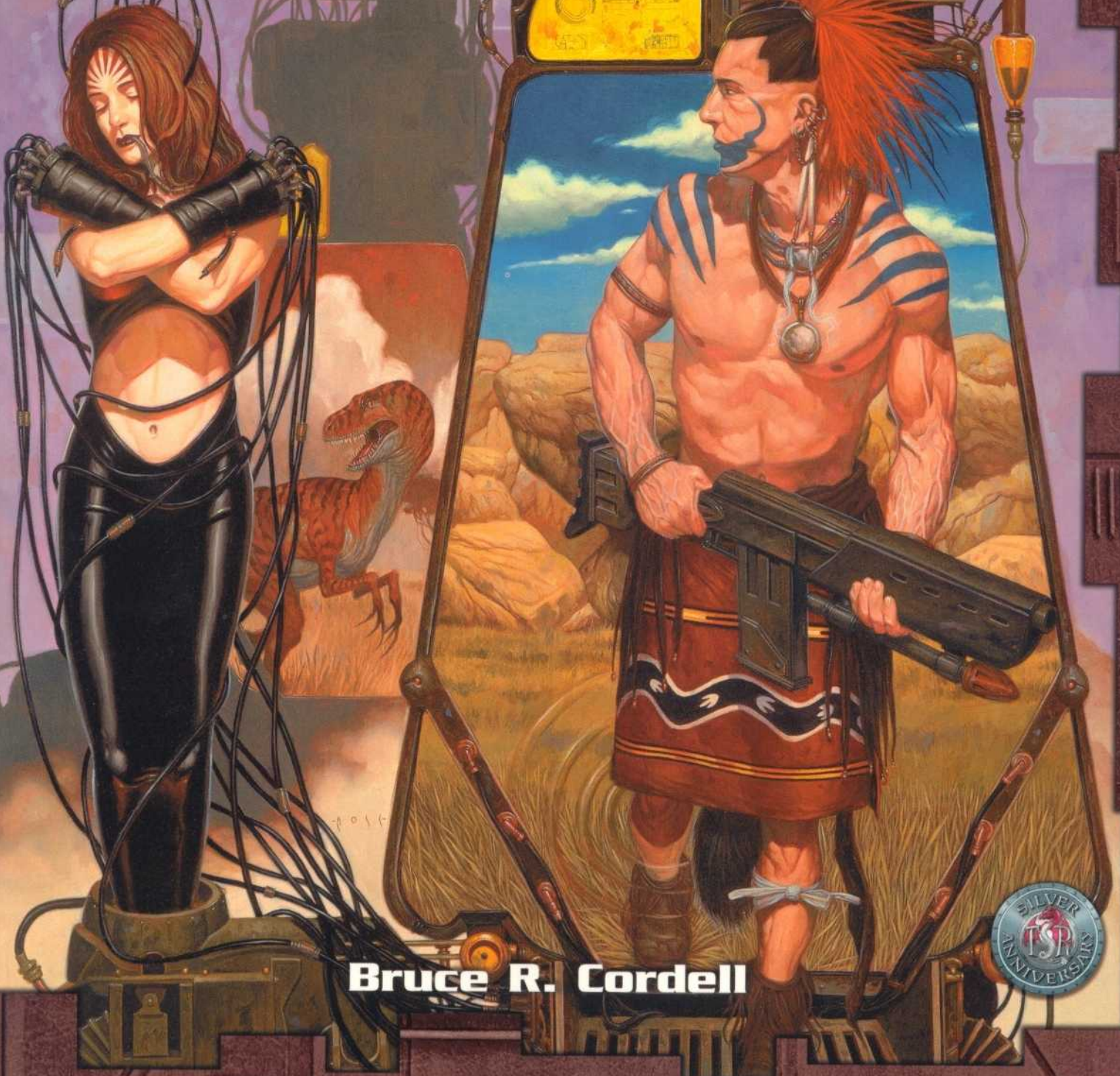


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ALTERNITY[®]

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game Sourcebook

TANGENTS



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ALTERNITY

TANGENTS

Bruce Cordell

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INTRODUCTION

"Our civilization is the product of a particular path our ancestors followed among the vagaries of historical alternatives. Had events of the distant past taken a slightly different turn, our surroundings and thought processes, what we find natural and hold dear, might be very different. Despite our everyday sense that things should of course be the way they are, the details of our particular civilization are extraordinarily unlikely, and it is easy to imagine a set of historical events which would have led to a rather different civilization."

—Carl Sagan, *Murmurs of Earth*

TANGENTS As A SOURCEBOOK

Albert Einstein predicted the existence of exotic black holes. It was also Einstein and his associate Nathan Rosen who determined that black holes are actually tubes that connect to other possible universes! But it was Martin Kruskal who was the first to map a passage to parallel universes.

Welcome to *Tangents*, a universal campaign sourcebook and adventure for the ALTERNITY science fiction roleplaying game. The material in *Chapter One: Of Parallel Worlds* provides you with the scientific and game theory that explains the existence of parallel worlds and how to use them in the ALTERNITY game. You'll also discover a few methods and items used for traveling across superspace (the term that refers to the collection of all parallel universes), over a hundred attributes describing a variety of tangents, the many dangers associated with tangent leaping, superspace anomalies, and a matrix for generating your own tangents on the fly when your heroes head off into the unknown. The sourcebook section also introduces a few known groups from other tangents that have access to tangent-

hopping technology, rules of tangent travel, and some advice for Gamemasters interested in subtly introducing the heroes into a parallel universe.

TANGENTS As AN ADVENTURE

The *Tangents* adventure found in *Chapter Two: Lucid Dreaming* is suitable for three to six moderately equipped heroes of any level; however, low-level heroes should refrain from meeting every challenge head-on. Likewise, a group with lots of high-quality gear (body tanks, heavy weapons, or resources from Progress Level 7 and beyond) could find some of the encounters too easy. It may be necessary to "beef up" some of the encounters if your heroes are particularly high in level or if they possess particularly potent or high Progress Level equipment. A group of six pregenerated heroes is presented on pages 94–95 for use in this adventure if your players don't already have appropriate heroes.

Prior to running the adventure, you should read it to familiarize yourself with the outline of events. Keep in mind the particular heroes your players are using so you can watch out for the special abilities and/or tactics they are likely to bring to bear. The adventure is nonlinear; that is, the events will not occur in a predetermined order. Instead, after beginning with "The Adventure" the heroes will move through four separate chapters in whatever order they prefer. Once the events of all four chapters have been resolved, move to "Adventure Conclusion" on page 92.

What Do You Need to Play?

This product is designed for the ALTERNITY science fiction roleplaying game. You'll need the *Player's Handbook* and *Gamemaster Guide*, but no other products are necessary to utilize *Tangents*.

Tangents at PL 5 and Beyond

Tangents is written from the viewpoint of a PL 5 (modern-day) Earth. However, *Tangents* can supplement any primitive, modern, or far-future setting. *Tangents* is also compatible with the *STAR*DRIVE* Campaign Setting (see "Xenoarchaeologists of Mantebtron" on page 46). The permutations of social and technological situations that follow from traveling parallel universes remain generally the same, regardless of the heroes' home Progress Level.

More specifically, the adventure presented in *Tangents* is written for PL 5 heroes; however, its setting is quite easily adapted to higher (or lower, for that matter) Progress Levels. Substitute the technological equivalents for the equipment and setting presented to match your campaign; locales, motivations, and the supporting cast remain the same. In fact, once the heroes leave their home tangent, the Progress Level and setting they've left behind becomes irrelevant. Thus, most of the adventure doesn't require any modification at all, regardless of the heroes' originating Progress Level.

CHAPTER ONE: OF PARALLEL WORLDS

"There were boundless, unforeseeable realms, planet on planet, universe on universe, to which we might attain, and among whose prodigies and marvels we could dwell or wander indefinitely."

—Clark Ashton Smith

The City of the Singing Flame

Do infinite parallel universes coexist with our own, each possessing qualities both like and unlike what we know as standard reality? In ALTERNITY, yes, it's a definite fact. But the theory of alternate parallel worlds is not pure science fiction. In fact, two independent theories simultaneously predict the possibility of parallel worlds: the theory

of relativity and quantum wave theory.

WHAT IS SUPERSPACE?

Superspace is everything. Superspace encompasses everything from local space, to the most distant galaxies and globular clusters, to the utmost limits of our own universe where strange and dark matter finally runs up against the final curb of space-time.

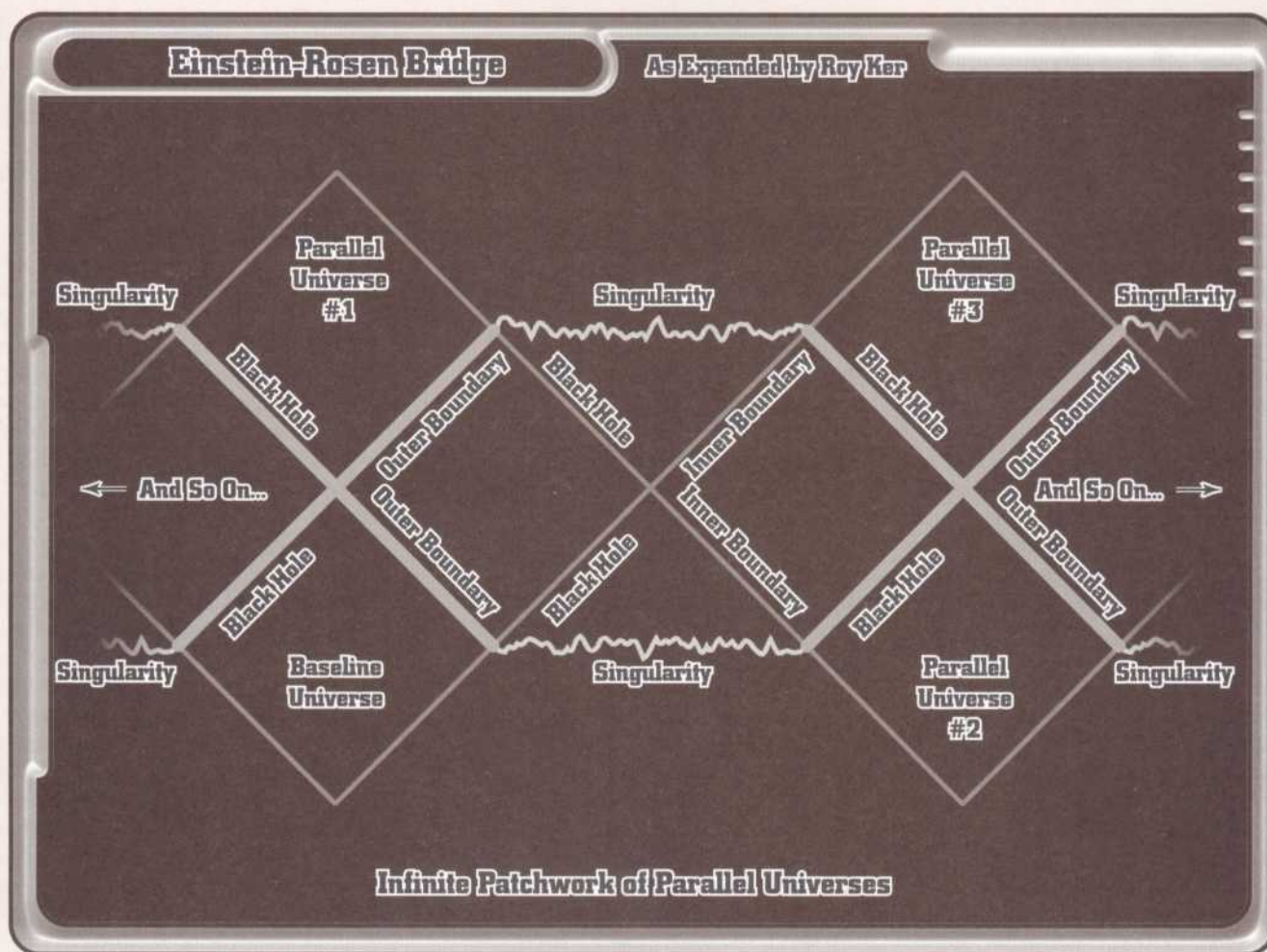
Superspace is more than just our universe, though: It is every universe. If there is a finite number of parallel universes coexisting side

Parallel Universe Terminology

When you want to talk about a particular universe that's not your home universe, you'd refer to a "parallel universe," the contraction "paraverse," or the term "tangent." Thus, a tangent is an entire universe comprised of billions of discrete galaxies; however, it is a universe parallel to your home universe.

by side like pearls on a string, every one of them is part of superspace. Even if there are an infinite





number of parallel universes (as there just may be), superspace is still the word you'd use to describe the whole lump sum in all its mind-numbing size.

Even though a tangent comprises a space which itself might be infinite, when discussing tangents, travelers of superspace usually only key on a single attribute to describe them. For example, tangent travelers on Earth generally stay on Earth (albeit a parallel Earth) during their superspace trips, and in every tangent they travel to, conditions on the parallel Earth are the only important factors on the trip. Thus, travelers may refer to alternate tangents with the following descriptive tags: the Wacky Haircut Tangent, the Robot Samurai Tangent, the Fire-Breathing Dragon Tangent, or the Tangent with the Good Chocolate. For those travelers who need more precise referents, a sophisticated method of classifying tangents is provided later in the text.

For now, let's get back to how scientists first suspected the exis-

tence of parallel universes in the first place.

How Relativity Predicts Superspace

The theory of relativity posits the curvature of space-time near any mass (space-time is literally space and time, each of which is a facet of the other in the continuum that makes up reality). The larger the mass, the more extreme the curvature. You can mentally picture space-time as a two dimensional grid made up of serried ranks of horizontal and vertical lines. In empty space the grid is perfectly flat, but if you throw a planet or two onto the grid it "deforms" like a rubber sheet, bulging downward where the mass lies upon it. The larger the mass, the deeper the bulge, and the greater the curvature introduced to the grid. For example, a star creates a much deeper pocket than a planet, but

something with the mass of a person hardly registers.

Remember that the grid represents space-time, so both space and time are deformed in the vicinity of mass. Of course, we're all familiar with how gravity feels (in a sense, gravity is curved space-time) but you and I otherwise do not notice space-time warps. However, if we ever had the opportunity to observe a burned-out star of just over 3 solar masses, we might notice something altogether different and strange: a black hole. A black hole is so massive that space-time curves to the breaking point. In fact, Einstein and Rosen predicted that the two-dimensional grid containing a black hole "outpockets" into a completely different universe! Put a spin on a black hole (actually, most are already spinning), and suddenly you have complex structure that might lead to an infinity of separate universes. See "Cruising Superspace" on page 25 for methods of safely traveling these corridors.

How Quantum Wave Theory Predicts Superspace

In the "double-slit" experiment, a single subatomic particle is shot toward a sensitive screen. Before the particle gets to the screen, however, it must pass a barrier that possesses two slits; the particle goes through one or the other of these slits and impinges upon the screen beyond. When one of the slits is closed down and the particle has only a single channel through which to travel, over several trials it actually impinges upon a larger surface area of the screen than when two channels to the screen were open. What does this mean? Take a look at the following example.

A cresting wave of water that flows past two piers breaks into two waves that destructively interfere with each other on the other side of the piers. The water particles that make up the two waves are dampened in some areas (and reinforced in others) before striking the shore. If the water wave remains whole without bifurcating (if no piers break it into two or more separate waves), no dampening occurs, and all the water particles strike the shore with the same force and frequency.

In a strange way, the particle in the slit experiment, though alone as it travels toward the screen, acts as if it were part of a wave front; i.e., as if it were one of many other particles all simultaneously shooting toward the screen. But, when it gets to the screen, sure enough, there is only one particle. Where are all these other particles, then?

Well, the simplest answer is also the strangest. If all these "alternative" particles are physically interfering with "our" particle, then they must really exist after all. But where? Why, in separate, but parallel worlds: "Our" particle is but one particulate in a wave composed of many particles across parallel worlds!

Of course, in at least some of the parallel universes encompassed by ALTERNITY, knowledge

and practical expertise concerning the many worlds of superspace is understood, and practical methods of utilizing this knowledge have been developed.

MAKING SENSE OF SUPERSPACE

If you're a scientist, and you discover that you inhabit just one of an infinite number of parallel universes, you are probably slack-jawed and glassy-eyed for a week! Once you've finally collected yourself, you realize that it's time to get back to science. What's the first thing you want to do? Classify superspace into a discrete and understandable (if arbitrary) structure, of course.

Scientists continue to argue about the "true" structure of superspace, each one suggesting a different "Grand Unified Superspace Theory." The theory with the strongest support has been dubbed the "Threaded Cluster Theory." It posits that each separate tangent universe is like a thread, a cross-section of which would show a particular moment in time. As you move "up" or "down" the thread, you move forward or backward within that tangent's timeline. (Though this product mentions the possibility of such a journey, the specific physics of time travel are best left for another day.)

In fact, if it were possible to view the entire network of superspace "threads" simultaneously, one could see how the various tangents branch apart from one another at various points in their history. Thus, cataclysmic events (such as a giant comet striking the Earth and triggering mass extinctions) serve as massive bifurcations of the threads, producing entire new clusters! It's generally accepted that only truly significant events result in the creation of new tangents. However, some posit that every action produces multiple tangents, but that those tangents immediately merge back together into a single thread. This produces interesting situations where a person "incorrectly" remembers a past

event—in truth, he remembers correctly, but the event occurred in a different tangent.

It is further theorized that if you could see all the way to the "bottom" of these clusters, you would find a point at which all tangents split off from a single central thread!

Tangents that share basic characteristics (called "attributes") tend to be clustered together, even wound around one another like many threads woven together to form a rope. Each cluster can hold anywhere from several dozen to many thousands of tangents, or perhaps even more.

Generally speaking, threads within a single cluster bifurcated relatively recently from one another (anywhere from a few seconds to thousands of years ago), as they share many historical similarities, but it's possible for an individual "thread" within a given cluster to have originated within a completely different cluster and "migrated" to its new location. Those educated in superspace theory theorize that tangents tend to "gravitate" toward those with similar attributes, occasionally "escaping" from another cluster. Of course, the reality must be much more complex, but it provides a suitable mental picture.

Each cluster is often referred to by a name that describes its primary attribute. For instance, the cluster dubbed "Egyptian Ascendancy" describes a group of tangents where the bulk of society on Earth generally resembles (or at least echoes) Egyptian architecture, beliefs, and creeds that died out in the Baseline tangent cluster. Within this cluster, however, tangents can be found where technology is equal to the Baseline tangents, tangents where the Egyptian states struggle against Nazi elements, and tangents where the predominant society on Earth is a blend of the two—Egytponazism. Ideologies that "compete" below the primary attribute are called secondary attributes.

As a traveler moves further from the cluster containing his home tangent, the tangents visited grow more and more unusual. This reflects what theorists have classified as the four "divisions" of tangent clusters:

Historical, Biological, Cosmological, and Fantastic (see page 7). If you could view a cross-section of all tangents in existence and color-code each of the four divisions, the resulting picture would look something like an amorphous bullseye, with each division forming a concentric ring around the center point (see the diagram on page 8). Remember that the "borders" of each division are not exact boundaries, as tangents frequently "cross over" these arbitrary lines as they move through time.

Note also that these divisions are relative, as inhabitants of different tangents define the tangents around them differently. For instance, a native of a tangent of sentient magic-wielding dinosaurs would define the tangents around his as Historical, even though to us, they are most definitely Fantastic.

Some researchers theorize that additional divisions lie outside the Fantastic. However, due to the incredible superspace distances involved, it is difficult to ascertain or even guess what broad divisions of superspace lie beyond those divisions noted above.

To further assist in cataloguing and studying parallel dimensions, researchers have devised a coordinate system to categorize foreign tangents. This system uses a simple x, y grid to establish a coordinate location for each tangent, using the home tangent as 0, 0. Some scientists further use the colloquial terms of east and west (for the x-axis) and north and south (for the y-axis) to describe tangents' relative positions to each other.

For example, 0, 0 is arbitrarily assigned to the home universe. Moving to the Paratemporal "East" or "North" (often abbreviated P-East or P-North) is designated with an increase in the x- or y-axis coordinate respectively, while the Paratemporal "West" or "South" is indicated with a decrease in the x- or y-axis coordinate. So, a tangent far to the Paratemporal West and slightly to the P-North might have the coordinates of -17.332, +1.759 (which would place it firmly in the Biological Division), while a tangent only a little bit to the P-East but far to the P-South might have the coordinates of +0.023, -22.708 (placing it

in the Cosmological Division).

Generally speaking, tangents are conceptualized as lying somewhere in a two-dimensional continuum. However, many tangent researchers further employ the z-axis to denote the dimension of time, with positive coordinates describing forward "motion" through time (and negative denoting the past).

Note that superspace continues on toward infinity in all directions, and divisions likely exist which are so strange as to be utterly inconceivable to the human mind (but probably not to whatever form of life inhabits them, if any).

While the two-dimensional model serves as a basis for understanding superspace, some tangent researchers instead rely on a the "Soap Bubble" model, which likens the collection of universes to a three-dimensional mass of soap bubbles. Each bubble represents a discrete tangent. The shared surfaces of the soap bubble represent space-time divisions between tangents. Note that each bubble is bordered by many bubbles. In a like manner, tangents are bordered by many parallel universes. Unfortunately, this particular model, while perhaps more accurate, doesn't provide a particularly easy way to catalogue tangents.

Tangent Clusters

As described above, a specific tangent cluster exists as a collection of tangents with the same primary attribute. Note that each cluster is given a single reference name, often extrapolated from the attribute description of the same name. Billions of individual tangents potentially lie within each class, and though some are so similar to others that hardly any difference at all exists, others vary wildly. The name given to each cluster merely serves as an overall defining characteristic (and that only for the reference point of Earth). Other characteristics (known as secondary attributes) blend and vary within each of these clusters to a lesser extent—some of these attributes may even include elements of other named clusters.

For instance, the group of parallel universes where the result of the

Cold War was a holocaust of nuclear fire is known as the "Nuclear Armageddon" cluster, even though in one of these tangents, the war was between Victorian-style Europe and a vast American empire ruled by the Aztecs.

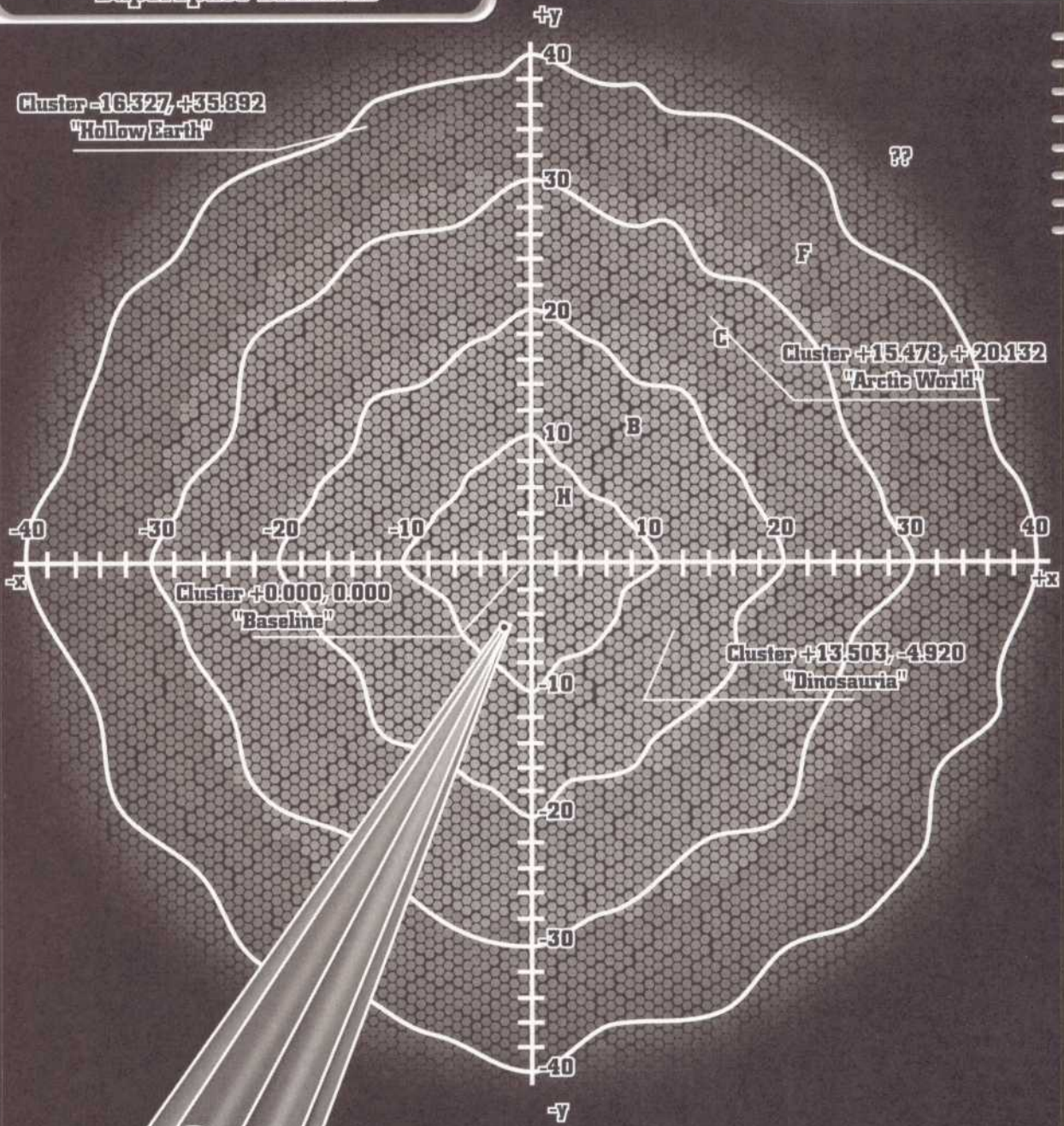
The Baseline Cluster

At various points, this text refers to the Baseline tangent or Baseline cluster. This is the tangent (or group of tangents) from which all other tangents are viewed by the heroes. It serves as the point of reference from which a GM (or the heroes) can stand in an otherwise infinite spread of universes. As such, most (if not all) tangents in the Baseline cluster will not have a primary attribute. Instead, the GM should roll one or more secondary attributes to reflect the minor differences between the new tangent and the heroes' home world. Of course, one Gamemaster's Baseline may be another's alternate universe. In general, *Tangents* was written from the point of view that the Baseline is contemporary Earth of PL 5 (except for the secret research being done on superspace travel). In most other respects, then, the Baseline shares characteristics with the "real world" with which you (and your players) are intimately familiar.

Divisions of Superspace

The four known divisions of superspace (as categorized by humans of the Baseline Cluster) are quite broad, as they are classified by their differences from the Baseline, rather than any similar attributes they might share. Remember that while the divisions seem sharp on the provided diagram, in reality, the border between tangent divisions is quite imprecise, as clusters tend to "move around" within their division, somehow "attracted" to tangents with similar attributes. For example, the otherwise Historical division "Egyptian Ascendancy" cluster might "brush against" a cluster in the Biological division and "pick up" a tangent where sentient feline humanoids rule an Egyptian-style world.

Superspace Divisions



Immediately below, the four tangent divisions are each given a brief general description. While four are given, there are undoubtedly more. Incredible distance and dangerously warping natural laws are the reason other divisions of superspace are not recognized at this time. For example, many scientists posit the existence of another "ring" around the Fantastic division that includes tangents with physical laws so unbelievably different from our own as to be deadly to humans (and similar sentient beings). However, just because other divisions are not listed here does not mean they do not exist within the infinity of parallel universes.

Historical

This division generally indicates the trillions of tangents where the presence of human beings is a defining characteristic. Differences between tangents within this division are generated purely by divergent events in human history. Different cultures may reign supreme, unusual governments may rule, and technology may have taken a different course, but humans are still humans. Virtually all the travel ever done in superspace by humans is confined to this division. In fact, a majority of the various attributes referred to below define primary attributes of the tangents lying in the Historical division.

Biological

For one reason or another, evolution has taken a different turn in tangents of this division. In some, humans exist, but are subtly changed. In others, humans walk the Earth alongside other sentient creatures. And in still others, humans (or perhaps even mammals) never evolved, and nature filled the void with sentient dinosaurs, sentient apes, or other sentient humanoid beings. In one cluster, insects developed an internal skeleton and organs enabling greater size, and thus insects fill nearly every niche from tiny pest to large predator to giant whale-sized seagoing insects! While the inhabitants of these tangents can be dangerous to travelers, the tangents

themselves are generally friendly to most lifeforms.

Cosmological

In this division, the solar system itself developed in different ways. Some variations may be major—such as the "NeverEarth" cluster, where our home planet never formed billions of years ago—while others are more minor, such as the "Arctic World" cluster, where Earth formed just a bit further from the sun and thus is trapped in a never-ending ice age. Obviously, these tangents can be quite hazardous to travelers, as the physical conditions on Earth itself may be deadly (or at least uncomfortable) to humans.

Fantastic

Outside the Cosmological division of superspace lies the Fantastic division. While most worlds in this division support life familiar to humans, the parallel universes here diverge from the ordinary in their bizarre variations of natural laws. For instance, in some clusters, humans possess strange abilities (that we might call magic or super powers), while in others Earth itself is a hollow shell, inside of which walk strange beasts of legend.

Some caution should be applied in traveling through Fantastic tangents, especially as one moves toward the "outer border" of the division. Natural laws that allow magic and other strange powers increase, while natural laws that technology relies upon become unpredictable. Unfortunate travelers could find themselves stranded on a tangent where only their most basic technological tools continue to function.

Beyond the Fantastic

A traveler who manages to move through the Fantastic division without mishap eventually discovers tangents where physical laws are so different that the biochemistry of life and thought itself are affected. Travelers without systems specially adapted to protect themselves from these effects (designed at PL 9 or higher) do not survive long, and soon fall into madness

Tangent Cognizance

The general public's understanding of tangents varies from world to world. Roll 2d6 on the table below to determine how familiar the denizens of any given tangent are with the concept of multiple realities.

2-3	Recognized by all
4-5	Known by some
6-10	Mythical
11-12	Completely unknown

Recognized by all: Nearly everyone on this world understands and accepts the existence of multiple dimensions, and the fact that travel between them is possible. Of course, their interpretation of exactly what those alternate dimensions are may vary.

Known by some: A limited number of individuals understand the concept of alternate dimensions. These individuals might be scientists, world leaders, seekers of the unknown, religious leaders, or any other group with access to unusual information.

Mythical: Though the concept of multiple dimensions is familiar to many people, most dismiss it as mere legend.

Completely unimagined: The inhabitants of this tangent are not only unaware of alternate dimensions, they don't even imagine such a possibility in legends.

and death. It is believed (though evidence is limited at best) that strange monstrous entities live, breathe, and gain sustenance from broken symmetries within this range; so far outside human understanding that using the word "alien" to describe them doesn't begin to address their "reality."

It is unknown what (if any) divisions lie beyond this region. Some predict that natural laws twist even further, possibly to the breaking point, and thus provide an actual "end" to the infinity of tangents. On

the other hand, it's possible that natural laws eventually move back toward superspace "standard," and that survivable universes exist beyond this region. Unfortunately, the lethal nature of the tangents outside the Fantastic division would likely prevent any exploration to the tangents beyond (if any).

Tangent Attributes

Tangent attributes describe the parameters of a specific tangent. These attributes include historical, societal, natural, mystical, and a host of other possibilities; a tangent often possesses many attributes. While a single primary characteristic defines the predominant conditions within a tangent, one or more secondary attributes serve to differentiate it from the other tangents within its cluster.

TABLE T1: TANGENT DIVISION

d20	Division (roll on this table for primary attribute)
1-5	Biological (TABLE T2)
6-8	Cosmological (TABLE T3)
9-10	Fantastic (TABLE T4)
11-19	Historical (TABLE T5)
20	Undefined or Baseline (GM's choice)*

* Undefined indicates that the randomly selected tangent lies outside the four known divisions of superspace; the GM is free to make a totally new division, or roll again above. Alternatively, the GM may decide that the tangent is part of the Baseline cluster, in which case no primary attribute is rolled (roll only secondary attributes as desired).

Gamemasters interested in spanning several universes during the course of the campaign will probably design many paraverses suitable for interesting adventures.

To aid in preparing some interesting and not immediately apparent mixes in your universes, a menu of a few possible attributes (out of an infinity of possibilities) is provided

Tangent Quirks

At the GM's discretion, he may decide to add a "quirk" of local natural laws to any tangent. These are believed to be attributes that have "leaked in" from tangents outside the Fantastic division. Four potential quirks are detailed below; the GM is encouraged to design others at his whim. In general, less than 1% of existing tangents will have such a quirk.

Adverse physical laws. Tangent locals are adapted to some natural law that is likely to adversely affect cross-tangent visitors. For example, the tangent world in question evolved in parallel, but the acceleration of gravity is thrice standard Baseline tangents, and could prove difficult or lethal for cross-tangent visitors.

Left-handed molecules. During the first few moments of the indicated tangent's creation, natural laws flip-flopped, resulting in a fundamental shift in molecular arrangement. This arrangement is not necessarily noticeable on a macro level, and cross-tangent travelers might not even find the visible differences common in alternative tangents. Unfortunately, those who unconcernedly eat local foodstuffs slowly starve, as the "left-handed" molecules that make up protein in the indicated world have no nutritious value for the visitors. Medicines, drugs, and other related substances have no beneficial effect on travelers. In addition, 10% of all substances consumed while visiting the indicated world are toxic. Natives of the world react in just the same way to food and medications given them by the travelers.

Stalled time. Indicated tangents are caught up in a superspace phenomenon of inexplicable origin, the effects of which have "stalled time" subjective to other tangents. However, due to the travelers' extra-tangen-

tial origin, they are immune to this effect—for a time. Thus, they can move freely through a frozen world, unable to affect anything in the tangent. In most cases, such a world will serve as nothing more than a museum exhibit to the travelers; however, it's possible that the heroes' presence might "restart" time. To determine the hero's effect on the tangent (and vice versa), a single hero should make a Resolve-mental resolve skill check every 24 hours while in the tangent (use the hero with the best mental resolve skill rank). On an Ordinary or Good result, the travelers maintain their normal temporal "identities." However, with an Amazing result, the timestream begins to reset itself, and within another 24 hours it will have resumed its normal rate. Of course, the natives won't have noticed a thing. With a Failure result, the heroes begin to lose their temporal individuality as their bodies slow down to match the tangent. This results in a +1 step penalty to all actions until they leave the tangent (multiple Failure results are cumulative). On a Critical Failure, the heroes become trapped in the tangent along with its natives, waiting for someone else to come along and save them. A wise traveler will exit such tangents immediately.

Temporal flux. Indicated tangents are caught up in a superspace phenomenon of inexplicable origin, the effects of which "speed up" or "slow down" time subjective to other tangents. To natives of the tangent nothing seems out of place, but cross-tangent travelers will note upon leaving that something strange has happened. While days may have passed for them, only hours (or perhaps months or years) may have passed on their home tangent.

TABLE T2: BIOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

1	Disease-free world
2	Humanoid dinosaurs
3	Humanoid insects
4	Longer/shorter lifespan
5	Other humanoid creatures
6	Overpopulated/ underpopulated
7	Plague world
8	Sentient apes
9	Sentient dolphins and/or whales
10	Sentient microorganisms
11	Sentient plants
12	Universal sentience

TABLE T3: COSMOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

1	Arctic world
2	Desert world
3	Drowned world
4	Earth missing
5	Earth pulled from sun's gravity
6	Forest world
7	Frequent dangerous storms
8	Grasslands world
9	Jungle world
10	Mountain world
11	Natural holocaust
12	Natural holocaust imminent

TABLE T4: FANTASTIC ATTRIBUTES

1	Arcane Magic FX exists
2	Faith FX exists
3	Earth/Sun is sentient
4	Hollow earth
5	Horror elements
6	Literary duplicate
7	Psionics common
8	Silly
9	Super Power FX exists
10	Technology doesn't work
11	Thin walls between tangents
12	War world, Fantastic

below as part of "Random Tangent Generation" below (with short descriptions of the listed attributes detailed starting on page 13).

Though the table is presented as a cohesive whole (including the generation of the superspace division), disregard its overall operation if it suits you, and merely select promising attributes to ascribe to your own world.

On the other hand, if you want to use the Tangent Generator as a complete idea resource, keep in mind that the scope of this product only allows the generation of a subjectively limited tangent con-

ception—filling out all the interesting details remains in the hands of the GM. And, of course, there are unlimited attributes not described herein; let your imagination run wild with possibilities!

Random Tangent Generation

When you wish to create the framework for a parallel universe randomly, roll d20 on TABLE T1: TANGENT DIVISION to determine the tangent's division.

Next, determine each tangent's primary attribute by rolling d12 on

the table appropriate to the tangent's division (as determined by Table T1). For each additional (i.e., secondary) attribute, roll first on Table T1 and then on the appropriate table of attributes below. It's recommended that you make one or two additional rolls in order to add some realistic "flesh" to your new tangent. Of course, you can roll more or fewer times if you like, possibly inventing a very strange world indeed. Re-roll duplicate results when rolling for attributes.

Example: The Gamemaster rolls a 12 on Table T1, indicating that the division of this tangent (and thus its primary attribute) is Historical. Moving to TABLE T5: HISTORICAL ATTRIBUTES, she then rolls a d12 and gets a 9 (Social Attribute). Since she's rolling on Table T5, she then moves to the appropriate subtable (in this case, Table T5E) and gets a 6 (Decadent). After determining this primary attribute, she decides to roll two secondary attributes. After a few more dice rolls, she has the following attributes: Decadent (primary), Sentient Apes (secondary), and Victorian Influence (secondary). After some quick thinking, she determines that the world in question is ruled by a corrupt British Empire that uses intelligent primates as slave labor. Heroes visiting this tangent will undoubtedly become caught up in vile political machinations or perhaps a slave revolt!

When rolling up attributes, two attributes may be indicated which seem to cancel each other out. In extreme cases, one of these can be discounted; however, it's usually possible to reconcile the discrepancy. For instance, if both "Armed society" and "Weapons outlawed" are indicated, it's possible that two antagonistic groups dominate the world, one where weapons are common, and the other on another landmass (or otherwise separated) where weapons have been banned.

Another possible occurrence is the combination of attributes of total disaster with more prosaic attributes such as "Art prominent" or "Gynarchy." Again, these attributes need not necessarily compete with one another. Instead, the prosaic attributes may describe elements of the world that existed before destruction (or war, pestilence, or

TABLE T5: HISTORICAL ATTRIBUTES

1	Alien Attribute (go to TABLE T5A)
2-4	Cultural Attribute (go to TABLE T5B)
5-6	Governmental Attribute (go to TABLE T5C)
7	Planetary Attribute (go to TABLE T5D)
8-10	Social Attribute (go to TABLE T5E)
11-12	Technological Attribute (go to TABLE T5F)

Table T5A: Alien Attributes

- 1 Aliens accepted as allies
- 2 Aliens conquered by Earth
- 3 Aliens integrated on Earth
- 4 Aliens worshipped as gods
- 5 Alone in the universe
- 6 At war with aliens
- 7 Caught in alien crossfire
- 8 Earth conquered by aliens
- 9 Interstellar government
- 10 Reservation planet
- 11 Secret alien subversion
- 12 Universe teeming with life

Table T5D: Planetary Attributes

- 1 Abandoned world
- 2 Aquatic cities
- 3 Disease-free world
- 4 Earth reshaped
- 5 Ecological collapse
- 6 Nuclear Armageddon
- 7 Overpopulated/ underpopulated
- 8 Plague world
- 9 Reservation planet
- 10 Urban sprawl
- 11 War world
- 12 Weather control

Table T5B: Cultural Attributes

- 1 African influence
- 2 Arabic influence
- 3 Central Asian influence
- 4 Central/South American influence
- 5 Egyptian influence
- 6 Greco-Roman influence
- 7 Medieval European influence
- 8 Indian influence
- 9 Native American influence
- 10 Nazi influence
- 11 Oriental influence
- 12 Victorian influence

Table T5E: Social Attributes

- 1 Anti-technology
- 2 Armed society
- 3 Art prominent/outlawed
- 4 Bigoted
- 5 Conservative
- 6 Decadent
- 7 Fiction prominent/ outlawed
- 8 Music prominent/outlawed
- 9 Polite
- 10 Scared
- 11 Sports & games prominent/outlawed
- 12 Weapons outlawed

Table T5C: Governmental Attributes

- 1 Anarchy
- 2 Bureaucracy
- 3 Communism
- 4 Gerontocracy
- 5 Gynarchy
- 6 Militocracy
- 7 Monarchy
- 8 Pedocracy
- 9 Plutocracy
- 10 Techno-capitalism
- 11 Theocracy
- 12 Ultra-capitalism

Table T5F: Technological Attributes

- 1 Android technology
- 2 Cloning technology
- 3 Genetic bioengineering technology
- 4 Longer/shorter lifespan
- 5 Machine intelligence
- 6 Missing major invention
- 7 Moon/Mars colonization
- 8 Nanotechnology
- 9 Primitive civilization
- 10 Technologically advanced
- 11 Technologically stalled
- 12 Virtual matter technology

comet impact) changed things dramatically. Elements of the previous society are still present, but are transformed by the nature of the specific disaster.

Note that all the attributes listed below are provided from a

Historical-division viewpoint; however, every one of them is easily mapped to one of the other divisions noted above. For example, in the Biological sequence, rolling randomly for attributes could conceivably create a world of Nazi dinosaurs

embroiled in conflict with alien (human) invaders from another star.

Finally, the GM may want to generate alternate planetary environments for the world in question. Generally, the GM can assume alternate worlds are Class 1 (see

page 197 in *Chapter 14: Campaign Architecture* in the *Gamemaster Guide*). On the other hand, the GM may wish to inject a bit more variety into the new tangent (or the tangent world in question lies outside the aforementioned sequences). In this case, the GM is encouraged to roll on TABLE G64: PLANETARY ENVIRONMENTS on page 198 in the *Gamemaster Guide*. This table and the associated descriptive text gives the GM extensive options for modifying the newly created planet, as well as describing the planet according to the GRAPH system, if desired.

Tangent Attributes Described

The attributes introduced in TABLES T2–T5 are described below. Feel free to enlarge on these ideas as appropriate for your campaign.

Abandoned world. The tangent world in question once possessed a civilization (described by one or more secondary attributes), but for

unclear reasons the world is now completely empty of sentient life, as if everyone had just “walked away.” Infrastructure, cities, and every other sign of civilization remains, but with no trace of the previous inhabitants—in the meantime, animals of all types have colonized empty cities.

African influence. A defining influence of the tangent world is that of one of the tribes or kingdoms of pre-colonial Africa. Note that only cultural elements influence the world—Progress Level is completely variable. The ivory kingdoms of the Middle Ages, ancient Ethiopia or Zimbabwe, or the more recent Zulu empire are good examples.

Aliens conquered by Earth. A twist on a more familiar theme (see the “Conquered by aliens” attribute), in worlds with this attribute Earth stands as the conquering power over one or more alien civilizations. Resistance against the human oppressors may be strong or weak, at the Gamemaster’s whim.

Aliens accepted as allies.

Regardless of Progress Level, the world in question possesses ties with an extraterrestrial race or races. Knowledge of the relationship is widespread, and the trade beneficial (especially to low Progress Level worlds).

Aliens integrated on Earth.

Whether the result of colonization, refugees fleeing another world, or the forcible integration of a conquered species, one or more alien races live among humans in relatively peaceful coexistence. Such alien beings may live as equals or may be treated as second-class citizens.

Aliens worshiped as gods. Far in this world’s past, aliens came to Earth and set themselves up as gods. In the thousands of years since, there has been little change in the natural inhabitants’ technological level from when the “gods” first appeared upon the world. The aliens merely possess PL 6 or greater technology.



Alone in the universe. At lower Progress Levels, the world in question suspects it, and at higher Progress Levels, it seems a proven fact: There are no other forms of intelligent life in the universe save for those on the tangent world. If other rolls for attributes indicate that there are indeed alien races, these races are hidden or have yet to be discovered.

Alternative humanoid species. Earth is home to a humanoid species other than humans. This species may be evolved from a different mammalian species, such as dogs or cats, or even something completely foreign, such as dinosaurs or insects! If this attribute is primary, then the alternative humanoid species is the only one present; otherwise, they share the planet with humans.

Anarchy. On this planet, the motto is "No Government is Good Government!" Whether by choice or simply by the inability to properly organize, humanity in these tangents doesn't have a coherent governing force. All that matters is personal power and one's ability to defend oneself from the predations of others. Any heroes visiting these tangents will likely have to defend themselves forcefully, especially if they carry expensive-looking gear!

Android technology. Certain elements of this tangent world use androids in all facets of their society: as workers, warriors, and even companions. This attribute only works at lower Progress Levels if natives who use androids represent some hidden force, or if the androids actually represent "homunculi" or "golems."

Anti-technology. For whatever reason, humans have outlawed all forms of self-powered machines. Muscle-powered machines of all types are completely legal, and in worlds of higher Progress Levels, amazingly efficient gear systems have been developed. Other worlds have solved this impediment through biological engineering (called "softtech" in some worlds). Some remnants of the past machine-oriented society may remain in hidden pockets, long deactivated but electronically awaiting some future machine

renaissance. Alternatively, some human-form machines could secretly exist as part of society, and perhaps even wield considerable power. Cross-tangent travelers who produce any machine (including vehicles) that smacks of being self-powered—or worse—self-aware, are immediately executed for having violated the Taboo of Mechanisms.

Aquatic cities. Relatively early on, humanity decided that the seas offered a promising region for expansion. As a result, numerous cities dot the surface and/or bottom of the oceans, and humans draw many resources from the sea itself. This attribute may or may not be associated with high population numbers (see the "Overpopulated/underpopulated" attribute).

Arabic influence. Significant elements of this world have an Arabian feel, modeled after the stories of Sinbad, Aladdin, or indeed, any of the stories in *A Thousand and One Nights*, regardless of the world's Progress Level.

Arcane Magic FX exists. On these tangent worlds, Arcane Magic FX (see *Chapter 16: Optional Rules in the Gamemaster Guide*) exists to some degree. On some such worlds magic is relatively rare, practiced by only a handful of learned individuals. On others, it's so common that every homemaker knows a few magic spells to keep the house clean. Most worlds will have a Heroic or Super Heroic tone (see *TABLE G72: FX ENERGY* on page 228 in the *Gamemaster Guide*).

Arctic world. Another ice age encroaches, or has already come. The tangent world in question has adapted in many ways to the cold and ice with changes in clothing, transport, and philosophy. Despite hothouse agronomy, the population is likely much lower due to reduced crops and animal ranges.

Armed society. These worlds put to the test the belief that such a society is by definition a polite one. On tangents with this attribute, everyone who can legally carry a firearm—which may include adults, teenagers, and even children—does so. While at first the heroes may relish this, especially if they enjoy carrying weapons,

the potential for any disagreement to turn into a firefight may well get tiresome after a while.

Art prominent/outlawed. Two versions of this attribute exist. The "Art prominent" attribute indicates that artists occupy the highest castes, and noncreative people of all types are looked down upon and discriminated against. In some tangents with this attribute, "noncreatives" are placed in reservation camps and regarded as morally bankrupt or evil. Cross-tangent visitors who can't produce an artistic or publishing credit are in trouble. In an "Art outlawed" tangent, all forms of artistic expression are seen as vain, obscene, and illegal. Any expression of creativity, be it written fiction, music, sculpture, or traditional illustration and painting, is punished with extreme penalties. On some tangents with this attribute, the penalty for an artistic endeavor is death. As is the way of things, artistic prohibition has created crime families and gangs that deal explicitly in black market art.

At war with aliens. Humanity (or whatever the prominent sentient species is) is at war with extraterrestrial (or extra-tangential) beings. This is an active conflict (though it may share elements with other attributes, such as "Conquered by aliens" or "Secret alien subversion"), that may or may not be taking place entirely (or even primarily) on Earth.

