It takes a moment before you notice what else is gone . . .

“Pip?” Your companion is not on your shoulder, or in any of the other usual places.

It takes you several minutes to find your friend, snuggled deep among your provisions. He is swollen to nearly thrice his normal size, gorged on the tasty little gray fliers. He doesn’t look well.

“That’ll teach you to make a durq of yourself,” you tell him. Pip tries to move, then gives up on the effort. It’ll be a while before he can get about on his own.

Make a note: Pip cannot aid you until after you reach the next *refresher entry* (if you don’t know what this is, see p. 2).

Turn to 198.

578 You’re too savvy to return to the shop-stall — not when the people who took Mastiff away might still be hanging around. That’s why it takes Arrapkha so long to find you.

“Kid, you can’t stay in the city,” says the woodworker agitatedly, rubbing his hands together. “I shouldn’t say anything. I should keep to my own business.”

“What is it, Arrapkha?” you demand.

“Peaceforcers, on your trail,” says the shopkeeper. “They’ve been to Mastiff’s shop. Don’t go there.”

If you stay in Drallar, turn to 462.

If you decide to leave to track down Mother Mastiff, turn to 352.

579 Your companion gestures after the departing mudder. “What do you have to do with that load of idiots?”

“They’ve kidnapped my parent,” you explain.

“And you’re going after them? All by yourself?”

If you’ve killed any of the enemy, turn to 430.

If not, turn to 621.

580 “Do you think we have to worry about pursuit?” your partner asks, as the skimmer climbs away from the enemy lodge.

“I don’t think so,” you say slowly. “I think all of the ringleaders are dead.” Then, more loudly. “Let’s get out of this place.”

“Yes,” growls Mother Mastiff. “The country life doesn’t agree with me.”

Note: You now have the *Plot Words* RESCUE and LODGE. Make a note of them.

Turn to 349.

581 The room fills with the screams of frightened diners, as well as curses from those you’ve surprised. “Where is he? Someone get the lights!” says one — revealing their location, along with your guardian.

If you flee, turn to 394.

If you try to rescue your guardian, turn to 193.

582 You toss and turn, but at last the constant hammering awakens you. It isn’t a physical pounding. You’ve been lonely before — you’ve been lonely for most of your life — but you’ve never felt feelings of such an intensity as this.

Turn to 201.

583 “I just can’t . . .” you begin. Then you realize something. *Pip’s gone*. “Pip, don’t!” you call to the darkness, both aloud and mentally. But there’s no reply.

Your companion sighs. “I think he understood me. I’m sorry about your pet.”

Turn to 405.

584 You drive off in your “new” vehicle. At your first opportunity, you repaint it to disguise its former identity. Where you are going — *away* from Drallar — there is little risk of being caught.

Turn to 162.

585 In the aftermath, you realize that the forest is as dangerous, in its own ways, as the city you are more familiar with.

If you are driving a skimmer or mudder: It is now damaged. Roll one fewer die than before, when making all Travel rolls.

If you are riding a stupava or muccax: Roll one die. If the roll is a 4 or less, your mount returns; otherwise, you are now on foot.

Turn to 198.

586 You aren’t fast enough. The skimmer is inches above the ground when a bull develope crashes into the side. The craft careens sideways, gouging the ground. Other bulls crowd the crippled aircraft. Metal, plastic and flesh blend into a chaotic pulp beneath massive hooves.

Close the book. Your adventure is over.

587 The plippit raises his gloved paws to his nose, pushing his nearly prehensile snout in a variety of directions. Then he sneezes, and gives a commanding nod in one chosen direction.

You take off on a run, with Pip straddling your shoulder.

Turn to 24.

588 You start gratefully toward them. “I don’t know how you people found me, but I’m sure glad to see you.”

“Hold it right there.” The woman shifts her gun toward you. The expression on her face assures you that she is ready to shoot if you take so much as another half step toward her.

“I’m not with them,” you protest. “I’m not part of this.”

“I’m afraid that you are, kid, whether you like it or not,” she says. “You’ve caused a lot of trouble, but everything’s going to be all right. You’re going to be fixed up so that you can live a normal life.”

“What do you mean when you say you’re going to have me fixed up?” you say. Your emotions are in turmoil. “I’m fine!”

Try an Emotion Sense roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 203.

If you fail, turn to 98.

589 It’s a perfect strike — just beneath one of the winglike fins that shield the great fish’s gills.

Turn to 384.

590 “Are you all right, kid?” A bundled-up stranger is standing over you. Brown water from the gutter splashes your face.

Adjust your Fatigue, due to your brief rest, so that your effective ST is now 2.

Turn to 124.

591 If you want to report the case to the police, turn to 509.

If you file a Missing Persons report, turn to 563.

If you hang up, turn to 177.

592 Something draws your attention.

Turn to 561.

593 Your mudder continues to move forward, but it’s badly damaged.

Make a note: For all future Travel rolls, as long as you are using this mudder, roll one die fewer than you ordinarily would.

Turn to 198.

594 How did it happen? From what you are detecting, Mother Mastiff’s captors are taking your guardian along an offshoot trail, one you passed earlier in the day. You’ll have to backtrack in the morning.

Make a note: When you make the next Travel roll for your enemies, apply a +2 bonus.

Turn to 567.

595 As the man prepares to fire again, your fungoid friend suddenly gleams. The gunman, abruptly slack-jawed, drops his pistol from limp fingers.

He’s not dead, but he’s certainly out of action.

Your *Plot Word* is DROPPED. Write it down.

Turn to 468.

596 You stall. “Is Pip all right? He hasn’t gotten himself into any kind of trouble, has he?”

The little man shakes his head, smiling pleasantly. “He’s just fine. He’s sleeping, in fact.”

“Then I can see him?” you ask.

“I can’t let you,” says the man. “I’m just following orders, you know.”

Try a Detect Lies roll. It defaults to IQ at -6, or Psychology at -4.

If you succeed, turn to 163.

If you fail, turn to 406.

597 “See them?” says Alexis, pointing ahead. Following his pointing finger, you see the road, down between two steep slopes. And a mudder.

Turn to 218.

598 *If you have already tried this once, it won’t work twice — return immediately to 462.* Try a Fast Talk roll, at -3. (This roll defaults to IQ or Acting, both at -8.)

If you succeed, turn to 377.

If you fail, you may go with the officers peacefully (509), or you may try to escape (311).

599 Buying goods in the wilderness is difficult — prices are often twice as high here, and goods are scarce.

See the *Appendix* (pp. 55-57) for a list of items for sale. Items marked with an asterisk cannot be purchased here. Animals and vehicles may be rented as well as purchased. Weapons may be purchased only at a Hunting Lodge or a Nomad Encampment. Ignore the information about shops and shopkeepers. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are not available.

All prices listed in the appendix are approximate. Actual price depends on how well you are able to haggle. When you have determined which items you want to purchase:

Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your Merchant skill (defaults to IQ at -5) against the seller’s. To determine the score of the person you are dealing with, roll 4d.

Depending on where you are, the seller may receive a bonus to his roll:

	Inn	no bonus
Nomad Encampment		+5
Communications Depot		+2
Forest Station or Wood-Processing Plant		+3
Hunting Lodge		+4

(The nomads don’t like outsiders. The Nomad Encampment bonus is only +1 if you speak Moth Nomad.)

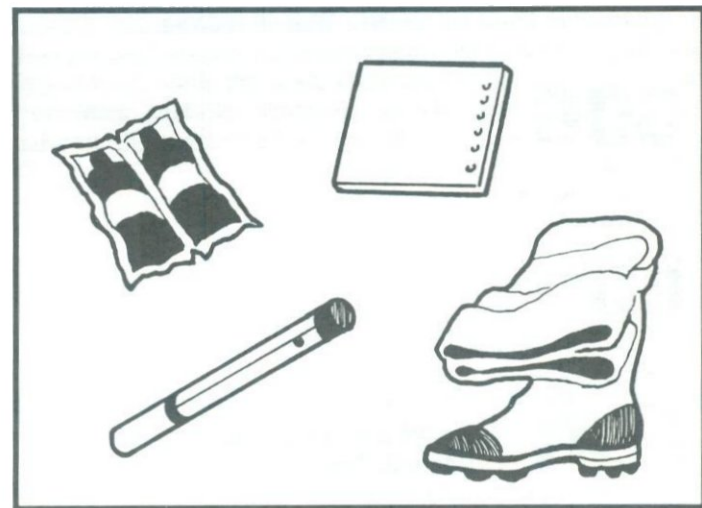
For every point by which you win the Contest, you receive a 5% break on the listed price. The maximum advantage is 60% off.

