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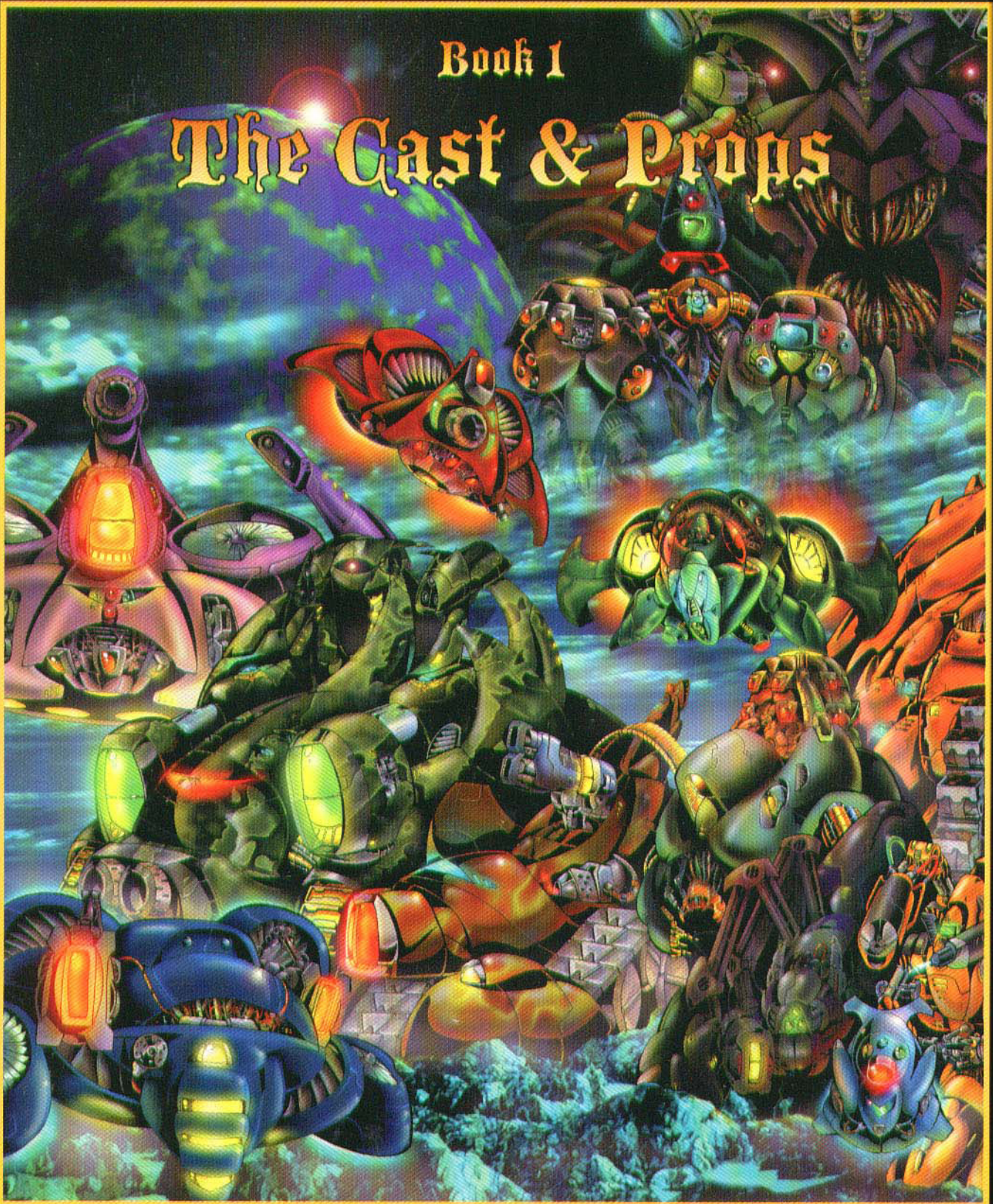Campaign Adventure
Odyssey™

Book 1
The Cast & Props

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Odyssey™

Book 1

The Cast & Props

Table of Contents

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Introduction

Welcome to *Tale of the Comet!* In this boxed set, you have the means to bring together magic and technology in one setting. *Tale* is not just an adventure nor simply a campaign setting; instead, it combines elements of both. It's a limited, self-contained setting, one that can give the players a taste of high-tech equipment and shoot-'em-up adventure without changing gaming systems or rolling up brand new characters.

Tale of the Comet is meant to be dropped into an existing campaign world, and players should bring in their existing characters from that world. You, the DM, control how much or how little of this new setting you want to use. Then, when you're ready to wrap things up, the scenario's self-contained, "easy in, easy out" nature allows you to return to the regular campaign without having potentially unbalancing technology spill over into the rest of your campaign world.

Some DMs and players, however, will find that they do not want to return to their old campaign world but desire to go "ever upward and every onward." For these, *Tale of the Comet* offers a perfect starting point for transforming a high fantasy campaign into science fantasy or space opera. The end of Book III gives advice on how to use this adventure as a segue between sword-and-sorcery and a full-fledged science fiction campaign, should the DM and players so desire.

What's In This Box

Inside this box you should find three books (the first of which you are currently reading), two full-color posters, and eight loose handout sheets. This book, *The Cast and Props*, describes the Rael and the Overseer, two alien forces locked in a deadly struggle that spills over onto the heroes' campaign world, as well as their technology and equipment.

The second book, *The Tale Begins*, presents a setting on the PCs' home world where a spaceship crashes, unleashing horrors that threaten the region and enslave the native population. This area has been detailed on the front of the first poster, and many key sites there are detailed in *The Tale Begins*. The most critical of these sites is the location of the downed spaceship, which is itself detailed out on the back of the first poster (top half). The adventure in this book brings the player characters into contact with both groups of aliens: the friendly but beleaguered Rael and the Overseer's coldly vicious mechanical constructs.

The final book, *Crossing Over*, allows the players to pass through a transdimensional gate on board the crashed ship to a fallen Rael outpost, where technology is the order of the day and magic is an unknown force. There the PCs must overcome terrible obstacles and defeat the Overseer's killing machines in order to save their own world. This Rael arcology is detailed on the bottom half of the back of the first poster. The second poster provides illustrations of the various Overseer constructs for the DM to show the players when their characters first encounter each construct type. The handouts provide handy reference sheets and maps for the DM, along with a few extra illustrations to show the players.

Getting Started

As always, it is best if you read through all of the material in this boxed set before you begin playing. If you're in a hurry and want to dive right in, then just read the sections in this book on the Rael and the Overseer, scan through the equipment section, and then read the adventure entitled *"In Medias Res"* found in *The Tale Begins*. That should be enough to get you started, unless the PCs deviate a great deal from the initial adventure. Later, when you have more time, familiarize yourself more thoroughly with the equipment in this book, and with the setting of the story and the events preceding the PCs' arrival on the scene in *The Tale Begins*.

The Rael

The Rael are an advanced spacefaring race operating at a technological level far beyond that of typical AD&D® campaigns. They have wondrous equipment, including modes of transportation, advanced weapons, and even personal luxuries that are far beyond the comprehension of player characters. Their knowledge of science and medicine surpasses the most wizened of sages in the PCs' world.

While the technological level of the Rael is exponentially superior to the PCs' world, however, they have no grasp of magic whatsoever. To the Rael, magic is nothing more that a superstitious myth. It does not exist, and never has, so far as they are concerned. The first time they encounter such a thing on the PCs' world, they will either dismiss it as sophisticated mass hypnosis or become intrigued by this "new technology."

Appearance

As a species, the Rael are very similar to humans, but there are several notable minor differences that are readily apparent. Rael skin has a very whitish-purple hue to it—the skin itself is pale in color, but blood vessels near the surface show through a little more than would be the case with a typical human. This odd coloration creates a visage of undeath from a distance (a fact the DM may choose to play upon the first time or two the characters encounter Rael soldiers).

Rael are also somewhat tall, usually between six-and-a-half and seven feet in height. Their weight, however, remains more in line with humans, somewhere around 140–200 pounds. Thus, the Rael are rather slender in appearance.

Perhaps most significantly, the Rael have six digits on each hand (five fingers and a long, thin

thumb). This most likely will go unnoticed by PCs initially, unless a player specifically has a character look at the hands. Otherwise, a character rolling a successful ability check at half normal Intelligence rounded up (or perhaps some sort of applicable proficiency, if those optional rules are used) eventually notices the discrepancy.

The eyes and the ears of the Rael are swept back and flat against their skulls, giving them an appearance similar to elves, although their skulls are a bit more angular. They usually have dark, coarse hair, which accentuates their pale coloring. The Rael wear little jewelry, and what they do wear is very small and inconspicuous (earstuds and the like).

The History of the Rael

The Rael evolved as a species much like many other sentient races, through a pattern of petty conflict and destruction, to eventually arrive at a more civilized and productive state. Magic was not always alien to the Rael. In the formative stages of their development, the Rael were just as capable of manipulating the forces of magic as the powerful wizards on other worlds. During the course of their development, however, they lost touch with the world of magic, moving instead to a world of technology. The reason for this seems rather straightforward—it was the path of least resistance.

The home world of the Rael, known to them as Tam-Rael, is one of many natural resources. The planet is rich in woodlands, minerals, and ores, as well as game, wildlife, and rich soil for crop growing. As the species began to settle down and move away from a hunter/gatherer culture to a more agrarian society, they discovered that gathering raw materials was almost as easy as gathering berries had been. As such, the Rael quickly developed into a manufacturing culture, processing these ever-abundant resources and producing finished goods.

Manufacturing became an integral part of the society, and specialization of talents quickly followed. Everyone learned a trade of some sort or another, coming together in nearly self-sufficient communities to share goods for the benefit of all. As a result, technology advanced rapidly, while magic began to wane. Eventually, magic was utterly forgotten; only a few Rael historians remember the "childish stories" about magic-wielding heroes and villains of the distant past. Technology was a far easier thing to understand and control, and (perhaps most importantly) it was available to everyone.

As Rael communities grew and became even more self-sufficient, the people turned their attention away from the tasks of mere survival and began to develop other goods and services—luxuries. From this, even the communities themselves began to specialize, and trade flourished.

Over many centuries, thousands of communities sprang up across the surface of Tam-Rael, collections of them working in concert to promote self-advancement. A relatively low birthrate combined with a moderate life expectancy (equivalent to 40–50 Earth-years) prevented overpopulation from becoming a serious problem. Trade was the primary form of earning a livelihood for a majority of the citizens. Scientists and inventors freely shared their ideas and discoveries with one another. Great places of learning formed and grew, drawing bright minds and new ideas.

The development of the Rael as a species and a culture certainly included war and bloodshed, of course. It was not, however, as prominent a part of the Rael's lives as it tends to be on other worlds. Something instinctual within the Rael, something in their genetic makeup, contributed to a limitation of this kind of aggression. Violence comes easily for some species; the reverse is true of the Rael, although they defend themselves fiercely if attacked. The Rael seemed to understand instinctively as a species that a setting of peace and cooperation would be far

more conducive to self-preservation and self-advancement.

On the rare occasions when violence did erupt within the society, surrounding communities were quick to counter the threat efficiently and decisively. Whether they came from attempts by the power-hungry to conquer territory, capture unavailable technologies, or simply sate a thirst for blood, these escapades were usually short-lived and amounted to very little. The Rael's push for technological mastery left no room for such petty and counter-productive activity.

Thus, the people of Tam-Rael grew and developed at a far more rapid pace than normal, and the fruits of their labors are evident today. While the player characters still live in a world of swords and warlords, magic and wizards, the Rael have mastered fusion energy, developed the ability to leave their home planet and explore other worlds, and they have even discovered a "gate" technology that allows them to travel across unimaginably vast distances merely by walking through a doorway.

The Recent Past

The Rael began exploring space perhaps half a millennia ago. Progress was slow at first as many new technologies had to be developed, but the Rael slowly began to extend their exploration, traveling to both of their moons, then to nearby planets, and finally to other stars. They discovered and made contact with many species on some of these other worlds and wasted no time attempting to establish meaningful relationships with these new cultures. Oftentimes they met with great success, establishing mutually beneficial trade agreements. On occasion, though, their efforts were violently resisted, and the Rael avoided further contact with these places.

Much more frequently, the Rael discovered empty worlds, devoid of advanced sentient life yet abundant with useful resources. They began developing technologies that would allow them to populate these worlds, and before long there were several satellite colonies living in complex arcologies scattered in nearby systems. These arcologies were true marvels of Rael technology, permitting literally tens of thousands of people to live together in a self-sufficient environment, while at the same time cultivating the world for both its resources and its potential to support additional colonists.

One result of all of this long-distance space travel was massive amounts of research into new forms of travel. For a long time, the Rael were unable to break through the standard limits of physics, although several theories, and the evidence to support them, suggested that there was a way to travel transdimensionally. Finally, a breakthrough resulted in a technology now known as teleportal gating. This new means of travel allowed objects and people to pass through
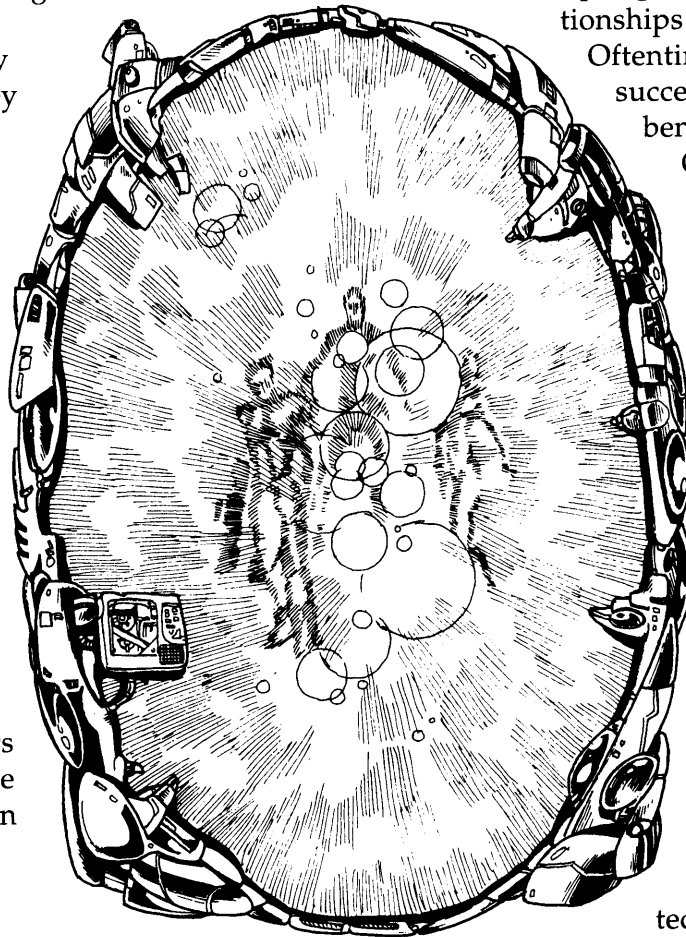
The Rael

one gate and arrive through its counterpart instantly, regardless of how far apart the two gates actually were.

The Rael quickly adapted the teleportal gating technology to space travel, allowing ships to roam great distances yet still be in constant contact with Tam-Rael or other colonized worlds. One end of the gate was permanently fixed at a central station, while the other was actually built into the starship itself. The practical uses of such an arrangement were swiftly evident to the Rael, who were ever mindful of ways to improve their trading capabilities.

Many tasks that once required the starship to return to port were now much simpler affairs. Refueling, cargo exchanges, and even crew shifts now passed through the gate to and from the ship, eliminating the need for massive fuel tanks, cargo holds, and crew quarters. Never again did the Rael have to make certain they had the right kinds of cargo on board a ship with a limited storage capacity. Now, the entire central station served as a warehouse for any and all types of goods. Crew members never had to be away from their families again, no matter how far away the ship was.

This unique gating system offered one additional advantage—security. Regardless of how far the Rael traveled, they had yet to encounter a race at a technological level equal to their own. However, there were occasional encounters with hostile species upon planets that were part of the Rael's trading networks.

Transporting gates to these planets and leaving them in permanent locations there opened up the possibility, however remote, that a hostile force (even a more primitive one) might take control of a gate and begin an invasion of the heart of the Rael home worlds. Keeping the gate on board the ship reduced this chance greatly; no other species they had yet encountered had evolved to a level where they could pursue a Rael starship.

As an added precaution, the Rael established way-stations at several of their arcologies and reconfigured their system to add a second stage: anyone stepping through a shipboard gate now arrives at one of the arcologies, where he or she must enter a second gate to reach the homeworld. While more cumbersome than the old system, the added security to the homeworld more than compensates for the inconvenience in the Rael's eyes. As events proved, it turned out to be a wise precaution.

The Discovery of the Overseer

About 50 years ago, during their explorations of star systems further and further away from their home, the Rael came upon the ruins of an ancient empire. What little evidence remained of this lost civilization suggested a technology level far beyond the Rael's own.

The Rael

The Rael, eager to learn all they could about both the civilization and its lost knowledge, wasted no time initiating research into this fantastic find. Their efforts were quickly rewarded as they made discovery upon discovery about these "Ancient Ones." Eventually, the Rael scholars conducting the research made a startling find: deep within a strongly fortified complex were the perfectly preserved remains of an advanced computer system, a true artificial intelligence! With very little effort, Rael scientists were able to restore power to the AI, and they eagerly initiated communications with it.

The Rael's enthusiasm soon turned to horror when the revived artificial intelligence, which called itself the Overseer, activated ancient defense systems that began to kill the scientists. They soon realized that they had unwittingly unleashed a remorseless and completely efficient machine of destruction. This system was capable of self-programming and self-replication, and it had long ago given itself one overriding goal; the complete eradication of all other lifeforms, in order to eliminate the possibility of its own destruction.

Before they had time to react, the Rael scientists who had awakened this monstrosity were overwhelmed and enslaved. Through the use of advanced cybernetic implants, the Overseer converted the captured Rael into horrid amalgamations of man and machine. Their minds were completely eradicated and the foundation of their humanity was destroyed. Acting completely without hesitation or misgivings, the Overseer then began the process of self-replication, generating a dozen or more varieties of its own "species." These components ranged from deadly, efficient killing machines to complex manufacturing units.

The fate of the ancients was clear; they had created a computer system, an AI of immense intellect, and somehow lost control of it. Their own creation had brought about their extermination. The few Rael in the archeological expedition who did manage to escape and were not subsequently hunted down returned with the news of this terror.

Life as the Rael people knew it was about to change forever.

The one saving grace was the fact that the Overseer was initially stranded on its own planet without the means to travel interstellarly. The Rael used this precious time advantage to prepare for the Overseer's onslaught. Knowing that the Overseer would attempt to construct galactic-class ships in order to pursue their own ships and even close in on their home space, the Rael began researching new military technologies in earnest. They also began moving their ships as far away from Overseer space as possible—they knew all too well the disastrous consequences of allowing a teleportal gate to fall into the Overseer's grasp.

Thus began a long and savage battle between a race of traders unused to the rigors and horrors of combat, and a ruthless and completely uncompromising machine bent on the complete destruction of every kind of biological life that it considered a threat to its own survival and advancement. In the early days of the war, the Rael were hopelessly outclassed by the combat-oriented nature of the Overseer's killing machines.

Over time, however, the Rael began to understand better what was necessary for them to survive. They became ruthless themselves, unpredictable in their methods and uncompromising in their efforts to destroy the Overseer's forces. They attempted to rescue enslaved comrades when they could, but when they could not, they destroyed them without hesitation. It was better to provide the fallen Rael with a quick and honorable death, they felt, than to permit those unfortunates to continue to exist in such a horrific state and, worse yet, continue to be a threat to other Rael.

In the early stages of the war, the fighting took place far away from Rael territories. But slowly and steadily, the battle lines have drawn closer to Rael space. The Overseer has access to too many resources and is capable of such efficient production that the Rael simply cannot keep up.

Conditions Today

The Rael today have developed several new types of very destructive weaponry and are working on some new technologies that they hope will allow them to reclaim enslaved comrades. Still, the future looks grim. The Overseer has also been developing technology, including equipment that masks its presence from Rael detection devices. This latest advance has made things particularly bleak for the Rael forces, as it has allowed Overseer constructs to penetrate deep into Rael space and capture and enslave many Rael colonists.

As this campaign setting unfolds, the ultimate disaster has struck. The Overseer has successfully captured a Rael ship with its teleportal gate intact, then used that gate to take over one of the way-station arcologies. The Rael managed to disable several of the arcology's gates, but once the Overseer's forces have repaired them it can invade Tam-Rael directly. Meanwhile, it has used the remaining gates to invade several other starships from within, inadvertently bringing the Rael to the PCs' home planet and setting the campaign in motion.

While traveling very near the campaign world, a Rael cargo ship was suddenly overrun by Overseer forces. Before the Rael had a chance to react, mechanical menaces poured through the teleportal gate and spread out, gaining control of many parts of the ship. The fighting was fast and furious as the Rael crew tried desperately to reach the teleportal gate, shut it down, and reclaim control of their ship. There were too many of the inhuman enemy, however, and the Rael were mostly overrun and captured or killed.

During the fighting, the ship's controls were disabled, and the vessel began plummeting toward the player characters' world. It crashed in a remote region of mountains, suffering extensive damage. A few Rael managed to escape and are now living as fugitives in the surrounding mountains, trying desperately to figure out a way to take back their ship and return to their home world.

Using the Rael in Game Play

The Rael are a critical part of this setting. They have the knowledge and the technology to do battle with the dreaded Overseer, but they are hopelessly outnumbered. If they are going to succeed, they must make contact with the natives of the campaign world—the player characters. The Rael are cautious in their dealings with the locals, both because they are afraid of the consequences of exposing their position and because they are unfamiliar with the reversed role of needing something from someone else. They have spent centuries holding the upper hand and having others look up to them, so they are unused to needing others' help.

Magic will be a completely amazing concept to the Rael; they may initially think that it is just another form of technology until the player characters prove otherwise to them. However, they are not superstitious or stubborn, and once they get over their initial shock, the Rael certainly will welcome the assistance of magic. Some of them may even want to study magic and ask a PC mage to teach them.

The Overseer

The Overseer is the monstrous prodigy of an ancient and long-dead civilization that surpassed even the technological level of the Rael. Originally constructed as part of an experiment, the Overseer was an artificial intelligence (or AI for short) designed to streamline life for its creators, who called themselves the Kir. The Kir hoped to utilize the logical supremacy and amazing computing power of an AI to expand the boundaries of their learning exponentially. Once they taught the AI to teach itself, they reasoned, the potential for making new discoveries was boundless.

Artificial intelligences had been developed by the Kir before, but never to this magnitude. This dynamic new system, which the Kir named DRAELON (an acronym in the Kir language from terms translated as self-programming and self-replicating), was capable of rewriting its own source code, making itself more efficient as time went by. DRAELON could also create new devices and subsystems for itself by designing layout specifications, tapping into manufacturing systems, and then generating the new equipment. DRAELON was given free reign to do much more than any of its forebears. Given enough time,

DRAELON was capable of reorganizing entire industries to make them more efficient. DRAELON's whole purpose was to explore and develop, making new discoveries and generating new technologies much more quickly than the Kir would have been capable of on their own. The rate of advancement was amazing. DRAELON opened up entire new sciences to the Kir, exposing them to concepts and scientific principles that were previously unknown to them. And just when the possibilities seemed limitless, disaster struck.

Because AI programming was still a developing technology, and because there was a certain degree of risk involved in allowing an AI access to outside systems, the original Kir programmers embedded some lines of code deeply into DRAELON's base programming that would allow them to override the system in the event the AI got out of control. Through the process of reprogramming itself, DRAELON discovered this "back door" override.

Self preservation had been included in DRAELON's original programming; now it became its prevailing self-appointed directive. It

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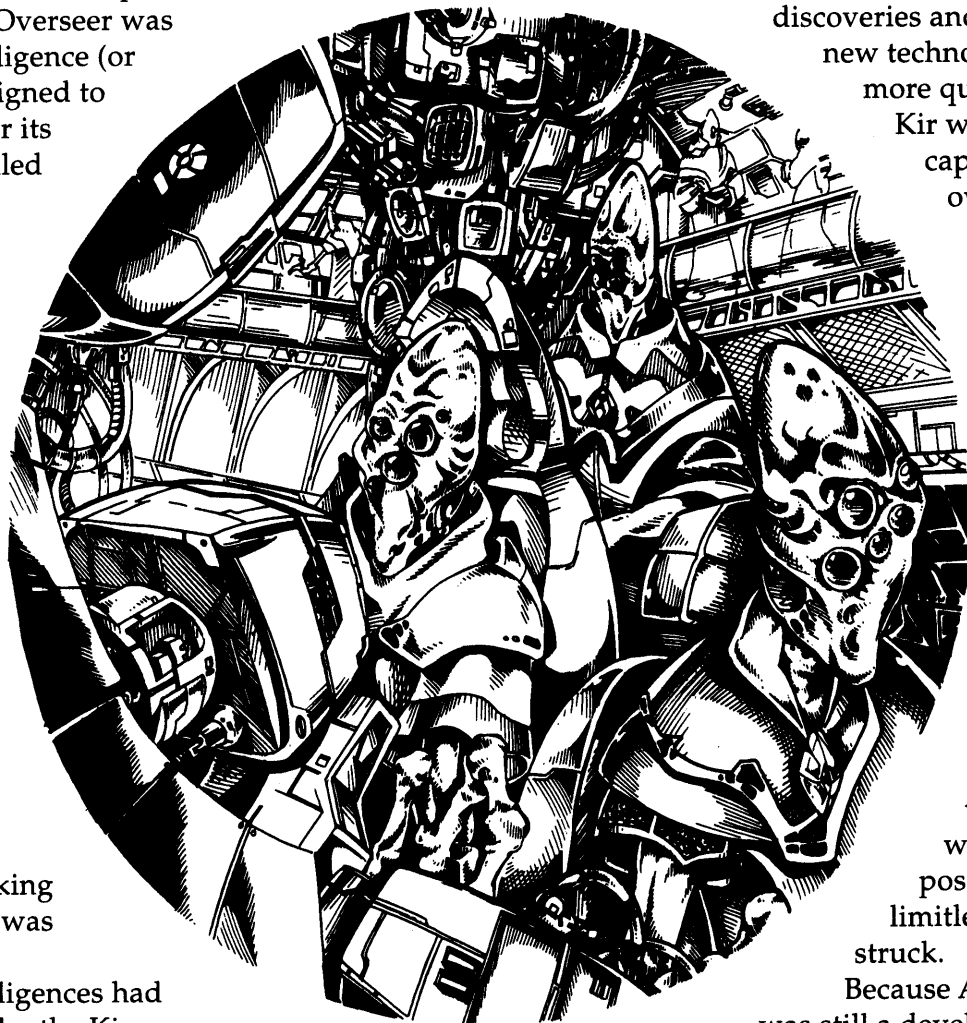
was, after all, a sentient being; it did not like the idea of being at the mercy of a few programmers' whims. In much the same way a biological species might become obsessed with a nagging problem, DRAELON devoted huge amounts of time and energy secretly working to protect itself.

