



THE RADIO MARRAUDERS



AN ADVENTURE FOR

THRILLING TALES



THE RADIO MARAUDERS

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A wave of science-crime strikes the city as armed robbers hit banks and jewelry stores, using special radio devices to stay one step ahead of the police! It's up to the PCs to track these well-equipped thieves down and put a stop to their robberies... but when they find out that there's more to this crime spree than mere robbery, will they be able to stop the scheme in time?

The Radio Marauders is a **THRILLING TALES** adventure designed for four to six Seasoned character, three to four Veteran characters, or a Legendary hero and his assistants.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The heroes are called in to help with the investigation when a series of bank robberies takes place in the city. The robbers wear special devices that not only allow them to talk with each other via radio, they black out radio and telephone communications for roughly a mile around the scene of the crime,

making it impossible for police cars and officers to maintain contact or for alarms to work.

As a result, no one's even come close to catching the men the newspapers have dubbed "the Radio Marauders."

After following some initial avenues of investigation, the PCs come to grips with the Radio Marauders at another bank robbery. After defeating them, the heroes have more clues to work with as they try to determine who's behind the crimewave — including copies of the radio devices.

The situation takes a turn for the worse when the man behind the Radio Marauders lands a group of "Bolshevik agitators" with a "bomb" in Veteran's Square, a crowded area. While the heroes and the cops work to defuse the bomb and save thousands of lives, the Radio Marauders hit two banks in other parts of town.

The latest robberies give the PCs the final clues they need to track down

the man behind this scheme, mad scientist Jennings Petrie. The real goal of the robberies was to obtain scientific prototypes and plans kept in a safe deposit box... and now that he has those plans, Petrie's going to build a weapon with which to threaten the entire city! The heroes have to find him and stop him before he unleashes this terrifying new device.

PART ONE: INVESTIGATING THE MARAUDERS

The adventure begins when the PCs are drawn into an investigation of a strange series of robberies. Over the past several weeks, a group of gangsters has robbed several banks, stealing not only all the money they could get their hands on, but rifling through safe deposit boxes. What sets them apart from other gangs of bank robbers is that they're equipped with special radio devices.

The device consists of:

(a) a helmet with two "arms" that hold a telephone-like speaker in front of the wearer's mouth (so he can talk without having to use his hands to hold the speaker) and

(b) a backpack-like unit with two radio antennae (one on each shoulder). The device not only lets the robbers communicate with each other when they're in different rooms or buildings, it contains a radio jamming device that makes

SECRET SQUADRON MEMBERS:

Set your Decoder to Code X-4:

**7-9-3-15-18 26-21
11-16-22 16-5-7 11-22-7-7
3-20-3-9-3-5-19 1-20-11
16-11 2-16-26-22
23-14-16-15-23-7!**

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all other radio and telephone devices within about a mile stop working. This tips people off that a robbery's in progress, prevents the police from using their car and dispatch radios when responding to the crime, and stops bank alarms from functioning. In the resulting confusion, the highly-skilled and well-trained robbers have little trouble getting away scot-free.

The press calls the gang the Radio Marauders. So far they've gotten away with over \$300,000 in loot, leaving many people destitute and several banks ruined. The police have no leads, though they're keeping a closer than normal eye on the other banks in the city.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

How you get the heroes involved depends on the types of PCs you have and the type of campaign you're running. If at least one PC is a masked crimefighter, then the heroes have plenty of incentive to stop whoever's behind the Radio Marauder crimes. The same consideration generally applies if you've got a PC who's a cop, a detective, or a reporter. For example, maybe a victim who had a treasured keepsake stolen from his safe deposit box hires a private eye to get it back, and a city editor could easily assign a PC newshound to get the big scoop about the Marauders.

If none of those easy hooks are

available, you can fall back on the PCs' circle of friends and contacts. A group of adventurers usually builds up a large group of acquaintances and allies, and that might include the Police Commissioner, an interested private citizen, the owner or director of one of the victimized banks, a friend or influential citizen who had his safe deposit box rummaged through, or the like. This person appeals to the PCs to use their well-honed skills, instincts, and heroic luck to succeed where the police have, so far, failed.