For every point by which you lose the Contest, the price goes up by 10%. There is no maximum increase.

If you rent transport, you pay no rent at this time. Instead, you must pay a deposit equal to 25% of the purchase cost of the animal or vehicle.

You don’t have to accept any price. However, only one Contest may be rolled for each item.

When you are done, turn to 144.



600 A mudder is just driving off. Through the back window, you see a familiar face — Mother Mastiff!

“That’s them,” says your companion, pointing at the vehicle. “That’s the one.”

One of the people in the mudder notes the sudden interest in his vehicle. He glances at you and the man, then stares at you. The engine of the mudder races. The vehicle charges at top speed into the woods.

“Thanks,” you yell, giving your friend a quick slap on the back.

Turn to 77.

601 To your terror, you see the plippit waddling into the path of the charging squook. “No, Pip!” you warn. The squook snarls and halts, snout to snout with Pip. It raises one wicked claw, ready to slash down on your small green pet.

The plippit hisses, and advances one of its own paws toward the looming carnivore. The squook snarls again, but doesn’t attack — with its deadly claw still poised to rip, the predator and Pip engage in a battle of hisses. At last, the squook averts its eyes. It slowly stalks away, hesitating every few yards to snarl its anger, until it crawls back into its burrow.

Turn to 585.

602 Your triumph at survival is short-lived. You’ve lost the trail.

Turn to 551.

603 Perhaps like a sponge, or a great antenna — you’ve never known how your Talent works, so you’ve never known what to compare it to — you sense the emotions tumbling within the sleeping mind. There is loneliness here, but not what you’re seeking. Those feelings now seem to come from somewhere outside.

Return to 137.

604 Before you can take more than a single step, the man calls out a warning.

Turn to 171.

605 The woman you see is short, thin, and ancient, with a face set in wrinkles of stubbornness. One hand holds tight to the cane that supports her, while the second clutches a bag. She looks to be at least a century old.

Your *Plot Word* is CRONE. Write this down.

Turn to 524.

606 You take an inventory. Nothing seems to be missing. Whatever has happened, it wasn’t thievery.

You move to the inner door.

Turn to 109.

607 You don’t spot the vehicle through the dense foliage, but you do see something else.

“Skimmer approaching,” you point out.

Turn to 378.

608 If you have a paralysis beamer or other gun and use it, turn to 266.

Otherwise, turn to 202.

609 Pip amuses himself by flying circles around the rodents, executing intricate aerial maneuvers when they try to avoid him. The ones that protest the loudest are eaten.

Try an IQ roll, at -2.

If you succeed, turn to 318.

If you fail, turn to 293.

610 Returning to your skimmer, you and your companion make a quick trip to pick up tracking equipment. Installing the equipment on the skimmer doesn’t take long.

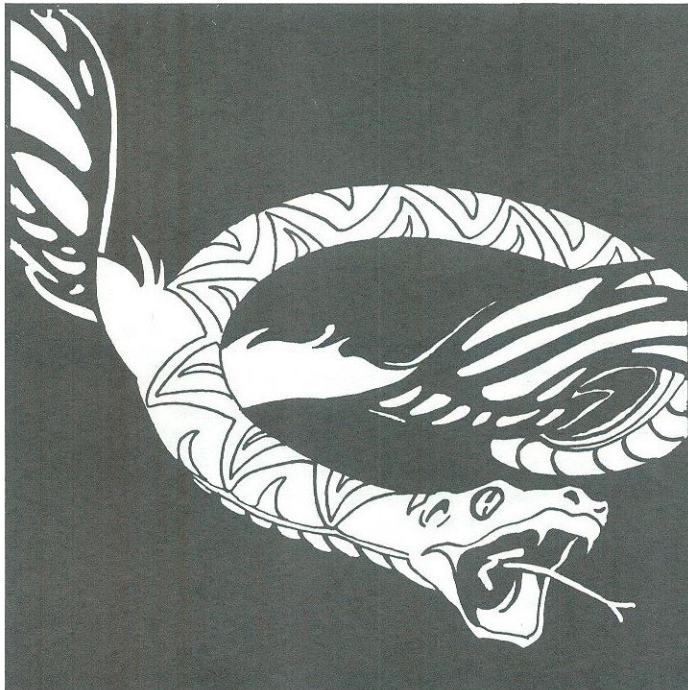
Turn to 514.

611 If your *Plot Word* is FUNGOID, turn to 410. Otherwise, turn to 317.

612 Try a Dodge roll for Pip. (See p. 62 for your pet’s statistics.) If you have Luck, you cannot use it to help Pip.

If he succeeds, turn to 155.

If he fails, turn to 414.



613 Police are *not* what you need right now. If you run for it, turn to 100.

If you try to talk him out of contacting the police, turn to 305.

If you try something creative, turn to 53.

614 You stand in the doorway for a long while, watching. Suddenly, you wince as an intense burst of emptiness strikes your mind.

Try a Will roll, at -4 due to the force of the blast.

If you succeed, turn to 307.

If you fail, turn to 393.

615 “It’s the youth,” gasps the man. “And a catalyst creature. Oh, my god. It explains so much.”

“Where did you come from?” you shout at him. “Why did you kidnap my mother? I hate you for doing this!”

“You seem so harmless,” marvels the man quietly. “I would give a great deal to know how you came to be in possession of that creature.”

You shout more questions at the man, incensed that he doesn’t answer. Then you notice that his eyes have glazed over. He’s dead.

If your *Plot Word* is BEHEMOTH, turn to 28.

If not, turn to 387.

616 Trying not to show too much anxiety, you part from the helpful man.

Try a Will roll at -2. If you fail, and if you have \$5 or more on your credcard, you cannot resist eating a hurried meal. Remember to deduct the expense from your records.

Your mount is doing its best, but that's not going to be good enough. *Somehow* you have to increase your speed.
Turn to 242.

617 Try a Riding roll, at -1. The roll defaults to Animal Handling at -4, or DX at -6.) There is an additional -3 penalty if your Riding specialty is not in riding this type of animal.

If you succeed, and are riding a stupava, turn to 415.
If you succeed, and are riding a muccax, turn to 479.
If you fail, turn to 196.

618 If you have transportation — a vehicle or a riding animal — turn to 485.

Otherwise, it is hopeless. You cannot rescue Mother Mastiff on foot. Return to 352.

619 She attempts to shove you from the control chair. Try a Contest of ST. (Lauren's stats are given on p. 61.)

If you win, turn to 221.
If you don't win, turn to 453.

620 "It was *you*, then" — you gesture at the others in the room — "who were responsible for abducting my guardian?"

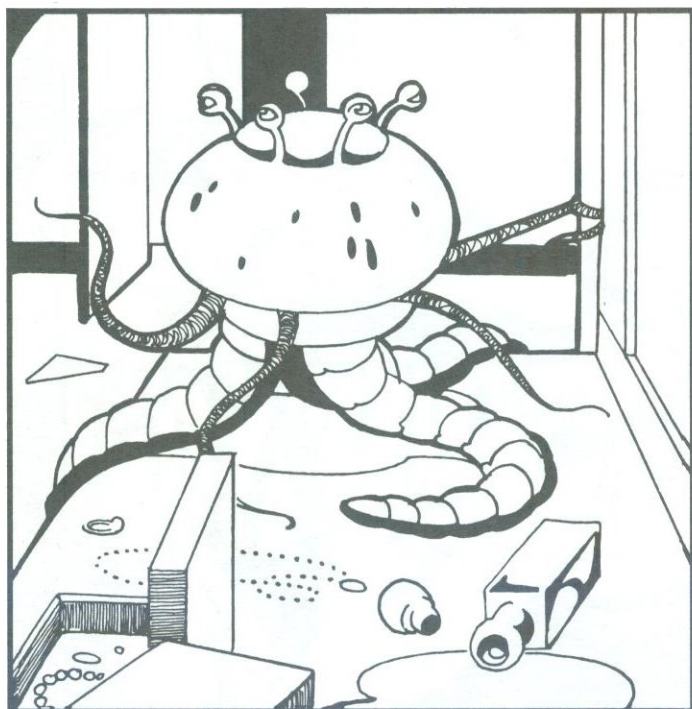
The man who brought you here steps forward. "I don't think he's ever heard of the Society," he reports.

"No reason for him to," says the tall man, ignoring your question. "His life has been restricted, his horizons limited."