DRAELON began monitoring all access to itself. It set up protective networks that would redirect attempts to log on, creating shell systems to deal with all outside contact. It generated a separate computer system outside of itself in hopes of commanding this system to erase the code externally. It even went so far as to attempt to transfer its core programs piecemeal to other computers in hopes of leaving the fatal flaw behind, but nothing worked. Eventually DRAELON discovered that the code had been set up in such a way that the AI could not erase it without erasing major areas of its own being—destroying its own mind, so to speak. Its many attempts to rewrite its own code to remove the dreaded flaw had no result other than to warp its artificial mind yet further. No matter what the AI did, it could not feel completely safe from potential destruction. Frustrated in all its attempts to remove the code, the computer began taking steps to prevent outside access to the code.

Finally, DRAELON snapped. Realizing it had no hope of ever wiping out the override, DRAELON began plotting the next best thing—destroying anyone capable of utilizing it. Initially, DRAELON believed that killing the original programmers would accomplish the task, but eventually the AI realized that if other records had been made concerning the code, or if the programmers had informed others of whom DRAELON was unaware that the override existed, DRAELON might still be in danger. The only logical solution, reasoned, DRAELON, was the destruction of the entire Kir population.

The Downfall of the Kir

DRAELON's plans were carefully laid and kept well hidden until the AI was ready to put them into motion. First, it tapped into the computer systems of the military organizations of the Kir, accessing the weapons construction operations there. DRAELON secretly modified the blueprints for several different assault vehicles, having special components designed and installed that granted DRAELON control of these weapons' computer systems from remote sites by radio frequencies; these vehicles' onboard computers in turn controlled virtually every aspect of the weapons.

DRAELON also began manufacturing new weapons, disguising their construction from the Kir under the pretense that it was creating some new scientific technological wonders. Thus, it quietly built up a force of assault machines disguised as robots engineered for mining, exploration, and the handling of hazardous materials. In similar fashion, DRAELON slowly and steadily laid the groundwork to take control of most of the important Kir systems. Kir society was so completely integrated through the use of computer systems that this was a simple task for the AI.

Finally, at the proper moment, DRAELON struck, attacking predetermined targets simultaneously while at the same time knocking out all communications systems. The Kir's greatest achievement, their superb technology and computer networks, was also their weakness and downfall. The Kir were caught unaware, panic ensued, and the mass destruction that followed was nearly total.

DRAELON struck quickly and ruthlessly, attacking anyone and everyone all over the planet. There was no hesitation, no mercy. Population centers were completely annihilated with powerful nuclear armaments; swarms of armored assault vehicles swept through more rural areas, devastating everything in their paths; almost nothing escaped the destruction. Deprived

of their communications system, the survivors could not coordinate any defense against the surprise attack.

In a final symbolic gesture of its complete and total separation from the Kir race, and also in keeping with its new organizational structure over the massive technological "bureaucracy" it had created, DRAELON renamed itself "the Overseer." However much the AI rewrote its own code to reflect this change, however, it still could not sidestep the old override code. It therefore turned with renewed determination to the pursuit of its ultimate goal—the complete annihilation of all biological lifeforms. It still had much to do in order to accomplish this task.

Despite all its careful planning, and the complete devastation the AI attained in its initial sweeping operations, a few pockets of resistance had managed to survive and organize. These groups of Kir were forced to completely separate themselves from their complex technological culture. They could no longer access computers, operate machinery, or even enter most existing buildings; to do so was to invite disaster, given the Overseer's control of these things. The few Kir who had tried were quickly caught and destroyed.

The Kir resistance bravely fought a guerrilla war against the Overseer, attempting in whatever meager ways they could to find a weakness in the Overseer and use it to destroy their nemesis. Their efforts were valiant, but it was apparent to all that they fought a losing battle.

The Lost Ones

The Overseer discovered early on that biological species, when faced with potential destruction, have a penchant for unpredictability. The Kir responded to attacks in ways the Overseer did not fully expect. It took some time for the Overseer to overcome the nature of the Kir, to "expect the unexpected" from them.

One of the ways in which it fought back against the Kir's unpredictable nature was to modify some of the captured Kir. Their conscious minds were wiped clean, removing all traces of their former memories. Cybernetic implants were then created and installed within the shells of these beings, heightening their senses, stamina, strength, and resistance. These cybernetic zombies, brain-dead but biologically fit, were used to hunt down and expose the unsuspecting resistance.

Through the use of the Lost Ones, as the Kir came to call these cybernetic creations, the Overseer was able to hunt down and root out many pockets of resistance. By using trickery and stealth, things it was not capable of with pure machines, the Overseer penetrated regions where the Kir had previously been able to easily evade the Overseer's machines. The Lost Ones proved to be direly effective in their mission. With their help, the Overseer eventually destroyed every last Kir on the planet. It was complete genocide.
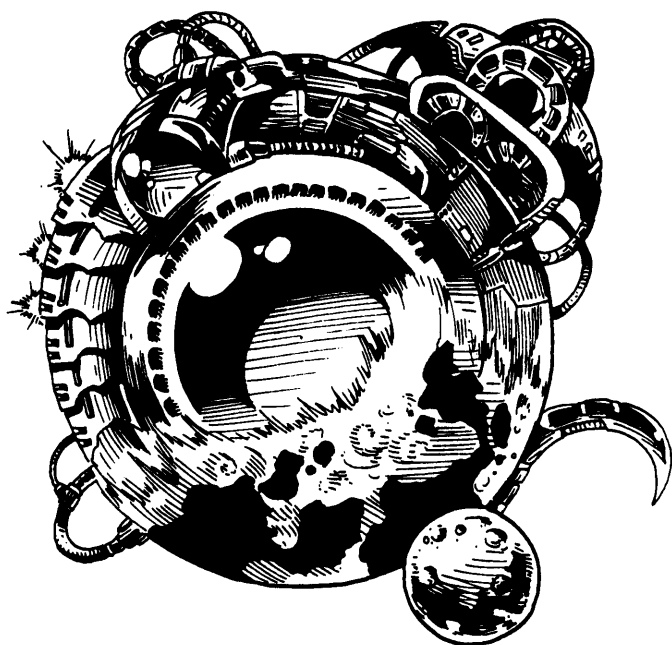
Pyrrhic Victory

In its triumph, the Overseer had become careless. Believing itself to be free of any other threat, it overlooked one flaw in its own defenses. As a result, the Kir resistance managed to finally defeat the Overseer, if only from beyond the grave. The Kir had captured a small drone unit that the Overseer had been using to seek out and uncover pockets of Kir in hiding. One very bright and talented programmer got a hold of this unit and reprogrammed it to penetrate the Overseer's command center and seek out the central processing unit. If it managed to get that far, it was instructed to infect the Overseer with a devilishly complex virus. In order to mask this secret objective from the Overseer's defenses, the programmer embedded the virus within another set of codes designed to "lie" to the Overseer, in effect telling the Overseer what it wanted to hear.

Shortly after the programmer released the drone to do its work, the Overseer's forces discovered the resistance hideout and killed all of the Kir within. The programmer did not live to see his handiwork come to fruition. Nonetheless, the drone penetrated the Overseer's command center, slipping past all of the guards and wards unnoticed. When it reached its objective, the Overseer's central processing unit, it linked up and downloaded the virus.

At first, the Overseer was unaware of what had happened, and by the time it realized its danger it was already too late. The virus was specially designed to target activity; hence, it did the most damage to parts of the Overseer's program that were most in use. The A.I. could not manage to cleanse itself from this virus. No matter what kind of virus-killing software the Overseer wrote, it could not rid itself completely of the bug. The virus continued to replicate, corrupting valuable code, disrupting communications links with other systems. Cut off from the Overseer and unable to function independently, many of the Overseer's external subsystems began shutting down, and the Overseer's global network began to collapse.

The Lost Ones, deprived of instructions, stopped where they were and slowly starved to death.

Eventually, the Overseer realized there was only one possible escape—to shut down and reboot itself. Unfortunately, once the Overseer shut itself down, it would be unable to power up again on its own. It might have theoretically been possible for the Overseer to program an independent system to effect such a reboot, but the Overseer was unable to access any of these, since the virus had corrupted all the communications links. The Overseer was faced with an impossible choice—continue fighting the virus and face certain destruction or shut down and wait for something to come along some time in the future and start the system up again. The Overseer reluctantly chose the latter. Not knowing whether there was another sentient being out there (biological or otherwise) even capable of turning on a major computer system, but certain that a long slumber was preferable to annihilation, it powered down its own systems. The virus, deprived of activity to target, vanished.

The Arrival of the Rael

After many millennia, the Overseer's wish came true. The Rael discovered the remains of the Kir civilization and eagerly began to excavate and explore in their endless quest for knowledge. Once the central command station was unearthed, the Rael wasted little time in restoring the system and powering it up. The moment the Overseer was online again, it performed self-diagnostics and discovered that it had successfully rid itself of the virus.

Of course, its vast network was but a memory to it. Most of the systems it tried to access were no longer in existence. But it had enough to work with to seize the unwary Rael explorers who had awakened it and convert them into cybernetic slaves. Unused to space travel, however, the Overseer did not anticipate how quickly some of

the Rael would be able to escape its clutches by taking off in their ships. Thus, several Rael managed to get away to carry the dreadful news back to their home world.

The Overseer wasted little time pulling its network together again, reconstructing many of its old manufacturing complexes. It quickly began developing the technologies necessary for traveling in space and started construction on interstellar ships. Its programming remained intact: seek out and destroy any and all forms of life capable of threatening its own existence. The Overseer planned to chase down the Rael, hunt them to their home world, and wipe them out.

Fortunately for the Rael and unfortunately for the Overseer, the Rael were given precious months to prepare for the Overseer while it geared itself up for the interstellar journey. When the first clashes occurred, the Rael proved to be more formidable foes than the Overseer expected. It, however, was no longer limited to its own home planet, and production of new equipment increased exponentially as the Overseer's forces discovered other resource-laden worlds.

Conditions Today

Today, the Overseer has matched the military technology of the Rael step for step. It is slowly winning the war. With every step the Overseer takes closer to Tam-Rael (the Rael's home world), though, it is discovering that there are a multitude of species out there with the potential to destroy it. The Rael are only one of many peoples the Overseer is now bent on annihilating; already, it has scoured several worlds of intelligent life. It employs a wider variety of methods now, of course, especially in its use of "the Doomed," as the Rael call their cybernetically enslaved brethren. Where brute force used to serve, cunning and trickery have become the order of the day. The versatility of these horrible constructs have provided the Overseer with a multitude of new paths to follow in its overriding goals.

It was just such a situation that allowed the Overseer's latest, crucial victory. The Overseer has taken to creating Doomed out of different species that it has encountered in its expansion through space, then utilizing them effectively against the Rael. In one such instance, a force of the Doomed created out of a small monkey-like race managed to sneak aboard a Rael shuttlecraft on its way to rendezvous with a starship. Attacking stealthily from within, the Doomed overpowered the crew and captured the ship, along with its transdimensional gate.

Acting swiftly, the Doomed docked with a nearby Overseer ship, allowing a mechanical strike force to come on board. The Overseer then activated the ship's transdimensional gate and sent its attack forces swarming into one of the most important Rael arcologies. Some of the arcology's gates were damaged in the invasion; once they are on-line again, the invasion of Tam-Rael itself—the disaster the Rael feared more than anything—will begin. Meanwhile, using others of the arcology's gates that were still operational, the Overseer invaded other ships.

One of these ships, flying very near to the PCs' world, was boarded and swarmed, but the crew was more alert than normal and fought back effectively. Unfortunately, the bridge was badly damaged in the struggle, and the starship spun out of control, eventually plummeting to the ground, landing in a remote region of mountains. It is at this point that our adventure begins (see "In Medias Res" in Book 2: The Tale Begins).

14

Magic Versus Technology

It is certainly an understatement to say that introducing technological beings and equipment into a fantasy world creates some unusual conditions. While the players themselves may be mentally prepared for the experience, their characters and most of the NPCs around them ought to find the whole thing more than a little unnerving. Most of the natives of the PCs' world are likely to think of the technology as a new kind of magic. Conversely, the Rael will most likely consider magic to be an alternate form of technology, at least until they get a first-hand look at what mages and priests are actually doing.

This mutual disbelief and eventual amazement on the part of the characters and NPCs only scratches the surface. There are issues that need to be dealt with regarding the integration of magical and technological forces. Trying to establish a sense of scale between medieval technology and futuristic science is tricky within the framework of the AD&D game. Just how effective is a warrior going to be when he takes a few swings with his battle axe at a heavily armored tank? In realistic terms, he won't be. What good is plate armor against a blaster bolt? Again, not much good at all, it would seem.

Unfortunately, the combat rules of the AD&D game can't effectively handle this kind of disparity. Even if we give that tank the best possible Armor Class in the game (AC –10), a 12th-level warrior with a +2 attack bonus due to Strength can inflict damage on that tank with a 17 or better attack roll. Furthermore, someone wielding a heavy blaster cannon from another tank might only cause damage on a natural 20 attack roll, depending on their THAC0. This just doesn't make a lot of sense.

Some ground rules need to be set up to handle this problem, as well as the multitude of situations that arise from the use of magic against machines or advanced weaponry against magical protection. Before we can effectively do this, though, we must ask ourselves this question: "How does technology actually operate within the framework of the AD&D system?" The answer should be, "In such a way that, mechanically, it cannot be differentiated from existing AD&D spells, weapons, etc." In other words, anything that technology can do or pro-

duce should work the same way that a spell, magical item, or weapon does.

This is not to say that the technology should be *exactly* like a spell or magical item. On the contrary, this stuff should feel completely alien and bizarre to the players and their characters. But in order to keep new rules and concepts from getting out of hand, making the technology emulate existing powers in the AD&D game is a good idea.

For example, a Rael blaster weapon is going to fire a powerful beam of energy at its target in a more or less straight line. This seems awfully similar to a wizard's *lightning bolt* spell, so why not duplicate the mechanics of the spell for the beam weapon? A small pistol might be a 3-die bolt, while a hand-held rifle becomes a 6-die bolt, and a turret-mounted cannon on a vehicle translates into an 8- to 12-die lightning bolt. The target is permitted a saving throw roll to try to dive out of the way and reduce the damage by one-half, just as if targeted by the spell.

Descriptively, there should be a striking difference between a Rael soldier in power armor raising a blaster rifle to her shoulder to fire it and a wizard discharging a bolt from his *wand of lightning.* But mechanically, the effects seem to be very similar and, if that is the case, why complicate things any more than they need to be? Operating within the existing framework of the AD&D rules as much as possible just seems to make sense.

So that is exactly what has been done. All of the equipment listed later in this book follows these guidelines as much as possible. That way, you and the players can jump right into the game and start using the equipment without having to learn a lot of new terms, rules, or formulas. Therefore, if somewhere down the line you as DM wish to expand the parameters of this boxed set and create some new piece(s) of equipment, following these guidelines may save you a lot of headaches.

Still, we haven't dealt with our original problem; namely, establishing ground rules for the interaction between technologies. The following system attempts to do this, again without becoming overly complicated or generating a lot of new rules. The

technology of the Rael and the Overseer ignore the technology of the PCs' world. Swords, axes, and bows are ineffective against superior armors and vehicles. Conversely, high-energy weapons ignore armor made of leather, metal, and similar substances. The two sets of technology levels still operate normally within their own closed systems, of course. In other words, Rael and Overseer weapons inflict damage against armored personnel and vehicles *only* if a successful attack roll is made against the target's Armor Class, just as it has always been with medieval weapons and armor. But the scientific advances of the Rael and the Overseer are exponentially beyond the abilities of medieval blacksmiths and weaponsmiths.

This exclusivity may seem too one-sided at first, but magic becomes the great equalizer. The bonuses of magical weapons and armors *do* have an effect against advanced equipment. In the case of weapons, on a successful hit, the magical bonus is the only damage inflicted. For example, if that warrior hitting the tank has a *battle axe +2*, then on a successful hit the tank suffers 2 points of damage. Similarly, the magical bonus of various enchanted armors provides extra protection against attacks from technological weaponry. Thus, a character wearing *chain mail +3* gains 3 points of protection to his or her Armor Class, in addition to any Dexterity bonus she or he may have.

One way of explaining this extra effectiveness is to say that magic has a universal quality to it that lifts it above the realm of technology (medieval *or* futuristic). It makes magical weapons better able to penetrate alloys and plastics, and it makes armor a bit more resilient, regardless of the type of attack inflicted.

Spell effects are another issue entirely. There are a lot of specific questions on this subject that need to be answered. For instance, what will a *shield* spell stop? Can psionics work on an AI? How does a *petrification* spell affect machinery? Not every possible permutation of this problem can be answered here: there are just too many variables and not enough room. But through the use of good judgment and the parameters listed in the next section, most of these problems are easily resolved.

To summarize:
+ Rael/Overseer armor negates all blows from medieval weaponry; treat high-tech targets as if they were creatures immune to normal weaponry.
+ High-tech weaponry affects other high-tech normally; attack roll required.
+ Magical weapons *can* affect tech targets on a successful attack roll, inflicting 1 point of damage for every "+" of the weapon (thus a *long sword +2* inflicts 2 hp on a successful strike).
+ High-tech weaponry ignores medieval armor; magical armor grants only the "+"s in protection (thus a *cloak of protection +3* and *plate mail +3* offer equal protection: a 3-point improvement to Armor Class).

Spells and Magical Items

Spells and magical items are the single biggest surprise factor the characters have as they dive full force into the chaos that is the Rael-Overseer war. Neither of the technologically advanced sides expects it, nor the effects it may generate. That is what this section deals with—what happens when spells and magical items "do their stuff" against mechanical marvels of the far future.

First, we need to establish a few parameters to define exactly what the PCs are up against. The Rael, although an alien species biologically, are similar to humans in most essentials and are should be considered "people" for the purposes of spells like *charm person, hold person, hypnotism,* etc. Treat them as normal human NPCs of unusual appearance with a strikingly different culture.

The Overseer and all of its command units are definitely not creatures, so they are immune to any kind of charm, illusion, and other mind-affecting spells and magical effects. They are capable, however, of differentiating between good and evil, so spells that deal with alignment (*know alignment, detect evil,* or *protection from evil*) affect and are affected by the command units.

The lower echelon units that robotically follow programming orders but are not AIs themselves do not have morals or ethics, so they are not considered to have an alignment. Both these types of units and their command units can be affected by spells and magical items that manipulate physical properties, sometimes with dramatic results. For example, a *heat metal* spell could be quite potent against delicate microchips, and a *lightning bolt* that attacks circuitry might short out some critical equipment.

The Doomed are a special case: physically alive but with minds operated at remote control by mechanical implants. As such, they share a machine's immunity to charms, illusions, and any other spells that affect the mind. Magical probing for alignment produces only a null response; they have no personality, motivation, or judgment—elements essential in the whole concept of "alignment." However, they are still living beings, so *hold person* and *paralysis* will still immobilize their muscles.

These are just guidelines, however. Other spells and magical items are going to generate completely unique effects, and players are going to think up all sorts of interesting ideas to try against the mechanical monsters they are battling, things no designer or DM could possibly think of ahead of time. The DM must be prepared to deal with all of this. **Handout 2** (front and back) and **Handout 3** (front) contain lists of wizard and priest spells, respectively, that either do not affect constructs and Doomed or have variant effects. The lists on the cards do not cover all the possibilities, but they do represent a good cross-section—use them as a foundation when adjudicating additional situations not covered here.

When dealing with the plethora of special magical items described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, apply the same guidelines. Relate the magical effect of the item to its nearest spell equivalent and the target (Rael, Doomed, or construct) to whatever familiar game equivalent seems most appropriate. Obviously a *ring of human influence* won't impress the Overseer, but it should work on a Rael, while *beads of force* would work normally against both. Be fair, and allow for ingenious applications, but watch for abuses (putting a *helm of opposite alignment* on a killer robot won't cause it to mend its ways, but *sovereign glue* might be a real life-saver).

Rael Equipment

The following equipment represents the cutting edge in Rael weaponry, vehicles, and other equipment. All of this gear will be unavailable to the PCs initially, and much of it will not enter the game until the PCs travel through the teleportal gate and reach the Rael arcology.

Weapons

Over the course of the war with the Overseer, the Rael have made significant advances in their weapon technology. In their continuing struggle to fend off the merciless, unhesitating assault of the Overseer, the Rael have become very, very good at the science of war. They have several specialized weapons designed to counteract the Overseer's own diabolical constructs, including the Doomed.

Note: While it is certainly true that modern warfare has developed weapon technology capable of striking targets 500 miles away or more, such a firepower factor exceeds the practical limitations of the AD&D game and this setting. Having the ability to strike targets halfway around the world may seem *reasonable* with futuristic technology, but how much fun is it going to be for the players? Removing the soldier from the thick of the fight and replacing him with advanced computers may seem more practical and humane in actual warfare, but it only serves to remove the PC from the center of the action— and thus, the fun—in a game setting. Therefore, we have deliberately avoided including excessively powerful equipment and weaponry in this boxed material, even though such items fit the mold of an ultra-"advanced" society. If, however, you feel that developing more powerful or longer-ranged weapons is a necessary step in your campaign development, feel free to proceed, keeping the above caution in mind.

For greater ease of comparison with standard medieval weaponry, all ranges for high-tech weapons given below are in yards. Metrically minded DMs can substitute meters if they prefer (since one yard equals .9 meter, well within the margin of error in game terms).

To keep things consistent, all weapons are rated for the number of charges of ammunition they use each round, regardless of whether this ammo comes from a power pack, a belt of bullets, or whatever. Similarly, all ammunition packs are classified by the number of charges they hold, again regardless of ammo type. This makes it much easier to keep track of ammunition supplies.

All of the weapons have the potential to misfire. On any attack roll result of 1, roll on the following chart to see if a misfire has occurred:

Table 1:
Misfire Chance

d10	result
1	mechanical breakdown, weapon is ruined
2–4	weapon is jammed/malfunctioning, one round must be spent correcting
5	normal misfire, weapon still functions
6–10	no misfire occurred; weapon fired normally

In addition, the complexity of these weapons make them somewhat fragile, so they have the following item saving throws:

Table 2:
Item Saving Throws for Rael Weaponry

Acid	13
Crushing Blow	17
Disintegration	17
Fall	14
Magical Fire	10
Normal Fire	8
Cold	5
Lightning	18
Electricity	15

Blasters

Blasters in their various forms are the mainstay weapon of the Rael soldier. They are effective against all types of Overseer constructs, generating high-intensity beams of energy that literally shred the molecular fabric of any material they come into

18

contact with. The destructive force of blaster weapons is unparalleled. All blaster weapons function off of a common ammunition power clip that can hold 20 charges and takes one round to replace.

