

# ASSIMILANT MENACE!



JACOB DC ROSS



Based on *White Star* by James Spahn, available from Barrel Rider Games, which is in turn based on *Swords and Wizardry Whitebox* by Matt J. Finch

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This book is dedicated to my wife, Amy, and daughter Ella, who are the reason that I write

Special thanks to every member of the *White Star: Whitebox Science Fiction Roleplaying* group on G+ and James M. Spahn

## ASSIMILANTS

This supplement is the first in a line of third-party books expanding the enemies found within the White Star core rulebook. It presents ships, encounters, adventure hooks and more.

Keep in mind that the multiverse is huge. If you decide that something presented here violates how Assimilants are presented in your game, feel free to change it.

## ASSIMILANT CULTURE

Assimilants began their existence thousands of years ago on a long-forgotten world. The entire civilization was uplifted when their culture attained the Singularity, which created a gestalt mind. The uplift was imperfect, and the minds split into factions, each led by a strong-willed individual.

These factions, called Swarms, fought for a time, although many simply fled to strike out on their own. Some Swarms are considered benevolent, and integrate any individual, so long as the individual is willing. Less charitable Swarms force prospective members to apply and undergo rigorous training. Certain Swarms see it as their mission to assimilate all living beings, and do so despite objections, though they attempt to minimize casualties. The most feared Swarms assimilate forcefully, and kill indiscriminately.

Each Swarm is led by a Monarch, who brings order to the myriad minds. They entrust control of ships and facilities to Overlords, who do the micromanagement. An Overlord's assignment is called a Hive. While a Hive can function without an Overlord, it does so at less-than-optimal ability, and a Swarm cannot function without a Monarch for extended periods.

## ASSIMILANT ENCOUNTERS

What does an Assimilant look like? They're basically humanoid with bits and bobs of mysterious metal poking through their skin. It's common for the vast majority of their skin to be covered in armor.

What does an Assimilant sound like? Their voices screech in a near-melodic tone. Assimilants speak in clipped phrases, and they tend to make unnerving eye contact.

What does an Assimilant smell like? Smell is a non-issue for Assimilants, which gives them a sweaty musk. Inside an Assimilant ship is almost unbearably hot and humid, with the aroma of body odor mingling with metal and lubricant.

## HOW TO USE THE ASSIMILANTS

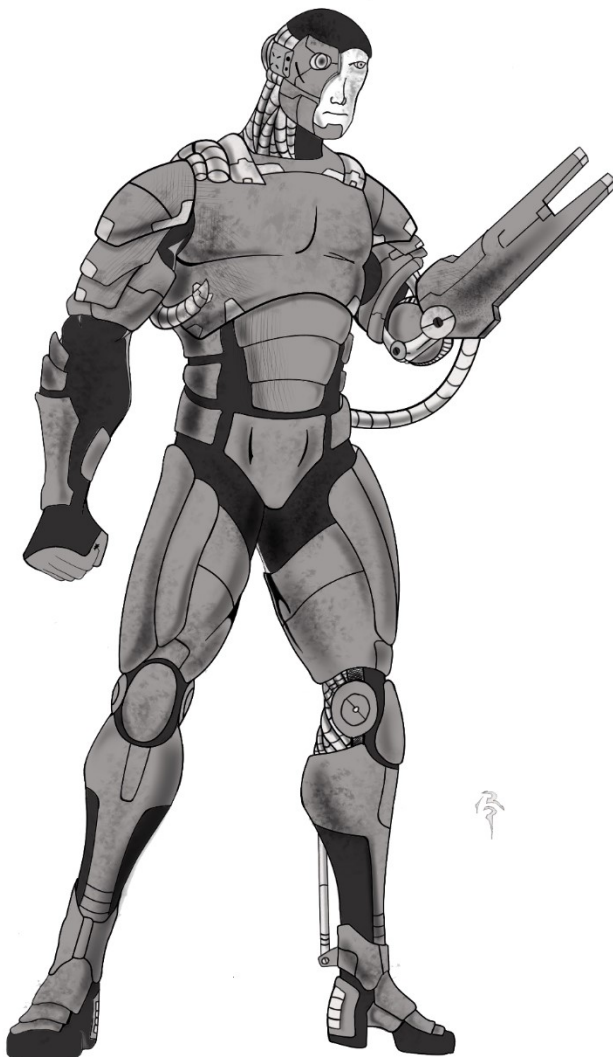
The race of cyborgs makes a natural antagonist for many games. They are suited for a variety of genres.