Bigoted. The indicated world is suffused with bigotry against one (or more) minorities, races, religions, cultures, or any number of other categories. Such worlds have gone to extreme lengths to act out their prejudice, including attempted (or successful) genocide against the particular target of unreasoning hate. Note that bigotry in some tangents could easily be toward the following otherwise unlikely categories: thin people, blue-eyed people, unpopular surnames, natives who have the genetic predisposition to "curl" their tongues, and so on.

Bureaucracy. On the indicated world, at some point the accumulation of rules, regulations, and red tape reached critical mass

and "took over." Now it's impossible to do anything without going through three or four bureaus and receiving authorization from a dozen administrative assistants or associate directors. It's not even clear any more who's in charge—the rules have become more important than the individuals involved.

Caught in alien crossfire.

Aliens of two or more species are engaged in a war, and Earth's inhabitants are the innocent bystanders. Interstellar spacecraft battle above the planet, while armies march across the world, caring little for those they displace along the way. Pockets of resistance exist, though it proves difficult to fight back against not one but two potential destroyers of the planet.

Central Asian influence.

Significant cultural elements of the world in question resemble such groups as the Mongols, Tartars, Uighurs, and related groups of nomadic herdsman with strong central organization. Even at PL 5 and above, the horse (or other appropriate mount) remains an important cultural icon.

Central/South American influence. Aztec, Mayan, Toltec (from what little is known), or Incan empires hold major influence in this world. The influence is cultural, and pervades selected cultures regardless of Progress Level.

Cloning technology. Tissue cloning is common on this world. In addition to cloning organs for personal use in the event of emergencies, complete clones are routinely used to fill out military regiments, for hazardous mining details, and any number of other dangerous activities. At lower Progress Levels, cloning is achieved through alchemical mixtures of blood, tissue from a mare, and other bodily fluids.

Communism. The capitalist regime fell before the dictates of communism. Significant portions of society are rigorously structured such that the State controls everything, and all are equal before the State. On some indicated tangents, ideal communism exists and all are relatively happy. On other indicated tan-

gents, corruption has made the State something to be feared, as the State suffers no criticism.

Conquered by aliens. Greedy eyes from other stars, another planet in the solar system, or even another tangent turned upon Earth and found it desirable. Indicated worlds are either caught up in a desperate struggle with their rulers, or have only recently been conquered by the Gamemaster's choice of alien. Particularly amoral aliens engage in genocide, while others may keep the original inhabitants of the world in reservations to use as slave labor, genetic stock, or food.

Conservative. In this tangent, even Ward Cleaver might seem freakishly out of place. Here, no one takes unnecessary risks, comes up with a groundbreaking idea, or says anything controversial. This could be due to any number of reasons—religious, political, or governmental—but the effect is the same. On this world, the heroes should stand out like a sore thumb, and will probably be identified as "deviants" and locked away in a mental institution (or worse).

Decadent. Sloth, indolence, and degeneracy afflict major portions of the indicated world. The most prized commodity is a good time, but society as a whole has become so jaded that it is doomed for an eternal search. Given even a determined invasion or other disruption, the civilization of this world is likely to topple (it is already backsliding under its own weight).

Desert world. Water is the most precious commodity in this world. Some indicated worlds are wholly overrun with sandy, water-parched deserts. In these worlds, society has adapted with desert-specific innovations and moved on. In other indicated worlds, desertification is a recent phenomenon and civilization is still dying, as some cities die of thirst and nations engage in total war over shrinking aquifers.

Dinosaurs exist. Some indicated worlds possess regions where dinosaurs never died out, while on others, dinosaurs were reintroduced through genetic engineering (whether known or secret, or in

large or small regions). Still other worlds somehow evolved humans and dinosaurs simultaneously; in some of these, many large species have been hunted to extinction, despite some groups' efforts to reintroduce the T-Rex back into its natural habitat over the objections of local ranchers. On other worlds, intelligent dinosaurs secretly exist on the edges of society. Generally speaking, these intelligent dinosaurs are no more than 2 to 3 meters tall.

Disease-free world. Medicine (including alchemy, magic, or herbalism) or perhaps just simple evolution long ago wiped out all forms of disease. Microbes and viruses are no more, and inhabitants die only of accidents and extreme old age. All's well, except in the event of the arrival of cross-tangent visitors, who are likely rife with bacteria and cold viruses. While a cold is nothing to a traveler, it is death to a local of a disease-free world. Waves of terrible plagues begin to spread within 24 hours of cross-tangent travelers' arrival.

Drowned world. The ice caps have thawed. In some worlds, this happened long ago, and the resultant society is quite integrated: Floating settlements, undersea cities, and underwater technologies are quite common. Water-breathing races are also possible. On other such worlds, however, the rise of the waters is a current or recent event; with the rising waters, whole nations are drowned, famine is common, and only those on extremely high landforms or with access to large watercraft may survive the catastrophe.

Earth missing. Cross-tangent travelers find that in the indicated tangent, the Earth (or the world specific to the GM's campaign) is not where it's supposed to be. Instead, empty space exists, which could prove lethal to some travelers. If this attribute is but one of many attributes, additional indicated societies exist in mammoth artificial structures protected from the ravages of vacuum near where the planet would otherwise be located.

Earth larger/smaller. In the formative years of this tangent's

solar system, the cloud of matter that coalesced into the Earth was a bit larger (or smaller, at the GM's option) than in the Baseline tangent. As a result, the planet that formed is a bit larger (or smaller) than what is familiar to the heroes. A larger Earth results in higher gravity, a thicker atmosphere, and shorter, stronger life-forms (including plant life). On the other hand, a smaller planet will have lower gravity, a thinner atmosphere, and life will tend to be taller and thinner than normal. The difference isn't too drastic—only rarely will worlds deviate from Earth's G2 gravity measurement (see "The GRAPH System" on page 62 in the *Gamemaster Guide*). Heroes unused to such conditions could suffer a +1 step penalty on their actions until they acclimatize (a few days at most).

Earth pulled from sun's gravity. Cross-tangent travelers come to a world that has been ripped from its normal gravitational mooring about the sun. Instead, it is in the grip of a nonradiating neutron star that snagged the Earth as an afterthought on its interstellar journey. The planet is covered in condensed water ice in the lowest layers, and other gases (like oxygen, carbon dioxide) at higher levels. If other attributes occur in conjunction with this attribute, indicated inhabitants exist in protected domes under the ice, near natural heat vents, while others live entirely within subterranean hollows of varying sizes.

Earth reshaped. Cross-tangent travelers arrive on what they at first believe to be a standard world; however, observation may reveal that the world is not a sphere. Variant shapes include a disc (with sun at the center, otherwise known as an Alderson Disc), a ringworld (with sun at the center), a covered ringworld (no sun required), a massive rotating tube (no sun required), a great sphere 1 A.U. across encompassing the sun (a fused Dyson sphere), and other variants from the GM's imagination.

Earth/Sun is sentient. In this tangent, one or more of the heavenly bodies in our solar system developed sentience! In worlds with the "Earth is sentient" attribute, some

twist of natural laws allowed our planet to develop intelligence—an interesting variation on the "Earth goddess" myths of many cultures. Such an intelligence might react poorly to ecological attacks by humans, responding with natural disasters or worse.

If the "Sun is sentient" variant is chosen, the sphere of light we know as the sun is really a massively complex object, incorporating several layers of various gases and plasmas. Communication between the layers is accomplished through both pelagic convection and speed-of-light electromagnetic currents. In the indicated tangents, the sun (and perhaps many stars in the sky) is a reasoning entity capable of sensing and interacting with its environment! Prominences are self-directed and can be used as magnetic "waldoes" of incredible force and reach. Other techniques available to a sentient sun include the lasing (through magnetic lenses) of high-energy particles, producing coherent beams powerful enough to blast a planet. Appeasing the sun god takes on an entirely new meaning on the indicated tangent world.

Ecological collapse. The wasteful practices introduced during the Industrial Revolution's origin run their logical course—the indicated world passes some indefinable threshold after which it is no longer able to naturally purge itself of accumulated poisons. Waste byproducts, ozone depletion, and massive species extinctions combine to bring the world to its knees. Warlords vie for control of a planet that nothing can save, while dying dreamers search for fabled habitats that retain vitality and life.

Egyptian influence. The indicated world is suffused with ancient Egyptian culture, icons, décor, and even philosophies. Nearby worlds retain Sumerian flavors, while others of this class hold to Babylonian influences. Even worlds that have attained a significant Progress Level retain their Egyptian ties (i.e., spacecraft resemble sphinxes, boats, and/or pyramids, while leaders are still referred to as Pharaohs).

Faith FX exists. On these worlds, miracles and divine intervention aren't just the stuff of legend; instead, the ability to channel the power of divine force is held by many people. Whether such miraculous powers are held only by a select few, such as religious or world leaders, or whether any average person can call upon spiritual assistance when needed, is up to the Gamemaster. Nonbelievers—such as the heroes—might be pitied, distrusted, or even hated. As with "Arcane Magic FX exists," most of these worlds will have a Heroic or Super Heroic tone (see TABLE G72: FX ENERGY on page 228 in the *Gamemaster Guide*).

Fiction prominent/outlawed. Like "Art prominent/outlawed," this attribute has two variations. In "Fiction prominent," the useful fields of history, science, and philosophy all give way to the art of storytelling in the indicated worlds. Authors are like kings, and those who can tell the best tale hold temporal power. Round-robin storytelling societies mimic political parties of other tangent worlds. Established authors in power sometimes send goon squads to "deal" with up-and-coming authors for fear of eventual displacement. Natives who aspire to greatness in these worlds must first look to their ability to tell a tale. In the "Fiction outlawed" variant, society has realized the terrible waste of resources and degradation of the mind that results in allowing its members to fritter away mental energy on topics that are intentionally false and "made-up." All literature, video, and other media have been destroyed in many of the major governments of the indicated world. Such pastimes are seen at best as a waste of time, and at worst, a criminal influence. Cross-tangent visitors caught telling a "story" or even a joke are in for a rude surprise when the Fiction Police descend upon them. The travelers' only hope may be to receive aid from underground tall-tale tellers.

Forest world. This world is so heavily forested that the dominant species couldn't hope to clearcut it in a hundred thousand years. Society is built around and within

the boles of mighty trees that grow triumphantly across the face of the indicated world. At higher Progress Levels, the trees reach gargantuan sizes through genetic restructuring, and may serve as space elevators. Some specially bred trees serve as the hulls for gargantuan interstellar craft.

Frequent dangerous storms. Meteorologists are at a loss to describe the source of the constant electrical storms that rage across most of the face of the indicated world. If these storms began just recently, the indicated world is not quite up to dealing with multiple lightning strikes that rain from the heavens. It's not a matter of if lightning will strike twice, but when. In a world long acclimated to frequent storms, buildings, transport, and even personal clothing bristles with grounding technology.

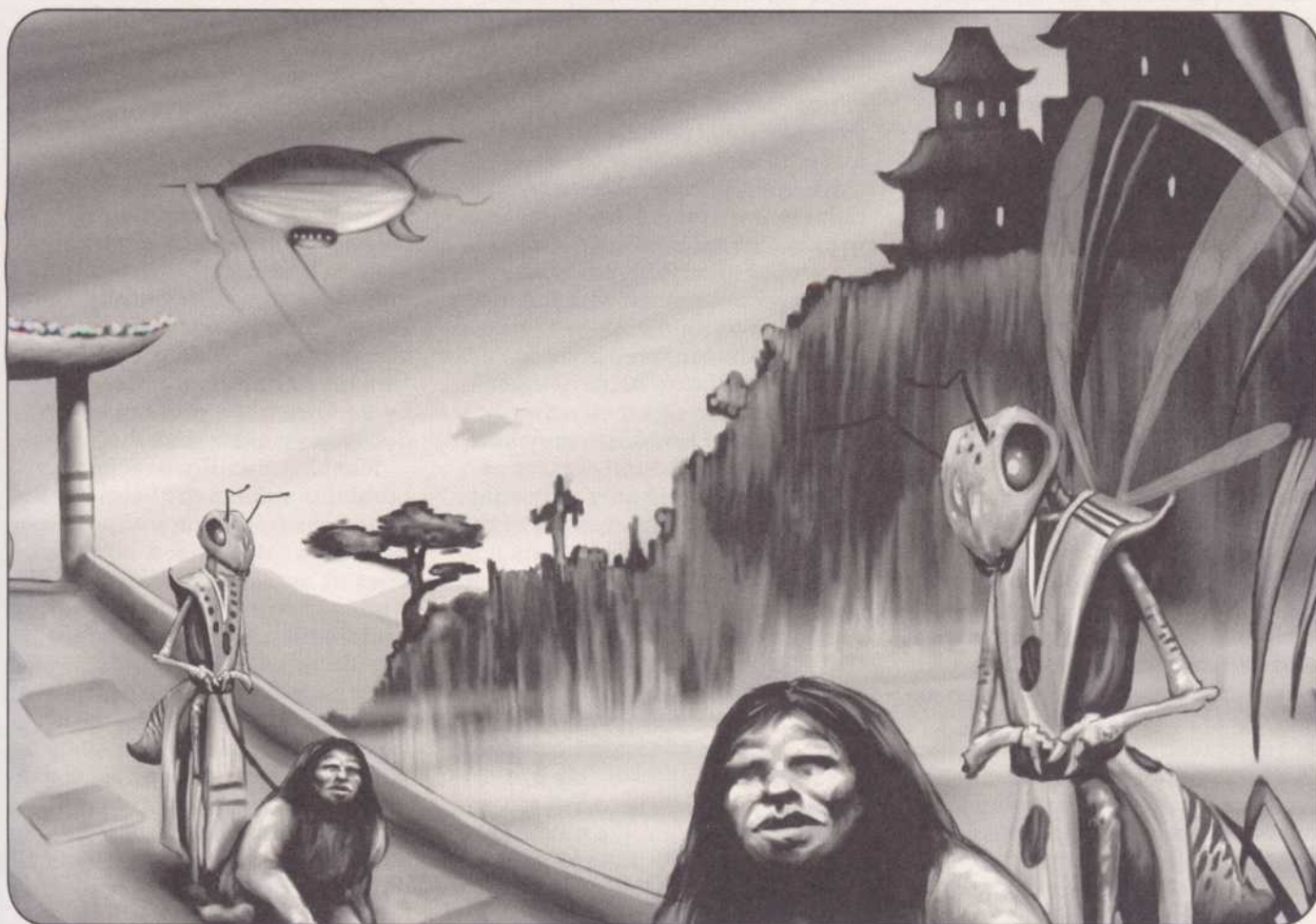
Genetic bioengineering technology. While genetic engineering exists on almost every tangent (breeding animals for desirable traits over many generations is a

form of genetic engineering), on the indicated worlds bioengineering is the mainstay. This trend had its inception in plastic surgery, but with advances in the appropriate technology, alterations in form and function have become a normal part of life. In some tangent worlds, changes are merely cosmetic and used primarily to fight disease, while on other indicated worlds, it's fashionable to "wear" bodies that are significantly changed from the human norm. Though extending the human life span is something that many genetic engineers strive for, it remains elusive. Some indicated worlds possess splinter races designed to colonize environments inhospitable to humans, and sometimes such races turn on their creators....

Gerontocracy. As the average lifespan creeps up in relevant areas of the indicated world, the preponderance of old vs. young increases dramatically. The very old rule and the young are akin to

second-class citizens. In fact, in some worlds full citizenship is only attained upon reaching 65 years of age. Groups of youths routinely attempt widespread violence against the segregated ruling communities of the very old, attempting to dislodge the seniors' hold on government but only widening the generation gap.

Gynarchy. Fed up with the problems associated with a male-dominated society, females completely govern the indicated world (or a large section of it). Males are not allowed to hold public office or high military ranks, though on some worlds they are still allowed a vote. Extreme versions of this world have herded men into concentration camps, where their particular talents are only brought into play when necessary. On yet other worlds, men have been entirely eliminated and exist only in legend. On such worlds, the species is propagated via cloning, genetic engineering, or some other unnatural method.



Hollow Earth. On such worlds, Jules Verne merely recorded the journals of real explorers to Earth's hollow core. A viable ecosystem exists below the surface in vast caverns, incorporating life from all the past epochs of the world. Gargantuan mammals coexist with even larger dinosaurs, and stranger things never discovered in the fossil record live in the hollow Earth as well. Seas that plunge to depths greater than any attained on the surface teem with all forms of life. Primate races whose evolution didn't culminate in the creation of homo sapiens also hunt these nether spaces.

Horror elements. Vampires exist, and so, too, do ghosts, the walking dead with a hankering for brains, and Things In The Earth. Paranormal elimination is a serious business run by an arm of the government, and only those most psychologically fit are allowed into its ranks. Of course, there are those who accuse the government of only eliminating some paranormal threats, while removing others for later study and exploitation (on some tangents, this accusation is absolutely true). Cross-tangent travelers had better take ghost stories seriously...

Indian influence. The indicated world is suffused with cultural influences of medieval India, regardless of Progress Level. The feudal set-up is rife with an incredible number of rajahs, moguls, and princes each governing over one of hundreds of small holdings (be they world-bound or large artificial orbital stations).

Insects dominant. Indicated worlds possess insects with internal skeletons and organs similar to lungs, allowing them to reach sizes normally restricted to mammals and even dinosaurs. These adapted insectoids exist openly and with little notice on some worlds, while on other worlds they exist in small areas where they have avoided extermination by fearful dominant lifeforms. Such a situation is sure to prove dangerous when the insectoids make a bid for dominance, relying on their incredible ability to reproduce quickly. This is compounded

on such worlds where the insectoids have developed vestiges of intelligence.

Interstellar government. In the indicated world, Earth is just a small part of a grand interstellar governing body. Earth might be a recent or long-standing member, and the planet's "tenure" in the organization will affect how much relative power it holds. In some situations, Earth might be in the final stages of the "galactic approval process," with the fate of humanity riding on the success of the planet's "application."

Jungle world. Climate is such that rainforests cover much of the indicated world. Some deep-seated cultural belief prohibits wide-scale clearing of these forests, and thus society is interwoven through massive jungles, even at high Progress Levels. Such societies possess an incredible store of herbal knowledge and medicines culled from plants that are exotic or even extinct in other tangent classes. In fact, the average lifespan of the dominant life form of the indicated world approaches two hundred years.

Literary duplicate. In an infinity of parallel universes, anything is possible, and in fact, everything exists. Given such broad leeway, there are tangents where Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street, worlds where John Carter fights across Barsoom, and paraverses where Saruman toys with the idea of making of Ring of Power for himself. Almost every book of fiction on the library bookshelf portrays conditions as they actually exist on some tangent somewhere in superspace, though classes of such tangents probably vary wildly, and many do not even lie in the same sequence. While many superspace travelers may seek out specific literary duplicate tangents, they prove devilishly difficult to track down. Moreover, distorted parallels exist on either side of the exact tangent sought. Thus, in many cases, indicated worlds possess literary equivalents combined with one or more other attributes on this table. Note that while this attribute is listed as Fantastic, the GM is free to place the tangent in whichever

division seems most appropriate for the "story" it portrays.

Longer/shorter lifespan. In the "Longer lifespan" version of this attribute, the true fountain of youth has been discovered (either literally or figuratively). Regardless of Progress Level, the primary inhabitants of the indicated world can realistically expect to live forever, barring disease or accident. On some worlds of this class, peace and universal harmony reign, but on others horrific wars occur following population explosions. Some worlds of high Progress Levels spread through the galaxy like a virus, using up resources at an ever-increasing rate. Societies particularly pressed for room that don't solve their problems through warfare are given to building massive artificial structures capable of housing trillions or more. Such structures could conceivably span interstellar distances. In the "Shorter lifespan" version of this attribute, humanity's desire for population control has resulted in a society where no one lives past a designated age, whether that is 21, 30, or any other number of the GM's choosing. This could be the result of genetic tampering, bizarre evolution, new laws, or a combination of the three. For whatever reason, individuals older than the specified age simply don't exist. If the age is less than the average age of the heroes, interesting (or dangerous) complications could occur as the "lawbreakers" are hunted down by a police force years or even decades younger than they were.

Machine intelligence. Early breakthroughs in artificial intelligence ensured the rapid proliferation of machine-based sentience, even as early as PL 5. Indicated worlds at lower Progress Levels contain hidden machine minds, possibly from other worlds, observing the advance of the low-tech inhabitants and interfering from time to time for their own purposes. On some worlds, mobile human-shaped "robots" are almost equals in society, while on other worlds of this class, genocidal war ranges against organic and machine life. Cross-tangent

travelers had best avoid planets where the machines have already won this war.

Medieval European influence. The indicated world reflects the prominence of landed nobility, various churches, and some secular "kings," even in worlds where Progress Levels are high. Castle architecture is common (even adapted to space stations and ships, if applicable) and knights are the figures that stories are told about (knights in high-technology tangents probably joust with proton lances and ride virtual destriers).

Militocracy. Military leaders run the indicated worlds (or large portions thereof). Often, militocracy leaders are prone to instituting universal martial law, especially if other militocracies exist that threaten supremacy, or if deposed elements of the past government somehow escaped execution.

Missing major invention. While civilization in this tangent has progressed along lines similar to our own, it is missing one major technological advance that we take for granted. For instance, an otherwise-modern society might never have invented the combustion engine. Thus, instead of consuming fossil fuels, they might rely on steam, solar power, or some other form of energy.

Monarchy. A single hereditary sovereign controls the indicated world, or a large portion of it. Some monarchies are tempered with laws, but on some tangent worlds, a single king rules the planet with unlimited, absolute power. Such rulers expect and receive unquestioning obedience. In the event of questions of succession, the resulting civil wars embroil the entire world.

Moon/Mars colonization. In tangents of this class, humanity has turned to the Moon and/or Mars to hold its ever-growing population. Depending on the other attributes rolled (or the GM's whim), such colonists did or did not discover life (possibly sentient) on these worlds. If intelligent life did develop, expanding humans might well have treated the primitive indigents as they've historically treated less-advanced cultures since

the disappearance of the Neanderthals. In these tangents, a mimicry of the "Wild West" exists on Mars, where the indigenous population is forever pushed back, wars rage, and frontier law is often rough and arbitrary.

Mountain world. Perhaps due to geological instability, or maybe just from accelerated continental drift, this Earth has almost no large areas of flat terrain. Hills, cliffs, valleys, broken lands, and mountain ranges occupy well over three-quarters of all dry land, and as a result, civilization is much different. Difficulties in transportation result in many small, isolated communities developing their own ways of life. Groups of people only a few hundred miles apart might never even have met! Large-scale farming is near-impossible, limiting the explosive population growth that resulted from improved agriculture. Of course, such a world would also create varying technological paths to answer its new needs.

Music prominent/outlawed. Like "Art prominent/outlawed," this attribute has two variations. In "Music prominent," if you can't hold a note, you had better conceal that fact in the indicated world. Music is the preferred method of communication and the best composers and/or performers are the real movers and shakers, holding the highest offices and commanding the most exceptional perks. In other tangents, characters in "musicals" are given to breaking into song when joyful, sad, or experiencing some other strong emotion. In this tangent, regular people on the street do the same with no embarrassment. In fact, such behavior is expected, and cross-tangent visitors who can't unanimously join in soon come to be regarded as defective, and may be rounded up and placed in seclusion due to their unhealthy influence on minors.

On the other hand, in "Music outlawed," rulers of society saw no immediately useful value in musical composition and have outlawed it. All albums, tapes, CDs, DVDs, 3Ds, and other media for storing music have been destroyed (through secret caches

may still exist). If you're caught whistling a tune while you work, you could be slapped with a fine. Cross-tangent visitors caught singing a song, or worse, producing prerecorded music of any type, are in trouble.

Nanotechnology. The problems of scale that hamper the development of nanotechnology were overcome early in the indicated world—even at PL 5, crude nanotech can be had on the open market. One of the most widespread uses of nanotechnology is for construction and fluid landscapes and/or fluid implements. Construction is achieved by programming a single miniscule unit with the blueprints of the structure to be built. The unit then multiplies at an exponential rate until sufficient miniscule units exist to build the structure, like trillions of Egyptian slaves toiling at gargantuan pyramids. Fluid structures are composed completely of nano-units, and change composition and shape via predetermined voice programs or voice orders. Fluid items are much the same; however, they are usually far more limited in the number of different modifications allowed due to total volume.

Native American influence. Colonizing Europeans were not up to the task of taking a continent away from the indigenous peoples, though there was much bloodshed before this fact was conceded (and on some worlds of this class, these wars rage still). In worlds of less than PL 5, the Americas remain mostly in control of native peoples at historical technological levels. At PL 5 and above, Native Americans develop technology in tandem with Europeans, though this technology is suffused with Native American icons, culture, and philosophy.

Natural holocaust. Earthquakes (or some other equally destructive natural force, such as a comet impact or extreme solar activity) have caused disastrous results to the planet. Newly formed seas swallow whole countries in only minutes, volcanoes erupt where once there were wheat fields, and chasms open below large metropolitan areas. Survival is difficult, and warlords and other opportunistic forces common to other

disaster scenarios are far less likely to develop, at least in the short term. Disasters claim too much attention on a personal level for power-grubbing individuals to organize and retain a power base.

Natural holocaust imminent. As "Natural holocaust," but the event is scheduled to occur in the very near future. Imagine the world-wide panic that would result from the knowledge that the sun was to go nova in only a few months, or that geological instabilities indicated that half the volcanoes around the Pacific "Ring of Fire" would be erupting in the next year!

Nazi influence. The Nazis rule the world, and their twisted dreams of racial purity have driven many cultures into complete extinction. Africa has become one big concentration camp, where the Nazis ship all who can't claim Aryan blood and all who would dare to speak against the Reich. Hitler and his twisted heirs won WWII, and now their rocket research (never pilfered by the Americans in this tangent class) has propelled them into the stars. Cross-tangent visitors without the proper papers (and those who are obviously not of Aryan descent) had best move on to a cleaner tangent as quickly as possible.

Nuclear Armageddon. The Bay of Pigs crisis—or some equally tense situation—was a match set to tinder, setting off WWII in this class of tangents. In some tangents, nuclear retribution was fierce and the bombs rained thickly enough to scrub all life from the orb, leaving naught but a radioactive cinder swinging blindly and without hope around the sun. Cross-tangent visitors to these worlds are in danger of residual radiation (see TABLE G19: RADIATION and TABLE G20: RADIATION EFFECTS in the *Gamemaster Guide*). Generally speaking, these tangents have a radiation level of R4 or R5.

Some worlds of this class got off a bit more lightly, and some life remains; in some tangents, even human life. If the nuclear rain was recent, the desolation remains strong and life brutal and hard, with many survivors succumbing to radiation sickness and/or starvation every day. If the

destruction was at least thirty or more years in the past, habitable regions host primitive societies (though some lost technological artifact now and then comes to light, and weapons always seem to be the most common artifact of an earlier time). Mutations have crippled many and sterilized even more, but life goes on. In some tangents (especially tangents that are near or within the Fantastic sequence of superspace), mutations are more likely to prove beneficial, possibly even providing strange abilities or powers to their owners.

Oriental influence. The indicated worlds contains many elements familiar to medieval Japan or China, with samurai and warlords common even at high Progress Levels. High PL samurai adhere to the same strict codes as their predecessors, and live as simply; however, their weapons are potentially technologically enhanced, as is their armor.

Overpopulated/underpopulated. This attribute has two variations. The population of "Overpopulated" worlds continues to grow geometrically, passing 5 billion, then 10 billion, 20 billion, and then 40 billion before draconian methods of birth control are finally enforced by governments around the globe. Food resources are strained to the limit, even with the advent of advanced hydroponics first developed for the Mars mission. Only those of tested and proven genetic superiority are allowed children, and then only a single child. All other citizens must undergo enforced sterilization. Illegal fertiles, as they are called, are hunted by a special branch of the government authorized to use deadly force. Cross-tangent travelers would be considered illegal fertiles if their reproductive status were revealed.

On the other hand, "Underpopulated" worlds are woefully empty of sentient life. Civilization exists in small islands amidst a much vaster wilderness controlled only by Mother Nature. On some tangents, the underpopulation is the result of planning, war, or plague and thus the signs of a much higher population are still visible. For

instance, a city built for two million souls that currently holds only ten thousand residents is obviously hollow and underutilized. On the other hand, some worlds of this class just aren't as populated as worlds of the Baseline class, and never have been (at least within recorded history).

Pedocracy. The indicated world is mostly (or completely) governed by the intelligentsia: scientists, philosophers, and other well-educated people. Politics as it is known and understood in many other tangent classes is a thing of the past here. Government officials are chosen for their contributions to science, philosophy, medicine, and other learned disciplines to serve terms of varying length. Elections and multiple terms are unheard of. Generally, such societies are enlightened nirvanas, given no other competing or conflicting influences. On the other hand, such rulers may also ignore the needs of "the common people" in favor of elegant solutions that don't work in real life.

Plague world. An uncontrollable plague grips the indicated world. A common plague in the class is an airborne form of "flesh eating bacteria" called hell's breath. The breath resists antibiotics and was intentionally developed through biological weapons research for its rapid onset time (5 hours) and mortality rate; 80% of those exposed to it die within 24 hours as the bacteria cannibalizes their cells. This is a sight as terrible as it sounds.

Enclaves of the uninfected survive in tightly patrolled perimeters away from large cities, killing all trespassers out of fear of contagion. Most of the large cities are burned out and home only to infected populations that act no better than animals, killing each other with eager abandon out of some hope that fresh blood from others will appease their own infection for a time. Other populations exist of horribly disfigured carriers whose symptoms last for years before death finally claims them. Finally, some individuals exist with a proven immunity. These immune few attempt to gather together and start their own

enclaves, but the infected ever seek them out for hope that their blood may be the cure they need.

Cross-tangent travelers are likely susceptible to hell's breath unless of a completely different species.

Plutocracy. The indicated world, or a large portion thereof, is ruled by the wealthy. The control is either direct, in the form of some sort of ruling council made up of the heads of the 500 largest megacorporations, or indirect, where government officials or leaders are bought outright and perform only as puppets to the will of their masters. Some worlds in this class may exist totally on the precept that money is the only power, and corporations are their own small nations. One would then be both a citizen and an employee of a particular megacorp.

Polite. Polite behavior is the oil that greases the "ball bearings" of society. On the indicated tangent world, this fact has become law. Cross-tangent travelers immedi-

ately notice how impeccably polite everyone is, even when they happen to be at odds with the natives. Unfortunately, if travelers are not equally polite, they are likely to be incarcerated for a period of enforced instruction of The Golden Rule. At lower Progress Levels, brainwashing techniques are useful, and at higher Progress Levels, neurosurgery and implants might be deemed necessary for the edification of the travelers who didn't say "thank you."

Primitive civilization. The primary inhabitants of the indicated world never progressed beyond the hunter-gatherer level of social development (PL 0). Technological visitors are likely to be viewed as gods, or possibly as thieves of the gods' tools. If this attribute is indicated in conjunction with other higher Progress Levels by multiple rolls on this table, the additional attributes indicate hidden enclaves. Alternatively, society once existed at the indicated Progress Level, but

turned back either through willful choice, devolution, or some other mysterious factor.

Psionics common. Early on, this world recognized and began studying the importance of the mind and its hidden abilities. A mental renaissance ensued, and all the arts of the mind were recognized and exploited in everyday society. Telepathy, precognition, telekinesis, and a thousand additional abilities are common. In the current time, every contributing member of society has some mental ability to which they can lay claim, and in fact use as a sign of the advancement along the next evolutionary step. Sadly, those without any psionic capacities are viewed as genetic dead ends. On some worlds, natives who can't even manage simple psionic empathic contact are shipped to special locations where they can live out their lives amongst their own kind. Cross-tangent travelers are in danger of being selected for just such treatment.



Reservation planet. Humanity has moved on to richer planets, unsullied by thousands of years of human destruction and waste. That is, all of humanity has moved save for the criminals, degenerates, and those otherwise deemed by the majority as "unfit" for common society (for example, non-psionics of the previous entry may end up here). As such, the indicated world is a broken down, polluted, and generally dismal reflection of the Baseline tangents. Hope is rare, but despair is free.

On other tangents of this class, it is all of humanity that has been judged "unfit" by alien beings. These alien forces have forced humanity to remain upon the world of its birth, never to join the galactic society of advanced species.

Roman influence. The icons, philosophy, and architecture common to the historical Roman Empire of the Baseline tangent class suffuse the indicated world, even at high Progress Levels. The Roman Republic is renowned for roadways, for bringing peace (*Pax Romanum*), and for safeguarding known space with hordes of invincible legionaries. But Roman influence has its dark side: slavery, bloody arena fights, and the tyranny of mad emperors.

Scared. The average citizen of the indicated world spends his day in a state of low-grade terror. The particular reason for this fear is up to the Gamemaster (and may be suggested by other attributes), but the effect is the same: individuals the heroes meet will be jumpy, paranoid, and nervous. Ironically, this will likely create the same condition in the heroes, even if they don't know why...

Secret alien subversion. Unbeknownst to most of the primary inhabitants of the indicated world, aliens from other planets of the same tangent (or aliens from different tangents completely) secretly entwine their agents and agenda into society. On some tangents of this class, the aliens work in conjunction with splinter groups of the government, while on other worlds, the aliens work against the government. Depending on the particular infiltrator species, the good of human-

ity is either being worked toward or undermined. On some tangents, alien subversion is so complete that the world is literally ruled from behind the scenes, using an array of technological methods to keep the masses unaware of their influence.

Sentient apes. Through evolution, genetic tampering, or colonization, apes gained intelligence on the indicated world. What's more, they now dominate large portions of said world. If this attribute occurs in the Historical sequence, the apes exist alongside humans. However, it may be that humans in such situations are completely eradicated, or exist as mere slaves. It's also possible that humans native to the indicated world have devolved culturally to the level of animals. The apes will hunt cross-tangent travelers, seeing them as threats to their power, and will eagerly confiscate their equipment, if possible.

Sentient dolphins and/or whales. Partnership with intelligent marine mammals has allowed the dominant life form of the indicated world to inhabit the seas with almost as much success as on land. Citizenship in the floating cities and oxy-water enclaves is not decided by species, but by intelligence. Thus humans, dolphins, and even whales are full voting members of society, though their agendas and needs sometimes compete with those who were bred for dry land. Note that there is just as much room for questionable motives and downright evil in the mind of a whale as there is in the mind of a human.

Sentient microorganisms. What if one-celled organisms were intelligent? On indicated worlds, genetic research has created smart cells; all that "unused" DNA is useful after all. In some worlds, smart cells are tightly controlled and programmed, functioning somewhat akin to nanotech robots. On other tangent worlds the controls (if any ever existed) crash, and intelligent cells begin to take over the macro world. Every living creature becomes a potential galaxy for sentient cells. The dominant life forms on these worlds have a fight on their hands

as the cells that constitute their own bodies rebel, if infected with the "smarts."

Sentient plants. It's a good bet that on this world, the three little pigs found something other than straw or sticks with which to build their houses. Here, intelligent trees communicate with hive-mind grasses, while friendly shrubs and prickly rosebushes share recipes for soil mixtures. If this is not a primary attribute, then the plants share Earth with humans, who are careful to pay attention to signs proclaiming "Keep Off The Grass."

Silly. The indicated world has progressed along social pathways that travelers from other tangents could only call "silly." For instance, on some worlds of this class, intelligent animals make up a segment of society. On others, schizophrenic computers control society, governing in frivolous and contradictory ways. Travelers had best not mistake silly for harmless—in fact, many a traveler has been lulled into a false sense of security by patently absurd situations, only to realize too late that silly can also be deadly serious in the end.

Sports & games prominent/outlawed. Like Art prominent/outlawed, this tangent attribute has two varieties. In "Sports & games prominent," the highest ideal that all hope to attain is to be a professional athlete. Premier athletes live like kings, and those who can win three out of five in any a popular physical sport hold temporal power. Sports teams mimic political parties of other tangent worlds. Established athletes in power sometimes send goon squads to "deal" with promising athletes for fear of eventual displacement. Natives who aspire to greatness in these worlds must first look to their physical ability. Alternatively or concurrently, depending upon the tangent in question, success at intellectual games confers a similar high social standing.

In "Sports & games outlawed," society recognizes the playing of sports, and worse, the watching of sports as a waste of mental resources. Furthermore, societal leaders can't countenance the loss

to productivity that sports bring. Football, baseball, basketball, and all other physical sports are just plain against the law. Such pastimes are seen at best as a waste of time, and at worst, as a criminal influence.

Alternatively or concurrently, depending upon the tangent in question, playing nonphysical games is also prohibited. Poker? A financial risk. Board games? Better to really live "Life" and to actually corner a market "Monopoly" than to only pretend to do so.

Roleplaying games? The worst offenders of the lot, these insidious games are "linked" to schizophrenia and murderous impulses. Those caught playing games are soon visited by jackbooted thugs in the employ of the government branch responsible for keeping its citizens "game free."

Super Power FX exists. As with the "Arcane Magic FX exists" attribute, this indicates the presence of certain FX abilities in the natives of this tangent. Such "super powers" may be relatively rare or very common, at the GM's discretion. Remember that just because such abilities exist doesn't require dozens of people to put on bright costumes and fly around town, though that's certainly an option. As with the other "FX exists" tangent attributes, most worlds will have a Heroic or Super Heroic tone (see TABLE G72: FX ENERGY on page 228 in the *Gamemaster Guide*).

Techno-capitalism. In the tradition of sci-fi cyberpunk literature in the Baseline tangents, indicated tangent worlds are pervaded with techno-capitalist megacorporations that control society. For the most part, "the net" is the primary arena for commerce, entertainment, and daily existence. Artificial intelligences roam the net like gods, and countless virtual realms provide ample opportunity for adventure and fun. If this attribute is indicated in tandem with a low Progress Level attribute, the cyberpunk influence exists only in limited or secret enclaves.

Technologically advanced. The indicated world possesses technology of at least two Progress Levels above the Baseline

tangent. If this result is rolled in conjunction with low Progress Level results, the high PL society is hidden in a secret enclave, or possibly part of a "ruling class" that doesn't share the fruits of technology with the surrounding, subjugated lands. Such lesser cultures exist at a Progress Level at least two steps below that of the ruling society. The technological elite generally reside in small communities segregated from the "rude" accommodations and lands of those of lower Progress Levels.

Technologically stalled. The indicated world exists at least two Progress Levels below the Baseline tangent. Nothing but the vagaries of history have stunted the Progress Level of tangents in this class. If this result appears in conjunction with elements of higher Progress Levels, see "Technologically advanced," above for tips. Cross-tangent travelers should avoid confusing low PL worlds with stupidity. Residents of such worlds are usually every bit as savvy as those in possession of advanced technology, and in many cases, are capable of devising elaborate schemes to get their hands of this technology, usually at the expense of the current owner.

Technology doesn't work. A convulsion of natural law retards the transmission of electrons through metallic and superconducting materials in the indicated world. Biological systems are not affected, but not even simple calculators work in the parallel world. Some worlds of this class incorporate other exceptions of natural law, invalidating other common technological processes, including natural laws that rely upon the flammability of fossil fuels and/or the flammability of gunpowder (normally composed of potassium nitrate, charcoal, and sulfur). It's possible that items made off tangent with "banned" technology will work on the indicated world, if the item itself doesn't require any "banned" process in order to operate.

Theocracy. The indicated world is completely (or mostly) ruled by or subject to religious authority. In some cases said authority takes

the form of a "god-king" who claims divine blood (whether true or not), while on other worlds, rulership is held by a council of priests (or similar religious intermediaries). Although some worlds of this class are benignly ruled by the theocracy, in many cases the theocracy uses its "god-given" power to eradicate unpopular, heretical, and other disliked groups and philosophies. Who knows? In worlds occurring within the Fantastic division, god-kings might very well possess the divine right to which they lay claim.

Thin walls between tangents. Tangents of this class suffer from thin dimensional walls separating one tangent from the next. Effects include those as subtle as disturbed dreams that show images of neighboring worlds to as dramatic as rips in the fabric of space-time that provide temporary conduits between the affected tangents. Usually, thin-walled tangents "cross-pollinate" each other, sometimes allowing seeds, small organisms, small items, and sometimes even small areas to slip from one tangent into that of another. Legends similar to that of Avalon could be the result of just such an occurrence of thin walls that later firmed up. To those accustomed to slipping back and forth between the realms, it might appear that Avalon just "slipped away" from the real world, when in fact Avalon is part of its own 'real' world.

Ultra-capitalism. On the indicated world, everyone works for "the company." The concept of a nation-state is ancient history (or unknown); instead, the planet is dominated by one or more megacorporations that rule according to the bottom line. If the heroes can't prove they're "employed," they may be in for a difficult time. Don't confuse this with "Techno-capitalism," which has a distinct cyberpunk aspect—these worlds simply exemplify capitalism taken to its logical extreme.

Universal sentience. On this tangent world, sentience has evolved in virtually all life forms larger than rodents, from birds and fish to elephants and whales. The political aspects alone are

staggering—how many political parties are needed to address the needs of so many species?—and the social, technological, and other factors of life prove equally interesting. The heroes will be in for a surprise the first time they shoo a flock of pigeons away from a bench in the park...

Universe teeming with life.

Almost as soon as radio was developed, messages of obviously extra-terrestrial origin were overheard. Tangents of this class are filled with life, and much of it is sentient. In fact, the sentients of the local galaxy (numbering in the thousands) have participated in a Galactic Accord stretching back some four billion years! This vast span of time has proved more than sufficient to allow many races to evolve (or receive as a gift) sentience, reach prominence in the Accord, decline, then disappear forever. Thus, in tangents of this class, planets at low to middle Progress Levels are probably utterly ignored, and only at Progress

Levels of 6 and above are they even noticed. Even when admitted into the fellowship of the Galactic Accord, young species are cautioned against angering the older members, lest the young species be "accidentally" exterminated by routine hyperspace conduit routing.

Urban sprawl. Due to overpopulation, poor planning, or just a lack of respect for the planet, the spread of cities nearly covers this tangent Earth. Concrete and steel structures stretch across entire continents, and patches of green are as rare as diamonds. Depending on the civilization's outlook on the natural world, they may or may not view this as a bad thing, but the heroes are likely to be taken aback the first time they try to walk to a location "just across town."

Victorian influence. On the indicated world, the sun has truly never set on the British Empire. Victorian sensibilities are still the norm, and it's almost certain that the American colonies remain

British. Who knows? Perhaps medical breakthroughs have even allowed Queen Victoria herself to remain on the throne!

Virtual matter technology.

Physics describes space as seething with erupting virtual particles, apparently springing from nothingness only to be annihilated by their twins. Virtual particles that spring into being near the extreme curvature of space-time associated with black holes are sometimes separated: one of the pair falls into the black hole while the other radiates as energy. On some tangents, the technology exists to artificially segregate virtual particles without resorting to extreme gravitational effects. As such, artificial structures can be created that are mostly composed of virtual matter! Such structures include walls, ammunition, and ship hulls. Using virtual matter in construction has the advantage of sidestepping mining/fabrication, procurement, and refining that normal construction



material requires. Of course, it has the disadvantage of being subject to evaporation if the power source holding the virtual matter pairs in isolation for a particular object or structure is disrupted.

War world. Those cross-tangent visitors who escape with their lives often characterize this class of tangent as "war worlds." War constantly rages across the length and breadth of the lands, instigated in some far-off century over some long-forgotten feud. Now, war has become a way of life for most, though legends persist of a hidden land where the smoke of destruction does not constantly mar the skies with the stink of death. Ruined cities, blasted battlefields, and the hulks of long-abandoned war machines stretch from horizon to horizon, offering only poor shelter from the elements to those not involved in the military offensive likely occurring just beyond the next hill. Cross-tangent travelers had best have glib tongues when encountering the locals, or else the face the possibility of being labeled as deserters, which carries a sentence of immediate execution.

War world, Fantastic. This class of tangent in some ways mimics the encompassing desecration described in the "War world" entry; however, these tangents are only found within the Fantastic sequence (or, rarely, with additional Fantastic elements). These tangents are in the grip of absolute war, but the warfare follows from some literal vision of a final apocalypse! Various tangents of this class exist, varying by the form of the final apocalypse. For example, armies of demons and lost souls fight hosts of angels and the righteous across a blasted Earth in some tangents, while "nearby" Ice Giants ignite Ragnarok in brutal fury, hoping to wake the Fenris Wolf from its age-long slumber. In almost every case, cross-tangent travelers are better off fleeing these tangents as soon as their nature is recognized—the attention of a "demonic" or "angelic" entity is something that even the implements of high technology are hard put to fend off.

Weapons outlawed. On this world, the ownership of personal weapons is strictly illegal. Any hero seen wearing a sidearm, or even brandishing a knife, will quickly find himself locked up. Of course, a brisk business in illegal weapons exists, though anyone caught dealing in such illegal goods is subject to extreme penalties.

Weather controlled. On the indicated world, the patterns of weather are completely controlled by humans. The savings in dollars (and lives) are tremendous, as predictable growing seasons ensure strong crops year after year and formerly storm-plagued areas thrive in safety. The technology allowing this control is guarded with amazing security by the world's leaders, as it could cause unimaginable chaos if it fell into the wrong hands.

CRUISING SUPERSPACE

First of all, in any setting where practical knowledge exists concerning travel to parallel universes, this knowledge is probably a cloistered secret—the great unwashed masses remain generally unaware of such knowledge, even in worlds set at extremely high Progress Levels. Even in settings where the average person knows of efforts being made to travel through superspace, the methods for such travel remain restricted to only the highest government agencies or wealthiest corporations (see "Tangent Cognizance" on page 9).

With that said, a variety of processes make it possible to travel across superspace. Since methods, items, and rituals that appear in one tangent at a particular Progress Level may be developed in another tangent at a completely difficult Progress Level, it is difficult to rank definitively the processes noted below. Thus, the Progress Level noted is not hard and fast, but more of a guide. Of course, methods that appear at earlier Progress Levels may still be available in later ones, if the proper ancient tomb, secret vault, or

archived data file is discovered.

Additionally, it is rare for a particular tangent to develop more than one of the indicated processes of cruising superspace below. Thus, it's not a matter of scientists simply choosing the best available option, but instead, of using the only option available to them on their home tangent. Sometimes, cross-tangent technology slips into adjacent tangents, but these are usually isolated occurrences (i.e., a single parastrider may fall into the hands of users in a paraverse who have heretofore used singularity submersibles to research parallel universes. However, because of a fear of breaking it, or inability to reverse engineer the item, the parastrider technology remains unique).

Every superspace trip, no matter the process actually used, only moves the traveler through the superspace dimension—no physical distance is moved, unless the process itself also incorporates an element of physical movement. Basically, this means that the traveler in a new tangent always finds herself in an area that corresponds with the same physical location in the old tangent. In tangents that possess many parallels, buildings, features, and landscape elements may be quite similar; however, the "farther" the traveler moves from her tangent of origin through superspace, the more likely it is that physical features may appear different, buildings may be rearranged (or absent altogether), and even the climate may shift. But even though things appear to be different, no physical distance was traversed through the tangent bridging process alone.

Except in special circumstances (as indicated by an unlucky roll on TABLE T9: HAZARDS OF SUPERSPACE TRAVEL), none of the methods of cruising superspace described below allow a traveler to "materialize" within a solid object. If a solid object exists within the target tangent, the traveler and her conveyance merely appear in any open space large enough to contain them within 100 meters of the intended entry point. If the target tangent doesn't contain sufficient empty space within 100 meters of the traveler's designated entry point, the

traveler is bounced to a tangent in the same cluster (replace secondary attributes but maintain the same primary attribute).

Finally, note that only a selected number of processes described below require a skill check to initiate travel to another universe. In the cases where no skill check is required, it is assumed that the process automatically functions. On the other hand, unless specifically noted otherwise, every superspace trip requires a roll on TABLE T9. Thus, there is almost always some roll associated with moving through tangents—if not the initiation of the voyage, then a check for the success of the trip itself. Some processes require both a skill check of some sort, and a check on Table T9.

