



THRILLING TALES
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*A Mysterious
ARISTOCRAT...*

*A Mercenary
LEGION...*

and

*An Army of
AUTOMATONS!*

MICHAEL B.
LEE

BARON KORGA

A DEVIANT LORD OF ASSASSINS...ON A MISSION OF CONQUEST!



BUY WAR BONDS
AND STAMPS
FOR VICTORY!



A SUPPLEMENT FOR
**THRILLING
TALES**





BARON KORGA

by Michael B. Lee

THE ORB OF HYPERBOREA! For millennia it has been the plaything of cultists and kings. It has shaped the course of empires greater than modern man has ever seen!

"Generations of wise men and would-be conquerors have tried to puzzle out its secrets. Adventurers such as yourself have ventured to the darkest corners of the Earth for fragments—fragments—of the Priest-Kings' forgotten lore. They could sense the power slumbering within the Orb, but no matter what they tried, no matter how much blood they spilled, it refused to obey them.

"Do you know why they failed? Because the Orb was waiting for the right person to unlock it. It is a relic of an age that respected no laws, a time when men of courage and ruthless spirit could shape the world to suit their desires. A world where a man could spill so much blood that he was no different from a god.

"That world will soon be reborn. I will wake the power of the Orb and use it to unleash a legion of steel and fire that will crush the petty empires of the world! I will grind the great nations of Earth beneath my heel, and mankind will bow before the might of Korga!

"A new age is dawning, my friend. A pity you will not live to see it."

INTRODUCTION

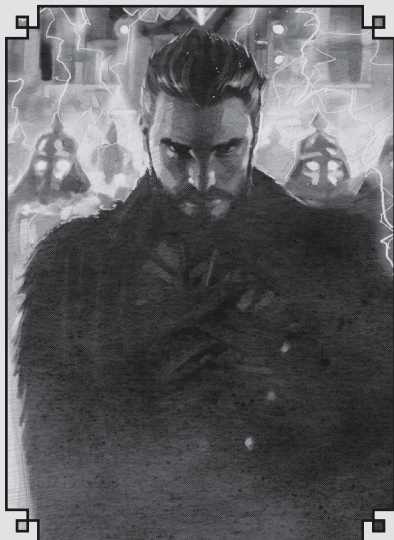
THE DASHING AND ENIGMATIC Baron Vladimir Korga is a celebrity among the high society of Western Europe: a charming, larger-than-life figure whose adventures have captivated wealthy patriarchs and breathless heiresses all over the Continent. But the Baron's handsome façade conceals a ruthless, cunning mind and a heart that lusts for conquest!

OVERVIEW

Baron Korga's origins are shrouded in mystery. One rumor has it that he is Russian nobility, living in exile with a beautiful female ward that might just be Anastasia Romanoff, daughter of the murdered Czar. Another story claims he is not Russian, but Hungarian, of a noble line all but exterminated by the Ottomans, and that he served as a spy for the British during the Great

BARON VLADIMIR KORGA

LEGENDARY WILD CARD



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Russian): d8, Knowledge (German): d8, Knowledge (French) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d12+2, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d10, Taunt d10

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 6; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Overconfident (Major), Greedy (Minor), Enemy (Minor, Count Demidov's cabal)

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Charmer*, Command, Dirty Fighter, Filthy Rich, Followers

(Fekete Sereg), Natural Leader, Nine Lives, Strong Willed

Gear: Luger P-08 pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, Rate of Fire 1), Reinforced long coat (Armor +2, covers Torso, Arms, and Upper Legs)

* Indicates an Edge or Hindrance which can be found in the *Thrilling Tales* core book.

War. Still another tale insists he isn't a noble at all, but a Black Seas pirate who made his vast fortune smuggling White Russians out of the country ahead of the vengeful Bolsheviks.

The truth is that Korga is none of these things—at least, not entirely. Hungarian by birth, Korga was from a long line of smugglers and thieves who plied their trade up and down the Danube. He developed a hatred for the Ottomans as a teenager, when his family was betrayed to the local police and sent to die in a Turkish prison. Vladimir, the only one to escape arrest, grew to become a ruthless soldier of fortune. When

the Great War broke out he worked as a spy for both the British and the Turks, playing both sides against the middle and filling his pockets in the process. Korga dropped out of sight in 1917, just ahead of a warrant for his arrest by Ottoman authorities, and reappeared in Russia the following year. He had used his ill-gotten gains to raise a large force of Russian and Bulgarian mercenaries to fight for the Whites during the Russian Civil War. After a few battlefield victories (and whispered reports of atrocities against prisoners and civilians), Korga ingratiated himself with the wealthy aristocrats who supported



“Demidov had been a fool to let Korga anywhere near his most secret journals and plans, Korga thought. ‘Let him ponder his mistakes in a Bolshevik prison,’ he mused...”

the movement.

It was through these social connections that Korga learned of a secretive group of Russian scholars and inventors led by the eccentric Count Anatoly Demidov. Demidov, a world-renowned adventurer and seeker of lost civilizations, had assembled a cadre of gentlemen scientists to uncover and harness lost technologies that could be used to combat the Bolsheviks. This included plans for a robot army and a towering war machine that could make a mockery of any modern army on Earth, all powered by a mysterious energy source once used by the Priest-Kings of Hyperborea.

Korga studied the plans, and listened at length to Demidov’s rambling discourses on Hyperborean technology, and was convinced. At his earliest opportunity, Korga sold Demidov and his cabal out to the Bolsheviks, stole their plans and their files on the Hyperboreans, and robbed his wealthy employers of everything he could lay his hands on.

Sacrificing most of his mercenary cutthroats to buy time for his escape, Korga and a small band of fanatical followers escaped across the Black Sea and disappeared. Demidov and most of his compatriots were arrested by the Bolsheviks, and the story of Korga’s betrayal was largely lost amid the chaos of the war.

Korga found his way to a small island in the Aegean he’d learned of in Demidov’s papers, a haven for smugglers and pirates dominated by a partially ruined medieval castle. The castle was quickly renamed Castle Korga, and its new lord quickly used some of his stolen wealth to buy off the local pirates and start bringing in craftsmen and materials to restore the fortress to its former glory. Additions were planned to the great castle: laboratories, workshops and eventually a gantry for the construction of Demidov’s fearsome war machine, the *Kraken*.

Korga had the money, a secure lair, and the plans for Demidov’s wonder weapons (plus Demidov’s brilliant

young daughter Tatiana, whom Korga “saved” from the Bolsheviks and believes is continuing her father’s work). All he lacked to complete his plans for world domination were scientists and engineers to bring his stolen designs to fruition, and adventurous souls to probe the dark corners of the Earth in search of the Hyperboreans’ lost power source.

A plan took form in Korga’s mind. Shortly after, the persona of Baron Korga was born. Posing as a noble with an intriguingly mysterious past, he used his roguish charm and ostentatious displays of wealth to hoodwink others into fulfilling his secret agenda. Once the Orb of Hyperborea was his, Demidov’s mechanical terrors would be his to command. Then the world would tremble before the might of Korga!

TATIANA DEMIDOV

Tatiana Demidov has lived a life of adventure since she was old enough to walk, accompanying her aristocratic father on expeditions from Siberia all the way to the sands of the Rub’al-Khali in search of arcane relics and the ruins of lost civilizations. From a very early age, Tatiana learned to amuse herself by poring through her father’s ancient texts and studying schematics of the legendary mechanical wonders of Hyperborea and Atlantis, and demonstrated a genius for reverse engineering arcane constructs. Tatiana’s father doted on the precocious Tatiana, encouraging her interests in arcane science and providing her with an extensive laboratory for her work on the family estate outside St. Petersburg. The Count saw his daughter’s talents as a way to harness the wonders of legend to transform Russia, and by extension, the rest of the world.