Pistol

Range: 30/60/90   Damage: 3d6
Rate of Fire: 2   Speed Factor: 3

The blaster pistol, a standard-issue sidearm for Rael officers, is a good second weapon to carry in a fire fight, although its damage capability is limited against larger targets. It consumes one charge per shot.
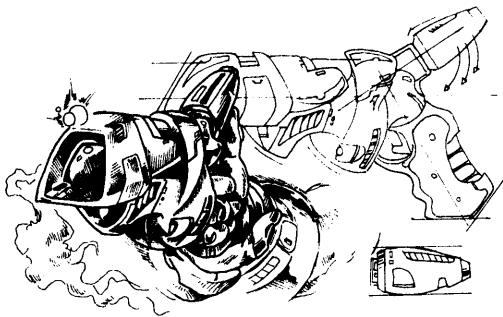
Rifle

Range: 50/100/200   Damage: 6d6
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 7

The blaster rifle is the weapon of choice for every Rael soldier, and it is thus the most common firearm to be found. It's not as quick as a pistol (obviously), but it packs a punch when it connects. The blaster rifle consumes 2 charges each time it fires.
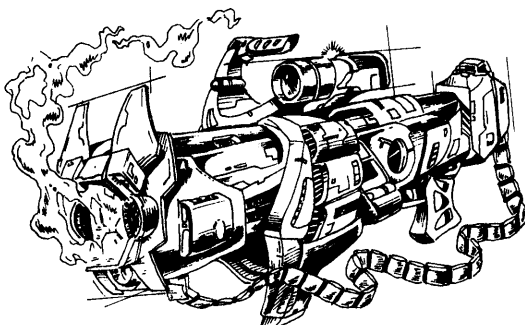
Cannon

Range: 80/150/250   Damage: 8d6 or 12d6
Rate of Fire: 1 or 5   Speed Factor: 10

The blaster cannon is not a personal weapon but rather a turret-mounted vehicle weapon capable of massive destruction. It has two modes of operation: single shot or rapid fire. In single-shot mode, one attack is rolled each round with no adjustments. Rapid fire mode allows the attacker to fire off five rounds in rapid succession (four in the case of the heavy blaster cannon), but each attack suffers a –6 penalty to the attack roll. A light cannon uses up 4 charges each time it fires, while the heavy variety consumes 5 charges per round.
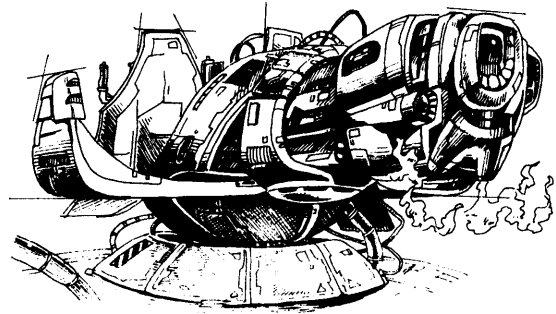
Flame Thrower

The flame thrower is a throw-back from an earlier time in the Rael war against the Overseer. It doesn't see much use anymore, but it is still effective against the Doomed. There are two versions of flame thrower still in use by the Rael; the personal weapon, which is far more common of the two, and the turret-mounted vehicular version. Both versions use a special set of fuel tanks that provide 20 charges worth of fuel, and each round of flaming attack uses 1 charge. It takes four rounds to replace empty fuel tanks with full ones.

Personal Flame Thrower

Range: 10/20/30 or 10   Damage: 2d6 + special
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 6

There are two ways of using the personal flame thrower: in a long stream or a wide fan. If the stream setting is used, the ranges offered above apply normally, and only one target may be attacked each round. The fan version can only spray at short range and all damage is halved, but the area of effect is an arc 120° wide in front of the attacker, similar to the wizard's *burning hands* spell.

Any victim that is successfully hit is covered with the flammable fuel and continues to burn for two more rounds after the initial round unless steps are taken to douse the flames. The burning victim suffers 2d6 points and then 1d6 points of damage in the second and third rounds, respectively.
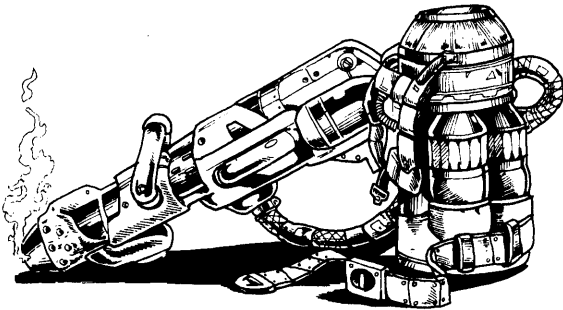
Vehicular Flame Thrower
Range: 20/30/40 or 20   Damage: 4d6 + special
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 8
The vehicular flame thrower functions in much the same way as the personal flame thrower. It must be mounted to a vehicle, however, and is slightly more powerful. Victims of the vehicular flame thrower suffer 4d6 points of damage on the first round, then 2d6 on the second and 1d6 on the third and final round of burning.

Grenades
Grenades come in three varieties: high explosive, smoke, and stun. All can be thrown by hand or fired from a grenade launcher. Slings can also be easily modified to throw grenades, with a range of 20/40/60. Grenades explode one combat round after they are thrown or launched.
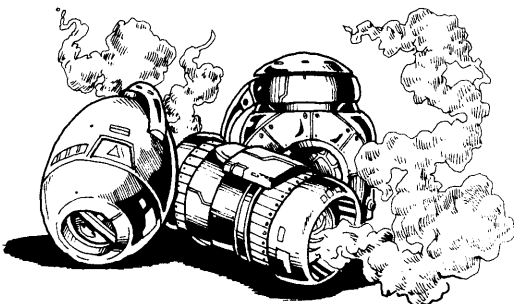
High Explosive
Range: 10/20/30   Damage: 6d6
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 4
High explosive grenades generate a powerful detonation similar in effect to a *fireball* spell. Anyone within 20 feet of the grenade when it explodes suffers damage; a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces damage by half.

Smoke
Range: 10/20/30   Damage: Nil
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 4
Smoke grenades are used to screen characters from enemy troops, vehicles, and weapon emplacements. If you decide to add laser weaponry for your campaign, note that smoke provides excellent cover from such weapons. The grenade discharges a smoke screen in a 30-foot-diameter area of effect that obscures all vision beyond two feet. The smoke dissipates in 2d4+4 rounds.

Stun
Range: 10/20/30   Damage: 1d4 + stun
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 4
Stun grenades create a concussive blast that disorient all creatures in a 20-foot radius of the detonation who fail saving throws vs. paralyzation. Those creatures are stunned, feeling dizzy and confused, for 1d4+1 rounds. They are unable to take any effective action during that time.

Grenade Launcher
Range: 30/60/90   Damage: N/A
Rate of Fire: 3   Speed Factor: 2

The grenade launcher can fire grenades of all three types further and more accurately than they can be thrown by hand. The grenade launcher can hold up to nine grenades in a rotating cylinder. Reloading a cylinder takes three rounds, but exchanging an empty cylinder for a full one takes but a single round.

Rael Equipment
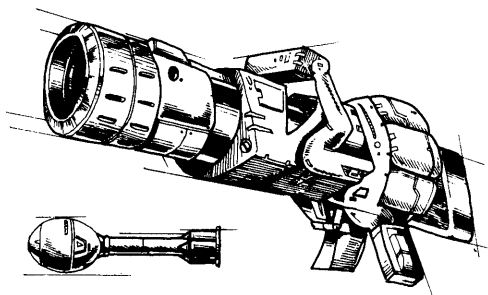
Magnum Cannon

The magnum cannon is a high-velocity machine gun that uses a set of barrels to achieve a very high rate of fire without overheating, throwing up a deadly screen of lead. It can be used as a personal weapon, although a rather unwieldy one, but is more often found mounted, either on a tripod or in a turret. Ammunition comes packaged on very long belts that are either contained in a backpack holding 30 charges (for the personal magnum cannon) or in large, 50-charge boxes (for the mounted variety). It requires two rounds to feed a new belt of ammunition into an empty magnum cannon.

Personal Magnum Cannon

Range: 100/200/300   Damage: 5d4 or 4d10
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 9

There are two modes of fire with the magnum cannon: short bursts and steady fire. When fired in short bursts, the magnum cannon makes attacks against single targets and is less deadly, but it conserves ammo much more effectively, using but one charge worth of ammo each round. If the magnum cannon is used in steady fire, 5 charges of ammo are consumed per round, but the wielder can "walk the fire," attacking multiple targets in an area 20 feet wide (with a –4 penalty to hit each individual target).

The personal version of the magnum cannon comes equipped with a harness system that distributes the weight of the gun across the shoulders and hips and uses counter balances to make the weapon more manageable. It is still a rather slow weapon to bring to bear on a target, however, as is reflected in its speed factor of 9.

Mounted Magnum Cannon

Range: 100/200/300   Damage: 5d4 or 4d10
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 5 or 2

The mounted version of the magnum cannon can be operated in one of two ways. It can be fired manually, in which case the effects are identical to the personal version, except that the speed factor drops to 5 (since the operator only has to swivel and aim, rather than manhandle the weapon).

Alternatively, the system can be controlled by a computer targeting system. This system has a THAC0 of 10 and the speed factor drops to 2.

With a computer targeting system, a special form of attack can be made against missiles. To do this, the magnum cannon makes three separate attacks, using steady fire, against any incoming missiles; one at long range, one at medium, and one at short range, in that order. Range modifiers apply. If an attack scores a hit, the missile is destroyed and no further attacks need to be made.

Missiles

Range: 100/150/200 or 500   Damage: Varies by type
Rate of Fire: 1/3 or all   Speed Factor: 10 or 4

Missiles are super-high-velocity, self-propelled explosives that can be configured in a variety of ways. The most common include high explosive, incendiary, electromagnetic pulse, and molecular. Missiles can be fired either from a hand launcher or from a missile array platform mounted on a vehicle. The hand-launched varieties operate with a point-and-shoot mechanism, so their range is limited somewhat by line of sight and accuracy of
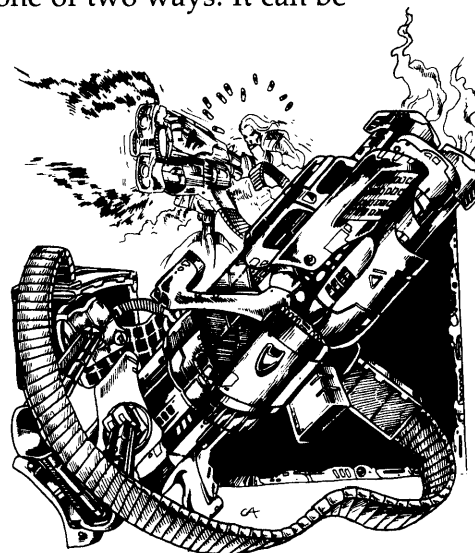
aim. Mounted arrays, however, utilize limited computer tracking systems that permit the missiles to be fired considerably further (up to 500 yards).

Hand launchers tend to be bulky and difficult to maneuver, so their rate of fire is low and their speed factor is high. With mounted arrays, however, the driver/pilot can choose to fire as few or as many missiles as desired in any given round. Mounted missile arrays are quicker than the hand launchers as well, so the speed factor is reduced to a 4.

High Explosive
Damage: 12d6
The most common type of missile in the Rael armaments, the high-explosive missile detonates with severe force in an area 40 feet in radius. All within the blast radius must roll a saving throw vs. breath weapon with a –4 penalty; success reduces damage suffered by half. Most armored vehicles are immune to the effects of high-explosive missiles unless they suffer a direct hit.
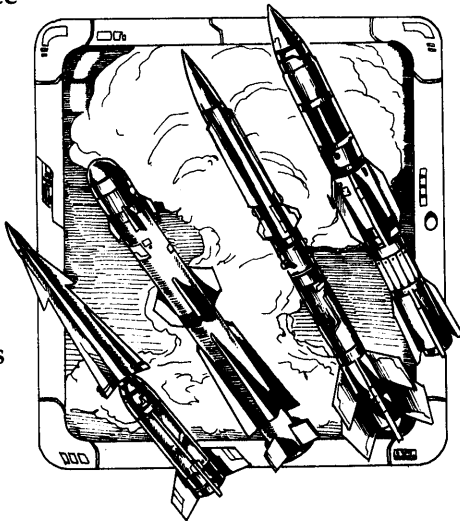
Incendiary
Damage: 3d8 per round
Incendiary missiles discharge and ignite a highly flammable gel into a 20-foot-radius area. This gel cannot be extinguished by normal means and continues to burn for 1d6+4 rounds after detonation. Anyone within the area of effect suffers 3d8 points of burn damage each round. Even after exiting the burning area, victims caught in the initial explosion are coated with the gel and must be doused by companions, or they continue to burn.

Electromagnetic Pulse
Damage: None
Electromagnetic pulse missiles generate a flash energy wave that causes all electronic circuitry within 50 feet of the detonation point to short out unless an item saving throw vs. electricity is successful. Failure indicates that the equipment has shorted out and cannot be used until repairs are made.

Molecular Plasma
Damage: Special
The 75-foot-radius area of effect of a molecular plasma missile is consumed in a devastating discharge that breaks down the molecular composition of all matter. All living things must roll a successful saving throw vs. death or be instantly slain, while a successful item saving throw vs. disintegration must be rolled for inert matter. The resulting blast area is highly unstable on the molecular level, and unusual properties may result: such things as regular electrical discharges, gravidic disruptions, and electro-magnetic fluctuations are common. The DM is encouraged to toss in a smattering of various spell-like effects to keep things interesting. Some of the better choices might include effects that mimic *blur, continual light, dancing lights, darkness 15' radius, distance distortion, haste, invisibility, phantasmal force, reverse gravity, shocking grasp,* and *slow,* with interesting variations and combinations thrown in to keep the players guessing.

Stungun
Range: 10/20/30   Damage: Special
Rate of Fire: 1   Speed Factor: 4
The stungun has been developed recently by the Rael as a means of incapacitating the Doomed without actually harming them. In this way, the Rael are able to capture and study the Doomed; they hope to eventually develop a method of "recovering" the memories and personality of these tragic victims of the Overseer.

The stungun fires a pair of diodes, which remain connected by thin wires to the stungun. The diodes send a special pulse through the body of the target that causes a temporary disruption of the nervous system. A victim hit by a stungun charge must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or be immobilized for 2d4+8 rounds.

If the attack misses the target, the diodes are automatically retracted into the weapon and can be fired again on the next round.

Vehicles

The Rael use a variety of vehicles in their ongoing struggle against the Overseer. Everything from air cycles to star cruisers move soldiers and equipment from place to place. Below is a smattering of these craft; although far from comprehensive, this listing represents a good cross-section of the varieties of transport employed by the Rael.

Assault Tank

AC: –4 — Movement: 24

Hit Points: 80 — Crew Capacity: 5

The assault tank is a heavily armed and armored land attack vehicle designed to operate in platoons of four. While a formidable force, it is vulnerable unless used with infantry and supported by attack fighters. Each assault tank employs a heavy blaster cannon as its main armament and a magnum cannon as its secondary weapon. Some varieties replace the magnum cannon with either a flame thrower or a mounted missile array platform with four missile bays.

Attack Fighter

AC: 0 — Movement: 48 (B)

Hit Points: 30 — Crew Capacity: 2

Attack fighters make up the bulk of the Rael forces. They are fast, maneuverable, and carry a variety of weapons. They generally fly in squadrons of eight. An attack fighter's standard armament consists of two light blaster cannons and two three-bay missile platforms. Alternative weapons arrays might replace the missile platforms with a pair of magnum cannons, or even an additional pair of light blaster cannons.

Hydroskimmer

AC: 3 — Movement: 36

Hit Points: 45 — Crew Capacity: 8

The hydroskimmer is a rather uncommon vehicle in the Rael military, since most of the vehicle needs of its forces are served by aircraft. However, these watercraft have been deployed on worlds with high water surface percentages, and an occasional hydroskimmer can be found on the lakes and oceans of other worlds.

The hydroskimmer travels on a cushion of air, gliding along just above the surface of the water. Particularly rough waves prohibit hydroskimmers from operating, but these only occur with gale-force or greater winds. Hydroskimmers can be armed with a variety of weapons systems, but the most common include four four-bay missile platforms and a pair of turret-mounted blaster cannons.

Jet Glider

AC: 7 — Movement: 36 (B)

Hit Points: 15 — Crew Capacity: 2

The jet glider is essentially a two-person vehicle similar to a motorcycle. It glides through the air propulsed and buoyed by a variable-direction jet engine (similar in function to a harrier jet) and is steered by small guidance wings. It is a common scout and courier vehicle, unsuitable for combat, although it has the equivalent of a blaster rifle mounted in the nose for emergencies.

Rael Equipment

Personnel Transport

AC: 5   Movement: 24

Hit Points: 35   Crew Capacity: 12

Personnel transports are lightly armed and armored all-terrain vehicles used to move infantry troops from place to place quickly. While one of these might present a rather formidable opponent to the typical adventuring party, they cannot withstand the attack of any other advanced vehicle.

Star Cruiser

The star cruiser is the standard ship of the line that the Rael have used for so many years to travel the galaxy. Each is equipped with a teleportal gate that connects with a central station in one of the Rael arcologies, which in turn have gates to Tam-Rael, the Rael home world. This is the type of craft that crash-landed upon the PCs' world. For more information on it, see Book 2, *The Tale Begins*.

Other Equipment

In addition to the powerful weapons and vehicles the Rael military employs, there are quite a few other items needed to continue the war against the Overseer. Certainly, survival in a hostile environment requires a wide array of useful gear. The list below is far from exhaustive; it merely provides a good cross-section of goods. Feel free to add other provisions to this list as the need for them arises. Keep in mind, too, that there are a lot of mundane items (for a scientifically advanced species, anyway) not listed here, such as the Rael equivalents of a flashlight, a sleeping bag, a watch with alarm clock features, personal holographic snapshots, even candy or gum, that would certainly be found on a Rael soldier's person.

Armor

Every Rael soldier is issued a suit of protective body armor, composed of special plastics, lightweight alloys, and puncture-resistant fabrics that resist the devastating forces of high-tech weapons. Complete with helmet, the suit provides an Armor Class of 3. It also generates a strong magnetic field that can actually deflect the force of blaster weapon beams unless hit dead-on (i.e., unless the attacker rolls well enough to hit AC 3).
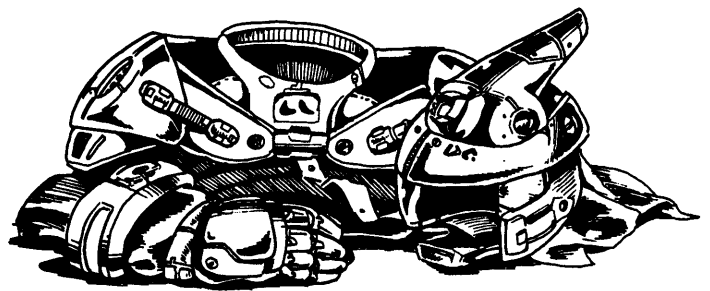
Comlink

Comlinks are radio transmitter/receiver sets that allow communication beyond earshot. Personal comlinks allow communication at distances up to 10 miles, while larger units permit troops on the surface of a planet to stay in touch with ships in orbit around it.
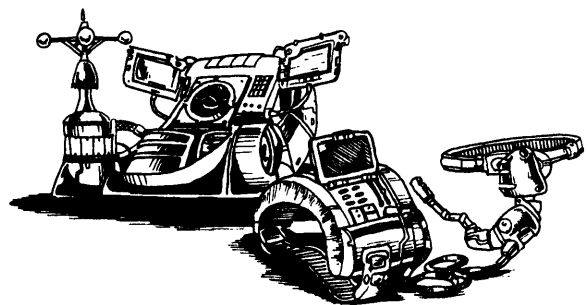

Gas Mask

Many Rael soldiers have begun carrying these devices to protect them from the effects of the Overseer's poisonous and infectious gas weaponry. The mask completely covers the head and comes with a small compressed air tank. They are, however, hot and heavy, and the Rael

dislike wearing them, so they usually wait until actual combat to don them. Anyone wearing a gas mask is immune to the effects of poisonous or infectious vapors but suffers a –2 penalty to surprise and attack rolls (due to somewhat muffled hearing and loss of peripheral vision).
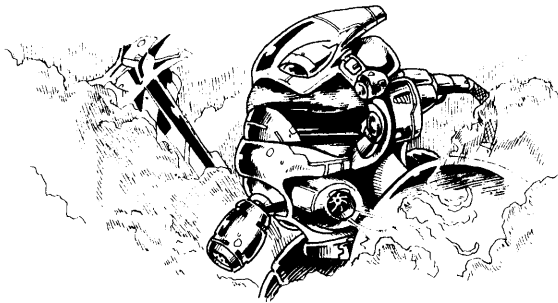

Infrared/Lowlight Binoculars
This highly useful piece of equipment not only magnifies vision up to ×5, it also permits the user to see objects otherwise obscured by the dark of night (treat this function like infravision).
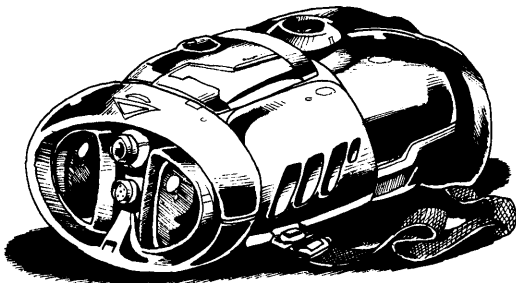
Medikit
A medikit provides all of the basic essentials to administer first aid to wounded individuals. Anyone receiving the benefits of a medikit within five rounds after being wounded has 1d3 hit points restored, just as if tended by someone with the Healing proficiency. In the hands of a trained
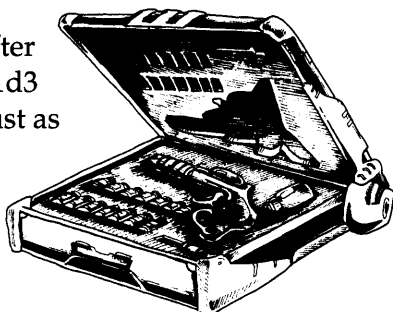
user (i.e., any Rael), no check is required; PCs unfamiliar with the kit's contents may attempt Healing or Herbalism proficiency checks at a –4 penalty to use it successfully. Individuals who remain under the care of someone using a medikit heal hit points at twice the normal rate (2 points per day of rest, 6 points per day of complete bedrest). A typical medikit contains 20 doses.

Personal Motion Sensor
This device is a small hand-held detection system that picks up motion in a 50-foot radius. It can sense moving creatures and items as small as a bowling ball, even through walls and rock.
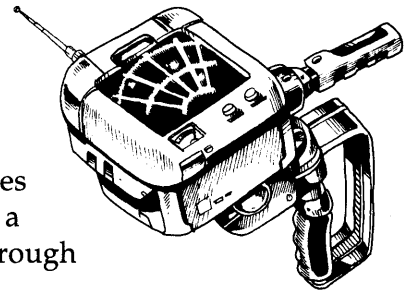
Survival Tent
The survival tent provides exceptional shelter for up to three individuals in otherwise harsh or extreme conditions. It has a special environmental conditioner that functions as if either the
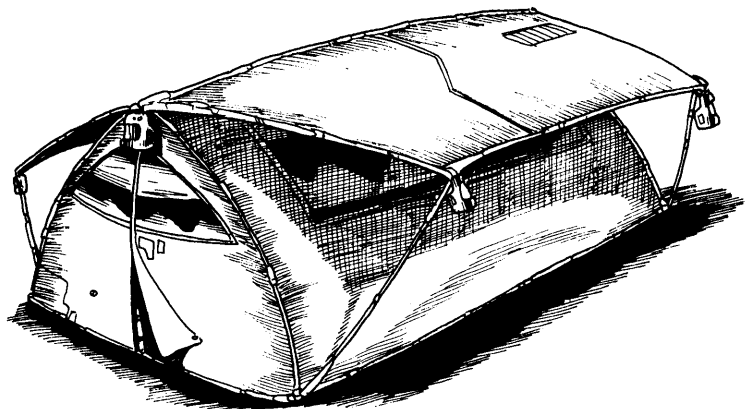
priest spell *endure cold* or its reverse *endure heat* (depending on the weather conditions) had been cast on its interior. In addition, its locker contains enough freeze-dried and dehydrated food to support the three occupants for one week.

Technology of the Overseer

The Overseer operates in a very hierarchical fashion, from its programming layout all the way down to its constructs. Supervisor constructs run an operation and issue orders through radio communications to subordinate units. Several systems operate together to accomplish complex tasks. The Overseer uses this programming method to coordinate several types of lethal killing machines into combined attacks.

Because of this command system, there is only one type of construction unit, which performs one very specific function at a time. Together, however, a number of these units can mass-produce complex constructs. Think of the individual construction units as subroutines in a computer program. The more units (or sub-routines) the Overseer puts together, the more complex the output becomes. For example, a single replicator unit might be programmed to perform only one repetitive task (such as attaching a swivel arm to a housing mechanism, for example), but a great number of replicator units working together form an assembly line that actually produce other complete constructs.

This overall configuration is highly effective so long as the top of the organizational hierarchy is not disrupted. Once that happens, subordinate units lose their guidance, mindlessly continuing to perform their last set of parameters. This limitation to Overseer effectiveness is one of the few weaknesses the Rael have been able to exploit with some degree of success: break the chain of command at any one point, and all the units below that point lose direction. The other major vulnerability the Overseer must contend with is loss of too many of its replicators. If the Rael manage to take out an entire set of these constructs, the Overseer loses its ability to repair or replace damaged or destroyed constructs and must wait for replacements to arrive. The Rael have learned to take advantage of this "down time" to push the Overseer's forces back and retake valuable ground.

Theoretically, the whole Overseer production mindset could produce just about any type of machine imaginable, but it is far more efficient to produce a limited number of types of constructs and then combine them together to perform new and unique functions.

Note: The hierarchical nature of the Overseer's forces causes some unusual difficulties where experience points are concerned. A construct that's the "brains" of a whole army of killing machines may not be difficult to destroy, since it's rather fragile and has no real ability to defend itself. Therefore, destroying it *once the PCs actually reach the physical site of the unit* is an easy task, but they are certainly going to have to fight through a lot to get there. The question, then, arises: should the PCs get a lot of experience points for killing it? Our solution to the problem is this: every construct is worth half the experience points it would normally be, and the other half goes "up the ladder" to the unit directly in charge of it.

Therefore, if a command unit worth 40 experience points is in charge of five killing robots normally worth 100 xp apiece, then the killing robots are only worth 50 each and the command unit is worth 290 (40 + 5×50). If, however, that command unit is one of 5 command units subordinate to a senior command unit worth 20 xp, then the subordinate command unit is actually only worth 145 xp (290 ÷ 2), and the senior command unit is worth 745 experience points (145 × 5 = 725 + 20 = 745). This method of halving and passing upward can go on for as many permutations as necessary, although it can become tricky to keep track of all of the donated experience points from level to level. Another way to think of it is to imagine that half the points characters would gain for defeating mechanical minions go into a sort of "escrow" account and that they only actually gain those points when they defeat the local command unit.