Alien Artifact, PL 0+

A hero may obtain an alien artifact in many different scenarios and at any Progress Level. For instance, a PL 3 hero could conceivably unearth the ancient site of a crashed spacecraft, and within the twisting halls of inhuman design, wrest forth an artifact with the power to slip sideways through superspace. Heroes at higher Progress Levels are equally likely to come across an artifact in trade, excavation, or other dealings with aliens hailing from other star systems. Regardless of how a hero comes across an alien artifact that provides access to parallel universes, it's suggested that a few particulars of such an artifact remain standard.

Accessing the alien artifact's power is not necessarily an easy process. It requires the hero to complete an Ordinary complex skill check (3 successes, one check

per round) involving an appropriate Intelligence-based broad or specialty skill as chosen by the Gamemaster. The Computer Science, Technical Science, or perhaps even the Life Science (for biological artifacts) broad skills are appropriate; alternatively, the Gamemaster may require an untrained Intelligence feat check. Once activated, an alien artifact doesn't create any big, flashy entrances to a parallel universe. Instead, it merely pushes itself, its owner, and up to 1000 additional kilograms into a nearby parallel universe with hardly a paratemporal "splash." Once used, the artifact can't be powered up again for d4 days.

The artifact can always transfer its user back to the parallel universe of origin or any previously visited tangent, assuming the user selects this destination and successfully activates the artifact. On the other hand, using the artifact to access any other potential destination is always determined randomly. The user is just as likely to end up in a tangent that differs from the Baseline only in that the normally sedate Keith Strohm drives a monster truck instead of a Honda, as finding a parallel universe where life never evolved beyond the single-celled stage.

Sometimes, these types of artifacts activate on their own, reacting to subtle cues in the environment of which the hero may not even be aware. Such inadvertent shifting could conceivably throw a hero and his companions into a parallel universe that is so similar to their own that they don't immediately realize the space-time shift. Only after massive impossibilities come to light do the heroes begin to realize that something is terribly, horribly wrong!

Using an alien artifact involves risks; see the relevant information about alien artifacts in *Chapter 5: Perks and Flaws* in the *Player's Handbook* and *Chapter 5 and Chapter 12: Alien Artifacts* in the *Gamemaster Guide*. In addition, each use also requires the travelers to roll as a group on T9: HAZARDS OF SUPERSPACE TRAVEL with no modifier. Additional negative effects are in your purview, but here's one sug-

TABLE T6: CRUISING SUPERSPACE

Process	Type	Capacity	PL
Alien Artifact	I	Varies	0+
Arcane Magic FX	M	Varies	0+
Plane Shift	M	Group	0+
Black Hole Diving	M	Group	6
Singularity Submersible	I	Group	6
Fixed Gates	I	Group	0+
Paraskiff	I	Group	7
Parastrider	I	Individual	8
Paratransponder	I	Special	5
Psionics	M	Varies	0+
Dimension Walk	M	Varies	0+
Quantum Psychedelics	M	Individual	1
Mushroom Powder	I	Individual	0+
Quantum Tunneler	I	Group	5
Superspace Drive	I	Group	8
Super Power FX	M	Varies	0+
Tangent Transit	M	Personal	0+
Tantalus Pods	I	Group	0+

Process: The common name of the item or method used to cruise superspace

Type: Denotes whether a type of superspace travel is a (M)ethod or an (I)tem. Methods include techniques or rituals that are not necessarily discrete, as opposed to items, which are distinct, transportable mechanisms. Note that each method contains at least one specific example.

Capacity: Indicates the number of travelers the superspace cruising process accommodates.

PL: Lists the Progress Level at which the process is generally available.

gestion: Each use provides a cumulative 1-in-20 chance to draw the attention of the alien creators of the artifact. These creators may well seek to put a stop to the hero's unsupervised use of said artifact.

Arcane Magic FX, PL 0+

In some settings, a hero or member of the supporting cast may have access to the Arcane Magic FX broad skill. Arcane Magic FX skills fit best into fantasy scenarios; however, you may feel that some arcane magic is appropriate for your science fiction setting. Arcane Magic is a fantastic effect produced through the use of ritual, word, will, or a combination of the three. Such effects are entirely at odds with the logical procedures of science, and attempting to understand Arcane Magic with such methods is generally unsuccessful. Though the spells and rituals of Arcane Magic conform to a lore that mimics scientific research, magical experimentation is based more on intuitive leaps, while scientific research is grounded in empirical trial and error.

Someone with the Arcane Magic broad skill may have the ability to "cast" one of a potential multitude of spells, incantations, or rituals (Arcane Magic specialty skills) which allow the caster and possibly others to peer or move through superspace. Of course, the specific parameters of traveling to other tangents vary according to the specific specialty skill. For example, the *plane shift* Arcane Magic FX specialty skill is provided below:

Plane Shift

Arcane Magic, Summon spell: Will; Amazing quality, base cost 12

This spell allows the caster to move himself or a touched creature or object (massing up to 800 kilograms) to a random tangent. If several people link hands in a circle, they are also transported to the new tangent (up to a limit of 800 kilograms).

The spell is always successful when used to transfer the caster back to the parallel universe of his origin or any previously visited tangent, assuming the caster selects this destination and suc-

cessfully casts *plane shift*. On the other hand, using *plane shift* to access any other potential destination reaches a randomly determined tangent.

Casting the spell requires a physical component (an iron rod) and a success on the skill check. On an Ordinary success or better, the hero moves to the new location. The degree of success indicates the bonus applied to the mandatory roll on TABLE T9: HAZARDS OF SUPERSPACE TRAVEL (-1, -2, or -3 steps). Failure indicates the spell simply fails to go off; however, a Critical Failure means that the caster is thrown into a randomly determined tangent and suffers 1 point of Fatigue damage.

Black Hole Diving, PL 6

Any setting that provides spacecraft capable of moving beyond the confines of the local solar system contains the possibility that black holes could be used to access other universes. Unfortunately, there are some drawbacks to using a raw black hole to move through superspace. Because of these drawbacks, black hole diving is rarely a preferred method to travel superspace. Of course, this method is all that is available on some tangents.

Black holes possess a region known as an event horizon. At the event horizon, the curvature of space-time (the pull of gravity) is so extreme that to an outside observer, time seems to come to a standstill. Nothing can ever pass an event horizon more than once; however, if the black hole possesses a spin, it has two event horizons, an inner and an outer. Now, if the terrific tidal effects can be avoided through some sort of inertialess field, a traveler could safely pass from our universe to any other parallel universe, of which an infinite number exist within the infinite structure of a black hole. The two-tiered event horizon space within a black hole is sometimes called "kerspace" after Roy P. Ker, whose calculations provided the first complete solution to the black hole gate enigma. Unfortunately, because of the time dilation effect, the universe from which the traveler came will have aged to "death"

while the he hovers on the edge of the event horizon! Sort of a one-way trip, as it were. Still, some travelers use this method, as seen in the specific example below.

Singularity submersible

The singularity submersible is a spherical structure in which an artificial environment is maintained. The submersible is not mobile by itself, but instead must be conveyed by a spacecraft to put it into position for use. That position, of course, is directly "over" the maw of a black hole.

The submersible measures some 15 meters in diameter. Its artificial environment is capable of sustaining up to 8 humanoids indefinitely on recycled air, water, and hydro crops. The outer hull is sheathed in a special "inertialess" weave, incorporating unstable virtual particles, making the interior of the ship resistant to the destructive tides and gradations of space-time curvature. This same weave acts somewhat like a "frame of reference anchor." While a tether remains between the deploying spacecraft and the descending submersible, the submersible is able to avoid the bulk of the time dilation associated with an unanchored black hole dive. Still, while the submersible remains "submerged" in kerspace within the black hole, only one minute passes inside the submersible for every 10 minutes that pass on the deploying spacecraft. If the tether snaps due to too much torque or to a random singularity flare up, the submersible instantly freezes in time, at least from the viewpoint of those on the deploying spacecraft. To those on the submersible, all the stars of their own universe rapidly dwindle and go out: no going back to that universe!

The inner hull of a submersible is covered with scientific sensory equipment sufficient to record a broad array of exterior electromagnetic, gravitational, environmental, and other exotic conditions. A supercomputer station inhabited with a first generation AI ties all the operations of the submersibles systems together.

Usually, a submersible remains in kerspace, the region within the black hole, and only "peeps"

through the infinite openings onto parallel universes. Sometimes, however, things from other universes "peep" back. Worse, sometimes the referential anchor breaks, and the submersible plunges into a random parallel universe, there to stay.

If a submersible breaks away from its frame of reference anchor and moves through into a new continuum, roll on Table T9 with a +3 step penalty. A submersible that accidentally slips into a parallel space is probably going to pop out near a parallel version of the black hole which they entered on their own dimension. Many times, a parallel version of a drop ship stands waiting to pick up the submersible, but horror stories persist of travelers who didn't realize they'd ended up in another tangent until well after their submersible was pulled in by the "rescuing" craft...

Statistics: Hull size 2, 1 compartment. Weapon: none. Armor: light alloy, d6-1 (LI), d6-1 (HI), d4-1 (En).

Compartments: C1 = Command 4/4/2.

Fixed Gate, PL 0+

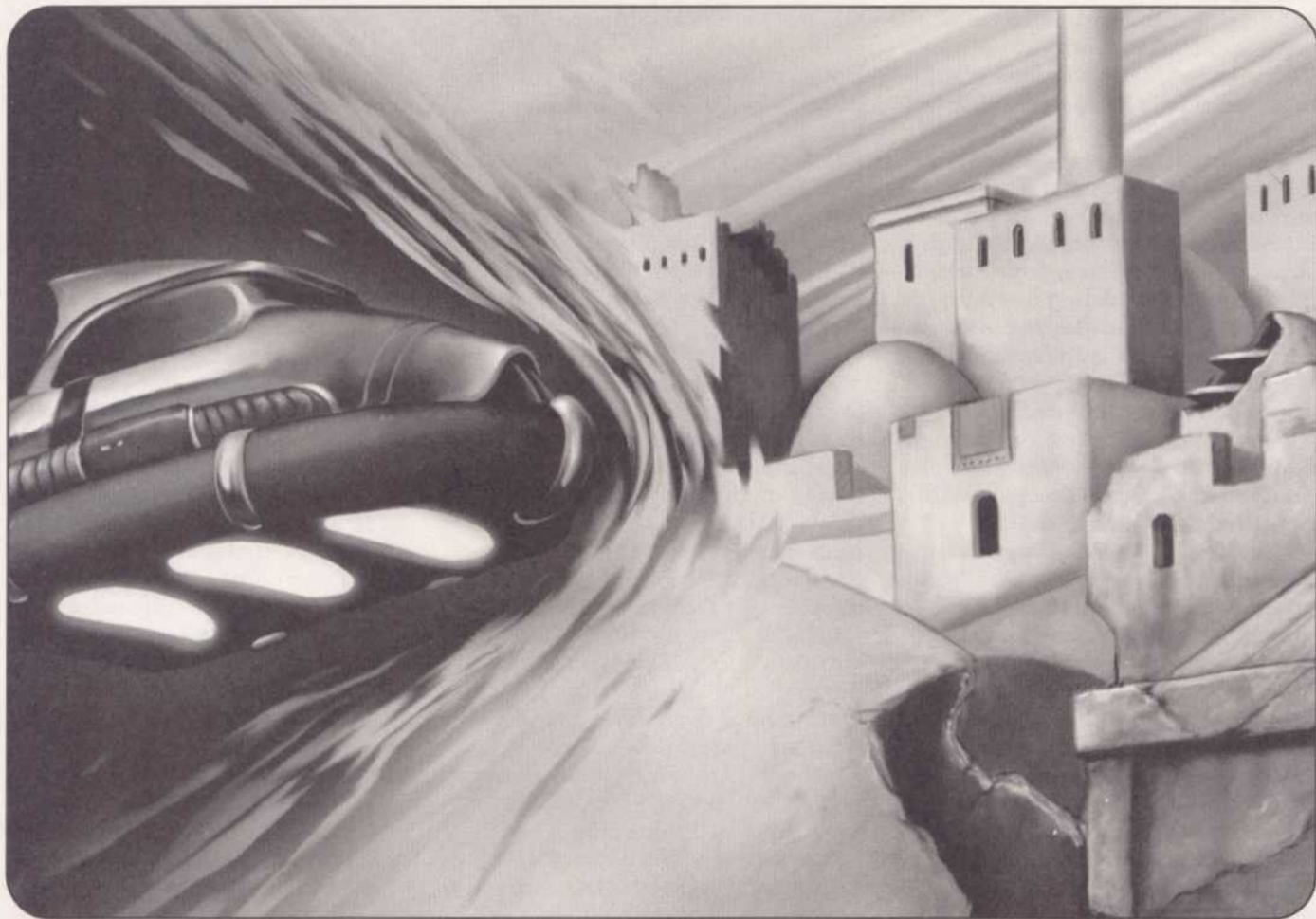
While the common forms of travel in superspace allow transit to any of a number of different paraverses, there is a class of transport known as a gate or portal that also provides transport between tangents. Unlike the other forms of travel discussed here, however, fixed gates are immovable structures that provide access to only one other tangent, which is normally preprogrammed into the gate at the time of its construction. Usually, travel is possible back and forth between the target tangent and the original tangent if the similar gate is built on the target tangent.

Technologically produced fixed gates may be produced no sooner than at Progress Level 7. The technological fixed gate requires a constant power supply of at least fusion cell level if the gate is to remain constantly open. If the gate is only opened at specific times, a massive charge can be slowly built up between openings using lower PL methods of power generation.

If a product of natural occurrences (i.e., some product of thin walls between two "nearby" tangents or of a short-term wormhole connecting two "distant" tangents), the fixed gate usually manifests within the mouth of a cave, cleft, pit, or other natural feature of the landscape. Furthermore, the gate is only "open" part of the time, keying to certain phases of the moon, planetary configuration with other bodies in the solar system, or energetic sunspot activity.

If a product of FX powers, fixed gates could be situated much like those of natural origin and open in accordance with natural phenomena. Magically instigated fixed portals can also be created in doorways, on the surface of small pools, or in the very air. Magical fixed gates operate for those with the proper magical command word or physical ingredient that serves to catalyze the cross-tangent trip.

Normally, fixed wormhole connections between tangents are tested and refined such that all possible



problems are a thing of the past. Thus, tended fixed gates do not require a roll on Table T9; however, newly discovered superspace gates of ancient origin may require a roll at your option.

Paraskiff, PL 7

A true marvel of technology, the paraskiff was developed over hundreds of years of effort by various agencies and private individuals. The paraskiff incorporates the latest developments of probability engineering at PL 7. A few tangents have developed paraskiffs in "parallel," and so some design differences exist across superspace, but if it's called a paraskiff, it generally looks something like a VW Bug without wheels. Instead of wheels, the paraskiff possesses a "ground effect skirt." In normal standby mode, the paraskiff floats like a standard hovercraft, up to 3 meters above the ground on a layer of air. Other than its ability to physically travel over all terrains, it handles just like a standard car of PL 5 (Skill: Land, Drv: -1, Acc: 50, Cruise: 100, Max: 180, Type: G, Dur: 10/10/5, Avail: Restricted, Cost: Special. See *Chapter 12: Vehicles in the Player's Handbook* for related information).

The paraskiff possesses a lanthanide capacitor that must be recharged after 24 hours of use. A full recharge takes 1 hour, and can be obtained through the use of any external source of electricity (the paraskiff possesses a "universal" plug that accepts anything from live wires to jolts of naked electricity).

Of course, the paraskiff's ability to drive over land is not what distinguishes it; rather, it's the paraskiff's probability engine that allows it to drive across superspace. Indeed, the paraskiff is a conveyance sought by all who are even aware of its existence. The "dashboard" possesses standard controls on the left for physical driving (i.e., steering wheel, charge gauge, lights, etc.); however, the right side of the dashboard contains a control panel designed for paradriving.

The paradriving controls consist of an input microphone and computer holomonitor, a probability indicator (denoting the status of the

probability engine), and a translucent "bullseye." This serves as a diagram of the paraskiff's location in superspace (the location is denoted as a tiny blinking light amidst the multi-colored continuum). The input microphone accepts verbal commands (a small latch unfolds a keyboard for manual input, if desired). While the Navigation-superspace navigation skill is not required to operate this vehicle (due to its intuitive design and multiple redundant safety systems), an operator with that skill enjoys an additional -2 step bonus to any rolls on Table T9.

The computer possesses memory and functions appropriate to non-AI computers of PL 7, but the computer's main function is to accept tangent settings from the paraskiff pilot, electronically feeding them into the probability engine. For instance, a pilot first initiates the probability field with a word, then states a desired coordinates, such as, "Input -3.325, +1.779" While the monitor records the superspace coordinates, the colored bullseye indicates the targeted tangent. When the pilot says "Initiate," the superspace trip begins.

Trip time depends on how many divisions separate the two tangents. Trips within the same tangent cluster will require only a few seconds. Those within the same division take d4 minutes, while those one, two, or three divisions away require trips of d4 hours, 5d4 hours, or d4 days, respectively. When just driving across a few tangents, the flicker of discrete parallel universes is quite visible as they pass by. When moving distances that require a greater amount of time, the flickers blend into an indistinguishable grayness.

Parastrider, PL 8

The parastrider represents the height of personal superspace-related technology. It incorporates all the best aspects of previous technologies into a compact, useful device whose very existence is a tightly held secret on those tangents that contain it.

The parastrider is really nothing to look at: a small white ceramic disc that is easily attached to a

belt, worn as a pin, or even as an amulet. Of course, within the white disc, the technology is a miracle blend of quantum circuitry, AI-directed activators, and psi-sensitive receptors. In fact, the psi-sensitive receptors act in much the same way a voice-activated input mike does for lower Progress Level computers, except that the structured alpha waves of the wearer are sufficient to operate the parastrider. The parastrider is actually powered by a virtual partition engine, and therefore theoretically will never run down.

A firm mental command (an Ordinary or better success on a Will feat check) activates the parastrider. Each stride then carries the wearer to a new parallel universe. Walking in one direction moves the wearer to the Paratemporal East, while walking in the opposite direction allows the wearer to stride "toward" the Paratemporal West. With a mental command, the wearer can calibrate the number of tangents moved through with each stride; however, moving across the superspace continuum from one division to the next requires at least one hour of walking per division passed through.

Actually, movement is the key. Someone wearing a parastrider in a moving car or other conveyance could also activate the parastrider and begin slipping through the tangents without causing a ripple. Of course, this goes without saying that the conveyance must also make the trip unless the wearer wants to catapult himself into the next tangent at 90 kph. The parastrider's field of influence is broad enough to cloak personal transport vehicles of up to 8 durability, allowing the wearer to bring a vehicle and its passengers along for the trip. If the cross-tangent shifting is subtle (for instance, if the wearer makes only very small moves to nearby parallel tangents), the occupants of a vehicle may not realize that they have left their own tangent. That is, until they turn the bend to behold fire-breathing dinosaurs casually scorching the nearby city skyline! On the other hand, unwary tangent travelers may not become aware of their displacement for some time (see

"Subtle Beginnings" on page 49).

Though the parastrider is given to casual exploration, the wearer of the device can affix the coordinates of previously traveled tangents (and his home universe) in the device with but a thought. It's then a simple matter to find any one of these destinations with just a little walking (assuming the destination lies within the same tangent division; otherwise, the hero is looking at an extended hike).

The parastrider, representing the technological pinnacle of tangent travel technology, is almost completely safe. Roll on Table T9 with a -4 step bonus.

Paratransponder, PL 5

A paratransponder is a device specifically created to send out an electromagnetic signal that propagates through superspace. This signal is only detectable by devices specifically designed to detect such signals, so no possibility exists for detecting the superspace signal on a radio, TV, gridcast, or other medium. For example, a quantum tunneler contains specific circuits allowing it to detect superspace signals emanating from a paratransponder.

Usually, the paratransponder is quite small, and has the basic shape of a 5-centimeter disc. Thus, it can be hidden in a piece of jewelry, belt buckle, or other small item, if desired. A paratransponder is sometimes camouflaged in this fashion when a traveler moves about a tangent whose denizens are unaware of the existence of superspace.

Every paratransponder possesses a unique signal, and thus multiple signals are easily discriminated by a tracking device. Once activated, a paratransponder transmits for d4 years before its tiny battery finally gives out. Unless a new power source is provided, the paratransponder is dead.

Superspace travelers who successfully track a superspace signal enter the specific tangent containing the transponder. Furthermore, whatever method utilized by the tracker for superspace travel deposits the tracker within d6 kilometers of the paratransponder's

location. Note that this overrides the general limitation on cross-tangent travel that prevents spatial travel when moving between tangents.

Psionics, PL 0+

In campaigns which utilize both the concept of intertangent travel and the rules for psionics found in Chapter 14: *Psionics* in the *Player's Handbook*, it is to be expected that some Mindwalkers will develop powers that relate to dimensional travel. Some skills will let the Mindwalker see into or communicate with alternate worlds, while others (such as *dimension walk*, below) allow the hero to travel through superspace.

Dimension Walk

Telekinesis Skill, Cost 6

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows the Mindwalker to move himself (and possibly others) from one tangent to another.

The hero may use the skill to travel to a known or unknown tangent. The power requires a full round (4 phases) to activate. The hero (and anyone he is bringing along, see below) can do nothing else while the power is "warming up." The following modifiers apply to the attempt:

Destination is...	Modifier
Home tangent	-2
Very familiar	0
Familiar	+1
Viewed once	+2
Informed of	+3
Completely unfamiliar	+4
In same cluster	-1
In same division	0
In adjacent division	+1
Two divisions away	+2
Three or more divisions away	+3

Thus, if the hero found himself in a tangent in the Fantastic division and wanted to return to the safety of his home tangent in the Historical division, he'd suffer a +1 step penalty (-2 for home tangent, +3 for three divisions away).

The better the result of the skill check, the safer and shorter the dimension walk. An Ordinary result grants a -1 step bonus to any

roll on Table T9 and indicates that the trip takes d4 hours, a Good result grants a -2 step bonus and requires 2d20 minutes, while an Amazing result gives a -3 step bonus and indicates a 2d4-minute trip. Note that this time is spent "in transit" and the heroes are generally incapable of taking any actions during this time.

A Failure result indicates the power fails to activate. A Critical Failure results in transport to a random tangent, determined by the distance being traveled.

Target division is...	Destination tangent is...
Same	Within target cluster
Adjacent	Within target division
Non-adjacent	Completely random

Thus, to continue the example begun above, if the hero rolled a Critical Failure, his destination would be completely random (because he was attempting to dimension walk into a tangent in a non-adjacent division), and he could end up in any tangent in any division.

Normally, a hero may only safely transport himself (along with about 50 kg of gear) between tangents. If he chooses, the hero may push his weight limit; each additional 100 kg (or fraction thereof) applies a +1 step penalty to the *dimension walk* skill check. All individuals and equipment to be brought along must be in physical contact with one another, and unwilling targets have no ability to resist this power.

⊗ As the hero improves his skill rank, he may bring additional mass along with him. For every 3 ranks attained, the hero may bring an additional 200 kg (approximately two people plus equipment), to a maximum of 800 kg at rank 12.

The use of *dimension walk* is severely taxing on the Mindwalker, inflicting one point of Fatigue damage to the user per skill check (whether successful or not). Also, because of the innate difficulties of tangent travel, the use of *dimension walk* more than once in a 24-hour period applies a +4 step penalty to the skill check.

Quantum Psychedelics, PL 0+

On some tangents there exist herbs of a particular quality and potency that actually serve to disconnect the minds of their users, allowing them to float in the wider sea of superspace. Such plant essences, whether pure or in extract form, are referred to by the knowledgeable as quantum psychedelics. Quantum psychedelics do not actually allow physical travel to other dimensions, but such substances do allow the user to gaze across the infinite parallel worlds that comprise superspace. Many quantum psychedelics are imperfect, and simultaneously blend views and experiences of several distinct tangents into a single gestalt experienced by the user. Thus, many of these substances are not particularly useful for actually gaining worthwhile information on other tangents, as the mental "trip" taken by the user is muddled and without any spatial references. In fact, the views of multiple tangents can be so disorienting that many times nausea is an unpleasant side effect.

Mushroom Powder

Quantum psychedelic, PL 4, WIL; Good quality

In the parallel universes where mushroom powder is available, the substance is not recognized for its true ability. In fact, it is regarded as a "hallucinogen" and considered an illegal drug. Those found to be in possession of mushroom powder by authorities of the state are prosecuted.

Unlike other substances of its general type, mushroom powder actually allows the user to mentally gaze into discrete parallel universes for short periods of time. To the unknowledgeable, mushroom powder may seem like just another "hallucinogen" of disturbing intensity. To those who know what they're doing, however, mushroom powder can be a powerful tool for charting superspace.

Maximum effect comes with a 1-gram dose of this grayish powder (prepared from special mushrooms that grow naturally in only a few tangents). Higher doses do not affect the duration or success of the

effect. In fact, any character who consumes more than 3 grams of mushroom powder in a 24-hour period must make a CON feat check or suffer neurotoxin poisoning according to the results of the check (CF: d4+1m; F: d6+1w; O: d4w; G: d8+1s; A: d4+1s).

Approximately 30 minutes after ingestion, the user begins to feel the effects, as the outlines of objects and other people begin to blur. If the user makes a successful Will feat check with a -3 step bonus, she may mentally direct her perceptions into alternate paraverses that lie within the same division as her tangent of origin. This may be accomplished d4 times. Alternatively, she may perceive a single tangent that belongs to a different division than her home universe (see page 8). No matter how many separate tangents are viewed, one dose of mushroom powder lasts only d4+4 hours. Unpracticed users view random tangents, but experienced users can return their gaze to previously viewed tangents. If the Will feat check is unsuccessful, the user sees only a muddle of mixed realities, and the experience seems no different that what might be had from the ingestion of any of a number of illicit substances.

Though the user gains a view of an alternate reality, the viewpoint is limited to the user's physical location in her home tangent. To "move" her viewpoint in the chosen tangent, the user must physically move in her own tangent to a corresponding position in the viewed tangent. Generally speaking, objects and/or individuals in the viewed tangent cannot sense or affect the viewer in her home tangent (though under special circumstances the Gamemaster may rule differently). Since all the user's senses are split between her home tangent and that being viewed, all actions in the home tangent are at a +3 step penalty while the mushroom powder lasts.

Example: Dee sits in the comfort of her own home, but thanks to a 1-gram dose of mushroom powder, mentally she sees a wide field with a strange light on the horizon in another tangent. To see what the light is, she physically

leaves her house and gets into her car in her own tangent. Once in the car, she is able to speedily move toward the light seen in her tangent vision, though this may entail a circuitous route to bypass barriers or other real obstacles that are not apparent in the viewed tangent, but certainly exist in her own. Furthermore, she'd best be extra careful, as she's a bit groggy from the mushroom powder (all her actions are at a +3 step penalty, including driving her car).

One perk of choosing mushroom powder over more physical methods of exploring superspace is safety. Mushroom powder users need not roll on Table T9.

Quantum Tunneler, PL 5

In the late Information Age, certain individuals in a few paraverses hit on the concept of quantum tunneling. Using a miniscule amount of energy (batteries are sufficient), this hand-held device can "punch" a hole from its originating paraverse into a random (but nearby in a paratemporal sense) alternate tangent! This device is called the quantum tunneler, and the hole created is usually called a paratunnel.

The paratunnel doesn't suffer from extreme space-time curvature, and thus space and time are not warped beyond reasonable limits within the artificial space. The paratunnel produced is about 10 feet in diameter, and looks like a displaced whirlpool composed of golden light from whatever angle it is viewed. It often manifests a few feet above the ground. Through this tunnel, other universes are accessible. Unfortunately, the quantum tunneler suffers from several disadvantages.

First and foremost, the quantum tunneler doesn't always work. It only produces a paratunnel when superspace paraequipotential flux aligns "just so." For the same reason, once a paratunnel is produced, it only remains open for a short time before collapsing without warning. Finally, someone using a quantum tunneler is unable to "chart" a passage to a specifically desired new tangent

(although the user can attempt to locate a general range of related tangents, such as a specific cluster): Exploratory quantum tunneling is random. Luckily, a resourceful traveler can follow a paratransponder signal back to a previous specific tangent, if a transponder was set up (see "Paratransponder" on page 30).

WARNING: Tangent travelers who travel from their home tangent without first setting up a paratransponder signal are in serious danger of setting themselves adrift in the cosmos for all time. Though random jumps may sometimes bring the travelers close to their home tangent, the chances of actually hitting on the exact originating Earth are vanishingly small. See "Subtle Beginnings" on page 49 for related information.

A user must make a Technical Science skill check (or an untrained Intelligence feat check) to operate a quantum tunneler. The results of the check determine how successful the user was in opening a paratunnel. Once a tunnel is created, the quantum tunneler enters a refractory period during which time the device cannot be used again for at least 10 minutes. Note that because of paratunnel position and aperture size, anything much larger than a human will have difficulty passing through.

To locate a specific paratransponder signal with the quantum tunneler, another Technical Science skill check is required. If the user wishes to open a tunnel to a tangent holding a specific paratransponder signal, a +2 step penalty is applied to the Technical Science skill check to open the tunnel to the appropriate tangent. Failure indicates that the paratunnel opens, but leads to another tangent in the same cluster as the target (refer to the instructions found under "Random Tangent Generation" on page 11 to generate the tangent in which the travelers find themselves). Of course, the heroes won't know this until after they pass through the tunnel...

Every time a traveler passes through a paratunnel created by the quantum tunneler, roll on Table T9 with a -2 step bonus. If travelers attempt to use the quantum tunnel-

er on a low charge or when it is damaged, apply a +1 step penalty to the requisite roll on Table T9. Using a damaged unit eventually proves catastrophic, as the results on the table describe.

Superspace Drive, PL 8

In the waning days of the Energy Age, a scientific breakthrough allows for the creation of a starship drive system that actually breaks the barriers between tangents. Dubbed the superspace drive, this system opens up entire new vistas of exploration.

Because of inherent limitations in the superspace drive, it only functions in ships of 30 durability or less. Multiple superspace drives have no additional effect. In addition, the technology is highly restricted, and only a handful of these systems exist in any civilization that has discovered them.

Like the paraskiff (a forerunner of the superspace drive), this system is very accurate. Operators gain a -3 step bonus on any rolls

on Table T9: SUPERSPACE HAZARDS. However, the system is very complex and requires the Navigation-superspace navigation skill to operate.

The superspace drive requires 4 power factors per 10 durability of the ship.

For an example of a starship that utilizes the superspace drive, see "Probability One" on page 50.

Avail Res, Cost 10 M, Dur 2, Pow *

Super Power FX, PL 0+

A hero or a member of the supporting cast may have access to the Super Power FX broad skill in an appropriate setting. A Super Power FX can be the result of a fantastic mutation, a research project, arcane lore, mythology come true, alien technology, or even alien intervention. In any event, someone with this broad skill may have the ability to manifest one of a variety of powers (Super Power specialty skills) that allow the user and possibly others to move through superspace. Of course, the specific

**TABLE T7: QUANTUM TUNNELER
OPERATION RESULTS**

Result	Effect
Crit Fail	No tunnel. Temporal flux prevents attempts to use the quantum tunneler for 1d10+10 days. Additionally, the batteries go dead, and require replacement.
Failure	No tunnel. Temporal flux prevents attempts to use the quantum tunneler for 4d20 hours.
Ordinary	Paratunnel connects! The paratunnel lasts 1d4 rounds before closing. Unless a paratransponder signal is being followed, the accessed tangent is determined randomly.
Good	Paratunnel connects! The paratunnel lasts 5d4 rounds before closing. Unless a paratransponder signal is being followed, the accessed tangent is determined randomly.
Amazing	Paratunnel connects! The paratunnel lasts 5d20 rounds before closing. The paratunnel connects to a desired cluster of tangents (see page 7), if any. If a paratransponder signal is being tracked, the paratunnel connects to the tangent containing it without requiring an additional check.

parameters of traveling to other tangents vary according to the specific specialty skill. As an example, the Tangent Transit Super Power FX specialty skill is provided below.

Tangent Transit

Super Power, Extreme Ability, WIL; Amazing quality, base cost 12

This power's prime manifestation allows the character (with her possessions) to "walk" into an adjacent parallel universe with each use. Generally speaking, this power doesn't allow the user to move between more than one division of superspace with each use. With an Ordinary or better success, the hero moves to the desired tangent. The degree of success indicates what penalty or bonus (if any) is applied to the hero's mandatory roll on Table T9; Ordinary provides no adjustment, while Good and Amazing results provide a -1 or -2 step bonus, respectively. A Failure result means that the power failed to trigger. A Critical Failure means that the power activated, but that the traveler receives a +4 step penalty to the required roll on Table T9!

Before triggering this power's prime manifestation, a hero can (with an Ordinary success) quickly peer into d6 random tangents in the same division (same FX cost as to use the power). Note that this scan is not in any way comprehensive; in fact, it only allows the hero to glance into adjoining tangents as if he stood on the exact point in that tangent. The effect is much like someone flipping quickly through a picture book. Though exacting information cannot be gained through this facet of the tangent transit power, it does provide at least enough information to select a likely target.

Tantalus Pods, PL 0+

In some strange tangents, the broad-leaf tantalus plant pushes its translucent blossoms toward the blue sun. In the wind, the leaves ring like small bells, and the nut-sized pods dangling like over-ripe fruit from the highest branches swing back and forth, certain to fall in the very next gust.

The tantalus plant has hit on a

very effective method of dispersing its seed: It sows its progeny across superspace! During its lifetime, a tantalus plant produces d4 pods, called tantalus pods. When a pod is mature, its connection to the plant grows tenuous, and in a high wind, is liable to fall off. When a tantalus pod is dropped (or thrown) to the ground, in biological defiance of physics it collapses and forms a brief wormhole to another parallel universe! The wormhole, generally measuring some 3 meters in diameter, creates a pressure differential sufficient to sweep several of the seed-bearing leaves off the plant and through the wormhole, to a completely new universe.

The wormhole lasts d8+5 rounds, during which time objects or individuals from either end of the wormhole can easily pass back and forth (although in a stiff wind due to the artificial pressure differential). This proves an ideal vector for disseminating seeds.

On the other hand, enterprising individuals can gather tantalus pods for their own use. Once picked, a tantalus pod is good indefinitely until used, at which time it collapses into nothing. Using a tantalus pod by throwing it onto or against a hard surface is inherently random—there is no way to choose where the other end of the wormhole will open up. In fact, unlike many other technological methods of opening passages to other tangents, the wormhole opened by the tantalus pod is not necessarily "local;" that is, the wormhole could very well cross a vast distance of the superspace continuum, bypassing multiple tangent divisions in one fell swoop.

Each trip through a tantalus pod-induced wormhole requires a roll on Table T9 with a -1 step bonus.

Superspace Skills

As with any other technological advance, the discovery of superspace theory brings with it the creation of new areas of knowledge (i.e., skills). Three specialty skills appropriate for campaigns utilizing *Tangents* are Knowledge-dimensional lore, Navigation-superspace navigation, and Physical Science-superspace theory. Gamemasters are free to utilize these skills or create others at her whim.

Dimensional Lore

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill grants the hero basic knowledge of the stories and legends regarding alternate dimensions. Though the specific knowledge that goes into this skill may vary by Progress Level (primitive societies may have very different ideas of alternate dimensions than more advanced civilizations), the skill remains roughly the same.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** For every four ranks of this skill, the hero gains a -1 step bonus to the following skills, when used to learn something about an alternate tangent or deal with natives of such a world: Knowledge-deduce, Awareness-intuition and perception, and Culture-diplomacy and first encounter.

Superspace Navigation

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill involves the study and performance of navigation through superspace. A hero with this skill gains a -1 step bonus whenever he uses an item or ability that allows travel from one tangent to another (note that some items do not require a skill check; in those cases, this skill grants no bonus).

**TABLE T8: SUPERSPACE
SPECIALTY SKILLS**

Skill	Cost	Pr	Pg.
Knowledge-dimensional lore	3	-	34
Navigation-superspace navigation	4	T	34
Physical Science-superspace theory	4	T	34

⊗ **Avoid Hazards:** For every three ranks achieved in this skill, the hero gains a -1 step bonus to any rolls made on TABLE T9: HAZARDS OF SUPERSPACE TRAVEL.

Superspace Theory

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill represents the study of the scientific theories of superspace (rather than legends of dimensional travel). For instance, a successful *superspace theory* skill check allows the hero to identify superspace hazards and anomalies.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** As a hero achieves higher ranks in this skill, he receives a bonus on skill checks that can be assisted by the skill. This include those skills listed under *dimensional theory*, as well as *superspace navigation* and *Physical Science* specialty skills. For every three ranks achieved, the hero gains a -1 step bonus (to a maximum of -4 at rank 12).

Superspace Hazards

The visitation of alternate universes is not something that was ever "meant" to happen. Only the most extreme cases of physical phenomena, magical intervention, or technological efforts can bridge the gap between the infinite dimensions. Still, even the most advanced methods usually entail some risk on the part of superspace travelers.

The following table provides you with the opportunity to randomly determine the annoying and dangerous side effects that may plague your heroes as they move from tangent to tangent. The methods and items described in this sourcebook provide predetermined step penalties and bonuses associated with their use. If you design your own methods of superspace travel and wish to consult Table T9, you should also assign some step modifier based on the level of technology, quality of FX, or nature of the natural bridge. More reliable processes have increasing step bonuses, while less reliable processes may incur a step penalty.

Multiple travelers using the same process for their trip roll only

once—the result is applied to the group as a whole.

Hazard Effects Explained

Flawless trip. All parameters of the journey peg the tolerances—in fact, everything that can go right does so. Add a -1 step bonus to the next action of the traveler (or travelers).

Routine trip. All parameters of the journey are within tolerances, and the tangent is reached without mishap.

Small time delay. A space-time wrinkle causes the superspace travelers to move slightly "up" along the theoretical z-axis of time. Thus, they arrive in their destination a bit "later" than they left the original tangent; d12 hours later, to be exact. The travelers won't notice this delay unless it results in an environmental change (for instance, if night falls "during" the delay).

Large time delay. As "Small time delay," except the travelers arrive d4 days later.

Small detour. Newly spawned parallel universes between the tangent of origin and target tangent confuse navigation systems (if any). Instruments or other methods (if any) that indicate superspace location are momentarily fooled, such that the destination paraverse is not the specific target. Instead, the travelers arrive in a different tangent in the same cluster (roll one or more different secondary attributes, but maintain the primary attribute). The parallels between target paraverse and the actual destination are so close that travelers may not immediately recognize the fact they've come up short (or overshot) the target tangent.

Large detour. Like the previous entry, superspace inconsistencies skew the journey. Unlike the previous entry, however, this trip eventually deposits travelers within a tangent completely unlike that which was sought—perhaps even in a different division! Refer to "Random Tangent Generation" on page 11 to generate the tangent in which the travelers find themselves.

Elastic effect. Superspace reacts poorly to forced tunneling: An elastic effect creates a brief wormhole that yanks travelers back to their tangent of origin. Unfortunately, some momentum and energetic charge is transferred during the rebound. Travelers subject to the elastic effect must make an

Acrobatics-fall skill check when they return to their home tangent with energy equivalent to a short fall (see Chapter 3: *Heroes in Action* in the *Player's Handbook*). At the Gamemaster's option, equipment used to travel between tangents (if any) may be damaged and require a Technical Science-repair skill check to fix.

Comaterialization. Traveling superspace isn't always as safe as the manufacturer's guarantee—unforeseen effects may conspire such that travelers materialize in the target tangent partially within solid objects! The resulting biological shock is equivalent to a medium collision (see Chapter 3: *Heroes in Action* in the *Player's Handbook*). Travelers subject to the comaterialization effect may make an *Acrobatics-dodge* skill check when they comaterialize, with the result affecting the damage inflicted (see TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE on page 58 of the *Player's Handbook*). At the Gamemaster's option, equipment used to travel between tangents (if any) may be damaged and require a Technical Science-repair skill check to fix.

Superspace rip. Sometimes, superspace travelers don't show up at their intended target tangent, and they're never seen again. No amount of searching by concerned comrades with similar tangent-spanning technology proves fruitful. In the end, it is assumed that the lost travelers ran afoul of some beligerent locals. In fact, some syner-

**TABLE T9:
HAZARDS OF
SUPERSPACE TRAVEL**

D20	Effect
<01	Flawless trip
01-14	Routine trip
15-16	Small time delay
17	Large time delay
18-19	Small detour
20	Large detour
21-22	Elastic effect
23	Comaterialization
>23	Superspace rip



gistic culmination of factors created by their trip through superspace induced a rip in the fabric of superspace itself, through which the unfortunate travelers plunged. What lies on the other side of a superspace rip? It's hard to say, but some theorize that travelers are sent to the beginning of time, or to time's end. In any case, a return from such extremities of the continuum has so far proven impossible. Others contend that travelers who plunge through a superspace rip simply "come undone," as their molecules and atoms are translated into so many unconnected neutrinos. While seemingly a painless and perhaps somewhat poetic way to go, no one in her right mind really wants to verify this effect personally.

Superspace Anomalies

Across the myriad realities, physical laws are sometimes twisted and tweaked beyond normal superspace tolerances. The resulting effects are

often vanishingly small when viewed from the perspective of an entire tangent (which, after all, is a complete universe unto itself), but from a local perspective, such effects can be quite impressive.

There are more "strange" effects than can possibly be listed here, and more that have never been positively identified, observed, or even predicted by scientists (or magicians) interested in superspace theory. On the other hand, in an infinity of realities, anomalies are relatively rare, and even those who travel through many worlds rarely see all the oddities that manifest between dimensions. Still, it behooves the conscientious researcher to note the most prevalent anomalies.

Listed below are several anomalies that may be encountered while traveling through superspace. These strange effects occur far too infrequently to be part of the random generation of tangents described on page 11. As the GM, you should make a conscious

choice to include an anomaly within a tangent. If you decide that you would like to include an anomaly in addition to whatever other parallel attributes you may have assigned to a new tangent, choose from any of the anomalies listed below, or create your own.

Hyperrealistic Objects

There are objects in superspace, some inert and some living, that exist in more than one tangent. In fact, these objects can only be visualized when looking at a broad collection of many tangents simultaneously.

Imagine that every tangent is a two-dimensional transparency. Now visualize a single dot marked upon each transparency. Singly, the marks seem meaningless, but stack the transparencies, and the dots coalesce into a three dimensional object!

Familiar objects and creatures only exist in four dimensions (the fourth dimension being time). Most

creatures that live within the familiar divisions of superspace, are not physically equipped to perceive things that simultaneously exist within additional dimensions. To humans, fifth (and higher) dimensional objects manifest as only a single speck of swirling dust. Our minds are incapable of perceiving that such a speck of "dust" is in fact a tiny portion of a hyperrealistic object, akin to a single cell from a standard four-dimensional organism.

Hyperrealistic objects (also called superdimensional objects) were discovered with the advent of superspace travel. Technologies that allow a traveler to speed past hundreds of tangents every second allow four-dimensional brains to visualize five-dimensional space, like a child might visualize stick-figure animation by rapidly flipping a pad of paper. Usually, objects visualized in this manner are hazy, indistinct, and uncertain; travelers usually only see lumpy masses, usually quite large. A few reports suggest organic structures, not unlike vines or trees. It doesn't take too much imagination to realize that if there are organic superdimensional objects, such objects must be part of a larger ecosystem existing in unattainable hyperreality. And if plant matter exists, then why not hyperrealistic animals?

Sometimes superspace travelers disappear from their tangent of origin but never reach their target paraverse. Several explanations are made, including simple equipment malfunction, but sometimes, the traveler (and her craft, if any) runs afoul of a superdimensional object. Normally, there is no basis for interaction between objects that exist in a single tangent and objects that exist in many. However, while a traveler is in the actual state of transit, especially when moving a great distance through superspace, she takes on hyperrealistic characteristics. In this case, a traveler possesses enough characteristics that a "collision" is possible with inanimate hyperdimensional objects. Worse, hyperrealistic organisms can see the traveler while the traveler continues to move across superspace,

whether they are in a craft, sliding down a wormhole, or transiting via a spell or other esoteric method.

One hyperrealistic creature often encountered (due to its aggressive tendencies) is the parachnid.

Outpocketing, Simple

In rare instances, small portions of the space-time walls that separate tangents bulge and stretch, forming an outpocket. Outpockets are discrete areas (as opposed to "Superspace Bleeding," described below), usually manifesting as a transparent two-dimensional wall or bubble. An outpocket interface doesn't restrict physical movement, and objects are visible beyond

these interfaces, but they are usually blurred and indistinct, as if looking through water. At other times, the interface is silvery and reflective. Simple outpocket interfaces usually measure no more than 3 to 5 meters in diameter, though in particularly stressed tangents, outpockets have been known to grow much larger over time.

An outpocket only occurs between two parallel universes that are "side by side," so to speak. Usually, one of the realities is somehow stressed, and a bubble of the "stronger" reality begins to intrude. It's possible to move back and forth between the two realities, simply by walking back and forth between the interface, though it is akin to walking through an incredi-

Pararachnids

Pararachnids travel in groups called pods, and are apparently hunters of hyperreality. In the rare instances that parachnids spy superspace travelers, they move in to attack, attracted by the movement like moths to an open flame. Travelers may make an Awareness-perception skill check to notice the threat before it's too late. Travelers who make a successful check actually see blurred, spider-like forms of indeterminate size (easily as large as a man, though sometimes far larger) swarming toward them out of the flickering grayness.

Travelers who notice parachnids and who possess the means to abruptly end their superspace velocity should do so immediately, stopping in whatever tangent they happen to be passing through. Without any superspace velocity, travelers exist safely within a single tangent, and can only perceive parachnids as single motes of ineffectual dust. To parachnids, it's as if their quarry suddenly vanished down an invisible hole through which the hunters are unable to follow by their very physical nature. Travelers who immediately resume their trip almost certainly draw the attention of the parachnids, which linger for d4 hours in the "area" wherein they lost their prey. After this time, the parachnids lose interest and move on. It's now safe for heroes to begin their journey anew.

Superspace travelers who don't see the oncoming threat, don't stop their trip, or are unable to do so (such as those transiting a wormhole, through the translucent sides of which they can watch in horror as the parachnids pounce), are physically attacked. Any contact by a normal object with a hyperrealistic object wrenches a portion of the normal mass permanently into the higher dimension, while a portion of the hyperrealistic object is pulled catastrophically into normal space. Such contact inflicts d6m and d6f to living creatures; a successful Acrobatics-dodge check reduces this damage to d4m and d4f (armor has no effect). In either case, whatever equipment the traveler used to travel superspace is wrecked, and he is stranded in a random tangent. Travelers who used mental or magical methods are similarly "parawrecked," while the fixed gates used by the traveler, if any, are destroyed.

No statistics exist for parachnids, because such statistics for a hyperrealistic creature are simply not meaningful in connection with normal creatures, or characters, that inhabit four-dimensional space. It's enough to know that if contact occurs under the highly specialized conditions inherent to superspace travel, such contact catastrophically disrupts both organisms.

bly stiff wind. Superspace explorers who stumble upon such a phenomenon may move back and forth between their world and a world like, yet strangely unlike, their home reality.

In regions where space-time is stretched beyond its capacity to heal (energetic events such as the detonation of thermonuclear devices near an outpocket interface can precipitate such fragility), outpockets sometimes grow geometrically, engulfing more and more of the victim tangent. Once an outpocket grows to a threshold size of some 100 km in diameter, its size surges wildly, and in a matter of hours the tangent world is literally swallowed up and "replaced" by conditions in the tangent world where the outpocketing originated. Though this may seem catastrophic, it is as if the victim tangent world never existed, and the inhabitants of the surviving world (if any) don't even necessarily realize that their reality just overwhelmed a lesser parallel reality. For some reason, outpockets never engulf more than a single star system. Thus, only local systems are directly affected by an outpocket that undergoes a tumorous growth spurt; however, within the universe where a solar system becomes victim to catastrophic outpocketing (as this phenomenon is sometimes termed), a burst of high-energy particles (gamma radiation) emanates away through space. This burst is not even noted by the inhabitants, if any, of the replaced solar system, but to the rest of the universe, the "gamma ray burster" is noted, though rarely understood.