When the Great War began, Count Demidov formed a cabal of arcane scholars and scientists, including Tatiana, and volunteered their services to the Tsar. As Tatiana and the others drew up plans for a legion of “automatic soldiery” and a towering war machine that could protect the Motherland from invasion, Tsar Nicholas dithered until it was far too late for arcane science to save the Russian Empire. As the Bolsheviks took power, Tatiana and her father fled their ancestral estate and joined the Whites in a bid to free the country from the communists and restore Nicholas as its rightful ruler.

As the Russian Civil War raged, Tatiana and the other scientists in Demidov’s cabal continued their work, perfecting their designs and searching for the legendary artifact that could power their fantastic creations: the fabled Orb of Hyperborea. By late 1919, Count Demidov had narrowed down the Orb’s location to a handful of remote sites in the wilds of central Anatolia.

With his own adventuring days far behind him, and unwilling to risk Tatiana on such a dangerous expedition, Count Demidov began searching for an adventurer willing to brave the chaos of the collapsing Ottoman Empire and find the Orb. Vladimir Korga, a dashing soldier of fortune much celebrated by the White army in southern Russia, seemed the perfect man for the job.

When Korga betrayed Demidov and his fellows to the Bolsheviks, he arranged for Oleg Grishkin and his mercenaries to “evacuate” Tatiana (and the plans for Demidov’s war machines) just ahead of the communist forces. Korga later told Tatiana that her father and his compatriots had been executed

TATIANA DEMIDOV

HEROIC RANK WILD CARD



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Lost Civilizations) d10, Knowledge (Science) d10, Repair d10, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Weird Science d12

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious (Major), Cautious (Minor), Wanted (Minor, Bolsheviks)

Edges: Arcane Background: Weird Science, Brilliant Scientist*, Font of Information*, Gadgeteer*, Just the Thing*, Mr. Fix-It

Gear: Webley Revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, Rate of Fire 1), Leather Satchel, Tool Set, Personal Journal

* Indicates an Edge or Hindrance which can be found in the *Thrilling Tales* core book.

by the Bolsheviks, and that Count Demidov's final wish was for Tatiana to continue the cabal's work to free Mother Russia from the communist usurpers. Since then, Korga has kept the young scientist in virtual seclusion at his castle, continuing to develop arcane technologies that she believes will one day be used against the Bolsheviks.

Tatiana Demidov is a scientist, scholar and adventurer, more at home in a laboratory or exploring the ruins of an ancient temple than entertaining potential suitors at a lavish ball. Idealistic and more than a little

naïve, she is nonetheless fearsomely intelligent and, when provoked, is a force to be reckoned with.

She is repulsed by the none-too-subtle advances of Korga's lieutenant, Oleg Grishkin, and endures the isolation of Castle Korga out of a sense of duty to her father and to the Motherland.

OLEG GRISHKIN

Baron Korga's trusted lieutenant and chief bodyguard, Grishkin was the son of a Cossack hetman who served the Tsar during the tumultuous

OLEG GRISHKIN

HEROIC RANK WILD CARD



Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Taunt d8. Tracking d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty (Major), Cocky (Minor), Wanted (Minor, Bolsheviks)

Edges: Brawler, Deus Ex Machina*, Leader of Men, Quick, Really Dirty Fighter*, Tactician

Gear: Mauser C96 Pistol (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d6+1, Rate of Fire 1), Bayonet (Damage Strength + d4, Reinforced long coat (Armor +2, covers Torso, Arms, and Upper Legs)

* Indicates an Edge or Hindrance which can be found in the *Thrilling Tales* core book.

years leading up to the Revolution. A capable leader with a reputation for savagery and a taste for plunder, he had barely escaped a hangman's noose after the fall of the Tsar and was living by his wits in Sevastopol when he crossed paths with Vladimir Korga. Korga was in the process of raising a mercenary legion to fight in the Russian Civil War, and wasted no time recruiting Grishkin as his second-in-command. Before long, Korga's Black Legion was fighting the Bolsheviks in south-central Russia. While Korga wormed his way into the inner councils of the aristocratic

Whites, Grishkin was out fighting the Bolsheviks and terrorizing everyone who crossed his path.

With Grishkin in command, the Black Legion won several notable victories against the Bolsheviks, but also earned an infamous reputation for thievery and murder. Prisoners disappeared into the trackless Russian forests, never to be seen again. If Grishkin decided that a village had something he wanted, he declared it a Bolshevik haven and pillaged it before putting it to the torch.

Grishkin's monstrous behavior quickly put the Black Legion at odds

PULP VILLAINS: BARON KORGA

with its Tsarist employers. When Korga approached his lieutenant with a plan to betray the Whites and steal Demidov's plans, Grishkin saw his chance to cheat justice once again. Selecting a small force of his toughest and most loyal troops, Grishkin abandoned the rest of the Black Legion to its fate and was instrumental in helping Korga flee to Sevastopol with a vast fortune and Count Demidov's young daughter in tow.

Grishkin now serves Korga as his second-in-command and chief of security, guarding Castle Korga and its secrets from the outside world. He often travels with the Baron as his personal bodyguard, and takes care of any second interlopers who pry too much

into Korga's affairs.

His loyalty to Korga is absolute, but is driven by pure self-interest. The Baron has promised him command of the "Iron Legion" (a relentless army of robot soldiers), and Grishkin dreams of plundering the world's Great Powers like a modern-day Attila. He is also obsessed with Count Demidov's beautiful young daughter, and has deluded himself into believing that Korga will give Tatiana to him as a reward for carrying out the Baron's dastardly plans.

THE BLACK LEGION

Named after the legendary Hungarian mercenary army, the Black Legion (a.k.a., *Fekete Sereg*) was formed by



"Forward, Fekete Sereg!" Korga bellowed. "Bring me victory, my Black Legion!"

Korga with help from Oleg Grishkin in 1919 to fight in the Russian Civil War. Using funds Korga had swindled from the British and the Turks during the Great War, Grishkin created the Black Legion out of a haphazard assortment of vicious Cossack raiders, treacherous army deserters, ruthless back-alley cutthroats, and wily, skilled thieves. Little more than a savage gang of brigands in uniform, under Grishkin's leadership the Black Legion won several battles against much larger Bolshevik forces, largely through skillful ambushes and the ruthless use of terror tactics against the enemy. The legion took no prisoners and stole everything they could lay their hands on, whether it belonged to the enemy or not. The mercenaries attracted more eager recruits with each victory, until Grishkin's reign of terror stretched from Odessa all the way to Kiev.

At its height, the Black Legion boasted 4,000 men, including everything from horse cavalry to a small force of tanks and armored cars. When Korga betrayed the Whites, Grishkin took a hundred of his most loyal men and the best weapons and equipment, and then sacrificed the rest to the vengeful Bolsheviks to buy time for Korga's escape. Now this small but powerful force defends Castle Korga and provides security when the Baron is abroad. Highly skilled and fanatically loyal to Grishkin, the Legion is the fist inside Korga's velvet glove.



BLACK LEGION MERCENARY

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6,



Insigne of Korga's elite fighting force, the Fekete Sereg, "The Black Legion."

Survival d6, Taunt d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6;
Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty (Major), Cocky (Minor), Wanted (Minor, Bolsheviks)

Edges: Dirty Fighter, Dodge

Gear: Mauser M32 Rifle (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, Rate of Fire 3), Black Legion Combat Helmet

ADRASTEIA DRAKOS

The legendary Pirate Queen of the Aegean, Adrasteia Drakos is descended from a long line of smugglers and sea raiders stretching back to the glory days of ancient Greece.

