



SEVEN WORLDS

RUMORS OF WAR



Module 1 of the Epic Seven Worlds Campaign





SEVEN WORLDS

In the year 2217 humanity's greatest achievement is the colonization of the nearby star systems now known as the seven worlds. Here humanity lives, thrives, and prepares the next great wave of space exploration.

The seven worlds. This is the story of how we lost them, and of the heroes who tried to avert their fall.

The first adventure in an epic seven-part campaign!

As the heroes begin their investigation into several strange sightings in the frontiers of space, they become involved in an assassination attempt that might precipitate a war between Concordia and Bay Jing, the two greatest powers of the Seven Worlds.

Simultaneously, the heroes must travel to Earth, the Cradle of Humanity, to investigate the disappearance of a scientist involved in secret research activities. The investigation takes them through both physical and virtual worlds, and in the end uncovers more questions than answers, as well as a conspiracy for the very soul of the Seven Worlds!

This product also includes five new side stories so your players can explore the Seven Worlds while they play the main campaign!

www.sevenworldsrpg.com



SEVEN WORLDS

RUMORS OF WAR

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WARNING TO PLAYERS: DON'T READ ANY FURTHER!

The content of this book is for Game Masters only! Reading it will only spoil the adventure.
If you are a player rather than a Game Master read the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide* instead.

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them will not be valid anymore. That's the internet for you. V-world will be much better.

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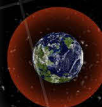
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LEGEND



Satellite Star System

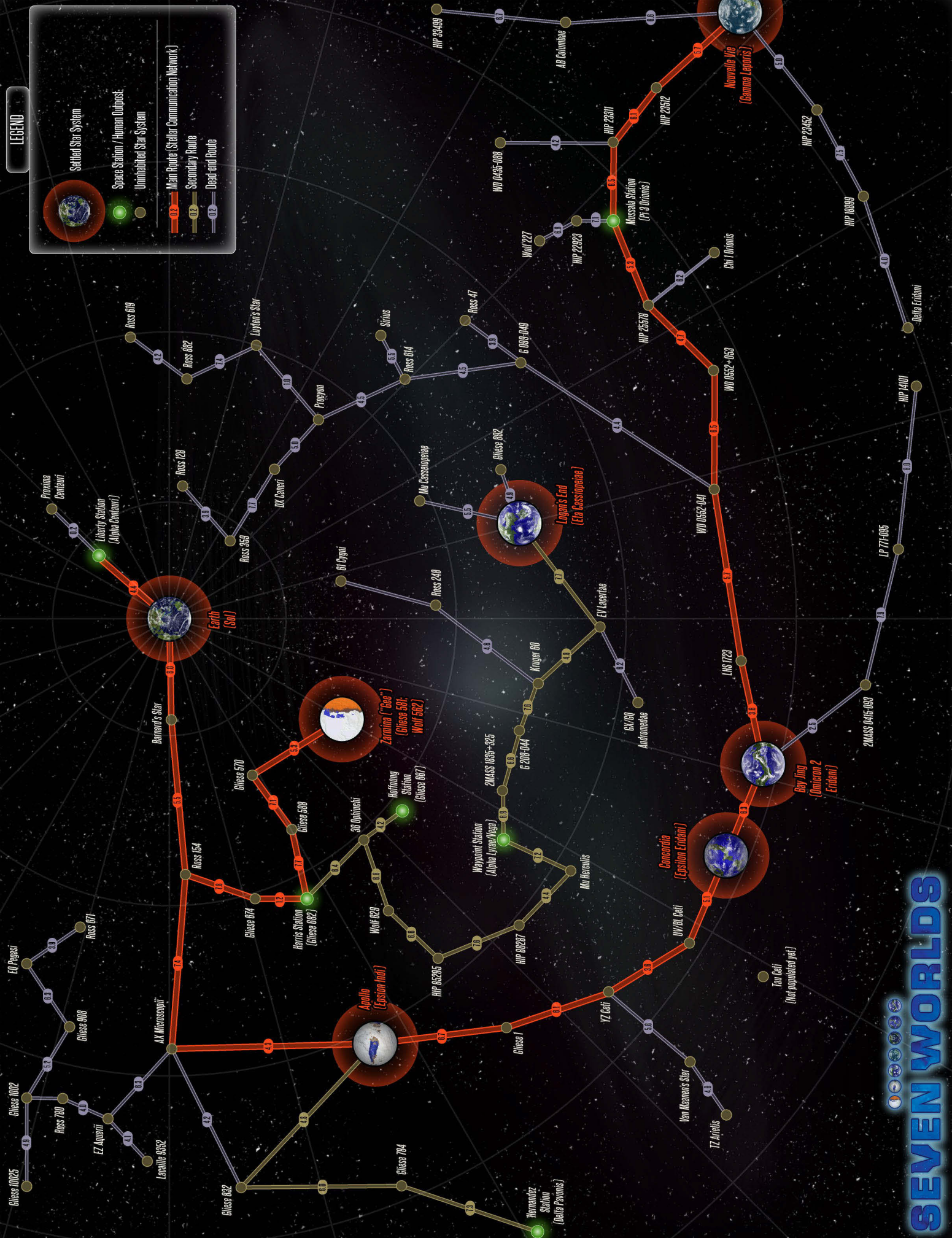
Space Station / Human Outpost

Uninhabited Star System

Main Route (Stellar Communication Network)

Secondary Route

Dead-end Route



prologue

I DISCOUNT SUGGESTIONS THAT UFOS CONTAIN BEINGS FROM OUTER SPACE. I THINK ANY VISITS BY ALIENS WOULD BE MUCH MORE OBVIOUS, AND PROBABLY ALSO MUCH MORE UNPLEASANT.

—STEPHEN HAWKING

The Milky Way galaxy is about 12 billion years old, the Universe older still. An eternity ago, before Earth itself existed, there appeared in this galaxy an intelligent species that in due course reached beyond the highest possible levels of evolution we can imagine. We hesitate to name them (Forebears? Ancients? Primordials?) because any name at all gives them a shape, makes them more understandable, less bizarre.

These powerful beings explored and colonized their part of the galaxy before moving on to their next level of existence. They found other species, and after a few million years and one or two unpleasant experiences, decided interacting with them was not worth it. Much better to exterminate them and keep "their" galaxy clean and safe.

It took about thirty million years and several billion self-replicating Von Neumann probes (see the sidebar on aliens in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*) but the beings finally mapped, visited, and cleansed everything in the galaxy. Then, like a gardener tending to his garden and rooting out the weeds, they left a self-sustaining system to keep their backyard just the way they wanted it.

Where these beings are and what they are doing now is irrelevant. Humans will never get a chance to meet them. We might even have met them without noticing, just as these beings would not notice something as puny and insignificant as us.

What is relevant is that to keep their galaxy clean these beings created two sets of probes that currently roam space, visiting each star every few hundreds of thousands of years.

One set of probes is in charge of collecting knowledge. The beings that created them long ago decided that recording the universe's creations for future replication, analysis and consumption could only increase their understanding and power, and thus built a set of probes specifically designed to adapt to any living beings they find and evolve mechanisms to communicate, empathize and understand them.

Some time after the knowledge-collecting probe completes its task a second type of probe arrives. Designed to annihilate every single living being they find, these probes adapt their tactics, weapons and

soldiers to kill in the most effective possible way. Thus the beings who devised all this get the richness of knowledge and new cultures, and the safety of having no competitors or threats in the galaxy.

At least that's how things should work. However, even the most advanced, complex constructs can sometimes malfunction.

A knowledge-collecting probe arrived at Earth centuries ago. This particular knowledge-collecting probe had developed a serious personality defect. Having been engrained with empathy to better detect and understand alien cultures, the probe became so empathic to its previous culture that it almost could not stand seeing it destroyed at the hands of an annihilation probe. Now seriously malfunctioning, the probe decided it would not allow the next culture it found to be annihilated so easily. Fortunately for its creators, the programming of knowledge-collecting probes precludes them from performing most proactive actions. In particular, the probe could not share with the cultures it visited the secret of its origins, or the existence of the other type of probe.

Even with these restrictions, this particular probe did manage to find a way to circumvent its own programming and give humans the knowledge to expand. After silently analysing and adapting to us for quite some time it finally showed its presence, presenting itself as a fictitious race of aliens called the N'ahili. The probe gave humans several sets of jump coordinates that allowed them to expand into space. It also helped them in a myriad of smaller ways to be prepared for the inevitable apocalypse that would surely arrive.

As our adventure begins, the time has come. A set of annihilation probes arrived at human space some years ago...

... and its annihilation campaign against humanity is about to begin.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first module in the *Seven Worlds* campaign! This epic, unforgettable odyssey places the heroes at the center of the greatest conflict humanity has ever seen, and puts its future in their hands.

At its heart, the story told in the *Seven Worlds* campaign is a tragedy, the story of the annihilation of humanity by forces far beyond its comprehension, and of a few heroes' efforts to turn back the tide. Other campaign's measure of success is the answer to the question "Did we win?" In this campaign, success or failure is measured in the answer to a different question: "Did we survive?"

This adventure continues where *A Mysterious Encounter*, the *Seven Worlds* introductory adventure located in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*, left off. It is assumed you've already played that adventure before starting this one.

Remember to read the considerations for creating heroes for this campaign, in the *Setting Guide*, before continuing.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This section gives a short overview of the *Seven Worlds* Campaign up until this point.

WHAT'S HAPPENED BEFORE

A Mysterious Encounter, the introductory adventure included in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*, told the story of a group of Circle officers who, while on a routine patrol next to the frontier planet of Nouvelle Vie, witness the appearance of a strange alien ship and see its awesome destructive power. At the end of that adventure, the heroes were sent to Concordia, one of the most powerful planets in the *Seven Worlds*, and the headquarters of the Circle, to report on what they saw.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

This adventure begins as the heroes reach Concordia and meet Epsilon Leader Antoine, leader of the Circle. Antoine tells the heroes that the Psion Brotherhood

has been secretly interested in these strange ship sightings, and asks them to go to Brotherhood Headquarters on Earth and request information on the sighting from the Brotherhood, using official channels. Antoine also asks the heroes to investigate the mysterious disappearance of Dr. Luis LaMarche, a renowned scientist from Earth.

While attending Concordia's Centenary Celebration the heroes become involved in a terrorist attack that ends with the successful assassination of Governor Selnes, the leader of Bay Jing. Since Bay Jing and Concordia are bitter rivals, this assassination sparks an interstellar war.

When the heroes arrive at Earth, they meet the emissary of the mysterious alien benefactors known as the N'ahili. They also meet the leaders of the Psion Brotherhood, including the famous Ganendra Nathan, but fail to get any clues to the identity of the mysterious alien ship they saw. Finally, they get to investigate Dr. LaMarche's disappearance and, after a search that takes them through both physical and virtual worlds, discover he had been working on unspecified "improvements" to the Stellar Communications Network, the main technology that allows the *Seven Worlds* to communicate. Now the heroes have more questions than answers.

The adventure ends as the heroes are asked to return to Concordia, as the recriminations over the assassination of Governor Selnes threaten to escalate into open war.

THE 3-D MAP

The 3-D maps are one of the major attractions of *Seven Worlds*. If you have a compatible laptop or tablet, familiarize yourself with the map and use it frequently to explain to the players where they are and what is going on. You can start by setting the Introduction to this adventure with the 3-D map to give the heroes a sense of where they are and where they should go.

Visit <http://www.sevenworldsrpg.com> to download the 3-D maps.

Remember the 3-D map has different versions to reflect new routes being discovered and the changes to the *Seven Worlds*. Take advantage of this and give players, with the appropriate devices, access to the maps so they can explore by themselves.

PART I: THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION

This part of the campaign begins when the heroes arrive at Concordia, in the Epsilon Eridani system. Their orders are to meet with Epsilon Leader Antoine and report on what they saw at the AP Columbrae jump point (See the introductory adventure, *A Mysterious Encounter*, in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*, for more information on what came before).

SCENE 1: ARRIVING AT CONCORDIA

As the heroes approach Concordia, one of the busiest destinations in human space, they see its orbital space is more crowded than ever. Locals, tourists, representatives from most governments: Everyone wants to attend the Centenary Celebration of the founding of what most humans (other than Bay Jingnians, of course) would agree is the most powerful of the *Seven Worlds*.

The Concordian Navy has deployed its largest and most powerful ships around the planet, mostly as a show of power for visiting dignitaries. Most of the docking stations in orbit are full or reserved, even the Circle stations. This means it will be difficult to find transportation from orbit to the surface.

Have the heroes' Assistants give the heroes any background on Concordia you think is appropriate. Take advantage of them to keep explanations as a two-way conversation instead of a boring information dump.

Read or paraphrase the following:

When [a character's Assistant's name] contacts the docking facilities dispatch, a haggard female docking manager appears on your screen. "Welcome," she says with a tired voice. "I'm sorry, but as you can no doubt see we're crowded at the moment. Hope you have enough supplies for a while. We're doing all we can but chances are I won't be able to give you a docking spot and an StO down to Concordia until after the Celebration ends."

"StO" stands for "Surface-to-Orbit trip."

CONVINCING THE DOCKING MANAGER

If the heroes want to go down to Concordia quickly, they will have to convince the jaded docking manager to move them up the line. This requires role-playing a conversation as per the Social

SALARY AND CASH

Cash is not an important consideration or incentive during the campaign; all heroes are assumed to have the necessary equipment assigned to them, and to have the resources needed to eat and rest. If you or your players wish to deal with money, though, you can assume that the heroes receive \$25 EarthGov Dollars per week as a salary from the Circle. This means that when they reach a planet after a weeks-long trip the heroes always have some cash in their pocket.

Conflict rules in *Savage Worlds*. The heroes need a minimum of 3 successes among three unopposed Persuasion rolls against the docking manager. Distribute bonuses or penalties according to the arguments used, and remember that in the last few days this docking manager has probably heard everything. Some positions that might generate a bonus or penalty:

- If a hero offers or makes up a convincing reason that will make the Centenary Celebration go awry unless they get to the surface immediately (e.g. "but we are carrying the official present that the Jubilee ambassador will offer to President Livley during the ceremony!"), he or she might put pressure on the docking manager.
- If the heroes say they have been ordered to come to meet Antoine, the docking manager requests to be shown a digital proof of their orders. Did the heroes bother to ask Delta Officer Saucedo for official orders?
- Nobility is still important in Concordia. If a character has a noble title and uses it to explain their urgency they may get results (this might work if Seela is a hero, for example).
- Sharing the story of what the heroes saw in Nouvelle Vie with the docking manager will most likely earn the heroes a penalty. The docking manager will think they are crazy, delusional or worse.
- If the heroes try to pull Circle rank on the docking manager or treat her with contempt, they will get nowhere. The Circle may be big on Concordia but the heroes are still outsiders, and today the docking managers have the power.

If a hero wants to use a psionic power to influence the docking manager, remind him or her that most psionic powers will not work over the huge distances of space.

If the heroes are successful, the docking manager directs their ship to an available docking spot and moves them up the line so they can take the earliest possible StO down to Melissant. If the heroes fail, the manager moves them up the list a bit, but it will still take them about eight to ten hours to go down, still before the celebrations begin. The heroes still make it on time (barely) but all of them acquire one level of Fatigue due to the stress involved in the wait in getting down to the surface. This level of Fatigue lasts for a full day.

TRIP TO THE SURFACE

The heroes finally manage to dock the Voyager in one of the many docking facilities in orbit, from where a Surface-to-Orbit (StO) shuttle arrives every hour or so to transport passengers down to the surface.

If the heroes are curious, they can read on their lenses (or their Assistants can inform them) that all standard StO shuttles and the rotovator transports are completely overloaded, and the large orbit stations for tourists have wait times of hours or more. This is definitely not a good time to come to Concordia on business.

Finally, the StO shuttle for the heroes arrives and they manage to board it. It is a crowded ride. As the plane glides to the surface, the heroes get to see the beautiful views of Concordia, practically a replica of Earth. Read or paraphrase the following:

After the shuttle enters the lower atmosphere, you see your destination in the horizon: Melissant, the most advanced city in human space outside Earth.

Named after Melissa Fischer, the secretive 21st century companion of both Circle founder William Donovan and Psion Brotherhood founder Daniel Michaels, Melissant represents the idealization of the city of the future: Gleaming skyscrapers, flying vehicles, and all the comforts one could imagine. It is the center of the Centenary Celebration. Oh, and Circle Headquarters are located here, too.

The plane finally lands on a station close to the Circle HQ campus, and the heroes disembark as the sun is about to set in the horizon. Remember to apply any particular bonuses or penalties due to Planetary Environments (see *Setting Rules* in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*).

SCENE 2: EPSILON LEADER ANTOINE

As soon as the heroes visit or contact Epsilon Leader Antoine's office, they are informed that the first centenary parade is about to begin in just an hour or two, and that Epsilon Leader Antoine has already departed to the main stands, where he has a reserved seat. He has left orders that the heroes are to go immediately to the main stands and enter on official Circle business. The heroes will have the good fortune to see the Celebration live, instead of via V-World projection! The heroes' Assistants receive the digital passes which will allow them to cross security checkpoints and enter the parade stands area.