### SPACE OPERA

The Assimilants are a major threat, if they choose to take notice of lesser species. If you want to make them a monolithic menace, increase the shield rating on all of their ships by ten times the listed value. It'll take a lot of coordinated fire to bring them down. A single large Assimilant spider could pose a danger to an entire sector of space.

### HORROR

Make the Assimilants a less-common presence in space. Don't bother with using the premade ships in this book. Have them instead target other ships for conversion. Players exploring hulks in space are liable to face conversion if they wander unprotected. Horror Assimilants never speak, or at least they don't speak intelligibly. Don't hesitate to let loose with a chilling howl whenever they attack.



## ASSIMILANT FOES

### ASSIMILANT SERUITORS

This is the basic laborer and staff member found throughout various Swarms.

AC	5/14
HD	3
To-Hit	+3
Attacks	Internal Laser Pistol (1d6+2) or Slam (1d6)
Saves	16
Special	Laser Modulator
Movement	9
HDE/XP	3/75

The Laser Modulator negates all damage from a laser pistol, laser rifle or Star Sword on a successful save.

### ASSIMILANT WARRIOR

The Warrior caste is responsible for the protection of the Swarm. They are heavily armed and trained for combat.

AC	4/15
HD	5
To-Hit	+5
Attacks	Shoulder-Mounted Laser (1d6+6) or Slam (1d6)
Saves	14
Special	Enhanced Laser Modulator
Movement	12
HDE/XP	5/90

The Enhanced Laser Modulator not only deflects weapon fire on a successful save, but also reflects it back to its attacker on a natural 20.

### ASSIMILANT LOOT

Depending on how much damage was done to the body, Assimilants can be looted for cybernetic implants, either those found in the *White Star* core rulebook, or in this supplement. The nice thing about these implants is that they install themselves, usually in about an hour. The bad thing is that they've got tracking devices and have a nasty habit of trying to convert the rest of you. A skilled technician can remove the trackers, but it's still going to take a Saving Throw every hour for a full day to resist conversion.

## NODE BRAIN

Node brains are the pilots of Assimilant ships. Fighters, such as the Wasp ships, feature low-level nodes with the intelligence of a dog. Node Brains are assigned to ships of Spider size or larger.

AC	10/9
HD	2
To-Hit	+2
Attacks	Uses various ship-board weapons
Saves	12
Special	Pilot Proficiency
Movement	2
HDE/XP	2/30

Pilot Proficiency improves a ship's AC by 1, and causes all weapons to be pilot-linked (may fire two in a round, or forego movement to fire all in a round). It also improves their Save ability to 12, while a regular NPC of their HD would only have a Save of 17. These bonuses are built into the stats of the Spider. If the Node Brain is detached or killed, apply a penalty of 1 to the Spider's AC and none of the weapons are no longer pilot-linked.

## ASSIMILANT OVERLORD

The Overlord manages a Hive. They are ideal officers who command with total efficiency. While about as combat-effective even as Servitors, Overlords enhance the capabilities of their subordinates.

AC	3/16
HD	4
To-Hit	+4
Attacks	Integrated Laser Pistol (1d6+1) or Management
Saves	15
Special	Laser Modulator
Movement	12
HDE/XP	4/80

The Laser Modulator functions as the Modulator from the White Star Core book. On any turn the Overlord chooses to use Manage as their attack, all Assimilants within the Overlord's sight gain +1 To-Hit and Saves.