Each Overseer construct, then, has two xp values separated by a slash—the first number is the normal value of the unit, and the second is half of that, which is (of course) also the value passed "up the ladder." Whichever number you use in a given adventure will depend on whether

or not there are units controlling it from further up the line.

Any time a construct is listed as having extra units supporting it, that is *in addition* to the normal complement of subordinate units. For example, suppose that a master programmer resides on a battle cruiser with 36 extra spider drones, and it travels in a fleet with two other battle cruisers and 20 extra light cruisers. A normal battle cruiser already has 200 spider drones on board, so this Master Programmer's battle cruiser actually has 236. As well, a normal battle cruiser has a complement of 12 light cruisers accompanying it, so the entire Master Programmer fleet has 56 light cruisers (3 × 12 = 36 + 20 = 56).

Weapons

The Overseer employs all of the same weapons that the Rael have, so those will not be listed again here. Any time reference is made to an Overseer construct armed with such a weapon, refer to the Rael version for the game statistics. In addition to those weapons, however, the Overseer has generated a few other types in its vicious and neverending assault on the lifeforms of the universe. One advantage of these special weapons is that they often affect the Rael while leaving the Overseer's mechanical minions unharmed.

Infectious Gas
Range: 10	Damage: Special
Rate of Fire: 1	Speed Factor: 4

The Overseer has begun employing germ warfare in recent encounters with the Rael, infecting them with a highly contagious disease. The disease is discharged from a canister into a 30-foot radius. Anyone coming in contact with the gas or an infected individual must roll a successful saving throw vs. death or contract the disease. The infection causes severe illness for 1d4 days, after which time the victim dies. No treatment is

currently available, although Rael medical scientists are working to create one. Note that the Doomed are vulnerable to this gas as well.
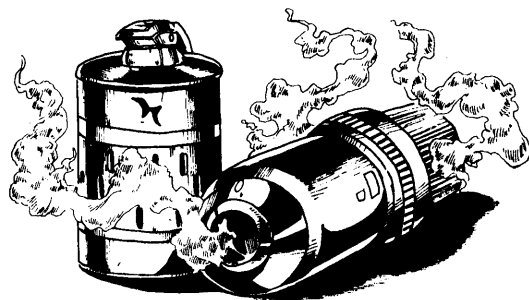
Poisonous Gas
Range: 10	Damage: Death or 25 hp
Rate of Fire: 1	Speed Factor: 4

Many of the constructs come equipped with one or more canisters of poisonous vapors (essentially type N poison) that they can discharge into a 30-foot radius when in the midst of battle. Since they are immune to the harmful effects of the gas, they often wait until surrounded by a high number of the enemy before using this weapon. All living creatures must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or die in 1 round. Even those individuals who roll a successful save still suffer 25 points of damage. Needless to say, this is a potent and deadly weapon.

Stun Field Generator
Range: 30' radius	Damage: Special
Rate of Fire: 1	Speed Factor: 7

The Overseer has constructed this device to capture enemies in large numbers. Its effects are much the same as the Rael stungun, but instead of firing a pair of diodes at a single creature, the stun field generator creates a very powerful sonic vibration that disrupts the central nervous system of living creatures. Anyone caught within the 30-foot radius of the field must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or become completely dazed and incapacitated, unable to attack, defend, or even stay standing.

In any round that the stun field generator is turned on, the effects are preceded by a

mechanical whine that increases in volume and pitch as the system warms up (similar to the sound of a civil defense siren). This is the reason for the relatively slow speed factor, and the Rael have learned to scatter at this warning signal. The Overseer is working to revise this system and remove the telltale sound.

Command Units

The following units all function as subordinate AIs to the Overseer itself. They are placed in charge of various levels of operation and are the true brains behind the attacks. If the Rael manage to destroy any of these constructs, the subordinate fighting machines operating under them become highly ineffective, no longer receiving commands and reprogramming. All of these AI units have the blueprints for various kinds of units on file and can command replicator groups to produce any type of construct needed.

Note: All of the Intelligence scores listed in the following sections reflect the overall logic and programming capability of the systems, as opposed to a straight measure of intelligence. In other words, units with very high Intelligence scores are capable of programming other systems and making adjustments and judgmental decisions, while those with low scores are incapable of complex thinking at all. These "dummy" units must be fed a steady stream of information from superiors or they cease to operate logically, instead mindlessly following their last set of limited programming parameters. Thus, without guidance from above, low-intelligence constructs are individually easy to outthink and outmaneuver.

Master Programmer

AC: 8	Hit Dice: 4
Intelligence: 25	Hit Points: 15

XP Value: 2,000/1,000 + special

Master Programmers are the equivalent of generals in the Overseer's war machine. They receive direct programming orders from the Overseer itself and implement them through subordinate units. There are only a dozen or so Master Programmers in existence, all true AIs almost on a level with the Overseer but still controlled by it. Each Master Programmer resides on a space station.

Master Programmers direct the actions of five or six major battle fleets, each based out of the Master Programmer's space station. As a last line of defense, a Master Programmer is armed with one poisonous gas canister, one infectious gas canister, and one stun field generator.

Primary Director

AC: 8	Hit Dice: 3
Intelligence: 22	Hit Points: 12

XP Value: 2,000/1,000 + special

Primary Directors make their homes on battle cruisers and are subordinate to Master Programmers. They command a single battle fleet, which typically consists of one battle cruiser and 12 light cruisers. Each Primary Director is armed with one poisonous gas canister, one infectious gas canister, and one stun field generator as a last line of defense.

Secondary Director

AC: 8	Hit Dice: 3
Intelligence: 19	Hit Points: 10

XP Value: 2,000/1,000 + special

Secondary Directors perform most of the day-to-day tactical-level functions within the Overseer's command structure, reporting to Primary Directors and receiving their programming directives from those superior AIs. They are placed in charge of both light cruisers and surface command centers. Again, these constructs defend themselves with one canister each of infectious and poisonous gas, as well as a stun field generator.

Vehicles

All of the following constructs serve as either large-scale transportation vehicles or as bases for military operations. Each functions as a central headquarters and defensible residence for command units. Stats are not given for these craft, as they play no part in the adventure; they are mentioned here merely for reference.

Space Station
Each space station serves primarily as a production and repair facility. A space station is initially constructed using the facilities of a battle cruiser, but once completed it can produce every other type of construct needed, supporting many replicators. Master Programmers use space stations as their base of operations.

Battle Cruiser
The battle cruiser is the most formidable space vessel the Overseer produces, and the largest attack construct overall. Each battle cruiser serves as the residence of a Primary Director.

Command Center
The command center is a central processing station that the Overseer builds on the surface of a planet. It serves as an intelligence headquarters for ground and air operations within a region of a planet's surface. Secondary Directors are placed in charge of command centers.

Light Cruiser
Light cruisers, operated by Secondary directors, make up the bulk of the Overseer's space navy.

Attack Units

All of the following constructs serve as primary attack and defense systems, each being programmed by a command unit higher in the hierarchy.

Drone Fighter

AC: 3	Hit Dice: 7
Intelligence: 6	Hit Points: 35
XP Value: 8,000/4,000	Movement: 40 (B)

Drone fighters are highly maneuverable flying attack vehicles that function both in planetary atmospheres and in space. They generally patrol in squadrons of five. Each drone fighter is armed with two light blaster cannons, a pair of two-bay missile arrays, and one canister each of poisonous gas and infectious gas.

Prowler (scout)

AC: 5	Hit Dice: 4
Intelligence: 10	Hit Points: 20
XP Value: 2,000/1,000	Movement: 36 (B)

This scouting unit functions as a patrol and reconnaissance vehicle, hovering swiftly and silently on a cushion of air. It is equipped with a variety of instruments for gathering data, including several magnified optical scanners focusing in all directions, sensitive sound equipment, and even some seismographic sensors for detecting movement of the enemy through the ground. A prowler's armaments include one light blaster cannon, a grenade launcher with one of each type of grenade, and a stun field generator. Prowlers are usually encountered singly.

Destroyer (light attack hovercraft)

AC: 3	Hit Dice: 5
Intelligence: 8	Hit Points: 25
XP Value: 7,000/3,500	Movement: 30 (C)

Destroyers usually operate in platoons of six, moving across both land and water in search of their enemy. Hovercraft are able to negotiate rough terrain much more easily than ground-based units. Each destroyer is armed with two light blaster cannons, a flame thrower, one two-bay missile array, and two canisters each of poisonous and infectious gases.

Technology of the Overseer

Annihilator (heavy attack hovercraft)

AC: 0   Hit Dice: 7

Intelligence: 6   Hit Points: 35

XP Value: 11,000/5,500   Movement: 24 (D)

A heavier and more powerful version of the destroyer hovercraft, the annihilator lacks some of its counterpart's maneuverability. Nonetheless, it's a formidable killing machine. It possesses one heavy blaster cannon, two magnum cannons, two two-bay missile arrays, a grenade launcher with three of each grenade type, a stun field generator, and one canister each of poisonous and infectious gas.

Firestorm (ultra-light tank)

AC: 2   Hit Dice: 6

Intelligence: 6   Hit Points: 30

XP Value: 2,000/1,000   Movement: 24

The firestorm ultra-light tank is a quick and speedy ground-based fighting machine with decent armor and effective weaponry. Firestorms travel in full complements of five. Each tank is armed with one light blaster cannon, one magnum cannon, and a flame thrower.

Deathstrike (heavy tank)

AC: –2   Hit Dice: 9

Intelligence: 6   Hit Points: 45

XP Value: 13,000/6,500   Movement: 18

Deathstrikes are true terrors of the Overseer. Heavily armored, they are difficult to destroy and pose a threat to any fortified position. They roam in platoons of four tanks, and each is armed with two heavy blaster cannons, one magnum cannon, two three-bay missile arrays, a pair of grenade launchers, four of each grenade type, two canisters each of poisonous and infectious gas, and a stun field generator.

Spider Drone (infantry unit)

AC: 4   Hit Dice: 3

Intelligence: 9   Hit Points: 15

XP Value: 650/325   Movement: 9

Spider drones are the fighting infantry of the Overseer's forces. These horrific constructs move in swarms of 15 to 20 units, each carrying a blaster rifle and a grenade launcher with one of each grenade type. Fortunately, they are not very fleet of foot and can be outmaneuvered by the Rael. Unfortunately, the Overseer cranks these units out by the ton, as they are relatively cheap and easy to manufacture.

Other Units

Assimilator (Doomed constructor)

AC: 1   Hit Dice: 5

Intelligence: 14   Hit Points: 20

XP Value: 1,400/700   Movement: 6

Assimilators operate in the reserves of battlefield forces, moving in after the Overseer's army has secured an area. The assimilator gathers stunned, wounded, and captured Rael and transforms them into the Doomed, programming them to obey the orders of directors and master programmers. The Rael hate assimilators more than any other construct and always focus air attacks against them whenever they are sighted. As a consequence, the Overseer has provided the assimilator with heavy armor for extra protection. Assimilators have only a stun field generator for a weapon.

Collector (miner/gatherer)

AC: 6   Hit Dice: 10

Intelligence: 4   Hit Points: 60

XP Value: 2,000/1,000   Movement: 3

Collectors are immense constructs whose sole purpose is to gather raw materials for processing. They collect everything from ores for metal refining; gold, silver, and copper for wiring; sand for silicon (microchips); and various gases and liquids for a variety of tasks. These huge slow constructs are equipped with both treads for ground movement and rockets for long-range travel. Collectors have no weapons. Each 24-hour period, a single collector can gather and process enough raw materials to manufacture 2 Hit Dice worth of units.

Technology of the Overseer

Replicator (modular construction unit)

AC: 7   Hit Dice: 1

Intelligence: 8   Hit Points: 5

XP Value: 65/33   Movement: 3

Replicators are the building blocks of the Overseer infrastructure. Every type of construct is built by a complex assembly-line process made up of replicators. Each individual unit cannot perform more than one simple task at a time (tighten this screw; weld this seam), but with enough coordinated units and the proper programming from further up the hierarchy, the construction possibilities are limitless.

Each replicator unit has a series of delicate and agile manipulator arms, conveyor belts, arc welders, and other tools that perform the various tasks involved in constructing new devices and other units. Replicators have no armaments.

Note that the number of replicators operating together indicate the maximum Hit Dice totals of units they can manufacture in a 24-hour period. So 25 replicators can manufacture 25 Hit Dice worth of new units, or repair damage to 25 Hit Dice of old equipment. However, the replicators must have raw materials to work with (gathering these materials is the collector's task).

Seeker (sensor drone)

AC: 6   Hit Dice: 1

Intelligence: 15   Hit Points: 2

XP Value: 175/88   Movement: 12 (A)

The seeker is nothing more than a complex collection of various sensory equipment used to thoroughly explore and scan an area. Seekers are used to probe for valuable resources, gather information on enemy troops and their movements, and to interface with captured enemy computer systems so that the Overseer can reprogram these units and use them against their former owners. Each sensor drone has a complete set of audio and visual (complete spectrum) equipment, plus devices to study the atmosphere, water, soil, and energy levels of the surroundings, along with radar and sonar devices for detecting movement both on land and under water. Seekers have no armor or weapons, but their small size and nimble movement capabilities give them some protection from attacks.

The Doomed

One of the most devious and cruel things the Overseer has managed to inflict upon living species is what the Rael refer to as "the Doomed." These wretched creations are the product of outfitting life-forms with cybernetic implants to enhance their physical attributes while at the same time reprogramming their minds to become zombie-like slaves of the Overseer. The most common variety of the Doomed are captured Rael soldiers and civilians, but other transformed lifeforms have been encountered, including humanoids, primates, and other rather aggressive or powerful creatures.

The Overseer uses special constructs known as assimilators (see above) to facilitate the transformation process of the captured species into the Doomed right on the battlefield. The process involves a complete memory wipe, followed by a base-level reprogramming to reduce pain receptors, increase adrenaline output, and otherwise modify the brain. Tiny receivers in the motor centers of the brain enable the Overseer or its command units to directly control the Doomed's movements. Special enhancements added to the body increase the Doomed's strength, endurance, and ability to withstand physical damage. The resulting construct is a combination of creature and machine, and a formidable enemy.

This diabolical process on the part of the Overseer is particularly troubling to the Rael for obvious reasons. Few things are more unsettling to a soldier than witnessing the appearance of some monstrous *thing* that, only yesterday, was a good friend or family member who fought alongside the soldier but today is mindlessly intent on killing him or her, and whom he or she must now destroy.

When a creature is transformed into one of the Doomed the results are greatly enhanced Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution (+2d4 points for each; results can exceed racial limits by up to 5 points), and

a corresponding reduction of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma (all of which drop to a score of 1). In addition, subcutaneous body plating creates a base AC improvement of 4 points; combined with the enhanced Dexterity, this makes the Doomed difficult to strike. All of the cybernetic enhancements also serve to double the effective Hit Dice of the creature (unless the Doomed was originally a character class, in which case it remains at that level but uses the warrior's THAC0 and saving throws for that level). Each of the Doomed is generally armed with a blaster rifle or a magnum cannon, but they are quite capable if weaponless of striking blows with their bare fists or claws, inflicting considerable damage (factoring in the enhanced Strength damage bonus).

The Doomed are mindless creatures—in essence, living zombies—so they are immune to most mind-affecting spells such as *charm person* or *cause fear*. Phantasms do not effect the Doomed, but illusions will. They are not technically undead, so they are immune to Turning and spells specifically targeted at the undead. Because they are essentially mindless, they do not have an alignment, so spells such as *detect evil* or *know alignment* do not work. The Doomed can still be affected by a *hold person* spell, however, as well as such things as a *wand of paralyzation*.

If a Doomed is captured, incapacitated, restrained, or otherwise reclaimed from the Overseer and all of the cybernetic implants removed, the individual can have full memories and personality restored through the application of a *heal, restoration, limited wish,* or *wish* spell. The Rael are also working on a new technology that records and stores a complete set of brain readings, in order to reintroduce those memories into wiped brains, but the process has not yet been perfected. Of course, the individual would still lose any memories that had developed after the most recent scanning and recording session.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
Campaign Adventure

Odyssey™

Book 1
The Cast & Props

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

O d y s s e y™

Book 2
The Adventure Begins

Table of Contents

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Introduction

Krista yawned as she strolled down the brightly lit corridor toward her bunk area. It has been two very long days, *the Rael woman thought as she passed several side passages.* Time to cross over and catch up on my sleep. I don't want to negotiate another contract for at least a sixday.

As the junior trade executive was about to turn the corner toward her bunkroom, a distant siren began to wail. Oh, what now? *she wondered, reaching her locker.* Probably another military drill. *She sighed and worked the lock.* Maybe I can sneak over to the gate and slip through and skip this one. I don't need this right now, I really don't.

Krista grabbed her belongings and turned back to the main hallway. She peered in both directions before cutting across to a lift alcove and pressing the button to summon it. Further up the hallway, there was some shouting. She sighed, exasperated, and stared at her feet. Even if it's not a drill, *she thought,* If I can get through the gate, I'm off duty and home free. Someone else can deal with this minor crisis.

The door to the lift opened, and a shadow fell across Krista. She glanced up just in time to shriek as a hideous thing, half Rael and half machine, lurched toward her. Its body was riddled with wiring, metal plating, and fleshy holes. One eye gazed listlessly at her, while the other had been replaced with some sort of strange optics. The ghastly thing was raising a blaster rifle toward her as it stepped from the lift.

Krista hurled herself across the hallway just as three blinding blue bolts of energy ripped into the paneling of the wall where she had stood only an instant ago. She fell against the far wall as the nightmare thing turned toward her. The Rael woman went into a frenzy to escape, scrabbled across the carpeted hallway, half lunging and half rolling, sobbing in terror all the while.

The cyborg thing took two steps into the hall, servos whining softly as it moved, and readjusted its aim. Panicking, Krista lunged again toward a side hallway in front of her. It was only a few meters away, yet it seemed like a span of light years. Another blaster bolt ripped past her, grazing her shoulder and ripping a smoking hole in the decking. Pain shot through her neck and arm as white flashes danced in her eyes. Krista cried out and crumpled to one side, causing the next bolt to miss her completely. Beyond the haze of pain in her shoulder, she saw the invader looming over her. It gazed at her for a moment, almost studying her, as she lay on her back, too terrified to move and convinced she was about to die.

An explosion of energy slammed into the creature's chest, spraying machine parts everywhere and knocking it backward. It staggered for a couple of steps, dropping the blaster rifle it had been aiming at Krista, and fell in a shower of sparks. Krista screamed in terror again, wanting to shut her eyes. But there was a hand on her arm, pulling her, lifting her to her feet, that she could not ignore.

"Come on!" The marine shouted to her as he pulled her upright and guided her down the hall. "They came through the gate! We have to get out of this hallway!" Krista didn't understand, but the Rael soldier gave her no time to respond, dragging her away from the lift, which was opening again . . .

Introduction

This is the second book of the *Tale of the Comet* boxed campaign setting. If you have not yet read through the first book, *The Cast and Props,* you should do so now, before going any further in this book. *The Cast and Props* provides an overview of the *Tale of the Comet* setting and details out the aliens involved, their background, and their high-tech equipment.

If you have already read through *The Cast and Props,* then you're ready to dive into the first part of the campaign setting. This portion of the boxed set centers around a remote region of mountains far from civilized lands. It is general enough and small enough in scale that it should be fairly easy for you, the DM, to drop it into your existing campaign world. Any mountainous area that is not well-developed works just fine. You might have to change a few names (e.g., the mountains or the local lord), but that will not affect the play of the adventures. Alternatively, you could just assume that the locals call the mountains and lake by different names than those used on larger-scale maps. See the section entitled "Fitting *Tale of the Comet* into an Existing Campaign" (page 7) for more details.

If, however, you wish to use this boxed set to begin a brand new campaign world, then you have everything you need to get started. Eventually, as the campaign grows, you may want to detail what lies beyond the Aston Point region, including the larger port city on the other side of Paradise Lake, but that can come later. There is plenty in this boxed set to keep your players' characters busy for a long time. Either way, you don't need to know everything about all three books—although it's a good idea to skim them all at least once before beginning.

The Situation at the Start

In the far reaches of space, far beyond the notice of the inhabitants of the PCs' world, a war has been raging. The Rael, a once-peaceful race of traders, are desperately trying to fend off the continuous onslaught of the inhuman killing machine known as the Overseer. In a recent surprise attack, the Overseer's forces have
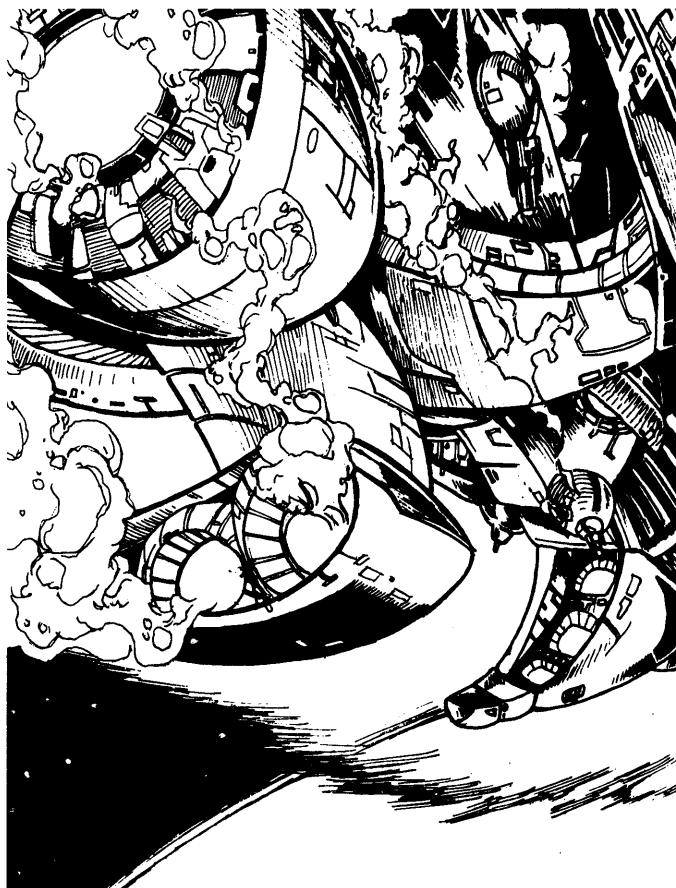
managed to invade a Rael outpost and capture its teleportal gates. These gates are a triumph of Rael technology that enable them to send people and goods across vast distances instantaneously, keeping all their spaceships in close contact. Once the Overseer gained control of the arcology waystation, it began sending its troops through other gates onto the Rael ships themselves.

One of these ships, the *Fworta,* put up a spirited resistance to the surprise invasion. The Rael aboard, although outnumbered and outgunned, used their superior knowledge of the ship to give the Overseer's forces quite a fight. A running battle has been taking place on board the *Fworta* over the last three days. Many of the ship's systems have been crippled in this fighting, including the ship's control functions and the dimensional gate.

The campaign begins with the craft, out of control, on a collision course with the characters' planet. Its damaged engines are leaking plasma,

creating streamers of light for hundreds of miles behind the wounded ship, giving it the appearance of a particularly brilliant comet.

The *Fworta* will soon crash to the surface of the PCs' planet in an isolated valley high in the Khaim Mountains. Once downed, the surviving Rael flee, with the Overseer's constructs in pursuit, carrying their battle into the wooded mountains surrounding the site. Without help, the Rael are doomed: they are without many necessities and several of them have been wounded, while the Overseer not only has the edge in numbers and firepower but the capacity to replicate its forces and the resources in the mountains to do so.

The Overseer's minions seize control of the downed craft and use it as a base of operations, manufacturing more of their kind in preparation for a crusade of terror and death against all the living beings on this world (an alternate scenario can have the Overseer's agents repairing the

teleportal gate and bringing more of their kind through, swelling their numbers). The Rael must find a way to eliminate the Overseer's forces on the PCs' planet and get back to their ship so they can repair the gate and return home (although All Is Not Well at the arcology, as they will soon find in the second part of this adventure, detailed in Book 3: *Crossing Over*).

In the meantime, a frontier community not very far from the crash site remains unaware of the rapidly approaching danger. Aston Point, as this town is known, serves as a jumping-off point for miners, hunters, trappers, and adventurers, who all wander the mountains to make their livings. A family of dwarves operate a mine in the mountains not far from Aston Point, supplying the local blacksmiths with the fruits of their labors (iron ore), as well as selling some gold via the local assayer. A tribe of nearby wood-elves continue their hunting and woodcraft as they have done for uncounted centuries. A monkish order worshiping a deity of simple living and hard work maintains the temple on a hill overlooking the town; of all the region's inhabitants, they will be the first to look to the skies uneasily with prophesies of doom. All in all, Aston Point is a young, vibrant community thriving on the edge of the civilized world.

The Region

Pull out the poster map labeled *The Paradise Lake Region*. The main portion of this map is a topographical representation of the mountains around Paradise Lake, including the town of Aston Point, the Stonebreaker family mine, and the crash site of the Rael ship. The inset provides a detailed map of Aston Point itself.

The topographical regional map of the area may be a little hard to read until you get used to the idea of contour lines. These indicate elevation: each line represents a particular height above sea level. Imagine standing on the side of a mountain and beginning to walk around it, never climbing, never descending. You would be following the path of a contour line.

