

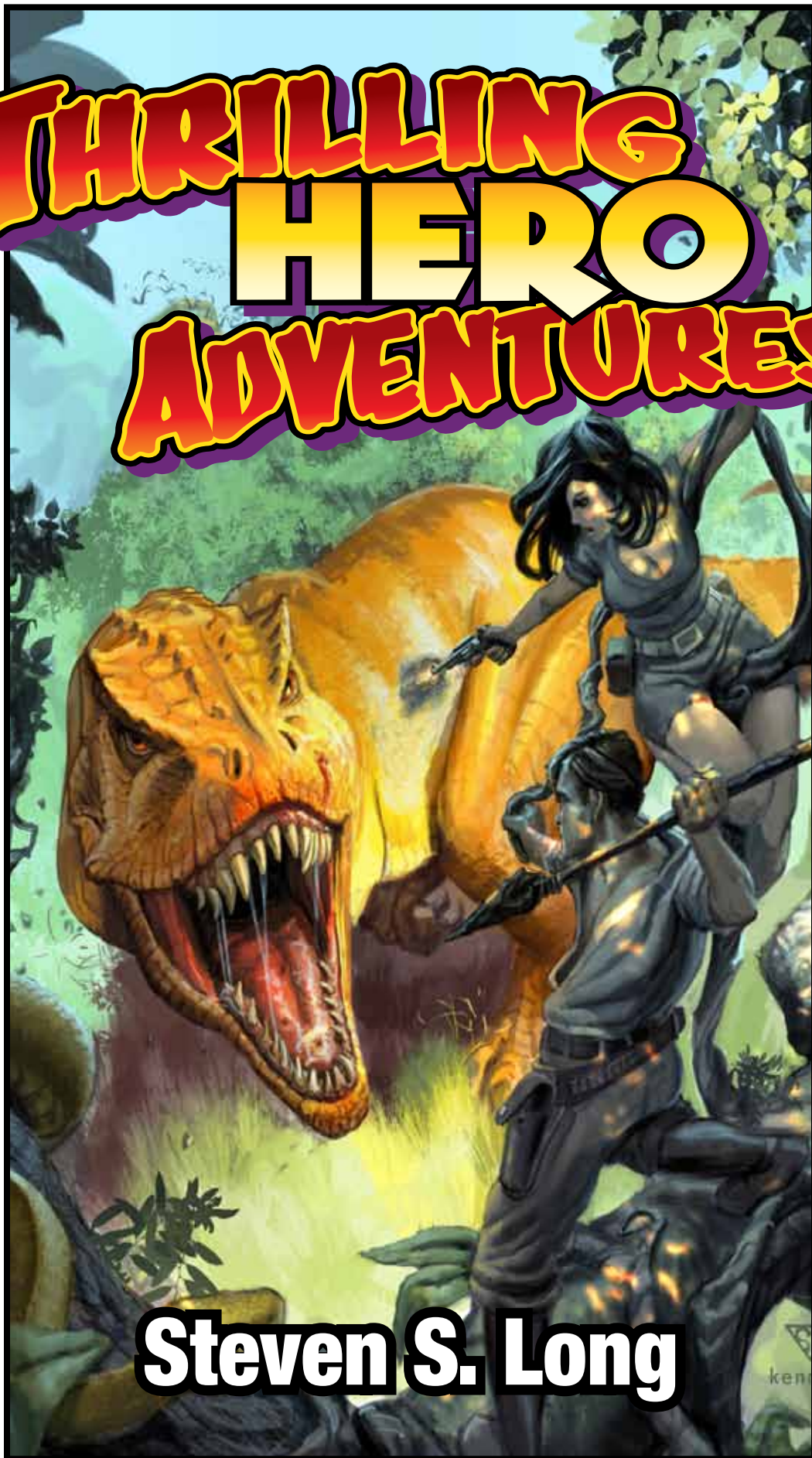
THRILLING HERO ADVENTURES

Steven S. Long

**PULP
HERO**

kennedy

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An Adventure Book for *Pulp Hero*

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INTRODUCTION



Several years ago, Hero Games began producing short adventures in PDF format. Primarily created for the *Pulp Hero* line, these “Hero Plus Adventures,” as they were called, proved to be a success. But since not everyone wants their scenarios in electronic format, you now hold in your hands this book. It features over a dozen of the “HPAs,” with high-quality maps to enhance play. It includes:

The Curse Of The Vulture-God, in which the heroes’ exploration of an ancient Egyptian tomb unleashes a terrifying evil they have to stop;

The Dordogne Zodiac, in which the heroes investigate a sinister, possibly prehistoric, cult;

The Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent, which takes the heroes to the wilds of Malaysia to thwart an evil cult;

The Golden Idol Of Sikral, in which the heroes must safely negotiate a trap-filled underground temple to obtain a rich prize;

Inner-Earth, a “Hollow Earth” setting for the Pulp Hero world, complete with dinosaurs, Aztecs, Neanderthals, and much more;

The Locomotive Pirates, which pits the heroes against some daring bandits who are robbing trains and then mysteriously escaping;

The Malay Coins, in which some antique coins provide the heroes with a map to an even greater treasure — one that some other people are willing to kill to possess!;

Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo!, in which the PCs discover that a series of zombie attacks on an African village are not quite what they seem;

Pterodactyls Over Broadway, in which a mad scientist’s fiendish schemes threaten the people of New York City;

The Radio Marauders, in which the heroes have to stop a gang of criminals equipped with Weird Science gadgets;

She-Fiends From Planet X!, the chronicle of a potential alien invasion of Earth that your PCs have to stop;

Spears Of The Tisangani, in which a crumbling old map leads the PCs to a mysterious lost civilization in the heart of Africa;

The Tablets Of Destiny, in which an ancient artifact brings the heroes face-to-face with a horror from Babylonian myth;

The Valley Of The Spider Queen, in which the heroes find themselves trapped in a hidden valley in Darkest Africa ruled by a mysterious woman who can command enormous spiders; and

The Voodoo Cross, wherein the heroes chase a stolen artifact right into the heart of voodoo-tormented Haiti.

The final section of the book is an Appendix containing rules for assembling, outfitting, and running expeditions into wilderness areas.

With a few exceptions, the adventures in this book are designed to provide roughly one game session’s worth of entertainment. They’re intended to be straightforward and easy to use so you can run them with a minimum of preparation. However, they often include suggestions on how to lengthen or expand the scenario if you want to, and each has an “Adventure Links” text box that discusses how to tie it into other adventures in this book or in the other books in the Pulp Hero line (*Masterminds And Madmen* and *Thrilling Places*).

So put your pith helmet on, make sure your gun has plenty of ammo, and don’t forget to bring that moldy old treasure map you found — it’s time for some *Thrilling Hero Adventures!*

Thrilling Hero Adventures

**CURSE
OF THE
VULTURE-GOD**

Adventure One

CURSE OF THE VULTURE-GOD



When a colleague of theirs uncovers a new clue leading to the undisturbed tomb of a pharaoh, the heroes find themselves plunged into the middle of a millennia-old scheme to unleash an ancient, imprisoned evil. When their efforts to resolve the crisis only make things worse, they have to race against time to destroy the newly-arisen priest of the evil vulture-god, Ehbek-Reme!

Curse Of The Vulture-God is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Three other *Thrilling Hero Adventures* — *Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo*, *Spears Of The Tisangani*, and *Valley Of The Spider Queen* — also take place in Africa, so linking them together shouldn't prove too difficult. Just sprinkle in some clues leading from the one you're currently running to the next one you want to run. (You could also take the PCs to Neos Themiscyra in *Thrilling Places*.)

Similarly, *The Tablets Of Destiny* takes place in the Near East, quite close to Egypt, and also involves archaeology, so tying it into this adventure shouldn't be too hard. *The Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu* from *Thrilling Places* is a similar adventure to this one and might tie into it somehow, or you could substitute the map of that tomb for the one in this adventure.

BACKGROUND

In the days of ancient Egypt, a few dark and evil-minded Egyptians worshipped Ehbek-Reme, the vulture-god, son of Set and god of darkness and cruelty. Their cult was a shadow upon the land, a force for chaos and destruction. In time a mighty pharaoh, Amen-ta-hetep, destroyed the cult and executed its leader, the high priest Takhat-nakht. As he died, Takhat-nakht cursed all of Egypt, and prophesied that he would not truly die, but one day would return to make Ehbek-Reme supreme among all the gods.

Fearing this might be true, Amen-ta-hetep and the priests of Horus took steps to prevent the prophecy from coming to pass. After Takhat-nakht was slain, they mummified him and buried him in a deep, unmarked tomb which they protected with many wards and seals. Some years later, when Amen-ta-hetep died, he was buried in a tomb directly above Takhat-nakht's, that he might guard him and keep him imprisoned for eternity. The priests cast special spells over the mummified pharaoh, giving him the power to rise from his sarcophagus to fight any who would try to despoil the tombs or free Takhat-nakht.

Despite Amen-ta-hetep's efforts, the cult of Ehbek-Reme did not truly die. It survived by lurking in the shadows, its few members passing the worship of the vulture-god from father to son, mother to daughter, right down to the present day. The cult's goal, then as now, has been to free Takhat-nakht that he might return to life and lead them... but the spells and traps placed upon his tomb, and the fearful presence of the pharaoh's mummy, has always thwarted them.

Recently the cult's current leader, a devilish little man named Aboosh, devised a plan to achieve the cult's long-held goals. Rather than try to penetrate the tombs by themselves, the cultists would use cat's-paws — a famous archaeologist or two. Someone who doesn't worship the vulture-god can get through some of the wards easily... and then, while they're fighting (and hopefully destroying) the pharaoh's mummy, the cultists can sneak down into Takhat-nakht's tomb, free him, and escape by a tunnel the cult dug centuries ago in a failed effort to get to him. Then Ehbek-Reme will reign supreme!

But Amen-ta-hetep's mummy isn't the only thing protecting his (and Takhat-nakht's) tomb. The priests who interred him gave the responsibility to watch over the tombs to their sons, and their son's sons, and so on through the centuries. Today this group, the Brotherhood of the Western Ankh, continues to monitor and defend Amen-ta-hetep's burial-place.

PART ONE: JOURNEY TO EGYPT

The adventure begins when the heroes receive the following telegram from their old friend, noted archaeologist and Egyptologist Sir Robert Madison:

MERCURY TELEGRAM

★ B.D. Bilkins, President ★

Have discovered new lead tomb Amen-ta-hetep.

Come to Cairo soonest to join expedition!

Wire with travel plans. — Madison

This company transmits and delivers messages only on conditions which have been assented to by sender of the above message. The company will not hold itself liable for errors or delays in transmission or delivery of unrepeatd messages. The company will appreciate suggestions from its patrons concerning its service.

(As a fun prop, create a telegram and “deliver” it to the players. You can photocopy the one on this page, or use online resources to mock one up.)

No true Pulp hero could resist an invitation like that! As any hero with an appropriate Background Skill (SS: Archaeology, KS: Egypt, KS: Ancient History, or the like) can tell the group, if Madison has found a way to locate the never-uncovered tomb of the powerful pharaoh Amen-ta-hetep, it's a discovery that will make the tomb of Tutankhamen pale in significance.

To give you the chance to stage an initial encounter with the Brothers of the Western Ankh — thus injecting an early bit of action and giving the heroes a clue that there's more going on than a simple archaeological expedition — try to arrange it so the heroes have to get to Egypt via ocean liner. Don't start the adventure until they're far enough from Egypt that they can't get there easily. If they have access to a plane or prefer to fly, try to find a way to stop them from doing so, or make an ocean voyage more attractive somehow. If you absolutely can't get them on a ship, stage the first encounter with the Brotherhood of the Western Ankh at the airfield when they land, at their hotel in Cairo, or the like.

SHIPBOARD BATTLE

One night while the heroes are relaxing (eating, playing cards, dancing, or engaging in some other form of entertainment that the ocean liner has to offer), a group of Arabic-looking men swarms into the room and attacks them! Since the heroes aren't expecting trouble, they shouldn't be armed; they'll have to deal with these attackers using their fists, their wits, and whatever they can find in the way of impromptu weapons. See the accompanying sidebar for a

character sheet for the Brothers.

If possible, draw this fight out a bit. Make it a running battle around the ship as the heroes try to stop their attackers, who will retreat, take hostages, and do whatever they must to win the battle (remember, they're fanatics!). Give the heroes plenty of interesting scenery to swing from, jump over, and hit people with. If you need floorplans for the ship, try these websites, which have maps of the Queen Mary:

<http://www.paper-dragon.com/1939/images/queenmarydeckplan.jpg>

<http://www.queenmary.com/factsandhistory.php?page=deckplans>

For the Brothers, use the Cultist character sheet on page 406 of *Pulp Hero*, or other character sheets in that section.

The fight should be tough, exciting, and offer plenty of opportunities for heroic action and daring-do. In the end, the heroes should win... and if possible, all the Brothers should be dead or beyond their reach (e.g., thrown overboard) when it ends. The rest of the adventure works better if the heroes think the Brotherhood is inimical — if they don't yet know exactly what's going on. If necessary, assume each Brother has a hidden cyanide tooth and uses it to commit suicide if he has no other option.

When they search the bodies of their defeated adversaries, the heroes note several interesting facts:

1. Based on appearance and clothing, each of them seems to be Egyptian.
2. Each of them has, somewhere on his person, a tattoo of a blue ankh (crux ansata) turned on its side, with the loop pointing to his



right (the viewer's left). (See the map of the pharaoh's tomb for an example.) Most of the time the tattoo's on the center of the chest, but some have it on the back or the upper arm.

IN CAIRO

Thankfully, the rest of the journey passes without incident and the heroes arrive in Cairo. Sir Robert meets them at the docks with a group of native Egyptian porters to carry their luggage. Two of the laborers, Baktiar and Wasim, are his personal servants. They seem very solicitous of him — they protect him from the sun with an umbrella, carry things so he doesn't have to, and see to his every need. Nevertheless, have any hero with Acting make a roll. If he succeeds by 3 or more, something about Baktiar and Wasim doesn't seem quite right to him — they “rub him the wrong way,” so to speak, though he can't put his finger on why. (If no hero has Acting, use PER Rolls instead.)

Sir Robert, an Englishman in his late 40s, is friendly, effusive, and glad to see the heroes. He's excited at the prospect of discovering and opening the pharaoh's tomb and is eager to get started. He suggests that he see the heroes to their hotel, and in the morning he can explain the situation and they can finish outfitting the expedition and set forth into the desert.

The heroes are now free to enjoy Cairo's night life. If you want to extend the adventure a little, roleplay the evening a bit, or even throw in some encounters while they're on the town.

Perhaps the Brotherhood of the Western Ankh attacks them again, or they run afoul of pickpockets, encounter a femme fatale, or get swept up into a short, simple murder plot that has nothing to do with Sir Robert's expedition.

The Map

When they meet the next day, Sir Robert shows the heroes the cornerstone of his expedition: an ancient papyrus map. He unrolls it with great care so as not to damage it, and carries it with him in a sturdy leather tube. Any hero with an appropriate Background Skill or Forgery (Art Objects or Documents) can make a roll to determine that it's authentic — and it is.

The map shows a valley, with the pharaoh's tomb marked on it and various lines of hieroglyphics in the margins. According to Sir Robert, the hieroglyphics offer directions and descriptions that allowed him to narrow the search and, eventually, find the right valley.

If questioned above the provenance of the map, Sir Robert explains that he bought it from an old bookseller in the *souq* (marketplace) of Cairo. He didn't realize what it was at first, exactly — he just liked the look of it and thought it was worth the minor price the man asked. Later, after he examined it and discovered what it was, he tried to find the old bookseller again, but to no avail.

Unfortunately for the heroes, Sir Robert is lying. The truth is that his servants told him they found the map one morning on his doorstep in the same leather tube he carries it in. He assumes

someone who knows his reputation as an Egyptologist left it for him as a present, but he doesn't want to sully the whole story by admitting he doesn't know anything about it. He's also afraid no one will take his expedition seriously if he tells the truth. His persuasive servants, Baktiar and Wasim, convinced him to keep the facts about the map secret. They're vulture-god cultists, and the ones who "left it on the doorstep." It's an actual relic the cult's using as part of the overall scheme.

In any event, there's no question of the map's authenticity as a relic, and Sir Robert's convinced that it's shown him the way to Amen-ta-hetep's tomb. Now he just has to lead the expedition there and prove it.

The Expedition

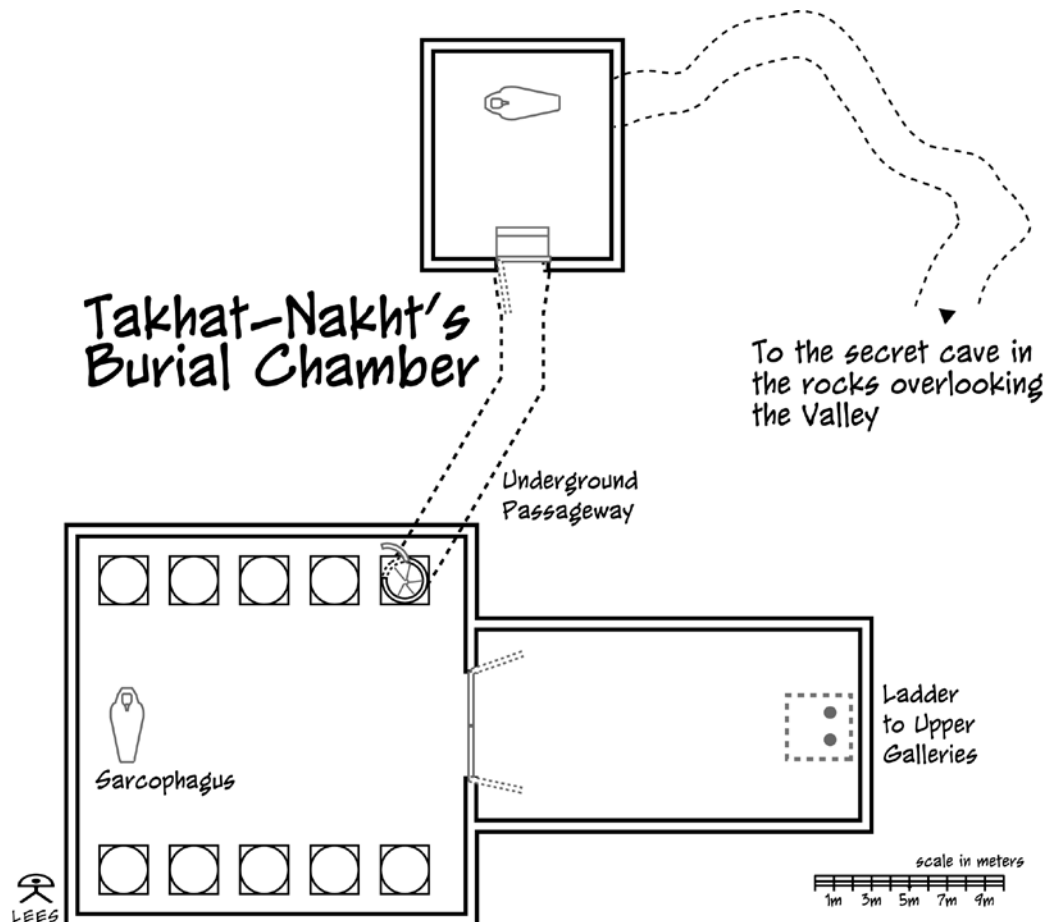
The heroes can now help Sir Robert finish outfitting his expedition. He's taken care of the necessary permits and can afford to fund the expedition himself, so all they have to do is let him know what they think the group needs. (You can use the Expeditioneering rules in the Appendix to this book if you want to go into a lot of detail.) With the help of Baktiar and Wasim, he's already arranged for porters, bearers, and laborers... who, unknown to him, are all vulture-god cultists!

If you want to expand on the adventure, this is another excellent opportunity. The Brotherhood of the Western Ankh could attack while the heroes are shopping in the marketplace. It's a rollicking, two-fisted brawl through the stalls and dusty streets as the heroes try to defeat their enemies and get away with the supplies!

**PART TWO:
THE PHARAOH'S TOMB**

The trip across the desert to the valley where the tomb's located is simple and uneventful... unless you prefer otherwise. The Brothers might attack again, a sandstorm might strike, or the heroes might meet an ancient old man who utters a cryptic warning and then falls dead — whatever you want to do that fits the tone of the adventure.

Once the expedition arrives, the laborers set up camp. According to Sir Robert's research, the low, flat hill on the eastern side of the valley is actually the tomb. The workers start digging in the locations the heroes and Sir Robert think are most likely to contain the entrance to the tomb. This being a Pulp adventure, they PCs find what



The Tomb of Amen-Ta-Hetep

they're looking for in just a couple of days: a large, flat capstone on the top of the tomb sealing the entrance to a tunnel. A ladder leads down into the structure itself.

An hour or so later, the capstone's been fully cleared and the workers are ready to lever it up out of place. Feel free to ratchet up the tension a bit by describing the scene and implying that something may come out of the tomb when it's opened... but as the capstone's lifted, nothing unusual occurs.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to the heroes or each other, two groups are sneaking around nearby. First, a group of vulture-cultists is in the rocky hills around the valley, making its way down a tunnel the cult dug to Takhat-nakht's tomb years ago. When the diggers reached the tomb's walls, the protective magics on it killed them, and the cult abandoned the project. But the cultists believe that once they gain entrance to the tomb from the inside, they can safely smash down the wall and use the tunnel to escape with Takhat-nakht's body. Second, a group of Brothers of the Western Ankh, commanded by their leader Bahram al-Mutaba, is getting ready to raid the campsite to help Amen-ta-hetep protect the tomb and keep Takhat-nakht from returning to life.

IN THE TOMB

The heroes, Sir Robert, and a contingent of laborers climb down the ladder into the tomb. (If the heroes forbid the laborers to enter, they'll sneak down later while the heroes are occupied.) The walls of the antechamber are decorated with beautiful Egyptian paintings... and the doors leading into the next room are still sealed!

They're also protected by a trap. If the heroes don't make a Security Systems roll at -2 to detect the trap, and another at -4 to disarm it, when they try to open the doors anyone within 12 feet (2") of them falls into a 30 meter (100 feet, or 15") deep pit! Half a minute (3 Turns) later a block of stone falls from the ceiling into the pit, crushing anyone inside.

The accompanying map shows the tomb. The main part is a squarish room, 8" x 10", with 1"-wide columns down either side and the pharaoh's sarcophagus along the center of the western wall. The room is lavishly decorated with wall-paintings and filled with rich grave-goods... but if the heroes (or, if necessary, Sir Robert) make an appropriate KS or SS roll, they realize there aren't nearly as many grave-goods as one would expect for a pharaoh of Amen-ta-hetep's prominent and importance. One conclusion is that he was moved here from an earlier, safer location... but that just doesn't seem right. For some reason Amen-ta-hetep wasn't given many goods. It's almost as if his burial here served another purpose than just honoring and protecting him in the afterlife...

As noted on the map, one of the columns conceals a hidden staircase. The cultists know

about this, and how to open the secret door. When the fight begins, as many of them as they can get away with it sneak over there and head down to Takhat-nakht's burial chamber. Do your best to arrange things so this can occur without straining verisimilitude too much. If you absolutely can't get away with it, assume the cultists smash into Takhat-nakht's tomb through their old tunnel — now that the heroes have opened the pharaoh's tomb, the protective magics that once stopped them from doing this have stopped working.

The Mummy Awakens!

The sarcophagus, as the centerpiece of the room and the pharaoh's resting-place, is sure to attract the attention of the heroes. As they examine it, they hear a muffled BOOM from inside — almost as if something struck the sarcophagus. Then, suddenly, the lid flies off and the mummy emerges! Treat this as a Presence Attack 10d6, which will hopefully be enough to make the heroes hesitate for the rest of Segment 12.

For Amen-ta-hetep's mummy, use the character sheet on page 122 of *The HERO System Bestiary*. If necessary, beef it up or add optional powers so it can go toe-to-wrappings with the heroes for at least a couple of Phases.

The Brotherhood Arrives

After a couple of Phases, a group of yelling, shooting, rampaging Brothers of the Western Ankh descends on the chamber and begins fighting the heroes! Now trapped between an angry mummy and an angry mob, the heroes may be in real trouble.

After a couple of Phases of fighting, let the heroes make PER Rolls. If any of them succeed, they notice something that makes them suspicious — the open secret door in the column, a cultist slipping into the column, the sudden complete absence of the laborers who entered the tomb with them, or the Brotherhood's sideways-ankh symbol on the mummy. They might even hear the muffled detonation of the dynamite the cult uses to blast through the wall of Takhat-nakht's tomb to get to the tunnel. Alternately, maybe Bahram al-Mutaba realizes something's amiss and tries to call a temporary truce. (As leader of the Brotherhood, he can command the mummy to stop fighting.)

However you do it, get the heroes and the Brothers to stop fighting and realize they're basically on the same side. With that realization they should figure out that they've been tricked. If they haven't noticed it already, now they should spot the secret door. Rushing down to the lower level and Takhat-nakht's burial chamber, they discover that his tomb's empty... and there's a tunnel leading up toward the surface!

Trapped!

As they charge up the tunnel, have the heroes make PER Rolls. Any PC who succeeds sees the bundle of dynamite left in the tunnel

by the fleeing cultists! Any hero who tries to proceed gets caught in an RKA 4d6 Explosion that collapses the tunnel. The only way to remain safe is to dive back into Takhat-nakht's tomb. If appropriate, you might have Bahram al-Mutaba throw one of the heroes out of the way and take the blast himself... and then, with his last dying breath, beg them to stop the cult once and for all.

The heroes return to Amen-ta-hetep's tomb... only to discover the cult's sealed them in by putting the capstone back in place! They can't last long down here — there's only a little air and a few light sources — so they'd better think of a way out fast. If nothing else, you can have several strong PCs and Brothers climb up the ladder and lift the capstone, but if the PCs can think up a more clever solution, let them.

PART THREE: TAKHAT-NAKHT RISEN

Either based on the horrific paintings on the walls of Takhat-nakht's burial chamber or because the Brothers tell them, the heroes now realize the mummy taken from the second chamber by the cultists was that of the high priest of Ehbek-Reme, the evil vulture-god. The Brothers can also explain that the cult intends to resurrect him so it can rule the world with the power of Ehbek-Reme (if there are no Brothers left alive to tell them this, let the heroes make Deduction or appropriate KS/SS rolls to figure it out). It's up to the heroes to prevent the cult from performing the Ritual of Rebirth and save the day!

The question is: where has the cult taken the priest's mummy? A spell of such power can only be cast in certain places, and as any character who makes an appropriate KS or SS roll can discern, the most likely one based on importance and proximity is the Oasis of al-Arnabah, located in the desert far west of the Valley of the Kings. And sure enough, if the heroes head that way they'll soon see tracks indicating someone else passed that way recently...

The heroes arrive at the Oasis — a pond surrounded by luxurious growths of palm trees and similar plants — some hours later. (If possible, arrange events so this takes place at night.) The cult had set up for the ritual in advance in a clearing near the water — there's an altar (on which Takhat-nakht's mummy now lies), fire-filled braziers, and other accouterments. Dozens of robed cultists look on as their leader, Aboosh, finishes casting the spell. As the heroes watch, he steps back from the mummy and makes one last gesture. They're too late!

With a jerk, accompanied by a peal of thunder and flash of lightning, Takhat-nakht sits up. If the heroes keep watching, he unwraps his bandages to show himself hale and hearty once more — a living, breathing, evily handsome man of obvious power. If the heroes attack immediately, he removes his bandages with a flash of magical fire.

Now it's time for the big, climactic fight pitting the heroes and the Brotherhood against the cult and the newly-arisen Takhat-nakht. You'll find a character sheet for Takhat-nakht at the end of this adventure; for the cultists, use the Cultist character sheet on page 406 of Pulp Hero.

Since Takhat-nakht possesses great mystical power, he should give the heroes a hard time in the fight, especially if they don't have any mystics of their own to oppose him. If necessary, diminish his powers a bit, or give one of the Brothers enough protective magics to shield the heroes a little. This should be a tough fight, not necessarily one the heroes win. If they lose, Takhat-nakht heads to Giza to found his new Egyptian Empire, and the heroes have to follow him there to get another crack at him (perhaps with a detour to the Egyptian Museum to pick up an enchanted weapon they can use against him).

CONCLUSION

Assuming the fight goes the heroes' way, the threat of Takhat-nakht and the cult of the vulture-god Ehbek-Reme has been ended... for now. No doubt other cultists remain elsewhere in Egypt, and the day will come when they're ready for another attempt to take over Egypt, and then the world — and, of course, get revenge on the heroes!

TAKHAT-NAKHT RISEN

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 20 | STR | 10 | 13- | Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [4] |
| 20 | DEX | 30 | 13- | OCV: 7/DCV: 7 |
| 20 | CON | 20 | 13- | |
| 15 | BODY | 10 | 12- | |
| 18 | INT | 8 | 13- | PER Roll 13- |
| 20 | EGO | 20 | 13- | ECV: 7 |
| 25 | PRE | 20 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 14 | COM | 2 | 12- | |
| 8 | PD | 4 | | Total: 11 PD (3 rPD) |
| 8 | ED | 4 | | Total: 11 ED (3 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 10 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 10 | REC | 4 | | |
| 40 | END | 0 | | |
| 40 | STUN | 5 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 147 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Spells **END**

| | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 50 | <i>The Gifts Of Ehbek-Reme:</i> | Multipower, 50-point reserve | |
| 5u | 1) <i>Fire Of The Gods:</i> | Energy Blast 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) | 2 |
| 4u | 2) <i>Hand Of The Gods:</i> | Telekinesis (20 STR), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) | 1 |
| 3u | 3) <i>Curse Of Scorpions:</i> | RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Limited Range (10"; -¼) | 2 |
| 4u | 4) <i>Curse Of Weakness:</i> | Drain STR and DEX 2½d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Limited Range (10"; +¼) | |
| 100 | <i>Armies Of The Dead:</i> | Summon 4 395-point mummies (see HERO System Bestiary , page 122), Slavishly Devoted (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Arrives Under Own Power (-½), Summoned Being Must Inhabit Locale (-½) | 9 |

Talents

6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

2 AK: Ancient Egypt 11-
 2 KS: Egyptian History 11-
 5 KS: Egyptian Myth And Legend 15-
 3 Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 184

Total Cost: 331

75+ Disadvantages

| | |
|-----|--|
| 10 | Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses) |
| 15 | Hunted: Brotherhood Of The Western Ankh 14- (Less Pow, Destroy) |
| 25 | Psychological Limitation: Must Fulfill The Will Of Ehbek-Reme (Very Common, Total) |
| 10 | Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Life/Holy Magics (Uncommon) |
| 10 | Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Life/Holy Magics (Uncommon) |
| 186 | Experience Points |

Total Disadvantage Points: 331

Thrilling Hero Adventures

THE
DORDOGNE
ZODIAC

Adventure Two

THE DORDOGNE ZODIAC



When they receive a strange relic as a bequest from a friend who died under mysterious circumstances, Our Heroes find themselves drawn into an investigation of — and a battle against — an ancient, evil cult. But will they be in time to prevent the cult and its foul masters from wreaking havoc throughout the Earth?

The Dordogne Zodiac is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Since *The Dordogne Zodiac* involves a trip to New Orleans, you can easily link it with *The Voodoo Cross*. Instead of proceeding from the Big Easy straight to the Rocky Mountains, the PCs can take a quick detour to Haiti to recover the Cross. And who knows, perhaps there's activity in Haiti that involves the Zodiac cult....

Another possibility is to tie this adventure to *Inner-Earth* by transforming the Serpent-Men of that scenario into the Kiggûrhamelu. Just change the Serpent-Men's appearance, the look of their art/architecture, and their culture to fit the stranger, more alien, more evil Kiggûrhamelu, and you're set.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A letter from an attorney informs the PCs of the tragic death of their friend, Malcolm Bosworth of Chicago, and that he has left them a bequest in his will. Upon reaching Chicago, the heroes discover that Bosworth, who on April 2, 1935 was murdered and apparently robbed under mysterious circumstances, has left them a box containing an artifact and his notes on that artifact. After reading over the notes, the PCs discover Bosworth believed he'd found evidence of a malign, ancient cult of some sort, and had recently corresponded with Professor Roderick Peasley of Tulane University in New Orleans concerning it.

The heroes travel to New Orleans to meet with Professor Peasley, arriving just in time to stop an attack on him by a group of degenerate cultists. Information obtained from the attackers leads the heroes to an isolated mountain valley in Chaffee County, Colorado, not far from Trout Creek Pass. Here they find one of the cult's headquarters, wipe it out, and obtain additional information in the form of other relics and books. Now they have the chance to learn some significant (and presumably highly accurate) information about the cult and its goals, no doubt leading to possible further adventures... but the PCs are now aware that a great evil has only been averted temporarily, and that they bear an uncomfortable burden of knowledge and a duty to act on that knowledge, from now on.

PROPS

This adventure features two "props," the letter from the attorney (page 27) and some reproductions of entries from Malcolm Bosworth's diary (page 28). You can find these at the end of the adventure; you have Hero Games's permission to make photocopies or print extra copies to hand out to the players during the game. The props assume the adventure takes place in the early spring of 1935; if you've set your campaign in another year, just inform the players of the change.

If you want to add a touch of verisimilitude to the adventure, a great prop would be to get a banker's box and fill it with Bosworth's notes and books about various ancient cultures (Sumerian, Babylonian, Aztec, and so on). Bookmark pages with interesting pictures or other clues, then alter or add to the scenario to make them meaningful. In Part One, give the players the box and let them actually investigate its contents and research their course of action.

PART ONE: THE BOSWORTH BEQUEST

The adventure begins when one of the PCs receives a letter from the Chicago law firm of Rutledge, Mann & Fellows. If possible, pick a PC who is either (a) an archaeologist, professor of ancient history, or a talented amateur interested in these subjects, (b) wealthy, or (c) both. If that's

not possible, choose the most appropriate PC based on the background of the scenario.

There's a prop version of this letter at the end of the adventure (page 27) that you can hand out to the players. For an added touch of class, print it on cream-colored letter-quality paper rather than standard printer or photocopier paper.

If possible, introduce Malcolm Bosworth into the campaign well before you run this scenario so that his death has greater impact. Bosworth is a very wealthy resident of Chicago who inherited his family's meat-packing business and fortune about a dozen years ago. He spends most of his time studying the history of Europe and the Near East; he's as well-versed in several subjects, including some ancient languages, as any professor. His wealth has also allowed him to amass a substantial art and antiquities collection.

IN THE LAWYER'S OFFICE

The PCs don't get the letter in time for them to make it to the reading (unless you want them to). Feel free to alter the date of the reading if necessary based on the PCs' latest adventures, but don't forget that April 20 is the crucial date for the conclusion of the scenario, as described below.

Sloane Whitcombe, Bosworth's lawyer and the executor of his estate, will be glad to meet with the PCs at any time, though he suggests an early morning meeting since they may want to examine their gift in his office. Skilled and prosperous, he's in his late 50s and has a hale and open manner most of the time.

The bequest to the PCs is in two parts. The first is a heavy, tightly-sealed banker's box that Bosworth brought to Whitcombe only three days before his death (which was also when he added the codicil to his will that made the bequest to the PCs). The second is a trust fund, administered by Whitcombe, in the amount of \$20,000 for the purpose of researching and investigating the contents of the box. Whitcombe suggests that the PCs retire to his firm's library to open the box and review its contents (but he doesn't care if they agree to his suggestion or not).

Bosworth's Death

If the PCs ask Whitcombe about Malcolm Bosworth's death, he tells them Bosworth was found beaten to death April 2 in a downtown Chicago alley not far from the University of Chicago. His wallet and valuables had been stolen. A witness reported seeing him accosted by two "burly" men earlier in the day.

The study in Bosworth's luxury penthouse was found torn up and rifled through when Whitcombe, as Bosworth's lawyer, let the police into his home. While many presumably valuable relics and objets d'art were left in the home, the police presume that something must have been taken — they just don't know what. (In fact, they're wrong; Bosworth's attackers were look-

ing for what he bequeathed to the PCs, and took nothing when they didn't find it.)

The PCs can talk to the police if they want to get the information directly, but they won't learn anything more. If they pass on to the police information obtained from the materials in the box, the police will express polite skepticism and refuse to re-open the case.

THE BOX

Inside the box are several things:

- Bosworth's diary, with the first entry in October 1934 and the last on March 31, 1935 (two days before his death);
- A thick file of notes in Bosworth's handwriting, labeled DORDOGNE CULT;
- Several books on various ancient peoples (the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Aztecs, and ancient Hindus, among others); and most importantly
- A stone tablet approximately one foot on a side and an inch thick. The tablet has been chiselled down to leave in relief a circle of twelve rectangular "plaques" in a circle. Each plaque is about one inch tall. On each plaque is a unique symbol. Outside the ring, next to four plaques equidistant around the circle, is a distinct, incised line. Inside the circle formed by the plaques is another, less pronounced, relief depicting some sort of fantastical creature. The best description for it would be "toad-dragon," but even that doesn't really convey the thing's appearance.



The tablet is made of a greyish-green stone that no PC recognizes (a successful roll with an appropriate Skill, such as SS: Geology or SS: Mineralogy, discloses that the stone resembles no known terrestrial stone). It has an unpleasant slick or greasy feeling to it, though it definitely doesn't have any grease or oil on it.

Examining it makes the PCs feel disturbed in ways they can't really articulate — there's something vaguely unnatural and upsetting about it that just plain gives them the willies. In game terms, all the PCs lose 1 point of PRE for purposes of resisting or making Presence Attacks by/against members of the cult (whom they'll encounter later in the adventure) or cult-related situations. This lasts for the remainder of the adventure. If any of the characters have the *Fearless Talent* (from page 106 of *Fantasy Hero*) or a similar ability, they don't suffer this effect. As the adventure goes on they'll probably lose more points of PRE as they get drawn further and further into the horror of the situation.

THE SECRET OF THE TABLET

The tablet, naturally, has a history... one far older than modern man.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, when *Homo sapiens* was still to come and Java Man and his kin walked the Earth, another species shared this planet with him. A foul, decadent race, it may have journeyed here from some distant star, or spawned deep underground where men dare not go, or arisen side by side with men's ancestors — no man knows, and if they themselves know they have never told of it. What this race named itself also remains unknown; tens of thousands of years later, the Sumerians called them the Kiggûrhamelu — “men of toad-like visage,” for these people were short and squat, with broad, flat-nosed, large-eyed faces no true human could call lovely.

The Kiggûrhamelu worshipped as their chief god a being like unto them, and yet unlike: a thing that might have been one of their kind transformed into a gigantic beast, the fountain-head of legends about dragons and monsters the world over. The Sumerians named the god, too, though they spoke of him only in the barest of whispers: Usumgallu, meaning “great reptile.” Where the Kiggûrhamelu encountered early men, they forced them to worship this god by performing his foul rites and learning his doctrines as best their primitive minds could. Far more often, they forced them onto altar-stones and tore out their throats as sacrifices to the god. Fortunately for humanity to come, the toad-men were far less numerous than the people they shared the Earth with. Only a small number of proto-humans fell under the sway of the Kiggûrhamelu, while the rest regarded them and their pawns as perverse and evil.

Usumgallu was not the only god of the Kiggûrhamelu. In their lore were many other

demons and deities whom they described to their servants in only the vaguest terms. Usumgallu was but a forerunner, they said — a scout or messenger sent ahead to clear the way for the rest to enter into the Earth and claim it as their own.

When the world turned colder and the great glaciers returned, the Kiggûrhamelu retreated into the warm depths of the Earth, admonishing their followers to maintain the rites and continue the worship of great Usumgallu. They warned that they would return from time to time to ensure that all was done in accordance with their commands. And so the cult of Usumgallu lived on the face of the Earth, though his people did not.

About 50,000 years ago, a Neanderthal from a tribe that belonged to the cult — which his people called Sogg-Utash (“The Worshipful Ones”) — carved the tablet out of stone left behind by the Kiggûrhamelu, using primitive flint tools. The level of art rises far above what Neanderthals could normally achieve; at times, it seems, Usumgallu granted his worshippers wisdom beyond their means. The tablet is a zodiac, depicting the twelve sacred star-symbols of the cult. These are nothing like constellations recognized by modern man; it would take a KS: Astrology or SS: Astronomy roll at -4, or a KS: Arcane And Occult Lore roll at -6, to recognize them for what they are. The lines next to four of the plaques mark the holiest days of the cult's calendar, which modern humans would name April 20, July 20, October 20, and January 20.

The lore of the cult states that the rest of the Kiggûrhamelu gods may one day manifest on Earth during certain astrological conjunctions if all that is needful has been done to prepare the way for them. Sanctified stone circles must be built at key points around the world, and certain rituals and sacrifices performed therein. The circles are the keys that open the Gates of Earth, and once “turned” cannot be put back as they were without equally terrible counter-rituals. When the cult succeeds in creating and turning all the keys, the gods will come, and mankind be cast down before them, all save their faithful servants who opened the way.

The cult of Sogg-Utash — a name kept most secret — still exists. Tens of thousands of years ago Cro-Magnon men attempted to wipe out the foul Neanderthal tribes who kept it alive, but they did not succeed in slaying them all. These worshippers hid, and bred, and slowly evolved to a form more like that of modern men. Their descendants live today, often interbred with true men but still showing many of the marks of their forebears: heavy foreheads, deep-set eyes with pronounced browridges, thick lips, broad but projecting noses, thick black hair, and coarse, swarthy skin. They often live in isolated communities where they worship Usumgallu through half-remembered ceremonies and attempt to prepare the way for the coming of his brethren. They

keep alive the memory of the Kiggûrhamelu and their commands, though none have been seen on the face of the Earth for a thousand generations.

BOSWORTH'S NOTES

The PCs can examine the tablet quickly; it won't tell them much for now, other than that it's mysterious and disturbing. The diary, notes, and books will take more time to review — at least one day in quiet surroundings, if not more.

Once the heroes begin to study the materials seriously, give them the handout you'll find at the end of this adventure: the excerpts from Bosworth's diary. (You should, of course, read over it and familiarize yourself with it before the players receive it.)

Prop Notes

The "Le Moustier site" mentioned in the October 28, 1934 diary entry was a rock shelter in southern France where tools created by Neanderthals were found. The Mousterian style of tools takes its name from Le Moustier. As indicated in later journal notes, the implication is that the tablet was created by Neanderthals as well — though Neanderthals could not possibly have created so sophisticated a piece of art.

Manning, mentioned in the February 22, 1935 entry, is Professor Walter Manning, an expert on Far Eastern languages at the University of Chicago. He was a friend of Bosworth's, though the PCs haven't met him (unless one of them happens to be an expert in the same field). He remembers the meeting and the tablet — which he disliked intensely for reasons he can't explain — but has nothing further to offer beyond what's mentioned in the diary. The "inscriptions" are mysterious to him; he may even suggest to the PCs that they're not writing at all, but something else (though he has no idea what that might be).

The "Peasley" of the March 28, 1935 entry is Professor Roderick Peasley of Tulane University in New Orleans, a world expert on anthropology, mythology, and comparative religion. Any PC with any significant knowledge of those subjects (i.e., an 11- or better roll on any relevant KS or SS) has at least heard of him, and may have met or corresponded with him.

The Notes And Books

Bosworth's notes, handwritten on standard paper, provide the information behind his diary entries. At first they involve research into Neanderthal toolmaking and culture; everything he

found indicated that the Neanderthals (who inhabited Europe from roughly 100,000 to 50,000 BC, according to his notes) had stone weapons, rock shelters, fire, and burial practices. What art they had, if any, is unknown — but they definitely don't seem to have been capable of stonework anywhere as precise, detailed, elaborate, or skillful as that of the Dordogne tablet.

From there the notes segue into an examination of various ancient languages and alphabets in an effort to decipher the "inscriptions" on the twelve raised plaques. Bosworth spent no small amount of time digging through musty old books trying to locate any sort of clue from which to proceed, but found nothing. Characters with Universal Translator or translation-based Cryptography can try all they want, but they won't recognize any sort of writing or communication in them either (as mentioned above, they're cult constellations, not writing at all).

Lastly, Bosworth investigated comparative primitive religions, and here he seemed to feel he was making some progress. After finding depictions of a creature similar to the one on the tablet on two Sumerian clay tablets, he began looking for others. He felt he found them in Aztec, Chinese, Malay, and Hindu myths and legends, with other possibilities in a half-dozen other cultures. By most experts' standards this would be a very thin thread — the similarities aren't that striking and could easily be pure coincidence — but the possibility of some sort of world-spanning cult or religious figure definitely fixed itself in his mind. (The books in the box are all marked at pages showing pictures of the various creatures and monsters Bosworth was interested in.)

As the months pass, Bosworth's writing becomes harder to read and more disjointed. He seems to become obsessed, maybe even possessed, by the tablet; he obviously spent far too much time studying it. By March, his mental health clearly started to suffer — his notes become harder to read, not only because of the handwriting but because he's using so many obscure references, and even alternate alphabets at times, that following the train of his logic is sometimes difficult. There are several references to the works of Professor Roderick Peasley, a friend of Bosworth's; two of the books in the box are texts by Prof. Peasley on comparative mythology and religion.

WORSHIPFUL ONE/ CULTIST THUG

15 STR 12 DEX
17 CON 13 BODY
8 INT 8 EGO
13 PRE 7 COM
7 PD 5 ED
3 SPD 8 REC
34 END 35 STUN

Weapons:

Pistol (RKA 1d6, 6 shots); **blackjack or brass knuckles** (HA +2d6); **knife** (HKA ½d6, STR Min 6)

Abilities:

+1 HTH, KS:
Usumgallu Cult
8-, Shadowing
11-, Stealth 11-,
WF: Small Arms,
Common Melee
Weapons, Resistance
(5 points)

Disadvantages:

Distinctive Features
(Worshipful
One features);
Psychological
Limitation: Fanatic
Usumgallu Cultist

PART TWO: HARD TIMES IN THE BIG EASY

After the PCs finish reviewing Bosworth's notes, their next step should be fairly obvious: they need to talk to Professor Roderick Peasley at Tulane. Bosworth certainly had faith in Peasley's ability to shed some light on this mystery, and by this point the PCs should realize they've stumbled into something deeper than they can deal with on their own.

If the PCs telephone or send a telegram to Peasley, he'll be deeply saddened to hear of Bosworth's death but glad to discuss the tablet with them — in fact, he thinks he's made some intriguing discoveries. However, it's too much to go over in writing or on the phone; he suggests that they come to visit him in New Orleans. He promises both enlightening discussion and pleasant hospitality. If the PCs pressure him, he stands firm: it's not something he can discuss long-distance, they've got to come to New Orleans.

GETTING TO NEW ORLEANS

The PCs can travel to New Orleans by train, bus, or even ship down the Mississippi River. However they get there, they have directions from Professor Peasley as to how to reach his office at Tulane University.

When the PCs reach New Orleans, have all of them make PER Rolls. If any of them makes his roll by 6 or more, he notices someone watching their disembarkation point (whether it's the train depot, the dockyards, or the bus station). The watcher is a cultist who has the traditional Worshipful One look: heavy forehead, deep-set eyes with a pronounced browridge, thick lips, a broad but projecting noses, thick black hair, and coarse, somewhat swarthy skin. Given that it's New Orleans, the obvious conclusion is that he's of mulatto or mestizo stock — but he's definitely keeping an eye on the PCs. If they spot him, have him make a PER Roll (12-). If he succeeds, he realizes they've seen him and doesn't follow them; if he fails, or they don't see him, he follows them into the city (Shadowing 13-). He won't attack or try anything else; the cult just wants to keep an eye on the PCs to find out which hotel they're staying at, and so forth.

THE CULT ATTACKS!

Whether they check into their hotel first or go directly to see Professor Peasley, sooner or later the PCs make their way over to Tulane. As they approach the building where he has his offices, they hear a shout for help and the sound of breaking glass!

Charging inside, they find that Professor Peasley is being menaced by several attackers with the traditional Worshipful One look — they're holding him captive and tearing through

his office looking for something. It's the PCs to the rescue as a fight breaks out! See the accompanying sidebar for a character sheet for the cultists.

Victory!

The cultists should give the PCs a good fight — include enough cultists to challenge your heroes — but the odds are they'll still win. Defeated cultists can be turned over to the New Orleans Police Department; Professor Peasley will explain the situation to the cops so the PCs don't get into any trouble (unless, of course, they're wanted men).

The PCs will undoubtedly search the cultists before releasing them into police custody. In the pockets of two of them they find a pair of tickets: a train ticket from Salida, Colorado to New Orleans, and a bus ticket from a town named Uptonville to Salida.

If the PCs try to interrogate the cultists, they'll probably get nowhere fast. Between the cultists' Psychological Limitation and Resistance, the odds of convincing them to part with any useful information are mighty slim. If the PCs succeed anyway (perhaps by rolling a 3 on Interrogation), at most they'll convince a cultist to rave at them about "the unknown powers that lurk nearby and hunger for your souls," "the vengeance of the Worshipful Ones, mighty and terrible, which shall fall upon you right soon," and so forth. For men who look brutish, they seem perfectly intelligent, even expressive on some subjects.

A Snake In The Grass

What the PCs don't know, and hopefully don't even suspect, is that Peasley himself is a member of the Cult of the Worshipful Ones! Although he lacks the brutish features and build so many of his fellow cultists have, he's a descendant of the ancient Neanderthals who worshipped Usumgallu just like they are — and he's every bit as dedicated to the propitiation, and eventually the manifestation of, the Kiggûrham-elu gods. He chose his career because it allows him to search for Worshipful One relics and lore all over the world without arousing suspicion. It was he who informed the cult that Bosworth had the tablet. The "attack" on him was a fake designed to lure the PCs in, make them trust him, and hopefully get them killed.

Peasley will do everything he can to earn and keep the PCs' trust, even to the extent of hinting indirectly at the cult's true history — he wants them to come to think of him as a friend and valuable ally, and to entice them further into the cult's web with tantalizing tidbits of information. That way he can keep tabs on what they know about the Worshipful Ones (and whether they've told anyone else), tell the cult about their movements and activities, and eventually destroy them.

WHAT PEASLEY KNOWS

After the “attack” by the cultists has been defeated, Peasley thanks the PCs profusely for rescuing him. He’s a middle-aged man, probably in his late 40s, with black hair that hasn’t yet started to go grey; he wears nice but not overly expensive men’s suits.

Quickly recovering his composure, Peasley welcomes the PCs to his office — “it’s practically my home, I spend so much time here” — and to New Orleans. After a few moments of small talk, he turns to the matter at hand.

He tells the PCs that after reviewing the materials Bosworth sent him, he’s not prepared to dismiss the matter. He thinks Bosworth may have stumbled onto something that more orthodox students of anthropology would laughingly dismiss. “The concept of a cult of worldwide proportions that’s survived in secret for centuries may seem absurd,” he says, “but many native religions have continued for just as long after the introduction of “mainstream” religions like Christianity and Islam. To my mind, the question is not whether the cult exists, but what its purposes are. Why would a religious organization kill a harmless scholar in Chicago? You must also ask yourselves: if the cult has spread around the world, as Bosworth thought and as my studies would seem to confirm, how did it accomplish this? How can cultists thousands of miles apart continue the same worship for centuries without being discovered?”

(The answer to this question is: mystic rituals of communication. The PCs probably won’t answer those questions in this scenario, but if they get their hands on Ezekiel Upton’s grimoire [see below] or continue their crusade against the cult, they’ll discover the truth eventually.)

Examining The Tablet

At the appropriate time, Peasley will ask the PCs to show him the tablet. If allowed to, he’ll spend hours examining it, comparing it to the notes Bosworth sent, and making his own notes. In part this is a bluff — he knows almost instantly when he sees it that it’s a genuine Worshipful Ones artifact. He’s playing for time. He hopes to have the opportunity to (a) abscond with the tablet if the PCs are so foolish to leave it with him for a while, and/or (b) to cable Ezekiel Upton (see below) in Colorado to warn him the PCs have found a clue to lead them his way because two of the cultists forgot to get rid of their train tickets.

If the PCs don’t leave Peasley alone with the tablet long enough for him to make a getaway with it, he’ll study it carefully and say that in his opinion it’s a genuine artifact, not a forgery. He’s at a loss to explain its provenance, since he “knows” Neanderthals weren’t capable of stonework of such skill. He suggests that the tablet may be a calendar tracking solar months. If the PCs ask if it could be a zodiac, he’ll agree that it could be, but say he can’t confirm that fact.

If the PCs leave the tablet with Peasley, he’ll contact another cultist in the city (the one who followed the PCs, if they didn’t eliminate him; someone else if not). They’ll carefully pack the tablet in a small trunk. Then the cultist will catch the first train to Colorado, stopping along the way to wire Uptonville about what’s happened. Peasley will arrange things in New Orleans to look like another group of “thugs” assaulted him and stole the tablet. He’ll stress to the PCs that its obvious value to the cult means that it must be important, or that some major cult activity is about to occur.

PART THREE: HORROR IN THE ROCKIES

One way or another, the PCs are likely to find themselves heading out to Colorado on the trail of the sinister cult. If they try to research the trip in advance, they’ll discover little about Salida, and nothing about Uptonville except its location. It’s as if the town doesn’t exist as far as the outside world is concerned.

Uptonville is located in Chaffee County, Colorado, not far from Trout Creek Pass. To get there, the PCs have to take a train to Salida, Colorado, then catch the ramshackle weekly bus to Uptonville. They may have to wait a few days in Salida, a town of just a few thousand residents, before the bus leaves; they can spend the time studying Bosworth’s notes or engaged in other useful activities. They won’t notice anyone with “the Worshipful One look” in town, though if they describe the look to a friendly local, he’ll quickly identify it as being similar to the appearance of many people from Uptonville.

If possible, time the PCs’ arrival in Uptonville for April 19 — the day before a major cult holiday when an important ritual will be held. That way the PCs can witness, and stop, a key cult activity.

UPTONVILLE

The driver of the bus, which visits many of the smaller communities in Chaffee County, seems surprised that so many people want to visit Uptonville, but gladly takes them there if they can pay the \$1 per person fare.

After a couple hours on the bus, the PCs arrive in Uptonville, a small town nestled in a valley in the Rocky Mountains. After the PCs alight from the bus, a few locals get on to ride to other towns, and the bus soon takes off for its next destination. The PCs should be left with the uncomfortable feeling that they’re alone with something unnatural, possibly even terrifying — they’re miles from anywhere “civilized.” Be sure to emphasize this feeling if you can; isolation is an important element in horror.

The PCs’ first impression of Uptonville is of decrepitude and squalor. The town basically consists of a long, unpaved north-south main

EXPANDING THE SCENARIO

If you want to draw the scenario out a little, have the clue found in the thugs’ pockets lead to a group of cultists that worship Usumgallu at an abandoned plantation out in the swamps near New Orleans. You can use the Laussat Plantation maps from *Thrilling Places* to stage a fight there. Then, a clue found there in turn sends them on to Colorado.

street lined with buildings — Candler's General Store, the Uptonville Hotel, a barber shop, a dress shop, a couple of saloons, and so forth. Additionally, there are some other buildings and structures on lesser streets to the east and west of the main street. The buildings are mostly made of wood, and appear to all have been manufactured at the same time — roughly 50 years ago, at a guess. It's questionable whether anything's been done to maintain them since then. They look old and rotten, with collapsed eaves or railings here and there. The whole place gives the PCs an impression of insularity and decay.

After the PCs have had a little while to absorb all of this, it's time for you to give the disturbing “feel” of the place and their situation a definition in game terms. Each PC loses ½d6 of points of PRE as a way of representing how the place gives them the creeps; this loss applies only to defending against Presence Attacks made by the cultists and the like; it doesn't reduce Interaction Skill rolls or the PCs' own Presence Attacks. Characters with abilities that reflect a special level of courage, such as the Fearless Talent from Fantasy Hero, are immune to the PRE reduction, or suffer it at a lesser effect determined by you.

None of the buildings in Uptonville appears to be a church. Don't mention this to the players; let them think to ask about it on their own.

The northern terminus of the main street is at a gold mine. The mine is shut down, with a sturdy chain-link fence locked with a strong chain and padlock cutting off access to the mine and its buildings, and a prominent sign saying *UPTONVILLE MINING CO. — CLOSED*. Unlike the rest of the structures in town, the fence and lock seem relatively new. If the PCs ask someone in town who's willing to talk to them, they learn that two kids got lost in the mine a couple of years ago, so the company put up the fence to prevent any further tragedies. (This is true — though the fence also blocks off access to a tunnel that leads from the mine to the cultists' ceremonial chamber, described below.) The mine itself played out nearly 20 years ago and has been idle ever since. The buildings and abandoned vehicles visible inside the fence testify to two decades of neglect — rust, rot, decay, and collapse are everywhere.

The PCs see few cars or trucks on the streets of Uptonville, though there are some (and one tiny gas station); most people seem to get around on foot or horseback. There are also very few telephones, mostly in a couple of important businesses (the hotel, the general store, and so on). There's a telegraph office; the proprietor is a cultist with a touch of the “Worshipful One look” to him. In short, the PCs will find it difficult (at best) to communicate with the outside world, and even harder to do so without being monitored. Again, this should heighten their feeling of isolation.

The Uptonville Hotel

The only place in town for the PCs to stay is the Uptonville Hotel. The PCs may wonder why a town as small and isolated as Uptonville even has a hotel (a small and uncomfortable one, but still a hotel). They may attribute it to the former activity of the gold mine, and if they can get any townsfolk to talk to them, that's the story the locals tell. But the truth is the hotel exists to provide a place for cultists who come to visit Ezekiel Upton to stay. The PCs can get rooms there for the outrageous sum of \$1.50 per room per night.

The owner/desk clerk (in fact, sole full-time employee) of the Uptonville Hotel is a man named Pete Worth. He's got something of the “Worshipful One look” to him, but it's not nearly as pronounced as in the thugs the PCs fought in New Orleans. He is, in fact, a cultist; he'll report on the PCs' movements to Ezekiel Upton by phone.

The People

The people of Uptonville are a quiet, insular folk who don't seem to take kindly to visitors, especially nosy ones. They often glare at the PCs, and attempts to get them to answer questions earn the PCs nothing but a brush-off.

Many — but by no means all — of the Uptonvillers have at least a touch of “the Worshipful One look.” Some are as brutish-looking as the thugs the PCs encountered in New Orleans, while others are nigh-indistinguishable from the normal run of humanity.

History

Uptonville was founded about 50 years ago by Ezekiel Upton, patriarch of the Upton clan and one of the world leaders of the Worshipful One cult. Using cult magic he'd determined that there was gold to be found here, which would fund cult activities around the world, and that it was located on a site of mystical significance that made it suitable for some cult rituals (though it's not a site where a stone circle is to be placed). Nearly three-quarters of the inhabitants are cultists; they're the ones least likely to talk to the PCs. The remainder were drawn to Uptonville over the decades to work in the mine or associated businesses. Most of “the others” (as the cultists call them) realize that there's something not quite right about the town, but can't or won't leave for some reason. They know it's unhealthy to talk about the cult — several people who've done so in the past have mysteriously “disappeared” — so they're likely to treat the PCs brusquely.

AVENUES OF INVESTIGATION

Having situated themselves in the hotel, the PCs can poke around and try to learn a little bit about what's going on. Some of the ways they might do this are discussed below — but as always, players can be extremely inventive, so you should be prepared for other possibilities.

Talking To Townsfolk

The most obvious way of gathering information is to talk with Uptonville residents to find out more about the town and its inhabitants. Unfortunately for the PCs, this is a complete dead end. Most of the citizens are cultists, and they will have nothing to do with the PCs, rudely brushing them off if necessary. There are a few non-cultist citizens, but most of them are canny enough to know they should keep their mouths shut about their suspicions and the local gossip. The one possible exception is Arthur Candler.

Candler's General Store

Candler's is the only major business in town not owned by a cultist. It used to be, but 30-some years ago its owner fell into debt to one of his suppliers, who took the store in payment of the obligation. The current owner, Albert Candler, is that man's son. He doesn't like the town or its strange people, but he makes a pretty good living with the store, so here he stays.

Candler's sufficiently starved for interesting conversation and companionship — since the cultist citizens shun him — that he might become talkative with the PCs if they spend a lot of money in his store. He doesn't know the full local history, and knows nothing about the cult per se (not even that it exists). However, he can tell the PCs the following useful facts:

- Ezekiel Upton founded the town about fifty years ago. Stories say he was already married and had grown children, but since he's still alive Candler wonders how that could be possible — Upton would have to be nearly 100 years old, if not more, and he doesn't look or move like someone that old.
- Upton and his sons run the town. They're rich from owning the mine and other local businesses. David Upton is the town marshal. Upton himself comes into town once every few months; he looks like he's in his fifties or sixties.
- Upton lives on a large "ranch" a few minutes' drive south and west of town. Candler's never known them to raise cattle, sell cattle, or buy cattle feed, though.
- Sometimes large groups of the townsfolk go up to the Upton ranch for "doin's" — Candler thinks it's like a picnic or revival meeting or something, though these get-togethers happen at dusk and night. He's never been asked to go.

Local Records

Uptonville has one public building that includes town offices, a single courtroom, the register of deeds, and so forth. The town clerk is an Upton by marriage and a cultist; she'll report the PCs' activities to Ezekiel Upton.

Local records don't contain any smoking guns, but they tell the PCs just how much of the town is owned by the extended Upton clan, Eze-

kiel Upton in particular. (The records do show the location and extent of Ezekiel's "ranch" near town.) Most of the townsfolk seem to belong to one of five or six families who've lived here since the town was founded.

If the PCs spend several hours looking at local tax records, they'll discover that there's been little economic activity in town since the mine shut down. And yet there doesn't seem to have been a mass exodus of people looking for a better life elsewhere. There's money coming into the town somehow, but the source is unclear. (In fact, Ezekiel Upton receives money from the cult to maintain the Uptonville "stronghold," and distributes it to the other cultists in town.)

THE CULT STRIKES BACK!

The cult has many eyes and ears in Uptonville, so news of the upstart visitors spreads quickly. The cult doesn't react well to being threatened, so it takes steps to first neutralize, then destroy, the heroes.

If possible, start this scene as it's becoming dusk. The rest of the adventure works best at nighttime. If the timing doesn't work out, have dark clouds roll in, threatening a thunderstorm — an odd occurrence for this time and place, but that should spook the PCs even more.

A Mysterious Burglary

After the PCs have explored the town, investigated, asked questions, and so forth, they return to their hotel rooms to discover that their possessions have been rifled through, with no effort made to hide that fact. Anything of value or use — notes about the tablet, weapons, money, jewelry, and especially the tablet itself if they were foolish enough to bring it — is gone. There are no signs of forced entry. If the PCs confront Pete Worth, he swears he didn't see or hear anything. (In fact, he tipped the burglars off and let them in.) If the PCs had any (D)NPCs staying behind at the hotel, they've disappeared... giving the rest of the characters even more motivation to destroy the cult. (If a PC remained in the hotel rooms for some reason, you should run a combat scene with just that player to have the cultists take him hostage.)

Depending on the circumstances, you've now deprived the PCs of some (if not all) of their gear, and maybe an ally or two. They should get concerned about being "trapped behind enemy lines" with no way out and little information about what's happening here... and night's coming on. Time to ratchet their concern up another notch and force them to action!

Torches And Pitchforks

As soon as the PCs have had the chance to realize the extent of the burglary and the difficulty of the situation they're in, but before they have the chance to leave the hotel, have them make PER Rolls. The character(s) who make them by the most look out the window and see a group of townsfolk approaching the hotel.

The looks on their faces and the fact that they're armed with farm implements, hunting rifles, and shotguns makes plain their hostile intentions. The PCs are badly outnumbered; the odds are strongly against their being able to defeat this mob.

Fortunately, the mob's only approaching from the front of the hotel. If their discretion is a sufficient part of their valor, the PCs should realize that their best bet is to flee the hotel and the town and take to the wilds for the time being. Hopefully by now they've discovered, one way or another, how powerful Ezekiel Upton is and where his ranch is. That's the logical place to take the fight against the cult.

THE UPTON RANCH

Ezekiel Upton's ranch is located just a few minutes' drive south and west of town. If the PCs want to stay on the road, they can walk there in about an hour and a half... but they'll almost certainly be seen by patrols of well-armed cultists. If they stay in rough areas, walking there takes them close to three hours, but there's almost no chance the cultists will spot them.

The accompanying map shows the layout of the main part of the Upton ranch; the PCs probably approach from the north, since the ranch is south and west of town. Surrounding the main compound are many acres of fenced, mostly barren pastureland. Cultists armed with rifles

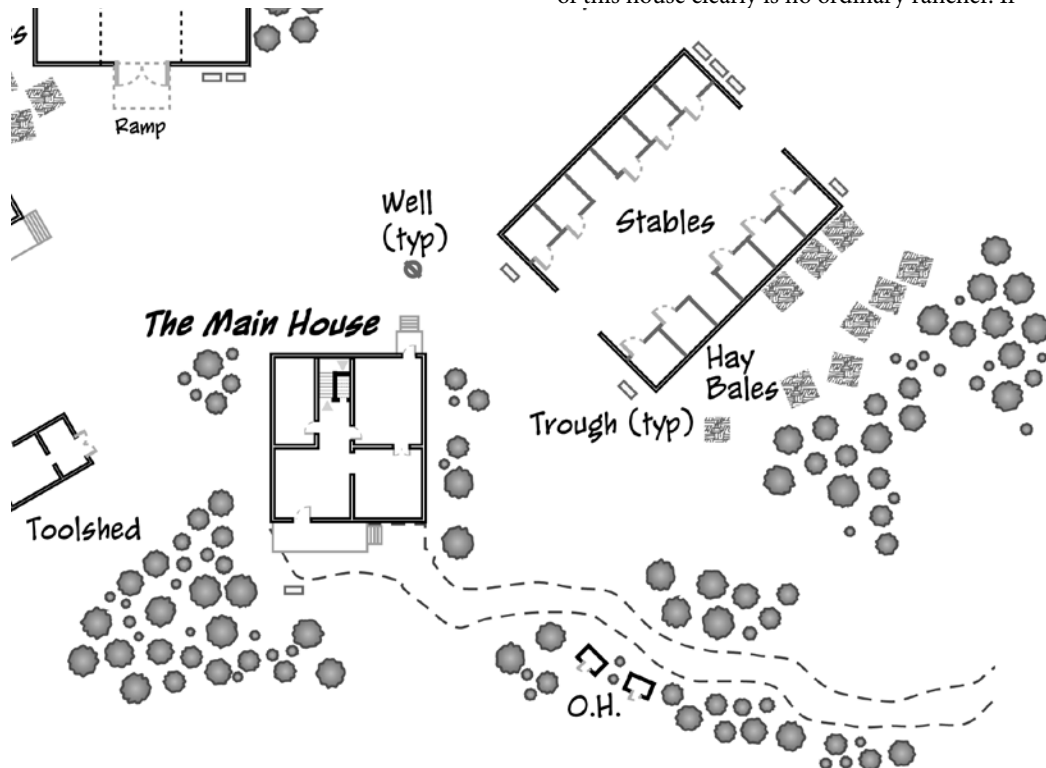
patrol the grounds on horseback; for excitement you might arrange an encounter between a guard and the PCs in which the heroes have to act quickly and quietly to stop the guard from giving them away.

The heroes may expect to fight a major battle in and around the main house... and they're partly right. You should station a few guards here (as well as two on the porch of the main house), but only a few. Since most of the cultists are at the ceremony (see below), there are far fewer people at the ranch than normal. Smart PCs will quickly realize that something's not right here.

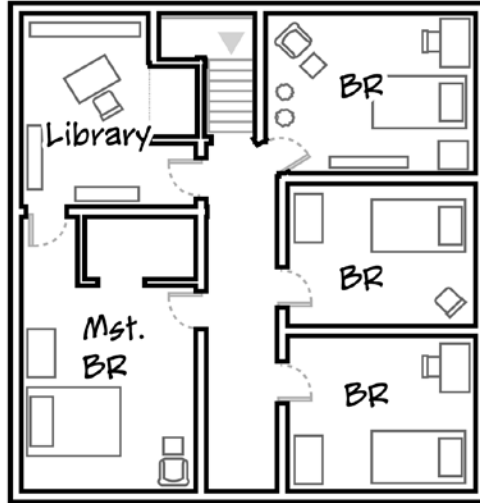
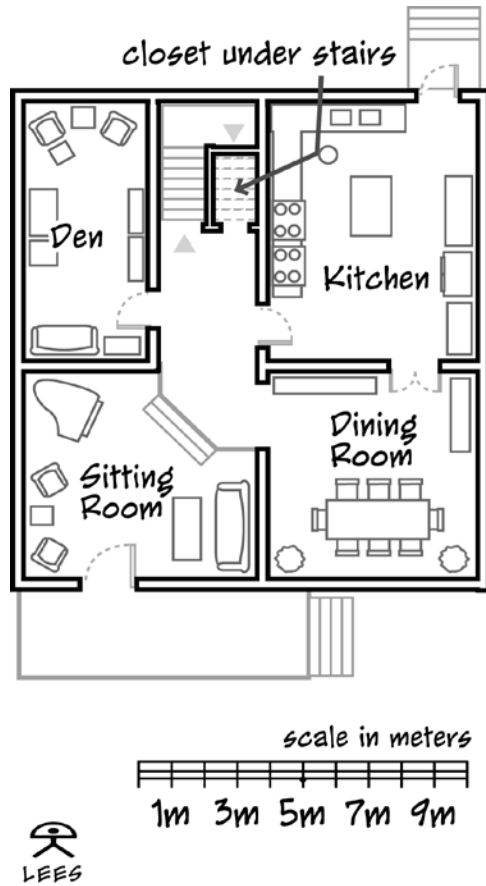
This part of the adventure provides the PCs with an opportunity to re-arm, if the burglary cost them their weapons. The guards have rifles and shotguns, and there are similar weapons stored in gun cabinets at the main house. Assume these are Winchester Model 70 rifles and 12 gauge shotguns (see *Pulp Hero*, pages 304 and 306).

The Main House

The main house is a large wooden dwelling with a stone foundation. It has two stories and a cellar. On the first floor there's a den, dining room, kitchen, and sitting room; on the upper level a master bedroom, two other bedrooms, and a library/study. The latter seems oddly out of place in so rustic a dwelling, but the owner of this house clearly is no ordinary rancher. If



Upton Ranch



Upton House

the PCs take the time to examine the library, they'll discover that it contains many volumes on subjects such as anthropology, the occult, witchcraft, history, exploration, and geography, as well as various general-interest books. None of the books are grimoires, long-lost "missing texts," or other tomes of great significance, but some are quite old and rare and would be valuable to a collector or researcher.

The cellar's filled with what one would normally expect to find in such a place: crates, barrels, old equipment, that sort of thing.

As mentioned above, the Upton family is at the worship ceremony. Thus, the house is eerily deserted. After fighting their way past guards, the PCs probably expect another major battle here — but all they'll find is silence. If any of them examines the master bedroom in detail and succeeds with a PER Roll, he gets the impression that the room hasn't been lived or slept in for some time, even though Ezekiel Upton's supposedly still alive given the way the townsfolk talk about him.

The Secret Tunnel

A secret tunnel leads from the main house to a ceremonial chamber deep underground, and then onward to the abandoned Uptonsville Mine. There are two ways to find it. First, there's a main entrance in the cellar of the main house; a PC searching the cellar who makes a Concealment roll at -2 can locate it. Second, the westernmost outhouse marked on the ranch map isn't actually

an outhouse at all; it conceals a ladder that leads down to the tunnel. Heroes poking around the outhouses can make a Smell PER Roll at -3 to realize that there's no outhouse stench coming from that particular outhouse.

The tunnel is marked on the map with dotted lines.

PART FOUR: THE THING IN THE TEMPLE

From this point the adventure quickly progresses to its conclusion: the PCs have to disrupt a Worshipful One ritual, in the process saving a beautiful young woman who's destined to become a human sacrifice... and slay the horrific creature who intends to eat her.

THE TUNNEL

After the PCs enter the tunnel, they'll be heading north and east — back toward town — though they might not realize that unless one of them has Bump Of Direction, since they're underground. The tunnel's about eight feet high, and wide enough for one man to walk comfortably or two to walk abreast (or pass one another) in cramped conditions (-2 DCV, -1 OCV). There's no light; the PCs need torches or lanterns to see where they're going (there are plenty of lanterns at the Upton ranch house if necessary).

At first the tunnel's earthen, with thick beams every ten feet or so to brace it, but after the PCs have walked for a while and descended a good bit it turns to stone and the braces are spaced out more. Curiously, the tunnel's musty smell doesn't end when it becomes stone — in fact, it becomes worse, with an underlying stench of the swamp that's disturbing in an underground tunnel. As the heroes proceed down the tunnel, approaching the ceremony cavern, the smell becomes stronger.

A little further on and the PCs begin to see paintings on the walls. The paintings depict cultists worshipping an evil looking “toad-dragon” sort of creature, the same as the one shown on the tablet. The first paintings the PCs see show primitive-looking men performing all sorts of unholy worship ceremonies. As the tunnel continues onward, the men in the paintings change — the PCs recognize scenes set in the artist's view of what must have been Sumer, ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and other prominent places and times throughout history. As the tunnel progresses, the paintings get closer and closer to the modern day.

At this point, each PC loses another ½d6 of points of PRE: if the town itself was creepy, the tunnel, with its odd smell and blasphemous paintings, is worse. Again, characters with abilities representing special courage or fearlessness are immune or suffer a lesser effect.

After they've walked down the tunnel for nearly half an hour, the heroes see a glimmer of light up ahead. If they douse their own lights they can proceed forward without being seen (unless they deliberately make a lot of noise, or significantly fail any Stealth rolls you have them make). If the PCs keep their own lights lit, the cultists have a much better chance of seeing them coming and being prepared for them.

THE CEREMONY

The tunnel eventually leads to a large cavern where numerous cultists are gathered. The cavern is fitfully lit by torches (-2 to Sight PER Rolls and to Ranged OCV). There are two tunnels exiting from the cavern, one to the northwest, one to the northeast.

The odor the characters have been smelling in the tunnel is particularly strong here; all characters must make a CON Roll. Any who fail suffer a -1 to all Skill, Characteristic, and Attack Rolls due to nausea and dizziness.

On the cavern map, the dotted lines are contour marks indicating where shelves of rock rise from the cavern floor. Thus, to get into the cavern the PCs must descend two or three shelves, and to get to the sacrifice (see below) they must ascend two. Ascending or descending each shelf costs 1” of movement.

The Cultists

The cavern is filled with cultists. They're wearing rust-colored, hooded robes with the

hoods up and mostly looking north, so there's a good chance they won't see the PCs at first, unless the heroes have done something to draw attention to themselves. They're chanting in low, sonorous voices in a language the PCs do not recognize — not even characters with Gifted Linguist (Pulp Hero, page 290) or similar Universal Translator-based abilities defined as extensive linguistic training can understand it. (On the other hand, Universal Translator defined as “sub-consciously telepathically reading the speaker's mind” or the like can understand it.)

The Sacrifice

On the northern side of the cavern the heroes see something that makes their blood run cold. Tied to a column of rock is a beautiful young girl. She's wearing an ordinary dress, though it's badly torn in places, and has passed out, probably from fright. She's clearly intended as some sort of human sacrifice. (On the map, the X marks the girl.) The bonds holding her are DEF 2, BODY 3; untying them without cutting them takes ½d6+1 Phases, or only a single Full Phase if the character trying to untie them succeeds with a Contortionist or PS: Knot-Tying roll.

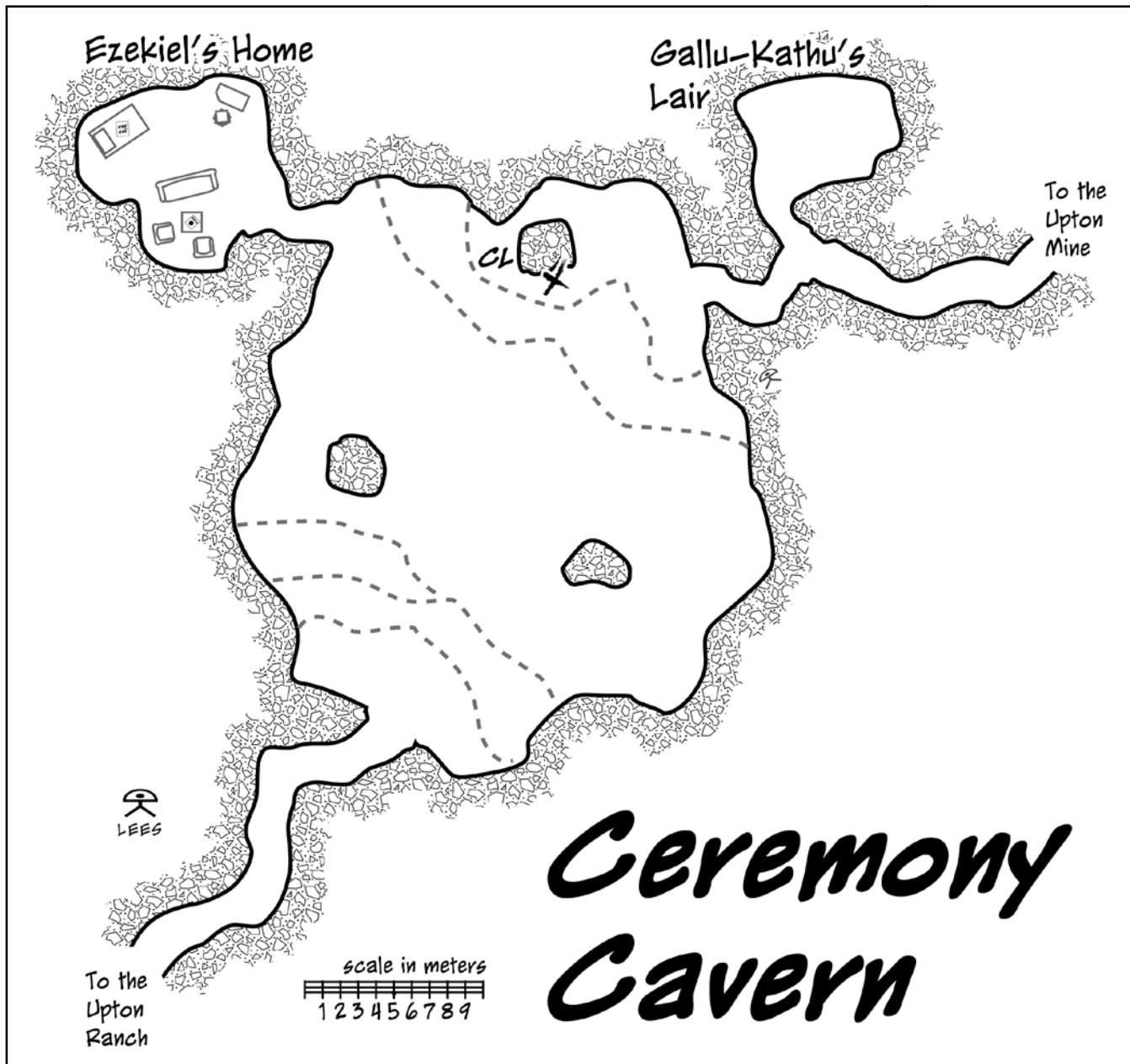
The High Priest

Standing to the left of the girl is a man dressed in more ornate robes that are blood-red in color — obviously the cult's leader. (On the map, the CL marks his position.) The hood on his robes obscures most of his features, but from what little the PCs can see of his face and the way he moves, he's obviously aged. Clutched in one arm is a large, thick, old leatherbound book. He's preaching to the cultists in the same unknown language as the chants, his voice rising in a pitch of ecstasy and power as he prepares them to witness the glorious sacrifice heralding one of the cult's holy days. If the PCs think to ask about it, tell them he doesn't seem to have a knife or any other weapon with him.