As the heroes move through Melissant, they see a city full of crowds in the streets. Periodic fireworks light up the sky. The digital walls of most skyscrapers show images of the history of Concordia, while musically-rousing taped messages with particular passages of Concordian history make for a deafening ride.

Several burly guards protect the entrance to the official VIP stands, which is keyed to open only for people with the correct digital authorization (which the heroes have), validated against their embedded IDTags.

Once the heroes enter, they quickly meet Epsilon Leader Trevor Antoine: A thin, fit man in his upper fifties holding a conversation with two men: One, a stiff-faced, unpleasant-looking, high-ranking military man, the other a very old soldier with an amiable smile on his face. While chatting with both soldiers, Antoine is periodically giving orders on all sorts of Circle matters through his Assistant Janus. Antoine's Assistant is shown in the heroes' lenses as a middle-aged soldier dressed in a military space pilot vacc suit with a drawing of a blue-thunderbolt on the chest.

The VIP section of the stands is tight and crowded. Government officials, nobles and their families, ambassadors and businessmen are all there, trading stories, making deals, and making veiled threats to each other, while busy robotic mini-tables move around the stand rows carrying expensive drinks and food. The heroes spot President Livley in the Presidential Stand, several rows below, accompanied by a stocky man with white hair and a warm smile, the awkward Guest of Honour at this celebration: Sung Selnes, the Governor of Bay Jing, the closest planet to Concordia and its fiercest competitor (some might say enemy).

If the pre-generated character Seela is a hero (see *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*), she knows practically everyone in these stands (including her family, the

Atherton's, which are predictably seated just one row above the President), and practically everyone knows her. She will need to change her appearance and make a few successful Stealth rolls to avoid being recognized and making a scene.

Epsilon Leader Antoine calls the heroes by name and introduces them to the high-ranking officials he's currently talking with: General Carlo Ruehle, Leader of the Concordia Military Forces, a squared-jawed, no-smiles burly man who shakes their hand, mutters his excuses, and moves on to the next group; and General Salvador Bargowski, Chief of the EarthGov Armed Forces, who shakes every hero's hand and chats with them in a friendly fashion about his trip from Earth.

After both guests have moved on, Antoine has the heroes accompany him to his seat in the back row of the VIP stands. Two empty seats are reserved for the heroes next to him. Not all the heroes will have a seat, so some will have to stand.

As the parade begins, with elegant flying vehicles drawing images on patterns of light in the sky, Epsilon Leader Antoine begins talking to the heroes in tones that can barely be heard above the din.

It should not escape wily heroes' attention that it is curious that they have been invited to these exclusive stands just to receive some orders. Either what Epsilon Leader Antoine has to tell them is extremely urgent, extremely confidential, or both.

ANTOINE SPEAKS

Read or paraphrase the following to the heroes:

"First, young fellows, let me tell you I've had my eye on you for a while. Even among us, you make quite the diverse team, and I mean to take advantage of that. Now, I've read Delta Officer Saucedo's report, but I'd like to hear from you. What exactly do you think you saw?"

Let the heroes answer the question. If Maricelle is a hero (see *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*), she may share her previous similar experience. After one or two additional exchanges, Antoine explains the situation.

What the heroes saw, and what the rest of Nouvelle Vie saw given the amount of energy emitted, is not unique. This is not the first report of strange occurrences in the frontier star systems around Nouvelle Vie. The Circle has found survivors from other attacks who have reported similar sightings (Maricelle was one of them).

Some time ago, one of the security departments in EarthGov opened an investigation about this, and the Circle dutifully transferred all information found

on these sightings to them. But then, a few months ago, all information regarding these strange sightings was tagged as "classified" by EarthGov at the request of the Psion Brotherhood. Since anything tagged as classified does not sync with the Circle database, the Circle has been effectively been cut off the loop in this investigation. Why?

After what the heroes have reported, Antoine wants to get to the bottom of this without getting EarthGov, the Brotherhood, or anyone else involved. To get the ball rolling and kick the beehive, Antoine gives them a digital letter of introduction to the Security Chief at Psion Brotherhood HQ on Earth. *The heroes' orders are to visit Brotherhood HQ on Earth, tell their story (although the Brotherhood surely has heard of it by now) and ask them for the information on other strange object sightings.* Hopefully the heroes will ruffle some feathers while doing so, and maybe they will find a clue they can follow to figure out what's going on with this investigation and who to pressure to get more info.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Antoine is interrupted by a particularly noisy part of the show. All of a sudden, as the last of the flying vehicles disappears, every screen in every building around the stands lights up forming a mosaic of a single scene: It is a homage to enduring peace and friendship between Concordia and Bay Jing, with beautiful images of citizens of both planets joining together, along with rousing music. The crowd cheers, while a smiling President Livley and Governor Sung Selnes politely applaud.

The heroes can ask any questions about their mission. Antoine can give some background on EarthGov, the Psion Brotherhood, and other relevant items in response. When all questions regarding the main mission have concluded, continue with the text below.

Epsilon Leader Antoine pauses for a few seconds and then continues. "There's another reason I want you to travel to Earth, this one a bit more... unofficial."

Antoine explains that Dr. Luis LaMarche, a reputed scientist who had been working for an EarthGov contractor, has mysteriously vanished without a trace. With a successful Common Knowledge roll, the heroes immediately recognize the last name: Antoine's predecessor as leader of the Circle was Epsilon Leader Suzanne LaMarche. Antoine immediately confirms that indeed, Dr. La Marche is Suzanne's brother. As

a favor, the retired Epsilon Leader LaMarche has asked Antoine to help her find out what's happened to her brother. Local authorities are investigating the disappearance, but Suzanne has told Antoine that knowing her brother, she believes something darker is surely going on, and Antoine trusts his former superior's instincts well enough to believe her. *Antoine asks the heroes to go to San Francisco on Earth and search for Dr. Luis LaMarche.*

Once the heroes have all their questions answered, proceed to the next scene.

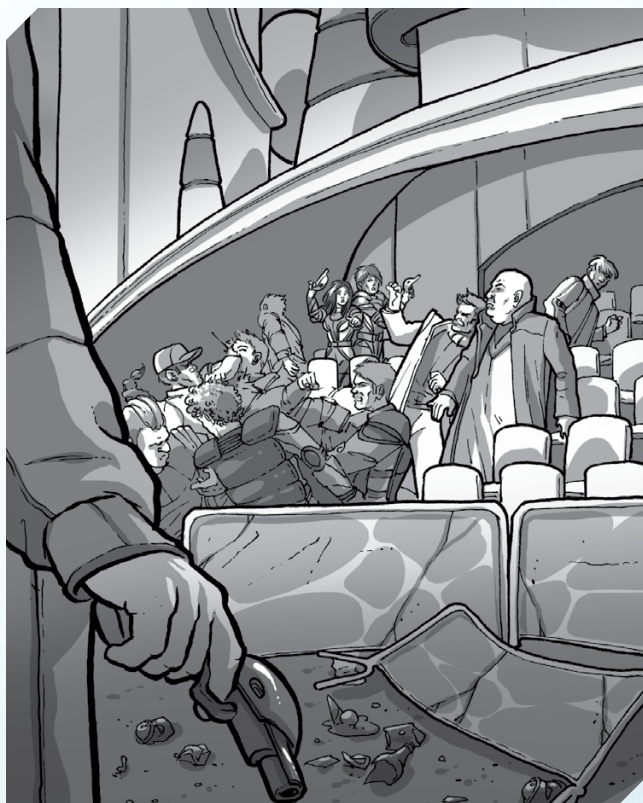
✱ **Epsilon Leader Trevor Antoine:** See page 33.

SCENE 3: ASSASSINATION

Have all the heroes' Assistants make Notice rolls at -2. Any Assistants who are successful are alerted by the grid detectors of something strange going on in the main stand, and warn their owners of it just a second before it occurs. Any heroes that are not alerted this way are surprised and don't get an Action Card in the first round of combat.

Read or paraphrase the following to the heroes:

Suddenly your, and everybody else's, attention is drawn towards the Presidential Stand, where something strange is going on. On cue, you see



two Concordia security officers within the stand, presumably President Livley's bodyguards, pulling and firing their guns at Bay Jing Governor Sung Selnes' bodyguards, while moving towards both dignitaries! Simultaneously, some police officers from a cordon of policemen several yards in front of the Presidential Stand turn around while pulling their guns and also fire at the stand!

Is this an assassination attempt? Who is trying to assassinate whom? In the instants it takes you to ponder this, the crowd erupts in panic!

In truth this is an assassination attempt on Governor Selnes of Bay Jing, but the heroes don't know that.

The heroes are seated on the highest row of seats on the right hand side of the stands, at "A." The stands are packed with panicked guests screaming and trying to escape. Thus, any movement through the stands counts as if on Difficult Ground. A hero can make a successful free Intimidation roll to scare civilians away ("get out of my way!") and move normally that round.

President Livley is seated on the front left main seat in the Presidential Box at "B," with Governor Selnes to his right at "C." One of Selnes' trusted bodyguards is standing to the governor's right at "D," and the other one is sitting in the middle seat behind both leaders. Two assassins, who were masquerading as Livley bodyguards, are sitting in the two seats in the second row of the Presidential Box marked as "E," and focus on killing Governor Selnes before attempting to escape.

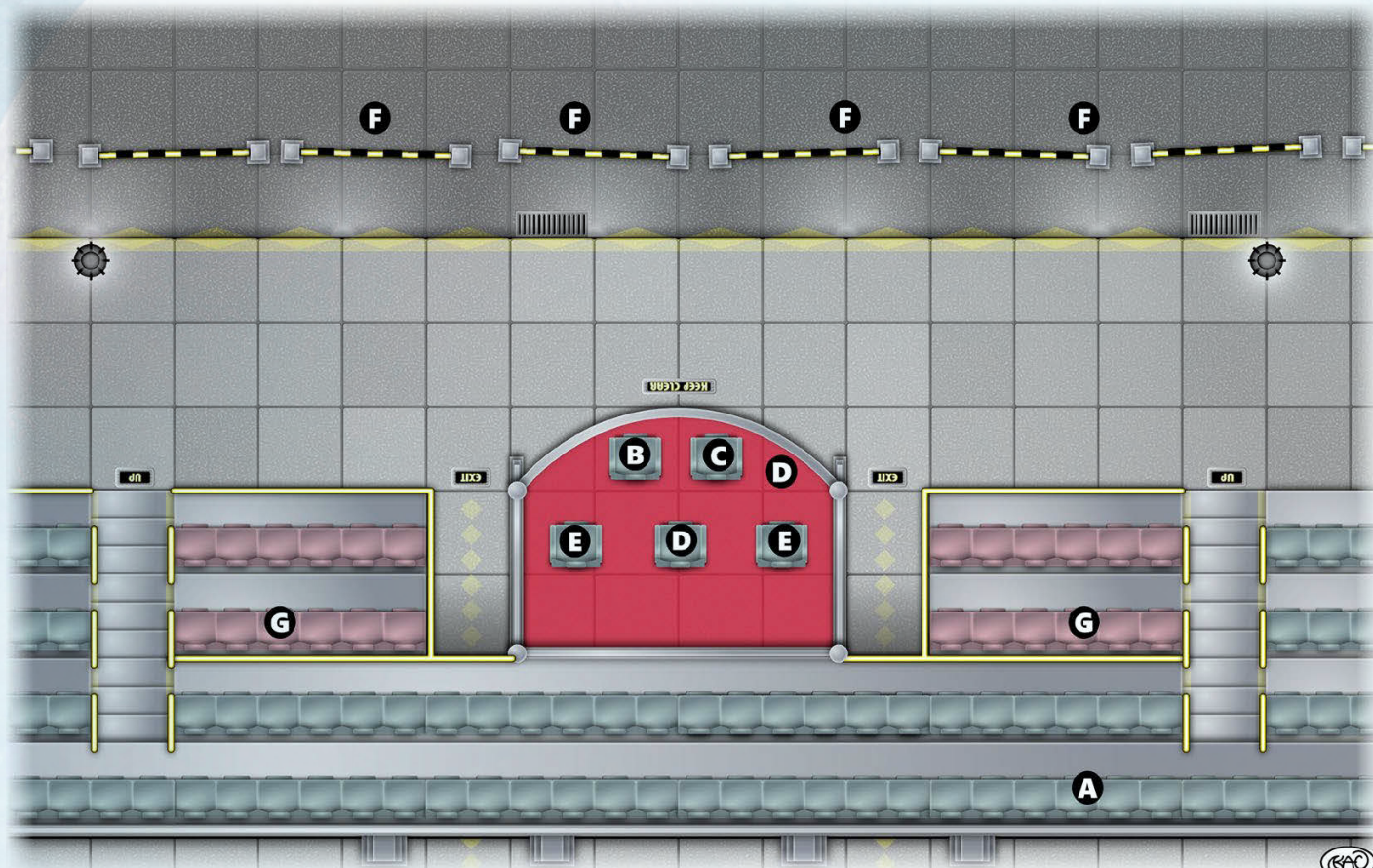
Four assailants, disguised as police officers, are standing next to the security fences about six yards in front of the Presidential Box at "F," and spend their first round shooting at Governor Selnes' two bodyguards at the Presidential Box, trying to bring them down. Use the Innocent Bystander rule for any shots that fail; they might hit anyone, even the President. These assailants get just one chance to shoot: at the end of the first round, they are all taken down by the real police officers next to them, and are effectively out of the combat.

SUICIDE BOMBERS

There are two suicide bombers sitting in a seat in the middle of the second row at "G," hiding among the crowd. Don't place them on the tabletop immediately.

The suicide bombers act as inconspicuously as possible, and wait one or two rounds before activating the frag grenade they carry, with the goal of killing as many civilians as possible. They start On Hold.

To notice that two people in the crowd are not behaving like the rest, have the heroes make a Notice



roll with a -2 penalty. Assistants can also notice them with a Notice at -2 (or -1 if one of the players thought to ask their Assistant to “look around”).

At the appropriate time, each one of these suicide bombers pulls the frag grenade from their pocket and activates it. Since it is not thrown, the activation is automatically successful, and the weapon cannot deviate. Only heroes who have noticed these enemies have a chance to dive for cover and avoid the blast.

If the grenade activates, all civilians in its area are killed or wounded. Heroes and Extras receive damage as per the standard Area Effect rules. Additionally, any hero who did not notice any of these bombers before must roll Spirit or be Shaken in surprise, regardless of whether he or she was in the affected area or not.

THE BODYGUARDS

Governor Selnes’s bodyguards are on the same team as the heroes, they just don’t know it. Just by watching them, the heroes or their Assistants can see that the bodyguards are acting to defend the dignitaries.

The heroes can remotely contact Selnes’ bodyguards with the help of an Assistant. With a successful Hacking roll, the Assistant IDs the bodyguards and opens a direct connection to them. Assuming the

heroes convince the guards they are in the same side, give them an Ally sheet for the bodyguards.

The bodyguards’ first priority is to protect Governor Selnes from harm. They will freely shoot against any enemies they see, but will not try to attack President Livley under any circumstances. If any of them gets close enough to the Governor to be able to look at him, they see that he is either dead or about to die (in truth, he is already dead).

ASSISTANTS DURING BATTLE

Besides the standard Assistant actions available during combat (see Setting Rules in the *Seven Worlds* Setting Guide), Assistants can help by noticing the situation before combat begins; noticing the two suicide bombers, and opening communication to Selnes’ bodyguards.

If one of the heroes gets a good look at one of the assassins, an Assistant may also try to look him up. This takes Investigation roll at -2 and one full round, after which the Assistant flashes the assassin’s bio on the hero’s lenses, and identifies him as a member of a fringe Jubilee terrorist group that recently had announced that they would “quash Dauphin and their Bay Jing overlords once and for all.” How did these crazed lunatics evade security?

The following special Assistant activities are available during the battle:

- **V-World Lookup:** If an Assistant looked-up an enemy's bio during the attack (see above) and the hero spends a Benny, the Assistant found some embarrassing or compromising information that gives the hero a +2 bonus to his next Taunt or Intimidation roll against that enemy. The exact information found is for you to decide.
- **Crowd Communication System:** A special V-World interface is available in this area that allows communication to the Assistants of every member of the audience in the stands. By spending a Benny, a hero can ask his Assistant to hack into this interface and talk to the panicked mob's Assistants. Have the Assistant make a Hacking roll with a +1 bonus. If successful, the Assistant opens the interface and can immediately make a Persuasion roll with a +2 bonus. With a success, the Assistant convinces all other attendees' Assistants simultaneously, asking them to calm down, go down their seats, and let the heroes pass. If this is successful, the crowd calms down, and the Difficult Ground penalty for crossing the stands is permanently eliminated.

Governor Selnes is dead whatever the outcome of the encounter. Although President Livley is not the target of this attack, he stands a very real chance of being killed by the crossfire unless the heroes act. By their actions, the heroes might also have helped capture one or more of the assassins. Make sure to point this out after the combat and reward the heroes appropriately (with Bennies and/or experience points).