In most cases, outpockets remain stationary, strongly associated with a physical landform and local geology. In a few cases, oddities of space-time have incorporated outpocket interfaces with small, mobile objects, as the following example illustrates. Since the "Eye of the Dream" is not really a physical object, it can't be shattered or broken unless the frame itself is destroyed.

Outpocketing, Complex

On occasion, thin space-time walls that separate tangents bulge and stretch, forming an outpocket. As described in the previous entry, outpockets are discrete interfaces (as opposed to "Superspace Bleeding," described below). Unlike simple outpockets, complex outpockets (also called supertopologies or nested realities) do not manifest as a single interface. Instead, complex outpockets exist as a series of nested interfaces. As before, an interface represents a boundary between two distinct parallel universes, though complex outpockets border on several different tangents. Some supertopologies include just two or three nest-

ed interfaces, while some potentially border on hundreds of parallel worlds.

Unlike simple outpockets, borders within nested realities are not necessarily visible. In fact, someone could easily blunder past the outer border of a supertopology without realizing it, at least until the visitor noticed that the light was subtly different and that all the small copse of bushes didn't look like it contained any towering conifers from the exterior.

Supertopologies, owing to their extradimensional nature, are "bigger" on the inside than their outermost border suggests. For example, the outermost border of a particular supertopology may appear to be no larger than a copse of bushes (as

Eye of the Dream

There is a tangent world not far from the Baseline cluster. Like most worlds of the Baseline, it's called Earth, and history has unfolded at approximately the same speed and to the same ends as many neighboring tangents. On this Earth, an heirloom has passed through many generations of the McFarlane family. The heirloom is a full-length mirror, the frame of which is purported to have been forged in part with meteoric iron sometime during the late 14th century in Scotland by an obscure Masonic order. When the McFarlanes immigrated to the New World, the prized mirror came along.

Most of the time, its reflective surface is clear and unblemished, but from time to time, the image clouds and grows hazy. Watchers who gaze through the mirror at this time are usually unable to make out anything, but sometimes, the haze clears enough for the viewer to see her "reflection" beyond. In almost every case, this blurred reflection is like, yet unlike that of the viewer! Differences include obvious differences in age, occupation, and sometimes even gender. Sometimes, the viewer can't see herself in the "reflection" at all! The McFarlanes don't talk of their heirloom beyond their family, and regard it as a "magical" window into the land of dreams.

In fact, the surface of the mirror itself is an outpocket interface, held steady and "within the frame" by the chance incorporation of the perfect blend of extraterrestrial elements of the frame itself. The outpocket interface connects to a parallel universe where a similar mirror exists, framing the interface. The parallel universe contains slightly altered physical laws, such that the technological revolution has been slow, but some Fantastic elements have made up for these shortfalls.

It's entirely possible to travel between the two parallel universes, but as a rule, the McFarlanes avoid all such attempts, due to family lore concerning the loss of several children that "passed into Dream, never to return." On the other hand, some stories talk of strange people who emerged from the mirror long ago, but soon died. As the McFarlanes put it, "the wee dream creatures just evaporated in the real world, don't you know."

Whatever the truth of the matter, the McFarlanes keep the mirror in a locked room where company is never allowed. When a family member is particularly troubled, he can enter the room for a long gaze into the "glass." If anything out of the ordinary is seen, it is taken as a portent, and the "dream" is personally interpreted in an attempt to resolve the problem that brought the viewer to the Eye of the Dream.

Outpocketing, Complex



**Each contiguous space represents a separate parallel reality.
Each line represents a physical interface between each parallel reality**

The Secret Seas of Lake Recollection

Leopold Roberts has a secret. Leo resides in a tangent not far from the Baseline cluster. Although the world is in the Industrial Age (Progress Level 4), it approaches PL 5 in some respects. Mr. Roberts is a merchant, dealing in exotic perishables, exceptional crafts, bulk raw materials, and various oddments. Though no one has ever looked into it, Leopold Roberts ships all his trade goods in from Lake Recollection. Oddly, Lake Recollection only measures some 6 miles in diameter, and doesn't contain any islands or large tributaries that might constitute a connecting trade route.

Of course, Lake Recollection is a complex outpocket, and simultaneously borders on several dozen parallel universes in nested rings of borders. A traveler who takes a boat out onto the water passes the first interface after only a few dozen meters of travel toward the lake center. To observers on land,

the traveler plunges into a small bank of mist, but doesn't reappear on the opposite side. To the boater, the passage through the same bank of mist reveals a wide sea, stretching to all horizons, save for a small island a few kilometers distant. Of the original shore, there is no obvious sign.

The small island is Leopold's true base of operations. Usually, several trade ships are docked along a large pier. The ships are notable in that they belong to no single time period, or even culture. Leopold crews his ships with blackguards and pirates recruited from various tangents which Lake Recollection "contains" ("borders on" is probably a better way to put it). Usually, d4 ships lie in the small port, and 50 to 100 men (and some stranger critters) can usually be found in the small wood and stone complex on the island proper.

The complex is crude, but con-

tains such luxuries as electricity and running water. It also contains a warehouse that serves as a clearinghouse for all the cargo brought to this distribution center. Leopold's office and quarters are here, as well as a large brewpub that is always open, and usually filled with some motley collection of sailors on leave from their trade ships.

Leopold guards the secret of his lake fiercely, especially if visitors attempt to profit from their knowledge of the many seas (and ports) that Lake Recollection borders upon. Visitors are tolerated if merely passing through by accident or in order to reach one of the nested seas, especially if they've some valuables to trade. Some of Leopold's men are armed with PL 4 firearms, though Leo himself has a 9 mm pistol stolen from a nearby PL 5 world. Those who attempt to steal from Leo's ships or warehouse are dealt with harshly.

per the previous example). Once the outermost border is passed, however, the next "layer" of the supertopology, consisting of a section of a conifer forest, could stretch for acres. Like the outermost interface, the next interior border within the conifer stand could conceivably take up only a few hundred square feet within the hollow bole of a particularly large conifer. The bole's interior marks yet another interface; from the "inside," this interface makes a border many kilometers in diameter, even though from the "outside" (which is really a section of a distinct alternate world), the interface measured only 3 to 6 meters across! This inmost section opens onto a forest of mighty redwoods, towering hundreds of feet in the air. The original copse of bushes certainly didn't appear to hide such a landscape.

Persistent Individuals

While some people make more of a difference individually, others are just more persistent. That is, they show up over and over again across superspace. Of course, there are parallel versions of almost every individual, each just slightly different from the fellow the next tangent over. Persistent individuals (sometimes just called persistents) are different versions of individuals existing across millions of tangent worlds!

Over a range of tangents, a specific persistent individual can possess varying professions, motives, positions, and geographical locations. Even the most complex superspace social dynamic equations are at a loss to explain how persistent individuals matter so much, or why a particular persistent might be the head of the corporation in one tangent, and the night janitor for the same corporation the next tangent over. Perhaps persistents are nothing more than a manifestation of infinity; that is, in an infinite space, all things are possible, even phenomena as seemingly meaningless as persistent individuals.

Superspace Pits

Tangent worlds are sometimes "replaced" due to simple outpocketing, but in at least one case, this process has gone terribly wrong. Instead of replacement, a hole was ripped in superspace itself. Such a hole, called a "superspace pit," is a stress on the fabric of infinity. In less time than it takes to describe, the parallel universe hosting the pit is drawn completely down a non-dimensional gullet, irrevocably gone, swallowed by the superspace pit.

It's not hard to understand how the "disappearance" of a single tangent amongst a continuum of tangents leads to local superspace stress of unimaginable intensity. In layman's terms, the tangents "adjacent" of the swallowed tangent are squeezed into the empty space, but in so doing, come into contact with the superspace pit. These tangents then become subject to the same insane forces that swallowed the

first tangent. Though the tangents newly forced into the breach by superspace pressure don't dissipate with the same rapidity as the first, the destruction of these tangents is still incredibly fast; they dissipate in a matter of subjective weeks, and are gone forever. As such, the superspace pit yawns wider as more tangents are sucked into it, and yet more local tangents come into jeopardy.

Remember that each tangent is an entire universe in and of itself. As a universe tumbles into the pit, stars begin to flare, natural laws begin to wobble, and the stuff of Creation begins to fray. Inhabited worlds within a tangent abutting a superspace pit experience storms of ever-increasing severity. Such storms finally culminate in continent-sized tornadoes that literally suck away the mantle of the planet as the atmosphere boils! Storms of such magnitude arrive only scant hours before the entire tangent is torn asunder and swallowed by the

Joey

Joey is one of the first persistents identified by field agents of Access, Inc. Specifically, it was Agent Gastwirt who made the initial report, after a superspace trek lasting three years through multiple divisions. In his report, Gastwirt writes:

"... and that was when I realized I'd seen Joey before, perhaps many times. His name was Joey Tanaka in Tangent +0.032, -1.231, and he sold hot dogs on a street corner. As I liberally applied mustard, it occurred to me that Joey was the same fellow who tried to press pamphlets on us two days and several tangents to the P-West of here. Except, in that tangent, his name was Fred, or Frank, maybe. But it definitely wasn't Joey.

"I asked Agent Robbins about Joey. Sure enough, she remembered seeing him before, but over two months ago, in one of the Roman Utopia paraverses. In fact, she claimed that our Joey was none other than the Holy Roman Emperor Remus XXXVII!

"Since then, we've kept our eyes open for Joey. Sure enough, we've seen him on several tangents, but almost always in a completely different situation than in the previous tangent. Joey seems to break all the rules concerning "parallel versions" of specific individuals; he appears too frequently with too much variance. What's more, now that we are alerted to the phenomenon, we've noted what just may be a few more regularly occurring people who don't seem merely to be parallels. We've started to call them persistent individuals, or just persistents, for short.

"Most recently, we met Joey under less than ideal circumstances. His name was Bill Burg, and he was some sort of crime boss in Under York (-1.039, -4.378). Unfortunately, our activities ran afoul of one of his goon gangs, and to escape without revealing our cross-tangent origins, we were forced to eliminate him. It was painful, since Joey has become somewhat of a "familiar face" in superspace. Thankfully, we met Joey again the very next day in another tangent, where he sold insurance. Apparently, no harm done."

Mhegadon

There is a superspace pit somewhere within the Fantastic division where some residents of the originating tangent survived the pit's creation. The survivors crafted an artificial environment "around" the pit in subspace, an synthetic zone made possible through marvels of PL 9 technology and convoluted natural laws. The energy necessary to maintain the subspace is astronomical; however, the survivors utilized the energy of dissipating tangents, siphoning the barest distillate of the destruction in the pit "below" them in order to stabilize their refuge.

Within the subspace a city of tungsten-carbon fiber was constructed. The city is Mhegadon, a torus-shaped solid structure measuring some 60 km in diameter, with the singularity of the pit burning with hellish intensity at its center. Because the city is in subspace, it is out of phase with the pit, which would otherwise destroy it instantly. The original twelve survivors have set themselves up as lords of their self-made domain, but they are not alone within the massive construction. In fact, millions of souls reside within Mhegadon: refugees from the pit, "skimmed" from superspace as their tangents evaporated.

The synthetic subspace "around" the pit, existing outside of normal space-time and superspace, acts in some ways like a filter. As broken tangents swirl into nothingness into the superspace pit, detritus in the form of unique individuals and objects sometimes wash up on the edges of the artificial zone containing Mhegadon. These refugees usually have little trouble in gaining access to the city proper, where a breathable atmosphere is supplied, but once inside, are subject to the vagaries of rulership, class, and strife that has sprung up in the lower regions of this extensive structure.

Different sections and levels of Mhegadon vary in their composition. Gangs claim some levels, others are controlled by small groups who all hail from the same tangent world, and others stand empty, save for automated hydroponic farms, water condensation units, and the occasional automated drone. Ultimately, all Mhegadon's residents supposedly answer to the Lords, though few have ever seen the true masters of the city. The Lords of Mhegadon are too busy with their projects to spend undue time governing the riff-raff of accumulated paraverse refugees.

The Lords of Mhegadon (also referred to as Lords of the Pit, or Pit Lords by the many refugees crowding the city) are consumed with a single passion: to completely comprehend the phenomenon of the pit. In so doing, they hope to engineer methods whereby the vast energies resident in the pit might be fully tapped and utilized. It is the ambition of each of the Lords to gain personal ascendancy over this insane power by whatever means necessary. In fact, several of the lords have already fitted themselves with special cybernetic transceivers of their own design. These transceivers allow their owners to channel small bits of residual energy skimmed from the pit, and with the hardware and software in each transceiver, to give the siphoned energy brief shape and purpose! Generally speaking, the lords have access to PL 8 and 9 technology, as well as to some Arcane FX skills. Furthermore, those with transceivers can be treated as having Superpower FX abilities of varying types.

Cross-tangent travelers of average Progress Levels should stay well clear of Mhegadon. The Lords are none too scrupulous when it comes to obtaining new bits and pieces of technology from tangents farther afield than those that have already been consumed by the pit. Of course, potential visitors to the city could only even conceivably reach the subspace in which Mhegadon resides if they transfer to a tangent about to be extinguished. Visitors who have some notion of sealing or otherwise destroying the superspace pit are greeted with outright hostility by the Lords.

ravenous superspace pit. Even those few inhabitants of worlds who survive the massive instability don't last too much longer unless they possess the means to flee the

tangent itself.

Superspace pits may be a threat to all of superspace. Those aware of them wonder if, in time, all the myriad universes will eventually



be drawn into a superspace pit. Then again, this is only really a possibility if superspace is not infinite. Still, vast swaths of superspace could easily be eaten up by such a phenomenon, and whole divisions of the superspace sequence could ultimately be consumed. Thankfully, the rate of "tangent consumption" within a superspace pit varies between 1 and 10 per subjective month. When considering the billion billion tangents that make up a single sequence division, the threat loses its immediacy.

Space-Time Wrinkles

Where the fabric of reality is stretched or compressed, it is sometimes described as "wrinkled." As briefly touched on in "Hazards of Superspace Travel" on page 34, space-time wrinkles encountered mid-trip can affect the "z-axis" destination of an inter-tangent trip, effectively "delaying" such a journey. That scenario assumes that the trip passes through a space-time wrinkle, with only an indirect effect upon the travelers. Space-time wrinkles can have a more significant effect on travelers if they end their trip in a tangent that contains this phenomenon.

Space-time wrinkles are resident to a single universe. They only occur around objects at least as massive as a small planet. Of course, every mass affects space-time, but these distortions are normal. Space-time wrinkles are abnormal; they form for no obvious reason, and their affects on local geometry can be quite troubling, especially in inhabited systems.

An inhabited world affected by a space-time wrinkle is pocked with regions with variable time. That is, time runs slower in specific regions on the surface of the world than in other places on the same world. In other specific areas, time may run faster. Certain tangent worlds are absolutely riddled with such inconsistencies of time. The inhabitants regard such vagaries of the time stream like residents of unaffected tangents regard mountain ranges to be avoided, or inclement but seasonal weather. On other tangent worlds,

only very specific, small areas are so affected by pockets of slow or fast time.

Superspace Bleed, Minor

Much like it sounds, superspace bleed occurs when influences from one tangent seep into that of another tangent. Bleed is unlike outpocketing, in that no discrete interface forms between the tangents involved in the bleed. Note, howev-

er, that bleeding is generally contained within a radius of one to ten kilometers. Only in rare cases does the bleed seep beyond these parameters.

Minor bleeding rarely involves tangible objects, at least at the macro level. Instead, minor bleed usually takes the form of emotions, diseases, or philosophies. Residents of a particular physical site on the indicated tangent world may be subject to recurring pathogens, even though the strictest immunization and sterilization procedures are in force. In fact, the virus or bacteria may be seeping in from the parallel world "next door," especially if the "infectious" tangent world is experiencing some sort of virulent plague.

In the same way, events that somehow call into being extreme emotions on one tangent can affect the mental state of residents of nearby tangents that live in physical correspondence with the first. For instance, events of extreme violence on one tangent could color the dreams of residents of a small town the next tangent over. Such towns usually grow smaller and smaller, as the unending dreams that come from no apparent source whittle down even the strongest of wills.

Even subtler are the rare occurrences of philosophical bleed. Intangible ideals sometimes seep past superspace barriers to color the attitudes of localized populations in the affected worlds. For instance, on there may be an Earth that subscribes wholly to the belief that pets are evil and cannot be tolerated. Those found in violation of this belief are punished. Now, imagine if an Earth within or near the Baseline tangent class begins to experience philosophical bleed from the first Earth. As stated earlier, minor bleed is usually localized to just a few kilometers, so at most a small city might be affected, or perhaps a small section of a large city. Over time the residents of the section affected by the bleed begin to act quite strangely, even inhumanely, toward animals. Though these actions seem horrendous, imagine how much worse philo-

Shoals of Slow Time

On many alternate worlds, time is like a fluid. Drifts of slow time congeal and move like tides across the planet. Sometimes, slow time falls like droplets of rain from a time front. Seconds flitter like butterflies, sometimes alighting and transferring their burden of time to random objects and living beings. Everyone is familiar with these manifestations, and like the rain, they can't be avoided. This is not so with the Shoals of Slowtime.

The Shoals wend in narrow bands across interdicted lands. To travel into the shoals is to lose oneself to the ages; a trip into slow time may take the traveler but an hour, but to the rest of the world, a thousand years and more may pass by. Refugees from justice sometimes escape into the Shoals of Slowtime. Inquisitive explorers, curious about the future, also sometimes wander into Slowtime, hoping to return to the time stream many ages hence, in a better world.

This is not to say that the Shoals of Slowtime are lifeless. Plant and animal life that flourished millions of years ago are said to be common farther in, and within the deepest sediments of lost time, life that flourished before the dinosaurs yet walks. Rumors persist of lost races, species, and even civilizations that might exist beyond the outer bands of slow time. However, to delve so deep, an explorer must forget his present, and forsake his future.

The Ghost Town of Shylo

Shylo is an abandoned city. Cities like Shylo occur all throughout superspace. Unlike boomtowns that dry up after a time for economic reasons, Shylo and cities like it dry up for no good reason, at least as far as most inhabitants can understand.

In fact, Shylo stands empty and abandoned these last hundred years because of the superspace bleed that invisibly suffuses the air around the town. Though no history book records it, people slowly drifted out of Shylo because of their horrible dreams that commenced upon their residency in the city. The dreams are a direct result of bleed from a corresponding physical site in a "neighboring" tangent. Where Shylo stands on one tangent, a battlefield lies on the other. The war raging on this field has continued for three hundred years. Though lulls in the fighting sometimes last years, no end in the conflict is in sight.

In the present, Shylo has a reputation of being haunted. Those who enter the city sometimes see flashes of light from behind boarded windows and shuttered doors. Dim figures wearing fantastic regalia are sometimes glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. Strange sounds, screams, and muffled weapons fire sometimes resound through the empty ghost town, though finding the source of these noises proves impossible.

The true power of Shylo's curse becomes fully evident to those who spend a night within city limits. Scenes of murder, blood, and death claw at the dreamer's sanity all night long. Those who spend a span of days in Shylo soon grow weary from sleep deprivation, though their brains are overfull with unwanted dreams.

Sometimes, people come to Shylo specifically to probe these disturbing dreams. The visions of war sometimes hint at technologies and weapons far beyond those of the tangent world where Shylo resides. Such visions are usually mistakenly attributed to the future of the current world. Thus, some come away bereft of hope. Others come away with hints of warcraft, which, in the wrong hands, could precipitate a war on the world where the ghost town of Shylo resides.

sophical bleed could be from a tangent world that subscribes to truly evil belief systems!

Another manifestation of minor superspace bleed is the "past life" phenomena. Across many tangents (especially those that are not cognizant of superspace), certain individuals claim to remember the events of past lives. In fact, these individuals are manifesting the effects of superspace bleed. The memories they attribute to their souls in previous incarnations may actually be the lives of other individuals on other tangents, whose memories migrated through superspace bleed.

Superspace Bleed, Major

Akin to minor bleed, major superspace bleed involves seepage from one tangent into another. Unlike the minor manifestation, however, major superspace bleeding is not neces-

sarily limited to just ideas, emotions, or microscopic viruses. Though major bleed can include such things, the phenomenon's primary identifying feature is that actual physical objects, organisms, structures, landscapes, and even altered physical laws can bleed from one tangent to another. Worse, major bleeding isn't always constrained to just a few kilometers. In some cases, effects grow until they until the two affected tangents fuse into a single, muddled universe, or until the process can be manually reversed through advanced technology.

Natural regions of major superspace bleed rarely grow on their own accord. Naturally occurring events often include relics and organisms from several neighboring tangents, as well as "distant" tangents that lie within different divisions of the superspace sequence. Thus, regions which experience major bleed can con-

tain several anachronistic and "tangent anachronistic" elements, including "alien" races, technological items far in advance of the standard for the indicated world, and creatures straight out of a fantasy novel. Such manifestations of superspace bleed are rare. Sometimes affected areas are looked upon as dangerous, while on other tangents, trade routes are opened through the new "lands" accessible through the "nexus."

Unnatural occurrences of major superspace bleed often continue to grow after their inception, sometimes to the detriment of one or both of the tangents affected. Unnatural bleed can be initiated during technological research into the nature of superspace, especially when researchers tinker at superspace matrices in spite of shaky or misguided theories. Major bleed can occur so fast that to observers, it resembles an explosion, leaving only rubble in its wake. Other superspace bleed disasters start small, but grow into events that threaten the entire world.

Time Loops

A Mobius strip is a continuous one-sided surface formed from a flat strip of material by rotating one end 180 degrees and attaching it to the other end. Time loops are like Mobius strips, in that a loop is formed with no beginning and no end. In the case of a time loop that affects a tangent, a certain section of history plays over and over again, never deviating from the prescribed course of events, and never failing to jump back to an earlier time when the current events have run their course.

Time loops are generally not tangent-wide effects, but instead are relegated to specific portions of the space-time continuum. Sadly, living creatures caught up in a time loop are generally unaware of their fate to relive a portion of their lives over, and over, and over again, ad infinitum.

Time loops sometimes form completely naturally, but the most common reason a time loop forms is due to some catastrophic release of energy that results in significant

Project Zeppelin

A military scientist stumbled onto superspace matrix theory. Not long after, a secret military research grant was approved, codenamed Zeppelin. Sadly, whoever coined the phrase "a little knowledge is dangerous" must have had Project Zeppelin in mind. Disregarding or possibly unaware of the consequences, Project Zeppelin raced forward, and in the end, managed to rend the fabric of superspace.

In fact, the laboratory and the restricted ground upon which Project Zeppelin was located were instantly destroyed in a blast following a particularly intrusive experiment. The blast resulted from newly introduced space-time, which destructively overlapped the previously situated space-time. Sadly, the blast itself was only the herald of an incident of major superspace bleed.

The area affected by the bleed continues to grow in diameter at a rate of 1 km every 24 hours. The growing imposition of an alien space-time on a previously existing space-time visually manifests as a spreading bank of obscurity, reminiscent of particularly thick fog. Therefore, the edge of this expanding fog bank is the demarcation between compromised and uncompromised areas. Investigation of the fog reveals a breathable, if a bit thick and cloying, atmosphere.

Organisms from the alien space-time also accompany the fog. These organisms seem right at home within the confines of their new misty environment, though they never stray outside the knife-edge boundary of the fog's growing influence. Unfortunately, these organisms seem to be quite predatory. In fact, most investigators of the growing fog bank discover this fact in spectacularly gruesome fashion, and usually too late to warn other would-be investigators who remain outside the limits of the growing region of doubled space-time.

Researchers now believe that the tangent world from which the bleed originates is part of the Biological or Fantastic division. No researchers have yet penetrated far enough into the heart of the bleed to find out what conditions are really like on that world. It's theorized that several hundred species live within a balanced ecosystem, but for whatever reason, the organism that features most prominently within the fog is a predator. The predator uses the dense fog, in which vision only stretches 3 to 6 meters,

to its full advantage. The predators don't seem to be affected by visual limitations, but then again, they don't appear to have organs that could even be classified as eyes.

Fog Predator

STR	15 (d4+12)	INT	10 (d4+8)
DEX	15 (d4+12)	WIL	7 (d4+5)
CON	13 (d4+11)	PER	1 (Animal 1)
Durability:	13/13/6/6	Action Check:	16+/15/7/3
Move:	24/12/6	#Actions:	2
Reaction Score:	Ordinary/2		

Attacks

Tentacles (x6)	15/7/3	d6s/d4+1w/d4m	LI/O
Bite	15/7/3	d4w/d8w/d4m	LI/O

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks (hard to see at all in fog)
 Armor: d6+2 (LI)/d6+1 (HI)/2d4 (En)

Skills

Stealth [13]-hide [18]; Stamina [13]-endurance [17]; Awareness [11]-intuition [14], perception [12]; Resolve [11]-physical resolve [13].

The fog predator, when it can be seen at all, resembles an octopus in a carapace. Its six tentacles emerge from beneath a pale gray shell. It uses these tentacles to propel itself almost like a spider. Of course, it also uses these tentacles to attack its prey. Once the predator scores a hit with a tentacle, it wraps the tentacle around its prey and automatically constricts in each subsequent round. The prey can pull free of a constricting tentacle with a successful opposed STR feat check. Alternatively, 5 points of wound damage will sever a tentacle (note that this damage doesn't count against the fog predator's overall durability). For every tentacle that already constricts a particular victim, each succeeding tentacle attack is at a -1 step bonus. If prey is secured by at least three tentacles, the fog predator can draw its victim partially beneath its carapace to automatically deliver a horrendous bite each round.

destruction. "Significant" is the key term here—any diversion in a tangent's history of enormous "significance" that is prematurely precipitated must spawn another parallel tangent where the disaster did not occur, according to theory. The thing is, superspace is already saturated with infinite tangents, and there isn't always "room" for more. So, instead of spawning new tangents based on one localized event,

the event and the surrounding space-time is snipped off, and looped back on itself just prior to the disaster in question. Thus, there is no need for the formation of new universes, since the significant event didn't really occur.

Of course, events that humans consider significant happen all the time, but time loops don't curtail our future. It goes back to what "significant" really means, as far

as superspace is concerned. A destructive event (or creative event, for that matter) is only significant if it would require another parallel universe to form to balance out wild swings of probability. And, just for the record, this sort of balancing act is very, very rarely necessary. So, merely flipping a coin is not a significant event, nor is the destruction of an entire planet... usually.

The Afterglow

"Don't you wonder why we never talk about the future anymore?" is a question often asked on the bridge of the *Afterglow*, right before the ramjet sucks a quantum black hole directly into the engines. As the resulting catastrophic blast begins to vaporize the massive PL 6 generation colony ship *Afterglow*, the flow of events is snipped and spliced to a time five days before this disastrous event. The *Afterglow* is in a time loop, and objectively, has lived out the same five days thousands of times.

The destruction of the *Afterglow* is a significant event for the universe in which it inhabits. Because the ship is a colony generation ship, it is destined to eventually bring human life to a far star called Neovenon 472. From this first step, civilization would then spread exponentially through the rest of the local spiral arm, and eventually, into other galaxies. However, with the *Afterglow's* destruction, this massive colonization of the universe by humans fails to get off the ground; the Earth from which the *Afterglow* set out turns inward, and never again sends out grand colony ships.

The sad thing is that the *Afterglow's* demise could so easily have been (and could be) avoided. In fact, a sinister covert operative's intervention is responsible for steering the *Afterglow* directly into the interdicted vector. Murmes Japhy, the covert operative, is in the employ of the Coalition for Human Serenity back on Earth. The launch of the *Afterglow* was something the Coalition fought long and hard against. They lost in the end. In a last-ditch effort, the coalition managed to include Japhy as one of the systems operations staff.

Japhy, a fanatic Coalition member, was on a mission of sabotage. As a purported navigation tech op, the operative pulled a regular shift on the bridge. It was during one of these shifts that Japhy cut the alarms and injected a false sensory module into the navigation computer. The destruction of the *Afterglow* was the result.

Travelers who somehow find themselves on the *Afterglow* have an advantage over those caught up in the time loop. Because superspace travelers originate from outside the local universe, they have a chance to recall successive loops, each of which ends in a catastrophic blast. Every time travelers find themselves reliving the loop, at some point during the repeated five days of history, "déjà vu" becomes strong enough to allow them each an Awareness-intuition check at a

+2 step penalty. Successful checks indicate the traveler remembers the previous loop (or loops, if more than one has occurred).

Superspace travelers who become aware of their situation must avert the disaster by stopping Japhy—the time loop prevents any method of superspace travel from functioning. Only by ensuring the survival of the *Afterglow* does the time loop fade away, allowing normal superspace rules to function once more. Thus, the travelers may have an investigation ahead of them, which if successful, leads them to a physical confrontation with the mad saboteur.

Murmes Japhy

Covert Operative

Level 6 human Free Agent

STR	10	INT	12 [+1]
DEX	11 [+1]	WIL	12 [+1]
CON	10	PER	11 [+1]
Durability:	12/12/6/6	Action Check:	14+/13/6/3
Move:	20/12/4	#Actions:	2
Last Resorts:	2		

Attacks

Unarmed*	5/2/1	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
11mm ch pistol	14/7/3	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m	HI/O
*+d4 base situation die			

Defenses

CF softsuit d6 (LI)/d6 (HI)/d6-1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Acrobatics [11]-defensive [12], daredevil [12]; Manipulation [11]; Modern [11]-pistol [14]; Stealth [11]-hide [12], shadow [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]-space [12]; Stamina [10]-resist pain [11]; Knowledge [12]; Navigation [12]-system astrogation [13]; Security [12]-protocols [13]; System Operation [12]; Awareness [12]; Investigate [12]; Resolve [12]; Culture [11]-etiquette (campaign specific) [12]; Deception [11]-bluff [12], bribe [12]; Interaction [11]-interview [12], charm [12], seduce [12].

Gear

Computer gauntlet, space jumpsuit/uniform with anti-scan weave (treat as CF softsuit), comm gear, lock-pick set, surveillance gear, 11mm ch pistol, vacuum mask.

Zero-time Ghosts

Technically speaking, zero-time particles are actually observed to exist for a specified time and to move a specified distance. However, to the particle itself, it exists for no time at all. It existed for zero time. Did the particles have any "real" existence? In a way, yes. The term "zero-time" and some ele-

ments of the behavior were borrowed to describe an even stranger phenomenon: zero-time ghosts.

Zero-time ghosts are living beings that don't actually live within the confines of a standard tangent. In fact, they are some sort of a "reflection" from a possible but improbable parallel tangent. Such reflections are incredibly rare, but

sometimes conditions within a tangent accidentally slide into the peculiar celestial alignment necessary to create a zero-time ghost. Such conditions are typically reminiscent of events that could lead to a time loop (i.e., they are somehow "significant" to the tangent).

Zero-time ghosts often appear near the site where they "remem-

ber" some significant future event. As soon as the event responsible for the zero-time ghost's memories fails to occur, the zero-time ghost fades back into the continuum in a brief blaze of virtual particles. The few notable exceptions are those zero-time ghosts who realize some portion of their predicament. Such entities may choose to take matters into their own hands, and physically attempt to bring about the future they remember, thereby assuring their own future existence!

Known Superspace Travelers

In the vast reaches of superspace, several groups actively travel the tangents. Some travel to explore, others for profit, and some just because they can. This section introduces a few of these known superspace travelers.

Gleaners of Ishtar

In the Historical division a class of tangents exists where Babylonian culture is predominant. On one

such parallel Earth at PL 6, the warrior scientists of Ishtar are very interested in the natural world. After all, their goddess holds purview over a wide gamut, including love, fertility, and war. In any event, the warrior scientists uncovered ancient encrypted computer disks in long-buried data archives. The information revealed many secrets of reality's manifold nature. Using schematics translated from the data, the warrior scientists built several superspace modules. They would have built more, but the encrypted disks spontaneously erased during an attempt

The Question of Ed White's Future Origin

The media called him the Astonishing Bulk. When Ed crashed into a bank vault in his purple and gold body suit with supernormal strength, his reputation was made. Everyone wanted to know who the Astonishing Bulk was, and how he came by his incredible physical abilities. Was he the result of some bizarre military experiment? Was there some secret herb or vitamin that the Bulk discovered? Was the Bulk a new weapon of organized crime? What cologne did he use?

Of course, Ed White is the Bulk's real name. Ed would certainly never have picked such a ridiculous nom de guerre. Then again, Ed is in somewhat of a pickle. His strange powers are the result of his mother's strange accident involving the chance interaction of an artificial blood substitute with a manufactured fat alternative before Ed was even born. However, Ed knows that the incident with his mother that gave him his powers occurred 12 years in the future! Ed appears to be adrift in time, interacting with the past for reasons he can't immediately identify.

Looking into things a bit, Ed discovered that Cellstar, the company that produced the artificial blood substitute partly responsible for his strange gifts, is on the brink of financial collapse. How can this be? If Cellstar goes under, they'll never mass-produce the plasma that Ed's mother received during a kidney stone operation. If she never receives the plasma, the one-in-a-million interaction with other foreign chemicals in her bloodstream won't occur. The developing embryo destined to be called The Astonishing Bulk will never be born. Ed White will never be born.

Well, Ed wasn't content to let a future occur that didn't contain him without trying to do something about it. Thus, Ed turned to a life a crime, in attempt to provide some liquidity to the insolvent Cellstar. Ed figures that if he can keep the pharmaceutical company afloat for just 12 more years, his mother will get the vital transfusion as she is supposed to, and Ed's existence will be assured.

Those who interfere with Ed and his mission are dealt with swiftly and fiercely by the Astonishing Bulk. Ed has to make sure that the future unfolds just so. Otherwise, he suspects he'll just fade away, a chimera that couldn't ensure its own embodiment, even when given the perfect opportunity by a capricious universe.

Ed White
(a.k.a. The Astonishing Bulk)
Level 8 human Tech Op

STR 15* [+3] INT 8
DEX 10 WIL 11 [+1]
CON 16* [+3] PER 8
Durability: 16/16/8/8 Action Check: 11+/10/5/2
Move: 24/16/6 #Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Attacks
Unarmed 17/8/4 d4+3s/d4+4s/d4+5s LI/O

Defenses
Armor skin* d6+4 (LI)/d6+3 (HI)/d4+2 (En)

*The skill listings below assume that Ed's STR (base 10), CON (base 13), and armor skin (see above) are the result of Super Power FX (cost 35 skill points).

Skills
Athletics [15]-throw [16], rugby [16]; Unarmed Attack [15]-brawl [17]; Vehicle Op [10]-land [11]; Stamina [16]-endurance [19], resist pain [17]; Business [8]-corporate [9]; Knowledge [8]-deduce [10]; Awareness [11]; Street Smart [11]-street knowledge [12]; Interaction [8]-bargain [9], intimidate [9].

Gear
Purple & gold jumpsuit.

Gleaner of Ishtar

Level 4 human Combat Spec

STR 10 INT 11 [+1]
 DEX 11 [+1] WIL 10
 CON 9 PER 9
 Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 15+/14/7/3
 Move: 20/12/4 #Actions: 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

11mm ch rifle* 14/7/3 d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m HI/O
 or
 Rail gun 11/5/2 d6w/d6+2w/d6m HI/O
 *—d4 base situation die

Defenses

Attack Armor: d4+1 (LI)/d6+1 (HI)/d6-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [10]—combat [12]; Athletics [10]—climb [11]; Heavy Weapons [10]—direct [11]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]—rifle [14]; Vehicle Operation [11]; Stamina [9]—endurance [11]; Knowledge [11]—computer operation [12], first aid [12]; Navigation [11]—tangent navigation [12]; Physical Science [11]—superspace theory [12]; Technical Science [11]; Awareness [11]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Attack armor (decorated with Babylonian insignia and symbols), sensor gauntlet, microcomputer, instrument pack, comm gear, 11mm charge rifle OR rail gun, knife with Ishtar's profile carved into handle.

to copy the sacred information into more permanent storage.

Each of the 99 superspace modules appears as a multifaceted solid object about the size of a clenched fist. The warrior scientists call the small modules Footprints of Ishtar and regard them as totems of their deity's favor. Each Footprint acts as a parastrider (described on page 29), save that the Footprints allow only a single individual to move between tangents. Footprints of Ishtar can be synchronized, allowing several individuals to move to the same parallel tangent using several different modules.

The warrior scientists wasted little time in exploiting their new-found power. Using their temple on their own Earth as a base, the Gleaners (as they are now known) moved out across the many dimensions. At first, they were content with observing and exploring, but soon, the explorers began to exploit their technological superiority on tangents at or below PL 5.

The Gleaners usually contract themselves out as mercenaries on worlds at Progress Levels equal to or less than their home tangent. As mercenaries, they glory in their ability to bring Ishtar's grace to "foreign" battlefields. Few can stand to their tactics (especially when they utilize their Footprints to slip behind enemy lines) or their esoteric weaponry and defenses collected from a hundred previous tangents.

In worlds at PL 3 or lower, the Gleaners dispense with contracts and take on the role of raiders. The Gleaners collect treasures of precious metals, art objects, and cultural oddities in order to adorn Ishtar's temples back in their own world.

Generally speaking, Gleaners travel in groups of five. Thus, the full complement of 99 warriors rarely gather from their various pursuits in parallel universes. The statistics for an average Gleaner appear below. Note that individual Gleaners are quite likely to possess at least one unique item plundered from another dimension.

Xenoarchaeologists of Mantebron

If you use the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting, this option allows you to subtly introduce your heroes to superspace theory and the means whereby they, too, can travel the infinite dimensions. The STAR*DRIVE option presented here is not located on PL 5 Earth. Instead, it is located at Progress Level 7, on a world in the Mantebron star system.

Mantebron lies in the Verge, an area of frontier space more than a thousand light years from Earth. Though Mantebron still shines strongly, it's calculated that in 30,000 years the sun will exhaust its hydrogen fuel and swell into a red giant. Eight planets orbit Mantebron, including the planet

called High Mojave. Once, High Mojave possessed seas, forests, and lush grasslands, but with the aging of the sun, the biosphere has dwindled. High Mojave is now a cold and desiccated planet with an unbreathable atmosphere (G2/R2/A3/P1/H1). Still, the rough and independent stellar nation known as the Orion League arrived to colonize planet, despite its Class 2 environment and physical remoteness. It seemed that the planet was destined to remain a backwater, up until the homesteaders' discovery of alien ruins.

The ruins predate human sentience. In fact, they were abandoned at least a hundred million years ago, though exact dating remains elusive. The ruins show a high level of silicon-based technology, but little metallurgy.

Appropriately enough, the xenoarchaeologists who have flocked to the system dubbed the ancient aliens "The Glassmakers."

Glassmaker ruins extend through much of the planet's surface and subsurface, but because of their extreme age, little has been learned. At least, little has been learned by the bulk of those studying the decayed architecture.

Liesal Sandovar (the daughter of Mojave's colonial governor) has taken to xenoarchaeology, despite her father's wishes to the contrary. Growing up amidst the stark beauty and wide-open desertscapes of the world instilled Liesal with a

Liesal Sandovar**Level 6 Tech Op**

STR 8 INT 12 [+1]
DEX 11 [+1] WIL 11 [+1]
CON 9 PER 9

Durability: 9/9/4/4 Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: 18/12/4 Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

9mm ch pistol* 11/5/2 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m HI/O

Unarmed* 4/2/1 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

CF long coat: d4 (LI)/d4 (HI)/d6-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]; Vehicle Op [11]; Stamina [9]; Computer Science [12]; Knowledge [12]-deduce [13]; Life Science [12]-xenology [16]; Physical Science [12]-paleontology [16], xenoarchaeology [15]; Technical Science [12]-repair [15]; Administration [11]-bureaucracy [12]; Awareness [11]; Investigate [11]; Teach [11]-tech op [12]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Jumpsuit, CF long coat, 9mm charge pistol, archaeological gear, Glass Door.

deep love for High Mojave. Her interest in the ancient Glassmakers is an obsession that she has carried with her from early childhood.

Now, as an adult, she brings scientific methodology to her explorations of ancient sites, some of which she discovered when still only a child. In fact, it was her "secret place" so often used to escape her father's grim moods when she was younger that eventually yielded up the Glassmaker artifact she dubbed the Glass Door.

The Glass Door operates in all ways like the Alien Artifact described on page 26. In shape, the artifact actually looks like a translucent pane of glass with a convoluted and eroded frame. The frame sports many small depressions that serve as controls. When properly activated, the "glass" becomes permeable, allowing travel to other tangents. At the destination point, travelers exit into the new tangent through what looks to be another artifact of exactly the same shape. In fact, through a



hard-to-explain twist of physics, the exit is the original Glass Door, and when the tunnel is turned off, it seems to any observers back on the original tangent that the artifact simply fades away.

A variety of possibilities exist for the GM interested in using this information in his or her campaign.

◆ Liesal decides to transport her prize to a university. She hires the heroes to protect her from agents of VoidCorp, the Thuldan Empire, or perhaps even the Galactic Concord who have learned of the discovery.

◆ Liesal is taking the Glass Door to Old Space. In fact, she's heading for Earth, located at the center of the Solar Union. She intends to find a perfect Earth where mankind isn't so exploitative. The heroes are hired (perhaps by one of the groups noted in the previous entry) to get the Glass Door from her.

◆ Liesal opens the Glass Door on Mantebron to a tangent where humanity never reached the Verge. However, the planet is inhabited by an expansionist alien species, desperate to evacuate this dying world. Any connection between this species and the Glassmakers is up to the Gamemaster. Are they the distant descendants of that ancient race? Or were they planted there eons ago as part of an enormous experiment? The alien species should have technology of Progress Level 5 or 6, with perhaps some PL 7 elements thrown in. The doorway to the Mantebron of the StarDrive universe presents a perfect means of escape (and colonization) for the alien species, who aren't terribly bothered that someone else already lives there.

Masters of Reality: The Seleucians

The Seleucians, or "Masters of Reality," as outsiders have dubbed them, truly believe they are the heirs to superspace. They possess innate abilities that allow them to walk between parallel worlds, so there is some merit to their claim.

The Seleucians hail from the world of Seleucia (G2/R1/A2/P3/H2), a tangent Earth that straddles the

outer border of the Fantastic division of the superspace sequence. In the tangent that contains Seleucia, items requiring an electrical or plasmatic charge to operate are rendered useless because of the warped laws of physics that exist in this region of superspace. As a general rule, no technology more advanced than that of PL 3 can function in Seleucia. The rulers of Seleucia rely on this fact to keep and maintain their "empire" from the forces of those that might otherwise possess a higher Progress Level in their own tangents.

The rulers of Seleucia belong to an extended family. Those truly of royal blood usually possess the ability to stride through tangents (similar to the Super Power FX skill tangent transit described on page 33). Because of their great training, all Seleucians receive a -2 step bonus in the use of this ability, and even a Failure result indicates that the Seleucian has reached the correct tangent cluster (but not the specific tangent desired). What's more, the Seleucians can even use tangent transit to move between divisions, though this applies a +1 step penalty per division crossed into.

It doesn't take too much imagination to realize that the power of the Seleucians is great, indeed. At base, their inherited power of superspace travel allows them to find anything they can imagine. So, by holding a particular picture of a desired tangent in mind, a Seleucian lord or lady soon arrives at their heart's desire.

The "empire" claimed by the lords of Seleucia encompasses several thousand specific regions across several hundred parallel tangents. Some of these tangents are actually connected via outpocketing and/or fixed gates, so some commerce is possible.

The capital city of the empire, which shares the name of Seleucia, is somewhat medieval in feel; however, architectural marvels acquired from a thousand parallel universes make for a breathtaking skyline. Likewise, trade with many different tangents has raised the standard of living in Seleucia to the levels normally associated with worlds at much higher Progress Levels.

Because Seleucia's very nature rebuffs technology, most other groups that travel superspace never find the city. In fact, Seleucia and its royalty are somewhat of a legend among those groups of superspace travelers who spend their time within the Historical division of the superspace sequence. However, when a traveler of lordly demeanor is glimpsed slipping between the folds of reality, it's probably a Lord of Seleucia.

Rules of Tangent Travel

Any time a group adheres to a common goal, rules for that group's behavior are not far behind. When such groups travel through superspace to tangents where threats both known and unimaginable lurk, such rules become a necessity. Because not every situation can be predicted ahead of time, certain primary considerations must be followed, unless the group in question wants to risk the discovery of their technology by natives of other tangents.

Some subset of the following rules are usually a part of the charter of any organization involved in traveling superspace. The nature of the organization helps determine which tenets are adhered to and which are ignored. For instance, an organization primarily interested in salvage or piracy (such as the Gleaners of Ishtar on page 46) doesn't care about rules limiting theft or interference. On the other hand, paraverse privateers adhere strongly to the rules that address leaving identifying clues or technology behind in a just-looted location on another tangent. If natives of the tangent learn too much, it's possible they could track the looters back to their headquarters to extract revenge.

Subtle Beginnings

What if your heroes start their superspace adventuring careers without knowing it? That is, what if the heroes accidentally stumble on some mechanism or area of effect that subtly transfers them to another tangent Earth without their immediate knowledge? Of course, the new tangent Earth must be initially similar to that from which they originated, or it becomes immediately obvious that things

are not as they should be.

Introduce very subtle clues to the heroes over a period of a few days to the effect that things "are not quite right." Subtlety is key—it creates dramatic tension before the heroes finally come to the realization that they are no longer on the Earth they remember! Don't introduce more than one clue at a time—overwhelming heroes with subtle clues is not subtle.

A list of possible clues is provided below. These clues are written

from the standpoint of a PL 5 Baseline tangent. Note that in addition to using the clues to kick off a cross-tangent adventure, you can also use these clues when characters have already adventured in superspace, but think (incorrectly) that they are safely back in their home tangent. In fact, the look of horror that comes over your players' faces when they realize that they're not actually home is something that every GM should witness.

Rules of Superspace Travel

- ◆ Do not interfere with the natives of alternate tangents.
- ◆ Do not interfere with events as they normally unfold on alternate tangents.
- ◆ Do not remove artifacts or relics from alternate tangents.
- ◆ Do not remove natives from alternate tangents.
- ◆ Do not leave clues that would make reasonable natives suspect the existence of superspace travelers (i.e., "enough with the crop circles!").
- ◆ Never leave out-tangent equipment where natives can find it, especially if such equipment is of a higher Progress Level than what has been achieved on the current tangent.
- ◆ Absolutely never give tangent-spanning techniques to natives of non-superspace-traveling tangent worlds.
- ◆ If natives become aware of the presence and true nature of superspace travelers, steps should be taken to remedy the situation.

Things That Aren't Quite Right

- ◆ Some (not all) popular songs are attributed to artists different than those on the heroes' home tangent (i.e., "Stairway to Heaven" by the Rolling Stones, "Welcome To The Machine" by the Beatles, or "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" by Alanis Morissette).
- ◆ Some (not all) popular books (and movies) are attributed to authors (or directors) different than those on the heroes' home tangent (i.e., *The Fountainhead* by James Michener, *Salem's Lot* by Michael Crichton, or *Foucault's Pendulum* by Bruce R. Cordell).
- ◆ There is no listing for Pizza in the phone book—a big giveaway that something's not quite right.
- ◆ The Dilbert cartoon is written from the perspective of middle and upper management.
- ◆ Scientific proof is accepted that the sun will go supernova within one year. Because this event cannot be prevented, life goes on somewhat normally, though with a notable increase in apathy. Natives of the tangent never talk about it, but sometimes make oblique references to "The Time" within the player's hearing.
- ◆ Some (not all) movies and books have alternative endings than those characters remember from their home tangent. For example, heroes watching a favorite cult classic like *Highlander* have a chance to notice that Connor MacLeod loses his battle with the Kurgan. Likewise, heroes may be stunned when Venkman is knocked from the top of the high-rise during the epic conclusion to *Ghostbusters*, allowing Gozer to reign triumphant.
- ◆ Abraham Lincoln's portrait adorns the American \$1 bill (this requires a successful Awareness-perception check to notice). Of course, the correct president on the \$1 bill is Andrew Jackson (if you don't agree, maybe you've already slipped into another tangent without realizing it).