Because the high priest is looking south, there's a chance he sees the PCs if they make themselves obvious in the south tunnel. Have him make a 13- PER Roll in a Skill Versus Skill Contest against their Stealth rolls, if necessary. If he sees them, or even suspects he sees something, he'll halt the ceremony and alert the cult.

AND THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

If all goes well — and since the PCs are heroes, it probably does — the PCs are likely to find themselves with the drop on the cult. The best plan of action here is to shoot the high priest, then hope to rescue the girl in the confusion and escape with her before the cult can muster enough wherewithal to stop them. In the process a lot of cultists are likely to get shot, too (which is a perfectly acceptable outcome as long as the heroes don't just start mowing them down like trapped cattle — that wouldn't be very pulp-



ish, now would it?). However, there are a couple of potential flies in the ointment.

First, the high priest — Ezekiel Upton, whose life has been extended with unholy magics — has mystic powers he can bring to bear. They aren't as flashy as comic book magic or Fantasy magic, but they might have an effect. He can curse a PC with dizziness (Drain DEX 4d6, Ranged, Full Phase, Requires An 18- Skill Roll), or inflict pain in another person (Ego Attack 4d6, Full Phase, Requires An 18- Skill Roll). (He has other mystic powers, but they're not applicable to combat.)

Second, about half the cultists have pistols (RKA 1d6, 6 shots). They're not as helpless as they look. Use the Worshipful One Cultist/Thug character sheet on page 17 for most of them; about half aren't quite so strong, quick, and brutish.

The Gallu-kâthu

Third, the tunnel to the northeast is actually the entrance to a smaller cavern — one where the Uptonsville cult's most terrifying ally lives. It is a *gallu-kâthu*, a Spawn of Usumgallu, a loathsome thing somewhat in the image of its father. Nearly 18 feet (3") long including its tail, it looks like a cross between a giant toad and an iguana. See below for its character sheet.

The gallu-kâthu has been awaiting the high priest's signal to come out and eat the girl (at which point the each cultist bows his head and stares at the floor). Upton can also urge it to come forth (though he cannot command it; it's a godling to the cult, not a pet). The most dramatically appropriate thing would be for the PCs to shoot Upton, and have him with his dying breath call upon the creature to protect the cult and slaughter the unbelievers... but if that doesn't

work out, reveal the gallu-kâthu whenever it seems best to you.

When the PCs first see the gallu-kâthu, its very appearance horrifies them and blasts their sanity. That such a thing could exist is wrong; it is a blasphemy, a being so unnatural as to offend their innermost sensibilities. Roll a Presence Attack using the creature's 7d6 applied against the heroes' Presence (reduced due to the fear they've been feeling all along, as described above). Adjudicate the attack's effects appropriately. It's not a good idea for the PCs to run screaming in fear (that's not very pulpish, after all), but if the result is high enough they'll definitely hesitate before doing anything. Even worse results might cause a PC to lose his sanity temporarily and fall to the floor, screaming, crying, and clawing at the cavern's rock. Other PCs may suffer penalties to Attack Rolls because they don't dare look straight at the thing.

And don't forget the creature's stench! That's what's causing the smell in here. As noted on the gallu-kâthu's character sheet, the smell forces characters to make a CON Roll at -4... and if they fail, they suffer penalties to CV and various other rolls due to retching and nausea.

AFTERMATH

Can Our Heroes survive?

The best outcome for the PCs is that they kill the monster, kill Ezekiel Upton, kill some (or all) of the cultists, rescue the girl, and find the items described below. Many less optimal outcomes are possible, such as just rescuing the girl and escaping — but even that represents a major triumph, since it means the PCs struck a significant blow against the cult (and what's more important, know some things about it that it doesn't want them to know).

THE GIRL

The would-be sacrifice's name is Darla Bromwell; she's a secretary who was kidnapped from her home in Denver by the cult. She's pretty (COM 14) and, though not well-educated, quick-witted and bright (INT 13). She's obviously quite grateful for the rescue (though she's still not entirely sure what was going on, since she was dazed most of the time; she can't tell the PCs anything of use about the cult). She'd probably have no objection to starting a romance with a handsome PC (as an NPC, she's unaware that women who get romantically involved with Pulp heroes usually have short and unpleasant lives... but of course, as the GM you can violate that particular genre convention if you prefer).

THE OTHER CHAMBERS

The chamber to the northeast is the gallu-kâthu's lair; the stench should keep the PCs out of there altogether, and in any event there's nothing there of interest. A tunnel leads out from there several miles back to the old Uptonville Mine.

Upton's Lair

The northwest chamber is Ezekiel Upton's quarters; he's lived down here for years as part of the spells that preserve his life (which is why his bedroom at the ranch house seems unlivid in). Here the PCs can find several items of note.

First, there's the book he was holding during the ceremony. Written in a script none of the PCs can recognize and a language none of them know, it's one of the holy books/grimoires of the cult; its loss is a major blow to the Worshipful Ones. It can be a great source of knowledge for the PCs, since it's got the full history, theology, rituals, and spells of the cult... but learning to read it will take a PC months of scholarly effort and the expenditure of Character Points on the Language the cult speaks. Furthermore, the matters it deals with are, like the gallu-kâthu itself, so blasphemous and unholy that studying the book may subject a character to psychological problems (a hefty Major Transform with Gradual Effect). The exact results and how they play into the campaign are left in your capable hands.

Second, there's a stone statuette depicting Usumgallu himself on a base of rough-hewn rock. His name has been crudely etched into the base in cuneiform; anyone who makes an SS: Archaeology roll or Forgery (Art Objects) roll can tell that the writing was added long after the statuette was made. The statuette has aesthetic stylings similar to the tablet from Dordogne; while they might not have been made by the same artist, they were created by the same culture at around the same time.

LEAVING UPTONVILLE

Even if the PCs defeat the cult, they still have to get out of Uptonville — not necessarily the easiest thing in the world to do. Their best bet is to steal a car from a cultist and lam out of there. If that's not possible, they may be in for a long overland trek.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Win, lose, or draw, the PCs are now aware of the existence of a world-spanning cult of utter evil, a cult that's existed in one form or another since before true humans lived on Earth. What they decide to do with that information is up to them — and you. If you want, you can easily spin many other adventures out of The Dordogne Zodiac as the PCs attempt to hunt down other parts of the cult and destroy them, disrupt the cult's rituals and plans, find other books and objects associated with the cult, and in general protect humanity from it... and its masters.

GALLU-KÂTHU

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 25 | STR | 20 | 14- | Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2] |
| 15 | DEX | 15 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 20 | CON | 20 | 13- | |
| 20 | BODY | 20 | 13- | |
| 10 | INT | 0 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 25 | PRE | 20 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 4 | COM | -3 | 10- | |
| 14 | PD | 15 | | Total: 14 PD (2 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 8 | | Total: 10 ED (2 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 15 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 9 | REC | 0 | | |
| 40 | END | 0 | | |
| 43 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 130 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 8"/16"

Cost Powers **END**

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 42 | <i>Disgusting Stench:</i> Change Environment 2" radius (stench), -4 to CON Rolls (see text), -6 to Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls, Multiple Combat Effects, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), No Range (-½) | 0 |
| 30 | <i>Disgusting Stench:</i> Add to Change Environment -2 CV, -2 to DEX-based Rolls, -2 to INT-based Rolls, and -2 to PRE-based Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), No Range (-½) Only Applies If Victim Fails CON Roll (-½) | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Horrifying Appearance:</i> +10 PRE, Only For Fear-/Horror-Based Presence Attacks (-1) | 0 |
| 16 | <i>Tongue:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼) plus Stretching 2", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), Limited Body Parts (tongue; -¼) | 0 |
| 2 | <i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED) | 0 |
| 3 | <i>Strong Legs:</i> Leaping +3" (8" forward, 4" upward) | 1 |
| 10 | <i>Wall-Walking:</i> Clinging (normal STR) | 0 |

Skills

- 10 +2 HTH
3 Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 121

Total Cost: 241

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Physical Limitation: Near-Human Intelligence (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
5 Physical Limitation: Large (-2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
25 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Devoted To The Service Of Usumgallu (Very Common, Total)
121 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 241

RUTLEDGE, MANN & FELLOWS
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

2712 Prussian Street
Chicago, Illinois 57516

April 3, 1935

Dear

It is my sad duty to inform you of the death of your friend, Malcolm Bosworth. Mister Bosworth has left you a bequest in his will, which is to be read on Friday, April 5. If you cannot attend the reading, please feel free to make an appointment to visit me in my offices at any time convenient to you.

Very truly yours,

S. H. Whitcombe

Sloane Whitcombe

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF MALCOLM BOSWORTH

October 28, 1934: Received interesting package today from Henri. He says he bought it from a farmer who lives near Dordogne, not far from the Le Moustier site. The farmer tried to sell it to the university, which dismissed it as a fraud. Rightly so, I think.

November 13, 1934: Continue to study Dordogne tablet. Very puzzling. If it's a fake, it's a damn good one, at least in terms of technique. Knapping of stone on edges and around the twelve plaques definitely suggests Mousterian culture — but no Mousterian man could have made such a thing. Why go to such technical trouble to create something so obviously impossible?

November 29, 1934: Have sent rubbings and photographs of tablet to Kruegdorf in Berlin. Perhaps he can shed some light on the mystery.

January 9, 1935: Heard back from Kruegdorf at last, thank God — but he could offer no help with this damnable problem. He thinks it's definitely Mousterian, but can offer no solutions as to provenance or purpose. Suggests that maybe the twelve "plaques" represent solar months.

January 21, 1935: Very bad dreams last night. In a forest, running for my life from inhuman things lurking above and below. Need a few days in the countryside, I think.

February 3, 1935: Returned to the study of the Dordogne tablet. Could symbols on the plaques be runes or letters of some sort, maybe the first letters of the names of the months? But surely Neanderthals could not have had speech, much less writing!

February 14, 1935: Very bad dreams last night. Trapped underground, running through torchlit caverns, pursued by something I couldn't see. Slept in late to make up for it.

February 22, 1935: Thinking the inscriptions might bear some relation to primitive oriental writing I took the tablet to the university and showed it to Manning. He could make nothing of it, says the letters look nothing like Chinese, Korean, or Japanese. Not surprising, I suppose, if it was made in Europe. Maybe some relation to Basque or Etruscan? Must find out more about those languages' alphabets.

March 1, 1935: Obscure European languages don't seem to be the key. May have found something, though — Sumerian. Inscriptions look vaguely like cuneiform; maybe that will hold some clues.

March 6, 1935: Don't think cuneiform is the answer anymore, but have uncovered more disturbing information. In reviewing pictures of Sumerian tablets I have found two, both allegedly spell-tablets from the libraries of renowned magi, showing a creature remarkably similar to the one in the center of the tablet! No name that I could locate.

March 14, 1935: The mystery deepens. Aztec mythology has the creature, too, or traces of it at least — Cipactli, the crocodile-monster. What sort of a religion could span five thousand years and three continents?

March 20, 1935: The more I look, the less I think I know. Chinese, Malay, Hindu legends all seem to have similar creatures or gods! Could there be a cult, some sort of shadow-religion, behind them all? What sort of a person... or group... or being... could orchestrate such a scheme? I cannot fathom it. The thought terrifies me in ways I cannot describe.

March 28, 1935: Have sent rubbings, photos, notes to Peasley at Tulane. If anyone can come up with some answers to this puzzle, it's him.

March 30, 1935: No word from Peasley yet, but he could scarcely have had time to study what I sent him, I suppose. Accosted on the street today by two rough-looking men, Polish dockworkers probably, who offered to buy the tablet! How they learned of it they rudely declined to say. I refused their offer.

March 31, 1935: Have not been sleeping well. Another bad dream — priests on torchlit ziggurats at night, moonless sky bright with stars, preparing to sacrifice me to the toad-thing which somehow lurks nearby, unseen. Have had it for several nights, each time more intense. What is going on?

Thrilling Hero Adventures

FANGS OF THE SCARLET SERPENT

Adventure Three

FANGS OF THE SCARLET SERPENT



When an ancient serpent-cult rears its scaly head on the streets of Singapore, a plea for help from an old friend brings the heroes running to the British colony city. There they clash with the cult and track it to its local lair... just in time to find out about a deadly ritual they have to stop!

Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent links nicely with *The Malay Coins*, since both take place in the same region of the world. After finishing the *Coins* adventure, your PCs might want to have a brief holiday in Singapore, where they soon get wrapped up in another adventure. Or perhaps something they find in the trove along with the *Coins* is a clue leading to *Fangs*. Similarly, *K'hull Island*, *the Street of the Emerald Bird*, and *the Island of the Pale White Lady* (all in *Thrilling Places*) are geographically or culturally close enough to the Malay Peninsula that you could weave a connection.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Cult of Orobouros Risen, better known in some circles as the Cult of the Scarlet Serpent from the red snake imagery it uses and the tattoos its members often bear (a winding, sinuous red serpent around a devotee's left arm), is an insidious religion devoted to crushing other faiths and, in time, taking over the world. Growing out of snake-worshipping cults so old their origins are lost to time, it venerates the Serpent as the embodiment of power (both mystic and mundane). (Contrary to what a few of the experts who have heard of it believe, it does not equate the Serpent with Satan, or otherwise follow Christian or Gnostic doctrine.)

Only a few occultists or scholars know of the Cult's existence — it's kept itself and its goals largely secret. It's most powerful in Asia, especially South Asia, where it's known as the Sembahyang Agama Merah Menyala Ular Yg

Meningkat ("Cult of the Scarlet Serpent Rising") or Agama Ular ("Cult of the Serpent"), but has also been active in Russia, West Asia, China, and the Near East. The world's leading expert on the group is Doctor Rupert Wellingsley, an assistant curator at the Singapore Museum of History.

The Cult has traditionally been opposed in the South China Sea region by the Mongoose Society. The Society's members practice Bersilat and wear yellow headclothes and face-kerchiefs. Their symbol is a highly stylized Chinese ideogram for "mongoose."

Wellingsley has noted an upturn in what he believes to be Cult activities in the past year or two, and was convinced the group was up to something (which is it — the preparations for and casting of a great ritual to bring it power and weaken its enemies). He was readying a book about the Cult for publication when the Cult learned of this and kidnapped him. The Cult intends to torture him for information, then sacrifice him to Orobouros.

Shortly before being kidnapped, Dr. Wellingsley sent a message to one of the heroes — an adventurer (preferably an occult detective type) with whom he's fought the Cult before. It indicated that the situation was worsening and he needed the hero's help.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

After arriving in Singapore the heroes are met by Harrison Marsh, Dr. Wellingsley's assistant... and secret member of the Cult! He leads them into an ambush in an alleyway. Things look grim for the heroes until the Mongoose Society shows up to even the odds.

After the fight, the Society members explain that they've just learned the Cult kidnapped Dr. Wellingsley. It no doubt intends to sacrifice him as the capstone of the major ritual it's been working on for the past two years! They must first find out where Wellingsley's being held, and second where the ritual's to be performed (Wellingsley may already know this).

After the heroes rescue Dr. Wellingsley from the clutches of the Cult, he tells them the ritual is to be held soon at a Cult temple just north of Kelantan... and the Cult has kidnapped his daughter for use as a sacrifice! The PCs have to get there before the ceremony begins, stop it, save the girl, and crush the Cult.

PART ONE: SINGAPORE SLING

The adventure begins in the PCs' hometown — New York City, Hudson City, San Francisco, London, wherever you like. One of the heroes receives a telegram from an old friend — Doctor Rupert Wellingsley, an assistant curator at the Singapore Museum of History. Ideally the recipient of the telegram should be a character who's an Occult Detective, a psychic, or someone else who has experience with things mystic and strange. If your group doesn't include such a character, a two-fisted hero or adventuring archaeologist will do. The telegram reads:

*O.R. ACTIVE ONCE MORE. STOP
YOUR HELP NEEDED IMMEDIATELY.
STOP. MUST ASCERTAIN CURRENT
PLANS AND GOALS. STOP. MEET ME
SINGAPORE MUSEUM NATURAL
HISTORY SOONEST. STOP. WILLINGLSEY*

(As a fun prop, create a telegram and "deliver" it to the players. You can photocopy the one on this page, or use online resources to mock one up.)

The "O.R." refers to the Cult of Orobouros Risen (which Wellingsley wisely doesn't want to name in a telegram). What hero could turn down a plot hook like that?

IN SINGAPORE

The heroes make it to Singapore as fast as they can. If they don't have a private plane, they can charter one or take a regularly-scheduled flight (though the latter choice takes at least a day or two longer, if not more). Unless they happen to be near Singapore already, the urgency of the message means sea travel will take too long.

However and wherever the heroes arrive, they're greeted at the docks by a man who identifies himself as Harrison Marsh, Dr. Wellingsley's assistant. Marsh has brought several rickshaws to take the PCs to the Raffles Hotel, the best in Singapore, where Dr. Wellingsley has reserved rooms for them. After they've checked in and dropped of their bags, Marsh will take them to see Dr. Wellingsley at the Museum.

Two important points: first, Marsh does not mention that Dr. Wellingsley's been kidnapped. Second, if the heroes question how he knew where and when they were arriving (assuming they didn't cable Dr. Wellingsley with the information), he'll respond (truthfully) that he has lots of friends in Singapore and that word gets around about the imminent arrival of a special group of travelers. "If you know how to get things done in this city, it's easy, really."

When the rickshaws leave, they're lined up so Marsh rides in the one in front, the one in the very back carries the baggage, and the PCs ride in rickshaws in between. The runners take a circuitous route due to the traffic-clogged streets.

MERCURY TELEGRAM

★ B.D. Bilkins, President ★

O.R. ACTIVE ONCE MORE -(STOP)- YOUR HELP

NEEDED IMMEDIATELY -(STOP)- MUST ASCERTAIN

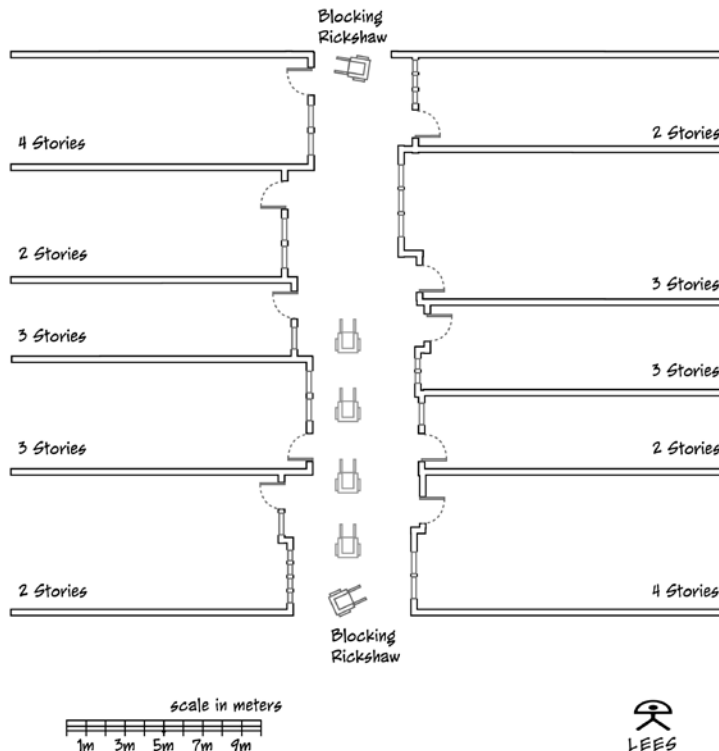
CURRENT PLANS AND GOALS -(STOP)- MEET ME

SINGAPORE MUSEUM NATURAL HISTORY SOONEST

-(STOP)- WELLINGSLEY

This company transmits and delivers messages only on conditions which have been assented to by sender of the above message. The company will not hold itself liable for errors or delays in transmission or delivery of un-repeated messages. The company will appreciate suggestions from its patrons concerning its service.

Singapore Alley



If a hero succeeds with a CK: Singapore roll, he realizes the route maybe isn't the best one possible, but it's not just meaningless wandering around or an attempt to take the heroes somewhere else.

Suddenly the rickshaws turn into an alley... and stop! Marsh's rickshaw and the baggage rickshaw are turned so as to block either end of the alley. Scarlet Serpent cultists hidden among the trash and in rooms in the buildings on either side of the alley reveal themselves and attack, hoping to kill the PCs.

See the accompanying alley map for details on the ambush site.

The PCs are badly outnumbered — there should be at least two or three cultists per hero, if not more. (Use the Cultist character sheet on page 406 of *Pulp Hero*; the cultists carry an assortment of rifles, pistols, and knives.) The heroes can hold their own for a while — feel free to give them the chance to try some cinematic stunts in a valiant effort to win — but before long the situation should start to look grim and dreams of victory should fade.

But suddenly, a ray of hope! — the Mongoose Society arrives! Armed with rifles and pistols, the Society members even the score and give the heroes a chance to win (and perhaps even capture a cultist or three). Don't let the Society do all the work (the heroes are the protagonists of your story, after all), just enough of it to make

the battle a fair fight for the PCs. The leader of the Society forces is Yusoh Tunku, a forceful, handsome, intelligent Malay man about 30.

Breakout

In the event the heroes get lucky and break free from the alley, turn the fight into a running battle through the streets of Singapore. Eventually you can have the cultists corner the heroes in a blind alley, a courtyard with no good exits, or the like... and then the Mongoose Society can arrive to help.

AFTER THE FIGHT

After the heroes win the fight with the help of Yusoh and his men, he introduces himself, explains what the Mongoose Society is, and tells the heroes they (the Society members) have just learned the Cult kidnapped Dr. Wellingsley and his daughter Amanda. It no doubt intends to sacrifice him as the capstone of the major ritual it's been working on for the past two years!

The heroes now have to find out two things: first, where Wellingsley's being held; second, where the Cult intends to perform this ritual. Wellingsley may already know about the ritual, so rescuing him could solve both problems.

Avenues Of Investigation

Some of the possible avenues of investigation the heroes can use include:

- Interrogating captured cultists: If the heroes

took a few cultists alive, the heroes may be able to get them to talk. Unfortunately, the cultists are fanatics, so you should consider them to have Resistance (5 points).

- **Use Streetwise:** This is highly unlikely to work because the Cult keeps to itself; it doesn't mingle with the underworld or reveal its plans. At a minimum, a character would have to succeed with a role at -6 to learn anything, and even then he's only likely to get a lead on the Jao Corporation warehouse (see below). If the character cannot speak both Malay and at least one form of Chinese, increase the penalty to -8; if he has CK: Singapore, he can use it as a Complementary Skill.
- **Check out Wellingsley's home and office.** His home reveals nothing; it hasn't even been disturbed. In his office, which the heroes may have trouble getting into due to officious museum personnel, the PCs discover a mess — signs of a struggle. This is where the Cult snatched him; it also stole all of his notes and working papers regarding its activities.

If the PCs succeed with a Concealment roll at -2, they discover an important clue among the papers strewn about on Wellingsley's desk top. Realizing the Cult was coming after him, he tore three pages out of his calendar — January, August, October — and stamped them with the “chop” (a small stone seal used to put one's official mark on documents) someone once gave him as a gift. They stand for JAO — he knows the Cult has a local headquarters in a warehouse maintained by the Jao Corporation on the docks of Pulau Blakang Mati (“the Island of Death from Behind,” known in the modern day as Sentosa). Ironically, the warehouse lies in the very shadow of Fort Siloso, one of the British gun emplacements protecting Singapore!

(For a fun prop, visit www.timeanddate.com, print out January, August, and October calendars for the year you run this adventure in, and draw some sort of Chinese-looking character on them in red for the chop.)

PART TWO: THE SERPENT'S LAIR

Now that the heroes have a lead, it's time for action! They proceed to the Jao Corporation warehouse; the Mongoose Society can send a guide, plus as many other members as the heroes need to fight the cult.

For the warehouse itself, use the warehouse map from *The HERO System Resource Kit* or any similar map; just eliminate modernisms like forklifts (which, though invented in 1917, aren't in use at this place) and computers. The Cult is holding Doctor Wellingsley in a small enclosed room, like a closet or office, and has a guard in

there with him if you think it's appropriate. Two or three cultists stand guard outside the warehouse, trying (but generally failing) to look like nondescript loafers.

Let the heroes plan their attack in as much tactical detail as they wish, but remember — this is Pulp! If things start to bog down too much, do something to stir the pot (like have a cultist walk toward wherever they're hiding, or having the sound of Dr. Wellingsley screaming under torture waft out of the warehouse). Once the attack begins, if the cultists think there's a chance they'll lose the fight, they will make a desperate play to (a) kill Dr. Wellingsley, (b) use Wellingsley as a hostage, or (c) destroy Wellingsley's notes and working papers. (The latter point is especially important to them, since they can always try to kill Wellingsley later.)

NO REST FOR THE HEROIC

The warehouse has several sources of information about the Cult's planned ritual. Either Dr. Wellingsley (if he survives), or his notes (if they survive), or a crude map taken off the body of a deceased Cultist (possibly damaged by the fighting and requiring repair), or a successfully-interrogated surviving cultist reveal the location of the Cult's temple: just north of a largish lake in Kelantan (one of the Unfederated Malay States).

Doctor Wellingsley can also reveal that he overheard the cultists saying they had an even better sacrifice than him ready — a “British woman,” they said. He's not yet aware that this woman is, in fact, his daughter Amanda (she was kidnapped separately). Word of this will cause him almost to faint from fear and anxiety.

The worst news of all is: the hour of the ritual is almost here! To get there in time to stop it, their only option is to take a seaplane, land on the lake, and make a short hike through the jungle. If they leave now they might barely get there in time....

LET'S FLY AWAY

Depending on how the scenario goes and how much time you have, you may want to make the plane trip up to Kelantan more eventful than the trip to Singapore was. If the cultists in the north have gotten word about the heroes' involvement, the priests could invoke a storm to try to make the plane crash. Alternately they might send cultists in canoe-like boats to ambush the heroes after they touch down.

PART THREE: A NEST OF VIPERS

The heroes land on the lake shortly after nightfall. It's pitch-black out here in the wilderness, but they think that, far off through the jungle, they can see a hint of firelight. Trekking that way through dense undergrowth, they

slowly and uncomfortably, but surely, make their way toward the light.

At last the heroes come to the edge of a large clearing, and in the center of that clearing is a large, ancient, and mostly ruined temple. For this temple, use any map of the “temple” or “inner sanctum” area of Angkor Wat, but assume most of the walls and roofs have crumbled away leaving a mostly-open area with lots of columns. At the very center the Cult’s leaders have set up an altar with a large fire... and tied to a nearby column is the helpless Amanda Wellingsley! Gathered all around the altar, eagerly watching the ceremony and chanting, are dozens (if not hundreds) of cultists. Standing nearest the altar and looking outward is an “honor guard” of a half-dozen or more particularly strong- and nasty-looking cultists holding spears.

If the PCs watch the ceremony for a little while, they’ll see the head priest get more and more worked up as the ritual proceeds. Then have them make PER Rolls. The one who made it by the most suddenly sees something moving up among the remaining bits of roof and lintels near the altar. It’s a gigantic red serpent! The sacrifice doesn’t involve burning or cutting Amanda Wellingsley to death... she’s going to be eaten alive! (Use the Giant Snake from pages 116-17 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for the red serpent.)

Time for the heroes to bring this show to a halt. The easiest way to do this is to somehow distract or frighten away most of the cultists so the odds against the PCs drop. Let the heroes

plan whatever they want (within reason) — but if they take too long, spur them to action by revealing the giant snake or having a group of late-arriving cultists come walking through the jungle right where they’re hiding.

RACE TO THE PLANE

It’s possible, if not likely, that the heroes will somehow get close enough to rescue Amanda Wellingsley without having fully routed the cultists and/or slain their leader. In this case, a group of cultists, perhaps led by members of the “honor guard,” may pursue the fleeing heroes in an attempt to (a) kill them, and (b) retrieve the sacrifice (in that order of priority). This could lead to a running battle in the jungle, an attempt by the heroes to lure the cultists into an ambush, or the cultists trying to shoot down the PCs’ plane with rifle fire. Go with whatever seems most dramatic, and make it exciting and fun!

CONCLUSION

After returning safely to Singapore with the girl in tow and the Cult thoroughly defeated (if not destroyed), it’s time to retire to the famous Long Bar in the Raffles Hotel for a well-deserved drink!




Thrilling Hero Adventures

**THE
GOLDEN IDOL
OF SIKRÁL**

Adventure Four

THE GOLDEN IDOL OF SIKRÁL



When the review of a dead professor's papers reveals wrongdoing, the PCs find themselves chasing his unscrupulous nephew to Central America and into a long-lost valley where an ancient civilization unknown to modern man still lives. There they must explore — and survive — the temple of the frog-god Síkrál to prove themselves the true friends of the tribe and ensure that the professor's legacy is not exploited and destroyed.

The Golden Idol Of Síkrál is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters. It's particularly helpful if at least one of the PCs has either or both of the Concealment and Security Systems Skills.

ADVENTURE LINKS

The Golden Idol Of Síkrál can tie in nicely with Xınca-Hol from *Thrilling Places*, since both adventures take place in the same region. Perhaps the Quicháru of Golden Idol are somehow related to the Mayan pygmies of Xınca-Hol, or the two cultures long ago conducted trade with one another so that the PCs find relics from (or information about) one adventure while they're involved with the other. Another possibility is to move some of the African adventures in this book to South/Central America and tie them into *Golden Idol* somehow.

BACKGROUND

Deep within the jungles of Nicaragua there once lived a people known as the Quicháru. Although they traded extensively with the Maya, the Aztecs, and various South American tribes, they remain almost unknown to modern men. Unlike the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incans, they didn't build large stone cities (only a few step-pyramid temples); their writing, mostly carved notches in wood, was not permanent enough to survive until the twentieth century; their stone carvings are mainly symbolic and religious, not representational or historical. The only depictions of them are in a few Mayan murals.

One man, Professor Anderson Brisby, made it his life's work to rediscover this forgotten civilization. Using only the scraps of data he could gather from Mayan murals, he began to search for the remains of the Quicháru. While exploring the wilds of Nicaragua he came across a remote valley, hidden under jungle growth and a covering of misty clouds. Descending into it, he found not the ruins of the Quicháru civilization, but the Quicháru themselves! For centuries one last tribe of Quicháru have lived in that valley, isolated from the outside world, carrying on their native traditions and worshipping their gods, including the three most important ones: Ab Kínchel, the feathered serpent, god of wind and rain; Yuhásin, god of crafts and wisdom; and Síkrál, the golden frog, god of fertility and power.

Professor Brisby spent several years among the Quicháru, learning their language and their ways. He was especially fascinated by the cult of Síkrál, the chief of their gods and the one most often depicted in idols and temples. The old step-pyramid temple of Síkrál, several miles away from the Quicháru village, was no longer used by the tribe. Centuries ago, the last of the priests died without passing on the knowledge of the deadly traps that guarded its inner sanctum, reputed to hold great wealth, and no Quicháru has even dared to climb up the pyramid's side since. Professor Brisby carefully recorded all the legends about the temple, including one about a fabulous idol of Síkrál, made of solid gold, which supposedly was hidden there. He even sketched the idol based on word-of-mouth descriptions and surviving stone statues of the god: a golden frog, about 5" x 5" x 5", with a wide-open mouth and solid emeralds for eyes.

Brisby finally returned home to tell the world about his findings. In fact, he wrote a book describing all aspects of the Quicháru civilization. But he pushed himself too hard, causing the malaria he contracted in Central America to recur again and again. Shortly after he finished the book his frail body succumbed to the disease, and he passed away. His will left his anthropological legacy to the university he'd been associated with for decades.

Unfortunately, before Professor Brisby's papers could be inventoried, his unscrupulous nephew Randolph got into his study. In need of money to finance his gambling debts, Randolph was captivated by the Professor's elaborate descriptions of the Quichárus' golden "trinkets."

He stole the book and flew to Nicaragua. He found the Quicháru and wormed his way into their society, becoming a trusted advisor to the chief, Five Deer, just like his uncle had been. He now schemes to steal all the wealth of the friendly tribesmen and make his way back to civilization a rich man.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One or more PCs become involved in Professor Brisby's estate. Several months after the Professor's death, the PC who's been working with Brisby's papers realizes something's missing: the book the professor had planned to write, and to which his notes make numerous references. After they talk to several of Brisby's friends and servants, the PCs learn Randolph went into Brisby's study and spent several hours there the day before the reading of the will. When they investigate Randolph, they uncover his sudden departure and his gambling debts.

Realizing what's happened, the PCs set out on Randolph Brisby's trail. They must travel to Managua, Nicaragua, and thence to the Valley of the Quicháru. But Randolph is ready for them. He told the Quicháru evil men who wanted to hurt them would follow him. The Quicháru, thinking him their friend, believe him. When they see the PCs, they take them captive. If the PCs are foolish enough to fight back, they end up looking like pincushions. The PCs are brought before Five Deer and Randolph, who denounces them. But the PCs, having studied Professor Brisby's notes, know enough of the Quicháru and their language to respond and challenge Randolph.

The PCs' knowledge of his tribe's customs and language confuses Five Deer. He decrees that the PCs must be tested to determine whether they speak the truth. At Randolph's suggestion, the test is this: they have to enter the temple of Sikral and bring back the golden idol! After being taken to the pyramid, the PCs climb to the top and find the way to enter the "inner sanctum." There they must confront and defeat a series of traps based on Quicháru myth, find the idol, avoid one last trap, and leave with the golden frog in their hands. Once they return to the village, Randolph is judged to be a liar and is cast out. The heroes return home with several Quicháru artifacts and a wealth of knowledge about this new and fascinating civilization.

PART ONE: JOURNEY TO THE LOST VALLEY

The adventure begins a few months after the death of Professor Anderson Brisby, an explorer and anthropologist who specialized in the Americas. He died as a result of repeated bouts of malaria weakening him over the last half-year or so before his death.

During his long career, Prof. Brisby visited much of Central and South America, made many friends, and wrote a dozen books concerning the history and tribes of the region. While he made no Earth-shattering discoveries, he did much to advance mankind's knowledge of his chosen subject. (If possible, introduce an elderly Prof. Brisby as a friendly NPC prior to this scenario, so his death will have more meaning for the heroes.)

At the request of the university Prof. Brisby worked for, a PC (or PCs) who's a known expert in the field of anthropology has been inventorying his papers and belongings to determine what may be worth publishing, and what should be archived. (If no PC is appropriate for this role, use a friendly NPC who reports his findings to the PCs.) After weeks of work, the hero has come to a conclusion: something's missing. Some of Brisby's notes on a subject that had long intrigued him — the enigmatic Quicháru people, who died out centuries ago — were organized as if he intended to write a book on the subject. The notes have some intriguing mentions of the Quicháru, including references to their gold jewelry and a "golden frog god," but there are odd gaps in them. The more the PC has worked with the Professor's papers, the more certain he's become of an unsettling conclusion: Brisby did write a book about the Quicháru... but it's been stolen.

INVESTIGATING THE THEFT

Having realized that Professor Brisby's definitive work on the Quicháru, the only book ever written about that tribe, is missing, it's up to the PCs to find it. Time for them to put on their investigators' hats and look into the situation.

The obvious first step is to interview the Professor's associates. He mostly worked at his large country home, where he had a staff of five servants, but he also maintained an office at the university and often did research in its library.

Interviews of the Professor's colleagues at the university, the librarians there, and his students turn up nothing. He hasn't confided in any of them about his recent work — in fact, he was unusually secretive about it, as if he had a big academic surprise planned.

Interviews of the Professor's servants (a butler, two maids, a cook, and a gardener) prove more fruitful, if the PCs ask the right questions. Both the butler and one of the maids witnessed

something important. When they found the Professor's body in his bedroom, they called the authorities and his next of kin, his nephew Randolph Brisby. (When Randolph's name is mentioned, have the PCs interviewing them make PER Rolls. If they succeed by 3 or more, they notice that both the butler and the maid bristle a little at the mention of Randolph's name; they don't seem to like him.) Randolph arrived first, checked on his uncle's body in the bedroom, then ducked into the Professor's study and shut the door. He was in there for about 10 minutes, then emerged with a valise he didn't have previously and left before the police arrived. No one's seen or heard from him since.

Randolph Brisby

This information should be enough to tip off the PCs to the fact that Randolph stole the Professor's completed book manuscript and some of his more important notes. That should shift their focus into investigating him.

Randolph lives in a nice, though not luxurious, apartment in the Blackbridge neighborhood of Hudson City. He doesn't have a job; he lives off a small but adequate trust fund established for him by his late parents. As the Professor's servants can tell the PCs, he liked to live beyond his means, and was fond of fast living and Jazz Age fun; the Professor had to bail him out of tight spots with loans on several occasions.

If the heroes hit the streets and succeed with a Streetwise roll by 3 or more, they'll learn an interesting fact: Randolph was an inveterate gambler, and not a very good one. In fact, over the past year he's racked up a debt of nearly \$10,000 in a couple of underground casinos owned by the Fratianno mob, and the Fratiannos have been looking for him to get their money... or blood.

OFF TO NICARAGUA

By this point, if the PCs haven't figured out what happened, have them make Deduction rolls with a +1 bonus. If they succeed, they realize Randolph stole the Professor's book and notes, which probably mentioned some sort of valuable relics, and headed off to Central America to try to find the treasure to pay off his gambling debts and set himself up in a better lifestyle. If the heroes want to recover the book... and maybe the treasures!... for posterity, they're going to have to move quickly!

Getting to Nicaragua is a relatively easy matter even if the PCs don't have their own plane or anything like that. From any major airport in the United States they can arrange a flight (though it will take several "hops" to get to Managua); from any port they can obtain passage by ship (see page 149 of Pulp Hero for more information about period ship travel).

The Current Situation in Nicaragua

Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, is still rebuilding and recovering from a devastating March, 1931 earthquake. However, the PCs should have little trouble finding a hotel they can stay at and obtaining the guides and bearers they're going to need — all they have to do is spread enough cordobas around and many doors will open.

Nicaragua itself leads a chaotic existence. As of 1935, American troops have been withdrawn. General Anastasio Somoza's forces killed rebel leader Augusto Sandino in February, 1934, but the rebels continue to struggle against the government of President Juan Sarcasa (who in June, 1936 will be deposed by Somoza). If you want to extend or expand the adventure, you can embroil the PCs in all of this. For example, maybe a group of rebels (or bandits masquerading as rebels) takes the heroes prisoner during the trek to the valley of the Quicháru, forcing the PCs to think quickly and fight bravely to escape with their lives, employees, and baggage train intact. Even worse, the rebels might capture them after they're returning from the valley laden with treasure....

Tracking Randolph Brisby

Once the PCs are on the ground in Nicaragua, they can start asking around about Randolph Brisby. By spending ½d6 days asking around, handing out "gifts" of cash to hotel clerks and street urchins, and chasing down likely leads, they can make a Streetwise roll at +1 (Bribery is Complementary). If they succeed, they learn Randolph was in the city roughly a week ago. He hired a group of bearers and set off into the jungle. No one's seen or heard from him since. If they fail, they have to spend another ½d6 days asking around before they can roll again, this time at +2 (and so on). All bonuses change to a -1 penalty if the heroes don't speak Spanish or have the good sense to hire a native to help them.

Finding the Quicháru

Following Randolph's trail and locating the Valley of the Quicháru requires two things.

First, the heroes have to figure out which way to go — they can't just hike blindly into the jungle and trust to good luck. Fortunately, they have the bulk of Professor Brisby's notes. With ½d6 days of work, a hero (probably the one who was inventorying the papers to begin with) can pull together enough references from the notes to assemble a reasonably trustworthy map to the Valley of the Quicháru. Based on Brisby's notes, the heroes estimate it will take about a week to hike into the interior and find the Valley... assuming no difficulties (foul weather, bandits, getting lost...) arise along the way.

Second, they have to outfit an expedition. This means hiring guides, bearers, and transla-

tors who can speak the dialects of the countryside folk and the languages of the native tribes, buying or renting mules and horses, buying food and other supplies, and so forth. This, too, will take about ½d6 days (or possibly longer, if you want to use the Expeditioneering rules in the Appendix to deal with this in more detail). If you want to complicate the scenario a bit, have the heroes hire Alejandro Fuentes (see *Masterminds And Madmen*) as their guide.

PART TWO: VALLEY OF THE QUICHÁRU

Unless you want to add some scenes or lengthen the adventure as described above, at this point you can probably fast-forward to when the heroes reach the Valley. Throw in a few minor trail encounters (a venomous serpent that almost bites a PC, a particularly beautiful waterfall, a bearer and mule falling off a slippery mountain trail to their doom...) to add some color if you like.

Eventually the heroes find themselves standing on the edge of a large, fog-shrouded valley. It's been an arduous trek to get here; it's not surprising the Quicháru have remained isolated and undiscovered for so long. Off in the distance... is that the top of a pyramid-temple peeking through the fog?

Eager to reach the end of their journey, the heroes take the barely-visible trail leading into the valley. They proceed down the trail, slowly and cautiously, for several hours. Eventually they reach a small clearing that looks like a good place to stop and rest for a while.

CAPTIVES!

Suddenly, the hairs on the backs of their necks start to tingle... something's not right! (Characters with Danger Sense may make their rolls; if they succeed, they instantly realize the clearing's surrounded and get the usual benefits of Danger Sense.) Without warning a large group of native warriors steps almost-silently out of the forest around the clearing — they're all around the heroes. The natives are pointing blowguns and bows with drawn arrows at the PCs and their bearers, but that's the extent of their hostility right now. Before any of the heroes gets trigger-happy, have them make INT Rolls to realize that if the natives just wanted to kill them, they'd have started firing from the cover of the forest.

If the PCs are foolish enough to try to fight their way out of this one, they're going to end up looking like pincushions. Each of them is Covered by a least ½d6+1 warriors, and their arrows and blowgun darts are tipped with poison. The only sensible course of action is surrender; if necessary, have the heroes make more INT Rolls to realize this if the players have lost their grasp

on the obvious. It's okay; it happens to Pulp heroes all the time.

Once the (surviving) heroes surrender, the Quicháru leader will order them to kneel on the ground so that his warriors can tie them up. At this point, the hero who's been inventorying Professor Brisby's papers, and any other hero working closely with him on that project, discovers that a little knowledge has rubbed off on him — he can understand Quicháru speech, albeit haltingly. He understands enough to get the gist of the leader's orders and communicate them to the other PCs. (Similarly, those PCs know a little about the customs and civilization of the Quicháru.)

Once all the heroes and their bearers have been restrained, the Quicháru warriors frog-march them further into the valley. Reaching the village of the Quicháru takes only a couple more hours.

FIVE DEER

The warriors "escort" the heroes into the Quicháru village and right up to a large home on a hill in the center of town — the house of the Quicháru chieftain or king, obviously. If you'd like to add an element of romance to the adventure, have a comely Quicháru maiden notice and fall for a handsome hero as the PCs are led through town.

In the walled compound right inside the main entrance of the king's house, the heroes are made to kneel once more. Once they're on the ground, the chieftain, Five Deer, emerges from inside the house. He's an old man, probably in his fifties, with greying hair and plenty of wrinkles and scars to show he's lived a long, hard life. He's got a certain regal bearing about him and is wearing much finer clothing than the other Quicháru the heroes have seen.

Accompanying Five Deer is a white man the PCs instantly recognize as Randolph Brisby — he looks a good bit like his uncle. He's clutching a thick leather valise and sweating in the tropical heat. He looks a little nervous to see the heroes, but is obviously "in good" with Five Deer.

Five Deer looks over the heroes somberly. If any PC tries to speak to him, a native warrior whacks that PC in the head with the butt of his spear (3d6 NND damage); repeated attempts to speak will earn further beatings of increasing severity.

After Five Deer's had the chance to look at the PCs, Randolph Brisby begins talking to him earnestly in Quicháru. Any heroes who can understand the language (either in bits and pieces because they studied Professor Brisby's notes, or in full because they have Universal Translator or the like) quickly get the impression that Randolph is denouncing them. He's warning Five Deer that the heroes have come to steal his land and enslave his people, that they're known criminals in the outside world. After he speaks

urgently for a minute or so, Five Deer raises a hand and he instantly stops talking.

Five Deer looks back at the heroes. In halting English (taught to him by Professor Brisby) he asks, “Why come here?” The heroes now have the chance to explain themselves. If they can do so in Quicháru, they will earn a look of surprise, perhaps even appreciation. Whichever hero does the talking (or most of the talking) should make an Oratory or Persuasion roll (his choice; the other Skill is Complementary, as is Seduction); if he doesn’t have any of those Skills, he can make a PRE Roll at -2 (with another +1 to either roll for speaking Quicháru, if appropriate).

If The Roll Fails

Failure means the chief believes Randolph and distrusts the heroes. (He has no particular reason not to believe Randolph; he’s the nephew of a great man Five Deer considers a friend and has done nothing deceitful... yet.) He decrees that the truth of the heroes’ claims must be tested “according to the ancient ritual” the next morning.

The PCs are allowed to sleep (under heavy guard) in one of the huts. They are being watched at all times, but they can try to mount an escape if they like. The odds are strongly against them, and it’s probably the end of the adventure if they succeed, but you never know what may happen. If possible, try to roll with their plans and give the Quicháru a chance to see that they’re honorable people so Five Deer’s willing to let them enter the temple, as described below.

If the PCs wait for the “ancient ritual,” they’re awakened at dawn and led to the center of the village. There the shaman has built a fire in a large stone bowl. The ritual is simple: one of the heroes must reach into the fire, grab one of the burning coals, and hold it aloft without crying out in pain or letting the expression on his face change. If he can do that, the tribe is willing to let the heroes prove themselves more trustworthy than Randolph.

To pass the test, one of the PCs must succeed with an EGO Roll at -3. The Resistance Talent adds to the roll, as do any Heroic Talents or other abilities that provide bonuses for resisting pain (such as *It Doesn’t Hurt That Much* on page 273 of *Pulp Hero*). Failure means the Quicháru execute the heroes by throwing them off a tall cliff onto jagged rocks. Hopefully the heroes have a few Heroic Action Points to spend to avoid that unpleasant fate.

The hero who grasps the coal takes 1 BODY damage with no defense; Paramedics and like methods cannot “heal” this damage. For the rest of the adventure, any DEX Rolls, Agility Skill rolls, or Attack Rolls involving the use of that hand suffer a -2 penalty.

If The Roll Succeeds

If the hero’s speech rings true, Five Deer begins to have doubts about Randolph. Maybe these new outlanders are speaking the truth. After all, this Randolph seems to be a pale shadow of his fine uncle. The heroes deserve a chance to prove that they do not intend the Quicháru any harm — and, in fact, that they’re willing to help the tribe. “Your word sound noble,” he says. “Tomorrow have chance prove worthy, prove friend of Quicháru.”

The PCs are allowed to sleep (under heavy guard) in one of the huts. They’re watched, but not as closely as if the chief distrusted them. Still, the odds of an escape are poor... and in any event, why escape when things seem to be going, if not well, at least not dismally?

If you had a pretty Quicháru girl notice one of the handsome male PCs earlier, this is a perfect time to bring her back into the story. At an opportune moment she sneaks into the hut and brings the PC food... and perhaps a little advice.

PART THREE: THE TEMPLE OF SIKRÁL

Quicháru warriors awaken the heroes at dawn. They’re led back to Five Deer’s house, where the warriors free them from their bonds. If they give their word to do no harm to the chief or his people, Five Deer will give them back their weapons and gear — over Randolph’s strident objections.

The chief now explains what the heroes must do to prove themselves trustworthy and a friend of the Quicháru. “To sun-set is temple of Sikrál.” He points in that direction; the PCs can just see the top of the temple-pyramid they noticed on entering the valley through the morning fog. “Old temple. Not used by Quicháru any more. Cursed. But still golden idol of Sikrál is there. Must enter temple, get idol, bring idol to Quicháru, break curse.”

With that, the Quicháru feed the heroes a breakfast of fruit, and then a large troop of warriors escorts them to the temple. The warriors obviously aren’t happy about the job — they clearly don’t want to get anywhere near the temple — but they do as Five Deer orders.

THE TEMPLE

The temple of Sikrál is a large step-pyramid with a small structure on top, similar in most ways to certain Aztec and Mayan structures. Each of the steps is about 2’ (13 feet) tall, and there are ten of them. A staircase leads up the temple to the top, where it terminates just before a large rectangular altar. Even today, after countless rains and exposure to the sun, dark bloodstains are readily apparent on the top of the altar and running down both edges of the staircase.

The warriors (none of whom speak English) motion the heroes up the stairs. To get into the temple, the heroes must walk to the top, enter the tiny structure behind the altar, and find the concealed door that reveals the stairway going down.

When the heroes first enter the tiny, dark structure (it's about 2" x 1", the same size as a car), they disturb a colony of bats that roost inside. You can play this for fright, humor, or however you wish.

Concealed in the floor is a stone trapdoor that gives access to a spiral staircase. Finding it requires a successful Concealment roll. There are no traps on the door or anywhere else in this little room. Opening the trapdoor requires a lifting capacity of 1,000 kg. (To determine two or more characters' lifting capacity, add together their respective lifting capacities from STR and compare it to the Lifting Table to see what "combined STR" they have for lifting purposes.)

The Second Level

The spiral staircase leads down about 70-80 feet into a large chamber. The column around which the stair winds is lightly carved with scenes of Quicháru warriors, gods, demons, and monsters. The figure of Sikral — a tall man of proud bearing, dressed in ornate garments including a pectoral in the shape of a frog's head — appears frequently. The staircase is open, with no railing, so they may fall off if they're not careful (call for DEX Rolls, if you want to add a note of danger). There's no light in the room at all, so they'll need torches or lanterns (which they hopefully thought to include with their gear). The stair terminates at the floor below (or so it appears now...).

The heroes may suspect that there's a trap on the stairs... and they're right. About a third of the way down to the room below, one of the steps is a pressure-plate that triggers a group of spear-like spikes to project out of the central column. The character on that step and the two above him take 2d6 Killing Damage, and the spikes remain in place to block the way down (though since they're wood, cutting through them isn't difficult... if the characters have the right tools or weapons). Finding the trap requires a Security Systems roll at -1; disarming it requires another roll at -3.

Eventually the characters get down to the floor level of the room (hopefully more or less intact!) Here's a description of the room; you can read it aloud to the players if you like:

The room the stairs lead down into is a square room, about 65 feet (10") long on a side, with a sort of triangular-shaped hallway or chamber leading straight outward from each wall. The floor is made of flagstones and is surprisingly (though not perfectly) level. Painted on the floor around the spiral staircase is a band of white about two feet thick. In this band, directly facing each hallway, there's an inch-deep

diamond-shaped depression cut into the floor. The long axis of the diamond is about six inches long and the short axis about half that. The white paint does not cover the inside of the depressions, but they otherwise seem unremarkable.

Beyond the white band around the stairway, the floor of the room is a beautiful mosaic made of thousands of tiny stone tiles. It depicts a tableau from Quicháru mythology in which Sikral brought the Quicháru fire, then led them to their home, fighting demons and monsters along the way to keep them safe.

The walls of the room, like the central column, are carved with scenes from Quicháru mythology. Given a week or more in here, a hero with the right background could learn some fascinating things about the Quicháru and their religion. In each corner stands a large stone urn.

The entranceways to the four chambers leading off the center room are each decorated arches.

These five rooms — the central room and the four halls/chambers that lead off of it — embody Quicháru mythic concepts. The Quicháru cosmology and philosophy envisions a world of five directions: north, east, south, west, and center. Each one has certain associated symbols and concepts, which have influenced the decor and traps in the rooms related to them.

A character who examines each of the depressions and makes a Security Systems roll at -3 realizes that together they act as some sort of trigger... but for what, he's not sure. Just pressing on them won't do the trick; the depressions have to be filled somehow before the trigger will activate. To find the proper "keys," the heroes must brave each of the four chambers — north, east, south, west — and survive their traps.

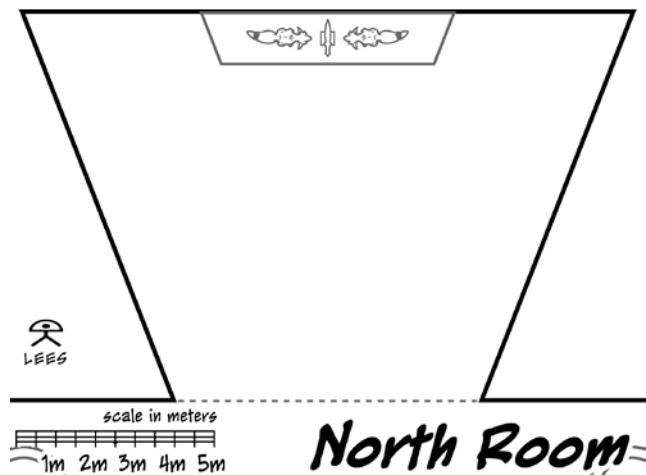
Each of the four chambers is of equal size — the far wall is 50 feet (7.5"), and from the entranceway to the far wall is 35 feet (5").

THE NORTH ROOM

Description: The archway leading into the north chamber is made of a lighter-colored stone than the rest of the central room and is carved with eight intertwined lizards. In the chamber itself, the walls and floor are painted a featureless black; the ceiling is also black, but with many tiny white rings representing the stars. Along the center of the north wall runs a table-like ledge; sitting on it are two foxes flanking a stone box about a foot wide and broad and four inches deep. On top of the box is an obsidian dagger.

In Quicháru thought, the North is associated with the number 8, the color black, the evening star, storms, and animals such as the fox and the lizard (both of whom play "trickster" roles in Quicháru myth and legend). "Unlucky winds" blow from the North, and misfortune often dogs people born on a day linked with North.

The stone box is not locked and is thicker



than it looks; it weighs 200 kg and is lightly carved with abstract Quicháru designs. Inside it there's a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick — it fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above). The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of a fierce storm rolling over the Valley of the Quicháru. It weighs 2.5 kg.

The Trap: When the characters move the stone box in any way, or remove the stone plaque from the box, a stone wall descends from the archway leading into the room, trapping the characters inside. The wall takes 2 Segments to descend, becoming flush with the floor on DEX 12 in the second Segment. To add a note of tension, assume the character who picks up the plaque does so on his first Phase in the Turn, not on Segment 12. Any character who has an action left in that Segment can easily move outside and avoid the wall; those who have Phases in the next Segment have to make DEX Rolls to get out in time. Characters with DEXs less than 12, or who don't have a Phase in the next Segment, are automatically trapped inside unless someone carries or throws them back into the main room.

Characters may instead try to stop the stone wall from shutting. The wall has STR 40, so holding it up by main strength alone may be tough. A better plan is to use the stone box or some other sturdy object to stop it from descending all the way. Given the box's weight (200 kg), a character of STR 15 can barely lift it and stagger a step or two; it takes a character of STR 18 or more to lift it and carry it over to the door in time (not to mention enough DEX and SPD to get there in time) to use it to block the wall. Other possibilities include a crowbar or the like; if the characters use an object that's not sturdy enough, it may merely slow the wall down instead of stopping it.

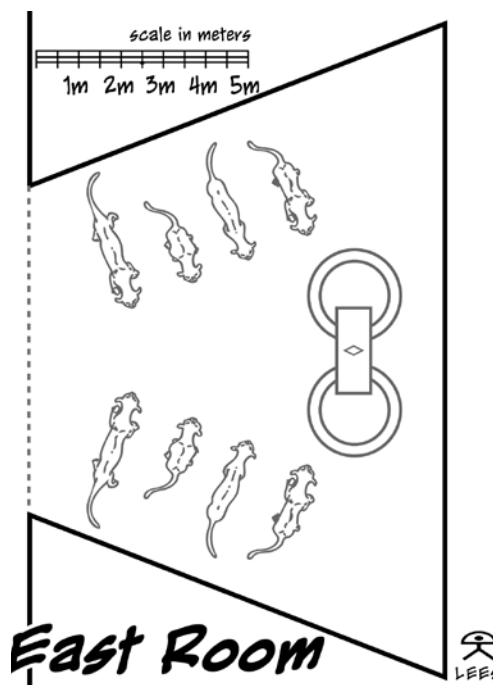
Any character who's trapped inside won't have to worry about a slow death from starvation. Beginning two Segments after the wall contacts the floor, the trapped characters learn that the "white rings" representing the stars on the ceiling are painted around tiny holes... because

sand begins pouring in through them! The room will completely fill with sand in 1 Minute, crushing and/or suffocating anyone trapped inside. The pour of sand has STR 15 for knocking characters down and effectively keeping them from moving around.

Detecting this trap requires a Security Systems roll at -4; disarming it before it activates requires another Security Systems roll at -5. Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the plaque with a Sleight Of Hand roll at -2; if they succeed, the trap doesn't activate. (You must decide whether the object they use is close enough to the plaque's 2.5 kg weight for this to work; if it's not, the Sleight Of Hand roll is irrelevant.) The sliding stone wall can be raised from outside the room by a lever hidden behind a concealed panel to the east of the entrance (Concealment roll at -3 to find).

THE EAST ROOM

Description: The archway leading into the eastern chamber is made of a lighter-colored stone than the rest of the central room and is carved with eleven panels depicting gods, demons, or heroes of Quicháru myth. The walls of this room are painted yellow and orange; dominating the eastern wall is a large rising sun done in the Quicháru style in pure gold leaf. Lining the northern and southern walls are a series of stone statues of jaguars: one crouching nearest the entranceway, then one sitting on its haunches, then one in stalking pose, and finally one in the middle of leaping onto its prey nearest the east



wall. Next to the east wall are two stone urns, similar to those in the main room but sealed. Propped across them is a stone slab, and on the stone slab are two solid gold statues of beetles about six inches long. With their mandibles the beetles are holding a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on the top with a scene of the sun rising over the Valley of the Quicháru.

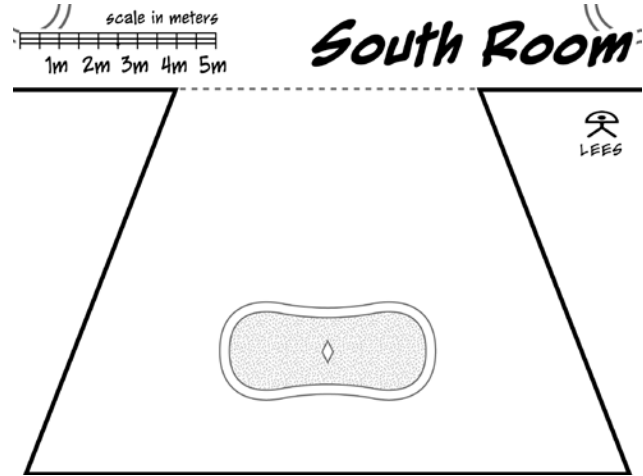
In Quicháru thought, the East is associated with the number 11; the colors yellow, orange, and ochre; the Sun; and animals such as the jaguar and the beetle (especially the brightly-colored chuma beetle). The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 2.5 kg.

The Trap: The stone slab is carefully balanced and weighted so that it doesn't break either of the urns (which are actually made of clay and painted to look like stone). Removing the plaque from the gold beetles causes them to unbalance and fall over, which in turn unbalances the system, causing the slab to crack open the urns, unleashing a swarm of ravenous, flesh-eating beetles! (How did the beetles survive in the urns all these centuries, you ask? Don't be impertinent. This is a Pulp adventure!)

Defeating this trap is a simple matter of carefully lifting the stone slab off the urns before removing the plaque. Doing this without unbalancing or dropping anything is tricky, though. It requires two people of at least STR 15 to lift the slab, and each of them must succeed with a DEX Roll at -1. If either of them is too weak or fails a DEX Roll, the urns crack open; otherwise, the characters are safe.

If the urns crack, the cracks quickly spread across them, and in the next Segment they fall to pieces and the beetles go free. 1d6+1 characters are attacked by a swarm of them; use the Stinging Insect Swarm character sheet from page 183 of The HERO System Bestiary, but remove the Swarm's Flight. The swarms will pursue the characters throughout the main room and all four chambers until destroyed or trapped somehow. (For example, clever PCs who know about the North Room's trap might try to lure the beetles in there and trap them behind the stone wall.)

Detecting this trap requires a Security Systems roll at -3; disarming it before it activates requires the actions described above. Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the plaque with a Sleight Of Hand roll at -4; if they succeed, the trap doesn't activate. (You must decide whether the object they use is close



enough to the plaque's 2.5 kg weight for this to work; if it's not, the Sleight Of Hand roll is irrelevant.)

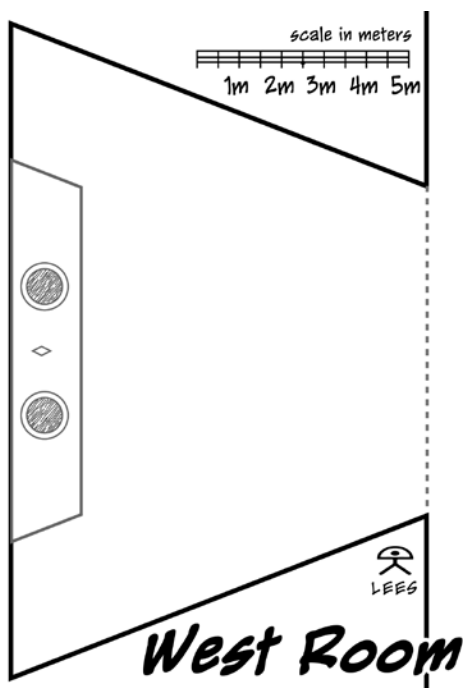
THE SOUTH ROOM

Description: The archway leading into the southern chamber is made of a greyish-blue stone and is carved with four panels, each depicting a waterland scene with turtles, ducks, herons, and similar creatures. The walls of this room are painted in beautiful patterns of blue and green, and the ceiling with scenes of gentle rainclouds. The floor is decorated with a mosaic suggesting grasses and water-plants. The air in here is oddly cool and fresh despite the passage of years. Near the south wall is a small pool of clear, cool water. In the center of the fountain there's a sort of carved arch in the shape of quetzal-birds; where the two arms of the arch almost touch they hold a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of the feathered serpent god Ab Kinchel causing a gentle rain to fall on the Valley of the Quicháru.

In Quicháru thought, the South is associated with the number 4, the colors blue and green, the morning star, good rains, fertility, and animals such as the turtle and quetzal-bird. It's generally regarded as a propitious direction; good luck is said to follow Quicháru born on a day linked with the South. The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 2.5 kg.

The Trap: There is no trap in this chamber — in fact, just the opposite. If the characters come to this room first, before any of the other chambers, they can retrieve this plaque without any peril. Furthermore, all rolls made to detect, disarm, or counteract the traps in the other chambers receive a +1 bonus (which may only partially offset their inherent penalties, but every little bit helps). If they visit any other chamber first, even just to step inside and look around, they won't receive this benefit.

Detecting that there are no traps in this room requires a Security Systems roll at -5. Otherwise the characters are doomed to remain in doubt, waiting for the axe to fall...



THE WEST ROOM

Description: The archway leading into the western chamber is made of an ochre-colored stone and is carved with six panels depicting leaping deer. The walls and floor of this room are painted red. The ceiling is black, and dominated by a picture of Nantzucc, the Quicháru god of the moon. He wears elaborate ceremonial garb in grey and red, and his skin is a sort of pale yellow. He carries a spear with an odd crescent-shaped blade in his right hand, and in his left a cuahola (a magical torch used by the Quicháru gods). Along the center of the west wall runs a table-like ledge; sitting on it are two brazier-like containers blazing with fire. Between them there's a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of the moonlit nighttime in the Valley of the Quicháru.

In Quicháru thought, the West is associated with the number 6, the color red, the moon, and animals such as the deer and rabbit. The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 2.5 kg.

The Trap: The players will likely suspect that the braziers are part of a trap, but they're wrong. The trap here involves scything crescent-shaped blades swinging through the chamber on pendulums from the ceiling — five blades, one for each hex-line in the chamber (which is 5" long from the entranceway to the west wall). If they

pick up the stone plaque without disarming the trap, the blades immediately fall free from their niches and begin cutting back and forth through the room in a random pattern. The Segment that happens, every character in the room must make a DEX Roll at -2; the character who picked up the plaque must make his roll at -4.

Those who succeed dodge the initial volley; any who fail take 1d6 Killing Damage. If a character tries to Dive For Cover to get away, apply the DEX Roll penalty to his DEX Roll to do that.

If a character doesn't move, he can continue to dodge the blades cutting through where he's standing with an unpenalized DEX Roll every Segment. If he moves, even 1", the trap attacks him with OCV 9. The trap gets +1 OCV for every hex line a character moves through.

If a character decides to attack a blade as it swings at him, the pendulums are DCV 9 and have 3 DEF, 3 BODY.

The Center Room

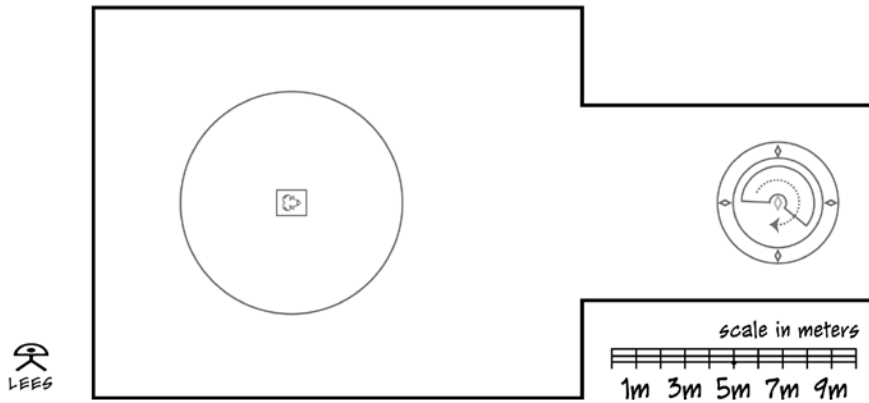
In Quicháru thought, the Center is associated with the number 5, the color white, the star Cenzonaha (what we'd call Polaris, or the North Star), and the eagle.

As far as the heroes can see at first, there is no "Center Room." In fact, the room they first entered after descending the stairs — the square room with the four halls leading off of it — is the gateway to the Center Room. When the heroes place all four of the diamond-shaped stone plaques they found in each of the four other rooms in the four depressions (with the plaque found in each room in the corresponding depression), the spiral staircase they descended to get to this room begins to sink. (If the plaques aren't placed in the right depressions, the stairway won't sink.) It keeps sinking until where there was once a column, there's now a staircase going down. To put it another way, the staircase drops down one level, giving access to the Center Room below the main square room... but now the PCs are cut off from the way out because the staircase no longer connects to the structure above! (If the heroes remove all four stone diamonds from the four depressions, the staircase rises again.)

When they descend the staircase, here's what the heroes find:

Description: The staircase ends at the flagstone floor of a wide corridor, its walls carved with depictions of the Quicháru gods, that leads west to a chamber. The entrance to the chamber is an arch carved with abstract Quicháru designs. In the chamber, the walls and floor are undecorated, and in the center of the room there's a raised circular dais two feet tall. In the center of the dais is a rectangular plinth four feet tall. On top of the plinth is the golden idol of Sikrál, a solid gold frog statuette about 5" x 5" x 5", with

The Temple: Center Room



a wide-open mouth and solid emeralds for eyes. The statuette somehow seems to glow, providing a faint light in the chamber.

The statuette weighs 20 kg.

The Trap: The weight of the statue holds in place a simple but deadly trap. If removed from the plinth, it causes the entire room to sink, quickly trapping everyone in the room in what will become their tomb! The plinth will seem to “rise” as the room sinks; it’s actually a rectangular stone column.

The room has to sink 2” to close off the entranceway and trap the heroes. It sinks at the rate of ½” per Segment. The room is 10” long and 8” wide. Escaping the trap is a matter of getting out of the room before it finishes sinking, stopping it from sinking all the way by wedging something in the entranceway (the trap has 60 STR, though, so it had better be something sturdy), or being cautious enough to leave someone in the corridor. After the trap finishes sinking, a character in the corridor can use a concealed lever (Concealment roll at -4 to find) to cause it to rise again.

Detecting this trap requires a Security Systems roll at -6; it cannot be disarmed. Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the statuette with a Sleight Of Hand roll at -5; if they succeed, the trap doesn’t activate. (You must decide whether the object they use is close enough to the statuette’s 20 kg weight for this to work; if it’s not, the Sleight Of Hand roll is irrelevant.)

CONCLUSION

If the characters all get trapped in the final chamber, they’ll die there once their food and water runs out unless they can find a clever way to escape. But hopefully they’ll avoid that unpleasant fate. Once they make it back up to the main chamber, removing the four diamond-shaped plaques causes the staircase to rise again so they can get out.

If the heroes return but without the idol, Randolph will convince Five Deer to sacrifice them to the Quicháru gods. The PCs had better figure out a way to escape, and fast... but hopefully it won’t come to that.

Upon the heroes’ successful return to the village with the golden idol, Five Deer judges that they speak truly and are friends of the Quicháru. Randolph Brisby, seeing which way the wind is blowing, seizes Five Deer and holds him hostage at gunpoint, at which point he becomes fair game for hero and Quicháru warrior alike and has very little chance of escaping the valley alive. The Quicháru seize his possessions (including Professor Brisby’s manuscript and notes) and give them to the heroes. The Quicháru then hold a celebratory feast at which the heroes are made honorary members of the tribe, oaths of friendship are sworn, and the heroes receive many lavish gifts (and hopefully have the good grace to make some gifts to Five Deer and the tribe in return). The idol and other artifacts recovered from the temple must remain with the Quicháru, but the heroes may draw pictures of them or take photographs.

Thrilling Hero Adventures

INNER- EARTH

Adventure Five

INNER-EARTH



When what was supposed to be a simple exploratory journey sweeps Our Heroes down an underground river, they discover a new world in a gigantic cavern far beneath the surface:

Inner-Earth. Inhabited by creatures that long ago died out on the surface, ancient lost peoples and tribes that somehow found their way down there, insidious serpent-men, and a group of lost Nazi explorers whose intentions for the place are decidedly more sinister than the heroes', Inner-Earth contains wonders marvelous to behold... and perils deadlier than anything in the sunlit lands! Do the heroes have what it takes to survive the perils of a hollow world?

ADVENTURE LINKS

The main way to link *Inner-Earth* (which is a mini-setting more than a discrete adventure) to the other adventures in this book is how the PCs get there. For example, in fleeing from the volcano at the end of *Valley Of The Spider Queen*, the heroes might take refuge in the cave marked “the Mouth of Darkness” on the accompanying map. But the eruption is so strong that the cavern collapses and they plunge into Inner-Earth! Crumbling old books or stone tablets found while investigating the mystery of *The Dordogne Zodiac* might lead the PCs to start exploring deep caves in Hawaii or South America and eventually find their way down to the sunless lands. The Neanderthal-inhabited areas might have an entrance that leads to the Pleistocene Plateau (*Thrilling Places*), or the PCs might find clues in one of those areas that hints at the existence of the other. The Mole Men of Pranamoltar (*Thrilling Places*) might have dug tunnels deep enough to reach Inner-Earth, or have broken through to a cavern that leads to it.

Similarly, you can use *Inner-Earth* to lead the PCs to other adventures based on where they finally exit it. Perhaps the escape tunnel leads to the Island of the Pale White Lady, Pranamoltar, K'hull Island, Neos Themiscyra, or Xınca-Hol (all described in *Thrilling Places*).

THE WORKINGS OF INNER-EARTH

Inner-Earth isn't literally another circular ball of rock inside Earth — it's actually a gigantic cavern, many miles below the surface, that stretches (in surface terms) from northern South America all the way to northern Europe and the Arctic. Primarily it consists of three large caverns connected by what's known as the Sunless Ocean — but of course there might be other parts of Inner-Earth not directly connected to this area, just waiting for your heroes to discover...

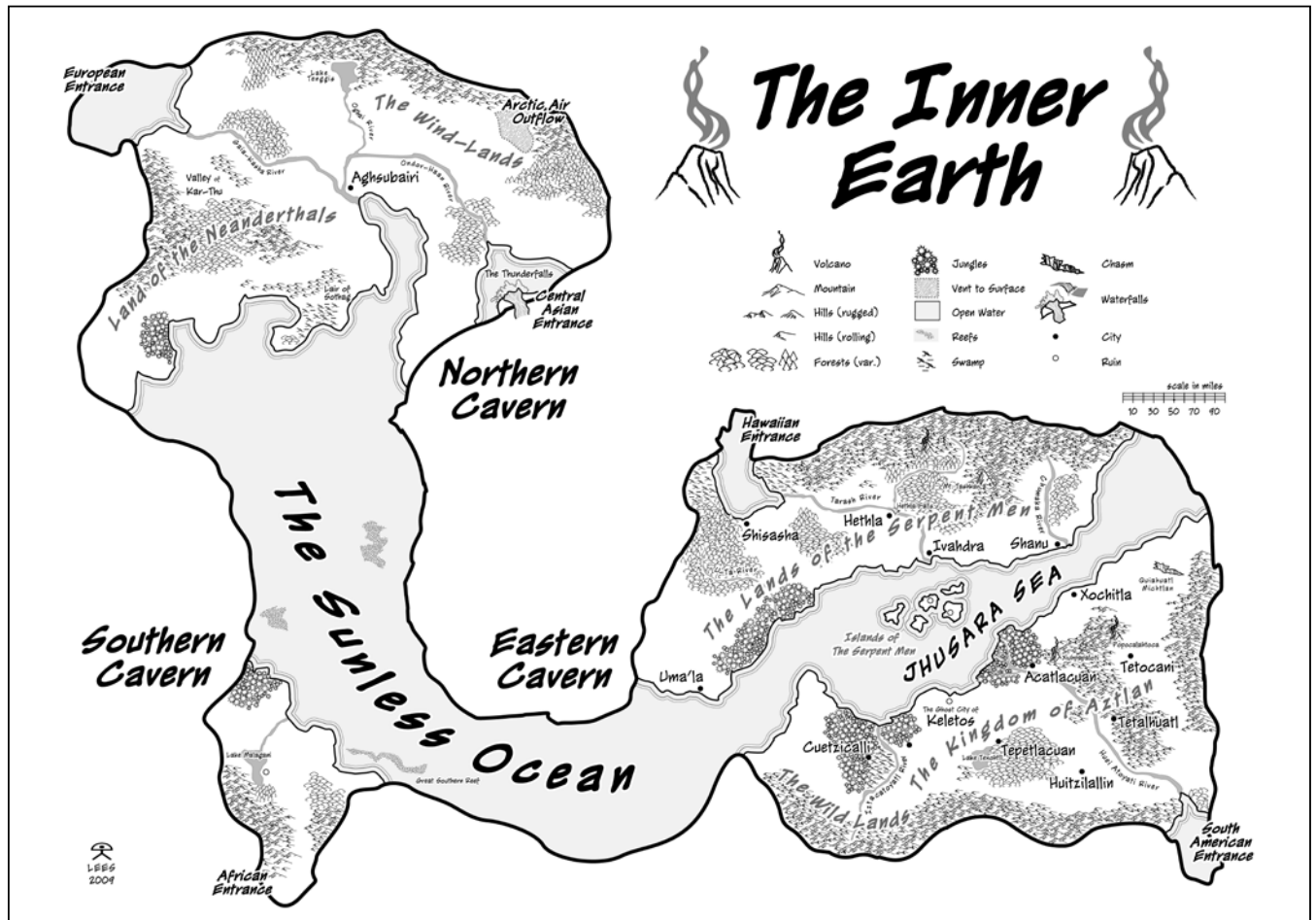
The caverns that make up the Inner-Earth are enormous — hundreds of miles long, and usually at least a mile from floor to ceiling — allowing for weather, plenty of room for travel, the expansion of civilizations, and so forth. Unless you run an entire campaign there, or a really long story arc, it's unlikely your heroes will explore all of it... which leaves plenty of room for a *Return To The Inner-Earth* adventure!

