

# THE MOON MONKEY MYSTERY

BY  
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*THE THRILLING NEW ADVENTURE FOR SPIRIT OF THE CENTURY*

# THE MOON MONKEY MYSTERY

An Adventure for Spirit of the Century

By Roger Carbol

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## **SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND EVENTS**

Millions of years ago, Crono the Moon Monkey arrived on Earth. Among his other activities, he shot and killed an *Australopithecus*, an early ancestor of humanity, who was infected with a now-extinct strain of lycanthropy.

Time passed. In the modern age, Crono developed a new martial art which incorporates firearms that he calls "gun-fu." He taught this fighting technique to his minions, the Monkey Masks -- so-called because they conceal their identities with monkey masks. Unsatisfied with their human limitations, Crono began experimenting with different strains of lycanthropy, modified with his own alien genetic material, in an effort to produce an army of super-soldiers. He has been able to create a small number of 'blue werewolves' which he controls telepathically.

Six months ago, in a South African excavation site, Dr. Travis Jenkins discovered the *Australopithecus* skull. Shortly thereafter his camp was attacked by a blue werewolf; Jenkins survived, but he was infected. Fearful of his worsening condition, he shipped the skull to Dr. Raymond Pronge, an old colleague in London.

## **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

The characters are summoned to Dr. Raymond Pronge's laboratory, where he excitedly shows them the skull and explains its significance. They are soon attacked by a team of Monkey Masks, along with a blue werewolf, who are attempting to retrieve the skull for Crono. In the attack, Pronge is badly injured. The players discover clues that lead them to Jenkins. The characters make their way into the posh hotel restaurant where Jenkins is dining and question him. The stress of interrogation provokes a monstrous change in Jenkins, who transforms into a blue werewolf and flees down the outside of the hotel, where he is picked up by a car full of Monkey Masks. The characters give chase, and are led to a warehouse. They are trapped by Crono, who infects them with the blue werewolf disease. The moon monkey explains his plan to infect the entire city of London with his contagion gas, providing him with an unstoppable army fit for world domination. Escaping their captivity, the heroes discover they are aboard Crono's flying saucer, high above the city. They battle Crono -- now using his robotic armor -- and his blue werewolves. Having defeated their enemies, the characters guide the unpiloted flying saucer to a relatively-safe landing and receive their just rewards, including the cure for their new lycanthropy.

## **INTRODUCTORY CUT SCENE**

Six months ago, in a limestone quarry outside Molehabangwe, South Africa...

The hot sun beats down on an excavation site. The native men, digging with picks and shovels in a deep pit, suddenly stop and begin shouting excitedly in some foreign tongue. A phrase of English is recognizable: "Doctor Jenkins! Come, come quick!"

A man dressed as an archaeologist descends into the pit. His eyes widen as he bends over to pick up something from the ground. He holds aloft a skull which is not quite human. "How amazing," he says, "and how peculiar."

More native shouting is heard from outside the pit, but with the tone of panic. They all look up. Silhouetted against the blinding sun is a hulking, humanoid figure. Suddenly, in a blur of blue fur, it leaps at them.

## CHAPTER ONE: A MYSTERIOUS DISCOVERY

The characters are invited by Dr. Raymond Pronge, a scientist well-respected by the Century Club, to come to his laboratory to inspect his latest discovery. It's only a short drive away, on the second floor of a non-descript building.

Dr. Pronge is in his laboratory, standing at his lab bench and furiously scribbling indecipherably in his notebook. On his bench, a large silk handkerchief covers an object about the size of a pineapple. When he notices the characters' arrival, he beckons them closer excitedly.

"Ah, my friends, I'm so glad you could come on such short notice! I'm sorry to have called on you all so late in the evening, but I simply had to share my findings with those who could appreciate them," he says. With a flourish, he pulls his handkerchief away.