Born aboard her parents' tramp freighter in the middle of a summer storm in 1895, legend has it that Adrasteia didn't set foot on dry land until she was twelve, and learned to swim before she could walk. The Aegean and its many islands were her birthright, and she learned its secret paths like most children learn their letters. By the time of her eighteenth birthday, Adrasteia was famous among the Aegean pirate clans as much for her fiery personality as

ADRASTEIA DRAKOS

HEROIC RANK WILD CARD



Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d10, Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Aegean) d10, Knowledge (Turkish) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d10, Swimming d10

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Wanted (Major, Turkish Police), Cocky (Minor), Outsider (Minor)

Edges: Brave, Charismatic, Moxie*, Really Dirty Fighter*, Trademark Vehicle (Boat)*

Gear: Astra 400 Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, Rate of Fire 1), Tramp Freighter *Kymera* (ACC/TS 5/12; Toughness 14; Crew 1; Cost: \$40,000)

* Indicates an Edge or Hindrance which can be found in the *Thrilling Tales* core book.

her skills as a smuggler. She drank, caroused, gambled and brawled from Athens to Izmir and every port in between, always managing to stay one step ahead of Greek and Ottoman authorities.

The Great War offered the potential of tremendous profits for smugglers bold enough to brave the patrol boats and the minefields of the Aegean and the Dardanelles. Operating from a decrepit harbor on the island of Eos, the nineteen-year-old Adrasteia earned her reputation running cargoes to Anatolia and beyond, sometimes sneaking her ship, the *Kymera*, through the Bosphorus and

into ports along the Black Sea. News of her exploits drew pirates and smugglers to Eos from across the Aegean and beyond, transforming the harbor into a bustling pirate enclave that called Adrasteia its queen.

The end of the war in 1918 brought the glory days on Eos to a close. The Ottoman Empire was unraveling, and smuggling, while still highly dangerous, was no longer nearly so profitable. Like a receding tide, the harbor emptied out and the enclave dwindled until just a dozen or so crews remained. Adrasteia and the others turned to running guns and medicines to the Whites at Odessa

and Sevastopol when, in the spring of 1920, the *Kymera* returned to Eos to find Vladimir Korga and a small army of mercenaries camped in the ruins of the old crusader castle overlooking the harbor.

Korga laid claim to the entire island, and intended to restore the ancient castle to use as his base of operations. Adrasteia and the other captains were furious, but the pirate queen knew that they stood no chance against Korga's heavily armed troops. Conversely, the captains were perfectly capable of cutting off the island from the rest of civilization and making work on the castle nearly impossible if they so chose. So Adrasteia and Korga met and hammered out an agreement. He "purchased" the castle and use of the harbor from the pirates for a princely sum, and in return Adrasteia and the other captains would ferry passengers and supplies from the mainland and keep the waters around the island clear of potential trespassers.

Though Adrasteia and the other captains profit handsomely from this arrangement, there is no love lost between them and Korga. Adrasteia distrusts Korga (and despises the arrogant, brutish Grishkin), and would love to see the outsiders driven from the island. When not at sea she holds court in a large, ramshackle tavern at the edge of the harbor, biding her time until she can figure out a way to turn the tables on the baron and his men.

BARON KORGA'S LAIR

Korga maintains a number of residences throughout the world—a small villa in the south of France, a deluxe flat in Kensington, an Art Deco penthouse in Manhattan, among others—to maintain the

vener of nobility.

He considers none of them "home," though they are useful as staging areas, or as lures or meeting points for potential recruits...or victims.

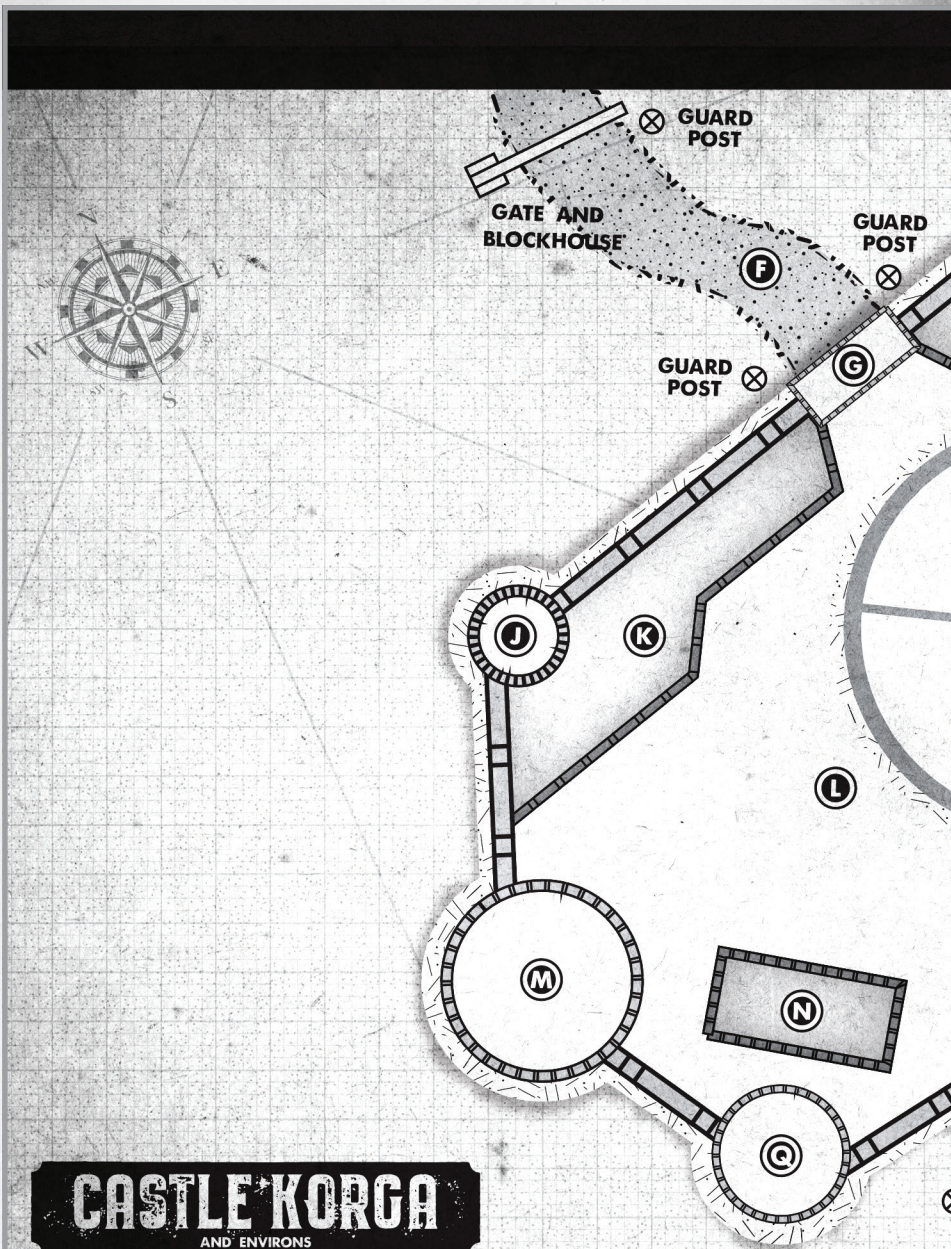
His preferred base of operations is something considerably less cosmopolitan: Castle Korga.

CASTLE KORGA

Situated on the tiny island of Eos in the northern Aegean Sea, Castle Korga was once an ancient crusader fortress built to guard the coastal routes from Istanbul to the West. Abandoned for centuries, the castle was little more than an obscure ruin by the time Korga learned of its existence from Count Demidov. He saw the value of the castle at once; it was the perfect place to disappear with his stolen wealth and technology and transform himself from a bandit and soldier of fortune into the grandiose Baron Korga.