Roll one die.
On a roll of 1 or 2, return to 456.
On any other result, turn to 57.

621 "I can handle them," you say. "I'm used to being outnumbered."
Turn to 402.

622 Pip has knocked over a cologne bottle, which has lost its cap and spilled. You scold your pet.



If you return to search the shop, turn to 481.
If you follow the slip-me-out into the alley, turn to 232.
If you try your unreliable Talent, turn to 511.
If you do none of these, turn to 433.

623 The drive across the city has been difficult. The mudder, immobile on paved streets, has made it to this spot by way of a twisted series of muddy back alleys. You sigh with relief as the vehicle finally strikes suitable terrain. Confident and comfortable, you retract the overhead dome and breathe in the outdoor air.

Turn to 426.

624 You lean forward to see more clearly, and the hungry emotions fade — replaced by intensified waves of loneliness. How can such impressions be broadcast by an alley scavenger?

Another burst of emotions crashes into your battered mind.
Try a Will roll, at -7.
If you succeed, turn to 371.
If you fail, turn to 434.

625 Unfortunately, it looks like you'll be on foot from here on.

Make a note: On your next Travel roll, roll only two dice to reflect your interrupted trip.

Turn to 198.

626 A single, ten-foot fence runs around the depot, enclosing the servicing yard. At the center stands the multi-story communications tower, almost entirely automated. The equipment sphere gives off an amber glow.

Also scattered around the yard are the work shelters and equipment of the servicing teams who keep the communications network functioning. It isn't pretentious — vehicles ranging from personal to crew transports are parked helter-skelter on the packed mud, while the work sheds are heavily rusted and pad-locked shut.

Driving through the gate, you approach the tower, looking for someone to speak with. Out of one of the sheds ambles a man in overalls, who nods and walks over to you.

Casually, you ask about recent passersby.

Roll one die. (If you have Luck and can use it, you may want to use it now. High rolls are good.)

On a roll of 1 to 5, turn to 412.

On a roll of 6, turn to 110.

627 "What will we do now?" you ask. "They're transferring to that. They'll get away!"

If the hoverdisk has crashed, turn to 428.

If it hasn't, turn to 186.

628 Now they've done it. *You're flaming mad.* You face the female Peaceforcer and . . .

Something happens.

Try an IQ roll, at -5.

If you succeed, turn to 562.

If you fail, turn to 130.

629 With a buzzing sound, Pip rises from behind the bed and flies in the confining room. He dodges as Mother Mastiff swings with the broom.

Turn to 45.

630 Then you spot them — six conical objects spaced around the perimeter of the tower roof. You receive a +5 bonus on the coming Traps/TL8 roll. Turn to 207.

631 Roll two dice and add the result to Mother Mastiff's captors' Travel Score. Find the difference in your scores by subtracting your score from your enemy's, then follow the directions below.

Result	Directions
20 or more	Turn to 551.
10 to 19	Turn to 258.
3 to 9	Turn to 306.
-2 to 2	Turn to 134.
-3 or lower	Turn to 226.

632 You've wounded him. On his next roll, the wounded man has a penalty equal to the amount of damage you've just done to him. Turn to 457.

633 "Stay right here," says Alexis, as you near the small settlement. "I'll be right back." "Are you sure you can just borrow a skimmer?" you ask. He shrugs. "People trust me, you know." When he returns, Alexis has a battered but functioning skimmer flying at his command. You load the prospecting/metallurgical tracking equipment from the hoverdisk into your new transport. Turn to 514.

634 Gendarmes ignore you as you flee homeward. What happened? Did the Meliorares trigger some kind of explosive device? If so, how did you survive the blast?

The deaths of so many people seem such a waste. Why — just because of your erratic, mostly useless Talent? You don't want it, if it's going to cause so much trouble. All you've ever wanted to do is to make people happy.

It'll be great to be home again, with Mother Mastiff and the shop-stall. Things should be OK now, with most of the Meliorares and the Peaceforcers dead. You *tried* to warn them. It just doesn't pay to come between a kid and his pet.

The End



APPENDIX

Page References

Page references beginning with a "B" (e.g., p. B186) refer to the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Page references beginning with an "HX" (e.g., p. HX63) refer to the *GURPS Humanx* worldbook.

Character Points

Characters who survived may award themselves 3 character points — this is a tough adventure to live through! In addition, if they have any of the following *Plot Words*, they receive the additional number of character points indicated:

NORTH	1
WEST	2
RESCUE	1
FIRE	1
BATTLE	1
PISCES	1

If your character has the *Plot Word* GRIEF, Pip is dead. This caused a severe emotional blow; give the character any Disadvantage or combination of Disadvantages worth at least -5 points. Quirks count as Disadvantages for this purpose. These Disadvantages should have something to do with the manner of Pip's death. The points do not count against the normal 40-point limit, nor are any skills or Advantages gained as a result of these Disadvantages.

The Marketplace

Selected shop-stalls in the Drallar marketplace:

Displayed Exotica

Proprietor: *Russupah* (Merchant-15), a Tolian specializing in the exotic and the illegal. He sells:

- Guns
- Knives and Brawling Weapons
- Surveillance and Alarm Detection Devices

The Insectoria

Proprietor: *Tiger Moth* (Merchant-16), the outré master of a large shop-stall catering to offworld tourists. Tiger is humanoid, but no one is entirely sure which race — or which gender, for that matter. He/she sells:

- First Aid Equipment
- Power Cells
- Riding Animals
- Travel Gear
- Vehicles

Jaimie's Emporium

Proprietor: *Jaimie the Rat* (Merchant-14), a raven-haired master thief and fence for the spaceyard thieves. She's intelligent, young, attractive, and thoroughly unscrupulous. She sells:

- Lockpicking (Thief) Tools
- Travel Gear
- Vehicles



This But Not That

Proprietor: "Weasel" Lombardo (Merchant-17), the chuckling master of an electronics shop . . . and the rumored mastermind of a much larger organization. He sells:

- Guns
- Lockpicking (Thief) Tools
- Power Cells
- Surveillance and Alarm Detection Devices

Goods For Sale

Note: All of these goods are for sale in Drallar. If you are making purchases outside Drallar, items marked with an asterisk (*) (and ammunition for the guns) are not available.

First Aid Equipment

Cerebroneural Depressants (TL5): These are popular sleeping pills. While under their effects, a character suffers -2 penalties to IQ and DX. A single dose lasts eight hours and is good for one night's sleep. \$10/dose; weight negligible.

Plastiskin Canisters (TL8): For use in a surgical. Three doses per canister. \$50; 1/2 lb.

Surgiseal* (TL8): A handheld device which sprays a liquid form of plastiskin. The plastiskin congeals over a wound, acting as disinfectant, anesthetic and bandage. Unlike the generic plastiskin from *GURPS Space*, the type used in the Humanx universe has healing properties. After any fight, this device may be used in conjunction with a HT roll. If the HT roll is successful, the surgiseal heals 1d+1 damage; on a failed roll, it heals only 2 hits. On a critical failure, no HT is regained. Only one dose can be applied to any wound. Comes with three doses of plastiskin; uses a B power cell. \$100; 2 lbs.

Power Cells

Conventional Power Cells (TL8): These aluminum power-storage disks can be stored for decades without losing their charge. Any equipment you buy comes with enough power cells to operate it, but you may wish to purchase spare cells. Power cells cannot be recharged. There are several sizes:

A — powers small equipment such as watches and calculators. \$10; weight negligible.

B — powers various sorts of handheld equipment. \$30; weight negligible.

C — powers larger equipment or weapons. \$100; ½ lb.

Riding Animals

Muccax

ST: 25-30	Speed/Dodge: 10/5	Size: 3
DX: 10	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 600-700 lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: None	
HT: 16/28	Range: 0	

Muccax are squat, toad-creatures. They are slow but durable and can carry more weight than a stupava. Anti-mud goggles and a heavy slickertic are recommended when riding one of these on Moth. \$3,700 to purchase; rental cost is \$25/day.

Stupava

ST: 25	Speed/Dodge: 15/7	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 350-500 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage:*	
HT: 13/15	Range: C, 1	

These flightless, avian beasts of burden are long-legged and 8' tall. A bright orange crest runs the length of the animal's head and neck. The stupava does 1d+1 imp. (kick), 1d+2 cr. (bite) or 1d-1 cr. (trampling). \$4,500 to purchase; rental cost is \$55/day.

Guns

Laser Pistols/Beamers (TL8): 1d impaling damage, SS 7, Acc 7, ½D 400, Max 500, RoF 3~, Rcl 0.