He reveals a skull, apparently from an ape or some other primate. "Allow me to introduce *Australopithecus*, an early ancestor of modern man. The unfortunate owner of this skull died literally *millions* of years ago. And now it has found its way into the hands of its descendents! Simply amazing," he says, barely able to contain his enthusiasm.

If the characters examine the skull directly, they're unlikely to discover anything about it that Pronge hasn't already told them. The doctor may certainly volunteer any of the Q&A information if he notices a character taking an interest in the skull.

### Q & A with Dr. Pronge

Q: Where did the skull come from?

A: It was dug up recently in South Africa. Then it was shipped to me.

Q: Who sent you the skull?

A: It was sent to me by an official Royal Geographical Society excavation team.

Q: Is there anything unusual about the skull?

A: The canine teeth are unusually well-developed, almost like a baboon's -- this might be a common feature of the *Australopithecus* species, or it could be a mutation peculiar to this individual.

Q: What's with that hole in its temple?

A: (Go to the section below.)

The last piece of information that the players should receive, and the segue into the next part of this scene, is this:

"The most peculiar thing about the skull," says Pronge, "is this discoloration around this hole. The residue appears to be gunpowder, and the damage is consistent with a gunshot. The damage doesn't seem to be modern, but of course, that is impossible..."

Dr. Pronge is cut off in mid-sentence when he receives his own gunshot wound. Masked men burst through the laboratory door, each armed with two pistols. One turn later, a blue werewolf arrives, dramatically smashing in through a window.

Monkey Masks: Average (+1) minions, two per hero. They are all armed with pistols, and they all have the Gun-Fu stunt.

Blue Werewolf: Fists Good (+3), Athletics Good (+3), can take five boxes of Damage, has the Werewolf aspect.

The primary goal of the Monkey Masks is to steal the skull for Crono. Their secondary goal is shooting up the joint and everyone inside. The blue werewolf just wants to smash and kill.

If one of the Monkey Masks gets the skull, he'll try to escape, while the others concentrate their efforts on keeping the heroes in the lab. If he makes it to the street, he dives into a waiting car and speeds off. The players may be keen on chasing him down, but it's futile at this point in the story. Remind them they've got Dr. Pronge bleeding to death to worry about.

At some point in the combat, the following event should occur:

"One of the vats stored in the corner bursts open, drenching the furry beast with some liquid chemical. It howls in pain!" The blue werewolf should take at least one box of damage from this. The players should learn at some point that this was a vat of silver nitrate -- giving them an early clue to the werewolves' special vulnerability is important.

Once combat has ended, Chapter Two begins.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE GOOD DOCTOR**

The goal of this scene is to get the party to discover that Dr. Travis Jenkins is important, and to get them to travel to his location. There are a variety of clues that can be used to this purpose – some are more suited to particular skills or stunts than others. Roughly in order of ascending bluntness:

- Paperwork, discarded packing, or receipts in the lab indicate the skull was sent from Jenkins.
- Any of the characters with any experience in paleoanthropology or related fields might remember that Jenkins is an expert on the same level as Pronge.
- One of the more gun-happy heroes (there's always at least one) could recall hearing at the local gun shop that some guy named Jenkins recently ordered a number of bullets cast in silver, for some reason.
- The Century Club might eventually recommend they go talk to Jenkins, as an expert in the field and an old colleague of Pronge.
- Dr. Pronge briefly regains consciousness just long enough to say “Jenkins...”

Once they've got the name Travis Jenkins, his location should be easily found by a phone call to his residence (the number is publicly-listed) or some other approach.

He is, in fact, dining at the Savoy Hotel, a well-known and elegant establishment not far away.

Once the characters arrive at the Savoy, Chapter Three begins.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESERVATIONS?

Dr. Travis Jenkins is dining in a posh restaurant on the top floor of the Savoy Hotel. To get to him, the characters need to make their way past the maître d'.

The maître d' is reluctant, to say the least, to admit anyone without reservations; the scruffier the characters appear, the more reluctant he will become. This is an excellent opportunity to Compel or Tag any of the more uncivilized or barbarous Aspects that the characters might have.