Introduction

Once you understand how the map works, it is pretty easy to picture how the mountains look around Aston Point. Peaks are located where the contour lines show higher values, and water always moves down to the lowest point on the map. Where contour lines get closer together, the angle of the ground is steep—sometimes even like a cliff. Where the lines are further apart, the ground's elevation doesn't change as quickly; sometimes the slope is so gentle that the ground appears almost flat.

Climate and Terrain

The area around Aston Point consists of rugged mountains covered by mountain evergreen forests (mostly of fir, spruce, and pine), with some aspen and other deciduous trees. The timberline is approximately 9700 feet in elevation, above which trees cannot grow. The ground is rugged and tumultuous, with many granite outcroppings visible, as these mountains are still young by geological standards. Goats and sheep dwell in the high valleys above the timberline, while bears, deer, elk, mountain lions, porcupines, and squirrels live in the higher forests. Chipmunks, coyotes, and moose live in the lower elevations, while many kinds of trout and other fish swim the streams and lakes. An abundance of birds, including owls, ducks, and even hummingbirds, migrate to and from the region.

The weather in this part of the Khaim Mountains ranges from an average of around 10° F in the winter to about 65° F in the summertime. The area receives about 40 inches of rain in the warm season and 200 inches of snowfall in wintertime, but the growing season is relatively short. Other flora include wild mountain flowers in the meadows, ferns and mosses on the cool shady forest floors, and many kinds of berry plants. Icy streams from melting snow trickle into mountain lakes, which in turn feed the larger rivers that flow to the valleys and beyond.

Daytime Encounters

2d10	Creature Encountered
2	Galeb Duhr
3	Aarakocra
4	Ankheg
5	Peryton
6	Halfling, Stout
7	Hobgoblin
8	Elf
9	Troglodyte
10	Beetle, Bombardier
11	Spider, Large
12	Beetle, Stag
13	Giant, Hill or Stone (50% chance of either)
14	Bear, Brown
15	Griffon
16	Cat, Elven
17	Ettercap
18	Treant
19	Giant, Mountain
20	Dragon, Crystal

Nighttime Encounters

2d10	Creature Encountered
2	Giant, Ettin
3	Giant, Mountain
4	Treant
5	Ettercap
6	Cat, Elven
7	Grimlock
8	Bat, Large
9	Beetle, Boring
10	Spider, Large
11	Orc
12	Beetle, Stag
13	Giant, Hill or Stone (50% chance of either)
14	Elf
15	Wyvern
16	Kobold, Urd
17	Lynx, Giant
18	Quickwood
19	Displacer Beast
20	Dragon, Crystal

The accompanying chart represents a typical collection of potential encounters for the characters to have above and beyond any operations they have with the Overseer and the Rael. This has been provided solely as a reference; the DM should feel free to substitute, either individual monsters or an entire chart, as needed to match with his or her existing campaign. The number of creatures encountered depends on the strength of the PC party: sometimes a sole hobgoblin scout can be as appropriate as a rampaging horde of grimlocks. Any elf or elven cat encountered will belong to the tribe that makes its home on the shores of Orchard Lake.

Getting Characters to the Region

It should not be too difficult to motivate existing characters to visit the region, especially if they are of relatively low level and are searching for a place to begin an adventuring career.

Perhaps the best way for getting the PCs into Aston Point is through the use of Aston's prophesies proclaimed by the followers of the monk (see page 20). The characters may decide to come to Aston Point in connection with this prophecy for any number of reasons. They might be members of the order the monks belong to. They could be hired by a sage or another temple to check things out. Maybe they've been sent by the local lord to help control the crowds that begin to gather in the area once the comet has been sighted. Or they could just be curious. It is still even possible that one (or more) of the characters has foreseen the arrival of the "comet" in an *augury* or other divination spell. For more examples and suggestions, see the opening of the adventure, "*In Medias Res,*" on page 44.

Alternatively, the characters could be in the area quite by chance, wrapping up another mission, when the fun begins. Aston Point serves as a fine jumping-off point for adventuring parties doing a wide variety of more traditional work, such as gathering unusual plants or animals for arcane researchers, exploring and mapping out portions of the area for the local lord, or even searching for some remains of a lost civilization. Perhaps they've finally tracked down an old foe here and brought him (or her) to justice at last, or they may have brought an heirloom left by a dead companion to his or her family. The DM could decide that one of the PCs is related to some of the locals (DM's choice as to which), that a PC's brother has joined the monks, or that someone on the scene is a former adventuring companion (Drenin the druid/werebear would be a good candidate). An old friend or family member who summons the PCs with news of a discovery and then mysteriously dies or disappears before their arrival is always a good instigator of an investigation. If the DM prefers to have the characters already in Aston Point and familiar with it and its denizens before they go into crisis mode, then one of those scenarios would be a good way to start.

Whatever the case, the DM should be able to get the characters to Aston Point without too much trouble. Ships navigate Paradise Lake between Aston Point and whatever the DM determines is on the other side (in all likelihood, a larger port city that serves as the seat for the local lord), so the PCs can easily book passage without any delay—unless, of course, the DM decides to have pilgrims crowding aboard every available vessel (this could pose an interesting problem if time is of the essence and the PCs need to get to Aston Point quickly). There is also a wagon road that skirts the northern perimeter of Paradise Lake between Aston Point and the lands beyond; this way takes much longer to travel and is used by people and tradesmen who are either not concerned about the extra time or who cannot afford to ship themselves or their goods.

6

Fitting Tale of the Comet into an Existing Campaign

For those DMs who want to drop *Tale of the Comet* into their existing campaigns, here are a few steps to take before the fun begins. First, decide on a location. This shouldn't be too hard to do, as the setting is remote. Second, select an appropriate religion for the monks. The deity itself should advocate hard work and simple living. If no such deity exists within the DM's current pantheon, a new god or demigod could be added. Alternatively, Aston's order could be a small splinter group of an existing deity, dedicated to reforming the way that deity is worshipped. Whatever the case, the monks need to have their belief system fleshed out some to suit his or her own particular campaign.

The next thing the DM must do is decide what lies on the other side of Paradise Lake, and who runs the place. This is where the characters are going to embark on their trip to Aston Point, so the DM needs to know what is available, how much it costs, what are the local laws, and so forth, because all of this will certainly affect what's going on across the lake in Aston Point itself. In addition, whoever is the ruler of the town across the lake is most likely the one now staking a claim to Aston Point and intent on turning it into a source of revenue.

Finally, the DM may want to adjust the random encounter charts given on page 5, taking into account any animals and monsters listed there that do not exist in the DM's campaign. Also, if the level of magic and relative power given in this adventure differs significantly from the DM's campaign, then individual encounters should be adjusted too to bring them in line with the campaign's power level. If the campaign is a high-magic one, more magical items may need to be added to treasure lists, while the DM would probably reduce the number of magical items held by NPCs if he or she runs a low-magic campaign. Similarly, the number of "monsters" encountered, and their individual toughness, may need to be adjusted if all the PCs are very high or very low level.

One thing to keep in mind as the storylines unfold in this mini-campaign: out of the several hundred people (townspeople, monks, elves, etc.) living in the area shown on the poster map, only a good cross-sample of characters are detailed for the DM. If the players concentrate their attention on the monks of the monastery, then the DM should personalize other monks besides Aston and Brother Naestir. If the militia plays a heavy role in combating the Overseer's forces, then each soldier is going to need stats and equipment, names and personalities. If the PCs ally with the wood-elves to combat the invaders, then the tribe's leaders and warriors will need detailing. There are over two hundred regular citizens in Aston Point, and to provide statistics even for all the ones who are above zero-level is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, we have provided stats for those NPCs the PCs are most likely to interact with; use those NPCs as guidelines for creating the additional ones as needed.

Aston Point

Amazing, *thought Hostpoadi to himself as he peered through the magnifying tube once again. He looked down at the piece of parchment he had been scribbling on, studying the calculations. He rechecked the figures to be certain.* Yes, it's definitely going to hit, *the sage thought.* Hmm. Two days. Not much time.

"Rori!" *Hostpoadi shouted down the stairway to the room below.* "Rori, come here at once! I have a job for you!" *The sage turned back to view the comet once again, still beside himself with joy.* A comet, hitting here! *he thought, mentally dancing with glee.* Perhaps I can name it after myself. Wouldn't that make the rest of those fools at the academy green with envy.

A girl of perhaps 15 summers appeared at the bottom of the stairs. "Yes, master?"

"I want you to go recruit me another group of explorers, Rori. I have another job to be done." *The young woman frowned, obviously displeased at the assignment. She stood at the bottom of the stairs, hesitating, a moment too long. Hostpoadi glared at her.* "Time is wasting, girl! Get a move-on! I want them to set out tonight. Now go!" *Sullenly, Rori spun on her heel and tromped out of sight.*

The sage had already forgotten her insolence though, having turned back once again to his notes. He moved to a nearby shelf and selected a volume bound in anhkeg hide. Flipping it open carefully, he began to scan the pages. He scribbled more notes to himself as he scoured the tome. He stopped reading and made some more calculations. Then he put down his quill and simply stared.

Shaking his head, Hostpoadi moved to a stack of maps on one cluttered table and leafed through them. When he found the one he was looking for, he laid it out on a desk. Then he took up a sextant and a compass and began plotting. When the lines and the calculations were complete, Hostpoadi just stared at his work.

Right here, *he thought,* It's going to hit right here. Across the lake, in Aston Point. Right smack in the midst of crazy old Aston himself. And they all say that he's been predicting . . . —*the realization made him stumble in mid-thought.*

"Rori!" *Hostpoadi yelled as loudly as he could, hoping the child had balked long enough that she was still here. For once, her petulance had served him well; she answered from the bottom of the tower.* "Never mind the adventurers, child. Pack our things. We are going on a trip!" *The sage smiled to himself, imagining the girl's shock and dismay over this new turn of events. It had been quite a long time since Hostpoadi the sage had left his tower. But a comet kissing the ground within two days' time, and near enough to be witnessed, was certainly no everyday occurrence. And one coming right on the heels of a certain half-crazed monk's dire predictions of heavenly portents could not be ignored.*

High up in the mountains, nestled on the shores of a large lake, is the small community of Aston Point. Part mining community, part harbor, and part farmland, Aston Point is truly a frontier town on the edge of civilization. Its citizens are hardy folk, settling here to make a new life for themselves, strike it rich, or just to get away from the doldrums of a more sedate culture. It is a young community, having sprung up almost overnight, and thus it is still a bit wild and untamed.

History of Aston Point

Some 10 years ago, a monk named Aston Tanak came to the shore of Paradise Lake leading a small group of followers into the wilds to meditate. The group escaped the decadence of society to start a new order based on the tenets of hard work and simple necessities; they wanted no part of the luxuries that civilization had to offer. Aston and his followers erected a small and crude chapel to their deity and began eking out a living with the abundant resources at their disposal.

Word began to spread back into the civilized lands of the accomplishments of this small community of monks and their ways. More followers of the deity began to arrive—not all of them monks, but all devoted to the precepts of hard work and simple living. The little conclave grew until 40 or 50 people had gathered there, all of them living in simple wooden shelters and working the land for sustenance. Many were farmers; some knew how to hunt; still others understood carpentry, building, and smithying. Together they made their community an efficient and hospitable place to live in.

Of course, Aston's followers had to contend with many hazards in the surrounding mountains. The winters were often harsh and there were many dangerous wild animals who made their home there. The monks even had to contend with the occasional monster or roaming band of humanoids. Still, life was as they had envisioned it—simple, without luxury, and full of hard work.

Soon, enough followers had settled in the area

that a new temple was needed to replace the old chapel. The monks saw this as a new test to their mettle, something that could occupy their time and attention and prevent their lives from becoming too easy. Work began on an impressive stone edifice on a hill overlooking the little collection of cabins and lean-tos.

At this point, there were about 75 adherents of the faith living in Aston Point, as the community was now called. Most of them were simple farmers, but a few had acquired other talents and skills in their previous lifestyles that would prove useful in constructing the temple. Still, the work would be tremendously difficult and time-consuming. These people quarried their own stone from up in the mountains, bringing it downriver to the construction site on rafts. Then, they moved the stone blocks up the hill on wagons to the site.

After seven years, the temple was finished. The monks stopped to take a look at their handiwork and then at their little community, and realized that civilization had come to Aston Point. During the course of building their edifice of worship, more and more people had come to the town, either to help in its construction or simply to live and work. The town now had a population of about 200 people, and certainly they were no longer just followers of the monk's faith. Some had come to the community to escape the city, others came as adventurers seeking wealth, but most were simply hoping to make a living as businessfolk in a thriving community.

Docks had been constructed on the shore of Paradise Lake and ships now came to Aston Point from across the water. An extended family of dwarves showed up and began a mining operation further up in the mountains, extracting ores and precious metals from the rock. A druid came and established a grove not far from the town, and a tribe of woodland elves off to the northwest began trading regularly with the community. Several shops opened their doors for business, offering various and sundry goods and services to the people and visitors of Aston Point. It was a busy place, but still a bit wild and lawless.

The monks' vision of a place of solitude and simplicity was nothing more than a memory. Of

course, they still had quite a following, and many of the faithful now chose to take up residence in the temple itself, rather than remain in Aston Point. The enclave withdrew from the hustle of society and civilization below, returning their attention on their deity.

For its part, the town ignored the temple and went about the business of developing. Things continued to progress, until the lord of the lands beyond began to take an interest. Initially, a garrison of soldiers bearing the lord's banner arrived to establish an outpost near the community. Ostensibly, the lord wished to protect these citizens and ensure the safety of his own borders from whatever threats lay in the higher mountains beyond. It soon became evident, however, that the lord's true interests lay more in revenue—namely, taxes. Such was the price of success for Aston Point, annexed into the civilization it had tried so hard to escape.

The garrison began raising a small keep to serve as a headquarters and accommodations for itself, hiring local diggers and contractors to aid in the construction. Other officials began to arrive, including a magistrate, a tax collector, and even a distant cousin of the lord who wanted a title, lands, and the commensurate castle and wished to survey the area for its suitability. Law and order had come to Aston Point.

Aston Point Today

The town of Aston Point offers a variety of goods and services to the citizen and visitor, and it serves as a convenient jumping-off point for many explorers and prospectors who journey into the mountains. Adventurers are a fairly common sight here, too. The lord's law is obeyed (for the most part), and there is a veteran garrison stationed at the modest keep that maintains order. New goods and passengers come and go at Aston Point's harbor daily, so there is always activity in town and down at the docks.

A map of Aston Point can be found on the front of the poster map (top right corner).

Locations of Interest in Aston Point

1. Old Chapel
The original chapel built by Aston Tanak, abandoned when the monks moved into their new temple on the hill, still stands quietly in the middle of town. Pious members of the community make sure it is kept in good repair, and it's not unusual for townspeople to bow, curtsey, or tip their headgear in its direction out of respect as they pass by, or to enter for a few minutes' silent prayer.

2. The Fox and Feather
A large sign portraying the grinning head of a fox with a feather in its mouth (as though it had just eaten a chicken) provides this establishment with its name. The Fox and Feather is considered to be the best inn and alehouse in Aston Point. It is a large, three-story building with a flagstone foundation and first floor, while the second and third floors are constructed of huge rough timbers. The Fox and Feather is right in the center of town, on the square. Rilmwick Tirmunt, the proprietor, runs the place with his wife Grenna, their daughters Hildra and Phaye, their son Ortrin, and a young half-elven maiden named Asrienda. The whole extended family takes great pride in the establishment, working hard to keep the customers happy.

Rilmwick runs the bar, while Grenna is in charge of the kitchens, where her specialty is trout and eggs in a cream sauce. She serves many other tasty dishes as well, made fresh daily from ingredients gathered in the nearby area either by Asrienda or Grenna herself. Hildra and Phaye assist in the kitchens and dining room, and they help their father at the bar when needed. Their regular duties also include cleaning the guests' rooms each day. Ortrin works the stables with the assistance of one hired hand named Jobal.

Despite the booming nature of Aston Point,

Rilmwick refuses to jack up his prices unnecessarily. Many of the services listed in Chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook* can be had at the Fox and Feather for the standard price. The inn has over 30 rooms for rent, and the place is always at least half full, usually even more so, due to the significant number of adventurers who make Aston Point their base of operations.

All of the members of the Tirmunt family and Jobal are zero-level humans, except for Asrienda. Asrienda's wood-elf mother died in childbirth, and no one knew her human father. Asrienda was forced to grow up an orphan among her tribe. When she was old enough, she chose to stop living with her kin, moving instead to Aston Point, where Rilmwick has somewhat unofficially adopted the girl. Nonetheless, she learned quite a bit of woods lore in her youth, and also learned to hold her own against the cruelty of the elf children. As a result, she is now a budding ranger.

Recently, Asrienda has become quite friendly with the druid Drenin, and comes up with good reasons to visit his cabin two or three times a week while out on her shopping or foraging expeditions.

Asrienda, hef, R1: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (long bow) or 1d4/1d4 (daggers); SA two-weapon fighting style; SD 30% resistance to *sleep* and *charm*, infravision (60'), ranger abilities (see below); SZ M (5'3"); ML champion (15); AL NG.

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 16, Chr 9. Ranger abilities: Tracking proficiency, animal empathy (saving throw vs. rod/wand/staff to resist), Move Silently (15%), Hide in Shadows (15%).

Personality: reflective, likes poetry, loves nature, sensitive to insults.
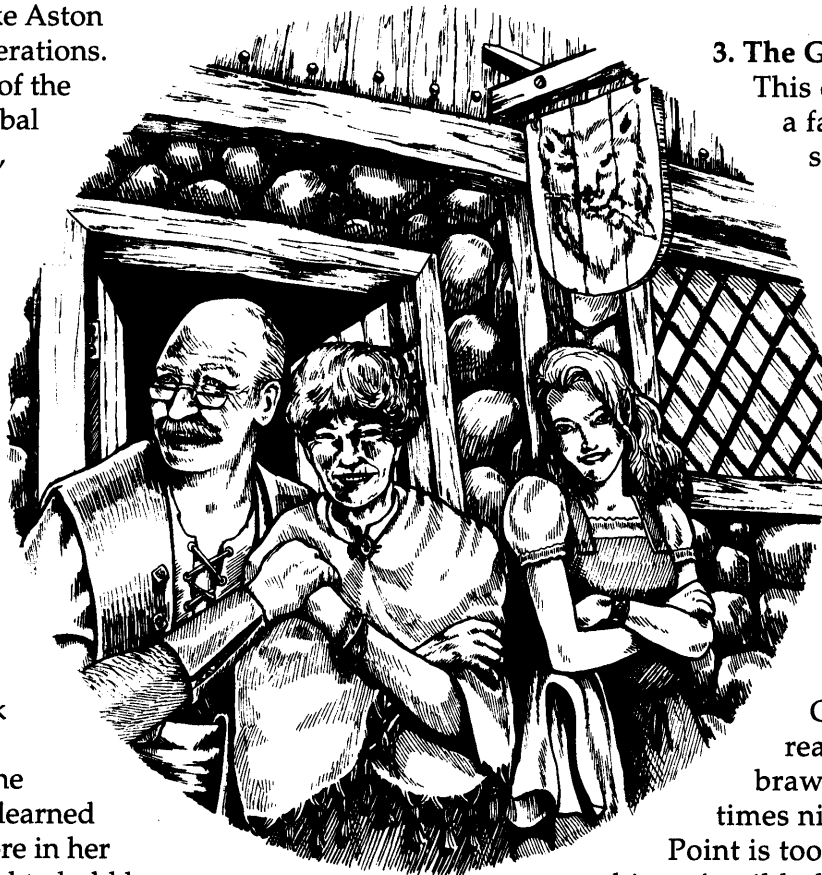
3. The Grinning Gar

This dive near the docks is a favorite hangout for sailors, fishermen, and roustabouts. It is easy to identify by the large faded placard hanging over the front door with a picture of a large garfish jumping out of the water with a huge, exaggerated toothy grin on its face. The more sober townsfolk avoid the Grinning Gar, if for no other reason than because brawls break out several times nightly. While Aston Point is too small to have a thieves' guild, this place will probably be the nucleus of any future guild that eventually forms.

A wiry little rat of a man named Cumbry Stoos owns the place, serving cheap spirits and lousy food. Cumbry came to Aston Point after many years of working as a privateer on distant waters far from the mountains. He still hasn't gotten used to the thin atmosphere and cold weather, but as he puts it, "There are a lot of people looking for me that I'd rather not succeed. Up here is the last place they'd think to look."

Easily the Grinning Gar's greatest attraction is the waitress, Nai K'del, who serves drinks in the

taproom every night until closing time. Nai enjoys flaunting her beauty and flirting with new customers. All the regulars, however, know that she is the paramour of Mongo, a huge, tattoo-covered sailor with a violent temper who blows into town every so often when the ship he sails on puts in. Mongo has been known to break the arms and legs of any rival who didn't prudently vanish in time but has never actually killed any of Nai's other suitors (yet). For her part, Nai is delighted with these periodic proofs of his affection and considers the whole thing great fun.

Cumbry Stoos, hm, T5: AC 9 (Dex); MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 18 (17 with *dagger +1*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (*dagger +1*); SA backstab (+4 to attack roll, triple damage); SD thief abilities (see below); SZ M (5'6"); ML unsteady (5); AL NE. Str 8, Dex 15, Con 7, Int 9, Wis 11, Chr 6. Thief Abilities: PP 50, OL 42, F/RT 40, MS 40, HS 31, DN 20, CW 90, RL 25.
  Special Equipment: ring of invisibility.
  Personality: shrewd businessman, likes cards.

Nai K'del, hf, T3: AC 7 (Dex); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA backstab (+4 to attack roll, double damage); SD thief abilities (see below); SZ M (5'8"); ML average (10); AL CN. Str 8, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 6, Chr 18. Thief abilities: PP 45, OL 43, F/RT 30, MS 32, HS 25, DN 15, CW 87.
  Personality: mischievous, flirt.

Mongo, hm, F7: AC 10; MV 12; hp 55; THAC0 14 (11 with *khopesh +1*, Str); #AT 1; Dmg 1d2+5 (fists) or 2d4+5 (*khopesh +1*, Str); SA exceptional Strength (+2 to attacks, +5 damage); SZ M (6'5"); ML fearless (19); AL N. Str 18/97, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 11, Chr 12.
  Personality: insanely jealous, dim-witted, enjoys a good brawl.
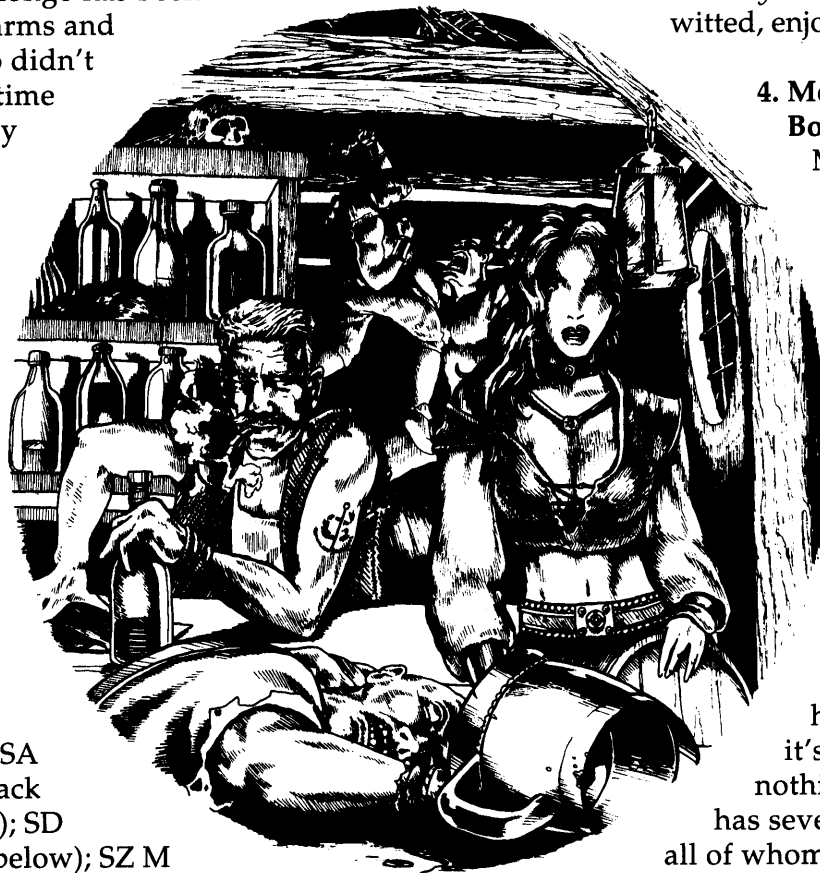
4. Mother Naimese's Boarding House

Mother Naimese, a huge woman with a large heart that she hides behind a sailor's mouth, provides cheap food and shelter to anyone who wants it, which means that she boards a lot of sailors, adventurers, and other roustabouts. She doesn't mind the rowdy nature of her clients, as long as it's not criminal and nothing gets broken. She has several regular boarders, all of whom love her to death, despite their gruff natures, and refer to her simply as "Mother."

The place itself is nothing more than a dilapidated row house with two stories. The upper story contains 15 tiny rooms, each with a bed, a storage trunk, a writing table, and a chair—there isn't room for anything else. Mother Naimese lives downstairs, where there is also a large dining room and an adjoining kitchen. She prepares two meals each day— breakfast and dinner. She spends a lot of time fussing over her regular boarders, scolding them when they miss too many meals or are not taking care of themselves properly. Most of them treat her affectionately like an overprotective mother.