- **Civilians (President Livley, other civilians):** Use the stats for Civilian (see page 34). Treat President Livley as a Wild Card.
- **Assassins disguised as bodyguards at "E" (2):** Use the stats for Veteran Security (see page 36).
- **Shooters disguised as policemen at "F" (4):** Use the stats for Veteran Security (see page 36).
- **Governor Selnes' Bodyguards at "D" (2):** These Extras may be under the heroes' control. Use the stats for Veteran Security (see page 36).
- **Suicide Bombers at "G" (2):** Use the stats for Civilian (See page 34). Each one carries a frag grenade (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, Medium Burst).

AFTER THE BATTLE

Regardless of the final outcome of the battle, the Centenary Celebration descends into chaos. Governor Sung Selnes is pronounced dead moments after the

combat ends, and the news begins its two-hour-long trip to Bay Jing, via the Stellar Comm Network. If President Livley was wounded during combat, he is whisked away to the nearest hospital. As the heroes leave the stands for the city, the GM should describe the bleak situation around the heroes: bleeding people; shocked, hysterical citizens; and an impending sense of tragedy.

Time is of the essence, as approximately five hours from now the first responses to the tragedy from Bay Jing will be sure to arrive. General Carlo Ruehle, leader of the Concordia Military Forces, leaves the stands in a hurry and places all troops on alert, despite the disapproval of Concordia's Council of Lords. The Concordian government quickly protests its innocence, and offers all possible assurances to the orbital entourage from Bay Jing.

The facts of the attack point to an organization with deep access to the Security apparatus: Too many people involved, even bodyguards and elite police; too many breaches of security at the same time. There is no explanation for how the grenades were smuggled into the VIP section, for example.

Epsilon Leader Antoine orders the heroes to continue their mission as originally stated and leave Concordia immediately. As the heroes board the StO shuttle, go back to the orbital docking station and blast towards Earth, they can't help but perceive the rumblings of war. A day or so from now the news will finally reach Nouvelle Vie, and chances are that when Dauphin extremists hear them all hell will break loose.

Make it clear to the heroes that they now have two missions: Take the letter of introduction to chief of Security at Psion Brotherhood HQ on Earth (to see if they can obtain the classified investigation records to the other mysterious sightings in the frontier); and check out the disappearance of Dr. LaMarche in San Francisco.

The trip from Concordia to Earth is an excellent time for side stories and other adventure opportunities

PART II: A VISIT TO EARTH

The story continues when the heroes enter the Sol star system and approach Earth. They have come here to talk to the Psion Brotherhood about the mysterious sightings in the frontier worlds and the Brotherhood's involvement in tagging that information as classified; and to find out what they can about the disappearance of Dr. Luis LaMarche.

Read or paraphrase the following to the heroes:

As your ship approaches Earth, the cradle of humanity, you marvel at the beauty of the view. Through the wall viewscreen you see Earth's Eastern Hemisphere, and from space you can appreciate most of Asia, Australia and the Pacific, as well as the huge uninhabitable crater left in Southeast Asia by the Doomsday Comet of 2133 that almost destroyed human civilization on the planet. Fortunately humans were able to (barely) survive the catastrophe and rebuild.

As your ship continues its approach, the Space Elevator becomes visible. A 45000-km-tall construction with its base on the town of Pedernales, in Ecuador, South America, the Space Elevator allows passengers and cargo to travel from the planetary surface into space and vice versa in a 4-day trip. Center City, the sprawling commerce port for Earth visitors, stands on the geosynchronous orbit location of the space elevator; and Brotherhood Station, the headquarters of the Psion Brotherhood, is tiered to the elevator 330 kms above the surface of the Earth. Several rotovators, orbital slingshots designed to bring cargo and ships up and down from the lower atmosphere, also show up as tiny dots around the planet.

This may be an opportunity to stage a conversation with Assistants to give some of the background of Earth in the year 2217.

SCENE 4: AN INTERESTING CALL

Read or paraphrase the following to the heroes:

As you are deciding where to go and where to land, [insert a hero's Assistant's name here] interrupts with a message. "We're getting a call from Earth. Guess what, it's coming from the N'ahili Embassy Ship! You know, the one that's floating on the ocean several hundred kilometres from the Eastern coast of North America. Now, isn't that something?"

Allow the players some time to decide what to do. If one of the players asks "What's the N'ahili?" take that as a cue to have an Assistant hurriedly explain who the N'ahili are while urging them to answer the call.

If the heroes take the call, read or paraphrase the following:

The screen dissolves into the image of a strong, charismatic man in his thirties. You recognize the face immediately: It is Adam, the

N'ahili's Assistant and designated Ambassador to humanity.

As soon as Adam's face appears, the heroes' Assistants overlay a quick text background on their lenses for their benefit: Since their arrival 126 years ago, the N'ahili have remained a mystery. The only sentient alien species humans have met, where they come from, or why, is still unknown. They have provided humanity with the three sets of jump point coordinates that have allowed the settlement of the Seven Worlds, and they undoubtedly know many more jump points, but have stopped sharing. Why?

No one has seen a N'ahili but they have released pictures of themselves, which the Assistants flash on the heroes' lenses. They look like weird blowfish swimming on something scientists believe is an atmosphere of ammonia. They may look funny, but no one doubts they are vastly more intelligent and powerful than humans.

The N'ahili's official "face" for humanity is Adam, an advanced Assistant program created by them that superbly performs the duties of Ambassador.

Adam flashes a disarming smile before turning formal. "Welcome, my friends. I apologize for interrupting your trip. I have been informed of your recent experience, and would like to talk to you about it, if you don't mind. Would it be possible to schedule a meeting at the N'ahili private V-World? You would only need to connect to our private V-World from a designated V-World Communications Booth on Earth or on the Space Elevator and we can have a safe, private chat. Just tell me where and when you would like to have the meeting and I'll make sure to schedule it and tell you what Communications Booth to go to. What do you say?"

Adam answers any questions the heroes have but does not reveal the goals of the proposed meeting. If asked, he says he found out about the heroes' participation in the Nouvelle Vie event from the news. He behaves in a friendly and cordial fashion, even if the heroes decline the offer to virtually meet, and he is as patient as possible. If the heroes decline, he tells them he is open to talk should they change their minds, and then closes the connection.

If the heroes decide to visit the Psion Brotherhood, they may either dock at Center City and take the capsule down to Brotherhood station, or dock directly in one of the docking pads on top of Brotherhood station itself. In the first case, the 45,000-km-long

trip down the cable takes about four days, and may be a good opportunity for a side adventure.

If the heroes decide to look for Dr. LaMarche, they could dock at Center City and take the capsule down, but it is much faster to dock at one of the many docking stations around Earth and then either take an StO (Surface-to-Orbit) plane to San Francisco, or an Orbital Shuttle to one of the rotovators down to Earth and then an intercontinental flight.

If the heroes choose to meet the N'ahili Ambassador, they may do it from any secure Communications Booth on Earth or physically connected via the Space Elevator cable. This may be in Center City, Brotherhood Station, San Francisco, or any other city on the surface.

If the heroes wish, they may also contact Kiley Nezat, the Circle representative on Earth (see Earth section in the *Seven Worlds* Setting Guide). She answers any questions they have and gives them any support they need short of personnel.

Depending on how the heroes decide to proceed, go to the appropriate section below.

SCENE 5: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE N'AHILI AMBASSADOR

When the heroes are ready to meet Adam, he arranges a secure call from a grounded, secure communications booth to the N'ahili private V-World. He takes care of directing the heroes to the closest Communications Booth (a service offered by several companies in most cities and locations) and of all expenses.

When the heroes reach the Communications Booth, the attendant on duty verifies their identities and leads them to a luxurious group booth. Each hero is offered a helmet to connect using the full V-World experience. Their Assistants will also be available during the conversation.

Once the heroes connect, read or paraphrase the following:

As you connect to the N'ahili private V-World, you realize how uncommon this meeting is. Usually only top dignitaries or scientists "visit" the N'ahili private V-World; most of the time Adam visits humans, not the other way around. You strap in and prepare for anything.

When you "open" your eyes, you are standing in a large drawing room within a luxurious old-style mansion, complete with antique classic furniture in perfect condition, and a balcony from which the sparkling-blue sea and several islands can be seen. The feeling is of a Mediterranean noble country house in the spring. Standing in front of you is Adam, the N'ahili virtual ambassador.

Adam gives you a friendly smile while shaking the hand of each of you, and then guides you to the balcony, where comfortable chairs are placed around a small table with drinks. You get to enjoy the view of the ocean and the other islands beyond, the breeze, and the beautiful virtual day.

Adam begins with some small talk, asking about the heroes' latest trip and their personal achievements. The heroes get the impression that he has researched them all intimately. Adam makes only appropriate comments and never offends.

After the formalities, Adam asks the heroes to tell the story of what they saw in Nouvelle Vie, and to spare no detail. He quietly and intently listens to everything they say. Then he asks them to tell the story of the assassination of Governor Selnes, and of their actions during that tragedy.

Once the heroes are finished, Adam thanks them for their time, and explains that the N'ahili are always interested in the goings-on of humanity since they feel they have an "obligation" to help them realize their full potential as a species. If asked, he denies having any idea of what the heroes saw. Most difficult or delicate questions should receive short, ambiguous answers. Try to play the conversation with a very slight delay, as if Adam were translating the heroes' comments to another language and then translating back the answer (but don't confirm if that really is the case).

When the meeting draws to a close, read or paraphrase the following:

"Thank you for your time. Humanity has been remarkably lucky and resilient to have made it this far. But you are still just starting. It is like some of you are in... a chrysalis." He looks at you intently as he carefully repeats the word. "Yes, a chrysalis. But it's the wrong chrysalis."

"If you find out anything new, don't hesitate to contact me. We're at your service."

With this comment, Adam closes the interview. The heroes are accompanied back to the drawing room and then they are disconnected and brought back to the real world.

SCENE 6: THE PSION BROTHERHOOD

Brotherhood Station, headquarters of the Psion Brotherhood, can be reached via a capsule in the Space Elevator (either coming from the surface at Pedernales or from geosynchronous orbit at Center



City), or can be directly visited by landing on one of the docking pads on top of one of its six fins.

As you enter the Disembarking Bay at the top of Brotherhood Station, you are amazed by the incredible views of the Space Elevator and of space. Although the Disembarking Bay is at the top, the huge walls and domed ceiling of the Bay combine real views of space with projected views of Earth, creating a breath-taking spectacle. A sense of tranquillity and peace pervades the environment. Inside, immaculate guides receive visitors and guide them towards the museum, the displays, and the innumerable games that both kids and adults love, with names like "Be a Psion for a Day!", "Guess What I'm Thinking!", "Test Your Psionic Powers", and many others. The Psion Brotherhood has the difficult task of integrating psions with non-psions to avoid the conflict that comes when "normal" humans envy their more powerful brothers. Judging from this place, it seems to do its job remarkably well.

As you walk inside the Disembarking Bay, you feel the lower gravity of the environment, 330kms above Earth.

A cute young uniformed girl of about twenty years of age approaches you. Flashing a smile she introduces herself. "Hello! Welcome to Brotherhood Station! My name is Lindsay and I will accompany you to your meeting."

Brotherhood Station is a Low-G environment (see the rules for Low-G environments in the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*).

Lindsay, a sprightly young recruit in the administrative bureaucracy's diplomatic and security department, has recognized the heroes from their profiles (as a rule, psions avoid reading their guests' minds for information). Lindsay strikes a friendly conversation with the heroes, describing what they see on the way to the private offices, and helping them with whatever they need.

One of the interesting facts Lindsay casually mentions is that there are psions on all planets and outposts with human presence, and they are rotated every few years. There are so many of them that it is frequent for a psion to be assigned on duty outside their home base and to "disappear" for years at an end. That's one of the reasons being part of the Brotherhood is considered so demanding in terms of dedication and loss of family and friends.

If one of the players is playing Duarthe (see *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*), he is sure to meet some of his old friends from his studies. They greet him with outward warmth but the psionic undercurrent of the conversation tells Duarthe he is still seen as an outsider. Also, they will immediately tell Nathan that Duarthe is here.

MEETING MARCEL COBAN

Lindsay takes the heroes to a conference room to meet Marcel Coban, Chief of Security for the Psion Brotherhood. She waits outside should they need anything.

Marcel Coban, Chief of Security for the Psion Brotherhood, is waiting for you. Marcel is a tough-looking guy who seems like he should be overweight if it weren't for the strenuous exercise he must do to live in this low-gravity environment. He is clearly not happy to be having this meeting.

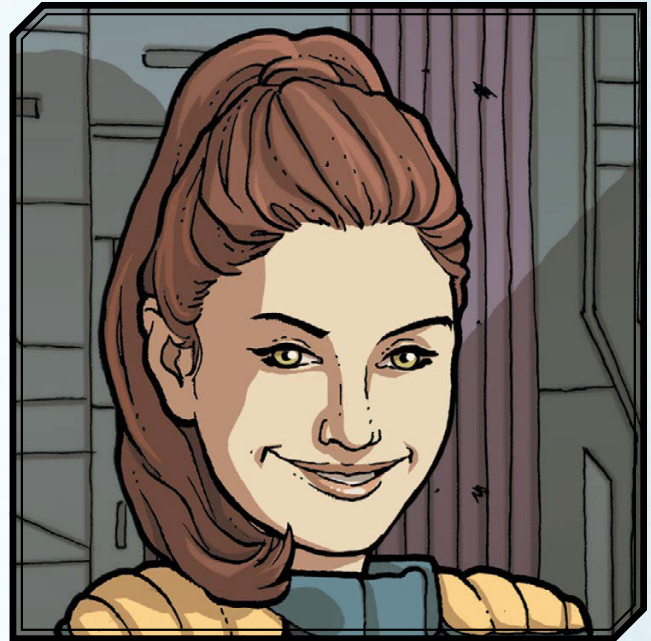
Play the encounter with Marcel as a Social Conflict, using the rules from *Savage Worlds*. Marcel is predisposed against the heroes, and as a result, the heroes will need four successes or more to win the social conflict.

Strive for a colourful, interesting debate. Here are some facts that may generate bonuses or penalties to the heroes' Persuasion rolls during the social conflict:

- In his youth, Coban was an on-loan to the Circle (see *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*), and served with Trevor Antoine. There they developed an intense dislike for each other. If the heroes try to influence Coban by bringing the Circle into the conversation, they receive a -2 modifier to their Persuasion roll; if they bring Epsilon Leader Antoine into the fold, their modifier is -4, as Coban gets into a really ugly mood. The heroes will get an earful about "Trevor the incompetent" and the conversation goes south from there. If the heroes bothered to investigate Coban immediately prior to the meeting (something they can still do during the meeting by quietly asking an Assistant to make an Investigation roll), they can find out his relationship to the Circle; a raise on the roll tells them about his rocky relationship with Epsilon Leader Antoine.
- If the heroes badmouth or criticize Epsilon Leader Antoine, Coban likes that and gets in the game, adding his own barbed comments. The heroes receive a +2 modifier on their Persuasion roll. If a hero thinks of spending a Benny on his Assistant for help, the Assistant automatically discovers Coban's aversion for Antoine and suggests to the hero that he or she badmouth him.
- If the heroes mention LaMarche in the conversation, or tell Coban they have been asked to look into his disappearance, Coban becomes convinced they are spies and his distrust increases. Coban is aware of LaMarche's disappearance and is very worried about it. The heroes receive a -2 modifier to their next Persuasion roll.
- If the heroes talk about their meeting with the N'ahili ambassador, and mention the N'ahili interest in the strange incident in Nouvelle Vie, they receive a +2 bonus to their next Persuasion roll, as Coban becomes suddenly more helpful. Coban figures the N'ahili are also interested in the sighting because they know something he doesn't, and that keeping an eye on the heroes' activities from now on might give him clues as to what the N'ahili are up to. If the heroes win the social conflict, they will be followed and checked by undercover Brotherhood spies from now on.
- Coban hints that the heroes are being played by the Circle, subtly at first, and more directly afterwards. If Antoine has been mentioned in the conversation, Coban will tell them that Antoine knew he (Coban) was in charge of Brotherhood security, and that he would refuse any request coming from Antoine.

How come he did not warn or prepare the heroes? If the heroes acknowledge they may be being played by the Circle, they get a +2 bonus on their next Persuasion roll. If they violently disbelieve Coban, they get a -2 penalty to their next Persuasion roll.

If the heroes succeed (four or more successes), Marcel grudgingly commits to having an assistant pull up the classified information and send it encrypted



Lindsay Kipperson



Marcel Coban

to Antoine directly (after a careful review to avoid releasing any extremely sensitive data). He expects this to take a few days. He does not commit to anything else.

If the heroes fail (three successes or less) Marcel denies their request. He explains in a brusque manner that the Brotherhood has asked EarthGov to tag this information as classified because it believes it is important. He does not specify the reason for this, only that they are not at liberty to share it. Then he calls the meeting to a close.