The Maître d': Empathy Good (+3), Intimidation Fair (+2), Rapport Good (+3), Resolve Fair (+2). He becomes much more amenable if given a Fair (+2) bribe. He concedes to the characters if he suffers three boxes of Composure damage.

If the characters just physically push their way past him, no burly security guards arrive to haul them away. However, it may be suitable to apply some sort of penalty on any further social conflicts they may become engaged in during their time in the Savoy – such as the Aspect “We don’t belong here.”

Jenkins is relatively civil; if the players are not overtly combative, he invites them to join him at dinner and have a civilized discussion. He’s enjoying a Chinese dish with chopsticks – he finds the silverware uncomfortable to use. He's authentically shocked and dismayed that Raymond Pronge has been seriously wounded.

Unfortunately, Jenkins has an advanced case of blue lycanthropy. He has been suffering from increasingly-frequent blackouts, during which he cannot remember turning into a blue werewolf or what he does in that form. He is very concerned about his image in scientific circles and vigorously denies that he's involved in anything unusual.

Dr. Travis Jenkins: Academics Good (+3), Deceit Good (+3), Empathy Fair (+2), Rapport Fair (+2), Resolve Fair (+2), Science Good (+3). The Honest Lie (Deceit), can take four boxes of Composure damage.     He has the Aspect "Aversion to Silver."

Due to his blue werewolf condition, Jenkins does not handle social stress as well as he used to. He becomes increasingly agitated as he takes social damage. When half his social stress boxes are filled, or at some other appropriate time determined by the GM, he undergoes an involuntary transformation into full blue werewolf mode.



Jenkins the Blue Werewolf: Alertness Good (+3), Athletics Great (+4), Endurance Good (+3), Fists Good (+3), Might Good (+3). Human Spider (Athletics), can take five boxes of Damage, has the Werewolf aspect. □ □ □ □ □

He lashes out in frustration at anyone who attacks him. If he has an opportunity to take the skull, he will attempt to do so.

When half his physical stress boxes are filled, or when he has taken a minor physical consequence, or if he has the skull, he decides to retreat by the expeditious path of jumping through a window and climbing down the side of the building. At roughly the same time, a carload of Monkey Masks (possibly the survivors from the lab encounter, if there were any) arrive in front of the hotel. They shoot (largely ineffectually) at any characters attempting to climb down after the doctor.

The safer route of pursuit is to descend the building from within, of course. Jenkins has a head start, but the characters can run down the stairs faster than he can climb down the building. Ideally, everyone reaches the ground at about the same time.

If the players were eager for a chase scene earlier in the story, this is their big chance. The Monkey Masks drive off, ideally with the skull, or failing that, Jenkins. The characters do not find it especially difficult to pursue them, although they can't quite manage to catch them. Jenkins might do something foolhardy like leap from his vehicle to the heroes'.

At some point, the Monkey Masks drive their car right through the large door of a warehouse. If the characters follow in their car, they find themselves in a strange narrow corridor of concrete. Then a large iron door springs up between the two cars, and there is a crash.

When the characters are trapped inside the warehouse, Chapter Four begins.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: A NOVEL ILLNESS**

The characters (and their vehicle) are likely to be severely damaged (but not killed outright) by the crash. If any are still conscious, they notice their car (in which they are trapped) is being filled with an opaque blue gas. Then they too lose consciousness.

Later, they awaken to the sound of a loud, steady hum. They feel a bit disoriented but otherwise they feel fine -- better than they should after that crash, in fact. They're still in their car, but the whole vehicle has been moved to some larger room. Standing in front of the car, flanked by numerous Monkey Masks aiming machine guns at the heroes, is Jenkins, in human form. He has a blank expression on his face, and he carries a small blue monkey in his arms, who regards the characters with a malicious glare.