Geography

As shown on the accompanying map, Inner-Earth consists of four major caverns linked together: an eastern cavern containing two landmasses divided by what the inhabitants call the Jhusara Sea; the utterly dark Sunless Ocean; a southern “subcavern” off the Sunless Ocean that's considerably smaller than the other two land caverns; and the northern cavern. Each area is described in more detail below.

LIGHT

Inner-Earth of course doesn't receive direct light from the sun or moon. However, countless veins of pure quartz crystal, some of them quite large, honeycomb the rock between the ceiling of Inner-Earth and the surface (where they usually emerge in out-of-the-way and unexplored locations, so no one knows about them). These crystals refract sunlight and moonlight down to Inner-Earth, even giving an approximation of sunrise and sunset as Earth turns and the area of greatest light crosses the caverns from east to west. However, while the ceiling crystals provide enough light for flora and fauna to thrive, this arrangement has several implications you and your heroes need to be aware of.



First, time passes at the same rate in Inner-Earth as on the surface: 60 minutes in an hour; 24 hours in a day; 365 days a year; and so forth.

Second, refracted sunlight isn't as bright as the full sunlight that reaches the surface — in effect, the Inner-Earth only gets to take advantage of a fraction of the sun's light. In other words, it often seems dim in the Inner-Earth as compared to the surface. The inhabitants are used to this; they don't even know it's unnatural. Visitors from the surface, on the other hand, suffer a -1 on Sight Group PER Roll penalties for the first two or three weeks they're in Inner-Earth as their eyes adjust. (This penalty does not apply to characters who have Nightvision.)

Third, refracted moonlight and starlight are even dimmer, and often non-existent. Nights in the Inner-Earth are almost pitch-black, without even the weak illumination of the moon most of the time. Characters, native or visitor, suffer the full -4 Sight Group PER Roll penalty for "dark night" (unless, of course, they have Nightvision).

Fourth, there are no veins of crystal in the surface oceans. Therefore, the parts of Inner-Earth that are under the oceans — primarily the aptly-named Sunless Ocean — are totally dark at all times regardless of whether it's day or night on the surface.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Water precipitates down to Inner-Earth through cracks in the rock between the surface oceans and the caverns, through the underground rivers that give access to the caverns, and so forth. Water filtering down usually forms into clouds high above the cavern floors, which in turn create rain when the conditions are right (though thunder is relatively rare; the various peoples of Inner-Earth often regard it as an important omen).

Despite the relative lack of light, most parts of Inner-Earth tend to be warm (even hot) and humid due to the fact that the area is enclosed, all the water entering the caverns, and general Pulp tradition. The northern cavern tends to be somewhat cooler and drier (at least in places), but the eastern cavern and southern sub-cavern often verge on (or into) the tropical.

Air precipitates down into the Inner-Earth through the various entrances and the like. It in turn flows out through a large "chimney" in the northeastern part of the northern cavern (which is why the Wind-Lands are so windy). The chimney emerges in the Arctic, where it remains undiscovered by man. Some air also seeps down the chimney, making that part of Inner-Earth cooler than the rest.

TERRAIN

Due to the climate, jungles, swamps, marshes, and grasslands dominate much of the terrain; temperate forests and plains are much rarer, though more common as one approaches mountainous areas. Mountains tend to cluster along the edges of the major caverns, though there are a few other low-lying ranges. There are even some volcanoes.

Inhabitants

Over the course of millennia, animals and people have found their way down to the Inner-Earth. Many have died when unpleasant fate or curiosity drew them deep into the Earth, but enough have survived to create thriving ecosystems and civilizations. And apparently there were some species already living in the Inner-Earth when surface-dwellers first arrived!

A PREHISTORIC ZOO

In most parts of the Inner-Earth, the plants and animals of yesteryear continue to survive. Dinosaurs and prehistoric flora live here in a delightful melange that mixes creatures from multiple geological epochs — explorers will find sabretooth tigers living alongside tyrannosaurs, pterodactyls, plesiosaurs, and dimetrodons. See pages 152-59 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for character sheets for various well-known dinosaurs, and the appendix to this adventure for several more.

The southern subcavern tends to have fewer prehistoric creatures than the two larger caverns. Instead, its fauna (and flora) are similar to those of the East African plains and African jungles: lions, zebras, rhinos, leopards, gorillas, warthogs, antelope, and more.

FLORA

As with the fauna, much of the Inner-Earth's flora dates to prehistoric times. Perhaps the seeds were carried down by dinosaurs, or otherwise filtered down into the Inner-Earth during geological events. Other plant species, particularly domesticated ones, were introduced by the human(oid) inhabitants.

PEOPLE

An intriguing variety of sentient humanoids — not all of them human, just humanoid — inhabit the Inner-Earth.

In the eastern cavern two peoples live. On the southern side of the Jhusara Sea, mainly in the lands to either side of the Huei Atoyatl (the Great River), is Aztlan, a kingdom of Aztecs whose ancestors came to the Inner-Earth centuries ago. Their civilizations is both like and unlike that of the Aztecs who lived in what is now Mexico. On the northern side lives a people the Aztecs call the Coatlichtli, and who call themselves the Ssujala — a race of serpent-men,

reptilian beings whose civilization was already old when the Aztecs arrived. Against them the men of Aztlan have often fought, and from them they learned the building of ships and the art of fighting on water.

In the southern sub-cavern, no people live at present. There are signs that a few people — perhaps African tribesmen, perhaps ancient Egyptians — once dwelt there, but they all died away long ago.

In the northern cavern, like the eastern, live two peoples. To the east are the Wind-Lands, where strong winds sweep ceaselessly over broad plains. On these plains live several tribes of Mongols. How their forefathers came to the Inner-Earth they do not remember, but they've made a life for themselves here that suits a warrior's soul. To the west, the land is often mountainous and forested, with many animals, and there live a large group of the ancestors of man: Neanderthals. Perhaps taking the example from their Mongol enemies they have formed a crude civilization, with chieftains and shamans ruling over extended tribes composed of clans. The Mongols claim that a race of demons they call the Fedal secretly rules over the Belemei (the "Dark-Browed Ones," their name for the Neanderthals).

Last but not least, the characters aren't the only explorers from the surface world in the Inner-Earth right now. A Nazi exploratory/archaeological expedition got swept down into the caverns much like the heroes, and its members are now trying to (a) find a way to return to the surface, and (b) figure out how to turn the existence of the Inner-Earth to Germany's political and military advantage.

See the individual cavern and civilization descriptions below for more information, including character briefs for prominent persons.

Communicating With The Natives

The Aztecs and Mongols both speak versions of their native surface tongues, altered by centuries of living in Inner-Earth. The Languages Nahuatl (Aztec) or Mongolian are considered to have 4 points of similarity with Inner-Earth Nahuatl and Inner-Earth Mongolian, respectively, so characters who know either surface language have half as many points in the Inner-Earth versions.

The serpent-men speak their own language, Hlissara. Characters may learn to speak it through exposure, but can't know it when they first enter the Inner-Earth. Characters with Universal Translator may understand it if they make their INT Rolls at -2.

The Neanderthals speak their own language, Thal. Characters may learn to speak it through exposure, but can't know it when they first enter the Inner-Earth. Characters with Universal Translator may understand it if they make their INT Rolls.

THE EASTERN CAVERN



The enormous eastern cavern — over 500 miles long east to west, and about two-thirds that north-south — is home to two oft-warring civilizations. To the south of the Jhusara Sea is Aztlan, the land of a remnant of the once-great Aztec Empire; the lands to the north are inhabited by a race of strange serpent-men, the Ssujala. See the accompanying map for more information.

AZTLAN

Centuries ago, a group of Aztecs who fled from their city rather than be conquered by Tenochtitlán took refuge in a large cave. They discovered that the cave went deep into the earth. Driven by fear of their enemies and curiosity, they descended deeper and deeper... until at last they emerged in the Inner-Earth! Thinking they'd found Aztlan, the legendary home from which their ancestors had first come, they decided to remain there. A cave-in long ago collapsed the route they took down here, but they've been in Aztlan so long only a few of their tales and stories even hint at the existence of the surface world.

After they'd been in "Aztlan" a few decades, the expanding Aztecs encountered the Ssujala — the Coatlichtli, as the Aztecs call them — when the serpent-men began raiding their cities and villages. Since then they've fought unceasingly against the Ssujala, sometimes losing battles and sometimes winning, but steadfast and determined to neither give nor ask quarter from their hated foe.

Culture

The culture of the Aztecs of Aztlan (or Aztlanecs) is in most respects similar to that of the Aztecs whom Cortez discovered and conquered in 1521. For example, they have no draft animals — they raise only smaller animals, such as chickens and pigs, and carry large burdens via ships or trained porters. However, life in the Inner-Earth has wrought a few changes.

RELIGION

First, they've adapted some elements of their religion, primarily the use of human sacrifice, to the necessities of the Inner-Earth. At first they continued their worship ceremonies and practices unchanged, but it soon became appar-

ent that there weren't enough of them to make human sacrifice viable — they needed everyone they had to survive, hunt the strange giant lizards that roamed the land, and build a new society.

As a substitute, the priests decreed that the sacrifice of a tepuzotlin — a "sickle-lizard," a deinonychus (a velociraptor) — would take the place of human sacrifice. Today, it's regarded as a mark of courage and skill for a warrior to capture a tepuzotlin for sacrifice, and a good omen for his family.

SHIPBUILDING AND SAILING

Their early encounters with the Ssujala taught the Aztlanecs about ships and sailing. Today they're skilled mariners, using bireme-like vessels to sail to Ssujala lands to fight, and sometimes to the other end of the Sunless Ocean to trade. An atl pochtecatl ("sea merchant," or trader-captain) who can face the dangers of the night-dark waters and return with trade-goods is accounted a man of bravery, skill, and wealth.

WARFARE

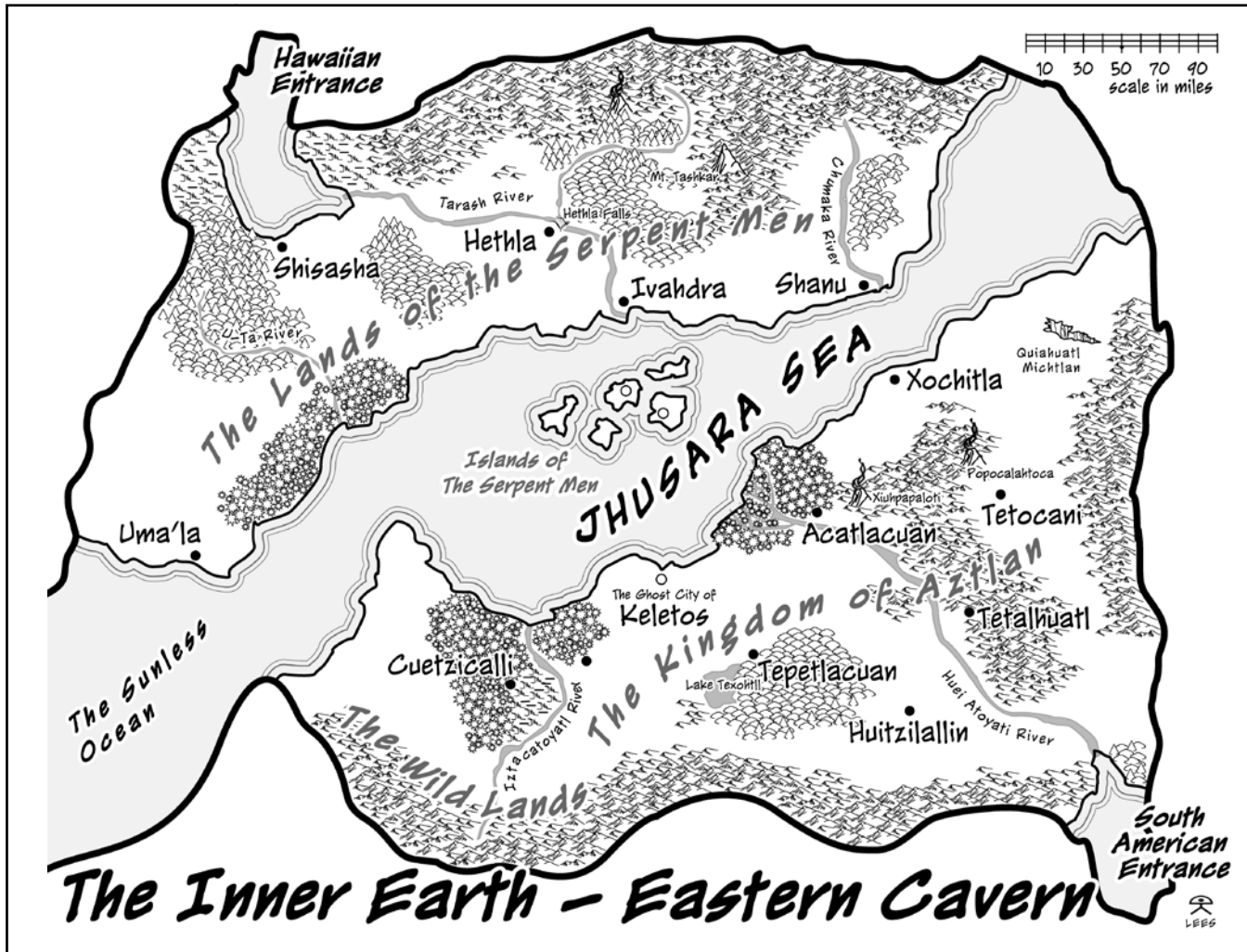
Surface Aztec warfare was often *xochiyaoyotl* — "flowery war," fighting intended not to achieve actual military goals but to capture warriors for human sacrifice. The Aztecs of Inner-Earth have no need for such a practice anymore, and now have a foe — the Ssujala — whom they must kill or be killed by. The Aztlanecs do not play at war; they fight with great ferocity and deadliness using the *macahuitl* (obsidian-edged warclub-sword) and *tlacochtli* (spear, often hurled great distances with an *atlatl*, or spear-thrower). They use the bow for hunting, but not fighting.

Places

Some of the important, intriguing, or dangerous places heroes may visit in Aztlan include:

CITIES

The Aztecs have built seven cities in Aztlan. For the most part they're similar, with a large step-pyramid temple at the center that dominates the city. A large plaza used for both major religious ceremonies and various public gatherings surrounds the temple. From there the city spreads out as far as need be, with one- and two-story buildings typically made of wood and mud brick; the ruler's home (which also functions as a



sort of “city hall”) is usually the biggest building in town after the temple (and often located not far from it). Surrounding the city proper is a belt of farmland worked by peasant clans.

Acatlacuan: The largest city of Aztlan, Acatlacuan is the de facto capital of Aztlan; its ruler, Netzahualtloctollin, is the huei tlatoani, or “high king,” of all the chieftains of the land. Built on the edge of the delta swamps of the Huei Atoyatl, it’s a well-irrigated city whose farms and orchards grow large, lush crops; hunters and fishermen stalk the marshes for fowl, fish, and game. Its temple pyramid is the largest in Aztlan, and its ports can hold the many ships that sail up the main channel of the river to sell their cargo.

Cuetzicalli: The westernmost city of Aztlan, on the swift-rushing Iztacatoyatl River, Cuetzicalli was founded in accordance with a prophecy. A priest of Tepetlacuan had a vision in which Huitzilopochtli, god of war, commanded him to lead several clans to a place where he would find a “great skull” and build a city there. The priest and his followers found the skull — one like that of a tyrannosaur, but nearly twice as large — and built their temple on that very spot, enshrining the skull as a holy object. The Aztecs remain

unclear as to why Huitzilopochtli had them found a city here, but they’re certain they’ll learn in time.

Huitzilallin: The “Place of the Blue-Green Hummingbird,” so named because the chieftain who founded it saw five such hummingbirds, considered it an omen, and built his city there. Since it’s not located on a major body of water and has relatively bad soil, Huitzilallin often has poorer farming than the other Aztlan cities, but if necessary can trade for food with gold its people mine in the mountains to the south.

Tepetlacuan: Located on the shores of Lake Texohtli and next to the range of forested hills east of the lake, Tepetlacuan enjoys a relatively cool climate and bounteous harvests. Its ruler, Ecatzin, is an ambitious man said to covet the position of huei tlatoani.

Tetlahuatl: This city’s name means “stone oak,” signifying the large pillar of natural rock in the city’s plaza. The Aztecs found it there, and regard it as having some sort of holy significance. Some of them claim that if you look closely, you can see faded glyphs or pictures on the stone, though who carved them and what they mean remain a

mystery... if they even exist.

Tetocani: Built near the volcano Popocatehtoca (“Throne of Smoke”), Tetocani is one of Aztlan’s chief sources of the obsidian the Aztecs use to make so many of their weapons and tools. Its fields, enriched by volcanic ash, are very fertile. Every year the priests walk to the rim of the volcano to perform special ceremonies to appease Tezontlin, the god of the volcano, so that he won’t become angry and inflict fiery destruction upon them.

Xochitla: Xochitla (“garden”) is considered the most beautiful city in Aztlan. Built on a low cliffside, it offers a superb view of the ocean (and, for those willing to walk down some steep paths, excellent beaches). Hanging gardens and flowers seem to be everywhere throughout the city, so that its streets delight the eyes.

THE GHOST CITY OF KELETOS

On the central coast of Aztlan, surrounded by barren trees and rocky ground, stands a vast ruin — the Ghost City of Keletos. The Aztecs discovered it after they arrived in Aztlan. The serpent-men do not claim it as a place of their own, saying it’s existed ever since they can remember and that the script they’ve found etched on some of the ruins remains unreadable. The Aztecs refuse to go there, considering it an abode of demons.

QUIAHUATL MICTLAN

In the far northeast of Aztlan a deep cleft splits the ground. The Aztecs call it Quiahuatl Mictlan, the Gateway to Hell, and regard it with superstitious dread. They say ghosts live in its depths and come out to haunt the living at night, and that no one who’s ever descended into its bottomless depths has ever returned.

THE WILD LANDS

The people of Aztlan have only a few villages west of the Iztacatoyatl. They call that area Cuautlah — the Wild Lands — because it’s so fierce and untamed. The swamps, patches of jungle, and plains of the Wild Lands are home to countless dinosaurs and other threats. But perhaps in its mountains, if the heroes can survive that far, are tunnels leading up to the surface....

People

Aztlan is home to thousands of people, many of them interesting or intriguing. Here’s more information on a few whom the heroes are likely to meet or interact with, and a character sheet for a “generic” Aztlan warrior.

NETZAHUALTOCTOLLIN

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 12 DEX | 12 CON | 10 BODY |
| 15 INT | 13 EGO | 18 PRE | 10 COM |
| 4 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 4 REC |
| 24 END | 21 STUN | | |

Abilities: +1 with All Combat; Bureaucrats 13-; High Society 13-; AK: Aztlan 13-; KS: Aztlan History And Lore 12-; KS: Aztlan Nobility And Politics 13-; Oratory 13-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Compose Poetry 11-; Stealth 11-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Atlatl; Contacts (30 points’ worth among Aztlan nobility); Fringe Benefit: Huei Tlatoani Of Aztlan; Money: Wealthy

50+ Disadvantages: Age (40+); Hunted: Xilotzin (Less Pow, NCI, Kill/Usurp Throne); Hunted: the Ssujala (As Pow, Kill); Psychological Limitation: Duties Of Rulership; Social Limitation: Famous Ruler

Notes: Huei tlatoani, or high king, of Aztlan, Netzahualtoctollin has rules Acatlacuan (and thus, by extension, all the Aztecs of Inner-Earth) since the death of his father 18 years ago. Now in his early forties, he’s a somber, often stern man, rarely given to levity (or even smiling). He tends toward the conservative (since his people have a strong enemy in the Coatlichtli) and is slow to trust new ways or new people — though he’s a true friend when he becomes convinced an outsider doesn’t want to hurt the Aztlanees.

The father of seven children (four sons, three daughters including Pilla [see below], all grown), Netzahualtoctollin takes a keen interest in the doings and wellbeings of his progeny and grandchildren, though he tries not to let them know it. For recreation he writes poetry and discourses on philosophy; he enjoys discussing both topics with people he regards as his intellectual equals.

PILLA

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 8 STR | 10 DEX | 11 CON | 9 BODY |
| 13 INT | 14 EGO | 18 PRE | 18 COM |
| 3 PD | 3 ED | 2 SPD | 4 REC |
| 22 END | 21 STUN | | |

Abilities: Conversation 13-; High Society 13-; AK: Aztlan 11-; KS: Aztlan History And Lore 11-; KS: Aztlan Nobility And Politics 11-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Weaving 11-; Seduction 13-; Stealth 11-; Fringe Benefit: Princess Of Aztlan

25+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Xilotzin (As Pow, NCI, Take As Wife); Hunted: the Ssujala (As Pow, Capture/Kill); Social Limitation: Famous Princess

Notes: Netzahualtoctollin has many children, but the apple of his eye is his daughter Pilla. Now 18 and unmarried due to her father’s indulgence and her stubborn refusal to marry anyone she

TYPICAL AZTEC WARRIOR

| | |
|--------|---------|
| 15 STR | 14 DEX |
| 15 CON | 13 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO |
| 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 4 ED |
| 3 SPD | 6 REC |
| 30 END | 30 STUN |

Abilities:

KS: Aztlan History And Lore 11-; Stealth 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Atlatl, 5 points’ worth of Skills pertaining to hobbies, interests, and the like

25+ Disadvantages:

Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes:

This character sheet represents the typical Aztlan warrior whom the characters might fight (or fight alongside). He carries a *macahuil* (HA +3d6/HKA 1½d6, STR Min 13) and a spear (HKA 1d6, STR Min 10, 1” reach), wears armor of animal skins and specially-treated quilted cotton (DEF 3), and carries a round medium shield (+2 DCV).

To create an elite Aztlanec warrior — a member of the Eagle or Jaguar Knights, two orders of “knighthood” — give this character a few Combat Skill Levels (and perhaps some Martial Arts), Tactics, and other improvements.

SSUJALA SPELLS

Calling The Lesser Brethren:

Summon up to 16 serpents built on up to 100 Character Points each, Expanded Class (any type of serpent; +¼), Loyal (+½) (70 Active Points); OAF Expendable Fragile (a serpent's fang smeared with blood, Easy to obtain; -1¼), Concentration (½ DCV throughout casting; -½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Arrives Under Own Power (-½), Summoned Being Must Inhabit Locale (-½), Requires A Ssujala Sorcery Skill Roll (-½). Total cost: 11 points.

Curse Of Ill Luck:

Major Transform 8d6 (person into person with Unluck 4d6, heals back through another application of this spell or a like spell), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaScale (hex covers entire planet; +1¼) (330 Active Points); OAF Expendable (special Inner-Earth root plants harvested in a special ceremony, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour; -3), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations

doesn't love, she's become something of a scandal in Aztlan, but she doesn't care. She's determined to live life on her own terms, not however some doddering old fools think she should live it.

XILOTZIN

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 14 DEX | 15 CON | 12 BODY |
| 15 INT | 18 EGO | 20 PRE | 10 COM |
| 3 PD | 3 ED | 3 SPD | 5 REC |
| 30 END | 25 STUN | | |

Abilities: Psychic Powers or like abilities appropriate to your campaign; Conversation 13-; High Society 13-; AK: Aztlan 12-; KS: Aztlan History And Lore 12-; KS: Aztlan Nobility And Politics 11-; KS: Aztlan Theology 15-; Persuasion 13-; Stealth 12-; Fringe Benefits: High Priest Of Aztlan, Right To Marry; Money: Well Off

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Powerhungry And Greedy; Social Limitation: Famous Cleric; Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (in league with the serpent-men)

Notes: Xilotzin is the most powerful priest in Aztlan — the de facto leader of the large and often complex priesthood that oversees the temples and rites that are so important a part of Aztec daily life. Strongly orthodox, he favors a return to the old ways of human sacrifice, believing that if enough blood and hearts are given to the gods they will shower the Aztlaneacs with favor and power. But he knows that idea isn't at all popular with most priests and the nobility, so he doesn't push it.

TYPICAL AZTEC WARRIOR

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 15 STR | 14 DEX | 15 CON | 13 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 6 REC |
| 30 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: KS: Aztlan History And Lore 11-; Stealth 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Atlatl, 5 points' worth of Skills pertaining to hobbies, interests, and the like

25+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: This character sheet represents the typical Aztlan warrior whom the characters might fight (or fight alongside). He carries a macahuitl (HA +3d6/HKA 1½d6, STR Min 13) and a spear (HKA 1d6, STR Min 10, 1" reach), wears armor of animal skins and specially-treated quilted cotton (DEF 3), and carries a round medium shield (+2 DCV).

To create an elite Aztlaneac warrior — a member of the Eagle or Jaguar Knights, two orders of "knighthood" — give this character a few Combat Skill Levels (and perhaps some Martial Arts), Tactics, and other improvements.

THE LANDS OF THE SERPENT-MEN

Across the Jhusara Sea from Aztlan lies a land that has no name — or at least, no name in any human tongue. There dwell the Ssujala, a fearsome race of serpent-men who enslave humans and are said to possess great mystic power. They intend one day to rule all of Inner-Earth... and in time perhaps the surface world as well.

Culture

Although they remain unknown to surface-dwellers, the Ssujala have lived in Inner-Earth for millennia, biding their time until they have the strength and power to return to the sunlit lands where they once lurked during the ancient days of the Turakian Age. During that time they've developed a rich, elaborate culture, albeit one alien in many ways to humans. They regard other races, particularly humans, as nothing more than slaves... or cattle.

CASTE

Among the Ssujala, class distinctions are prominent, rigid, and usually unwavering. A Ssujala born into a high class has the unquestioned right to abuse, give orders to, and in some cases even kill lesser-ranking serpent-men with impunity. While it's possible for a Ssujala to "lose class" and go tumbling down the social ranks for some great sin or crime, it's much rarer for a commoner to be elevated to the upper levels of society. This most often occurs when a noble Ssujala finds a lower-ranking woman so attractive and desirable that he marries her, thus raising her to his own level.

GLADIATORIAL COMBAT

While the Ssujala have countless ways to entertain themselves, for many of them the favorite is watching... or participating in... gladiatorial combat. Every city has a large arena for staging battles, with the one in Ivahdra being the largest, grandest, and most prestigious of all. Typically a battle pits a professional Ssujalan gladiator against slaves, criminals, prisoners of war, or beasts. Better battles, the ones the spectators most enjoy, have two (or more) gladiators fighting each other in a contest of brawn, wits, and skill. Betting on gladiatorial events is heavy.

MYSTICISM

The tales of the arcane powers of the serpent-men aren't just foolish rumors (unless, of course, your campaign features no mysticism at all). Although Ssujala sorcerers lack the power they wielded in ancient times, they remain able to cast certain spells and wield other arcane abilities. In game terms they have magics similar

to the Psychic Powers on pages 279-86 of Pulp Hero, but they require occult trappings (Limitations) such as expendable Foci, Extra Time, Requires A Skill Roll, Ritual, and the like. The accompanying sidebar has a few more Ssujala spells.

Ssujala wizards usually wear distinctive skullcaps, and robes of a dull yellow (a color restricted by law to their use) marked with the symbol of their brotherhood, a five-branched rune whose true meaning is known only to them. Most of them are solitary, but a few work in groups of two to seven on a regular basis, and annual conclaves are held in major cities to share lore and fellowship. Circles needed for ritual castings assemble whenever and however the initiating sorcerer can manage it. Sorcerers have high rank within Ssujala society, and are usually feared by ordinary serpent-men.

POLITICS

Serpent-man society is organized into city-states, each nominally independent and in control of the surrounding region (which includes fields and pastures worked by human slaves). The ruler of each city state is the Vaash-la, which roughly translates as “priest-king.” A vaash-la is the political leader, war chieftain, and high priest of his people; most bureaucrats, government officials, and military officers within a city-state are priests (or at least have some strong connection to the temple). Substantial “donations” to the temple (and thus ultimately to the vaash-la in most cases) are necessary for an individual Ssujala to transact significant business with the government (for example, to get the vaash-la’s permission to finance and lead a trade expedition or a slave raid).

In theory, the vaash-las of the five major cities and some minor cities rule the Ssujala as a sort of oligarchic council. In truth, the vaash-la of Ivahdra is “first among equals” and in most situations the de facto “king of the serpent-men.” As the religious, political, and financial center of the Ssujala lands, Ivahdra is so powerful that Vaash-la Naa’ru (see below) can make the other priest-kings do whatever he wants most of the time. Only their united opposition on a matter in which they probably have the support of many priests and most of the people is likely to get him to change his mind.

RELIGION

The Ssujala of the Inner-Earth worship but a single god: Shaa-tûl, creator of the world, Slayer of the Demons of Da-kan, Bane of the Soft Ones, Giver of Victory. He’s depicted as a six-armed serpent-man, most prominently in statues mounted on the tops of Ssujala temples. The upper two arms hold a bowl of fire above his head; the middle two hold upright spears, and the lower two reach forth to protect and help his people.

Temples

The typical Ssujala temple is a sort of circular pyramid constructed in such a way as to roughly resemble a coiled serpent. Priests ascend the temple by walking up the coils, much like traversing a twisting path around a mountain. At the top stands a statue of Shaa-tûl (see above), and at the feet of the statue there’s a sacrificial altar. Here the priests perform major rituals, including human sacrifice during particularly important or powerful ceremonies. The victim’s throat is cut and his blood allowed to run off the altar and back down the pyramid. Centuries’ worth of sacrifices have stained the “path” the priests walk to the top a dark, evil reddish-brown — not even the sometimes-fierce rains of Inner-Earth can wash the stones clean. Once a sacrifice’s body has been drained of blood, it’s fed to the temple’s gigantic guardian serpents, who dwell in the vaults within to protect the temple’s treasures.

The Priesthood

The Ssujala don’t have a formally-organized priesthood as most humans would conceive of it, but as in any other organization certain individuals become more powerful due to connections, politics, skill, influence-peddling, the respect of their fellows, sneakiness and treachery, or the like. The “high priests” of each of the city-states answer to their respective vaash-las, who as priest-kings rule temple as well as people, but the high priests handle day-to-day temple functions and oversee most aspects of the priesthood. Below their ranks, other priests are assigned specific duties based on their abilities, standing within the priesthood, and the needs of the people.

Ssujala priests wear distinctive black robes; few other serpent-men dress in black for that reason. They wear around their necks small amulet-statuettes resembling the statues of Shaa-tûl that stand atop the temples. Most amulets are made out of a greenish-hued stone found in Ssujala lands, but wealthier or more powerful priests’ amulets are often made of precious metals and gemstones.

SLAVERY

Slavery is common throughout Ssujala society — their society thrives and survives on it. They capture and enslave humans to work their fields, carry heavy loads, dig pits, clean houses, perform menial labor of all sorts, and do any other task a serpent-man doesn’t want to. Slaves have no rights; in fact, any serpent-man can maim or kill any slave for any reason (or even no reason at all), and at most he owes the owner financial compensation.

(throughout casting; -½), No Range (-½), Limited Target (sentient beings; -¼), Requires A Ssujala Sorcery Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0). Total cost: 41 points.

Curse Of Sickness: Drain CON and BODY 3d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Delayed Recover Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Day; +1½), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaScale (hex covers entire planet; +1¼) (142 Active Points); OAF Expendable (fetish made during a special ceremony from hair of the race of the being to be affected, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour; -3), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Requires A Ssujala Sorcery Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0). Total cost: 20 points.

Dominate The Mind: Mind Control 10d6, Telepathic (+¼) (62 Active Points); OAF (arcane crystal; -1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Requires A Ssujala Sorcery Roll (-½). Total cost: 11 points.

The Ssujala want their slaves to breed — in fact, they often force them to under pain of torture. Children are taken from their parents and raised elsewhere as slaves themselves. Many generations of men in the Inner-Earth have known the feel of Ssujala chains and the taste of Ssujala whips all their lives.

TRADE

The Ssujala don't like to mingle with other races, and in many ways are self-sufficient. However, their lands don't contain everything they need (or want), forcing them to trade with other races at times. Their oxblood-colored trading ships visit Aztlan occasionally, but the frequent wars and conflicts between the two peoples often limit this contact to short, tense bargaining sessions. The serpent-men often prefer to trade with the south cavern peoples (when any exist) or the folk of the northern cavern (though their trade-goods are often limited). Trade expeditions to such places usually leave from the city of Uma'la.

WARFARE

The average Ssujala tends to be a little stronger and tougher than the average human, their scaly skin protects them as well as light armor, and they can inflict wounds with their small but powerful fangs. (See the Ssujala Package Deal, below, for more information.) Thus, by human standards serpent-men make mighty warriors. Ssujala soldiers usually go into battle wearing

scale armor and carrying small round metal shields, scimitar-like curved swords, and wickedly-barbed spears; they also have archers, more heavily-armored warriors, and lighter-armored “marines” used to fighting on or from ships.

Places

Like other regions of Inner-Earth, the lands of the serpent-men contain many places of interest, distinction, and danger. Some of the more noteworthy include:

CITIES

Serpent-man cities are usually built of stone as much as possible; the Ssujala seem to dislike working with wood any more than they can help. Their buildings tend to be low and broad, rarely more than two stories tall at most, though decorative domes are common in larger/more opulent buildings, and some structures have short towers. Many buildings, including most residences, have an unroofed interior courtyard surrounded by a colonnade-like area; others have a large (often domed) common or entertainment room in the center.

Hethla

Located at the enormous waterfall of the same name formed where the Lusalash River joins the Tarash, Hethla is known as the “City of the Mists” due to the clouds of spray and vapor



that so often waft over it. Humans find the climate extremely humid, muggy, and oppressive; most Ssujala enjoy it immensely, though it's hard on cloth, paper, leather, and other substances that can rot or corrode.

Ivahdra

The capital and religious center of the Ssujala lands, Ivahdra is also the biggest serpent-man city. Many of its buildings are large and impressively decorated with mosaics, frescoes, carvings, and statuary; the temple to Shaa-tûl in the very center of the city is the largest and tallest building in the Ssujala realm. Second only to it is the palace of the Vaash-la, made of the finest stone the Ssujala can obtain and built with all the skill they can muster. From it Naa'ru rules his people with a mix of power, craftiness, and influence-peddling.

Although it's not the trading center Uma'la is, Ivahdra has a large and bustling marketplace. Ssujala from all over the territory go there to buy and sell, and sometimes ships from Aztlan put in there during the uneasy periods of truce.

Shanu

A drab and colorless sort of place, Shanu has little to attract even other serpent-men, and many who live there would prefer to go elsewhere if they could. But as the Ssujala city closest to Aztlan, it's the usual launching-point for raids and invasions across the Jhusara Sea. Its coastal fortresses and bulwarks make it the most easily-defended city-state in the land.

Shisasha

The Ssujala city most likely to be visited first by PCs who enter Inner-Earth via the Hawaiian route (possibly after they've been captured by serpent-man soldiers and taken there in chains), Shisasha occupies a beautiful location overlooking a lake (also named Shisasha). The ruler, Cha'shara, is more moderate than most serpent-men, and something of a scholar in addition to being a mystic. He may even take a not-unfriendly interest in the PCs if they're brought to his city... but in the end, he's still Ssujala and will treat them as slaves or fodder for his experiments rather than equals.

Uma'la

The launching-point for trading expeditions across the Sunless Ocean, Uma'la is the wealthiest city-state of the Ssujala, and Ivahdra's constant rival for power and prestige. Its vaash-la, Horucar, is an enormous serpent-man — a former warrior well gone into decadence and fat from years of easy living, but still quite able to wield a blade to deadly effect if he has to.

SSUJALA PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

| Cost | Ability |
|------|--|
| 4 | +2 CON |
| 4 | +2 BODY |
| 4 | +2 EGO |
| 3 | +3 PRE |
| 10 | <i>Fangs</i> : HKA ½d6 |
| 2 | <i>Ssujala Skin</i> : Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED) |
| 5 | <i>Tail</i> : Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼) |
| 1 | Swimming +1* |

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 33

Disadvantages

| Value | Disadvantage |
|-------|--------------|
| | None |

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

MOUNT TASHKAR

The Ssujala, who greatly dislike the cold, spend little time in the mountains; their legends and histories describe only bad, evil things coming from them. They particularly dread Mt. Tashkar, the tallest peak in all of Inner-Earth, considering it roughly the same as Hell. It's the abode of ice demons, frost-ghosts, and the spirits of the evil or unshriven dead. They don't even like to let the mountain's shadow fall upon them, and they would never go anywhere near it (much less climb it).

THE ISLANDS OF THE SERPENT-MEN

In the midst of the Jhusara Sea is a small archipelago of islands. The Aztlanecs call them the Islands of the Serpent-Men, and in fact Ssujala ships prevent any other vessels from going close to them (never mind landing on them to explore the mysterious ruins there). However, the Ssujala rarely go to the islands themselves; they seem to regard them with a superstitious dread.

People

Here's more information on some serpent-men your PCs might encounter during their time in Inner-Earth, including a Ssujala Package Deal and character sheets for "generic" warriors and assassins.

NAA'RU, VAASH-LA OF IVAHDRA

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 15 STR | 16 DEX | 17 CON | 13 BODY |
| 15 INT | 14 EGO | 20 PRE | 10 COM |
| 8 PD | 6 ED | 4 SPD | 8 REC |
| 34 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: Standard Ssujala abilities (see Package Deal); +2 with All Combat; Bureaucratics 13-; Climbing 12-; Conversation 13-; High Society 13-; Interrogation 13-; KS: Aztlan 11-; KS: Ssujala History And Civilization 12-; KS: Ssujala Nobility 12-; KS: Ssujala Theology 12-; Martial Arts (Ssujala Swordfighting; use Kenjutsu); Oratory 13-; Persuasion 13-; Stealth 12-; Tactics 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Off Hand; Contacts (Well-Connected and 20 points' worth of Contacts among the Ssujala nobility and priesthood); Fringe Benefits: Head Of The Church, Head Of State, Right To Marry; Money (Wealthy); Ambidexterity (no Off Hand penalty)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Aztlan 11- (As Pow, Kill); Hunted: various enemies among the nobility and priesthood (Less Pow, NCI, Kill/Usurp Throne); Psychological Limitation: Ruthlessly Powerhungry; Psychological Limitation: Hates Non-Ssujala; Social Limitation: Famous

Notes: Naa'ru is Vaash-la of Ivahdra, which effectively makes him king of the serpent-men... and that's just how he likes it. Ever since he was old enough to realize what power was, he's wanted it. Although a high noble among the serpent-men, he wasn't in direct line for the throne — at least not until he began “removing” rivals and obstacles through clever manipulation, assassination, and similar methods. Since finally attaining the rulership of Ivahdra ten years ago, he's held onto power with an iron grip. Every attempt to eliminate or remove him has failed, leaving his enemies twitching on the impaling-spikes after long weeks of torture in his dungeons. His ambition now is to conquer Aztlan, but so far the doughty Aztecs have repelled his invading forces every time he's tried.

Naa'ru has a natural gift for many pursuits, including warfare. He's a skilled warrior trained in the Ssujala swordfighting style. He can use either hand equally well, so he often favors a two-sword fighting style instead of the sword-and-shield adopted by most of his soldiers. He's no coward, but neither is he foolishly obsessed with honor and machismo — if someone challenges him, the challenger has to defeat a lot of his warriors (perhaps including Ilarin; see below) before the vaash-la himself takes up the blade to defeat his presumptuous foe.

ILARIN

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 18 STR | 18 DEX | 18 CON | 15 BODY |
| 13 INT | 12 EGO | 15 PRE | 10 COM |
| 0 PD | 8 ED | 4 SPD | 10 REC |
| 36 END | 40 STUN | | |

Abilities: Standard Ssujala abilities (see Package Deal); Bureaucratics 12-; Climbing 13-; KS: Aztlan 11-; KS: Ssujala History And Civilization 11-; KS: Ssujala Nobility 8-; Martial Arts (Ssujala Swordfighting; use Kenjutsu); Navigation (Marine, Land) 12-; Persuasion 12-; Stealth 13-; Tactics 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons; Fringe Benefit: General Of Ivahdra

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Aztlan 11- (As Pow, Kill); Hunted: Naa'ru (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Proud, Can't Tolerate Insults Or Challenges Without Responding; Psychological Limitation: Hates Non-Ssujala; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Ilarin is the greatest living general of the serpent-men and Vaash-la Naa'ru's right-hand man in his efforts to maintain control of the Ssujala and conquer Aztlan. (Ilarin has no personal devotion to Naa'ru, but recognizes that the Vaash-la of Ivahdra is the most powerful Ssujala in the land, so he serves him loyally out of self-interest.) A former gladiatorial warrior, he parlayed a string of victories in the arena into a military position, then used his natural talents and fearlessness to ascend the ranks. Skilled at both land and naval warfare, he's eager for another try at conquering Aztlan.

TA'HISHRÉ

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 8 STR | 12 DEX | 12 CON | 10 BODY |
| 18 INT | 15 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 3 PD | 3 ED | 3 SPD | 5 REC |
| 24 END | 20 STUN | | |

Abilities: Standard Ssujala abilities (see Package Deal); Cloud Men's Minds and 32 more points' worth of spells and mystic abilities (see Mysticism, above); Conversation 12-; KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 14-; KS: Ssujala History And Civilization 13-; KS: Ssujala Sorcery 13-; Power: Ssujala Sorcery 20-;

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: various Ssujala authorities (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Curiosity, Must Examine/Question Everything; Social Limitation: social outcast

Notes: Known as Ta'hishré the Renegade, Ta'hishré the Apostate, and Ta'hishré the Unpleasant, this renowned serpent-man is a mystic of great skill and ability. Possessed of what Humans would call a scientific mind, he seeks to learn everything he can, and questions much of what his fellow serpent-men take as gospel. For

example, he doesn't necessarily think of other races as slaves or food (in fact, he thinks some, including Humans, may know things worth learning), and he thinks Ssujala superstitions about mountains are foolish. He's a social outcast, rarely even spoken of in polite company — if it weren't for his powers and the assistance he's rendered to more than one vaash-la during his life, he'd likely have been killed as a troublemaker long ago.

TYPICAL SSUJALA WARRIOR

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 12 STR | 12 DEX | 13 CON | 11 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 5 REC |
| 26 END | 24 STUN | | |

Abilities: Standard Ssujala abilities (see Package Deal); +1 with Sword (or Spear, GM's choice); Stealth 11-; Tactics 8-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

50+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: This character sheet represents the typical Ssujala warrior whom the characters might fight. He carries a scimitar-like sword (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 10) and a spear (HKA 1d6, STR Min 10, 1" reach), wears scale mail (DEF 5), and has a round medium shield (+2 DCV).

TYPICAL SSUJALA ASSASSIN

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 13 STR | 15 DEX | 16 CON | 13 BODY |
| 13 INT | 13 EGO | 15 PRE | 8 COM |
| 6 PD | 5 ED | 4 SPD | 6 REC |
| 32 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: Standard Ssujala abilities (see Package Deal); Acrobatics 12-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; Contortionist 12-; KS: Methods Of Assassination 14-; Lockpicking 12-; Martial Arts (16 points' worth; use Karate or Ninjutsu); PS: Brew Poison 11-; Security Systems 12-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 14-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Garrote

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted: hirelings and followers of his current and former targets 11- (As Pow, Kill); Psychological Limitation: Code Of The Assassin

Notes: The Ssujala have a long and respected tradition of settling their differences with assassination. A class of highly-trained assassins (kswaga) has arisen to satisfy the need for hired killers. Skilled at weapons use, unarmed combat, poisoning, and many other disciplines, a Ssujala assassin can deal death in dozens of ways. Some are also adept at disguise and impersonation, making it even easier for them to get close to their victims. Rivalries often exist between assassins from different schools or who studied under different masters, adding yet another current of tension to an already-dangerous occupation.

THE NORTHERN CAVERN



The northern section of Inner-Earth has entrances from Europe and Central Asia. Like the Eastern Cavern it's home to two groups — tribes of Mongols on the plains to the east, and tribes of Neanderthal cave-men in the mountainous, forested lands to the west. Compared to the Ssujala and Aztecs these two groups have relatively little contact with each other. The Northern Cavern is split by two great rivers, the Ondor-Haan in the east and the Gala-Kasha in the west/center. The Ondor-Haan is often deep, but in places becomes shallow enough to be forded or narrow enough for bridges. The Gala-Kasha, on the other hand, is swift, broad, deep, and often cuts through gorges. In effect it forms a natural barrier that keeps the Neanderthal lands relatively safe from the Mongols. Only rarely do groups of Mongol warriors decide it's worth the effort to find a way to cross the Gala-Kasha and raid the lands of the Belemei (the "Dark-Browed Ones," their name for the Neanderthals)... especially since the Neanderthals seem to have relatively few valuables worth taking (aside from timber, which the Mongols covet because their own lands mostly contain small wooded copses).

THE MONGOLS

The eastern region of the northern cavern is mostly plains and steppe-like lands, only lightly forested at best — in other words, a perfect home for the tribes of Mongols who live there. The Mongols have lived in the Inner-Earth for so long that they have no recollection of how they got there, what the surface is like, or even that the surface exists. As far as they (and their tales and legends) are concerned, they've always lived in the Inner-Earth, hunting dinosaurs and competing and fighting among themselves.

Culture

The Mongols live in large tribes, each ruled by a khan, or chieftain. A khan's word is law for his people; anyone who doesn't like it is free to challenge him for the position in hand-to-hand combat. Most khans are mighty warriors, but in some tribes the khan is an elder or wise man who appoints a "war chieftain" to lead his soldiers. At times a khan becomes so powerful that he rules multiple tribes as a kha-khan.

Most Mongol tribes in the Inner-Earth are

semi-nomadic, with a territory they claim sovereignty over and travel through during the year. They herd sheep, goats, and horses, moving from one pastureland to another as needed. Some tribesmen, such as farmers and smiths, establish more permanent homes and have people who need their services come to them; older Mongols unable to withstand the rigors of travel also settle down (preferably near a woods, river, or other source of food).

Some tribes get along well, linked by marriage, trade, or mutual interests. Others tend to fight with or raid one another frequently — after all, why worry about raising your own livestock or crops when you can just steal someone else's? And all tribes periodically come together with other tribes for a naghadam, or festival/competition. The women gossip, trade, and arrange marriages, the craftsmen and entertainers ply their trades, and the warriors compete at horseriding, wrestling, archery, and swordplay. Usually naghadums are a time of celebration and comradeship, but more than one feud has arisen from a quarrel or misunderstanding that began at a festival.

KHANS

Besides Hulugai Khan and Qara Jasray (see below), some of the other important Mongol Khans include:

Belgutai Sedenbal: A young man full of fire and vigor, Belgutai has three wives and somehow seems able to keep them all happy. An expert archer, he loves to go hunting in the forests and mountains to help keep his tribe supplied with food. Although perhaps more proud than is good for him, he's smart enough to know when there's a way to solve his problems that doesn't involve fighting.

Burilgi Three-Fingers: Despite having only three fingers on his right hand due to a war-wound received when he was a young man, Burilgi is a deadly swordsman renowned for being able to hack the heads off his opponents with a single, powerful blow. His tribe mostly lives in the area south and west of the Thunder-Falls and is known for the swiftness and ferocity of its raids.

Juchin Bira: A doughty old warrior who's seen many battles, Juchin is covered with scars, including one that pulls his left eye partly shut so that it looks like he's always scowling. Full of

aches and pains from his injuries and age, he'd like to step aside from the chieftainship of his tribe, but he hasn't found anyone strong and wise enough for him to give the position to without causing tribal infighting.

Kassar Davaa: Khan of a tribe whose territory is along part of the Gala-Kasha River, Kassar Davaa has a well-deserved reputation for cleverness and craftiness — and, some would say, treachery. The Odysseus of Inner-Earth, he prefers to trick or out-think his opponents rather than just fight them. Observant and suspicious, he doesn't take well to outsiders until they prove themselves trustworthy... and even then he keeps a close eye on them.

RELIGION

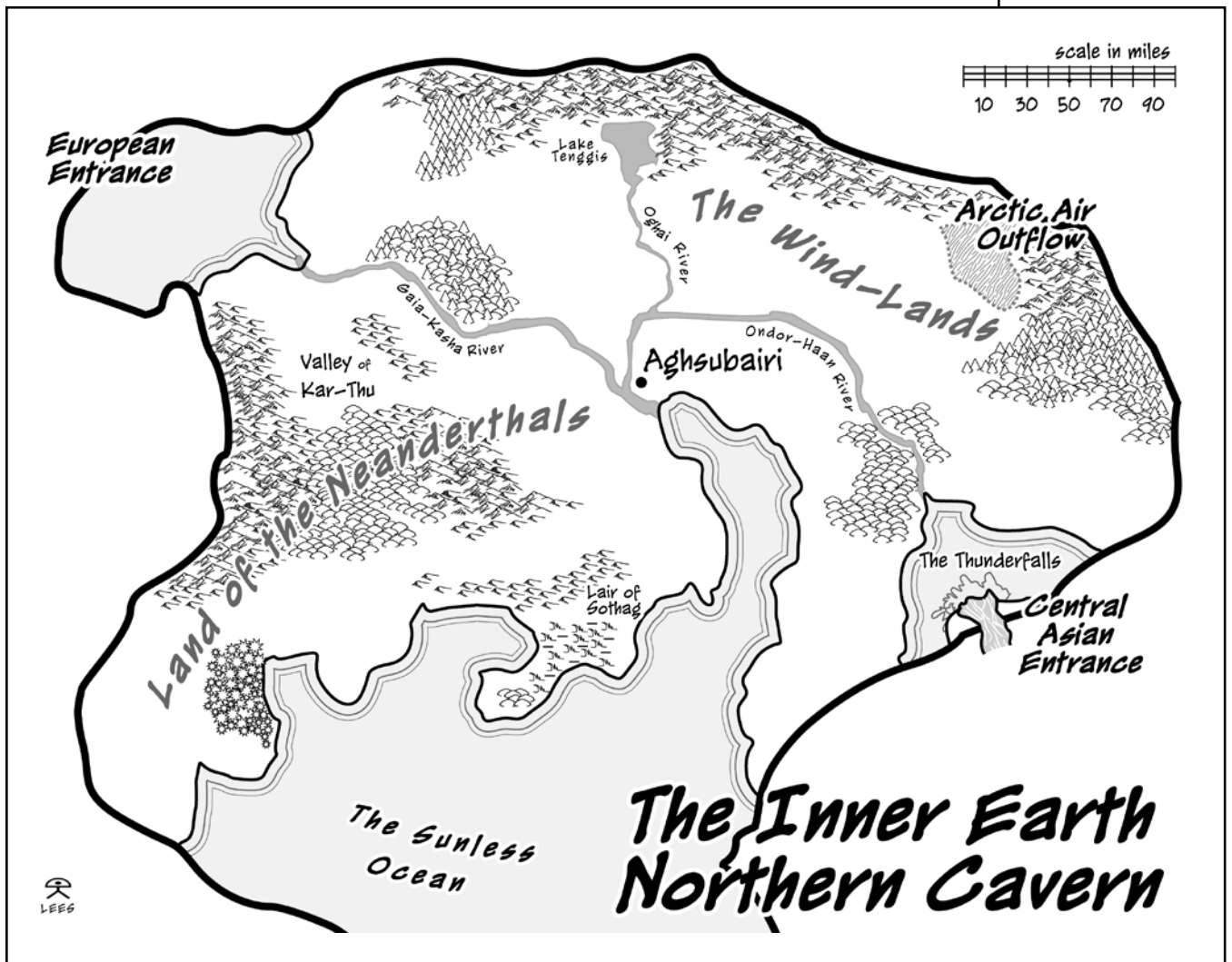
The Mongols of the Inner-Earth have developed a simple religion mixing features of monotheism and animism. Their main deity is Burqan, the God of Gods, the creator and ruler of all the world. Burqan's countless children are sakhi: spirits and godlings that inhabit nearly everything: trees, hills, rocks, weapons, houses. Some living things — particularly horses — are regarded as spirits incarnate; others are simply

beasts. A Mongol desiring success in an endeavor offers up a prayer, and perhaps a small burnt sacrifice, to the appropriate spirits. There is no priesthood per se, but some tribes have "wise men" or "shamans" who help the tribe interact with Burqan and his children.

WARFARE

The Mongol tribes frequently fight with or raid each other, and when they can find a way to cross the Gala-Kasha River sometimes also like to raid and fight the Neanderthals. They're cavalrymen, fighting from horseback with short bows and curved swords. They make their steel weapons from iron ore obtained in the mountains to the north.

In combat, each Mongol tries to obtain as much aldar, or "personal glory," for himself as possible. He does this by defeating enemies and taking from them a trophy, such as a braid of hair, a weapon, or a piece of jewelry. As a result, their style of fighting emphasizes personal battles and challenges rather than massed formations or group tactics.



Places

The Mongol territory, particularly the eastern half, is known as the Wind-Lands because of the strong winds that seem to sweep across them constantly, usually to the northeast. The Mongols often consider times of stillness and calm, when the winds don't blow, as unlucky.

The only large permanent settlement the Mongols have established is Aghsubairi, a trading-town where the Ondor-Haan River meets the Gala-Kasha not far from the coast. Here ships of the serpent-men and Aztlanecs dock to trade for the furs, herbs, and craftworks of the Mongols. Many older Mongols "retire" to Aghsubairi, and among the warriors the term "town Mongol" signifies someone who's too weak or civilized to fight.

LAKE TENGGIS

In the far north of the Mongol lands is a large, clear, bitterly cold lake, Tenggis. According to Mongol lore a powerful *sakh*, or guardian godling-spirit, inhabits Tenggis. By tradition no battles may be fought, or any blood shed, within a thousand paces of its shore, or bad luck will befall whoever started the fight.

People

Here's more information on some Mongols your PCs might encounter during their time in Inner-Earth, including a character sheet for a "generic" Mongol warrior.

HULUGAI KHAN

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 15 STR | 15 DEX | 15 CON | 15 BODY |
| 15 INT | 15 EGO | 20 PRE | 12 COM |
| 6 PD | 4 ED | 4 SPD | 7 REC |
| 30 END | 31 STUN | | |

Abilities: +2 with All Combat; Conversation 13-; Navigation (Land) 12-; Oratory 13-; Persuasion 13-; Riding 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 12-; Tactics 12-; Tracking 12-; Trading 13-; TF: Riding Animals; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Bows; Fringe Benefit: Kha-Khan of several Mongol tribes

75+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Burdens Of Chieftainship

Notes: Hulugai is the kha-khan of several tribes whose territory lies west of the Oghai River (and thus whom heroes entering the Inner-Earth from the European entrance might meet soon after making their way to land). Despite being nearly 40, he remains a stronger, tougher, more devious fighter than most of the warriors serving him, and he's proven his wisdom time and time again. Although he's a warrior and knows that sometimes one must fight, he prefers to avoid battle in favor of negotiation or trade when possible. Although suspicious of outsiders, including Mongols from other tribes, he's a good judge of

character and quick to warm to friendly visitors who don't seem to pose any threat to him and his.

QARA JASRAY

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 13 STR | 18 DEX | 15 CON | 14 BODY |
| 13 INT | 14 EGO | 20 PRE | 16 COM |
| 5 PD | 5 ED | 4 SPD | 6 REC |
| 30 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: +4 with All Combat; Climbing 12-; Martial Arts (Swordfighting, see FH 91); Navigation (Land) 12-; Persuasion 13-; Riding 13-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 12-; Tactics 12-; TF: Riding Animals; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Bows; Fringe Benefit: Khan of a Mongol tribe

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Determined To Prove Herself The Equal Or Superior Of Any Man; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Chieftainship

Notes: It's rare that a woman ascend to a position of power and authority in Mongol society, but Qara Jasray is no ordinary woman. Intelligent, strong-willed, beautiful, and determined to bow to no one, she quickly earned a reputation as a troublemaker when she was growing up. But she proved to have a natural talent for warrior's work, and before her twentieth winter she'd slain the khan of her tribe and taken his place. Though the warriors at first grumbled about obeying a woman, she soon showed them that not only could she defeat any of them in trial by combat, but she could lead them to victory in raids and battles against other tribes. Having now ruled for nearly 10 years, she's well-loved by her people. Having not yet met a man she considers worthy of her attentions, she has not married.

TYPICAL MONGOL WARRIOR

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 15 STR | 14 DEX | 14 CON | 12 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 6 REC |
| 28 END | 27 STUN | | |

Abilities: +1 with Bows; Navigation (Land) 8-; Riding 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 11-; TF: Riding Animals; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Bows;

75+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: This character sheet represents a typical Mongol warrior. He's usually on horseback and carries a scimitar-like sword (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 11), a spear (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 10, 1" reach), and a light bow (1d6+1, STR Min 10, 20 arrows).

THE NEANDERTHALS

The least organized of the peoples of the Inner-Earth are the Neanderthals who inhabit the mountainous regions of the northern cavern that lie west of the Gala-Kasha River. (The Mongols call them the Belemei, or “Dark-Browed Ones.”) They live in small tribes and extended families in caves in the mountains and forests, hunt dinosaurs and other animals, and fight with other tribes for women or territory. Chieftains and shamans rule some “clans” composed of a number of families and tribes, and at times these clans unite to war with the Mongols when the latter dare to cross the river. Like their ancestors on the surface, they use stone tools and other primitive technology, though a few have “magical” metal weapons taken from defeated Mongols or obtained through trade.

By modern human standards, the Neanderthals are not pretty to look at, with their thick browridges, flat and elongated heads, broad noses, barrel chests, and limb bones that aren't proportioned the same as those of Homo sapiens. But despite their brutish looks and primitive technology, they're not stupid or animalistic. Heroes who underestimate them, or treat the Neanderthals as if they were idiots, should quickly be taught a lesson in just how clever their prehistoric foes can be!

Culture

The Neanderthals belong to what's known to paleoanthropologists as the Mousterian culture. This means they use flaked stone tools and weapons, and know that the flakes they knock off a stone core are often as useful (or more so) than the tool they make from the core itself. They can make hand-axes (sharpened stones used for cutting tasks; HKA ½d6, STR Min 6), wooden-shafted spears with sharp stone heads (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 10), and various task-specific slicers, choppers, and cutters. Their spears aren't made for throwing; for that they have sharpened wooden javelin-like weapons (RKA ½d6, STR Min 6).

The Neanderthals make simple cave paintings using ochre and other natural paints and pigments they can find and manufacture. The paintings are typically made by shamans, who wield primitive magics (or so they claim...) to help the tribe and protect it from harm. A tribe's shaman is also its religious leader, presiding over such simple observances as they have and making sure that all tribal taboos are obeyed. They bury their dead, sometimes with a few grave goods, but there's little in the way of a burial ceremony — they lay the corpse in a dug hole and then cover it with dirt or stones. (In some campaigns the Neanderthals may have a more advanced religion; see the accompanying sidebar.)

The Neanderthals speak a language known as Thal, described on page 49. Compared to modern human speech it seems ungainly and crude, but it lets them communicate just fine.

Although they may seem simplistic, the Neanderthals are clever hunters and fierce fighters. They're strongly territorial, used to defending their lands against others of their kind as well as occasional Mongol raids. If they perceive someone as a threat — and that doesn't take much — they'll attack without quarter (and often without much regard for their own personal safety).

TRIBES

Some of the Neanderthal tribes of Inner-Earth include:

Bear Skull Tribe

This tribe worships the skull of an enormous cave bear as the manifestation of its bear-god. Each warrior of the tribe wears a necklace of bear claws, one claw for each kill he's made in battle. Fierce and aggressive, the Bear Skull Tribe often raids other tribes for food, women, or other resources, and has few friends... even in its own clan.

Deep Cave Tribe

This tribe lives in the mountains north and west of the Valley of Kar-thu in a particularly large and defensible cave complex. Although Deep Cave usually has lots of food and other resources (including springs inside the caves), it rarely gets raided because it can so easily protect itself.

Fire People Tribe

The Fire People tribe worships fire as “pieces of the sun” and always keep a large bonfire lit in their cave compounds. The tribe's shamans have the duty to keep the fire alight; they perform fire-sacrifices to bring good luck and success in hunting and battle to the tribe. The shamans, and some “sacred warriors,” go into battle using lit heavy torches as clubs.

Flint Hill Tribe

In the wooded hills a little ways south and east of the Valley of Kar-thu there's a large hill made mostly of flint, and this tribe controls it. Although there are other sources of flint in the Inner-Earth, this flint is among the best, so the Flint Hill tribesmen can trade it for other things they need. After fending off numerous raids, the tribe's warriors have become skilled, dangerous fighters.

North Hills Tribe

This is the largest tribe in the range of hills northeast of the Valley of Kar-thu. Its chief, Gokanna, is old and weak, so the shaman Thoagash really rules the tribe. He's said to want to rule his entire clan, and perhaps eventually many clans.

MASTERS OF THE NEANDERTHALS?

If you're familiar with *The Dordogne Zodiac*, you know about the strangely advanced relics created by certain Neanderthals. Those Neanderthals worshipped foul gods under the direction of the Kiggûrhamelu, an enigmatic race that served those gods and held the Neanderthals in bondage. As explained in that adventure, “when the world turned colder and the great glaciers returned, the Kiggûrhamelu retreated into the warm depths of the Earth,” leaving their Neanderthal followers on their surface to continue worshipping the gods (which those Neanderthals' descendants do to this day).

If you're using that story as an element in your campaign, then Inner-Earth is the realm to which the Kiggûrhamelu fled, taking with them some of their Neanderthal servants. They live in the deepest of the Neanderthal caves, rarely emerging into the light of day. They rule their followers with an iron grip — if the Kiggûrhamelu are in charge, there's no fighting between Neanderthal tribes! All the tribes are united in their worship of the foul gods and their servitude to the toad-like Kiggûrhamelu. The Mongols think the Kiggûrhamelu are demons and call them the Fedal. (Even if you don't use the Kiggûrhamelu, the Mongols still believe in the Fedal.)

Places

Much of the Neanderthals' territory is mountainous or hilly, and often forested as well. The people prefer to live in caves when possible, sometimes digging artificial ones into hillsides. Some live in small fishing village-like groups on the coast, or similar communities on the plains.

THE VALLEY OF KAR-THU

The mountains and hills of the central western lands form a large valley that the Neanderthals call Kar-thu, meaning "Place of Fear" in Thal. It's home to many large, ferocious dinosaurs — the sort the Neanderthals often don't have to cope with, because such monsters don't like living in mountainous areas.

The Neanderthals don't like entering the Valley at all; some are absolutely terrified of it. Only the bravest warriors and hunters dare to go down there in search of food or valuables. Anyone who goes into the Valley and returns with proof he was there (such as a dinosaur carcass) earns great prestige and esteem in the Neanderthals' eyes.

SOTHAG'S LAIR

The hills and swamps to the south are the territory of a fearsome beast the Neanderthals call Sothag — "Eater of All" in their language. Few of them have ever glimpsed Sothag, but they know he exists from the enormous tracks they've seen and the evidence of his kills. Their descriptions tend to suggest that Sothag is some sort of gigantic, long-limbed tyrannosaur, but their stories are so obviously exaggerated, and vary so much from tribe to tribe, that he's probably just a long-dead allosaur who's become a terror through generations of campfire stories. But if the heroes can find proof he exists (like some of the aforementioned tracks), it should become obvious to them that staying far away from him is the healthiest course of action.

People

Here's more information on some Neanderthals your PCs might encounter during their time in the Inner-Earth, including a character sheet for a "generic" Neanderthal warrior.

KOGAR

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 20 STR | 14 DEX | 18 CON | 15 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO | 15 PRE | 7 COM |
| 6 PD | 4 ED | 4 SPD | 8 REC |
| 36 END | 34 STUN | | |

Abilities: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +1 HTH; Climbing 12-; AK: Neanderthal Lands 11-; AK: Valley Of Kar-Thu 8-; PS: Clan Leader 13-; PS: Flint Knapping 11-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate) 11-; Tactics 11-; Tracking 11-; WF: Neanderthal Weapons; Fringe Benefit (Neanderthal clan leader)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Feels Responsible For Protecting His Clan Subjects; Psychological Limitation: Superstitious; Rivalry (various clansmen or rivals who think they should be chieftain); Social Limitation: Burdens Of Chieftainship

Notes: Kogar is the chief of a large clan of Neanderthals who live on the northern edge of the region of wooded hills between the two large mountain ranges. In his youth he was a daring hunter and warrior who went to the Valley of Kar-Thu many times, often returning with food for his tribe. In time his strength, valor, and wits earned him the chieftainship when he defeated the prior chieftain, a domineering, wily old man named O-thog.

Kogar's been chieftain for many years, and he's learned to distrust change. He tends to be suspicious of strangers, fearful of new ways, and reluctant to do things any differently than they've been done before — after all, they work that way, so why switch to another method? But he's no fool, and won't reject something... or someone... new to his clan just because it's strange and different.

Kogar wields a "magical" Mongol sword he took from the body of a raider he slew. He also carries a distinctive club with a large rock bound into the Y-shaped fork at its end by dinosaur sinew. As chieftain, he gets to wear an unusually-shaped piece of turquoise on a leather thong around his neck as a symbol of his position.

RAN-HAR OF THE BONES

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 15 DEX | 14 CON | 12 BODY |
| 13 INT | 14 EGO | 15 PRE | 8 COM |
| 4 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 5 REC |
| 28 END | 24 STUN | | |

Abilities: Psychic Powers (Aura Vision, Dowsing, Foresight, Sensitive); Conversation 12-; Deduction 12-; KS: Clan Religion 15-; Oratory 12-; Paramedics 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Shaman 14-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate) 12-; WF: Flint Knife; Fringe Benefit (clan shaman)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Must Serve The Religious/Mystical Needs Of The Clan; Psychological Limitation: Superstitious; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Shamanship

Notes: Ran-Har is a shaman of a Neanderthal clan (whether it's the clan Kogar rules or some other clan is up to you). Old — 32! — and scrawny, he's remarkable spry for his advanced age and a storehouse of clan lore and history. As the clan shaman, he's responsible for conducting religious rituals, placating the spirits, protecting the tribes from hostile forces, and combatting enemy shamans. He takes these duties very seriously, and is beloved for both his powers and his wisdom.

Ran-Har is generally friendly and open, willing to talk with anyone about anything — he likes to think he knows something about everything, and thus always has a “helpful” opinion to

offer. He becomes stern, even harsh, if someone endangers the tribe or does something that could bring evil spirits down upon his people.

Ran-Har comes by his nickname because he always wears his special bone necklace (which rattles as he walks, and to which he occasionally adds new bones) and a bag of divination bones (he throws them onto a flat surface and reads the pattern they form to use his Foresight; the bag's an OAF for the ability). He'll often trade for unusual or oddly-shaped bones; they seem to fascinate him.

NEANDERTHAL WARRIOR

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 13 STR | 13 DEX | 15 CON | 14 BODY |
| 8 INT | 8 EGO | 10 PRE | 6 COM |
| 4 PD | 4 ED | 3 SPD | 6 REC |
| 30 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: Climbing 12-; AK: Neanderthal Lands 11-; PS: Tribal Hunter/Warrior 13-; PS: Flint Knapping 11-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate) 11-; Tracking 8-; WF: Neanderthal Weapons

75+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (of tribe or clan chiefs)

Notes: This character sheet represents a typical Neanderthal warrior. He usually carries a flint-tipped spear (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 10), a club (4d6 Normal Damage, STR Min 10), and a flint hand-axe or chopping tool of some sort.



OTHER LANDS



While your Pulp heroes are likely to spend most of their time in the Inner-Earth in either the eastern or northern cavern (or both!), there are other parts of known Inner-Earth that they might explore.

THE SOUTHERN CAVERN

Hanging off the south side of the Sunless Ocean like a fruit waiting to be plucked, the southern cavern is little known to the inhabitants of other parts of Inner-Earth. As of 1935, it doesn't seem to have any native civilizations. There are signs that people once lived there — a few remnants of villages here and there; the large, unnamed ruins of a stone city on the shores of Lake Malagani; a few other small stone structures elsewhere — but today the land is inhabited only by beasts.

The flora and fauna of the southern cavern seem mainly African in nature. The land is mostly East African-like savannah, though there are patches of jungle and swamp here and there. Lions, elephants, pythons, zebras, rhinos, leopards, giraffes, and ostriches flourish, along with many lesser animals. Some dinosaurs, mainly small herbivores preyed on by the great cats, live here as well. Player characters looking for more-familiar surroundings may find a few days' "safari" here worthwhile, and of course the hunting's good.

THE SUNLESS OCEAN

Connecting the three land caverns of Inner-Earth is an enormous, water-filled cavern called the Sunless Ocean. It's mostly under the Pacific Ocean and receives no sunlight at all. It's pitch-black, lit only by the illumination brought into it by human sailors. The fish and other animals living in its dark waters tend to be blind and albino, provide their own light via bioluminescence like the anglerfish, or have dolphin-like sonar.

Some of the creatures who live in the Sunless Ocean are gigantic, a threat to man and ship alike: megalodons, plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, ichthyosaurs, deinosaurs, and more. Some seem to have grown even larger than they did in the surface oceans. It's not uncommon for sailors to hear the stentorian roars of the great beasts as they breach the surface beyond the reach of a ship's lights, or even to hear (or see) two of these

titans clash in lethal battle. And more than one unwary Aztlanec or serpent-man sailor has been plucked from the deck and eaten by a greedy plesiosaur.

Nor are sea creatures the only threats. At several places in the Sunless Ocean whirlpools or rocky shoals threaten entire ships. Mariners try to steer clear of them, but in the absence of landmarks and sunlight it's often hard to navigate a straight line through the night-dark cavern (characters suffer a -2 to all Navigation rolls) — most ships stick to the cavern walls if possible, but of course must steer out into the middle of the sea to get around various hazards. As one approaches the southern coast of the southern cavern, there's a large reef that can rip apart a ship's hull as if it were paper. Despite this, many ships make for the reefs in search of exotic fish species prized as food, pearls, and other valuables.

PIRATES OF THE SUNLESS SEA

If you want to extend the adventure, perhaps there's a threat lurking in the dark-covered waters besides prehistoric monsters: pirates! In this case, centuries ago some Malay pirates somehow got trapped in Inner-Earth and decided to stick with their old profession by preying on the ships that sail the Sunless Ocean. Today their descendants are all pale-skinned and nearly blind, but with their incredibly heightened hearing can work and fight as well as ordinary men! They maintain their lair at Twilight Cay, a low-lying island somewhere in the Sunless Ocean. Perhaps after initially being captured by the pirates, the PCs will have to fight their way to freedom, in the process rescuing captives, Aztlanec women held on the island and forced to serve the pirates.

THE SHIPS OF INNER-EARTH

Because there's relatively little wind in the Sunless Ocean, ships that traverse it are usually bireme- or trireme-like vessels that can be rowed as well as sailed. Most have a crew of around 200 all told, plus a generous hold for transporting cargo. Usually some of the crew are soldiers to protect the ship and its personnel, and it's not uncommon for a ship to have a catapult, ballista, or other large weapon mounted on the deck. See *The Ultimate Vehicle* and *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook* for character sheets for various ships you can adapt for use in Inner-Earth.

THE NAZI EXPEDITION



Your Player Characters aren't the only ones who've found their way to the Inner-Earth. A Nazi exploratory expedition was trapped down here some time ago (possibly months, depending on the needs of your campaign). When they got here, how they arrived, how much of their equipment and supplies they still have, what they've been doing, and where they are now is up to you.

Having now been trapped in the Inner-Earth for a while, the Germans are eager to find a way out... and equally eager to bring news of the place to their masters in the SS. They're well aware of Inner-Earth's strategic military value (not to mention its vast scientific value) and want to make sure Germany alone controls the place.

ERNST HEILBRUCK

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 18 | STR | 8 | 13- | Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 [4] |
| 18 | DEX | 24 | 13- | OCV: 6/DCV: 6 |
| 18 | CON | 16 | 13- | |
| 15 | BODY | 10 | 12- | |
| 15 | INT | 5 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 18 | EGO | 16 | 13- | ECV: 6 |
| 20 | PRE | 10 | 13- | PRE Attack: 4d6 |
| 10 | COM | 0 | 11- | |
| 6 | PD | 2 | | Total: 11 PD (5 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 2 | | Total: 11 ED (5 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 12 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 8 | REC | 0 | | |
| 36 | END | 0 | | |
| 40 | STUN | 7 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 112 |

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Cost Powers

END

Martial Arts: Cinematic Brawling

| | Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Damage/Effect |
|---|-----------------------|-----|-----|---------------------------------|
| 4 | Block | +2 | +2 | Block, Abort |
| 4 | Disarm | -1 | +1 | Disarm, 38 STR to Disarm |
| 5 | Hoist 'n' Heave | -2 | -2 | Grab Two Limbs, 48 STR to Throw |
| 4 | Kidney Blow | -2 | +0 | HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) |
| 4 | Low Blow | -1 | +1 | 3d6 NND(3) |
| 4 | Punch/Backhand | +0 | +2 | 7½d6 Strike |
| 5 | Roundhouse/Two-Fisted | | | |
| | Smash | -2 | +1 | 9½d6 Strike |
| 3 | Throw | +0 | +1 | 5½d6 +v/5; Target Falls |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 8 | +2 Damage Classes (already added in) | |
| 15 | <i>Cinematic Safety: Armor</i> (5 PD/5 ED) | 0 |
| 2 | <i>Fast: Running +1"</i> (7" total) | 1 |

Perks

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Fringe Benefit: Passport |
| 5 | Military Rank: SS-Hauptsturmführer |
| 6 | Money: Wealthy |
| 4 | Reputation: adventuring Nazi archaeologist (around the world) 11-, +2/+2d6 |

Skills

| | |
|----|---|
| 10 | +1 Overall |
| 3 | Climbing 13- |
| 3 | Combat Driving 13- |
| 3 | Concealment 12- |
| 2 | Cryptography 12-; Translation Only (-½) |
| 3 | Deduction 12- |
| 1 | Forgery (Art Objects) 8- |
| 3 | Lockpicking 12- |
| 3 | Mechanics 12- |
| 2 | Navigation (Land) 12- |
| 2 | PS: Expeditioneering 11- |
| 2 | PS: Writer 11- |
| 3 | Riding 13- |
| 3 | Security Systems 12- |
| 3 | Stealth 13- |
| 3 | Streetwise 13- |
| 6 | Survival (Deserts, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12- |
| 3 | Trading 13- |
| 5 | TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Riding Animals, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles |
| 4 | WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms |
| 3 | Linguist |
| 1 | 1) Akkadian (fluent conversation; German is Native) |
| 1 | 2) Arabic (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 3) Cantonese Chinese (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 4) Egyptian Hieroglyphics (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 5) English (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 6) French (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 7) Greek (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 8) Hindustani (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 9) Japanese (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 10) Latin (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 11) Mandarin Chinese (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 12) Russian (fluent conversation) |
| 1 | 13) Sanskrit (fluent conversation) |

ERNST HEILBRUCK PLOT SEEDS

The classic Ernst Heilbruck plot #1: The PCs learn Heilbruck's leading an expedition to someplace unusual. He must be on to something! They'd better get there first and beat him to the punch! (Alternately, he learns they are on the track of a major find and sets out to discover it first.)

The classic Ernst Heilbruck plot #2: The PCs and Heilbruck and his expedition meet in the field. They're both in desperate straits. Despite their mutual dislike and distrust, they've got to work together to survive and find what they're both looking for. (Alternately, they may agree to work together in advance to undertake a difficult expedition, with Heilbruck looking for an opportunity to betray the PCs and the PCs trying to detect and thwart his treachery.)

While on an expedition, the PCs stop to spend the night in a peasant's hut... and find Ernst Heilbruck lying on the bed! He's badly injured — so badly that he's barely conscious and will probably die if they can't get him to modern medical care somehow. If

they have any doubts about saving his life (and they shouldn't, as Pulp heroes), he starts raving in his delirium about whatever lost city or artifact they're currently looking for... and based on what he's saying, he clearly knows something the heroes really need to learn if they're going to succeed.

- 1 14) Swahili (fluent conversation)
- 1 15) Tibetan (fluent conversation)
- 1 16) Turkish (fluent conversation)
- 3 Scholar
- 2 1) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 12-
- 2 2) KS: The Archaeology World 12-
- 2 3) KS: Art And Antiquities Market 12-
- 2 4) KS: Art History 12-
- 2 5) KS: History 12-
- 2 6) KS: Nazi Doctrine And Philosophy 12-
- 2 7) KS: The SS 12-
- 3 Scientist
- 5 1) SS: Anthropology 15-
- 5 2) SS: Archaeology 15-
- 2 3) SS: Geology 12-
- 2 4) SS: Paleoanthropology 12-
- 3 Traveler
- 3 1) AK: Africa 13-
- 3 2) AK: Central Asia 13-
- 3 3) AK: China 13-
- 2 4) AK: Europe 12-
- 2 5) AK: India 12-
- 2 6) AK: The Mediterranean 12-
- 2 7) AK: Mexico And Central America 12-
- 2 8) AK: The Near East 12-
- 2 9) AK: Russia 12-
- 2 10) AK: South America 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 220

Total Cost: 332

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Hunted: the SS 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Hunted: one of those meddling "heroes" 8- (As Pow, Thwart)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Dedicated Nazi (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Fascinated By The Past And Its Relics (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (with "adventuring archaeologists," like Valentine Keene and Carolina Caldwell)
- 15 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)
- 187 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 332

Background/History: Ernst Heilbruck's name has been known around the world since 1929, when as a 25 year-old archaeologist he was the only member of a German expedition into the Amazon rainforest to return alive. His book about his adventures and the expedition's ultimately unsuccessful quest to find a lost city described in colonial-era manuscripts, *Into The Green World*, became a best-seller in both Europe and America. The money he earned from the book (and the film rights) made him wealthy enough to finance expeditions of his own to Africa and Central Asia in conjunction with various German universities.

