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CONTAMINATION PRINCIPLE

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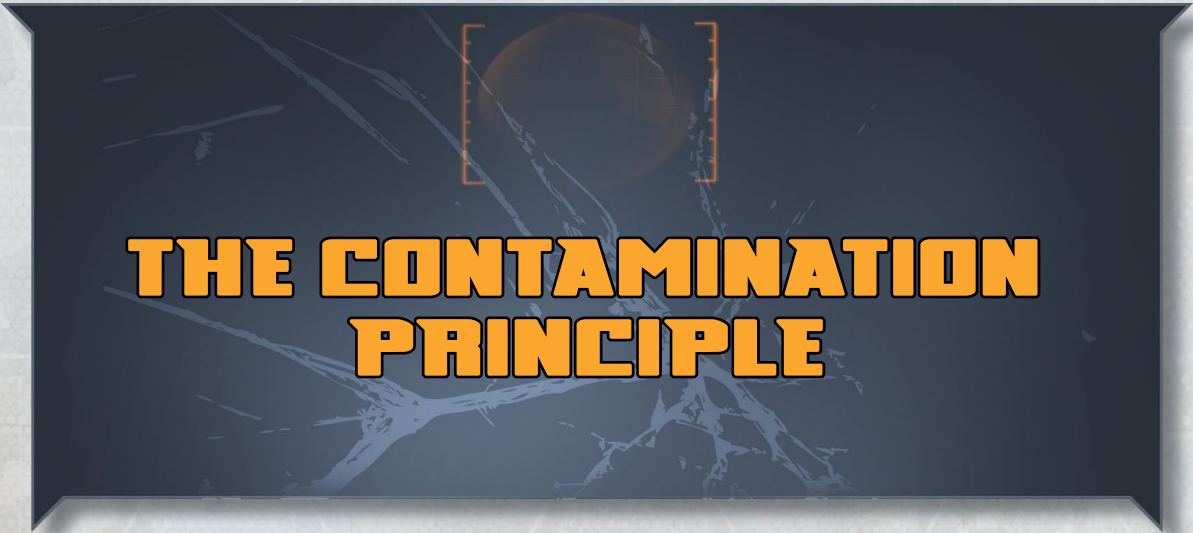
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THE CONTAMINATION PRINCIPLE

THE characters are a Special Exploratory Team for the Tomorrow Legion, currently on patrol in the Oklahoma Territory at the southwestern edge of the Legion's sphere of influence. They are wrapping up an uneventful patrol when suddenly a short range radio signal crackles over their equipment. A man's voice fades in and out through the garbled transmission: "...sighted Xiticix...Red River...before it's too late...Valiant..."

Then the broadcast ends. A Common Knowledge check reveals that Valiant is a known settlement on the legionnaires' map. It's a small human town on the Red River Trail, a minor route just north of Lone Star, and the only town on the map close enough to be the source of that weak signal. The Xiticix portion of the message is cause for great concern. It's well known that the invading alien lifeforms never stray so far south of their primary hives. If the creatures are actually in the area it could be a disaster: a new hive unconnected to the northern nexus, or a major shift in the Xiticix's expansion behavior.

Once the xenophobic insects establish a hive, they wipe out all other life within miles, and then start to spread. If Xiticix actually are in the area the legionnaires must slow or stop them from establishing themselves by any means necessary until the

full might of the Tomorrow Legion can be brought to bear on the situation. Hopefully the message is either a Coalition trick or a misidentification caused by sighting some other insectoid D-Bee...but there's only one way to know for sure.

VALIANT TOWN

The trail to Valiant is mostly dirt, with patches of broken concrete and pavement in some sections. In most places it's wide enough for heavy vehicles to travel unimpeded. Thick forest tall enough to screen the approach of vehicles or large robots lines both sides of the trail. There are no visible landmarks, but the trail remains well-worn and marked by occasional rusted signs from the old world.

ROADKILL

The legionnaires encounter a strange carcass as they close within a few miles of Valiant. At first glance it looks like a very large bear, about 18 feet tall if it reared up on its hind legs. It's in shreds. A successful Survival test reveals the creature has been dead for around two days.

Closer examination finds oddities with the body, without any check needed. On some patches of skin fur gives way to a thin chitinous shell, and its jaw includes a pair of mandibles as well as normal teeth. A Notice



test spots something else strange: the bear's right foot (once it's finally found) has no claws on it, but five toes instead.

FLOCKING HELL

When the legionnaires proceed they can see a large mass of hundreds of birds, clustered in a thick, meandering spiral pattern ahead. The swarm of birds dives down, then shoots upwards forming strange and fascinating patterns. Then the mass pivots and heads straight for the heroes.

- **Mutated Bird Swarm (2):** See page 14.

Individual bird remains, examined once the battle concludes, reveal oddities similar to the bear's. Many appear normal, but some have the same patches of chitin or insectoid wings rather than feathers. Some have mandibles as well as beaks, and most have an acid gland inside their throats. A Common Knowledge test reinforces the uncomfortable fact that these are all known Xiticix characteristics.

APPROACHING TOWN

The trees finally open up into a wide, open plain. Most of the area looks like irrigated farmland. A low concrete wall encircles much of the area. Inside the wall is a five foot deep moat of sorts, covered by a steel grate with irregular bars or pipes across the top. It's easy enough to walk or drive across, but most animals would shy away from the grate or slip and get a leg stuck in it. The most prominent feature of town visible from beyond this wall is an old laser defense tower (Range 100/200/400, Damage 4d10, AP 4, RoF 1, Mega Damage). Its housing looks intact and viable from this distance.