"So, these are the so-called 'Centurions'," says Jenkins, with an uncharacteristic sneer in his voice. "I must thank you for your assistance in returning the skull to me. I remember clearly the day I shot that human. Little did I know at the time that the disease he carried -- the one you humans so quaintly call 'lycanthropy' -- was exactly the strain I needed for my master plan. Beasts like Jenkins here are a mere shadow of what I'll be able to now create! Once I spray this entire city with my contagion gas, my army will be unstoppable! This world will tremble at the name 'Crono.'"

"Of course, you'll have front-row seats for my victory. Even now I can see that the contagion is beginning to change you. Soon you'll be my slaves -- just like the rest of humanity!" He issues the classic laugh of an evil mastermind and they depart, closing and locking the door behind them.

The characters are, in fact, on their way to becoming blue werewolves. Subtle changes, such as their hair taking a slight blue tinge, can be observed. Fortunately for them, they will have ample opportunity to find the antidote in the near future.

Escaping from the room is Greatly (+4) difficult. Methods which may work include smashing down the door with brute force, disassembling the hinges, crawling out through an air duct, or the old standby of calling to a guard to hurry and open the door to deal with some emergency.

Once the characters have escaped this room and made their way to the bridge, Chapter Five begins.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE SHOWDOWN

A long straight hallway leads to a set of stairs which lead upward to the bridge of the flying saucer.

The bridge is a large hemispherical dome of glass, providing a panoramic view of the city below. Bolts of electricity arc between the walls of the dome, and the entire vehicle lurches from side to side. In the centre of the room stands some sort of robot. It appears to be a large metal box, about the size of a man, with steel tentacle-like arms and legs extending from it. A fifth limb takes the place of a tail.

The robot turns when the characters enter. Crono can be seen in a glass pod within the robot. "You fools!" he says, in a monotone robotic voice. "I am unstoppable!" An alarm goes off somewhere on the ship, and a number of blue werewolves rush up the stairs to attack the characters.

Crono-Robo



(Skills and stunts granted or affected by the suit are shown in italics)

Superb (+5): Science

Great (+4): Resources, Leadership, *Endurance*

Good (+3): Athletics, Pilot, Guns, *Fists, Might*

Fair (+2): Engineering, Resolve, Stealth

Average (+1): *Alertness*

Acrobat (Athletics), Human Spider (Athletics), Death Defiance (Endurance), Personal Gadget (Engineering) (Robo-suit), Gun-Fu, Shot on the Run (Guns), Minions, Stately Pleasure Dome (Resources) (flying saucer), Mad Science (Science), *Thick-Skinned (Endurance), Man of Iron (Endurance)*

Aspects: Ageless, Evil Mastermind, Overconfident, Blue Monkey, Telepathic Dominance.

Blue Werewolves: Fair (+2) minions, 1 per hero. They have the Werewolf aspect.

If the battle is going badly against Crono, he suddenly stops fighting. His evil laugh issues from the robot as he ejects his control pod, with him safely-ensconced inside, crashing through the glass of the dome. A small parachute can be seen opening after he has fallen a safe distance from the flying saucer.

Once the characters have defeated Crono and/or forced him to escape, Chapter Six begins.

## **CHAPTER SIX: A ROUGH LANDING**

With their enemies defeated, the characters still have the problem that they're in an alien flying saucer high above the city, and it's filled with horrible contagion gas. Possible solutions include landing the saucer safely, crashing it into a nearby lake, river, or ocean, or crashing it into the distant uninhabited countryside, among others.

Landing the ship in a survivable way is Average (+1) difficulty. Relevant skills might be Pilot, Engineering, or Science, among others. Remaining shifts make the landing quicker, gentler, less-damaging to the ship, et cetera.

Once the characters are safely back on the ground, the adventure, as such, is over.

### **LOOSE ENDS**

- The characters are able to find or create a cure for themselves and others inflicted with blue lycanthropy.
- Dr. Raymond Pronge makes a full recovery from his injuries.
- Dr. Travis Jenkins receives the cure and is on the road to recovery.
- Sporadic reports of a small blue monkey seen roaming London are widely-dismissed as fanciful.