## ASSIMILANT MONARCH

A Monarch directs their personal swarm. They are the heart, soul and mind of the collected consciousness. Perhaps they are powerful individuals who bent the Swarm to their will, or perhaps they are manifestations of the Swarm's mind made physical.

AC	2/17
HD	7
To-Hit	+7
Attacks	Integrated Plasma Lance (1d6+3)
Saves	12
Special	Supreme Laser Modulator
Movement	12
HDE/XP	7/210

The Integrated Plasma Lance functions as a sword and a pistol at will. A Monarch's Supreme Laser Modulator functions as the Warrior's, but it reflects the attack back on 18-20.

### OVERLORD AND MONARCH INTRIGUE

Some Overlords (1 in 1d6) and Monarchs have Parasite Arrays, which let them mimic any being they see if they succeed a saving throw. It takes a save from the PCs to see through the deception. Overlords launched from a Parasite Queen (see Assimilant Wasp below) don't come with this modification by default, but any who do are severe threats. Some set up identities as merchants and sell Assimilant-tainted wares to unsuspecting colonies.

## ASSIMILANT SHIPS

Assimilant ships perform their duties for the Swarm. Like the Servitors, Warriors, Overlords and Monarchs, they are cybernetic beings, although they generally begin their life as machines and become more organic when they become fully operational.

## WASP DRONE

AC	3/16
HP	20
Shields	0
Movement	16
Targeting	+2
Attack	Laser Gatling (4d6) [pilot-linked]
Modifications	FTL Drive, Ion Charge, Laser Modulator

The Laser Modulator functions as an Assimilant Servitor's personal modulator.

## WASP QUEEN

AC	3/16
HP	25
Shields	3
Movement	16
Targeting	+3
Attack	Laser Gatling (4d6) [pilot-linked]
Modifications	FTL Drive, Shield Capacitor x3, Enhanced Laser Modulator, Drone Management

The Enhanced Laser Modulator works as an Assimilant Warrior's. Drone Management provides a +2 Shield bonus (and the effects of the Shield Capacitor) to any Wasp Drones under their command (max 4).

## PARASITE QUEENS

A Wasp queen may be a Parasite Queen (1 in 1d6 chance). The Parasite Queen has a single Implantation Missile, which is a combination of an egg and a computer virus. If it hits the missile delivers an embryonic Overlord, which grows to maturity in a day, and it also begins to probe the ship's computer (it won't act until the Overlord is mature). This can become a cat-and-mouse game of chasing the Overlord and finding his hideout before he completes a Node Brain (which can immediately cut off life support to kill the crew).



## ASSIMILANT SPIDER

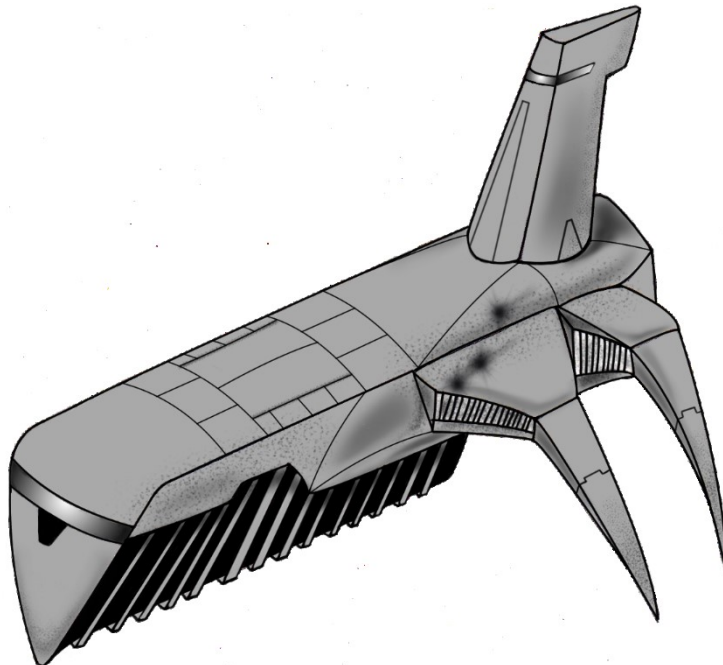
The Spider represents the Assimilants' main battleship. It's designed to capture and convert enemy ships and crew.