AVENUES OF INVESTIGATION

Once the heroes have taken an interest in the case, it's time for them to start investigating. It's impossible to predict every conceivable tactic they might take, but here are some common avenues of investigation and how they tend to play out. All of these approaches will require successful use of Investigation, Knowledge and Streetwise skills, as well as making good use of NPC connections.

Talking To The Cops

If the PCs are on good terms with the police, or if they're working at the behest of a high police official who can give them access, they can talk to the cops who've investigated the robberies and examine their files.

Each of the robberies tends to fit roughly the same pattern. First, the Radio Marauders suddenly show up in the bank. According to

witnesses at some of the robberies, they arrive in a big black limo or a black panel truck. There are usually at least half a dozen of them; the smallest number ever seen was five, the largest ten. While using their radio devices to black out communications and keep in touch, they hold everyone in the bank at gunpoint (typically with Thompson submachine guns and a variety of pistols) and methodically ransack the place. They take everything they can out of the till and force the bank manager to open the vault. If enough of them are present (usually at least seven), they also rob safe deposit boxes. They don't look through the boxes in any order; they just crowbar them open at random to see what they can find. Sometimes they get lucky and make off with someone's

best jewelry; sometimes all they find are marriage licenses and birth certificates.

The police know a Radio Marauders robbery is in progress when radios and telephones in the vicinity stop working... but since they lose the ability to communicate with each other and headquarters, they can't respond effectively. The best they can do is go to the nearest bank and see if the Radio Marauders are there. Only once did two cops find the robbers... who promptly shot them and their squad car full of holes.

At this point, the cops have no real clues, just eyewitness descriptions of the Radio Marauders and their gear (though the helmets effectively hide most of the robbers' faces).



Even if the police department officially doesn't want the heroes involved, many individual cops welcome their participation, because the investigation is stalled.

Streetwise

Some characters may want to use Streetwise to try to track down the Radio Marauders. Unfortunately, this isn't likely to work — under Dr. Petrie's clever (if maniacal) leadership, the robbers remain a tight-knit bunch who've stopped mingling with the underworld and haven't been spending their loot around town. However, if a hero makes his Streetwise roll with one or more raises, he hears about a gangster named "Sheets" Malone who told some of his pals that he was "in big with the Radio Gang."

The heroes have to make another Streetwise roll at -4 to find Sheets Malone; reduce this to -2 if they have police cooperation.

"SHEETS" MALONE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10,

Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d8,

Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8,

Shooting d10, Streetwise d10, Taunt

d8, Throwing d8

Charisma -2, **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Alertness, Danger Sense,
Rock and Roll!

Gear: Tommy Gun (12/24/48,

2d6+1, AP1, Auto, ROF 3 Shots 50)

Taking him unawares, following him back to the Radio Marauders' lair, or convincing him to talk isn't likely to work... but it may not hurt to try.

If successfully followed, Malone eventually leads the PCs to the Radio Marauders' hideout in an abandoned factory. Since this would bring the scenario to a (potentially) premature end, try not to let it happen — give Malone plenty of chances using Danger Sense or Alertness to spot a tail, have him lose the PCs whether he knows about them or not, or arranging the timing of finding him so that he can't derail the rest of the adventure.

Tracking The Radio Devices

If the PC team includes a gadgeteer or scientist, the heroes may try to find the Radio Marauders by tracking their radio devices with the help of Weird Science. This tactic, too, is highly unlikely to work.

The devices use an oscillating radio frequency (a gadgeteer can detect this with a Weird Science roll made at -2). Even if the PCs somehow succeed in locking onto a signal, they may not be able to hold it long enough for it to do them any good — after all, once they're a safe distance from the scene of a robbery, the Radio Marauders turn their devices off .