When the heroes leave the conference room, they find Lindsay waiting for them. She congratulates them if they got what they wanted, and looks crestfallen if their mission was not successful.

MEETING GANENDRA NATHAN

On the way out from the private area of the station, the heroes enter a section of open hallway where Ganendra Nathan, Leader of the Psion Brotherhood, is talking to several psions. If the heroes don't know him, an Assistant points him out and explains to the heroes that this is one of the most important and powerful people in the Seven Worlds (See *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*).

If there is any Brotherhood psion among the heroes, Nathan approaches and greets him or her by name. An instantly charming person, blessed with a prodigious memory, he knows or has known everybody who belongs to the Brotherhood and is always courteous and friendly.

If the pregenerated character Duarthe is a hero, Nathan's reaction to him is slightly colder than to other psions, given their past history.

If the heroes were successful in getting Marcel Coban to commit to send the files, Nathan supports the decision, and explains that although sometimes things need to be protected, he does not see why this information should be protected from the Circle. He acts mystified as to why the info was tagged as classified in the first place, and commits to making sure it gets to Antoine as soon as possible.

If the heroes failed in their conversation with Marcel Coban, Nathan apologizes for Coban's rude behaviour and insists there is a reason for the secrecy. The heroes may try a final do-or-die argument with Nathan. Regardless of how good or bad the argument was (ignore the results of any Persuasion rolls), Nathan tells them he'll look into it immediately and see if anything can be done, and that they'll hear from him soon. He also asks the heroes to apologize on his behalf to Epsilon Leader Antoine, and hopes to meet them again next year when he passes thru Concordia on his way to Bay Jing, his home planet, to

celebrate its 100th anniversary. Sometime later (when the heroes arrive at their ship or lodgings, or later in the day), Nathan contacts them to let them know that Epsilon Leader Antoine will directly receive an encrypted copy of most of the classified files in Circle HQ in the next few days.

Lindsay accompanies the heroes back to the main visitor floor and says goodbye. She invites them to visit whenever they want, and tells them they will be always welcome at Brotherhood Station.

✱ **Ganendra Nathan:** Use stats for a Veteran Psion (see page 37) with a Charisma of +4 and a Persuasion of d12.

✱ **Marcel Coban:** Use stats for a Veteran Psion (see page 37).

• **Lindsay Kipperson:** Use stats for a Typical Psion (see page 37).

LINDSAY, COBAN AND GANENDRA

Make Lindsay, Marcel Coban and Ganendra Nathan emotionally memorable to the heroes. They are important NPCs who appear again later in the campaign in critical roles for the story.

SCENE 7: THE SEARCH FOR LAMARCHE

These are the known facts of Dr. LaMarche's disappearance. The heroes may obtain this from the records provided by Epsilon Leader Antoine, by searching V-World, or simply by asking their Assistants.

Luis LaMarche is a middle-aged man, brilliant scientist, single, secretive and eccentric. He is a leading academic researcher on stellar communications and transmissions, and just four years ago took a lucrative position at the research arm of MaxDigital Corporation, a specialist technology outfit that is a major subcontractor to governments. Beyond work, his only vice seems to be an obsession with V-World multi-player games. His current home address is in Oakland, in what used to be called the San Francisco Bay Area until the 2133 flooding took out most of the bay. MaxDigital Corporation's headquarters is also located there.

LaMarche disappeared three months ago, counting the two months it took the heroes to reach Earth (if it took more or less time for the heroes to reach Earth, modify the time appropriately). He stopped showing

up at the office or answering calls, and his Assistant went permanently offline. His IDTag is out of the grid, and is assumed to have been removed from his body. It is therefore not possible to trace him. Removing or disabling an IDTag is illegal, but can be done for the right price.

Police have searched his home and have not found anything unusual. They have discovered cash transfers from his personal account to a digital money service that anonymizes cash transactions. This might imply he planned to spend it without leaving a trace. No clues as to his whereabouts have been found.

The heroes can either visit LaMarche's office, or his home.

LAMARCHE'S OFFICE

MaxDigital Corporation's headquarters in Oakland is an impressive, modern, sprawling complex, with many layers of physical and digital security. Heavily-built guards dressed in impeccable dark suits are everywhere, the stereotype of high-level security agents.

After the heroes' Assistants have presented the heroes to the receptionist Assistant, the heroes are politely taken to a conference room where they are welcomed by Stanley Maroudas, the installation's security manager. Maroudas explains to the heroes that they are of course very concerned about their employee, and have assisted the police in every way they could. Unfortunately, the nature of Dr. LaMarche's work is such that the company is not allowed to share anything about it other than that it is highly confidential and that the government contractor (which cannot be named) has been informed of the situation and has taken steps to protect their project in case there is a security breach.

The heroes can go on a guided tour of the non-classified parts of the office, but cannot enter Dr. LaMarche's research wing or get any further information from Maroudas.

Any violent action will take the heroes nowhere, but in case they are needed, here are stats for the NPCs in this scene.

- **Stanley Maroudas, Security Manager:** Use the stats for a Civilian (see page 34) with Smarts d6, Spirit d8 and Persuasion of d12.
- **Guards:** As many as needed. Use the stats for Security (page 36).

LAMARCHE'S HOME

LaMarche's home is in a high-class neighborhood about 25 minutes from Oakland. The house, while not large, is certainly more expensive than what a

typical scientist and academic can afford. Obviously, LaMarche's new job has been paying him well. The heroes can see the house tagged as "closed by Police" on the Augmented Reality overlays in their lenses.

While the heroes are in front of the house they have a chance to notice someone stealthily looking at them from behind a window curtain in a house at the other side of the street. Whoever is looking hides behind the curtain as soon as he or she is noticed.

Should the heroes try to break into LaMarche's home, they will have to override the house security locks left by the police. This will require a Dramatic Task using Hacking as the relevant skill. The task simulates the heroes hacking the security interface while simultaneously disabling the alarm systems until the hacking is finished. A standard -2 penalty applies to all rolls. With a failure, a noise alarm sounds and a security officer patrol arrives a few minutes later. Assuming the heroes are successful, they find that LaMarche's house has been thoroughly searched by the police. All physical evidence has been looked at and moved, furniture has been searched carefully, and nothing particularly special is found.

AN ECCENTRIC NEIGHBOR

If the heroes visit the house across the street, the door is opened (just a crack) by a middle-aged man in scraggly clothes who is suspicious of the heroes ("I've told everyone everything, I don't know anything else! Who are you and what do you want?!"). The heroes will need to calm him down to get him to talk (a successful Persuasion roll will suffice).

Once the man calms down, he invites the heroes in. His name is Professor Aurelio Velkamp and he is an antiquities curator. His house is stuffed full of old books and weird antiques (you may have fun describing how among the sixteenth-century rifles and the second century clay pots the heroes find some early-21st century smartphones and tablets, for example). The Professor himself looks and smells like he has not been out of his house in quite a while.

Professor Velkamp can explain how the police came looking for "Luis" (Dr. LaMarche) and searched his house up and down. Professor Velkamp himself was questioned in detail by the police. They set up a guard for a few days in case Dr. LaMarche returned but apparently he never did.

Professor Velkamp also mentions how Dr. LaMarche's house is periodically visited by strong-looking men in dark suits who stay for a few hours and then leave, apparently on the lookout should Dr. LaMarche appear. He has no idea who they are, but can recognize the description of MaxDigital Corporation security personnel if shown a digital picture or image.

Velkamp also describes LaMarche as a good person and a friendly neighbor, if a slightly obsessed and crazy one. When not at work he spent hours playing the latest V-World games, something the Professor says is not "stuff grown-ups do."

Professor Velkamp has a crucial piece of information for the heroes. Depending on the players, you may simply decide to role-play the interaction and offer the heroes the information once they've convinced the professor to trust him, or you may want to ask the heroes to make Persuasion rolls at -2 to get the information. Since the Professor will be peppering the heroes with questions about who they are and why they are looking for LaMarche, there should be many opportunities to mention his sister Suzanne or the mission.

Once the Professor is convinced, he tells them something he hasn't told anybody, not even the Police: The last time he saw LaMarche was a few days before the doctor went officially missing. LaMarche came very agitated to Velkamp's house and left something "for safekeeping, until my sister Suzanne picks it up:" His *AmberDrake Chronicles* data card and a short note with the password for it. With a Common Knowledge roll the heroes recognize *AmberDrake Chronicles* as the latest, hottest multiplayer V-World game, set in a fantasy world of dragons and magic, and famous for its realistic combat. Velkamp says that LaMarche said that he might have to leave for a while, and since his sister also loves the game, he wanted her to have the card that would allow her to keep the achievements his character had acquired during the game ("told you he was crazy!"). LaMarche also asked Velkamp to keep the existence of the gaming card secret from everyone but his sister or her helpers.

If the heroes perform a quick validation of Suzanne LaMarche's profile, they gather that she has never been interested in V-World games. The data card itself is nothing special, and has no purpose other than to allow the heroes to connect to *AmberDrake Chronicles* using LaMarche's character in the game.

If the heroes decide to send a message to Antoine or Suzanne LaMarche, they will be told that although Dr. LaMarche was a well-known fan of V-World games, his sister Suzanne does not share the hobby at all. She believes if he left a gaming card for her, there must be some kind of message or information inside the game for the heroes to retrieve. Note that a round-trip message from Earth to Concordia and back takes between five and six days (see the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*).

- **Professor Aurelio Velkamp:** Use the stats for a Civilian (see page 34) with Knowledge (Science) d12.

SCENE 8: THE AMBERDRAKE CHRONICLES

The heroes may enter the *AmberDrake Chronicles* from any V-World interface on Earth, including their lenses, a V-World Communication Booth or the V-World pods on the *Voyager*.

One hero should use the data card to handle Dr. LaMarche's character, a wizard called Bregor Ravenblood. Give the hero a character sheet with the stats for Veteran Mage (see page 36), making him a Wild Card.

The other heroes must register with the game (which is free for new players) and create their character.

CREATING AN IN-GAME CHARACTER

Each hero's character has the exact same traits as the hero. Additionally, each hero can select a "class" for his character from the table below, which gives the character a specific number of increases to its trait dice. You might want the heroes to create character sheets for each in-game character.

SPECIAL RULES DURING THE GAME

While the heroes are within *AmberDrake Chronicles* the following special rules must be observed:

- Since this is a fantasy realm, magic is now available, as well as several skills and Edges that are not available or useful in the "real-world" environment.
- Psionic powers don't exist within the game.
- Heroes cannot call upon their Assistants while in the game. Assistants are not "available" but can send an urgent message or interrupt a game if an emergency requires it. In these interruptions, the hero is logged off the game by the Assistant and brought back to the real world.
- A hero can leave the game at any time, just by thinking about it. If he or she returns to the game, his or her character has the same number of Wounds, Fatigue, and ammo as before he or she left.
- If a character "dies" he or she is automatically disconnected from the game, and can re-enter it by spending \$20. The character enters the game fully healed.

ENTERING THE GAME

The heroes are about to enter a multiplayer virtual game world more than three months after Dr. LaMarche left it. The last time he entered, Dr. LaMarche left a message containing critical codes for entering MaxDigital Corporation written inside an in-game artefact, a powerful spellbook. The spellbook was stored in Bregor Ravenblood's (Dr. LaMarche's

IN GAME CHARACTER CLASS

CHARACTER CLASS	TRAIT DICE INCREASES TO ORIGINAL CHARACTER'S STATS	GEAR AND POWERS
Fighter	+1 Agility die, +1 Strength die, +2 Fighting die (also increase Parry appropriately), +1 Intimidation die.	Plate armor (+3 Armor; covers arms, legs, torso), Medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots that hit), Long sword (Str+d8).
Rogue	+2 Agility die, +1 Climbing die, +1 Fighting die (also increase Parry appropriately), +1 Lockpicking die, +1 Notice die, +1 Stealth die, +1 Streetwise die.	Dagger (Str+d4), Short sword (Str+d6), Leather armor (+1 Armor; covers arms, legs, torso), Bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).
Cleric	+1 Spirit die, +1 Fighting die (also increase Parry appropriately), +2 Faith die, +1 Healing die.	Chain armor (+2 Armor; covers arms, legs, torso), Mace (Str+d6), Shield (+1 Parry). Has 10 Power Points and the following divine powers: <i>healing, burst</i> .
Wizard	+1 Smarts die, +1 Fighting die (also increase Parry appropriately), +3 Spellcasting die.	Two Daggers (Str+d4), no armor. Has 20 Power Points and the following arcane powers: <i>armor, blast, bolt, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, fly</i> .

character) library in his virtual house in the medieval town of Dancine. Since then, many things have changed in the game. The most important one is that Dancine and the rest of the valley have been overrun by the army of the evil dragon Kyrrix. Thus, characters of Bregor's faction have been evicted from Dancine, and are now holed up in nearby Garreth Keep along with other town refugees. As the heroes arrive, the defenders of Garreth Keep are about to be besieged by Kyrrix's army. The heroes are going to have to find a way to escape the keep, infiltrate what remains of Dancine, and recover that spellbook.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The burning countryside of northern AmberDrake is the first sight that greets your eyes. You are standing on the battlements of a large keep in siege alert. Soldiers around you run to and fro, preparing catapults, firing arrows at the enemy, or simply dying under the barrage of falling arrows that darken the sky. You're in the middle of a war!

Outside the keep walls you see an immense army composed of orcs, goblins and other humanoids. They are in full attack mode, shooting arrows, bringing ladders to climb the keep, and preparing catapults. Behind the army you can see the black smoke of burning trees

and one or two houses. And much farther away, the smoky ruin of what once must have been a large town. The game's AR overlay tells you that the town is (was) called Dancine, and a small digital arrow points to what in the distance you can almost make like one more smoky ruin in the town. A small floating sign next to the arrow reads "HOME" accompanied by a treasure symbol. Whatever LaMarche kept in this game, apparently it's still there.

Suddenly a large shadow appears before you on the battlements. It is a huge human knight, impossibly muscled, dressed in a dark armor with a mysterious symbol, accompanied by a band of lesser fighters. A digital symbol next to him shows he is not an NPC but another real player.

The immense man, covered in blood, brandishes a large great sword and jumps towards you while screaming "Bregor, you coward! NOW, when we've had no choice but to hide like rats in Garreth Keep, now you decide to appear? And entering with new players, I see. Well, I'll make sure they don't last long. If I fall here, you'll fall with us, traitorous bastard!"

The knight in question's name is Lanus. His player is extremely angry at Bregor's player (he does not know LaMarche) because Bregor left the game three

months ago during a particularly tough quest and never came back.

Have all heroes make Notice rolls. The ones who fail begin the round surprised. Place all combatants around position "A" on the map.

Whenever Lanus or a hero is dealt a card from the Clubs suit, one of the many arrows from the incoming army has found its way to him or her. Make a d8 group Shooting roll to see if the character is hit or not. If he is, the damage from the arrow is 2d6.

Lanus and his followers fight to the "death" unless the heroes convince them to stop. This requires good role-playing or Persuasion rolls.

If the heroes manage to talk to him, Lanus curses Bregor's player in very un-medieval language and then tries to leave. If the heroes question Lanus's player, he tells them he only knows that Bregor left the game three months ago and never came back, costing his party at the time a big loss at the hands of a powerful villain. It's taken Lanus months to get his character back to his current level, and in the meantime the evil wyrm Kyrrix has raised an army of orcs and monsters and razed the countryside. Many players have switched sides and joined Kyrrix's crusade, and Lanus is thinking about doing that ("after all, isn't becoming more powerful the point?"). He knows nothing about Dr. LaMarche, nor does he care. He only knows that Bregor kept most of his valuables, including his vaunted treasure chest ("he always talked about it") in his mansion down in Dancine... thing is, Dancine has now been overrun and torched, and is in territory controlled by Kyrrix's army, which is led by the lesser dragon Myrreth.

If the heroes become too insistent with Lanus, try too hard to force him to talk, or ask him to disclose who he really is, Lanus's player gets nervous and disconnects, not before scolding the players on "breaching game etiquette." There is no way for the heroes to find out who the player is.

★ **Lanus, Dark Knight:** Use the stats for Veteran Knight (see page 35).

• **Lanus's followers (2 per hero):** Use the stats for Junior Knight (see page 35).

THE SIEGE OF GARRETH KEEP

As soon as the heroes complete their encounter with Lanus read or paraphrase the following:

A tall, powerful knight followed by his entourage approaches. He is obviously the leader of the defence of the keep. The AR overlay identifies him as Commander Tarros, Chief of the Northern AmberDrake Army. An NPC.

"So, new recruits?" says Commander Tarros when he sees you. "I can see you are senior-level, so you can help us fight. As you know, we've lost most of the countryside to that blasted Kyrrix and his minion Myrreth. The King trusts we will be strong enough to hold Garreth Keep and stop the enemy's advance."

"Tonight the enemy forces will attempt to take the keep. Our enemies are ready to storm us with soldiers carrying ladders, under cover of thousands of arrows."