AC	4/15
HP	150
Shields	12
Movement	5
Targeting	+2
Attack	Laser Cannon (6d6) [pilot-linked] x4
Modifications	FTL Drive, Shield Capacitor x3, Supreme Laser Modulator, Tractor Beam

The Supreme Laser Modulator functions the same as a Monarch's.

## ABANDONED SPIDER

The players come upon a drifting Spider. It appears to be partially powered, but there are no life signs. As they explore within organic characters begin to manifest random cybernetic implants. Anyone with medical training can remove the tracking devices easily before they take root. These implants are actually harmless, until the players bearing them come into contact with an Overlord or Monarch. When this happens they have to save three times in a row to keep from being converted.



## CONVERSION

Assimilants convert others to their way, either through force or persuasion. The process of turning a human into an Assimilant takes about a day inside a Spider or at a Hive Base. It can be done in the field by an Overlord, Monarch or Wasp Queen, but the process takes a week away from proper facilities. Conversion suppresses the abilities of a Star Knight, Alien Mystic or other such character.

A Spider can convert ships or machinery into Wasp Drones, which produces a single Drone each week. A Drone can be upgraded to a Wasp Queen with a month's work. Hive Bases can produce a Drone in a day (and usually have space to make about 5 at a time), and a Queen in four days. Spiders can't make more Spiders, but Hive Bases can, at the rate of one per month. Captured ships that haven't been destroyed can be dismantled and made into ships using their current HP on a one-for-one basis, so an intact Stunt Fighter could be used to make a Wasp.

## VARIANT CONVERSION

Here are some ideas for mixing up the conversion process. Use them to represent the tactics of different Swarms or the atmosphere you want to convey.

## SHIP PARASITISM

Instead of dismantling ships and fabricating new ones from them, the Assimilants might convert ships directly to Assimilant control. The Assimilants board, disable the computer and install the Node Brain, which begins to take root and grow. The process takes one hour for every HP the ship has remaining. If the Hive doesn't have a Node Brain to spare, they'll take the captain, pilot or engineer (or perhaps all three, see Bits and Bobs below) and convert them to be a Node Brain (which takes one day). After this the

## BITS AND BOBS

Sometimes there just isn't enough organic matter to work with, so you've got to improvise. This process is a horrific alternative to using conversion bots on a living being. The bots go to work on multiple bodies (living or not) and use the material from all of them to form new organic bodies for the machine components. Somehow even though they get broken down at a cellular level, the resulting Assimilants bear uncanny resemblances to their various base donors.

