

HUNT FOR

ANDRZEJ STÓJ

THE HERCULES

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GRAMEL



NEMEZIS

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Hunt for the Hercules

A ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE NEMEZIS CAMPAIGN SETTING, FOR A GROUP OF HEROIC HUMANS OR NOVICE CYBORGS.

Player characters in this scenario are assumed to be an experienced team, perhaps a bit short on cash and ready to take on expensive, risky jobs. They can be an all-cyborg squad, but a party of cyborgs and elite human specialists is also viable. They were hired by Infinity, and since they're specialists, instead of in a cold, damp hovel, they meet the corporate representative in a spacious, heated office in Serena. Mr. Ivanov, the corp's representative, is accompanied by two other people: a statuesque Ashian woman with dark narrow eyes, introduced to the PCs as Dr. Phuong Dinh, and a rugged, tanned man in an ill-fitting suit, with heavily cyborged head (modified eyes and ears), identified as Marvin Aday.

When the PCs are settled and have introduced themselves to the rest, Ivanov begins a presentation – the lights dim, and an imaging unit displays a 3-D holographic picture of a powerful cyborg – one of the largest cyborg bodies the PCs have ever seen, almost 3 meters tall. As schematics and plans are displayed next to the body, Dr. Dinh begins her explanation.

This is the Hercules-class body. A one of a kind, prototype cyborg created for the

Cor military to destroy massive Horde creatures. About as powerful as a troop of modern tanks. Probably the strongest cybernetic body within five hundred parsecs, armed with heavy weapons and proofed against the influence of the so-called "Lij daemons". We chose to reject the traditional designs from the monastic ships, and we further improved upon the synth-brain of the cyborg. It's supposed to be the peak achievement of robotics and nanotechnology, designed with personal input from our CEO. In theory.

Though we have deviated from the patterns of monastic training, I still believe that the human factor is to blame. The person we transferred into the Hercules was Ajith. Captain Ajith Skijan, a good soldier and a loyal...

Dr. Dinh pauses for a moment, and takes a deep breath. Mr. Ivanov takes over.

Dr. Dinh and the supervisors of the project decided that the most arduous elements of monastic training could be replaced by extensive VR simulation and mnemonic memories replayed into Captain Skijan's head. We wanted to

speed up the training process, since, as you know, there's a massive demonic Horde that wants to destroy us all. Sadly, the sped-up training didn't go well. To put it simply, Captain Skijan went berserk after transfer, and left the city. We want you to immobilize him and recover the body. Destruction of the body will be penalized, and we really don't want to kill one of Cor's heroes. Mr. Aday will help you track him down in the icy wastelands. As usual, we'll provide an ATV truck for you.

PCs will be paid \$20 000 in total for the delivery of disabled cyborg body of Skijan, less if they bring back parts, and much more if they manage to bring him back alive!

PCs can interrogate Dr. Dinh, who is unwilling to share any technical details on the Hercules, especially to cyborgs not affiliated with Infinity. She might warn them about its armaments and capabilities, though. She also does not want to talk about what kind of man Ajith Skijan was, though it's obvious to the non-cyborg PCs that she has some kind of emotional connection with him. The PCs aren't allowed access to the laboratory where the transfer was made, nor are they able to examine Skijan's natural body. However, as long as they're in range of the Cortex's – Ashian planetary network – they can at least try a quick web search.

A simple Cortex search using jacks isn't going to be very successful; most of the data concerning Skijan are on the military Corisian network, and even if the PCs have some kind Connections

to the army, it's still on another planet. Even chartering a private courier ship would cause a delay. However, the data on the Hercules project is still in Infinity's intranet, though obviously protected and encoded. If the PCs start thinking of breaking into the project, let them!

A Knowledge (Computers) roll at -6 will allow the PC to break into Project Hercules' data on Aday (failure by more than 3 causes the sysadmin to be notified), and search them: an Investigation -2 roll allows the hacker to discover that Skijan is a dedicated Cor veteran, who has risen from a simple drafted private to officer rank, often commended for his heroic actions. Though he has served on the Corisian frontlines, he has avoided PTSD, and remained a stable, affable person, ideal for conversion into a dedicated cyborg. A raise on Investigation will reveal that he served as a scout with Marvin Aday – and that it was Aday who recommended him for promotion to officer.