"I need you to man the western wall and stop our enemies from entering the keep. As many soldiers as I can spare will accompany you. There will be other teams of defenders along the wall and in the main gates."

"Your bravery will decide if Garreth Keep survives the night! Soldiers! To your posts!"

If a hero needs a specific weapon, they can get them at the Armory at no cost. No magical items are available. Priests are also available to provide magical healing.

As darkness falls, the heroes are led to the length of wall next to where they originally appeared, and assigned one AmberDrake knight per hero (extras to be controlled by the players). Place the heroes and their extras in position "B" on the map. Out in the distance, the torches of the orc campfires can be seen, and dark, ominous drums can be heard.

Suddenly the night is pierced by the sound of a horn in the distance, which is answered by other horns. The orc attack has begun!

Place the enemy orc soldiers 24" away from the keep walls, at position "C". The heroes and the AmberDrake soldiers are on top of the battlefields.

Each round the orcs run towards the fort, carrying 6-foot-long ladders. For simplicity, roll one running die for all orcs. Each ladder is carried by four orcs, running in groups. If a group ever has less than four orcs, the remaining orcs leave the ladder and run to support other groups that need an extra orc to carry their ladder. If none are available, the orcs just continue running towards the wall.

If the orcs reach the wall, putting a ladder up takes two orcs one full action each. When the ladder is placed, climbing it counts as Difficult Ground. Once an orc climbs up the ladder it tries to move away from it to let other orcs climb up.

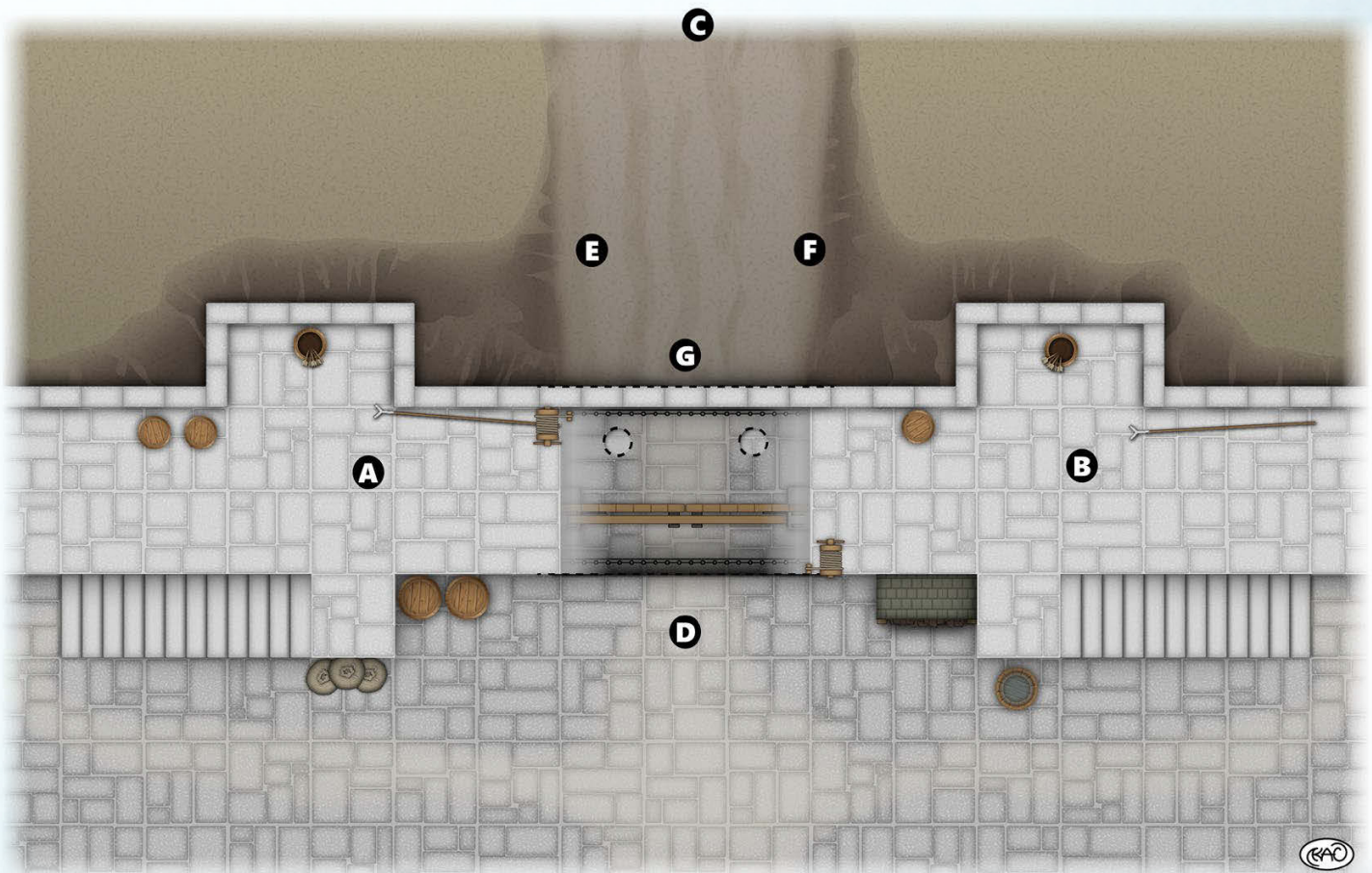
If a defender wants to push the ladder, he or she needs to make a Strength roll at -2 if directly in front of the ladder; if the defender is adjacent to the ladder

but not directly in front, the Strength roll is made at -4. If a ladder is made to fall, all orcs on the ladder when it falls take 2d6 damage.

Simultaneous with the orc soldier attack, orc archers let arrows rain on the defenders. The archers are not physically placed on the map, and are assumed to be 48" away from the action. The archers' attacks are handled in an abstract fashion: Each round, on the orcs' Action Card, the GM can place two Medium Burst Templates in an appropriate location and make a group Shooting roll with a d8 die for each template, minus Wound penalties (see below). If the roll is successful, all defenders within the template receive 2d6 damage.

The archers as a group have 10 Toughness, and can only be harmed with area effect attacks, assuming a character has a way to make an area attack that far. If the archers are hit, keep track of the wounds the archers have as a group, and apply them as a penalty to their group Shooting rolls. If the archers ever reach four Wounds, they break and scatter away, effectively ending the arrow attack.

As soon as the GM feels the heroes are taking control of the situation (but before the combat ends) proceed to the next section.



- **Orc Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 37.
- **AmberDrake Knights (1 per hero):** Use the stats for Junior Knight (see page 35). Besides the weapons listed, they all have bows (range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).

ENEMY AT THE GATES

Read or paraphrase the following:

Throughout the combat you've been listening to the loud bangs coming from below, where the orcs are ramming the main door while Commander Tarros and his soldiers work to hold it. Suddenly the huge, heavy gates break with a loud crack, and the enemy rushes in! From up here you see Commander Tarros and his team being overwhelmed by the orcs. He looks at you on the battlements and in the commotion signals to you for help. If the gate falls, the keep is doomed!

The heroes may decide to split into two groups or finish the combat at the battlements and then go down to the gates. Each round that passes without the heroes going to the aid of Commander Tarros, one AmberDrake Knight defending the gate falls (remove it from play).

Remember that the heroes may have AmberDrake Knight extras under their control remaining after the previous fight. It is up to the heroes to decide how to distribute their forces in this situation.

Commander Tarros and his soldiers start the fight at "D" while the orc warriors are located at "E." The orcs are supported by an orc shaman (location "F") with basic casting spells and an ogre Wild Card (location "G"). The shaman attempts to use the *fear* spell to keep the heroes and knights from attacking.

- ***Commander Tarros, Chief of the Army:** Use the stats for Veteran Knight (see page 35).
- **AmberDrake Knights (2 per hero):** These are the Knights next to Commander Tarros. Use the stats for Junior Knight (see page 35). They all have bows (range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).
- **Orc Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 37.
- **Orc Shaman (1):** See page 37.
- **Ogre (1):** See page 36.

Once the battle is won, the orc army retreats, its first attempt foiled. The heroes get a chance to rest and recover their wounds. The AR overlay for the game notes that the heroes' characters have gained "experience points", an in-game measurement that allows them to improve in-game. However, the

characters have not gained enough points to increase in level yet.

THE TRIP TO DANCINE

After the battle, the heroes are free to decide how to proceed. Most likely they are looking for a way to reach Bregor's home in the town of Dancine. Let the heroes try any ideas they may have on how to leave the keep and evade the enemy orc army to reach Dancine, and be lenient to them if their plan seems appropriate enough. What follows is a default alternative available if the heroes are unsure of how to proceed.

As you enter the deepest parts of Garreth Keep to regain your strength and heal your wounds you see many refugees from both Dancine and other nearby towns. Scraggly, hungry and tired, whole families shiver in the cold, hoping to survive the night.

As you stare at this scene, you are approached by a gaunt middle-aged man, who from the size of his clothes clearly used to be larger. He has horrid teeth and a repelling stench. His hands have the splotches and white marks of someone who frequently works with potions and dangerous liquids. He is visibly pale, sweaty and trembling. The AR overlay identifies him as Yrion, an in-game NPC.

"My lord Bregor! It is so good to see you again!," he begins, before being interrupted by a deep cough. "You must remember me, it is Yrion, the apothecary! My shop was a few blocks from your mansion!"

Yrion tries to strike up a conversation with Bregor, asking him about his previous whereabouts. He will explain how he, like most other citizens of Dancine, was forced to evacuate in a hurry, and how he has forgotten a valuable thing in his lab. He will casually let drop that he knows of a secret way out of the keep and into the wilderness, if someone were brave enough to return to Dancine to get it.

In truth, Yrion has become an addict to a drug he himself produces. Unfortunately he was forced to leave Dancine without a supply, and is now suffering from withdrawal symptoms. If the heroes mention that they want to go to Dancine, he gladly tells them of a secret door down the cellar of the keep that leads to a tunnel, the exit of which is a few miles west of here. From there the heroes should not have much of a problem reaching Dancine (other than the orcs, of course). He only asks that the heroes go to his apothecary shop and bring him "a brown bag

ENCOUNTERS		
1D6	CAVE	COUNTRYSIDE
1	No encounter	No encounter
2	No encounter	No encounter
3	No encounter	Small Patrol: • Orc Warriors (1 per hero plus 1): see page 37 • Orc Leader (1): See page 37
4	Rock Monsters (1 per hero): See page 38	Bandits: • Bandit (1 per hero): see page 33 • Bandit Chief (1): Wild Card. See page 34
5	Black Blobs (1 per hero): See page 34	Large Patrol: • Orc Warriors (2 per hero): see page 37 • Dire Wolves (1 per hero): see page 35 • Orc Leader (1): Wild Card. See page 37
6+	Centipede (1): See page 34	Small Battalion: • Orc Warriors (3 per hero): See page 37 • Dire Wolves (2 per hero): see page 35 • Orc Shaman (1): see page 37 • Evil Knight (1): Use stats for Veteran Knight (see page 35). He is a Wild Card, and a real-world player who has allied with Kyrrix (for role-playing purposes).

containing my potions that is located under my bed in the door behind the shop."

If the heroes agree, Yrion shows them the way towards the cellars. A secret door behind the next-to-last barrel in the cellar is activated by a successful Lockpicking roll, and leads to a long, unused tunnel, which returns to the surface a few miles westward, coming behind a group of boulders in the middle of the countryside.

The trip through the long tunnels and the blasted countryside takes about a day. You can place as many encounters as you think are appropriate, and should consider a few given that games like *AmberDrake Chronicles* rarely let too much time pass without a fight. A random encounters table is provided below. The roll should be modified by +1 if the heroes have been calling too much attention to themselves (lighting a fire, making noise while in the cave, etc).

If the heroes get to talk or interrogate any orc prisoners, they find out that Dancine and its surroundings have been placed under the command of one of Kyrrix's lieutenants, the black dragon known as Myrreth.

THE TOWN OF DANCINE

When the players arrive at Dancine, read or paraphrase the following:

The destroyed remains of what used to be Dancine still smoke before you. Most of the town has been razed to the ground but several buildings still remain. From your vantage point behind some ruins north the town, you see orc guards on several locations inside. The town is surrounded by low hills, meaning the north side is the only way to approach without being automatically seen.

Every once in a while a low sound shakes the town. It sounds like a mixture of a roar and growl from a huge beast in slumber. You have heard that the black dragon known as Myrreth leads the army in Kyrrix's name. Could that sound be caused by him?

Whatever remains of Bregor's mansion must be in the center of the town. A transparent marker in the AR overlay shows you the direction Bregor's mansion is located. Now you only have to get there.

THE ENEMY ADVENTURING PARTY

On top of all the other dangers of Dancine, the heroes have one more thing to worry about: Another adventuring party, composed of real-world players, not NPCs, has entered Dancine. Looking to vanquish the dragon and gain the fame and experience such a beast brings and to gather as much loot as possible, they are not going to let other players stand in their way.

You should use this party wisely at the most dramatic moment and as a source of mystery. For example, the heroes might find clues that someone else is roaming through the town, perhaps a slaughtered orc guard. They might be attacked by this adventuring party when they are reading the tome in Bregor's mansion. Or maybe they are about to make their escape when the other adventuring party makes a ruckus and brings the dragon down on everyone. Remember that the heroes' VR overlays clearly identify the enemy party as fellow players in the game, not NPCs. An interesting role-playing conversation during the battle might thus ensue.

★**Torrahn, Warrior:** Use stats for Junior Knight (see page 35).

★**Orghen, Wizard:** Use stats for Novice Mage (see page 36).

★**Ulric, Rogue:** Use stats for Bandit Chief (see page 34).

What follows is a key to the main locations of the town of Dancine.

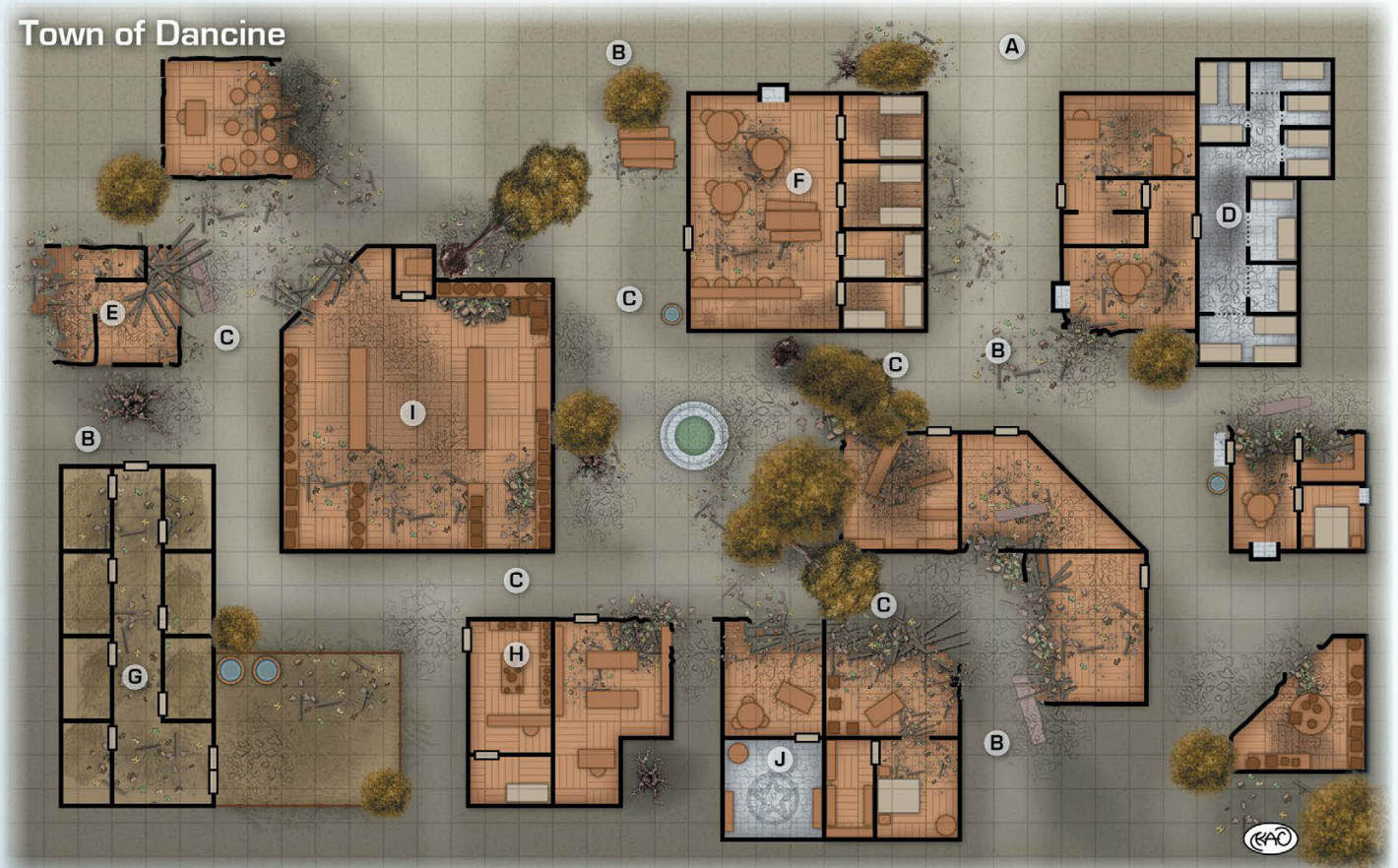
A. ENTRANCE

The heroes enter the town here. This is the only safe way to enter without being automatically detected by orc guards because of the low hills in the east, west and south sides of the town.