In 1933 Heilbruck, a loyal member of the Nazi Party since 1929, joined the ranks of the SS. His groundbreaking expedition to Siberia later that year (including, rumor has it, the recovery of some strange and as-yet unidentified relics) brought him another bestseller, more fame, and promotion to the rank of *Hauptsturmführer* (Head Storm Leader) in the SS (roughly equivalent to an Army captain). In early 1935 SS leader *Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler* granted him the funding to establish a new program, the Heilbruck Research Institute, under the auspices of the *Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage organization). Since then he's continue to travel the world on behalf of Nazi Germany, seeking archaeological relics, anthropological data, and scientific, historical proof of Aryan superiority.

Personality/Motivation: Heilbruck is a man with two passions — passions that sometimes war with each other. On the one hand, he's a loyal member of the Nazi Party who believes strongly in the Nazi ideals of German military, cultural, and racial superiority. On the other, he's fascinated by the history and peoples of the world, its relics and artifacts, and nearly everything to do with archaeology and anthropology. His work for the SS and *Ahnenerbe* allows him to combine these passions by searching for historical evidence of German superiority, but at times the scientist in him clashes with the Party member. When his finds help the Reich and support its doctrines, all is well. When they do not, he must decide whether to bury the information, distort it, or report it correctly — an agonizing decision that he puts off as long as he can (if necessary by launching another expedition before he's

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|----------------------|
| Luger P-08 | +1 | +0 | 1d6+1 | 1d6-1 | 8 | 8 | Carries 1 extra clip |
| Machete | +0 | — | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 8 | |
| Knife | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: Notebook and pencil; compass; magnifying glass; archaeologist's tools

Clothing: See Appearance

really had time to prepare the findings of the last one). He prefers to be in the field conducting his research (and sometimes contending with rivals like Steven “Carolina” Caldwell), where such questions don’t press upon him so hard.

Quote: “When will you learn, Dr. Caldwell, that Science is but one more tool with which Aryan superiority will be proven?”

Powers/Tactics: Ernst Heilbruck is a highly-experienced field anthropologist and archaeologist. He’s traveled all over the world, survived in some of the most desolate wildernesses on the planet, and come out on top in barroom brawls in dives from Shanghai to Rio. While he rarely looks for a fight, as an SS officer he doesn’t back down from one, either. Fiercely competitive, he’ll drive himself and his underlings almost to the point of death to beat out a rival or prove the accuracy of his theories.

Campaign Use: In archaeology, exploration, and Globetrotting Adventure stories, Ernst Heilbruck is a perfect adversary for the PCs. While they have to respect his experience, learning, and accomplishments in his chosen field, they can gladly loathe him for his Nazi beliefs and desire to pervert science to prove National Socialist doctrine.

To make Heilbruck a tougher opponent, give him some Combat Skill Levels with his Cinematic Brawling or firearms and/or more Extra DCs for his Martial Arts. You could also increase his STR to 20. To weaken him, reduce his STR to 15, remove his Extra DCs, and get rid of his Overall Skill Level.

As a Hunter, Heilbruck is tenacious and determined. His goal isn’t to kill or injure the PCs, but to get whatever they’re after before they do (or take it from them). If possible, he researches his target in advance, looking for weaknesses he can exploit. Once he’s ready, he’ll go after them, sticking to them like glue until he gets what he wants.

Appearance: Ernst Heilbruck had no trouble meeting the “appearance” qualifications for the SS. At 6’0” tall, with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a strong chin, he embodies Himmler’s Aryan ideal to a T. He prefers sturdy field clothes appropriate to the environment and climate when on an expedition; in Germany he proudly wears his SS uniform.

The Rest Of The Expedition

Serving under Heilbruck are four German scientists, most of them about his age or a little younger, all members of the SS.

STEFAN LESKER

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 12 DEX | 13 CON | 12 BODY |
| 13 INT | 12 EGO | 13 PRE | 10 COM |
| 4 PD | 3 ED | 2 SPD | 5 REC |
| 26 END | 24 STUN | | |

Abilities: Climbing 11-; Stealth 11-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12-; Systems Operation 8-; WF: Small Arms; Scientist and SS: Biology 11-, SS: Chemistry 11-, SS: Herpetology 12-, SS: Zoology 12-; Fringe Benefit: Passport; Military Rank (in SS)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: the SS (Watched); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Stefan Lesker is the expedition’s zoologist, charged with observing animals in the wild, collecting specimens of unusual, rare, or previously undiscovered beasts, and the like. His particular interest is herpetology (the study of reptiles), so he’s been captivated by the Inner-Earth’s dinosaurs (not to mention its copious snakes). Of all the German scientists, he’s the least enamored of Nazi ideals (and the lowest-ranking in the SS) and the only one who doesn’t really mind being trapped here. He’s more worried about how he’ll get his samples out once they do find a way to return to the surface.

MAXIMILIAN “MAX” PELZER

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 12 STR | 14 DEX | 14 CON | 13 BODY |
| 14 INT | 10 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 3 ED | 3 SPD | 5 REC |
| 28 END | 30 STUN | | |

Abilities: +2 with Firearms; Can Handle His Booze; Climbing 12-; Mechanics 8-; Persuasion 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12-; WF: Small Arms; Scientist and SS: Biology 11-, SS: Botany 12-, SS: Chemistry 11-, SS: Dendrology 12-, SS: Zoology 11-; Fringe Benefit: Passport; Military Rank (in SS)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: the SS (Watched); Psychological Limitation: Loyal Nazi; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: A large, genial, bald-headed fellow with a booming voice and a hearty laugh, Max Pelzer is the expedition’s botanist and an old friend of Heilbruck’s. Compared to his fellows he’s open and friendly, always willing to share a campfire and exchange news and information with other explorers of similar attitude. Like Lesker, he’s been happily collecting specimens from the Inner-Earth’s jungles, plains, and thickets; he thinks that his finds will make him famous, particularly if (as he expects) some of the plants he’s found revolutionize agrostology (the study of grasses).

Ironically, despite the fact that he doesn’t have to hunt his specimens like Lesker does, Pelzer is the best shot in the group aside from Heilbruck.

DIETER TISCHLER

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 10 DEX | 12 CON | 10 BODY |
| 18 INT | 13 EGO | 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 4 PD | 3 ED | 3 SPD | 4 REC |
| 24 END | 21 STUN | | |

Abilities: Conversation 12-; High Society 12-; KS: Nazi Racial Doctrine 13-; Persuasion 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 13-; WF: Small Arms; Scientist and SS: Anthropology 13-; SS: Biology 11-, SS: Ethnology 13-, SS: Ethnography 13-; SS: Zoology 11-; Contacts (15 points' worth in Germany's upper crust); Fringe Benefit: Passport; Military Rank (in SS)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: the SS (Watched); Psychological Limitation: Loyal Nazi; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: The son of a wealthy Bavarian industrialist, Dieter Tischler embraced Nazi doctrine as he grew up (his father was an early Party member) and joined the SS as soon as he could. Believing deeply in Nazi theories of Aryan racial supremacy, he set out to prove them by becoming an ethnologist. Armed with calipers and other devices with which to take anthropometric measurements, plaster to make facial casts, and other tools of his trade, he's been taking advantage of his time in Inner-Earth to study "primitive" peoples in their "unsullied" state. He'd dearly love to study the Neanderthals more closely... and to obtain some of their skulls and skeletons.

FRIEDRICH WOLLENHAUPT

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 STR | 13 DEX | 12 CON | 10 BODY |
| 13 INT | 10 EGO | 13 PRE | 10 COM |
| 4 PD | 4 ED | 2 SPD | 4 REC |
| 24 END | 21 STUN | | |

Abilities: Bureaucrats 12-; KS: German Medical Community 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Photography 12-; Scientist and SS: Biology 12-, SS: Chemistry 11-; SS: Medicine 12-, SS: Surgery 12-; Fringe Benefits: License To Practice Medicine; Passport; Military Rank (in SS)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: the SS (Watched); Psychological Limitation: Loyal Nazi; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Wollenhaupt, at age 36 the oldest member of Heilbruck's team, pulls double duty as expedition photographer and doctor. Trained as a physician, photography was his hobby until he began taking pictures of patients to assemble a database for ethnological research. His work brought him to the attention of the SS, which he joined in 1933, and eventually led to his being assigned to work for Heilbruck. He dislikes being in the field and frequently complains about the food, the heat, the insects, the labor, and just about anything else. None of the other Germans really like him... but they do their best to tolerate and even placate him, because he's the one with the medical skills and has saved each of their lives and limbs many times.

GAMEMASTERING INNER-EARTH



Here are a few suggestions, guidelines, and tips for running scenarios, story arcs, and even entire campaigns in the Inner-Earth.

INTO INNER-EARTH

When planning a game involving Inner-Earth — whether it's a single scenario, a story arc, or an entire (mini-)campaign — there are several issues you should consider.

POINT OF ENTRY

First, where will the PCs enter the Inner-Earth? Marked on the map are six entrances: South America; Hawaii; Central Asia; Europe; Africa; and the Arctic air outflow. (Of course, you can create any additional entrances you want, or remove existing ones.) Each of them is described in greater detail below. The one your heroes use determines which race they're likely to meet first: the European entrance leads to the Neanderthals or the Mongols; the Central Asian entrance to the Mongols; the South American entrance to the Aztecs; the Hawaiian entrance to the serpent-men; and the African entrance to no one (and the necessity of a sea voyage).

In dramatic terms, the easiest way to decide where the heroes enter is how you want to structure your story. If you want them to encounter an evil foe that takes them captive, thus requiring them to escape and then meet and ally with another race, the Hawaiian entrance is your best bet — the Ssujala fill the role of “evil enemy” nicely, and the Aztecs aren't too difficult to reach. If you want the heroes to get involved in long-term politicking among tribes, the Neanderthals or Mongols both work well, so the PCs should enter from Europe or Asia. If you want the possibility of romance between a hero and a “native princess,” use the Central Asian (for Qara Jasray) or South American (for Pilla of the Aztecs) entrances.

You should also consider whether you want the heroes to travel throughout Inner-Earth. Each of the three caverns is fairly self-contained and offers the heroes the raw materials with which to build rafts or ships (assuming they have the Skills and tools to do so, and to use what they build). But only one — the eastern — has ships already built and seafaring cultures able to use them readily. So if you want the heroes to see all

of Inner-Earth, starting them off in the eastern cavern is the way to go.

Included with the entrance descriptions below are brief paragraphs describing a trip down each entrance and what your heroes see when they arrive in Inner-Earth via that route. Feel free to read those paragraphs out loud to your players if you like... but be sure to make any necessary changes to suit the nature and style of your PCs. And if you want to roleplay the journey down, or at least the beginning of it, go right ahead. Who knows what marvels... and dangers... your heroes might encounter on their descent into the depths of the earth?

South American Entrance

In the Amazon Jungle there's a large river that everyone assumes is a tributary of the Amazon... though no explorer's ever found where the two join together. In fact, this river goes underground and eventually sweeps down to the Inner-Earth.

Here's a brief description of the trip down this entrance, along with what your heroes will see when they arrive in the Inner-Earth:

The last few hours have passed by in a blur of adrenaline and action! Since the river swept you underground and sped up, you've been struggling as hard as you can to keep your boats upright and intact, barely able to spare a moment's thought about where the river might be taking you...

...but now you've arrived. Finally the river's leveled out and slowed down... and fed into a lake on the edge of a sunlit underground land! The sunlight's dimmer than you'd expect — and from the looks of the rock walls towering off to the north and west, you'd guess you're in a gargantuan underground cavern of some sort. How there could be sunlight here you can't imagine, but it's definitely sunlight, though unusually dim. The air's hot and humid, not unlike the South American jungle you began the day's journey in. In the distance you can see a shoreline. Unfortunately you can't get back up the plummeting river, so you'll have to find another way home....

Hawaiian Entrance

By descending into the crater of an extinct Hawaiian volcano, and then downward for miles through a series of caverns, one can reach Inner-Earth in the northwest region of the eastern cavern. Water dripping down through the caverns makes the journey a tough one, especially for the last quarter of the trip when the water essentially forms an underground river.

Here's a brief description of the trip down this entrance, along with what your heroes will see when they arrive in the Inner-Earth:

The last hour or so has been a blur of speed, water, and bruises. Days ago you set out on this journey, climbing down into the heart of an extinct Hawaiian volcano. The openings in the caldera soon gave way to tunnels and caverns... which kept going and going. Unable to resist the thrill of exploring strange new places no man had ever seen, you kept on, descending further and further from the surface.

Over the past day or so, trickles of water became underground streams, and then the streams an underground river pouring swiftly downward. You roped yourselves together so no one would get lost, and that proved to be a wise precaution the first few times someone slipped. But the last time — when two of you went into the water at once — the current was so strong it dragged the rest of you along. For an hour you were rushed downstream, unable to get a grip on the smooth, water-worn rocks. But now you find yourself floating in what seems to be a lake... in some sort of sunlit land! The sunlight's dimmer than you'd expect — and from the looks of the rock walls towering off to the south and east, you'd guess you're in a gargantuan underground cavern of some sort. How there could be sunlight (even dim sunlight) here you can't imagine, but that's definitely what it is. The air is hot and humid, not unlike the Hawaiian climate you began your expedition in. In the distance you can see a shoreline, part of which looks swampy. Unfortunately you can't get back out the way you came in, so you'll have to find another way home....

African Entrance

Somewhere in Africa there's a rift valley, and at the very bottom of the valley is an entrance to caverns and tunnels that lead down, down, down to the Inner-Earth. The natives believe the rift valley to be an abode of monsters and gateway to the underworld; they won't go there voluntarily.

Here's a brief description of the trip down this entrance, along with what your heroes will see when they arrive in the Inner-Earth:

Days ago you set out on this journey, climbing down to the very bottom of the African rift valley. The openings there soon gave way to tunnels and caverns... which kept going and going. Unable to resist the thrill of exploring strange new places no man had ever seen, you kept on, descending further and further from the surface. You knew it was

dangerous — the cave-in that almost killed your entire party a few hours ago is proof of that — but you couldn't resist continuing onward and downward. Now, after many tiring days, you've emerged into... Africa! Or at least it sort of looks like Africa. The sunlight's dimmer than you'd expect, not all of the fauna looks quite right, and the climate's a little more humid than the East Africa you know. But the biggest clue that you're not in the Dark Continent anymore is the rock walls towering off to the north, which lead you to guess that you're in a gargantuan underground cavern of some sort. How there could be sunlight (albeit dim sunlight) in here you can't imagine, but it's definitely sunlight.

Unfortunately you can't get back out the way you came in — that cave-in blocked the tunnels for good, you think — so you'll have to find another way home....

Central Asian Entrance

Near Lake Baikal there's a large river that goes underground. Everyone assumes it feeds into the lake, but in fact it plunges deep below it to emerge in the Inner-Earth as the Thunder-Falls, a vast waterfall 4,900 feet (1,500 meters, or 750") tall — by far the largest in the world, if only surface scientists knew of it.

Here's a brief description of the trip down this entrance, along with what your heroes will see when they arrive in the Inner-Earth:

All you know is that you're lucky to be alive. Your exploratory trip down the underground river was going fine, and you were amazed to discover that the river apparently didn't feed into Lake Baikal at all. It just kept going down and down in a series of rapids, each more dangerous than the one before it. That last stretch of rapids was too much. Your boats were smashed, and you thought you were all going to die as the current battered you against the walls and underground rocks.

Now you've awakened to find yourself and your comrades floating in a lake amidst the wreckage of your boats and supplies! The thunderous roar of a truly gigantic waterfall to the southeast fills your ears. If you fell down that, it's a miracle any of you survived — that cascade dwarfs Victoria Falls! The sunlight's dimmer than you'd expect — and from the looks of the rock wall the fall plunges through, you'd guess you're in a gargantuan underground cavern of some sort. How there could be sunlight (even dim sunlight) in here you can't imagine, but it's definitely sunlight. The air's hot and humid in here, much warmer than the region where you started your expedition. In the distance you can see a shoreline. There's no way you can get back up the waterfall, so you'll have to find another way home....

European Entrance

High in the Alps are entrances to caverns that eventually lead down to the Inner-Earth. As with the Hawaiian entrance, water follows these tunnels down, eventually creating underground rivers.

Here's a brief description of the trip down this entrance, along with what your heroes will see when they arrive in the Inner-Earth:

The last hour or so has been a blur of speed, water, and bruises. Days ago you set out on this journey, climbing down through caverns and tunnels in the Alps... which kept going and going. Unable to resist the thrill of exploring strange new places no man had ever seen, you kept on, descending further and further from the surface.

Over the past day or so, trickles of water became underground streams, and then the streams an underground river pouring swiftly downward. You roped yourselves together so no one would get lost, and that proved to be a wise precaution the first few times someone slipped. But the last time — when two of you went into the water at once — the current was so strong it dragged the rest of you along. For an hour you were rushed downstream, unable to get a grip on the smooth, water-worn rocks. But now you find yourself floating in a sort of lake... in some sort of sunlit land! The sunlight's dimmer than you'd expect — and from the looks of the rock walls towering off to the south and east, you'd guess you're in a gargantuan underground cavern of some sort. How there could be sunlight (even dim sunlight) in here you can't imagine, but it's definitely sunlight. The air's hot and humid, a far cry from the alpine climate you began your expedition in. In the distance you can see a shoreline. Unfortunately you can't get out the way you came in, so you'll have to find another way home....

Arctic Air Outflow

The vast "chimney" in the Arctic through which Inner-Earth's air flows out provides a way to get in... if one is an expert mountaineer willing to fight hard winds every inch of the way down. In other words, absent Weird Science it's almost certainly not a route the heroes can use. But it might be one that they can use to get out.

Other Ways In

If none of the ways listed above are quite what you're looking for, some other possibilities include:

- While exploring a cave complex, the PCs are caught in a collapse/cave-in that sweeps them all the way down into the Inner-Earth
- The PCs are on the surface when an earthquake strikes, opening a fissure in the Earth that they fall into, gradually tumbling all the way down into the Inner-Earth
- A Weird Science device malfunctions and somehow teleports or carries all the PCs into the Inner-Earth

WHERE ARE WE?

Except for Africa, all five of the main entrances to the Inner-Earth start the characters off in bodies of water — lakes. The shore is miles away, so they're either going to have to swim a long way or build some impromptu watercraft from their salvaged supplies. If necessary, create a few small, rocky islands near where they enter so they have a place to rest and build.

As the heroes near the shoreline, describe the unusual flora and fauna (don't forget to mention how dim the light is compared to the surface, how the air feels, and so on). As soon as it's appropriate, arrange an encounter to demonstrate how strange the place is — in short, to show the heroes that they're not in Kansas anymore. The easiest way to do this is a dinosaur. Depending on how involved you want this to be, a tyrannosaurus or ceratosaurus could immediately fixate on them as a tasty snack, they could see a herd of ornithomimus off in the distance, or a comically friendly brontosaurus could stick its head down through the trees and brush to see what they are.

After that initial encounter, you can get the heroes involved in the meat of the story by arranging an encounter with the local populace. This doesn't have to take place immediately; you might let the heroes spend a few days exploring, scavenging supplies, and hunting for dinosaur meat ("tastes like chicken!") before the action begins. With most of the peoples of the Inner-Earth, an initial encounter is likely to be tense and suspicious, but not necessarily violent or hostile unless the heroes start a fight. But with the Ssujala, things probably go badly from the very beginning, since the serpent-men see humans as slaves or sacrifices.

SUPPLIES

However the PCs come to Inner-Earth, as described above it's likely to be a precipitous arrival. That means you need to address the question of what supplies the heroes have with them.

Assuming your heroes were on some sort of exploratory expedition when they stumbled into Inner-Earth, they were probably equipped with plenty of food, water, ammunition, scientific equipment, medicine, and other gear. So the question is: how much of that useful stuff made it down to the Inner-Earth with them?

The more supplies you give the heroes — particularly ammunition — the more independent they can be, and the less help they're likely to need from potential native allies. Food and water are pretty commonplace in the Inner-Earth (though not necessarily up to the standards of fare the heroes are used to), but there's no way to replenish supplies of ammunition at all. Given enough ammo, the heroes can probably take over large areas of the Inner-Earth without too much trouble (especially among the more superstitious races like the Aztecs and Neanderthals). On the

other hand, give them too little and they might be too easily overwhelmed by the natives. Try to strike the right balance based on your feel for the way your players prefer to play and the ways their characters are likely to interact with the natives.

THE NAZI MENACE

If you want to use the Nazi expedition described on pages 66-69, where are its members when the heroes arrive in the Inner-Earth? (The descriptions above assume they've been there for at least a little while — a week or more — before the heroes arrive, but that's really up to you. They could arrive at the same time, or later, if you want.) If you want the heroes to encounter them immediately (which would be most appropriate for a single scenario or a short story arc), put them in proximity to the heroes, and perhaps even have them already allied with a group you want the heroes to oppose (or rescue the Germans from). For longer Inner-Earth campaigns, it often works best to save the Nazis for later — just as the heroes think they've gotten used to things in the Inner-Earth, more surface-dwellers show up to complicate the situation!

Expanding Inner-Earth

Depending on your desires and preferences and the course of events in your campaign, you may want to make Inner-Earth larger than depicted in this adventure. Adding more caverns is a fairly simple matter, all you have to decide is:

- Where they're located in relation to the other caverns
- What effect these other caverns have on the existing ones (and their inhabitants), if any
- What people or races (if any) and animals and plants live in them

Other parts of Inner-Earth don't necessarily even have to be connected to the caverns described here. There might be entire other cavern complexes waiting for the heroes to discover and explore!

ROLEPLAYING THE RACES

Each of the four races — Ssujala, Aztecs, Neanderthals, and Mongols — that the PCs may encounter during their travels through Inner-Earth presents the possibility for fascinating role-playing and intriguing encounters.

THE AZTECS

Your heroes might initially recoil from the Aztecs because they associate them with human sacrifice, ritual cannibalism, and other such practices. But the Aztlaneacs have given up those customs, so hopefully it won't take long for the heroes to realize that the Aztlaneacs are probably their most likely and best allies in the Inner-Earth.

Because they're essentially a people at war, the Aztecs will probably be suspicious of the heroes at first — not necessarily hostile or violent, just wary. They'll keep a close eye on them and won't let them wander around unescorted. Give the PCs a chance to prove their heroism and noble natures so the Aztecs will come to trust them.

THE SSUJALA

As a people, the Ssujala are evil through and through — definitely enemies for the heroes. They'll try to capture the PCs for use as slaves, sacrifices, gladiators, or possibly even food, and if they can't capture them will try to kill them because of the threat they present. But the PCs might meet individual serpent-men, such as Ta'hishré, with whom they could peacefully interact. They're not going to start any sort of revolution in Ssujala society, but having a friend there who can help them may mean the difference between life and death, or freedom and enslavement.

THE MONGOLS

You can easily adjust the Mongols to suit the needs of your story. If you want harsh, brutal, barbaric, aggressive villains, then that's what the Mongols are — personifications of medieval European fears and countless literary stereotypes. If you prefer a more developed, even honorable culture the PCs could empathize or ally with, you can present the Mongols as “civilized barbarians” with a code of warrior ethics and an admiration for anyone who can keep up with them.

THE NEANDERTHALS

Depending on your preferences, your campaign, and the nature and actions of your PCs, you can play the Neanderthals in any of several ways. First, they could be brutish savages who react to the PCs with suspicion, fear, hatred, and anger. They'll attack the PCs at each and every opportunity with the intention of wiping them out... or perhaps even eating them. Second, you could portray them as noble savages of honest, simple means and traditions. Their barbarian honor and warrior spirit will respond to and be inspired by the heroic nature, conduct, and outlook of the PCs, turning them into hearty allies and boon (if seemingly crude) companions for the heroes while they're in the Northern Cavern. Or you could mix and match them, treating some tribes as hostile and “evil,” and others as honorable and at least potentially friendly.

THE GM'S VAULT

This section contains additional and/or secret information about the Inner-Earth that's for the GM's eyes alone. If you're playing in, or plan to play in, a campaign based on the Inner-Earth setting, do not read this section!!

The GM's Vault is organized by page number. If the Vault doesn't comment on some part of the main text, it's usually safe to take what's written there as accurate (or as left for each GM's individual interpretation). As always, you're free to change anything in this adventure to suit your own preferences or campaign.

PAGE 52 — THE TETLAHUATL PILLAR

There are in fact glyphs on the "Stone Oak" of Tetlahuatl, which was once a pillar erected by a long-lost civilization (perhaps one of a previous age). They tell the story of the founding of a kingdom, its rise to power, and its eventual downfall due to the "power of the snakes that walk as men." (If you like, additional glyphs may provide tantalizing clues regarding a special weapon for use against these serpent-men, who are almost certainly the Ssujala.)

PAGE 53 — THE GHOST CITY OF KELETOS

The ruins of Keletos were built by an alien civilization that visited Earth well over a hundred thousand years ago (the Malvans? the Elder Worm?). Depending on what you want to do in your campaign, they could be just an intellectual and historical curiosity... or they could contain a gateway that transports your heroes to strange new worlds for some Pulp Science Fiction adventure!

PAGE 53 — QUIAHUATL MICTLAN

Paradoxically, maybe the "Gateway to Hell" offers the heroes a way out of Inner-Earth. If they descend into its depths, perhaps they can find tunnels that lead down, then levels off to join up with other tunnels that eventually go up to the surface. Or maybe Quiahuatl Mictlan leads to more large caverns to explore — a sort of Inner-Inner-Earth, if you will.

PAGE 54 — XILOTZIN

Xilotzin craves wealth and power. For a long time he's believed that he, not Netzahuatl-octollin, should rule Aztlan — and what's more, he wants Pilla as his queen. A few years ago he secretly joined forces with the Ssujala, agreeing to work for them in exchange for being made ruler of Aztlan when they overthrow it... and for receiving Pilla to do with as he sees fit. Ever since he's been revealing secrets to the serpent-men, working subtly to weaken Aztlan's defenses, and doing his best to worm his way closer and closer to the throne... and Pilla.

PAGE 54 — THE SSUJALA

Unbeknownst to the Ssujala, they can no longer survive outside the Inner-Earth: the air of the caverns contains certain vapors that don't affect humans but which have become vital to the serpent-men. A Ssujala who leaves Inner-Earth and heads toward the surface will soon sicken and die if he doesn't return home.

PAGE 57 — THE ISLANDS OF THE SERPENT-MEN

The mystery of these islands is one left for you to explain as you see fit. They may be serpent-man ruins so old that even the Ssujala have forgotten what they were, though they consider them sacred for some reason. Or they might be strange relics of the Turakian Age that have survived the eons after becoming trapped underground — perhaps a temple-complex of Thon, or the crypts of some of Kal-Turak's chief servants....

PAGE 63 — THOAGASH

A twisted, powerhungry little man, Thoagash has great ambition and would, as hinted, like to rule many more tribes — perhaps even all the Neanderthals. Clever and full of guile, he works toward his goal through flattery, manipulation of superstition, blackmail, and similar devious means.

PAGE 64 — THE VALLEY OF KAR-THU

Dinosaurs aren't the only horrors in the Valley. A species of enormous spiders — half as large as a man, sometimes even bigger — dwell there. They feed on smaller dinosaurs and consider humans tasty prey. Use the character sheet on page 91 of *The HERO System Bestiary*, adjusted downward in size as discussed in the text, for them.

PAGE 64 — SOTHAG

Sothag is a deinonychus-like lizard-serpent that can rear up on its hind legs and walk about like a tyrannosaurus — though it's far larger, more powerful, and more vicious than any tyrannosaur. Use the Deinonychus character sheet on page 78, but increase its size and related abilities as necessary.

PAGE 66 — THE SOUTHERN CAVERN

If you want, all sorts of strange dangers and opportunities for adventure may lurk in the southern cavern. Could degenerate tribes of cannibals, or some sort of wicked version of Tarzan, live in the jungles? Why did the former civilizations fall, and what terrors... and treasures... might lurk in the ruins? Is it possible Lake Malagani or one of the mountain ranges contains a way back to the surface?

APPENDIX: MORE DINOSAURS!



As mentioned on page 50, Inner-Earth is a land filled with survivors of the Age of Dinosaurs, so it's likely your heroes will encounter plenty of the scaly beasts during their time there. The dinosaurs on pages 152-59 of *The HERO System Bestiary* should suffice for the vast majority of most gaming groups' dinosaur needs, but in case you'd like a little more variety in your thunder lizards, here are a few more.

BALUCHITHERIUM

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---|
| 50 | STR | 40 | 19- | Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5] |
| 12 | DEX | 6 | 11- | OCV: 4/DCV: 4 |
| 35 | CON | 50 | 16- | |
| 35 | BODY | 50 | 16- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 30 | PRE | 20 | 15- | PRE Attack: 6d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 14 | PD | 4 | | Total: 14 PD (3 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 3 | | Total: 10 ED (3 rED) |
| 2 | SPD | 0 | | Phases: 6, 12 |
| 17 | REC | 0 | | |
| 70 | END | 0 | | |
| 78 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 160 (+106 with NCM) |

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Leaping: 0"/0"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 3 | <i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED) | 0 |
| 32 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -16" | 0 |
| 12 | <i>Long Legs:</i> Running +6" | 1 |
| 3 | <i>Baluchitherium's Senses:</i> +1 PER with all Sense Groups except Sight Group | 0 |
| 2 | <i>Baluchitherium's Nose:</i> +1 PER with Smell/Taste Group | 0 |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 52

Total Cost: 212

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Enormous (approximately 9m long, 5.5m tall at the shoulder, and up to 33 tons in weight; -4 DCV, +4 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 92 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 212

Ecology: More properly known in modern times as Indricotherium, the Baluchitherium was a relative of the modern rhinoceros, though it had no horn on its head. It was a vegetarian, using its downward-pointing upper tusks, forward-pointing lower tusks, flexible upper lip, and size to eat leaves off of trees much like a giraffe. It lived during the Oligocene.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: The baluchitherium seems to have lacked significant natural weaponry, so if unable to run from an attacker, would probably have used its size and strength to smash, bash, and stomp. (However, given its size, it probably had few, if any, natural enemies.)

Appearance: The baluchitherium is the largest land mammal known to have lived. It was nine meters (4.5", or 30 feet) long, with a skull two meters (1", or about six feet) long, stood about 5.5 meters (2.5", or about 18 feet) at the shoulder, and weighed 20-33 tons, making it approximately 1.1 times as large and four times as heavy as the largest modern elephant.

CERATOSAURUS

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 35 | STR | 25 | 16- | Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 [3] |
| 15 | DEX | 15 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 28 | CON | 36 | 15- | |
| 25 | BODY | 30 | 14- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 25 | PRE | 15 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 12 | PD | 5 | | Total: 12 PD (3 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 4 | | Total: 10 ED (3 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 5 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 13 | REC | 0 | | |
| 56 | END | 0 | | |
| 57 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 122 (+52 with NCM) |

Movement: Running: 10"/20"
Leaping: 0"/0"
Swimming: 0"/0"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|--|-----|
| 30 | <i>Jaws:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR) | 3 |
| 10 | <i>Forelimb Claws:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR) | 1 |
| 3 | <i>Snout Horn:</i> HA +1d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) | 1 |
| 3 | <i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED) | 0 |
| 12 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -6" | 0 |
| 8 | <i>Big Body And Long Legs:</i> Running +4" (10" total) | 1 |
| -2 | <i>Can't Swim:</i> Swimming -2" | |
| 6 | <i>Dinosaur Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Tail:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼) | 0 |

Skills

4 +2 OCV with Jaws

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 80

Total Cost: 202

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Large (up to 3m long/tall; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 82 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 202

Ecology: A predator of the late Jurassic Period, Ceratosaurus may have worked in packs or other large groups to hunt and kill large prey.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: While small compared to Tyrannosaurus, Ceratosaurus is nothing for heroes to laugh at. Its jaws are more than large enough to kill a human, and it attacks aggressively (sometimes, as noted above, in groups!).

Appearance: Ceratosaurus is about 3" (20 feet) tall/long. Its large jaws contain sharp, curved teeth, and its feet have three clawed toes. It has two short "arms" with four clawed fingers on each paw. There's a short horn on its snout. Running from its neck, down its back, and all the way down its tail is a row of small bony plates that may have helped it control its temperature.

CORYTHOSAURUS

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---|
| 25 | STR | 15 | 14- | Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2] |
| 13 | DEX | 9 | 12- | OCV: 4/DCV: 4 |
| 25 | CON | 30 | 14- | |
| 25 | BODY | 30 | 14- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 18 | PRE | 8 | 13- | PRE Attack: 3½d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 8 | PD | 3 | | Total: 8 PD (2 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 1 | | Total: 6 ED (2 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 7 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 10 | REC | 0 | | |
| 50 | END | 0 | | |
| 51 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 90 (+25 with NCM) |

Movement: Running: 14"/28"
Swimming: 4"/8"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 15 | <i>Bite:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) | 1 |
| 2 | <i>Leathery Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED) | 0 |
| 12 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -6" | 0 |
| 16 | <i>Long Legs:</i> Running +8" (14" total) | 2 |
| 2 | <i>Webbed Feet And Hands:</i> Swimming +2" (4" total) | 1 |
| 2 | <i>Acute Sense Of Smell:</i> +1 to PER Rolls with Smell/Taste Group | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Tail:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼) | 0 |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 55

Total Cost: 145

75+ Disadvantages

| | |
|----|--|
| 15 | Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing) |
| 10 | Physical Limitation: Enormous (approximately 9m long and up to 4 tons in weight; -4 DCV, +4 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing) |
| 5 | Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, can only leap 1" (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing) |
| 15 | Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing) |
| 25 | Experience Points |

Total Disadvantage Points: 145

Ecology: One of the most common of the duckbilled dinosaurs, Corythosaurus ("helmet lizard") occupied the lands that would one day be western North America. It was first discovered by Barnum Brown in 1912 in Alberta, Canada. It lived in herds that browsed through the forests and grasslands. It may also have lived in swamps. When predators such as Tyrannosaurus Rex attacked, Corythosaurus could run away on its two large hind legs, and may have been prone to retreating to the water.

Like other lambeosaurine duckbills, Corythosaurus has a large, hollow crest on the top of its head made of expanded nasal bones. The exact purpose of this crest remains uncertain. Initially (including during the Pulp era) it was thought that Corythosaurus was semi-aquatic and that the crest acted as a sort of "snorkel" or air reservoir so it could remain underwater for long periods of time. Later discoveries showed that Corythosaurus was well-adapted to life on land. Other possible explanations for the crest are that it acted as a cooling system for the body, enhanced the dinosaur's olfactory senses, or was a sort of "vocal resonator" allowing Corythosaurus to make a wide variety of loud, distinctive cries and calls. (The latter two theories seem to be favored in the modern day, and are both reflected in this character sheet.)

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: If forced to fight, Corythosaurus uses its jaw, which contains hundreds of small, sharp teeth, to bite. But it prefers to flee from danger if possible. In an Inner-Earth campaign, it would likely be hunted by Humans for its meat.

Appearance: Corythosaurus was approximately nine meters long and weighed about four tons. It stood on its two large hind legs, using its smaller "arms" and long, heavy tail to balance itself. Its snout had a duck-billed shape. On top of its head was a prominent crest; the size, shape, and perhaps even the color of the crest varied with age and gender.

DEINOSUCHUS

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------------|
| 30 | STR | 20 | 15- | Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3] |
| 14 | DEX | 12 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 30 | CON | 40 | 15- | |
| 25 | BODY | 30 | 14- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 30 | PRE | 20 | 15- | PRE Attack: 6d6 |
| 4 | COM | -3 | 10- | |
| 12 | PD | 6 | | Total: 18 PD (6 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 4 | | Total: 16 ED (6 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 6 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 12 | REC | 0 | | |
| 60 | END | 0 | | |
| 55 | STUN | 0 | | |

Total Characteristics Cost: 123
(+56 with NCM)

Movement: Running: 3"/6"
Leaping: 1"/2"
Swimming: 8"/16"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|--|-----|
| 20 | <i>Bite:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR); Restrained (-½) | 3 |
| 10 | <i>Tail Bash:</i> HA +4d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only With Extra Limb (-½) | 0 |
| 18 | <i>Scaly Skin:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED) | 0 |
| 18 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -9" | 0 |
| 6 | Strong Swimmer: Swimming +6" (8" total) | 1 |
| -6 | <i>Short Legs:</i> Running -3" (3" total) | |
| 1 | <i>Burst Of Speed:</i> Running +3" (6" total); Increased Endurance Cost (x8 END; -3 ½) | 8 |
| 1 | <i>Lunge:</i> Leaping +1" (2" forward, 1" upward); Only To Lunge At Things Near The Water (-1) | 1 |
| 6 | <i>Crocodylian Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Crocodylian Eyes:</i> Nightvision | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Tail:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼) | 0 |

Talents

3 Environmental Movement: Aquatic Movement (no penalties in water)

Skills

6 +3 OCV with Bite
6 +3 OCV with Grab
2 Concealment 11-; Self Only (-½)
3 Stealth 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 105

Total Cost: 228

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Cold-Blooded (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Huge (up to 16m long; -6 DCV, +6 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, can only leap 1" (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 93 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 228

Description: Deinonychus ("terrible crocodile") is a gigantic prehistoric crocodile that may have been up to 15 meters (50 feet) long — its skull was as long as a man is tall! (By comparison, the record for a modern-day crocodile is about 8 meters, or 28 feet.) It's also known as Phobosuchus, or "horror crocodile." It lived in what would become Texas at the end of the Cretaceous Period.

This character sheet assumes that Deinonychus functioned in much the same way as modern crocodiles (see pages 149-50 of The HERO System Bestiary for more information). However, some paleontologists believe it may have been a short-bodied, long-legged land predator. Resolution of the dispute awaits the discovery of more fossil evidence.

GIGANTOPITHECUS

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------------|
| 35 | STR | 25 | 14- | Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 [3] |
| 15 | DEX | 15 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 25 | CON | 30 | 14- | |
| 24 | BODY | 28 | 14- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 25 | PRE | 15 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 8 | PD | 1 | | Total: 8 PD (1 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 1 | | Total: 6 ED (1 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 5 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 12 | REC | 0 | | |
| 50 | END | 0 | | |
| 55 | STUN | 0 | | |

Total Characteristics Cost: 107
(+38 with NCM)

Movement: Running: 5"/10"
Leaping: 5"/10"
Swimming: 0"/0"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 7 | <i>Arm Swing:</i> HA +2d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) | 1 |
| 10 | <i>Bite:</i> HKA 1d6-1 (1d6+1 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼) | 1 |
| 4 | <i>Roar:</i> +10 PRE; Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1), Incantations (must roar; -¼) | 0 |
| 1 | <i>Thick Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED) | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -3" | 0 |
| 3 | <i>Ape Senses:</i> +1 PER with all Sense Groups | 0 |
| -2 | <i>Slow:</i> Running -1" (5" total) | |
| -2 | <i>Poor Swimmer:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total) | |
| 4 | <i>Reach:</i> Stretching 1"; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼) | 0 |

Skills

4 +2 OCV with Arm Swing

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 35

Total Cost: 140

75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Physical Limitation: Large (up to 3m long/tall; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Near-Human Intelligence (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 40 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 140

OPTIONS

Cost Power

+10 *Carnivorous Gigantopithecus:* Increase HKA to 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR) and remove Reduced Penetration (-¼)

Description: Gigantopithecus is an enormous gorilla-like ape; it stands 3 meters (10 feet) tall (as compared to 1.5-1.75 meters, or 5-6 feet, for modern gorillas). It probably lived mostly on the ground and ate vegetation, roots, and small animals; it has a relatively short jaw and small teeth. The Carnivorous option assumes the beast has large fangs and a taste for flesh — but even without that, the sight of a ten foot-tall gorilla defending its territory from them should be enough to frighten most Pulp heroes!

Gigantopithecus was first discovered in the 1930s, when a paleontologist saw four of its enormous fossilized teeth on sale in a Hong Kong pharmacy. Complete lower jaws weren't found until the 1950s. Some people have speculated that it survived to the modern day in some isolated places — including the Himalayas (where it's known as the yeti) and the Pacific Northwest (where it's called "Bigfoot" and "sasquatch").

This character sheet assumes that Gigantopithecus functioned in much the same way as modern gorilla (see page 165 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for more information).

MEGALODON

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|------------------------|
| 40 | STR | 30 | 17- | Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4] |
| 14 | DEX | 12 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 30 | CON | 40 | 15- | |
| 30 | BODY | 40 | 15- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 35 | PRE | 25 | 16- | PRE Attack: 7d6 |
| 6 | COM | -2 | 10- | |
| 12 | PD | 6 | | Total: 12 PD (3 rPD) |
| 8 | ED | 2 | | Total: 8 ED (3 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 6 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 14 | REC | 0 | | |
| 60 | END | 0 | | |
| 65 | STUN | 0 | | |

Total Characteristics Cost: 147
(+79 with NCM)

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Leaping: 8"/16"
Swimming: 20"/40"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 35 | <i>Jaws:</i> HKA 2d6+1 (4½d6 with STR) | 3 |
| 8 | <i>Dermal Denticles:</i> HKA 1 point, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Inherent (+¼), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always On (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½), No STR Bonus (-½) | 0 |
| 3 | <i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED) | 0 |
| 18 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -9" | 0 |
| 18 | <i>Shark's Body:</i> Swimming +18" (20" total) | 2 |
| -12 | <i>Only Swims:</i> Running -6" (0" total) | |
| 6 | <i>Shark's Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Shark's Eyes:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (240 Degrees) for Sight Group | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Shark's Nose:</i> +3 PER with Smell/Taste Group | 0 |
| 15 | <i>Shark's Nose:</i> Targeting and Tracking for Normal Smell | 0 |
| 17 | <i>Electrosense:</i> Detect Bioelectrical Fields 11-, Sense, Targeting | 0 |
| 35 | <i>Lateral Line Sense:</i> Detect Physical Vibrations 11- (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Targeting | 0 |

Skills

| | |
|---|------------------|
| 6 | +3 OCV with Jaws |
| 3 | Stealth 12- |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 163

Total Cost: 310

75+ Disadvantages

| | |
|-----|---|
| 35 | <i>Enraged:</i> berserk when smells blood (Common), go 11-, recover 8- |
| 15 | <i>Physical Limitation:</i> Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing) |
| 10 | <i>Physical Limitation:</i> Huge (up to 16m long; -6 DCV, +6 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing) |
| 15 | <i>Physical Limitation:</i> Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing) |
| 15 | <i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Voracious Appetite (Common, Strong) |
| 20 | <i>Reputation:</i> Man-eater, 14- (Extreme) |
| 10 | <i>Susceptibility:</i> to not moving in water, takes 1d6 per Turn (Uncommon) |
| 115 | Experience Points |

Total Disadvantage Points: 310

Description: This huge prehistoric shark could reach lengths of up to 15 meters (50 feet), nearly twice the size of the largest great white shark. Some estimates claim it could have been up to twice that size! Its massive jaws are filled with seven inch-long teeth, and a single bite can easily cut a human being in two.

This character sheet assumes that Megalodon functioned in much the same way as modern great white sharks. See pages 175-76 of The HERO System Bestiary for more information.

ORNITHOMIMUS

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 20 | STR | 10 | 13- | Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2] |
| 16 | DEX | 18 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 18 | CON | 16 | 13- | |
| 15 | BODY | 10 | 12- | |
| 8 | INT | -2 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 5 | EGO | -10 | 10- | ECV: 2 |
| 10 | PRE | 0 | 11- | PRE Attack: 2d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 6 | PD | 2 | | Total: 6 PD (1 rPD) |
| 5 | ED | 1 | | Total: 5 ED (1 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 4 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 8 | REC | 0 | | |
| 36 | END | 0 | | |
| 34 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 48 |

Movement: Running: 13"/26"

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|--|-----|
| 1 | <i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED) | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -3" | 0 |
| 14 | <i>Swift Runner:</i> Running +7" (13" total) | 1 |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 21

Total Cost: 69

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Large (up to about 3.5m long; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Disadvantage Points: 110

Ecology: Ornithomimus ("bird mimic") lived in what would become North America during the Late Cretaceous Period. It was probably an omnivore, eating leaves, plants, small lizards and other animals, roots, and perhaps even other dinosaurs' eggs.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: Ornithomimus has no natural weaponry to speak of — if threatened, it runs away at a top speed of about 30 miles per hour. Like *Corythosaurus*, in an Inner-Earth campaign it's probably hunted as a food animal by humans.

Appearance: Ornithomimus is about 3.5 meters (11.5 feet) long from tail to snout. It has two large hind legs, two much smaller forelimbs used to grasp food, a long neck that curves upward in a sort of S-shape so its head and large eyes are held high for a good view, and a tail that sticks out behind for balance as it walks and runs. It had no teeth and a beak-like jaw.

Thrilling Hero Adventures

**THE
LOCOMOTIVE
PIRATES**

Adventure Six

THE LOCOMOTIVE PIRATES



The authorities are baffled as a group of thieves suddenly appears on trains traveling between New York City and Washington, D.C., robs them, and then vanishes into thin air! When the heroes are called in to try to stop the thieves, they discover a far more sinister plot — one that could threaten the United States itself...

The Locomotive Pirates is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

You can easily connect *The Locomotive Pirates* to just about any other adventure set in the United States by shifting its location. The Pirates could attack trains traveling between any two major cities; the loci don't have to be New York and Washington. For example, if they're attacking trains between Atlanta and New Orleans, you could eventually put the PCs in the Big Easy so they could get wrapped up in the events of *The Voodoo Cross* or *The Dor-dogne Zodiac* (or even the mysterious goings-on at Laussat Plantation, as described in *Thrilling Places*).

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Recently, several trains traveling between New York City and Washington, D.C. have been victimized by a mysterious and skilled group of thieves. The distinctively-garbed, well-armed thieves seemingly appear out of nowhere, rob the passengers and the baggage car looking for small, easily-carried valuables (such as cash and jewelry), then retreat to the caboose... and vanish! Somehow they get off the train without anyone seeing them jump off. No trace of any of the stolen items has been found.

The culprit behind these robberies is the infamous Skymaster. Through his contacts he's gotten word that a scientist in the New York City area has been working on some advanced airplane designs for the government and is traveling regularly to Washington to show the progress of

his work. He doesn't know the scientist's name; all he has is a description. As the unquestioned Lord of the Air, the Skymaster must have this new aviation technology and must prevent the targets of his campaign of conquest from having it. Therefore he decided to steal the plans from the scientist *en route*. Finding the plans also means learning the scientist's identity, so the Skymaster will follow up the final robbery with an assault on the man's laboratory.

To accomplish these robberies, the Skymaster has outfitted a group of his Airmada pilots with autogyros based on his SK-1 airplane design. The autogyros come equipped with magnetic clamps as part of their landing gear so they can land on a locomotive car easily. The forward movement of the train keeps the autogyro's rotor spinning at high speed, so when the robbers are ready to leave they can lift off almost as if they were using a modern-day helicopter, then quickly soar into the clouds before anyone sees what's happened. To observers on the train, it's as if they vanished!

After other avenues of investigation prove fruitless, the PCs take to the rails to see if they can wind up on a train that gets robbed. Since this is a Pulp adventure, their tactic works. Soon the PCs find themselves in the midst of a robbery, with the opportunity to fight back against the robbers should they choose. Even better, the scientist the robbers are looking for — Dr. Emil Stromberg — is on this train! The heroes have to prevent the robbery and protect Dr. Stromberg, who has valuable blueprints and plans in his valise. More importantly, they have a chance to figure out how the crooks pull off the caper. Once they realize it involves aircraft, they likewise realize there's more motivating the robbers than greed — this can only be part of the Skymaster's campaign to conquer the world!

A captive, or a clue left behind by an escaping Locomotive Pirate, tips the heroes off to Skymaster's temporary headquarters for this mission: an isolated clearing in the Pennsylvania mountains. But this is a feint — Skymaster has abandoned the base and instructed his men to use it as part of a phony story. While the PCs head to Pennsylvania, the Skymaster's men are ransacking Dr. Stromberg's laboratory near New York City to obtain what he needs.

But the base isn't the dead-end it appears to be. After they fight their way through a fiery trap, the heroes find some clues that tip them off

to the Skymaster's real plan: the aerial bombardment of Washington! With his planes equipped with some of Dr. Stromberg's advanced technology, they can easily defeat the Army planes defending the capital. It's up to the PCs to stop the attack, lest the Skymaster leave Washington a smoking ruin....

THE SKYMASTER

The villain for this adventure is the Skymaster. You can find full details about him, the Skyfortress *Cumulus*, and his men, planes, and equipment in Chapter One of *Masterminds And Madmen*.

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 the Locomotive Pirates. The same consideration generally applies if you've got a PC who's a cop, a detective, a spy, or a reporter. For example, maybe a victim who had a treasured keepsake stolen from him hires a private eye to get it back, a city editor could easily assign a PC newshound to get the big scoop about the Pirates, and a spy could be on the trail of the Skymaster and his men already.

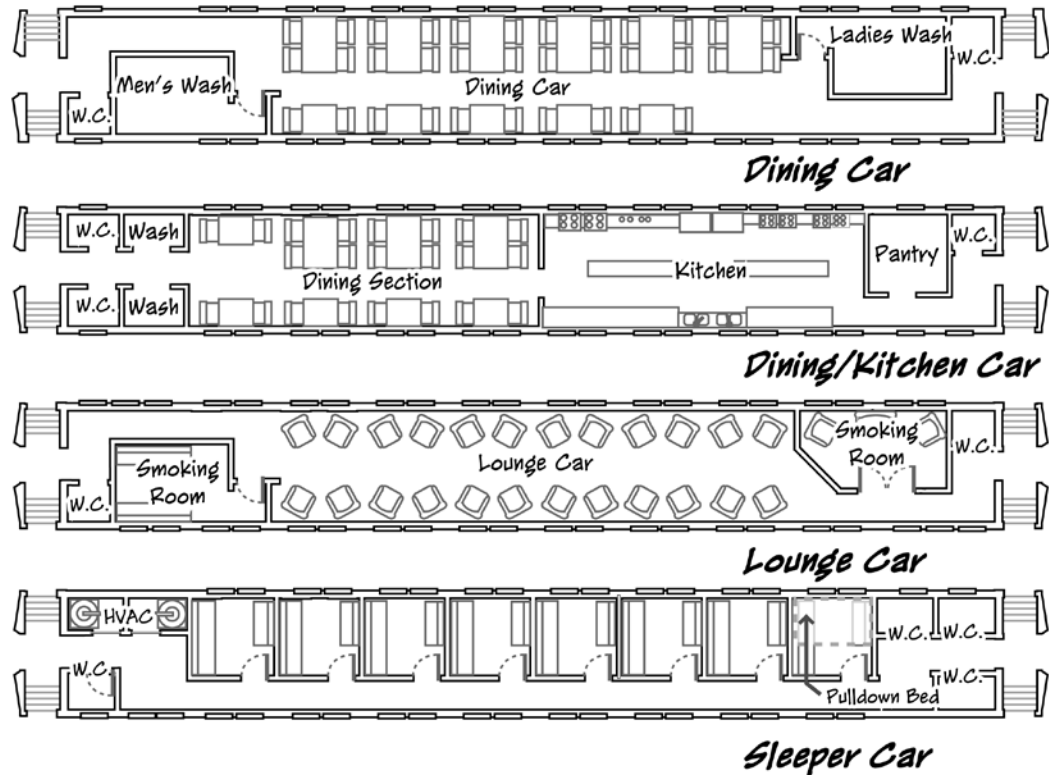
If none of those easy hooks are available, you can fall back on the PCs' circle of friends and contacts. A group of adventurers usually builds up a large network of acquaintances and allies, and that might include the Police Commissioner, a high-ranking government official, an interested private citizen, the owner or director of one of the victimized railroads, a friend or influential citizen who was robbed, or the like. This person appeals to the PCs to use their well-honed skills, instincts, and heroic luck to succeed where the authorities have, so far, failed.

A more direct way to involve the heroes is to have them be on one of the trains when it gets robbed. While it's assumed the PCs get to that point eventually (see *In Harm's Way*, below), you could simply start the adventure *in media res* with the PCs on a train the Pirates have targeted. Before they ever even hear about the Locomotive Pirates, they're battling them! Then the adventure proceeds onward from there as described below.

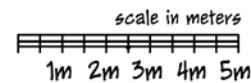
PART ONE: PIRACY ON THE IRON RAILS

The basic facts behind the situation are these:

1. Over the past month, five trains traveling between New York City and Washington, D.C. have been attacked by a group of thieves.
2. There seems to be no particular pattern to the robberies — the trains have belonged to different lines, have been hit at different points during the trip, and have been attacked at different times of day. However, they're all trains carrying passengers (no cargo-only trains have been hit) and they're all expresses or trains making very few stops. The weather has usually, but not always, been cloudy or rainy during their attacks.
3. The thieves always wear black outfits reminiscent of military uniforms and are well-armed with pistols and Tommy guns. They cover their faces with hoods.
4. The thieves either appear at the back of the train and work their way forward, or at the locomotive and work their way backward. They do not stop or slow down the train.
5. No one has reported seeing a group of male travelers walk to the front or back of the train just before the robberies. The authorities believe the robbers do not get on the train at a stop, but somehow find a way to board it while it's moving.
6. The robbers hold travelers at gunpoint and take cash and small items of value, such as jewelry. They search through briefcases, valises, purses, and the like in addition to taking obvious valuables like watches and wallets. In some cases the robbers have also rummaged through baggage cars and cargo cars, but appear to have done so only cursorily.
7. When they're done, the robbers proceed to the front or back of the train (whichever is closer) after warning passengers and crew to keep their eyes and mouths shut.
8. When the train is searched as soon as the passengers and crew feel it's safe to move, there's no sign of the robbers or how they got on the train.
9. The authorities have tried putting federal agents or policemen on the trains to stop the Locomotive Pirates. In the process, no robbery has been stopped, but three law enforcement officers have been shot (and one, an FBI agent, was killed).



Train Cars



If you like to create props for your campaign, a fake newspaper page or two with an article containing these facts would make a great addition to the adventure.

AVENUES OF INVESTIGATION

The above information is largely available through newspaper accounts of the robberies and similar sources. The police and FBI are investigating the crimes but don't have anything significant to go on. Other ways the heroes might investigate the situation include:

Streetwise

Try as they might, succeed with Skill Rolls however well, the heroes can't learn anything about the Locomotive Pirates by talking to their connections on the street. This is clearly no ordinary gang of thieves — whoever they are, they don't mingle with the underworld.

Railroad Insiders

The heroes can spend as much time as they wish talking to railroad employees — everyone from freight loaders, conductors, and dining car waiters to company executives — but they won't learn a thing. The Skymaster doesn't have any major contacts in the railroad industry and isn't using subversive means to choose trains to attack. If he had access to such resources, he would probably have found Dr. Stromberg already.

The Aviation Community

It's possible one or more PCs has KS: The Aviation World or some other Skill reflecting knowledge of the community of aviators, mechanics, and other people who work with airplanes. In some cases the GM may also want to assume such knowledge based on a character having a high Combat Piloting or Aerobatics roll. Initially it's not likely the PCs will start poking around in the Aviation World in search of clues or answers, but sooner or later the possibility of the Locomotive Pirates making their escape by flight will probably occur to them.

If the characters visit the large commercial airfields in the New York-Washington corridor, they won't learn much. But if they focus on the smaller airfields and succeed with a roll, they'll discover something interesting: there are a lot fewer mechanics working than they'd expect. It seems a few months back, some tough-lookin' fellow in a cheap suit came around hiring mechanics for a really good wage. He wouldn't explain the specifics of the deal until a prospective employee agreed to the terms, but since then no one's seen or heard from anyone who accepted. Local pilots are a little upset about it, since it's made it harder to get repairs and maintenance done on their planes. Wherever those mechanics went, they must be doing well, because none of them have come back to their old jobs.

(What happened is that the Skymaster needed extra mechanics to help with the preparations for his attack on Washington. Those who did good work and fit into his organization will remain a part of it; those who didn't he plans to kill later in the scenario.)

IN HARM'S WAY

Eventually the PCs realize that tracking the Locomotive Pirates through the usual channels isn't going to work. To come to grips with the robbers, they're going to have to put themselves in harm's way... by taking a train ride.

After reviewing the available trains running between New York and Washington, the heroes select the *Atlantic Flyer* as being their best bet. Like the Locomotive Pirates' other targets, it's an express passenger train. It consists primarily of passenger cars, with one baggage/cargo car and a caboose in back. The trip takes approximately four hours; the Pirates' attack occurs about halfway through the trip, or whenever you deem it appropriate.

About halfway through the trip, the Locomotive Pirates strike! But how good a strike they make depends on the preparations of the PCs. If the characters have simply taken a seat in one of the passenger cars and awaited developments, they won't detect the Pirates' approach and methods. If they're waiting in the front or back of the train, they have the chance to stop the Pirates before they make it further into the train and start robbing people. If they've told you that they're watching the top of the train, they'll see the Pirates arrive, instantly learn how they pull off their "vanishing act" escapes, and have the chance to battle them atop the moving train! (See page 213 of *The Ultimate Vehicle* for rules about fighting on top of moving vehicles.)

The Pirates approach the train from the north (*i.e.*, from behind) and land either near the back or front of the train — whichever you think will make for a better fight scene. Two Pirates can ride in each autogyro; there should be at least six of them, plus as many more as you think are needed to give the PCs a tough fight (plus at least one autogyro with an empty seat for carrying a captive). If you like, let the PCs make a Hearing PER Roll at -3 to hear the <THUNK> of the magnetic landing clamps attaching the autogyros to the top of the train; that's a good way to tip them off or build a little suspense if they haven't taken any particular steps to prepare for the Pirates' arrival.

The accompanying maps show the typical passenger car, the dining car, and the baggage car aboard the *Atlantic Flyer*. (If the fight happens to move into the locomotive or caboose, adapt those maps as appropriate.) The Pirates are armed with Thompson submachine guns and various pistols. They move through the cars in a group, leaving one or two of their number behind to watch each car and then loot it after they've swept forward and taken control of the

train; if they encounter opposition, they start shooting (and, if necessary, take hostages).

If appropriate to keep the action flowing smoothly and give the heroes an unexpected surprise, you might want to give the Locomotive Pirates a "plant" on the train. One of them purchased a ticket and is on the train legitimately, ready to tip them off to enemy plans or ambush the opposition. He has a gun (and perhaps other weapons, such as knockout gas or smoke grenades) in a briefcase.

Doctor Stromberg

Fortunately for the Pirates, and unfortunately for the PCs, the Pirates' target — Dr. Emil Stromberg — is on the *Atlantic Flyer*. The Pirates have a rough description of him (an older man, mostly bald, with wire-rim glasses, a distinctive grey moustache, and a Scandinavian accent) and won't have any trouble recognizing him if they see him. He's well-dressed and carrying a thick valise that contains blueprints, notes, and other information pertaining to the inventions (advanced engine and wing designs allowing planes to fly at great speed) he's selling to the government.

For the scenario to proceed as smoothly and dramatically as possible, the Pirates should have a good chance to snatch Dr. Stromberg (or at least his valise) and escape. Position Dr. Stromberg within the train to make this possible. It may also help if he's seated in the same car as the PCs, or otherwise has an opportunity to be near (or even meet) the heroes.

The Fight

This should be a tough fight, but one the PCs can win with luck, courage, and the expenditure of a few Heroic Action Points.

The Pirates' goal is to explore the train looking for Dr. Stromberg (robbing the passengers as they go to disguise their true motives). If they find him, their goal changes to kidnapping him or stealing his valise full of documents. They'd prefer the kidnapping (so he can't re-create his inventions) but will settle for the valise.

The PCs' known goal is to stop the robbery, and if possible capture one or more Locomotive Pirates for interrogation, discover how the Pirates escape and track them back to their lair, and so forth. Once they realize the Locomotive Pirates want Dr. Stromberg and his valise, they also want to prevent the Pirates from getting their hands on him.

Run the fight for maximum drama and excitement. Give the Pirates a chance to pin the heroes down with Tommy gun fire so they have to take daring steps to attack by getting on top of or outside the train. Put innocents in harm's way so the PCs have to rescue them instead of just attacking the Pirates (and put crowds of innocents in the way to facilitate the Pirates' escape). Remember, a train car is only about 1.5" wide, so moving around may be a problem, and some characters may suffer the standard penalty for

fighting in cluttered or cramped environments.

It's not likely, but it's possible the Locomotive Pirates can make it to their autogyros and escape without the PCs realizing how they get away. If so, make it seem as if they've vanished into thin air to maintain the mystery. However, the PCs may find odd marks on top of the cars where the autogyros latched on with their magnetic clamps (Criminology roll at -1 or Sight PER Roll at -3 to find). This may give them a hint as to what's going on.

Aftermath

The best possible outcome for the rest of the scenario is this: the Locomotive Pirates all escape after giving the PCs a tough fight, taking Dr. Stromberg's valise with them... but the PCs save Dr. Stromberg himself and discover how the Pirates attack and escape (which should, in turn, provide a clue that the Skymaster is involved, since it takes both piloting skill and an unusual fixation on planes to come up with the idea of using autogyros to rob trains).

Additionally, the PCs should leave this fight with clues or other resources that let them proceed onward with the scenario. Some possibilities include:

- If they rescue Dr. Stromberg, he can lead them to his laboratory if you want to use that scene (see *Stromberg's Laboratory*, below). If the Pirates kidnap Dr. Stromberg, have him drop a business card so the PCs can learn his name and address. His name and address are in his valise, if the PCs keep control of that.

If rescued, Dr. Stromberg will gladly explain to the heroes who he is and what he's been doing for the government (without revealing any specific technological secrets, of course). He can also put the PCs in touch with his military contacts, who immediately recognize the seriousness of the situation and offer to help the PCs deal with it (unless the heroes are notorious outlaws or the like).

- If the PCs have taken one of the Pirates hostage, it won't take much interrogation for him to reveal the existence of the Pennsylvania Aerie (see below). The Skymaster expects the heroes to learn about it — in fact, that's part of his fiendish plan. His men have instructions to give up the information after withstanding enough interrogation to make it look plausible. A character can make an Interrogation roll at -3 to realize that the subject has "broken" just a little too easily. An Interrogation roll at -8 gets the subject to confess what's *really* going on.
- One of the Locomotive Pirates leaves behind a clue: a bit of mud and a leaf that got scraped off his boot during the battle. By succeeding with a Criminology roll at -2, or a SS: Geology roll at no penalty, they can trace both the soil sample and the leaf to a

specific region in the mountains of Pennsylvania. With a few overflights, the PCs can find the Pennsylvania Aerie.

- If the PCs see the Locomotive Pirates escape, they know the Pirates fly in the direction of Pennsylvania. It's not much to go on, but it gives the PCs a pointer.
- Tailing the Locomotive Pirates. If the heroes suspect an attack by air, they might prepare for that by having one of their number follow or observe the train from the air. In that case, you might want to have the Locomotive Pirates engage the pilot PC in a PER Roll Versus Stealth Roll Contest to see if they spot him (if so, you can let them adapt their plans to take advantage of this knowledge, but don't have them call off the attack — it's time for some action!). To follow the Locomotive Pirates without being spotted by them, a character should have to make one or two Shadowing rolls (or Stealth rolls at -2). Depending on how you want the adventure to proceed, you can have the Pirates head for the Pennsylvania Aerie, or directly to the Skyfortress Cumulus. In the latter case, you may need to advance the timetable of the adventure and change the Skymaster's target to Philadelphia (or some other nearby city) so the heroes have to stop him *right now*.

PART TWO: THE LAB AND THE AERIE

At this point, there are three ways the scenario could progress: the heroes examine Dr. Stromberg's house and laboratory; they start looking for the Pennsylvania Aerie; or they do both (first the lab, then the Aerie).

Stromberg's Laboratory

If the heroes have Stromberg, he will (if necessary) point out that his laboratory back home in New York has more plans, parts, supplies, and the like that the Locomotive Pirates might want. If the heroes only have his business card, they'll have to decide to investigate the lab on their own.

Either way, the heroes arrive at the lab in time to confront a group of Locomotive Pirates (*i.e.*, the Skymaster's men) ransacking the place. They're taking everything they can find — books, plans, drawings, notes, spare parts, supplies — and loading it onto a truck. They're armed as described above. Once they realize the heroes are there, they'll try to flee in the truck (leading, hopefully, to a thrilling chase scene!). If that's not possible, they'll fight to death or capture. If captured, they will reveal the location of the Pennsylvania Aerie if they must, but nothing else (though a successful enough Interrogation roll

might get them to cough up the Skymaster's real plan).

For the laboratory, use one of the warehouse maps from *The HERO System Resource Kit*. Stromberg's house is right next to it, connected by a short covered path. As on the train, use enough opponents to give the heroes a good fight... but one they can probably win in the end. If you can arrange for a car chase, so much the better.

The Pennsylvania Aerie

Obtaining Dr. Stromberg's plans and inventions is part of the Skymaster's scheme — but only a minor part, a decidedly secondary goal that serves as a smokescreen to conceal his true plans. He *actually* intends to attack Washington, D.C. with an aerial bombardment as the first stage of his conquest of the United States! If that attack succeeds, he'll turn next to New York City, Boston, Hudson City, and Philadelphia, in that order, to secure control of the Northeast.

To help build and/or maintain the planes he'll need for his attack, the Skymaster established a hidden base in the mountainous wilds of Pennsylvania months ago. He cleared out an area of forest, built an airstrip and hangars, and hired mechanics from the region to help with the work so he didn't have to disrupt his worldwide organization too much. The mechanics who've fit in well with his private air force will remain in his employ. The ones who don't, or who didn't do a good job, he intends to dispose of... perhaps with the help of the PCs.

The PCs can find the Aerie in several ways. Information obtained from interrogated captives or the mud-and-leaf clue left on the train are the most likely (though the latter will involve some searching, probably by air). If neither route is open to your PCs for some reason, you'll have to find another way to clue them in. For example, maybe a report reaches them (perhaps via Dr. Stromberg's military contacts, or a friend in the FBI) that several locals have seen a lot of unusual airplane activity recently. Or, if they only know the general area of Pennsylvania to look in, perhaps they find a crashed autogyro near enough to the Aerie so they can find the Skymaster's lair...

...or actually, *former* lair. His plan is near enough to completion that he's moved the planes and useful personnel to the Skyfortress. He's left the undesirable personnel, plus a few troops, at the Aerie as part of a trap for the heroes he knows will be on his trail.

LAYOUT

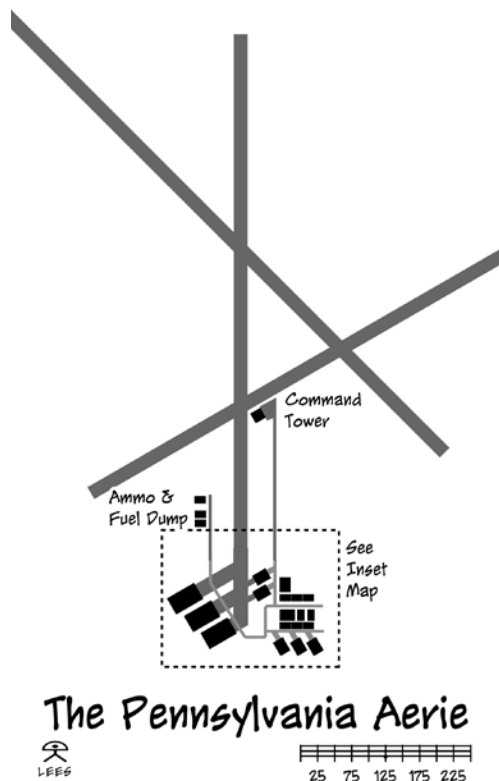
The accompanying map shows the arrangement of the Aerie. It's basically two airstrips, several large hangars, and some barracks and other support buildings in a clearing hacked out of the Pennsylvania woods. A rough dirt road leads to it. The smell of gasoline, oil, and grease are strong around the buildings, even on the out-

skirts of the compound.

As the PCs approach the Aerie, they'll notice only a little activity. There are a few people moving about, but not the hustle and bustle one normally expects at a mastermind's lair. If the heroes approach at night, they won't see anyone outside; the left-behind mechanics are clustered mostly in one barracks, listening to the radio and playing cards.

If confronted with force or an appropriate Presence Attack, the mechanics tell everything they know: they were hired for a very good wage to help build and service a private fleet of planes that were recently taken away. They don't know where the planes were taken or what the man they worked for was planning. If asked, they can describe the man (Air Marshal Von Hagen), but they don't know his name: a handsome thirtyish man, strongly built, light brown hair, an arc of scars around his right eye, wearing a black uniform with silver lightning bolts on the shoulders and at the wrists, carries a pistol. They were paid an extra month's wages to stay here for two more weeks or until notified to leave.

Except for the barracks, mess hall, and other buildings where the mechanics live, most of the buildings in the compound are pretty much empty — only a few meaningless odds and ends and scraps have been left behind, as well as two old, poorly-functioning open-top cars. But in one building — the Air Marshal's former quarters and "war room" — there's a clue. Accidentally left behind were several important documents, including a map of Washington showing the planned route of attack and an almanac whose calendar is annotated with weather pre-



dictions and the state of the moon (full, half, and so forth) carefully noted. A rapidly approaching date — perhaps as soon as the next night! — is circled on the calendar in red.

A Burnin’ Ring Of Fire

Lurking in the woods nearby is a small squad of the Skymaster’s mercenary troops — a dozen at most. They’re ready to spring the trap as soon as the PCs are far enough into the compound. The smell of gas is so strong because the Skymaster’s men have soaked the ground around the boundaries of the compound with it. When the heroes are in position, the troops throw lit torches at the right places, and suddenly the PCs and mechanics are trapped in a ring of fire! (If possible, spring the trap before the heroes have the chance to find the map-and-almanac clue described above, so that there’s even more urgency.)

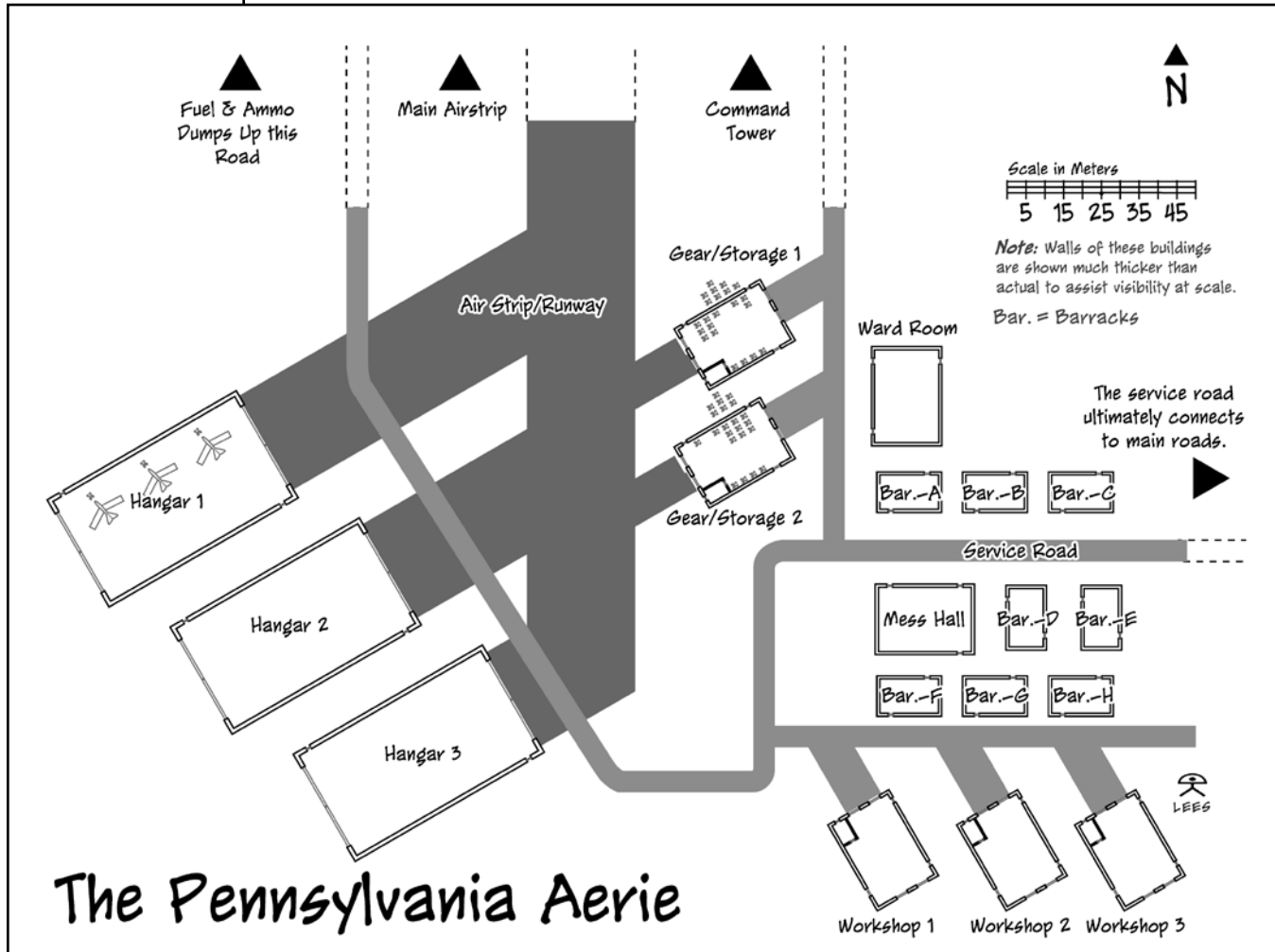
The heroes now have to find a way out — and take the mechanics with them — before they burn to death. The easiest way is to douse the fire in a small area and lead the mechanics to safety. The watertower offers the best hope of doing that, but it has very little water left and no immediately obvious way to pump it wherever the heroes want it to be. Depending on their

skills and abilities, they may be able to use left behind supplies and scrap materials to gadgeteer up a primitive water-chute or pumping device. Encourage the players to be creative and imaginative by rewarding their efforts with bonuses (or at least by not imposing any penalties).

**PART THREE:
DEATH-PLANES OVER D.C.!**

From this point, the scenario becomes somewhat more free-form in terms of the characters’ approach and response to what they now know to be the *real* danger: the Skymaster’s planned attack on Washington, D.C. Based on the map and almanac found at the Aerie, information obtained from well-interrogated captives, and/or other tips you’ve provided them if they’ve overlooked those clues (such as an emergency transmission from an NPC spy who’s figured out what the Skymaster’s up to), they know the following:

- The Skymaster is planning an attack on Washington. While he’ll obviously attack from the air, they don’t know what form the assault will take (strafing runs, a bombing



raid, or something else). Nor do they know if he has or plans to use ground support.

- This attack is scheduled to take place very soon — probably on the night marked on the almanac's calendar. (If possible, you should arrange the scenario so the attack is likely to start so soon that the PCs can't turn the matter over to the Army; they have to use their own contacts and abilities to save Washington.)

Now the heroes just have to figure out a way to stop the attack before it starts. Knowing what they do about the Skymaster (or can find out), he's got to be moving his Skyfortress into position to launch the attack. That means they have to get into the air and either (a) dogfight with his planes before they reach Washington, or better yet (b) get to the Skyfortress and prevent the planes from taking off in the first place.

GETTING TO THE SKYFORTRESS

Unless your group of heroes are all aviators with their own planes, or has access to a plane large enough to carry them all and the ability to fly it, they'll need to get some help to reach the Skyfortress. Perhaps the most pulp-ish alternative is to have the mechanics they saved at the Aerie also be pilots who can take the characters back to one of the local airfields where they (the mechanics) used to work and drum up enough planes for a suicide run on the Skymaster's gigantic dirigible. (Or maybe the mechanics can introduce the PCs to a group of gung-ho barnstormers who'll fly them.) Alternately, the PCs may have Contacts, Favors, or other resources they can call on to provide them with some planes. For example, if Dr. Stromberg's put them in touch with his military contacts in Washington, those men (perhaps after some skeptical har-rumphing) will provide the heroes with planes and pilots so they can hold the line until the Army Air Corps can be mobilized.

Of course, just because they get into the air doesn't mean the PCs know where the Skyfortress is. They're going to have to search the skies for it... and of course you should have them find it as it's approaching Washington, just in time to get aboard and stop the attack!

ABOARD THE SKYFORTRESS

Once the PCs get aboard the Skyfortress, it's up to you to give them a rousing battle and a chance for heroics (including at least one of the obligatory hang-from-the-railing-while-being-attacked scenes where a character has the chance to fall to his death). If possible, try to arrange the fight so that the following scenes occur:

- The heroes (or at least one of them) have a chance to confront the Skymaster himself — but don't kill him. Preferably this fight ends indecisively, with the two being separated by a sudden fire or the like, so that neither of them get killed. Other good outcomes are

(a) the Skymaster thinks it's safe to leave the character for dead, though the character in fact survives, and (b) the characters think they've killed the Skymaster (by, for example, throwing him out of the airship) when in fact he can be saved by a pulpish incredible coincidence.

- The Skyfortress is at worst damaged or crippled, but not destroyed. As a master villain, the Skymaster can certainly rebuild his enormous carrier dirigible, but it's easier if it remains intact so he and his men can flee. Maybe the heroes *think* they've destroyed it, but of course they have to leave before it blows up, and the actual explosion, concealed by clouds or the airship's Fog Generator, is a fake designed to let the Skymaster slip away and return to fight another day.

At the very least, you may want to remind the PCs that by the time they reach the Skyfortress, it's over well-populated areas, and blowing it up or causing it to crash could easily kill hundreds or thousands of innocents on the ground.

Caveat: destroying the Skyfortress is preferable to letting the PCs get their hands on it in most campaigns. Unless you want them to have an advanced, gigantic dirigible and its complement of planes, make sure to arrange matters so that even if they defeat the Skymaster, they don't get to keep the Skyfortress Cumulus.