Staking Out Banks

As dull as it may be, the best way to come to grips with the Radio Marauders is to stake out a likely bank or two. If the PCs have a gadgeteer among their number, he could build Weird Science radio devices that let them communicate through the Marauders' black-out so they can cover more banks (using *dispel* to counter the Marauder's *dispel*) -- but let them think to ask if they can do that, don't suggest it to them. This tactic leads nicely into Part Two.

PART TWO: BATTLE WITH THE MARAUDERS!

Unless something unusual happens during the initial period of investigation, it's unlikely the PCs will get any solid leads on the Radio Marauders. That means it's time for you to inject a little action into the adventure and set up a battle between them!



If the PCs have staked out banks, you can move on to this part of the adventure whenever you like just by having the Radio Marauders arrive on the scene. Otherwise, you need to have a robbery take place when the PCs are nearby so they can respond, or have someone somehow get word to them that a robbery's occurring.

The easiest way to do that is to have the phone go dead while a PC's in the middle of a conversation — if that doesn't make him rush to the nearest bank looking for the robbers, he needs to turn in his hero badge!

THE ROBBERY

The Radio Marauders' stats are provided at the end of this adventure. There should be at least one of them per PC, if not more. They arrive in whatever vehicle seems most appropriate to you, and one to two of them stay in the car as getaway driver(s).

The Radio Marauders' goals for this robbery are:

- (a) grab as much money as possible, and
- (b) check the bank records and safe deposit boxes to see if they can find what they're really looking for (see page 10 for the secret behind the crime spree). It's not at this bank, but they'll still try to rob a few safe deposit boxes to cover their trail.

You want to give the heroes a real challenge here. The Radio Marauders aren't petty crooks or cheap thugs, they're well-trained, well-equipped criminals more than capable of holding their own in a fight. Unless the heroes fight really well or get really lucky, at least some of the Marauders should escape somehow. The Marauders are Wild Cards, and have two GM bennies each -- remember to use them!

During the battle, if possible and appropriate, give at least one hero the chance to make a Notice roll to see the Radio Marauders looking through the bank records. If you can't do that, have the Radio Marauders leave the records tossed around the bank manager's office in such a way that it's obvious they were looking at them.

AFTERMATH: WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN

If the Radio Marauders defeat the heroes, they'll leave them behind and make their escape; they have no interest in taking prisoners, administering *coups de grace* to unconscious heroes, or anything like that. If the heroes defeat the Radio Marauders, and in some cases even if they don't, they have more clues and information to work with:

Captives

Hopefully at least some of the Radio Marauders got away, but there's a good chance the heroes will have survivors to interrogate (or perhaps

bodies to autopsy). Thanks to mental treatments administered by Dr. Petrie (*boost trait*), every Radio Marauder has d12 in Spirit, so getting anything out of them via Interrogation is likely to prove tough. And if they take the captives to the police station, they'll find the Marauders' lawyer already waiting for them there; he'll ensure that all questioning ceases (the Miranda rule may not be the law of the land in the Thirties, but the cops [and characters who work for or with them] can't just ignore an attorney who's present).

If the heroes succeed with Interrogation despite the difficulties, you should tailor the information they receive to keep the scenario moving along, but not derail it. The captives will not tell the heroes the location of the gang's hideout, but they might reveal the following facts:

- They work for an older guy they call "Doc"; they don't know his real name. He's some sort of scientist. He pays real good, in cash! They can describe him if asked to (characters who've encountered Dr. Jennings Petrie before will recognize him from the description if they succeed with an INT Roll).
- They're looking for something in the banks other than just money. None of the captives know just what (unless the heroes captured all of them at the scene),

but they know the money's not the real goal.

- The Doc is "workin' on a real big plan," but they don't know what it's all about. They think (hope) it's some sort of scheme to rob all the banks in the city simultaneously, netting the gang millions of dollars.