Korga has spent several years and a considerable fortune rebuilding the castle to his specifications, adding modern technology and expanding the keep into an imposing, gothic-style manor house. The barracks and armory for Korga's guards are located within the castle's fortified gatehouse, and several structures have been converted into laboratories and fabrication shops for Tatiana Demidov and her staff. There is a single, ancient tower connected to the manor house, capped by Korga's personal observatory.

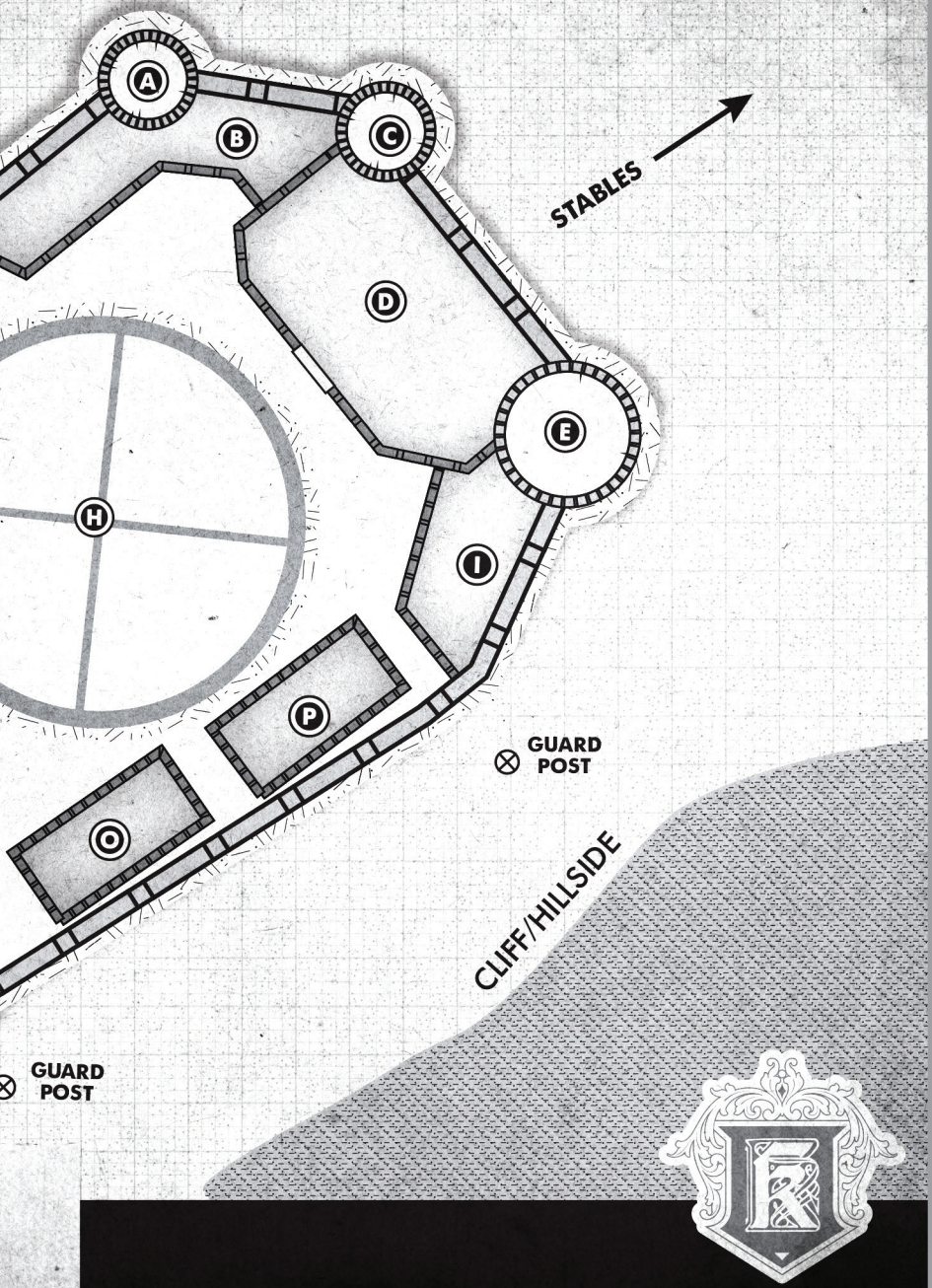
A massive metal access door (leading into an underground garage/hangar facility housing Korga's fleet of vehicles and the Kraken) doubles as a parade ground/mustering area. Demidov is housed in a secondary tower attached to Korga's manor (so that she can "work in safety," her every move scrutinized by Grishkin.



CASTLE KORGA

AND ENVIRONS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Guard Tower | F. Access Road to Island Village | L. Training Area |
| B. Barracks/Grishkin's Quarters | G. Main Gate/Elevated Gatehouse | M. Main Guard Tower |
| C. Korga's Tower/Observatory | H. Parade Ground/Hangar Access | N. Medical Office |
| D. Korga's Manor | I. Demidov's Laboratory | O. Armory |
| E. Demidov's Tower/Library | J. Guard Tower | P. Machine Shop |
| | K. Barracks/Mess Hall | Q. "Black Tower"/Stockade |





“Welcome to my humble abode,” the Baron said. “I trust your journey was without undue...unpleasantness.”

(If questioned by visitors, Korga says the tower is the last structure left from the original fortress, and is undergoing extensive restoration work. In fact, the tower has been reinforced to prevent Demidov from freeing herself from “custody.”)

The baron’s manor house can accommodate up to 50 guests in ostentatious, Old World luxury, complete with personal servants and round-the-clock kitchen staff. The manor is also honeycombed with secret passageways, allowing Korga, Grishkin, and the staff to move quickly and quietly throughout the house as needed. These passageways also provide access to the old castle’s dungeon,

located beneath the manor, as well as a secret escape route leading to a motorboat hidden on the north side of the island.

Korga’s island fortress is accessible only by boat. Guests are brought in via the island’s small harbor, then escorted through the village beyond and up a narrow, twisting road to the castle itself. The village and its inhabitants are a seedy-looking bunch, and guests of the castle are cautioned not to leave the grounds without an escort for their own safety. This is mostly to isolate the guests from Adrasteia Drakos and her crews, who might be persuaded to turn on the baron if the price was right.

WONDER WEAPONS

Korga's dreams of conquest require the creation of an arsenal of exotic weapons, developed from Demidov's designs and powered by the Orb of Hyperborea.

THE ORB OF HYPERBOREA

An arcane relic of unfathomable power, the Orb of Hyperborea is a hollow sphere of orichalcum measuring five feet in diameter and inlaid on its inner and outer surface with a complex tracery of gold and silver threads. Specially-shaped crystals of exceptional purity are set into the sphere at forty-one different nexus points, linking the inner and outer tracteries and acting as focusing elements for the Orb's power.

When active, the Orb collects and amplifies cosmic energy and then transmits it any arcane invention configured with the proper set of receiving crystals, anywhere in the world. Count Demidov spent much of his life searching for the Orb, intending to harness its limitless energy to transform the Russian Empire into a technological utopia. His daughter Tatiana has continued her father's work, studying ancient

drawings of the Orb and learning how to restore the legendary device if it can be found.

FLAME GUN

This carbine-sized weapon is a heat ray projector designed by Count Demidov and powered by the Orb of Hyperborea. An adjustable aperture gives the flame gun two distinct fire modes: a focused, high-intensity beam that can penetrate hardened structures and vehicle armor, or a short-range, wide-angle blast that can blanket an entire area like a flamethrower.