CONCLUSION

Barring disaster or bizarre complications, the scenario should end with the PCs having stopped (or at least blunted) the Skymaster's attack on Washington and sent him packing with his tail between his legs, his plans to conquer the United States in ruins. The heroes receive the thanks of a grateful nation (or at least the grateful politicians and generals who know What Really Happened) and can take satisfaction in a job well done.

OTHER ADVENTURES

Of course, the events of this scenario may provide fodder for further adventures. First and foremost, if the Skymaster got away the heroes have made themselves a new and determined enemy. He'll almost certainly seek revenge in the future. Second, what if he left caches of equipment, or concealed hangars of reserve aircraft, hidden elsewhere in the Northeast? A gang or minor crimelord might find them and put them to bad use. Third, the contacts the PCs made with Dr. Stromberg and the military may call on them for help with other problems at a later date.

Thrilling Hero Adventures

THE
MALAY
COINS

Adventure Seven

THE MALAY COINS



After inadvertently foiling a museum robbery, Our Heroes get caught up in a race to recover seven mysterious coins which, when put together, show the way to a fabulous, long-lost treasure! After acquiring the coins they proceed to the Orient to try to recover the treasure, only to run afoul of Li-Ming Jade, Pirate Queen of the South China Sea!

The Malay Coins is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

The Malay Coins links nicely with *Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent*, since both take place in the same region of the world. After finishing the Coins adventure, your PCs might want to have a brief holiday in Singapore, where they soon get wrapped up in another adventure. Or perhaps something they find in the trove along with the Coins is a clue leading to *Fangs*. Similarly, K'hull Island, the Street of the Emerald Bird, and the Island of the Pale White Lady (all in *Thrilling Places*) are geographically or culturally close enough to the Malay Peninsula that you could weave a connection

Since *The Malay Coins* involves travel all over the world, you could easily link it to many other adventures.

BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, a pirate ship full up with valuable cargo sank to the bottom of the South China Sea during a fierce storm. The only survivor was a Chinaman who made it to the shores of the Malay Peninsula. Determined to recover the ship's riches someday, but not wanting to rely on his memory or an easily-destroyed paper map, he crafted seven silver coins that, when laid down together in the right arrangement, formed a map to the treasure. As a warning to those who'd seek the treasure, he also inscribed a message on the edges of the coins that can only be read when they're stacked in the proper order. Unfortu-

nately for the Chinaman, he was never able to recover the treasure, and after he died the seven coins were split up among his heirs, who didn't understand their significance. Since then they've become scattered all over the world.

Li-Ming Jade, Pirate Queen of the South China Sea, learned of the coins and their secret recently when she recovered one of them from a person on board a ship she and her men waylaid. She now seeks the other six coins.

THE COINS

The seven coins are made of silver, though age and tarnish have given them a brownish-purplish sort of coloration. The silver they're made of, and certain stylistic elements, point to a Malaysian origin, but the coins themselves are not in the Malay style. Malay coins are solid, like American coins, whereas these coins have a square hole in the center like Chinese coins. (This is mostly just a point of curiosity, but a PC with an appropriate KS, or one of the knowledgeable NPCs they encounter, may mention it as a way of showing that the coins are unusual, and probably hand-crafted.)

The central coin has groups of incised lines at six points around its rim; the first group has one line, the second two lines, and so on. The other six coins each have one matching set of incised lines on their respective rims. By matching the lines up, the characters can arrange the coins properly to form the map. Throughout the text, the coins are referred to as "Coin One" through "Coin Six," based on the number of incised lines they have. For example, the coin directly below the center coin is Coin Four — the one with four incised lines at one point on its rim.

Carved on the coins are various islands, rocks, and other landmarks, and the center coin has a star-shaped symbol indicating where the wreck is. By bringing together all seven coins, the heroes can determine the location of the wreck in relation to the islands. Closer to the point in time when the shipwreck occurred, it would have been possible to find the treasure with fewer than all seven coins, if one knew the area well. However, the passage of centuries, intervening seismological and volcanic activity, and other factors have altered the shape (and perhaps even existence) of the landmarks, complicating the situation. Without all seven coins, the heroes will have a *much* harder time zeroing in on the

shipwreck. In game terms, a character with AK: South China Sea (or appropriate maps and charts) *and* Navigation (Marine) *and* at least one coin can make a Navigation roll to determine the longitude and latitude of the shipwreck. If he has all seven coins, the roll is unmodified, and AK: South China Sea serves as a Complementary Skill Roll. If he has less than all seven, the AK doesn't help him and his Navigation roll is at a cumulative -3 penalty for each missing coin. Thus, if he has four coins (meaning he lacks three), he can locate the shipwreck only if he succeeds with a Navigation (Marine) roll at -9. Taking extra time doesn't provide any bonus here; just getting to make the roll in the first place requires a lot of time and research. In short: without all (or almost all) of the coins, the heroes probably won't be able to find the treasure.

Additionally, each of the coins has a series of tiny cuts and incisions along its edge. If the coins are stacked in order, the center coin on the top and Coins One to Six below it, these marking line up to form several columns of Chinese writing. The writing is centuries old, so unless a hero has KS: Chinese History (or the like) in addition to Language: Mandarin Chinese, he has to make an INT Roll at -2 to read them. If the roll suc-

ceeds, he interprets the writing correctly. It says:

Let he who seeks this treasure beware, for it includes a chest of gold coins we took from a man who, in dying, placed a curse upon them that those who kept them from him should nevermore know rest or ease.

If the INT Roll fails, the heroes mis-read the text. They think it says something more like this:

Let he who seeks this treasure look carefully, for it includes a chest of gold coins. They will not be taken from me, and I curse anyone who would keep them from me and will pursue them without rest or ease.

Li-Ming Jade possesses Coin One. This coin is particularly important because the jagged rocks shown on its lower left have largely withstood the ravages of time unchanged, making it a crucial component of the map as a whole.

The accompanying illustration shows the seven coins placed together to form the map (with a notation by each coin to indicate who possesses it at the start of the adventure). The illustration does not show the Chinese characters on the edges of the coins.)

The Seven Coin Map

1. LI-MING JADE (Shanghai)

2. MUSEUM (the City)

3. WILLIAM GROSSMAN (the City)

4. CHITRASH MUTHANNA (India)

5. MUSEUM (the City)

6. MUSEUM (the City)

7. (Center Coin): HWA ZHYA-SUNG (Shanghai)

LEES

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins at a museum, which has three of the three of the coins but knows nothing about them. After the heroes foil an attempt by Li-Ming's men to steal the coins, they realize the coins are more than antique money... and the chase is on! They've got to get the other four coins (including the one Li-Ming already has) and then go in search of the treasure!

But the Pirate Queen of the South China Sea isn't so easily foiled. As the heroes close in on the sunken ship, Li-Ming pursues them, eventually forcing them to join battle with her to drive her away from their prize. And if they fail, they'll wind up as food for the sharks.

Once the heroes reach the ship, one last, terrible surprise rears its ugly head: skeletons! A curse placed on the treasure has brought the men who went down with the ship back to unlife as skeletal warriors. Only after they fight their way through cutlass- and kris-wielding bony foes can the heroes finally claim the treasure as their very own!

PART ONE: RECOVERING THE COINS

Broadly speaking, you can divide *The Malay Coins* into two parts: learning about and recovering all the coins; then using the map on the coins to seek the treasure. You can easily draw the adventure out as much as you want. For example, the quest for each coin or group of coins (see below) could be expanded to make up a complete scenario on its own, followed by a one- or two-session adventure involving the recovery of the treasure itself. (The text has suggestions and options for lengthening the scenario.) If you want to keep things shorter and simpler, don't worry about playing out the acquisition of each coin separately. You can quickly roleplay through those encounters... or gloss over them entirely and just assume the heroes get what they need to keep the adventure flowing along smoothly.

Fight In The Museum!

The adventure begins *in media res* when the heroes are visiting the museum for some reason (to give a presentation, enjoy a day off, accept an award, unveil a new exhibit they helped recover, or the like). In Hudson City, the museum is either the Museum of Anthropology and Natural History or the Thorson Museum of Archaeology; in New York City, it's the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For a map of the museum, use the aboveground parts of the Delacroix Mansion in *Shades Of Black*, with the various rooms appropriately reconceptualized, reconfigured, and renamed as museum exhibit rooms.

Room 9 on the first floor (labeled "Dining Room") is an exhibit of coins and money from around the world and throughout history. It includes three of the Malay Coins — Two, Five, and Six. The heroes shouldn't be in this room, but they should be close enough that they can hear the commotion and get there quickly.

Suddenly, the heroes hear screams and the sounds of breaking glass from Room 9! Rushing there, they discover a group of Asiatic thugs robbing the place. The Chinese robbers are armed with hatchets, knives, and pistols. Use the *Gangster* character sheet on page 407 of *Pulp Hero* for them, but give them Martial Arts (Kung Fu) in addition to the weapons mentioned above. There should be enough of them to give the heroes a good fight, but not one they can't win.

AVENUES OF INVESTIGATION

Once the fight's over, the heroes can start investigating the situation in several ways.

The Museum Staff

By talking to Assistant Curator Maxwell Griffies (who's in charge of, among others, the coins and money exhibit) and Head Curator Rogers MacIntire, the heroes can learn what the museum knows about the coins. The display containing the coins is labeled "Malaysian Coins c. 1650 (?)". Based on the metal content and artistic stylization, Griffies believes the coins to be Malaysian in origin, but the square center hole is a feature of Chinese, not Malay, currency. Griffies assumes from the markings on the coins' rims that there must be at least three more of them (*i.e.*, ones with one, three, and four incisions), and probably a central, seventh, coin as well.

Griffies and other experts are puzzled by the fact that the coins feature no indication of their ascribed value, of the king or nation who made them, or the like. If the heroes suggest to Griffies or MacIntire that the coins might be a picture or a map, they'll agree that it's possible, but without having more of the coins to examine they won't commit to any particular theory.

Either Griffies or MacIntire can tell the heroes that a local coin collector, William Grossman, owns a coin that seems to come from the same set as these three coins. He's tried to buy the museum's coins several times, but of course the museum doesn't sell items from its collection.

If the heroes are well-known or have good reputations, the museum is willing to let them borrow the three coins in an effort to find out why someone wants to steal them. Griffies will even provide a wooden, velvet-lined, waterproof container (it floats) that can hold up to ten coins in special slots so they don't get damaged during the heroes' travels. If the heroes aren't well-known or have bad reputations, they'll have to get someone to vouch for them before the museum lets them borrow the coins.

Captured Thugs

It's entirely possible the heroes will capture some of the Chinese thugs. If the heroes are on good terms with the police, or if they think fast and interrogate the prisoners before the cops arrive at the museum, they may learn something from questioning the thugs.

The thugs are tong warriors hired by Li-Ming Jade through intermediaries to steal the coins. She learned the museum has three of them, though so far she's had no luck locating the other three. The tong warriors were to take the coins back to their boss, Yen Lo Chee, who'll ship them to Li-Ming Jade through the man who hired him. They were only to steal these three particular coins, plus a few handfuls of other coins just to confuse the authorities; nothing else was to be taken.

Getting the thugs to talk requires an Interrogation roll at -3 or an appropriate PRE/EGO +20 Presence Attack. All they know is that Yen Lo Chee instructed them to steal the coins as described above. They can also tell the heroes where to find Yen Lo Chee.

Yen Lo Chee runs a tea shop in Chinatown. If confronted by the PCs, he admits nothing. It takes an Interrogation roll at -5 or an appropriate PRE/EGO +30 Presence Attack (he's PRE 15) to get him to reveal that a fence and "underworld broker" named Cheng Tsai in Shanghai hired him to obtain the coins by any means necessary. The coins were to be shipped to Cheng Tsai; Yen Lo Chee can provide the shipping address, but knows nothing more about Cheng Tsai.

Research

The heroes can try to research the coins further by reading books on the subject, talking to numismatists, and so forth. They won't turn up anything (unless maybe they roll a 3 on an INT Roll, and even then they'll just find a picture of one of the coins they already have and some vague information). The coins are too obscure to have made it into standard records and reference sources.

The Other Four Coins

At this point, the heroes definitely have one lead to follow up (William Grossman, located in the same city they're now in), and possibly two (this "Cheng Tsai" of Shanghai). As described below, Grossman can put them on track to recover most of the rest of the coins.

Since this part of the scenario involves traveling around the world, if you want to you can draw it out based on how the PCs choose to travel. If they're on a ship, a murder mystery or attack by undersea fish-men might make for a fun game session; if they're flying, plenty of adventures begin with a plane crash in the wilderness....

COIN THREE: WILLIAM GROSSMAN

Grossman is a wealthy man who lives in a fine house in the city. If the heroes are well-known or have good reputations, he'll gladly agree to meet with them; otherwise they'll need a letter of introduction from Griffies or MacIntire.

During their meeting, Grossman explains (truthfully) that he knows nothing about his coin — Coin Three — except what the museum personnel have already revealed. He'll show it to them, and happily compare it to the museum's three (which he's wanted for years). He bought his coin in a Damascus marketplace over a decade ago; he can't remember the seller's name, but knows he had no information about the coin.

If the heroes ask to borrow Grossman's coin, he's willing to do so, with a few conditions:

1. The heroes explain, truthfully, why they want it.
2. The heroes agree to return it to him (regardless of its condition) within two months. If they lose or damage the coin, they must return whatever remains of it to him and pay him the sum of \$500.
3. If the heroes have explained or hinted that the coins might form a treasure map, he insists that, if the treasure includes any coins, he be allowed to choose ten coins from them. He gets first selection, before the heroes take any for themselves, sell any, give any to museums, or the like.

If the heroes won't meet his conditions, he won't let them borrow his coin, make rubbings or drawings of it, or anything of the sort.

If the heroes agree to his terms, Grossman will also reveal that he knows a coin collector in Delhi, Chitrash Muthanna, who possesses a coin "very much like mine." He'll even give the heroes a letter of introduction, if they've impressed him with their courtesy and heroic natures.

Expanding This Encounter

If you want to expand the scenario a bit, Grossman is wealthy because he's a mobster. He's in the middle of some sort of gang war or conflict right now, and as an additional condition for borrowing his coin he wants the heroes' "help" to harm his rivals or conduct some sort of criminal activity. You decide exactly what's involved, based on the nature of your campaign and your PCs. If necessary, make Grossman out to be a relatively non-violent and likeable crook, whereas his rival is a brutal butcher who definitely needs to be removed from the picture.

COIN FOUR: CHITRASH MUTHANNA

This scenario works best if the heroes decide to follow Grossman's lead and go to India. If they want to pursue Cheng Tsai in Shanghai, try to discourage them and point them in the direction of Delhi.

Muthanna is a merchant, a man who's made himself wealthy dealing in spices, dry goods, and the like. He collects coins as a hobby. He bought Coin Four from a sailor he met in Calcutta and hasn't seen since; he has no idea where the sailor got it. Like Grossman, he's willing to let the characters borrow his coin (unless they offend or annoy him somehow), provided (a) they promise to return it, and (b) pay a non-refundable fee of \$300, with another \$300 to be paid if they lose it or damage it in any way.

Muthanna has heard rumors that a coin-dealer in Shanghai named Hwa Zhya-sung has "a coin very similar to mine." That should be all you need to keep the PCs heading onward.

Expanding This Encounter

There are three ways to expand this encounter. The first is to have some of Li-Ming Jade's hirelings show up at the same time as the PCs, sparking a fight for the coin. However, since this also happens in Shanghai (see below), it might be too repetitious to do it here.

Second, if the heroes have had any encounters with Akash Varmandali or his daughter Drisana (see *Pulp Hero* and *Masterminds And Madmen*, respectively), perhaps they've somehow learned about the coins and want to obtain them. The heroes arrive at Muthanna's home to find him beaten bloody (perhaps to death) and his coin missing. Now they have to track down the thieves — who work for Varmandali — and get the coin back!

Third, Muthanna may want a service from the PCs instead of money. For reasons he refuses to disclose (but which you should concoct in case you need to know), he's attracted the unwelcome attentions of a malign cult — an offshoot of the Thuggee, he believes. He wants the heroes to put an end to the cult before it kills him.

CENTER COIN: HWA ZHYA-SUNG

The last coin waits for the heroes in Shanghai... along with a deadly surprise! Like the heroes, Li-Ming Jade has learned that a dealer in coins, jewelry, and antiques named Hwa Zhya-sung owns one of the Malay Coins. Rather than buy it from him for 900 *yuan* (\$333 US dollars), she sends some of her men to steal it. In a typical Pulp coincidence, those men show up just as the PCs arrive!

Use the character sheet for the tong thugs for the Pirate Queen's men. As with the museum fight, make it a tough one, but not one the heroes can't win. If possible, arrange things so that Hwa himself, or his beautiful granddaughter (who just happens to be the PCs' age...) are threatened by the pirates. After they save his and his granddaughter's life, Hwa will be so grateful that he'll sell them the coin for only 270 *yuan* (about \$100 US). He explains that he acquired the coin many years ago during one of his periodic collecting trips through the region. His records say he bought it from a merchant in a marketplace in Singapore, but that's all.

COIN ONE: LI-MING JADE

If the heroes capture any of Li-Ming Jade's men, or have the chance to follow one of them as he escapes, they can interrogate them for information about their mistress. They'll reveal that one of her ships is tied up right here in Shanghai... and that her coin is aboard! If neither of those paths work, the heroes can look up the fence Cheng Tsai (see above) — he can tell them where the Pirate Queen's junk is.

The scene now shifts to the docks, where the heroes have to obtain the seventh coin by force or trickery. If you think you can arrange it and that your heroes won't just kill her outright, let Li-Ming herself be present but escape after the heroes defeat her men (if necessary, give her a generous helping of Heroic Action Points to spend to ensure her getaway). Otherwise, a trusted lieutenant commands the junk. (For Li-Ming Jade's character sheet, see *Masterminds And Madmen*.)

Make this a tough fight — tougher than the others the heroes have had so far. They're on enemy territory now, fighting Li-Ming's pirates in their natural environment (ships and docks). At the very least, they should come through the fight a few Heroic Action Points poorer. For added excitement, keep putting the coin in constant danger: it's just about to fall into the water! — a fire's broken out on the ship and the coin's going to melt! — a pirate's grabbed it and is running away! If possible, put the coin in peril every couple of Phases so the heroes have something to do other than just duke it out with Li-Ming's men (and possibly the Pirate Queen herself!). But in the end, they should get the coin. At this point they can probably find the shipwreck without it, but letting Li-Ming Jade keep it probably isn't a good idea... and the matched set looks better.

PART TWO: IN SEARCH OF TREASURE!

With all seven Malay Coins in hand, the heroes are ready to go in search of the shipwreck and its treasure. But more difficulties are soon to present themselves... and a deadly secret lurks beneath the waves!

OUTFITTING THE EXPEDITION

Now the PCs have to outfit their expedition. It should be obvious to them by now that they're after an underwater prize, so they'll need a ship, at least one diving suit or set of primitive SCUBA gear, food, water, and other such supplies. Based on their analysis of the map, the best places to depart from would be Manila or Singapore, but they can set out from Shanghai if they prefer.

To make the final encounter exciting, you'll want to allow as many heroes to work underwater at a time as you can. If necessary, let a Gad-geteer or Scientist PC (or a helpful NPC) equip

the heroes with Weird Science diving equipment, Oxygenation Pills (*Pulp Hero*, page 332), or whatever other plot device gizmos you need to keep the action moving along.

An Unexpected Encounter

For an added human interest element, one day while they're outfitting their expedition the heroes chance to see several dockyard thugs pushing around a kid who looks to be about 10 or 12. As Pulp heroes, they've got to go to the rescue! It won't take much to scare the bullies away — they were after the boy's money, which he earns performing odd jobs and uses to support his family. His name is Tay Siang-loke, and he's half Malaysian, half Chinese; the heroes can refer to him as "Sammy."

Sammy's family have been fishermen in the South China Sea for literally centuries. As such, he knows the region well (AK: South China Sea 13-) and would be happy to work as a "guide" and helper (read: kid sidekick!) for the heroes. (A wage would be nice, but if they don't offer, he figures he owes them for saving him from those thugs.) He'll spend the rest of the adventure getting into lighthearted trouble, playing the part of the designated hostage and NPC-in-peril, and generally providing comedic relief.

CANNONS AND CUTTHROATS

With their expedition ready to go, the heroes set off to sea in search of fame and fortune... or at least fortune. Unfortunately for them, they've still got an enemy on their tail: Li-Ming Jade. The Pirate Queen of the South Seas has plenty of contacts and resources in the region, so it doesn't take much for her to find out where the PCs are and what they're up to. From that it's a simple matter to have her converge on the heroes and try to capture the coins by force.

You can spring this attack on the heroes whenever and however you like: she can come after them while they're still sailing to the wreck's location, or wait until they've already dropped



anchor and begun hunting for the wreck itself; you can have them show up and begin a tension-filled chase, or spring them on the heroes by surprise one crisp dawn.

Li-Ming's junks (see page 115 of *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook*) are armed with cannons and other guns. However, she probably won't use them on the PCs' ship for other than warning shots, because she's afraid of sinking it and losing the coins. She plans to close to boarding distance and then swarm over the heroes' ship with superior numbers.

This should be the toughest fight the heroes have had in the scenario so far. They're out in the middle of the sea, unable to flee or get help, and badly outnumbered by a well-seasoned group of pirates. If they happen to lose, Li-Ming takes them prisoner and forces them to work as slaves... thus giving them the opportunity to escape!

PIRATES' BONES

Sooner or later, the heroes overcome all the obstacles you've put in front of them and make it to the area where the wreck went down. They don't know *exactly* where it is, so they'll have to start searching... but this is a Pulp story, so they'll find it!

But even once they do, it's not payday just yet. Part of the treasure is a chest of gold coins the pirates stole. The man they stole it from placed a curse on it that the thieves would never know rest. As a result, not all of them died forever when their ship went down. Some of them remain horribly alive, the flesh eaten off their bones by fish — undying skeletal guardians of the treasure! (Of course, if your campaign doesn't feature any mysticism or Weird elements, feel free to ignore this encounter.)

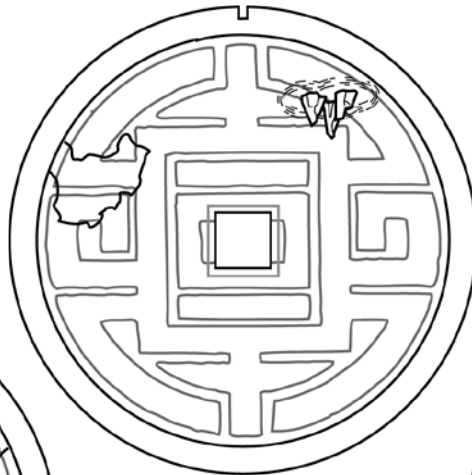
When the heroes get too close to the wreck, the skeletons attack. Use the character sheet on page 123 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for them; they're wielding cutlasses (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 11) and large krises (HKA 1d6; STR Min 11). They fight until destroyed

CONCLUSION

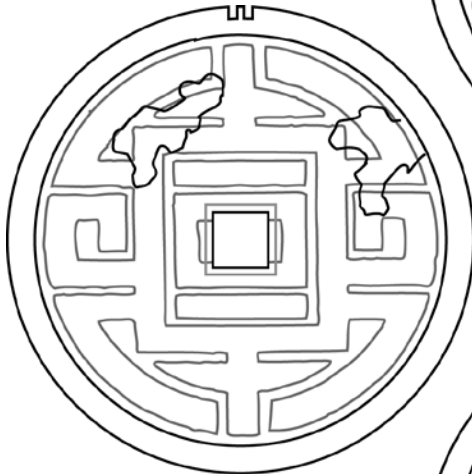
After they defeat the skeletal pirates, the heroes are home free. All they have to do is haul up the loot. You can throw in a storm, some sharks, or another encounter with pirates or other enemies if you like, but at this point the adventure's pretty much come to a (hopefully successful) conclusion. In addition to the previously-mentioned chest of gold coins (from which William Grossman will gleefully take his pick), the treasure includes Chinese porcelain from the seventeenth century, some jewelry, and a variety of artifacts valuable to any museum. And who knows? Perhaps some other item in the trove will be the start of another adventure....

THE MALAY COINS

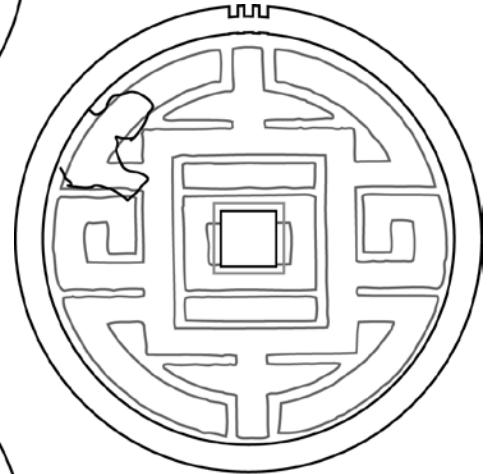
For a fun prop, print out a copy of this page, cut it apart into the individual coins, and give the paper coins to the players as the heroes recover them.



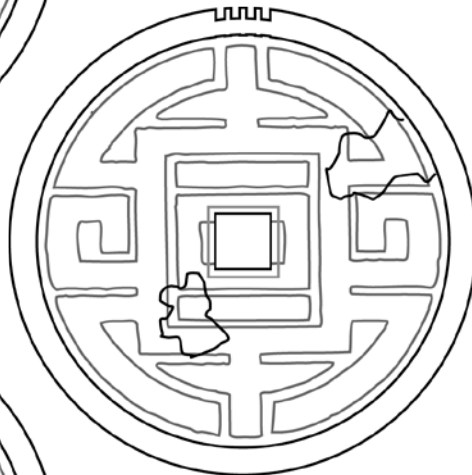
Coin 1



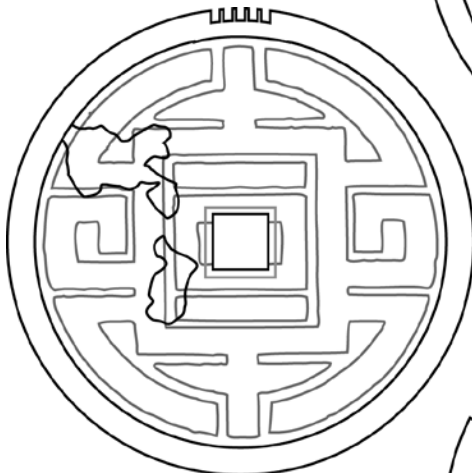
Coin 2



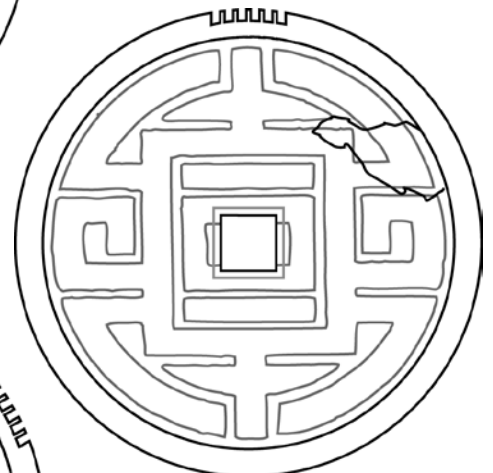
Coin 3



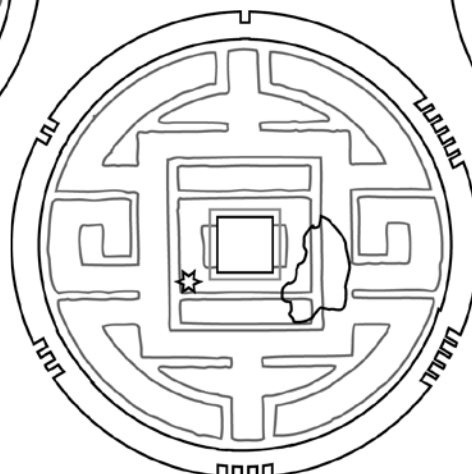
Coin 4



Coin 5



Coin 6



Coin 7

Thrilling Hero Adventures

**NAZI
DEATH-ZOMBIES
OF THE
CONGO!**

Adventure Eight

NAZI DEATH-ZOMBIES OF THE CONGO!



When a young African boy comes to the heroes for help fighting the “fire demons” that are kidnapping women and children from his village, the heroes discover that the Third Reich has built a secret mine in the Belgian Congo and enslaved large numbers of natives to work underground. Can the heroes defeat the Nazis — including the four powerful members of the secret special force *Einsatzgruppe Omega* — to free the Congolese and bring the Nazi project to a halt?

Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo! is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Three other Thrilling Hero Adventures — *Curse Of The Vulture-God*, *Spears Of The Tisangani*, and *Valley Of The Spider Queen* — also take place in Africa, so linking them together shouldn't prove too difficult. Just sprinkle in some clues leading from the one you're currently running to the next one you want to run. (You could also take the PCs to Neos Themiscyra in *Thrilling Places*.)

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Of all the insidious Nazi scientists in Germany, the most insidious is undoubtedly Dr. Hans Siegfried. His name still evokes fear and hatred among surviving Victorian-era adventurers, whom he fought as a much younger man. Today he's old and physically feeble, virtually confined to a wheelchair, but his evil brain remains alert and unimpaired. With the help of his son Rutger, also a scientist of no small merit, Dr. Siegfried works for the greater glory of the Third Reich and the defeat of her enemies — including stalwart heroes such as your PCs.

Among Dr. Siegfried's nigh-innumerable experiments are several involving uranium. Recently the Nazis discovered a large uranium deposit in the Belgian Congo and secretly began mining it. To avoid having to import large numbers of workers or pay day laborers, they kidnapped the family of a local witch-doctor named Makalo to force him to work for them. To keep

the Germans from harming his family, Makalo must use his *juju* to turn men into mindless workers — zombies, essentially — so they labor ceaselessly, don't complain, ignore the effects of radiation poisoning, and remember nothing.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins when the PCs, on safari in the eastern regions of the Belgian Congo, are approached by a young African boy. He claims that “fire demons” attack his village and kidnap women and children, and wants the PCs to come protect the place. Responding to his call for help, the heroes discover that the “fire demons” are actually semi-mindless men who glow with a mysterious light. After they defeat these “zombies,” the heroes “awaken” them and learn that the witch-doctor Makalo enslaved them... and where they can find him.

The PCs travel to Makalo's lair, a ruined old plantation house, and confront him — only to discover that he's being forced to use his *juju* on the men by the Nazis. He can tell them where to find the mine, and perhaps a little about some of the Nazi commanders.

The PCs' adventure continues onward to the mine. There they must find a way to rescue all the hostages (particularly Makalo's family) and workers and defeat the Nazis, or who knows what horrifying super-weapons the Nazis will create with the uranium?

PART ONE: NIGHT OF THE BURNING DEAD

The adventure begins with the heroes enjoying themselves on safari in the eastern part of the Belgian Congo. If one of them is a Great White Hunter or old Africa hand, he's leading the safari; if none of the PCs are suitable for this role, they have a professional guide.

One day while they're out in the field, they see on the horizon a man who's running — running toward them, in fact! As he gets closer, it becomes apparent that it's a boy, not a man, and that he's been running a long, long time — he looks like he's on the verge of collapse. In fact, when he gets within about a hundred feet of the heroes he *does* collapse, forcing them to go to his aid.

The boy is exhausted but no worse. If a hero succeeds with a Paramedics roll at +2 and gives him some water and food, the boy quickly revives long enough to tell his tale. (If one of the heroes is a Great White Hunter or old Africa hand, the boy came looking for him specifically; otherwise he was looking for *any* sort of help and stumbled across the heroes providentially.) He claims that *moto mazimwi* — “fire demons” — are attacking his village every night and carrying off women and children. The heroes must come help before everyone is taken away... and no doubt eaten by the demons!

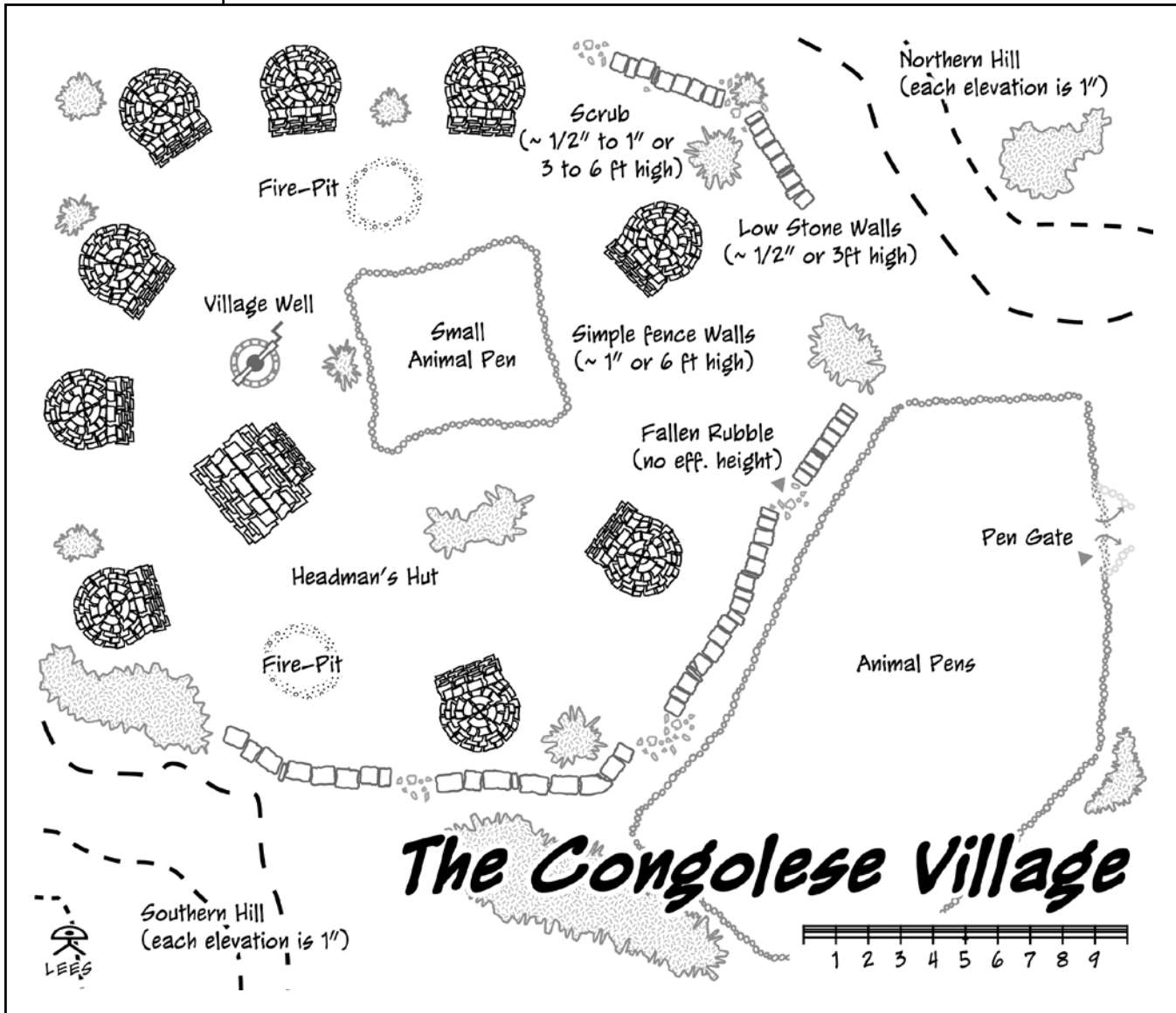
If the heroes ask him about the men in the village, the boy explains that several weeks ago all the men went off to the north to work in the mines. A white man’s company opened up a new mine and offered high wages for miners. He doesn’t know the name of the company or the location of the mine.

THE VILLAGE OF NO MEN

The boy’s village is about a day and a half’s travel away. If the heroes push themselves hard they can get there in a day, but may suffer some temporary penalties (such as -1 to OCV and Skill Rolls) to represent the fatigue they feel.

The village, shown on the accompanying map, seems a little run-down and almost deserted. There are no men older than 15 or younger than 50 at all, and a lot of women and children are missing. The remaining natives tell the same story as the boy: “fire demons” attack the village each night, usually a few hours after sundown, and carry women and children away into the night.

Night falls... and no doubt the heroes are on watch! Several hours after sunset their patience is rewarded. Have them all make PER Rolls; the hero who succeeds by the most sees what looks like a lantern or torch off in the distance. Soon all the heroes can see several such lights, and they’re clearly too large to be torches or lanterns. Slowly



but surely they get closer, and soon the heroes can see that they're men surrounded by palls of fire!

Though the heroes won't realize it at first, these are actually some of the men from the village who went to work at the mines. Makalo "zombified" them. Because the men mine uranium, they become irradiated, and this causes them to glow at night in a way that makes it look like they're "on fire" to unsophisticated native eyes. The men, though zombified, dimly remember their real lives and miss their wives. Crazed with sorrow, love, and a desire to be free, they leave the camp at night to kidnap their wives and children to come live with them at the mines. The Nazis permit this, thinking it harmless and easy to alter if necessary... besides, it gives them hostages in case they need any.

Once the "fire demons" get within 10" of the heroes, let them make PER Rolls again. Anyone who succeeds by 3 or more can see that these "fire demons" are actually glowing men. If attacked in HTH Combat, the men respond with great strength and toughness (STR 25, CON 20, PD 10, SPD 2), but only long enough to knock or throw their adversaries out of the way so they can continue to the village. (They similarly destroy or smash through obstacles they can't easily go around.) If injured by Ranged attacks, they keep moving forward as long as they're physically able to; if they can't walk, they crawl.

The trick to running this scene properly is to try to build up a fear of the "monsters" among the players while keeping them from just shooting the "things" as they approach. The "fire demons" are innocent victims here, so the PCs, as Pulp heroes, shouldn't be made to feel guilty for shooting them. If necessary, give them numerous opportunities to make PER Rolls to realize their "attackers" are men, that the men appear glassy-eyed and not fully in control of themselves, and so forth.

Breaking The Trance

Once the heroes realize the "fire demons" are zombified men, they need to find a way to snap the men out of it and bring them back to their senses. Ordinary pain won't do it (as mentioned above, they keep going even if shot or cut, as long as they're physically able to), but the pain of being burned with a torch or the like probably would (or at least give the victim a chance to make an EGO Roll to break free). Holding one down and splashing cold water on him would also work. Beyond that, it's your call as GM, but this being a cinematic genre you should reward creativity and fast thinking on the part of the PCs.

PART TWO: THE WITCH-DOCTOR'S PLANTATION

After somehow "awakening" the "zombies," the heroes can speak to them (though the men first want to see their families and have a decent meal, of course!). The men explain that when they went to the mine to look for work, Makalo, a local witch-doctor, used his *juju* on them to put them in a "walking sleep" so they would work as hard as possible without complaint, even though the work made them feel sick (*i.e.*, they got radiation poisoning from the uranium). The men's minds are fuzzy on how to get to the mine, but they do remember how to get to the old plantation house where Makalo lives — that's where he put the spell on them. Time to go have a talk with the old witch-doctor...

The men can lead the PCs to (or give them directions to) an old, abandoned Belgian rubber plantation where the Nazis keep Makalo and have him use his zombie-spell on their workers. The accompanying map shows the plantation compound; Makalo lives in the main house (the other buildings are abandoned, though some of Makalo's "zombies" sometimes work in them). All the buildings are old and decaying. The sights and smells of the rot brought on by decades of abandonment and neglect in the African environment are overwhelming, even depressing or frightening in some ways (particularly if the heroes go there at night).

As discussed in the Adventure Background above, Makalo isn't working for the Nazis willingly: they have his wives and children held hostage. He hates what he's doing, how he's perverting his wisdom and lore. He'd gladly stop what he's doing (or even help the PCs) if he could find a way to do so without getting his family hurt or killed.

When the heroes arrive, Makalo assumes they're there to capture or kill him (unless he and a PC happen to know and trust one another). Since either result would prevent him from working for the Nazis and thus ensure his family's death, he fights back... at least for a time, until his guilt overwhelms him. He has several "zombies" serving him who protect him (they're faster than the ones back at the village — SPD 3). He himself has a knife, and you could even equip him with a minor magical item or two (such as a bag of "blinding powder") if that would make the fight better for your heroes.

Unless they kill him during the battle, Makalo eventually stops fighting; he just can't bear to hurt anyone else. He sorrowfully confesses and explains what he's been doing. He can even provide the PCs with a powder that will bring a zombified man out of his trance, but he begs the heroes not to use it until they free his family. He can give the heroes directions to the

The map depicts an abandoned plantation with several buildings and terrain features. The buildings include a large central 'Plantation House', a 'Bunkhouse' with a 'Hay loft (above)', a 'Barn', 'Toolshed', 'Stables', 'Smithy', and 'Animal Pens'. There are also 'Gravel Paths', 'Wells (typ)', and 'Troughs (typ)'. The terrain is marked with different patterns representing 'Dense Overgrowth', 'Structural Collapse', and 'Gravel'. A scale bar shows 5m, 10m, 15m, and 20m. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner. The map is surrounded by 'O.H.' (Overgrown Hill) markers.

The Abandoned Plantation

LEES

Dense Overgrowth
Thick and/or tall weeds (3+), briars or other blocking foliage.

Structural Collapse
Knocked down or Caved in, more than 75% ruined. Kaput.

Gravel
Some level, others overgrown in patches except where noted.

Scrubs
Small trees or shrubs, most are 3-6 Ft and offer Soft cover.

Everything else can be assumed to be at least somewhat overgrown, by weeds and vines no higher than the knee of an Average-height PC. All structures unsafe.

5m 10m 15m 20m

N

mine (or they might find a crude map among his possessions). He'll accompany them there if they insist, but fears the Nazis will see him and then kill his family.

NAZI ATTACK?

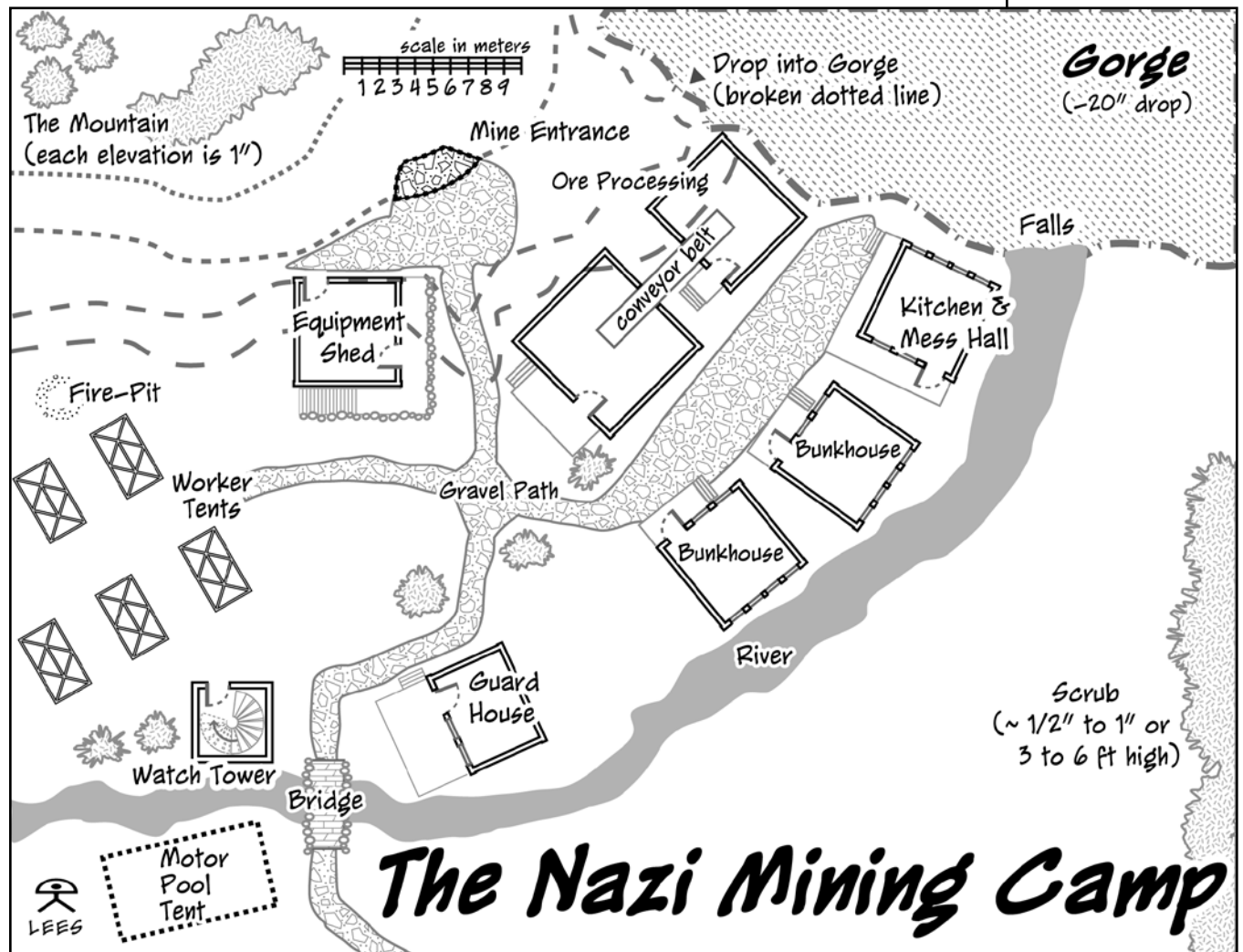
If you want to draw the scenario out or inject some more action into the mix, assume the Nazis had several guards hidden around the plantation. They saw the PCs arrive and the encounter that followed. They now want to eliminate this threat on their own and earn a commendation from their leaders. Just as the heroes finished talking to Makalo and think they're ready to proceed onward to the mine, German soldiers attack!

If you want to really complicate things, have the Nazis send one of their number back to the mine with a report before the rest of them attack. That way Einsatzgruppe Omega and the rest of the soldiers are in a high state of readiness and alertness when the heroes arrive. Otherwise, the mine only gets word about what happened if a soldier flees from the battle and the heroes let him get away.

**PART THREE:
THE MINES OF FEAR**

Whether with the help of Makalo, by interrogating (or following) German soldiers, or some other method, the heroes find their way to the secret Nazi uranium mine. The accompanying map shows the mining camp, which occupies one end of a sort of valley. The valley itself is more or less barren, leaving nothing in the way of concealment, but at the other end of the valley there's a forested ridge where the heroes can hide and observe the camp.

The dotted line on the map shows where the steep face of a cliffside juts up from the ground; the mine entrance is dug into the side of this cliff. To the northeast of the camp itself is a gorge that's at least 20' deep in most place, and deeper in some; it's 50' wide (sometimes more) with a river at the bottom.



LAYOUT OF THE CAMP

As shown on the map, most of the camp is on the far side of a stream that's crossed by a simple wooden bridge; the only structure outside the boundaries of the stream is the motor pool tent, where the Nazis keep several trucks and other vehicles. The other buildings near the bridge are a wooden watchtower and a guard-house.

To the left of the mine entrance is a small building where the Nazis keep some mining equipment and supplies, including picks, shovels, dynamite, and parts to repair the various carts and machines used in the operation. South of that building is a place where the slaves park the hand-pulled ore-carts they use, and a series of open-sided tents where the slaves rest, eat, and sleep. (Any family members "kidnapped" by the "fire-demons" also have to live here; Nazi guards keep watch on them.)

To the right of the mine entrance are two ore-processing buildings connected by a conveyor belt. The zombified slaves haul ore out of the mine to the first building, where it's broken up and carried by the conveyor belt to the other building for final processing. Just south of those two buildings is a building where the mine's administrative personnel work and keep their records.

The three buildings in a row along the stream are barracks for the Nazi soldiers, including the members of Einsatzgruppe Omega (see below). They also include a kitchen and mess hall.

THE MINES

The map does not show the mines. For them, you can use just about any map of an underground/cavern area, such as some of the maps from *Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds*. However, you have to make sure the map has (or that you can add) four specific features:

1. It's two levels deep.
2. Both levels include a long tunnel leading out to the cliff face of the gorge. (This is where the zombified slaves dump the mine tailings.)
3. The second level has one room suitable for a mad science laboratory for Dr. Siegfried. He no longer maintains the lab, so there aren't much equipment or supplies left, but when the mine first opened he worked there extensively. If the heroes examine this room, let them make Tracking rolls; anyone who succeeds notes tracks on the ground that look like wheelchair tracks or the tracks of a wheeled cart of some sort.
4. The second level has one room suitable for holding Makalo's family prisoner.

BATTLE FOR THE CAMP!

From this point, how the adventure goes depends largely on the choices your heroes make. They might try a frontal assault, or attempt to sneak past the Nazis to make it into the mines; they might try to blow up the camp and kill all the Germans, or may be content just to rescue Makalo's family and get away. Give them enough time to analyze the situation and plan their attack, but don't let the game get bogged down into a tactics and strategy session. If necessary, ratchet up the tension by letting a Nazi guard get close to them (or even see them) or having a troop of "friendly" monkeys call attention to them with shrieks and cries.

If the heroes want to sneak around, the gorge offers a pretty good way to do so — they can enter it far away from the camp and creep along ledges until they get to the two openings into the mines mentioned above (where the zombified slaves dump the mine tailings). This requires several Climbing rolls, including one at -2 if they have to cross the water-slicked rocks where the waterfall plunges into the gorge.

Another excellent resource, if the heroes can get to it, are the crates of dynamite in the mine supply building. With that stuff in hand they can reduce the camp and mine to rubble... assuming they succeed with some Demolitions rolls and place the dynamite properly.

If the heroes get away but leave even one member of Einsatzgruppe Omega alive, they'll have made an enemy for life. Eisengesicht and his men aren't the type to forget grudges.

EINSATZGRUPPE OMEGA



Membership: Eisengesicht; der Aufseher; Tier; Von Schädel

Background/History: Einsatzgruppe Omega (“Task Force Omega”) was assembled by Heinrich Himmler himself as an elite unit composed of SS officers with distinctive abilities and appearances to serve the needs of the SS and himself. They are often tasked to assist Nazi scientist Dr. Hans Siegfried and his son Rutger with their various Weird Science projects and missions.

Group Relations: Einsatzgruppe Omega is a military unit with a precisely-defined chain of command: Eisengesicht, der Aufseher, Von Schädel, and Tier (who bitterly resents being lowest in the chain). Eisengesicht holds the rank of *Obersturmbannführer* (equivalent to a lieutenant colonel in the military); the others are all *Hauptsturmführer* (equivalent to captain). They can command soldiers of lesser rank if necessary.

Tactics: Einsatzgruppe Omega doesn’t always fight together as well as a military unit should because of the diverse abilities and personalities of its four members. Eisengesicht, and to some extent Von Schädel, prefer standard military tactics — they get to cover and use their weapons to pick off opponents. (Though Eisengesicht sometimes prefers to charge right into a group of foes and use his brawn and toughness to smash them into unconsciousness.) Der Aufseher wants to get close enough to use his whip, but hopefully maintain enough distance to keep out of HTH Combat range; Tier closes to HTH Combat range as soon as he can to use his claws and teeth.

Campaign Use: Einsatzgruppe Omega serves as a major adversary for any group of Pulp Hero PCs. Tough, ruthless, and deadly, they can show up just about anywhere in the world pursuing nearly any sort of goal on behalf of the SS and the Third Reich. When they fight, they shoot to kill (though they understand the value of prisoners and hostages in appropriate situations). They fight intelligently and with skill, using their military training and weapons to best effect.

The easiest way to make Einsatzgruppe Omega a stronger opponent is to give it squads of Nazi soldiers to command. More dramatically, you could add another member or two if necessary to make the group numerically equivalent to your PCs, or equip the members with Weird Sci-

ence devices of Dr. Siegfried’s design. To weaken them, remove a member, or reduce the members’ SPDs to 3.

As a Hunter Einsatzgruppe Omega is subject to the orders of its superiors in the SS and Nazi high command. If instructed to pursue someone, they do so according to the commands they receive as interpreted by their own cleverness (and sometimes sadism).

EISENGESICHT

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 25 | STR | 20 | 14- | Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [5] |
| 16 | DEX | 18 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 20 | CON | 20 | 13- | |
| 18 | BODY | 16 | 13- | |
| 13 | INT | 3 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 18 | EGO | 16 | 13- | ECV: 6 |
| 25 | PRE | 20 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 6 | COM | -2 | 10- | |
| 10 | PD | 7 | | Total: 16 PD (6 rPD) |
| 8 | ED | 4 | | Total: 14 ED (6 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 14 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 12 | REC | 10 | | |
| 40 | END | 0 | | |
| 50 | STUN | 9 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 155 |

Movement: Running: 6”/12”

| Cost | Powers | END |
|----------------|---|-----|
| 10 | <i>Powerhouse Punch:</i> HA +3d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) | 1 |
| 18 | <i>Feels Very Little Pain:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED) | 0 |
| 30 | <i>Feels Very Little Pain:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25% | 0 |
| 4 | <i>Iron Mask:</i> Armor (+4 PD/+4 ED); Only Protects The Front Of The Head (-2) | 0 |
| Perks | | |
| 7 | Military Rank: SS-Obersturmbannführer, leader of Einsatzgruppe Omega | |
| Talents | | |
| 3 | Lightsleep | |
| 8 | Resistance (8 points) | |
| Skills | | |
| 32 | +4 with All Combat | |
| 6 | +2 with Firearms | |

EISENGESICHT PLOT SEEDS

Eisengesicht hears about a brilliant American surgeon who may be able to make him look normal again. He kidnaps the man, intending to force him to operate; the heroes have to track him down and free the terrified physician.

A Nazi mystic believes Eisengesicht is the incarnation an ancient Germanic storm-deity. He convinces the iron-helmeted warrior to participate in a ceremony designed to bring forth the “essence” of this god, giving Eisengesicht vast strength and powers. The heroes have to find the ceremony and stop it before one of their worst foes becomes almost unstoppable!

Eisengesicht’s body starts to break down. To “repair” him, Dr. Siegfried needs special parts and data from a top-notch but eccentric American scientist (perhaps a PC!). Eisengesicht steals the goods; the heroes have to find him and get them back before Dr. Siegfried can make him even stronger than ever.

- 12 Targeting Skill Levels: +4 versus Hit Location penalties with all attacks
- 3 Combat Driving 12-
- 3 Interrogation 14-
- 2 AK: Europe 11-
- 2 CK: Berlin 11-
- 1 KS: The Espionage World 8-
- 2 KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
- 3 KS: The Nazi Military 12-
- 2 Language: English (fluent conversation; German is Native)
- 3 Navigation (Land, Marine) 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 6 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 4 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Snow Skiing
- 6 WF: Small Arms, Blades, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Launchers, Flamethrowers

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 173

Total Cost: 328

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Distinctive Features: iron faceplate (Concealable With Effort, Causes Major Reaction [fear, loathing, disgust])
- 5 Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 5 Distinctive Features: unusually low body temperature (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 20 Hunted: enemies of Nazi Germany 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 10 Hunted: the SS/Wehrmacht 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Ardent Nazi (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Despises People Who Are Beautiful, Talk Too Much, Or Seem Favored By Fate (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 128 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 328

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-----------------------|
| Mauser Gewehr 98 | +1 | +1 | 2½d6 | 1d6 | 5 | 14 | Carries 2 extra clips |
| Luger P-08 | +1 | +0 | 1d6+1 | 1d6-1 | 8 | 8 | Carries 1 extra clip |
| Knife | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

Iron Faceplate/Helmet (+6 DEF, protects Hit Locations 3-5)

Gear: Binoculars, map case with relevant maps, compass

Clothing: Uniform (see Appearance)

Background/History: Eisengesicht (“Ironface”; his real name is a highly-classified German military secret) was once one of the guards assigned to protect and assist Dr. Hans Siegfried. Unfortunately he was standing a little too close to one of Herr Doktor’s experiments when something went wrong and it exploded, showering him with shrapnel and bits of uranium.

Any other man would have died... but not Eisengesicht, who’s as tall as an oak and sturdy as a stone tower. He clung to life with every fiber of his being, and Dr. Siegfried saw in him something worthy of being preserved. Using his vast knowledge of biology and electronics, Dr. Siegfried “rebuilt” Eisengesicht, replacing some parts of his body with Weird Science devices intended to keep it alive. Some of the side effects of this process were unpleasant (it made Eisengesicht look even more horrific than normal, and gave him an unusually low body temperature), while others (diminished capacity to feel pain) were useful. Doktor Siegfried even designed a special iron faceplate/helmet to hide Eisengesicht’s explosion-ravaged face from the world.

When Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler decided to create Einsatzgruppe Omega, Eisengesicht was the ideal choice to lead the unit. He’s served with distinction all over the world ever since, killing dozens of enemies of the Third Reich and recovering intelligence and treasures of all sorts.

Personality/Motivation: Like all members of Einsatzgruppe Omega, Eisengesicht is an ardent Nazi, a devoted German patriot, and a loyal member of the SS. Stern, unforgiving, and efficient, he makes an ideal Nazi military leader and task force commander. Since his accident he has come to despise people who talk too much, who are beautiful/handsome (especially if they flaunt their looks), or who seem to get the lucky breaks that never came his way before.

Quote: “Enough prattle, ausländer. Now you die.”

Powers/Tactics: Before being assigned to Dr. Siegfried and joining the SS, Eisengesicht was a German soldier. As such he approaches problems and crises, including combat, with military precision and efficiency. He remains calm, cool, and collected at all times, never losing his head or giving in to panic. He identifies the most

important foe, takes aim, and guns him down. He keeps repeating that tactic, moving around the battlefield as necessary for his own safety or line of sight, until the enemy's been defeated.

Campaign Use: Eisengesicht makes a perfect foe for Pulp heroes who are skilled sharpshooters or like to target vulnerable locations such as the Head — since he has extra armor there! His rebuilt body is also much more resistant to injury than an average person's, so he can keep fighting or pursuing an enemy long after other opponents would have just fallen down and died.

If you need to make Eisengesicht even tougher, give him more Combat Skill Levels, increase his SPD to 5, and/or increase his CON to 25. To weaken him, reduce his STR to 20 and remove his Targeting Skill Levels.

Eisengesicht only Hunts characters if ordered to do so, in which case he follows orders.

Appearance: Eisengesicht is a huge brute of a man, 6'6" tall, broad-shouldered, and as tough and unyielding as a cliff. Because he feels cold all the time, even in tropical climates, he usually wears a heavy SS winter longcoat over his SS uniform, with a Nazi armband on the left upper arm on appropriate occasions. His face and head are hidden by an iron faceplate/helmet that has slits at his eyes, nose, and mouth so he can breathe and see. He usually carries his Mauser Gewehr 98 rifle and several other weapons with him at all times.



AUFSEHER PLOT SEEDS

While torturing a prisoner, der Aufseher learns the location of a hidden cache of gold. He can't go after it lest someone realize he kept the secret for himself, so he decides to trick the heroes into getting it and then take it from them... or, better yet, their corpses.

After an encounter with a strange Indian mystic, der Aufseher comes to believe it's possible for a man to learn to inflict pain at a distance with nothing but the power of his mind. Determined to learn how to do this, he begins searching the world for arcane power/teachers. The heroes have to stop him before he gains psychic powers no sadist should be allowed to have.

Der Aufseher comes into possession of a torture-manual from the Middle Ages. Eager to test out its contents, he concocts a false reason for Einsatzgruppe Omega to hunt and capture the PCs.

DER AUFSEHER

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 15 | STR | 5 | 12- | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3] |
| 15 | DEX | 15 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 15 | CON | 10 | 12- | |
| 13 | BODY | 6 | 12- | |
| 13 | INT | 3 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 13 | EGO | 6 | 12- | ECV: 4 |
| 15 | PRE | 5 | 12- | PRE Attack: 3d6 |
| 10 | COM | 0 | 11- | |
| 6 | PD | 3 | | Total: 6 PD (0 rPD) |
| 4 | ED | 1 | | Total: 4 ED (0 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 15 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 6 | REC | 0 | | |
| 30 | END | 0 | | |
| 35 | STUN | 6 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 75 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers **END**

Martial Arts: Whipfighting

Maneuver **OCV** **DCV** **Damage/Effect**

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|----|---------------------------------|
| 4 | Choke | -2 | +0 | Grab One Limb; 3d6 NND (2) |
| 4 | Disarm | -1 | +1 | Disarm, 35 STR to Disarm roll |
| 5 | Slash | -2 | +1 | Weapon +6 DC |
| 5 | Snap | +1 | +3 | Weapon +2 DC |
| 3 | Trip | +0 | +1 | Weapon +2 DC +v/5; Target Falls |
| 8 | +2 Damage Classes (already added in) | | | |

Perks

5 Military Rank: SS-Hauptsturmführer, member of Einsatzgruppe Omega

Talents

3 Resistance (3 points)

Skills

| | |
|----|---|
| 16 | +2 with All Combat |
| 6 | +2 with Whipfighting |
| 3 | Contortionist 12- |
| 9 | Interrogation 15- |
| 2 | AK: Europe 11- |
| 2 | CK: Berlin 11- |
| 1 | KS: The Espionage World 8- |
| 1 | KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 8- |
| 2 | KS: The Nazi Military 11- |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 | KS: Torture 12- |
| 2 | Language: English (fluent conversation; German is Native) |
| 2 | Language: French (fluent conversation) |
| 2 | Language: Russian (fluent conversation) |
| 2 | PS: Torturer 11- |
| 3 | Stealth 12- |
| 3 | Streetwise 12- |
| 3 | TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles |
| 5 | WF: Small Arms, Blades, Whip, Off Hand |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 104

Total Cost: 179

75+ Disadvantages

| | |
|----|--|
| 5 | Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable) |
| 20 | Hunted: enemies of Nazi Germany 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill) |
| 10 | Hunted: the SS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching) |
| 20 | Psychological Limitation: Ardent Nazi (Very Common, Strong) |
| 15 | Psychological Limitation: Sadistic; Loves To Inflict Pain (Common, Strong) |
| 20 | Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major) |
| 15 | Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Oskar Wollenhaupt) (Frequently, Major) |

Total Disadvantage Points: 180

Background/History: Oskar Wollenhaupt, der Aufseher ("the Overseer"), is the only member of Einsatzgruppe Omega who could pass for a normal human... at least based on external appearance. Raised in a strict German family, he grew up from a petty child who played malicious tricks on his playmates and other adults into a sadistic adult who spent time in jail for a number of petty crimes and assaults. He'd undoubtedly have graduated to rape and murder in time had the Nazi Party not come along to channel his "enthusiasms" so they became useful for the state. As a master torturer skilled with both whip and knife he made a fine candidate for Einsatzgruppe Omega.

Personality/Motivation: Like all members of Einsatzgruppe Omega, der Aufseher is an ardent Nazi, a devoted German patriot, and a loyal

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|------------|-----|------|---------|-------|-------|---------|----------------------|
| Whip | +0 | — | ½d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 5 | 3" reach, can Grab |
| Luger P-08 | +1 | +0 | 1d6+1 | 1d6-1 | 8 | 8 | Carries 1 extra clip |
| Knife | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |
| Scalpel | +0 | — | 1 point | 0 | — | 3 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: Surgical instruments and other tools of torture

Clothing: Uniform (see Appearance)

member of the SS. But he's also sadistic and cruel, taking advantage of every opportunity his position provides to torture and hurt people. More than once he's had such fun torturing a prisoner that he's killed the man before gaining a confession or learning anything useful.

Quote: "Now, Herr Irons... let us test the limits of your endurance."

Powers/Tactics: In combat der Aufseher prefers to use his whip, but to do so he has to maintain at least 1-2" of distance (and preferably 3") from his target, which isn't always possible. If forced into true HTH Combat, he fights with a knife in his right hand and scalpel in his left; if he can't get close enough for the whip, he draws his Luger and starts shooting.

Campaign Use: Der Aufseher is probably the least likeable member of Einsatzgruppe Omega, a team that won't exactly inspire warm and fuzzy thoughts in your PCs on the best of occasions. If he ever gets his hands on the PCs, after they escape they probably won't rest until they get revenge for his sadistic interrogation sessions by killing him.

To make Der Aufseher tougher, increase his DEX and CON to 18 and perhaps give him

a Martial Art of "torture maneuvers" he can use to inflict pain on his enemies in HTH Combat. To weaken him, remove his Combat Skill Levels with All Combat.

Der Aufseher only Hunts characters if ordered to do so, in which case he follows orders.

Appearance: Der Aufseher is a pale-skinned German man, 5'9" tall, with brown hair and dark eyes. He wears a standard SS uniform suitable to his rank, but always with a dagger on his right hip and a whip coiled on his left. He rarely displays much facial expression except when interrogating or torturing someone, when a subdued but hellish glee lights his features.



TIER
PLOT SEEDS

While Einsatzgruppe Omega is on a secret mission in New York City, Tier gives into his “animal aggressions” and begins killing innocent people all over the city. The heroes have to race against the Germans (and perhaps against revenge-crazed gangsters!) to see who can find and capture him first.

Tier decides to create some openings in the ranks by secretly letting the PCs know when several other members of Einsatzgruppe Omega start a new mission in Afghanistan. The heroes have to decide if the “anonymous tip” is worth following up... and figure out who’s behind it, and why.

If one of the PCs is a famed Great White Hunter (or the like), Tier decides to make a special target out of him (preferably by trapping him in a wilderness area). Who will win this time, the hunter... or the beast?

| TIER | | | | |
|--|---|------|----------|-------------------------|
| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
| 15 | STR | 5 | 12- | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3] |
| 18 | DEX | 24 | 13- | OCV: 6/DCV: 6 |
| 15 | CON | 10 | 12- | |
| 15 | BODY | 10 | 12- | |
| 15 | INT | 5 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 14 | EGO | 8 | 12- | ECV: 5 |
| 20 | PRE | 10 | 12- | PRE Attack: 3d6 |
| 14 | COM | 2 | 12- | |
| 8 | PD | 5 | | Total: 11 PD (3 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 3 | | Total: 9 ED (3 rED) |
| 5 | SPD | 32 | | Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12 |
| 6 | REC | 0 | | |
| 30 | END | 0 | | |
| 40 | STUN | 9 | | |
| Total Characteristics Cost: 123 | | | | |
| Movement: | | | | |
| | | | Running: | 9”/18” |
| | | | Leaping: | 5”/10” |
| Cost Powers | | | | |
| 10 | <i>Nails Like Claws:</i> HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) | | | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Nail “Poison”:</i> Images to Touch Group, +3 to PER Rolls, Trigger (when HKA attack does BODY damage and he wants this power to work, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger takes 1 Turn or more; +¼); No Range (-½), Set Effect (feels like poison, see text; -1), 4 Charges (-1) | | | [4] |
| 7 | <i>Sharpened Teeth:</i> HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus (-½) | | | 1 |
| 6 | <i>Animal Swiftiness:</i> Running +3” (9” total) | | | 1 |
| 2 | <i>Strong Leaper:</i> Leaping +2” (5” forward, 3” upward) | | | 1 |
| 6 | <i>Animal Senses:</i> +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups | | | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Eyes Of Darkness:</i> Nightvision | | | 0 |
| 6 | <i>Eagle-Eyed:</i> +4 versus Range Modifier with Sight Group | | | 0 |
| Perks | | | | |
| 5 | Military Rank: SS-Hauptsturmführer, member of Einsatzgruppe Omega | | | |
| Talents | | | | |
| 6 | Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED) | | | |
| Skills | | | | |
| 20 | +4 HTH | | | |
| 3 | Climbing 13- | | | |
| 3 | Concealment 12- | | | |
| 3 | Conversation 13- | | | |
| 3 | Interrogation 13- | | | |
| 2 | AK: Europe 11- | | | |
| 2 | CK: Berlin 11- | | | |
| 2 | KS: Animals 11- | | | |
| 1 | KS: The Espionage World 8- | | | |
| 1 | KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 8- | | | |
| 2 | KS: The Nazi Military 11- | | | |
| 2 | Language: English (fluent conversation; | | | |

- German is Native)
- 2 Language: French (fluent conversation)
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 1 SS: Chemistry 8-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 3 Sleight Of Hand 13-
- 7 Stealth 15-
- 6 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12-
- 3 Tracking 12-
- 3 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 136

Total Cost: 259

75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: sharpened teeth and prominent nails (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 5 Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 25 Enraged: in combat (Very Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 20 Hunted: enemies of Nazi Germany 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 10 Hunted: the SS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Ardent Nazi (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Total)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Lukas Theissen) (Frequently, Major)
- 44 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 259

Background/History: Lukas Theissen comes from a German family of great respect and ancient lineage. As a boy he spent hours roaming around in the woods on his family’s estate, sometimes wishing he could be an animal — a wolf, or a bear, or a panther, something fast and powerful. Sometimes, when no one was watching, he took out his “animal aggressions” on family pets and domesticated animals, mutilating and killing them.

Lukas grew up into a strong, handsome young man — the perfect Aryan, at least on the outside. In his mind the animal aggressions still lurked. After he joined the German army they became even stronger... until he could no longer resist them. He had to become an animal himself. Ignoring the pain, he filed down his teeth to sharp points so he had fangs, and he used a special chemical formula to lengthen and harden his fingernails, turning them into claws. When his superiors saw that he was now *Tier* (“Beast”), they knew the regular army wasn’t the place for him — he belonged in the new Einsatzgruppe Omega.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|----------------------|
| Whip | +0 | — | ½d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 5 | 3" reach, can Grab |
| Luger P-08 | +1 | +0 | 1d6+1 | 1d6-1 | 8 | 8 | Carries 1 extra clip |
| Knife | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: Pocketwatch, compass, vial of “antidote”

Clothing: Uniform (see Appearance)

Personality/Motivation: Like all members of Einsatzgruppe Omega, Tier is an ardent Nazi, a devoted German patriot, and a loyal member of the SS. But his overriding passion is his “animal aggression” — his desire to take on the best qualities of beasts of prey and use them to demonstrate his superiority and destroy his enemies. Sometimes his aggression overwhelms him, causing him to kill someone Eisengesicht would prefer he left alive or making him heedless of his own personal safety in combat.

As the youngest member of the Einsatzgruppe, and the least dependable due to his “animal aggressions,” Tier is the lowest-ranking member of the group. He bitterly resents having to take orders from the other three and yearns for the day when the situation changes. In fact, he might even *help* it change if the opportunity presents itself...

Quote: “There is a beast in all men. I have simply given free rein to mine.”

Powers/Tactics: While Tier is no stranger to guns or thrown knives, he prefers hand-to-hand combat where he can use his claws and fangs. He coats his “claws” with a harmless substance that causes wounds to burn slightly (he usually sets all four Triggered Charges in advance, if he has the chance). This makes an opponent think Tier has poisoned him — and Tier carries a vial of “antidote” with him to use as a bargaining chip. (If the GM’s feeling particularly wicked, the “antidote” might actually be a poison....)

Despite the fact that he’s a vicious, bestial killer, Tier can show plenty of charm — “animal magnetism,” if you will — when he wants to. This isn’t always enough to overcome his disturbing appearance (which usually imposes a -2 penalty, or worse, to Interaction Skill rolls), but it works more often than one might think.

Campaign Use: Tier is the weakest link in Einsatzgruppe Omega — the member who’s most likely to cause problems for the team, one way or another. If the PCs realize this, they may be able to play upon his disaffection or sociopathy enough to turn the tables in their favor.

To make Tier a deadlier opponent, increase his CON and STR to at least 18 each, and perhaps give him a Martial Art with his claws. To

weaken him, reduce his SPD to 4.

Tier only Hunts characters if ordered to do so, in which case he follows orders.

Appearance: Tier is 6’0” tall, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and handsome — an ideal Aryan specimen until one sees that he’s filed all his teeth down to fangs, that his fingernails are effective claws, and the gleam in his eye is that of a predator about to take his prey. He typically wears a standard SS uniform appropriate to his rank.



VON SCHADEL PLOT SEEDS

Von Schädel hears that one of the PCs is an expert fencer. Determined to prove he's the best, he tracks the hero down and challenges him to a duel — preferably at some public venue, like a high society ball.

Von Schädel's body continues to deteriorate, becoming not only more skeletal and grotesque, but weaker. Thinking that a certain Russian scientist's work might hold the key to his recovery, he decides to trick the heroes into recovering the experimental medicine for him.

To arrange an encounter (and thus a duel) with one of the PCs, Von Schädel plants a false rumor of a fabulous hidden treasure squirreled away in Berlin — complete with realistic-looking “antique treasure map” and other props. Now all he has to do is sit back and wait for the heroes to come to him....

VON SCHÄDEL

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|----------------------|
| 15 | STR | 5 | 12- | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3] |
| 18 | DEX | 24 | 13- | OCV: 6/DCV: 6 |
| 16 | CON | 12 | 12- | |
| 14 | BODY | 8 | 12- | |
| 15 | INT | 5 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 14 | EGO | 8 | 12- | ECV: 5 |
| 15 | PRE | 5 | 12- | PRE Attack: 3d6 |
| 4 | COM | -3 | 10- | |
| 8 | PD | 5 | | Total: 11 PD (3 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 3 | | Total: 9 ED (3 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 12 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 8 | REC | 4 | | |
| 32 | END | 0 | | |
| 30 | STUN | 0 | | |
| Total Characteristics Cost: 88 | | | | |

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Cost Powers **END**

Martial Arts: Fencing

| Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Damage/Effect |
|---|-----|-----|---|
| 3 Cut | +2 | +1 | Weapon |
| 4 <i>Fleche</i> | +2 | -2 | Weapon +v/5; FMove |
| 4 <i>Froissement</i> | -1 | +1 | Disarm, 25 STR to Disarm |
| 5 Lunge | +1 | -2 | Weapon +4 DC |
| 4 Parry | +2 | +2 | Block, Abort |
| 4 Riposte | +2 | +2 | Weapon +2 DC, Must Follow Block |
| 5 Slash | -2 | +1 | Weapon +4 DC |
| 5 Takeaway | +0 | +0 | Grab Weapon, 25 STR to Take Weapon Away |
| 5 Thrust | +1 | +3 | Weapon |
| 3 Trip | +2 | -1 | STR +1d6 Strike, Target Falls |
| 7 <i>Terrifying Visage</i> : +15 PRE; Only For Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1) | | | 0 |
| 2 <i>Fast Runner</i> : Running +1" (7" total) | | | 1 |

Perks

5 Military Rank: SS-Hauptsturmführer, member of Einsatzgruppe Omega

Talents

6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

| | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 10 | +1 Overall |
| 6 | +2 with Fencing |
| 3 | Acting 12- |
| 3 | Bribery 12- |
| 3 | Bureaucrats 12- |
| 3 | Climbing 13- |
| 3 | Disguise 12- |
| 2 | Forgery (Documents) 12- |
| 3 | Interrogation 12- |
| 2 | AK: Europe 11- |
| 2 | CK: Berlin 11- |
| 2 | KS: The Espionage World 11- |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | KS: Fencing 11- |
| 2 | KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11- |
| 3 | KS: The Nazi Intelligence Services 12- |
| 3 | KS: The Nazi Military 12- |
| 2 | Language: English (fluent conversation; German is Native) |
| 3 | Lockpicking 13- |
| 3 | Navigation (Land, Marine) 12- |
| 3 | Security Systems 12- |
| 3 | Stealth 13- |
| 3 | Streetwise 12- |
| 3 | TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles |
| 7 | WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Launchers, Off Hand |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 141

Total Cost: 229

75+ Disadvantages

| | |
|----|---|
| 20 | Distinctive Features: skull-like face/head (Concealable With Effort, Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear, loathing, or disgust]) |
| 5 | Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable) |
| 10 | Distinctive Features: Style (Not Concealable, Noticed And Recognizable, Detectable By Large Group) |
| 20 | Hunted: enemies of Nazi Germany 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill) |
| 10 | Hunted: the SS/Abwehr 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching) |
| 20 | Psychological Limitation: Ardent Nazi (Very Common, Strong) |
| 15 | Psychological Limitation: Sadist; Enjoys Causing Suffering And Toying With His Victims (Common, Strong) |
| 20 | Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major) |
| 15 | Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Adlar Neukirch) (Frequently, Major) |
| 19 | Experience Points |

Total Disadvantage Points: 229

Background/History: Von Schädel (“Of The Skull”) is, like Eisengesicht, the victim of one of Dr. Hans Siegfried's experiments. The “accident” he suffered (which, unbeknownst to him, was deliberately engineered by Dr. Siegfried) caused his skin and flesh to wither slightly, making him look thin and skeletal. Worst of all, it gave his face and head a rather skull-like appearance, permanently cutting him off from polite society.

Rather than give in to depression and self-pity, Von Schädel chose to continue his military career, using his frightening appearance to assist with prisoner interrogations and other unusual missions. When Himmler formed Einsatzgruppe Omega, Von Schädel was an obvious choice for the unit.

Personality/Motivation: Like all members of Einsatzgruppe Omega, Von Schädel is an ardent

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|---------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Walther PP | +0 | +0 | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | 8 | 7 | |
| Fencing Sabre | +0 | — | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 10 | |
| Knife | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: Miniature telescope, forgery equipment, lockpicks, several sets of false papers, disguise kit**Clothing:** Uniform (see Appearance)

Nazi, a devoted German patriot, and a loyal member of the SS. Like der Aufseher he's a sadist, though his delight in inflicting pain usually takes the form of toying with his victims rather than outright torture. He loves to watch despair, anxiety, and fear grow in a victim like a beautiful flower... then to snip that flower off by ending the victim's life. In many cases he'd be a more effective member of Einsatzgruppe Omega if he simply polished off his opponents at the first opportunity.

Quote: "That fire in your eyes will soon dim when you realize you are outmatched, mein Herr."