Characters with *detect arcana* or abilities that make them sensitive to ley lines or magical and psychic effects feel something odd about the area. There are ley lines in the distance, and even a strong nexus where they converge, but those are too far away to explain the effect happening here. There is an unusual level of ambient PPE and ISP spread throughout the valley. Not enough to tap and use, but definitely

enough to indicate something out of place. Psionics sense unsettling, barely audible whispers all around. There is no source or focus for the energy, but there is a powerful mental signature emanating from the same direction as the nexus.

No one greets the legionnaires as they cross the grate. The most prominent structures other than the laser tower are a church, a town hall, and a saloon. Nothing in town is more than one story tall, perhaps to give the tower a clear line of sight to the wall in all directions. As the heroes approach they can see a number of townsfolk gathered outside the church, apparently for a funeral.

MEET AND GREET

The funeral abruptly ends as the legionnaires reach the circle of buildings that make up Valiant's town square. A woman in a top hat and an eye patch heads into the town hall, a nervous looking man ducks into the saloon, and a single man remains in the church yard, shoveling dirt into the fresh grave. Everyone else disperses to homes or the fields surrounding town. A legless beggar perched outside the saloon during the funeral snarls out a dismissive warning to the heroes. "Get away from this place!" Most of the townsfolk are shy farmers and ranchers. More prominent citizens who the legionnaires can talk to about the situation are listed below. They all start with a Neutral Reaction towards the Tomorrow Legion, except for Silas who starts as Uncooperative.

- Silas Trent. Silas is the town's official drunk and beggar. He has tattoos that mark him as a former Coalition soldier. Both his legs are missing, and a bundle of cloth wraps around his waist like a diaper. He has little use for either the Tomorrow Legion or the Coalition at this point, and continually blusters at either to leave town. Like everyone else in town, he knows the funeral was for Glen Carver, a local rancher who was found torn to pieces along with most of his cattle. Silas remains tightlipped about Glen's particulars or who anyone else in town is without a successful Intimidation or Persuasion test.

- Buck Thompson. The owner and barkeep of the "Dirty 30" Saloon. He's a tall, friendly blond with an easy smile. He offers the heroes drinks and food when they enter. The menu offers only vegetarian food, plus a variety of local brews and some imported liquor. Buck is quick to tell the legionnaires he saw a Xiticix south of the wall, and entreats the heroes to explore that direction immediately. A Smarts test will recognize Buck's voice from the radio transmission, and if pressed he admits he sent the signal to the Tomorrow Legion from the transmitter in the town's laser defense tower. He knows the Xiticix are a threat to the region and need wiping out, and directed his message towards the Legion in hopes that they'd deal with the bugs without investigating Valiant too thoroughly. He's certain the Coalition would round up or exterminate the people of the town. He's hesitant to speak about the town's situation even to the Legion, and directs questions about that to the Mayor.
- Father Kincaid. If the heroes visit the church the man shoveling dirt into the grave is actually the town's priest, Owen Kincaid. Father Kincaid nervously answers any questions about Glen Carver, the man he is burying, but redirect questions about the town to Mayor Sawyer. He's only just started filling in the dirt for the grave, so it's relatively simple (if rude) to open the casket and see what's left of Carver's body. The wounds are almost identical to those suffered by the bear on the road.
- Dahlia Sawyer. The young Mayor of Valiant has dyed pink hair and is still wearing a black dress from the funeral. The crisp top hat she wears covers a pair of antennae, and under her eyepatch is an unblinking multifaceted Xiticix eye. She hopes to keep her mutations hidden from prying strangers. Dahlia seconds Buck's tale of spotting a Xiticix warrior to the south, and tries to coax the heroes that direction immediately. If pressed with a successful Intimidate

or Persuasion test she'll sigh, ask the legionnaires to remain calm, and remove her hat and eye patch.

DAHLIA'S STORY

About 3 months ago, after a series of storms swept through the area something changed in town. One of their cattle had grown a human ear, and everyone stopped eating them for fear of tainted meat. Whether it was too late or caused by something else, the rest of the town began showing similar symptoms. It varies who manifests what, and where, but everyone has mutations now. Everyone can psionically 'feel' one another, even the cattle and some wildlife to the south. They haven't seen the Xiticix directly, but they are dimly aware of a small hive due to this connection, and the recent proliferation of insectoid additions to their mutating flesh. She can give the heroes the general direction of the hive, and she also senses a strong mental presence towards the nexus.

The town was initially terrified by these changes, but they are growing used to it. Dahlia even acknowledges some advantages. The town intends to keep to themselves since they may as well all be D-Bees now, and being a D-Bee is dangerous so near Coalition controlled territories.

Suddenly Dahlia stops and her antennae twitch. She moves to the window, and outside the heroes can see half a dozen figures in Coalition armor surrounding Silas outside the Dirty 30. "Oh no, what's the Coalition doing here?" she says in despair, fixing her hat and eyepatch and steeling herself to greet them.

HERE COMES THE JUDGE

The Coalition team is an investigative and troubleshooting squad similar to the heroes. A pale Psi-Stalker crouches uneasily near four equally tense Dog Boys. All of them are clearly deferential to an ISS Inspector in heavy Dead Boy armor. ISS (Internal Security Specialists) are the police of the Coalition, and an Inspector is a high ranking detective. Normally an Inspector investigates crimes inside Coalition cities, but some are mobile and bring "justice" to settlements in contested regions. This

Inspector, Dolan, pulls the wrappings off of Silas's waist, exposing nasty little bug legs growing underneath.

☛ **Hektor:** see Coalition Psi-Stalker from *Savage Foes of North America*.

Hektor sports the pale skin and sharpened teeth common to most Psi-Stalkers. He's worked with Dolan for years and considers the man a friend. He also has a strong bond with the Dog Boys and reacts savagely if any harm comes to his team.