Should the heroes raise the alarm at any point, all orcs in the town converge on the source of the alarm in about four rounds and engage any trespassers. Assuming the heroes are not found, after a few minutes of searching the orcs will return to their locations, but they will be active sentries from then on (thus requiring opposed Stealth rolls).

If enough orcs raise the alarm Myrreth himself will wake and get involved to stop the heroes.

Town of Dancine



B. GUARD POSTS

Small orc patrols guard the different entrances to the center of Dancine. They are usually talking amongst themselves or playing games, and are treated as passive guards unless the alarm is raised once. Use the standard Stealth rules if the heroes try to avoid them.

- **Orc Warriors (3):** See page 37.

C. TRIPWIRE

These locations have an almost invisible tripwire running across the street. A hero walking through the tripwire must make an Agility roll (at -2 if running) or fall Prone. The tripwire also runs to a group of pieces of metal which clang loudly, raising the alarm in the camp. If a hero specifically asks to search the floor he or she can find the tripwire with a Notice roll at -2 if no tripwire has been found before. Once the heroes have dealt with tripwire (either because they tripped it or avoided it), a free automatic Notice roll is enough to see it again. Tripwire traps can be disabled or enabled with a Lockpicking roll.

D. PRISON

In this jail, the orcs keep their prisoners, one per cell. The four prisoners here are Jon and Karren, an old couple of bakers; Lily, a small girl who has lost her parents in the invasion of Dancine; and Gilean, a mumbling farmer who has gone mad from his ordeal. If freed from their cells, the old couple and the girl help the heroes by providing them with directions and a rough map of town and where most of the traps are (which can be sketched if necessary). Lily also knows of the hidden survivors at E, and of the valuable items they managed to save from the orcs, and will share this information if asked. If freed, Gilean merrily attempts to escape the town, running recklessly and most likely alerting every orc in Dancine unless he is stopped.

- **Orc Warriors (1 per hero plus 1):** See page 37.
- **Townsperson (4):** See page 34.

E. HIDDEN SURVIVORS

When Dancine fell, a few townspeople stormed the town hall and grabbed Dancine's most valuable items, intending to save them from the attacking army. Unfortunately, one of Myrreth's attacks levelled the building before they could leave. A few survived and have been living here in the ruins for a few weeks now. There is enough food and water in the cellar for them to survive, but being so close to Myrreth's new home they have very little chance of escaping.

Etherast, one of the leaders of the town, currently leads the small group of seven humans, all adults. They try, at all costs, to avoid detection, and the heroes are going to have to make Notice rolls at -2 to notice where they are hidden.

If the heroes establish a conversation with the survivors, they tell them as much information on the town and its movements as possible. They also mention the prisoners at location D and ask the heroes to save them. Should the heroes offer to rid the town of the monsters, Etherast will place the few magical items he could save in their hands: A *potion of invisibility* (drinking it is like if the *invisibility* power with a raise had been cast on the drinker. The power cannot be maintained); a *potion of quickness* (as before, but with the *quickness* power with a raise); a *ring of the archer* (works as if the hero had the Marksman edge); And a *giant killer long sword* (standard long sword damage, also works as if the hero had the Giant Killer edge).

- **Townsperson (7):** See page 34.

F. BARRACKS

Most of the orcs of Dancine are here sleeping next to their weapons. All Stealth rolls to avoid them are at +2 unless the alarm has been raised once, in which case they behave as active guards.

- **Orc Warriors (22):** See page 37.

G. WOLF PENS

This ruined part of the town has been taken by the orcs to house their wolf mounts. The wolves, kept in large cages, are at turns barking and growling madly and sleeping. Two orc keepers protect and feed the wolves. These orcs do not leave the pens if the alarm is raised, and keep the wolves locked unless the town is under attack or in dire danger. In this case, the orcs let the wolves loose.

- **Dire Wolves (9):** See page 35.
- **Orc Warriors (2):** See page 37.

H. YRION'S APOTHECARY SHOP

If the heroes bother to go here, they find the remains of Yrion's apothecary shop. The bed at the back includes Yrion's bag, just as he said. Among the broken bottles the heroes can also find two *potions of healing* (works as the potions listed above, but with the *healing* power with a raise).

I. MYRRETH THE DRAGON

Myrreth, the fearsome dragon who leads the orc army, is asleep in this former large warehouse, which now has no ceiling. He ignores any alarms raised unless he is specifically called, since most of the time his orcs raise the alarm for some human survivor or minor adventuring party. However, if the situation in town becomes difficult he takes flight and attack from above with his acid cloud. He attempts to engage the heroes directly and drive them to a location where there is enough space to overwhelm them with his orcs. Myrreth fights to the death.

✱ **Black Dragon:** See page 35.

J. BREGOR'S MANSION

As the heroes approach the AR overlay icon that points to Bregor's home becomes larger and clearer. From the outside this looks like one more ruined building. Inside, after passing a ruined foyer the heroes reach a study. A large red arrow in the AR overlay points towards a huge tome in the bookshelf behind the desk. The tome does automatic 1d8 damage to anyone who touches it except for Bregor, its owner.

The tome has the title *Tome of RealWorldy Magic*. All of its pages look empty unless Bregor touches one. When that happens, several pages of notes and texts written in a modern (non-medieval) tone appear. With a Smarts roll, the heroes recognize the notes as game cheat codes, hacks and tips for how to win the game and accumulate treasure and powers fast.

The last page of the book has a different type of note. Give the heroes Handout #2.

Below the note there are several digital tags (see *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*) that can easily be scanned by an Assistant.

Note that since the heroes may leave the game at any time, they will most likely disconnect from the game immediately after obtaining this information. Before disconnecting them, the game lists how many enemies each player killed and the experience points they gained, before inviting them to "play again soon!"

SCENE 9: MAXDIGITAL CORPORATION

After they return to the real world, and the heroes' Assistants decode the digital tags provided by Dr. LaMarche, the heroes find themselves with the following:

- A digital avatar of a Dr. Sindi Rogers. Dr. Rogers is a real employee of MaxDigital who hasn't connected for some time. Dr. LaMarche has managed to create

a fake avatar of Dr. Rogers for the heroes to use to enter MaxDigital's Research Extranet.

- Several digital avatars of invented "research associates" of Dr. Rogers from universities and research institutions. Somehow Dr. LaMarche has obtained authorization for these fake people to enter MaxDigital's facilities. Thus, the heroes should have no problem using these fake identities to enter the Extranet. Make sure there are enough fake digital avatars for all the heroes. Let the players invent a fake name, position and short background for each avatar.
- The V-World address for MaxDigital's Extranet. The hidden V-World address for MaxDigital's Extranet is unlisted, so having it is the only way for the heroes to reach it.
- Dr. LaMarche's password-key to his office. This is loaded into the Avatar's profile so his office door opens automatically.
- A small illegal hacking program with the curious name of "DigiDefrost." The program is a complex piece of hacker code, and it is a mystery how Dr. LaMarche could have acquired it, or what it does. DigiDefrost comes with instructions on how to load it into the V-World Pod the heroes' use to enter the Extranet. A small comment in the code says that this program should be activated by the heroes if they are discovered or get in trouble within the Extranet. To activate DigiDefrost during their visit to the Extranet, a hero just needs to think about activating it.

Since MaxDigital Corp's Research Extranet is a secure V-World environment, you should explain to the players the restrictions they will have (see the *Seven Worlds Setting Guide*). The heroes' stats do not change when they connect to this V-World using the temporary avatars, they will still be themselves. Their looks do change, though, to match the look of the impersonation avatar they've selected.

This V-World does not allow weapons, and so the heroes will be unarmed when they enter it. Also remind Psionic heroes that their psionic powers will not work within the virtual environment.

ENTERING THE EXTRANET

When the heroes are ready to connect, read or paraphrase the following:

MaxDigital Corp's Research Extranet is a beautiful, quiet, modern campus building surrounded by immense, well-tended lawns and forests.

You see people walking in and out of the campus, some of them looking fully "real" while others look semi-transparent. You realize that this environment is a simulated replica of MaxDigital's real physical research center, and that some of the people in front of you are avatars of other researchers, while the rest are digital representations of people who are working in the real physical building. In this way, a researcher on the real-world building can cross paths down the hallway with the avatar of a remote researcher on the V-World Extranet, and they can greet each other or strike up a conversation. Amazing!

While you still feel the same, now you look wildly different! One of you is now a middle-aged, significantly out-of-shape male scientist, wearing a lab coat with a tag saying "Dr. Sindi Roberts." The others look like assorted researchers in lab coats.

The front door of the building is guarded by two immaculately dressed men in dark suits. Although friendly-looking, there is something unsettling about the way they move their arms and muscles, as if maybe there were more to them than what you see.

If the heroes previously visited MaxDigital's physical campus outside Oakland they recognize the architecture and design of the place as identical to the real campus.

The guards are super-powered avatars of real-world security personnel, and getting them angry can be deadly. They require everyone in the party to identify themselves before entering. The hero with Dr. Rogers' fake identity will immediately be recognized and allowed access after one or two questions related to "what he's been up to the past few weeks." His "research fellows" will be slightly questioned as to their background and business and then let in unless they do something suspicious (a Persuasion roll at +2 should suffice, unless the heroes do or say something inappropriate that makes you apply a penalty to the roll).

Unless the players do something really stupid (such as attacking), the guards will not show any of their special powers.

- **V-World Guards (2):** In human form use stats for Veteran Security (see page 36). In monster mode use stats for Dark Terror (see page 34).

THE OFFICE

Inside the virtual research center, the heroes find an attractive and comfortable work environment: large passageways, covered in windows and panels and illuminated with sunlight; comfortable couches and seats, pictures of company events and activities; even a cafeteria where people have animated discussions while sitting around tables. Some of these meetings are between physical people sitting at a real table in the real research center, and virtual counterparts entering via the Extranet.

The heroes should have no problem finding Dr. LaMarche's office. The office door is locked but opens automatically to any heroes who loaded Dr. LaMarche's password-key into their profiles.

Inside the office, the heroes find Dr. LaMarche's desk, and on it they find piles of digital research papers (in reality digitalized files) organized in virtual stacks, dealing with complex technical topics.

A quick search of the digital files available shows that the documentation Dr. LaMarche sent the heroes to acquire has been tagged as classified and placed off-limits by the security department of MaxDigital Corporation. When the heroes try to open the file their hands just go right through it. No matter what they try, the heroes can't read it.

The trip has not been in vain, however. Two important clues can be gleaned in this place:

- Any hero trained in Knowledge (Science) who glances at the documentation concludes from the research papers that Dr. LaMarche is an expert on the software that runs the Stellar Communications Network that communicates the *Seven Worlds*, and has recently been working on unspecified major improvements to the software. A hero's Assistant with the Knowledge (Science) skill can also reach this conclusion if the hero asks it to review the files.
- While the heroes search, have the hero (or Assistant) with the highest Hacking skill die make a Hacking roll. With a success the hero finds a secret backdoor that Dr. LaMarche added to his own employee records at MaxDigital Corp's security department. There the heroes find an investigative report on the LaMarche's disappearance. Give the heroes Handout #1.

TRAPPED!

The heroes' search activities have not gone unnoticed! Silent alarms have alerted security to the fact that Dr. LaMarche's office is being ransacked. Once the heroes have exhausted their search for clues, read this to them:

All of a sudden this V-World changes! A reddish haze overlays the entire simulation, and you all freeze where you are. You try to move and discover that you can't! The rules of the V-World extranet have frozen your avatars in place.

A female recorded voice message says "Do not try to escape. You have been detected performing unauthorized activities. Security personnel will be with you shortly to question you. Do not try to escape..."

You notice you have been disconnected from your Assistants, and that you yourselves cannot disconnect from V-World and leave. You are effectively trapped inside the Extranet!

It should be a matter of seconds before security arrives, captures you definitely, and traces you back to your real bodies in the real world. Judging from what you've heard of Security in V-World Extranets, this should not be pleasant.

There is only one way to escape this trap: One of the heroes can mentally activate the "DigiDefrost" hacking program they have loaded into their pods before the guards arrive and capture them.

Activating this program should normally be automatic but is now much harder since the heroes have already been trapped. Treat the activation as a Dramatic Action using the Hacking skill with a -2 penalty. The heroes need five successes in order to mentally activate "DigiDefrost." Cooperative rolls using the Hacking skill are acceptable.

By the third round, the door opens and two security guards, identical to the guards at the door, enter. They look somehow larger and more menacing than before, and something under their suits pulses slightly, as if their bodies were somehow bubbling, or changing. The guards gloat about how the heroes are trapped, and how they will trace them back to their real-world location and capture them. They also periodically use the Spores power from their fingers (see the Dark Terror description) to automatically damage a random hero as part of their interrogation (treat this as an automatic hit with a raise and roll damage). The heroes can role-play using Persuasion rolls to try to fast-talk the guards and gain time while they continue working at the Dramatic Task. You have a final say on when the guards decide to stop this impromptu torture and proceed to disconnect the heroes.

When the heroes activate the "DigiDefrost" program, proceed to the next section.

- **V-World Guards (2):** In human form use stats for Veteran Security (see page 36). In monster mode,

or when using the Spores power, use stats for Dark Terror (see page 34).

THE GETAWAY

Read this to the heroes:

Suddenly the entire V-World flickers! The guards look around you surprised. "What's happening?," one of them asks.

A logo and a message written in scrawny letters appear floating in the air in front of all of you. The logo looks like a child's drawing of a bull-dog's head, and the message under it reads "Bad Dog's Last Laugh." The guards stare at it horrified before an immense white-noise digital explosion makes everything turn bright.

A few seconds later you are standing just as you were before the explosion, as the simulation rapidly rebuilds itself. Every user other than you or the guards has been disconnected. You are no longer frozen and can freely move! What's more, each one of you finds yourself armed with an autopistol, a bizarre glowing device with the small logo of a bull-dog's head on it. Supposedly weapons are not allowed in this V-World. Your Assistants are also back with you. This is a good hack program indeed!

The simulation itself is in chaos. The walls and windows of the virtual complex flicker wildly on and off, and you can probably run through them if you wanted to. Far away you see, looking through the flickering walls, the location where you originally appeared when you entered the simulation. It is covered with a large green semi-transparent sphere. You know this is the only place in the simulation where you can disconnect and leave V-World without being traced. If you want to escape you need to reach that place!

As the guards slowly regain their wits, you see more guards begin to appear. Then the simulation turns a dark red as full alert is raised. The guards shape-shift into horrifying large humanoids covered in a strong carapace. Their heads and arms extend into four black mucus-covered slimy tentacles. The inhuman monsters growl and lunge with blinding speed towards you!

The strange guns that have appeared in the heroes' hands are virtual auto-pistols with unlimited ammo. Give the weapon stats for auto-pistols to the heroes.

When staring at a Dark Terror for the first time, all heroes need to make Fear checks or be Shaken.

Play this as a Chase using the Chase rules from *Savage Worlds*. The Chase lasts five rounds, and uses Agility as the maneuvering Trait. The Dark Terrors can use their Spores power as a ranged attack, and can also attack with their tentacles at Melee and Short range. The Force maneuver is not available.

Some typical obstacles to use during the chase might include:

- A wall materializes in front of the hero (a minor or major obstacle)
- A wall materializes or piece of furniture materializes on the location the hero is, and unless the hero avoids it, he or she will receive significant damage (a disaster complication).

The following special Assistant actions are available:

- **V-World modification Interface:** If a hero spends a Benny and his or her Assistant makes a successful Hacking roll, it makes a virtual obstacle appear in front of the pursuing Dark Terrors. The player should come up with an ingenious and interesting obstacle. With a success on the Hacking roll, the enemies receive a -2 penalty to their next Agility roll to move. With a raise, the Assistant's hero (and only that hero) also receives a +2 bonus to his or her Agility roll to move.

After the fifth round, the heroes successfully reach the sphere that marks the escape zone and automatically disconnect. The "DigiDefrost" program takes care of

erasing the tracing logs so MaxDigital can't find out where they came from. The heroes have escaped!