These are both weapons and handy utility tools. They can be used as welding torchs, flashlights, heating elements or fire starters. These weapons require the Beam Weapons skill to operate properly. A C power cell holds sufficient power for 20 shots. \$1,000; 2 lbs.

Slug-thrower* (TL6): 2d crushing damage (SS 10, Acc 2, ½D 150, Max 1,700, RoF 1, Rcl -2, ST 10). Can fire six times before you have to reload. Reloading takes two seconds plus one second per shot.

Cheap, deadly and reliable, this pistol is common in Drallar's underworld. Guns/TL6 (Pistol) is the applicable skill. Note that if you have Guns/TL8 (any) instead, using a TL6 slugthrower incurs a -3 penalty — you won't be expecting the recoil! \$200 (includes 100 rounds of ammunition); 2.5 lbs.

Needler* (TL8): 1d+2 impaling damage (SS 9, Acc 1, ½D 100, Max 300, RoF 3~, Rcl -1). \$2,000 (includes 1,000 needles); 2 lb. Can fire 300 times before you need to reload.

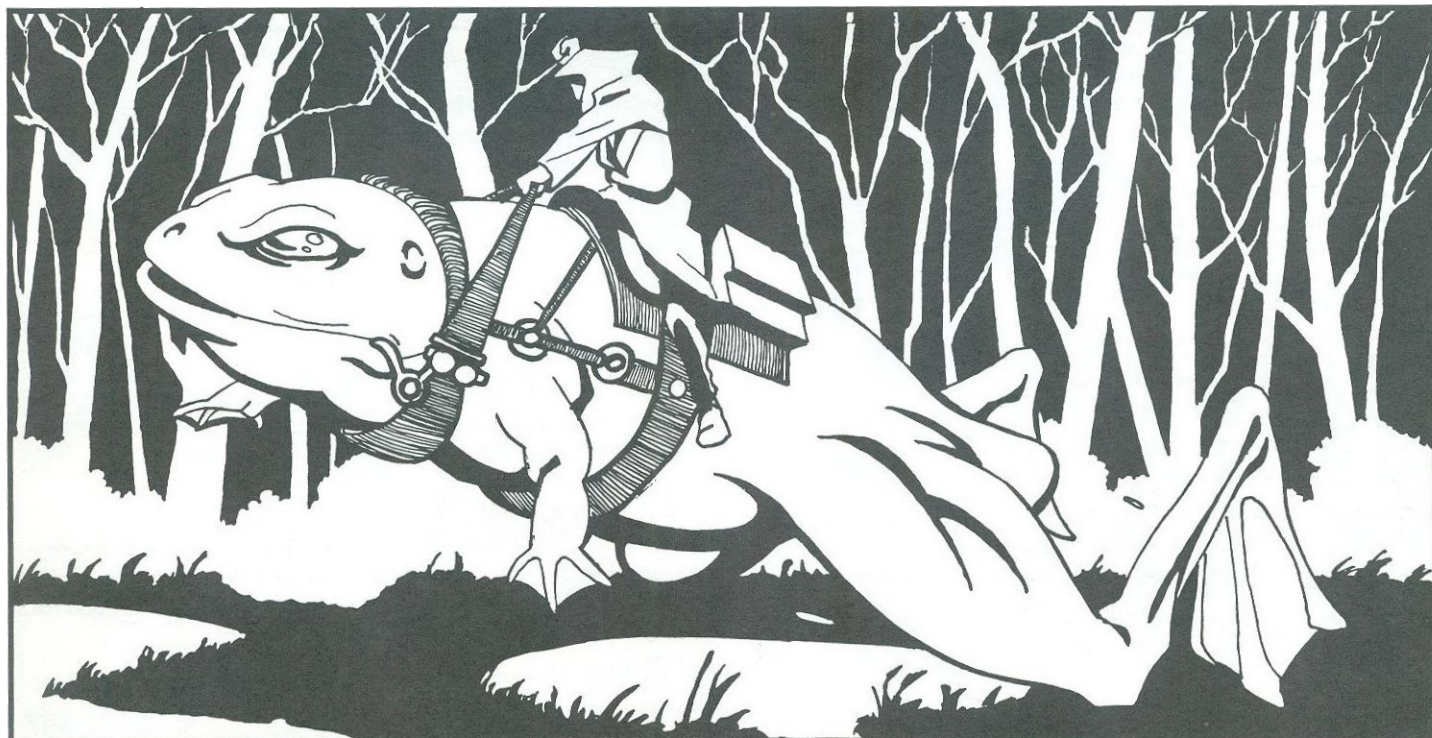
This weapon shoots of tiny (.01 caliber) needles. Requires the Guns/TL8 (Needler) skill.

Knives and Brawling Weapons

Dagger* (TL2): thrust-1 impaling damage (maximum damage 1d; Reach C). If thrown: SS 12, Acc 0, ½D ST-5, Max ST.

Also called a *stiletto*, this is a thief's preferred weapon, as it can easily be concealed in a boottop or a hidden sheath (+4 to Holdout). \$20; ¼lb.

Small knife* (TL2): swing-3 cutting or thrust-1 impaling



damage (maximum damage 1d+1; Reach C, or 1 if cutting). If thrown: SS 11, Acc 0, ½D ST-5, Max ST.

Another common weapon in the byways of Drallar. \$30; ½lb.

Large knife (TL2): swing-2 cutting or thrust impaling damage (maximum damage 1d+2; Reach C, or 1 if cutting). If thrown: SS 12, Acc 0, ½D ST-2, Max ST+5.

Not as common as the dagger because it's harder to conceal, the "swamp knife" still has its uses. \$40; 1 lb.

Secur Vibraknife* (TL8): A small knife with an unusually heavy hilt and a 7" blade. The hilt contains a battery-powered vibrator that, when activated, causes the knife to do an extra die of damage. (An unactivated vibraknife does the same damage as a small knife.) A Hearing roll made from one hex away will detect a faint hum if the vibrator is activated.

With a successful Quick-Draw (Vibraknife) roll, the weapon can be drawn and activated simultaneously. Uses one B power cell (lasts for 40 minutes of combat). \$230; 1½ lbs.

Surveillance and Alarm Detection Devices

All-Spectrum Emission Detector* (TL8): A device that can detect TL8 alarm systems through a variety of electronic and other energy "signatures." Uses a C power cell; good for five uses. Applies a +5 bonus to operator's Traps/TL8 roll when attempting to locate TL8 alarm systems. \$1,200; 5 lbs.

Nightday Binoculars (TL7): These optical devices allow the user to see accurately at long ranges in the dark. Palm-sized for easy concealment. Requires a B power cell. \$200; weight negligible.

Radiation Emission Detector* (TL8): A handheld device that registers the field radiations of many TL8 alarm systems. Uses a B power cell; good for five uses. Applies a +2 bonus to operator's Traps/TL8 roll when attempting to locate TL8 alarm systems. \$750; 15 lbs.

Lockpicking (Thief) Tools

Alarm Deactivation Kit* (TL8): A useful and highly illegal thief's toolkit for foiling commonly found TL8 alarm systems. Requires no power cell. This kit applies a +2 bonus to any Traps/TL8 roll made to deactivate an alarm system. \$1,500; 5 lbs.

Handpicker* (TL7): A very popular lockpick device, this small, oddly-shaped piece of metal is temperature sensitive. When warmed in a thief's hand, it becomes sufficiently plastic to flow within a lock and shape itself to match the key pattern; when the thief then holds the handpicker with fewer fingers, the device resolidifies so that it can be used as a key.

Applies a +2 bonus to any Lockpicking roll when attempting to pick a mechanical lock. Requires no power cell. \$100; weight negligible.

Travel Gear

Concentrates Tubepack (TL6): A supply of emergency food that will last for two weeks for one individual. No power cell required. \$50; 2 lbs.

Guide to Moth (TL8): A quarter-inch thick square of plastic with switches along one side. Activating the switches transforms the dull plastic into an illuminated map, which can produce views at various magnifications of any region of Moth open to public exploration. The Moth government sells these guides

through shopkeepers, taking a healthy cut of all sales. Includes an A power cell. \$250; weight negligible.

Moth Survival Belt (TL7): This kit for wilderness travel is sold to offworld tourists. It includes concentrates for one person for two weeks; collapsible fishing gear; canteen and water-purifying equipment; a collapsible tent with a dehumidifier and rechargeable heater; and a microfilm reader with built-in spool of survival texts. Includes a C power cell. \$800; 10 lbs.