- **Coalition Dog Boy Soldiers (4):** see *Savage Foes of North America*.
- **ISS Inspector Dolan:** See page 14.

Despite Inspector Dolan's move against Silas, he isn't here to hunt D-Bees. He's following his own leads from within Lone Star, and is suspicious a renegade Lone Star scientist named Dr. Bradford is conducting an unauthorized experiment in the area. Bradford supposedly works for the Coalition, but Dolan suspects that Bradford is insane and pursuing his own agenda. Depending on how the legionnaires approach him, he and his team might even agree to work together. He knows the ley lines in the area, and checking out the nexus to the west is his next stop. His starting Reaction is Uncooperative, but a Persuasion test might convince him to share information for mutual benefit.

If convinced, he'll suggest the heroes check for the rumored hive to the south while his team looks into the nexus. He warns them that a scientist named Dr. Bradford experiments with Xiticix and means of killing them, and tells them of his suspicion that Bradford is conducting unsanctioned research near here. Technically he's here to investigate the Xiticix, but his team's senses are tipping them off to something big happening at the nexus and he wants to get there first.

If the legionnaires attack, Dolan and his team fight back as best they can. After one round the Experimental Xiticix-Killer leaps into town and attacks Dahlia. Any remaining Coalition forces use the confusion to flee from town towards the ley line nexus.

SIDEBAR: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IN VALIANT

The heroes should suspect that some factor is causing genetic characteristics of different species to remix with one another. The culprit is spores drifting from the nexus to the west. They aren't visible to the naked eye, but they are responsible for the ambient PPE and ISP in the area.

If a character eats a meal in Valiant, or drinks a non-alcoholic beverage she must make a Vigor test. If the result is 1 she begins to mutate within a day, gaining one additional step of the Psionics skill, but also suffering the Outsider Hindrance to reflect the visible mutations. This change likely won't happen during the adventure, and may be temporary depending on the choices made inside the Rift.

HUNTER KILLER

Whether Dolan and the team strike a deal or not, a deadly creature arrives in Valiant to complete the job it started on Carver. It jumps into town, landing near Mayor Sawyer. It attacks and kills her on its first action unless the heroes target it first. Once attacked the beast acknowledges the group as a threat and attacks them without mercy.

This beast is one of Dr. Bradford's prototype Xiticix-Killers, engineered with the power and desire to slay as many of the insects as possible. Whether this is a new model or an older prototype is unclear. Drawn to the area by the Xiticix scent, it savagely attacks the humans and animals that it perceives as its programmed prey. Once engaged the creature fights to the death.

- **Experimental Xiticix-Killer:** See page 15.

If the heroes defeat the creature the remaining townsfolk thank them profusely. There's little else to discover in Valiant. The



heroes' next move is either to find the Xiticix hive, or check out the nexus, and by now they should be aware of both and have a general direction for either.

Dolan's team heads towards the nexus, and the hive seems like the more immediate threat. If the team heads to the nexus skip to **Rift to Beyond**, otherwise move on to **The Hive**.

THE HIVE

The legionnaires must cross a medium sized ley line on the way south towards the hive. Those sensitive to lines can feel it nearby, and also feel a ley line storm brewing. The storm front is wide, and rolling eastward down the line. Just as it hits a group of Xiticix Warriors appears from the southeast. There is no mistake, the presence of these creatures means the entire region is under threat of doom. Their wings flutter aggressively and they leap to attack.

- **Xiticix Warriors (5):** see *Savage Foes of North America*.

The skirmish takes place on a ley line and during an active ley line storm (see Ley Line Storms, *Savage Rifts® Game Master's Handbook*). There's no random extra effect rolled for this storm—no lightning or thunder—only a kind of interdimensional effluvia detectable once the battle is over. The Xiticix Warriors suffer a -2 on all their tests from Fatigue and interference from the storm. After the battle a light coating of spores, invisible to the naked eye but carrying exactly the same as energy detected around Valiant, covers the area and the group.

A CURIOUS STRUCTURE

The storm subsides quickly, and the heroes can fix the exact direction the warriors approached from with a Survival test. After 10 minutes they emerge from the tree line into a wide, deforested section of riverbank. The Red River snakes around the wasteland. A single unusual structure dominates this open space, looking similar to a smokestack with a partial dome covering the top.

A Notice test spots a few oddities even at this distance. The structure looks more like

a building than a natural structure, with a regular conical tower base and a panel-like construction on top. There is no activity in the open space, only the sound of the wind rasping through the tower and the rushing water of the river. A Survival test suggests that a proper Xiticix hive would have multiple towers, and they would be more organic like a termite mound.

The eeriness only increases as the group approaches closer. Interspersed throughout the area are small concrete silos covered in Xiticix resin with robotic recording equipment inside. Opening the silos and using Knowledge (Computers) recovers footage of groups of Xiticix warriors turning on one another. Some of the creatures have patches of human flesh or other non-insectoid characteristics, and appear to flee the hive. Scores of the normal looking Xiticix bring them down, pulling the wounded and dead back inside.

ASCENT AND DESCENT

Prominent metal ladders allow an easy climb to the entrances about 50 feet up, another irregular feature of this hive. Glitterboys in armor and vehicles can't make the climb or fit through the entrance, but Cyborgs can. As the heroes climb they get a good look at the construction of the so-called hive: it is mostly concrete and steel reinforcement with layers of artificial resin spackled over the top.

At the top of the ladder is a wide entrance hole, and then a ladder descending back down into darkness on the other side. The tunnel down seems to be a 10 foot diameter pipe going about 70 feet downward. Quiet heroes hear soft clicking sounds from the blackness below. At the base is a tunnel network radiating out in three different directions, with knee deep mud coating the bottom of the tubes. The same cameras from outside are present inside, built into the walls.