Probability One

This remarkable spacecraft represents the pinnacle of super-space drive technology.

The *Probability One* is designed as the ultimate scout-ship—shift into any tangent, take sensor readings, collect samples, interact with natives if necessary, then return to safety in its home dimension.

The ship's typical crew complement is six: a captain, a navigator (who must have the specialty skill of Navigation—superspace), an engineer, a science officer (who should possess the skill of Physical Science—superspace theory), a first contact consul, and a defense officer. By necessity, most crew members are cross-trained on multiple systems.

Though its designers stressed defense over offense—as demonstrated by its strong armor and excellent defensive systems—the pair of kinetic lances mounted on the front of the ship are more than enough to deal with most craft of similar size. Still, because of the monetary value of the ship, the captain of the *Probability One* is well advised to seek flight over fight.

Because of the high power cost of the ship's defensive systems, during battle the communication and support systems must be taken off-line. This is another reason why any fight involving the *Probability One* must by definition be short.

Perhaps the only flaw of the ship is her rather spartan design. With no mess hall or entertainment facility, the crew must rely on their own imaginations (plus whatever broadcast programs that might exist in the tangents they travel to) to fill their leisure time. Though her recycler unit greatly extends the lifespan of the ship's stores, the scout craft isn't particularly comfortable for long trips. Furthermore, since it has no long-range drive capabilities, the *Probability One* must rely on hitching rides on larger craft for intersystem travel.

Probability One (Scout class)

PL 8

Cost \$ 20,505,000

Compartments: 6
Maneuver Rating: 0
Cruise Speed: 2 AU/hr

Dur: 30
Acc: 3 Mpp
Berthing: 6 crew

Armament: Kinetic lances (2)
Defenses: Jammer, displacer, damage control
Armor: Moderate nanofluidic (3 dur) 2d4 (LI), 2d4 (HI), 2d4 (En)
Computer: Good computer core, Good dedicated defense, navigation, science, and sensor computers
Engines: Inertial flux engine
Power: Matter converters rated for 14 power factors
Drive: Superspace drive
Hatches: Standard (0 dur)

Roll	Comp't	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
1-2	Command	Command deck (0/0) Multiphase radar (1/0) Spectroanalyzer (1/0) EM detector (0/0) IR detector (0/0) Laser transceiver (0/1) Radio transceiver (0/1) Jammer (0/1) Good damage control (2/2) Airlock (0/0) Reentry capsule (0/0) Good computer core (2/0)	12/12/6
3-4	Engineering	Inertial flux engine (2/2) Superspace drive (2/*) Autosupport (0/2) Autocargo (1/1)	10/10/5
5-7	Auxiliary	Matter converter (4/*) Recycler unit (1/1)	10/10/5
8-10	Weapons 1	Kinetic lance (2/1) Kinetic lance (2/1)	8/8/4
11-14	Weapons 2	Displacer (4/6)	8/8/4
15-20	Crew	Crew quarters (1/0) Lab section (2/0)	6/6/3

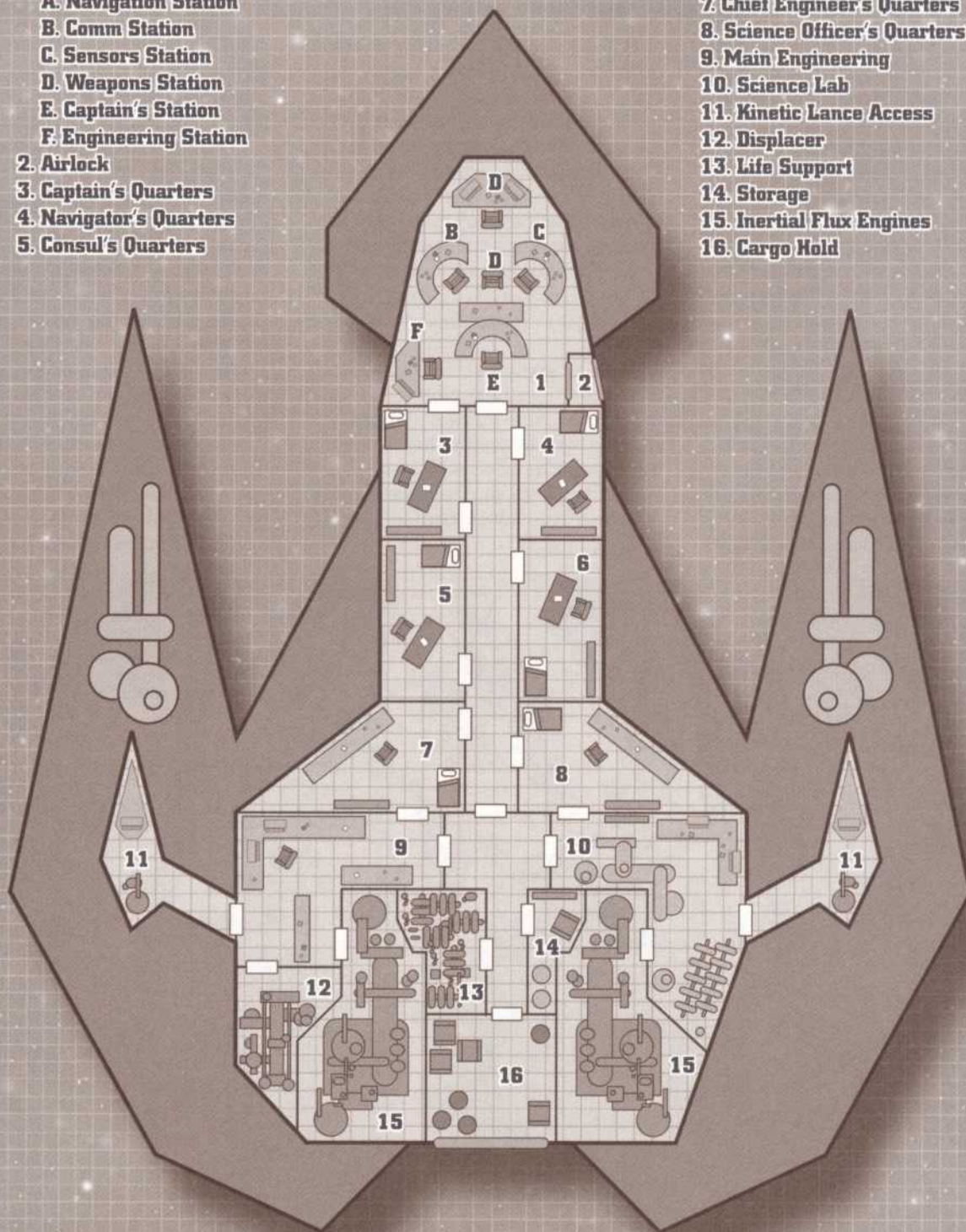
Weapon Data

System	Acc	Range (Mm)	Type	Damage	Actions
Kinetic lance (2)	0	5/10/20	HI (e)	d4+1w/2d4w/d4+3m	3

Probability One

1. Command Deck
 - A. Navigation Station
 - B. Comm Station
 - C. Sensors Station
 - D. Weapons Station
 - E. Captain's Station
 - F. Engineering Station
2. Airlock
3. Captain's Quarters
4. Navigator's Quarters
5. Consul's Quarters

6. Defense Officer's Quarters
7. Chief Engineer's Quarters
8. Science Officer's Quarters
9. Main Engineering
10. Science Lab
11. Kinetic Lance Access
12. Displacer
13. Life Support
14. Storage
15. Inertial Flux Engines
16. Cargo Hold



One square equals one meter

CHAPTER TWO: LUCID DREAMING

The following section contains an adventure introducing your heroes to the superspace continuum. Read through 'Background' and 'Plot Synopsis.' Skim 'Supporting Cast' for now, but give 'Getting The Heroes Involved' some serious thought. The adventure really begins under 'Triggers,' but some additional direction is provided under 'Where Do We Go From Here?' on page 58.

BACKGROUND

A research team comprised of particle physicists, theoretical physicists, mathematicians specializing in topological systems, and several engineers specializing in a variety

of fields colluded for many years on their favorite project: superspace theory.

When their theories began to look as if they might be more than just theories, the group managed to obtain a financial grant to refine them into something more practical. The researchers' benefactor is Lucid Technologies. Lucid is a spin-off business focusing primarily on cutting-edge research in a variety of fields.

In time, Lucid Technologies hired the entire team of superspace researchers into its R&D department. A special, secret laboratory and hardware shop was built and set aside for the superspace group's sole use. This lab is located in an industrial park in a large city

(choose the city that best fits your game). Lucid kept the group's true objectives under the tightest security, for two reasons.

If it turned out that Lucid had poured millions into the failed development of something as crazy as practical methods to access alternative realities, PR would negatively impact Lucid for many years. On the other hand, if Lucid was on the right track, it wouldn't do for an agent of technological espionage to steal Lucid's research and hand this information over to a competitor. Lucid's cover story indicated that the work being conducted in "the back lab" was routine government contract work in Solar Electric Propulsion (SEP) technology.



Despite Lucid's best efforts, a rival company called Device, Inc. learned of the secret research lab and its true goals. Without knowing for certain if Lucid was on to something or if they were just wasting a lot of money in R&D for the tax write-off, Device devised a plan to slow down or perhaps stop the research. This would allow Device's industrial espionage agents to have a window of time during which to steal relevant data from the secret lab.

Device engaged its plan immediately. The rival company began to leak slightly altered and exaggerated information to a particular vehement branch of fundamentalist fanatics called the Salvationists. Over time, and tainted by Device's inaccurate and slanted information regarding Lucid's secret labs, the religious fanatics came to believe that the secret research facility planned to trespass in a heavenly realm in which only the Supreme Being was ever meant to exist. In the end, a group of Salvationist extremists, led by Brother Reynolds, demolished most of the lab with several explosions from home-made pipe bombs (or home-made shaped plasma charges if you are running this adventure at PL 6 or above).

The four primary Lucid researchers involved in the project were working late when the Salvationists descended. Luckily, most of them survived the blast. The bad news was that the explosion catapulted them (and their singular knowledge of superspace theory) through one of the many experimental paratunnels open at the time of the blast! The computers and hard files recording all the research, the equipment responsible for creating the rifts and the singular devices called 'quantum tunnelers' were completely gone: not the outcome that Device had hoped for when they leaked knowledge of Lucid's activities to the volatile Salvationists.

Immediately following the blast, the group of Salvationists responsible for the atrocity still on the scene moved in to check out their handiwork. One of the researchers, Dr. Gail Wolherth (see page 56) was crawling forth from the blast with a working prototype of the quantum tunneler cradled in her hands. The Salvationists promptly relieved her

of the burden, and accidentally stepped into superspace!

Even now, Brother Reynolds and his acolytes are moving through the tangents on a self-imposed crusade through what they view as shadow worlds created by Lucifer! These lunatics are creating a swath of destruction with high-tech gadgets looted from previously visited tangents. It seems only a matter of time before these crusaders "invade" a tangent Earth that has the technology not only to stop them, but also to mete out a brutal revenge upon the terrorists' home tangent!

Meanwhile, the four researchers blown through the temporary rifts (which were closed in the blasts) even now languish in unknown tangents, completely cut off from their Earth of origin, and possibly in bodily danger. Even worse, from Lucid's point of view, the millions of dollars spent in the development of the project is gone, trapped in the minds of those who conceived it. Thus, Lucid seeks to mount a rescue effort to retrieve those vital to the project's success.

Device never wanted to see Lucid's secret research laboratory blown up and all its data lost. At least, not until Device had a lock on the technology that the lab was developing. Like Lucid Technologies, Device, Inc. can't develop the necessary technology to leap into alternative universes without the top-notch talent represented by the parawrecked researchers.

Luckily for Device, one of their agents managed to steal a prototype quantum tunneler before the catastrophic blast. With this prototype, Device also mounts a rescue effort. Of course, the two rescue groups work at cross-purposes, though in the beginning, neither corporation knows of the other's rescue attempt.

Plot Synopsis

The *Tangents* adventure assumes the players' heroes take a commission by Lucid Technologies to find and rescue their lost researchers. The bulk of the adventure describes the heroes' encounters and situations on the several alternate earths to which they must travel in order to accomplish a complete rescue. Once the heroes have accomplished their

task (or of much of it as they can), refer to "Adventure Conclusion" on page 92 to wrap things up. Note that some additional direction is provided under "Where Do We Go From Here?" on page 58.

Supporting Cast

The heroes will encounter several primary and secondary characters in the course of the adventure. Brother Reynolds and Doug Wilcoxon represent the primary ongoing threats to the heroes: Reynolds leads the Salvationist fanatics, and Wilcoxon heads up Device, Inc.'s counter-rescue team. The other characters presented here also represent major personalities the characters are likely to face during the adventure; however, the statistics for one-time encounters are usually embedded in the adventure text. Of course, in addition to the characters presented here, you can create characters to round out the adventure according to your own campaign.

One last note: Don't be afraid to upgrade some of the supporting cast's equipment or skills if you run this adventure at higher than PL 5. On the other hand, both Reynolds and Wilcoxon have already picked up a few choice high-PL items during their cross-tangent trek.

Brother Joshua Reynolds

Level 8 Human Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR 7	INT 10
DEX 11 [+1]	WIL 13 [+1]
CON 11	PER 12

Durability: 11/11/5/5

Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: 18/12/4 #Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Laser pistol 12/6/3 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m En/O

Defenses

Cassock of Faith: d4 (LI)/d4 (HI)/d6-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [7]; Modern Weapons [11]-pistol [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]; Stamina [11]; Knowledge [10]-first aid [12], language: English [13]; religious doctrine [12]; Technical Science [10]-juryrig [11], repair [11]; Animal Handling [13]-animal training [14];



Awareness [13]—intuition [14], perception [14]; Resolve [13]—mental [15]; Teach [13]; Deception [12]—bluff [13]; Interaction [12]—bargain [13]; Leadership [12]—command [13], inspire [13].

Gear

Prototype quantum tunneler, looted laser pistol, two pipe bombs, TV repair kit, the Holy Bible (heavily appended in Brother Reynolds' spidery hand), various additional "mementos" from tangents visited.

Before Brother Reynolds "got faith" he was a TV repairman. In fact, it was while repairing a particularly intractable set that his eyes were opened when the set short-circuited. When Reynolds regained consciousness, he rededicated himself to vegetarianism and mankind's salvation. He promptly shaved his head and founded the Salvation Church. Most people refer to Brother Reynolds and his followers as Salvationists.

Always eager for a cause, Brother Reynolds was captivated when he

began to receive secret communiqués regarding "Satanic research" being conducted secretly by a local corporation. The Salvationists believe foremost in the sanctity of Creation and man's place therein. Without even questioning the source of the communiqués, Brother Reynolds came to believe implicitly the information revealed. When the time was right, he and the inner circle of his staunchest followers launched a pre-emptive strike against the research facility, as described under "Background" on page 52.

Throughout this adventure, the Salvationists are both a threat and an objective. If and when the Salvationists become aware of the heroes and their affiliation with Lucid Technologies, Brother Reynolds begins to "follow" them to put an end to their "evil ways." On the other hand, one of the heroes' objectives is to stop Brother Reynolds and his mad crusade through the tangents. If he isn't stopped, it's only a matter of time

before he stumbles upon a high Progress Level tangent that not only stops the Salvationists on its own, but which also traces Reynolds' superspace trek back to its originating tangent out of vengeance!

See "Encountering Salvationists" on page 58 for hints on how to weave the Salvationists into the adventure. At your option, Brother Reynolds has picked up additional high Progress Level items besides his laser pistol and cassock (equivalent to a CF long coat).

Salvationists

Reynolds' Fanatic Followers
12 Human Nonprofessionals

STR 10 INT 9
DEX 9 WIL 8
CON 10 PER 8

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 10+/9/4/2

Move: 18/12/4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Marginal/1

Attacks

Unarmed* 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Pistol, .38 rev 10/5/3 d4w/d4+1w/d4m HI/O

*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Unarmed Attack [10];

Modern Weapons [9]-pistol [10];

Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [10];

Knowledge [9]-language: English

[12]; System Operation [9];

Awareness [8]; Interaction [8].

Gear

Stolen bulletproof vests, stolen .38 revolvers, satchel charges (d4-1 per person), personal journals, various additional "mementos" from tangents visited.

The twelve most loyal fanatics who make up the Salvationists accompanying Brother Reynolds on his crusade were at first a bit nonplussed when they found themselves in an alternate Earth. Their uncertainty soon evaporated, however, in the face of Brother Reynolds' impassioned sermon about the many netherworlds of Lucifer revealed by Lucid Technologies' unholy experiments! Certain that their way is right, the Salvationists follow Reynolds from tangent to tangent to bring "cleansing" retribution on all the "half-made" worlds.

The Salvationists are almost always encountered with Brother Reynolds. At your option, assign a few names and personalities to the Salvationists, but above all, their devotion (read: fanaticism) always shows through. In the same vein, you can add additional high Progress Level items to individual Salvationists at your option, but note that all the best equipment garnered in this fashion is given to Brother Reynolds.

Douglas Wilcoxon

Device, Inc. Head of Security
Level 10 Human Free Agent

STR 10 INT 11 [+1]
DEX 12 [+1] WIL 10
CON 12 PER 9

Durability: 12/12/6/6

Action Check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: 22/14/4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Unarmed 11/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

.44 magnum 14/7/3 d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m HI/O

Defenses

Assault Gear: d6-1 (LI)/d6 (HI)/d6-1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Unarmed Attack

[10]-power [11]; Modern Weapons

[12]-pistol [14]; Vehicle Operation

[12]; Stamina [12]-endurance [13];

Computer Science [11]-hacking [13];

Knowledge [11]-deduce [12]; first aid

[12]; language: English [14]; Law

[11]; Security [11]-protocols [12];

devices [12]; Awareness [10]-intu-

ition [11], perception [11];

Investigate [10]-interrogate [12],

search [12], track [11]; Street Smart

[10]; Interaction [9]; Leadership

[9]-command [10].

Gear

Prototype quantum tunneler, assault gear, .44 magnum, electronics tool kit, personal radio, surveillance gear, possibly a few souvenirs picked up during super-space travels.

Mr. Wilcoxon wanted to be an aerospace engineer, but the chances of life led him down a much different path. Recruited right out of college by Device, Inc. for his exceptional computer skills, Doug eventually came to head up Device's security department. The company has a long secret history of industrial espionage and other morally ambiguous activities, and Mr. Wilcoxon proved more than adept at heading up many additional related projects.

When Device's plans went wrong regarding the secret research lab investigating parallel worlds, Mr. Wilcoxon and a hand-picked team of security professionals arrived on

the scene within an hour of the blast (see "Background" on page 52). Unfortunately, Brother Reynolds and his Salvationists had already made off with a quantum tunneler, but fortunately, a previously stolen prototype allowed Mr. Wilcoxon and his team to mount a rescue effort of their own. Using the prototype quantum tunneler to track stranded researchers across the dimensions, the security agent hopes to bring the prized researchers back to Device, Inc. as captives.

Throughout this adventure, Mr. Wilcoxon and his team provide both competition and threat. When the security team becomes aware of Lucid's rescue team made up of the heroes, they do their best to foil the heroes by any means possible. If possible, Mr. Wilcoxon even devises an ambush to trap heroes using a fake transponder signal.

See "Encountering Device's Rescue Team" on page 59 for tips on how to weave the security team into the adventure. At your option, Mr. Wilcoxon has picked up additional high Progress Level items.

Security Team Members (6)

Level 1 Human Combat Spec

STR 11 [+1] INT 9
DEX 10 WIL 10
CON 11 PER 9

Durability: 11/11/5/5

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: 20/12/4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Unarmed 12/6/3 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Knife 12/6/3 d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w LI/O

9mm pistol* 12/6/3 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m HI/O

*-d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]; Melee Weapons

[11]-blade [12]; Unarmed Attack

[11]-brawl [12]; Modern Weapons

[10]-pistol [12]; Vehicle Operation

[10]; Stamina [11]-endurance [12];

Knowledge [9]-first aid [10], lan-

guage: English [12]; Security [9];

Awareness [10]-perception [11];

Street Smart [10]-criminal [11];

Interaction [9]-intimidate [10].

Gear

Battle vest, 9mm pistol, concealed holster, personal radio, possibly a few souvenirs picked up during superspace travels.

The six members making up Mr. Wilcoxon's security team are professional scum; that is, mercenaries. If the money is right, they'll take any contract. Currently, each security team member is due quite a lot of money if they return from their current assignment. Of course, these brutes are generally unimaginative sorts, but they are still a bit jumpy about the whole concept of parallel worlds.

The security team is almost always encountered with Mr. Wilcoxon. At your option, assign a few names and personalities, but remember, before anything else these are rough and uneducated brutes. In the same vein, you can add additional high Progress Level items to individual team members at your option, but note that all the best equipment garnered in this fashion is given to their leader.

Vernon

Computer Technician
Level 5 Human Tech Op

STR 10 INT 13 [+2]
DEX 9 WIL 11 [+1]
CON 10 PER 7

Durability: 10/10/5/6

Action Check: 15+/14/7/3*

Move: 18/12/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Good/2

*-d4 bonus to action check

Perks: Good Luck

Achievements: Action Check Bonus (applied); Action Check Increase x2 (applied).

Attacks

.32 revolver 10/5/2 d4w/d6w/d4m HI/O

Defenses

None

Skills

Athletics [10]; Modern Weapons [9]-pistol [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [10]; Computer Science [13]-hacking [14], hardware [15], programming [14]; Knowledge [13]-deduce [14], language: English [16]; Technical Science [13]-

invention [15], repair [14], technical knowledge [14]; Administration [11]-management [12]; Awareness [11]-intuition [12], perception [12]; Creativity [11]; Investigate [11]; Resolve [11]; Interaction [7]-interview [8].

Gear

Laptop computer, lab coat, .32 revolver, various odds and ends that vary by parallel world.

Vernon is a Persistent Individual as described on page 38. Vernon exists on many parallel Earths, maybe on all of them! Due to equipotential flux associated with the heroes' specific goal, it is almost assured that they'll run into a "Vernon" on a variety of the Earths they visit. On some tangents Vernon will prove helpful, on others he'll be an annoyance, but on a few, Vernon is downright diabolical. Each of the adventure sections describes each "Vernon's" particular situation depending upon the tangent where he's found. Note that alternate statistics are provided for Vernon in tangents where computers are unknown.

Getting the Heroes Involved

Before you start playing *Tangents*, think about what kind of heroes the players will run through this adventure, and how they will progress from their last adventure in your campaign (if any) to this adventure. It's important to give the players continuity, so that the suspension of disbelief remains solidly in place. On the other hand, even completely new heroes rolled up specifically for use in *Lucid Dreaming* require reasonable circumstances concerning their involvement in the scenario.

Here are a few adventure hooks you can use or adapt to get your heroes involved. Note that different hooks can apply to different heroes—the only important thing as that for any of the reasons provided below, or because of circumstances you provide, the heroes are assembled in a Lucid Technologies' conference room as described under "Triggers," below.

Dr. Gail Wohler

Dr. Wohler is available to accompany the heroes on their search for the missing researchers (see "Triggers" on page 56). In fact, if you don't have enough heroes, you may assign her to one of the players. Her statistics can be found on page 95. Though she is a brilliant theoretician, her core competencies did not lie in creating the intricate superspace circuits necessary to create a quantum tunnel. The loss of the core researchers is a personal affront to Gail, and she will not rest until they are all safely rescued. As per protocol, Dr. Wohler wears a paratransponder much like those worn by her lost compatriots. Unfortunately, as long as she remains with the party, the transponder has the possibility of drawing the attention of both the Salvationists and the Device rescue team.

◆ Some or all of the heroes belong to a freelance civilian consulting and security firm hired by Lucid Technologies to deal with this matter. You or your players can pick their name of the security firm your heroes represent.

◆ Some or all of the heroes are already employees of Lucid Technologies, and represent a response team just assembled from core competencies within the company. Alternatively, the heroes could be employees of the parent corporation from which Lucid Technologies was spun off. It is not outside the realm of possibility that this parent corporation (unnamed in this adventure) is a government contractor.

◆ Heroes are independent mercenaries with a reputation for being able to handle "strange" assignments. They've been contacted by Lucid for a top-secret mission.

◆ Some of the heroes are researchers working on secondary, but related, superspace projects. With the loss of their comrades, they are singled out as part of the team assembled to rescue the parawrecked head researchers.

Prior to this meeting, the heroes know only that there has been some serious trouble in the Solar Electric Propulsion offsite research facility (unless a hero's background necessitates more familiarity with the situation).

Triggers

When your players and their heroes are assembled and you've determined the heroes' reasons for being present at this "kick off," it's time to begin. Read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

You are ushered into a large but spartan conference room by mute security guards. Already present are an older man in a suit and a woman dressed in lab smocks over a jumpsuit. The man rises, saying "I'm Tom Chandler, Vice President in charge of the Solar Electric Propulsion Division. This is Dr. Gail Wolhert, who works in my division." The woman nods non-committally.

Chandler continues, "The most important thing you'll discover today is that the SEP Division is a façade. No solar electric work is being done here—it's a convenient fiction. We're really working on accessing parallel worlds. And we've succeeded."

Chandler lets that sink in a second, but then raises his hands to forestall any questions, and concludes, "Unfortunately, our security has been violently compromised. That's where you come in."

Chandler allows the heroes to ask preliminary questions, if they have any. Before too long, however, he shakes his head and asks Dr. Wolhert to give the heroes some brief history of parallel worlds—see *Chapter One: Of Parallel Worlds* for important general superspace background information. Note that Dr. Wolhert is only familiar with the general theory of superspace presented, and with the quantum tunneler device in particu-

lar. She has absolutely no knowledge of any other methods of superspace travel, nor of the specific hazards, anomalies, "known" groups, or other specialized knowledge presented in that chapter.

At whatever point seems prudent, and before the meeting spirals off into side issues, Chandler briefs the heroes on the specific situation at Lucid. Chandler describes the situation as a security breach, and swears the heroes to secrecy before he reveals the information presented under "Background" above. Provide this information to your players in a condensed, summarized fashion as if Chandler were really relating it. Note that although Lucid suspects that a rival corporation is behind the bombing, they really don't know. All they know for sure is that the Salvationists were directly behind the destruction, and are now loose in superspace up to who knows what. Neither Chandler nor Lucid know that their true competitor, Device, Inc., has mounted a rescue counter-effort!

When the background and parallel universe information is presented to the heroes to your satisfaction (and Chandler's), read or paraphrase the following to your players:

Chandler says, "What it all comes down to is this: We need our core researchers back, and we just might be able to get them! It was standard procedure for every researcher to wear a superspace transponder. These transponders propagate a signal through superspace that we can detect and track with a quantum tunneler. Luckily, the Salvationists didn't get all our equipment—I had one prototype transferred here a few days before the disaster for "show and tell" to the upper brass.

"With this last prototype, you can track the researchers' paratransponder signals across superspace. We've got four signals, corresponding to our four lost researchers. We're not sure which signal is whose, but we know you can find them. Using the quantum tunneler, you

paratunnel directly into the alternate Earth where each signal emanates. We'll also provide a paratransponder signal from this tangent, so you can find your way back home each time you've extracted one of the lost researchers.

"I probably don't have to tell you that this is a dangerous retrieval assignment. Dr. Wolhert will be accompanying you, due to her familiarity with the equipment and her personal knowledge of our targets. I've only got one question: Are in you in?"

If Lucid can't get its researchers back, its secret superspace access division is through. Thus, Chandler is willing to consider a fairly significant compensation package for the group. He initially offers \$50,000 to each hero, but can be dickered as high as \$75,000. A retainer of \$10,000 is given to each hero up front when they agree to sign on. Chandler also provides standard survival equipment if the heroes require any, although heroes must provide arms and ammunition out of their own resources (or with part of the retainer). Note that only PL 5 weapons and equipment or lower can be acquired by the heroes if you're running your campaign in a "contemporary" setting.

The four parawrecked researchers are Dr. Greg Kemper, Dr. Laurie Bertelsen, Dr. Brian Darwin, and Dr. Kirk Connor. Chandler provides a color photo of each, and tells the heroes that they were lost to superspace twelve days ago. Between them, these researchers constitute the core team that brought the quantum tunneler to the world. Without them and their specialized skills (and with the loss of all the records), accessing parallel worlds is impossible without another leap in technology. It's possible that any gathering of three out of the four would constitute enough brilliance to rebuild the quantum tunneler lab; however, Lucid Technologies doesn't want to take any chances.

When all pertinent documents have been signed and all other

associated preliminary preparations are completed (this could take a few days or a few hours, depending on the heroes), Chandler opens up a digitally locked steel briefcase. Inside is the last remaining quantum tunneler on the heroes' tangent. See "Quantum Tunneler" on page 32 for a full description of the workings of this nifty little piece of technology. If Dr. Wolhert is to accompany the heroes (that is, assuming they have no major objections to her presence), Chandler presents the tunneler to her, otherwise he gives it directly to the heroes. The multiverse opens wide, and beckons.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As described on page 32, with just an Ordinary success on a Technical Science skill check (or an untrained Intelligence check), five distinct signals are resolved on the miniature monitor. Five? Oh, yes, Dr. Wolhert still wears her paratransponder. Unfortunately, all other paratransponders were lost in the blast, so there are none for the heroes.

The signals are represented as tiny points of ruby light randomly scattered within a circle. Each of the four significant points contains a tag, corresponding to the calculated coordinates of the tangent from which the signal originates. Differences in each signal would have allowed trackers to assign a name to each signal, but the records of who wore which paratransponder were also lost in the blast.

The heroes are on their own time. If Dr. Wolhert is with the heroes, she indicates that it's probably not a bad idea to trigger a paratunnel in the general vicinity of the bombed-out facility. Generally speaking, geographical distance is not traversed with paratunnels, so although the researchers "fell" into alternate timelines, they probably didn't travel too far in a physical sense. On the other hand, the blast that threw the researchers into other universes was anomalous in the first place, and the possibility for substantial physical displacement exists. If the heroes attempt to find the missing researchers using the paratransponder signal alone, they

may appear in the correct tangent, but within a vicinity of d6 kilometers of the signal—it's impossible to track paratransponder signals intertangentially with precision greater than 6 kilometers.

The site of the blast (only a few miles distant in an otherwise empty research park) provides no additional clues to help the heroes on their way. Only a pit remains, filled with melted and broken shards of metal and plastic. If the heroes want to investigate background information on the Salvationists and who might be behind the fanatics, Chandler indicates that he's already got police detectives working on that front. Chandler hired the heroes to find and rescue the researchers, but he will provide information already dug up by the detectives on Brother Reynolds if the heroes are interested (see Brother Reynolds' background provided under his statistics in "Supporting Cast" on page 54).

As indicated earlier, the mechanics for using the quantum tunneler are provided on page 32, including associated directions on determining hazards. Since there are four signals, the heroes need merely pick one, and attempt forge a paratunnel between their current tangent and their target tangent. The adventure text contains four major headings, each representing one of the four significant paratransponder signals. Refer to the appropriate section based on which signal the heroes investigate.

Sometimes, heroes will miss their intended tangent (or purposefully choose a tangent at random). In these instances, refer to "Random Tangent Generation" on page 11 for building tangents on the fly. Alternatively, utilize one of the many examples of strange tangent effects described under "Superspace Quirks" on page 10 or "Known Superspace Travelers" on page 46.

One last word: while the heroes work at rescue, other forces work at cross-purposes. Refer to the following sections before moving directly into one of the four "Signal" sections.

Encountering Salvationists

While the heroes likely attempt to move through the tangents by drawing as little attention as possible to themselves, the Salvationists are moving from dimension to dimension leaving a wake of destruction—see Brother Reynolds' and his followers' statistics under "Supporting Cast" on page 53. Their preferred method is to warp in ("warp" is a slang term used by the Salvationists for opening a paratunnel), quickly locate a large population center, drop a bomb or two, then warp out to the next dimension before local law authorities arrive.

The Salvationists have a quantum tunneler just like the heroes'. More to the point, it also resolves paratransponder signals. Thus, every time the Salvationists warp, they're tempted to investigate one of the signals.

For the purposes of the adventure, you have the luxury of dropping in an encounter with the Salvationists whenever seems convenient to you while the heroes are in the midst of rescuing a researcher. Additionally, while Dr. Gail Wolhert and her operational paratransponder remains with the heroes, there is always the chance that the Salvationists will zero in on its signal.

If you'd rather leave the chance for encountering the Salvationists purely in the hands of probability, simply roll a Personality feat check for Brother Reynolds once for every 24 hours the heroes remain within a tangent radiating a paratransponder signal (since they're carrying one with them, check every day). On an Amazing result, the lead Salvationist intuitively decides to check out the same paratransponder signal currently being investigated by the heroes.

During initial contact between the heroes and the Salvationists, the fanatics are not necessarily concerned with the heroes, though the heroes are probably fairly curious about the wide-eyed bunch of shaven-headed men in robes who just popped out of a nearby paratunnel. The heroes are free to turn the other cheek or interfere

with the fanatics as they begin to blaze away with guns and a few high Progress Level weapons!

If the Salvationists realize that the heroes represent a team chartered by Lucid Technologies, the fanatics deem it their personal quest to eradicate the heroes. If a resolution isn't reached immediately, the Salvationists flee toward a random paratransponder signal in another tangent, and attempt to set up traps or an ambush. Use your own discretion in determining where and how the Salvationists set up such traps and ambushes; eventually, the Salvationists will kill off the heroes or the heroes will defeat the fanatics. In the event of this latter scenario, the heroes may gain possession of the Salvationists' equipment, including a quantum tunneler they are not necessarily required to turn back over to Lucid, if they play their cards right.

Encountering Device's Rescue Team

Device, Inc.'s counter-rescue effort is led by Mr. Wilcoxon and an elite team of thugs—see Mr. Wilcoxon's and his teams' statistics under "Supporting Cast" on page 55. Like the Salvationists and the heroes, the counter-rescue team also has a quantum tunneler capable of detecting the signals made by paratransponders (this represents the third and last functioning quantum tunneler originating from the heroes' home tangent).

Mr. Wilcoxon is charged with the very same mission given to the PCs, although by a different employer. As such, the heroes and the counter-rescue team are working at cross-purposes. It takes Device a few days longer to get its team together, so the heroes have a grace period (d4+1 days) before they have a chance to run afoul of Mr. Wilcoxon.

You have complete freedom in dictating when or where the heroes meet the counter-rescue team, although at first, the heroes are only likely to encounter the team in the immediate vicinity of one of researchers. If you want to leave such encounters to chance, roll a

Personality feat check for Wilcoxon every time the heroes first enter an alternate Earth containing a parawrecked researcher. On a Good or better result, the counter-rescue team is somewhere nearby.

During initial contact with the counter-rescue team, and if a researcher is in immediate peril, it's not impossible for the heroes and Mr. Wilcoxon's team to work together for a brief time before each realizes the origin of the other. The moment that Wilcoxon realizes the heroes are in the employ of Lucid Technologies is the moment that he betrays their trust. Note that Wilcoxon won't inform the heroes of his real employer, if he can help it.

If the heroes are unable to deal with Wilcoxon and his team immediately, they may escape into parallel universe. It then becomes a race to see who can rescue the remaining researchers first: Any researchers actually rescued by the counter-rescue team are immediately brought to a secret holding cell back on the heroes' home tangent. Of course, Wilcoxon sees to it that that researcher's paratransponder is deactivated so that the heroes can't trace it. On the other hand, Mr. Wilcoxon may decide, at your discretion, that the heroes represent a threat that must be neutralized before any other consideration. In this case, the counter-rescue team uses tactics not unlike those employed by the Salvationists: They track the heroes if they can, otherwise they attempt to set up ambushes on those tangents where paratransponder signals originate.

Note that the Salvationists and the counter-rescue team are unlikely to forge an alliance, although you may orchestrate one if you'd like. Otherwise, if they ever meet, a firefight likely breaks out. This becomes especially interesting if the heroes are also present, in which case a three-way conflict (four-way, if tangent natives become involved) is possible!

If the heroes manage to rescue all the researchers (or at least, deactivate all the paratransponder signals), Mr. Wilcoxon and his team end their efforts to rescue the researchers. However, in this sce-

nario, Wilcoxon doesn't return to Device, Inc. to return the quantum tunneler. Instead, he sets himself up as a cross-time bandit, utilizing the quantum tunneler as the ultimate tool in acquiring ill-gotten gains.

Tangent Overview

Several tangents that focus on Earth are provided below as part of each section's presentation. These fleshed-out tangents are specific to each adventure segment, but at the most basic level, serve as examples for creating tangents entirely of your own.

Each tangent world is presented with its superspace coordinate, division, and GRAPH data (see "The GRAPH System" in Chapter 3: *Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide*).

The locations of cities, specific addresses of locations within cities, and other adventure sites presented in the following sections are left vague for a reason. Cities are not usually named in this text, even if the tangent in question is of the Baseline cluster. This allows you to base the action in whatever city you'd like, whether large or small, as suits you. Your familiarity with a specific city goes a long way toward adding a personal touch, and your in-depth knowledge of particular geography in reality will translate well into your adventure.

On the other hand, if you'd rather utilize a constant chosen by the author, assume that the original superspace lab was located near the city of Seattle, Washington. Many of Seattle's satellite communities, such as Renton, Auburn, and Kent contain research parks devoted to aerospace and other high-tech research, not to mention Bellevue and Redmond's reputation for cutting-edge computer software and hardware development.

SIGNAL ONE: THE ELEVENTH PLAGUE

Dr. Greg Kemper fell into a world not unlike his own tangent Earth, except for one significant difference. Forget about the Ten Plagues of Egypt—the Eleventh Plague could wipe out the human species native to this tangent Earth.

Setting

Signal One tangent quickstats:
+0.003, +0.001 (Baseline Cluster);
Historical Division; PL 5;
G2/R1/A2/P3/H2.

At first glance, this paraverse Earth was hardly distinguishable from the heroes' home tangent (assuming they hail from a Progress Level 5 Baseline-cluster tangent). Though the heroes are not likely to meet parallel versions of themselves, most of the nations, institutions, philosophies, and his-

torical events closely matched the Baseline cluster.

At least that's the way things were until Dr. Kemper fell into this world. Apparently, this Earth never developed the slightest immunological defenses against the common cold, and Dr. Kemper started a plague.

While on the heroes' world, billions of years of coevolution have brought the cold virus (actually, there are many varieties) and living creatures to a standoff, on this Earth, the cold virus is unopposed. It moves like a whirlwind, infecting the population on seemingly unstoppable vectors, at least in large metropolitan areas.

Since Kemper's arrival, 30% of the population of every large city in a 500-mile radius (plus a few distant hot spots) has succumbed and perished. Though martial law has clamped down in most cities, looting, rioting, and arson are the rule, not the exception. Military troops in gas masks attempt to protect strategic areas here and there, while Center for Disease Control (CDC) teams in neon yellow contamina-

tion suits are a common sight. They move through the streets spraying antiseptic foam on every surface, and burning the corpses of those they find who've succumbed to the unstoppable rhinovirus.

Thought the plague is ubiquitous now, it started slowly, and the CDC was able to trace "Patient Zero," the initial carrier of the virus: Dr. Gregory Kemper. Kemper was blown through a paratunnel near the industrial park that in his own tangent housed the secret super-space lab. At first he was dazed and hurt, and not realizing that he'd actually moved through the tangents, checked into the local hospital. It was only when those around him begin to get sick in a terribly short period of time, and the news reports showed the spread of the plague, that Kemper began to recognize the possibility that he'd shifted into a parallel Earth.

Kemper immediately began to search for a good place to put himself under quarantine, and eventually decided to steal a yacht by night (to reduce others' exposure)



and isolate himself out in the bay (or whatever large body of water is nearest the city you choose). Before his plan came to fruition, however, the CDC tracked him down and put him in isolation.

The CDC constructed a Disease Crisis Center quickly, commandeering and gutting a handy office building, and refitting it for its special needs. As "coincidence" would have it, the Crisis Center lies within the same industrial park that, in the heroes' tangent, housed the secret superspace lab. The area around the new Crisis Center was evacuated, and military patrols were set up to patrol the evacuation zone and deter the many lynch mobs that threatened to "do away" with the plague-bringer. Of course, the CDC couldn't have that. It needs Kemper alive for now so it can gain some understanding of this "new" virus.

Scene 1: Arrival

If the heroes open a paratunnel from a tangent Earth within the corresponding physical location of a city, read or paraphrase the following description of the situation that greets the heroes upon their emergence. Even if they arrive on this tangent Earth quite far from the area originally corresponding with the superspace lab, the following description still provides an adequate description of the situation in many cities countrywide, possibly even worldwide. Note that the time of day in this tangent corresponds to that of the heroes' home tangent.

The air is unpleasantly warm, and carries with it the whiff of unpleasant chemicals mixed with the unmistakable smell of rot and something burning. Garbage, abandoned cars, and debris litter the streets in an ominous fashion, and the sound of distant gunfire and a sudden shout closer to hand shatters the growing perception that the streets and nearby buildings are utterly abandoned.

The heroes' corresponding location of transit in their last tangent

determines where they arrive in this tangent. Unless you determine differently, the site of the superspace lab in the heroes' tangent corresponds to a building in this tangent housing a copier repair center called Business Repairs. This building lies seven blocks to the west of the site of the new Crisis Center where Kemper is interred.

The entire industrial park and abutting residential area was evacuated several days ago. Now it's a no-man's-land of infected looters, paranoid military troops, and over-anxious CDC teams intent on making the region "infection-free" by whatever means necessary. The bodies of those who've succumbed to the rhinovirus are often seen slumped over steering wheels in the center of the road or lying on stairs, and some few are even visible through office windows lying at their desks.

The heroes must find out the location of Kemper by asking around. On one hand, everyone they're likely to meet in the area knows of Kemper and where he's being studied. On the other hand, it is difficult to get real information out of the three types of people the heroes are likely to meet: CDC, soldiers, and infected looters. Any violent conflict involving firearms with one group soon brings one of the other groups to investigate the scene within 5 minutes (you decide which—it could even potentially be another group of the same type the heroes just encountered).

Remember that the heroes are just as much "plague carriers" as was Kemper himself (though no one, including the heroes, is likely to realize this right away). The heroes' mere contact with uninfected and unprotected natives will probably lead to the natives' death! This may or may not become immediately clear to the heroes, but if this knowledge somehow is communicated to the natives, all prior cooperation (if any) dries up, and the heroes become Public Enemy #1. Hopefully, the heroes will get in and out without doing too much damage. Besides, anyone wearing a contact suit or gas mask (most people in the Crisis Center are thus equipped) is protected from infection in the presence of the heroes.

The Gamemaster should determine which group of natives the heroes encounter first. To determine this randomly, roll a d6. On a 1 or 2, the heroes run across a group of d4+3 looters, on a 3 or 4, they encounter d4+1 soldiers, and on a roll of 5 or 6 the heroes are accosted by d4+1 agents of the CDC. The first encounter should occur within d20 minutes of the heroes' arrival on the tangent. Note that there is more than one group of each type—for every 12 hours the heroes spend in this disputed region, they are likely to have another encounter.

Infected Looter

Human Nonprofessional

STR 9 INT 9
DEX 9 WIL 9
CON 9 PER 9

Durability: 9/9/4/4

Action Check: 10+/9/4/2

Move: 16/10/4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Marginal/1

Attacks

Unarmed 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
Club 10/5/2 d4+1s/d42/d4+1w LI/O
.38 revolver* 10/5/2 d4w/d4+1w/d4m HI/O

* One in three groups of looters will have pistols.

Defenses

None

Skills

Athletics [9]; Unarmed Attack [9]—brawl [10]; Melee [9]—bludgeon [10]; Modern [9]—pistol [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [9]—language: English [12]; Awareness [9]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Clubs, various "loot" including portable CD players, laptop computers, and other small but valuable items. Some have .38 revolvers.

Looters begin any encounter with a scream and an attack. No information can be gained from these wild-eyed citizens in ragged clothes prior to their capture. Perceptive heroes notice that all the looters seem to suffer from bad colds, which heroes in close proximity have a chance to catch.

The "Plague"

The rhinovirus loosed on this tangent Earth has had limitless fertile ground in which to multiply through billions of parallel generations. Some of the resulting viral colds are easily caught by the heroes, but if the heroes don't really understand that the "plague" is really just a terrible cold, they may become quite concerned when they begin to show symptoms.

Those who are infected are identified by their ubiquitous cough, swollen lymph nodes on the sides of their throat, and constant mucous discharge from the nose. In the last stages of terminal illness, the swollen nodes blacken, as does the mucousal discharge.

Each time the heroes come within 3 meters of someone infected with the plague, the heroes must make a Constitution feat check to resist the hazard with a -1 step bonus (natives to this make the same check, but with a +4 step penalty!). With an Ordinary or better result, the hero suffers no ill effects. However, on a Failure, the hero "catches" the cold and will begin exhibiting symptoms in only 3d4 hours. Natives of this tangent are at a much greater risk; an Ordinary result indicates illness, while a Failure or Critical Failure indicates extreme or terminal illness, respectively.

Symptoms include a sore throat, soon followed by a running nose and lethargy. For the heroes, this is as bad as it gets. Ill characters suffer a +2 step penalty to all actions. Each day, the character must attempt a Constitution feat check. On a Good or Amazing result, the character recovers. Natives make the same check, but at a +4 step penalty, and only on an Amazing result do they recover; any other result indicates that they first fall extremely ill, then terminally ill. Refer to "Disease" in Chapter 3: *Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide* for more information on diseases.

Soldier

Level 3 Human Combat Spec

STR 11 [+1] INT 11 [+1]
DEX 11 WIL 8
CON 12 PER 7

Durability: 12/12/6/6

Action Check: 15+/14/7/3

Move: 18/12/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Good/2

Attacks

Unarmed 12/6/3 d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w LI/O
7.62mm rifle* 13/6/3 d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m HI/O
9mm pistol 12/6/3 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m HI/O
*-d4 base situation die

Defenses

Assault gear: d6-3 (LI), d6-1 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [11]-combat [12]; Athletics [11]-throw [12]; Unarmed [11]-power [12]; Modern [11]-pistol [12], rifle [13]; Vehicle Operation [11]-land [12]; Stamina [12]-endurance [14]; Knowledge [11]-computer operation [12], first aid [12], language: English [14]; Tactics [11]-infantry [12],

vehicle [12]; Awareness [8]-perception [9], intuition [9]; Resolve [8]; Interaction [7]; Leadership [7]-command [8].

Gear

Rations, gas masks, army first aid kit, comm gear.

Soldiers (arrayed in biological gas masks) begin an encounter with a command of "Drop your weapons or we open fire!" They assume that any civilians within this zone are looters, and worse, plague carriers (of course, they are especially right in the case of the heroes). Heroes who don't comply quickly may have a firefight on their hands. On the other hand, a hero who succeeds with a Deception-bluff or Interaction-charm check, along with a believable story, may convince the soldiers to bring the heroes directly to the Crisis Center (see Scene 2, below).

CDC Agent

Level 4 Human Tech Op

STR 10 INT 12 [+2]

DEX 11 [+1] WIL 8

CON 11 PER 8

Durability: 11/11/6/6

Action Check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: 18/12/4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Unarmed 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
.38 revolver 12/6/3 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m HI/O
Foamthrower 11/5/2 special En/O

Defenses

Contact suit: d4-1 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Heavy Weapons [10]-direct [11]; Modern [11]-pistol [12]; Stealth [11]-hide [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]; Stamina [11]; Knowledge [12]-language: English [15]; Life Science [12]-biology [13], virology [14]; Medical Science [12]-medical knowledge [14], surgery [13], treatment [14]; Technical Science [12]-juryrig [13]; Awareness [8]-intuition [9], perception [9]; Resolve [8]; Interaction [8].