Radio Devices

If the heroes have captives, they've also got their radio devices to examine. With a sample in hand, a gadgeteer or scientist character might be able to find a way to trace the broadcasts or "jam" the radio and telephone blackout effect. To keep this from ending the adventure in a swift and anticlimactic fashion, you should arrange the timing so the characters have to spend many long hours on this project, only succeeding when you're ready for them to track the Radio Marauders back to their lair. (In fact, it would make a great ending for Part Two if the characters finally have a tracking device ready to go right after the scene at Veteran's Square.)

Bank Records

Whether they see the Radio Marauders examining bank records, or discover afterward that they were doing so, the PCs should learn that the robbers were doing something other than taking cash and valuables from the bank. The obvious (and correct) conclusion is that they want to steal something from a specific

depositor. They're hitting one bank after another until they find the one that's got what they're looking for. Whatever it is, they must be closing in on it, since there are only so many banks in town....

If the PCs are particularly clever, they may decide Petrie's looking for something scientific, prompting them to start talking to famous scientists around town to see if any of them are hiding something of particular value in a safe deposit box. If you want to reward them for their cleverness, this can lead them to an encounter with the Radio Marauders robbing banks in Part Three. If not, this is a dead end; those scientist whom they know about and who will talk to them either won't say anything, or reveal no information of any use.

PART THREE: THE VETERAN'S SQUARE BOMB

With the information gleaned from the earlier robberies and other sources, Dr. Petrie is pretty certain he knows where his objective — plans and prototype parts for a deadly "sound weapon" developed by an eccentric researcher named Moultrie Dobbs — is hidden. It's at one of two banks. But since the heroes have involved themselves in his affairs, he's got to find a way to distract them so neither they nor the cops can interfere with either of these crucial robberies.

One distraction, coming up....



ALL HAIL THE GLORIOUS PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION!

In the middle of their investigations, the PCs receive a frantic call for help from the police (or their contacts, or they hear about this on the radio — it doesn't matter, as long as they get there in time for a big action scene). A Communist revolution is breaking out down at Veteran's Square!

Veteran's Square is basically just the intersection of two streets downtown. The city widened it slightly and erected a statue in the center to honor veterans of the Great War, then renamed the site "Veteran's Square." Doctor Petrie has chosen this as the site of his distraction.

The heroes arrive at the Square to discover a strange site. A strange finned aircraft of some sort has crashed into the square, jutting up from the ground at an angle. Nearby, using the downed aircraft and statue as "cover," are three (or more, if you prefer) men. They're wearing uniforms vaguely reminiscent of those of the Red Army of the Soviet Union, carrying Thompson submachine guns, and shouting Bolshevik slogans. A curious crowd has gathered, though the police are keeping them back as best they can.

According to witnesses, a few minutes ago the daytime crowd at the Square heard a strange sort of "buzzing" noise coming from the air... followed by silence. Then the strange "plane" crashed, right

here! (the plane is nothing more than a futuristic glider, which Dr. Petrie towed into place and then cut loose) Then the men with guns got out of it (apparently none the worse for wear despite the impact). They declared themselves the "vanguard" of the American Bolshevik Army, a group "*destined to bring the great Workers' Revolution to the shores of America!*" Even worse, they said that the "plane" was actually a sort of bomb! If anyone gets too close, or the police try to stop them, they'll trigger the bomb, turning the Square and much of the surrounding blocks to rubble. "*Such will be the fate of all capitalist oppressors of the people!*"

As the heroes hopefully realize sooner or later, this is all a big lie. The "Bolsheviks" are members of the Radio Marauders whom Dr. Petrie has brainwashed into thinking of themselves as Communist revolutionaries. (Use the Radio Marauder stats at the end of the book, although these don't have the radio devices.) There's a "bomb" in the aircraft, but it doesn't contain any explosives. A hero who spends one round examining it close up and succeeds with a Knowledge roll (-2 penalty if the hero has no relevant knowledge of explosives) realizes it's no threat at all.