Whichever direction the explorers choose the tunnel opens up into a larger chamber. At first it appears empty, but within moments a small horde of warriors emerges from the walls and ceiling to attack!

- **Xiticix Warriors (2 per hero):** see *Savage Foes of North America*.

After clearing the chamber the heroes hear the clicking noises within the hive grow louder and faster, but before anything else occurs a single warrior appears from one of the other corridors and waves at the heroes, beckoning them to follow it. The heroes understand without any checks this is completely unprecedented behavior from a Xiticix!

The creature leads the heroes down another tunnel and into a chamber nearly closed off by a makeshift resin barricade and guarded by a handful of warriors. They all step aside and let the party pass. A thick fungus grows on the walls here, and sensitive characters note the same ambient

energy they detected in Valiant and after the storm.

Another tunnel leads downward, and the legionnaires find themselves in a chamber twice the size of the previous ones. The mud here is deeper, and the same fungus as above covers the walls. Hollowed out resin craters bubble with some dark sludge that gives off the same energy as the fungus. Dominating the chamber is a massive Xiticix of a type the heroes have never seen.

MEET THE NEW QUEEN

The very young queen towers about 15 feet tall, which is small for a queen. Her armor is dark grey with green hued highlights, and exposed green entrails glow in her abdomen. Her chamber contains pools of Sludge, a high-protein mixture used to accelerate Xiticix growth. Just over a dozen warriors attend her. There are no young or other types of Xiticix present. One human blue eye stares back from under her head-crest. She opens her mandible-jawed mouth and raspy English emerges.

"We...I...am no longer Xiticix. I am new. I am other." This young queen has no name, such things are alien to the Xiticix, but she accepts and uses any name the heroes give her. She explains that this hive is less than a year old, and she is one of two young queens within. She doesn't remember the hive's creation, just that she hatched within it and set to work.

She and the mutants loyal to her fed on fungus and Sludge exposed to some outside contaminant, and it altered them. The other Xiticix reacted violently to their change. The unmutated Xiticix killed her young and she has only a handful of loyal warriors left. She and her forces have managed to temporarily trick the others and avoid total extinction—for now.

The ordinary queen is keeping most of her own remaining warriors close to her, defending her breeding ground until a new clutch of warriors emerges from their cocoons. If this new generation is free of contamination they will surely wipe out the rest of the mutants. The mutant queen hopes the unmutated Queen hasn't figured out the source of contamination, and some

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

Dr. Bradford built this entire complex as an experiment. He hoped to introduce a small colony of Xiticix into a controlled environment to observe their behavior, and how they dealt with some of his new killer lifeforms. Bradford rigged the entire hive with failsafe explosives designed to wipe out any queens and all their grubs if things got out of control.

Then the mutations started. Bradford had nothing to do with them. They have the same source as those affecting Valiant. The mutations fascinated Bradford. Rather than terminate the hive immediately, he let things develop. He recently lost transmissions from the hive and the ability to detonate its explosives thanks to the young queen's workers disabling his equipment at the top of the tower.

Bradford is quietly building an extermination force to eliminate the hive and recover as much footage from the robotic cameras as possible. His preparations tipped off Inspector Dolan that something was going on in the area and prompted the Inspector to find out what the rogue scientist is up to.



of the Sludge or fungus has produced more allies for her instead.

She points around her chamber where the resin and concrete have been dug up, exposing wiring and explosives. Once she realized that the entire hive was not of Xiticix manufacture she had her forces cut off the transmitter atop the dome to prevent whoever built this place from blowing it up. If the new generation of warriors aren't mutants she intends to dig an escape tunnel to the surface and send suicide troops to reconnect the transmitter and hopefully destroy her xenophobic kin in the process.

The legionnaires may attack this queen if they wish. If they do it draws all her remaining warriors to defend her. There are 12 warriors in her chamber, and three more groups of four warriors each arrive within 1d6 rounds — roll separately for each group. A successful Repair or Knowledge (Electronics) test can set off the explosives in this chamber, killing the queen, her forces, and any characters within—but the other queen's chamber takes no damage from the blast.

♣ **Very Young Queen (1):** See page 16.

■ **Xiticix Warriors (12):** See *Savage Foes of North America*.

The young queen is keen to form an alliance with the outsiders and find a new way of life for herself and her altered followers. She answers questions about the Xiticix as best she can, though many of her statements reflect her mutated consciousness or the fact that she matured artificially in laboratory conditions.

She's a powerful psychic and can sense an intelligence miles away at the ley line nexus. She can't determine its purpose, but she considers it a threat and happily points the heroes towards it while she waits to see if the next generation will be her salvation or destruction.

HARD CHOICES

The heroes may ally with the mutated queen, attack her, or even choose to betray her and immediately attempt to reconnect the detonator at the top of the hive before

WHAT DO THE XITICIX WANT?

The simple answer, and one that comes readily to the young queen is the Xiticix want to thrive. Once that's accomplished there is another compulsion that only becomes active after all available territory's conversion into hive-land. The young queen gets visibly distressed when trying to think about it and formulate words, and finally gives up. She eventually states there is something else beyond their prime instinct, but it will take her time to process it. She promises to tell the Legion as soon as she can come to grips with it; introspection is quite alien to her kind.

the next generation of warriors hatches. If they opt for the latter skip immediately to the **Cleaning Up** section. The number of opponents is the same. If the group agrees to check out the anomaly the queen's warriors escort them safely out of the hive.

RIFT TO BEYOND

It's simple enough to reach the nexus, the ley line between the hive and Valiant leads directly to it if the heroes follow it east. If they just march east they'll hit a perpendicular ley line that intersects as well. At the nexus is a stable, open Rift with another world visible on the other side.