# APPENDIX 1: GAME MECHANICS

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## The Werewolf Aspect

The "werewolf" aspect automatically comes into play in a number of situations:

- Whenever a werewolf is attempting to attack, smash, or otherwise apply brute force to a situation, the aspect is freely-tagged for a +2 bonus.
- Whenever a werewolf is attempting to use finesse or social skills, the aspect is freely-tagged for a -2 penalty.
- Whenever a werewolf is attacked with a mundane weapon, the aspect is freely-tagged for a +2 bonus to the werewolf's defense.
- Whenever a werewolf is attacked with a silver weapon, the aspect is freely-tagged for a +2 bonus to the attacker's attack roll.

Particularly special weaponry, such as a weapon that a character has an Aspect in, can generally ignore these penalties, and may count as silver weapons in some cases.

## Gun-Fu Rules

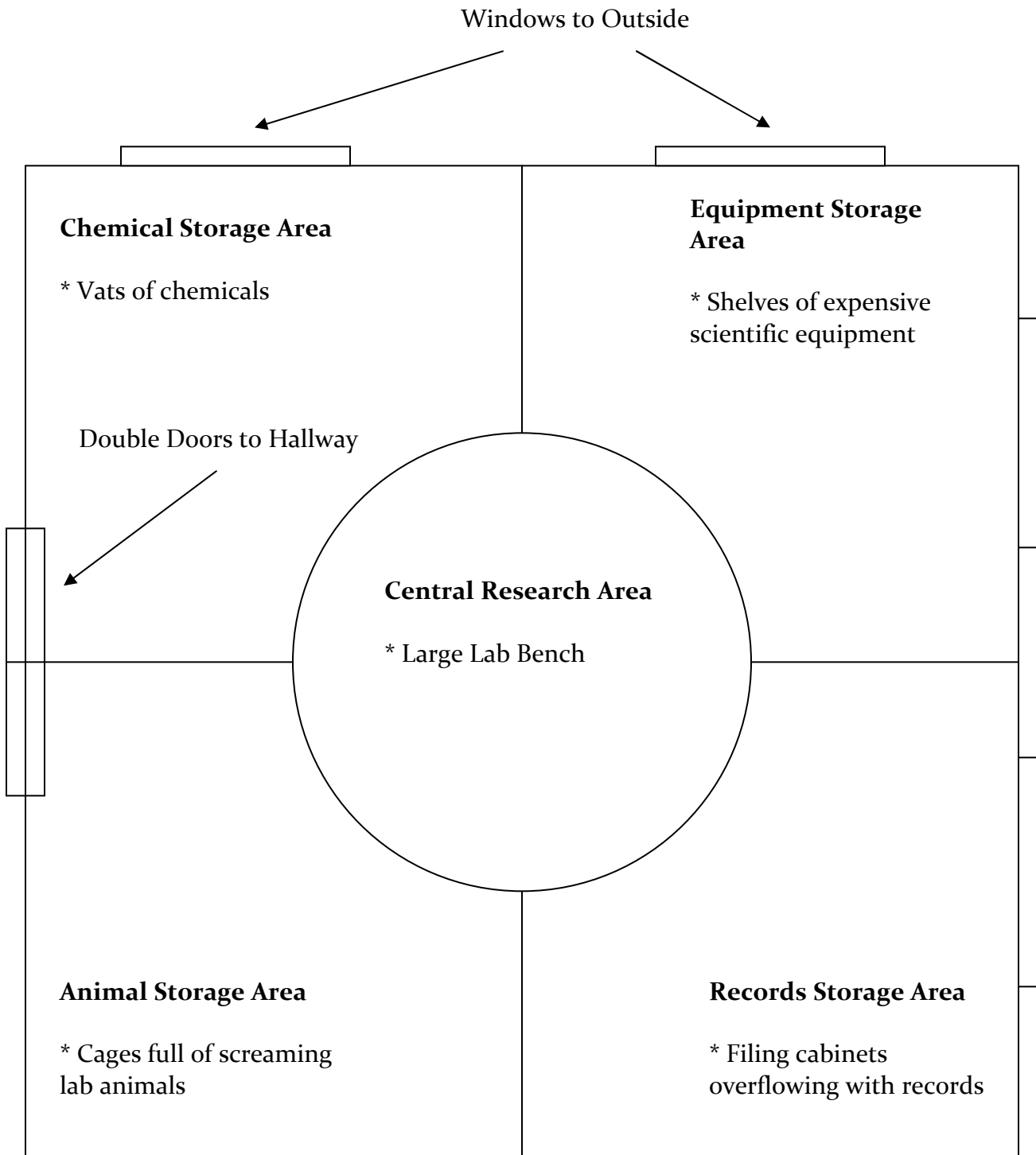
Stunt: Gun-Fu [Guns, Martial Arts]