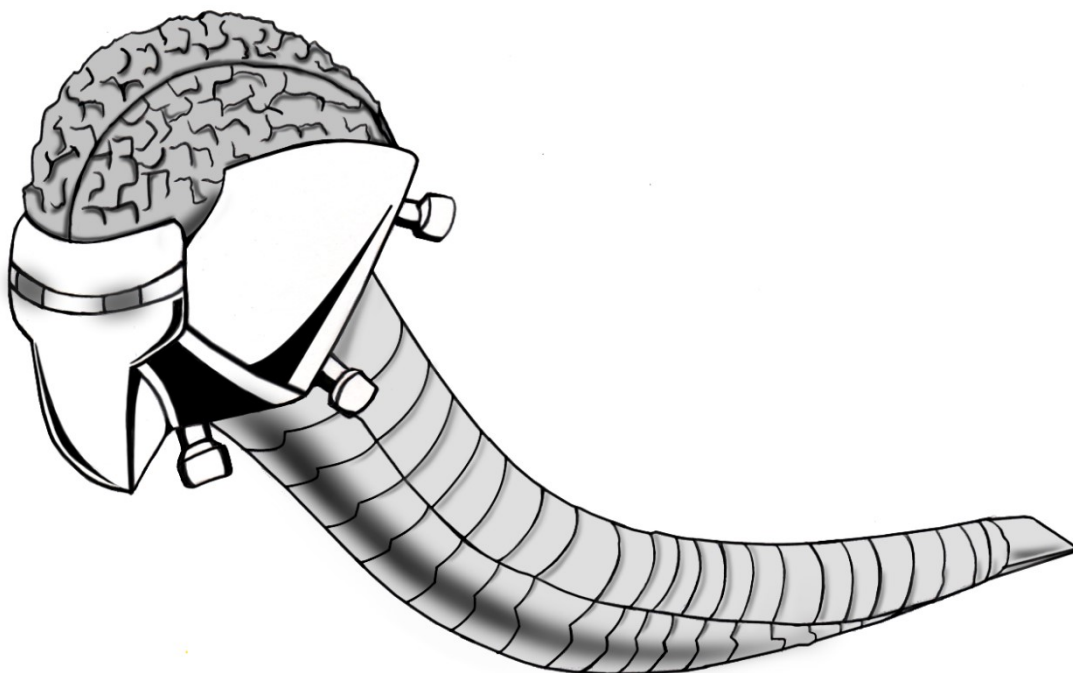
## UNDOING CONVERSION

Most Swarms modify a being's body to fit a base template. While this doesn't much affect a human, a sentient bear is going to look a lot different if he gets his conversion reversed. Reversible conversions don't quite bring everyone to the same appearance. Rather than similar-looking Servitors, each Assimilant looks much like they did in their previous life.

## *CONVERTING EXISTING SHIPS AND CHARACTERS*

To convert a ship to Assimilant tech, the biggest change you have to make is to install a Laser Modulator. Choose the type of Modulator that's listed on the ship closest in max HP to the converted ship. All Assimilant ships with shields have Shield Capacitors. Ships the size of a Spider or larger have Tractor Beams. Depending on how far along the conversion has progressed, a ship might look partly or totally Assimilant.

To convert a regular character or NPC, simply use the stats for a Servitor. If you want to preserve some aspect of the original, such as a skilled Pilot, feel free to make the new Assimilant a special case. Maybe they're a Node Brain now with access to all of their Pilot abilities, so you could just add the Servitor's Modulator and Laser but otherwise use the character as-is. If the Assimilants convert a Space Centaur you lose a lot of flavor if you reduce their Movement. In that instance it might be more fun to actually enhance their Movement, even if it doesn't fit in with the theme of plodding doom. While regular conversion destroys Gifts and Meditations, it could, at your discretion, instead change their nature, such as only allowing telepathic effects against robots or the like.



## ASSIMILANT HEROES

It's all well and good to fight against Assimilants, but what if you want to play as one? These classes, the Free Servitor and the Free Node Brain represent Assimilants who have been liberated from their Swarms, which allows them to easily integrate with mixed parties. You can also use them to portray simple cyborgs or integrated ship pilots.

## FREE NODE BRAIN

Node brains integrate with starships, although they could conceivably merge with a boat, mech suit or building. Node Brains have some restrictions, including the fact that they don't have a Strength rating, and their CON is automatically 5.

LEVEL	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1+1	+0	15
2	2,500	1+1	+1	14
3	5,000	2	+1	13
4	10,000	2	+2	12
5	20,000	3	+2	11
6	40,000	3	+3	10
7	80,000	4	+4	9
8	160,000	4	+5	8

## FREE NODE BRAIN ABILITIES

**Weapon/Armor Restrictions:** Node Brains don't move, so they are restricted from using any personal weapons or armor. The chamber in which they sit can be reinforced, and they can use vehicle-scale or stronger weapons, so long as they're installed on their ship.