Powers/Tactics: Von Schädel knows how to use many types of weapons, but his favorite by far is the fencing saber. He eagerly singles out any fencers among the opposition for a one-on-one duel, even if it would make more sense to shoot them. If he can't close to sword range, he uses his Walther PP.

Campaign Use: Von Schädel is intended primarily as a rival for a PC who also uses a sword (or, failing that, some other HTH Combat weapon). He makes a fine general adversary, but he really comes into his own as a nemesis for a fellow fencer.

To make Von Schädel a stronger opponent, give him some Extra DCs with his Fencing, some more Combat Skill Levels, and perhaps SPD 5 or a Ranged Martial Art with firearms (so he's as deadly at Range as he is HTH). To weaken him, reduce his STR to 10 and DEX to 15.

Von Schädel only Hunts characters if ordered to do so, in which case he follows orders.

Appearance: Thanks to the accident he suffered in Dr. Siegfried's lab, Von Schädel is unusually (though not unnaturally) thin, even almost skeletal in a few places. Most striking of all, his face has withered in such a way that his head resembles a skull — nose and lips have rotted away, the flesh has tightened, and so forth. His skin has a disturbing greyish-green color to it. He wears a standard SS uniform, but usually has a saber on his left hip.



Thrilling Hero Adventures

**PTERODACTYLS
OVER
BROADWAY**

Adventure Nine

PTERODACTYLS OVER BROADWAY



When prehistoric creatures attack New York City, the heroes learn about a Weird Science plot that could threaten the country... and that may send them on a jaunt through Time itself! *Pterodactyls Over Broadway* is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

You can easily connect *Pterodactyls Over Broadway* to just about any other adventure set in the United States by shifting its location (though that means changing the name of the scenario, of course!). For example, if you move it to Hudson City, there might be some connection between it and the residents of the Grant Building, the Street of the Emerald Bird, the Pharaoh Club, or the Royal Viridian Theater (all described in *Thrilling Places*).

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

A mad scientist, Dr. Reinhold Sorros, has developed a Weird Science device that creates a “Time Portal” — a window through which people can travel backwards in time! Aware of the danger of erasing himself from history if he meddles with the timestream too much, Sorros decided to use the Time Portal to conquer the world a different way: by bringing forward to the present an army of dinosaurs!

After inventing a special whistle he can use to control dinosaurs, Dr. Sorros begins bringing the gigantic lizards forward to the present day and preparing to launch an attack on civilization. But in his madness and pride he can't resist announcing himself to the world, and this gives the heroes a chance to stop him. The adventure begins on a sunny New York day, when out of nowhere two gigantic pterodactyls sweep down over the city! One of them drops a bomb, the other a packet of ransom notes demanding the city pay him not to attack it. The pterodactyls (actually pteranodons, but widely mis-identified

in the press) will return the next day for the ransom.

When the pterodactyls return the next day, the heroes can follow them back to Dr. Sorros's rural hideout. There they have to confront his dinosaur army. Gradually the fight goes there way — and when he realizes all is lost, Dr. Sorros takes the controls to the Time Portal and leaps through it into the past! To prevent him from changing history forever the heroes have to follow him, get the controls back, and return to the Thirties.

ACT ONE: ATTACK OF THE PTERODACTYLS!

Pterodactyls Over Broadway begins in the greatest metropolis in the world, New York City — the PCs are already “on the scene,” so to speak. If they're not already in town, there are plenty of ways to get them there: a museum exhibit they want to see; the opening of a new Broadway play they'd like to attend; visiting a friend; giving a lecture at one of the city's universities; or just passing through.

One morning at about noon, just as the crowds start to pour out onto the streets for the lunch hour, a terrifying reptilian cry fills the air! The people on the street, including the PCs, look up to see two enormous flying reptiles — pteranodons, as any PC who makes an appropriate Skill Roll (such as SS: Paleontology) knows — soaring over the city. People begin to panic and run wherever they can; traffic comes to a halt due to a thousand fender-benders caused by rubbernecking drivers.

Have the PCs make PER Rolls. Whoever succeeds by the most suddenly notices that the pteranodons have something in their claws... just as one releases its burden! The crate-sized object plummets to the ground in a ballistic arc. It smashes to the ground about a block away from the heroes — and detonates! More screams fill the air in the aftermath of the bomb's explosion, and the heroes can see flames rising into the air.

As the crowd continues to panic, the heroes have to fight their way through the fleeing masses of humanity toward the scene of the explosion. There, two emergencies confront them: injured people and a spreading fire.

And to top that all off, one of them notices the other pteranodon dropping its bundle about two blocks away.... (In case any of the PCs ask, the pteranodons are high enough in the air that they're out of range of a pistol shot; if they insist on shooting anyway, assume they can only hit one of them on a 3. A rifle has a better chance of hitting, on a 5 or less.)

Handle this part of the adventure as you see fit, giving the PCs plenty of crises to deal with — and only they can deal with them, since the panicking crowds and jam-packed roads prevent ambulances or fire trucks from getting to the scene. Possible vignettes you could use include: someone who needs immediate medical care or he'll die; a woman trapped on the upper floors of a burning building who begs the heroes to save her baby; finding a way to get water to put out the fire (there are fire hydrants, but they have no hoses); stopping the panic long enough to mobilize a bucket brigade; and so on.

In the middle of all this, have all the PCs

make Hearing PER Rolls. The one who succeeds by the most notices that he never heard another explosion. Maybe that second package was a dud....

THE INSIDIOUS DR. SORROS

What happens after the PCs stop the fire and save the bombing victims depends on their personal situation. If they have connections with New York City officials, are well-regarded famous adventurers, or are known experts on dinosaurs, the Mayor will contact them and ask them to come to a meeting at City Hall. Alternately, they might be asked to participate based on their heroic actions stopping the fire. If none of that applies, they'll have to find out what happened from radio news broadcasts or the evening paper.

The package dropped by the second pteranodon wasn't a bomb, it was filled with ransom notes. The text of the note is published in the paper and broadcast on the radio; it reads:

*Greetings, citizens of New York and the planet Earth!
I, Dr. Reinhold Sorros, the greatest scientific genius the world has ever known, declare my intention to conquer first New York, then America, then the world. My armies will be not men, but terrifying creatures from before the dawn of time — creatures that only I can command! You have already witnessed their terrifying majesty and power... and rest assured, the pteranodons are but the weakest of my "soldiers."*

But never let it be said that Reinhold Sorros is not a wise and compassionate ruler. I have no wish to inflict needless harm and suffering on they who will be my subjects. I will give the city of New York 24 hours to surrender and accept my rule. As a token of its intentions, before noon tomorrow the city must affix to the spar on top of the Chrysler Building a package containing a written declaration of surrender and one million dollars. Only if this is done can New York be spared death and destruction at the hands of Sorros!

Choose wisely and well, New York — the eyes of the world are upon you.

Reinhold Sorros, Ph.D.

FINDING DR. SORROS

At this point the PCs have several options. If they have official connections and are working with the city to thwart the menace of Dr. Sorros, everything will go more smoothly and they have the city's resources to call upon; otherwise they'll have to rely on themselves.

Any PC who wants to can research Dr. Sorros. All that can be determined from the standard sources is that he has a Ph.D. from Harvard — in Physics. He hasn't studied Biology apart from standard undergraduate courses. After obtaining his Ph.D. he taught briefly at several universities, but lost each of those jobs due to his inability to get along with others and his penchant for performing energy experiments without permission, sufficient safety precautions, or regard for the welfare of others. No one has seen or heard from him in nearly a decade... until now.

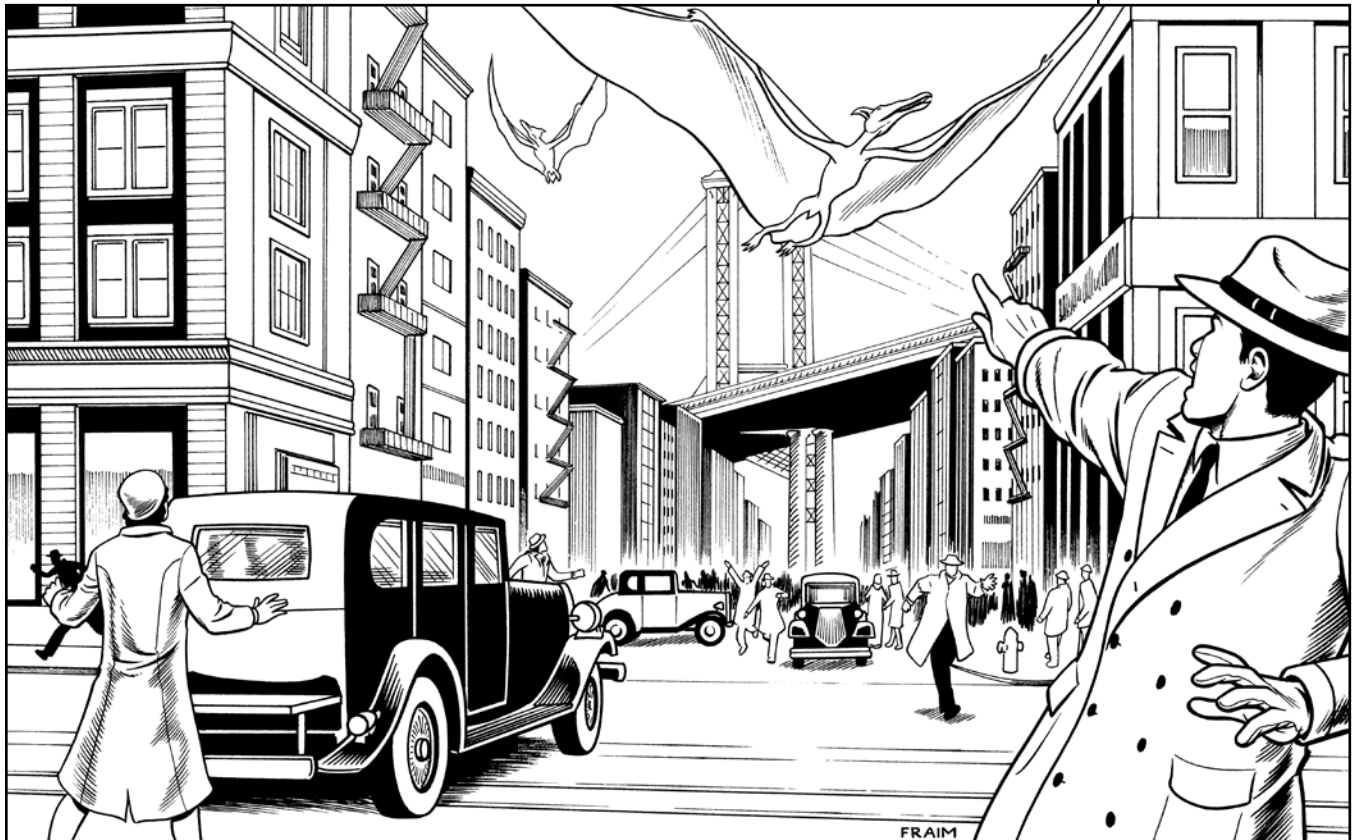
How the PCs choose to track Dr. Sorros to his lair is up to them, but all the possibilities involve putting a package on the Chrysler Building as instructed by his ransom demand. They include:

- Putting something in the package they can track, then following whoever picks up the package
- Parking an autogyro on the roof of a nearby building, then taking off and following the package after it's picked up

THE PICKUP

At noon the next day, the pteranodons return! They're supposed to snatch the package from the Chrysler Building, then return to Dr. Sorros with it. Smart heroes will let them take it and follow them somehow. If the heroes aren't smart and attack the pteranodons, they shouldn't have too much difficulty killing them (see *The HERO System Bestiary*, pages 155-56, for a character sheet for them) — but then they don't have any leads to Dr. Sorros. If that happens you'll have to find a way to put them back on the trail. For example, perhaps if they study the remnants of the bomb, or the paper and ink used to create the ransom notes, they can find a clue that leads them there.

Assuming the PCs are smart and try to follow the pteranodons, they shouldn't have too much trouble — it's not as if the lizards are highly intelligent or difficult to see. However, nothing should come without effort. Have the PCs make some appropriate Skill Rolls, using Shadowing if they have it or some other appropriate Skill if not. Try to keep the final outcome of the surveillance in doubt until they see the pteranodons begin to circle in for a landing at what seems to be an ordinary rural New York dairy farm.



ACT TWO: THE DINOSAUR ARMY

Doctor Sorros's lair is an isolated farm in a rural area of New York state not too far from the city as the pteranodon flies. It looks like a prosperous dairy farm, though that's all part of the cover — the cattle are food for his "pets"; he buys them from other farmers rather than trying to raise them himself. Player Characters studying the farm who have any sort of agricultural background will note that the barn is unusually large.

Besides the barn, there's a small house and several outbuildings, a chicken coop (currently unused), and a well with a house pump. There's a dog who spends his time in the yard and around the buildings; he doesn't look particularly fierce, but might bark a warning if the PCs don't make friends with him first. There's also a barnyard cat who will stare at the PCs with a sort of suspicious look that may make them nervous. But neither it nor the dog are actually controlled by Dr. Sorros; they're just pets.

If the PCs investigate the other buildings, the house seems like a relatively normal farmhouse run by a messy bachelor. There are lots of scientific books and papers scattered around in several rooms, but nothing that refers to any of Dr. Sorros's major projects. The other buildings mostly hold rusting, unused farm implements and equipment, and some carpentry supplies. In one the PCs will find various engines and other scientific equipment, carefully crated, stored, and/or covered with dustcloths. The neatness of the scientific materials is in stark contrast to the neglect shown the farm equipment.

BATTLE IN THE BARN

It probably won't take the PCs long to figure out that the barn is where the action's at. Closer inspection shows that it's been altered in several ways. First, it was enlarged from its original, standard, size. Second, while there's still a big barn door at one end, the door at the other end has been permanently closed. There are a few other human-sized doors into the structure, but except for the one next to the big door they've all been permanently nailed shut as well.

If the PCs get near the barn, have them make Smell PER Rolls. The PC who succeeds by the most notices an unusual animal smell in the air — something different from the typical barnyard odors. The one who succeeded by the second most (or the first PC, if only one succeeded) also notices an ozone-like scent in the air, similar to the smell after a lightning strike during a summer thunderstorm.

When the PCs enter the barn (however they choose to enter it) they go from peaceful farm setting to Weird Science territory. Lining both sides of the barn are special cages holding all sorts of dinosaurs. There's nothing *too* big, like a brontosaurus or a diplodocus, but other than

that you can put any types of dinosaurs you want in there. See pages 152-59 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for various dinosaurs' character sheets; you can find more in Chapter Five. Running down the center of the barn between the cages are tables with scientific equipment and the like.

At the far end of the barn, on a sort of second story/mezzanine-like platform, there's even more scientific equipment. Dominating this area is a large metal framework attached to a control bank. The framework is basically circular, and longer in diameter than a man is tall. In the center of the framework is a glowing energy field with shifting colors of purple, mauve, and gold. Also on the platform is the fiendish Dr. Reinhold Sorros!

At this point there's nothing for it but a fight. To keep the adventure moving along, you have to arrange matters so the PCs don't simply get the drop on Sorros and knock him out before he can do anything. If necessary, give him some alarm systems to alert him to the presence of intruders, or assume he has such finely-tuned observational skills that he's got Intuition Danger Sense.

Doctor Sorros has one more thing: a special whistle that allows him to control the dinosaurs! It's specifically attuned to him, so the PCs can't use it, though they won't know that until they try it. The whistle's sound is partly audible to humans, so the heroes know when Dr. Sorros uses it.

When he sees the PCs, Dr. Sorros will confront them with a soliloquy: "So! It seems the heroes of New York aren't as feeble-minded as I expected. Not that it matters! You will be the first to get a taste of what I have in store for the world. Destroy them, my pets!" With that he hits a button on one of his control panels and blows on his whistle. The doors to the cages open, and the dinosaurs emerge and attack!

Doctor Sorros

For Dr. Sorros you can use the character sheet for Jennings Petrie in *Pulp Hero*. Alternately, if some other Weird Science villain of your own creation has fought the PCs before, you can substitute them for Dr. Sorros in this adventure.

Fighting The Dinosaurs

Run the battle against the big lizards in a typical dramatic, Pulp-y fashion. The heroes almost certainly have guns, but some of the dinosaurs are too big and fierce to be killed with a single gunshot. If necessary, you can even have one of them bite at the PCs, but instead of hitting and injuring the character the dinosaur bites his gun in two!

Besides their guns, the PCs can use the scientific equipment in the middle of the room to jury-rig some weapons, throw acid on a dinosaur, or what have you. They could also retreat from the barn and get farm vehicles and equipment from the other buildings to use as impromptu weapons. The possibilities are nearly

endless, so let the heroes exercise their Pulp creativity.

ESCAPE INTO THE PAST!

Sooner or later — probably sooner — the PCs are going to try to go after Dr. Sorros himself and stop the entire plot by knocking him out, taking away his whistle, and shutting down his equipment. Ideally you want to delay this long enough for each PC to spend at least a few Phases fighting the dinosaurs so Dr. Sorros can prepare his escape... but if necessary he can simply flee (assume he has a Held Action for this purpose, if necessary).

When the PCs get close to him, or it looks like his dinosaur “army” is about to be destroyed, Dr. Sorros will utter another soliloquy: “It seems as if I’ve underestimated you. Well, I won’t make that mistake again! If I can’t conquer the present with creatures from the past, I will simply conquer the past and change history to suit myself. I bid you farewell... and bid you say farewell to the world you know!” With that he snatches a small control box from one of the control panels and jumps through the glowing energy field!

Alternately, if the PCs get to Sorros and his equipment too quickly, or it seems more dramatic, have the destruction of the control panel, a power surge, or some other accident cause the framework to explode in a “temporal detonation” that sucks Dr. Sorros, all the PCs, and perhaps some dinosaurs into the past.

ACT THREE: SAVING HISTORY

Though the PCs may not have figured it out yet, either Dr. Sorros’s last soliloquy or an examination of his equipment tells them that the energy field is a Time Portal — a gateway into the past through which Sorros has retrieved his pet dinosaurs. The Time Portal can be set to any time in the past, but not to the future. However, Dr. Sorros took the main control box with him, and without it the PCs cannot change or alter the Time Portal. But the downside for Dr. Sorros is that he can’t shut it off... which means they can follow him.

At this point the scenario can become whatever sort of historical adventure you want it to be. Some possibilities include:

1. **Victorian Era:** Dr. Sorros travels back to Victorian England, where he becomes Jack the Ripper (or helps the Ripper somehow).
2. **The Wild West:** Dr. Sorros ends up in a Wild West boomtown where he uses his scientific acumen to help a corrupt sheriff keep the townsfolk oppressed and helpless.
3. **Renaissance Italy:** Dr. Sorros becomes a competitor of Leonardo da Vinci and uses his inventions to propel an evil nobleman to power.
4. **King Arthur’s Court:** After Nimue traps Merlin, Dr. Sorros shows up and steps into Merlin’s place, becoming a corrupting influence on the weakening Arthur and casting his kingdom into darkness.
5. **Imperial Rome:** Thanks to his cleverness and ruthlessness, Dr. Sorros is now a powerful Roman senator.
6. **Prehistory:** Dr. Sorros might flee into times he’s already studied, the eras of the dinosaurs or early man, and try to prepare for a comeback.

Regardless of the situation, the PCs show up after him (possibly weeks, months, or years later due to fluctuations in the Time Portal’s energy field) and have to put a stop to his evil schemes, get their hands on the control box, and return him and themselves to their own time. He should already be in a position of power and influence so they can’t simply attack him and get the box; they have to blend into the society, get mixed up in power struggles and schemes, and help the local good guys come out on top. Once they’ve resolved the current crisis, only then can they get the control box from the defeated Sorros and remotely activate the Time Portal to take all the twentieth century people back to their own time.

CONCLUSION

What happens after the adventure ends depends largely on whether you want to keep the Time Portal and its Weird Science technology in your campaign. It definitely has the potential to cause trouble, but it could also serve as a catalyst for other adventures. If necessary, once the PCs get home, describe how unstable it’s become and have it self-destruct in an explosion.

Thrilling Hero Adventures

**THE
RADIO
MARAUDERS**

Adventure Ten

THE RADIO MARAUDERS



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 *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

The Radio Marauders pairs up nicely with *Pterodactyls Over Broadway*, since both involve Weird Science in the Big City. It might also go well as part of a series with *The Locomotive Pirates* or the early parts of *She-Fiends From Planet XI*.

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 (a) 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 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 a victimized bank, 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:

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 by 6 or more, he hears about a mobster 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 -3 to find Sheets Malone; reduce this to -2 if they have police cooperation. Malone has a PER Roll 13- and Resistance (5 points), so 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 PER Rolls to spot a tail, have him lose the PCs whether he knows about them or not, or arrange out so the PCs don't find him until he's unable to derail the rest of the adventure.

Tracking The Radio Devices

If you have a gadgeteer or scientist among the PCs, 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. As you can see below, the devices' Radio Perception/Transmission has Concealed (-6 to PER Rolls for others to perceive or track). 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 or scientist among their number (or as a Contact or Follower), he could build radio devices that let them communicate through the Marauders' blackout so they can cover more banks. (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

For the bank, use the map on page 24 of *Villainy Amok* (with appropriate changes, such as removing the ATMs) or quickly sketch out one of your own.

For the Radio Marauders, use the character sheet 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' goal for this robbery is (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 below 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. If necessary, give each of the Radio Marauders 1-2d6 of Heroic Action Points to emphasize how tough they are.

During the battle, if possible and appropriate give at least one PC the chance to make a PER 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 treatments administered by Dr. Petrie, every Radio Marauder has Resistance (5 points), 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 hide-out, 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. The devices are Personal Foci, so the heroes can't use them... but they can study them. 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 PCs arrive at the Square to discover a strange site. An object roughly the size and shape of a Jenny airplane has crashed in the middle of the Square, right next to the statue. Unlike a Jenny, the “plane” mainly seems to be made of metal; its nose is buried in the ground, leaving the rest of the thing sticking up at an angle. Nearby, using the plane 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! 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. (Instead of getting their Resistance treatment one day, they got their minds scrambled.) There's a “bomb” in the aircraft, but it doesn't contain any explosives. A hero who spends 1 Turn examining it close up and succeeds with a Demolitions roll at -1 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.

For Veteran's Square, use the “Rosie's Bar” street map from *The HERO System Resource Kit* and draw in the statue and plane/bomb, or simply sketch out a city street intersection on your own.

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 (or if any of them succeeds with a Luck roll) to pick the right bank by sheer heroic fortune. (Any of them may spend Heroic Action Points, at 1 per +1 on the roll, to ensure success.)

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 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). Use the map on page 69 of *Villainy Amok* (if you have that book) or one of the warehouse maps from *The HERO System Resource Kit* for the factory.

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). Draw all these objects in on the map, or represent them with spare dice and the like.

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 (*Pulp Hero*, pages 401-02) and as many Radio Marauders as you need to give the PCs a good fight. Kit Dr. Petrie's Gadget Pool out as appropriate, using devices from *Pulp Hero* or others of your own choosing. At the very least he should probably have an Electric Pistol and a Rocketpack, but make the choice based on your PC group... and don't forget that if they beat him, they're likely to get their hands on his toys.

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.

RADIO MARAUDER

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 15 | STR | 5 | 12- | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3] |
| 15 | DEX | 15 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 15 | CON | 10 | 12- | |
| 12 | BODY | 4 | 11- | |
| 13 | INT | 3 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 15 | PRE | 5 | 12- | PRE Attack: 3d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 5 | PD | 2 | | Total: 5 PD (0 rPD) |
| 5 | ED | 2 | | Total: 5 ED (0 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 5 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6 | REC | 0 | | |
| 30 | END | 0 | | |
| 30 | STUN | 2 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 52 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers **END**

- 11 *Radio Marauder Radio Transmitter:* Radio Transmission/Reception (Radio Group), Concealed (-6 to PER Rolls for others to perceive or track); OIF (-½) 0
- 4 *Radio Marauder Radio Jammer:* Darkness to Radio Group 1" radius, MegaArea (1" is 1 mile wide, deep, and broad; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼); OIF (-½), No Range (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour, easily recharged; -0) [1cc]

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: Criminal Rank (member in Radio Marauders)

Talents

- 5 *Dr. Petrie's Mental Treatments:* Resistance (5 points)

Skills

- 3 +1 with Firearms
- 3 Combat Driving 12-
- 2 Gambling (Card Games) 11-
- 2 CK: city where he lives
- 1 KS: Local Underworld 8-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Systems Operation 12-
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 43

Total Cost: 95

50+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: the cops 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 10 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 95

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|----------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| Thompson | +0 | +0 | 2d6-1 | 1d6 | 30 | 14 | AF5 |
| Pistol | +0 | +0 | 1d6+1 | 1d6-1 | 7 | 8 | |

Armor

None

Gear: Bank robbing tools, other gear as noted for specific scenes during the adventure

Clothing: Radio Marauder Radio Device (see above)



Thrilling Hero Adventures

**SHE-FRIENDS
FROM
PLANET X!**

Adventure Eleven

TROUBLESHOOTING: SPACEFARING HEROES

In some *Pulp Hero* campaigns the PCs may have access to their own spaceship, or other ways of getting to the rocket before it lands on Earth. If so, you should find a way to disable their technology so the PCs have to await the Sidonians' arrival like everyone else, since that's part of the suspense and fun in the scenario. The first parts of the adventure unfold over a long period of time, so it shouldn't be too difficult to arrange an adventure for the PCs in which their rocket (or whatever) suffers damage and becomes unusable during this adventure.

Or if you want to give the PCs a little more freedom, let them go out and meet the Sidonians! They can be Humanity's first ambassadors to another sentient species. In this case you'll have to rearrange things so that the Sidonians *can* show the PCs the inside of their ship, but later secretly build gateways in it or elsewhere to continue their plan.

SHE-FIENDS FROM PLANET X!



When “invaders from the stars” turn out to be gorgeous women, the world embraces the alien visitors with open arms. But are these women the peaceful explorers and scholars they claim to be... or something more sinister?

She-Fiends From Planet X! is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Unlike the other adventures in this book, *She-Fiends From Planet X!* isn't meant to be run as a discrete scenario, run from beginning to end in one game session. Instead you should spread out mentions of it, and the key events in it, as subplots over several other adventures. For example, the PCs might be present for the Sidonian landing. As the Sidonians begin mixing with human society, the PCs might see them when they visit other cities and countries as they travel around the world on their globetrotting adventures. For example, if they're in Cairo as part of *Curse Of The Vulture-God*, they see a Sidonian woman spending time with an Egyptian government official; if they attend the showing of the Haitian Cross at the New Orleans Empire Club in *The Voodoo Cross*, at least one Sidonian woman is there as the date of a prominent industrialist, adventurer, or art patron. Eventually the invasion reaches the point where it takes center stage and becomes the main plot for the evening as the PCs fight to fend off the alien conquerors.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Far from Earth lies the planet Kelsidon. Kelsidon is an amazingly Earth-like planet, and her people, the Sidonians, are remarkably similar to Humans. To all outward appearances they're Human, and even a cursory medical examination won't reveal their alien heritage — it would take surgery, x-rays, or testing their blood to uncover that fact. Sidonian society is much more technologically advanced than Human, though thanks to a recent series of devastating wars its population is much smaller.

Unfortunately, that population is also running out of time. The super-weapons with which the war was fought have rendered Kelsidon unstable. Sidonian scientists believe it will explode within no more than ten Sidonian years. Upon learning this, the Sidonians began desperately searching for a new home — and given that they're a warlike species, one that's either unoccupied or that they can conquer.

Not long ago, Sidonian astronomers located Earth. Initial data revealed that it might be suitable, so robotic probes were secretly sent to study it more closely. It turned out to be an ideal new home for the Sidonians. There was just one problem: Humanity. Though Kelsidon enjoys a decided technological edge over Earth, its present inhabitants so greatly outnumber the Sidonians that the Sidonians don't want to take a chance on an outright assault. Instead, they've developed a plan that mixes subterfuge with high technology.

The most advanced Sidonian device is what they call a *gateway*. Basically it's a teleportation portal that allows people or devices to travel great distances instantaneously. It's still very cutting-edge and prone to failure, especially when used on technology rather than living beings, so it's not something they could reliably use to attack Humanity. But they *can* use it to transport soldiers to Earth once they've established a beachhead.

The Sidonian High Command's plan is to send a spaceship filled with beautiful Sidonian spies to Earth in the guise of friendship. Once there the women will get close to the rich and powerful, slowly but surely subverting Human society. Meanwhile, Sidonian scientists who remain hidden will use gateways to transport Sidonian soldiers to a remote location on Earth. When the time is right, the spies will kill Earth's leaders and the soldiers will destroy key military targets and build more gateways. The Sidonian people will flood in, crush all opposition, and take over Earth! If necessary Humans will be sent back through the gateways to doomed Kelsidon to live out a few remaining years before the planet self-destructs.

Only your heroes stand in the way of this fiendish plot!

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure starts slowly, with a few initial reports of a strange astronomical object approaching Earth. Soon it gets close enough that scientists can see that it's a ship! Trepidation and curiosity grip the populace as the stellar vessel gets closer and closer but says nothing, ignoring all attempts at communication.

Eventually the spaceship arrives... and a crew of gorgeous female space travelers disembarks! They say they're the Sidonians, a race of peaceful explorers and scientists from a distant, tenth planet of Earth's solar system. They want to open trade relations with Humanity and exchange scientific knowledge.

Soon the beautiful women from "Planet X" are the toast of Earth. They begin mixing and mingling with Human society, often attaching themselves to powerful Human men. Everything seems to be going fine... and then they strike! The Sidonian attack begins with a wave of attempted assassinations and covert military strikes. Unless the heroes step up to the plate and put a stop to the invasion, Humanity is doomed....

ACT ONE: BEAUTY HITS THE SCENE

The initial stages of *She-Fiends From Planet X!* should unfold slowly, as background information appearing in other scenarios. Unlike the other adventures in this book, ideally this one won't be run entirely in one night — there should be some foreshadowing.

First, the PCs should hear reports that astronomers have detected a strange object at the outer reaches of the solar system. At first they think it's a comet.

A scenario or two later, the PCs should hear about this again. The "comet" has now gotten close enough that scientists using high-powered telescopes realize it's a technological object! It looks like a classic Pulp Science Fiction-style rocket — it's a long, mostly smooth cylinder with fins and similar protrusions. The rocket becomes the subject of constant conversation around the world, and speculation runs wild in the media: is this an attack or invasion? Is the rocket carrying passengers? No one knows anything, but rumors and guesses abound.

A scenario or two later, the rocket is close enough to Earth that it can be seen in the night sky with the naked eye (though it's not yet close enough to look like anything but a silvery spot, not much different from a star). Scientists have broadcast numerous radio messages to it, but have received no response, nor has the rocket attempted any independent communication with anyone on Earth.

At last, the fateful day arrives — the rocket-ship lands!

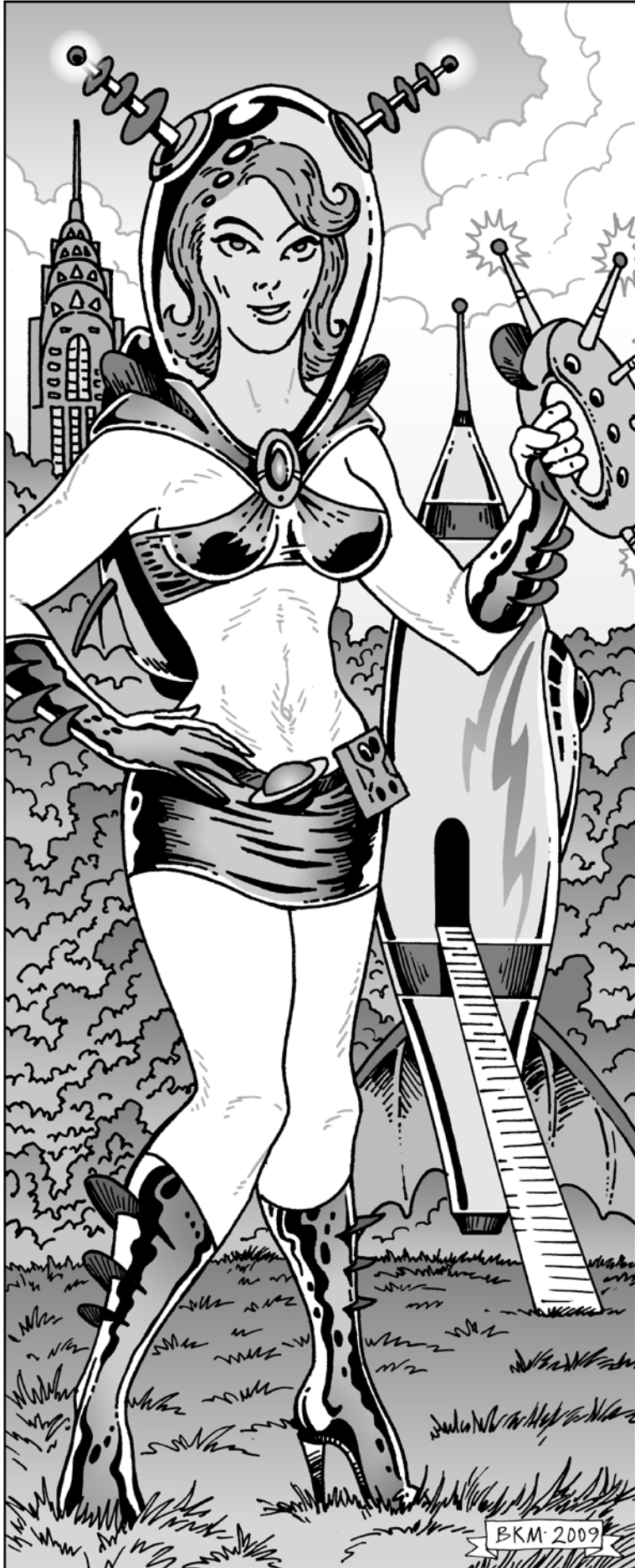
THE ARRIVAL

With a roar of its rockets and a blast of heat the mysterious rocketship lands in a large, open area in the campaign city (in Hudson City, this would be LeMastre Park; in New York City, Central Park). The police and US military have surrounded the landing site, but tens of thousands of curious onlookers are straining against the barriers, trying to get a glimpse of what's happening. If your PCs have some sort of official sanction or friends in high places, they may be able to get inside the security cordon and see things close up; otherwise they'll have to rely on their own cleverness to get a good viewing spot.

After several minutes of inactivity, during which the rocketship vents what seems to be steam or some sort of harmless gas, a hatch on the side opens and an electronic stairway descends to the ground. The aliens emerge... and Humanity is stunned. Not because they're hostile alien soldiers armed to the teeth and ready to conquer Earth. And no, not because they're hideous green-skinned little men whose appearance turns the Human stomach. In fact, it's just the opposite. The aliens are all women... and all beautiful. By Human standards every single one of them is at least the equal of the most glamorous movie stars. They've got legs up to there, gorgeous figures, lush long hair, and faces that could melt the hardest heart. And their clothes! By the standards of the time these alien women are scandalously dressed in two-piece "uniforms." The bottom part is what modern Humans would call a mini-skirt; the top part isn't much more than a bra. Each of them has a transparent "glass" bubble-like helmet on her head, presumably one that contains whatever gas they breathe on their homeworld. None of them appear to be armed, though some are carrying strange devices whose purpose isn't readily apparent. Each of them has a small device clipped to her belt that's about the size and shape of a pack of cards.

The one in the lead — a particularly attractive readhead — carries a device about the size and shape of a large book. She holds it up, moves it back and forth through the air, and fiddles with a dial or two on it. Then, apparently satisfied with something, she nods to herself, puts the device on the stairway... and removes the helmet from her head! As she shakes her long red locks free in a particularly alluring move, the other aliens remove their own helmets.

At last she speaks. "Greetings, people of Earth!" she says in a voice so sultry and confident there isn't a radio actress in the world who wouldn't kill for it. "We are the Sidonians, a race of peaceful explorers and scientists from the tenth planet in this solar system, which we call Kelsidon. I am Telsa, commander of the rocketship *Ariago*, and these are my crew. We have come to your world in search of knowledge and to open diplomatic relations with you, our nearest neighbors. We hope this will herald a new era for both our peoples!"



Amidst a storm of flashbulb flares and general hubbub from the crowd, a delegation of American officials approaches the Sidonians openly but cautiously. A conversation is held out of earshot of the crowd (and of the PCs, unless they're important enough to go along, in which case they're privy to a conversation asking the Sidonians to go downtown to meet with Human leaders, an invitation the Sidonians accept). Commander Telsa turns to the rocketship, picks up the book-sized device, points it at the ship, and turns a knob. This causes the electric stairway to retract and the hatch to close, and then a force-field springs up around the ship. A group of soldiers clears a path through the crowd to some waiting limousines, and the Sidonians are escorted downtown in style.

MEETING WITH THE ALIENS

The meeting with the Sidonians takes place at the Mayor's offices. It will last several days and include officials and scientists who fly up from Washington — maybe even President Roosevelt himself, if you want to make things more dramatic. During the meeting the Sidonians answer some questions about themselves and their civilization and describe their purpose in coming to Earth. Rooms are arranged for them at a swank hotel so they can sleep, and those rooms are guarded by New York policemen... and the Sidonians' own force-field technology.

Here are some of the questions that will eventually get asked and answered, possibly by the PCs if they get to attend. In time the information will filter out into the papers, but initially all the papers can print are pictures and speculation. Of course, all of this information is completely fabricated.

Q: Is there really a tenth planet?

A: Yes, far out beyond Pluto where your primitive telescope devices cannot yet detect it.

Q: How can you survive on a planet so far from the sun?

A: Kelsidon was once much closer to the sun, but a cosmic catastrophe hurled it further out and nearly destroyed our civilization. We rebuilt our society in underground chambers that we heat and illuminate artificially.

Q: How many Sidonians are there?

A: Our population is roughly the same as yours.

Q: How many Sidonians came on your ship?

A: There are several hundred of us.

Q: Are all the Sidonians who came to Earth women, and if so why?

A: Yes, because in Sidonian society women are in charge and take on all the dangerous tasks, such as space exploration.

Q: Can we tour your rocketship?

A: Unfortunately, no. While we have found that we can tolerate Earth's atmosphere without any help, Humans cannot survive in Kelsidon's atmosphere, which is what the ship contains.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: When our scientists detected the presence of an advanced civilization on this planet, we felt it was time to meet you and open diplomatic and trade relations. Kelsidon needs many substances that Earth possesses in abundance, such as gold, and we have technology and resources that will help you as well.

Troubleshooting: Detecting Lies

It's possible that one of your PCs has the skill to detect falsehoods, or can build a gadget that would do the same thing. In that case, assume the Sidonians are using their own, more advanced, technology to make any such devices register that they're telling the truth, and/or that the ability to detect falsehoods told by Humans does not provide the same information about Sidonians.

ACT TWO: ALIENS AMONG US

Like the earliest stages of the adventure, Act Two should gradually unfold over several game sessions. This is a good opportunity to work in some other adventures and keep the players from focusing solely on the alien women. Drop in a mention of them here and there, and have them show up on the arms of powerful men when the PCs encounter such people.

In the weeks following their arrival, the Sidonians quickly become the toast of Earth. They visit all the major nations of the world and meet with every important leader in the political, economic, and social sectors. They become a common sight at important conferences, major society events, and any other significant occurrence.

Even more intriguingly, it soon becomes obvious that Sidonian women are smitten with Earth men, and vice-versa. Any prominent politician or industrialist who's not married soon has a Sidonian "companion," and even some married men seem to be spending an unusual amount of time with Sidonian women instead of their wives. In some circles it's nearly a scandal, and often discussed in shocked whispers; in others having a Sidonian "companions" is the height of status. But neither the Sidonians nor the men they favor seem disturbed by any such rumors.

TRADE DEALS

To show the benefits of trading with Kelsidon, the Sidonian women begin exchanging small technological items for gold bars, diamonds, and other easily-carried Earth valuables. Some of the devices they provide are:

- a two-way audio and visual communication system with crystal-clear reception between units (each of which is about the size of a wardrobe)
- a briefcase-sized cleaning robot that can keep a building spic-and-span
- binocular-like sight-enhancing devices that are far better than the Earth equivalent, and can even see clearly at night
- a device that transcribes speech onto paper automatically and without error

The Sidonians will not provide Humans with any military technology (including their force-field devices), and in fact won't even demonstrate them except when they have to use them.

MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE SIDONIAN ROCKETSHIP..

...events are moving at a fast pace. Sidonian scientists (mostly men, not all women by any means) have built a gateway and are teleporting in more and more women to worm their way into Human society. (If a PC thinks about it, and can actually find a reliable way to count the Sidonian women on Earth, it will soon become apparent that more than "several hundred" must have been on the ship.) Some of them even snuck out to a remote rural area near the city and have constructed a gateway there, through which they are bringing an invading army.

The Sidonians have also been covertly releasing special drugs into Earth's air and water supplies. The drug "pacifies" Humans, making them more accepting and trusting of the Sidonians (think of it sort of as lowering Human PRE solely for the purpose of making Humans more susceptible to Sidonians' Presence Attacks and Interaction Skill rolls, only in non-combat situations). This is how the Sidonian women have been able to become so accepted into Human society so quickly, and why so few people seem upset by the situation. If the PCs think to look into this, and have sufficiently sensitive testing equipment, they'll be able to detect the alien chemicals (but not to determine what it is they do). However, the drugs make it hard for anyone they discuss this with to believe anything negative about the Sidonians.

TROUBLESHOOTING: SIDONIAN TECHNOLOGY

During this scenario, your PCs (not to mention the governments of the world) may have the chance to acquire powerful Sidonian technology, such as ray-rifles. If you don't want to change the nature of the campaign to make Sidonian devices commonplace, just assume that anything you don't want to keep around runs on "energy crystals" that provide each device with a limited supply of power. The PCs can't make more crystals (nor recharge ones that run out of energy), so once the relatively small supply of crystals on Earth is used up, destroyed, or lost, their Sidonian technology is useless.

Furthermore, *Sidonian Energy Weapons* is a 2-point Weapon Familiarity distinct from Small Arms. Until they learn it, PCs suffer the standard -3 OCV non-proficiency penalty for using Sidonian weapons.

SNEAKING ONTO THE SHIP

Sooner or later the PCs are going to get it into their heads to sneak aboard the rocketship. Unfortunately, this is far easier said than done.

First, the Sidonians keep their ship guarded by a force-field at all times unless they're entering or exiting it. In game terms it's a Force Wall (20 PD/20 ED), Affects Desolidified, Hardened, so the odds are against the PCs forcing their way through it.

Second, while it might be possible to sneak up to the ship when the women are leaving or going back aboard, this presents difficulties of its own. First, the women might get PER Rolls to see the PCs. Second, there's almost always a small crowd looking at the rocketship from all angles, and if anyone in the crowd saw the PCs "attacking" the Sidonian vessel they'd yell loudly... and soon the cops would come running.

Third, Sidonian security watches the exterior of the ship at all times via what amounts to closed-circuit television. If the PCs can get close to the ship unseen they might be able to shut these devices down with a Security Systems roll at -3, but even that might alert suspicious Sidonian personnel. If the Sidonians detect the PCs trying to enter, or even suspect it, they'll move plenty of armed guards to the rocketship's entrance.

Fourth, as far as any Human can tell there's only one way into the ship, the main door that's reached by the electronic stairway. The Sidonians only extend the stairway when it's in use; at other times it retracts into the ship. The bottom edge of the door is 3" above ground level, making it difficult to reach without drawing attention.

Fifth, even if the PCs somehow get on board undetected, they won't stay that way long. Personnel watch most of the ship via security scanners, and the interior is so cramped (compared to the picture the Sidonians have painted, anyway) that it's very difficult to move around inside without running into lots of Sidonians.

In short — attempting to get onto the ship and accomplish anything there is next to impossible. If your PCs do manage it, though, they can find all sorts of documents and information on "thinking machines" (computers)... all of it written in Sidonian, which no Human can read. Except for some maps of Earth with major military installations and similar facilities marked on them, there's nothing the PCs can read or use that can prove an invasion's in the works. However, if they can see the ship's gateway in use, that will provide unequivocal information that the Sidonian women lied and that there are more Sidonians on Earth than anyone else suspects. Furthermore, they can find maps of the local area with the site of the invasion beachhead portal clearly marked. That should be enough to lead them to the climactic fight!

ACT THREE: THE SIDONIAN INVASION

Just as the PCs discover what's going on, the Sidonian invasion begins! Massive numbers of soldiers and war-vehicles pour through the new gate near the city. They fan out across the countryside, conquering as they go and preparing for a major assault on the city itself.

For the soldiers, use the character sheet below. For their vehicles, use writeups of World War II-period vehicles such as the Sherman tank (page 33 of *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook*), but change the special effect of the weapons to energy rays and give ground vehicles the ability to hover up to 4" off the surface.

How you want to handle the invasion and its pitched battles is up to you — and, of course, your PCs. Arrange the conflict so the heroes have a chance to shine, and if possible put them in a position to be the pivotal force in the fighting. You could even adapt the Mass Combat rules from *Fantasy Hero*, if desired.

CONCLUSION

The course of the war depends on your desires and what the PCs do. If you want to transform your campaign into a "military adventure" epic for awhile, play out the entire war. You can either let the PCs take command of significant aspects of the war effort, or they can become a sort of "special forces" unit that strikes against key Sidonian targets using unconventional methods. On the other hand, if you don't think your players would enjoy a military-oriented campaign, keep the events of "the war" simple: pin the success or failure of the invasion on a mission only the PCs can complete. For example, maybe the PCs have to sabotage the main Sidonian gateway, and if they succeed, that effectively brings the invasion to a halt, allowing US soldiers to mop up the Sidonian forces that already came to Earth.

You should also decide how you want the aftermath of the war to play out. Is Earth now a war-ravaged world that has to recover from a massive alien attack? Or are the effects of the fighting so minimal that things are back to normal by the next gaming session? Do any Sidonians remain on Earth, and if so what will their fate be?

SIDONIAN SOLDIER

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 15 | STR | 5 | 12- | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3] |
| 14 | DEX | 12 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 14 | CON | 8 | 12- | |
| 13 | BODY | 6 | 12- | |
| 13 | INT | 3 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 15 | PRE | 5 | 12- | PRE Attack: 3d6 |
| 10 | COM | 0 | 11- | |
| 6 | PD | 3 | | Total: 6 PD (0 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 3 | | Total: 6 ED (0 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 6 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 6 | REC | 0 | | |
| 28 | END | 0 | | |
| 30 | STUN | 2 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 53 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Perks

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Sidonian Military Rank

Skills

- 4 +2 OCV with Ray-Rifle
- 1 Bureaucratics 8-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 4 WF: Small Arms, Sidonian Energy Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 17

Total Cost: 70

50+ Disadvantages

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To The Sidonian People (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 85

Description: This character sheet represents a typical Sidonian soldier of the type the PCs will face during this scenario. They're strong, tough, seasoned warriors armed with Sidonian ray-rifles.

Personality/Motivation: The Sidonian soldiers sent to Earth tend to be strongly loyal to the Sidonian people and government. They want to serve and help the Sidonian race, and care little for the consequences to humanity.

Weapons: The Sidonian soldier carries a *ray-rifle*, a weapon that projects a beam of red energy and requires two hands to use. The soldiers are highly trained and fight using efficient tactics whenever possible. Some also carry energy grenades.

Appearance: Sidonian soldiers are externally the same as Humans. Their uniforms are a sort of silver-white lamé with a helmet that leaves the face open and has a fin on top, flared gloves and boots, and a broad red belt. Rank insignia are marked on the chest and upper arms in red.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|----------------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|---------|--------------------|
| Ray-Rifle | +1 | +1 | 2d6 | 1d6 | 20 | 12 | |
| Energy Grenade | +0 | +0 | 2d6X | 1d6-1 | 4 | 5 | Range Based On STR |

Armor

Force-field Belt (6 PD/6 ED)

Gear: Sidonian timepiece, pocketknife, various other personal trinkets

Thrilling Hero Adventures

**SPEARS
OF THE
TISANGANI**

Adventure Twelve

SPEARS OF THE TISANGANI



When they learn that the lost half of an antique map has been discovered, Our Heroes must journey into the heart of darkest Africa in search of the long-lost city of Tisangani! But they'd best beware, for one of their enemies seeks to thwart their efforts to find the fabled city. And if they do reach it, they'll find themselves plunged into a political battle between the king and his warlord, with the fate of all of Africa perhaps hanging in the balance....

Spears Of The Tisangani is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Three other Thrilling Hero Adventures — *Curse Of The Vulture-God*, *Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo*, and *Valley Of The Spider Queen* — also take place in Africa, so linking them together shouldn't prove too difficult. Just sprinkle in some clues leading from the one you're currently running to the next one you want to run. (You could also take the PCs to Neos Themiscyra in *Thrilling Places*.)

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs receive a telegram from their friend Professor Hogan, a retired anthropologist, archaeologist, and expert on African history. They drive to his country estate, where he informs them his agents in Africa have recovered the long-lost half of the "Marsh map," a document that supposedly shows the way to the city of the Tisangani. Most people consider Tisangani (both the city and the tribe) to be a myth, but the Professor's always been more open-minded — and now he has proof! But apparently someone else has learned of the discovery, for while at the Professor's house the PCs are attacked by African warriors intent on stealing the part of the map Hogan already owns!

After they defeat the natives, the PCs have to travel to Africa, to the town of Stanleyville in the Belgian Congo. There they meet Heillard Alswend, the Professor's agent, and get from him the

missing half of the map. As they exit his shop, they're again attacked!

After defeating this second group of adversaries, the PCs set out into the jungle with a train of native bearers and guides. Following the map, they slowly but surely make their way toward Tisangani. As they get close to the city, they have the chance to rescue Princess Kinara, who's fled the city to escape her father's enemies. The grateful Kinara, sensing their heroism, leads them to Tisangani in the hope they can help her father.

In Tisangani, the PCs are rewarded for saving the princess with a feast. But during the feast King Togalo's warlord and rival, Boseda, captures them and starts a revolt! While in the dungeon awaiting a no doubt horrible fate, the PCs receive a visit from their old enemy, "Colonel" Bruce Forsythe, who's been the one behind the attempts to steal their map. He gloats, then leaves them to their fate.

After the PCs escape (either due to their own cleverness, or perhaps with help from Kinara), they have to fight Boseda and put down the revolt. They then leave Tisangani laden with gifts and rewards from the grateful King Togalo.

MAPS AND PROPS

This adventure includes one "prop" — a copy of the Roger Marsh map the PCs are trying to obtain and use. You can find the map in this chapter; the dotted line indicates where you should tear it in two (see below).

If you want, you can prepare other props to make the adventure more fun. Examples include a copy of the telegram described in Part One (so you can hand it to the players, instead of just reading it to them) and maps of 1930s Africa so the PCs can plan out their route to Stanleyville.

PART ONE: THE TELEGRAM AND THE MAP

Having recently returned to the States from an adventure, the PCs are staying at a hotel in Manhattan (you can have them in residence at the Empire Club if you prefer, or for a nod at Pulp trivia make it the Hotel Metrolite). While relaxing in the lobby or restaurant, they receive a telegram from an old friend, Professor Andrew Hogan. The telegram reads:

**TISANGANI
WARRIOR**

10 STR 14 DEX
 14 CON 10 BODY
 8 INT 8 EGO
 13 PRE 8 COM
 5 PD 3 ED
 3 SPD 6 REC
 28 END 25 STUN

Weapons:

Spear (HKA 1d6, STR Min 10, Can Be Thrown, +1" reach),
Shield (+2 DCV),
Dagger (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 6, Can Be Thrown)

Abilities:

Stealth 11-, WF:
 Common Melee Weapons

Disadvantages:

Distinctive Features (Tisangani war-paints and scars)

MERCURY TELEGRAM

★ B.D. Bilkins, President ★

Have found missing piece Tisangani puzzle

-(STOP)- Come to my home tomorrow night

7:00 to learn more -(STOP)- Most important

-(STOP)- Hogan

This company transmits and delivers messages only on conditions which have been assented to by sender of the above message. The company will not hold itself liable for errors or delays in transmission or delivery of unrepeated messages. The company will appreciate suggestions from its patrons concerning its service.

The PCs know, from their friendship with Professor Hogan, that he's been trying to prove the existence of the Tisangani (both the tribe, and the supposed city of the same name) for decades. They're regarded as mythical, but the Professor believes they really exist. Being intrepid Pulp adventurers, how can they resist the chance to be a part of proving him right?

The PCs pile into their car and drive out to visit the Professor the next evening. It's a pleasant spring night, cool but not cold — perfect for a drive in the country. When they arrive at the Hogan residence, the Professor greets them effusively and ushers them into his study. It's a cozy room panelled in dark wood, the walls lined with bookshelves filled to overflowing with anthropology and archaeology books. Here and there relics and artifacts from the Professor's many trips to Africa hang on the wall, serve as bookends, or gather dust on endtables. Since the weather's so pleasant, the room's several large windows are open to catch the breeze.

THE MARSH MAP FRAGMENT

After offering the PCs drinks and food, the Professor gets to the point. A friend of his in central Africa, a Dutch trader named Heillard Alswend, cabled him recently that he'd come into possession of a fragment of a map he believes is part of the fabled "Marsh map" — a map created by Roger Marsh, an explorer in the early 1800s, that purports to show the location of Tisangani. The Professor already owns one piece of the map, but it doesn't show enough to enable him to find the city.

At this point the Professor brings out his

map fragment, which is carefully stored in a leather folder, so you should give the map fragment to the players. (You can find the map at the end of this adventure; just copy it, tear it in two at the indicated line, and use it as a prop with your players.) The Professor's piece is the eastern (right-hand) half of the map. Nothing on the map fragment is known to the PCs, no matter how much they make any appropriate Skill rolls by — they've never heard of the "Lake Lumaru" or the Twin Obelisks depicted on the map. Obviously, they need the western (left-hand) piece to figure out where to go — and that's what Alswend claims to have. The Professor asks — implores, if necessary — the PCs to go get the rest of the map, find Tisangani, and verify his theories. (Sadly, he's too old to go into the field, or else he'd gladly accompany them.)

NATIVE WARRIORS ATTACK!

At this point have the PCs make Perception Rolls. The one who makes it by the most notices a blowgun being poked in through one of the windows, aimed at the Professor!

The character who noticed the attack gets a Full Phase in which to act; no one else can do anything. A smart hero will dive for the Professor and knock him down, so that the blowgun dart thuds dramatically into the wall where he was just standing! If a character tries that, he automatically succeeds. If he tries anything else, adjudicate it normally.

Now a group of warriors — Tisangani warriors, though the PCs don't know that yet — bursts into the room! They're wielding spears and shields, and there should be enough of them

to give the PCs a good fight (but one they'll likely win). See the sidebar for a character sheet for the warriors.

The warriors' goals are, in order of importance, (a) obtain the Professor's map fragment, (b) kill Professor Hogan, and (c) kill the heroes. They're working for the PCs' enemy, "Colonel" Bruce Forsythe, who's already made contact with the Tisangani and is helping the evil warlord Boseda in his bid to seize power.

The warriors are tough compared to everyday people, but shouldn't pose too much of a threat to the PCs. Use enough of them to give the heroes a challenge, but not enough to overwhelm them.

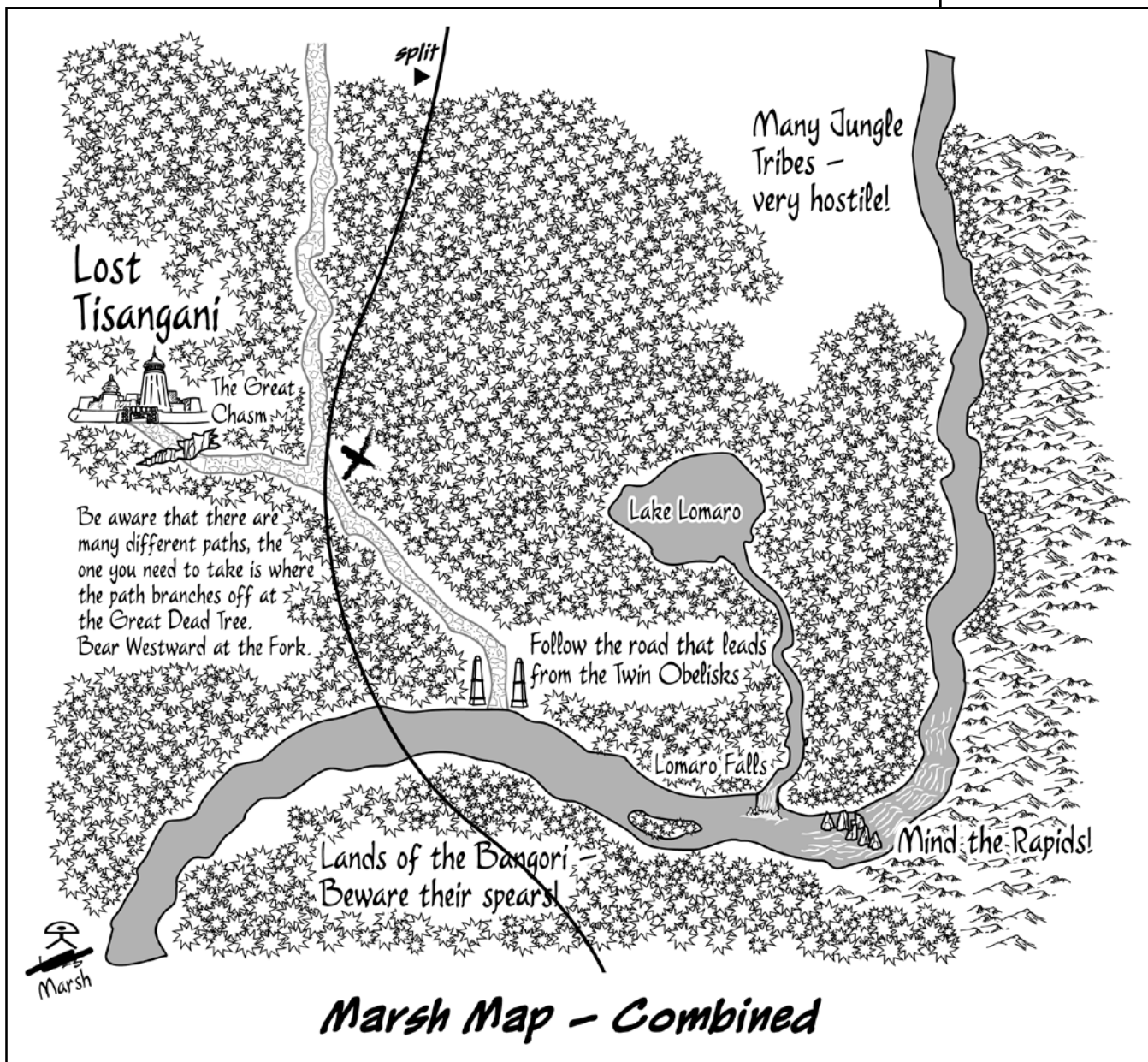
As the fight ends, have the PCs make Perception Rolls. The hero who makes his by the most hears the squeal of tires as a car pulls away from the house. (Forsythe was watching from the road with binoculars; having seen the defeat, he's

fled. The PCs are too far from the road to see any details, or to catch him.)

If the PCs have left any of the warriors alive, they can try to interrogate them — but since none of the Africans speaks any language but Tisangani, and no one in the civilized world speaks Tisangani, they won't learn anything unless one of them happens to have Universal Translator. (In that case, the natives clam up, refusing to say a word.) The Professor states that the warriors' war-paint and ritual scarification match patterns supposedly used by the Tisangani.

OFF TO AFRICA

The PCs now have to plan their trip to Africa. Unless they have access to their own plane, zeppelin, or the like, that probably means (a) booking passage on a ship from New York City to somewhere in Africa (probably Tangier



ARAB STREET THUG

| | |
|--------|---------|
| 8 STR | 14 DEX |
| 13 CON | 9 BODY |
| 10 INT | 8 EGO |
| 13 PRE | 8 COM |
| 5 PD | 3 ED |
| 3 SPD | 6 REC |
| 26 END | 20 STUN |

Weapons:

Dagger (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 6, Can Be Thrown), other weapons as appropriate and necessary

Abilities:

Concealment 11-, CK: Stanleyville 11-, Stealth 12-, WF: Common Melee Weapons

Disadvantages:

None of relevance in this situation

or Cape Town) and then (b) chartering a plane in Africa to take them to Stanleyville, where they'll make contact with Heillard Alswend (the Professor will cable Alswend to expect them). Other options include sailing up the Congo River or taking a train to get as close to Stanleyville as possible and then riding or walking there; both of those alternatives add time to the trip.

If you want to lengthen *Spears Of The Tisangani* so that it requires multiple game sessions (or even becomes an entire story arc), now's your opportunity. If the PCs take a ship, they're trapped on board for days, presenting you with the perfect opportunity for a murder mystery or horror scenario. If at any time they get in a plane, they could suffer a crash that puts them in the middle of an unrelated adventure. (Since this is already a "lost civilizations" story, don't make it one of those; come up with something different, like a Weird Menace scenario that takes place on an old rubber plantation.)

If your group of players enjoys planning trips in detail, let them do so, using the Expeditioning rules in the Appendix. Before they leave they can go shopping for whatever supplies they want to take along with them, figure out each leg of the trip in precise detail, whatever you're willing to allow. If they (or you) prefer to keep the action rolling, assume that Heillard Alswend can provide them with any reasonable supplies they need; he'll also arrange for trustworthy native bearers and guides.

IN STANLEYVILLE

Once the PCs arrive in Stanleyville, they can check into the Royal Hotel and then look up Heillard Alswend. He's not hard to find; asking after him in the hotel or the street will soon lead them to him.

The streets of Stanleyville are bustling and busy. Most of the inhabitants are native Africans, but here and there the PCs see other white people, and persons of Arabic descent are also apparent. They notice plenty of people staring at them with frank curiosity — word of the arrival of "five white tourists" has already gotten around. If you want to roleplay a little, have beggars, street merchants, and other folk interact with the PCs.

Alswend's expecting the PCs and is glad to see them. He's a hearty, friendly, portly middle-aged man dressed in a slightly shabby suit; he frequently mops his forehead with a handkerchief. He speaks English well, but with a pronounced Dutch accent; he can also speak Dutch, and a little French and German. Once the PCs arrive, he puts one of his workers in charge of his store (he's a general merchant, outfitter, and broker) and ushers the PCs into his office.

Once the PCs are in the office, Alswend brings out a leather folder containing the other half of the Marsh map, which you should now give to the PCs. Information on that fragment — specifically, the mention of the Banguri tribe —

tells the PCs something if one of them makes a KS: Africa (or similar Skill) roll. (If none of them have an appropriate Skill, have Alswend supply the information.) They've heard of the Banguri and know roughly where their lands are. Knowing that, they can easily make a rough deduction about where the hills and the pass depicted on the map are.

It should become apparent after a little studying of the map that the only way to get to Tisangani from Stanleyville is to hike through the jungle to the pass, then travel down the river in boats until they reach the Twin Obelisks. If possible, you should prevent the PCs from using a plane to overfly the area; it ruins the story. If necessary, inform them that the weather in the area is reputed to be extremely rough and stormy, which is why no one's ever discovered Tisangani from the air before. If they decide to fly anyway, hit them with a storm that causes their plane to crash near the river. Guess it's time to break out the boats....

STREET ARABS ATTACK!

The PCs can make whatever plans they like as to when they'll leave on the trip to Tisangani; Heillard Alswend offers to help however he can and arrange for any reasonable supplies they need.

As the PCs leave his shop, several ugly Arabic-looking fellows get up from where they've been lounging around the street and approach them. Before the PCs know it, they've been surrounded by a loose knot of thugs... who draw knives!

The Arabs are working for Bruce Forsythe, who's still trying to get the map so the PCs can't follow it. They'll fight as hard as they can until the battle has really turned against them, at which point they'll flee. The accompanying sidebar has a character sheet for the Arabs.

During the fight, while the PCs are occupied, have all of them make PER Rolls. The one who makes it by the most notices a white man wearing a white suit watching the fight from behind the curtains of a nearby shop's window. As soon as the PC sees him, he leaves the window. This is Forsythe, monitoring the progress of his hirelings; he quickly departs the scene and leaves for Tisangani so he can beat the PCs there (he's been there before and should have no trouble outdistancing them; if necessary for story believability, distract them or slow them down).

In the unlikely event the PCs get defeated or lose the map, you'll have to run a chase scene where they pursue the Arabs to get it back. Fortunately, Forsythe has given them strict instructions not to destroy or lose it; he wants it for his own collection of artifacts, or to sell later on when he no longer needs it.

PART TWO: INTO THE JUNGLE

After everything's arranged, the PCs set out to follow the map to Tisangani. Unless you want to lengthen the scenario with some encounters (wild beasts, venomous snakes, slippery pathways, disputes among the native bearers, Weird Science menaces...), assume they make it to and through the pass after a couple days of traveling.

Once they're through the pass, they can find the river easily. Now they must take to the small boats provided by Heillard Alswend. Basically they're going to drift south with the current, so it's not crucial that any of them have TF: Small Rowed Boats. If necessary, assume several of their native guides have that Skill.

THE RIVER

In its northern reaches, the river is fairly normal, with banks lined with vegetation. But as it proceeds south, the banks rise until the river's running through a sort of gorge. This basically makes it impossible to get off the river, which means the PCs can't avoid the rapids marked on the map.

As the boats pass through the rapids, have every PC make a DEX Roll; characters with TF: Small Rowed Boats get a +3 bonus to their roll. If all the rolls succeed, all the PCs and boats make it through successfully (though you might want

to sacrifice one boat that's only carrying native bearers and supplies to demonstrate how dangerous the rapids are, and/or to force the PCs to go on with fewer supplies so they *must* find Tisangani). If any PC fails, something dire happens: he falls out of his boat and has to be rescued; his boat capsizes; his boat gets smashed on the rocks. The magnitude of the disaster, and the difficulty of performing a rescue, should depend on the severity of the failure. This isn't intended as a way to kill PCs, though — it's just a bit of excitement — so don't make the situation too dire.

For another touch of peril, have the PCs spot a small group of Banguri warriors on the south bank sometime. The Banguri carry spears, but only watch the PCs... as long as they're not molested. If the PCs attack them or try to land on the south bank, the Banguri will attack: they *do not* care for visitors.

THE TRAIL

After about two days on the river, the PCs reach the Twin Obelisks marked on the map. By this point the banks have come down again, making it easy to land the boat. There's a sort of stone quay at the Obelisks.

Once they've landed and unloaded their supplies and gear, the PCs and their bearers can head up the trail. The trail still exists, though it's obviously not heavily used. The "great dead tree" marked on the map is still there. Unless you want to lengthen the scenario, nothing happens on the



trail until the incident described below. If necessary, you could have a group of “hostile natives” (not Tisangani) attack the PCs, or you could threaten one of them with a venomous serpent.

A CRY FOR HELP

After about two days on the trail, the PCs feel they must be getting close to the chasm marked on the map. Suddenly they hear a woman’s scream! It’s coming from the south. It sounds like she’s just off the trail, over a hill covered with scrub brush that prevents the PCs from seeing her.

Naturally, the PCs, being Pulp heroes, charge to the rescue. As they crest the hill, they see a beautiful young black woman crouched at the foot of a tree. A grey-haired but still hale black man is using a walking staff to try to fend off the attack of a ferocious lion! The PCs can save the pair (who are obviously doomed if they don’t get help) by scaring off the lion, killing it, or the like. The purpose of the encounter is not to fight the lion, so feel free to have it run away unless the PCs really want a combat. (For the lion’s character sheet, see pages 145-46 of *The HERO System Bestiary* or page 453 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*.)

The woman, who seems to be about age 20, expresses her gratitude to the PCs — amazingly, she speaks halting, simple English! (If asked, she attempts to explain that she and her father both learned it from books left behind by Roger Marsh, which have been handed down in the Tisangani royal family for generations.) She identifies herself as Kinara, the daughter of King Togalo and thus princess of Tisangani. (The man is a servant.) She was running away from Tisangani in the hopes of avoiding what she felt was an inevitable forced marriage to the king’s cruel general, Boseda (who is a rising power in the ancient, hidden kingdom), and because she wants to find some help for her father to resist Boseda’s efforts to seize power. With the PCs by her side, she’s willing to return to Tisangani and see what can be done.

Assuming at least one PC is a strapping, handsome male, you can have some fun by roleplaying Kinara falling for him. She’ll immediately begin paying more attention to him than anyone else, will explain to others that he saved her (even if someone else was more responsible for that), and so on. This is particularly amusing if two male PCs have a Rivalry — have her pick one of them.

THE ROPE BRIDGE

Kinara leads the PCs to the chasm. Across the chasm is a rope bridge. It appears to be sturdy, but the players will no doubt be suspicious — especially when their characters notice the group of Tisangani warriors guarding the far side of the bridge!

Before they can stop her, Kinara strides confidently onto the bridge. One of the guards

shouts something at her in Tisangani; she shouts back. While none of the PCs understand Tisangani, the thrust of the argument is obvious: the guard’s challenging her right to bring these “white devils” to Tisangani, and she’s asserting her royal prerogative to do whatever she darn well pleases. As she (and presumably the PCs) get closer, the guards sullenly acquiesce — she and the PCs may head on into Tisangani not only unmolested, but with a small “honor guard” of two spearmen.

PART THREE: IN TISANGANI

The PCs quickly attract a crowd after they enter Tisangani. Most of the natives stare at them with frank curiosity; a few of the bolder ones might touch them to see if the white color of their skin “rubs off.” A few look at them with apprehension (or even frank dislike); some have expressions on their faces that might signify... relief? hope?

Kinara ignores the crowd and leads the heroes through the city to a large building in the center — obviously the palace. As she walks, people bow their heads to her; some prostrate themselves on the ground. At the palace, everyone treats her with deference and respect; she’s regally aloof, but not unkind. If she’s taken a shine to a male PC, she’ll insist he walk with her and happily point out sights of interest.

Kinara leads the PCs into the palace and down a few corridors to the throne room — a large, rectangular room in the center of the building with a colonnade around three of the walls. Against the fourth wall there’s a raised platform with a wooden throne, and on the throne sits King Togalo, Kinara’s father. He’s an old man, rather feeble-looking, but with a bearing that bespeaks dignity and pride.

The king is not the only person in the room. Various nobles — courtiers, if you will — stand or sit around the throne room, and slaves scurry to and fro on various errands. The nobles are well-dressed, and greet the PCs with the same stares as the townsfolk... though here more of them show obvious dislike or distrust. One noble in particular stands out: a tall, muscular, darkly handsome man holding a spear. He stands on the dais to the left of the king. This is Boseda, the king’s warlord and his rival for power in the city (if the PCs can’t figure this out themselves, Kinara will whisper it to them). Boseda looks at the PCs with undisguised contempt, even hatred.

Like Kinara, King Togalo speaks halting English. After Kinara tells him what happened, he welcomes the PCs to Tisangani, offers them his hospitality for as long as they care to stay, and gives them each a gift. If you like, you can tailor the gifts to each PC, but they could receive matching necklaces or other items of jewelry if you don’t want to go to the trouble.

IN THE PALACE

King Togalo then tells the PCs that rooms have been arranged for them in the palace, and slaves will now escort them there so that they may rest and prepare for the grand feast that will be held tonight to celebrate his daughter's rescue! Since it's early-mid afternoon, the PCs have an hour or three to relax.

This is another point at which you can lengthen the scenario if you want. If you feel like it, let them explore the palace and interact with the natives. Since they speak no Tisangani, and the natives no other languages, the odds for successful communication are dim. However, the PCs might convince Kinara to give them a tour of the palace, or have a run-in with a hostile noble that foreshadows later events. If you want to keep the scenario moving along briskly, just skip ahead to the feast without giving the PCs any "free time."

FEAST OF TREACHERY

At dinnertime a slave arrives at each PC's room to escort them to the feast. The feast is held in the throne room, where a long table has been set up in the center of the room. The king's throne has been moved down to the head of the table, and as the guests of honor the PCs get to sit nearest him (though a guard armed with a spear stands to each side of him, and there are other guards standing at attention along the colonnade). Kinara sits with the PCs. If she's sweet on one of them, he gets the best seat of all and she's right next to him. Several of the nobles look rather put out at having to sit "below" the white visitors; Bosedá looks positively furious.

The feast commences as slaves bring in large platters of food. If you like, describe the very non-European food (including some insects, reptiles, and a variety of strange-looking fruits and vegetables) to make the PCs squirm.

Halfway through the feast, Bosedá stands and addresses the king. This brings other conversations to a halt; the PCs get the impression this is unusual, and can feel tension in the room. The "discussion" between the two quickly turns heated, and Bosedá obviously becomes angrier and angrier. Suddenly, he shouts an order! The two guards flanking the king cover him with their spears, and the guards on the portico quickly move forward to stop the PCs and Kinara from acting.

At this point, the PCs should realize they're badly outnumbered. In game terms, consider each of them Covered by at least one spearman: if they do anything, they'll automatically get skewered once, if not more. If they want to fight, let them, but the deck is definitely stacked against them... and Bosedá and a few of his chief warriors are powerful enough to have Heroic Action Points of their own to spend. If necessary, Bosedá and his rebels can even take the king and Kinara hostage to stop the PCs from fighting.

Unless things *really* go their way, the PCs

should be taken prisoner (if appropriate, have the spearmen smack them unconscious with the butts of their spears, rather than running them through with the points). They'll then be escorted (under *heavy* guard) to a dungeon cell.

VISITORS UNWELCOME AND WELCOME

The PCs' cell is located in the bowels of the palace. Its walls are made of stone; the door is thick, sturdy wood with a small barred window; the only light is provided by a guttering torch. The door is barred and locked from the outside. The door should be strong enough to resist the PCs' efforts to escape... at least for a short time.

While in the cell, the PCs hear the sounds of shouting and fighting in the streets: Bosedá's rebellion is in full swing and seems to be succeeding! And then they hear a familiar chuckle coming from just outside the door. Looking in the hole in the door is their old adversary — "Colonel" Bruce Forsythe! "Looks like I've finally got you where I want you," he gloats fiendishly.

Forsythe will go on to explain how he stumbled across Tisangani some months ago, learned of Bosedá's ambitions, and formed a partnership with him. In exchange for Forsythe's aid and knowledge of the outside world, Bosedá will give him many of the Tisangani's golden treasures. Having failed to prevent the PCs from getting here, Forsythe will at least have the pleasure of watching Bosedá lop off their heads. After making some suitably dire prediction or pun about their fate, and the fate of West Africa once Bosedá begins his campaign of conquest, Forsythe leaves.

At this point, you can let the PCs make serious efforts to escape from the cell... but even if they can't on their own, they'll have some help. A little while later, they hear someone else approaching the cell. Looking out the hole in the door, they can see it's a slight figure, stooped, wearing a dark robe. Suddenly, the visitor stands up to reveal... Kinara!

She explains that she eluded the slaves Bosedá set to watch over her, got hold of the key, and has come to free them. She'll quickly unbar and unlock the door, tell the PCs Bosedá and the other leading rebels are keeping King Togalo prisoner in the throne room until he agrees to their demands, and beg them to help him. She's even brought along their weapons....

THE BIG FINALE

Being true Pulp heroes, the PCs head toward the throne room and begin a battle to defeat Bosedá and rescue the king. And since it's a Pulp adventure, this time the odds are stacked in their favor — you can even "refresh" a few of their Heroic Action Points to give them a chance to really cut loose if you like. Make it a tough fight, with lots of challenges for them (such as saving the king from a sneak attack by Bosedá or

OTHER TISANGANI NAMES

If you need names for any Tisangani NPCs, here are a few you can choose from:

| Male | Female |
|--------|---------|
| Baruti | Aluta |
| Kefele | Atosa |
| Kopano | Okalese |
| Lefo | Suma |
| Makalo | Syande |
| Namdi | |
| Nyemba | |
| Omondi | |

a wicked noble)... but in the end, let them win.

With the PCs' help, guards and warriors loyal to King Togalo can quickly put down the revolt and round up the rebels. The surviving rebels will be executed; Justice is swift in the jungles of Africa.

You can wrap up the scenario however you like. The king can make the PCs honorary members of the Tisangani tribe, agree to open up relations with the civilized world, shower them with valuable gifts, persuade one of them to marry Kinara... or all of the above! It all depends on how long you want the scenario to last and what sort of follow-up adventures (if any) you'd like to develop from this one.

And of course, there's the trip back to Stanleyville, and home. If you prefer, you can gloss over this and get them home safely in just a few seconds... but you can always pile on some difficulties if you want to start another adventure right away!