Gear

Contact suit, foamthrower, comm gear, first aid equipment, bullhorn (one per group), and three flasks acid neutralizer.

CDC agents, in their neon yellow contact suits, begin encounters with a bullhorn yell of "You are in violation of the quarantine. Stop and prepare to be decontaminated, or be destroyed! This is not a warning." The agents take their job quite seriously. Heroes who comply with the request are hosed down with anti-septic foam. Once "decontaminated," the agents are willing to listen to the heroes' requests, and may guide or give the heroes directions to the Crisis Center if one of the heroes can make a Deception-bluff or Interaction-charm check. If the heroes prove recalcitrant (or if they let slip that they are as virulently infected as "Patient Zero"), the CDC agents can't take chances, and switch over the nozzles from anti-septic foam to acidic foam.

CDC Foamthrower

Foamthrower; Skill Heavy Weapons-direct; Acc -1; Md F; Range 6/12/30; Type En/O; Damage special.

A Good or Amazing attack result with a foamthrower indicates that the target has been fully immersed in the acidic foam. The target must immediately make a CON feat check with the following results: Critical Failure 5d4w, Failure 4d4w, Ordinary 3d4w, Good 2d4w, Amazing d4w. An Ordinary result with the attack indicates only splash damage, in which case a Critical Failure on the CON feat check causes 3d4w, a Failure 2d4w, and an Ordinary success d4w (Good or Amazing indicates no damage is caused by a splash). In either case, the target continues to take damage each round, though the amount decreases by d4 per round. See "Acid" in Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action in the Gamemaster Guide for more information.

Most armor proves at least somewhat effective in preventing damage. Treat acid damage as Ordinary Energy (En/O) damage for the purposes of determining what the armor can deflect. Note that the acid used by the CDC agents works only against organic compounds; thus, most of the heroes' equipment is undamaged by the acid (though any natural fabrics are destroyed by immersion or damaged by a splash).

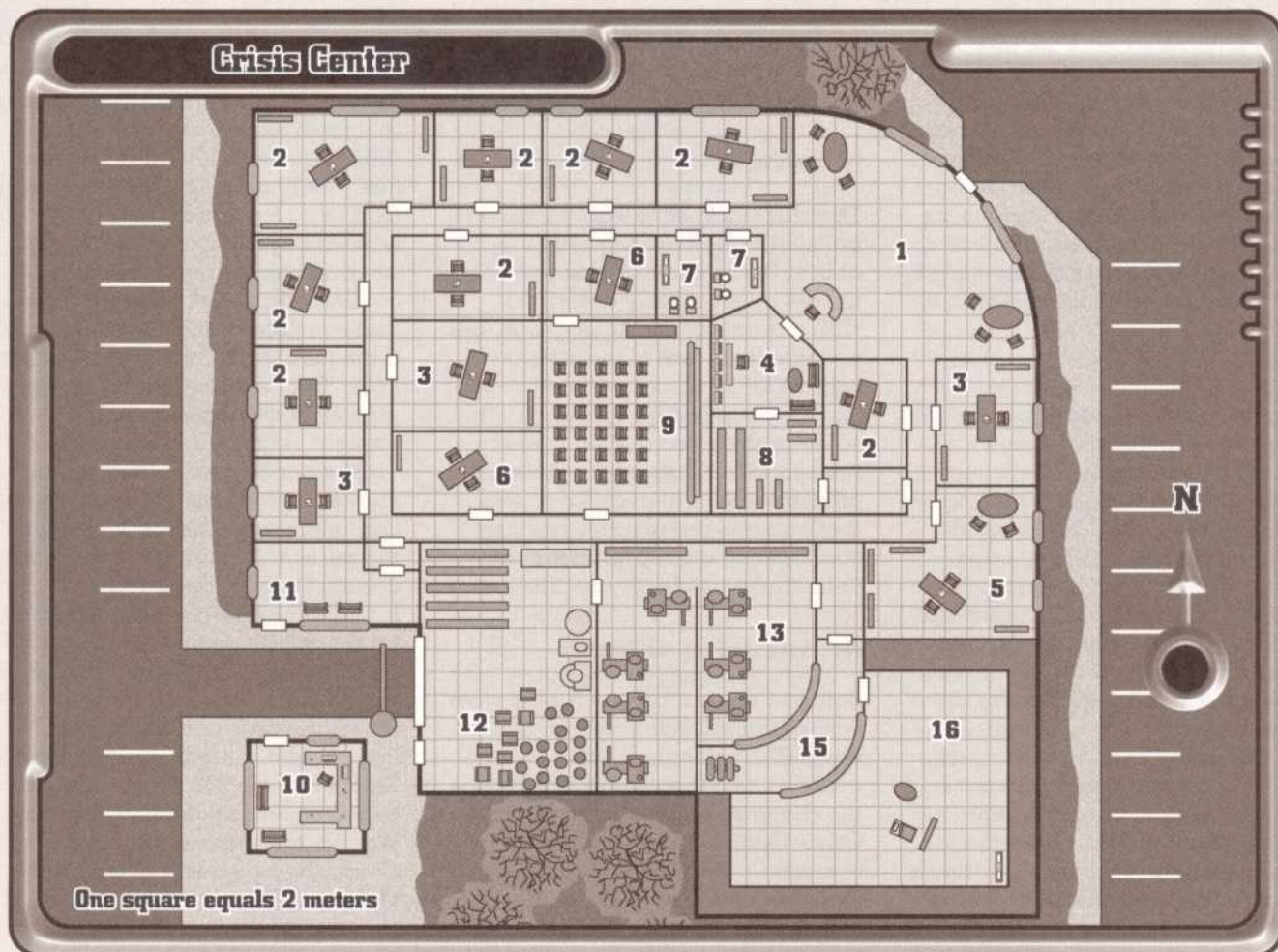
Heroes hit with a squirt of acidic foam can attempt to ameliorate the number of rounds they will take damage by shedding clothing quickly and/or making use of an acid neutralization flask carried by CDC agents. Heroes who make a successful DEX feat check strip off their armor or outer layer of clothing quickly enough to reduce the duration of continued damage to only one additional round. On the other hand, heroes with access to CDC acid neutralization flasks can take one round to empty the contents over their heads. This completely neutralizes any acid still adhering to the hero.

Scene 2: The Crisis Center

The Crisis Center is manned by both CDC agents and military soldiers. A frontal assault by the heroes with the intent to rescue Dr. Kemper from the Level 5 Quarantine

Ward (room 17) will prove quite dangerous. The heroes are better off attempting diplomacy and/or deception to gain entry to the center. Of course, once the heroes reveal their true intent (to release Kemper), any goodwill they may have built up evaporates.

Heroes who take the time to study the exterior of the Crisis Center note a video camera mounted upon the flat roof at every corner (or in the case of the northeast section of the building, the curve) with a successful Awareness-perception check (-2 step bonus to the check).



All video cameras are keyed to room 4 (Security Office).

In the event that the heroes or some other group assaults the Crisis Center, the personnel described in the offices keyed to 3, 4, 10, and 11 will move to the trouble spot. Be sure to read these descriptions ahead of time, in case the heroes create a ruckus in a particular portion of the building. If they are loud enough or if they are in view of one of the many video cameras, they will draw a response from these keyed locations.

1. Reception

The comfortable chairs, interesting magazines, suave decorations, and spiffy company logo of the company that owned this building before the crisis are mostly ignored. A single soldier now sits at the front desk, but stands to attention when anyone enters from the outside. Characters had best have a darn good story ready (any story offered by the heroes also requires one of the heroes to make a Deception-*bluff* skill check), or the private asks the intruders to leave. Diplomatic heroes with a believable story are probably sent to see Director Emily Kearns in room 5 (Administrator's Office).

A successful Awareness-perception or Investigate-search check notes a small video camera in the ceiling (anyone looking for such an item gains a -4 step bonus to the check). This camera provides a feed to the security personal posted in 4.

2. Office

There are several offices keyed as 2. Each room has décor common to offices the multiverse over, including a desk, chair, shelves, writing utensils, paper, tape, and so forth. Additionally, because they have been converted from their previous use to aid the CDC in its current crisis, these offices also contain cots, water, and rations sufficient to feed those present in each office for up to 3 months.

Each office holds d4 CDC agents (see CDC agent statistics on page 62) slaving away at reports, epidemiological analyses from the lab, and carefully worded (filtered) press releases. The agents in these rooms

do not have the antiseptic/acid foamthrowers attributed to the teams outside the building, but enough contact suits hang near the door for each agent present in the office. Beyond that, most agents constantly wear a biohazard gas mask at all times, rated for microbes and viruses. The staff only rests during the darkest hours of the night, when they unfold cots to catch a few winks before morning.

Assuming the heroes haven't raised an alarm with their entrance, encounters with office personnel are effortless. A simple question as to where Dr. Kemper might be found is all it takes: "Patient Zero? Well, he's in the Level Five Quarantine Ward, of course."

Unlike the agents the heroes may have met outside, the CDC personnel at their desks in the offices keyed to 2 are not brave, and shrink from a confrontation. A commotion or firefight outside their office does not bring them running. Of course, they'll defend themselves if directly assaulted.

One out of every four of these offices (roll randomly) contains a video camera mounted in the ceiling, obvious to anyone who specifically looks for them (-4 step bonus to Awareness-perception checks).

3. Office

The offices keyed to 3 at first glance are similar to those keyed to 2 above. Décor, content, and personnel are as previously described, with one exception: At least one (but no more than two) of the agents in each of these offices will respond to a commotion or firefight. Unlike the soldiers stationed at 4, 10, and 11, the heroic CDC agents in these offices respond at once. Of course, these agents are prepared for any contingency, and have a foamthrower handy to use in any scuffle.

4. Security Office

Banks of video monitors fill the west wall of this dark chamber. A top-notch PL 5 computer controls these monitors and the video feeds from the cameras located throughout the Crisis Center, as well as the four cameras mounted on the building's exterior. A dedicated phone line

connects this chamber with the security forces stationed in 11.

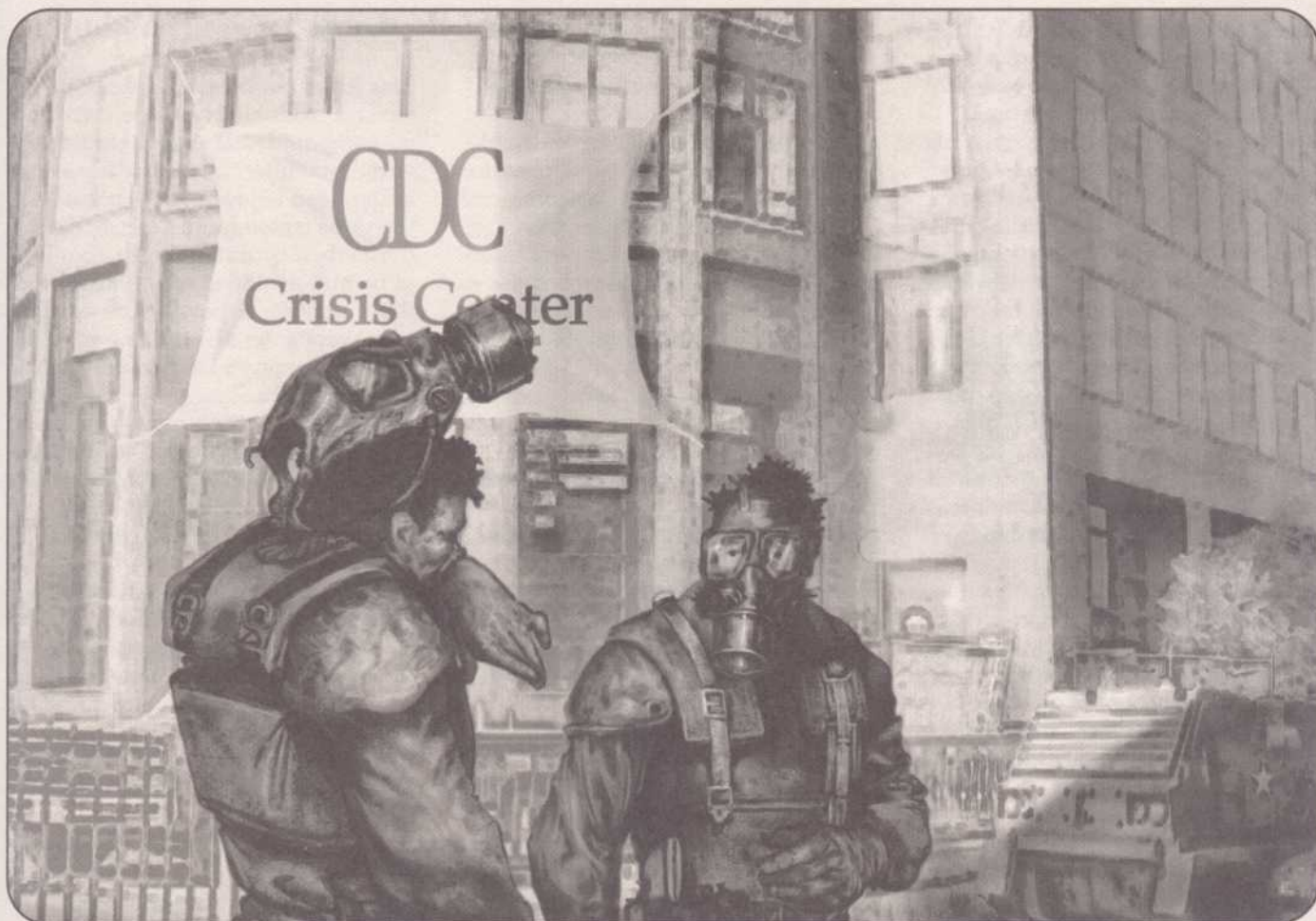
There are usually five soldiers stationed in this room at one time (see soldier statistics on page 62). One soldier remains dedicated to controlling the monitors and reporting possible threats to the soldiers in 11 (who can verbally communicate this information to the soldiers in 10). The other four soldiers remain available to quell trouble. For instance, if trouble develops in the lobby, two of the soldiers are initially dispatched to deal with it. If they prove inadequate, the dispatcher calls for a force of five additional soldiers from 11—the two soldiers remaining in this room (plus the dispatcher soldier) stay to protect the communications gear.

If this area is compromised, the surveillance and communications necessary to best defend the Crisis Center are also compromised. Heroes who adopt a frontal assault strategy are served best by taking out his room as quickly as possible. Of course, a frontal assault may not be the best strategy.

5. Director's Office

Though larger than the other offices, this room appears very similar to the others. Director Emily Kearns (use CDC Agent statistics from page 62) can be found here nearly 24 hours a day. Director Kearns is responsible for coordinating the civilian effort to identify antibodies that can defend against the plague. If the heroes attempt to gain access to Dr. Kemper through diplomatic means, they'll most likely be brought to Emily Kearns' office.

Director Kearns is tired, and it shows. At this point, she is willing to grasp at any straws offered by the heroes. A good story (and a successful Deception-*bluff* or Interaction-*charm* check, modified by the quality of the story) may be all it takes to sway her. If the heroes win over Kearns, she'll shortcut all the challenges put before the heroes, and bring them directly to Kemper in area 16. Of course, getting Kemper out of the Quarantine Ward is another story entirely—Kearns and the researchers in the vicinity will not allow it.



If the heroes let it slip that they are just as likely to be "plague" bearers as Kemper, she also brings them to 16, but at the last moment attempts to lock them in.

6. Infected Office

The two offices keyed to 6 are quite similar to the other offices (keyed to 2) in most ways. Unfortunately, these two offices show signs that the terrible plague is loose even inside the carefully controlled perimeter of the Crisis Control Center. Heroes who investigate these rooms find d4 CDC agents dead in their cots, victims of the "plague." At your option, one isn't quite dead, and launches a feral attack from behind a desk (use CDC Agent statistics on page 62, but without any gear).

7. Restrooms

The two small chambers keyed to this entry are the Men's and Women's restrooms, respectively.

8. Office Supplies

Like any office building, this one has an office supply room, filled with reams of white paper and letterhead (denoting the previous business, not the CDC), staplers, multi-outlet surge protectors, etc.

9. Meeting Room

This large open space is filled with folding chairs and serves as a meeting room. A white board, screen, and overhead projector at the head of the chamber aid speakers during their talks. Particularly acquisitive heroes can help themselves to dry erase markers, erasers, and the real find: a laser pointer.

10. Security Island

This small shack with windows on all sides was put up only recently. It serves as a security island and is staffed by four soldiers charged with controlling access to the loading dock of the building (use the statistics for Soldiers provided on

page 62). Anyone approaching on foot or in a vehicle is asked to stop (a gate that can be raised or lowered blocks entry to the large garage door providing direct access to 13) for inspection. The soldiers stationed here have orders to deny entry to anyone not associated with the CDC. Even if heroes can convince the soldiers in the island that they are representatives of the CDC (which requires a Deception-bluff skill check with a +2 penalty), those in the island ask the heroes to wait while they call Director Kearns (see 5). Heroes can observe the resulting phone conversation through the window looking into the shack. Those who make an Awareness-perception check notice the look of suspicion that crosses over the soldier's face as the conversation winds down.

Non-combative heroes are merely turned away, but those who resort to armed threat or outright violence are met with the same. The four soldiers in the security island have medium cover as they fire from

inside through the windows (shattering them); the heroes are at a +2 step penalty to return fire. Note that the soldiers across the way in 11 also have an unobstructed view of the area around the security island, and four of them begin to fire on any intruders two rounds after the initiation of hostilities, possibly catching attackers in a crossfire. Attackers who flee are not followed.

Those who attempt to drive a vehicle through the garage door might succeed (see "Ramming and Crashing" on page 201 in *Chapter 12: Vehicles* in the *Player's Handbook*). Assume that the door has a durability of 5; the result of the door's durability check (effective Stamina-endurance of 10) on TABLE P43: CRASH AND COLLISION DAMAGE indicates the damage inflicted. If 5 or more wounds (or 2 or more mortals) are inflicted, the door must make a second durability check or collapse (if 10 wounds or 5 mortals are inflicted, this check automatically fails).

11. Billet

Unless hero activity has caused some soldiers normally stationed here to respond to an emergency, there are ten soldiers billeted here (see soldier statistics on page 62). Of those, four are always on duty, ready to respond to threats. The others are currently off duty, either sleeping or sitting around jawing. In the event of an attack, the four soldiers on duty can respond immediately, but the six off-duty soldiers require at least 1 minute (5 rounds) to wake, equip themselves, and be ready to respond. Of course, in the event of a direct physical assault, these soldiers can grab up their pistols or combat knives and defend themselves right away.

In addition to being ready to respond to threats in other parts of the building (coordinated via phone communication with room 4) and assisting with intruders in front of the garage, the soldiers here also monitor access from the office portion of the building to the laboratory section (areas 12–16).

12. Lab Supplies

This large chamber is completely utilitarian; heroes with any ranks in

Physical Science–chemistry note that the supply room is particularly well stocked. Most of the walls are filled with shelves and racks, while barrels and crates take up much of the floor space. The shelves contain all varieties of medical research equipment, including syringes of various cc size, matching needles of varying gauge, latex gloves, distilled water, antiseptic soap, various buffer solutions, and hundreds of other similar supplies.

Amidst the disposable supplies there are also larger pieces of equipment, such as pH meters, scales, electrophoresis plates, spare rotoevaporators, and the like. The crates and barrels on the floor hold a variety of dry and wet chemicals, including acids, bases, and a host of organic chemicals. The chamber also contains an industrial scale sink, flask washer, autoclave, and freezer (complete with low-grade biological radioactive probes).

Heroes who spend an extra few minutes searching through the supplies (and make a successful Investigate–search check) find an untended canister of acidic foam used by the CDC agents' foamthrowers.

Even if heroes enter this room quietly, they find Vernon (see "Supporting Cast"). In this tangent, Vernon is a research technician responsible for keeping the supply room stocked, and for providing general lab maintenance. Vernon is quite helpful, and will ask the party what he can do for them. "You need your glassware sterilized? How 'bout I whip you up some media plates? If you're looking for something in particular, I know this storeroom like the back of my hand!" Vernon tags after the heroes and is generally annoying, but certainly not dangerous.

Other than Vernon, the room remains empty except during shift changes or when a CDC scientist in 13 requires supplies from this room. Of course, if the heroes gained entry during a firefight or by driving a vehicle through the garage door, the soldiers from 11 are sure to respond (if they haven't already).

The door leading to 13 is not locked, but does possess a small window through which the contents of 13 can be seen.

13. CDC Research Lab

This large chamber is divided up by several work benches filled with ongoing epidemiological studies. A variety of different methods are being used to identify the nature of the virus causing the plague. If an antibody inoculation has a chance of being developed, it is here within this chamber. Hopefully, the heroes won't prove too disruptive as they attempt to spring Dr. Kemper from isolation in 16.

The southeast corner of the room is glassed, and provides a view into a glass-enclosed walkway (area 15), beyond which is visible a large quarantine ward holding several humans in beds (area 16).

Twenty scientists can always be found in this chamber (though not always the same scientists, since they work on shifts). Use the statistics provided for CDC agents for the scientists in this chamber (though none have foamthrowers). The scientists here are most interested in protecting their samples of the live virus, and less interested in heroics. They will surrender in the face of aggression, but will argue desperately to keep Patient Zero (Kemper) quarantined here so that an inoculation can be developed against his particular plague. While the other scientists argue, one attempts surreptitiously to place a call from a phone on the side of a work bench to the soldiers in 11 (if the heroes have already dealt with these soldiers, there is obviously no response).

No matter what inducement, story, or threat the heroes provide, the scientists here will not under any circumstances unlock the sophisticated electronic door (14) allowing access to the Quarantine Ward (room 16). The glass separating all the associated chambers is bulletproof, though explosives might do the trick, assuming the heroes would stoop to such extremes.

14. Clearance Required

This electronic portal normally accepts a seven-digit alphanumeric activation sequence entered into the appropriate keypad before the steel reinforced door slides open. Without that sequence (the scientists won't

divulge it even under torture), the heroes must bypass the keypad. This requires a complex skill check (one check per round), which could be made all the harder if the characters are under fire while making the attempt. The number of successes necessary is based on the applicability of the skill used.

A character using Technical Science—juryrig needs 5 successes (with a +1 step penalty) to open the door. If a hero uses Security—devices, only 3 successes (with no penalty) are required to slide the door open.

Of course, there are two doors in this chamber, one leading back to 12, and one leading to 15. There is no check required to move from this half-chamber into 15, but heroes who do not take measures to prop the second door open behind them may be dismayed when it silently slides closed. There is a keypad in 15 that provides access back to 14, just as described above for the other entrance—the heroes must play out the challenge in the same way as described above.

15. Observation Hall

This glass-enclosed hallway mostly serves as a "clean room," scrubbing the air from 16 of all contaminants before recycling it to the outside. Rooms 13 and 16 are also easily visible from this semicircular area. No one is stationed in this area; however, a tray stand is pulled up next to the window here, filled with needles, syringes, and racks of test tubes. These are periodically used to draw blood from the subjects in 16.

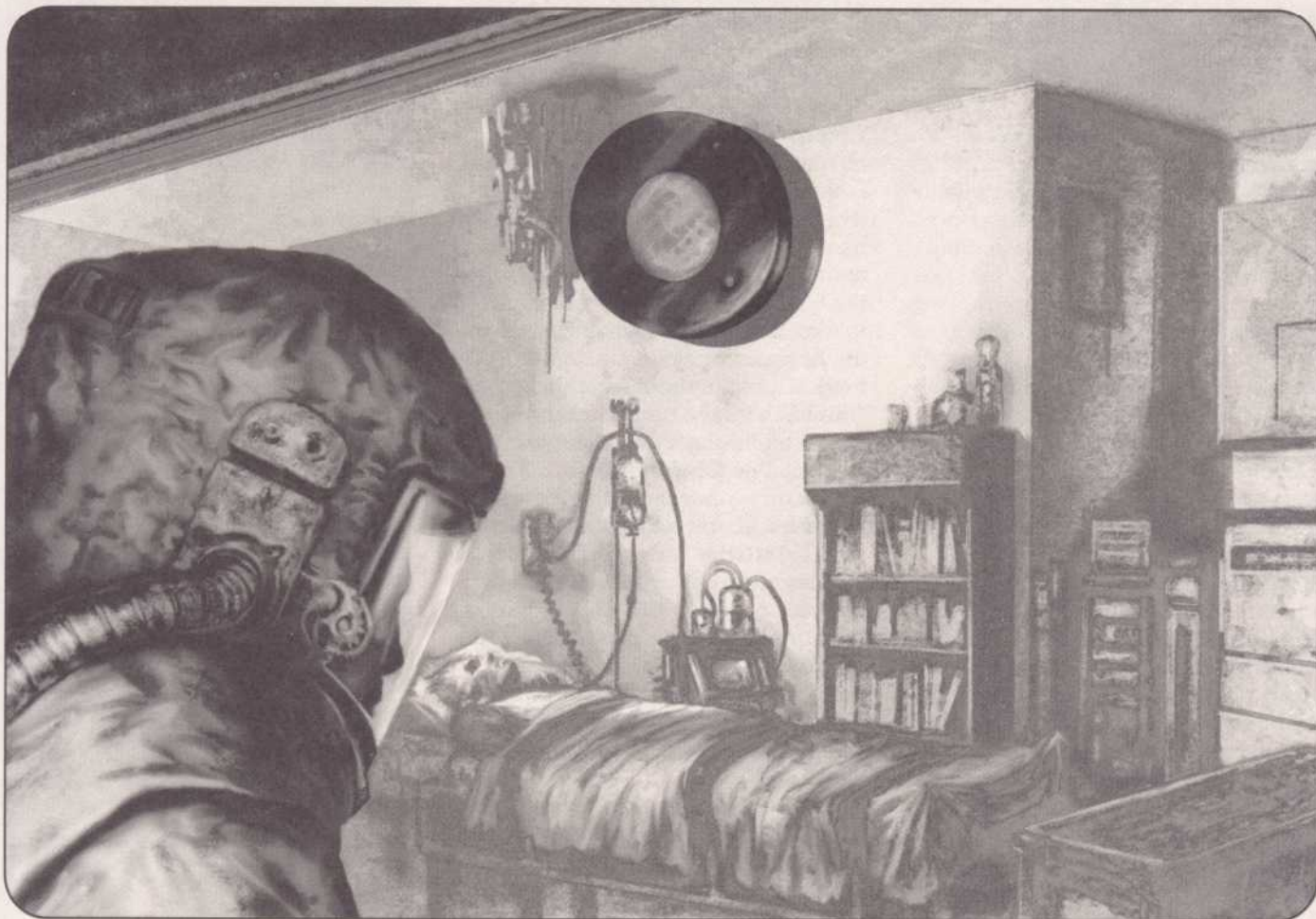
If the heroes make it to this chamber, they can see Kemper and he can see them. If he recognizes any of the heroes or Dr. Wolherth, his look of amazement is priceless. Getting into 16 is as simple as releasing the latch.

16. Quarantine Ward

The CDC keeps Patient Zero safely isolated in this chamber. Besides Dr. Kemper, the room contains a cot, a washbasin, a stand, and a small bookshelf filled with magazines

and random fiction. The rest of the room is absolutely bare.

Using frequent blood samples, the CDC hopes to understand the nature of the plague, and develop some immunity against it. Though the questioning is non-stop, Dr. Kemper hasn't revealed his true origin. On the other hand, Kemper is absolutely aghast at the chaos and death that his mere presence in this tangent has caused. It is an unlooked-for and unanticipated result of cross-tangent travel that gives the scientist food for thought should he ever be brought back into a laboratory setting for the purpose of conducting further experiments. In any case, he remains morose and dejected during all interactions with the heroes, rightfully blaming himself for the plague. That said, he is willing to be rescued if at all possible; his knowledge lies in physical science, and no matter how much he'd like to help the scientists of this tangent, he simply does not possess the requisite proficiency. Use Dr. Gail Wolherth's statistics provided on page 95 as a template for Dr. Kemper, if necessary.



Eleventh Plague Conclusion

Though heroes may think otherwise, it's not part of their job to stop the plague ravaging this tangent Earth. Though it is a terrible catastrophe, it's unlikely that the heroes possess the ability and equipment necessary to stem the tide before the plague moves outside the 300-mile zone it currently fills. In the weeks that follow the initial outbreak, this is exactly what happens. In a year, only 10% of the human population remains on the planet (unless you decide to spare this tangent). It is a terrible tragedy directly caused by the contact with travelers from the heroes' home tangent; however, it is not the heroes themselves who are to blame. Furthermore, in years to come, the 10% who proved resistant to the cold embark on building a new civilization from the ashes of the old. In the case of this tangent Earth (and barring any future catastrophes), life eventually triumphs.

SIGNAL TWO: NEW WORLD UNTOUCHED

In this alternate Earth, North America remains in the hands of its native peoples. Dr. Laurie Bertelsen thought she'd found a simple people, but soon learned that primitive does not mean stupid.

Setting

Signal Two tangent quickstats: +3.215, -2.118 (Pristine New World Cluster); Historical Division; PL 2; G2/R1/A2/P3/H2.

On this tangent, the European middle ages lasted far longer than in the heroes' home tangent. For similar reasons which are not important here, the myriad other cultures which might have potentially developed the desire and technology to colonize the New World never did so, leaving North and South America firmly in the hands of the "natives" that inhabited the two continents. Thus, the various tribes of peoples exist much as they have for the last ten to twenty

thousand years, still practicing a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, and in a few cases, limited agriculture. Without the white man to inaccurately label the natives, the term Indian has never been heard in the New World.

When Dr. Laurie Bertelsen fell into this parallel world, her entry was observed by a peaceful people called the Chehalis. The force of the blast injured Bertelsen, rendering her senseless. The Chehalis who observed the scientist's entry into their world decided that she must be an emissary or avatar of the Coyote, and so brought her to their settlement to nurse her back to health.

In this tangent, natives of the Pacific Northwest revere a group of legendary individuals that includes Coyote, Fox, Raven, Mink, and Eagle. Coyote plays leading roles in adventures of all sorts, including theft of fire, destruction of monsters, and teaching of useful crafts. The natives see that in the animal kingdom, the weak sometimes escapes the strong by cunning and intellect. In keeping with Coyote's tricky and often hard-to-understand ways, Laurie is seen as Coyote's Child.

The leader of the Chehalis, Chief Schwaebe, is also trained in the ways of the medicine man. Using his medicinal skills, he soon healed Laurie of most of her obvious wounds. The one thing he couldn't heal, however, was Dr. Bertelsen's memory of how she came to be with the Chehalis, where she was prior to that, and indeed, who she was at all. She also spoke a strange tongue, only understandable by Chief Schwaebe and other medicine men through their telepathic powers. The Chehalis took this confusion as further proof that Laurie was a child of the Coyote, born wholly into the body of an adult in an instant, and so lacking any memory of a past life. The Chehalis felt sure that Laurie's presence was a blessing of the Coyote, and a boon to be treasured. Because she couldn't remember her name, the Chehalis simply refer to her as the Coyote's Child.

Although she couldn't remember her past, the Coyote's Child was pretty sure she was no creature of the spirit world. Using her status as



Using Signal Two

The two warring tribes described below are based quite loosely on the natives that inhabited the territory now known as Washington state. However, if your campaign is set in a different location, you have a choice: ignore the historical inaccuracy and use the same tribal names or provide names more appropriate to your geographical location. For instance, the Lakota and Crow tribes could be used in the Midwest instead of the Chehalis and Haida.

the Coyote's Child, she managed to persuade a few Chehalis braves to escort her to the place where she was observed to enter the world, some two days travel from the Chehalis community. The Chehalis had previously placed a crudely carved sculpture of Laurie in the clearing to mark it as a holy place. Unfortunately, this location borders on the territory claimed by the Haida tribe.

The Haida became aware of the stories of the Coyote's Child, and were angry that the Coyote had chosen to grace the Chehalis with such a gift, when none was given to the Haida. When Laurie and her two Chehalis escorts finally made it back to the point where she'd arrived on this tangent world, a band of Haida attacked, killed the Chehalis braves, and took the Coyote's Child back to their own camp as a prize.

Scene 1: Arrival

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text to the players when their heroes arrive through the paratunnel from another tangent. Note that if the characters are leaving behind any type of cityscape, the transition is likely somewhat jarring. If the heroes are not entering this tangent from the geographical parallel on their own tangent where the blast occurred, do not read the last sentence describing the shrine.

Birdsong and a smell like lilacs complement a beautiful view of conifer trees, distant mountains, and gloriously towering thunderheads. You've appeared on a shallow slope in a 10-meter-wide clearing in the trees. The scene would be utterly pastoral, suggesting not the slightest touch of man, but for the roughly carved wooden sculpture standing near the center of the clearing.

Heroes who know or have seen a likeness of Dr. Bertelsen and make an successful Awareness-perception check realize that the sculpture in the clearing is that of Dr. Bertelsen. The heroes have just a few rounds to gawk before the eight hidden Haida braves fire their bows from the trees. Allow each hero an Awareness-intuition check to detect the ambush before it is launched; anyone succeeding may act in the surprise phase of the combat (see "Surprise" in Chapter 3: *Heroes in Action* in the *Player's Handbook*).

The Haida have this spot under surveillance, and the heroes represent their worst fear: the Coyote is angry with the Haida, and has come to reclaim the Coyote's Child meant for the Chehalis. To prevent this from occurring, the Haida have posted a group of warriors at the site where the "avatar" (Dr. Bertelsen) first appeared.

Once the Haida launch their ambush, heroes can spot each of their attackers with a successful Awareness-perception check with a -2 step bonus. Note that the Haida braves are considered to be under heavy cover from the tree branches and their excellent position, and thus heroes shooting back at them suffer a +3 step penalty to their rolls. The Haida are brave, if misled, and fight to the bitter end.

Haida Brave

Level 2 Human Combat Spec

STR 11 [+2] INT 10
DEX 10 WIL 10
CON 10 PER 9

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 14+/13/6/3

Move 20/12/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Perks: Tough As Nails (+1 bonus on STR resistance modifier, applied)

Attacks

Unarmed	12/6/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
Club	12/6/3	d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w	LI/O
Bow*	12/6/3	d4w/d4+2w/d4+3w	LI/O

*-d4 base situation die

Defenses

Hide armor: d6-3 (LI)/ d4-3 (HI)/ d6-4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]-climb [12], throw [12];
Melee [11]-bludgeon [12]; Unarmed [11]-brawl [12]; Primitive Ranged [10]-bow [12]; Stealth [10]-hide [11], sneak [11]; Stamina [10]-endurance [11]; Survival [10]; Knowledge [10]-language: Haida [13]; Awareness [10]-intuition [11], perception [11]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Wooden club, bow, 24 arrows, heavy hide clothing, gruesome trophies of past victories

The Chehalis are actively looking for the Coyote's Child, and have meanwhile sent a group of eight braves to the site of Dr. Bertelsen's first appearance. At your option, they appear in time to aid the heroes in their conflict, if things are going particularly badly for them. It's easy to tell the Haida from the Chehalis (apart from their obvious differences in temperament): The Chehalis primarily adorn their hair with knots of shells and decorative stones, while the Haida wear braided feathers. Furthermore, the brash Haida have painted their faces, indicating their current warlike attitudes.

Chehalis Brave

Level 3 Human Combat Spec

STR 10 INT 10
DEX 11 [+2] WIL 11
CON 9 PER 9

Durability: 9/9/5/5

Action check: 14+/13/6/3

Move 20/12/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Perks: Reflexes (+1 bonus on DEX resistance modifier, applied)

Attacks

Unarmed 11/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Hand axe 11/5/2 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w LI/O

Bow* 13/6/3 d4w/d4+2w/d4+3w LI/O

*-d4 base situation die

Defenses

Hide armor: d6-3 (LI)/d4-3 (HI)/d6-4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]-climb [12], jump [11], throw [12]; Melee Weapons [10]-blade [11]; Unarmed [10]-brawl [11]; Primitive Ranged [11]-bow [13]; Stealth [11]-hide [12], sneak [12]; Movement [9]; Stamina [9]-endurance [10]; Knowledge [10]-first aid [11], language: Tsamosan [13]; Animal Handling [11]-animal training [12]; Awareness [11]-intuition [12], perception [12]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Stone axe, bow, 24 arrows, heavy hide clothing, various trophies of previous conflicts

If the Haida braves are defeated, the Chehalis braves indicate with hand signals that they are friends, and that the heroes should follow them. It will most likely prove impossible for the heroes and the braves to communicate verbally. If the heroes remain unconvinced, the braves will offer them small gifts of shells and stones, taken from the braids of their own hair to indicate the seriousness of their proposition, and the trust with which the heroes can place in them. If the heroes accept such gifts, it's customary for the heroes to give something in return, but the Chehalis aren't offended if they receive nothing. After all, as far as they know, the heroes represent yet more servants of the Coyote.

If the heroes decide not to follow the Chehalis, they're on their own. They'll have to use their own methods of finding Laurie Bertelsen, currently held in a Haida camp some two days travel (by foot) to the southeast. Heroes who follow the Chehalis braves are in for a trip of some two days to the west. At your option, you may spice up the trip by having a hungry bear wander into camp in the middle of the night. See "Animal Compendium" in *Chapter 17: Creatures & Aliens* in the *Gamemaster Guide* for the bear's statistics.

The Chehalis Camp

Finally, the braves bring the heroes into a small camp of hide tents. The camp consists of some 40 adults and at least as many children, who crowd around the heroes with eager, interested faces as the heroes' escorts usher them to the largest hide tent. Of the 40 adults, only 30 can be considered combatants (use Chehalis brave statistics). The rest are either too old or with child.

The large tent belongs to Chief Schwaebe. The player's may be shocked to find that Schwaebe is able to communicate with them via telepathy! Indeed, the skills of a medicine man are large and varied, and communication is among them. Once, Schwaebe was a great warrior brave, but he is an old and respected elder now, and leads the Chehalis. He also is very interested in the welfare of the Coyote's Child.

Schwaebe is impressed with the heroes, and remains confident of their ties with the Coyote, regardless of any efforts to dissuade him. Chief Schwaebe provides the heroes with the information presented under "Setting" on page 68. Furthermore, he tells the heroes that he realizes that the Coyote must be angered at the treatment of the Coyote's Child, and doesn't fault the decision of the Coyote to send its servants (the heroes) to retrieve the Child and bring her back from whence she came.

To this end, Schwaebe volunteers four Chehalis braves to show the heroes the way to the Haida village where the Coyote's Child is being held. Furthermore, he offers the

braves' aid in any conflict arising from the heroes' attempt to rescue the Child. Unfortunately, he can't offer more of his braves, because the Chehalis must conserve their strength against the attacks of another belligerent tribe to the north called the Simsiams. If asked about this northern threat, Schwaebe simply says, "Day and night cannot dwell together. The Chehalis have ever fled the approach of the Simsiams, as the changing mists on the mountain side flee before the blazing morning sun."

Chief Schwaebe of the Chehalis
Chehalis Chief and Medicine Man
Level 10 Human Diplomat (CS)

STR 7 INT 10
DEX 8 WIL 12 [+1]
CON 10 PER 13

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: 14/10/4 # Actions 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Last resorts: 3

Perks: Observant (-1 step bonus to Awareness-perception checks)

Talents: Schwaebe has a psionic talent as described on page 228 of *Chapter 14: Psionics* in the *Player's Handbook*
Psionic Energy Points: 6

Attacks

Unarmed 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

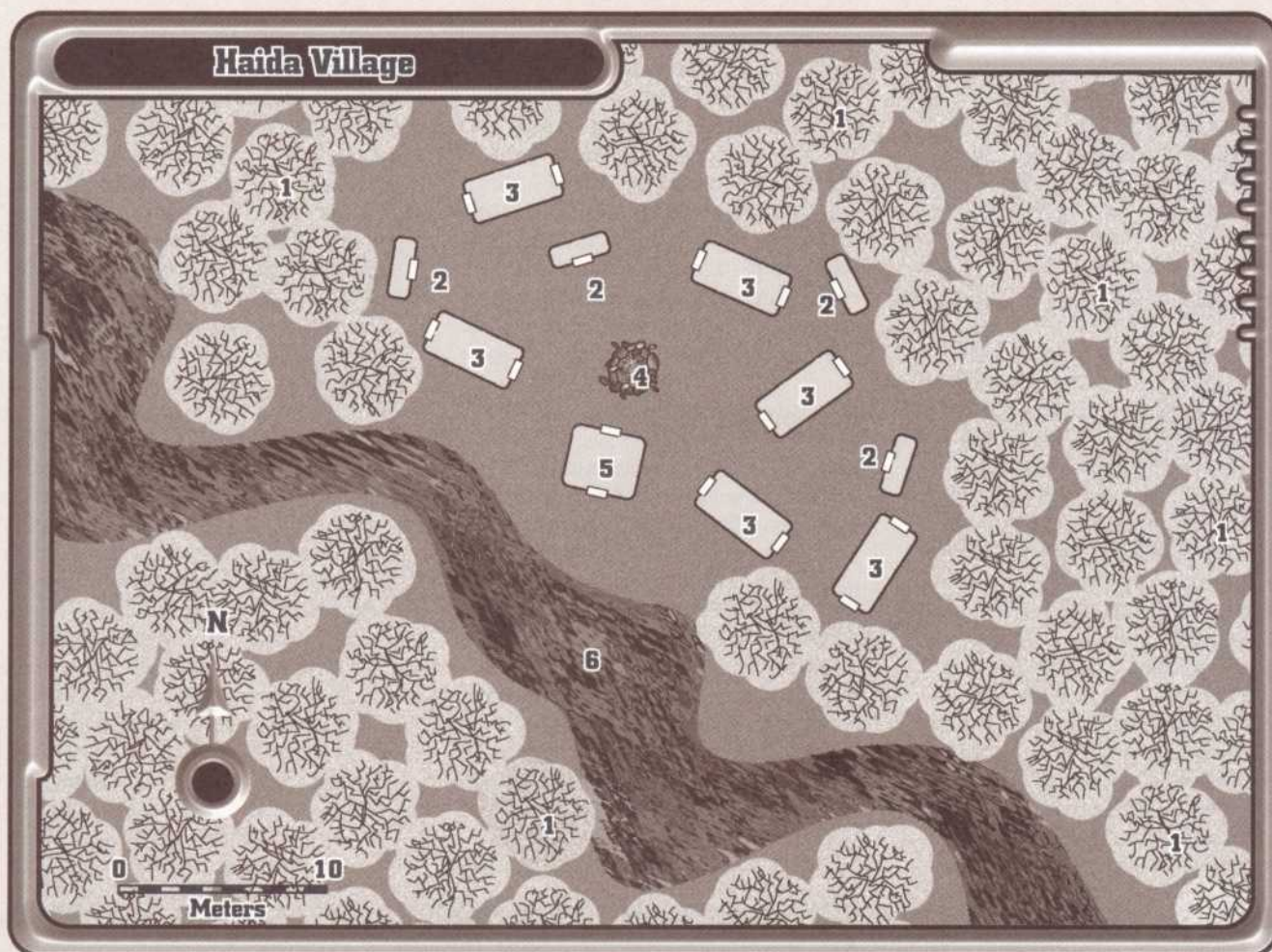
Dagger 8/4/2 d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w LI/O

Defenses

Hide armor: d6-3 (LI)/d4-3 (HI)/d6-4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [7]-climb [8]; Melee [7]-blade [8]; Unarmed [7]-brawl [8]; Primitive Ranged [10]-bow [11]; Stealth [10]-hide [11], sneak [11]; Stamina [10]-endurance [11]; Knowledge [10]-language: Tsamosan [13]; Animal Handling [12]-animal training [13]; Awareness [12]-intuition [14], perception [13]; Investigate [12]-track [13]; Culture [13]-diplomacy [15]; first encounter [14]; Deception [13]-bluff [15], bribe [14]; Interaction [13]-bargain [14], charm [14]; Leadership [13]-command [15], inspire [14]; Telepathy [13]-contact [15], suggest [14].



Gear

Stone knife, heavy hide clothing, various talismans, various dried herbs and desiccated small animals, and an earring given to him by Dr. Bertelsen.

Scene 2: Haida Village

As stated above, four Chehalis braves lead the heroes toward the Haida village, a journey of some three days. The journey is without incident; however, at your option, you may include an encounter with the heroes and a group of six Haida braves (use the Haida statistics on page 69 for this or any encounter in the village).

Refer to the Haida Village Map when the characters come to within half a kilometer of their goal. The Chehalis braves have previously scouted the outskirts of the village, and can draw a crude rendition of the village, its permanent log lodge structures, and the river that runs along the village. Though the

Chehalis braves know that sentries guard the perimeter of the village, they do not know exactly where such sentries are located.

The heroes can attempt to gain entry to the village in any manner they'd like; however, it should be noted that there are a great many braves within the Haida village, and a full-on frontal assault is not necessarily a good idea. Such a scenario could lead to one of two results: the large number of Haida braves overwhelm the heroes, or the heroes with their technological goodies overcome the Haida through sheer violence and bloodshed.

Diversiory tactics, stealthy penetration under cover of darkness, diplomatic trading of some of the heroes' cool technological items for the captives, and even an attempt to convince the Haida that the heroes are divine figures (a complex Deception-bluff skill check requiring five successes (one check per round); heroes who wield impressive devices may have a -1

to -3 step bonus) are all possible methods whereby the heroes might rescue Dr. Bertelsen from her confinement among the Haida without resorting to arms. Reward heroes who utilize such tactics with two or three additional achievement points above and beyond what you might normally reward them for after the scenario is completed.

At your option, the Haida village is in the midst of a tamanamus as the heroes arrive (see area 4 for more information).

1. Sentries in Trees

Each of the locations keyed to this entry indicates the presence of a crude platform in the branches of an aspen tree, some 10 meters above the level of the ground. Each platform holds two Haida braves with their bows close at hand. These sentries pepper suspicious intruders with arrows, at the same time giving forth an ululating battle call loud enough to be heard by all the braves in the village. Like the Haida

encountered during Scene 1, these Haida enjoy heavy cover from the tree branches and their excellent position, and thus heroes shooting back at them have a +3 step penalty applied to their rolls. The Haida are brave, if misled, and fight to the bitter end.

2. Young Braves' Lodge

Four small lodges composed of stripped pine trunks are scattered around the village, each with a single entrance. These serve as the homes for young braves newly made "men" but who are too young for families. Generally, 2d4 young Haida live in each structure; however, during the day half the inhabitants are off hunting. At night, all the young warriors are in residence, unless they are participating in a night-long tamanamus (see 4). The structures also contain the personal effects for each of the braves they house, which include extra hide clothing, extra arrows and weapons, tools, dried food, and just a few lengths of ceremonial cord knotted

with shells, bear claws, and other valuable oddments.

These young braves respond within 5 rounds to any general alarm raised by the sentries or in the event of a nearby conflict. The young warriors have statistics similar to those given for Haida braves on page 69. To mimic their lack of experience, the Gamemaster may apply a +1 step penalty to any skill checks made by the young braves.

3. Family Lodges

Five large lodge structures with two entrances each house many Haida families. Though other cultures prize privacy, to the Haida the intimacy of many families is accorded to those who have honored themselves before the tribe. Thus, to live in close proximity with the others who've attained a similar honor is something all Haida desired. Thus, each of the lodges keyed to this entry contains d8+5 families. Each family consists of at least one combatant, in addition to d2 old and infirm members, as well as d6 non-

combatant children. Note that only during the dark of night is it likely that every member of a family is completely collected within the lodge. During the day, half of the combatant braves are off hunting. The rest are likely aiding their families in various activities situated around the firepit (see 4 below). At the GM's option, the various family members could be assembled around the firepit during a night-long tamanamus (again, see 4 below).

In the event of a general call to arms, d8+5 braves (use Haida warrior brave statistics on page 69) from each family lodge responds within 3 rounds, ready to defend the village from all harm. The other members of each family remain within the lodges, praying for the Coyote to deliver them from harm, and to lend the strength and ferocity of the bear to the braves if conflict proves unavoidable.