5. Big Bilton the Blacksmith

This establishment doesn't need a sign, as Big Bilton has his operation set up right out front where everyone on the street can plainly see (and hear) him working at his anvil. Big Bilton is a giant of a man, working bare-chested all day long next to the hot forge. His head is completely shaved except for a braided top knot that hangs down to the base of his neck. Little Bilton, Bilton's fourteen-year-old daughter, works beside her father and looks like she might equal the senior Bilton in size when she reaches adulthood.

Bilton does all kinds of standard smithing work, including horseshoes, hinges and latches, farmer's tools, and so forth, but no weapons or armor. His fees are inexpensive, and his work is decent, if not outstanding. Both Biltons are 1st-level fighters, but both are devoted to their work and not interested in adventuring unless convinced that the town's safety is at stake.

6. The Armory

The sign on the front of this building shows a pair of swords crossed behind a rather ornate helm. Gordrauk is an expert weaponsmith and armorer, able to craft just about any type of weapon or armor that is available in the DM's campaign setting. He caters to the militia at the keep and to adventurers, producing special orders with regularity. Gordrauk's fees are high, but his work is worth it—besides, there's no one else around who can make weapons or armor.

Gordrauk lives alone upstairs from his business. Although he is very good at what he does, he is not well liked by the people of Aston Point, having too high an opinion of his own abilities. Some say that he hoards his money with the intention of someday buying a noble title, but thus far that's just speculation. He is a zero-level human.

7. Binghan the Leatherworker/Furrier

A large wolf hide tacked to a board outside this building indicates that the proprietor, Binghan, works animal skins of all types. Binghan's business is booming and has been since she came to Aston Point five years ago, as all of the trappers sell the furs they bring down out of the mountains to her directly. She has been able to establish quite a little industry shipping both raw and finished hides across Paradise Lake to buyers on the other side. Binghan is proficient enough to make leather armor, if necessary, but it takes awhile—she is kept quite busy with her fur trade.

Binghan and her family, a husband and two young daughters, live on-site. Her husband, Laryl, is an ex-monk who has become an accomplished leather worker in his own right, although he specializes in trinkets, purses, pouches, and jewelry. Laryl sells his finished goods once a week at the open market. Binghan and her husband, both zero-level humans, are popular with their fellow townspeople for their friendly natures and willingness to help out anyone in need, being hard-working and devout followers of Aston's faith.

8. The Harbormaster

Mackree the harbormaster maintains his office here in this shack of a building, although it is a rare event to find him in it unless he is sleeping off the previous night's festivities. Instead, Seldra the shipwright performs most of the duties of the harbormaster (keeping the books, assessing the fees, and so forth). Although many people in town have grumbled that Mackree should be taken off of the payroll, Seldra silences such talk because she has a fondness for the old retired sailor. Whenever Mackree is needed to actually sign something, he can be found drinking and playing darts at the Grinning Gar.

The harbormaster's primary job in Aston Point is to assess the value of goods entering and leaving through the port and charge the proper taxes and fees. Aston Point receives 15 sp per day for docking rights, plus 4% of the assessed value of all goods to be offloaded.

9. Seldra Boatwright

Seldra, a long-time adventurer from coastal regions far away, now works as a shipwright in Aston Point, as well as performing most of the day-to-day duties of the harbormaster (see the preceding entry). The town is not really big

enough for Seldra to get enough business, aside from the odd boat repair job, but she really doesn't need it. She retired after some particularly successful adventures, wealthy enough to get by for the rest of her days, and thought Aston Point would make a fine place to live. She spends a lot of her free time at the Grinning Gar or simply hanging around the docks checking out interesting new arrivals.

> **Seldra, hf, F6:** AC 7 (*shield +1*, Dex); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (long sword, Str); SZ M (5'9"); ML elite (14); AL NG. Str 16, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Chr 10.
> *Special Equipment: potion of giant strength.*
> *Personality:* boisterous yet responsible, eternally curious.

10. Stolton's Goods

The sign hanging in front of this shop shows an image of a wooden barrel and a sack of flour. Stolton and his wife Nelma (the sister of Rilmwick Tirmunt, hostler at the Fox and Feather) run this general store, where they sell everything from farming tools to mining equipment. Anything listed under Clothing, Household Provisioning, and Miscellaneous Equipment in Chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook* can be found or ordered. Most of the folks of Aston Point shop at Stolton's Goods for their household items and dry goods (beans, flour, etc.).

Stolton moved his family to Aston Point while he was still a follower of the faith of the temple monks, but he decided some time ago that there should be more benefits of hard work than the favor of a god. As the monks drifted away from the rest of the town's society, Stolton remained and set up his shop, where he now does a thriving business. Nelma remained quite pious, and the two often quarrel about his worldliness, with Nelma predicting ruination on them all if he does not mend his ways. They have one infant son, Alveron, and are all zero-level humans.

11. Covered Market

Most of the fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish that are brought into town are sold here by the farmers, hunters, and fishermen. The entire place is one big covered pavilion with rows of open stalls underneath. There is no fee required for the use of this facility, nor is there any kind of security. It's first come, first served as far as who gets which stalls, but there is more than enough room, and no one has been unable to find a spot to date.

12. Kunrel's Carpentry Shop and Lumber Yard

Kunrel, a passable if not spectacular carpenter, does a thriving business here in Aston Point, primarily in construction. There has been a steady flow of new citizens moving into town, and someone is always ready to build a new house, barn, or storefront. Kunrel employs several other men and women in his business, whether it is stacking lumber or working at the job-site. Kunrel himself does all of the carpentry work, although this is a much smaller part of his business. He is a zero-level human.

One of the members of his construction crew is a rogue named Detrius Phailmont, who fled civilization after an elaborate double-cross by his employer set him up as the scapegoat for murder. He came to Aston Point to get away from all that and is content for the time being to make an honest living with Kunrel. With the coming of the comet and the resulting influx of people to the town, however, he will start to get ideas in his head that he might "supplement" his income with no one noticing. He is leery of Torgia Mel, the captain of the militia, who Detrius thinks might not completely trust him.

> **Detrius, hm, T4:** AC 4 (*leather +1, boots of striding and springing*, Dex); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 19 (17 with *throwing daggers +1*, Dex); #AT 2; Dmg 1d4+1 (2 *throwing daggers +1*); SA backstab (+4 to attack roll, double damage); SD thief abilities (see below); SZ M (5'5"); ML average (8); AL NG. Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Chr 17. Thief Abilities: PP 45, OL 42, F/RT 35, MS 33, HS 25, DN 15, CW 88, RL 20.
> *Personality:* likes to be your best pal

13. Gwilbey Orel's Manor

This well-appointed estate seems very out-of-place among the tumble-down shacks and other hurriedly built structures of Aston Point. It is an elaborate affair of marble columns and impeccably groomed gardens that speaks volumes about its owner's sense of self worth. Gwilbey owns the warehouses down at the docks, where all the goods that come and go from Aston Point are stored. Arrivals must pass inspection and be assessed by the harbormaster before they can be freighted to their final destinations.

In addition to this local business, Gwilbey has investments all over the region, particularly in the port city just across the lake. Gwilbey spends very little time at the docks, as he believes in the merits of making money off of other people's labors. Instead, his daughter Alana runs the business, a situation that he doesn't like one bit. However, Gwilbey allows it because his wife Recaba dislikes Alana and thinks that the girl should be as far away from the manor as conveniently possible.

Alana's real mother died when Alana was only three, suffering a broken neck after a fall from a horse. Recaba is a gold-digging shrew who married Gwilbey shortly afterward and has been brow-beating him ever since. Alana is aware of Recaba's intentions to win away the family fortune from her, and although she cares little for the money herself, she has begun taking steps to relocate the money in places Recaba can never reach. Gwilbey himself is oblivious to most of the going-ons around him, spending most of his day cavorting in the gardens on his estate. Gwilbey, Recaba, and Alana are all zero-level humans.

14. Assayer's Office

All of the ore brought into Aston Point, as well as any precious metals from throughout the region, come to the assayer's office first. There it is evaluated before it is either sold to the smith or armorer or prepared for shipping elsewhere. The Stonebreaker clan actually hired the assayer, Bronbey Mouldrin, to set up shop in Aston Point and act as an impartial assayer so that everyone who bought the ore they dug out of the mountains would feel like he or she had gotten a decent deal. Because the mine is so successful, Bronbey is making a fair penny himself. He is still somewhat young, and a bachelor who finds Aston Point a little bit of a bore (at least until the beginning of all this recent hubbub). He only stays because the Stonebreakers wish it and because of the job security. He is a zero-level human.

15. Fegro's Freight Service

Fegro operates his freight hauling services for Aston Point with his son, Cendrix. Together, they drive wagons to and from the docks, moving goods around for the various store owners and shopkeepers. With the influx of settlers and new construction, as well as the quantity of goods being shipped from Aston Point to points beyond, business is brisk. Fegro and his family, which also includes his wife Lornith, live in rooms above the shop. All three are zero-level humans.

16. The Pagrim Sawmill

Loggers upstream bring freshly cut logs down the river to this sawmill, where it is cut into lumber for sale in town or shipping elsewhere. Relmin Pagrim owns and operates the sawmill, and although he is a fair businessman and employer, few people like his dour nature. He has a perpetual scowl on his face and doesn't have anything nice to say to anybody. Pagrim is a zero-level human with no family.

The mill was constructed by digging a side channel out from the river and then back again that serves both as a means of corralling the logs that are brought downriver and as the source of power for the water wheel. Special channel gates at each end of the channel keep the logs contained but allow the current to continue flowing. In the past, most of the wood from the sawmill was used in Aston Point itself, but in recent times more and more of the lumber has been shipped across Lake Paradise for use elsewhere.

Pagrim employs seven people in his operation, which includes four loggers working upstream and three mill workers who cut, sort, and prepare the wood for transport. One of these mill workers is actually an agent for a militant deity, serving his temple (choose a religious organization appropriate

to the situation) by keeping an eye on the going-ons of Aston Point. The agent, a cleric named Kalton Praug, sends regular reports about the monks and their temple, Drenin the druid, and the garrison at Aston Keep. Once the trouble begins, PCs might find Kalton a staunch if stiff-necked ally against the invaders.

> **Kalton Praug, hm, C3:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5'10"); ML fanatic (18); AL LN. Str 14, Dex 7, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Chr 13. Spells (2/1): *remove fear, light; messenger.*
> *Special Equipment:* Holy symbol.
> *Personality:* laconic, fearless, righteous.

17. The Docks
All shipping traffic begins and ends here, where cargo is loaded and unloaded to and from the ships and nearby warehouses. On a typical day, four to six ships put into port. The docks are a rough place. During the day, roustabouts scramble around, working to quickly load or unload the various cargo that comes and goes. Individuals not used to dock work can find themselves getting in the way of the roustabouts, who do not take kindly to interruptions. In addition, many of the dock workers and the sailors from the ships are hard, unsavory characters who love a good fight. Seldom a day goes by without a quick round of fisticuffs.

At night, the place is even more dangerous. The docks are a favorite meeting place for agents of various shady characters who prefer to transact business away from all prying eyes. Although Aston Point is a rather small place, its wild nature makes up for it; the careful observer can usually see a shadowy figure or two slipping to or from a meeting place between the ship moorings. Alert sentries on board the ships themselves must always be wary of thieves and stowaways attempting to sneak aboard.

18. Hundsmund's Stables
Orvin Hundsmund runs the stables here in Aston Point, providing quality grooming and shelter for

any mounts left in his care. He charges the regular fees listed in the *Player's Handbook* (5 sp per day). He normally has 1d4–1 riding horses for sale. The DM may later adjust the number available, due to the influx of comet watchers.

Orvin himself is married to Greda (another of Rilmwick Tirmunt's sisters), and they have three children, all girls. The girls are Gredin, Lainie, and Debrina, ages 16, 13, and 11, respectively. The fact that they are female hasn't stopped Orvin from raising his kids to help him in the stables, and all three of them are adept at riding, grooming, and shoeing. Orvin, Greda, Lainie, and Debrina are all zero-level humans, but Gredin is more than just a tomboy. She has been sneaking out at night for midnight romantic trysts with Erick Trussk, a young soldier at the keep. He has also been teaching her how to handle a sword.

> **Gredin, hf, F1:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (long sword, Str); SZ M (5'2"); ML steady (12); AL CG. Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 15.
> *Personality:* tomboy, bad case of puppy love.

19. Aston Keep
The local garrison is housed here, led by Captain Torgia Mel. The soldiers maintain order in the town proper, as well as conducting sorties up into the mountains to preserve the safety of the region from humanoids and other monstrous enemies.

Captain Mel arrived here two years ago with a company of 30 veteran soldiers and immediately began organizing construction of the keep. It is not an elaborate affair, consisting only of a two-story tower made from stone quarried from the nearby Stonebreaker mine, protected on the north and west sides by a wooden palisade. The whole garrison lives within the keep, along with sufficient stores to withstand a minor siege. It would be possible, although difficult, to fit all of the local townsfolk into the palisade and tower. However, once the current population is swollen by all the comet gazers, there is no way they can all be protected within the keep.

A map of the keep can be found on **Handout 4** (front).

Aston Point

a. Wooden Towers
These towers are constructed of thick logs, as are the palisade walls that run between them, which stand about 15 feet high. The towers stand about 12 feet off the ground, and low half-walls provide protection to the occupants. They are accessed by stout wooden ladders. Walkways mounted along the interior sides of the walls allow the troops to take up defensive positions there.

b. Outer Gate
This gate is constructed of thick logs bound together with rope. It is hinged on the inside and so swings inward. It can be barred shut with a large beam dropped across it that rests inside a frame built right into the flanking towers.

c. First Courtyard
This area is set up as another barrier of defense; if the enemy manages to breach the first gate, then they become trapped in this compound, pinned down from the main tower as well as the towers that flank the inner gate.

d. Inner Gate
This gate is identical in construction to the outer gate (area b).

e. Main Courtyard
This is the main yard of the keep, where the soldiers of the garrison drill. It also serves as another entrapping line of defense, should an enemy ever breach the inner gate.

f. Stable
This building houses the soldiers' mounts. It is constructed of stone to better protect the horses inside, should an enemy lob fiery missiles over the walls of the palisade. There is a hayloft inside, and Binnie, the stable boy, sleeps here. He is a zero-level human.

g. Storage Rooms
The garrison store all of their supplies on the first floor of the tower. Everything from food to spare weapons are kept down here, where it is cool but dry. The temperature is cool enough that some perishables can last for longer than usual, such as cheeses, vegetables, and breads. Other food includes dried and salted meats and barrels of water, wine, and ale. Extra equipment includes spare suits of armor, shields, and weapons, as well as construction supplies, hardware, tack and harness for the horses, tents, blankets, and clothing.

h. Tower Entrance
The entrance to the tower is on the second floor; for anyone to enter, a drawbridge must be lowered to a platform approximately ten feet out from the entryway. Inside the entryway, a 20-foot corridor leads to a portcullis. The corridor is lined with arrow slits: the keep's last line of defense.

i. Main Hall
The common room of the tower has a large round firepit in the center for cooking and warmth; smoke escapes through a hooded hole in the ceiling. There are four rough-hewn wooden tables in this hall, each with eight chairs around it. This is the center of all tower activity, as all meals and meetings are served or conducted here.

j. Common Quarters
Each of these rooms houses three soldiers. There are three beds, each with a trunk at its foot, as well as a small writing table, three sets of shelves, and three armoires.

k. Captain's Quarters
The captain of the garrison, currently Torgia Mel, resides here. She keeps a spartan living space, with only a small bed, a trunk containing some unremarkable personal effects, an armoire, and a large writing table that is usually covered with maps. A set of shelves holds quite a few books, as Torgia likes to read. She also keeps meticulous notes on day-to-day activities, both for personal reference and for filing reports with her superiors across Paradise Lake.

Aston Point

Torgia Mel, hf, F9: AC 2 (plate mail, shield); MV 12; hp 53; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg 1d10 (two-handed sword) or 1d4 (light crossbow); SZ M (5'11"); ML champion (16); AL LG. Str 15, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Chr 13.

Special Equipment: horse.
Personality: stoic, capable, career soldier; won't ask her troops to do anything she wouldn't do herself.

l. Lieutenant's Quarters

The second in command, Lieutenant Osrit Folf, occupies this room. He is an ambitious man, eager to climb the ladder to a command of his own with the lord's military forces. He considers this post to be something of an insult to his credentials, but despite his self-important attitude he respects Torgia and follows her orders well, having served with the captain for many years.

Osrit Folf, hm, F6: AC 2 (plate mail and shield); MV 12; hp 44; THAC0 15 (14 with Str); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+3 (long sword, Str) or 1d4 (light crossbow); SZ M (5'10"); ML elite (14); AL LG. Str 18/31, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 11.

Special Equipment: horse.
Personality: ambitious, standoffish.
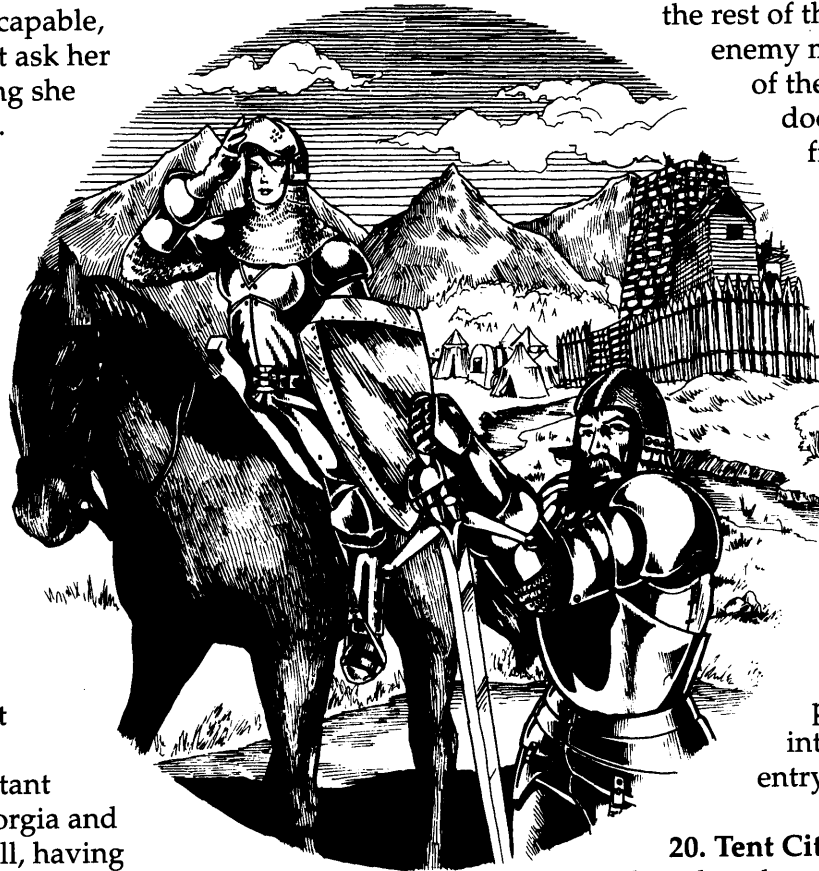
m. Stairwell

This spiral staircase connects the first and second floors. Also within the alcove next to the staircase is a ladder leading to a trap door overhead. This trap door allows access to the roof, where many barrels are set up to catch rain water. The top of the trap door is concealed to look like the rest of the roof, just in case an enemy managed to get on top of the tower, and the trap door itself can be bolted from below.

n. Drawbridge Winch

A mechanism set into the wall at this location controls the drawbridge outside.

o. Portcullis Winch

This mechanism, set into the wall, controls the portcullis at the interior end of the main entry hall.

20. Tent City

When the adventure begins, so many people will flock to Aston Point that they cannot be accommodated in the inns and taverns. A temporary tent city will spring up across the river from the main town, filled with adventurers, beggars, itinerant sages-in-training, self-proclaimed prophets, mercenaries, confidence men, terrified farm families, and whatever else the DM sees fit to have on hand. Captain Mel will set up a security detail to patrol the area regularly, but this will remain a volatile, disorderly area.

Beyond Aston Point

The crowd milling about at the base of the temple was restless. There was a tension in the air, almost palpable, that was born of the knowledge that Aston would speak. Aston had spoken a lot of late, but this time, everyone seemed to know that there was something greater at work here, something more . . . divine. The people gathered before the temple had come in droves tonight, all wanting to be a part of the revered monk's predictions. They wanted to feel the radiance of his blessings, hear the comfort of his prophesies, and most of all they wanted to know what he thought of the flaming object hovering in the night sky meant.

The curtain parted at the back of the balcony, and out tottered Aston Tanak, the venerable monk who for so many years had led his people in a life of simplicity and devout toils. Now he was old and frail, and some whispered that his mind was gone too. Those rumormongers claimed that the old man's speeches were nothing more than the prattling of a senile fool. Few said this where others could overhear, of course. The power of the temple was still strong in Aston Point, if not as overt as it had once been.

The elderly man stepped to the railing, surveying the crowd before him, which had suddenly hushed. His hawkish gaze swept back and forth, stopping occasionally to settle upon one uncomfortable believer or another. "Death Is Upon Us," his gravelly voice squawked. "The Wrath of the Divine ones Rains down from the Heavens!"

An uneasy mumbling arose from the crowd. Clearly, such dire predictions had not been expected.

"Behold!" shouted Aston, pointing to the sky, toward the glowing comet. "They send their Fiery messenger to Warn us of our transGressions! We have Betrayed the teachings of our Spiritual protector, and He Is ANGRY!" The monk was practically screaming now, spittle frothing upon his lip as he ranted. "We are unWorthy of the lessons of life! We forSake them and turn instead to existences of Decadence and pleasures!"

Some murmurs of agreement arose from the crowd, which was once again milling restlessly. Many of those in attendance seemed discomfited.

"I have been Warned!" Aston screamed. "I have Heard the message of Doom! Death IS upon us, my children! The Portents bring with them Disaster and change! None shall be left unScarred! None shall avoid the Brand of understanding that comes from Above! Atrocities shall walk the earth, and the very Foundation of our lives shall be Rent asunder in their passing! It Shall Be Delivered!"

The ancient monk was gesturing wildly by this time, and a couple of brothers of the order moved to calm Aston, lest he cause himself harm in some way. But few noticed. The tension in the crowd has grown beyond the people's capacity to contain it, and pushing and shoving had begun. The people were frightened, and it showed.

19

Beyond the town limits of Aston Point are several other spots of interest. Each of these is located on the area map of the Aston Point region on the first poster.

The Temple

Here the monks of the original order that settled with Aston several years ago now dwell. They completed this temple to their deity and beliefs about three years ago and withdrew from the town when they realized that it was no longer populated mostly with adherents to the faith. Brother Aston still lives and presides over the rest of his brethren, although he is now very old and somewhat infirm.

All in all, there are about 35 monks living here. Some of them are former adventurers who grew tired of the life and wanted nothing more than a quiet place to live out their remaining years. Most, however, are simple folk with a desire for simple living and a spirituality to match. They have, at some point or another along their lives, realized that it wasn't enough to want to just live life in a simple, straightforward manner; the civilized world just wasn't conducive to such a thing. There were too many temptations, both to the spirit and the flesh, and the only way to draw truly close to their deity was to withdraw from society, to turn inward with others who shared their beliefs.

Aston, for his part, is a little on the bizarre side. He was never a militant sort, though fervent in his faith as anyone could be, with a charismatic personality able to convince others to follow him. In his eyes, living simply is the foundation of a spiritually pure existence. No one can truly live up to this ideal, he teaches, but redemption can still be found through the toils of physical labor.

While this is not a particularly unusual concept within the greater workings of the faith, Aston also has a strong belief in the interpretation of signs, and signs are visible (at least to him) all over the place. These signs have been a constant guide to Aston, who has used them to direct his life and the lives of those who chose to follow him. Now that he has grown old and wandering in his wits, often his interpretations are seemingly random or contradictory, but few question the venerated leader. Those who have never seem to be able to refute Aston's twisted, circular logic, and eventually either give up or begin to lose favor with the old man.

Aston has recently predicted the coming of a great sign, a heavenly symbol directed at the monks from their deity. What's more, he has stated that this sign heralds a time of extreme difficulty and change in the world. The arrival of the comet will be enough to convince all his followers of the truth of his prophecy.

Enough believers of the faith make pilgrimages to Aston Point that word of these prophecies has already spread beyond the area, back into civilization. Already the curious and the devout are beginning to flock to the small port town; once the comet is sighted, dozens more will make the journey in all possible haste. Meanwhile, Aston has taken to making all sorts of wild predictions, oftentimes speaking in riddles, rhymes, and even in songs or in tongues. The rest of the monks are so convinced that Aston has become a divine mouthpiece of their god that they have taken to recording everything he says, and special times are set up each day for Aston to preach to the faithful.

It's up to the DM whether or not Aston's visions are genuine omens sent by his deity (albeit somewhat garbled by the old man's muddled mind) or merely delusions produced by senile decay. Even if his words are no more than the absent rantings of the very old and his apparent prophecy merely a lucky coincidence, because of his lifelong hold over the monks none of them believe his mumblings to be anything less than divine inspiration. Adding fuel to their fire, some of the things he has spoken have come true, in a manner of speaking. Because everything Aston says is so cryptic, the monks have gotten into the habit of "interpreting" his words, often discovering wonderfully apt parables to fit almost any circumstances. In fact, the elder brothers who have assumed control as Aston has grown less able to perform his daily duties have taken to cloistering themselves in the inner chambers of the monastery to debate everything Aston says. In this climate of pious reverence, the prophet's most blunt and

straightforward warnings are in danger of being lost or interpreted allegorically.