Through the maw the group can see a multi-tiered pyramid rising up from a jagged landscape covered in a thick layer of dusty webbing. Dual suns, a red giant and smaller yellow surrounded by hazy gasses, are setting behind the temple, bathing the area in a haunting reddish light. Atop the temple is a metallic structure with rotating parts emitting occasional arcs of lightning that feed into the Rift. The outer edge of the Rift pulses, expanding and contracting slightly as the energy courses into it, making it almost appear to be breathing.

Both sides of the nexus count as being on a ley line for psionics and mages. Those sensitive to the psionic link affecting Valiant and the hive feel that same ambient energy in the air here, and strongly concentrated in the webbed landscape beyond the Rift's threshold. The machine atop the temple emits a steady and powerful psychic signal.

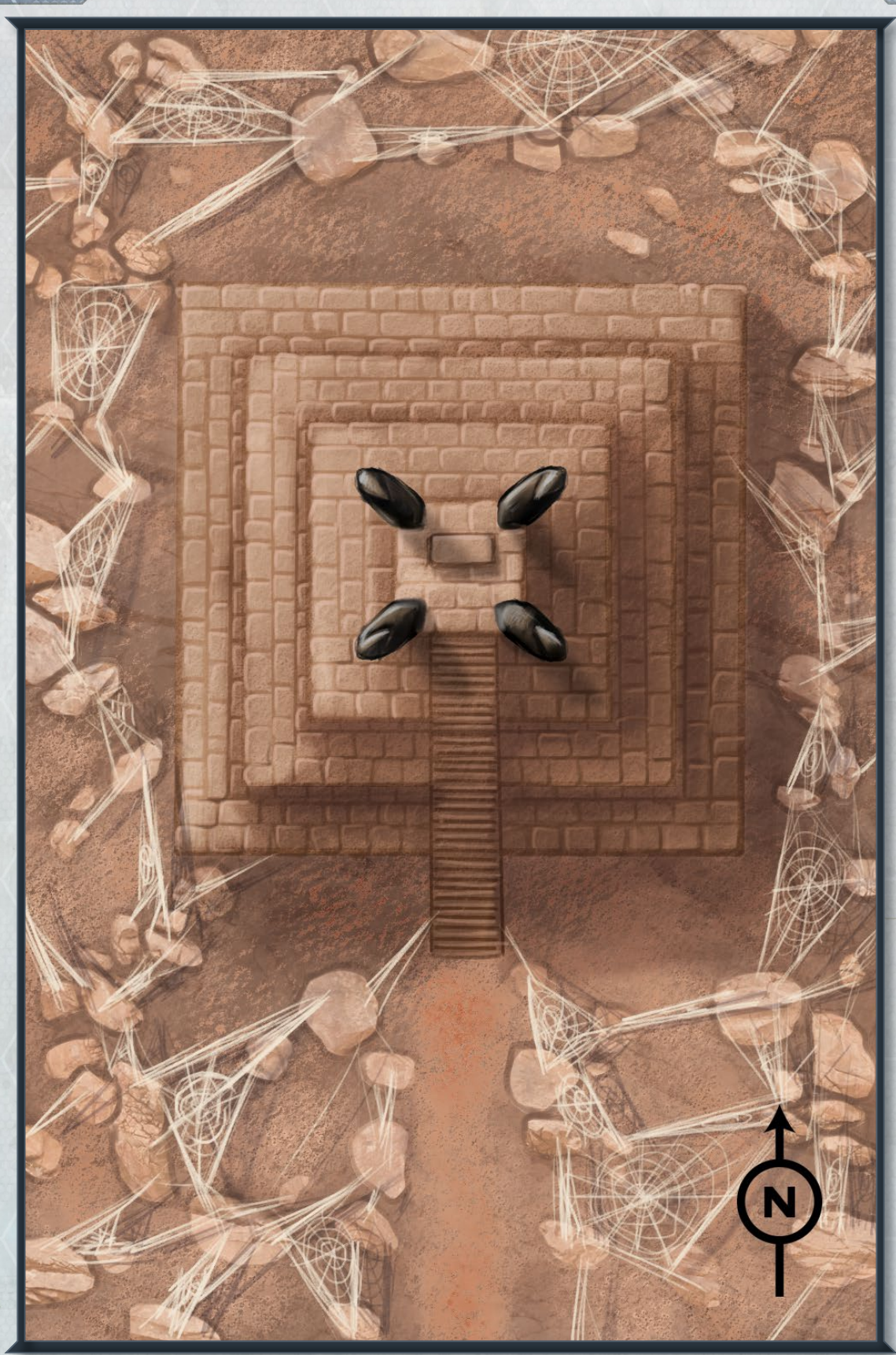
A successful Knowledge (Arcana) test reveals that this is a stable Rift, though it appears the structure on the other side is the source of that stability. A mage could collapse the Rift in the usual way, but it would likely re-open sometime later unless something stops the energy from the device. A few shots from a powerful weapon could destroy the device and seal the temple. After the first shot the Temple Guardians (see below) flood out of the Rift to stop the attackers.

If ISS Inspector Dolan and his team survived the encounter in Valiant they stand at the threshold of the Rift looking inside. Depending on how the legionnaires dealt with them they either flee inside towards the temple or agree to explore the Rift with the party. Dolan would rather find out more about the machine before trying to destroy it or collapse the Rift.

ANOTHER WORLD

If the group ventures inside the Rift the air on the other side is hot and dry. The world around them is still and lifeless, apart from a hot breeze back towards the Rift opening and occasional flashes of energy from the machine. The webbing that covers nearly everything isn't sticky, and feels almost like steel wool. Touching it sends clouds of dust into the air, thick with the contagion that is affecting Valiant and the Xiticix hive.