**Integration:** Free Node Brains are aware of everything that goes on within their ship, provided there are microphones or cameras set up for observation. They have access to the computer, engineering and other functions no matter where on the ship they're located.

**Stick Jockey:** A Free Node Brain gains a +2 bonus to Initiative during combat.

**Node Management:** For every even-numbered level the Free Node Brain may designate one weapon as pilot-linked, improve AC, Targeting, Movement or Shields by 1.

**Integral Systems:** For every odd-numbered level after the first the Free Node Brain may either install a single starship modification or increase the ship's HP by 5.

**Changing Ships:** A Free Node Brain can change the ship they're attached to, but it causes the original ship to lose all bonuses. It takes a week to fully integrate, plus another week for each level after the first.

**Saving Throw:** A Free Node Brain gains a +2 bonus to resist damage from exploding consoles or computer viruses.

## FREE SERVITOR

Free Servitors are useful in many different situations. Their implants grow within them as they gain experience and they can direct their function to specialize in virtually any pursuit.

LEVEL	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1+1	+0	16
2	2,500	2	+1	15
3	5,000	3	+2	14
4	10,000	4	+2	13
5	20,000	5	+3	12
6	40,000	6	+3	11
7	80,000	7	+4	10
8	160,000	8	+5	9

## FREE SERVITOR ABILITIES

**Bio-Mechanical Bud:** You begin the game with 1 implant of your choice, plus an integral laser pistol (1d6+2) that can retract into your arm. You gain another implant of your choice at every odd level.

**Saving Throw:** A Free Servitor gains a +2 bonus to resist mental commands from any source.

**Free Overlord (6<sup>th</sup>):** You gain the ability to create your own cybernetically linked squad. You may implant a receiver in each member of the party (maximum 5 other individuals). All members (including yourself) gain +1 Initiative and -1/+1 AC while within about 100 feet from one another. Once per day one member can use a Saving Throw bonus from any other member.

## NEW TOYS

Assimilants and others have access to impressive augmentations. Here is a selection of a few.

### CYBERNETIC GLANDS

You can, once per day, give yourself a boost of adrenaline that provides a +1 bonus to all saving throws and attacks for three rounds.

### CYBERNETIC NOSE

You can detect pheromones to automatically tell a being's mood. This doesn't work on species that don't secrete pheromones.

### LIQUID FORTIFICATION

You don't decompress without a space suit, and regular solar radiation has no effect on you. It's a good idea to take cybernetic lungs, too.

## RIGS

Rigs represent full-body conversions. They are patterned into wild shapes and require specialized gear to place your body inside. This sometimes means cutting up your body so that only the torso or even just the head and spine are left. The rest of you stays in a preservation tank until you can be sewn back together.

For convenience just assume that your rigs all have the same capabilities as your base body unless stated otherwise. Node brains might be able to use these, just roll up a Strength rating to use. If the DM says that it's okay, you can customize your rigs with other implants. Among the Swarms Rigs are most commonly found as the personal toys of Monarchs and Overlords, with the occasional Warrior shock troop receiving extensive modification.