However, if a PC attempts a network investigation into the “modified monastic training” mentioned by Ivanov and Dr. Dinh, reportedly taking six months instead of five years, they'll find (also after hacking into the Infinity databases) that no one has undertaken it previously – Skijan was the first to do so. If the PC browsing the details of Skijan's training is a cyborg or has undergone monastic training himself, he should be rather skeptical whether this could work – most elements of this training need to be tailored to the individual. A raise in this Investigation roll will also reveal



the Limitations of the Hercules' brain – never act against the orders of Cor's high command, always attack Horde creatures, and avoid killing fellow soldiers, unless this conflicts with other Limitations or his mission.

A single Investigation or hacking roll takes about half an hour – it can be made while the other PCs prepare for the trip across Ash's arctic wastelands. Infinity can provide a heated truck (use the landspeeder stats on Nemezis p. 52, but it's larger and can carry cyborg PCs without major problems), but all the other expenses like buying heavy weaponry must be paid for by the heroes. Aday and Dinh will accompany the heroes – and it's worth noting that the latter is clueless about survival in the wilds. Speaking of which, remember that human characters out of the heated van will need to make Vigor checks against the cold every four hours.

In the spread-out metropolis of Serena, tracking down the cyborg will be easy. Even though Infinity and the government do whatever they can to silence the onlookers, there are still plenty of witnesses who've seen the rampaging cyborg, and plenty of butchered bodies marking the trail of blood. Police tried to stop the cyborg with little effect, and the wide streets of Serena are also littered with the wrecks of police cars. Infinity naturally has its own network of surveillance satellites, and knows that the cyborg disappeared in a snowstorm a couple of miles beyond Serena's city limits. During the time it took to recruit the PCs and prepare them for travel, the snowstorm

eventually died down and the heroes can follow the trail.

Marvin Aday is an expert tracker, and with his cybernetic senses is one of the best scouts available. Even after a massive Ashian snowstorm, he's able to find the tracks of the Hercules and tells the driver exactly where to go. The Hercules walked north, across the forest, to Socha, a small riverside resort – now, of course, frozen and abandoned.

Skijan is not completely insane – but his brain is not functioning perfectly, either. As a human, he was a decorated war hero and a dedicated man, believing he was fighting for humanity. However, Infinity's VR training and mnemonic implants ignored that aspect of his personality – Skijan's mind couldn't find a focal point for his beliefs. The incomplete training combined with his romance with Dr. Dinh to create an unstable mind. After the transfer into the synth-brain, he initially started to perceive everyone around him as Horde monsters and butchered them mercilessly, then escaped elsewhere to regain his composure. He's currently resting at Socha Beach, in the ruins of an empty hotel, used occasionally by smugglers to camp in.

The heroes can pursue him without major problems – while the road is ruined and buried under a fresh layer of snow, it is still there, free of tree stumps or bumps – which is why Skijan walked on it as well, leaving half-meter deep tracks.

The view of Socha Beach is not welcoming – the few advertising

billboards left, showing sunny river banks and tanning lotion, seem like a cruel mockery when buried in snow. Crows fight over some seeds on the frozen river banks near a pier, with ruined motorboats permanently trapped in the layer of ice. Tracks lead to the ruined hotel complex. Aday will encourage the PCs to use high explosive weapons – he knows that the ruins of smaller settlements are sometimes inhabited, but in his mind these dwellers are mostly “scum and outcasts”. Dr. Dinh on the other hand will not want to harm Ajith, and if asked, will advise the PCs to simply talk with him at first.

Skijan is currently trying to calm his mind and meditate in peace inside the empty hotel, recalling the few elements of monastic meditation techniques transferred into his brain. The hotel itself is a large structure with concrete (Toughness 8) outer walls and wooden (Toughness 4) inner walls. The Hercules is not expecting the chase – and will retaliate against any attack. He won't attack the PCs if they start up a conversation, but won't be much for verbal arguments. At this point, he doesn't see humans as Horde monsters anymore, but is afraid that he might do so again, and so he simply warns the heroes to leave him alone. He might be more inclined to admit that “something went wrong” if the PCs bear the insignia of the Cor army (or if they took Aday or Dr. Dinh to the confrontation). Eventually, afraid he will revert to a murderous rage, he'll flee again. Against humans, he will attempt to use nonlethal force, for instance trying to bury the PCs in debris instead of killing

them. Cyborgs are fair game, however. If he manages to Incapacitate at least one of the player characters or he himself receives one Wound, he'll escape over the frozen river to the west. The riverbed will collapse, and the cyborg will sink like a stone...