Psionics hear a constant low death-scream of millions of voices. This is a world of ghosts. If the explorers uncover a large enough section of webbing they find a petrified corpse. They only catch a brief glimpse of the pained expression frozen on its twisted face and a body asymmetrical, contorted, and covered in seemingly incongruous features. The body then crumbles to dust. Only barren rock and more dust is under most of the webbing.



THE TEMPLE OF CONVERGENCE

Broad stairs lead from the web covered ground to the top of the temple. It is split into five tiers, each about three yards high. The stairway is steep, and each tier has a lip about 2" wide at the top. Metallic spires emerge from the penultimate tier, and the very top of the structure is a 4" by 4" terrace with a strange looking helmet resting on an altar. Psionics can feel the power pulsing from the helmet, and sense the temple itself has a mental presence. The helmet appears to be some kind of focus.

The machine responds to psionic probing, or the heroes can make contact with it directly by putting on the helmet. The helmet itself stores psychic energy, and grants +10 ISP to its wearer. This ISP recharges normally on its own. Disjointed thoughts flood the mind of anyone who attempts to link up with the temple, but eventually the following thoughts become clear in the chaos:

This place is the Temple of Convergence, and its original purpose was to bring together the minds and bodies of several different species that inhabited this world. It accomplished its task. The machine is still active, and its influence is spreading out through the Rift, carried by wind and storms. A strong enough will can stop the process, or even send a signal to reverse it. The images also contain a warning: the temple has guardians nearby to respond with deadly force to any tampering.

GM NOTES: M.D.C. AND WILD CARD

Players walking through the adventure too easily? Swap out M.D.C. armor for the regular armor on the Temple Guardians, and don't forget you can make any foe a Wild Card. And if your players find this adventure too much of a challenge, remember foes are considered Extras unless otherwise noted — only one wound and they're out!

DEADLY DILEMMA

Before the heroes attempt to disable or destroy the machine give them a chance to decide what approach to take. Reversing the blending that's already begun is possible, and anyone who puts on the helmet or is psionically sensitive can sense it once they get close to the temple. Doing so restores the people of Valiant back to normal, but it also dooms the mutant Xiticix to return to their instinctive behaviors.

If Dolan is still alive he advocates turning off the machine without trying to reverse the process. His curiosity gets the best of him and he wonders what they might learn from the mutated Xiticix. This is a unique opportunity that could someday save billions of lives; a worthy sacrifice for a handful of humans whose lives would be more difficult—but not impossible!

The discussion could be further complicated if anyone in the group is already infected. Dolan will try to argue it out before resorting to combat. Use a Social Conflict (see *Savage Worlds*) if the characters disagree and wish to bring him around. If the characters can't convince him he'll try to use the helmet or make Hektor connect to the machine while the rest of his team hold off the heroes. If a fight breaks out the Temple Guardians awaken and attack both sides.

SWITCHING OFF

Disabling the temple is a Dramatic Task whether the heroes are trying to reverse the mutation process or simply stop it. Any psionic can make an attempt using Psionics with a -2 penalty, or no penalty at all if wearing the helmet. A non-psionic can make the attempt only when wearing the helmet, and rolls against Spirit with a -2 penalty instead. Completing the shutdown requires 5 successes within 5 rounds.

At the end of the fifth round the temple overloads and explodes dealing 4d12 Mega Damage to everyone still inside the Rift. Dealing enough damage directly to the temple has the same effect. It is Toughness 22(10) Mega Damage, and has 3 wounds. Shortly after the heroes disable or destroy the temple the Rift destabilizes and closes for good.

Tampering with the temple machinery or attacking it rouses its guardians. The webbing around the temple hides them, but they burst free as soon as the action starts.

- **Temple Guardians (1 per hero):**
See page 15

CLEANING UP

If the legionnaires haven't already dealt with the Xiticix hive, they need to now. They can try to clear the hive room by room—a daunting prospect which leads to every creature in the hive (except the queens) swarming them from all directions in the first large chamber. More realistically, the group can try to hack into the disabled equipment at the top of the hive and set off the self-destruct mechanisms Dr. Bradford built into the artificial structure. If they went straight to the nexus and reversed convergence they're in for a tough time since they won't even know about the self-destruct mechanism unless they get inside and then spot the strange activity on the ceiling with a Notice test.

The exact circumstances of this last battle depend on the decisions made up until now:

- If ISS Inspector Dolan and his crew are still alive, they now assist the heroes without hesitation. Distribute them as followers for the final confrontation.
- If the heroes reversed the convergence process the Xiticix reunified and prepared for the attack. Half the mutant queen's remaining warriors now bolster the forces on watch at the top of the hive, and an extra warrior arrives each round during the battle.
- If convergence wasn't reversed the mutant queen and her paltry remaining forces emerge from the hive and repulse an attack just as the group arrives on scene. Only a small portion of the hatching warriors were mutants. The non-mutant Xiticix slew them almost immediately. She's wounded and has only eight warriors left. She lends each character one warrior as a follower for the upcoming battle, and keeps any remainder for herself as she flees towards Valiant.



Setting the detonation sequence is another Dramatic Task, requiring five successes against Repair or Knowledge (Computers). There is no round limit on this task, but the hive is buzzing with activity, and the more time it takes the more likely the group is eventually overwhelmed by swarming Xiticix. When the intruders first reach the equipment at the top only six warriors are present. At the start of each subsequent round additional warriors equal to the number of heroes arrive, and on the second round the hive's sole Super Warrior bursts onto the scene.

Success on the task sets the explosives with a short timer so the legionnaires and their allies may escape before the hive is completely obliterated. Failure with Clubs for initiative detonates the explosives immediately dealing 5d12 to everyone present.