BOSEDA

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 18 | STR | 8 | 13- | Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 [4] |
| 17 | DEX | 21 | 12- | OCV: 6/DCV: 6 |
| 17 | CON | 14 | 12- | |
| 13 | BODY | 6 | 12- | |
| 10 | INT | 0 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 20 | PRE | 10 | 13- | PRE Attack: 4d6 |
| 12 | COM | 1 | 11- | |
| 6 | PD | 2 | | Total: 9 PD (3 rPD) |
| 4 | ED | 1 | | Total: 7 ED (3 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 13 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 7 | REC | 0 | | |
| 34 | END | 0 | | |
| 31 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 76 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Talents

6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

12 +4 with Spears
 3 Climbing 12-
 3 Conversation 13-
 3 High Society 13-
 3 Persuasion 13-
 3 Stealth 12-
 5 Tactics 12-
 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 42

Total Cost: 118

75+ Disadvantages

5 Distinctive Features: Tisangani war-paints and scars (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
 10 Hunted: King Togalo 11- (As Pow, NCI, Watching)
 20 Psychological Limitation: Ambitious; Wants To Rule The Tisangani, And Eventually All Of West Africa (Common, Total)
 5 Rivalry: Professional (with other ambitious Tisangani nobles)
 3 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 118

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| Spear | +0 | +0 | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 10 | Can Be Thrown, +1" reach |
| Dagger | +0 | +0 | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

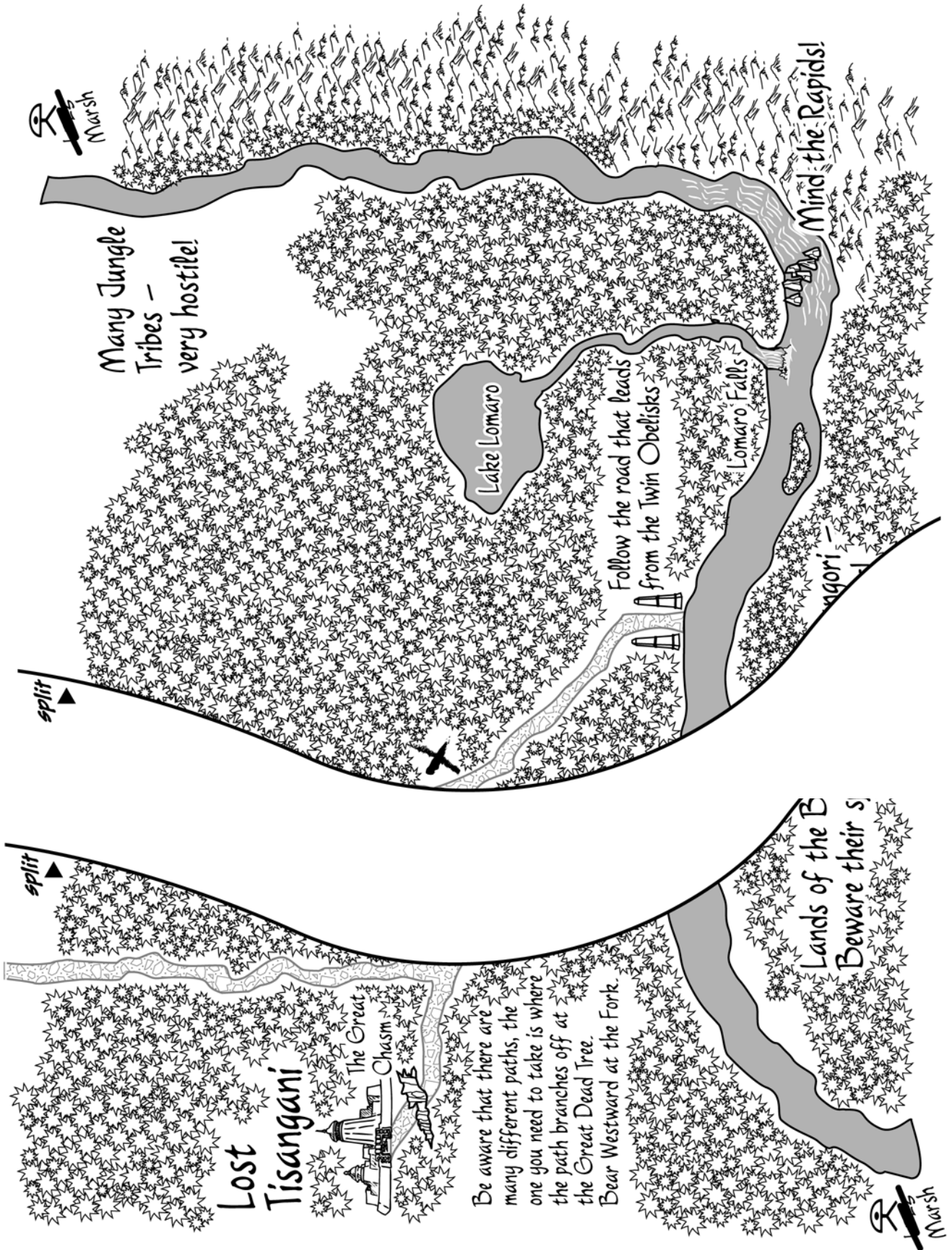
Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Whatever he needs within reason

Clothing: In most situations, the fine clothing of a Tisangani nobleman; if he's expecting combat, warrior's garb

THE TISANGANI MAP FRAGMENTS

Print out a copy of the following map fragments, cut them out, and present them to the heroes at the appropriate moment in the adventure.



Thrilling Hero Adventures

THE
TABLETS
OF DESTINY

Adventure Thirteen

THE TABLETS OF DESTINY



When a Nazi archaeological expedition in the Near East requests a hero's help with a mysterious matter, the heroes find themselves plunged into a race against the Third Reich to find the Caves Of Marduk, avoid deadly traps, and recover one of the most powerful relics ever created — the fabled Tablets Of Destiny!

The Tablets Of Destiny is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Since it takes place in the Near East, *The Tablets Of Destiny* could connect to other adventures in the same region. *Curse Of The Vulture-God* (in this book) and *The Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu* (from *Thrilling Places*) are both obvious choices, especially since they both also feature archaeology as an adventure hook. Perhaps there's some sort of meta-plot linking all three of them together, such as a special artifact whose parts are scattered among the three areas or a villain involved in all three digs.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Babylonians and Assyrians, who ruled Mesopotamia from around 2000 BC until 539 BC, told a myth about Zu (or Anzu), the god of birds. Zu, a minor god, was jealous of Marduk, Ishtar, and the other gods. He decided to gain superiority over them by stealing the Tablets of Destiny from Enlil, king of the gods. These Tablets are the symbol of rulership among the Babylonian gods, and whoever owns them possesses great power. Zu waited until Enlil was bathing, then stole the Tablets and flew away to his mountain home. The gods, dismayed, held a council to determine who would get them back. One by one, each deity declined the difficult task, but finally Marduk, god of wisdom and light, agreed to undertake the mission. Marduk was successful, and he crushed Zu's head and destroyed him.

However, the myth's ending is more symbolic than correct. Marduk didn't literally "crush" Zu's head — he only did so figuratively. Rather

than risk another theft of the Tablets, Marduk hid them in a deep cave. Then he stripped Zu of his intellect and his godhood, making him naught but a terrible monster, and left him in the cave to guard the Tablets. To further protect the Tablets, Marduk set three traps to catch the unwary who dared to enter the cave.

Recently, a Nazi archaeological expedition in Mesopotamia unearthed a broken clay tablet written by Yasmakh-Adad, court wizard of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC). It tells that Marduk hid the Tablets of Destiny in "the Caves Of Marduk," but then ends at the break. The Nazis, aware of the power the Tablets could bring them, are looking for a complete copy. Besides continuing their dig, they're kidnapping (or blackmailing) prominent Assyriologists and forcing the scholars to help them; those whom they cannot intimidate into working for them are killed.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One of the heroes who's known for his archaeological work or expertise on Assyro-Babylonian languages and culture is approached by a scientist from the Berlin Museum of Antiquities. The Third Reich wants to hire the PC to work on Near Eastern dig, but won't say much about it unless the hero agrees. If the hero agrees, he's given travel instructions to get to the dig in Iraq (and of course his friends follow along to find out what the Nazis are so interested in); if not, the heroes are later attacked by Nazi stooges and, motivated by revenge and a desire to find out what the Germans are up to, head for Iraq.

After arriving in Baghdad, the heroes either (a) follow the instructions given by the Germans, and/or (b) contact old friends in the city to learn what there is to know about the Nazi expedition. Either way, they eventually find themselves at (or spying on) an archaeological dig outside Nineveh, a little north of the town of Mosul. They eventually find out that the Nazis are looking for a cuneiform tablet that may very well reveal the final resting-place of the fabled *Tablets Of Destiny*. By hook or by crook they get the information first and head for the Caves Of Marduk with the Nazis hot on their heels. Once they get there they still have to survive three deadly traps!... and fight a terrifying monster from the dawn of time!... and defeat the Nazis!... before they can claim victory and the Tablets.

PART ONE: A VISITOR FROM BERLIN

While the PCs are relaxing at home, or in some distant foreign hotel after their latest adventure, a German in a black suit comes to call on one of them — the PC with the greatest knowledge of Assyro-Babylonian civilization, language, and myth. (If none of the PCs are even remotely suitable, you can substitute a friendly NPC who seeks their advice and opinions on the matter.) He identifies himself as Steffen Dietrich, an Assistant Curator from the Berlin Museum of Antiquities. None of the heroes has ever heard of him (unless you feel their KSs or the like indicate they should have — he's telling the truth about his job and employer).

Dietrich asks if the hero would be willing to work for the Third Reich on an important archaeological dig “in the Near East, for which your expertise makes you uniquely suited.” He refuses to say more until such time as the PC agrees to take the job; nor will he even make the offer, much less talk about details, with anyone other than the PC he came to see (unless that PC absolutely insists on including the other heroes in the conversation).

At this point, the action can go one of two ways.

THE HERO AGREES

There's a chance the hero agrees to work for Nazi Germany. Typically no true Pulp hero would have *anything* to do with the Nazis, but your players may decide the best way to find out what the Germans are up to is for the hero to join the expedition while *pretending* to side with the Nazis.

When the hero agrees, Dr. Dietrich expresses his pleasure. He explains that the dig is in Nineveh, on the outskirts of Mosul, Iraq. He will reveal more about the specific objects sought, and why the PC's expertise is so vital, when the hero reaches the dig. He provides one (and only one) plane ticket to Baghdad, along with instructions to contact Wilhelm Mersmann, a German importer/exporter who's assisting the expedition, once the hero arrives. Mersmann will arrange for the rest of the hero's travel. If necessary he makes it quite clear that Germany's offer does *not* extend to the other heroes, and that they will not be allowed on the dig site. (Despite this, it's assumed the other PCs will find a way to tag along, or to get to the dig on their own. After all, they're heroes!)

Once in Baghdad, the heroes may want to get in touch with old friends to find out anything they can about the Nazis' activities (see below). Eventually, the PC working for the Nazis has to contact Mersmann, a middle-aged and generally affable trader. He provides a train ticket to Kalat, a town just south of Mosul where the railroad ends. There's only one railway, and only one train

per day; the only other (slower) ways from Baghdad to Mosul are via the Tigris River or a long, dusty, uncomfortable car ride.

In Kalat a Dr. Rudolf Grüber, who's in town with a truck to pick up supplies, meets the PC at the train station to give him a ride out to the dig site. At the dig site Dr. Dietrich reveals what's going on (see below).

THE HERO REFUSES

If the hero refuses (politely or impolitely) to work with Nazis, Dr. Dietrich graciously expresses his regrets and leave. He returns to Iraq... but not before putting plans in motion to get what he wants anyway!

Later that evening, enemies attack the PC, intending to kidnap him (if possible) or kill him (if not), and of course to kill anyone else who gets in their way. Depending on where the PCs are, the enemies could be Bundists armed with tommy guns, local hirelings wielding blades and pistols, or anything else you think is appropriate. The key is to stage the attack in a picturesque location so it's a fun, dangerous, slam-bang battle that gives the heroes a hard time but allows them to win. Use the *Adversaries* character sheets on pages 405-07 of *Pulp Hero* for whatever sort of attacker you decide on.

If the PCs leave any of their enemies alive, the survivors know nothing except that the PC who spoke with Dr. Dietrich (whom they do not know by name) was to be kidnapped if possible and smuggled to Iraq via a cargo flight.

Now it's personal! Time to find a way to get to Baghdad and stop those Nazi scum. Whatever they're up to, it can't be good!

PART TWO: THE SANDS OF IRAQ

Once the PCs make it to Iraq, things begin to progress.

FRIENDS AND ALLIES

Before they head north to Mosul, the heroes might want to make contact with people they know who may have information about the Nazi expedition. Or, they may need friends' help to travel through Iraq as easily and safely as possible. You should use whatever friends are appropriate for your group (they may already have Contacts there, for example), but here are two you might consider:

Ismail

In Baghdad lives a friend of the PC who was approached by Dr. Dietrich — an old man named Ismail who for years has been a part of archaeological digs throughout Mesopotamia and is something of an expert on them. He rarely goes into the field anymore, but if the Nazis are working a serious dig in the region they'd at least have consulted with him, if not tried to hire him.

Ismail was indeed consulted. He says the Nazis are searching for some ancient Assyrian tablets, but weren't entirely forthcoming on why they're so important. The dig is motivated, apparently, by a find of another tablet last year that contained tantalizing information of some sort. He's not clear where that tablet is now, but the Nazis have a rubbing of it that they showed him. Ismail remembers little of what he saw, but he recalls that...

- ...the tablet was allegedly written by Yas-makh-Adad (a PC who makes an appropriate KS has heard of him — he was the court wizard of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC))
- ...the tablet mentioned the “Caves Of Marduk” and purportedly gave directions to them, but the directions are incomplete (neither the PCs nor Ismail have heard of these Caves, but clearly they sound important)

The Nazis apparently intend to find the rest of the tablet or some other sources of information that gives full, accurate directions to the Caves Of Marduk. That means the heroes have a goal: get the directions before the Nazis do and beat them to the Caves Of Marduk!

Reginald Whitby

Reginald Whitby is a diplomat at the British Embassy. If he's a friend of the PCs, he can tell them that the only German archaeological expedition currently authorized in Iraq is north of Mosul, at Nineveh. He can also arrange travel documents for them, and assist them in other small but important ways.

TO MOSUL

Aside from the archaeologist PC who's working with the Nazis and follows their travel arrangements (see above), all other PCs have to make their own way to Mosul. There are several ways to get there from Baghdad:

- Private plane (either their own, or one they charter). This requires special government permission (easily obtained with Reginald Whitby's help).
- Train. A train runs daily from Baghdad to Kalat, just south of Mosul. This is the fastest and most comfortable way to get there other than a plane.
- The Tigris River. This is slow (especially if the heroes sail rather than use a motorized watercraft) but fairly cheap.
- Car. The road trip from Baghdad to Mosul is slow, dusty, hot, bumpy, and generally miserable, but it's one way to get there.

If you want to liven the scenario up a bit at this point, perhaps a group of Kurdish brigands or a band of river pirates attack the heroes' method of transport. Depending on how the PCs handle the situation, their attackers may even become erstwhile allies who can help them later

against the Nazis.

Once the heroes make it safely to Mosul, they must be very careful — it's not a large city (60,000 people), and their presence may attract notice and arouse the attention of the Nazis. A German who's in town to obtain supplies or enjoy a little rest and relaxation might spot them, or a sneaky informer might try to get word to the Germans about “Englishmen” who are in town as a way of currying favor or earning some money.

THE DIG

The accompanying map shows the Nazi expedition's camp, which is a couple of miles outside Mosul on the outskirts of the ruins of Nineveh. The two large tents on the northern side of the map are for cleaning, processing, and studying artifacts recovered by the dig's archaeologists. If the PCs want to get a look at the incomplete tablet the Nazis already recovered (of which they showed a rubbing to Ismail), they can find it here.

The two medium-sized tents to the east are where the Assyriologists the Nazis have kidnapped or blackmailed into helping them stay. Two Nazi soldiers stand guard over these tents when the scientists are in them.

The three medium-sized tents south of the main bonfire are barracks tents for the Nazi soldiers assigned to the dig.

The small tents to the west are for the Nazi archaeologists. If a PC archaeologist has agreed to work with the Third Reich, he'll get one of these tents.

The two medium-sized tents near the smaller campfire are for Major Eichenwald and for Dr. Dietrich and his daughter Wiltrud.

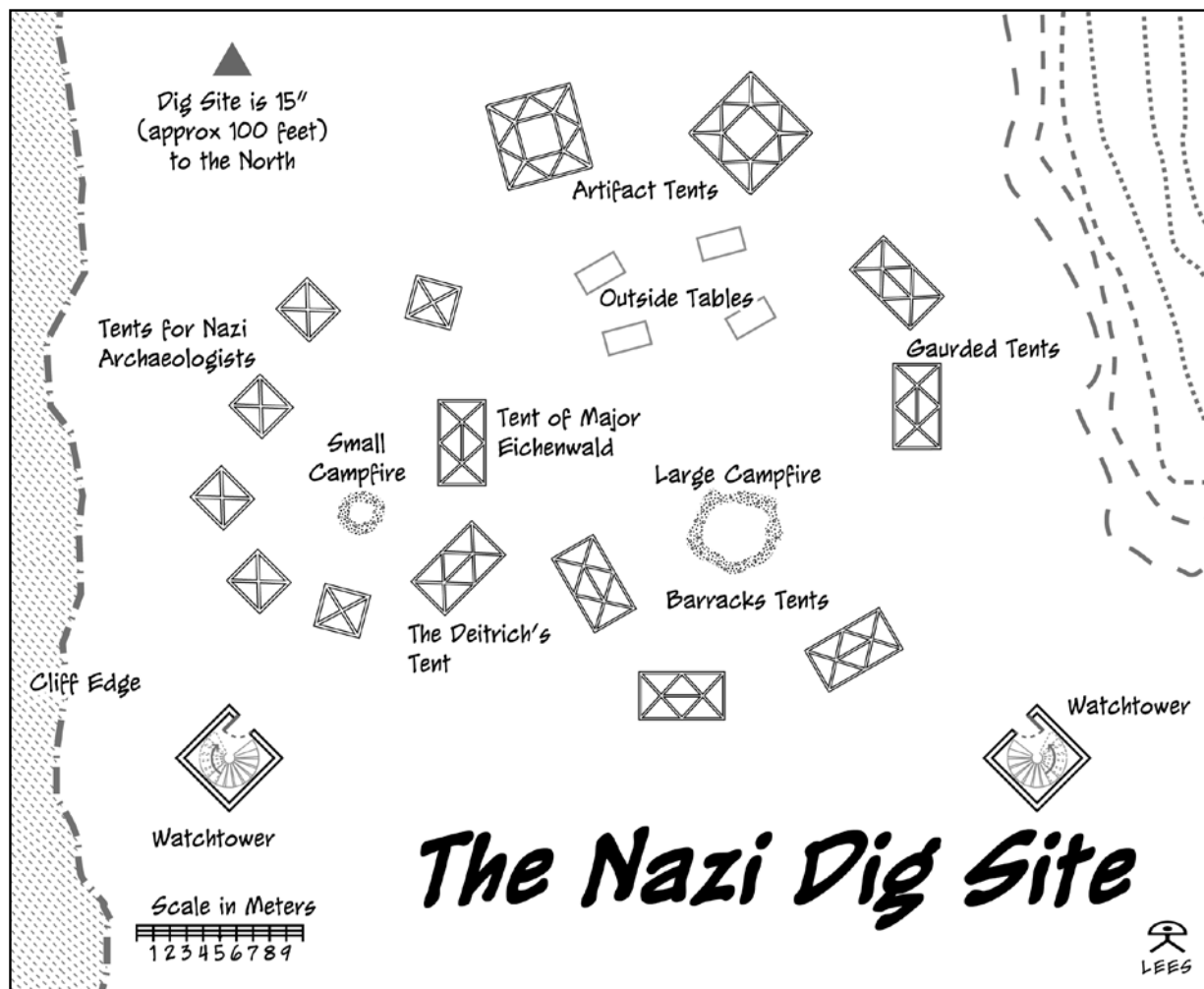
THE NAZIS

The military leader of the Nazi expedition is Major Baron Hermann Eichenwald (see *Pulp Hero*, page 395). He's a ruthless SS soldier who won't hesitate to “dispose” of the PCs if he feels they're a threat. He commands the soldiers in the camp with grim efficiency.

The academic leader of the expedition is Dr. Steffen Dietrich, whom the PCs have already met. In the field he dresses much less formally, but he still leads the scientists and workers with a certain amount of grace and punctilio.

Wiltrud Dietrich

With Dr. Dietrich is his daughter Wiltrud, a lovely young woman of 22. She's not just there for “fun” — she's a learned Assyriologist in her own right and is doing serious work assisting her father. Despite the fact that she looks like she could have stepped right off an Aryan recruiting poster, with her blonde hair tied back in a braided ponytail and her deep blue eyes, she's no Nazi. In fact she despises her father's Nazi ideals and could be persuaded to help the PCs keep the Nazis from obtaining the Tablets Of Destiny, if they're dashing and handsome enough and



promise not to hurt her father. At the very least, she can explain exactly what the Nazis are looking for and what's going on.

If one of the PCs is working for the Nazis, Wiltrud gives him the cold shoulder. It will take some serious Persuasion rolls and good deeds to convince her he's not sympathetic to the Nazis.

THE ROUTINE

The camp comes to life before dawn. Breakfast is made and eaten. Nazi soldiers keep a wary eye on the kidnapped/blackmailed Assyriologists. As the sun rises, the archaeologists and diggers head out to the actual dig site under the leadership of Dr. Dietrich. Sometimes Wiltrud goes with them, sometimes she stays behind to study or process artifacts the team has already found. At least two archaeologists work in the acquisitions tents each day.

At noon the archaeologists and diggers return for lunch. After eating they return to the field; sometimes the ones who worked in the acquisitions tent go into the field and two others stay to work in the tents.

As the sun begins to set, the expedition calls a halt to work for the day. Everyone returns to camp for dinner. After dinner there may be conversation, or storytelling, or a little impromptu harmonica music or singing, but as often as not

people drift off to their tents to read and go to sleep early — it's a grueling life. Soldiers keep the reluctant Assyriologists under watch at all times.

WORDS WRITTEN IN CLAY

At this point it's up to the heroes to keep watch on the camp somehow and gather information about what's going on. If one of the heroes is in the camp working for the Nazis, he already knows what the Germans are up to; it's just a matter of somehow communicating that information to the other heroes without Eichmann or the other Nazis learning what he's doing.

Dramatically, the best way for the heroes to learn the lay of the land is to sneak into camp one day and make friends with Wiltrud Dietrich. She may take a little persuading, but once they convince her of their *bona fides*, she'll gladly help keep the Tablets out of Nazi hands.

The New Tablet

A day or three after the heroes start watching the camp, the Nazis find a large cuneiform tablet which tells the story of Zu and has complete directions to the Caves Of Marduk. Dietrich begins translating it, a process that will take at least two days. The PCs must learn what's on the tablet, either by spying on Dietrich, stealing

it and translating it on their own, or sneaking in and taking a rubbing that they can translate. Being the heroes of the story, they may be able to translate a little more quickly than Dietrich can.

The new Yasmakh-Adad tablet provides a more truthful ending for the myth of Zu; it tells that Marduk hid the Tablets Of Destiny, including the approximate location of the Caves Of Marduk in the Zagros Mountains. However, Zu's continued existence as a guardian of the Tablets is *not* mentioned. Yasmakh-Adad's full account goes on to relate that:

Lord Marduk set also three cunning snares to further protect the sacred Tablets. He who would gain the Tablets for himself must be strong, devout, cautious, and clever. For the first, heed the wisdom of Urshanabi. For the second, let Shamash guide thee. For the third, walk as would the victims of Lamashtu. Then must he face the greatest peril of all.

LAST ONE THERE IS A ROTTEN EGG

The scenario now becomes a race to the Cave Of Marduk. The trip takes about two days by car, camel, or horse, and four days on foot over the rough and rocky ground of northern Iraq.

For best dramatic impact, one way or another the Nazis should find out about the PCs. Soon Eichenwald, Dietrich, and a squad of Nazi troops are hot on their heels, and the PCs should know it (from seeing plumes of dust in the distance behind them and such).

Feel free to complicate matters to add dramatic tension. Maybe the heroes run into a group of Kurdish bandits; if they can make friends, the bandits might delay the Nazis for them. Or perhaps they have a chance to set up an ambush — is it worth the risk to try to eliminate the Nazi competition, or should they rely on speed? What if the PCs' car breaks down?

PART THREE: THE HALLS OF MARDUK

After a few tense moments (and possibly a fight or two), the PCs make it to the Cave one step ahead of the Nazis. It's an old, dry natural cave, with one tunnel leading down into the darkness. If the PCs didn't bring a light source, they must lose some precious time making some crude torches.

If anything delays the PCs, the Nazis arrive just as they enter the Cave and use force to prevent them from going down the tunnel. If the PCs retreat into the Cave, only Eichenwald and a few crack troops are brave enough to follow them. If the PCs fight and lose, the Nazis get to enter the tunnel and go after the Tablets first (after interrogating the PCs). If the PCs fight and win (unlikely, but possible, since they're badly

outnumbered), they can proceed onward unmo-
lested. If the PCs make it into the Caves well before the Nazis arrive, they may run into the Germans coming in as they're leaving... or waiting to ambush them when they emerge back into the sunlight.

After entering the Caves Of Marduk, the heroes encounter, and must defeat or avoid, the three traps mentioned in Yasmakh-Adad's tablet.

THE WATERS OF URSHANABI

The tunnel twists and turns downward for about 75 feet, opening onto a circular chamber about 20" in diameter that's lit by a dim unnatural light. Filling the center of the room is a dark lake; there's a lip of about one foot between the cavern wall and the water's edge. On the other side of the lake the tunnel continues onward. Chunks of stone litter the beach near either tunnel. There are only two ways across: swim or creep around the edge.

This is the first trap; the PCs must use "the wisdom of Urshanabi" to pass successfully. Urshanabi is the ferryman of Uta-napishtim, the Babylonian Noah from *The Epic Of Gilgamesh*. Urshanabi helps Gilgamesh cross the deadly waters of the Abyss by advising him to cut many boat-poles and use each pole only once so he doesn't touch the water (which will kill him). In short, the advice is: don't touch the water. Marduk filled this lake with water from the Abyss; it causes 3d6 Killing Damage per Segment with no defense if touched, 6d6 if drunk.

The ledge around the lake is rigged to collapse at the halfway point, dumping intruders into the water. Two characters may make Breakfall rolls, or DEX Rolls at -3, to avoid falling in by leaping onto a safe part of the ledge; any more than that are doomed to fall in when the trap is sprung. Detecting this trap requires a Security Systems roll at -3; disarming it requires another such roll.

Since the PCs don't have a boat, they have to find another way to follow Urshanabi's advice. The best way is to use the rocks on the beach. The lake is actually very shallow, and if enough rocks are thrown in, the heroes can make a series of stepping-stones so they can cross without touching the water. Each character crossing this way has to succeed with a Breakfall roll at +1, or a DEX Roll at -1, to cross safely; failure indicates a character falls in.

THE PROCESSIONAL OF THE GODS

The tunnel beyond soon straightens out and begins to show signs of carving and decoration. After a while it opens into a great hall 15" long and 4" wide whose walls are carved with scenes of the Babylonian gods: Enlil, Ea, Anu, Ishtar, Marduk, Ninurta, Nergal, and many others. Prominent among them is Shamash, god of the sun, giving off rays of light and holding a great sword (which points toward the far end of the hall). At the end of the hall the tunnel narrows

once more and ends in a set of elaborately-carved wooden doors (which are fakes). Several other hallways lead off from the room in various directions.

This is the second of Marduk's traps. If the PCs go the way Shamash points, they'll be trapped when an enormous stone block falls down behind them, sealing off the passage... and then the wall begins to move, slowly but inexorably, toward the back wall of the corridor! (If they examine the corridor before going all the way to the end, finding the trap requires a Security Systems roll at -4.) The wall has STR 40, so opposing it will be tough — and just stopping it from moving would only be a temporary solution. The PCs have to find another way to jam the wall and make it reverse course; you should make the players think quickly to find the answer. Don't make it impossible, though — it isn't much fun for anybody if the PCs are crushed to death. If the players insist on making Skill rolls to get out of the dilemma, finding a way to stop the trap requires a Security Systems roll at -4 (finding the trap in advance before it activates requires a Security Systems roll at -6).

All the other hallways leading off from the Processional are fakes — they end in traps just like the one described above.

Yasmakh-Adad's clue doesn't mean to go in the direction Shamash indicates, but rather to literally follow him: the carving of Shamash conceals a secret door. If the PCs can find the catch (this requires a Concealment roll at -2), that section of wall shifts backwards, allowing Shamash to "guide" them into a new tunnel.

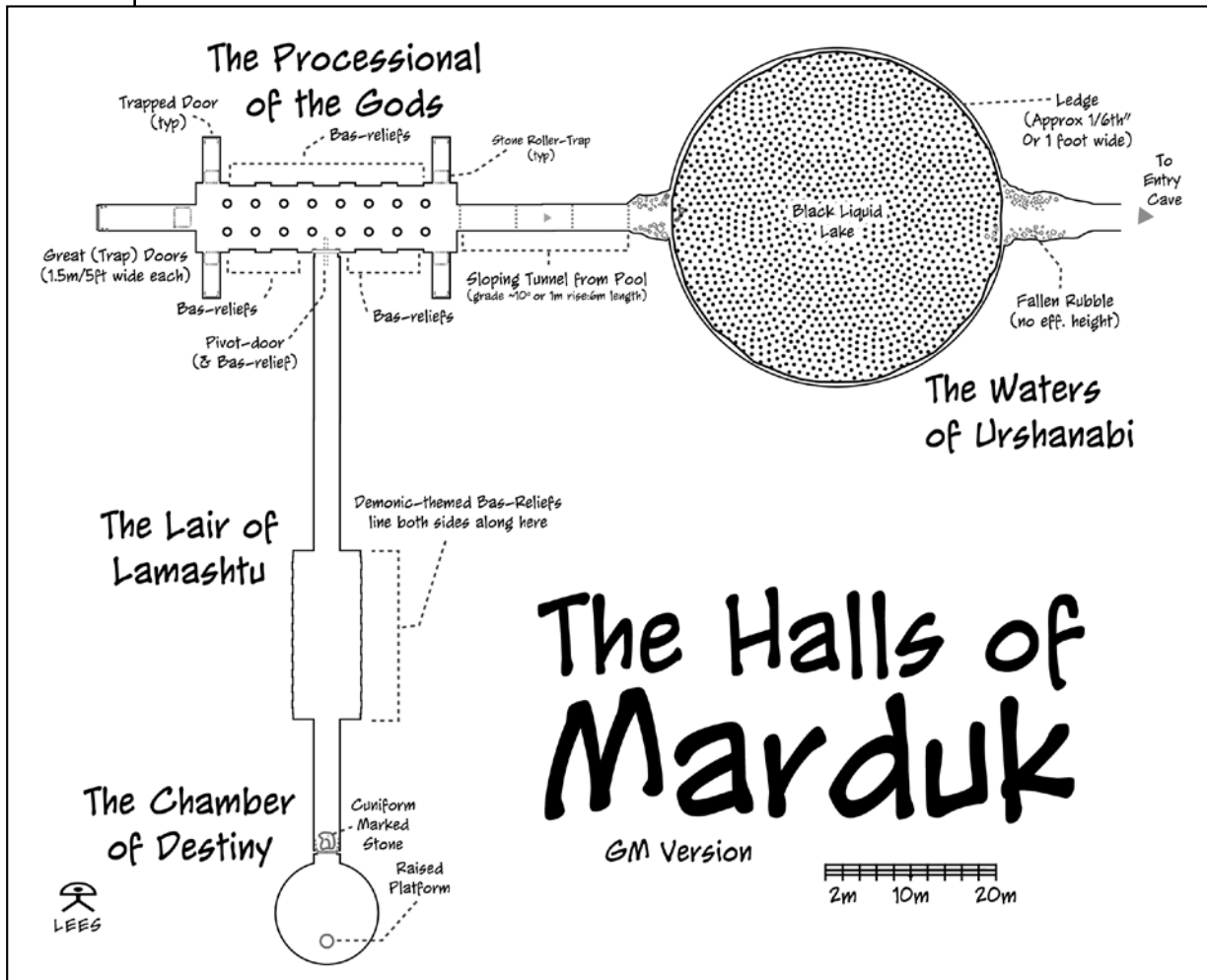
THE LAIR OF LAMASHTU

The new tunnel continues downward for many feet, then levels and widens into a sort of gallery that's 10" long and 4" wide. The walls of this gallery are carved with depictions of many horrible Babylonian demons. Most prominent among them is Lamashtu, a demoness who steals newborn babies.

As soon as you describe Lamashtu, begin to time the players. They have exactly ten seconds of real time to figure out what to do: "Walk like the victims of Lamashtu," *i.e.*, get on their hands and knees and crawl like babies.

Any PC still standing after ten seconds gets hit by one of several enormous spiked bars that swing down from the ceiling (2d6 Killing Damage, Does Knockback). The only ways a standing PC can avoid the bars is to make an Acrobatics or Dive For Cover roll at -5.

Now the PCs are almost at their goal. After several dozen more feet of tunnel, they come to



a large stone covered with Babylonian magical symbols of warding and protection. If they can move the stone (it weighs about 3,000 kg), they can enter...

THE CHAMBER OF DESTINY

In the Chamber of Destiny (a perfectly circular room with a 6” radius, not shown on the map), the Tablets of Destiny sit on a 3” tall pedestal near the wall opposite the door. The PCs now have to overcome a danger worse than all of the traps combined — Zu himself! Marduk has reduced him to a monstrous bird-man, with terrible claws and a screech that can shatter stone. See the accompanying character sheet for Zu’s game information, but adjust it as necessary — make him tough enough to give the PCs a good fight, one they’ll remember for the rest of their careers.

Once the PCs defeat Zu, the Tablets are theirs. The Tablets contain enormous power, though they can’t teleport the heroes out or kill all the Nazis with just a thought. But any PC who was injured or killed by the mad half-god is healed to full life and health if someone touches him with the Tablets. Now all the PCs have to do is escape with the Tablets without being captured by the Nazis... perhaps by using the Tablets to, say, make all the Germans fall asleep.

CONCLUSION

Depending on what the PCs do with the Tablets, they may still have to fight their way past Eichenwald and the other surviving Nazis before they can make it to safety. Since they’ve just been through the toughest fight at the climax of the adventure, don’t make this challenge too tough — perhaps you could even save it for the start of the next game session. And even after they make it past the Nazis, the PCs are still stuck in the middle of a desert....

After the Tablets are taken out of the Cave Of Marduk, their power soon fades and they crumble to dust. They and their power can no longer survive in a world where the gods of Babylon are as dead and buried as the cities where they were once worshipped.

| ZU | | | | |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
| 25 | STR | 20 | 14- | Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [5] |
| 20 | DEX | 30 | 13- | OCV: 7/DCV: 7 |
| 20 | CON | 20 | 13- | |
| 20 | BODY | 20 | 13- | |
| 5 | INT | -5 | 10- | PER Roll 10- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 25 | PRE | 20 | 14- | PRE Attack: 5d6 |
| 6 | COM | -2 | 10- | |
| 10 | PD | 7 | | Total: 10 PD (6 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 8 | | Total: 10 ED (6 rED) |
| 5 | SPD | 30 | | Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12 |
| 10 | REC | 2 | | |
| 40 | END | 0 | | |
| 50 | STUN | 7 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 157 |

Movement: Running: 6”/12”
Flight: 10”/20”

| Cost | Powers | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 15 | <i>Talons:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) | 1 |
| 5 | <i>Beak:</i> HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR) | 1 |
| 107 | <i>Screech:</i> Hearing Group Flash 10d6, Area Of Effect (6” Radius; +1¼) plus Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense or being deaf/deafened; +1), Area Of Effect (4” Radius; +1); Linked (-½) | 12 |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 6 | <i>Zu’s Divine Form:</i> Damage Resistance (6 PD/6 ED) | 0 |
| 120 | <i>Zu’s Divine Form:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75% | 0 |
| 17 | <i>Wings:</i> Flight 10”, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Restrained (-½) | 1 |
| 8 | <i>Zu’s Eyes:</i> +4 PER with Sight Group | 0 |
| 2 | <i>Zu’s Eyes:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (240 Degrees) for Normal Sight | 0 |

Skills

| | |
|----|----------------|
| 10 | +2 HTH |
| 2 | +1 with Flight |
| 3 | Stealth 13- |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 295

Total Cost: 452

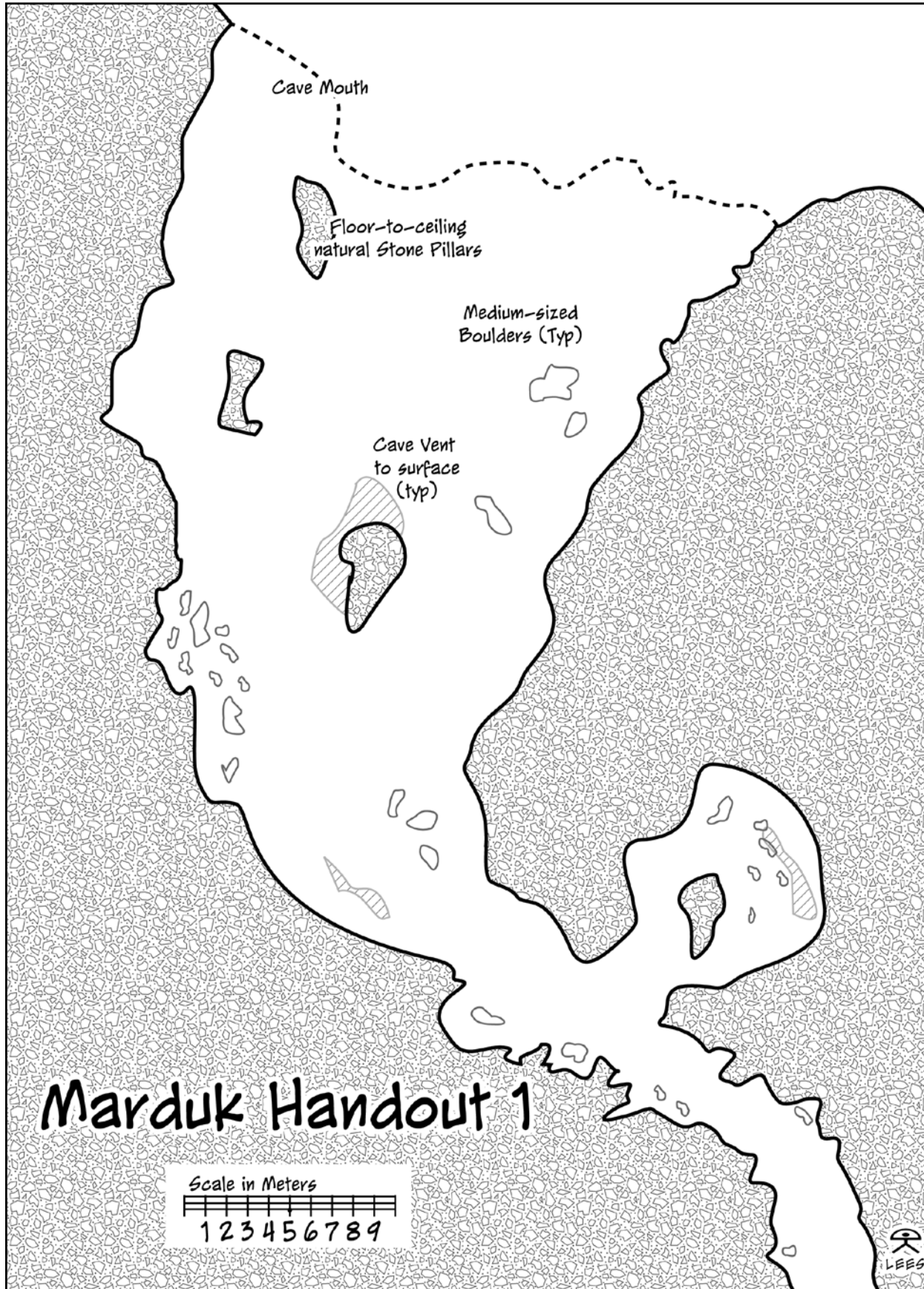
75+ Disadvantages

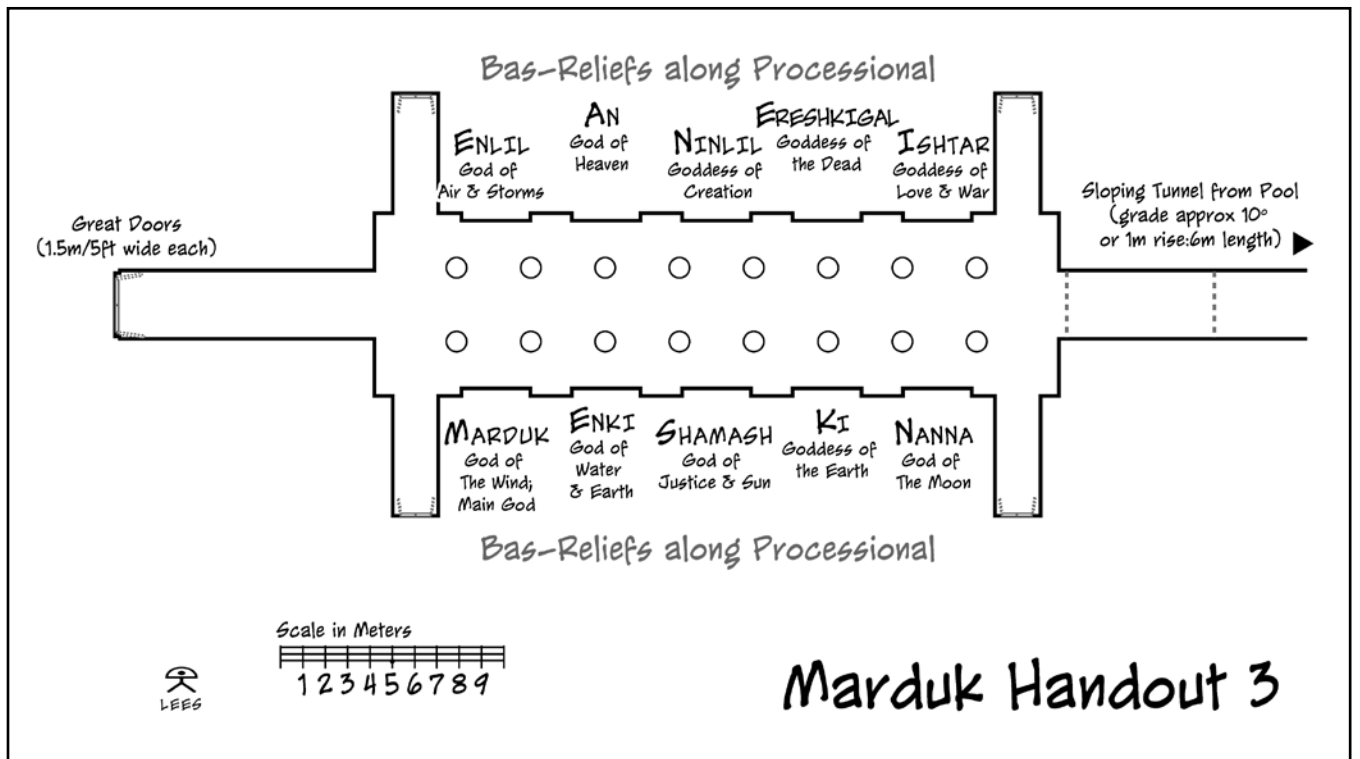
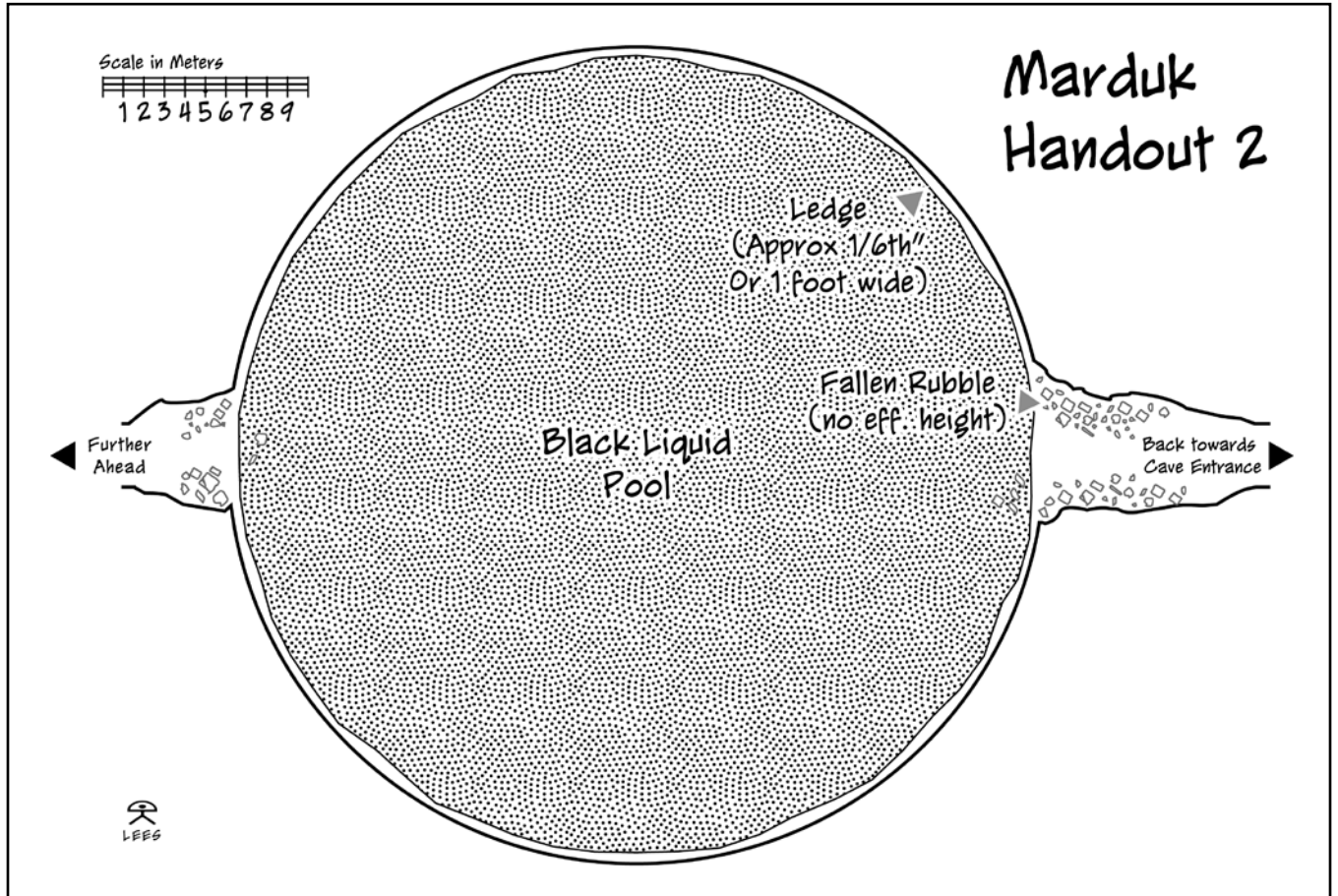
| | |
|-----|--|
| 0 | Physical Limitation: Human Size |
| 25 | Psychological Limitation: Violently Hates Everyone And Everything (Very Common, Total) |
| 352 | Experience Points |

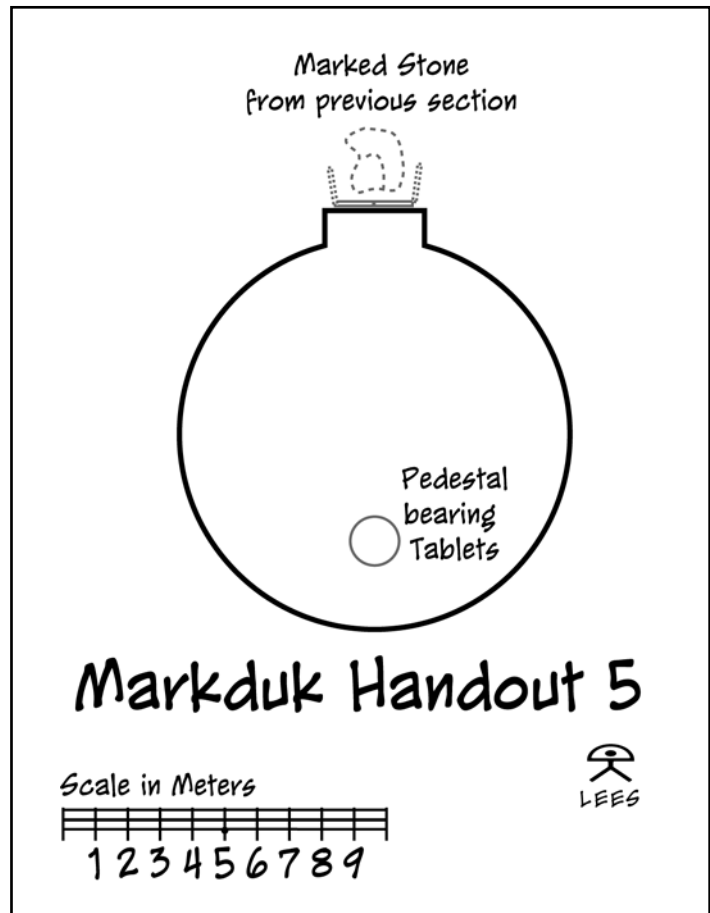
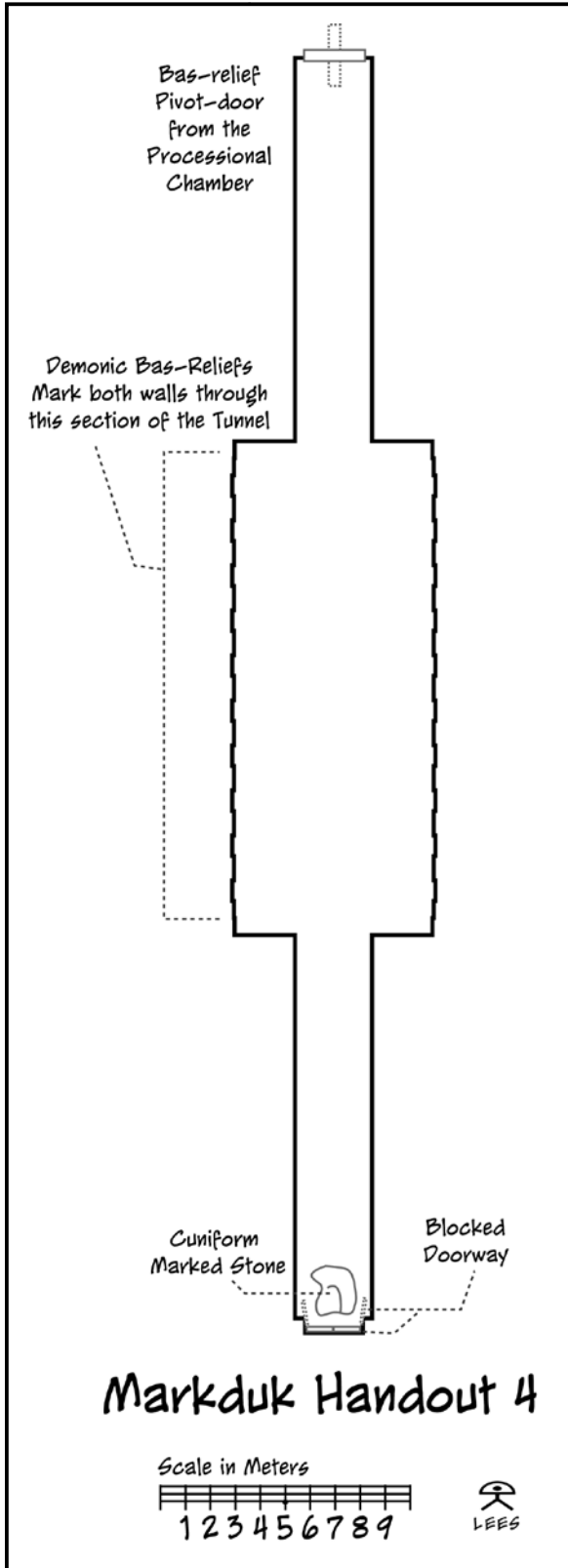
Total Disadvantage Points: 452

HANDOUTS FOR THE HALLS OF MARDUK

To help the players understand and visualize the settings of Marduk's treacherous tests, print out a copy of the following handouts, cut them out, and present them to the heroes at the appropriate moment in the adventure.







Thrilling Hero Adventures

**VALLEY OF
THE
SPIDER QUEEN**

Adventure Fourteen

VALLEY OF THE SPIDER QUEEN



When the heroes discover a ruined African village, it leads them down the path of adventure to a mysterious, long-lost valley ruled over by a woman who has the power to control gigantic spiders! As a volcanic eruption threatens the entire valley, can they escape the Spider Queen's clutches and escort her many victims to safety?

Valley Of The Spider Queen is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Three other Thrilling Hero Adventures — *Curse Of The Vulture-God*, *Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo*, and *Spears Of The Tisangani* — also take place in Africa, so linking them together shouldn't prove too difficult. Just sprinkle in some clues leading from the one you're currently running to the next one you want to run. (You could also take the PCs to Neos Themiscyra in *Thrilling Places*.) And as discussed in the Conclusion section of the adventure, you can use the Mouth of Darkness cave in the Valley to lead the heroes to *Inner-Earth* (or some other "hollow earth" setting of your own creation).

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Over a dozen years ago an entomologist named Talia Morgan disappeared in the West African jungles, never to be seen again. Renowned (and ridiculed) in the scientific community for her theories about using certain chemical compounds to control insects for beneficial purposes, she went to Africa determined to prove her hypotheses. Her belief was that a chemical distilled from the nectar of the rare African indigo orchid was just what she needed to silence her critics.

After penetrating the jungle and establishing a base camp, Morgan went in search of the rare orchid. Luck was with her — she found several of them, more than enough to begin her work. After nearly a month's labor she distilled the chemical she was after, but only achieved partial success: instead of allowing her to control

any insect, it only allowed her to control spiders (actually a type of arachnid). However, she also discovered that by altering the chemical slightly she could use it to make spiders grow to enormous sizes — a common spider could become the size of a small dog, and larger spiders the size of wolves!

Unfortunately, not long after she achieved this initial success Morgan suffered a terrible accident. Working alone in her makeshift laboratory, she tripped and fell, hitting her head against a laboratory table and knocking that table over. When she awakened after hours of lying among her chemicals, her memory was gone — she didn't know who she was, where she was, or what she was doing there.

As fate would have it, right at that moment a group of hunters happened upon her hut. Members of the *Busakina* (Spider People) tribe, they carried a tarantula-like spider with them for good luck — and were astonished and terrified when a casual gesture from the dazzlingly beautiful white-skinned woman caused their pet to obey her commands! Realizing she must be a goddess — *Talara Rakana*, the Spider Queen — they prostrated themselves before her and were soon obeying her every word as if they were spiders themselves.

Morgan, now believing herself to be the Talara Rakana, accompanied "her people" back to their home in a volcanic cleft unknown to Western explorers or scientists. There she began to rule over the Busakina as the Spider Queen, crushing any disobedience or dissent either with her pet giant spiders or the sycophantic worshippers loyal to her. For over a decade now she's ruled the Busakina with an iron fist — when into her world stumble Our Heroes.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

While in West Africa, the heroes come across what was once a peaceful village; it now lies in ruins. Realizing the destruction took place mere hours ago, they set off in pursuit to rescue the hapless kidnapped villagers. A few hours later, as they slowly seem to gain on their quarry, night is approaching when their trail leads up to and over the edge of an enormous, and heretofore undiscovered, rift valley. Off in the distance they can see a smoking volcano... and what might be a large man-made structure!

The PCs hurry on, but nighttime soon overtakes them and they're trailing the kidnappers in the dark. Suddenly they stumble into an ambush! Although they fight valiantly, the short but doughty native warriors use poisoned darts and other strange weapons that soon lay them low. They awaken in the morning to find themselves thoroughly trussed up for a march across the valley to... the Palace of the Spider Queen!

After passing by a village of downtrodden natives, and one clearly abandoned village, they arrive at the palace. Along the way they've felt some ominous rumblings from the volcano, but nothing to compare to the feelings of dread they experience when they meet the Queen herself! After pondering their whiteness and looking them over carefully, she chooses the most handsome male to be her "consort" and declares that the rest shall be sacrificed to her brother Mwali, the god of the volcano, during the wedding ceremony!

Now it's up to the PCs to escape her clutches before the sacrifice takes place, possibly by stirring up the disaffected natives to rebel. To add urgency to the matter, it soon becomes apparent that the volcano's about to blow! The PCs have to find a way out of the Valley, escaping not only the Queen and her followers but the unforgiving lava, while leading as many of the innocent natives to safety as they can.

ACT ONE: THE JUNGLE CHASE

The Valley Of The Spider Queen begins in West Africa — the PCs are already "on the scene," so to speak. If you need to get them there, you could arrange for a scientist friend to send them into the jungle on some sort of expedition — perhaps a botanical one to find specimens of the rare African indigo orchid that Dr. Talia Morgan sought all those years ago. Or they could be returning to civilization after participating in another adventure, such as *Nazi Death-Zombies Of The Congo!*

While trekking through the scrub near the main body of jungle they're planning to explore, the PCs come upon a village. They might even have expected to find it — maybe they have friends in the village and were planning to spend the night and resupply there, or obtain guides and porters. In that case you should have a name for the village ready, as well as the names of the people they know there.

In any event, when the PCs reach the village they discover, to their shock and horror, that it's been burned and destroyed. Flames still lick here and there fitfully, the embers are still warm, and the corpses littered about (almost all of men) clearly haven't been dead long. The attack could only have occurred a few hours ago! What's worse, the number of bodies on the ground is far less than the number of people who should

live in a village this size — the rest must have been taken captive, no doubt intended for a life of slavery.

Though it's already mid- to late afternoon, no self-respecting hero could fail to respond to this outrage! A Tracking roll at +5 is enough to pick up the trail of the remaining villagers and their kidnappers (see page 338 of *The Ultimate Skill* for specific rules setting modifiers for the number of persons tracked; you can also apply other modifiers you consider appropriate, such as for the angle of the afternoon sunlight). It soon leads away from the open territory where the village was and into the jungle.

THE RIFT VALLEY

The heroes follow the trail for a couple of hours, plunging ever deeper into the trackless West African jungle. As dusk approaches they come to the edge of a rift valley that stretches away to the west for miles. No one in the group has ever seen or heard of this rift before (not even characters intimately familiar with African geography). Off in the distance, silhouetted by the light of the swiftly-setting sun, they can see the cone of a volcano with a plume of smoke drifting upward from it... and a little to the right of that, what looks like it might be a very large man-made structure!

A trail — not a large or well-used one, but a trail nevertheless — leads over the lip of the canyon and down a forested slope that looks like it eventually leads to the canyon's floor. The tracks of the villagers continue down this path, so the heroes must follow...

Not long after they enter the canyon the sun sets, and night returns once more to the jungle. This makes the going slower and harder, but if the heroes don't keep up they'll never catch the kidnappers and rescue their victims.

THE AMBUSH

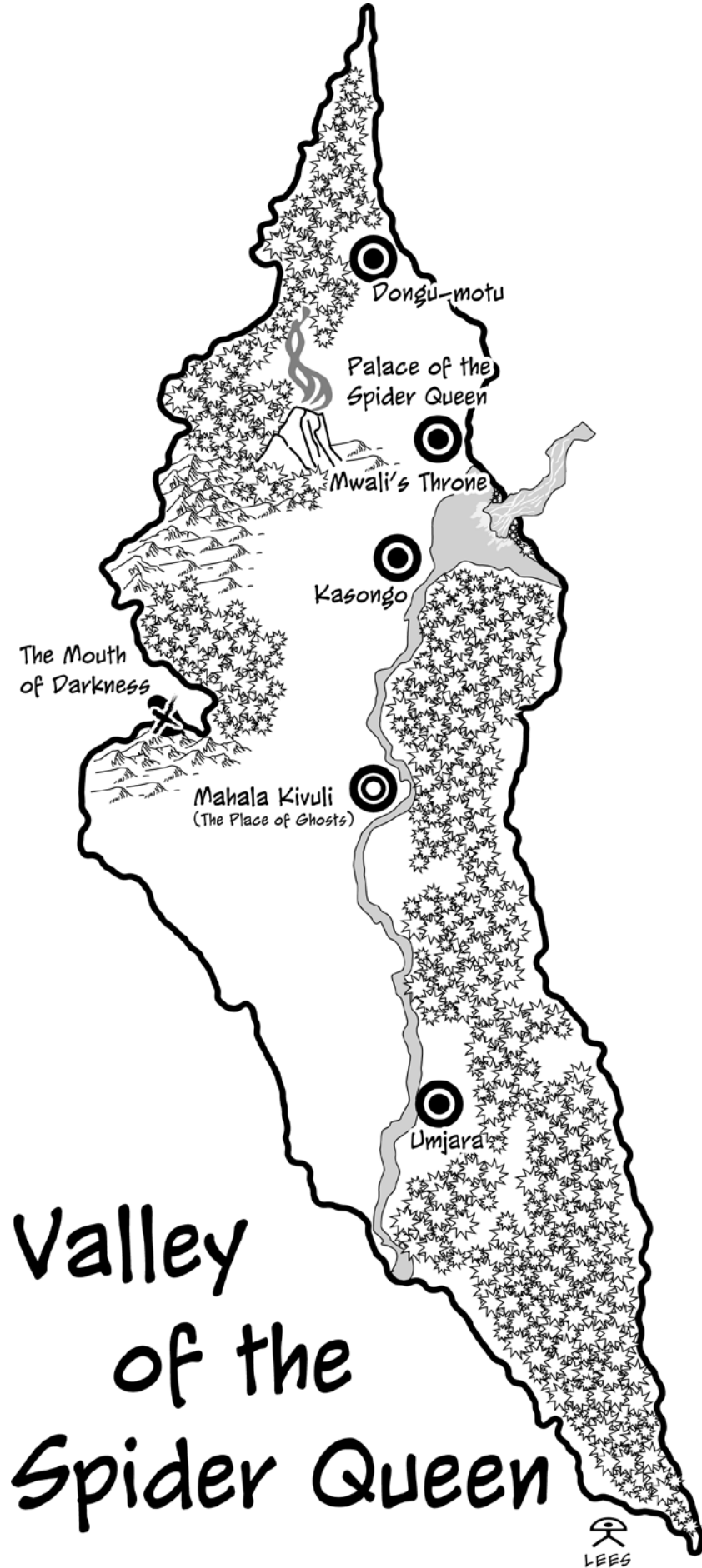
After another hour or so, when they guess-timate they're about halfway to the canyon floor, the heroes come to a clearing — a roughly circular patch of ground about 10" in radius. Here the Busakina have laid a trap. Their warriors lurk in the jungle all along the fringes of the clearing, ready to attack the heroes with their blowguns, nets, and other weapons. Their goal is not to kill the heroes, but to capture these strange people who look so much like their Queen and take them to her.

The scenario proceeds best if the heroes get captured at this point, so give the Busakina a *significant* advantage in numbers. Even if the PCs anticipate the ambush via Danger Sense, cleverness, or some other method, the Busakina warriors should be able to restrain them. (See the end of this adventure for a character sheet for the Busakina.) Even if the heroes fight valiantly, the knockout drugs on the warriors' blowgun darts is probably enough to lay them low.

TROUBLESHOOTING: ESCAPING THE AMBUSH

It's possible — unlikely, but possible — that the heroes can avoid the ambush, either by beating the Busakina warriors in a fight, sneaking around it, or escaping from it somehow after it's sprung. That changes the course of the adventure. Now instead of being brought before the Spider Queen as helpless captives they're free to explore the valley, make friends with the oppressed inhabitants, and perhaps even start a rebellion without even seeing her or being threatened with death by volcano.

If any of that happens, it will be up to you to adapt the adventure "on the fly" to fit the changing circumstances. With luck and good timing you may even be able to do that without altering the overall course of events too much. For example, maybe the Busakina warriors get word to the Spider Queen about the "white-skinned invaders" and she can turn out her armies (both human and spider) to hunt them down, defeat them, and capture them. Once they're captured, the adventure can proceed as normal, perhaps with the added element that she has to sacrifice all of them to put down the rebellion that they've started.



CAPTIVES OF THE SPIDER PEOPLE!

The heroes awaken the next morning to find themselves thoroughly trussed up by the Busakina warriors. If you want to get really dramatic the Busakina might have them suspended from poles carried by two warriors each, but it's just as easy to tie them like the captives from the burned-out village — hands behind their backs and feet roped together so they can shuffle along in a line. They have no weapons or gear, nothing but their basic clothes (even hidden objects have been taken away unless you want to give the PCs a serious chance for escape). Their gear has been divvied up among porters. They're being taken somewhere, but they don't know where and their captors don't speak a language they can understand. (Though of course characters with Universal Translator get to roll, and at the GM's option any character who knows Yoruban (or any language in its subgroup, such as Ibo or Ashanti; see page 220 of *The Ultimate Skill*) can make an INT Roll to understand Busakina.) All they can say for certain is that they're heading west, up the rift and toward the volcano they saw yesterday.

At one point during the day the jungle clears away briefly and the PCs can see the length of the rift valley. The volcano is definitely closer, though still far away. North of it they can see a large building — apparently a palace of some sort, though it's hard to say, it could be a temple or something else like that. Most of the rift valley is covered with light jungle, but there are some areas of what seem to be heavier jungle, as well as some grasslands. Here and there they can see what are probably villages.

About midday they come to one such village — a place called “Umjara,” if they're interpreting what their captors say correctly. Instead of the typical bustling West African village the PCs are used to, this one is quiet and sort of rundown. The people, who are taller than and obviously of a different tribal stock than the Busakina, keep their eyes on the ground and obey the Busakina warriors without hesitation — a fact the warriors gleefully take advantage of. It's obvious to the PCs that the Umjarans are being oppressed somehow, by whoever the warriors work for... probably the person who lives in that palace they saw.

Despite this, if any PC succeeds with a PER Roll he notices a glint of defiance in the eyes of a few of the Umjarans. They're careful to conceal it from the Busakina, but to the PC's eyes it's apparent that the yoke of the Spider Queen does not sit firmly on these persons' shoulders. Perhaps there's a “resistance movement” the PCs can make contact with... though not here, since all the Umjarans scrupulously avoid them.

<5> Troubleshooting: Escape

As written, the adventure assumes the PCs get brought before the Spider Queen and are relatively helpless until near the end of the adventure, when the chance for escape arises and they can help the rebellion defeat the valley's

ruler. As pulpish as this is, it may seem a bit too “railroaded” for some *Pulp Hero* groups. The GM may want to give the PCs a chance to escape earlier than Act Three.

In that case, the entire adventure changes into one of more military bent. If they can engineer an escape, the PCs can ally with the valley peoples who hate and fear the Spider Queen and want to get rid of her and her faithful Busakina. They can strike at a few loyal villages and maybe even attack the palace, but the Spider Queen definitely has a major military advantage. She also has all her spider “pets” which can function as spies, ambush attackers, and the like.

Even if they spark a rebellion, the PCs' best chance to attack the Spider Queen directly will be when she goes to perform a sacrifice at Mwali's Throne (the volcano) to quiet down her “brother” and thus prevent an eruption. (This sacrifice takes the place of sacrificing most of the PCs as described in the main text; she has several captured rebels as her victims.) Events can then proceed as described for Act Three.

TOWARD THE QUEEN'S PALACE

The Busakina warriors continue to carry the PCs north toward the palace. About a day out of Umjara they stop near a place called Mahala Kivuli (which translates as “the Place of Ghosts,” though the PCs probably won't know that). They stop about a hundred yards from it; the PCs can see it just clearly enough to realize it's a ruined village. The Busakina destroyed it several years ago when its people rebelled against the Spider Queen. Ever since they've had a superstitious dread of the place; they think the ghosts of the villagers want revenge on them. But it's not a safe refuge for the PCs — the warriors will pursue them into the ruins if they escape rather than risk the Spider Queen's wrath.

Rumblings From The Volcano

During the trip north to the Spider Queen's palace, be sure to mention that the volcano rumbles occasionally, shaking the ground in a disturbing way. At night the magma pool at the top gives off a fitful, garish light that can be seen all over the valley. The PCs should get the (very accurate) impression that the volcano is unstable.

ACT TWO: IN THE WEB OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

One more day's travel brings the group to the village of Kasongo. Unlike Umjara, here all the people seem happy to see the Busakina — in fact, they seem to be Busakina stock themselves, not a different tribe like the Umjarans. They throw rotten fruit and heap other kinds of abuse on the captive PCs.

As they approach Kasongo, have the PCs make PER Rolls. The character who succeeds by the most notices that the further west the group

goes, the more common spiders become. It's now possible to see them all over the place if you look carefully, and some of them are disturbingly large. The Busakina seem to think nothing of them.

After another half-day on the road the Busakina warriors and their captives arrive at the Spider Queen's palace — an enormous stone building of many rooms with creepy-looking towering spires. The Busakina immediately take the PCs inside to the first room, which is a guard room. Under the watchful eyes of many alert, well-armed Busakina they're searched once more and their gear put in one large sack. Then, still tied up, they're escorted into what's obviously a throne room.

Everywhere the PCs look in the palace they see spiders — skittering across the walls and floors, in webs built into corners. The smallest of them is as large as an American tarantula.

THE GLORY OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

In the throne room the PCs are forced to their knees facing the throne. There are plenty of Busakina in the room: guards; well-dressed priests; courtiers; and the like. Naturally there are also plenty of servants. Everyone stares at the PCs in frank curiosity as they nervously await the arrival of their lady.

A few moments later the curtains behind the throne part and Talara Rakana, the Spider Queen herself, enters the room! She's a strikingly beautiful white woman, pale-skinned with long black hair and piercing green eyes. An intoxicating smell — some sort of perfume — wafts from her, clearly smellable despite the distance between her and the PCs. She's wearing a scandalously revealing cloth garment. Most disturbingly of all, she's accompanied by two gigantic spiders the size of terriers; they follow her like pets and obey her every word and gesture. All the Busakina in the room (except for the PCs' guards) fall to their knees and put their faces to the floor until she gives a command, then they stand back up.

The Spider Queen sits down on her throne, one spider pet on each side of the chair. As she idly pets one of the spiders, she stares languidly at the PCs for awhile, then stands up and comes over to look at them more closely. A Busakina guard starts to talk and offer her the bag containing the PCs' gear, but she waves him silent. Now that she's close to the PCs, the scent of her perfume is heady and intoxicating. (The perfume is the key to her power to control spiders; if the PCs can wash it off her, she loses that power, and if they can get into her private chambers they can find a supply for themselves.) She carefully examines each of the white male PCs, ignoring women and non-European men. When she's done, with a regal air she spins on her heel and returns to her throne.

After seating herself once more, the Spider Queen speaks — in English! “You have done well, my warriors,” she says. She pauses, and her

priests (who understand English) translate her words into Busakina. The warriors brighten at her praise. Then she continues, pausing at appropriate points for more translations. “This one,” she says, pointing at the male PC with the highest COM, “is a god, and as a god it is fitting that he should become my consort. These others are lesser spirits who follow him. Them we will sacrifice to my brother Mwali, to ease his anguish. Take my consort and prepare him; throw his spirits into the dungeon. We will hold the ceremony tomorrow at Mwali's Throne.” The priests nod at all this, obviously pleased by the decision. If any PC speaks to her, she will probably ignore him, but perhaps can be lured into speaking if he's clever enough with what he says. In no event can the PCs convince her to free them.

The PC chosen to be her consort is taken to a room where attendants bathe, dress, and feed him. He's untied, but guards watch him at all times, and more guards stand outside the room. Escape is difficult, at best. Feel free to drop some hints about what female spiders typically do to their mates, to make him more nervous.

The other PCs are thrown into locked rooms with stone doors, and not untied. However, no guards watch them directly, so freeing themselves from their bonds shouldn't be too difficult

ESCAPE?

The PCs may want to take this opportunity to try to escape. If you'd like to work with that, help them out by having servants who are part of the rebellion assist them, perhaps by leading them to their gear (which is now in the Spider Queen's well-locked and -guarded treasure room). If you'd prefer for events to play out into Act Three before a serious chance to escape arises, make sure there are plenty of guards everywhere and put other obstacles in the PCs' way. You can also assume some of the spiders in the palace are spies for the Queen, giving her a way to keep watch on the PCs at all times.

If the players haven't yet realized that some of the peoples in the valley aren't happy with the Spider Queen's rule, you can take this opportunity to have a rebel spy who works as a palace servant visit them and seek their help. (The spy has learned English from listening to the priests, for whom it's a sacred language.) He can't free them, but he can provide lots of information.

ACT THREE: AT MWALI'S THRONE

Early the next morning the PC who's to become the Spider Queen's consort is awakened and dressed in Busakina formal garments tailored to his size. When that's done he's tied up again (but lightly) and escorted to the throne room. The other PCs are rudely awakened and none-too-gently taken to the throne room.

Awaiting all of them there is the Spider

Queen, resplendently (if revealingly) dressed for her wedding. The room is filled with guards and priests all wearing their best and standing “at attention.” There are lots of the Queen’s spider pets clustered around the throne.

Once all is in readiness, the Queen’s priests lead her and a procession out the doors of the palace toward the volcano — Mwali’s Throne, in Busakina legend the home of the Spider Queen’s brother, the god Mwali. The intention is to throw the other PCs into the volcano, sacrificing them to Mwali, as part of the ceremony in which the Spider Queen marries the consort PC.

Unfortunately, Mwali apparently doesn’t like this plan. As the procession moves along, the rumblings from the volcano get worse and worse; at times it’s hard for the PCs and the Busakina to keep their feet.

DEATH TO THE SPIDER QUEEN!

At the most dramatic moment — possibly just as the sacrifice is about to occur — two things happen. First, a group of rebel warriors attacks! This is an ideal point for the PCs to escape their bonds and join forces with the rebels. But second, before the fight can really get going the volcano explodes!

The PCs are now stuck in the middle of a very dangerous situation. Arrayed against them are the forces of the Spider Queen. Their allies are a ragtag but determined group of rebels with whom they probably don’t share a common language. And making life difficult for them all is Mwali’s Throne, whose eruptions, lava, and

earthquakes are going to make the valley largely uninhabitable within a few days at most... and possibly just a few hours!

How the rest of the scenario plays out is up to you and the PCs. React to their actions, giving them plenty of opportunities for heroism and derring-do while challenging them with enemies and natural obstacles. Don’t forget that the Spider Queen has plenty of spiders in addition to Busakina warriors — use the character sheet on page 91 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for the largest spiders, and scale it down for her more common pets (the ones the size of small dogs).

CONCLUSION

Sooner or later the PCs realize they have to get out of the valley; it’s not stable any longer, and/or lava is going to destroy everything west of the volcano and most of what’s east of it. If you want the adventure to end here, have the rebels lead them to a little-known path out of the valley.

However, there’s another option if you want to segue into Adventure Five in this book, *Inner-Earth*. On the western side of the valley, high up the cliff wall and reachable only by a narrow path, is a cave known to the natives as “the Mouth of Darkness.” They fear the place; it’s the home of spirits and monsters. But better spirits and monsters than being burned alive! What they don’t know is that the eruption of the volcano has made the place unstable. Not long after they enter it, another major earthquake shakes



the valley... and suddenly they find themselves falling, falling, falling...

...only to awaken in the Inner-Earth!

THE FATE OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

Depending on how events at the end of the scenario play out, the Spider Queen may be alive and free, in which case she can survive the volcano's eruption and create her kingdom anew somewhere else in West Africa to bedevil the PCs later. Or she may never be heard from again, presumably because she died. Maybe the PCs even kill her in battle if the opportunity arises.

Perhaps the most intriguing possibility is for the PCs to take her captive. She won't lose her power to control spiders until her perfume fades after she's been unable to apply more for about a week. Until then she could cause the PCs real problems, even if she's confined or unconscious. Months of intense psychotherapy will be required to restore her old personality, though a skilled PC might achieve a minor breakthrough before then — enough to render her harmless to the PCs, at any rate.

BUSAKINA WARRIOR

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 10 | STR | 0 | 11- | Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [2] |
| 13 | DEX | 9 | 12- | OCV: 4/DCV: 4 |
| 13 | CON | 6 | 12- | |
| 11 | BODY | 2 | 11- | |
| 10 | INT | 0 | 11- | PER Roll 11- |
| 10 | EGO | 0 | 11- | ECV: 3 |
| 13 | PRE | 3 | 12- | PRE Attack: 2½d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 4 | PD | 2 | | Total: 4 PD (0 rPD) |
| 4 | ED | 1 | | Total: 4 ED (0 rED) |
| 3 | SPD | 7 | | Phases: 4, 8, 12 |
| 5 | REC | 0 | | |
| 26 | END | 0 | | |
| 23 | STUN | 0 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 29 |

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Perks

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Membership: Favored of the Spider Queen

Skills

- 4 +2 OCV with Blowgun
- 2 +1 OCV with Dagger
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 2 Survival (Tropical) 11-

- 3 Tracking 11-
- 3 WF: Blowguns, Daggers, Web-Net

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 19

Total Cost: 48

25+ Disadvantages

- 25 Psychological Limitation: Fanatically Loyal To The Spider Queen (Very Common, Total)

Total Disadvantage Points: 50

Description: This character sheet represents a typical Busakina warrior of the type the PCs will face several times during this scenario. Sturdy, experienced jungle fighters and trackers, they're hard to shake once they're on your trail and difficult to fight effectively in their native environment.

Personality/Motivation: This type of Busakina warrior is fanatically loyal to the Spider Queen. He believes her to be a goddess and obeys her commands without question, even if they expose him to danger or death.

Weapons: Besides a flint dagger, a Busakina warrior often carries two other dangerous weapons. The worst is the blowgun. The blowgun darts themselves aren't that harmful, but the poison they coat them with — which they make from the venom of the Spider Queen's "pets" — is. It's a Drain STUN 6d6 with Delayed Return Rate (5 points per 20 Minutes), Gradual Effect so that it does 1d6 damage every 2 Segments. Typically at least two to three warriors try to shoot the same target, causing a rapid build-up of poison leading swiftly to unconsciousness.

The other weapon is a net woven from special strands of spider silk. It's an Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF that covers a One Hex radius. They use these to capture fleeing foes and slow down ones that still have some fight in them; often they shoot an enemy with several blowgun darts, then net him so that he falls asleep before he can break free.