...but the pressure is low enough that a Hercules could walk for some time underwater, before the water starts to freeze within the circuits. The systems warn him about the possibility of freezing, but Skijan hopes to be able to dry himself out at the next stop. He'll emerge from under the ice 15 miles west and move further north, hoping to find a calm, dry place where his nanoids will fix any damage and he himself will be able to focus. He'll walk underneath the ice cover, to hide his tracks. A reasonable assumption is that he will move with the river flow, and indeed, after a couple of miles downstream PCs following that assumption will find the hole where the Hercules emerged from the riverbed. If the PCs assume that he died, one of the NPCs will remark that Hercules was relatively waterproof.

Tracks lead to the frozen forest – Skijan has learned by now not to trust roads. He'll use tree stumps, jumping from one to another to mask his trail, and melt snow with his CW laser to create a layer of ice. The PCs' truck slows down, and can move at only half of its normal speed. The temperature is ever decreasing, and human PCs leaving the truck should make another Vigor roll for thermal shock. That's not the main danger, though. When escaping, Hercules spotted a large hunting group

of gulthanks, and decided to lead the trackers to their nest, to slow down the chase. Skijan effortlessly killed some of them, but the creatures are still hunting and agitated. If the PCs are mostly cyborgs, the creatures will avoid confrontation, but still attack if the party enters their nest. There's 1 Wild Card gulthank + 1 Extra per cyborg PC and +1 Extra per 2 Heroic human PCs.

After the battle, finding the tracks of Hercules will require a Tracking roll – he used the beasts' tracks, trees, rocks and difficult terrain to lose his pursuers. Each failure means the loss of an hour, but once the tracks are found it's easy to follow them. Aday can of course contribute to this roll.

After wading into the gulthank's nest, Skijan headed north. He's seen the lights of an outcast camp, but decided against visiting them. He circled the human camp, and went east, to an abandoned hospital where he holed up.

The PCs, however, could spend the night at the small camp under an old flyover, with massive walls built of snow and ice. A small tribe of fur-wearing outcasts lives there: mostly psychopaths and murderers who escaped the metropolises and now live by hunting and looting nearby farms. They will be hostile, but if intimidated or bribed (they do wander into towns from time to time, so money is still valuable to them), they'll calm down and allow the PCs to spend the night with them. It's a good time to roleplay an Interlude for one or two characters.

After that, Aday will tell the PCs about him and Skijan. Aday idolized Skijan, but thinks that he wasted his talents by switching into a cyborg body. For Aday, Skijan is already dead, and the malfunctioning robot is all what's left of him. He thinks that rejecting human fate makes cyborgs inhuman. Dr. Dinh will admit that she felt something for Captain Skijan; but in the end they agreed simply to have "one last human romance" before he became a cyborg, they liked each other but didn't want to form a major attachment. At least, that's her side of the story. She tells them that she hopes he's sane; not just to prove that shortening the monastic training period is possible – but because Skijan is a good man. Dinh is certain that a psionic psychiatrist could hopefully at least limit Skijan's tendencies.

Most of the inhabitants of the camp haven't seen any cyborgs; but one of the trappers spotted the massive, heavy tracks of an "ice giant" some distance away, leading to the "ghostly zone" – the abandoned hospital.

If the PCs decided not to rest, and instead followed the Hercules' trail, they discover him again during the night, this time as he wades through an abandoned farm. Skijan is angered – he will not talk, will rage incoherently to the effect of "Please leave me alone so that I can die!", but will not attack humans. He isn't stupid, and the first thing he'll do once all the PCs he's seen previously face him... is to destroy their truck with his CW laser (yes, if Dr. Dinh is inside, she almost certainly dies). He'll try to escape again – treat that as a chase. If he isn't caught after 5 rounds, he reaches

the abandoned hospital grounds and while the PCs catch their breath, he climbs upstairs, hiding.

In any case, the hospital is another dismal sight – the windows are covered with thick frost, while the paint peels off the walls like some weird skin disease. However, some elements of the hospital's infrastructure are operational and can be restored – in particular the heating, the lighting and the intranet – allowing anyone with a jack to hack (Knowledge (Computers) roll, -4 penalty) into the ruined security system. A lot of cameras are inoperative, but with patience, the Hercules can be located, sitting on a massive surgical table in the middle of an operating theatre. The PCs can sneak around to cut off any route of escape for the cyborg or even prepare some traps.

The heroes can violently assault the Hercules, but they can also try to negotiate – Skijan is mostly stable at this moment. If you want to use the game mechanics, use the Social Conflict rules. Technically, the heroes should be unopposed, but they have to deal with the instability of Skijan's new brain – treat these as an opposition with effective skill d10, roleplaying them as Skijan arguing with the voices of implanted cyborgs, cybernetic Limitations and himself. Using what the PCs have learned about Skijan's past deserves a bonus.