Requires one other Gun stunt and one other Martial Arts stunt.

A character who knows Gun-Fu is especially adept in two things: knowing where an opposing gunman will shoot, and not being there.

When a character with Gun-Fu gains defensive Spin against an enemy who is shooting at him, he can immediately place a Temporary Aspect (usually fragile, but sometimes sticky) on the scene itself or anyone involved in it, as though he had just succeeded with a maneuver. Thus his enemies' bullets can be used to shoot the propane tanks behind him, destroy the lights, or even shoot other enemy combatants.

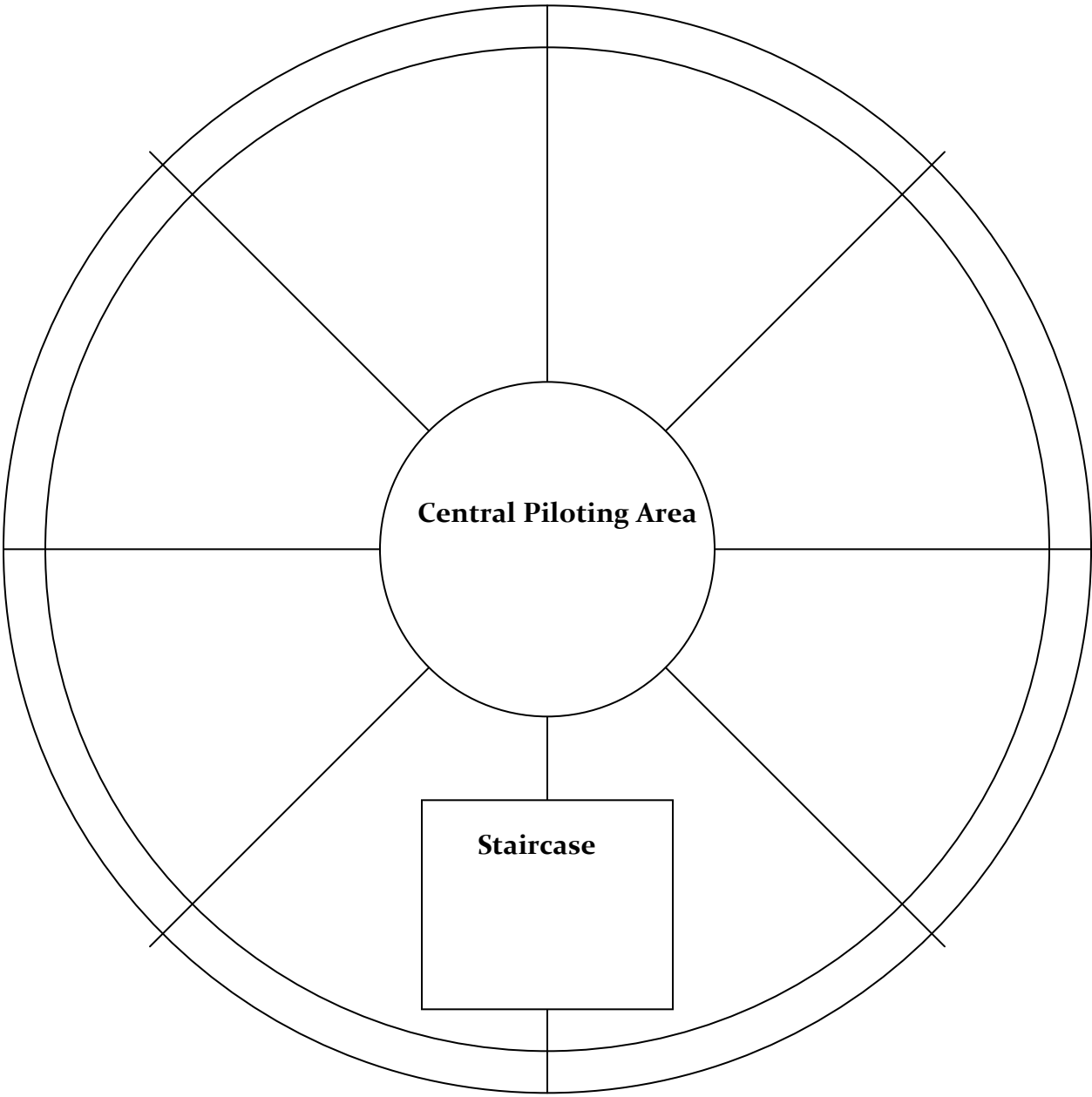
# Dr. Raymond Pronge's Laboratory



# Crono's Flying Saucer

\* Lurching through the sky

\* Electrical bolts arc across the dome



## APPENDIX 3: DESIGN NOTES

This all began when D Edward Sauve posted the following message to the FateRPG group (<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/FateRPG/>)

Message: 10824  
Date: Mon Sep 3, 2007 6:54 pm  
Subject: Throwdown, Round one!

Build something for Fate using all of the following ingredients. It doesn't need to be for SotC, but it can be. HOW you use them is also up to you.

Winner gets no net the next Throwdown, Oh, and you have until the 10th.

USE ALL OF THESE:

Gun-fu  
Werewolves  
A stained skull  
Steve Kenson's Blue Monkey

It was a challenge I couldn't resist. An adventure seemed like the obvious way to incorporate all these different elements. To the credit of Spirit of the Century, it really is well-suited to pick-up games and it doesn't need a lot of pre-generated adventures. Still, the adventure provided in the rulebook has seen quite a bit of play, and it never hurts to have another free adventure around, right? So, an adventure it would be.

Two sections in particular in the SotC rulebook made this a lot easier to write: "The Pulp Plot Framework", described from page 278 onwards, and "The Dynamic Pickup Game", described from page 296 onwards. Both sections are also in the SotC SRD. The immediately useful section was "The Dynamic Pickup Game", which simply asks four questions:

- 1: What is the Hook?
- 2: Who Wants It?
- 3: What is He Going to Do With It?
- 4: Is That Enough?

Compared against the list of ingredients, the stained skull jumped out at me as The Hook. I had some other questions to answer about the skull, though. Who or what is it the skull of? What is it stained with? And what the heck is it good for? I brainstormed a bit on these ones, but also kept moving on to the other questions.



Who Wants It? This is another way of asking who the villain is going to be. The werewolves seemed like a good choice. But I also had Cosmo the Moon Monkey (from Freedom City,) otherwise known as Steve Kenson's Blue Monkey, staring me in the face. Tricky thing, using other people's characters. He was a bit too beloved to make the villain. And he didn't seem right as a sidekick or patron.

So I figured, hey, if there's one Moon Monkey running around on Earth, there's got to be more. Cosmo's evil uncle, or some such thing. It's still a blue monkey, right? So I was beginning to feel better about that.