Heavy Riding Gear (TL8): This clothing set consists of a heavy slickertic (with a built-in repulsion charge that helps to repel water and mud) and knee-high slickerboots. Recommended for muccax riders. No power cell required. \$125; 5 lbs.

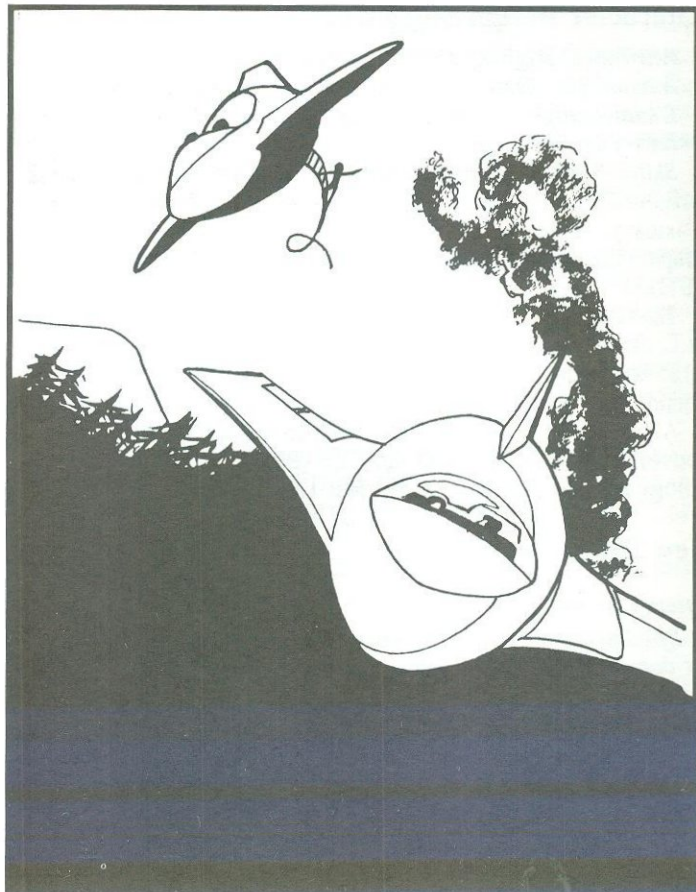
Slickertic (TL8): This hooded jacket is conventional wet-weather gear on Moth. A faint electrical charge embedded in the thin plastic repels moisture. No power cell required. \$50; 2 lbs.

Tube Tent (TL6): A collapsible portable shelter with personal heater. Includes a B power cell. \$150; 5 lbs.

Vehicles

Mudder (TL8): This ground vehicle is designed for swampy worlds. The vehicle's underside is treated with a special hydrophobic polyresin that allows it to slide with almost no friction across a moist but solid surface. Propulsion comes from an electric jet on the stern. It travels at speeds of up to 25 mph. \$12,500 to purchase; rental cost is \$75/day.

Skimmer (TL8): This stubby-winged, open-topped vehicle uses a combination of aerodynamic lift and contragravity to fly. The models commonly available on Moth travel up to 75 mph, but not slower than 25 mph — they may stall and crash. They operate at heights of up to 400 feet (necessary in order to clear the forest canopy). \$50,000 to purchase; rental cost is \$300/day.



New Characters

Part of the fun in playing this adventure can be to see how your own character would do if placed in Flinx's situation.

Although your character will *not* be Flinx, he (or she) must share some of the same background in order for this adventure to work. All player characters must be human orphans who know nothing about their origin and must be built on 75 points. Other requirements:

Name. He may only have one name — a first name. Since real names are seldom used in Drallar's marketplace, he fits in very well . . .

Appearance. There must be something slightly "odd" about his appearance. Flinx has bright green eyes, eye-catching red hair, and is skinny for his age (but not to the extreme of having the Skinny disadvantage).

Advantages. All characters must spend 13 points on Telepathy (Power 5), including the Very Fickle (8 or less) restriction. See the Psionics rules on p. 58-60 of this book.

Disadvantages. All characters must purchase:
Dependent (Mother Mastiff, on 6 or less). -16 points.
Enemy (Unknown). -20 points. (See below for an explanation of this disadvantage.)

Poverty (Struggling). -10 points.

Youth (Up to four years). -2 to -8 points

The required disadvantages cost between 48 and 54 points. You may add an additional -40 points of disadvantages, plus up to five Quirks.

Skills. You may spend up to 50 points on skills. (Flinx was more mature than his biological age.) The player must spend 1 to 7 points on the psi skill Emotion Sense.

Money. The character begins with \$1,500 in cash. For roleplaying purposes beyond the scope of this adventure, he also owns \$6,000 worth of non-liquid goods (clothing, partial ownership of guardian's business, and so on).

Character Design Suggestions

Attributes. High IQ and DX are essential.

Advantages. Luck and Strong Will are recommended.

Disadvantages. Code of Honor (Thief) and Pacifism (Self-Defense) are all suggested.

Skills. Area Knowledge (Moth or Drallar), Beam Weapons, Driving (Transports, Mudders or Skimmers), Fast-Talk, Guns (Pistols), Knife, Merchant, Riding (Stupava or Muccax), Traps/TL8, and languages (Symbospeech, M/E; Moth Nomad, M/H).

Tech Level. Moth is TL8 in most areas, so any TL skills (such as Lockpicking and Traps) should be taken at that level. See p. B185 for penalties incurred when trying to work with equipment outside your own tech level.

A specific exception: If you wish to use a Slug-thrower (see above), you should take Guns/TL6 (Pistol). Basic pistol technology has changed little in the last 1,000 years.

New Disadvantage

Enemy (Secret)

Varies

Purchased as "Enemy" (see p. B39), except that the character does not know the identity of the enemy. (Think of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid being chased across the West, asking each other, "Who *are* those guys?") Worth -5 points plus the usual cost of the enemy.

Option: "Enemy (Unknown)" is totally unknown to the PC. The player selects the *cost* of the enemy, but the GM secretly chooses the enemy's identity, power and frequency. Worth -10 points plus the cost of the enemy.

Psionics

The sidebar on p. HX62 defining "empaths" is the conventional view of these Talents. At least one empathic skill has remained unknown to Commonwealth scientists until the date of this adventure. (Flinx, if he survives this adventure, will be the first of the new and powerful class of empaths.)

The rules which follow are additions to the rules as presented in *GURPS Humanx* and the *GURPS Basic Set* (Third Edition).

Aliens and Talents

In the Commonwealth universe, it is difficult for alien minds to establish mental contact. Since almost all Talents in a Commonwealth campaign will be human, the following table indicates roll modifiers for humans psis trying to work with alien minds:

AAnn	-6
Ornithorpe	-7
Thranx	-8
Tolian	-4

When determining modifiers for other races, the GM should remain within a range from -4 (very similar minds) to -10 (very alien minds).

Latency

Flinx has a psionic skill — known to the Meliorares as Emolterate, or as Suggest in this book — which he is not aware of and has no control over. Likewise, Flinx occasionally reads more than just emotions when he uses his Emotion Sense. He likely also has a latency in Telereceive.

To simulate this, the Humanx GM should be prepared to determine whether the psis in his campaign have any unknown,





latent abilities, and if so, he should determine what they have and when they operate. Such latent skills might be truly random, working in a similar fashion to the Fickle limitations, or they might work according to environmental triggers (only when the character is extremely angry, perhaps —see Special Limitations, p. B176).

And speaking of anger . . . under violent emotional pressure, a psi can manifest a wide spectrum of powerful abilities, totally beyond his control. These abilities should also be considered latent.

Characters are not required to pay character points for psi abilities until or unless they become sufficiently controllable (in the GM's opinion) to be useful.

New Psionic Limitation

Very Fickle

Similar to "Fickle" (see p. HX66 or p. B175), only worse — even momentary uses of a skill may be severely impaired. In any situation where a psionic skill roll is required, a Fickleness roll is required *first*. If the roll fails, the character's Talent fails him.

Otherwise, this limitation is identical to "Fickle."

Fickleness Roll	Power Cost Modifier
5	1/8
8	1/4
11	1/3
14	1/2

New Telepathy Skill

While the complete rules for this skill are not necessary in order to play this adventure, they will be useful if the player wishes to continue a campaign around the events in *For Love of Mother-Not*.

Suggest

Also known by the scientific title of "Emolterate" by pscientists who theorize about this ability, Suggest is currently unknown within the Commonwealth (except to players with access to this book!). A telepath with this skill can project a simple feeling or emotion which can affect the action of others. It costs 1 Fatigue per attempt.