- **Xiticix Warriors (50 total if convergence was reversed, 30 total if not):** see *Savage Foes of North America*. Usually the warriors spread out and arrive in groups equal to the number of

heroes. If a queen is directly threatened all available warriors move to defend her as quickly as possible.

- **Very Young Queens (1 or 2):** See page 16.
- **Xitixix Super Warrior (1):** See page 16.

The survivors return to a hero's welcome at Valiant. The townsfolk accept the situation whether they remain mutants or not. If the young queen lives she promises to defend the community and help it thrive. If Dolan or his crew still live they don't intend to report the situation in Valiant, but they do intend to continue investigating Dr. Bradford's role in creating the dangerous situation with the hive in the first place.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Several options are open if the group wishes to continue exploring the Red River zone:

- Dr. Bradford and his Lone Star scientists are still running questionable experiments. They might unleash an uncontrollable Xitixix-Killer that poses a threat to the whole region, or send covert operatives to find out what happened to the hive and bring back "samples" from Valiant. If Dolan survived he quickly learns too much and needs help from people he can trust.
- Regular Coalition forces begin arriving in the area. They know Dr. Bradford was up to something here, and want to keep the situation under control. If mutants remain in Valiant these troops represent a dire threat to the town's safety.
- The old-world ruins northeast of the nexus were a military base. There may be valuable salvage there. It's also possible something escaped from the Rift and now lurks there, gathering strength.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ISS INSPECTOR DOLAN

Dolan has an obsession with uncovering the truth, including ugly truths within the Coalition. He doesn't speak like it, but he's secretly sympathetic to D-Bees who don't pose a direct threat to humanity. His frightening armor and brusque manners make his motives difficult to discern. He has a habit of jotting down things people say on an electric pad.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Investigation d10, Notice d10, Shooting d10, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (6)

Hindrances: Curious, Vengeful (Minor), Vow (Minor — Serve the Coalition)

Edges: Alertness, Command, Hard to Kill, Investigator, Level Headed, Marksman, Strong Willed

Gear: CA-1 Heavy Body Armor (+6 Armor, +2 Toughness, Full Environmental), C-14 "Fire Breather" Laser Rifle (Range 30/60/120, Damage 3d6, RoF 1, AP 2), C-18 Laser Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 2), Vibro-Knife (Str+d6, AP 4, Mega Damage), Two Frag Grenades (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, LBT, Mega Damage), 4 extra clips each firearm.

MUTATED BIRD SWARM

A thick, aggressive flock composed of many different species. Something is clearly amiss with the maddened throng, but it's difficult to tell what in the frenzy of flapping wings. The birds operate as two swarms, each the size of a Large Burst Template.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Alertness, Danger Sense

Special Abilities:

- **Acid Bite:** The birds peck, scratch, and vomit acid on everyone within the

template, automatically dealing 2d4, AP 6, Mega Damage to the victim's least armored location.

- **Flight:** The swarm has a Flying Pace of 10", and Climb 0.
- **Psychic Connection:** Each swarm template has a strong gestalt mind. Psionic attacks disrupt this bond and count as area effect attacks.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; because each swarm is hundreds of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area effect weapons work normally, and a character can swat or smash to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

TEMPLE GUARDIAN

The Guardians of the Temple of Convergence are hunchbacked robots made of the same black metal as the machinery that sprouts from the upper level of the temple. Sickly yellow light projects from three openings in their chest, perhaps eyes. The same light swirls around their massive, gauntleted fists. These creatures have minds swirling with madness and long forgotten purpose, more like psychic gestalts than programmed robots.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 17 (6)

Edges: Block, Improved Dodge, Mighty Blow, Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Armored Shell:** Temple Guardians have thick plating providing Armor +6.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots deal no extra damage; does not suffer from disease or poison.
- **Fearless:** Temple Guardians are immune to fear and Intimidation.
- **Helix-beams:** The three 'eyes' on the Temple Guardian's chest emit energy that spiral together into a single powerful beam (Range 50/100/200, Damage 3d8, AP 3, Mega Damage).
- **Jump Jets:** Temple Guardians may use an action to jump 12+1d10" in place of Running. Opponents do not get a free

attack against a Guardian disengaging in this way.

- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to attack rolls to hit the creature due to its large size.
- **Power Punch:** Temple Guardians' energized gauntlets deal Str+d6 Mega Damage.
- **Size +4:** Temple Guardians stand 15' tall and weigh over a ton.

XITICIX

EXPERIMENTAL XITICIX-KILLER

This beast has thick tentacles for arms, each with a nasty hook on the end. Its mouth looks like two buzz saws with a proboscis between them. It's a powerful jumper, and prefers to pounce on its prey, grab them with its tentacles, and then drive its head into the victim, tearing it apart. Its body bristles with hardened spines.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 17 (4)

Edges: Alertness, Improved Extraction, Improved First Strike, Improved Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Armored Hide:** The creature is engineered with a thick, plated hide providing Armor +4.
- **Buzzsaw Proboscis:** The Xiticix-Killer uses its engineered bite (Damage Str+1d6, AP 8, Mega Damage) on a creature it has grabbed at the beginning of its turn.
- **Fear:** The creature's monstrous form causes Fear checks when first encountered.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to attack rolls to hit the creature due to its large size.
- **Jumping Legs:** The creature may use an action to jump 1d10+4" in place of Running.
- **Tentacle Hooks:** This Experimental Xiticix-Killer strikes with natural weapons dealing Strength+d8 damage. If it hits with a raise the target is also Grappled.
- **Shooting Spines:** When surrounded the Xiticix-Killer may launch its spines,

attacking all targets in a Large Burst Template centered on itself. Each target may roll an Agility test to avoid being hit. Those hit by the spines suffer 2d8 damage.