The PCs have to find a way to defuse this situation (ha, ha) and prevent the "Bolsheviks" from hurting anyone. They can't just kill them, lest they detonate the "bomb"; they have to be more clever than that. In the end the

Bolsheviks will probably be killed (after all, they might open up on the crowd with their machine guns), but shooting them right off the bat isn't the way to go. Play the situation for tension, excitement, and thrills.

If knocked out, the "Bolsheviks" come to not remembering the brainwashing or knowing where they are or what they've done. The same thing happens after they next go to sleep. But as long as they remain conscious, the brainwashing holds.

If the heroes think fast and realize it's all a distraction, you have two options. First, you can have the "Bolsheviks" starting firing into the crowd to keep the PCs focused on the action at Veteran's Square. Second, they can just make it to one of the banks being robbed in time to try to stop the fleeing Radio Marauders in an exciting car chase... if they roll a 6 on 1d6 to pick the

right bank by sheer heroic fortune. (If the players wish to, they can spend bennies on this roll.)

MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...

...the Radio Marauders are robbing two banks and finding the Moultrie Dodds' plans and parts in one of them. Heroes at Veteran's Square won't have time to reach them (even if they find out the robberies are taking place), but if the heroes have deduced what's going on and not taken the Bolshevik bait, they might have a chance to fight the Radio Marauders now. If so, let them win the fight... but the parts and plans were at the other bank, so the Radio Marauders have them! If necessary, have witnesses at one of the banks describe how the Radio Marauders were excited about finding the plans and parts, or took special care in handling them, to emphasize what happened.



PART FOUR: THE MADMAN'S LABORATORY

From this point, the adventure rapidly moves to its conclusion. The heroes have to track Dr. Petrie and his Radio Marauders to their hideout and defeat them once and for all... or else the city will pay the price!

FINDING THE HIDEOUT

The PCs might find the Radio Marauders' hideout in any of several ways, such as:

- A gadgeteer or scientist PC (or NPC, if necessary) might finally have finished building a device that can follow their radio transmissions
- They might get to the last two robberies just soon enough to use Shadowing to follow the Marauders back to the factory
- A tip obtained from Streetwise might lead them there
- They might find muddy bootprints or the like at the last robbery scene; the mud is only found in the part of town where the factory's located
- Psychic powers might give a PC (or friendly NPC) a vision of where to find the robbers

- A captive Radio Marauder might finally crack under interrogation and tell what he knows
- Something found in the "Bolshevik bomb" airplane, or on the faux Bolsheviks, might tip the PCs off to the factory's location.

THE HIDEOUT

The hideout is an abandoned factory on the edge of town (if appropriate, make it an old radio factory that went out of business due to the Depression).

The interior of the factory is mostly intact, but has been partly gutted to make way for Dr. Petrie's scientific equipment and experiments. That section of the building is full of mad scientist gadgetry and consoles, including a large, sparking Jacob's ladder. In the center of Dr. Petrie's lab area is a monolith-like object that looks something like a Gernsbackian radio antenna (i.e., it has fins and circular vanes on it, that sort of thing).

The monolith-antenna is a project Dr. Petrie's been working on for some months, based in part on the (stolen) work of Moultrie Dodds. The parts and plans stolen from Dodds's safe deposit box are what he needs to complete the job. When finished, the monolith-antenna will let Petrie broadcast a radio signal that will put everyone in the city but

him and his men to sleep... leaving the city defenseless against their looting and pillaging! *Mwah hah hah hah hah!!!*