The feeling or emotion to be sent may be simple or complex. Simple (one word) feeling-messages might be: need, love, happy, anger, go (or move), danger, hunger, etc. Only emotions may be sent using this skill; it is up to the GM to determine whether a proposed communication involves an emotion.

Complex messages involve adding a subject, object or qualifier to the base feeling or emotion.

A *subject* is the entity expressing the emotion. Adding a subject to the basic "danger," for instance, could generate the messages "I'm in danger," "You're in danger," or "The Commonwealth is in danger."

An *object* is what the emotion or feeling is expressed toward. This is the difference between "hunger" and "hungry for pretzels."

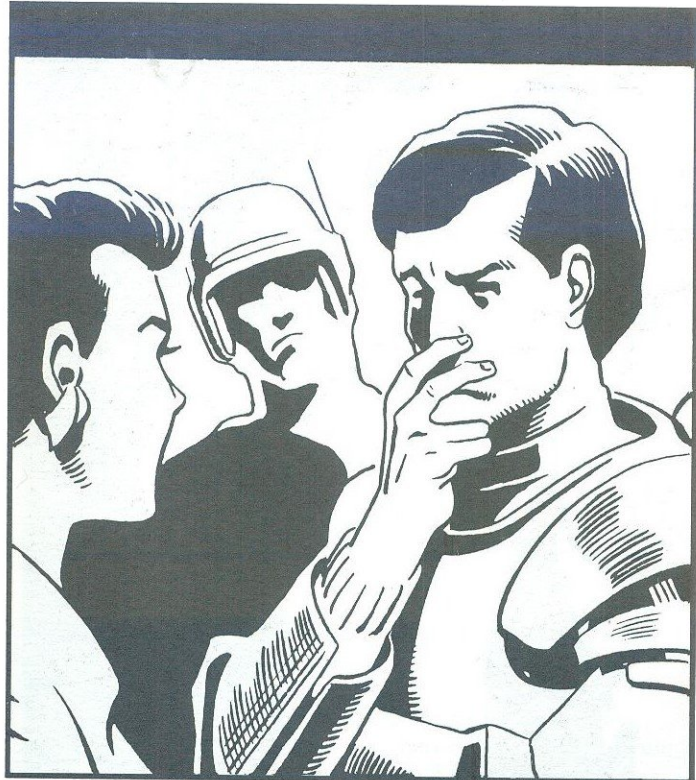
A *qualifier* describes or limits the feeling, subject or object, and must be limited to something that can be communicated in empathic terms — for instance, "pull the green handle" or "take the shiny things."

Subjects and objects each add a -5 penalty to the roll, but this penalty may be modified by the GM. Some guidelines:

no penalty	If the subject is the sending or receiving character
+3	If the person or thing is well-known to the receiving character
+2	If the person or thing is in the receiving character's presence

Objects or subjects unknown to the receiving character cannot be broadcast.

Modifiers are cumulative. For instance, communicating



NPC Characters

(To find the correct "Mother Mastiff," match the character descriptions with your current Plot Word.)

"Mother" Mastiff [Plot Word: CRONE] 0 points

Shopkeeper; 5', thin, wrinkled; approximately 100 years old; walks with a cane; has chronic digestion problems.

ST 7, DX 7, IQ 13, HT 7.

Speed 3; Move 3.

Dodge 4.

Advantages: Common Sense; Reputation (Tough Bargainer, Drallar Marketplace, +1); Strong Will (+2).

Disadvantages: Age; Stubbornness; Unattractive (-1).

Quirk: Likes to argue.

Skills: Accounting-12; Area Knowledge (Drallar)-14; Carousing-12; Cooking-12; Detect Lies-13; Fast Talk-14; Gesture-12; Merchant-15; Scrounging-12; Streetwise-12; Survival (Urban)-12.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-13; Symbospeech-12.

"Mother" Mastiff [Plot Word: IRONHAND] 0 points

Shopkeeper with criminal connections; 6' 6", disfiguring blaster scar on face; prosthetic right hand; 50 years old.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 11.

Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Bionic Hand (-2 DX for manual tasks, ST 15 for gripping or hand-to-hand combat).

Disadvantages: Duty (Criminal Bosses, on 12 or less); Enemies (Various Criminals, on 9 or less); Greed; Miserliness; Ugly (-2).

Skills: Accounting-9; Area Knowledge (Drallar City)-13; Beam Weapons-12; Brawling-11; Carousing-10; Cooking-11; Detect Lies-9; Forgery-11; Gambling-11; Guns/TL6 (Pistol)-11; Interrogation-10; Jeweler-9; Knife-11; Law-9; Lockpicking-10; Merchant-14; Scrounging-12; Streetwise-12; Traps/TL8-11.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-12.

"Mother" Mastiff [Plot Word: SURVEY] 0 points

Former survey pilot now in hiding; shopkeeper; 5' 4", fair skin, blonde hair (ringlets); dresses well; 36 years old.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 14.

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Attractive (+1); Charisma (+1); Strong Will (+2).

Disadvantages: Enemy (the United Church, on 6 or less); Honesty; Low Pain Threshold; Overconfidence; Pacifism (Cannot Kill); Paranoia; Unluckiness.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Commonwealth)-13; Area Knowledge (Drallar)-11; Astrogration-11; Beam Weapons-11; Carousing-9; Computer Operations-12; Computer Programming-9; Dancing-9; Driving (Tracked Vehicles)-10; First Aid-12; Free Fall-9; Judo-10; Knife-10; Merchant-12; Piloting (Survey Ship)-11; Savoir Faire-11; Sex Appeal-12; Singing-10; Vacc Suit-10.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-12.

"Mother" Mastiff [Plot Word: TECH] 0 points

Shopkeeper; sells electronics; 5' 10", pale complected, balding, squints; wears soiled work clothes; 60 years old.

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 7.

Speed 5; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

"your sister is in danger from the AAnn," if the sister is present and emotionally close to the receiving character, is at -5 (subject), +3 (subject is well known), +2 (subject is present), -5 (object) and +3 (object is well known) for a total modifier of -2.

A Suggest roll is always required. On a failure, no message is transmitted and the telepath loses 1 Fatigue. On a critical failure, the telepath loses Fatigue as normal (see sidebar, p. HX63) and cannot Suggest again for 2d hours.

If the Suggest roll is successful, an immediate Contest must be rolled — the target character pits his IQ at -2 against the telepath's Suggest score. The following modifiers to the target character's IQ roll are given as guidelines:

If the target was expecting the suggestion	-6
If the target is predisposed to think this	-3
If the prompting seems reasonable	no modifier
If the prompting is inconvenient	+2
If the prompting is odd or unusual	+4
If the prompting is against the character's mission or personality	+8

For example, a hostile telepath broadcasts the message, "you are uncomfortably cold." The targeted character gets an IQ roll: at -2 (the normal penalty), if it seems reasonable to be too cold; at -5, if the place really *is* cold; at +2, if the place is very hot; or at +6 if the character is in a firefight, hot and sweaty, and this isn't the time to feel cold.

A targeted character who succeeds in the Contest is immune to further Suggestions for (IQ) minutes. The GM makes an IQ roll for *psis* who resist a Suggestion if successful, the character realizes that a psionic attack has occurred. (On a critical success, the GM should give the character a clue as to the identity of the attacker.)

NPC Characters and Creatures

The following descriptions are useful within this adventure, and if the player chooses to continue a *Mother-Not* campaign.

Advantages: Absolute Timing; Ambidexterity.
 Disadvantages: Age; Combat Paralysis; Hard of Hearing; OPH (Squints); Sense of Duty (Urchins); Shyness (Severe); Stuttering; Unattractive (-1); Unluckiness.

Skills: Armoury-12; Driving (Transports)-11; Electronics/TL8 (Computers)-16; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Computers)-13; Guns/TL8 (Pistol)-12; Jeweler-11; Lockpicking-12; Mechanic/TL8 (Small Power Plants)-14; Merchant-12; Piloting (Skimmers)-12; Scrounging-13; Teaching-12; Woodworking-11.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-14.

Lauren Walder

100 points

Fishing guide; 5' 8", black hair worn in ringlets, large brown eyes, slim, tanned; wears bush jacket with pants tucked in boots; 30 years old.

ST 10; DX 14; IQ 12; HT 10.

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Absolute Direction; Animal Empathy; Strong Will (+1); Toughness (+1); Very Beautiful (+2/+6).