Due to the temperatures generated by the weapon's high-intensity mode, the flame gun must cool down for one round after firing. If the weapon is fired the round immediately after a high-intensity shot, a malfunction occurs (see the "Wild Cards and Hyperborean Tech" Malfunction Table, page 21).

FLIGHT BELT

This wide belt—consisting of linked metal plates containing a crystalline power matrix—is capable of generating a modulated repulsor field that grants the wearer a limited form of flight. A small control box



on the side of the belt adjusts the intensity and amplitude of the repulsor field, altering the wearer's speed and altitude.

The flight belt is designed to lift up to 250 pounds to an altitude of 100 feet, and is capable of one hour of sustained flight before overheating. Each additional pound reduces the maximum altitude by one foot, and the sustained flight time by one minute. Every round the wearer pushes the belt past its sustained flight time, roll a d4; on a roll of 1, a malfunction occurs (see the "Wild Cards and Hyperborean Tech" Malfunction Table, page 21).

FIRE SHIELD

This device, consisting of metal breast and back plates inscribed with a crystal power matrix, generates a modulated energy field that surrounds the wearer and reacts to high-velocity projectiles, vaporizing them with bursts of intense heat in a fraction of a second. The fire shield reacts to any physical object traveling faster than 150 feet per second, or just over 100 miles per hour. Energy attacks, or slower projectiles—like a thrown rock or a lobbed hand grenade—are not affected.

The fire shield generates a spherical barrier with a Toughness of 12 against high velocity projectiles. Large projectiles or multiple small projectile hits in a short period of time can draw too much power and overload the shield's crystal matrix. If the shield is hit with a total damage of 32 or higher in a single round a malfunction occurs (see the "Wild Cards and Hyperborean Tech" Malfunction Table, page 21).

THE IRON HUSSARS

Baron Korga's *Vas Huszárok*—the "Iron Hussars"—are a force of mechanical shock troops based on the designs of Count Demidov and his cabal of arcane inventors. Powered by a "charged fuel" (a unique chemical mixture stored in metal tanks on each Hussar's back, a concoction that derives additional power via exposure to the Orb of Hyperborea), these mechanical soldiers feature a crystal logic matrix that allows them to follow simple commands with a limited degree of autonomy. Each Hussar stands eight feet tall, with thick armor plating. Each Hussar is identified by a number stenciled on a bulky pauldron worn on the right shoulder. Slow and somewhat clumsy, but stronger and far tougher than an ordinary soldier, each Iron Hussar is equipped with a flame gun, a fire shield, and a flight belt.

Construction of the Iron Hussars is time-consuming and expensive. Built by hand in secret workshops beneath Castle Korga, only 24 of the mechanical soldiers are ready for action, with another 18 in various phases of assembly. The robots are programmed to accept commands only from Baron Korga, Tatiana Demidov, Oleg Grishkin, and a handful of Grishkin's trusted lieutenants. Additional programming prevents the soldiers from harming Korga or Demidov, or allowing them to come to harm. Only Demidov currently has the skills and authorization required to alter the robots' programming in any way.

Resistant to physical damage, one weakness in the Iron Hussar design is their fuel tanks; puncturing the tank and exhausting their fuel will stop a Hussar dead in its tracks,

IRON HUSSARS



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d10

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 4;

Parry: 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

Armor +2: Curved steel plating.

Construct: As an automaton, the Iron Hussar does not breathe and is immune to inhaled poisons and smell-based effects. In addition, it is +2 to recover from Shaken, and suffers no additional damage from called shots. Constructs are not affected by poison or disease.

Flame Gun: Fires a Bolt (Range 24/48/95, Damage 3d6, AP 10, Rate of Fire 1, Heavy Weapon), or a Blast (Cone Template, Damage 2d10, Flammable, Ignores Armor)

Fire Shield: Barrier (Toughness 12 versus high velocity projectiles)

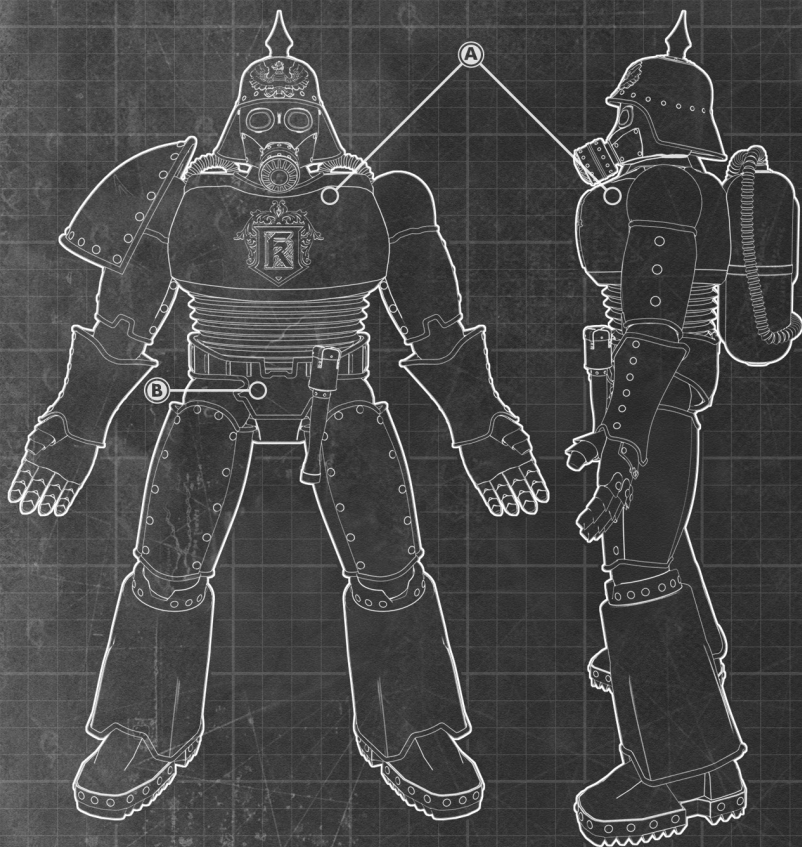
Flight Belt: The Iron Hussar is capable of flying at an altitude of 50 feet for up to 10 minutes of sustained flight. (ACC/TS 5/20; Climb 10)

Weakness (Fuel Storage Tanks): The Iron Hussars carry their fuel on Armored (+4) back-mounted storage tanks. If those tanks are specifically targeted with a called shot (-4), the Iron Hussar must make a Vigor roll vs the damage total. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, the tanks explode, destroying the Iron Hussar entirely.