### CENTAUR RIG

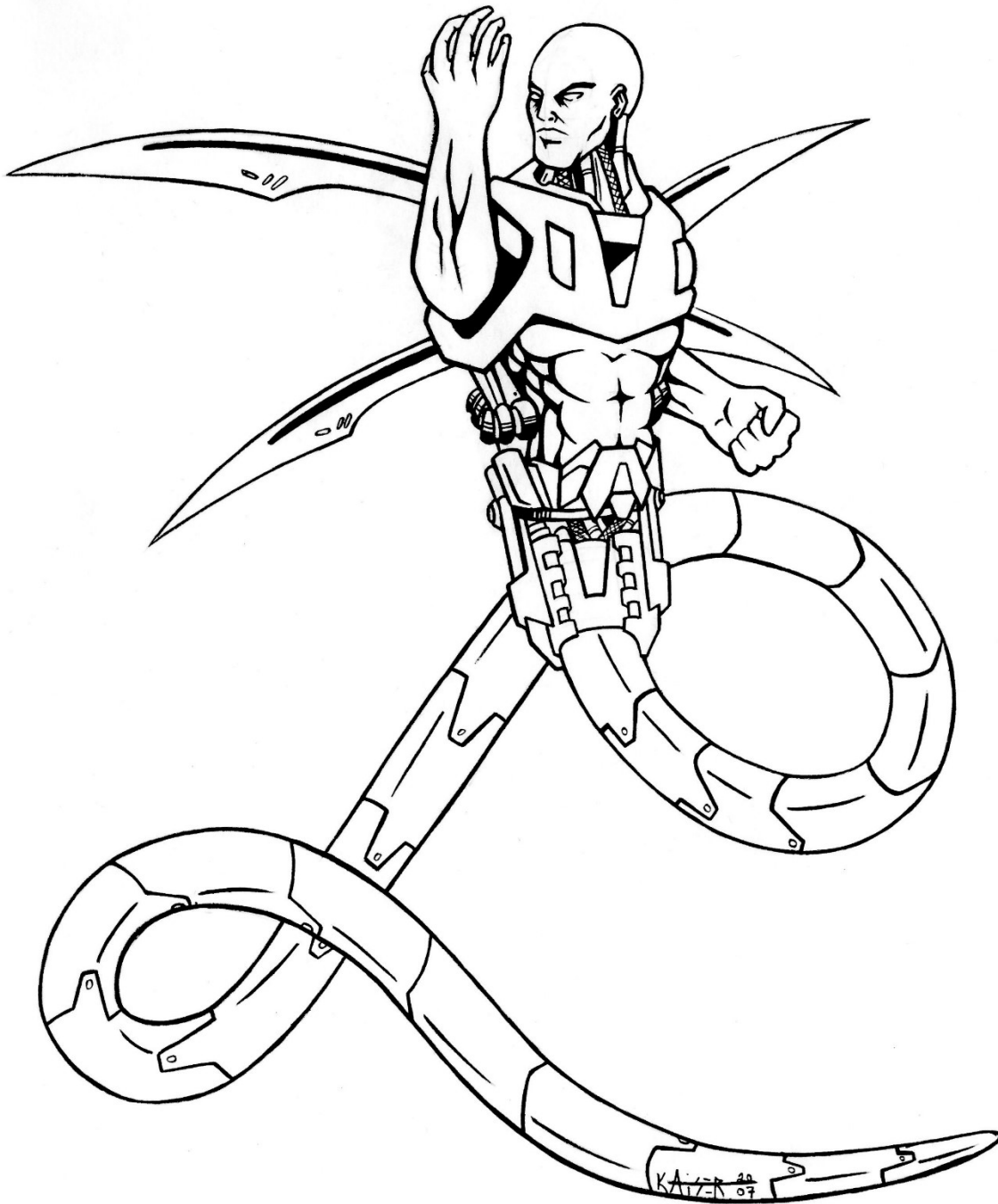
You replace your lower half with four fast legs. Your movement speed is quadrupled while you run. You can carry a rider who may attack with appropriate weapons.

### OCTOPUS RIG

You can breathe underwater, and your arms and legs are replaced with tentacles. The crushing depth of the ocean has no hold on you. Your tentacles can stretch up to ten meters.

## SERPENT RIG

You replace your lower half with a snake-like coil. If you want to, you can force an enemy to succeed a saving throw after you hit them with the tail (1D6+1) to hold them in place while you attack other beings. You can't move while you constrict the other foe, but you can make attacks against anyone in reach or in range of your guns. The enemy has to make a saving throw every round or take 1 damage (+1 damage if your strength is 15+). They can't do anything else until they succeed or you let them go.



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