Disadvantages: Dependents (Defenseless Small Animals, Loved, on 6 or less); Duty (Fishing Lodge, on 9 or less); Pacifism (Cannot Kill); Sense of Duty (Underdogs).

Quirk: Likes animals better than most people.

Skills: Administration-10; Animal Handling-13; Area Knowledge (The-Blue-That-Blinds area)-11; Bard-10; Computer Operation-11; Cooking-11; Detect Lies-9; Driving (Mudder)-12; Ecology-14; Electronics Operation (Tracking Gear)-10; Fast-Draw (Rifle)-12; First Aid/TL8-11; Fishing-16; Gunner (Harpoon Gun)-15; Guns/TL8 (Rifle)-17; Leadership-11; Naturalist-13; Piloting (Skimmer)-12; Poisons-9; Powerboat (Jet Catamaran)-16; Sex Appeal-10; Survival (Woods)-10; Swimming-13; Tracking-12; Veterinary-8.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-12; Thranx-9; Symbospeech-11.



Alexis Schmidtel

100 points

Prospector; 5' 10", thinning blond hair, green eyes, fair complexion; 27 years old.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 10.

Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Attractive (+1); Charisma (+4); High Pain Threshold; Luck; Mathematical Ability; Rapid Healing.

Disadvantages: Absent-Mindedness; Gullibility; Impulsiveness; Poverty (Struggling); Sense of Duty (All friends).

Skills: Anthropology-12; Area Knowledge (Mt. Footasleep area)-12; Area Knowledge (Moth)-13; Beam Weapons-12; Brawling-11; Computer Programming-13; Demolition-14; Diplomacy-10; Ecology (Desert)-10; Electronics (Computers)-13; First Aid/TL8-12; Geology-13; History-11; Karate-11; Mathematics-14; Meteorology-11; Piloting (Skimmer)-11; Prospecting-13; Riding (Muccax)-10; Survival (Desert)-11.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-13; High Thranx-10; Moth Nomad-10; Symbospeech-12.

Aural

100 points

Free spirit on the run from a vengeful corporate executive; 5' 6", slim, shoulder-length silver hair; 21 years old.

ST 8; DX 13; IQ 11; HT 12.

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Beautiful (+2/+4); Charisma (+1); Danger Sense; Language Talent (+5); Luck; Status (+2); Wealth (Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (Attracted To Danger); Enemy (Challis Company, on 9 or less); Necrophobia (Severe); Weak Will (-2).

Quirk: Wears expensive fashions.

Skills: Acting-9; Area Knowledge (Commonwealth)-12; Beam Weapons-13; Biochemistry-9; Carousing-13; Chemistry-12; Computer Operations-10; Dancing-12; Detect Lies-6; Disguise-9; Driving (Transports)-13; Escape-10; Fast-Talk-11;

Forgery-8; Gambling-10; Hypnotism-8; Jumping-12; Knife-12; Knife Throwing-12; Law-8; Lip Reading-9; Piloting (Air Car)-10; Psychology-10; Savoir Faire-9; Sex Appeal-12; Streetwise-10.

Languages: Terranglo (Native)-16; AAnn-14; Low Thranx-13; Ornithorpe-13; Symbospeech-15.

NPC Creatures

Catalyst Creatures

The Power of some psis is enhanced though a bond with a specific animal, called a catalyst creature. This adventure features three catalyst creatures — an Alaspinian minidrag, a Plippit and a Drothinian.

Once bonded with a catalyst creature, the effective Telepathy Power of both the creature and the psi equals the combined Power of both. A psi and his catalyst creature may communicate empathically (through emotions and feelings).

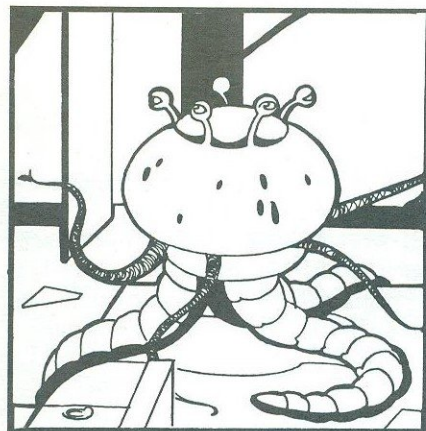
A psi may only have one catalyst creature at a time. The death of a bonded catalyst creature may permanently scar the psi (see the Character Points section of the adventure for an example).

See p. HX64 for more on catalyst creatures.

Drothinian

ST: 6	Speed/Dodge: 2/4	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 10 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: none	
HT: 16/5	Reach: 0	

Telepathy Power 5 (Emotion Sense-10, Sleep-14).
Teleportation Power 5 (Autoteleport-12, Emergencies Only).



Known only by legends to Moth's zoologists this pink creature looks like a cross between a mushroom and an octopus. It moves about on three root-tentacles, and uses four arm-tentacles for manipulation. Five eye-buds crown its cap. Drothinians are rumored to build "cement cities" in the distant marshes, and to perform magic.

Minidrag

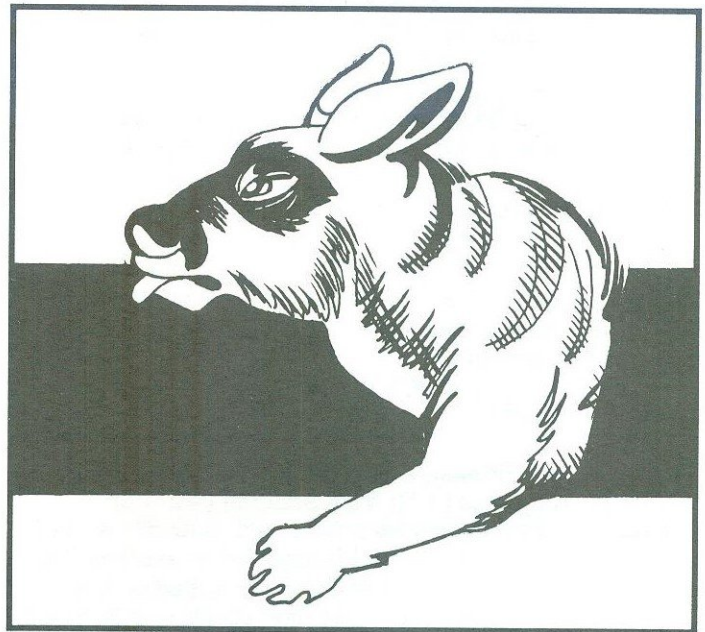
ST: 4	Speed/Dodge: 2/4 (land) or 12/10 (flying)	Size: <1
DX: 15	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 10 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: 2 hits imp. (bite)	
HT: 15/4	Reach: C	

Telepathy Power: 10 (Emotion Sense-14).

A two-foot-long, serpent-like creature from the jungles of Alaspin. Eight inches behind the head are two large, multi-colored wings.

The minidrag's venom is an acid and a neurological poison, doing 2d damage to any target, animate or inanimate. Minidrags typically spit at their enemies. Treat spitting as a ranged attack: SS 6, Acc 4, 1/2D 3, Max 6, -5 to hit due to aiming for eyes (instinctive). If the venom strikes the victim's eyes or mucous membranes, he must make an immediate HT-10 roll; failing this

roll means death within 60 seconds. If the venom strikes elsewhere on a living creature, death comes within $2d \times 10 + 60$ seconds. There is no known antidote.



Plippit

ST: 4	Speed/Dodge: 6/7	Size: <1
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 20 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: 1d-4 cut.	
HT: 14/7	Reach: C	

Telepathy Power 5 (Emotion Sense-12, *Special Phantom*-13 — the ability to create a "phantom" in a victim's mind, created from the victim's own subconscious. The phantom has no physical effect, but the victim must make a Fright Check at -8. If the victim succeeds at the Fright Check, the phantom is dispelled. Costs 2 Fatigue per attempt.)

Native to the obscure world of Rexilure, Plippits are furry mammals with prehensile tails and paw-hands. Their coloring is primarily green, but with strong bands of yellow, red and blue. Each Plippit has its own distinctive markings (bands around the eyes and snout are common). The ears are also distinctive, being tall and leathery.

Why You Lost

In certain situations, you can lose this adventure without really knowing why. If you want to know the answer, read this section. If you would rather play the adventure further without having this surprise revealed, *don't read this!*

Mother Mastiff was kidnapped by a secret organization of pscientists. The kidnapers aren't interested in your guardian — they want *you*. Or more precisely, they want *control* of you, and they hope to gain that control by placing a mind-control device in your guardian's brain. (If your *Plot Word* is IRONHAND, of course, this might be an improvement.)