A blue space monkey with an army of werewolves sounded like the seed of a pretty good pulp plot, so I decided to run with it. The nature of the skull mostly fell out of that. The only ingredient that I felt like I really shoe-horned in was the whole Gun-Fu thing, but that's alright. I think it works well enough, and I do like the underlying mechanic I'm using for it enough that it'll probably show up in some other game I run.

A bit of research into the real world was helpful, too. This is true: in 1924, Raymond Dart described *Australopithecus africanus* after discovering the Taung Child, an australopithecine infant, in a cave deposit being mined for concrete at Taung, South Africa. That's pretty close to the time frame I needed, so I changed a few names, moved the find from Taung to nearby Molehabangwe, and I had my tenuous connection to reality.

Now that I had the basic bones of the plot down, it was back to "The Pulp Plot Framework" to fill in all the scenes.

Chapter One is (A) Endanger the Characters. A laboratory seemed like a good place for a fight. I'm still a bit worried that players may be too eager to engage in a big chase at this point, but hopefully GMs will be able to work around that. It also turned out to be a good place to give the players an in-game clue to the werewolves' susceptibility to silver, which I wanted to do early enough for them to be able to do something useful with knowledge.

Chapter Two is (B) Reveal the True Danger. It's a short little scene in all likelihood. A bit of research and investigation for the characters who are designed for it, but nothing that will bring the whole thing to a halt if they're not. I think this was about the time when I thought an introductory cut scene might be a fun way to kick things off.

Chapter Three is (C) The Pursuit Encounters Complications. It starts off with some social conflict for a change of pace. It's also a chance for GMs to finally make life a bit awkward for that character who was raised by wolves or whatnot. I have a feeling that dealing with the maître d' could be the highlight of the adventure. Then it shifts back into a more physical conflict.

One thing I specifically avoided was a big travel scene here. It's not unusual to dash off on a train or a zeppelin or something at this point in the adventure, but I felt like doing something a bit different. Everything happens in about a six-block radius.

Chapter Four is (D) Certain Doom. Nothing like being infected with a horrible disease (with no known cure) that changes you into a monster to make you feel like you're certainly doomed. Some players might be unhappy with getting captured and infected so ham-handedly, but I'm hoping most of them will roll with it.

Chapter Four also covers (E) The Twist, in which the mastermind cleverly tells the heroes all about his plans for world domination. Nothing too brilliantly-original here.

Chapter Five is (F) Final Showdown. The bridge of a flying saucer seemed like a fun place to have a final showdown with a monkey-controlled robot. Throw in some werewolves and this one was ready.

Chapter Six is (G) Breakneck Escape. It's still optional, but it seemed like it could be a nice way to wrap up the adventure. The villain manages to get away, of course.

With the scenes all defined, it was just a small matter of implementation to write them all up, get the various NPCs nailed down, et cetera. I drew up a couple of "zone maps" which I thought might make the combat in those locations a bit easier to run. They're probably a bit small to use as-is but they're simple enough to easily reproduce on a bigger surface.

I must especially thank Fred Hicks for granting me permission to use "Spirit of the Century", and Steve Kenson for permission to use "Cosmo the Moon Monkey" and "Freedom City." Parts of this work would have been much more oblique without their kindness.

All in all, the whole process was pretty painless. I've written adventures for other game systems before that made me really appreciate how easy this all was in SotC. On the other hand, I also skipped all semblances of play-testing this thing, so GMs might be in for a few surprises. If you do give this a run with your players, an Actual Play post to the FateRPG group would be greatly appreciated.

Yours in Spirit,  
Roger Carbol  
7 September 2007  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

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## *The Moon Monkey Mystery*

*...WHO is behind the attack on a Royal Geographical Society excavation?*

*...WHY does a million-year-old skull have a bullet hole in it?*

*...WHERE will the mysterious gang of men in monkey masks strike next?*

*Discover the answers to these questions and more in this thrilling new adventure for Spirit of the Century!*