- **Size +4:** This specimen stands 15' tall and weighs over a ton.
- **Slow Regeneration:** The Xiticix-Killer gains a natural Healing roll once per day.

XITICIX SUPER WARRIOR

The Super Warrior is the queen's personal guardian, and acts as a front-line leader for warriors in times of crisis. It is easily marked from other warriors by its greater height (usually around 12 feet tall), thicker resin armor, and its six arms. Super Warriors are a whirlwind of destruction in combat. Warriors fight out of instinct; Super Warriors seem to enjoy it.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Tracking d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 19 (8)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Command, Danger Sense, Fervor, Improved Block, Improved First Strike, Improved Frenzy, Steady Hands, Two-Fisted

Gear: Four Xiticix Long Swords (Str+d8, AP 1, Mega Damage), Two Resin Spike Guns (Range 20/40/80, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 3, AP 3).

Special Abilities:

- **Acid Spit:** Most Xiticix can spit a glob of acid capable of eating through heavy armor. They use their Shooting skill, and the acid has a range of 3/6/12 and Damage 2d4, AP 6, Mega Damage. The acid continues to damage whatever it hits for 1d6 rounds, unless it's removed by some means (salt water is an effective neutralizer).
- **Antennae:** Xiticix can operate by motion sense and sound, thanks to their highly developed antennae. They suffer no lighting penalties for attacks or actions, even in Pitch Darkness. White noise or an extreme sonic effect introduced into the area negates this ability.
- **Death Scent:** When a Xiticix dies violently, it releases a distinctive

scent, barely noticeable to anyone who doesn't possess extraordinary scent abilities (such as a Dog Boy). This scent can reach other Xiticix within four miles!

- **Exoskeleton:** Super Warriors have +8 Armor.
- **Extraordinary Senses:** Xiticix Super Warriors gain a +2 to all Notice and Tracking rolls.
- **Fear:** Super Warriors cause Fear checks when they first arrive on the scene.
- **Low Light Vision:** Even when the antennae are somehow neutralized, Xiticix eyes see into the ultraviolet and infrared ranges, allowing the creature to ignore Dim and Dark lighting penalties.
- **Poison Bite:** Super Warriors can bite for Str+d4, AP 2 damage, and if the target is at least Shaken, he must make a Vigor check against Venomous poison (see Poison in *Savage Worlds*).
- **Six Arms:** Super Warriors can use all six of their arms in combat with no multi-action penalty.
- **Size +3:** A Xiticix Super Warrior stands nearly 12' tall.
- **Slow Regeneration:** Xiticix make a natural healing roll once per day, which can bring back lost wings, limbs, and antennae.
- **Trail Scent:** Xiticix tend to leave a mild scent trail that is easily followed by others of their kind.
- **Ultrasonic Communication:** Xiticix can communicate with each other at frequencies most beings cannot detect without special technology or unique abilities.
- **Wings:** Xiticix can fly at a pace of 12 with a d10 Run die.

☠ XITICIX, VERY YOUNG QUEEN

Neither of the queens in this hive intentionally joins a battle, but their statistics are provided in case the legionnaires confront them. These specimens aren't fully mature, though they share most of the characteristics of a proper young queen.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Psionics d12, Survival d4, Tracking d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 20 (8)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Arcane Background (Psionics), Command, Danger Sense, Fervor, Improved Block, Improved First Strike, Improved Level Headed, Hold the Line, Mentalist, Tactician

Powers (Psionics): *armor, psychic shield, telepathy*. **PPE:** 25

Master Psionic Powers: *superior telekinesis*

Special Abilities:

- **Acid Spit:** Most Xiticix can spit a glob of acid capable of eating through heavy armor. They use their Shooting skill, and the acid has a Range of 3/6/12 and Damage 2d4, AP 6, Mega Damage. The acid continues to damage whatever it hits for 1d6 rounds, unless it's removed by some means (salt water is an effective neutralizer).
- **Antennae:** Xiticix can operate by motion sense and sound, thanks to their highly developed antennae. They suffer no lighting penalties for attacks or actions, even in Pitch Darkness. White noise or an extreme sonic effect introduced into the area negates this ability.
- **Death Scent:** When a Xiticix dies violently, it releases a distinctive scent, barely noticeable to anyone who doesn't possess extraordinary scent abilities (such as a Dog Boy). This scent can reach other Xiticix within four miles!
- **Exoskeleton:** Young Queens have layers of resin that add +8 Armor.
- **Extraordinary Senses:** Xiticix Queens gain a +2 to all Notice and Tracking rolls.
- **Fear:** A Xiticix Queen is an imposing creature that causes Fear checks when she is first seen.
- **Four Arms:** Xiticix Queens can use all four of their arms in combat with no multi-action penalty.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to attack rolls to hit a Queen due to her large size.
- **Low Light Vision:** Even when the antennae are somehow neutralized, Xiticix eyes see into the ultraviolet and infrared ranges, allowing the creature to ignore Dim and Dark penalties.

- **Poison Bite:** Xiticix Queens can bite for Str+d4, AP 2 damage, and if the target is at least Shaken, he must make a Vigor check against Venomous poison (the Poison Effects Table, *Savage Worlds*).

- **Psychic Blades:** Each of the Queen's arms may strike with blade of psychic force (Str + Spi damage, AP 6, Mega Damage). This ability is similar to the Psi-Blade power, but the young queen may use it without spending ISP.

- **Size +4:** A very young Xiticix Queen stands nearly 15' tall.

- **Slow Regeneration:** Xiticix make a natural healing roll once per day, and this can bring back lost limbs and antennae.

- **Trail Scent:** Xiticix tend to leave a mild scent trail that is easily followed by others of their kind.

- **Ultrasonic Communication:** Xiticix can communicate with each other at frequencies most beings cannot detect without special technology or unique abilities.