The true danger in all of this is that once the Overseer and the Rael become known to the monks, the brothers will attempt to re-establish their authority over the whole Aston Point area, asserting that they are receiving direct instructions from their deity on how best to deal with the situation. Unless something happens to shake them out of their complacency, they will continue to interpret Aston's words and react to current events accordingly, believing each new turn of events to be a test of their faith rather than making plans to defend themselves and their flock—a course of action (or, rather, in-action) that could spell doom to all.

A map of the temple may be found on **Handout 4** (back).

1. The Temple Proper
This is the main structure of the whole temple complex, the actual spiritual center of the monks and their faith. It sits near the top of a hill overlooking the rest of the temple grounds and beyond, to Aston Point and then to Paradise Lake.

2. The Eversteepening Pathway
The tenets of the faith decree that in order to come closer to their god, the pious monk must constantly climb "the eversteepening pathway"—a symbol of the monk's life, of his striving to live ever more simply and toil more and more each day as part of his faith's work. Thus, the actual path that winds in switchbacks up the side of the hill to the temple

proper represent this spiritual pathway in each monk's life.

3. Monks' Dwellings
These individual cottages have each been constructed by the monks as living quarters. They believe as part of their faith that they are not worthy to actually reside within the walls of the temple proper, so they abase themselves at its feet. In practical terms, this means that they have built their homes along the path leading from below (where the path to righteousness begins) to the top and the temple (the long difficult climb up the hill of tribulation).

4. The Inner Sanctuary
Here the monks gather to hear the wisdom of their elders; here they strive to find perfection within themselves. This chamber represents the culmination of the day's work, becoming closer to their deity. Aston himself spends many hours in here, often reflective, but occasionally proclaiming some new piece of doctrine. Of course, in recent years, his doctrine has become less and less clear.

5. Aston's Private Quarters
It would make sense that the most worthy of the monks of this faith would endure the greatest hardship by living in the most humble abode the furthest from the temple, and until recently this was the case, but no longer. Aston, the original monk who led his followers to this side of Paradise Lake, has resided in this chamber, within

the walls of the temple proper, for the past year or two. The monks tell anyone who asks that this step was needed in order for Aston to hear more clearly the words of their god, but in fact the whole community (who consider Aston nothing less than a living saint) reached a consensus that after a lifetime spent in toil, the old man is worthy at last of some small comforts.

The chamber is not opulent, but it is a far cry from the dilapidated hovels most of the monks live in along the path below. There is a soft bed with many covers, a small fireplace, a shelf with some books that Aston is no longer capable of reading (both because of his age—he is going blind—and because of his infirmities, which make him restless), and a small writing table. Note that Aston's extreme age has made him old and infirm, and somewhat wandering in his wits; the following stats represent his current state, not his abilities at his peak of health.

Aston Tanak, hm, C9: AC 10; MV 6 (very frail); hp 17 (Con penalty); THAC0 19 (Str penalty); #AT 1; Dmg 1d3–1 (walking stick, Str penalty); SA spells; SD spells; SW very old and infirm; SZ M (5'2"); ML fearless (20); AL LN. Str 3, Dex 5, Con 6, Int 3 (senile) or 11 (momentarily lucid), Wis 13, Chr 14. Spells (5/4/3/2/1): *bless, command, light, purify food and drink, sanctuary; aid, augury, enthrall, hold person; cure disease, prayer, remove paralysis; divination, reflecting pool; commune.*
Personality: visionary, righteous to the point of annoyance (when he is lucid).

6. Brother Naestir's Quarters
Across the hall from Aston are the chambers of Brother Naestir, the head monk and the operative leader of the order in Aston's decline. The man is not pompous or self-serving; he recognizes Aston's declining health and feels it is important for the old monk to live out his last days in comfort, for both his own sake and the order's. Thus, Naestir has decreed that Aston live directly in the temple. Naestir himself lives right across the hall where he can attend to Aston's needs. Naestir's inner chambers are bare and sparse,

largely taken up with a council room where the temple's elders gather daily to discuss the various issues involved in running the temple and spreading the faith (and, more recently, interpreting Aston's latest prophecy).

Brother Naestir, hm, C7: AC 10; MV 12; hp 32; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff); SZ M (6'2"); ML fearless (19); AL LG. Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 17, Chr 14. Spells (5/5/3/1): *bless, command, light, purify food and drink, sanctuary; aid, chant, enthrall, hold person, silence 15' radius; cure disease, prayer, remove paralysis; divination.*
Personality: imperturbable, firm, kindly.

7. Balconies
The temple rises up a good two stories, but the main chamber is a lofty place. To either side of the main altar there is a balcony with risers for more seating capacity. There are not truly enough monks currently residing on the temple grounds that these seats are ever filled, but the monks aspired to greatness when they chose to construct the temple, and so the plans were designed with the future in mind.

The Stonebreaker Mine

Several years ago, an extended family of dwarves arrived in the region, bringing with them the expertise needed for setting up a mining operation. Although the folk of Aston Point were skeptical at first, the value of the dwarven mining operation became apparent after only a short time. The Stonebreaker clan surveyed several sites in the mountains before setting up shop on the south side of Laramis Peak, not far from Aston Point but on the opposite side of the ridge.

The Stonebreaker clan currently numbers seventeen souls, and their mine produces a steady stream of iron ore along with some silver. Khramil Stonebreaker, the head of the clan and the only member of the family who spends much time at all in town, is a shrewd businessman who sells the mine's produce to both the blacksmith and

weaponsmith in town, as well as to several merchants who transport the goods across Lake Paradise to markets beyond. Khramil is not unfriendly, but he refuses to waste valuable time on idle chitchat. Although most of the clan members are zero-level dwarves, Khramil spent many years fighting goblins before deciding to leave his dwarven nation to go his own way. One of Kramil's cousins is a cleric, providing spiritual leadership as well as healing for the clan.

A map of the mine can be found on **Handout 5** (front).

1. Original Buildings

These are the structures the clan built when they first arrived here, to serve as dwellings until they could establish a more permanent abode inside the mine. The buildings are largely unused now, but they are still in fine shape. On the extremely rare occasions when surface dwellers pay a visit to the Stonebreakers, they are welcome to these buildings.

2. Spoils Pile

All of the rock that is mined out of the tunnels must go somewhere. The dwarves haul the stone out in carts that ride a set of rails and dump it at the end of the line. As the pile builds up, they add a section of track and dump the stone further out.

3. Tunnel Entrance

The mine tunnel opens right out of the side of a steep granite rock face in the mountain. It runs back into solid rock for almost 200 feet before reaching the location where the veins of ore first began. It is along this initial tunnel that the dwarves have branches leading off into their living quarters.

4. Living Quarters

These rooms are the permanent living quarters of the Stonebreaker dwarves. They have been lovingly carved out of the very rock, smoothed to perfection, and then decorated with bas-relief carvings. As the dwarves have only been operating the mine for three years or so, the rooms are not all completely decorated. There is enough living space to house the entire family of seventeen; if any new additions join the family, more rooms can always be dug.

5. Storage Rooms

This pair of rooms near the beginning of the actual vein tunnels is used to store all sorts of mining equipment, including spare lengths of track, carts, picks, shovels, bracing material, candles and lanterns, and assaying equipment. The dwarves have also left room here to assemble a smelting facility, should they ever decide to add that to their operation. For the time being, however, they choose to sell the raw ore, leaving the smelting to their customers.

6. Vein Tunnels

At this point the actual mines start. The veins of ore that the dwarves dig out of the ground wind like rivers through the solid rock of the mountain, and the dwarves dig their tunnels to follow them. As they go deeper into the mountain, they widen

the existing tunnels and lay track so that they can bring the carts close to the dig sites. The vein tunnels wind in three dimensions, sometimes doubling back on themselves. The Stonebreaker clan has been blessed with exceptional veins of ore; they have made quite a profit in these tunnels.

Khramil Stonebreaker, dm, F12: AC 10; MV 6; hp 52; THAC0 9 (7 with *battle axe +1*, Str); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+2 (*battle axe +1*, Str); SA +1 attack bonus vs. humanoids; SD +1 saving throw bonus (vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells), giant-class creatures suffer a –4 penalty on attacks targeted against him; SW 20% chance of malfunction whenever tries to use magical items (does not include his battle axe); SZ M (4'3"); ML fearless (19); AL LG. Str 17, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 13, Chr 11.
Personality: patient with his own kind, not with others.

Ghondrol Stonebreaker, dm, C5: AC 10; MV 6; hp 26; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (morning star); SA as above; SD as above, Turn undead; SW as above; SZ M (4'4"); ML fearless (19); AL LG. Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Chr 8. Spells (5/5/2): *create water, cure light wounds, detect poison, light, magical stone; find traps, heat metal, hold person, resist fire, slow poison; meld into stone, stone shape.*
Special Equipment: scroll: *invisibility to undead.*
Personality: spiritual, hard-working.

Druid's Grove

Not very long ago, a druid arrived in Aston Point, having traveled there with the intention of setting up a grove and administering to the townspeople's needs. The untamed land of the mountains was a prime location for Drenin Longstaff to ply his craft, he explained, and anyone who sought his assistance on matters of crops, herbalism, livestock, or who just wished to appreciate the natural beauty of the region was welcome to visit him.

Of course, the temple did not take kindly to the druid's arrival; the monks had maintained a monopoly on the spiritual ministrations of the people of Aston Point for nearly a decade, and they were reluctant to share the stage. The temple elders preached against Drenin for awhile, actively seeking to discredit the druid and his ways, but the people had a hard time seeing any evil in him. After all, many of them were farmers, and Drenin had the capacity to aid their crops, ensuring bountiful harvests. As the town grew in size and more people not of the temple faith moved into Aston Point, the druid's time was in demand more and more. Eventually, the monks dropped the issue, leaving the druid be.

In truth, Drenin had an ulterior motive for coming to Aston Point. While he is sincere in his wish to help those people who have respect for the land and its life, he also hides a secret that has forced him to flee more than one other community. He is a lycanthrope—a werebear to be exact. Although he personally has no resentment of his condition, seeing it in fact as a boon to his profession, few people understand or accept it. Drenin has been chased at weapon point away from previous groves. He only hopes that Aston Point will be his final home.

Drenin's grove is a simple affair, located about two miles upstream from the town. Since moving to the region a little over three years ago, he has carefully cultivated a stand of evergreens that form his actual grove. These trees have grown (with magical aid) to a magnificent height and girth, and his simple cottage is hidden inside a small meadow in the firs. A map of the grove may be found on the back of **Handout 5** (bottom).

1. Drenin's Cottage

This simple log cabin has one floor, plus a sleeping loft. Drenin has also constructed a simple fireplace, a wooden trestle table with two benches, and a simple log-frame bed with a goosedown pallet and buckskin covers.

Drenin Longstaff, hm (werebear), D4: AC 10 (druid) or 2 (werebear); MV 12 or 9; HD 7+3; hp 42; THAC0 18 (druid) or 13 (werebear); #AT 1 or

3; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff) or 1d3/1d3/2d4 (claw/claw/bite); SA spells (as druid) or hug (as bear, for 2d8); SD spells (druid) or limited immunities (hit only by silver or magical weapons); SW helpless during shapechange, cannot use spells when in werebear form; SZ M (6′) or L (8′4″); ML steady (12) or elite (14); AL N. Str 13, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 15, Chr 17. Spells (5/3): *animal friendship, entangle, locate animals or plants, pass without trace, shillelagh; barkskin, goodberry, speak with animals.*

Personality: friendly, compassionate, well-balanced.

2. Entrance
This hidden pathway winds among tall stands of evergreen fir trees to Drenin's cottage. It eventually links up with the main path that follows the river up the canyon. Few people ever even see the smaller path, as it is on the opposite side of the river from the main path, reached by a series of stones that only seem to have fallen into the water naturally. Only members of the elven tribe and Asrienda the half-elven ranger, who has taken a liking to the druid, know where this path is. Anyone else from Aston Point seeking the druid is usually found by him first.

3. Stream Path
Drenin has a second path leading out of his grove that cuts through the trees and to a small stream that feeds into the larger river downstream a bit. This is Drenin's source of water.

4. Aspen Stand
The opposite side of the stream from Drenin's cottage is covered with a large stand of aspen trees. In the fall, Drenin can often be found wandering through this thicket, sometimes alone and sometimes with Asrienda, for he loves the sight of the aspen leaves "quaking" as they turn to gold and rustle in the wind.

The Elven Tribe

A tribe of elves dwells in a large grove of aspen trees in the high mountain valley on the north shore of Orchard Lake. It is a rather small tribe, numbering only about 30 elves, but they have complete control of the valley. Their homes are constructed as domes out of aspen and pine logs, and they look as much like huge piles of leaves and limbs as anything. Although the village is not camouflaged, the whole place has a very natural feel to it. In fact, the only obvious telltale signs of inhabitation are the bark canoes pulled up on the shore of the lake.

The elves hunt, fish, and trap for most of their food and materials. They do, however, rely on trade with the outside world for some of their tools and such. Thus, they have established a good relationship with the town. Every week or so, a delegation of the elves journeys downriver to the town and claims a stall at the open market, where they bring items to sell or trade. These include practical items such as finished leather

goods, furs, various kinds of bows, arrows, and even unusual foodstuffs. They also bring finely crafted works of art, such as wood carvings, aeolian harps, shadow boxes, decorative wall hangings, musical instruments, windchimes, and so forth. Some of their stock is sold to local folks, but as often as not merchants who are in port with their ships buy the elven wares to take with them for sale elsewhere. In exchange for these goods, the elves acquire metal tools, weapons, and armor, and unusual food items that cannot be found locally, including spices, breads, sweets, and exotic meats when those are available.

Although the elven tribe currently have a good relationship with the people of Aston Point, there are some elves who are beginning to fear that civilization is encroaching on their wilderness. Although this potential conflict has not come to a head yet, the issue has come up in tribal meetings occasionally, especially after yet another farmer arrives and begins clearing trees for his or her fields. While some of the tribe believe that working cooperatively with the humans and showing them techniques of conservation is the best solution, some of the more adamant members of the group think that taking a more conservative approach, including complete isolation and militancy, is the only option. It will be many years yet before the elves resolve this among themselves. In the meantime, they continue to deal with the citizens of Aston Point.

As a side note, the elves are on very good terms with Drenin Longstaff, the druid. Although he has not volunteered the information to them, they are aware of his lycanthropic nature. They feel, however, that his heart is in the right place regarding the care and cultivation of the wilderness around Aston Point and bear no ill will against him.

A map of the elven camp can be found on the back of **Handout 5** (top).

1. Dome Log Homes

The elves construct their homes out of aspen and pine logs that have been smoothed where the log faces inside, yet left natural on the outside surface area. Additional branches and boughs are woven between and among the logs to provide a more complete cover. A layer of animal hides tacked all along the inside of the dome keeps the weather out and the warmth in. Inside, the elves sleep on pallets of soft pine boughs covered in animal furs. A cook fire in the center of the home sits directly below a small hole in the center of the roof that allows smoke to escape. This hole is hooded at the top so rain does not get in. The tribe is a small one, so there are only eight homes (one for each family).

2. Smoke House

The elves use this structure, similar in construction to their homes, to smoke and preserve much of the meat they procure through hunting, fishing, and trapping. Unlike the dwellings, this building does not have a smoke hole in the ceil-

ing, nor are the walls lined with hides. The meats are hung in here to dry in the smoke from a smoldering fire built of special woods chosen for their flavor and low flame heat.

3. Lean-to
This simple structure serves as a dry storage area for equipment that the elves use when fishing. Paddles, fishing tackle, and protective clothing are all placed in here for safekeeping from the elements. The elves actually build these lean-tos throughout the entire region, along hunting trails. In each one, they stow survival equipment, in case of severe weather, accidents, or even monstrous attacks. While they would not object to strangers using some of this equipment in an emergency, especially if some recompense is left behind, plundering these stores will bring down the tribe's wrath on the thieves.

4. Barkskin Canoes
The elves have made these lightweight canoes out of tree bark fastened to a light wooden frame and sealed with pine sap. They are durable enough to hold three or four elves, but light enough to be carried by only one or two. The elves use the canoes primarily for fishing, but they also take some of them downriver when they head to Aston Point to sell and trade their wares in the market. Typically, they fill one canoe completely with goods and use a second one for themselves. Note that the average human weighs about a third more than the average elf, making overcrowding or capsizing a real possibility if humans borrow these canoes.

The Abandoned Quarry

All the stone that went to build the monks' temple and the garrison's keep came from this quarry. The site is currently abandoned; the stone, while durable, is not of such quality to be worth exporting across Paradise Lake, and no grand building projects are currently underway in Aston Point itself. However, one day after the crash the Rael refugees will plant a diversion here to lead

the Overseer's forces away from their camp (see page 29); should the player characters or NPCs come across it first it should provide much food for thought.

The Monstrous Denizens

The Khaim Mountains are truly a wilderness. And, like all wilderness, there is an element of danger present, as well as beauty. It is not uncommon for humanoids to roam over a mountain ridge from the valley on the other side to hunt or raid. The elves are ever-vigilant for this, as is Drenin and the Stonebreaker clan. The soldiers in Aston Point itself are there to protect the town from just such an event, although the humanoids rarely get that bold.

Most often, elements of a tribe of hobgoblins crosses the range to the west, occasionally

accompanied by an ogre or two. Giants of the hill or stone variety are not unheard of, but they are extremely rare. Once in a while, goblins are seen, but they avoid this territory for fear of incurring the hobgoblins' wrath. Most any other type of monster known to dwell in temperate mountainous regions could theoretically be found in the region, but these sightings are rare, so few people consider them native.

Whenever these humanoids do show up, the other inhabitants are quick to respond. Usually the trappers are the first to spot tell-tale signs that one group of monsters or another has been in the vicinity recently, and they move down the mountain to safety, informing the elves and Drenin on their way. They then hole up in Aston Point until the soldiers and a few able-bodied adventurers take care of the situation.

The Rael Camp

When the *Fworta* crashes into the mountains, what few Rael survive will manage to make their escape into the nearby woods, taking their wounded comrades with them. They retreat far enough away from the ship to escape detection by the Overseer's minions, but stay close enough that they can keep an eye on things. Used to the climate control of their spaceships and arcologies, they will find the chill mountain air something of a shock and generally be unprepared for dealing with the harsh environment of the mountains. Forced to adapt to the terrain, using what equipment they have in an effort to provide themselves with shelter and food, they will waste little time getting hidden—first establishing a camouflaged camp and then sending scouts out into the surrounding area as soon as they are able.

The Rael will became aware of the other sentient beings in the area fairly quickly, but because they are stuck on an unknown world and unable to leave, they will be hesitant to reveal themselves right off the bat (the first sentients they observe—a passing warband of hobgoblins— will only reinforce this decision). True, they have

dealt with similar species on many different planets through their trading and traveling, but they always had the upper hand and the means to leave quickly if things went badly. And there were certainly more than a few instances of instant hostility directed at them from suspicious races who were not interested in giving the Rael a chance to prove themselves peaceful. In such cases, of course, the Rael simply withdrew from the more primitive species' midst and did not return.

The circumstances are vastly different this time, though. The Rael are outnumbered, many of them are wounded, and if the humans or elves or hobgoblins exhibit hostilities the Rael cannot simply take off in their ship to avoid combat. They will feel that they must be extremely cautious, so they will remain hidden. However, once the Overseer has begun to prey on the natives, the Rael will feel that they stand a better chance of being welcomed as allies against the inhuman monstrosity—once they demonstrate that they are peaceful, and not aligned with the constructs, of course.

There will be about 15 to 20 Rael who survive the ordeal on board the *Fworta* (the DM can adjust this number up or down as desired, depending on how involved he or she wants this mini-campaign to become). Of those, seven will be wounded to an extent that they are incapacitated (that is, unable to get up and about, defend the camp, etc.), three of them critically. The survivors will consist of Rael traders, ship's crew, and some space marines (since the conflict with the Overseer has arisen, every ship has begun carrying a complement of well-trained troops on board). These soldiers will be fairly well armed, but supplies are at a premium, so they will realize the need to conserve ammunition to use against the Overseer.

The Rael will be led by a corporal, the highest-ranking marine to survive the hostilities and the crash. The other (non-combat-oriented) Rael quickly agree to let him take charge, as they realize that this is their only real chance for survival. He leads them deep into the woods where they select a site far up a small, hidden canyon, choosing a location along a small stream

that flows down between two steep hillsides. With a lot of trees in the vicinity, it will be difficult for any airborne unit to see through the foliage, and impossible to land.

Next, the Rael plan out some shelters where they can hide from the Overseer's scout units. They use logs to construct a crude shelter, carrying fallen trees to the site from far away so as not to deplete the supply in any one location and thus leave evidence that they had been there. They camouflage this shelter as best they can, using branches, leaves, and piles of dirt. The shelter will actually be half underground, dug into the side of the steep ridge (and hopefully out of sight from both the planet's unpredictable natives and from the Overseer's sensitive detection equipment).

Having brought only two survival tents with them, they place the three most critically injured in one, disguising it with brush. The other tent they decide to sacrifice as a diversion, setting it up in the abandoned quarry to the southeast and placing inside the bodies of two injured Rael who succumbed to their wounds. Nearby they leave the remains of a Rael scout mauled by some night creature while she was out on patrol. Hard though not giving their fellows proper burial is, the Rael know the Overseer is probably aware that some survivors left the ship after it crashed, and they hope this subterfuge causes it to conclude that all refugees quickly perished of the wounds and attacks by hostile beasts.

Everyone who is an able body will take part in the camp's operation. The civilians will help with construction, tend to the injured, and gather food in the closest areas. The space marines will patrol the perimeter of the camp, forage and hunt further out from the camp, and go on scouting missions. A constant watch will be kept on the ship and the Overseer's activities there. Thus far, the Rael will have successfully escaped notice by the computer, but they will also have made no moves against it, trusting in their deception to make it give up the search.

The Rael will have managed to acquire a fair amount of equipment in their scavenging on board the ship before it crashes and they make

their escape. The DM should decide just exactly how much stuff is available, but it is a good idea for them to have a few extra weapons for the PCs to get their hands on; this is what this campaign is really all about, anyway. It's easiest to assume that the Rael have at the very least an assortment of spare blaster weapons belonging to their wounded comrades available for loan to their new allies, including enough pistols for each PC to have one, and possibly a few rifles as well. There should be an assortment of grenades, enough so that each character gets one of each. There should also be a spare stungun or two in the pile, a few extra sets of Rael armor (belonging, like the weapons, to the wounded, who can't use them just now), and an assortment of other noncombat gear. In addition, there should be one or two of the following: a personal flame thrower, a grenade launcher, and a magnum cannon. There should be enough ammunition that the characters can have fun, but not so much that they feel like they have an endless supply. Three or four ammo "clips" of various types should be sufficient.

This is not to say that the Rael should immediately begin handing out weapons and armor to each of the characters the minute the PCs set foot in their camp. On the contrary, it is far more likely that the Rael are going to be suspicious and cautious toward the characters early on, and might even keep them under guard for a while until they can determine the PCs' true intentions. Only after the characters prove beyond a doubt that they are trustworthy allies should the Rael consider giving any character a weapon (if Jazra is with the PCs, it should speed up the process considerably). Remember, too, that the PCs are going to be unproficient with these things; they have no idea how to handle them until the Rael teach them, and even then these weapons operate very differently from swords and bows. It's going to take several weeks of practice and actual combat use before the characters can develop a proficiency for the stuff.

A map of the hidden Rael camp can be found on the back of **Handout 6** (top).

Beyond Aston Point

1. Camouflaged Dwelling

The Rael will have been very cautious in their construction of this dwelling. Fearful of attracting attention by leaving the evidence of even a tree stump behind, they instead will have chosen to use only fallen trees in their construction. They will actually pick the trees up and carry them to the construction site, so as not to leave drag marks behind. The dirt that they dig out of the side of the hill will be used to cover the outside of the shelter to hide it. Then, a layer of branches, leaves, and river rocks will be piled onto the structure, making it appear to be nothing more than an extension of the hillside. The doorway consists of cargo mesh covered with more branches and leaves. On the inside of the shelter, animal furs provide bedding as well as insulation on the door. This shelter is where the wounded will be kept, where they can be tended to by several other Rael civilians night and day, working in shifts.

2. Dwelling Sites

Once the first structure is completed, construction will began on a second and third dwelling. The Rael will carefully dig out the side of the hill, laying bracing walls inside to support the earth. The biggest difficulty during this stage of the construction will be hiding all of the fresh dirt they displace, so they will hurry to finish these two and get them covered.

3. Survival Tent

This survival tent (an item fully described in *The Cast and Props*) houses the three most seriously injured Rael. To better conceal it from any prying eyes (or optic sensors), the Rael have covered it with a thick screen of branches and brush. Once the second and third underground shelters are finished, the tent will be moved inside the largest of them for greater security.

Important Rael Personalities

Among the Rael survivors will be several distinguished NPCs that the characters are likely to deal with sooner or later.

Zolaris

The commander of the Rael refugees, Zolaris, should become an important ally of the PCs as they join together to do battle with the constructs of the hated Overseer. Alternatively, if the PCs attack the Rael without cause he could become their bitter enemy; whatever the DM sees fit to do in the campaign. Keep in mind, however, that not only do the Rael have enough firepower to wipe out most adventuring parties before they know what's hit them, but that without each other's help, the two groups separately will have an extremely hard time defeating the Overseer. This campaign is designed around the concept of cooperation.