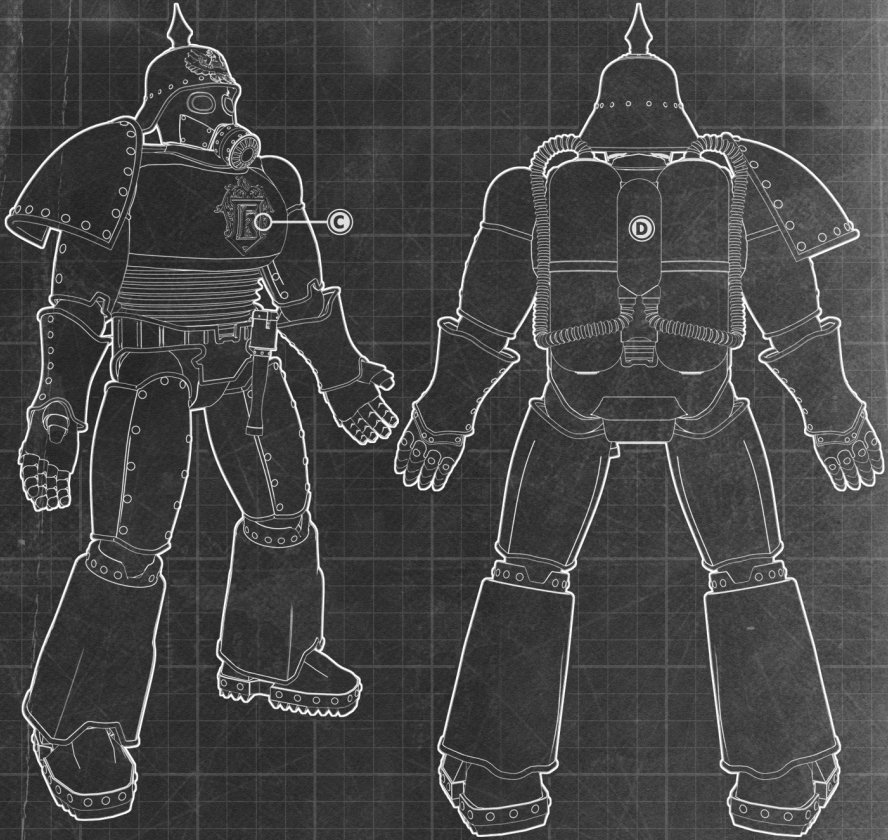
Immunities: The Iron Hussar is immune to fear and Intimidation.

Gear: The Iron Hussar is often deployed with 1-3 "Potato Masher" grenades magnetically clamped to the automaton's waist (5/10/20, Damage 3d6-2, Medium burst template).

THE IRON HUSSARS



- A. Armor Plating (Heavy Duty)
- B. Flight Belt
- C. Fire Shield Emitter (Located within Insignia)
- D. Fuel Storage Tanks



and detonating the fuel can crack their armor—though the resulting explosion can do a great deal of damage to everyone nearby.

THE KRAKEN

Based on fragmentary drawings of the floating fortresses of the Hyperborean Priest-Kings, the *Kraken* is an arcane war machine originally designed by Count Demidov for use against the Germans in the Great War. Resembling the mythical sea monster from which it gets its name, the *Kraken's* streamlined, torpedo-shaped hull is nearly 200 feet long, and features a cluster of four 100-foot long articulated tentacles that can be used to attack large targets like vehicles and buildings. Powered by the Orb of Hyperborea (which is installed in a reactor chamber onboard), the war machine is capable of operating both undersea and on land, driven by a trio of powerful thrusters located at

the junction of the *Kraken's* tentacles. These thrusters are used to propel the *Kraken* through the water or allow the war machine to hover up to 45 feet above the ground, and can be used like a colossal blowtorch against targets at very close range. The *Kraken's* hull and tentacles are armored, and when operating on land the entire war machine is protected by a fire shield.

The *Kraken* can be operated by a single individual, but only with great difficulty; Korga alone knows the necessary series of combinations for the locking mechanism that overrides the *Kraken's* controls from a position on the Battle Bridge.

Normal operations require a crew of at least 30, plus another 20–25 men for combat landing operations. Iron Legion robots can be carried in special racks in the vessel's cargo area, deployed through launch tubes that can rocket them to the ground in

THE KRAKEN

ACC/TS 5/32 on land, 2/10 submerged; **Climb** 10; **Toughness** 20 (8);
Crew: 30 (plus ground troops); **Cost:** Special

Notes:

Flame Cannon: By focusing one of its three thrusters, the *Kraken* can fire a Bolt (Range 24/48/95, Damage 4d10, AP 10, Rate of Fire 1, Heavy Weapon), or a Blast (Large Blast Template, Damage 3d10, Flammable, Ignores Armor)

Heavy Armor: Only weapons marked as Heavy Weapons can hurt this vehicle, regardless of the damage roll. This keeps a really lucky pistol shot from destroying a tank. Vehicles with Heavy Armor halve damage they take from colliding with other obstacles (including vehicles) that don't have Heavy Armor.

Heavy Fire Shield: Barrier (Toughness 16 versus high velocity projectiles).

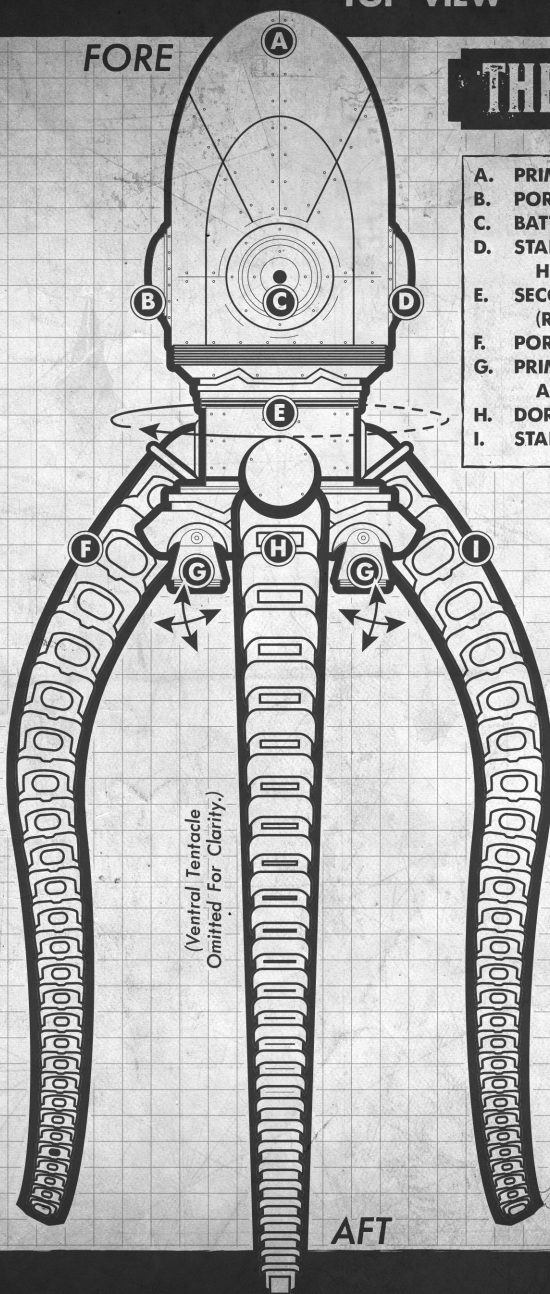
Tentacles: Each tentacle has an effective Agility of d4 and Strength of D12+10. They are capable of gripping large objects like cars or trucks, but not human-sized targets.

TOP VIEW

FORE

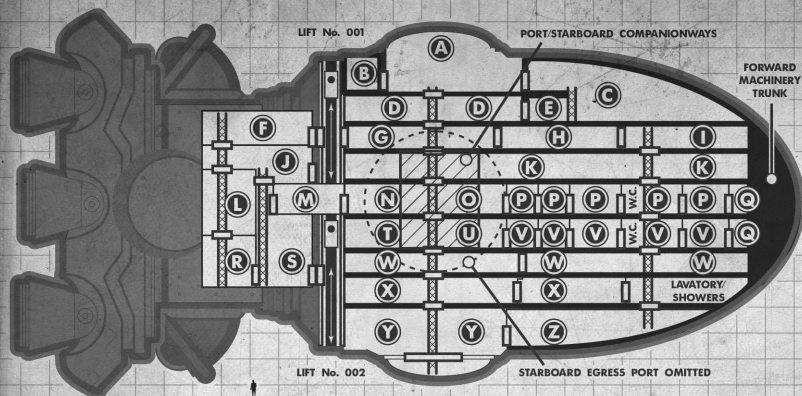
THE KRAKEN

- A. PRIMARY HULL
- B. PORT SIDE EGRESS HATCH
- C. BATTLE BRIDGE
- D. STARBOARD SIDE EGRESS HATCH
- E. SECONDARY HULL (ROTATING)
- F. PORT SIDE TENTACLE
- G. PRIMARY THRUSTER ARRAY
- H. DORSAL TENTACLE
- I. STARBOARD TENTACLE