Appearance: Busakina warriors are short (usually 5'0" to 5'5") black men with stout builds. They wear simple leather clothes, and decorate themselves with "war paints" made from mud. Many of them also ritually scar their faces with a web-like pattern to demonstrate their devotion to the Spider Queen.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|---------|-----|---------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| Blowgun | +0 | +0 | 1 pt | 1d6-1 | 20 | 2 | Drain STUN 1d6/2 Segments |
| Web-Net | +0 | RBS Ent | 4d6 | 1 RC | 6 | | AE: 1 Hex |
| Dagger | +0 | RBS | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 6 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

Spider-leather harness (DEF 3, Activation Roll 11-)

Gear: Whetstone, dried meat, various things useful for surviving in the jungle

Thrilling Hero Adventures

THE
VOODOO
CROSS

Adventure Fifteen

THE VOODOO CROSS



When a historical artifact recovered from Haiti is stolen from the New Orleans branch of the Empire Club, the heroes find themselves plunged into a dark and deadly world of Voodoo magic as they try to recover it from a centuries-old sorcerer!

The Voodoo Cross is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE LINKS

Since *The Voodoo Cross* starts in New Orleans, you can easily tie it into *The Dordogne Zodiac*, which requires a trip there (the text has some notes about using Professor Peasley in this adventure, in fact). And who knows, perhaps there's activity in Haiti that involves the Zodiac cult...

Another possibility is to connect *The Voodoo Cross* with the goings-on at Laussat Plantation (described in *Thrilling Places*). At the very least, you could substitute the map of Laussat for the map of the Delacroix Mansion mentioned in Part Two.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French imported slaves to work the sugar-cane fields of Haiti. These slaves were supposedly converted to Roman Catholicism, but many of them kept their native beliefs as well. Gradually, Roman Catholic elements blended with their native faith, creating a secret religion that became known as Voodoo. Some darker sects developed “red” (or Petro) Voodoo, an evil form of Voodoo sometimes involving human sacrifice. The priest-sorcerers of red Voodoo, *bokors*, wielded tremendous power, both among the slaves and in the spirit world.

The worst of the *bokors* was known as Papa Miguel. He belonged to a cruel slaveowner named Pierre Malraux. In 1688 Papa Miguel incited Malraux's slaves to rebel, and Malraux and all his household were sacrificed to appease Miguel's evil *loas* (gods or spirits). Miguel and

his followers fled into the interior of Haiti, where they grew ever stronger in their foul magic. Their most powerful artifact was a solid gold crucifix stolen from the Malraux household and consecrated to evil with the blood of Malraux's children; in time, Papa Miguel's life-force became bound to this cross.

For over a century, Papa Miguel ruled an empire of foulness, defying all attempts by the French to destroy him. But eventually his sins grew too great for the people to ignore. During Toussaint L'Ouverture's successful 1800-1804 slave rebellion, they slaughtered the *bokor* and his followers, crushing Papa Miguel beneath tons of rock. The gold crucifix was hidden away in a church.

But Papa Miguel did not die. Since his life-force was bound to the cross, he could not be killed by ordinary means. However, because his enemies had taken the cross away from him, his evil power was diminished — he could not free himself from the rocks imprisoning him. He passed into a state of suspended animation, more like undeath than life.

About a year before the scenario begins, an American explorer named William Morrisson discovered the cross in the ruins of a small Catholic church in Haiti. He dated the cross to approximately 1650. He took it to Port-au-Prince, pursued all the way by horrible Voodoo creatures and spirits drawn to the cross's magic. When he returned to his hometown of New Orleans, he donated the cross to the New Orleans Museum of Antiquities (“NOMA”) and then became a recluse, having been driven mad by the dark things he saw in Haiti.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The heroes begin their adventure in New Orleans, where they're attending a showing of “the Haitian Cross” at the Crescent City's branch of the Empire Club. During dinner the Cross is stolen! Investigating, they discover that a Voodoo *bokor* named Brother DuChamp, who's something of a power in the New Orleans underworld, has stolen the Cross for use in foul rituals. They track DuChamp and his cult to an old, abandoned plantation house outside the city. There they confront and battle the evil *bokor*...

...only to recover the Cross and discover that it's compelling them to take it to Haiti! They

follow its urgings into the interior. Soon they come to a ruined fortress where Papa Miguel — now awake, free, and powerful since the Cross was removed from the church — is conducting a ritual of human sacrifice. The heroes must defeat the old bokor, his cultists, and his zombies to rescue the woman who's about to die beneath Miguel's knife... or else they just might wind up as sacrifices themselves! And to put an end to the threat at long last, they must destroy the Cross.

PART ONE: THE THEFT AT THE CLUB

The scenario begins in New Orleans. If the PCs aren't native to the Crescent City, perhaps they're there for Mardi Gras, are visiting a friend, or were specifically invited to the unveiling of the Cross by someone they know (or who knows they have an interest in such things). Since they're adventurers, they're invited to spend an evening at the New Orleans branch of the Empire Club (they may also be staying at the Club).

Professor Peasley

If you've run, or plan to run, *The Dordogne Zodiac* (Adventure Two in this book), the characters' visit to New Orleans to view the Haitian Cross would be a good time to introduce them to or let them renew acquaintances with Professor Roderick Peasley of Tulane University. He'd certainly be interested in the Cross, and if he's not a member of the Empire Club he could easily find several who'd be glad to bring him along as their guest. You can find out more about Professor Peasley in *The Dordogne Zodiac*.

THE CROSS

The highlight of the evening is the unveiling of the Haitian Cross, a new artifact on loan to the Club from NOMA. It's a large cross, about a foot tall, made mostly of gold and inlaid with pearls. NOMA believes it was made about 1650 by a craftsman living in the Haitian interior.

Any character with mystic senses can perceive something unsettling, perhaps even "evil," about the ornate gold Cross. If his senses are sufficiently acute (*i.e.*, they have Analyze on an appropriate Detect), he can tell that the Cross was once used as a central ritual focus in Voodoo ceremonies involving human sacrifice and black magic. For such characters, holding the Cross is unpleasant; it has a sort of disgusting touch even though there's nothing on it that would make it feel that way. Just being near it may cause mild headaches and discomfort.

VOODOO DUST!

The unveiling takes place at 6:00 PM; afterwards, the Club serves cocktails, then dinner in the Arcadian Room. Many Club members are there, as well as guests who include notables from New Orleans society. If you want to

extend the scenario a bit, feel free to roleplay a little socializing over cocktails and dinner; you might even engineer some sort of confrontation between a PC and his Rival.

At dinner, one of the PCs is seated next to Chalmers Blighton, a New Orleans dilettante and art historian specializing in medieval enamels and decorative art. He was one of the members responsible for having the Cross shown at the Club, and proves to be an excellent conversationalist on a wide variety of topics. (Roleplay a little of this, if possible, to give the PCs a reason to like him.) In the middle of the entree, Blighton glances at his pocketwatch and excuses himself.

A few minutes later, the diners hear a tremendous crash coming from the Exhibit Room! The PCs, followed by the other guests, rush there to find Blighton lying unconscious on the floor. He has a bad head injury and is covered with a grey-black powder of some sort. The case holding the Haitian Cross has been smashed. The Cross has been stolen, and left in its place are three red rooster feathers tied together with a black ribbon!

Characters with appropriate Skills (KS: Voodoo at +1, KS: Arcane And Occult Lore at -2, other relevant KSs at worse modifiers) can make a roll to know what these things are. If the roll succeeds, the character knows that the powder is a focus for black magic — it's used by *bokors* to cast curses and other evil spells. Any character who touches it will suffer Unluck 1d6 for the rest of this adventure (or, at the GM's option, lose half or more of his Heroic Action Points for the game). The feathers are the symbol of a particularly evil Haitian red Voodoo cult thought to have been destroyed over a century ago — Papa Miguel's cult. If the characters don't know anything about Voodoo, a helpful Club member can provide them with this information.

Blighton's injury seems serious; he doesn't awaken and won't respond to attempts to wake him up (like shaking him or throwing water in his face). Any character who succeeds with a Paramedics roll (or roll with a relevant Skill like SS: Medicine) realizes he may have a bad concussion. A Club member calls an ambulance to take him to the hospital.

INVESTIGATING THE THEFT

As heroes and the stars of this particular show, the PCs will certainly want to help get the Haitian Cross back (especially if they realize, or even just suspect, that it's an evil Voodoo relic). Some potential avenues of investigation include:

Chalmers Blighton

The obvious line of investigation is Blighton, who awakens in the hospital the next day. His doctors and nurses will let the heroes talk to him, but won't permit any rough stuff, browbeating, or the like.

Blighton claims he got up to use the bathroom. On the way he saw a shadowy figure in the

STRANGE MAGICS: VOODOO

For more general information on Voodoo, see pages 116-20 of *The Ultimate Mystic*. For dozens of Voodoo spells, magic items, and monsters, see Hero Plus Adventure #17, *Strange Magics, Vol. I: Voodoo*. Spells referred to by name on the character sheets in this adventure are taken from HPA #17.

room where the Cross was on display, went in to find out what was going on, and was hit on the head from behind. He didn't get a clear look at the thieves or know anything about them.

After the initial questioning, let any PC with Acting make a roll. If the roll succeeds, he realizes Blighton isn't being entirely truthful — he's hiding something. Characters who succeed with an INT Roll at -4 or more realize the men's room and the Exhibit Room (where the Cross was displayed) aren't that near each other; there's no reason Blighton would have had to go past the display room to reach the toilet.

Once the heroes have reasonable suspicion of Blighton's involvement, let any of them who wishes make an Interrogation or Persuasion roll. If the roll succeeds by 1 or more, Blighton breaks down and confesses. Over the past several years he got involved in some shady financial deals. About four weeks ago one of his servants found a letter on the front porch of his house. It was a blackmail letter signed by a "Brother DuChamp," who somehow had intimate knowledge of Blighton's illegal business transactions and threatened to reveal them to the police unless Blighton followed his orders.

DuChamp instructed Blighton to arrange for NOMA to loan the Cross to the Club. After the loan was announced, DuChamp wrote again, telling Blighton to let a man who would be carrying three red rooster feathers tied together with a black ribbon into the Club and show him where the Cross was. Blighton did so — that's why he checked his watch and then left the table. This man, whom he can only describe as "a large, muscular Negro," hit him on the head from behind and stole the Cross. Blighton knows nothing else about Brother DuChamp. He no longer has DuChamp's letters; he burned them. He knows nothing else about Brother DuChamp.

Empire Club Staff

The PCs may want to question the staff at the Empire Club. They all claim (truthfully) to have seen nothing, heard nothing, and know nothing about the theft.

If the heroes lack Streetwise, don't think to use it, or fail their rolls (see below), you can have one of the Club's staff members fill them in about Brother DuChamp.

Streetwise

If the PCs spend a few hours on the street and succeed with a Streetwise roll at -3 (with KS: Voodoo, KS: The Mystic World, or CK: New Orleans as Complementary Skills), they'll hear rumors about a "Brother DuChamp" who leads a red Voodoo cult in New Orleans. It's said he has the entire black community in a grip of terror.

No one knows exactly who DuChamp is, or where to find him, but if the PCs make a second Streetwise roll at -4, they learn where he holds his rituals: an abandoned plantation house near Lake Ponchartrain, away from the city. In fact, a major Voodoo ceremony is due to take place

tomorrow evening! (If the PCs learn this fact during daylight hours, you might say the ceremony is *that evening*, to add a sense of immediacy and danger to the scenario.)

William Morrisson

The PCs might also want to talk to William Morrisson, who found the Cross and donated it to NOMA. They can get in touch with him through NOMA or Professor Peasley; he's not listed in the telephone directory. At Morrisson's house (which is obviously suffering from neglect) they discover he's become a drunken recluse, half-mad with terror.

Morrisson prefers to have nothing to do with the heroes, but with proper roleplaying (or perhaps a Persuasion roll) they can convince him of the seriousness of the situation. He tells them the story of how he found the Cross hidden in a concealed niche in an old, ruined church in the Haitian interior. He took it to Port-au-Prince with zombies, evil spirits, and other foul Voodoo creatures chasing him, trying to get the Cross. In an agony of fear, Morrisson begs the PCs to destroy the Cross when they find it, and warns them against ever going to Haiti.

PART TWO: DRUMS IN THE SWAMP

One way or another the heroes hear about Brother DuChamp and his dark Voodoo cult. It's time to beard the lion in its den and get the Cross back!

THE OLD PLANTATION

The ritual takes place in an abandoned plantation house in the swamps near Lake Ponchartrain. For the house, use the Delacroix Mansion map from *Shades Of Black*, with appropriate changes — the outer shell is still intact, but a few non-load-bearing interior walls have collapsed, there's no glass in any of the windows, and so forth. The stairs up to the second floor are intact, but dangerous. Anyone climbing them has an 11-chance to step on a rotten patch. For each point by which a character makes a DEX Roll, reduce the result of the "step on a rotten patch" roll by 1 (and for each point he fails by, *increase* it by 1). A character who obtains 1 level of more of Luck on a Luck roll, or spends 2 Heroic Action Points, can go up or down the stairs one time safely.

THE CULTISTS

Long before the ritual begins (after sundown, culminating at midnight with the sacrifice of a special black goat), cultists will be at the house, preparing for what's to come. Brother DuChamp appears immediately after sundown, coming out of the swamps by paths only he knows.

The typical cultist is an average person, armed with (at most) a knife — use the *Cultist*

character sheet from page 406 of *Pulp Hero* if necessary. A cultist may be possessed by a *loa* during the ritual, in which case he takes on the attributes of that *loa* — great strength, resilience, agility, craftiness, sensuality, or what have you. All fight fanatically to protect Brother DuChamp and the Cross.

Brother DuChamp himself is a powerful Voodoo *bokor*, though not nearly so powerful as Papa Miguel. His character sheet's on page 171.

THE RITUAL

The ritual is a horrible spectacle, complete with Voodoo drums, dancing, the sacrifice of chickens and other small animals, and possession of worshippers by evil *loas*. If possible, play appropriate drum music to add a little atmosphere to the game.

Brother DuChamp presides over everything and holds the golden Cross throughout the ritual. Shortly before midnight and the final sacrifice he speaks to the crowd, describing Papa Miguel as their “lord and master” who has “awakened at long last.” (But of course the heroes won't hear that if they've already attacked.)

The cultists (*loa*-possessed or otherwise) fight the heroes using fists, sticks, rocks, knives, and a few guns. Brother DuChamp casts Voodoo spells and uses Voodoo dusts and other items he has with him.

The Cross At Last!... Uh-Oh....

The odds are the heroes win this battle easily; the cultists aren't much match for them, and Brother DuChamp's not powerful enough to stand up to them on their own. (Though if they give him the chance to turn any slain cultists into zombies, it may be another story.) If he can, Brother DuChamp will flee into the swamps, leading the heroes on a dangerous nighttime chase through the bayous.

But one way or another, the PCs should get their hands on the Cross. The first hero to touch it, or any PC with mystic senses who touches it, feels a definite malevolent presence connected with it... accompanied by an urge to (a) preserve the Cross, and (b) go to Haiti. Initially this urge isn't too strong (Mind Control 8d6), but it gains +1d6 per day until the hero gives in and makes the trip. Getting rid of the Cross won't overcome the effect; the hero will feel compelled to regain the Cross and then take it to Haiti. If necessary to keep the heroes from destroying the Cross outright, you can rule that it's so closely bound to whatever's attracting it on Haiti that it can only be destroyed in that place (or near that person).

PART THREE: THE VOODOO FORTRESS

The PCs travel to Port-au-Prince, capital of Haiti. After they arrive, they hear rumors of a new red Voodoo cult that's arisen in the mountainous interior of the island. Some folk fear that Papa Miguel has returned; in fact, the PC carrying the Cross feels it subtly “tugging” at him in the direction of the mountains. The PCs spend that evening in a hotel in Port-au-Prince; in the morning each one finds a Voodoo charm, a square cross made of two black sticks, in front of his door. This charm, symbolic of Ghede, *loa* of death, is a none-too-subtle threat; it also tells the PCs they're being watched...

INTO THE INTERIOR

According to the guides they can find (who are few — most Haitians prefer to stay well away from the interior because of all the rumors) tell the PCs have at least a two-day journey ahead of them to get to the mountain area. Let the PCs equip themselves with whatever they need and can afford, within reason. Remember, Haiti of the 1930s isn't exactly a center of civilization, and its marketplaces won't have many (if any) modern amenities. If your players want to plan the expedition in detail, use the Expeditioning rules from the Appendix.

The first day the heroes travel by car as far as they can, to a small town named Font-du-Lac. If you want to emphasize the eeriness of the situation, during the trip have them encounter either (a) an old man or woman who utters a cryptic and disturbing warning, and/or (b) suffer



an unlucky (one might even say *supernaturally* unlucky...) accident.

The inhabitants of Font-du-Lac are unfriendly and uncooperative at first. They don't like having visitors, and seem to regard the white people as bad luck (or think they'll bring trouble). Eventually, one of the villagers picks a fight with the biggest, toughest-looking PC. If the Haitian wins, the villagers treat the PCs with scorn and ignore their requests for help. If the PC wins, the loser treats him and his friends to drinks at the local tavern and everyone becomes much friendlier. In the latter case, the natives point the PCs toward the center of the trouble — an abandoned colonial fort on top of a mountain, about one day's hike away. Otherwise, the PCs have to spend a day exploring the region to figure out where they need to go.

A PRELUDE OF THINGS TO COME

Either during their day of exploration or on the way to the fort, the PCs are attacked by a horde of zombies (at least one zombie per PC — use the *Zombi Cadavre* character sheet from Hero Plus Adventure #17, *Strange Magics, Vol. I: Voodoo*, or the *Zombie* character sheet from page 127 of *The HERO System Bestiary*). Since the PCs ignored the warning they were given back in the city, and the “accident” on the road, Papa Miguel is now trying to kill them directly.

This shouldn't be too hard a fight for the PCs. Give them a tense moment or two, then let them mop up their undead foes with heroic efficiency. This attack is more a touch of foreshadowing than a serious threat.

FORTRESS OF DEATH!

The PCs reach the ruined fort right after nightfall by following the light of a large bonfire that's been lit in the center of the fortress courtyard.

Layout Of The Fortress

The accompanying map shows the layout of the fortress, including areas that have collapsed or fallen into ruin. The fortress is basically a square structure with a round, rubble-filled bastion at each corner. (Cannons were once kept atop each bastion, with a spiral staircase leading down to a powder magazine below.) The walls are 4” (25 feet) high, and in some places have partially collapsed. Climbing the walls requires an unmodified Climbing roll.

The interior of the fortress consists of a courtyard ringed by rooms; the courtyard has two wells. Along the south are former troop quarters, along the east and west storerooms, along the north the kitchen, mess hall, and chapel.

The second “floor” of the fortress consists of battlements reached via the spiral staircases from the four powder magazines in the bastions. The battlements are as wide as the rooms along the fortress walls, and are topped by ½”-high crenelated walls. (In many places the wall has collapsed, leaving a gap of ½-1”) Wherever rubble is shown inside or outside the fort, indicating a (partially or wholly) collapsed wall, the battlements aren't entirely safe to walk on. A character moving through these areas no faster than 2” per Phase is fine; any faster than that and the character must succeed with a DEX Roll or fall through/off the battlement. At the very least, failure makes an area of collapse a little larger; it might even trigger a further collapse that buries that character in rubble, causing 8d6 Normal Damage and pinning the character beneath old stones.

In most cases the doors show on the map are either (a) so decrepit characters can easily smash through them (2 BODY, 1 DEF), or (b) fallen off their hinges, or (c) missing entirely. The GM determines the status of each door as necessary for best dramatic impact during the fight. If it would be fun to have a character smash through a door (or try to use a door to protect himself from a zombie), keep that door intact and upright; if a character needs an impromptu club, he can use part of a door that's fallen down.

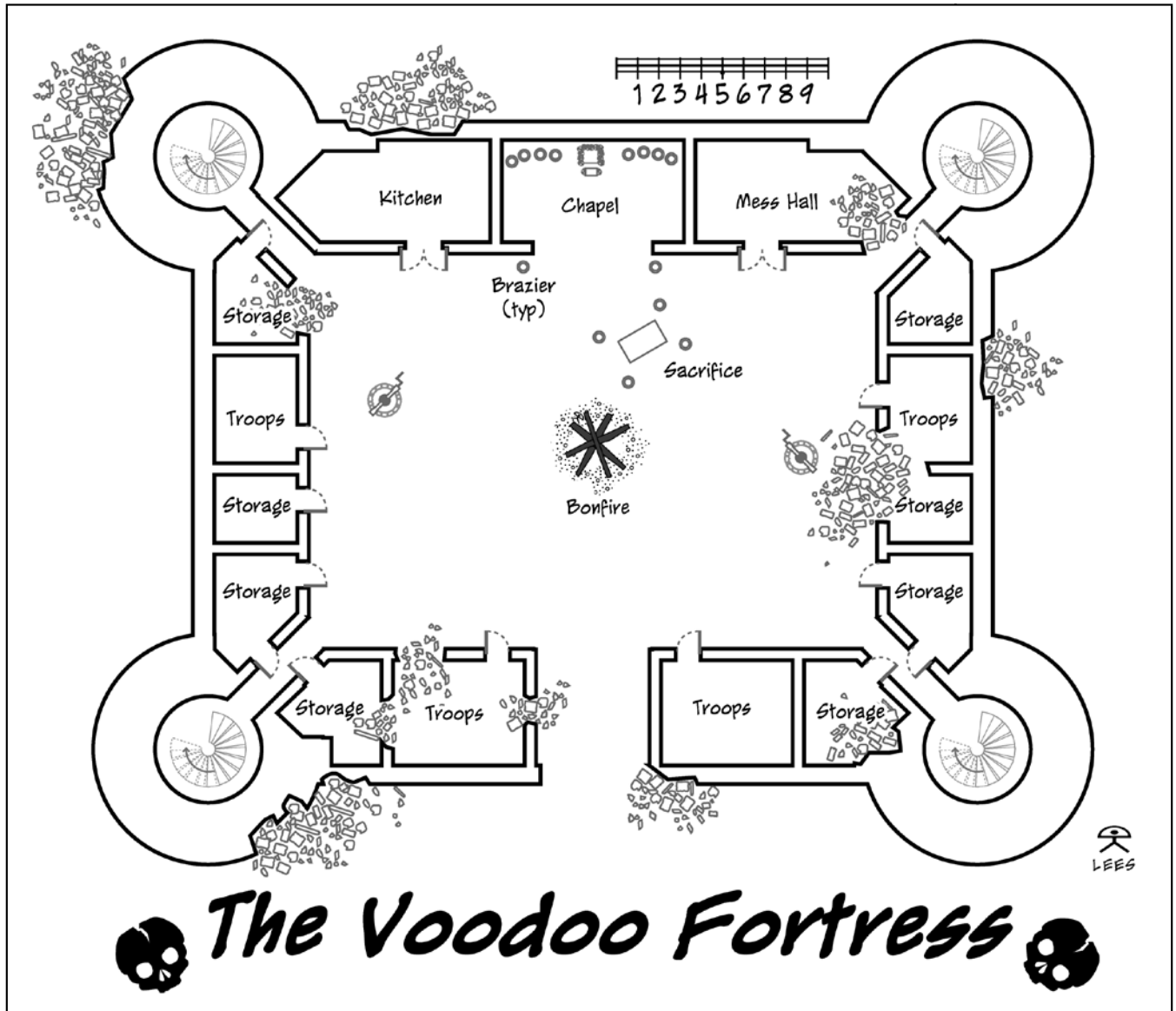
As shown on the map, the doors leading into the chapel have been removed so characters can easily see inside to Papa Miguel's earth-and-bone throne. Eight torches light the chapel.

Fortress Security

The walls of the fort are patrolled by *zombis cadavre*. To see into the fort unhindered, the PCs must either dispose of these zombies or sneak up to the ruined gate without being spotted by them. (Since there are at least three standing guard at the gate, the latter will prove difficult at best.)

Inside The Fortress

Inside, the PCs that there's a terrible Voodoo ritual underway. Cultists dance around a bonfire, sacrificing animals to the Voodoo spirits. To one side, a beautiful young white woman is tied to a stake, awaiting sacrifice. (This is marked on the map with an “evil altar.”) Watching the entire compound from a throne of bone and earth inside the former chapel, and flanked by several large *zombis cadavre*, is Papa Miguel himself, who looks like a cross between an old man and a zombie. When Morrisson took the Cross away from the precincts of the church where it had been safely kept, its unholy energies revitalized Miguel, awakening him and giving him the strength to free himself. Then he rebuilt his red Voodoo cult.



The PCs barely have time to view this ghastly scene before Papa Miguel perceives them (because of the Cross's unholy energies) and orders the *zombis* and cultists to attack. The PCs have three goals: survive; destroy Papa Miguel; rescue of the potential sacrifice. How they do all of this is up to them. Papa Miguel cannot be hurt by conventional attacks, such as fists or bullets, but is vulnerable to mystic attacks, fire, salt, and being struck by the Cross itself (see his character sheet at the end of this adventure).

If the cultists capture the PCs, Papa Miguel regains the Cross, becomes even more powerful than he is already, and adds the PCs to the "menu" of sacrificial victims. If they have no way to escape on their own, you can arrange a last-minute attack by a group of "good" Voodooists to help them out.

Love In The Time Of Voodoo

The young woman's name is Patrice Delacroix. Her father is a rich planter who lives in another part of the island. After the PCs rescue her, she could become a romantic interest for one of them, or her father could become a valuable Caribbean contact.

BROTHER DUCHAMP PLOT SEEDS

A black servant working for the PCs (or a friend of the PCs) frightfully reports that someone is using “black magic” against herself and her family. The PCs, upon investigating, uncover information about Brother DuChamp’s cult... but now he knows they know about him, and how they learned, so they’ve got to get to him before he sacrifices their informer!

The heroes hear rumors of “strange lights” out in the Louisiana bayous at night, and eerie sounds, and “dark, flapping things in the sky.” Is Brother DuChamp’s cult up to something horrible, or do the swamps hide more than just Petro Voodoo?

The dead begin to walk the streets of the Big Easy! Every night a half-dozen people are clawing their way out of their graves and trying to kill the living. Brother DuChamp clearly has the power to do something like this — but why?

| BROTHER DUCHAMP | | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|------|--|
| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
| 25 | STR | 15 | 14- | Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [4] |
| 16 | DEX | 18 | 12- | OCV: 5/DCV: 5 |
| 18 | CON | 16 | 13- | |
| 15 | BODY | 10 | 12- | |
| 15 | INT | 5 | 12- | PER Roll 12- |
| 16 | EGO | 12 | 12- | ECV: 5 |
| 18 | PRE | 8 | 13- | PRE Attack: 3½d6 |
| 8 | COM | -1 | 11- | |
| 8 | PD | 3 | | Total: 8 PD (3 rPD) |
| 6 | ED | 2 | | Total: 6 ED (3 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 14 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 9 | REC | 0 | | |
| 36 | END | 0 | | |
| 40 | STUN | 3 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 105 |
| Movement: | | Running: 6”/12” | | |
| Cost Powers | | END | | |
| 350 | <i>Voodoo Spells:</i> 350 points’ worth of spells from HPA #17, <i>Strange Magics, Vol. I: Voodoo</i> , including several Voodoo Black Magic spells | | | |
| 10 | <i>Mighty Fists:</i> HA +3d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) 1 | | | |
| 3 | <i>Protective Magics:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED) 0 | | | |
| 10 | <i>Gad Of Protection From Curses:</i> Power Defense (10 points) 0 | | | |
| 10 | <i>Gad Of Good Fortune:</i> Luck 2d6 0 | | | |
| Perks | | | | |
| 4 | Fringe Benefit: local cult leader | | | |
| Skills | | | | |
| 10 | +2 HTH | | | |
| 3 | Conversation 13- | | | |
| 3 | CK: New Orleans 12- | | | |
| 3 | <i>Medsin Fey:</i> KS: Haitian Herbalism 12- | | | |
| 3 | KS: Voodoo 12- | | | |
| 1 | Language: French (basic conversation; English is Native) | | | |
| 1 | Language: Hatian Creole (basic conversation) | | | |
| 3 | Oratory 13- | | | |
| 3 | <i>Medsin Fey:</i> Paramedics 12- | | | |
| 3 | Persuasion 13- | | | |

25 Power: Voodoo 23-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Streetwise 13-
3 Trading 13-
3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 457

Total Cost: 562

75+ Disadvantages

5 Distinctive Features: Voodoo scars and tattoos (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
20 Hunted: New Orleans Police Department 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
10 Hunted: various monster- and witch-hunters 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
20 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Evil; Serves The Foulest Petro Loa (Very Common; Strong)
15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy For Money And Power (Common; Strong)
10 Reputation: evil Voodoo sorcerer, 11- (in New Orleans; Extreme)
407 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 562

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Pistol | +0 | +0 | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | 6 | 8 | |
| Knife | +0 | RBS | 1d6-1 | 1d6-1 | — | 5 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: Asson rattle; Voodoo paraphernalia and spell components

Clothing: See Appearance

Background/History: Brother DuChamp grew up poor in the worst section of New Orleans. His aunt was a mamaloi, or female houngan, for a group of Voodoo practitioners, and she saw the talent in him and nurtured it. But unfortunately she couldn't nurture his soul, which was twisted and dark with a desire for things and power he didn't have. In time he turned to the Petro loa to grant him the power he craved. Eventually he became the leader of the Louisiana descendants of the few fragments of Papa Miguel's cult that had survived over the decades and centuries. Thanks to his evil charisma and powerful Voodoo spells, he's built the local cult up to be stronger than ever... and now that Papa Miguel has awakened, nothing shall stop them!

Personality/Motivation: Despite being a man in his mid-20s, Brother DuChamp is in many ways still the little boy he once was, lashing out at a world he hates because it hasn't given him everything he wants. He believes he must seize what he wants, and the way to do that is Voodoo. So far he's found nothing to prove him wrong.

Quote: "The loa we serve are strong! They will grant us good luck and victory over our enemies!"

Powers/Tactics: Brother DuChamp is a powerful bokor (Voodoo sorcerer) who can cast many different types of spells. (You can also give him any Voodoo magic items you think are appropriate.) Thanks to his *angajans*, or "engagements" (pacts) with various loa, he's immensely strong and tough and highly charismatic; if he lacks the time to prepare Voodoo black magic to use against his foes, he has no hesitation about mixing it up with them hand-to-hand. He usually has at least a few doses of kou poud powders that he can throw at his enemies to cause illness, misfortune, or even death.

Campaign Use: Although Brother DuChamp is presented as a secondary villain in *The Voodoo Cross*, for some lower-powered campaigns he might do quite well as the master villain — use his character sheet for Papa Miguel, then trim it down to create a new, weaker "Brother DuChamp." However, don't forget that most Voodoo spells aren't really usable in

combat because they take time and preparations to cast; despite his 350 Character Points' worth of spells, DuChamp is far, far less powerful in battle than even most 200-point Pulp heroes.

To make Brother DuChamp tougher, give him plenty of Voodoo magic items and powers, including a *Shirt Of Protection Against Bullets* and more *gads* and *angajans*. If appropriate, distinguish him from Papa Miguel by emphasizing his physical side — increase his STR, CON, and perhaps even SPD. To weaken him, reduce his SPD to 3 and his Character Points in Voodoo spells to 250.

Brother DuChamp might Hunt heroes if they become a persistent thorn in his side, but he knows his cult thrives the most when it remains secret. He won't do anything that will draw too much attention down on him or his followers.

Appearance: Brother DuChamp is a fairly handsome dark-skinned black man in his mid-twenties. His body has several *gads* (protective scars and tattoos), making it easy to identify him in the right circumstances. He dresses simply, in working man's pants, shirt, and shoes. He's usually got a large pouch full of Voodoo paraphernalia with him, and during ceremonies and spellcasting carries an *asson* (a rattle made from a gourd filled with serpent vertebrae and decorated with strands of beads).



PAPA MIGUEL PLOT SEEDS

Papa Miguel gets his hands on the Voodoo Cross somehow. With its power once again at his command, he begins to cast his shadow over the entire Caribbean — and he certainly won't stop there. The heroes, having failed to stop him from getting the Cross, must now enter the heart of darkness and beard the lion in his den deep in the Haitian interior.

After the heroes destroy the Cross, Papa Miguel dies... or so it seems. In fact he goes into a sort of hibernation (and if the heroes destroy his body, his spirit takes up residence in the body of one of his followers). His cult must now find another artifact, a star-stone cast down from the heavens themselves by the *loa*, to revive his flagging powers.

After the heroes defeat Papa Miguel and burn his body, one of his followers gathers up some of the ashes and uses them to make a potent *ouanga*. With this *ouanga* to help him, he becomes the new leader of the cult and a terrible threat to Haiti. The heroes have to return to “the magic island” to find and defeat him.

PAPA MIGUEL

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 20 | STR | 10 | 13- | Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [4] |
| 18 | DEX | 24 | 13- | OCV: 6/DCV: 6 |
| 20 | CON | 20 | 13- | |
| 20 | BODY | 20 | 13- | |
| 20 | INT | 10 | 13- | PER Roll 13- |
| 18 | EGO | 16 | 13- | ECV: 6 |
| 20 | PRE | 10 | 13- | PRE Attack: 4d6 |
| 6 | COM | -2 | 10- | |
| 10 | PD | 6 | | Total: 10 PD (8 rPD) |
| 10 | ED | 6 | | Total: 10 ED (8 rED) |
| 4 | SPD | 12 | | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 |
| 8 | REC | 0 | | |
| 40 | END | 0 | | |
| 50 | STUN | 10 | | Total Characteristics Cost: 142 |

Movement: Running: 6”/12”

Cost Powers END

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 843 | <i>Voodoo Spells:</i> all the spells from HPA #17, <i>Strange Magics, Vol. I: Voodoo</i> | |
| 5 | <i>Terrifying Aspect:</i> +10 PRE; Only To Make Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1) | 0 |
| 8 | <i>Zombi-Like Form And Protective Magics:</i> Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED) | 0 |
| 47 | <i>Zombi-Like Form:</i> Life Support (Total, including Longevity: ages at one-fourth normal rate) | 0 |
| 5 | <i>Eyes Of Darkness:</i> Nightvision | 0 |

Perks

| | |
|----|---|
| 15 | Follower: goat-horned dog (built on 75 Base Points) |
| 5 | Fringe Benefit: cult leader |

Skills

| | |
|----|--|
| 2 | AK: Haiti 11- |
| 6 | <i>Medsin Fey:</i> KS: Haitian Herbalism 16- |
| 2 | KS: Haitian History 11- |
| 6 | KS: Voodoo 16- |
| 1 | Language: English (basic conversation; French is Native) |
| 1 | Language: Hatian Creole (basic conversation) |
| 1 | Language: Langay (basic conversation) |
| 3 | Oratory 13- |
| 5 | <i>Medsin Fey:</i> Paramedics 14- |
| 3 | Persuasion 13- |
| 37 | Power: Voodoo 30- |
| 3 | Stealth 13- |

- 3 Trading 13-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 1,004

Total Cost: 1,146

75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: Voodoo scars and tattoos (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: various monster- and witch-hunters 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Evil; Serves The Foulest Petro Loa (Very Common; Total)
- 15 Reputation: evil Voodoo sorcerer, 14- (in Haiti; Extreme)
- 1,016 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,146

Background/History: Papa Miguel was born so long ago that even he doesn't remember his childhood, and in fact dismisses it as insignificant. What is important is that he is a dosou, a child born into a family after twins are born, and who thus “inherits” all of the twins' magical power. His gift for Voodoo was so profound that ordinary Voodoo could not contain it; before long he'd turned to black magic and sorcery. As his power and following grew, he turned on the family of his master Pierre Malraux and incited a rebellion. After slaughtering the Malrauxes he took the family's gold crucifix for use as a powerful fetish (one to which, in time, his life-force became bound).

Papa Miguel's cult grew, becoming a powerful force for evil in the Haitian interior. It was not until Toussaint L'Ouverture's slave rebellion of 1800-04 that Miguel was finally overthrown and, so it was thought, destroyed — crushed beneath tons of rock. No one dared to try to destroy the evil crucifix, so it was hidden in a church to neutralize its powers.

Because the crucifix remained intact, Papa Miguel could not die. He was trapped beneath the rock, but still he lived, waiting patiently. When explorer William Morrisson removed the cross from the confines of the (now-ruined) church, Papa Miguel became powerful enough to free himself and re-establish his cult (the remnants of which had never fully died away). Now he seeks to regain the cross, and thus greater

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

| Weapon | OCV | RMod | Dam | STUN | Shots | STR Min | Notes |
|--------|-----|------|-----|-------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Dagger | +0 | RBS | 1d6 | 1d6-1 | — | 8 | Can Be Thrown |

Armor

None

Gear: *Asson* rattle; Voodoo paraphernalia and spell components

Clothing: See Appearance

power, with which to take over Haiti... and then the Caribbean... and then the world....

Personality/Motivation: Papa Miguel is utterly, irredeemably evil. He serves the darkest loa (gods) of Voodoo, regularly offering human sacrifices to them to maintain their favor. Crimes and blasphemous practices that even hardened villains would hesitate at he performs readily.

Quote: “Bosou, grant me strength! Papa Legba, Baron Samedi, support me against my enemies!”

Powers/Tactics: Papa Miguel’s *konesans*, or known body of Voodoo lore, is enormous. He can cast spells, communicate with loa, and wield powers long forgotten by most hounsans or bokors. His met tet (“master of the head,” the loa with whom he has the strongest relationship, and whom he primarily serves) is Bosou, loa of black magic and virility, who gives him great power. His magics maintain his body in a sort of half-zombified state, giving him great strength and resilience without costing him any wit or agility.

Since most of his magic won’t help him in battle, if he expects a fight Papa Miguel prepares *Kou Poud* powders (primarily ones causing rapid weakness, sickness, or death so he can incapacitate his foes with them quickly), *ouangas* which inflict their curse when they touch the victim, and other magical items. He’ll also awaken or call to him as many *zombis cadavre* as he can and arm them with whatever weapons he has available. His familiar, a goat-horned dog, obeys his every order and savagely attacks any enemy he unleashes it on.

After centuries of staying alive, Papa Miguel is no fool. He usually has at least one escape route prepared, and often two or more. He’s only been free for a short while, and he has no intention of being imprisoned, much less killed, again.

Campaign Use: Based on his point total, Papa Miguel seems immensely powerful. While it’s true he’s no pushover, remember that most Voodoo spells aren’t intended for combat. They take a long time to cast, and plenty of preparation to boot. He can prepare some in advance (such as *Kou Poud* powders), but for the most part his hundreds of Character Points’ worth of spells don’t do him much good in combat. He’s weaker than he looks when it comes to fighting. But if the PCs don’t get rid of him in their first encounter, Miguel will have the chance to use his potent Voodoo black magic to make their lives a literal living hell.

To make Papa Miguel more powerful, add on Voodoo abilities and magical items until he’s as strong as you need him to be. If he regains the cross (or per-

haps if it’s even brought close to him, depending on how dangerous you want the climactic fight to be), he might become *much* more powerful than he is now, both physically and in terms of his Voodoo — for example, he might be able to cast an entire Voodoo ritual in just a Full Phase, Extra Phase, or 1 Turn instead of minutes or hours. To weaken him, reduce his Voodoo roll, and strip away at least 300 points’ worth of spells. You could also reduce his SPD to 3 and his Damage Resistance to 3-5 points.

Papa Miguel will Hunt any hero or person who has the Voodoo Cross, using all of his powers and wiles to get it back. Once he has it, he’ll turn to Hunting anyone who’s harmed or hindered him until he’s taken revenge on them all. Fortunately for him, his potent Voodoo black magic gives him *lots* of unpleasant ways to attack his enemies.

Appearance: Papa Miguel looks like an incredibly aged, wizened black man half-gone to death. His skin has an unhealthy greyish color to it that makes him look half-dead, or perhaps half-undead; his voice has just a touch of the unusual nasal tone that marks a zombi cadavre to Haitian ears. He wears rough, old clothing that’s in bad shape, except when a Voodoo ceremony requires him to don other garb. His pockets are always full of Voodoo charms, fetishes, and supplies, and he always carries a large pouch full of Voodoo paraphernalia with him. During ceremonies and spellcasting he has an *asson* (a rattle made from a gourd filled with serpent vertebrae and decorated with strands of beads).



Appendix

INTO THE UNKNOWN

**Expedition Rules
for *Pulp Hero***

INTO THE UNKNOWN

EXPEDITION RULES FOR *PULP HERO*



Pulp Hero adventures often take characters into the wild and unknown places of the world — the “white spaces” on the map where few, if any, Westerners have ever been before. They go in search of treasure and lost civilizations, in the spirit of exploration and scientific discovery... and along the way they have amazing adventures!

In many cases, it's not necessary to worry too much about the details of *how* the heroes get to where they're going — the meat of the story takes place once they arrive at their destination (whether it's the destination they originally expected or not!). But sometimes there's a lot of fun to be had planning exactly what goes into an expedition... and finding out what perils befall it. The drama of an expedition stranded in the wilderness as the food and water run out, or the hostile natives close in, is one featured in plenty of *Pulp* stories and movies (not to mention historical accounts), and it can be fun to play out in a *Pulp Hero* game as well.

Not every gaming group needs or wants the level of expedition-planning detail provided for in these rules. Feel free to adjust them to suit your group, removing or adding rules until you've found the right balance for your campaign.

MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION

When the PCs plan an expedition, the first thing they need to ask is: who's going?

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The foremost characters on the expedition are, of course, the PCs, who plan (and perhaps finance) the expedition and in most cases are ultimately responsible for its success or failure. As discussed further below, it's assumed the PCs aren't carrying anything beyond their personal weapons and possessions (if even those), and that they're likely to eat and drink better than the bearers and other laborers accompanying them.

MAJOR NPCs

Secondary only to the PCs in most cases are major NPCs who are a part of or accompany the expedition. Examples typically include NPC scientists, the NPC scientists' beautiful daughters, particularly important natives (such as the “headman” in charge of the native bearers, or a

native prince who's returning home in the company of his PC friends), a guide who's a Great White Hunter instead of a native, and of course Followers of the PCs (and perhaps even their DNPCs, if appropriate). Some of these (such as a scientist's daughter) may be potential love interests (or at the very least, the victim of all sorts of dangers and attackers the heroes have to rescue them from). In games featuring a certain amount of intrigue, a major NPC may be a traitor or a spy determined to sabotage the expedition.

Like the PCs, major NPCs usually don't carry anything and eat and drink better than the native help.

NATIVE EMPLOYEES

For most expeditions, the heroes have to hire local help, usually in one of five varieties:

Bearers

The PCs often require the help of native bearers to carry their goods and supplies. Even when pack animals or vehicles are available, some items are best carried by a human being. The typical bearer is an uneducated manual laborer who has only his strong back to make money with. A few types, such as gunbearers, muleteers, and cooks, have learned some useful skills (and thus get better treatment and slightly higher wages). Similarly, most expeditions have at least one higher-ranking bearer who serves as a “headman” and interacts directly with the rank-and-file bearers so the PCs don't have to.

The big advantage to using bearers is that they're available for other tasks if necessary: they can run for help, be conscripted as unskilled fighters in an emergency; and perform other tasks like setting up camp, gathering firewood, and keeping the PCs' gear clean. Even an expedition that relies primarily on pack animals or vehicles needs at least a few bearers along to perform menial chores. Additionally, bearers can go places no animal or vehicle can. Lastly, from a dramatic standpoint bearers provide a human element the GM can exploit for story and subplot development.

But there are some drawbacks to using bearers. First, they're not as strong as animals or vehicles. Second, unlike animals the PCs can't usually feed them by letting them forage; their food has to be carried along. Second, as humans they're subject to a wide variety of human failings and vices: they can drink too much; turn on

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE DEPARTMENT

Author's Note:

My inspiration for writing up these expeditioning rules largely derives from the expedition rules in the excellent RPG *Dark Continent*, by David Salisbury. My approach to and rules for the subject of outfitting and running expeditions aren't the same as his, but I'd be remiss to not acknowledge what first put the idea in my head. Thanks, David!

the PCs over bad treatment (whether perceived or real); demand higher wages at inconvenient times; require rescuing; or abandon the expedition when the going gets tough.

Guides

When you're going into the unknown, it helps to have someone along who's more familiar with the territory than you. A guide is a native who knows (or *claims* to know...) the region the heroes want to explore, and who thus can lead them down the best trails and around the danger zones. He may also double as a translator.

Translators

It's not easy to get along with the natives if you can't talk to them. It's not always possible to hire a translator, but if the PCs can, it's usually a good idea to. Otherwise they'll have to communicate with gestures or other primitive methods that may lead to problems.

Warriors

If the PCs expect trouble in the form of hostile native tribes and they don't have any soldiers along (see below), they may want to hire native warriors instead. They're more expensive than other forms of native help, don't carry loads, and have to be fed better than bearers. The heroes may also have to outfit them with weapons. But when several hundred spear-wielding tribesmen let forth battle cries and charge the expedition, a troop of warriors may spell the difference between victory... or defeat and death.

Dependents

Some expeditions allow the native help to bring along their wives and children. This provides some additional labor capacity and helps to keep morale high, but increases the amount of food the expedition needs to carry (or find, or trade for...). The dependents may also get kidnapped, require rescuing, or cause other forms of trouble.

SOLDIERS

If an expedition has official backing, or impinges on a nation's interest, the heroes may convince the authorities to send along trained soldiers to protect it. (In some cases the government may insist on sending soldiers, whether the PCs want them or not.) Soldiers are even better than warriors. For one thing, they're equipped with modern weapons; for another, they're more disciplined and usually better trained. But like warriors, they don't carry loads, and they expect to be pretty well fed and taken care of compared to the native help.



OUTFITTING THE EXPEDITION

Once the PCs have an idea of where they're going, how long they'll be gone, and who's coming along, they can decide how to outfit the expedition. This means they have to consider two issues: what do they need to bring with them; and how are they going to bring it?

Supplies

Broadly speaking, the supplies required for an expedition fall into several categories. The descriptions below and/or the accompanying Expedition Supplies Table list the weight for the supplies, since that's the most crucial factor in determining how many bearers, pack animals, and the like the expedition needs.

FOOD AND DRINK

The most important thing an expedition needs is food and water. Victuals for humans fall into three categories:

Bearers': Bearers usually drink water and eat basic foodstuffs: rice, meal, millet, other cereals, perhaps a bit of meat. The higher a bearer's rank in the hierarchy, the larger his daily ration. One week's worth of Bearers' Food for a single person weighs 3 kg.

Warriors': Warriors, soldiers, and some high-ranking bearers eat better and more food. One week's worth of Warriors' Food for a single person weighs 4 kg.

Explorers': Explorers — the PCs, major white NPCs, and the like — eat better than anyone else in the expedition. Meat, canned goods, whiskey, and seasonings are commonly carried, and some explorers go so far as to bring champagne, candy, and other outright luxuries. Explorers' food stores also includes extra rations of things like tobacco and salt (which they can dole out to the men as rewards for good behavior, to improve morale, and so forth). The PCs should keep a close eye on the best foodstuffs — letting the bearers carry the high-value edibles usually leads to the bearers trading them away and then begging for more. One week's worth of Explorers' Food for a single person weighs 5 kg (or more, depending on how luxurious the PCs want to get!).

The GM may require the expedition to keep separate track of some specific food items, such as bottles of whiskey or wine. This is particularly appropriate for types of foods that might make valuable trade items in a pinch, or which may have medicinal uses.

Water

Water is considered separate from food because of its weight. One week's worth of water for a single person weighs 5 kg (in hot, dry cli-

mates such as deserts this may double or even triple). Fortunately, it's often easy to replenish water supplies en route from streams, lakes, rainfall, melting snow, and the like.

Animal Fodder

Humans aren't the only things that need to be fed — the pack animals do, too. Although they can do some foraging along the way, pack animals can't feed themselves off the land entirely, not with all the work they've got to do... and in some environments, there's no food for them at all even if they had time to graze.

One week's worth of food for a single horse, mule, or camel weighs 5 kg (possibly more). One week's worth of food for a single elephant weighs 30 kg. Animals can usually drink from natural sources of water along the way; if that's not possible, one week's worth of water for most animals weighs 15 kg (50 kg for elephants).

Hunting, Fishing, And Foraging

During the expedition the PCs may have the opportunity to replenish their food supplies by hunting, fishing, or foraging. See the *Survival* section of *The Ultimate Skill* for rules for hunting, and the *On The Trail* section, below, for potential modifiers.

Cattle

Some expeditions take cattle or other livestock along to be slaughtered *en route* for food — a single beef cow can feed 20 people for one week. However, bringing along a herd can slow the expedition down and requires the hiring of herdsman to keep the cattle moving and in good health. Cattle may also tempt native tribes to raid the expedition's camp, or attack it in an attempt to steal the herd.

Trading For Food

Expeditions that expect to be in the field for a long time (more than a month) usually don't try to carry all the food and water they'll need — it simply weighs too much. Instead, they plan to trade for food with native peoples they meet along the way. For this they carry trade goods (see below). This assumes, of course, that they're going into an area that's inhabited by natives who'd be willing to trade, which isn't always the case.

CAMPING SUPPLIES

Explorers don't expect to sleep out on the ground under the stars (the way their bearers do in warm climes), nor to eat sitting on the ground. An expedition has to bring along tents, sleeping rolls, blankets, camp cots, camp tables, mosquito netting, and a host of other supplies to make expeditioning as comfortable as possible. In harsher climates, some of these supplies may become absolutely necessary for survival.

Rather than list every possible item used for camping individually, the Expedition Supplies Table lists "Camping Supplies" as a bulk item for

a single person, depending on luxuriousness. Bearers and the like in mild or tropical climates are assumed to carry their own basic camping supplies (bedroll and blanket) as part of their overall burden. The Price List on pages 334-38 of *Pulp Hero* has prices and other information for individual items, if necessary.

FUEL AND AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIES

Vehicles have some advantages over pack animals, but like beasts of burden they must be “fed” — just with gasoline instead of food. A gallon of gasoline weighs 2.7 kg. The amount of fuel used depends on the type of vehicle, its average speed, and other factors, but for game purposes assume a motorcycle needs 8 gallons of fuel per day, a car 15, and a truck 30. There’s usually no way to replenish fuel supplies in the field.

Additionally, a smart expedition carries along extra tires and other spare parts for repairing the inevitable damage its vehicles will suffer. Automotive supplies for one vehicle weigh 5% of the vehicle’s weight (see the Vehicles Table on pages 310-11 of *Pulp Hero* for vehicles’ mass). One allotment of automotive supplies is enough to repair up to 25% of the vehicle’s BODY. However, the GM may rule that certain parts are or are not part of “automotive supplies” for a specific vehicle, or that some types of damage simply can’t be repaired. For example, it’s highly unlikely any expedition carries the parts necessary to fix a broken axle on a truck.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Injuries, disease, and other maladies are practically a given during an expedition, so if the PCs are smart they’ll carry along plenty of medical supplies. And because treating sick natives they meet along the way is a great method for building up goodwill, bringing extra medical supplies never hurts. The Expedition Supplies Table lists various field medical kits and other doctors’ goods.

SCIENTIFIC SUPPLIES

Many expeditions have as at least one of their goals the advancement of scientific knowledge. Geologists and geographers want to chart Earth’s magnetic field, discover new rock formations, find the sources of rivers, and fill in the unknown parts of the map. Paleontologists seek fossils of ancient animals; anthropologists want to investigate native tribes and practices. Biologists and botanists seek specimens of animals and plants previously unknown (or barely known) to science.

To accomplish these goals, science-minded characters need specialized equipment (beyond routine tools like shovels and picks, which are covered under *Tools*, below). “Scientific supplies” refers to such things as: instruments for taking readings; nets, bottles, boxes, and taxidermy supplies for collecting, preserving, and analyzing animal and plant specimens; plaster for making

casts and impressions; photographic equipment and film; specialized digging and excavation tools used by paleontologists and archaeologists; telescopes; and so on.

Rather than list every possible item used for scientific exploration and experimenting individually, the Expedition Supplies Table primarily lists “Scientific Supplies” as a bulk item for a single person, depending on the quality and usefulness of the gear. An expedition has to carry Scientific Supplies for each type of science it wants to conduct; Archaeologists’ Supplies aren’t the same thing as Botanists’ Supplies or Geographers’ Supplies. The Price List on pages 334-38 of *Pulp Hero* has prices and other information for individual items, if necessary.

If an expedition gathers anything in the field — dinosaur bones, animal bodies for taxidermy, leaves from plants, archaeological relics, and so on — you should account for their weight during the trip home.

TOOLS

They’re what set man apart from the animals, and they often set successful expeditions apart from failed ones. With shovels, hammers, nails, saws, axes, and the like, an explorer can do a lot to make his life in the field easier... or ensure that he keeps it. The Price List on pages 334-38 of *Pulp Hero* lists various tools characters might want to take with them on an expedition; you can find some additions on the Expedition Supplies Table.

TRADE GOODS

During most expeditions, the PCs are going to meet native tribes, isolated villagers, and plenty of other people. Some of these people will have food or other items the PCs would like to buy... but of course the natives don’t need money. Similarly, the expedition may have to pay “tribute” to a local chieftain to pass through his lands, or “bribe” a hostile tribe not to attack. For all these purposes, the expedition needs *trade goods*.

In most cases trade goods are bulk manufactured items locals can use (cloth, for example) or luxuries they can’t otherwise obtain (such as beads or cheap jewelry). Some tribes want specific types of goods (the expedition’s guides or advisors should know this), and some powerful individuals may want particularly valuable items (guns, a telescope, a PC’s pocketwatch, whatever catches their fancy). The Expedition Supplies Table lists some bulk trade goods expeditions can carry by generic category, but the PCs may want to carry extra supplies of tools or other goods they can trade away if necessary.

WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

Since weapons and ammunition tend to be very important to any expedition, and can’t be resupplied in the middle of the trip, most expeditions take a lot of them. As noted on the Expedition Supplies Table, a box of 50 rounds

EXPEDITION SUPPLIES TABLE

| Item | Price | Mass | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|---|
| Ammunition | | | |
| Bullets (50, any caliber) | \$0.25 | 0.4 | |
| Shotgun shells (25) | \$0.70 | 0.5 | |
| Automotive Supplies | \$50-125 | Spec | Weighs 5% of vehicle's weight, can repair 25% of vehicle's BODY |
| Camping Supplies (per person) | | | |
| Poor | \$50 | 25 | |
| Average | \$75 | 50 | |
| Fine | \$100 | 75 | |
| Luxurious | \$200 | 100 | |
| Fodder | | | One week's worth for one animal |
| Horse, camel, etc. | \$5 | 5+ | |
| Elephant | \$30 | 30 | |
| Food | | | One week's worth for one person |
| Bearer's rations | \$2 | 3 | |
| Warrior's rations | \$4 | 4 | |
| Explorer's rations | \$8 | 5+ | |
| Gasoline (100 gallons) | \$20 | 270 | |
| Medical Supplies | | | |
| Basic, per person per month | \$12 | 2.0 | |
| Field hospital | \$100-400 | 75-200 | |
| Portable Boat (3-man) | \$75 | 30 | |
| Scientific Supplies | \$50-300 | 20 | One month's worth, per science |
| Storage Items, Sturdy (per 1) | \$10 | 20 | Wooden barrels, crates, and the like; hold 100 kg of goods each |
| Tools | | | |
| Nails (1 kg) | \$1 | 1 | |
| Saw, 1-man | \$1 | 1 | |
| Saw, 2-man | | | \$5 5 |
| Trade Goods (per 100 pounds) | | | |
| Poor | \$45 | 45 | |
| Average | \$90 | 45 | |
| High | \$135 | 45 | |
| Luxurious | \$180 | 45 | |
| Water | \$0.50 | 5 | One week's worth for one person |
| Beasts Of Burden (per 1) | | | |
| Camel | \$100 | N/A | |
| Dog, sled | \$30 | N/A | |
| Horse | \$100 | N/A | |
| Mule | \$50 | N/A | |
| Yak | \$100 | N/A | |
| Herd Animals (per 100) | | | |
| Cattle | \$500 | N/A | |
| Goats | \$400 | N/A | |
| Sheep | \$400 | N/A | |

Price is in United States dollars; see the text for further discussion.

Mass is in kilograms.

For other, individual, items, see the Price List on pages 334-38 of Pulp Hero.

of any size ammunition weighs 0.4 kg (25 shotgun shells weigh 0.5 kg), though the GM may increase this for particularly large ammo, such as that used in H&H hunting rifles. You can find the weights of specific guns on the tables on pages 302-06 of *Pulp Hero*, and should keep track of the weight of every weapon the expedition carries.

MISCELLANEOUS

Last but not least, there are various other supplies the PCs might want to take on their expedition. For example, many expeditions expect to spend some time on the water, so taking along portable boats (that break into sections for easy carrying and re-assembly) is a smart move. An expedition that plans to recover archaeological or anthropological treasures may need to carry specially-built cases or crates to transport them back to civilization safely.

Obtaining Supplies

Once they figure out what they need to take with them, the PCs have to obtain it.

BUYING SUPPLIES

Most equipment for most expeditions can simply be purchased — assuming the PCs are in a place with a decent outfitter and other stores selling what they need, and have the money for it. Historically there were firms, such as Fortnum & Mason of London, that specialized in providing food and gear to explorers and travelers. Some types of equipment, such as tools and some types of scientific supplies, are available from a wide variety of merchants; others are so specialized the PCs may have to have them custom-made.

The Expedition Supplies Table lists the prices of goods the PCs might want to take on their expeditions. The listed prices assume they're doing the buying in a relatively large city where there are many sources for the goods. If that's not the case — for example if they're in an isolated town — the GM should increase the prices accordingly, and perhaps even rule that some items aren't available. And of course, in some areas there may be no place to purchase supplies at all; in that case, the PCs either have to barter for what they want (if it's available at all) or do without.

HIRING NATIVE EMPLOYEES

Hiring native employees is a little trickier, since the PCs can't just walk into a store and pick up a crateful of bearers off the shelf. To hire native employees, the PCs (a) have to be in a place where there are natives willing to accept that type of employment, and (b) negotiate a price and terms of service.

Unlike buying equipment, which usually takes place before the PCs launch their expedition, hiring native employees generally occurs

after they reach their initial destination — the “jumping-off point” from which they'll head into the unexplored interior. Typically this is a coastal or riverside city, such as Leopoldville on the Congo River, but it all depends on where they're going and what they plan to do. Once there they can find natives to negotiate with directly or get in touch with a local contact or friend who can assist them.

To hire a bearer (*i.e.*, general, unskilled expedition laborers), the PCs must negotiate with the bearers themselves, or their representative, by making a Trading roll. The standard daily wage for a bearer is 5 to 25 cents per day; the PCs can nudge that downward, or may find it forced upward, based on the results of a Trading Versus Trading Contest. (See *The Ultimate Skill* for detailed rules about negotiating prices.) The GM can impose whatever modifiers seem appropriate to the circumstances. For example, if the PCs are arrogant, high-handed, or commit *faux pas* based on local cultural mores, they might suffer a penalty. If they're mounting an expedition to a place where the native bearers already want to go for reasons of their own, or they offer special incentives of some kind, they might get a bonus that results in lower wages they have to pay.

The standard daily wage for skilled natives — translators, guides, cooks, gunbearers, hunters, muleteers, headmen, herdsmen, and the like — is greater than that for unskilled natives, though how much greater depends on the circumstances, the native's experience and skill, and other factors. Depending on the situation, the GM may want the PCs to negotiate separately with every skilled laborer, or may simply lump all skilled labor together to resolve the matter quickly. In any event, skilled laborer's wages and work terms should always be decided separately from that of unskilled labor, and should always be higher/better regardless of dice rolls. At a minimum, the default starting point for negotiating wages for skilled laborers is 50% higher than the starting point for bearers. Typically the headmen get paid the most of all the skilled laborers.

HIRING PACK ANIMALS AND VEHICLES

If the PCs want pack animals and/or vehicles for their expedition, they'll probably have to obtain them at the same as they hire native laborers, since in most cases transporting vehicles and animals from Europe or the United States would be prohibitively expensive. (Though it may sometimes be necessary in the case of, for example, highly specialized vehicles that have to be custom-designed for Our Heroes.) The Expedition Supplies Table lists standard prices for various pack animals, though as usual this varies depending on the location, availability, customer demand, and plenty of other factors.

EXPEDITION TRAVEL

Once the PCs have all the supplies and hirelings they need for their expedition (or so they think...), you can determine how quickly and easily they can travel.

Carrying Capacity and Traveling Speed

However they get them, the PCs need enough bearers, pack animals, and vehicles to transport the weight of their supplies and gear. The more loaded-down their bearers, animals, and vehicles are, the slower the expedition moves.

CARRYING CAPACITY

In the *HERO System*, bearers, animals, and vehicles all have a STR rating that indicates how much they can carry. While it's possible to use the standard Encumbrance and Long-Term Endurance rules to determine the carrying and traveling capacity of any given member of an

expedition, for ease of game play the following rules “streamline” things.

A standard “expedition day” is 14 hours of work plus 10 hours of rest. An expedition’s leaders can vary this if they want (see *Forced Marches*, below). For example, if the expedition reaches a large river after eight hours of traveling, the expedition might cut the day short there so everyone can prepare to ford the river fully rested the next morning. And it’s possible that an expedition might need to declare “rest days” to let workers recuperate, replenish food stocks via hunting, and so forth.

Determining the expedition’s overall carrying capacity is simply a matter of adding up the carrying capacities of all the people and vehicles involved. Then compare that to the weight of the supplies the expedition’s carrying. The more heavily loaded the expedition, the slower it travels, as shown in the accompanying Expedition Encumbrance Table. Since an expedition can’t travel faster than its slowest member (see below), all the GM has to do is determine who’s slowest and then apply the appropriate modifier to the Expedition Travel Table.

EXPEDITION ENCUMBRANCE TABLE

Encumbrance (Total Weight Carried)

| STR | 0-10% | 11-24% | 25-49% | 50-74% | 5-89% | 90-100% |
|---------------------------|----------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 50 | 0-2 | 3-6 | 7-11 | 12-18 | 19-21 | 22-25 |
| 60 | 0-10 | 11-24 | 25-49 | 50-74 | 75-89 | 90-100 |
| 70 | 0-40 | 41-99 | 100-199 | 200-299 | 300-359 | 360-400 |
| 80 | 0-160 | 161-399 | 400-799 | 800-1,199 | 1,200-1,439 | 1,440-1,600 |
| 90 | 0-640 | 641-1,599 | 1,600-3,199 | 3,200-4,799 | 4,800-5,759 | 5,760-6,400 |
| 100 | 0-1,500 | 1,501-3,749 | 3,750-7,499 | 7,500-11,249 | 11,250-13,499 | 13,500-15,000 |
| 110 | 0-10,000 | 10,001-24,999 | 25,000-49,999 | 50,000-74,999 | 75,000-89,999 | 90,000-100,000 |
| 120 | 0-40,000 | 40,001-99,999 | 100,000-199,999 | 200,000-299,999 | 300,000-359,999 | 360,000-400,000 |
| 0-24%: | | No Encumbrance penalty to movement | | | | |
| 25-49%: | | -10% movement capacity, 1 LTE per 2 Hours | | | | |
| 50-74%: | | -20% movement capacity, 1 LTE per Hour | | | | |
| 75-89%: | | -30% movement capacity, 2 LTE per Hour | | | | |
| 90-100%: | | -40% movement capacity, 3 LTE per Hour | | | | |
| Greater than 100%: | | Character cannot move or take other actions | | | | |

All weights listed are in metric tons. Given the LTE penalties, note that human Bearers can’t carry more than 74% of their carrying capacity for a full 14-hour expedition day or they’ll collapse from exhaustion. Even at that rate, the expedition will need to declare a rest day once every 3-4 days.

- Native Bearer:** 10 STR, 4 REC, 24 END
- Camel:** 25 STR, 9 REC, 40 END
- Elephant:** 45 STR, 15 REC, 60 END
- Horse:** 25 STR, 9 REC, 40 END
- Mule:** 20 STR, 8 REC, 36 END
- Wheelbarrow, hand cart:** +10 to STR of bearer using it
- Travois:** +15 to STR of bearer using it
- Dogsled:** 20 STR
- Cart, animal-pulled:** 25 STR
- Wagon, sled:** 35 STR
- Car:** varies, but typically 25-35
- Truck, light:** varies, but typically 30-40
- Truck, heavy:** varies, but typically 40-50

TRAVELING SPEED

An expedition can only travel as fast as its slowest member (unless the PCs are willing to spread their group out over minutes or hours of potentially dangerous terrain). The

accompanying Expedition Travel Table provides suggested base speeds (depending on method of travel and terrain) and modifiers that you can use to determine how far the expedition travels each day.

EXPEDITION TRAVEL TABLE

| Type Of Travel | Base Speed (KPH) |
|--|------------------|
| Foot travel | |
| Easy ground (roads, plains, meadows) | 5.0 |
| Typical ground | 5.5 |
| Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests) | 3.0 |
| Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests) | 2.0 (or slower) |
| Riding horse, camel, or other mount (see also Base Speed Modifiers) | |
| Easy ground (roads, plains, meadows) | 5.5 |
| Typical ground | 5.0 |
| Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests) | 3.0 |
| Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests) | Not possible |
| Riding in a wagon | |
| Easy ground (meadows, plains) | 4.5 |
| Typical ground | 4.0 |
| Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests) | 1.5 (or slower) |
| Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests) | Not possible |
| Riding in a motorized vehicle | |
| Easy ground (meadows, plains) | 11.0 |
| Typical ground | 10.0 |
| Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests) | 6.0 (or slower) |
| Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests) | Not possible |
| Water travel, rowing or sailing | |
| Calm/typical water | 4.5 |
| Rough water | 3.5 |
| Very rough water | Not possible |
| Water travel, motorized | |
| Calm/typical water | 9.0 |
| Rough water | 7.0 |
| Very rough water | 1.0 (or slower) |
| Base Speed Modifiers | Base Speed (KPH) |
| Foot Speed | |
| Walk (+0 LTE per Hour) | +0 |
| Slow Run (+1 LTE per Hour) | +1.5 |
| Run (+2 LTE per Hour) | +5 |
| Fast Run (+3 LTE per Hour) | +9.5 |
| Injury to expedition member | -.1 per 2 BODY |
| Mount or Vehicle Type | |
| Pony | -.2 |
| Horse | +0 |
| Draft Horse | -.2 |
| Camel | -.2 |
| Donkey | -.2 |
| Mount Pace | |
| Walk (+0 LTE per Hour) | +0 |
| Trot (+1 LTE per Hour) | +1.5 |
| Run (+2 LTE per Hour) | +5 |
| Gallop (+3 LTE per Hour) | +9.5 |

EXPEDITION TRAVEL TABLE (continued)**Size of Expedition**

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| 1-16..... | +0 |
| 17-64..... | -.1 |
| 65-250..... | -.3 |
| 251-1,000..... | -.5 |
| 1,001-4,000..... | -.6 |
| 4,001 or more..... | -.8 |

Time of day

Time of Day

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Daytime..... | +0 |
| Nighttime..... | -.6 |

Water travel modifiers

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Drifting with the current..... | +0 |
| Paddling with the current..... | +2 |
| Paddling against the current..... | -1.5 |

Sailing with the current

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Strong current..... | +13 |
| Average current..... | +8 |
| Weak current..... | +5 |

Sailing against the current

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Strong current..... | -13 |
| Average current..... | -8 |
| Weak current..... | -5 |

Sailing with the wind

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Strong wind..... | +13 |
| Average wind..... | +8 |
| Weak wind..... | +5 |

Sailing against the wind

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Strong wind..... | -8 |
| Average wind..... | -5 |
| Weak wind..... | -2.5 |

Weather

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Fine/normal..... | +0 |
| Heavy fog..... | -.3 |
| Rainfall..... | -.1 |
| Storm..... | -.5 |
| Snow/ice..... | -.1 per inch of snow or quarter-inch of ice |

Percentage Modifiers To Base Speed**Encumbrance**

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 0-24%..... | -0% movement rate |
| 25-49%..... | -10% movement rate |
| 50-74%..... | -20% movement rate |
| 75-89%..... | -30% movement rate |
| 90-100%..... | -40% movement rate |
| Stealthy travel..... | -50% movement rate |

Base Speed Reduction

Determine the expedition's base speed by choose the default kilometers per hour rate based on the Type Of Travel (the method used and the general terrain) and the Base Speed Modifiers. After the base speed is calculated, apply any Percentage Modifiers To Base Speed (*i.e.*, Encumbrance and stealthy movement) to determine the expedition's final daily travel distance.

For example, suppose an expedition walks on Typical Ground (5.5 km per hour) for a 14-hour day. That's 77 km that it can travel that day as a base movement rate. However, the human bearers are carrying 60% of their carrying capacity, which is -20% movement. So over the course of the day the expedition only travels $(77 - (77 \times .20 = 15.4))$ 62 km.

If the terrain or method of travel varies throughout the day, the GM can either determine the rate of travel on a section-by-section basis, or assign an "average" Type Of Travel for the overall day.

Forced Marches

While these rules assume a 14-hour expedition work day, sometimes an expedition needs to move more quickly than that. This is referred to as “forced marching,” and can quickly tire out the expedition’s members and hirelings. Forced marching may also involve carrying larger than normal loads of supplies, which only worsens the problem. Expedition leaders have to be careful not to push their workers too far, or desertions, unrest, and even rebellion may result.

On The Road

An expedition wouldn’t be much of an adventure if everything went smoothly, now would it? There are all sorts of problems, lucky breaks, obstacles, and setbacks that an expedition may encounter during the course of its travels. The accompanying Expedition Encounters Table describes some possible “on the road” encounters. The GM should roll as often as he thinks appropriate (but typically no more than once per day maximum), and should adjust the results as he sees fit to account for the type of expedition, the terrain, the region being explored, the time of year, and so forth.

EXPEDITION ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Table 1: General Nature Of Encounter

| Roll (1d6) | Result |
|------------|---|
| 1 | Expedition Event (roll on Table 2) |
| 2 | Food Event (roll on Table 3) |
| 3 | Natives Event (roll on Table 4) |
| 4-5 | Weather/Terrain Event (roll on Table 5) |
| 6 | Miscellaneous Event (roll on Table 6) |

Table 2: Expedition Events

| Roll* | Event |
|------------|---|
| 1-1 | <i>Accident — Storage Problems:</i> due to some sort of problem with storing food and gear, ½d6% of the expedition’s goods have become lost or spoiled (the GM decides exactly what was lost, if necessary) |
| 1-2 to 1-4 | <i>Accident — Thievery:</i> some particularly valuable piece of gear, or set of supplies, is stolen by expedition laborers, hostile natives, or the like (the GM decides exactly what was lost, if necessary, but should focus on things that can easily be stolen) |
| 1-5 to 1-6 | <i>Accident — Travel Disaster:</i> while fording a river, crossing treacherous ground, or the like, there’s an accident that costs the expedition 1d6% of its supplies (the GM decides exactly what was lost, if necessary) |
| 2-1 to 2-3 | <i>Demonstrate Leadership:</i> PCs have an opportunity to earn the admiration of the laborers (e.g., by rescuing one from a dangerous situation or fairly arbitrating a dispute); if they succeed, the laborers may work harder, have higher morale for awhile, or the like |
| 2-4 | <i>Found Supplies:</i> it turns out the expedition leaders bought more than they realized! Increase the expedition’s amount of some supply by 1d6% (the GM decides which supply; this result should only apply once per expedition) |
| 2-5 | <i>Labor Unrest:</i> workers demand a rest day, higher wages, or other concessions, or there’s some problem among them (such as two men fighting over a woman) |
| 2-6 | <i>Sickness:</i> illness strikes, affecting 1d6 x 10% of the expedition’s workers, and reducing their work capacity by (1d6+3) x 10% |

Table 3: Food Events

| Roll (1d6) | Event |
|------------|--|
| 1-2 | <i>Good Hunting:</i> The expedition enters an area with particularly good hunting. If the expedition takes a rest day, it can increase its food supplies by 1d6% this way, or the expedition can stay in that location for up to 1d6+1 days and feed off the land without exhausting its own supplies. |
| 3 | <i>Plentiful Food:</i> The expedition enters an area where it can easily gather food (fruits, nuts, berries, roots, and the like). If the expedition takes a rest day, it can increase its food supplies by ½d6% this way, or the expedition can stay in that location for up to ½d6+1 days and feed off the land without exhausting its own supplies. |

EXPEDITION ENCOUNTERS TABLE (continued)

- 4-5 *Poor Hunting:* The expedition enters an area with particularly poor hunting. Any attempts to gather food by hunting suffer a $-\frac{1}{2}d6+1$ penalty to the Survival roll, and may take up to three times as long.
- 6 *Scarce Food:* The expedition enters an area where it can gather very little food. Any attempts to gather food suffer a $-1d6+1$ penalty to the Survival roll, and may take up to three times as long.

Table 4: Natives Event

| Roll (1d6) | Event |
|------------|---|
| 1 | <i>The Gods Have Come To Us!</i> The PCs somehow fulfill some prophecy or look like the gods, so the local natives think they <i>are</i> gods! The PCs can milk this situation for all sort of help and gifts... assuming they don't expose themselves as frauds by failing to know the sacred lore, being unable to demonstrate expected divine powers, or the like. |
| 2 | <i>A Helping Hand:</i> The local natives are in a desperate situation and can use the PCs' help. Perhaps the chief's daughter is very sick, another tribe is attacking them, or there's a terrible monster lurking in the nearby jungle. If the PCs solve the problem, the natives will be very grateful! |
| 3 | <i>The Natives Are Growing Restless:</i> The local natives aren't openly hostile to the PCs... yet... but are definitely suspicious of them. The PCs might need to earn goodwill by handing out trade goods for free, awe the natives by demonstrating "magic" (such as a cigarette lighter or gun), or the like. |
| 4 | <i>The Natives Are Hostile:</i> The local natives are actively hostile to the expedition and will attack and/or rob it at every opportunity... until persuaded by force that this is a bad idea, or distracted by some problem. |
| 5 | <i>Trade Opportunity:</i> The local natives are reasonably friendly and definitely open to trade. |
| 6 | <i>Walking Over The Sacred Burial Ground:</i> The PCs somehow violate a taboo or custom of the local natives and earn their wrath. The PCs must either flee, do something to atone for their transgression, or convince the natives to back off (by show of force or other means). |

Table 5: Weather/Terrain Event†

| Roll (1d6) | Event |
|------------|--|
| 1 | <i>A Fine Day For A Walk:</i> The weather's particularly good for the expedition; increase the rate of travel by +0.1 km per hour. |
| 2 | <i>God Hates The Infantry:</i> Rain, snow, or other weather that's particularly poor for the expedition hits; decrease the rate of travel by -0.1 km per hour. |
| 3 | <i>It's A Bit Breezy Today:</i> A tornado, hurricane, or like event strikes. If the expedition doesn't find appropriate shelter fast, deaths and injuries will result. |
| 4 | <i>Look Out Below!:</i> While traveling through an appropriate area, the expedition gets caught in an avalanche, mudslide, sinkhole collapse, bridge breaking, or similar event. If the PCs don't react fast and well the whole expedition may come to ruin. |
| 5 | <i>Shaken, Not Stirred:</i> An earthquake hits the region, or a volcano erupts! Depending on severity this may be a mild inconvenience or bring the expedition to a temporary standstill. |
| 6 | <i>We Need An Ark:</i> Recent heavy rains have resulted in flooding! This may slow down or stop the expedition until the waters recede... or, if the expedition has boats, may make the journey easier! |

Table 6: Miscellaneous Events

| Roll (1d6) | Event |
|------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Meet The Mystic:</i> the expedition has some encounter with mysticism (e.g., a lone witch-doctor who pronounces a curse upon the PCs, stumbling upon a human sacrifice in progress, a religious experience...). Depending on the circumstances this may have a significant effect on the (highly superstitious) native hirelings. |

EXPEDITION ENCOUNTERS TABLE (continued)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | <i>Nazis... I Hate These Guys:</i> Nazi Germany somehow interferes with the expedition for its own evil ends. |
| 3 | <i>Someone Else Has Been Here:</i> The PCs find evidence of another expedition. It could either be one from long ago that failed (and which no doubt left behind clues to help the PCs avoid some danger), or a contemporary one that's competing with their's. |
| 4 | <i>This Isn't On The Map!:</i> The expedition comes across a strange or unexpected natural feature: a lake, river, or forest that's not supposed to be there; a towering rock jutting out of an otherwise featureless plain; or the like. |
| 5 | <i>When Animals Attack:</i> An animal or group of animals attacks the expedition for some reason. This might be a single beast (like a stealthy man-eating lion that drags off native bearers in the night), a stampeding herd of wildebeest, a school of piranha, or something even worse.... |
| 6 | <i>Who Built This?:</i> The expedition comes across some ruins or other strange, obviously man-made feature. It could be an ancient building, an obelisk, the broken fragment of a causeway or aqueduct, or something similar. Who knows what secrets... or perils... the PCs might encounter? |

*: Roll 2d6. The first die is a 1 (1-3) or 2 (4-6). The second die is read normally to generate a number from 1-6.

†: If the region or local geography isn't appropriate for the rolled Weather/Terrain Event, the GM can either ignore it or re-roll. These events' effects are in addition to the weather and terrain entries on the Expedition Travel Table, and should be interpreted by the GM using common and dramatic sense to obtain a fun result that contributes to the adventure. Typically any extreme Weather/Terrain result should only occur once per expedition unless common sense dictates otherwise (*e.g.*, a major earthquake could spawn several "aftershocks").

Be sure to take advantage of the roleplaying and adventure opportunities the Expedition Encounter Table offers! Native Encounters in particular can be a lot of fun; so can opportunities to demonstrate leadership to the expedition's laborers or finding strange, previously unknown man-made objects.

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