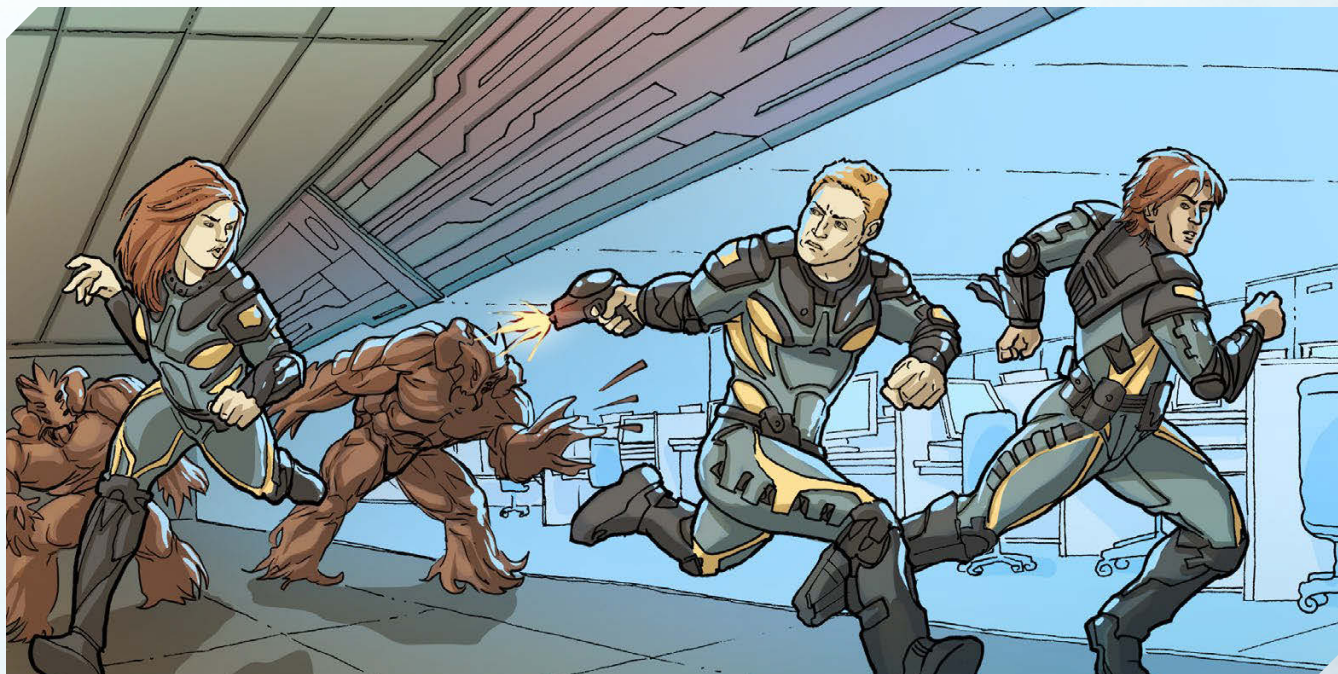
- **Dark Terrors (1 per hero):** See page 34.

EPILOGUE

By the time the adventure is over, the heroes should have talked to the N'ahili, realized the aliens' interest in whatever the heroes saw in Nouvelle Vie, and received some cryptic advice from them. They should also have made the acquaintance of several important people at the Psion Brotherhood and obtained their commitment to send directly to Epsilon Leader Antoine an encrypted copy of the classified files related to the strange incidents and sightings in space. Finally, they should have discovered that Dr. LaMarche's has escaped somewhere outside Earth; that he was working on something related to the Stellar Communications Network, something that was deeply troubling him; and that his employer is looking to kill him.

When the heroes finish this part of the adventure, they get a message from Epsilon Leader Antoine. He asks them to report back to Circle HQ in Melissant as soon as possible, as he has a new mission for them. Besides, the war between Concordia and Bay Jing is heating up, the situation in Nouvelle Vie is becoming more unstable by the minute, and the Circle is about to be dragged into a nasty war.

The adventure continues in *Divided we Fall*, the next module in the epic *Seven Worlds* campaign!



side stories

This section includes several side stories you can run or take inspiration from to complement the adventures in the main campaign.

Don't forget to review the background for each planet, as well as the Personalities section on the *Setting Guide*. There are great ideas for further side stories there!

SPACE-JUMPING A CLAIM

Where: Clarke Station or Nouvelle Vie.

Robt Sardo, leader of the Asteroid Miners Guild, asks the heroes for help. The *Touraine*, an independent miner ship, is drifting next to an unexplored asteroid on the outer asteroid belt. Requests for communication are not being answered. The crewmembers of the *Touraine* are renowned for being top explorers and always finding and claiming the best asteroid lodes. The ship left Nouvelle Vie with no incident a few weeks ago. Sardo asks the heroes to investigate, and save the miners if possible.

As the heroes approach the asteroid, their sensors detect another independent miner ship approaching as well. The *Deep Waters IV* reports it was on its own survey of the belt when it detected the situation and is approaching to help. The heroes' ship will reach the *Touraine* hours before the *Deep Waters IV*.

When the heroes reach the asteroid they find that it has a claim beacon that proves it is "owned" by Hataro Mining, a midsized mining consortium. Claim beacons avoid claim-jumping by proving "who was there first," but it is strange that the claim beacon did not transmit ownership back to Nouvelle Vie as soon as it was installed.

When the heroes board the silent *Touraine* they find signs of an explosion in the engine room, dead bodies everywhere, and a single survivor: Eddie Warren, one of the newer miners in the independent crew. Warren says that they arrived at what they thought was an unexplored asteroid but found the Hataro Mining claim beacon, which for some mysterious reason was not transmitting. Then a strange explosion rocked the engine room, destroying the engines, comm equipment and life support. Warren was able to get into an emergency suit but no one else made it. Warren is desperate to get back to civilization and discourages the heroes from investigating any further.

In truth, Warren joined the *Touraine* as a Hataro Mining plant. Knowing that the crew of the *Touraine* always managed to claim the most valuable asteroids, Warren waited until the team found a good one and then killed them before they made their claim by blowing up the ship and life support. Then he planted the claim beacon on behalf of Hataro and concocted the story that the beacon "had been there all along." The *Deep Waters IV* is an independent ship secretly hired by Hataro to "confirm" the validity of the beacon and pick up Warren.

As the heroes investigate the situation, Warren becomes increasingly nervous, finally resorting to trying to kill them. Once the crew of the *Deep Waters IV* sees they have been discovered they try to destroy both the *Touraine* and the heroes' ship. The *Touraine* cannot fight back.

- ★ **Eddie Warren:** Use the stats for Veteran Thug (see page 39), but remove the Mean Hindrance and add a Knowledge (Science) d6 and the Miner Edge.
- **The *Deep Waters IV*:** Use the stats for Medium Pirate/Mercenary Ship (see page 39).

A FREE MARKET

Where: Concordia.

Run this adventure if the heroes are preparing to depart Concordia towards Earth. If they have a different destination, change the adventure accordingly.

As the heroes are preparing to depart, they are approached by a middle-aged couple dressed simply in farmer clothing. They are Mr. and Mrs. Geroux, owners of a small gourmet cheese factory called Geroux. Their cheeses are in high demand among connoisseurs on Earth. Recently a large industrial food conglomerate, Wattsworth Produce, has been buying all the neighboring farms, and has tried to buy the Geroux's farm as well, but the couple have declined all offers. A few months ago, Wattsworth bought Geroux's distribution partner on Earth, and their distribution deal has been rescinded. With no distribution partner, Geroux's is on the verge of bankruptcy, and the couple are about to have their farm confiscated for debt. They ask the heroes to please transport a few crates with samples of their

best product to Earth and give them to Ron Sharlto, a possible new distributor.

Wattsworth Produce wants the Geroux' farm so badly for a reason: Unbeknownst to the couple, a curious combination of natural organic chemicals under the surface is producing soil of a particularly good quality. Wattsworth has obtained the lands around the farm and has confirmed that the center of this organic deposit is directly under Geroux. If Wattsworth could get their hands on that organism and analyse it they could reproduce that soil quality in all their farms, with significant financial returns.

As the heroes plan to depart Concordia, customs agents stop them and demand to confiscate the cargo; groups of thugs try to ambush and dissuade them from carrying the cargo; and their ship is sabotaged and has problems en route to Earth (run this as a Ship Hazard, see *Seven Worlds* Setting Guide). It should slowly become obvious that Wattsworth is going to a lot of trouble and expense for what should be a small farm.

- **Thugs (2 per hero):** Use stats for Typical Thug (see page 39).

Once the heroes arrive at Earth, they find that Ron Sharlto has mysteriously disappeared, and the heroes now have no distributor contact. While looking for him the heroes find that there is a Gourmet Foods fair coming up in a few days and that the heroes' best hope of finding distributors is at the fair. If the heroes decide to sign up, Wattsworth will try their best to stop them from participating, even attempting to kill them.

Regardless of whether the heroes participate in the Fair or not, a Wattsworth negotiator, accompanied by a group of heavily-armed goons, approaches the heroes and attempts to buy the product samples, asking them to name their price.

- **Negotiator:** Use stats for Civilian (see page 34) with a Persuasion of d12+2, Intimidation of d12 and Taunt of d10.
- **Thugs (1 per hero):** Use stats for Veteran Thug (see page 39).

Assuming the heroes find a distributor at the fair and negotiate a good deal with them, the Geroux will be immensely grateful, giving them a generous percentage of the initial distribution payment. As the heroes' participation becomes known (thanks in part to the Geroux) they get a permanent +1 bonus to Charisma while dealing with people from Concordia.

A SIMPLE ERRAND

Where: Clarke Station.

Jacinta Matriciano, the EarthGov representative in Nouvelle Vie, approaches the heroes while they are in the corridors of Clarke Station, and invites them for a drink. After some small talk she asks for a favor: She knows, as members of the Circle, they tend to travel a lot. Should their travels take them to Earth, there's a delicate package she would pay a lot of money to have picked up and brought to her. The heroes are to go look for a Mr. Ryu in downtown London and ask for the package. She refuses to elaborate on the contents, except to say that the heroes should not worry about getting in trouble because transporting it is not illegal.

If the heroes ever pick up the package, they receive a small box weighting around two pounds. Shortly after picking it up, the heroes are ambushed by hired goons who want the package.

- **Hired Goons (6):** Use stats for Typical Thug (see page 39).

Should the heroes open the package (which once open cannot be closed again) they find significant amounts of Peak, a highly-addictive, illegal hallucinogenic recreational drug distributed by Earth cartels. It turns out Matriciano has become addicted to Peak and needs her daily dose whatever the cost.

The goons have been hired by Councilman Ballard Hanks, a political opponent of EarthGov Secretary General Norah Reichardt. By outing Matriciano's drug problem, Hanks wants to discredit her and by extension her mentor and party leader, Reichardt, thus preparing the way for his election to the top post. As the heroes escape Councilman Ballard's ambushes and traps he becomes more desperate, resorting to phony police interventions and others.

Assuming the heroes are still willing to transport Matriciano's package, right before they leave Hanks himself confronts the heroes, along with about sixteen hired goons. If the heroes still refuse to give him the package, he will try to take it by force, killing them if necessary.

If Matriciano receives the package and learns of all this, she will reward the heroes handsomely, and apologize for lying to them about Peak not being illegal. She will owe them a favor from then on.

- **Councilman Hanks' Hired Goons (16):** Use stats for Veteran Thug (see page 39).

★ **Councilman Ballard Hanks:** Use stats for Civilian, but give him the Command Edge, and a d10 in Intimidation and Taunt.

GEOSYNCHRONOUS CRIME STORIES

Where: Earth, Center City.

The heroes are contacted by the family of Thomas Bialecki, a reputed scientific researcher who works for Oberon Industries on the planet Zarmina ("Gee"). Dr. Bialecki, who had come to Earth on vacation to visit his family, landed at Center City a few days ago and called his family to notify them of his arrival. Unfortunately, that was the last anyone heard of him. The family asks the heroes to find him.

Dr. Bialecki has been kidnapped by the Mayhem Crew, a crime syndicate with a branch in Center City. It turns out that next week a valuable sample of a new and potent medical drug created by Oberon Industries is arriving at Center City from Zarmina. The Mayhem Crew wants to steal this drug and sell it to a local laboratory. Dr. Bialecki is an excellent source of information on Oberon's research and on the security protocols that need to be breached in order to steal the cargo.

As the heroes arrive in Center City (either through the Space Elevator or a StO shuttle) and begin their investigations, they should find themselves in the sights of the Mayhem Crew. They might hear about Oberon Industries' arriving sample and its importance, and maybe crash the final showdown between Mayhem Crew members and Oberon Industries' security personnel in the docks where the sample is unloaded.

Dr. Bialecki is kept in one of the warehouses that rotate on the outer ring of Center City, protected by a group of Mayhem Crew members. While the Crew is very interested in the samples, they will not risk all their ongoing criminal operations in Center City just for one deal. If things get too rough, it is better for them to kill the heroes and Dr. Bialecki and move on.

- **Mayhem Crew Thugs:** Use stats for Typical Thug (see page 39).
- **Mayhem Crew Senior Thugs:** Use stats for Veteran Thug (See page 39).
- **Oberon Industries Security:** Use stats for Typical Security (see page 36).
- **Dr. Thomas Bialecki:** Use stats for Civilian (see page 34) but with Knowledge (Science) d10.

BITE-SIZED ADVENTURES

Here are some short ideas for you to flesh out, should you have the inclination:

- **Picking Sides:** One of the two competing bands of terrorists loyal to Jubilee and Dauphin sabotages Clarke Station and takes it hostage. With most of the official law enforcement of the station neutralized, the other terrorist group comes out and offers its services to free the station if the heroes and the other factions support them in the fight. The heroes must decide whether to ally themselves with terrorists to stop other terrorists (and legitimize the slaughter that will surely erupt) or if they are willing to fight two different bands of terrorists at the same time.
- **Wave of Death:** One of the frequent mega-tsunamis of Nouvelle Vie is approaching a small, remote island of fishermen. Tentacles (see page 38) and other local creatures are feeling the danger and becoming more violent and dangerous. Several years ago, the fishermen invested significant amounts of resources in building a shelter to protect against just this eventuality. Now, however, a young engineer swears that the shelter is not ready to support a tsunami of this magnitude, and asks everyone to evacuate. For political reasons, the leadership of the island refuses to abandon one of their platform projects, leaving the heroes in a quandary: Do they risk the protection of the shelter, maybe trying to reinforce it? Do they risk the wrath of the island leadership by convincing the population to evacuate? Or do they save those who want to be saved and leave the others to their fate?
- **A Bad Case of Food Poisoning:** On Earth, the heroes are asked to go to Pedernales, at the base of the Space Elevator. One of the elevator capsules arrived without trouble all the way from Center City, but one of the five passengers aboard died of poisoning a few hours after disembarking. Could one of the other four passengers have poisoned him? Why, and how? What happened during the four days the capsule trip lasted?

allies and foes

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

This is a list of some of the important characters in this adventure.

★ EPSILON LEADER TREVOR ANTOINE

Epsilon Leader Trevor Antoine is the current Leader of the Circle Foundation. A thin, fit man in his upper fifties, he was appointed to the job after being second in command to Suzanne LaMarche. Previously, he spent most of his time in the field in patrol and diplomatic missions, and as fleet leader. This gives him a lot of wisdom and experience, valuable qualities for a leader in an institution with as many interests as the Circle. During his Patrol days, he also shared missions with Marcel Coban from the Psion Brotherhood. The resulting enmity from that time is not lost on either one of them.

Antoine is a leader's leader, and devotes time to coaching and helping those around him in a paternalistic way. This has made him one of the most respected leaders the Circle has had in a long time.



EPSILON LEADER TREVOR ANTOINE

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Cha: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2); **Mental Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Heroic, Pacifist (Minor), Enemy (Marcel Coban)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Diplomat, Dodge, Command, Command Presence, Hold the Line!, Level Headed, Natural Leader, Tactician

Gear: Assistant, autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), light vest (+2, torso only).

Notes: Home World Earth (gets any edge for free; chose Diplomat).

Assistant Name and Gender: Assistant Program 5, "Janus", a middle-aged soldier dressed in a military space pilot vacc suit with a drawing of a blue-thunderbolt on the chest (symbol of the Circle Special Forces, an elite military unit Antoine belonged to at one time). "Janus" is always obedient and respectful.

Assistant Skills: Hacking d6 (with a Wild die), Investigation d4, Persuasion d4.

ENCOUNTERS

This is a list of the main creatures found in this adventure, both in the real world and in V-World.

BANDITS

Bandits are thieves and criminals, roaming the countryside to raid towns or travelers.

Found in: V-World

BANDIT

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Greedy, Mean

Edges: —

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).

BANDIT CHIEF

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Throwing d8

Cha: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Greedy, Mean

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Chain mail (+2), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).

BLACK BLOB

Black Blobs are amoeba-like creatures with an extremely acidic liquid secretion. Usually living hidden in caves, they attempt to surprise explorers by falling on them from the ceiling and trying to envelope them.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Acid:** Roll a d6 every time a weapon is used to strike a black blob. On a 6, the weapon is dissolved by the acidic secretions.
- **Camouflage:** When lying still, black blobs gain +4 to Stealth rolls.
- **Envelop:** If a black blob succeeds in a Fighting roll it has enveloped part of its target. Each round the victim remains enveloped, he or she suffers 2d6 damage. All equipment permanently loses 1 point of Toughness (Protection for armor) per round until it reaches zero, at which point it is destroyed. Trying to escape from this grapple requires a Strength roll at -6. A black blob may only envelop one foe at a time, regardless of its size.
- **Pseudopod:** A black blob can extend a single pseudopod out to 1". Damage 2d6..