STARBOARD SIDE ELEVATION PLAN

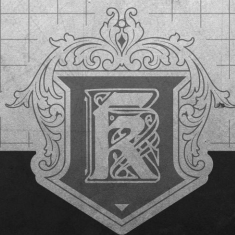
THE KRAKEN



- A. Deck 1: Battle Bridge/ Weapons Control
- B. Deck 1: Radio Room
- C. Deck 1-2: Baron Korga's Quarters
- D. Deck 2: Map and Navigation Deck
- E. Deck 2: Korga's Quarters/Antechamber
- F. Engineering Deck 1: Engine Room/Operations Control
- G. Deck 3: Machinists Operations
- H. Deck 3: Medical Officer's Quarters
- I. Deck 3: Second-in-Command's Ready Room
- J. Engineering Deck 2: Monitoring Stations
- K. Deck 4: Main Fore/Aft Companionway
- L. Engineering Deck 3: Reactor Room/Main Power

- M. Engineering Deck 3: Main Engineering Access Bay
- N. Deck 5: Off-duty Lounge
- O. Deck 5: Crew Quarters
- P. Deck 5: Senior Staff Quarters
- Q. Deck 5: Forward Mechanics Trunk/Machine Access
- R. Engineering Deck 4: Reactor Control/Emergency Shutdown
- S. Engineering Deck 4: Electronics Systems Control
- T. Deck 6: Food and Water Storage
- U. Deck 6: Combat Crew Quarters
- V. Deck 6: Combat Officers' Quarters
- W. Deck 7: Mess Hall/Galley
- X. Deck 8: Cargo Storage
- Y. Deck 9: Ventral Egress Port Mustering Area
- Z. Deck 9: Ventral Sick Bay

-  LADDER/CATWALK
-  HATCH
-  LIFT CAR



WILD CARDS AND HYPERBOREAN TECH

Wild Cards may use Hyperborean tech just as they would any other Weird Science gizmo. Because of their unique power source, no Power Points are used to operate these devices, but they do require a Weird Science skill roll (or a default skill roll) to activate. If a 1 is rolled on the skill die, a malfunction occurs. Draw a card and consult the Hyperborean Tech Malfunction Table, below.

HYPERBOREAN TECH MALFUNCTION TABLE

Suit	Result	Effect
Clubs	Catastrophic Malfunction	The device's crystal power matrix overloads. The device explodes for 3d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template.
Hearts	Major Malfunction	Crystals in the device's power matrix fracture. A power surge inflicts 2d6 damage on the user, and the device cannot be used again until it's fitted with a new set of crystals by Tatiana Demidov.
Diamonds	Minor Malfunction	The device's crystal power matrix has become misaligned. The device cannot be used again until it's repaired. It can be fixed with a Repair roll at -4.
Spades	Glitch	The device activates, but the power crystals are out of balance, causing it to behave unpredictably. Roll a d4. If a 1 is rolled, the device operates at half effect. If a 2 is rolled, the device operates at full effect, but the user suffers 2d6 damage from a power surge. If a 3 is rolled, the device fails to operate. If a 4 is rolled, the device operates normally. These glitches can be fixed with a Repair roll at -2.

seconds, or fire them like torpedoes when the *Kraken* is submerged.

The interior of the war machine is surprisingly spacious (save for maintenance crawlways and equipment access trunks), and the layout is designed—through the clever

use of rotating interior structures—to change orientation based on whether the craft is horizontal (underwater) or vertical (on land). Ladders double as catwalks, and a pair of cable-drive passenger cars allow for rapid passage between the upper and lower decks.

PULP VILLAINS: BARON KORGA

Korga's personal quarters are massive, and features a number of stolen art treasures and his personal weapons. He has also installed a large pipe organ, which he uses to play mournful music during his frequent sleepless nights.

Korga can trigger a self-destruct mechanism built into the Kraken's reactor by accessing a

trio of combination dials hidden behind a large painting (Ghisolfi's "Alexander the Great and Thalestris," specifically) on the forward bulkhead of his quarters. (Setting each dial to "6" activates a fifteen minute countdown before the reactor detonates.)



"The strange automatons turned in unison and began to march, in perfect thundering lockstep and a hideous hiss—like the breathing of dozens of mechanical lungs—filled the room..."

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following adventure hooks can be linked together to form a loose mini-campaign, or used as standalone adventures if desired.

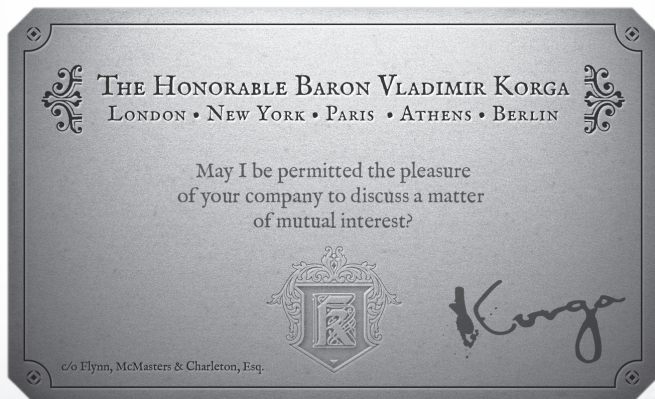
THE GREAT RACE

The characters cross paths with Baron Korga—it could be at a party, or social function like the opening of a museum, or simply encountering one another at a nightclub or restaurant—and Korga immediately takes a liking to them. (It's possible that he's had his eye on the characters as potential pawns for a while, due to press coverage of their exploits, or it could simply be chance encounter.) Some time later, they receive steamship (or airship) tickets to Greece and an invitation to be his guests at Castle Korga "to discuss a matter of potential danger and mutual profit worthy of your reputation."

Upon arriving at the castle, it becomes clear that the characters are not the only ones who have received Korga's curious invitation. There are adventurers from all over the world (possibly including some

of the characters' greatest rivals/adversaries) who have been brought together by Korga to take part in a kind of competitive treasure hunt. The prize is a legendary artifact known as the Orb of Hyperborea, believed to lie in a tomb or temple somewhere in the wilds of Anatolia. Each team is given information describing the Orb in general terms, as well as maps and copies of Count Demidov's notes on the artifact's possible resting place, plus a generous expense account for obtaining equipment, transportation, etc. The first team to locate the Orb and return with it to Castle Korga will win the race and "share the Orb's legendary rewards."

If the characters can outwit and outmaneuver their rivals, survive the dangers of the quest, and make it back to Korga with the Orb, the Baron tells them what the artifact truly is. If the Game Master wants to use this as a linked adventure,



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GM TIPS: THE FINE ART OF DESTRUCTION

Depending on the relative lethality of a campaign, GMs have some options on how to handle the exploitable weaknesses of Korga's wonder weapons.

THE IRON HUSSARS

Korga's automated soldiers carry their fuel in armored tanks mounted on their backs. The default rules for that weakness allow the players to, with a called shot, destroy an Iron Hussar by shooting the tanks (detonating the fuel and blowing apart the Hussar).

Alternately, GMs can treat the detonations like anti-personnel explosives (using grenade blast damage), if higher danger is more in the spirit of the ongoing campaign.

Another option is to puncture the tank (using the same called shot rules) and allow the fuel to spill out, meaning the affected Iron Hussar would keep moving for a few rounds—determined by a random die roll or gamemaster fiat—before simply running out of power and shutting down (presumably at a dramatic moment such as a moment before delivering a killing blow to a downed hero).