Each family within a lodge contains several valuable hide blankets dyed with colorful murals, extra hide clothing, tools, hunting



and fishing equipment, and several valuable strands of trophies taken from great beasts and fallen enemies.

4. Bonfire

A large firepit in the center of the village remains constantly aflame. The firepit is the center of the village, and heroes who come upon the village during the day likely find most of the tribe engaged in various everyday activities around the firepit. During the day, the embers are banked and manageable, and serve equally well for smoking meats as for curing hides. Ashes also make a good addition to dyes and even soaps.

At night, the firepit is stoked and burns brightly. At your option, the heroes may witness a tamanamus (a religious ritual) around the firepit. The tamanamus starts at nightfall and lasts until dawn. Feasting and dancing are a mainstay; at midnight, Vernon the medicine man (see **area 5** below) brings the Coyote's Child from the Chief's Lodge to witness a great dance in her honor, before returning her to her confinement there. The tamanamus offers heroes with plans of stealth an opportunity to achieve their rescue while most of the tribe is distracted. Loud calls from sentries may go unheard during the singing and dancing that are part of the ritual.

5. Chief's Lodge

This lodge is distinguished from the others by the many carved poles protruding upward from the roof. The carved poles depict several mythical and natural beasts wending their way up the poles, and represent the Haida's belief in the protections of the many spirits of the land, including the Coyote.

Generally, the lodge houses Chief Ponsif, his wife and two daughters, and the most honored member of the tribe: Vernon the medicine man (yes, this is a version of the Persistent Individual "Vernon" who has doubles all across superspace—see "Supporting Cast" on page 56). Currently, the lodge also houses a very frustrated Dr. Laurie Bertelsen.

Though she is treated with deference and has been given many gifts of shells, hides, and other tokens, she remains a prisoner here.

Though she can communicate with Vernon because of his special abilities, her temporary amnesia prevents her from convincing the Haida that she is anything other than the Coyote's Child. Though the Haida's arguments are persuasive, Bertelsen remains unconvinced. In fact, if she catches sight of one of the heroes dressed in clothing from her own tangent, sees someone she knew before she came to this tangent, or even hears someone speaking in English, her knowledge of her true origin will rush back to her.

In the event of a conflict, assume that Chief Ponsif has similar statistics to Chief Schwaebe (though he does not share Schwaebe's psionic talent of Telepathy). Ponsif's wife and daughters are non-combatants. Laurie Bertelsen's statistics are similar to those given for Dr. Gail Wolthert on page 95.

Though Chief Ponsif holds power over the Haida, the counsel of Vernon the medicine man often sways Ponsif's decisions. Unfortunately, Vernon's counsel is often suspect. As a matter of fact, it was Vernon who recommended that the Coyote's Child be stolen from the Chehalis. Vernon is a conniver, a deceiver, and generally only concerned with his own well-being. If the heroes attempt to parley with the Haida, they must speak through Vernon, as only this medicine man has the ability to understand the heroes' language. If at all possible, Vernon attempts to maintain control of the Coyote's Child, bringing all his skills and mental abilities to bear. Only if the heroes can prove their superior power to Vernon does the medicine man finally relent and counsel Ponsif to release the captive.

Vernon

Haida Medicine Man
Level 6 Human Diplomat (MW)

STR 8	INT 10
DEX 8	WIL 12 [+1]
CON 10	PER 13

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: 16/10/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 3

Attacks

Dagger	8/4/2	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w	LI/O
Mind blast	15/7/3	d4+1s/d4+2s/d6+2s	n/a

Defenses

Hide armor: d6-3 (LI)/d4-3 (HI)/d6-4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Melee [8]-blade [9]; Stealth [8]; Stamina [10]-endurance [11]; Knowledge [10]-first aid [11], language: Haida [13]; Animal Handling [12]-animal training [13]; Awareness [12]-intuition [13], perception [14]; Resolve [12]-mental [13]; Deception [13]-bluff [15], bribe [14]; Interaction [13]-bargain [14], intimidate [14], taunt [14]; Telepathy [13]-contact [15], illusion [14]; mind blast [15], suggest [14].

Gear

Stone knife, heavy hide clothing, various talismans, various dried herbs and desiccated small animals.

6. River

This broad and swift river provides the Haida with a natural barrier to intrusion. The banks of the river are steep, high (15 meters), and muddy (add a +3 step penalty to all attempts to climb). Heroes who attempt to use this avenue to penetrate the village from behind must first find or construct a raft or canoe (the Chehalis provide one if asked, but do not volunteer it). Since the river is swift, all action checks taken while the heroes attempt to get into position with the primitive water craft are at a +2 step penalty. Characters had best be quiet in their attempt, lest the Haida sentry posted across the river may give warning, and bring a host of Haida bow-wielding braves to the edge of the bank in just a few rounds, while

the heroes are still trying to climb up the muddy embankment.

New World Untouched Conclusion

Besides Dr. Laurie Bertelsen's extreme thanks, her rescue by the heroes isn't likely to cause any significant, lasting effects in this tangent, assuming they didn't massacre the entire Haida tribe to do so. On the other hand, if the heroes left behind any out-tangent items, events on this tangent could take quite an interesting turn many years in the future. Though such events may have no impact on your campaign, it's interesting to wonder what native tribes of what's called North America (in other tangents) might do with technological items, especially if they manage to understand and emulate any of the functions of said article. In future generations, Europeans stuck in their eternal middle ages could be quite surprised when technologically superior peoples from the New World begin to colonize their shores, pushing them out of the lands that they had inhabited for centuries...

SIGNAL THREE: NUCLEAR AFTERMATH

When technological evolution outpaces social evolution by a wide margin, disaster almost always follows.

Setting

Signal Three tangent quickstats: -3.718, +1.119 (Nuclear Armageddon Cluster); Historical Division; PL 2-6; G2/R3/A2/P3/H2.

In this alternate Earth, technology advanced a bit more rapidly than in the Baseline. Like children with dangerous toys, the natives have almost completely exterminated themselves, or at least the sanctity of their DNA. Savage volleys of ballistic missiles exterminated most life on the planet, raining nuclear fire down upon the fragile life forms

below. However, as the saying goes, life finds a way. On this tangent, an ecosystem pushed beyond the edge finally collapsed, but eventually reformed with strange new elements filling niches blasted clean by the bombs. Savage radiation seared some areas completely clear of all life, but in other places, radiation acted as a mutagenic.

While whole species were rendered sterile, and others acquired deformities too grotesque for survival, a few life forms found that mutation provided new strategies for survival in the wastelands. Among the most important of mutations acquired was an increased tolerance for radiation; however, other equally valuable attributes also contributed toward the new ecosystem. Of course, this new order of life remains fragile, and to survive it must skirt radioactive craters and similarly blasted sites.

This world is saturated with high background radiation and is inhabited by savage bands of splinter humanoid races that range the "livable" portions of the land. While a few bands have managed to salvage vestiges of lost technology, many more have devolved almost to proto-human levels of thought and civilization, such as the bronze-hued splinter race called the Latten.

The Latten claim the edges and inner rim of a giant crater that marks the sight of what was once a large city. The central portion of the crater is still too deadly for any creature to inhabit, but the Latten are a breed of humans with more radiation resistance than most, so they can inhabit the outer edges and inner rim of the crater. The rim is still too deadly for other organisms to approach or at least spend any significant amount of time near. The Latten take advantage of the fact by staging raids on the more densely inhabited surrounding areas for "food" (due to a mutational drawback, the Latten can only metabolize blood and so must consume it for sustenance). The Latten retreat back to their redoubt when resistance grows too stiff. Because of the threat of increased radiation, victimized bands are too afraid to approach the crater to extract vengeance and put an end to the Latten, or as they are also called, craterlings.

It was Dr. Brian Darwin's sad fate to fall almost directly into the hands of the Latten, who immediately secreted this strange "plainsman" with no signs of abnormality or scarring common to most organisms of this world. Though devolved, craterlings are not completely devoid of intelligence and reasoning, nor of instinct. Brian was brought deep into the craterlings' warrens that hollow the sides of the crater wall, where he was protected against undue radiation. It became the Latten's goal to induct Dr. Darwin into their band, and his undamaged DNA into their communal gene pool!

Scene 1: Arrival

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text to the players when they arrive through the paratunnel from another tangent. Note that if the characters are leaving behind any type of cityscape or natural living landscape the transition may be jarring. If the heroes are not entering this tangent from within 10 kilometers of the adventure's starting location, do not read the first few sentences describing the crater.

You appear near the edge of a vast, sloping crater of raw, reddish earth. The crater is so vast that its far side is lost in a haze, while a shifting, faintly glowing mist shrouds its lower reaches. Opposite the crater, the landscape slowly lifts, but is composed mostly of rough mesas and steep ravines. Within the shadow of the ravines, vegetation is visible, though it seems oddly tinted and strangely proportioned. More rare yet than vegetation, what appears to be the barest edges of long toppled skyscrapers peek up from under some of the hillocks. A dry sandy smell assaults your nostrils, while a feeling not unlike incipient sunburn begins to crawl across your skin, even under your clothes.

Heroes who have some means of detecting ambient radiation may

Radiation in Signal Three

The average radiation level for the Signal Three tangent on the GRAPH scale is R3 (though some places are lower, and some much higher). Heroes (and natives) are exposed to up to 100 rems of radiation for every 24 hours spent on this tangent (a rem is equivalent to the biological effect of one roentgen of X-ray or gamma-ray exposure). This exposure requires the heroes to make a Constitution feat check for each day (or portion thereof) spent on the tangent (unless they have access to "e-suits" as described in Chapter 9: Goods & Services in the *Player's Handbook*). See TABLE G20: RADIATION EFFECTS on page 63 in Chapter 3: *Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide* for results of the check. For the purposes of penalties and recovery from the radiation sickness, consult "Disease Effects" on page 57 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

learn of the potential danger of their situation.

Heroes who attempt to climb down into the crater or observe closely along the inner rim of the crater may attempt an Awareness-perception or Investigate-search skill check (at a +4 step penalty) to notice several (seven) upper crèche craterlings hanging in concealment (they are camouflaged with the Chameleon Skin mutation). If disturbed, the

craterlings scurry up the side of the rim to attack the heroes. Otherwise they remain hidden for a few rounds before coordinating an attack (see below).

The bottom of the crater is almost a full kilometer deep, and the sides of the crater are relatively steep, requiring a successful complex Athletics-climb skill check. The 1000-meter climb requires 10 successes (one check per 15 minutes); the many handholds provide a -2 step bonus

to checks (in addition to any climbing gear the heroes might have).

Those who fail the complex skill check begin to tumble down at rate of about 100 meters per round. Each round, the tumbling hero takes d4+1s and must decide whether he wishes to try to halt his fall or control the damage he is taking. A successful climb check (with a +1 step penalty) will stop the fall, while a successful Acrobatics-fall check reduces the damage to only 1s (though the hero continues to fall).

If Heroes manage to sidestep (or fall past) the Latten, they could conceivably pass down into the glowing mists to find nothing but a glass-like surface coated with sand, and an R4 radiation threat (CON feat check necessary for every hour spent in the bottom of the crater to avoid radiation sickness).

Heroes who spend more than 10 minutes near the edge of the crater without getting attacked by or attacking the craterlings finally draw the attention of Glandon, who watches the crater's rim from a nearby vantage point. Observant



characters note the appearance of a large man from the shelter of one of the unburied corners of a toppled skyscraper. The intruder calls loudly in a language very close to English, "Get away from the edge! Run! This way!" The figure is Glandon, a mercenary on a mission to the crater's rim.

The heroes have one round to obey Glandon's shouted command. If they move toward the large man, they avoid contact with the group of seven upper crèche craterlings hidden just below the crater's lip (see above). If the heroes dither, the seven craterlings rise from over the edge of the crater (their flesh resembling almost exactly the reddish earth of the crater) and attack!

Upper Crèche Craterling (Latten) Level 4 Mutant Human Combat Spec

STR 11 [+1] INT 6
DEX 12 [+1] WIL 9
CON 14 PER 8

Durability: 14/14/7/7

Action check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: 22/14/4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Mutations: Night Vision, Radiation Tolerance, Chameleon Flesh, Natural Attack (fangs)

Mutation Drawbacks: Sensitivity to Cold, Inefficient Metabolism (only blood suffices to nourish)

Attacks

Unarmed 13/6/3 d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s LI/O
Fangs 13/6/3 d4+1s/d4+1w/d4+2w LI/O

Defenses

None

Skills

Athletics [11]-climb [15]; Unarmed [11]-brawl [13]; Acrobatics [12]-dodge [13]; Movement [14]-race [15]; Stamina [14]-endurance [15], resist pain [15]; Survival [14]; Knowledge [6]-language: craterling [9] (see below); Awareness [9]-intuition [10], perception [10]; Resolve [9]-physical [10]; Interaction [8].

Gear

Various gruesome trophies of victims who have put up a particularly difficult fight.

The upper crèche craterlings are posted along the crater rim at various places to deter the curious. Unless discovered by the heroes, they coordinate an attack on the anyone who remains near the crater's edge for too long. If any are captured and questioned by the heroes, the heroes discover that upper crèche craterlings have lost most of their spoken language in their devolution, and can only grunt, wheeze, and make an odd rattling noise in the back of their throat. On the other hand, their skins can flash through several hundred hues quite quickly. Among the craterlings, this has developed into a language, though this is unlikely to prove useful to heroes used to verbal communication.

If the heroes are slow to move back from the rim and draw the attack of the hidden craterlings (or if the heroes' own investigation dislodges the Latten from hiding), Glandon arrives within 3 rounds to throw in his aid against the mutants, sprinting across the dry ground to arrive quickly. If the heroes move away from the rim at Glandon's insistence and avoid an immediate encounter with the craterlings, the big man continues to wave them toward him, until the heroes are close enough to look Glandon in the eye, who smiles.

Glandon

Mercenary Adventurer
Level 6 Mutant Human Combat Spec

STR 13 [+2] INT 8
DEX 10 WIL 8
CON 13 PER 8

Durability: 13/14/6/7

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: 24/16/6 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 1

Mutations: Improved Reflexes (-1 step bonus on action checks), Acid Tolerance (-1 damage from acid, -1 step bonus to all Stamina-endurance checks related to acid)

Mutation Drawbacks: Toxin Intolerance

Perks: Concentration, Danger Sense (-2 step bonus to intuition checks)

Flaws: Obsessed with craterlings (+1 step penalty on all actions when triggered)

Achievements: Fatigue Rating Increase (applied), Wound Rating Increase (applied)

Attacks

Brawl 15/7/3 d4+2s/d4+3s/d4+4s LI/O

Chainsword 15/7/3 d8+3w/d8+4w/d4+3m LI/O

Defenses

Battle harness: d6-1 (LI)/d4+1 (HI)/d4-1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [13]; Melee [13]-powered [15]; Unarmed [13]-brawl [15]; Vehicle Operation [11]-land [12]; Stamina [13]-endurance [14], resist pain [14]; Survival [13]; Knowledge [8]-first aid [9], language: English [11]; Awareness [8]-intuition [11], perception [9]; Resolve [8]-physical [9]; Interaction [8]-bargain [9], intimate [9].

Gear

Battle harness, chainsword, solar powered motor bike, survival gear, rations & water, 10 pods of salve (cures radiation sickness if patient makes a successful CON feat check; a Marginal success indicates that the illness is lessened by one grade) various trophies and oddments pilfered from the ruins.

Glandon is a very large man, attired in a combination of tattered leather and slick armor (battle harness). Though his tattoos, animal skins, and dusty appearance give the initial impression of a barbarian refugee, the sight of what looks like a stylized chainsaw (chainsword) and a solar-powered motor bike indicate otherwise. Of course, Glandon looted these and other treasures from the ruin of prior civilization, and really is a barbarian, though he thinks of himself as an adventurer on the side of right. Then again, even an adventurer on the side of right has to make a living, and Glandon watches the edge of the crater because of a recent commission.

The victimized bands of farmers and herders that live in more benign regions have hired Glandon to "deal" with the bloodthirsty Latten, and have offered him a

treasure of their own called a "plasma gun." Though Glandon's not sure what a "plasma gun" is, he likes the sound of it, and so took the commission. Knowing that he'd be operating in a region of higher radiation, he prepared ahead of time with several pods of radiation salve (see Glandon's Gear). If the heroes seem concerned about the radiation, Glandon offers the heroes three pods of radiation salve in return for their aid in driving the vicious Latten out of the region. Successful bargaining might bring the offer to as high as five pods.

Heroes may question Glandon about the missing Lucid, Inc. researcher. Glandon doesn't know anything about anyone like that having appeared in the area recently, but if he had to hazard a guess, Glandon wouldn't be surprised if any intruder as strange looking and unmutated as the heroes (Glandon himself has fairly obvious organic plating over much of his skin) was probably captured and sheltered within the Latten's Crèche for breeding purposes. Glandon explains that viability and children are the top priority to any group that wants to survive in this deadly world, and even beasts as primitive as the Latten are bright enough to realize this (especially the Lower Crèche craterlings, though Glandon has never seen one of these specimens). At the heroes' prodding, Glandon also relates any additional information about this tangent as presented in the "Setting" on page 74—as the GM, you may want to create additional details and "color" of your own devising for this post-nuclear holocaust tangent.

If the heroes agree to aid Glandon in the hope that their missing researcher does indeed reside amongst the Latten, and possibly in return for some radiation salve, Glandon reveals the openings he's identified leading into the Crèche—see Scene 2 below.

Scene 2: Latten Crèche

Glandon knows of the main entrance to the Latten Crèche (see **area 1** and the Latten Crèche Map) which lies over the side of the crater, some 15 meters down from the rim. Glandon doesn't know of the secret entrance, nor do any living Latten. If asked, Glandon counsels an attack during the day, as the Latten are more active during the cooler night hours.

Though the craterlings currently inhabit the buried space called the Crèche, they didn't excavate or build it. In fact, it's a remnant of a large structure that existed before the massive nuclear warhead created the nearby crater. Before the bomb, it was a thirty-seven story building, but now only a single basement level and parking level remain. The upper structures had many uses, but the lower sections of the now-vanished skyscraper actually conducted weapons research, and was part of the reason the site was bombed in the first place. Though in ruinous condition, the Latten found it perfect for their own warren.

Unless noted specifically to the contrary, all the passages and chambers of the Crèche are unlighted. Most heroes will require artificial light sources to explore the Latten-infested ruin.

1. Entrance

A gaping crevice offers rough passage into the side of the crater. The crevice is 15 meters down from the crater's rim, and as such requires a tricky climb down to access it. Heroes without rope or other climbing gear must succeed on an *Athletics-climb* check (with a -2 step bonus for handholds) to safely make it down the crater's slope and into the crevice opening. Climbing gear will provide additional step bonuses, as described on page 66 in *Chapter 4: Skills in the Player's Handbook*. Heroes who fail tumble down into the crater itself (see "Scene 1: Arrival" on page 74).

Heroes who make it to the entrance find a dark passage that is rough and natural-looking near the crevice, but slowly grades into what looks like pressure-formed cement to the east.

2. Steel Portal

Under normal circumstances, this rusted steel portal set in chipped and stained concrete stands ajar, unguarded and unlocked. If the heroes have come into conflict with the Latten that guarded the rim of the crater and allowed any to flee and bring warning, this steel portal is closed, and two upper crèche craterlings stand guard outside to deter any uninvited guests (see statistics on page 76).

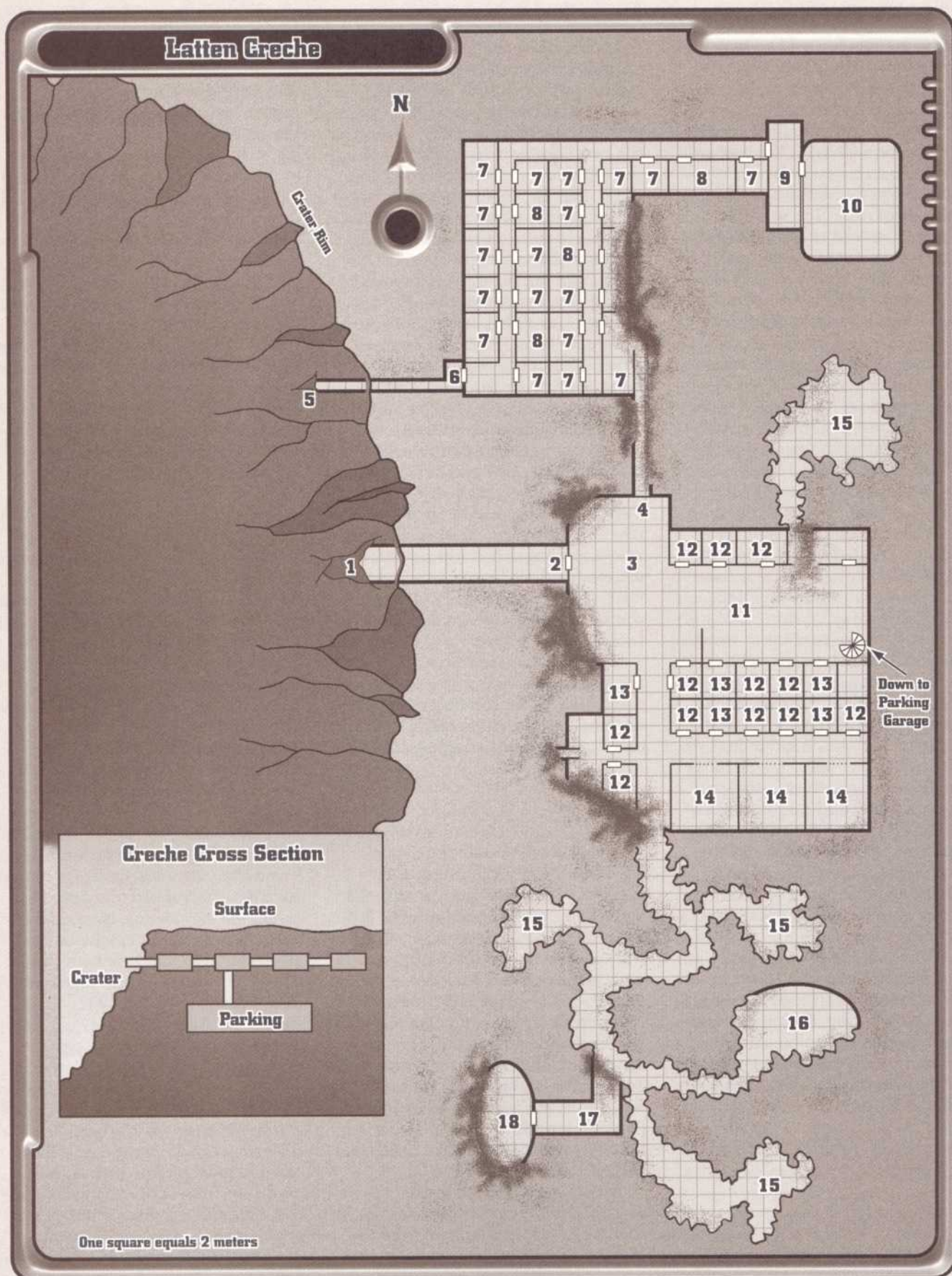
If the steel portal is closed and locked, the heroes have two options: pick the lock with a successful *Manipulation-lockpick* check, or wait the Latten out. After two full days, the bottled-up craterlings issue forth to clear their entrance, attacking with a force of 20 upper crèche craterlings and 10 lower crèche craterlings (see statistics on page 82).

3. Gallery

A wide space bounded by stained concrete and broken rock lies beyond the steel portal. The smell of urine and more detestable odors is quite strong in this chamber. If the Latten are alerted to the presence of intruders, the heroes can expect a welcoming committee of some 10 upper crèche craterlings waiting to deter any visitors. They take full advantage of their chameleon abilities to launch an ambush. If the heroes come into this room unannounced during the night, three upper crèche craterlings can be found here unconcernedly grooming each other's cracked and oozing skins. During the day, heroes find only a single upper crèche Latten sleeping off to one side near the portal, obviously failing to take its guard duty too seriously.

4. Partially Blocked Passage

The passage here is mostly blocked by an ancient rock fall, and the craterlings have never made the effort to unblock it to see what might lie on the opposite side—they assume nothing of too much importance. Heroes who decide to make the effort are looking at a job of several hours. Heroes engaged in clearing the passage risk overstaying



their welcome, as the coming of night brings d4 upper crèche Latten out into the gallery (**area 3**) to gather for a hunt, while the coming of day brings at least one new Latten to "guard" the entrance.

Clearing the passage involves a STR feat check by a "lead" hero. This check receives a -1 step bonus for each additional hero aiding in the work. The result indicates the number of hours required to clear a navigable passage through the debris: Amazing 1 hour, Good 2 hours, Ordinary 4 hours, and Marginal 12 hours. A Critical Failure indicates a further cave-in after 12 hours that requires the heroes to start over.

5. Camouflaged Entrance

This entrance is much like the main entrance (**area 1**), save that it is much smaller and naturally hidden by the folds of the runnels and erosion channels gouged into the crater's wall. Heroes who specifically scan this general region of the crater wall for anything out of the ordinary notice the opening with an Awareness-perception check (+2 step penalty). Reaching the opening requires all the same considerations as described under **area 1**.

6. Active Portal

A broken and ill-used concrete passage ends at a wall with a large iron-alloy portal firmly blocking further access. Unlike the door in **area 1**, a small electronic panel inset flush with the side contains a small keypad and liquid crystal display. This is a security door, and to get past it, the heroes must access the plate and make a complex Security-devices skill check (3 successes necessary, one check per round) at a +1 step penalty due to corrosion. Each Failure roll indicates that the frayed wiring delivers a minor jolt of electrical energy inflicting d4s damage to the person making the skill check.

If the security panel is successful bypassed, the door opens under its own power, revealing a small reception area. The siding has cracked and mostly peeled from the walls, the ceiling panels are mostly fallen, and decay and moisture has

moldered most of the magazines beyond readability. A reception counter complete with recessed computer screen sits against the north wall; however, the electronics have degraded beyond all possibility of information retrieval. Have each hero make an Awareness-perception check; the hero with the best result notices the fallen logo: five lines radiating from a stylized fist. This logo was used by MasterDefense, a contractor responsible for much of the advances and upgrades of weapons technology in this tangent. The GM can decide whether or not this company exists in the heroes' home tangent.

7. Standard Office

Though most of the many offices keyed to this entry once possessed name plaques, age has destroyed the paper used to identify the occupant. All the doors for these offices are closed, and are 50% likely to be mechanically locked. Heroes can bypass locked doors with a successful Manipulation-lockpick check, or with the application of brute force (a STR feat with a +1 step penalty is enough to cause the doors to come crashing in).

The interior of the office keyed to this entry are in very poor repair, sharing many qualities of dereliction with the reception area (6). Fallen bookshelves, rusted file cabinets and chairs, and rotted desks are the main features in these chambers. Computer equipment is utterly nonfunctional, and the paper files and books have degraded into a sodden, unrecognizable masses. On the other hand, some of these offices retain vestiges of past occupants.

In fact, half of the offices keyed to this entry contain the last remnants of former office workers. At this late stage, only some bones and a skull remain on or near the rusted chair behind the desk. Though protected in the sub-level of this basement by several meters of concrete, radiation still proved sufficient to instantly kill all the MasterDefense workers.

8. Nonstandard Office

At first glance, nothing seems to distinguish the doors to the offices

keyed to this entry from the other office doorways (7). However, those heroes who make an Awareness-perception check with a +4 step penalty note a dim glow of illumination seeping from under these doors. These doors are also 50% likely to be locked, but access is possible via the methods outlined in the previous entry.

The offices keyed to this entry contain small emergency freezer storage units, tied into the independent power source that once provided energy to the weapons research being conducted in this site. The other offices (7) also contain these units, but they lost power in the blast, consigning them to decay and uselessness. The power source was a massive capacitor that was charged daily by solar energy. With the blast that formed the crater, every link to the shielded capacitor was severed, save for the few that still provide power to the emergency storage units in these offices (and to the portals at 6 and 9, and to the "experiment" in 10). Still, after decades with no maintenance, the capacitor nears the end of its stored power. Heroes who want to make use of the outlet in these offices for their own uses may attempt a complex Technical Science-juryrig skill check (3 successes required, one check per 10 minutes); failure indicates that the power source is fully drained of energy. If this occurs, the other emergency freezer units in the chambers keyed to this entry go dead, and the "experiment" in **area 10** ends abruptly.

There are four emergency freezer units in all, one to each of the offices keyed to 8. Each holds a slightly different mix of standard and experimental pharmaceuticals (consider them to be PL 6 equivalents as per "Pharmaceuticals" on pages 138-139 of the *Player's Handbook*). Each bullet point represents the content of one (labeled) freezer unit:

◆ **Antibiotics.** These experimental antibiotics allow a victim suffering from disease to make any CON feat checks to recover with a -3 step bonus. These antibiotics incorporate time-release technologies with lipid encapsulation delivery, such that only a single dose is required to

stamp out infection (though a victim may still need several days thereafter to recover). There are five doses of the antibiotic in this storage unit.

◆ **Antiradiation serum.** This experimental serum is a potent combination of invigorated blood plasma, stabilized electrolytes, and augmented tocopheryl succinates. Each dose provides a -3 step bonus to the victim fighting off the effects of radiation illness. There are seven doses of antiradiation serum in this storage unit.

◆ **Coagulant/Regenerator.** This experimental substance uses advanced lipid encapsulation delivery and cell augmenters to enhance clotting and cell renewal at the point of injury without thickening blood throughout the body. If injected after receiving a wound, the coagulant/regenerator gives a dying victim a -3 step bonus to his or her next Stamina-endurance check. Furthermore, if that check is successful, the victim regains d3m and d4w over the next d6 hours of recuperation, above and beyond normal healing processes. There are four doses of coagulant/regenerator in this storage unit.

◆ **Stimulant.** This experimental stimulant is composed of augmented vitamin complexes and stabilized herbal extracts to energize the body. One dose of stimulant heals a variable amount of fatigue and stun damage based on the result of a CON feat check: d4 for Marginal, d4+1 for Ordinary, d4+2 for Good, and d6+2 for Amazing. There is no penalty to abilities associated with this variety of stimulant, nor is there any "relapse" following usage; however, taking more than one dose of this stimulant within a 24-hour period doesn't provide any additional stimulation or other benefit. There are four doses of stimulant in this storage unit.

9. Controlled Access

This chamber is lined with steel alloy. Recessed lights still shine dimly from the ceiling if the capacitor described under **area 8** remains active. Though the entry to this chamber from the hallway remains unguarded, the egress from this chamber into **area 10** is guarded by

a massive steel alloy portal similar to that described in **area 6**. In addition to a keypad, however, this portal sports an ocular scanner, complete with chin rest. Those with the proper retinal patterns who position their left eye to the scanner cause the door to swing open.

(MasterDefense scientists and executives possessed the proper retinal scans, but of course they are all long dead.) If the retinal pattern doesn't match, countermeasures are instituted, and the scanning laser coheres to a weapon-grade pulse (assume a skill rank of 10). Because the target must have his or her head in the chin rest to begin the scan, the laser receives a -4 step bonus to hit. Damage is slightly less than that of a laser pistol (d6w/d6+2w/d4m), and the victim must make an Acrobatics-dodge skill check or permanently lose the use of his left eye!

To get past the security door, the heroes must access the keypad plate and make a complex Security-devices skill check (5 suc-

cesses required, one check per round) at a +1 step penalty. To maintain a sense of tension, the Gamemaster may elect to roll the situation die in secret. If so, don't indicate whether or not the hero has succeeded; instead, allow him to roll several times (enough for you to determine success or failure without tipping your hand), then announce that "You think you succeeded." At this point, a brave hero must try his or her eye at the plate to determine success.

This chamber also contains a large window of bulletproof Plexiglas looking into a large chamber (10). The window is hazed and bubbled on the inside, making it difficult to pick out anything in the chamber other than a pulsing, multi-hued radiance.

10. MasterDefense Weapons Research Pod

Jumbled support machinery that ruined and destroyed by the blast fills this chamber. The ruined appa-

The Reasonator

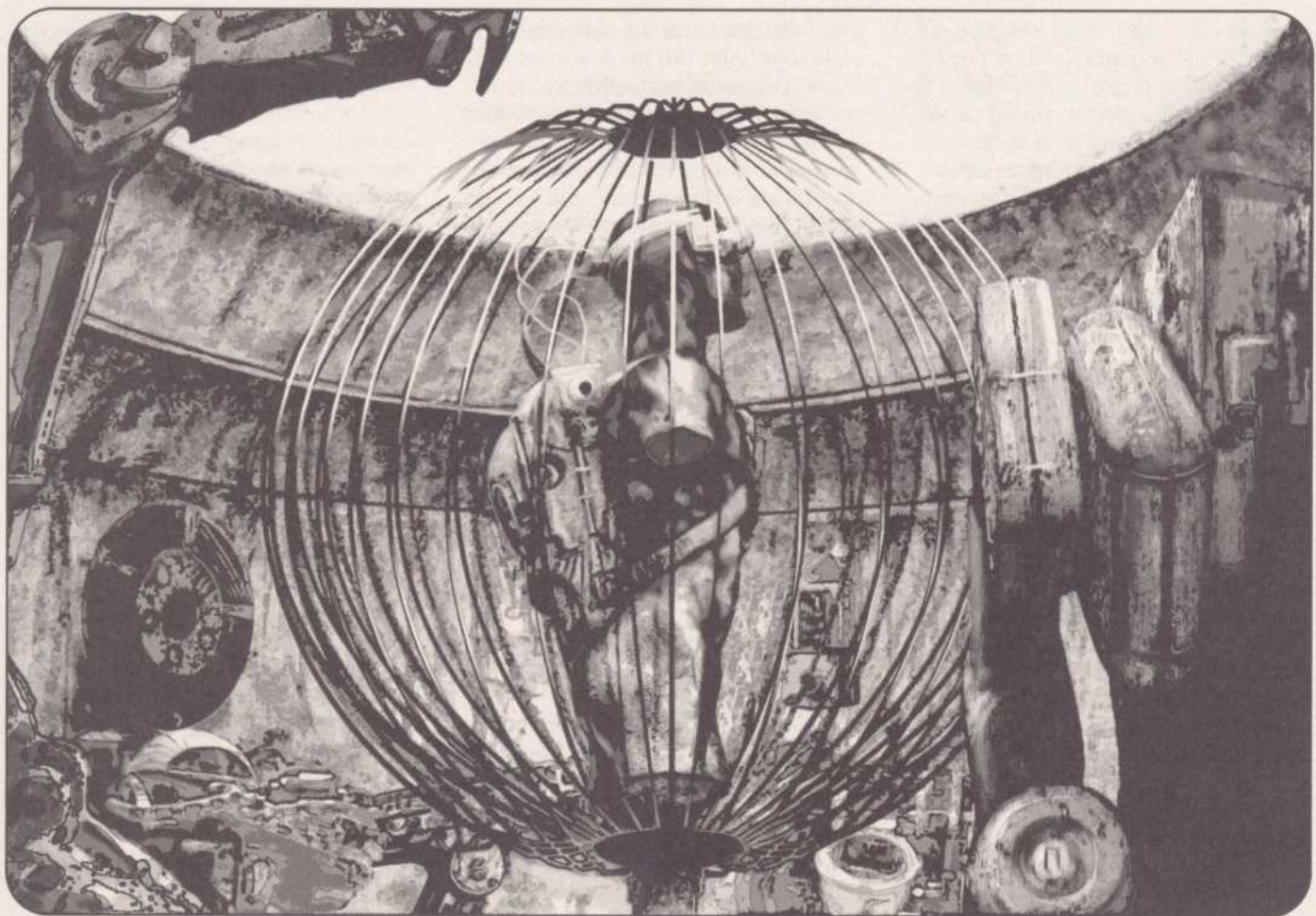
To the eye, the prototype weapon looks like a small circlet or unadorned crown, save for the MasterDefense logo. A nest of at least twenty silvery wires connects the circlet to a hard-sided backpack. In the late stages of the war, MasterDefense attempted to unleash the power of the mind as a weapon. The Reasonator is the result.

Any sentient humanoid who puts on the backpack and places the attached circlet firmly on his or her head feels a strange tickling in his head. A successful INT feat check allows the user to understand that the Reasonator somehow has the ability to enhance mental energy, allowing the user to send forth bolts of mental energy at enemies! However, each such use drains both the charge in the lanthanide capacitor contained in the backpack and the mental strength of the user.

To trigger the Reasonator, the user fix her mind on a living target within 40 meters away (no range penalties) and make a WIL feat check. Damage depends on the result of the "attack roll:" d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s. Armor provides no protection against a blast from the Reasonator.

Each use drains 1 fatigue point from the user (or d4s if you don't use fatigue in your game) and one "charge" from the capacitor (which currently contains enough power for 11 uses). It is suggested that the Reasonator not work for those who already possess the Mindwalker skill *mind blast*. However, at your option it could instead augment each damage result by an additional +2 points, but drain twice as much fatigue (or stun) from the mindwalker with each use.

A full recharge of the lanthanide capacitor takes 1 hour, and can be obtained through the use of any external source of electricity (the Reasonator possesses a "universal" plug that accepts anything from live wires to jolts of naked electricity). When fully charged, the Reasonator has 20 "blasts."



ratus forms a perimeter around a central pedestal encased in a faraday cage. Within the thin metal mesh of the cage lies a prototype piece of military hardware that was developed too late into the war to make a difference. The hardware was protected by the faraday cage from the nuclear blast, and a residual electromagnetic field both preserves and protects the armament. The scientists working on the prototype device called it a Reasonator.

Heroes who move to within 3 meters of the faraday cage enter the invisible protective field and must make a CON feat check to determine the damage they suffer: Critical Failure d3m, Failure d4w, Ordinary d4s, Good 1s, Amazing no damage. Heroes versed in Security-devices can remotely deactivate the field without triggering it with a successful skill check.

11. Common Dining Area

This large, dark area is almost contiguous with 3. Like the entry area,

this dirty concrete chamber stinks of fecal matter, mixed with what the smell of putrescence and rot. In fact, the husks of a few animals and humanoids, drained of all blood, lie disregarded in the corners of this chamber!

During the day, this chamber is generally empty. If the heroes come into this room unannounced during the night (i.e., if the heroes didn't just fight there way in from 3), two upper crèche craterlings (see statistics on page 76) can be found here unconcernedly feeding, vampire-like, on an unfortunate humanoid prisoner who still struggles weakly. Of course, the Latten don't react kindly to heroes who interrupt their dinner.

The half-collapsed spiral staircase in the southeast corner sports rusted iron railings. The staircase descends some 10 meters before opening up into a dark, echoing space filled with ancient derelicts: this was the parking garage before the blast, but currently all access to the outside world has been melted and covered with rubble. Heroes

who explore this area find several dozen rusted-out automobiles that have the appearance of cars made during the 1950s in the heroes' tangent; however, differences in style and manufacturer are apparent, and attributable to the nature of alternative universes. At your option, the heroes may discover one or more vehicles that operate with a successful Technical science-repair check and with a bit of gasoline that hasn't completely volatilized; however, it's unlikely they'll be able to get the vehicle out of the parking garage.

12. Upper Crèche Dens

These small concrete chambers were unadorned storage closets before the war—now, they serve the upper crèche craterlings as dens. Each of the chambers has a 50% chance to contain d4 Latten fast asleep, night or day. Even a nearby conflict is unlikely to wake these creatures, although it's your option to decide differently. Typically, only one (if any) of the craterlings in a den can be

considered a combatant (see upper crèche craterling statistics on page 76)—any other craterlings found in these chambers are too young or old to threaten or defend themselves adequately in the event of an attack.

13. Divided Spoils

These chambers are quite similar to those described above in 12. The occupants of the chambers keyed to this entry have recently divided the salvage retrieved from a recent raid: crayons! Each of these chambers (whether inhabited or not at the time of the heroes' investigation) contains 2d4 fat crayons and sheaves of cardboard liberated from a packaging company. Pathetic stick figure decorations adorn the surface of each piece of cardboard, mutely speaking to the sad, lonely, and ultimately sterile existence of the Latten in this subterranean redoubt. Bands of alternating color also decorate much of each piece of cardboard. Though they may mean nothing to the heroes, to the Latten it is like a written language. Generally, however, the thoughts recorded here are no more complex than, "sleep," "tasty," and "day is bright/filled with pain."

14. The Herd

Each of the three chambers keyed to this entry is blockaded by a set of crude bars salvaged from another site and set in the concrete here by brute force. Each chamber contains d6 humans stolen from nearby top-side communities, all in a fairly pathetic state after going without food of their own for some time, as well as suffering from wounds from past Latten feedings. Each member of the herd "suffers" from some subtle or obvious mutation; however, these are mostly drawbacks that include abnormal hair growth, vestigial limbs or organs (which don't work), and skin discolorations. In any case, their physical condition is such that none of them can be considered combatants, and are no good in a conflict, although releasing them *en masse* might make a suitable distraction.

Unfortunately, Dr. Brian Darwin doesn't reside among these prisoners. On the other hand, if the heroes come into this room, one prisoner

moves to the forefront of his cell and calls loudly for the heroes to let him loose. This prisoner is this tangent's version of Vernon! Vernon's statistics can be found on page 56; however, Vernon doesn't have any computer-related skills in this tangent, and he sports two nonfunctional fleshy antenna stubs protruding from his forehead. If asked, Vernon tells the heroes of a recent "pure one" (a mutation-free person like the heroes) captured by the Latten, and taken into the lower crèche to the south. Vernon doesn't know much else, save that the craterlings of the lower crèche seldom leave the darkness, but are said to be more dangerous than their upper crèche cousins. If released, Vernon allies with the heroes, though he refuses any offers to leave the tangent.

15. Lower Crèche Dens

These delvings were burrowed by Latten long after the blast. They currently serve as the dens for the more sensitive and influential Latten, also called lower crèche craterlings. Each of the caverns keyed to this entry contains d4+1 of these "enhanced" Latten. If the heroes enter these chambers unannounced, they'll discover the indicated chamber inhabitants huddled together for warmth, chattering to each other in rapid changes in skin coloration. The discovery of more "pure ones" (the heroes) in their domain is first treated with wonder, but if heroes refuse to be herded to their lords in **area 16**, the Latten's delight turns to vicious attacks.

Lower Crèche Craterling (Latten) Level 3 Mutant Human Combat Spec

STR 11 [+2] INT 10
DEX 10 WIL 13 [+2]
CON 9 PER 7

Durability: 9/9/5/5
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: 14/10/4 # Actions: 2
Reactions Score: Ordinary/2

Mutations: Chameleon Skin, Night Vision, Radiation Tolerance, Dermal Armor, Acid Touch*, Natural Attack (fangs and claws)

Mutation Drawbacks: Sensitivity to Cold; Sensitivity to Water,

Sensitivity to Light, Inefficient Metabolism (only blood suffices to nourish)

Perks: Fortitude (-1 step to endurance checks), Tough as Nails (applied)

Attacks

Fangs 14/7/3 d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w LI/O
Claws* 14/7/3 d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w LI/O
* For one round per day, an acid secretion inflicts additional damage per the result of a CON feat check by the Latten: Marginal d4s, Ordinary d4w, Good d4+2w, Amazing d6+2w. On a Critical Failure, the Latten instead suffers d4w.

Defenses

Dermal armor: d6+1 (LI)/d4+1 (HI)/d4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]-climb [13], jump [12];
Unarmed [11]-brawl [14]; Stealth [10]-hide [11], sneak [11]; Stamina [9]-endurance [10], resist pain [10]; Survival [9]; Knowledge [10]-language: craterling [13]; Awareness [13]-intuition [14], perception [14]; Interaction [10]-intimidate [12], taunt [11].

Gear

Gruesome trophies, bone necklaces, a couple of crayons.

16. Matriarch's Cavern

"She Who Leads" is the only reason that the Latten are a distinct subgroup of mutants. Though her mutations are extreme, She Who Leads remains capable of bearing children with the mutational traits associated with both upper and lower crèche craterlings. She Who Leads routinely gives birth to Latten quintuplets, approximately every 6 months! Unfortunately, unless the chosen father has particularly undamaged DNA, offspring are still-born. For this reason, none of the male Latten have proven capable of fathering the next viable generation of Latten.

Thus, when Dr. Brian Darwin was found, he was immediately secreted away as a treasure beyond price (in **chamber 18**). Though Darwin refuses to cooperate, She Who Leads believes that it is only a

matter of time before he comes around to the Latten point of view, especially as his hunger grows.

She Who Leads is quite old, though she doesn't look it. In fact, she's obviously pregnant when the heroes meet her. Because of her experience, she's learned to speak in the tongue used by the topside races (an English derivative), and can hold conversation with the heroes if given the chance. She'll explain the situation outlined above, and note that she can't give up Dr. Darwin because to do otherwise would put the future of the Latten in jeopardy. Of course, if Glandon remains with the heroes, he isn't likely to be too concerned with the niceties of negotiation—he was hired to do a job: stop the Latten's raids.

It is possible that particularly diplomatic heroes can devise a way to ensure that the Latten refrain from future raids, possibly through gifts of technology. Even Glandon will see this end as accomplishing his mercenary goal. However, in the event that the heroes decide that the only way to succeed is through application of force, She Who Leads possesses the standard statistics of a lower crèche craterling, except that her CON is 14, her Durability is 14/14/7/7, and her *endurance* and *resist pain* ranks are each 15. Additionally, she bears the key to open the portal sealing **area 18**.

17. Ruined Hallway

Two lower crèche craterlings guard this hallway at all times, using their Chameleon Skin mutation if an alarm has spread. Note that if heroes make it to this location without raising an alarm, at least one of the guards here attempts to flee without drawing attention to itself to do just that. If the alarm is raised here, d8+10 upper crèche craterlings and d8+5 lower crèche craterlings arrive at this nexus in 5 minutes—the heroes had best get what they came for and leave, if they don't want to be trapped by the mutant hordes!

18. Abode of the Pure One

The rusted iron door leading into this half-collapsed chamber is locked (She Who Leads in 16 has a key), but a successful Manipulation–lockpick check also unlocks the portal. Swinging the portal wide produces a tremendous squeal of rusted metal that, at your option, raises the alarm as noted in 17 if the Latten are not already aware of the heroes' penetration of the crèche.

Within, Dr. Brian Darwin is kept against his will in squalor. He is undernourished, filthy, and ill from radiation sickness. To rescue him, the heroes will have to carry him out bodily. If necessary, his statistics are similar to those given for Dr. Gail Wolhert on page 95.

Nuclear Aftermath Conclusion

In the event the heroes fail and are captured, the Latten strip them of all their "pretty trinkets" and incarcerate them along with Dr. Darwin as additional "Pure Ones." With this additional influx of undamaged genetic material, the Latten are sure to survive, and what's more, prosper. Of course, heroes who can't adapt to a diet of blood soon perish...

If the heroes successfully extract Dr. Darwin from the craterlings' clutches, they'll manage to survive if She Who Leads also still lives. If the matriarch was brought low by the heroes, the entire Latten complex is abandoned within a year.

Even if the Latten die off completely (or are invigorated by the heroes' DNA), their presence on this tangent is unlikely to have any major lasting effects. The world is just too splintered and disjointed for information, technology, or philosophy to travel far. Even if the heroes left out-tangent items laying around or as gifts, there is probably really nothing to distinguish these items from other rare relics of the previous era of high technology before the fall.

SIGNAL FOUR: PHANTASMS

Dr. Kirk Connor found a world that seemed empty of all human life, at least until he glimpsed the phantasms. Then again, phantasms aren't human.

Setting

Signal Four tangent quickstats: +0.001, -0.003 (Baseline Cluster/Abandoned Earth); Historical Division; PL 5; G2/R1/A2/P3/H2.

At first glance, this paraverse Earth appears absolutely similar to the heroes' home tangent, except that even a little time spent here reveals that there doesn't appear to be anyone "home." More specifically, it is as if everyone just got up and walked away during the middle of breakfast a few weeks ago. Infrastructure, cities, and every other sign of civilization remains, but there is not a living trace of the previous inhabitants. Note that animals, plants, insects, and the other classes remain firmly on the planet.