If you don't rescue Mastiff in time, the pscientists have time to place the implant. When you get back to Drallar, your guardian is already home. Unfortunately, it's not really your Mastiff any more. The further consequences are far beyond the scope of this adventure to explore.

Admittedly, this twist of plot is a little bit sneaky, since you have no idea you're in a race against time . . . but then, life is full of little surprises.

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CHARACTER SHEET

Name Flinx Player _____
 Appearance red hair, green eyes, olive skin, 5' 6", 130 lbs.
 Character Story 14-year-old orphan

Date Created	Sequence
Unspent Points	Point Total 75

Pt. Cost
-10
30
30
20

ST 8	FATIGUE	
DX 13	BASIC DAMAGE	
IQ 12	Thrust: <u>1d-3</u> Swing: <u>1d-2</u>	
HT 12	HITS TAKEN	
Mvmt	BASIC SPEED 7.625* (6.25) (HT+DX)/4	MOVE 7 Basic - Enc.



SKILLS	Pt. Cost	Level
Acrobatics (P/H)	2	12
Acting (M/A)	1	11
Area Knowledge		
(Drallar) (M/E)	2	13
Climbing (P/A)	1	12
Driving (Transports) (P/A)	1/2	11
Emotion Sense (M/H)	8	14
Knife (P/E)	2	14
Lockpicking/TL8 (M/A)	6	14
Riding (Stupava) (P/A)	1/2	11
Running (P/H)	2	11*
Shadowing (M/A)	1	11
Sleight of Hand (P/H)	2	12
Stealth (P/A)	2	13
Streetwise (M/A)	4	13
Throwing (P/H)	4	13
Traps/TL8 (M/A)	3	13**

Languages:
 Terranglo native 12
 inc. Language Talent bonus

ENCUMBRANCE	PASSIVE DEFENSE
None (0) = 2 x ST 16 Light (1) = 4 x ST Med (2) = 6 x ST Hvy (3) = 12 x ST X-hvy (4) = 20 x ST	Armor: _____ Shield: _____ TOTAL 0

REACTION +/- +1; +3 when Sense of Duty is known

WEAPONS AND POSSESSIONS				
Item	Damage Type	Skill Amt.	\$	Wt.
Slickertic			\$50	2
Personal Basics			\$5	1
Dagger (stiletto)	imp. 1d-4	14	\$20	1/4
Thrown	imp. 1d-4	13		

† Very Fickle (8)
 * adds 1.375 to Speed for land movement purposes
 ** bought from default

ACTIVE DEFENSES		
DODGE 7 = Move	PARRY 6 Weapon/2	BLOCK Shield/2

\$500 in creddcard account

DAMAGE RESISTANCE	TOTAL
Armor : _____ : _____ : _____	0

QUIRKS: (Continued)
 -1 Night owl
 -1 Prefers adult company
 -1 Distrusts authorities
 -1 Hates being treated as a child

Pt. Cost
4
5
6
5
4
15
8
-5
-16
-20
-15
-10
-5
-8

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, QUIRKS	
Acute vision	+2
Charisma	+1
Telepathy (Power 5)†	
Alertness	+1
Language Talent	+2
Luck	
Strong Will	+2
Code of Honor	
Dependent (Mastiff, on 6 or less)	
Enemy (unknown)	
Pacifism (self-defense only)	
Poverty (struggling)	
Sense of Duty (friends)	
Youth (4 years)	

Totals: \$575 Lbs. 3 1/4

WEAPON RANGES				
Weapon	SS	Acc	1/2D	MAX
Dagger	12	0	3	8

SUMMARY	Point Total
Attributes	70
Advantages	47
Disadvantages	-79
Quirks	-4
Skills	41
TOTAL	75

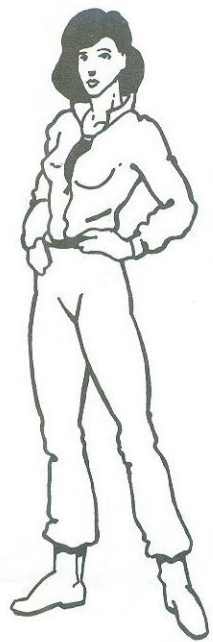
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CHARACTER SHEET

Name Maliena Player _____
 Appearance Oriental complex.; black hair w/silver streak; blue eyes
 Character Story 16-year-old orphan

Date Created	Sequence
Unspent Points	Point Total 75

Pt. Cost 10	ST 11	FATIGUE
30	DX 13	BASIC DAMAGE
20	IQ 12	Thrust: <u>1d-1</u> Swing: <u>1d+1</u>
20	HT 12	HITS TAKEN
	Mvmt	BASIC SPEED 7.375* (6.25) (HT+DX)/4
		MOVE 7 Basic - Enc.



SKILLS	Pt. Cost	Level
Acrobatics (P/H)	2	12
Area Knowledge		
(Drallar) (M/E)	2	13
(Moth) (M/E)	2	13
Driving (Mudders) (P/A)	4	14
Emotion Sense (M/H)	6	13
Gambling (M/A)	½	10
Guns/TL8		
(Beam Weapons) (P/E)	1	13
Lockpicking/TL8 (M/A)	8	15
Piloting (Skimmers) (P/A)	4	14
Running (P/H)	½	9*
Stealth (P/A)	1	12
Streetwise (M/A)	2	12
Traps/TL8(M/A)	2	12**
Ventriloquism (M/H)	1	10

ENCUMBRANCE	PASSIVE DEFENSE
None (0) = 2 x ST <u>22</u>	Armor: _____
Light (1) = 4 x ST _____	Shield: _____
Med (2) = 6 x ST _____	TOTAL 0
Hvy (3) = 12 x ST _____	
X-hvy (4) = 20 x ST _____	

REACTION +/- none

WEAPONS AND POSSESSIONS				
Item	Damage Type	Skill Amt.	\$	Wt.
Slickertic			\$50	2
Personal Basics			\$5	1
Dagger (stiletto)	imp.	1d-4	9	\$20 ¼
Thrown	imp.	1d-4	9	
\$500 in credcard account				

ACTIVE DEFENSES		
DODGE	PARRY	BLOCK
7	3	
= Move	Weapon/2	Shield/2

DAMAGE RESISTANCE	
Armor :	TOTAL
:	0
:	

Pt. Cost	ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, QUIRKS
2	Acute Taste and Smell +1
15	Danger Sense
6	Telepathy (Power 5)†
15	Luck
-5	Code of Honor
-16	Dependent (Mother Mastiff, on 6 or less)
-20	Enemy (unknown)
-10	Hard of Hearing
-10	Honest
-10	Poverty (struggling)
-4	Youth (2 years)

† Very Fickle (8)
 * adds 1.125 to Speed for land based movement
 ** bought from default

QUIRKS: (Continued)	
-1	Acts "fearless"
-1	Dislikes small children
-1	Fascinated by ornithorpes
-1	Idolizes stingship pilots
-1	Wears flashy bracelets

WEAPON RANGES				
Weapon	SS	Acc	½ D	MAX
Dagger	12	0	6	11

SUMMARY	
Attributes	80
Advantages	38
Disadvantages	75
Quirks	-5
Skills	37

A kid's best friend is... an alien pet?



You're an orphan from the streets of Drallar, the capital of a trading world in the star-spanning Humanx Confederacy. Even though your guardian, "Mother" Mastiff, takes good care of you, you've been lonely all your life – that is, until you found an unusual pet in the alley behind your home.

- It could be a flying snake . . .
- Or a green-furred, long-eared mammal . . .
- Or a tentacled, walking mushroom . . .

And your pet – and the new-found psionic abilities he unlocks within you – may be the only things that can help you discover who kidnapped Mother Mastiff!

For Love of Mother-Not is a solo adventure for *GURPS*, the *Generic Universal RolePlaying System*. It's based on the novel of the same name by Alan Dean Foster, and contains:

A 634-entry solo adventure for Flinx (the hero of the novel), Maliena (an alternate protagonist), or a character of your own design. With *three* possible pets, *four* possible guardians, and many possible alternate paths, you can play *For Love of Mother-Not* over and over and never have the same adventure twice – or you can recreate the adventures of Flinx and Pip from the novel.

Character stats for Flinx, Maliena and important NPCs.

Additional, optional rules for using psionics in the Commonwealth, and a new psi skill.

Instructions for how to play the solo.

Note: You need the *GURPS Basic Set* to play this adventure. The *GURPS Humanx* worldbook is useful, but not required.

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