Another option is to use the “detonating fuel tanks” to create chain reactions to destroy numerous Iron Hussars at once, if a more heroic, “pulpy” feel is called for.

DESTROY THE KRAKEN!

Korga's monstrous war engine is equipped with a self-destruct (see page 22) that overloads the vessel's reactor (which is powered by the Orb of Hyperborea). Depending on the level of danger or the needs of an ongoing campaign, the resulting destruction could be implosive—pulling the Kraken into itself and destroying it without inflicting massive damage to the surrounding area. (Blowing up midtown Manhattan would likely make the PCs wanted for questioning if not arrest and prosecution, for example.)

If it is advantageous for there to be long-term consequences of the destruction of the Kraken, however, the resulting detonation could be catastrophic, placing the PCs on the run or possibly even blamed for the devastation and forced to clear their names.

As a springboard for additional adventures, perhaps the energy discharge from the Orb of Hyperborea has a mutating effect on people or animals, creating new threats with bizarre energy-based or psychic powers as an ongoing problem for the PCs to deal with.

the baron offers to provide the PCs with experimental gear powered by the Orb (the flame gun, flying belt, force field, etc.) and sets aside facilities at the castle for their use as a base. Otherwise, Korga turns his mercenaries loose on the PCs, seizes the Orb, and throws them in the dungeon—from where they must escape to foil his dastardly plans.

OLD ENEMIES

If the PCs have accepted Korga's offer following The Great Race, as they are staying at the castle they are witness to an attack by a force of mysterious soldiers armed with high-tech weapons. The attackers attempt to make off with Tatiana Demidov, but are foiled by Korga's mercenaries (and perhaps aid from the PCs themselves). Korga prevails on the PCs to track down the mysterious attackers and put a stop to them before they can strike again. (If the GM wants to run this as a standalone adventure, then a mysterious nobleman named Korga approaches the PCs for help protecting his ward.)

Clues lead the players to Istanbul, where they discover that the attackers are survivors of Korga's old mercenary band who he left to die in Russia, plus a trio of Demidov's scientists who the Bolsheviks failed to catch. They reveal the truth of Korga's dastardly plans, and their attempt to rescue Tatiana—only to be interrupted by Oleg Grishkin and his soldiers, who have been shadowing the PCs all along and waiting for the right moment to strike. When the dust settles, Korga's fanatics have been driven off, and Demidov's friends prevail on the PCs to go to Castle Korga and save Tatiana before it's too late.

THE RESCUE

Korga's evil plans have been revealed; now the PCs must find a way to slip past the island's defenders and rescue Tatiana before the war machine and the robot legion become operational. (Again, if the GM wants to run this as a standalone, the PCs are recruited by Demidov's associates to rescue Tatiana from Korga's clutches after their own attempt fails.) The heroes are given Count Demidov's signet ring to help convince Tatiana of the truth: that Count Demidov is alive but in Bolshevik hands. When the heroes make it to Castle Korga, they learn that they are too late; the war machine and the legion are ready to deploy. With killer robots hot on their heels, the PCs can only flee for their lives as the Kraken rises from its gantry and descends into the waters of the Aegean. (Or, again, if the GM wants to run the adventure as a standalone, Tatiana tells the PCs how to shut down the Orb of Hyperborea, and they must board the war machine and disable it before it's too late.)

THE KRAKEN

As a demonstration of his power, Baron Korga unleashes his war machine and a small army of Iron Hussars on the ancient city of Istanbul. As the outmatched Turkish forces try to stop Korga's reign of terror, the PCs must fight their way close to the Kraken, board it, and disable the Orb of Hyperborea in a epic battle.

If the GM wishes to run this as a standalone adventure, then the PCs are approached by Count Demidov's old compatriots and sent to Castle Korga to rescue Tatiana from the clutches of Oleg Grishkin. Once

freed, Tatiana tells the PCs how to penetrate the Kraken's fire shield, board the war machine, and shut down the Orb.

At the end of the battle, the Kraken and the Iron Hussars have been rendered inert, along with all of the experimental Hyperborean tech. Korga has escaped, perhaps to take his revenge on the PCs in the future, and Tatiana is determined to return to Russia and free her father from the secret Bolshevik research facility where he is being held. The PCs could part ways with the young inventor at this point, or join her on a new set of adventures.

CLASH OF TYRANTS!

Korga's aims are in competition to other characters featured in various *Thrilling Tales* "Pulp Villains" supplements. The Orb of Hyperborea, for example, might be a fragment of the same "Atlantean Crystal" veins mined by Arthur Slingsby Duncombe-Parker—the "Subterranean Monarch" (ADM3230), and strange resonances between the Orb and the crystal make the two conquerors aware of each other; alternately, Korga's Black Legion mercenaries may well

have had dealings with Duncombe-Parker's "Stone Fist" soldiers of fortune. PCs could find themselves caught between rival villains as the technological horror of the *Kraken* and the Iron Legion wage a pitched battle with the Subterranean Monarch's Mantle Men, Drillmobiles, and giant magma worms—entire cities could fall under the threat of destruction in such a deadly conflict.

Another possible complication: once this "Tyrant War" spills into public awareness, perhaps a third player enters the fray—Von Keiner (ADM3229, "Pulp Villains: Von Keiner") and his powerful airship, the *Himmelhexen*, might spy an opportunity to seize new technology from either Korga or Duncombe-Parker. Bad enough when the Kraken heaves itself out of the sea and attacks London or New York—the arrival of a deadly airship with powerful Tesla cannons would make for a terrifying development.

Optionally, the PCs could find themselves facing an axis of evil—an alliance between three would-be masters of the world, attacking from beneath the ground, from the sea, and from the skies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Lee is a novelist, game designer and scriptwriter whose recent credits include *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands* and *For Honor*. He wrote the pulp novella "Genghis' Kahn and the Manchurian Gambit" for Microsoft's serial fiction efforts in support of the PC game *Crimson Skies*; the novella was later published in mass market paperback by Del Rey Books.

When not battling space pirates or hunting rogue secret agents he lives with his family in Nashville, Tennessee.

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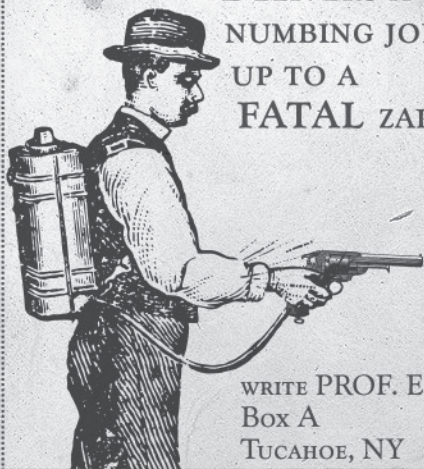
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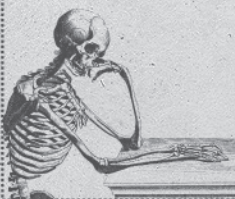
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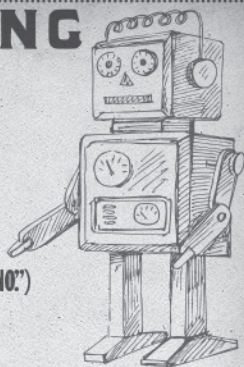
MISSING

Self-directed
Computational
Platform.

(Answers to "MEKKANNO")

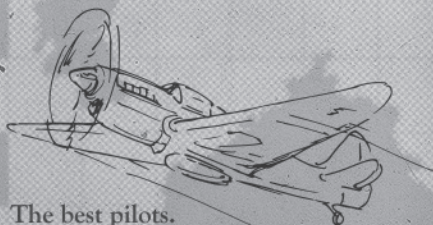
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