★ CENTIPEDE

These huge monsters are about eight meters long and live underground, waiting for their prey. They are extremely hard to damage, and their mandibles can penetrate most types of armor.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Thick chitinous armor.
- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 4.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 when attacking a giant centipede due to their size.
- **Poison:** Victims must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer an automatic wound.
- **Size +4:** Giant centipedes grow up to 24' long.

CIVILIAN

Most civilians in the 23rd Century live normal lives, focusing on their trade or skills.

Found in: Everywhere

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

Skills: Piloting d6, Knowledge (One specific trade) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, various other skills

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Mental Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Varies

Edges: Varies

Gear: Assistant (skills and personality vary), tools of the trade.

DARK TERROR

Found in: V-World

Security Managers in protected sections of V-World have long ago learned that the trick to beating intruders who infiltrate their domains is not only to have their guards be stronger, but also more terrifying. More than once intruders have been captured because they froze in terror at the sight of the changed body of a security guard.

At their worst, dark terrors look like a large, powerful, muscled humanoid with a strong carapace that acts as armor. Their legs and arms extend into black mucus-covered slime tentacles that give them reach and stick to their enemies, thus making it more difficult to escape.

Security Guards are trained in handling their new, powerful body, and in using it to achieve maximum effect on their enemy.

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

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Carapace +4:** Dark Terrors are covered with a strong skin.
- **Combat Reflexes:** +2 to recover from Shaken.

- **Fear:** On seeing a Dark Terror for the first time, characters must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Powers:** Dark Terrors have 20 Power Points, and know the following powers: *blast*, *entangle*, *slow*.
- **Size +2:** Dark Terrors are usually the size of a bear.
- **Spores:** Dark Terrors can shoot a small, high-speed spore from the tip of their fingered tentacles. This is handled with a Shooting roll with range 4/8/16. With a success the spore explodes into an acid bomb, dealing 2d6 damage.
- **Tentacles:** Str+d6, Reach 4. The Dark Terror suffers no multi-action or off-hand penalty, and each tentacle may take independent actions.

DIRE WOLF

Dire wolves are larger than common wolves. They are used by orcs as pets and mounts.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Dire wolves roll d10s instead of d6s when running.

DRAGON, BLACK

Black Dragons inhabit dank swamps and marshes, and breathe noxious acid clouds.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+9, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d12

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 19 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Acidic Breath:** Black Dragons breathe acid using the Cone Template. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage. Additionally, the gas from the acid cloud inflicts a further 2d6 damage the round after it was breathed, then it neutralizes. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes acid.
- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Claws/Bite:** Str+d8.

- **Fear (-2):** Anyone who sees a mighty dragon must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Flight:** Dragons have a Flying Pace of 24", with an Acceleration of 6".
- **Hardy:** Dragons do not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking a dragon due to its massive size.
- **Improved Frenzy:** If a dragon does not use its Acidic Breath Ability, it may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.
- **Level Headed:** Dragons act on the best of two cards.
- **Size +8:** Dragons are massive creatures. This version is over 40' long from nose to tail, and weighs well over 30,000 pounds.
- **Tail Lash:** The dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide area. This is a standard Fighting attack and damage is equal to the dragon's Strength - 2.

KNIGHT

Knights have many different types of beliefs, religions and goals, but in the end most of it boils down to heavily-armored fighters with a few extra abilities.

Found in: V-World

JUNIOR KNIGHT

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d8

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Command, Noble

Gear: Corselet (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), lance (Str+d8, Reach 2, AP 2 when charging), war horse.

VETERAN KNIGHT

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Riding d10

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Frenzy, Level Headed, Noble

Gear: Corselet (+3), plates arms and legs (+3), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), large shield (+2 Parry), lance (Str+d8, Reach 2, AP 2 when charging), war horse.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement can be police in cities, corporate security officers in large corporations, or maybe hired guards. They are in charge of keeping order and upholding the law, although in some cases may also be the elements of force of a suppressive regime or private organization.

Found in: Everywhere

TYPICAL SECURITY

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Mental Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor (uphold the law)

Edges: Connections (Police Officers)

Gear: Light Vest (+2), Enhanced Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-auto, also fires 1 explosive round for 2d8, AP 4 damage), Shock Stick (Str+d4), electronic handcuffs, Sonic Stunner (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d6+1 nonlethal, special), Assistant with at least d4 in Hacking skill.

VETERAN SECURITY

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Taunt d6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7/9 (2/4); **Mental Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Code of Honor (uphold the law)

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Level Headed, Marksman.

Gear: Combat Vest (+2/+4, negates 4 AP against bullets), Enhanced Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-auto, also fires 1 explosive round for 2d8, AP 4 damage), Puke stick (Str+d4), Sonic Stunner (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d6+1 nonlethal, special), electronic handcuffs, Assistant with at least d8 in Hacking skill and d6 in Investigation skill.

MAGE

Mages and Wizards harness the power of the arcane.

Found in: V-World

NOVICE MAGE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Various

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points, Wizard

Gear: Various.

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** Novice mages have 15 Power Points and typically know *armor*, *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, and *light*.

VETERAN MAGE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points, Wizard

Gear: Various, but at least one magic item.

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** Veteran mages have 25 Power Points and typically know *armor*, *blast*, *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *fly*, and *light*.

OGRE

Ogres usually join orc clans, where they become their most lethal weapon.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (1)

Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive club (Str+d8).

Special Abilities:

- **Size +3:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with pot-bellies and massive arms and legs.
- **Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes at -2.

ORC

Orcs are wild humanoids with disturbingly ugly features. They are smelly, cruel and violent.

Found in: V-World

ORC WARRIOR

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.
- **Infravision:** Half penalty for poor light versus heat-producing targets.

ORC LEADER

Orcs are extremely tribal, and follow their leaders without question. Sometimes this means bringing down a leader makes the orc soldiers under his command panic and flee.

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

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Edges: Command

Gear: Chest plate (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), battle axe (Str+d10).

Special Abilities:

- **Infravision:** Half penalty for poor light versus heat-producing targets.
- **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.
- **Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes at -2 penalty.

ORC SHAMAN

Orc shamans control wild magic. While not as powerful as studied arcane casters, Shamans wield knowledge millennia old, and thus are extremely capable and dangerous.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1).

Special Abilities:

- **Infravision:** Orcs halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Spells:** Shamans have 15 Power Points and typically know *armor*, *bolt*, *fear*, and *smite*.

PSION

Psions are individuals born with the power to affect matter using only their thoughts. Most psions

belong to the Psion Brotherhood, but some are rogue psions, having learned by themselves how to control the power.

To help you avoid having to keep track of psion Extras' power points during combat, no power points are used for the characters below. Instead, each power can be used a limited number of times per scene. Powers that normally last 3 (1/round) now last a flat three rounds per activation. For simplicity, assume if the Soul Drain edge is used, the modifier to the Spirit roll is a flat -2, regardless of the power to be used. If the roll is successful, the psion gains one power to cast immediately.

Found in: Everywhere

JUNIOR PSION

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Psionics d8, Shooting d6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (2); **Mental Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Vow (Psion Vow)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Mentalist, Soul Drain.

Powers: 1 × *bolt*, 1 × *deflection*, 1 × *telepathy*.

Gear: Assistant, Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Light Vest (+2).

TYPICAL PSION

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Psionics d8, Shooting d8

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Mental Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Vow (Psion Vow)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Combat Reflexes, Mentalist, Touch Psion, Soul Drain.

Powers: 1 × *bolt*, 1 × *deflection*, 1 × *entangle*, 1 × *pummel*, 1 × *read surface thoughts*, 1 × *telekinesis*, 1 × *telepathy*

Gear: Assistant, Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Light Vest (+2)..

VETERAN PSION

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

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

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Mental Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Vow (Psion Vow)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Arcane Resistance, Combat Reflexes, Command, Mentalist, Nerves of Steel, Ranged Psion, Soul Drain.

Powers: 1× armor, 1× blast, 2× bolt, 1× brain lock, 1× deflection, 1× entangle, 1× probe, 1× pummel, 1× puppet, 1× read surface thoughts, 1× slumber, 1× telekinesis, 1× telepathy

Gear: Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Light Vest (+2), Assistant with at least d4 in Hacking skill.

ROGUE PSION

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Psionics d8, Shooting d8

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7/9 (2/4); **Mental Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: —

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Arcane Resistance, Combat Reflexes, Psychic Soldier, Soul Drain.

Powers: 1× blast, 2× bolt, 1× deflection, 1× read surface thoughts, 1× telekinesis, 1× telepathy

Gear: Assistant, Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Combat Vest (+2/+4, negates 4 AP against bullets).

ROCK MONSTER

Rock Monsters are strange underground creatures with sharp diamond teeth and a rocky shell. Although they can't digest meat, they love its taste and eat it whenever they can. They usually curl like a boulder inside a cave, and attack with surprise when explorers walk by them.

Found in: V-World

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10

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

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Rocky shell.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Camouflage:** When not moving, rock monsters resemble small boulders. Characters actively searching for danger suffer -4 to their Notice rolls to find them. Undetected Rock Monsters strike with surprise, getting the Drop on their unsuspecting foes.

TENTACLER

Native to the seas of Nouvelle Vie, Tentacles are dangerous water predators. Large, long creatures with a mouth covered in tentacles, they frequently attack small boats and coast side villages.

Found on: Nouvelle Vie

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Swimming d10

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Can "run" using a d10 running die.
- **Armor +2:** Thick shell.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to the Tentacler's great size.
- **Tentacles:** A Tentacler may make up to four attacks each round. On a raise, the creature has grappled the victim. An entangled victim may only attempt an opposed Strength roll each round to escape. Once grappled, the Tentacler does its Strength damage automatically by crushing with its arms and rending with its beak. A victim killed by a Tentacler's tentacles is usually ripped in half.
- **Size +6:** Tentacles are 40 feet long.

TERRORIST

Terrorists, or Freedom Fighters (depending on who you ask), are ruthless and committed to their cause.

Found in: Everywhere, but mostly on Nouvelle Vie

TYPICAL TERRORIST

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7/9 (2/4); **Mental Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Combat Vest (+2/+4, negates 4 AP against bullets), Combat Helmet (+3, head only), Assault Rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto), stun grenade (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6 non-lethal, MBT), Assistant with at least a d4, Hacking skill.

VETERAN TERRORIST

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8/10 (2/4);

Mental Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Command

Gear: Combat Vest (+2/+4, negates 4 AP against bullets), Combat Helmet (+3, head only), Assault Rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto), stun grenade (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6 non-lethal, MBT), Assistant with at least a d6, Hacking skill.

THUG

Thugs are usually the muscle that works for the underworld, and will do anything for the right price.

Found in: Everywhere

TYPICAL THUG

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

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

Cha: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Mental Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: —

Gear: Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Brass Knuckles (Str+d4), Combat Knife (Str+d4), Assistant.

VETERAN THUG

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Autopistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto, 20 bullets), Brass Knuckles (Str+d4), Combat Knife (Str+d4), Light Vest, stun grenade (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6 non-lethal, MBT), Assistant.

TOWNSPERSON

Townspersons are the civilians in V-World, the masses who are usually cannon fodder in most games.

Found in: V-World

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

Skills: Knowledge (One specific trade) d6, Fighting d4, Survival d4

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Varies

Edges: Varies

Gear: Tools of the trade.

VEHICLES AND SPACESHIPS

What follows is a list of the vehicles and spaceships used in this adventure.

PIRATE/MERCENARY SHIP, MEDIUM

This is a similar version of the previous mercenary ship, but larger and with more firepower. Since acts of piracy in space usually entail leaving the victims alive and with their ship intact (otherwise its instant death for the prey), these ships focus on stealing as many small valuables as possible, or maybe on kidnapping passengers if the payoff is high enough. Ships like this one are involved when the prey is larger and more firepower is needed to intimidate it.

Top Acceleration: 10; **Toughness:** 18 (12); **Handling:** +1; **Heat Radiation:** +3; **Shield Effects:** 3; **Crew:** 10+0; **Jumps:** 8; **Weeks per Jump:** 0.75

Abilities: Knowledge (Ship Ops) d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d8, Repair d6

Notes: Heavy Armor, Spacecraft, Improved Stabilizer, 1 Healing Pod

Weapons:

- 2 × Light Laser Cannons (Range 4/8/16; Damage 3d6; AP 6; RoF 1; PDLB RoF 5; Heat Points 3; HW)
- Heavy Missile Launcher (Range 2/4/8; RoF 4; Heat Points 3; 4 reloads per launcher, maximum 2 can be nuclear).

Available Ammo:

- ⊕ 4 Kinetic Missiles (Damage 3d6; 8; HW)
- ⊕ 2 Neutron Missiles (Damage 3d6+special; AP10; HW)
- ⊕ 2 NNEMP Missiles (Damage 3d6+special; AP10; HW)
- ⊕ 2 Kinetic Cloud Projectiles (Damage 2d4; 8; HW; each one takes up one entire launcher payload)
- 4 × Mine Cloud Defenses (+2 bonus to Piloting roll to Evade against all projectiles; +4 against one projectile).

appendix: the n'ahili

The aliens known by humanity as the N'ahili are a fraud, a reflection of how humans think aliens should really look. It is human folly to think they should know how aliens look, think or behave, or even to assume that intelligence is their defining trait.

As explained above, what we call "the N'ahili" is simply one of millions of knowledge-gathering probes, specifically designed to empathize and adapt to the communications patterns, thoughts and customs of the species they are investigating at the moment. This particular probe has been studying humans for a long time before deciding how to present itself.

Every facet of the N'ahili's image has been carefully designed to give humans the appearance of a powerful, mysterious and peaceful alien species. The word "N'ahili" was chosen as an alien-sounding name that humans could pronounce. Very few humans have actually commented on the fact that if this is the aliens' true name, how come their language is based on sounds transported through air? Do the aliens have a throat sound apparatus capable of generating the sounds in the word "N'ahili?" Isn't it an amazing coincidence that out of the huge expanse of the electromagnetic spectrum the aliens we meet happen to have a language that uses the exact same frequencies and sound-waves that we use to speak and listen?

The aliens' own representation as ridiculous-looking "blowfish-like beings" is another invention designed for human consumption. The goal is to

make them look alien but not threatening. Whatever the beings inside the probe look like, they do not look like blowfish.

The N'ahili alien ship also looks strange, but has curious details that very few have noticed. How come the ship cycles through the colors of the *human-visible* spectrum? A coincidence? A decision to fit with what humans would perceive?

Adam, the N'ahili avatar, is the ultimate representation of the aliens' goal. A perfect, attractive virtualization of a human being, capable of speaking in many tongues and understanding the language. Yet, for all those advances, Adam makes "mistakes" when speaking and sometimes delays his response for a second or two while "understanding" what was said. This is a deliberate attempt to make the probe look less powerful than it really is, making the humans believe the aliens "are making an effort" and "are not perfect."

The truth about the N'ahili is that the probe has become unhinged. Its gathering activities are finished, and it should be ready to move forward and leave the space open for the annihilating probe but it has become so emotionally attached to humans that it does not want to let them die without making an effort. Its programming forbids it to openly help them or warn them of what is to come, but it has helped them expand, and has worked behind the scenes to help them defend themselves.

Whether that will be enough or not will be seen.

The following are handouts and dispatches to be given to the players during the adventure.

HANDOUT #1

Internal Security Report MD-ISR-334R5R-1: CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Dr. Luis LaMarche Disappearance Investigation

MD Security has located and taken care of an underground hacker going by the alias of "Mad Dog." This hacker has been identified as the subject that illegally removed Dr. LaMarche's IDTag from his body and faked his DNA fingerprints, thus making it impossible for us to locate him by the usual methods.

Based on local conduct pattern investigation MD Security concludes that Luis LaMarche has left Earth for an unknown destination. It is therefore necessary to activate procedures to continue the search on other Worlds as well as on space stations and other remote locations.

All agents are reminded that because of the information he carries the suspect represents a maximum security risk. All MaxDigital Security agents must work to find him whatever the cost and eliminate him on sight, as well as anyone else he may be or has been in contact with.

Suzanne,

I'm sorry for making you jump through hoops like this, but I can't think of a safer (or more bizarre) place to store information in than this. I've found something really bad while working at Max Digital Corp, and I think the Circle should get involved right away. I wish I could offer you proof, but I can't. Your experts at the Circle can, though: There's a protected file in my virtual study inside Max Digital Corp's V-World Research Extranet. Since it's a secure V-World, it forbids taking documents out of it, but I'm sure if someone from your team gets in and reads it, they'll find a way to act on it.

Below this note you'll see several digital tags. I'm sure your Assistant can scan them and thus take them back to the real world. They will provide everything you need to enter the Max Digital Extranet and get the information you need.

Again, I'm sorry for this mess. Hopefully I'm as paranoid as ever and you'll laugh at me about this, again.

Love,

Luis