When Dr. Connor regained consciousness on this abandoned Earth, he didn't realize that he'd been flicked through superspace. In fact, he thought he was still on his own Earth, which had just suffered a terrible atrocity through a scientific accident. More to the point, he thought it was his own experimentation with Lucid Technologies gone horribly wrong that had somehow displaced every living human being on this planet into some other continuum. It's possible that he's not incorrect, though if there is any blame to assign, it is to the paraverse doubles of Connor and the other Lucid Technologies researchers of this particular tangent. Of course, they're not around to ask.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it seems that whatever unknown force or agency that removed all the humans from this tangent made a few "substitutions" with an order of life otherwise unknown within the Historical division. In fact, it's unclear what order of life the few newcomers hail from. The few times

that Connor noted them across an empty intersection or gazing down upon him from within an otherwise empty bank of high-rise windows, he saw only dim shapes, obscured as if swaddled in a great cloak, and fuzzy as if they might really only be a hallucination. Connor took to calling them phantasms.

It's unclear what the phantasms really represent. It could be that they're ghosts of the people who've disappeared, or perhaps they're merely evil memories given life. Maybe they're not "native" to this tangent at all, but instead represent colonizing beings from a distant tangent, just taking advantage of absent tenants. Dr. Connor speculated on all these and other possibilities, but the theory that he finally settled on was this: the phantasms represent dark angels who remained behind after forcefully assisting humanity's leave-taking of this Earth. After a few close-up encounters with the entities, it became clear that the phantasms were definitely malign.

What's worse, Dr. Connor's living mind draws these creatures, attracting them with the light of reason. The concentration of the creatures began to rise in his vicinity. The first time he encountered more than one at a time, Connor's apprehension ratcheted up a notch. However, during his next encounter with a phantasm, he was downright terrified when the entity abandoned the previously established watchful behavior, viciously attacking him with nightmarish teeth and claws!

Dr. Connor survived through luck alone as he brought out his personal taser to bear and reflexively called upon the Lord to save him. The phantasm retreated and Dr. Connor was saved, though he remained unclear about what had saved him. Was it his taser, his prayer, or a combination of both?

Not taking any chances, Dr. Connor holed himself up in a nearby church within easy walking distance of an electronics store and a local radio station. Using his training and experience in stopping the phantasm that attacked him, Kirk turned a church into a fortress of subtle traps and pitfalls designed to slow down

and kill the phantasms should they attempt to "get him."

Scene 1: Arrival

If the heroes open a paratunnel from a tangent Earth within the corresponding physical location of a city, read or paraphrase the following text. If the heroes leave their own tangent from within sight of the blasted pit that housed the secret research facility, they arrive in this tangent Earth where an exact duplicate of the blasted facility also resides. It may take heroes a few moments to realize that there is any difference to their new surroundings.

A brief tension in your shoulders eases as you gaze around this new paraverse Earth. The sky is blue, not venomously green or gold. There are no twisted attackers emerging from strange structures to attack you. In fact, everything seems absolutely normal and quiet in every way. In fact, maybe it's too quiet... Where the heck is everybody?

Refer to the map on page 85 to pinpoint the heroes' general location upon arrival. This map corresponds to city streets in Seattle of our home tangent; however, feel free to substitute a map of a location more familiar to you, especially if you've already established that Lucid Technologies superspace facility existed in a city other than Seattle. On the other hand, who's to say that the streets on the Arrival Map don't exist in the alternative city (if any) where you've chosen to base this adventure?

Cars stand idle in city streets, though some have obviously run up on curves and have crashed into buildings. Every single car is empty, but most show signs of habitation: dropped lipstick, half-eaten (and molding) sandwiches on the dash, and empty soft drink cups within easy reach. Many of the cars sitting empty in the middle of the street have no gasoline, having idled until they ran dry after the "event" that snatched every living human being

from the planet a few weeks ago. Should the heroes investigate further, they will discover that the disappearance coincides with the date of the explosion of the superspace lab in this (and their own) tangent.

Small animals have begun to colonize the streets already, and manicured lawns are beginning to overgrow. Heroes who investigate nearby buildings or homes discover that there is still power here and there, but no one seems to be at home. In restaurants homes, food stands half eaten. In homes, television and radio channels show only static or a test signal (save for a few exceptions, noted below).

Letting The Truth Sink In

Allow the heroes time to confirm to the fact that, yes indeed, there is no one home. The really eerie thing is, this tangent was an almost exact duplicate of their home tangent, so dedicated heroes find Lucid Technologies, and even their own homes (if nearby), or at least their listing in the phone book. Of course, they don't find actual duplicates of themselves, nor bodies: there are no bodies anywhere. Whatever event snatched away humanity, it didn't leave any clues as to its nature. If more than a day passes before the heroes find any trace of Dr. Connor, they heroes begin to encounter phantasmic rats and phantasms according to the mechanism described below under "Looking For The Chapel."

Of course, there must be at least one human on this world: a paratransponder signal undisputedly leaks from this tangent Earth. There must be a researcher hidden here somewhere! But where?

Finding The Missing Researcher

There are a variety of means whereby the heroes might eventually discover Dr. Connor. Unfortunately, by the time that the heroes arrive on this tangent, Dr. Connor has slipped over into real paranoia, and so methods designed to signal the researcher and draw him out of hiding always fail: Dr. Connor hasn't left his fortress for at least a month. Clever heroes or those with

Cross-tangent Money

Particularly sneaky characters may hit on going through those purses and wallets that they can find in this abandoned tangent Earth for cash. Note that while they characters can get credit cards that correspond to real accounts back in their home tangent, utilizing these cards soon brings investigation, as the tangent duplicates of the people to whom the cards still exist in the heroes' home tangent! Only hard cash provides a safe form if looting becomes a goal.

A little looting is probably not something you need to worry about, but heroes who take the time to knock out an unguarded bank vault may require some management. On this tangent in particular, the more time the heroes spend, the more attention from phantasms they'll receive (see below), which could prematurely end a larceny spree. On the other hand, maybe there are other small differences in this tangent than from the heroes home tangent—the design on all bills are slightly different, such that attempts to pass large denominations back on their home tangent are stymied. For all intents and purposes, this money is counterfeit!

map provided, streets are labeled, but except for the Arrival Point and 112 Galer Street, individual buildings are not shown. Though there are several office buildings and light industrial complexes near the Puget Industrial Park, the neighborhood depicted beyond, called Queen Anne, is a mixture of upscale homes, chic shops, and small stores situated amongst steep hills overlooking Puget Sound.

Encountering Phantasms

As the heroes move toward 112 Galer (whether intentionally or unintentionally), the Phantasms they may have caught sight of previously become more common.

For each block traversed by the heroes, pick a random hero to make

an Awareness-perception check. On a success, that hero notes the silhouette of a person, or at least a humanoid figure, standing in the shadow of an alley, behind a half-drawn shade, or within a parked vehicle farther along the road. The first three times a sighting occurs, investigation reveals nothing—the silhouette simply wasn't there, was something else (such as a mannequin in a store window), or it somehow "evaporated."

After a few false starts, it's possible that the heroes begin dismissing such sightings as harmless. Unfortunately, this doesn't prove to be the case. Eventually, the phantasm sighted does not flee but rather shadows the heroes with the intent of attacking them. From now on, every phantasm sighting leads to a physical encounter while the heroes remain within one kilometer of 112 Galer Street. Unless noted specifically under a keyed entry in Scene 2 (or unless you decide differently), the heroes ever only meet one phantasm at a time.

Phantasm

STR 15 (d4+12) INT 4
(Animal 13 or d4+11)
DEX 15 (d4+12) WIL 12 (d4+9)
CON 13 (d4+10) PER 2
(Animal 8 or 2d4+3)

Durability: 13/13/6/6

Action Check: 16+/15/7/3

Move: 80/48/12 (fly 4) # Actions: 3

Reaction score: Good/3

Attacks

Bite 14/7/3 d4w/d4+1w/d4m LI/O
Claws 18/9/4 d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w LI/O

Defenses

+3 res. modifier vs. melee attacks
+3 res. modifier vs. ranged attacks
Intangibility: d4+2 (LI)/d4 (HI)/d4-3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [15]-climb [17]; Acrobatics [15]; Stealth [15]-hide [19], sneak [19], shadow [19]; Stamina [13]-endurance [18]; Awareness [12]-intuition [18], perception [14]; Resolve [12].

A phantasm normally appears to human senses as a blurred humanoid silhouette, moving in and out of the shadows in quick darts and feints in an unnatural

way that can bring nausea to those viewing its movements.

Comparison to someone moving in a strobe light or the amazingly quick movements of a hummingbird come to mind. These entities defy normal biology, and their half-spectral origin remains unclear. Even when killed, they simply evaporate like so much heavy mist, draining away into any nearby cracks in the pavement or ground.

When first encountered, a phantasm seems most interested in simply observing from a distance, quickly fleeing with its incredible speed if those it observes attempt to move toward it. Unfortunately, once a phantasm decides upon a victim, it may attack immediately and then break off, only to stealthily shadow those it has chosen, waiting for them to split off from the main group or otherwise let their guard down. The phantasm can attack from concealment with a mad dash, covering up to 20 meters in a moment; this initial dash incurs a +1 step penalty to the victim's Awareness-intuition check to avoid surprise. This penalty is in addition to any already incurred by the phantasm's Stealth skill check.

Under special circumstances, two phantasms may merge to form a single entity. The merging process takes place over d4+2 rounds, accompanied by a dark blaze and ominous rumbles. During the merging process, the two phantasms are at their most vulnerable: any successful energy attack (bare electrical wires work) completely disrupts both creatures, killing them permanently. If the merging is successful, a greater phantasm forms that possesses all the attributes of a standard phantasm, plus a +3 bonus to all damage inflicted in attacks and heightened intangibility (d6+3 (LI), d6+2 (HI), d4 (En)). The greater phantasm also apparently possesses the ability to somehow enliven natural creatures with terrible energies (see the description of phantasmic rats). Finally, its new look includes an extra meter of height, the suggestion of ram-like horns, backswept bat-like wings, and two eyes that burn with a hellish light all their own...



Encountering Phantic Rats

Besides the keyed encounters listed under Scene 2, the heroes have the opportunity whenever they spend a night in an abandoned home or hotel, or even if camping in the street, to encounter rats that have been "enhanced" by merged phantasms. Phantic rats have been touched by the improbable, and pulse with strange energies hard to quantify, though they may originate in a tangent located beyond the Fantastic division of superspace. Rats (and other living creatures) that have been touched by a merged phantasm are somehow drawn to sentient beings, and the heroes certainly qualify.

Each night the heroes spend in this tangent, they have a 50% chance of encountering a pack of d8 phantic rats. Unless the heroes have gone to great lengths to seal themselves into a rat-proof enclosure, at some point late at night there is a scurrying and scratching from the wall (or from within a nearby room, outside the tent, etc.). Investigating

heroes are attacked by the rats, while those who don't investigate are attacked within 3 rounds.

If heroes spend a night in this tangent without encountering live rats, there is a 50% chance that they instead wake to discover the grisly bodies of phantic rats on the doorstep whose "gift" expired in a lethal manner (see below).

Phantic Rat

STR 4 (d4+2) INT 2
(Animal 7 or d4+5)
DEX 14 (d4+12) WIL 7 (d4+5)
CON 3 (d4) PER 4
(Animal 13 or d4+11)

Durability: 3/3/2/2

Action check: 15+/14/7/2

Move: 60/40/12 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Good/2

Attacks

Bite 10/5/2 d4s/d4s+2/d4w LI/O

Defenses

+1 res. modifier vs. melee attacks
+3 res. modifier vs. ranged attacks
Hide: d4-1 (LI)/d4-1 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [4]-jump [10], climb [10];
Acrobatics [14]-fall [16]; Stealth
[14]-hide [19]; Stamina [3];
Awareness [7]-intuition [10].

The phantic rat is a rodent that's come into contact with a greater phantasm. Through some little-understood arcane ability, the greater phantasm can enliven these natural creatures, bloating them with strange energies, and imbuing them with a murderous frenzy toward any living being. A rodent enlivened in this fashion gains great strength, doubles or triples in size, gains some intangible qualities to its hide, and follows the directives of its benefactor, if any. Unfortunately, the energies bequeathed to a phantic rat only last for a maximum of 72 hours. When the power fades, the rat dies a sickening, implosive death. It is entirely likely that a greater phantasm could enliven creatures besides rats with its fell energies, possibly even a human being, under the right conditions...

Scene 2: Congregationalist Chapel

The large brick chapel at 112 Galer was the church chosen by Dr. Connor to serve as his final fortress. Before paranoia took control of Connor's rational thought processes, he placed a hand painted sign out front that reads "Come In! -Dr. Kirk Connor."

Contrary to the sign, every window is boarded up tight, and no sound or light is visible from within, no matter how much noise the heroes make on the outside. More disturbing, there are over three dozen imploded bodies of rats (expired phantic rats) lying in small heaps near the main door and near some of the boarded windows. Refer to the Congregationalist Chapel Map on page 89 for the following keyed entries.

1. Entrance

A double door stands solidly closed here, blocking access into the chapel. From the outside, several crucifixes are strung to cover the entire door. The doors are locked and trapped. Connor has run electrical current through the door frame and the handle, hoping to keep out phantasms. Touching the door handle, the door frame, or the hinges provides a bridge to ground, inflicting d8+1s (En) damage. A successful Awareness-perception check with a +2 step penalty allows a hero to hear a faint crackling hum from the door. Heroes with the proper resources can attempt to short out the trap with a successful Security-devices, Technical Science-juryrig, or Demolitions-disarm skill check. A Critical Failure on the attempt to deactivate the trap incurs d8+1s (En) to the hero making the attempt.

A successful Manipulation-lock-pick check with a +1 step penalty unlocks the door once the trap has been deactivated. Of course, driving a car through the front doors is also an option for heroes unconcerned with property damage.

2. Foyer

A wide, welcoming space is that no longer—Dr. Connor's self-protection projects have left this place littered with all manner of cast-off supplies from his many trips to the local hardware and electrical stores. Wiring, cables, capacitors, transformers and other products lie together with cans of plaster, sacks of cement, and (if one of the heroes makes an Awareness-perception check) the wrappers from what look to be mining-grade shaped explosives. An electrical cord runs from a nearby socket to the front door, feeding its charge through an intricate cage of wires so that any seeking entry from outside stand the chance of taking a nasty shock (see area 1).

A large portrait on one wall reads "Vern Johnson, Minister." Yes, this is another manifestation of Vernon. Sadly, like everyone else on this tangent Earth, Vern went missing a few weeks ago.

The open coat closets on either side of the foyer are filled with light coats—the "event" must have occurred during some sort of gathering, or even a Sunday service! Heroes interested in finding keys for some of the many cars in the parking lot can do so here.

3. Nave

A beautifully designed nave complete with huge sun wells above must have provided a comfortable place for prayer back when people still lived on this world. Though the chamber remains peaceful, a few toppled pews speaks to some sort of activity in this chamber. Many purses and a few coats lying on the pews were apparently left behind in the disappearance. A hero who takes the time to check under the pews and makes a successful Investigate-search check notices several packs of explosives bundled here and there throughout the chamber (explosives are marked with an E on the map). Each contains a radio transponder, set to go off when the proper signal is given (see below).

If heroes want to take the time to disarm any of the explosives, a successful Demolitions-disarm skill check detaches an explosive from

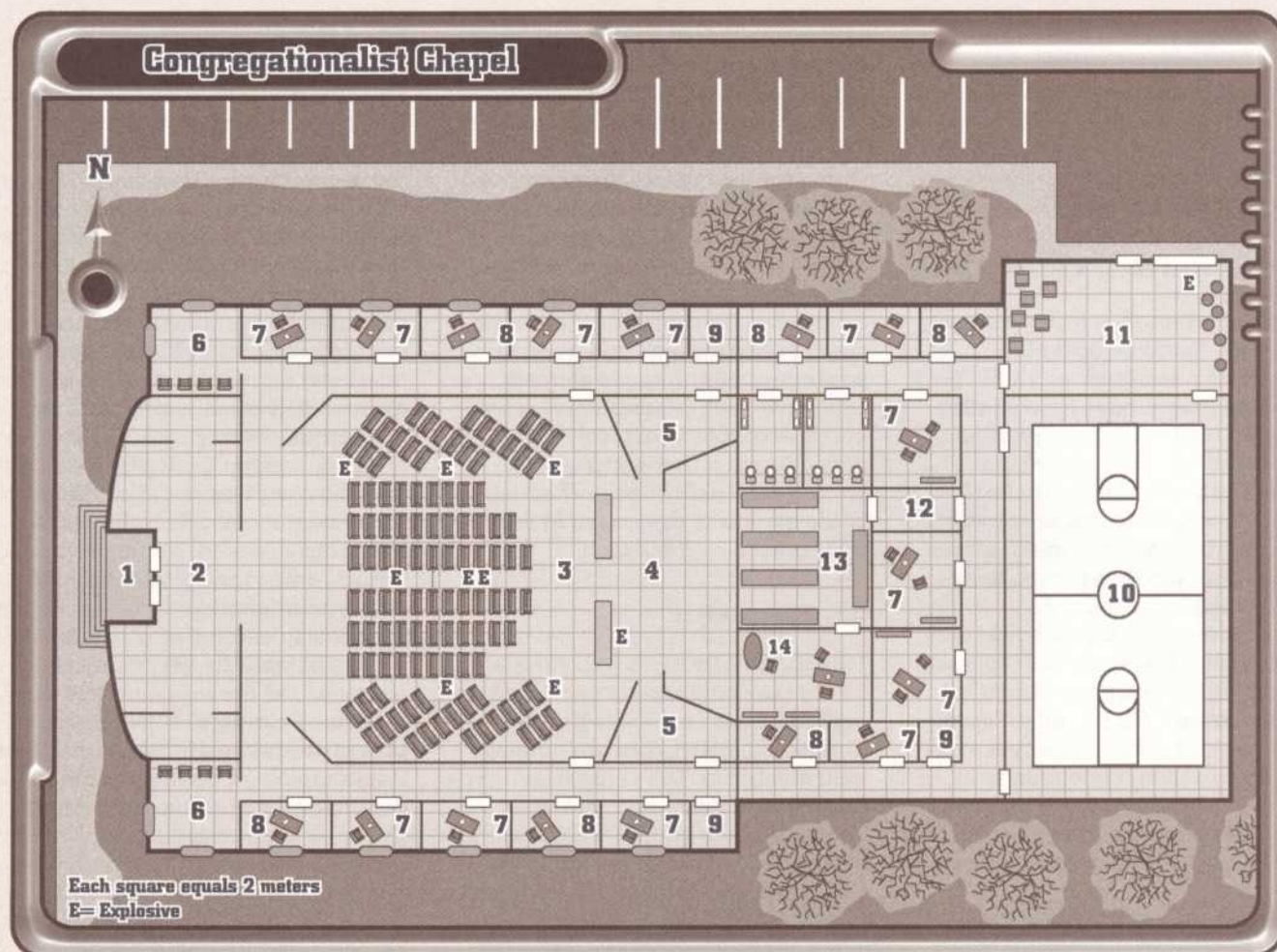
its radio connection. On a Critical Failure, the hero accidentally triggers the explosive.

The explosives are automatically triggered if any hero walks down the center aisle of the nave. Positioned half way down the aisle is an invisible laser "trip wire" (cobbled together from a laser pointer, a photocell, and a walkie talkie) set just under two adjacent pews (see dashed line on map). Heroes who are actively looking for a triggering device find it without triggering it on a successful Investigate-search check (or an Awareness-perception check with a +1 step penalty). Allow heroes unaware of the danger an Awareness-intuition check at a +3 step penalty just before they stride through the invisible laser beam.

Each shaped explosive pack (equivalent to a double charge of plastic explosive, see page 180 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* in the *Player's Handbook*) inflicts d6+1m to any hero in contact with the explosives (for instance, someone disarming it), d6+1w to heroes within 2 meters, and d8s out to 6 meters. Damage is considered to be LI/G. Note that overlapping areas of effect may increase the total damage inflicted.

4. Apse

It is really quite dark up here. In fact, heroes who make an Awareness-intuition check note that the darkness is a physical haze. The two main podiums stand like shrouded pillars in the mist; one of them contains the sermon being giving by Minister Vern Johnson when he and his congregation were snatched away. The obscuring darkness hides the immobile form of a phantasm that stands along the east wall, its silhouette blending into the life-size mural painted on the back wall that denotes many human figures standing along a painted trail. Pick a single hero to make an Awareness-intuition check (with a +2 step penalty), success notes the three-dimensional silhouette of the phantasm amidst the others. Heroes specifically looking for an ambush can attempt an Awareness-perception or Investigate-search check to note the discrepancy.



If the phantasm is discovered, it attacks. Otherwise, it waits for the heroes to turn their backs on it, after which it attacks, or shadows the heroes for a time before attacking, at your option. See phantasm statistics on page 86.

5. Sacristy

The two side chambers keyed to this entry contain the sacred vessels and vestments used during services. A long cupboard runs along the far wall of each of these chambers, in which can be found silver trays, cups, and other similar implements. A rack holds various multi-colored robes and scarves, used during services. Small benches and a table round out these preparatory chambers, neither of which have become infested with phantasms, nor have then been trapped by Dr. Connor.

6. Dayroom

These wide open chambers are carpeted and served alternatively as

conference rooms, class rooms for bible study, or any of a number of other temporary duties. Several folding chairs lie stacked along the walls of both of these chambers. Other than the fact that all the windows in both of these chambers are completely boarded up, nothing noteworthy can be found here.

7. Offices

Several offices are off the parallel corridors of the chapel. Other than desks, filing cabinets, writing utensils, and the voluminous paperwork associated with running a church that sponsors several youth groups, adult activities, and charity drives, nothing noteworthy inhabits these rooms.

8. Rats In The Walls

Allow each hero an Awareness-perception check to hear faint scrabbling noises as they pass by or consider entering the offices keyed to this entry. The scrabbling

is only noticeable for a few seconds before dying away. Inside, these offices are at first indistinguishable to the offices keyed to 7. However, heroes who take the time to carefully scan these offices before entering note that one or more of the boards blocking the window seems a bit loose.

These offices each contain $d6+3$ phantic rats. If the heroes enter unaware, they are ambushed by the pack, which floods out from the desk, closet, or other concealing piece of furniture. If the heroes open the door to the office but refrain from entering, the resident rats attempt to make a break for the door after 5 rounds. If heroes are not surprised and get a better action check result, they can slam the door before the phantic rats run into the hallway. If not, the rats escape the office and attack the heroes. See phantic rat statistics on page 87.

9. Closet

Odds and ends, extra copier paper, pens and pencils, construction paper, and other assorted office and craft supplies are located in the three chambers keyed to this entry.

10. Basketball Court

Youth activities once took place in this large chamber, basketball being the foremost. Now, it's darkened and empty, save for a scattering of lonely basketballs. Heroes who spend any time searching through this chamber note the flittering movement in the shadows high above among the metal struts, but the hazy darkness is too thick to really make anything out.

The rafters of the gym hold another phantasm, which rests here in the heights, currently happy to remain hidden. On the other hand, if the heroes bother it in any way, or spend more than a few rounds in the court after identifying its presence, the phantasm attacks! See phantasm statistics on page 86.

11. Garage & Storage

The door and garage door in this large warehouse-like space are trapped with one of Dr. Kirk Connor's home made specials. Several crucifixes are strung across the outside, creating a crude barrier that Connor hopes will deter or delay the phantasms. The physical trap is a better deterrent. Any attempt to turn the handle to the door or lift the garage doors sends an electrical pulse to the explosive pack (equivalent to a satchel charge) strapped to the inside of the garage door, causing it to detonate. The blast inflicts d4m to anyone within 2 meters, d4w out to 6 meters, and d6s out to 10 meters (the door blunts some of the damage, resulting in these lower numbers). Note that from inside the garage, the explosive packs and triggering wires are easily noted and removed with a successful Demolitions-disarm skill check (-1 step bonus). From outside, heroes must first make an Investigate-search check with a +2 step penalty to notice the trap, then make a disarm check with a +2 step penalty to remove the

explosives. A Critical Failure on the disarm check indicates that the explosives go off.

The church keeps a Ford Explorer here, plus several bikes. There is a well-equipped mechanic and electrical bench (the church saved a lot of money by doing all its own repairs) along the south wall. This bench shows obvious signs of heavy usage, and heroes who make a successful search check find a sealed package containing one shaped explosive pack (equivalent to a double dose of plastic explosive). A hero may attempt a Demolitions-scratch-built skill check to fashion a crude explosive device using the components on the bench.

12. Gauntlet

This short hallway is well-trapped by the paranoid researcher holed up in the minister's office (14) off the library (13). Both doors are pulsing with electricity. The setup is exactly the same as described for the entrance to the chapel (1) in that the west sides of both doors house the live wires and extension cords feeding to nearby sockets. From the east sides of both doors, heroes can't detect a trap unless a successful Awareness-perception check is made with a +2 step penalty. Note that heroes may be tipped off to the presence of a trap by the many crucifixes which adorn the east faces of both doors. The traps may be disarmed by the same procedure as is listed in area 1.

The sleep-deprived Dr. Connor concocted one additional trap in this chamber. A deadfall trap is rigged to drop several hundred pounds of sand bags on the heads of those walking through the short corridor. The trap is triggered by breaking the invisible beam of a laser pointer springing from one wall and striking a photo cell on the opposite wall. Any break in the light sends a quick current through a small explosive pack set in the ceiling. The resulting blast doesn't do any direct damage; however, anyone standing in the hallway when the blast goes off takes damage from the falling sand bags according to the result of an Acrobatics-dodge check: Critical Failure 2d4w, Failure d6w, Ordinary 2d4s, Good d4s, Amazing no damage.

13. Library

This library is quite extensive for a church collection, and covers a broad spectrum of subjects, including secular topics and fiction. Sadly, many books are now tumbled from the shelves to lie scattered upon the floor, and the comfortable couches and chairs are all overturned and arranged bunker-like to protect the door leading to 14. While this seems interesting, the most significant event in this room is triggered by the heroes' entry.

This chamber contains two phantasms attempting to get at Connor in the next room. So far they have been unsuccessful. Noting the heroes' entry, they play their last trick and attempt to merge (see phantasm description on page 86). This is potentially very bad news; however, the heroes could use this to their advantage. The merging process requires d4+2 rounds before it is complete. If the heroes can deliver any sort of successful energy (En) attack during this colorful and ominous event, both phantasms are permanently dissipated! Even a live wire works. Alternatively, the heroes may attempt to extract Connor quickly from the next room, and escape before the merging is complete. Unfortunately, this is not as easy as it sounds.

The sounds of hoarse shouts emanate from the next room (14) as soon as the heroes make any noise: "Go away, I know your tricks! You can't fool me!" Basically, the good doctor is loopy, and only several calm days of bed rest will repair his mind. Heroes can attempt to talk him out of the chamber peacefully (the door is locked), but this requires a complex skill check (5 successes, check once per round). Skills that might apply include Deception-bluff, Interaction-bargain, charm, or seduce, Leadership-command or inspire, or Medical Science-psychology.

If the heroes' attempt is interrupted by the phantasms, they may continue it after combat is complete. However, once the complex check has failed, almost nothing will convince Dr. Connor to come along. See the next entry for Dr. Connor's statistics.

14. Defended Redoubt

Vern Johnson's office serves as Dr. Connor's final defensible lair against the terrifying knowledge of phantasms. The door leading to this room is locked, and a current runs through it just like the doors described under **area 12**. Any attempts to unlock the door that don't have Dr. Connor's support (see previous entry for guidelines on talking the doctor down) receive the response of a shotgun blast right through the door. The bonus for proximity almost cancels out the penalty for blind shooting and cover in this specific case; Connor's shot suffers only a +1 step penalty (and has -2 to damage rolls).

This is a tricky scene. The heroes are probably trying to extract Dr. Connor safely from the chamber without hurting him. Not so for Dr. Connor; his mind is too far gone to realize that the heroes have his best interests at heart. He blazes away with the shotgun at any hero brave enough to stick his head into the room. If the heroes harm the researcher but don't do any perma-

nent damage, the extraction can still be considered a success. If they maim or kill the researcher while attempting to remove him from the filthy lair he's lived in, they can't claim an achievement point for this particular mission (see "Adventure Conclusion" on page 92). In fact, particularly vicious heroes may even forfeit additional achievement points at your option. Once the heroes have Dr. Connor (or his transponder signal), this segment of their rescue is complete.

Dr. Kirk Connor

Lucid Technologies Scientist
Level 8 Human Tech Op

STR 11 [+1] INT 14 [+2]
DEX 9 WIL 8
CON 10 PER 8
Durability: 10/10/5/5
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Move: 20/12/4 # Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Taser 10/5/2 d4+1s/d4+3s/d6+4s En/O
Shotgun 9/4/2* d4w/d6w/d4m HI/O
*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Police Vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]; Manipulation [9]-lock-pick [10]; Modern Weapons [9]-pistol [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]-land [10]; Stamina [10]; Computer Science [14]-hacking [15], programming [15]; Demolitions [14]-scratch-built [15], set explosives [15]; Knowledge [14]-deduce [15], first aid [15], language: English [17]; Physical Science [14]-chemistry [15], physics [16], superspace theory [16]; Security [14]-devices [15]; Technical Science [14]-invention [16], juryrig [17], repair [15], technical knowledge [17]; Awareness [8]-intuition [10], perception [10]; Resolve [8]-mental [10]; Interaction [8].

Gear

Police vest, taser, shotgun and ammo, electronics kit, crucifix.



Phantasms Conclusion

What are the phantasms? Again, this is hard to define. Then again, certain things remain clear. One fact that shouldn't be dismissed is that disappearance of every human being on this tangent Earth corresponds with the explosive blast at this tangent's version of Lucid's superspace facility. Furthermore, it was only after that "event" that the phantasms appeared, at least according to all the evidence. Coupled with the phantasms' strange visage and ethereal qualities, a couple of different cases could be made regarding their origin, overlooking the simplest explanation (that the phantasms are ghosts).

The first theory postulates that the phantasms are natives of superspace itself. Normally, such creatures remain much too diffuse, existing across a wide span of separate universes (see page 36 for other examples of such creatures). However, perhaps some side effect of the "event" somehow concentrated the attention of several such entities on this particular tangent. Completely alien in nature, phantasms might then be regarded sort of as "guardian spirits of superspace" who are naturally attracted to large disruptions of their environment, and so are gathered in large concentrations on this tangent. Since Dr. Connor (and the heroes) are obviously out of place, the phantasms are naturally drawn to them in an effort to force them out.

The second theory is related to the first. However, the second theory places phantasms as natives of a tangent in or perhaps beyond the Fantastic division of superspace. These entities obviously possess abilities and defenses not entirely explainable by "normal" science. Perhaps these arcane abilities include sensitivity to vast disruptions of superspace. Furthermore, perhaps the "event" opened a brief doorway between the phantasms' home tangent and this one. Eager phantasms crowded through, hoping to colonize. If this is true, it is quite likely that the creatures were dismayed to

discover that many of their abilities simply failed to function in this section of superspace, due to alternative natural laws. That's too bad for the phantasms, but a lucky break for the heroes and Dr. Connor.

Either theory still recognizes phantasms as dangerous entities. Regardless of whether the heroes remain or take their leave of this tangent, more and more phantasms begin to come through to the tangent world emptied of humanity (who knows, maybe all sentient life in this entire universe has gone away).

If the first theory about phantasm origins is true, the increasing concentration of concentrated paratemporal energy eventually (within one year) causes the dissolution of the entire tangent. Components are simply merged back into superspace as a whole and the phantasms disperse.

If the second theory is true, additional phantasms continue to emigrate from their own hellish tangent into this new one. When some threshold number of new inhabitants is reached (which will occur in about a year), the natural laws shift enough to allow the phantasms to assume their true aspects. What those aspects are doesn't bear thinking about, especially since the author can only guess; however, this second outcome is less palatable than the first. With this conclusion, the phantasms have gained a beachhead tangent, firmly rooted in the Historical division of superspace. With such a vantage point, the colonization of additional tangent Earths becomes possible...

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

Because of the segmented nature of this adventure, no climax scene immediately presents itself. If the heroes rescue all the researchers and deal with (or ignore) the fanatics and Device's counter-rescue force, the adventure can simply conclude with heroes satisfied that they've done a good job. Award each hero 1 achievement point for each researcher rescued.

You may want to award these points as the heroes conclude each Signal. Also, award 1 achievement point to each hero if the group reached satisfactory conclusions with the fanatics led by Brother Reynolds or the rescue team led by Mr. Wilcoxon. Of course, feel free to award additional achievement points if you feel the heroes distinguished themselves during the course of the adventure. Also, you should decide whether or not Lucid Technologies will allow the heroes to keep the prototype quantum tunneler. It depends on whether or not you want your campaign to continue as one where tangent-hopping plays a primary role in the ongoing story.

If you're not satisfied with an adventure without a climax, consider the following potential resolutions to wrap things up in a dramatic fashion. However, if your heroes are exceptionally hurt or beaten down, you might one to consider delaying using one of the following finales until after they've had a chance to heal and recover. Then again, it's your game.

Fanatics Finale

This conclusion is only possible if the heroes haven't already dealt with the Salvationists (see pages 53-55 for the Salvationists' statistics). Detecting transponder signals shuttling back and forth between various tangents, Brother Reynolds has decided to put an end to Satan's servants (as embodied by the heroes, at least in the mind of the fanatics) once and for all. With the heroes' final trip back to their own tangent, a second paratunnel forms. Emerging from this tunnel with guns blazing are the fanatics, with Brother Reynolds in the forefront, wild-eyed and screaming a litany of prayers and chants. The fanatics fight to the last Salvationist, confident that their ways are right.

Counter-Rescue Team Finale

This conclusion is only possible if the heroes haven't already dealt with the counter-rescue force. Basically, this encounter occurs just as the heroes bring in the last rescued researcher; right next to the paratunnel that they've just used to enter into their home tangent, a second paratunnel forms. Emerging from this tunnel with guns blazing is the counter-rescue force led by Mr. Wilcoxon (see statistics on page 55). They've been tracking the movement of the last paratransponder signal, and have decided to make an all-out attempt to acquire the final researcher before all are safely ensconced once again within the secure reach of Lucid Technologies.

Followed Through Superspace!

The heroes' many trips through superspace have brought them to the attention of creatures who have some limited ability to jump from paratunnel to paratunnel, like a brachiating primate in a forest of branches. Unfortunately, the phantasms of Signal Four have focused their attention on the heroes' comings and goings among the many tangents.

As the heroes make their final trip back to their home tangent, they may be horrified to note that there is one final form following them through the paratunnel. As it emerges last, the horror solidifies: it is a merged phantasm, sporting horns, wings, and other demonic attributes! The invading creature immediately attacks the closest hero.

Try this twist: If you want to add a little extra excitement to the mix, and if the heroes haven't already dealt with either the Salvationists or the counter-rescue team, set up the scene in the following manner. Begin the concluding conflict with either the "Fanatics Finale" or the "Counter-Rescue Team Finale" described above. However, before more than a round or two of threats and or weapons fire can be traded, a horned Merged Phantasm sticks its head out of the

heroes' lingering paratunnel, stretching and pulling the warp out of shape with its large bulk. If the heroes are fighting one group of antagonistic supporting cast members, one additional merged phantasm crawls out of the paratunnel, for a total of two. If the heroes were involved in a three-fold free-for-all, a total of three merged phantasms wriggle out of the paratunnel, one per round.

When the first merged phantasm immediately attacks the nearest fanatic or Device rescuer, the indicated group turns its attentions from the heroes to fight the monster. With a common cause suddenly apparent, the indicated group is more than willing to work with the heroes in ending the threat that could potentially overwhelm the tangent which is, after all, home to all three groups.

If the heroes prove victorious against the invading force and any of the antagonistic groups remain alive, the survivors indicate their willingness to end all hostilities. In fact, the Salvationists will even give up their prototype quantum tunneler, though Wilcoxon will need some convincing to do so (if he can, he just smiles and slips away through superspace). In any event, Wilcoxon decides to end his contract with Device, and tells the heroes that the Lucid researchers are safe, at least from him and his team.

The heroes must defeat the creature(s), or risk an infestation of their home plane with more and more of the entity's kin. If phantasms gain a foothold on the heroes' tangent, dark times loom for the inhabitants of the Baseline tangent.

SAMPLE HEROES

The heroes on the following pages have been designed for use in the *Tangents* adventure. They represent a group of individuals from varying backgrounds brought together by Lucid Technologies to track down the lost researchers. Use any or all of them as needed for your campaign.

These heroes are from a PL 5 setting (roughly modern-day Earth). If your campaign is set in another time period, you may need to adjust some of the skills and equipment. Though they have already been equipped by Lucid with the basic necessities, the players are free to request additional gear as described on page 57.

Hank Markham

Team Leader
Level 6 Human Diplomat (CS)

STR 9 INT 11 [+1]
DEX 9 [+1] WIL 10
CON 9 PER 12 [+1]
Durability: 9/9/4/4
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Move: 18/12/4 # Actions: 3
Last Resorts: 2

Perks: Reflexes [+1 DEX res. mod.]

Achievements: Action Check
Increase [applied]; Extra Action
[applied]

Attacks

9mm pistol 11/5/2 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m HI/O
Unarmed 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]; Unarmed [9]-brawl [10];
Modern Ranged [9]-pistol [11];
Vehicle Op [9]; Stamina
[9]-endurance [10]; Knowledge
[11]-computer op [12], deduce [12],
language: English [14]; Law
[11]-enforcement [12]; Tactics [11];
Administration [10]; Awareness
[10]-intuition [12], perception [11];
Investigate [10]; Resolve [10]-mental
[11]; Culture [12]-diplomacy [13];
Interaction [12]-bargain [13], charm
[13]; Leadership [12]-command [13].

Gear

Bulletproof vest, 9mm pistol &
ammo, shoulder holster, long coat,
watch, backpack, hiking boots, per-
sonal radio, bedroll, rations (1
week), flashlight, survival gear.

Background

Hank Markham, 33, is the top
hostage negotiator in the Chicago
police force. After dropping out of
the University of Chicago during his
sophomore year, he enrolled in the
police academy and has served on
the force for 11 years. His strong
powers of diplomacy, deduction,
and intuition have served him well
during a decorated career in the
force. He was tabbed as leader for
this expedition precisely because of
those skills.

John Grieve

Corporate Security Specialist
Level 6 Human Combat Spec

STR 10 INT 10
DEX 11 [+1] WIL 10
CON 10 PER 9
Durability: 10/10/5/5
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: 20/12/4 # Actions: 2
Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Danger Sense [-2 step bonus
to intuition checks]

Flaws: Old Injury [back injury; suf-
fers 2w and 1s whenever he jumps
down or falls more than 1 m]

Attacks

9mm pistol 13/6/3 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m HI/O
Unarmed 11/5/2 d6s/d6+2s/d4w LI/O

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Unarmed [10]-power
[11]; Modern Ranged [11]-pistol [13];
Stealth [11]-shadow [12], sneak [12];
Vehicle Op [11]; Stamina
[10]-endurance [11]; Knowledge
[10]-computer op [11], deduce [11],
language: English [13]; Law [10];
Security [10]-protocols [11], devices
[12]; System Operation [10];
Awareness [10]-intuition [11], per-
ception [12]; Investigate [10]-interro-
gate [11]; Resolve [10]; Interaction
[9]-intimidate [11].

Gear

Bulletproof vest, 9mm pistol &
ammo, shoulder holster, watch,
backpack, hiking boots, personal
radio, bedroll, rations (1 week),
flashlight, survival gear.

Background

John Grieve, 30, is the assistant
chief of security for Lucid
Technologies. He has worked for the
company for seven years, having
worked his way up from night
watchman. However, despite his
experience, he's never before visit-
ed the Solar Electric Propulsion
Division, where the recent troubles
occurred.

Erika Strickland

Private Investigator
Level 6 Human Free Agent

STR 8 INT 11 [+1]
DEX 12 [+1] WIL 11 [+1]
CON 10 PER 8
Durability: 10/10/5/5
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: 20/12/4 # Actions: 2
Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Observant [-1 step bonus to
perception checks]

Flaws: Claustrophobia [+1 step
penalty when in enclosed spaces]

Attacks

.44 magnum 13/6/3 d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m En/O
Unarmed* 4/2/1 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]-climb [10], jump [9];
Acrobatics [12]-dodge [13];
Manipulation [12]-lockpick [13];
Modern Ranged [12]-pistol [13];
Stealth [12]-hide [13], shadow [13],
sneak [13]; Vehicle Op [12]; Stamina
[10]; Knowledge [11]-computer op
[12], deduce [13], language: English
[14]; Security [11]; Awareness
[11]-intuition [13], perception [12];
Investigate [11]-search [13]; Street
Smart [11]; Deception [8]-bluff [10];
Interaction [8].

Gear

Bulletproof vest, .44 magnum &
ammo, shoulder holster, watch,
backpack, hiking boots, personal
radio, bedroll, rations (1 week),
flashlight, survival gear, binoculars,
parabolic microphone, lockpick set.

Background

Ever since her 12th birthday, Erika
Strickland dreamed of becoming a
private detective. Now, at 27, she is
an accomplished investigator, hav-
ing worked on a number of delicate,
high-profile cases over the past few
years. Though she prefers to talk
her way out of trouble, she carries a
.44 magnum just in case words
aren't enough.

Marcus Crowley

Field Scientist
Level 6 Human Tech Op

STR 8 INT 12 [+1]
DEX 11 [+1] WIL 12 [+1]
CON 10 PER 7

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: 18/12/4 # Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 0

Perks: Fortitude [-1 step bonus to endurance checks]

Flaws: Code of Honor [respect for natural world]

Achievements: Action Check Bonus [-1 step bonus to action checks]

Attacks

7.62mm rifle 13/6/3 d6+1w/2d4+1w/d4+1m HI/O
Unarmed* 4/2/1 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]-climb [9], jump [9];
Modern Ranged [11]-rifle [13];
Vehicle Op [11]-land [13]; Movement
[10]-swim [11], trailblazing [11];
Stamina [10]-endurance [11];
Survival [10]; Knowledge [12]-com-
puter op [13], first aid [13], language:
English [15], language: French [13];
Life Science [12]-biology [13];
Medical Science [12]-forensics [13];
Navigation [12]-surface [13]; Animal
Handling [12]; Awareness [12]-intu-
ition [13], perception [13];
Investigate [13]-track [14]; Resolve
[12]; Interaction [7].

Gear

Bulletproof vest, 7.62mm rifle &
ammo, watch, backpack, hiking
boots, personal radio, bedroll,
rations (1 week), flashlight, survival
gear, first aid kit, binoculars, climb-
ing gear.

Background

As a top field researchers for the
British Museum, 38-year-old Marcus
Crowley has seen most of the world.
Whether on an expedition to Mt.
Fuji or a safari on the Serengeti,
he's at home in any situation.

Sam Roybal

Military Engineer
Level 6 Human Tech Op

STR 8 INT 13 [+2]
DEX 12 [+1] WIL 10
CON 9 PER 8

Durability: 9/9/4/4

Action Check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: 20/12/4 # Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Concentration

Attacks

9mm pistol 13/6/3 d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m HI/O
Unarmed* 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Unarmed Attack [8];
Modern Ranged [12]-pistol [13];
Vehicle Op [11]-land [12], water [12];
Stamina [10]; Demolitions [13]-dis-
arm [14], scratch-built [14], set explo-
sives [15]; Knowledge [13]-computer
operation [14], deduce [14], lan-
guage: English [16], language:
Spanish [14]; Physical Science
[13]-chemistry [14], physics [14];
System Operation [13]-engineering
[14]; Technical Science [13]-inven-
tion [14], juryrig [15], repair [16],
technical knowledge [16];
Awareness [10]-intuition [11], per-
ception [11]; Resolve [10]-mental
[11]; Interaction [8]-seduce [9].

Rank Benefits: -1 step bonus to all
Technical Science broad and spe-
cialty skill checks.

Gear

Bulletproof vest, 9mm pistol &
ammo, belt holster, watch, back-
pack, hiking boots, personal radio,
bedroll, rations (1 week), flashlight,
survival gear, toolkit.

Background

Twenty-eight-year-old Samuel Iñez
Roybal has served in the Army
Corps of Engineers for six years,
after graduating from MIT with a
degree in mechanical engineering.
"If somebody built it," says Sam, "I
can fix it."

Dr. Gail Wolhert

Lucid Researcher
Level 6 Human Tech Op

STR 8 INT 14 [+2]
DEX 11 [+1] WIL 11 [+1]
CON 7 PER 10

Durability: 7/7/3/3

Action Check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: 18/12/4 #Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

.38 revolver 12/6/3* d4w/d4+1w/d4m HI/O
*+d4 base situation die

Defenses

Battle jumpsuit: d6-3 (LI)/d6-2 (HI)/d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Modern Weapons [11];
Vehicle Operation [11]-land [12];
Stamina [7]; Computer Science
[14]-programming [15]; Knowledge
[14]-deduce [16], language: English
[17], language: Japanese [16]; Life
Science [14]; Physical Science
[14]-chemistry [15], physics [17],
superspace theory [16]; System
Operation [14]; Technical Science
[14]-invention [18], technical knowl-
edge [16]; Awareness [11]-intuition
[13]; Investigate [11]-search [12];
Resolve [11]-mental resolve [12];
Interaction [10].

Gear

Bullet-resistant jumpsuit, .38
revolver, video recorder, sample kit,
electronics kit, laptop computer,
paratransponder.

Background

Dr. Gail Wolhert, 32, was a
researcher hired by Lucid to devel-
op practical paraverse technology.
When the attack came, she was in a
back room calibrating a prototype
quantum tunneler. Sadly, she was
too stunned to resist when the
fanatics entered the facility; they
took the prototype from her hands
and escaped.

Suggested Reading or Viewing

Almost every science fiction, fantasy, mystery, or horror story, TV series, or movie can be thought of as a "parallel world" where fantastic things not common to the real world occur. In fact, every work of fiction is potentially a "parallel universe." However, there are many stories that deal more specifically with the idea of multiple universes. Some of those are provided below, as chosen by the author as exemplary examples of the "parallel universe" genre. Reading or viewing from some subset of these works may provide countless idea seeds for tangent campaigns of your own creation.

Frankenstein Unbound by Brian Aldis
The Gods Themselves by Isaac Asimov
Eon, Eternity, and Legacy by Greg Bear
The Practice Effect by David Brin
Timescape by Gregory Benford
Twistor and Einstein's Bridge by John Cramer
The Number of the Beast by Robert Heinlein
The Incredible Umbrella and The Amorous Umbrella by Marvin Kaye
H.P. Lovecraft's Mythos stories
No Brother No Friend, At the Narrow Passage, and Vestiges of Time by Richard C. Meredith
"Elric," "Corum," and other "Eternal Champion" stories by Michael Moorcock
"All the Myriad Ways" by Larry Niven
Singers of Time by Frederic Pohl and Jack Williamson
The Coming of the Quantum Cats by Frederic Pohl
"Trips" by Robert Silverberg
Ring Around The Sun by Clifford D. Simak
The "Amber" series by Roger Zelazny

Mirror, Mirror episode of *Star Trek* (original series)
Sliders Television Series
Back to the Future II Movie

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Looking for More Tangents?

If you're looking to continue to explore parallel worlds and alternate realities, join the Alternity Mailing List. The mailing list is an online community of gamers who share ideas, alternate rules and campaign settings, and offer advice for running a science fiction campaign. No matter what flavor you like your future, you're sure to find someone else on the mailing list who shares your visions of quality science fiction genres.

To subscribe to the mailing list, send an e-mail message to **LISTSERV@ORACLE.WIZARDS.COM** with the words **SUBSCRIBE ALTERNITY-L** in the body of the message. Soon after that, you'll receive messages from other players located all over the world.

You can also find local players for your game or nearby retailers who are selling TSR products by visiting the TSR Homepage at **www.tsr.com**. Just follow the link to the TSR Player Registry or the Retail Locator from the main page.

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