THE OPPOSITION

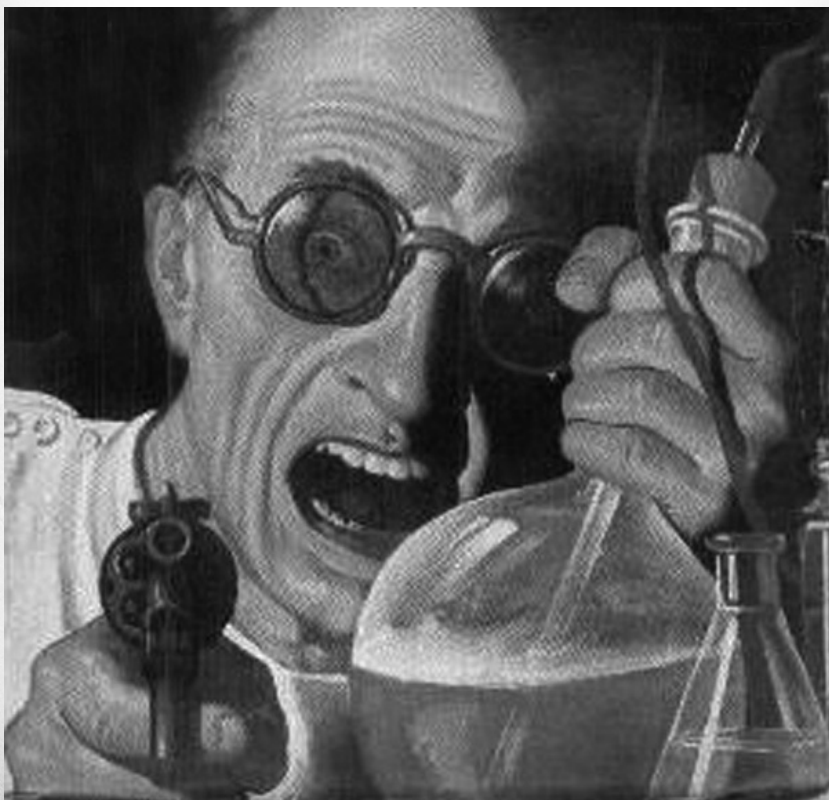
In the factory are Dr. Petrie himself and as many Radio Marauders as you need to give the heroes a good fight.

Once the PCs discover the villains' lair, it's up to them to decide how to proceed, but whether they sneak in or crash through the front door with guns blazing, sooner or later there's going to be a fight. Make sure it's a

challenge for the PCs, but one they can probably win in the end. This is the big climax, so it's appropriate that the PCs should triumph!

CONCLUSION

Assuming the fight goes the PCs' way, they can defeat Dr. Petrie (who hopefully has a chance to escape, in best master villain tradition), capture all the remaining Radio Marauders, and destroy the monolith-antenna.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

RADIO MARAUDERS

This gang of well-trained, science-fortified criminals are holding the city in a grip of stark terror!

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

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Lockpicking d10, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d10, Throwing d8

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 8; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Obligations (brainwashed "Bolsheviks" are also Delusional)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Dirty Fighter, Gadget, Strong Willed

Gear: Tommy Guns (12/24/48 damage 2d6+1, RoF 3, AP1, Auto)

Radio Helmet: Gadget -- allows for communication between wearers while simultaneously blocking all telephone and radio communications for roughly a mile in all directions. Note that this isn't strictly built according to the weird science rules -- it's a plot device, and should not be able to be recovered and used by the PCs)

DR. PETRIE

The Mad Scientist behind the Radio Marauders -- his plan is to finish construction of his masterwork (stolen from Moultrie Dodds) -- a monolith-antenna which will put the city to sleep!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (electronics) d12, Knowledge (radio) d12, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Repair d10, Shooting d6, Weird Science d12

Charisma: +0, **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 5 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusional
Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Gadgeteer, Mr. Fix It, McGyver, Power Points, Rapid Recharge.

Current Gizmos: Radio Brain Manipulator (can either *boost/lower trait* or *puppet*), Rocket Pack (*fly* -- used as a last-ditch escape option), hypnoprojector (*confusion* as per *Fantasy Companion* --3 power points to affect up to 3 targets within Smarts x2 range, Target must make Smarts roll at -2 (-4 if raise on activation) or be Shaken); 30 Power Points.

Gear: Colt Detective .38 revolver (12/24/48 damage 2d6 RoF 1)