Assuming that the PCs managed to convince Skijan to go with them, they'll be paid \$50 000 each. The Hercules body will be retrieved and entrusted to a more stable individual, undergoing a classic monastic training over five years,

while Skijan's mind will be transplanted into a heavy assault body, and let loose on Cor, to die heroically.

Opponents



Ajith Skijan – the Hercules

The Hercules is a one-of-a-kind cyborg, heavily armed. Vaguely humanoid, with two massive arms with weapons hidden inside them, including a powerful CW laser cannon and a smaller plasma handcannon for when precision is needed. The mind of Captain Ajith Skijan should make the body even more deadly – but sadly the method of implantation proved to be less than effective.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12+4

Skills: Fighting d12+2*, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Shooting d10+2*, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d8, Tracking d8, Throwing d8.

Charisma: +2 Pace: 8; Parry: 9; Toughness: 43 (30)

Gear: All of the following is built into his body: assault force field (2d10), plasma handcannon (10/20/40, 4d8 damage, RoF 1, AP 15), CW laser (50/100/200, 3d10 damage, RoF 3, AP 30, Auto, HW), 2 charged chain blades (Str+d6+4, Heavy Weapon).

Edges: Alertness*, Ambidextrous*, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Fleet-Footed, Harder to Kill*, Improved

Block, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed, Marksman, No Mercy*, Rock and Roll!, Steady Hands, Strong Willed, Two-Fisted*.

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Delusional (sometimes sees people as Horde monsters).

Special Abilities

- ④ Auto-Repair: Can make 1 natural healing roll per hour.
- ④ Cyborg Body: Doubled jumping range, can't swim, immune to poisons and diseases, ignores Fatigue rules and Wound penalties.
- ④ Enhanced Skills: Bonuses to Shooting and Fighting rolls, bonus Edges (marked with asterisk).
- ④ Incomplete Training: Does not receive a bonus to Tests of Will, must make Fear rolls normally.
- ④ Immunity: Can't be targeted directly by black magic, including Lij's influence or her daemons.
- ④ Low Light Vision: Can see in total darkness to a range of 120 feet.
- ④ Size +3: Made of alusteel, over 3 meters tall.



Marvin Aday

Marvin served as a sergeant in the Cor Army and was one of the few that managed to quit on their own terms after five years of service. With his numerous alterations, he couldn't settle down, and now he serves as a mercenary tracker on Ash. Note that as the PCs' ally he is controlled by them during combat.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6,

Intimidation d6, Notice d6+2, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d10, Swimming d6, Tracking d10+2*

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Illiterate, Mean, Outsider
Edges: - Alertness*, Combat Reflexes, Marksman*, Quick, Woodsman.

Gear: Plasma rifle (30/60/120, 3d10, RoF 1, AP 10), cold weather clothes (+2 to resist cold), standard (2d6) force field, compass.

Implants (CT 9/12): Chemical Analyzer (+2 to knowledge rolls to identify substances), pair of cybernetic eyes with light amplifier, zoom and tracking analysis mods (infravision, +2 to Tracking, Marksman and Alertness Edges), jack.

Dr Phuong Dinh

An attractive scientist who helped design the Hercules body. She's willing to travel with PCs both to control her invention and help her friend Ajith.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Cybernetics) d8+2, Knowledge (Robotics) d10+4, Repair d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Clueless (outside Infinity labs), Pacifist (Major)

Edges: Attractive, Elan, Scholar (Cybernetics, Robotics).

Gear: Small modern pistol (5/10/20, 2d6, AP1), tool kit.

Implants: Jack, Multi-Threaded Deductive System (Robotics), Stress Controller.

Gulthanks

See page 150 of Nemezis core book.
Led by one Wild Card alpha male.

Nomads

An assorted group of criminals. To survive, however, they have a certain Code of Honor – they usually don't rob travellers (especially heavily armed ones). If you mess with one member of the tribe, you mess with the entire tribe.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7(2)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Code of Honor, Loyal (to the tribe), Outsider or Wanted.

Edges: Elan.

Gear: Assorted melee weapons (St+d4), hunting rifle (30/60/120; Damage: 2d10; RoF 1, AP 2), thick leather armor (+2, +2 to resisting cold)

Special Abilities:

- ④ For the Tribe: Members of the tribe add +2 to their Gang up bonus.