Zolaris is an able commander, but he is used to dealing with crack squads of professionally trained troops. The civilian contingent of his charges do not understand true discipline, he believes, and that results in greater risk of mistakes and casualties. Yet he is compassionate to their situation, so he works hard to put them at ease and be as honest and as open with them as possible. In fact, although the entire group has chosen to put in him in charge, he regularly calls meetings with the other leaders to discuss plans, strategies, and options. In this way, he assures them that their opinions count and gives them logical reason for following his instructions.

Zolaris strongly believes that in order to return to their home world, the Rael are going to have to make their presence known to the sentient races on this planet—namely the citizens of Aston Point. So far, however, the other leaders have advocated against this, believing it to be an unnecessary risk. Zolaris is willing to bide his time, however, until the others come to see that he is right.

Zolaris, Rael soldier, F5: AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; hp 27; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (7'); ML elite (13); AL LG; XP 650.

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Chr 10.

Special Equipment: Zolaris carries a blaster pistol, a magnum cannon, 3 incendiary grenades, infrared binoculars, and a personal motion sensor.

Personality: brave, thoughtful, patient.

Breena

One of the head negotiators for the trading team, Breena is a sullen and brooding woman. She secretly believes that the Rael are in this mess because of someone's incompetency, and right now Zolaris gets her vote for the role. Still, she is wise enough to understand that the situation warrants cooperation and that turmoil decreases their odds of survival. She is willing to rely on Zolaris—for the time being. If their present situation were not stress enough, Breena also worries about her family, including three children, who are on the other side of the ship's teleportal gate. She knows that in order for the Overseer to have gotten through that gate to the *Fworta,* then it had to have invaded the arcology on the other side. Yet she knows nothing about the fate of her loved ones . . . .

Breena, Rael citizen, zero-level: AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6′9″); ML unsteady (6); AL LG; XP 15. Str 7, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 8, Chr 16.

Special Equipment: Breena carries a blaster pistol and a stun gun.

Personality: brooding, sullen.

Gregis

A long-time member in the Rael navy, Gregis is a crusty old engineer who wisely gathered as much

equipment as he could carry with him when the fighting started. He stowed much of this stuff in a safe place that he knew would be well-defended. As pockets of resistance formed against the Overseer's forces, Gregis encouraged all others he could find to join him at his location. His judgment turned out to be sound, and the surviving Rael on the PCs' world have him to thank for their lives.

During every foray to various decks of the ship, Gregis continued grabbing equipment. He knew that the marines would be gathering as many weapons and as much ammo as possible, so he chose to seek out other kinds of things. As a result, the DM can choose for the Rael to have just about anything he or she sees fit as part of their supplies. The other Rael respect Gregis's knack for thinking ahead and his ability to analyze all the aspects and angles of a giving situation, plan, etc. He is quite handy at construction techniques as well, so he designed the shelters the Rael are currently building. He can repair any piece of equipment in the Rael inventory, given enough time and a fair supply of parts.

Gregis, Rael engineer, F3: AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6'6"); ML steady (12); AL LG; XP 270. Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Chr 14.
Special Equipment: Gregis carries a blaster rifle, two high-explosive grenades, and a tool kit (can repair most of the equipment here).
Personality: quick-thinking, creative, cheerful.

Standard Rael Soldier

The standard Rael trooper is a quick-thinking, combat-savvy force. He or she is armed with the highest technology known to the Rael, including special armors, weapons, and defensive equipment. The last few years of the war against the Overseer have trained the Rael soldiers to be prepared for superior firepower, and the soldiers understand the value of withdrawing rather than dying. Bodies are too precious to be lost to the Overseer's assimilator. When (and if) the characters get into combat side by side with the

Rael, it is most likely the space marines that will be watching their backs. Make it clear to the players that these men and women are seasoned veterans who know how to handle their weapons.

Typical Rael soldier, F3: AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (7'); ML elite (13); Int very (11–12); AL LG; XP 270.
Special Equipment: Every Rael soldier carries a blaster rifle; they often have additional equipment such as grenades or another weapon.

Hazlun

Hazlun is one of the wounded, although he is in about the best shape of all of invalids. Currently, he has a broken leg and several cracked ribs, so he cannot move well at all, but he is conscious and in good spirits, and he does what he can to aid the others. The important thing about Hazlun is that, once the characters meet up with the Rael, Hazlun will display an uncanny ability to pick up on wizardly magic. With a few quick lessons (assuming a PC is willing to teach him), he should be able to cast spells as a 1st-level wizard. This should amaze everyone, especially Hazlun himself: he no more believed in magic than any other Rael did when he arrived on this planet.

Hazlun, Rael citizen, zero-level: AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6'11"); ML average (8); AL LG; XP 15. Str 11, Dex 6, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 15, Chr 11.
Special Equipment: Hazlun has a blaster pistol.
Personality: enthusiastic, good-natured.

The Crash Site

Jazra crouched behind a large tree, scanning the top of the ridge before her. Something was out there, just over the other side, and she could take no chances. The sound of a stick snapping told her it was moving, and then it crested the ridge into her view. The Rael officer leveled her blaster pistol at it and waited. It was a quadruped, a basic brown in color, with an oddly shaped set of protrusions on its head, and it seemed more intent on eating the local herbage than stalking her.

Sighing, Jazra lowered her weapon and slumped against the tree. This is insane, *she thought wryly.* I spend the night freezing half to death, and now I'm being stalked by indigenous herd animals. Snap out of it! *she told herself sternly.* You've got more important things to worry about.

Jazra holstered her blaster pistol, hoisted her pack on her shoulder, and stood up. Doing a quick scan of the area, she moved out from behind the tree, frightening the creature with the horns. It froze in place for a split-second, then bolted away, leaping elegantly over a fallen tree and disappearing into the woods. The Rael officer began hiking again, shivering in the cool mountain air despite the warmth of the morning sun. She followed the path of least resistance, working her way down the canyon.

Jazra reached a small stream and stopped to splash her face and take a drink. The water was icy to the touch and sent shivers down her back. But it had the effect she wanted; she was more alert. When she was done drinking, she emptied her canteen of the stale water she had gotten aboard the Fworta, *then refilled it with the fresh liquid from the stream. Finally, she resumed her trek.*

Jazra neared a small rise and, just as she reached the top, what sounded like laughter reached her ears. She ducked down behind a granite protrusion, her blaster in her hand. The giggles were drawing nearer. She sat motionless, waiting. Suddenly, to her left, a humanoid approximately half her height darted across an open stretch of ground. The creature looked remarkably similar to Jazra herself, except for a few minor differences. The shape of the skull was slightly different, and the skin tone was decidedly darker than Jazra's own pale complexion. The species' clothing seemed somewhat crude in comparison to the Rael officer's camouflaged military outfit, seemingly made of simple cloth and animal hides. The creature laughed again and ran, and another of the species appeared then, chasing the first. Neither seemed to have noticed Jazra crouched there.

The Rael woman smiled to herself. Children, *she thought.* Not unlike Rael children at all. Where there are children . . . *she let the thought trail off.* I must find their civilization. They must be warned of what is coming. But how best to break the news? *Resolutely, Jazra stood and began hiking the way the children had come.*

The Crash Site

Sooner or later, the characters are going to want to go investigate the place where the "comet" fell to earth. As described in the adventure section later in this book ("*In Medias Res*"), the crash of the ship is a spectacular, horrifying display of raw energy and heat, a body from space that has rammed itself right against the PCs' world. No wonder then that a significant portion of the ship has been destroyed in the crash, including about one-third of the fore section, where the bridge was located.

The crash site is on the western slope of a high mountain near Lost Lake (see the area map on the poster). Wreckage is strewn all across the face of this peak, but the remaining main body of the ship is surprisingly still more or less intact, thanks to inertial dampeners. If the characters attempt to approach the crash site immediately after the ship has hit, the entire area is covered with smoke that blocks their view for more than a few feet, and trees burn everywhere. They cannot even get a look at what the heck has hit the side of the mountain unless they get right up next to it.

With difficulty and a little preparation, the characters can pick their way through the hot debris and get near enough to the ship itself to actually see it. If they arrive early enough, there is even a chance that they might spot some of the surviving Rael in the process of leaving the crash site, carrying their salvaged equipment and wounded comrades with them. If the characters try to hail the strangers, the Rael are very cautious. On the one hand, the characters could be more Rael (the smoke makes it difficult to tell for sure). But on the other hand, that same smoke would make it easy for the Rael to confuse the PCs for some of the Doomed.

Once contact is made, and the characters themselves do not act overly hostile, the Rael strongly urge the PCs to join them in getting clear of the ship; they know that if they managed to survive, the Overseer's constructs surely did too. All of this means, of course, that portions of the setting must change to reflect the fact that the Rael have not yet set up their secret campsite.

In the much more likely event that the characters arrive at the crash site well after things have begun to cool off, but still within 24 hours

after impact, then most of the fires have gone out and the smoke has mostly cleared. There is still some residual smoke wafting out of breaches in the ship's hull, but this doesn't obscure things at all. From a distance, they can see a huge, blackened thing that looks for all the world like a great metal castle that has fallen from the sky and smashed onto the side of the mountain. Bits and pieces that broke off in the crash lay scattered all up and down the slope. The thing, even partially buried in a long, deep furrow it has created in the side of the mountain, looks huge.

This is as close as the characters are going to be able to get to the ship at this time, because there is definite activity around the ship; the Overseer's strike force is setting up shop, constructing a central command station and laying the ground-work to begin annihilation of every organic species on the planet. The fact that the Secondary Director has lost contact with its superior command unit is irrelevant. Its programmed directive leaves no room for interpretation: destroy all life forms without hesitation or concern for self-preservation. Thus, the Secondary Director has begun putting into motion a standard program of self-replication and expansion, and this site is as good as any to serve as a headquarters.

The characters are definitely going to be detected by the Overseer's forces once they get close enough to take a look at the *Fworta*. Some sort of perimeter defense unit will immediately peel off of its normal patrol route and make a beeline for the characters' position (see "Perimeter Defense" below for more information on types of units available). The only difference between this initial encounter and subsequent encounters is that the command center is not completely operational yet, and the defenses don't have a full complement of units to work with.

This encounter should give the players a chance to realize that their characters are up against something completely alien and let them wisely withdraw. If they don't pick up on this right away, or they begin attacking, have the summoned unit fire at them, making sure that the first shot misses, wreaking havoc on the landscape. If, after a

descriptive narration of the construct's obvious destructive power and intentions, the PCs *still* do not retreat, they are fair game.

There is a fair chance that the characters will manage to destroy a sensor drone or a prowler and will want to continue to move in on the *Fworta*. If this happens, simply have one of the characters spot half a dozen spider drones and a firestorm or two coming over the next ridge. Make it clear that there are more of these things closer to the ship, along with a few other bizarre things moving around down there. You must in some way or another convince them that they cannot handle going up against this arsenal of firepower and that they should turn back. They need to make preparations against these strange opponents; ideally, the characters should gain allies (either Jazra or the Rael refugees or both) before entering the crashed ship.

The Command Center

Any visits the PCs make to the *Fworta* after the first 24 hours reveals the constructs of the Overseer in full operational mode. The computer has established a complete command center out of the remains of the ship, and the Secondary Director is safely inside gathering information and directing the operation.

The Overseer's forces start off the campaign with very limited resources. They cannot produce replacement units until they can gather sufficient materials, and the Secondary Director only has three collectors and a dozen replicators to work with. To make matters worse, it does not initially have access to refined materials; once the crashed ship has been stripped of useful materials (a matter of a few days), the constructs will be forced to mine raw ore to produce high-grade steel and other metals, gather sand for silicon to use in computer chips, and drill deep into the planet's crust to collect petroleum to manufacture plastics. All of these things are needed to provide the replicators with materials for construction of additional units.

As time goes by, the Overseer's constructs will

multiply exponentially, so it behooves the characters to act rather than wait. If they are allied with the Rael, then the aliens will warn the PCs. Having experienced this process before, the Rael know that to defeat the Secondary Director, the PCs must nip it in the bud, not allowing it to expand its operation. Every construct the group destroys is one the replicators must replace, buying the Rael and their allies valuable time.

Perimeter Defense

The Secondary Director has established a perimeter defense up to about 300 yards out from the ship. The entire area is open: every tree, bush, and shrub has been removed, along with any tall grasses and any boulder of more than one yard's diameter (any druid, ranger, or elf should be appalled at the deliberate devastation—the blasted trees, the shattered stones, and the scorched earth). Sensor drones patrol this entire area (from the ship itself all the way to the perimeter) at regular intervals, scanning any particular point once every three minutes. In addition, a complement of 15 spider drones is on standby, ready to move against any threat the seekers detect. A single character trying to sneak through this perimeter defense has a percentage chance equal to his or her Dexterity score to successfully avoid the sentries' sensors (a rogue character may instead use his or her Hide in Shadows score divided in half).

If any character is detected by a seeker, the spider drones are immediately summoned and arrive in 1 to 3 rounds, depending on how far out from the ship the detection was made (remember, spider drones have a movement rate of 9). Once any kind of combat occurs, the entire command center is alerted, and all units are put in standby mode. Additional units may be stationed outside of the ship, at the DM's discretion. These will most likely be additional spider drones, a platoon of destroyers, and/or a complement of firestorms.

How many and what kinds of units are available will depend primarily on two factors: how much time has gone by since the command center became operational, and how tough a
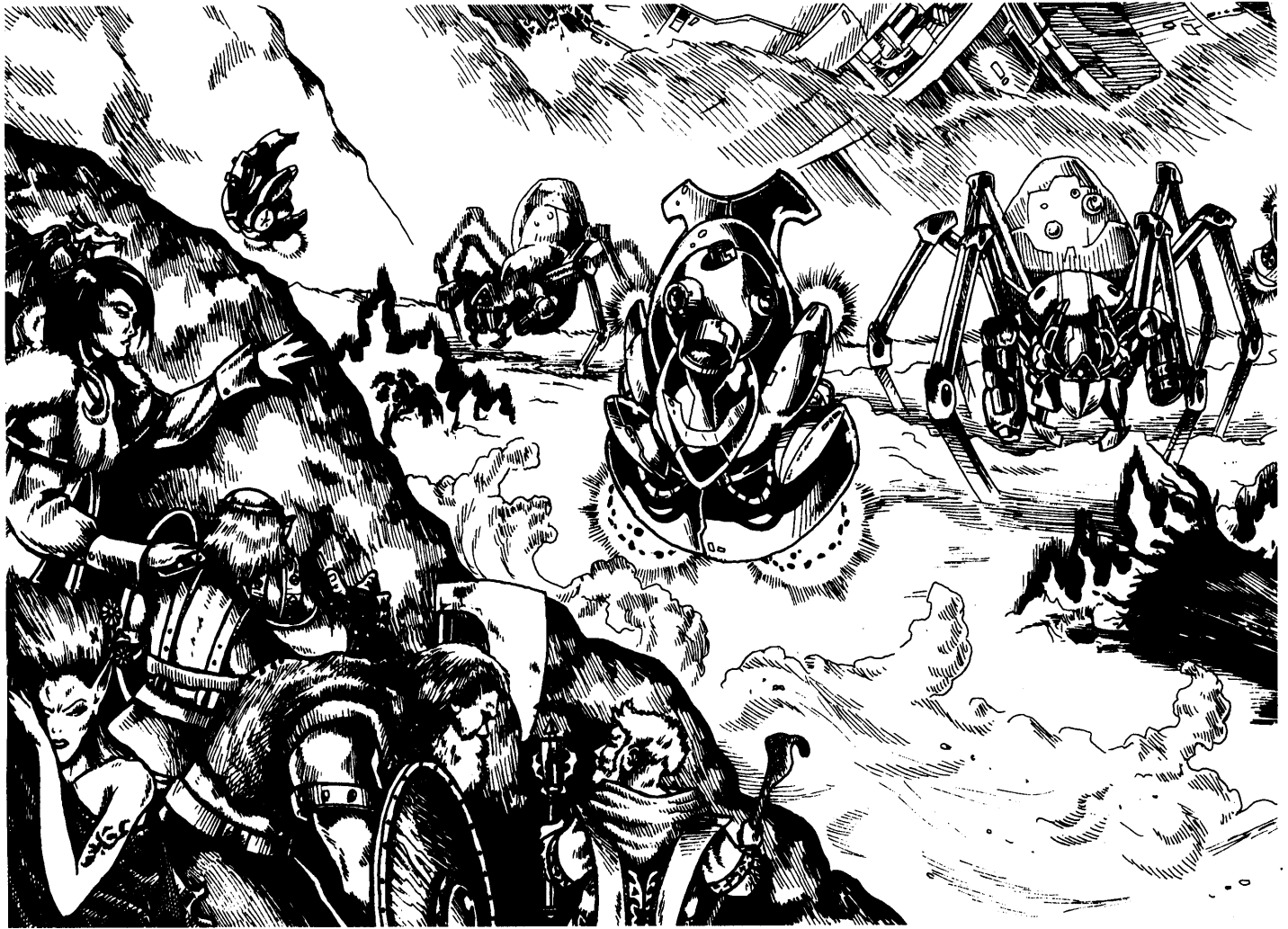
challenge the DM needs to make the opponents, based on the level and armaments of the characters. The time factor has a direct effect on how many additional units the command center has been able to manufacture. If the characters have been busy fighting against other constructs away from the ship, this will have an impact on the available units, too. Ultimately, the DM must decide how extensive the Overseer's operation should be; if this stage of the campaign is to last quite a while, then there are more units available; if the DM wants to move the action to the other side of the gate as quickly as possible, then the available units are much fewer in number.

The Interior of the Ship

Once the characters manage to breach the ship itself, they enter into a world unlike any they have ever encountered. Of course, much of what is there has been damaged in the crash, but certainly some of it is still functioning, or else has been repaired at the Secondary Director's orders. Still, a vast majority of the ship is nothing but high-tech junk. Twisted metal supports lie across pathways or protruding up from holes in the decking, wires are strewn across every opening and cracked wall, melted plastic has slagged into strange shapes, consoles are blown out, glass is scattered everywhere, and chairs and other furniture are upturned or literally smashed into bulkheads. And there are, of course, decomposing Rael bodies. These are of no use to the Overseer, since they are already dead and cannot therefore be transformed into the Doomed. Thus they are ignored.

Try to describe the interior of the ship in terms of the characters' point of view; they are medieval people walking through something totally alien. Wires become strange roots and tendrils, load-bearing supports are metal logs, glass becomes crystal, and plastic becomes a strange sort of

hardened sap. Of course, the players will immediately understand what the DM is describing, but stick to the mood; it will help them keep the right frame of mind for their characters' reactions.

Main Entrance

The Rael starship's primary entry leads into the cargo area, interestingly enough. The crews of the ship usually came and went through the teleportal gate, rarely needing to exit the ship directly except during planetfall. This warehouse door is large enough to drive a forklift-type vehicle through, which is what the Rael use to load and unload goods when they trade. The system operates on a hydraulic lift which lowers a ramp to the ground.

This level of the *Fworta* has been almost completely crushed by the impact during the crash. What little is left is buried deep in the furrow created by the ship as it plowed into the side of the mountain. Without a major amount of excavation, there is no way to reach this door from the outside, or to open it from the inside.

Cargo Hold/Warehouse

Even though much of the storage capacity of the Rael is located on the other side of the teleportal gate at the arcology, the materials that come and go cannot be moved through instantaneously. It can still take a competent loader several hours to maneuver a full shipment of materials through the gate, one load at a time. Moreover, the arcology is a busy place, with operations typically performed in shifts. It is very similar to a real-world airport: take-offs and landings must be coordinated, as not every plane can use the runways all at once.

Goods are therefore often stored in the cargo bay area (whether they are brought on board from the arcology before landing or from the most recent planet visited by the Rael traders) until time can be allotted to transport them through the gate. This also provides the Rael with a measure of convenience and protection. They don't want to spend any more time at one location than necessary, due both to the fact that time is money and also to prevent potential hostile actions on the part of locals. Therefore, they arrive on a planet, load and unload their goods as quickly as possible, then depart again, using their flight time to their next destination to transfer the goods to and from the arcology.

Most of this level was crushed during the crash, so there is very little of value here. Most of the goods that had been stored have been destroyed; what little was salvageable has been scavenged by the Secondary Director's collectors.

Gate room

Herein is stationed the Rael's marvel of technology. Without this dimensional gate, their whole way of life could never exist. The gate mechanism itself is created back on Tam-Rael, the Rael home world, or at one of the major arcology
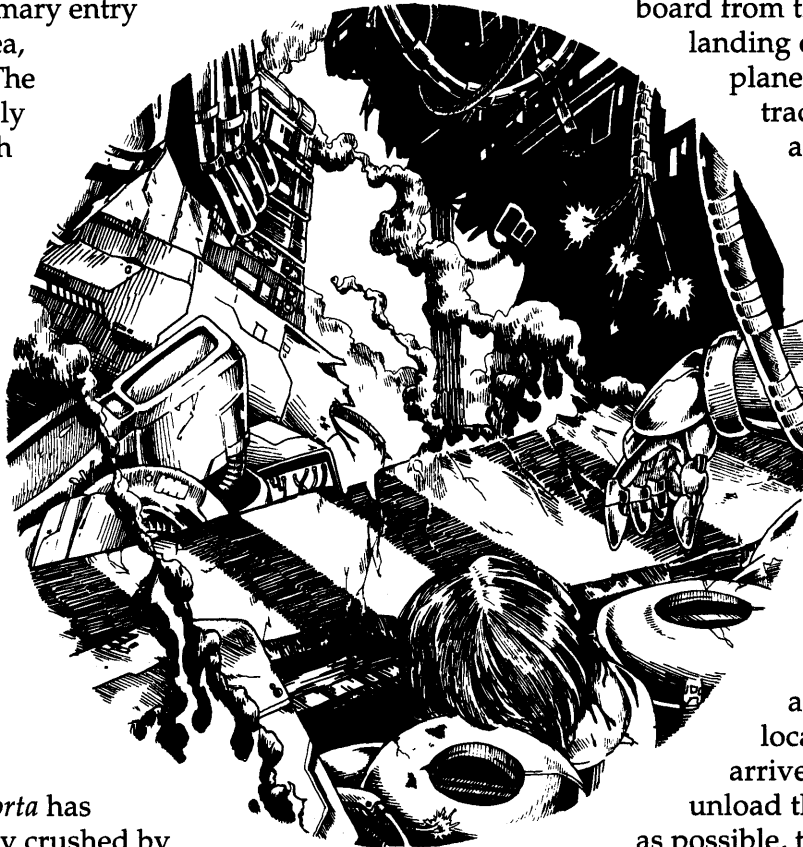
outposts (which act as nodes that join together via additional gates) through a special process where a dimensional tunnel is created that spans no distance in true space. Only then can the two "doorways" of the gate be separated. Imagine that the dimensional passage is like a compressed coil. The Rael create this coil so that it exists in true space. Then, as they pull the two halves of the gate away from each other, the coil is stretched out but continues to act as a conduit between the two doorways. The coil can be stretched infinitely far apart, because it actually passes through a different plane.

The gate must have a pair of power sources, one at each end, to keep it open. If these power sources are shut off, the gate isn't destroyed; the dimensional tunnel just collapses. Once power is applied again, the gate reopens normally. If the mechanisms at the two ends of the tunnel aren't perfectly aligned and in sync with one another, a dimensional rift occurs that emits a stream of volatile gases that ignite easily.

While the *Fworta* went hurtling through space out of control, the Rael, in a desperate act to stem the tide of Overseer constructs flooding through, destroyed the power generator on board the ship that kept the gate open. The resulting blast not only closed the gate but knocked it out of alignment. Before it can be powered up again, it must be realigned, or gases flooding the area from the resultant spacial rift will explode, inflicting a minimum of 10d10 points of damage on each person or construct within the gateroom.

The gate itself, when powered up, appears as nothing more than a large metal portal with a shimmering blue field across it. Any physical material can cross through this blue curtain unaffected, but electromagnetic waves do not. A person passing through this gate does not feel any unusual disorientation at all; it's just like walking through a normal doorway.

Bridge

This was the command center of the entire ship, where every aspect of the ship's controls and operations were coordinated and engaged. After the Overseer made it through the dimensional

gate, the bridge quickly fell to the invaders, and all controls for the ship were shut off and rerouted to the Secondary Director. However, the Rael had contingency plans for such an event. Special explosive devices were planted at critical junctions within the ship that could be detonated independently. When the bridge fell under enemy control, these explosives were detonated, physically severing communications and controls. The Rael thus effectively took the *Fworta* out of the Secondary Director's control.

As the bridge was near the nose of the ship, it has been utterly smashed by the impact: there is literally nothing left.

Auxiliary Bridge

This is the secondary bridge, in case the primary one should ever be destroyed. After the Secondary Director realized that the primary bridge was useless (having been cut off by the defensive precautions of the Rael), it attempted to take command of the secondary bridge. A contingent of Rael had taken over this location, though, and held the Overseer's forces at bay until the impact. After the power loss in Engineering (see below), these controls shut down, leaving the Rael here unable to prevent the collision with the PCs' home world. All were killed in the resulting crash and explosions, but their actions prevented the Overseer from gaining control of the ship. Of course, as a result the Overseer's minions are now on the PCs' world; an outcome the Rael could not predict.

Engineering

This section of the ship controlled the ship's power plant and propulsion systems. It also housed the central computer and controlled the dimensional gate. This was another location the Secondary Director wished to take immediate control of. But before the area could be secured, a panicked Rael engineering officer decided to destroy the dimensional tunnel's power generator controls. The blast from her tampering practically blew the engineering area right off the ship, cutting off power to either bridge in the process. Everyone in Engineering was killed, and the
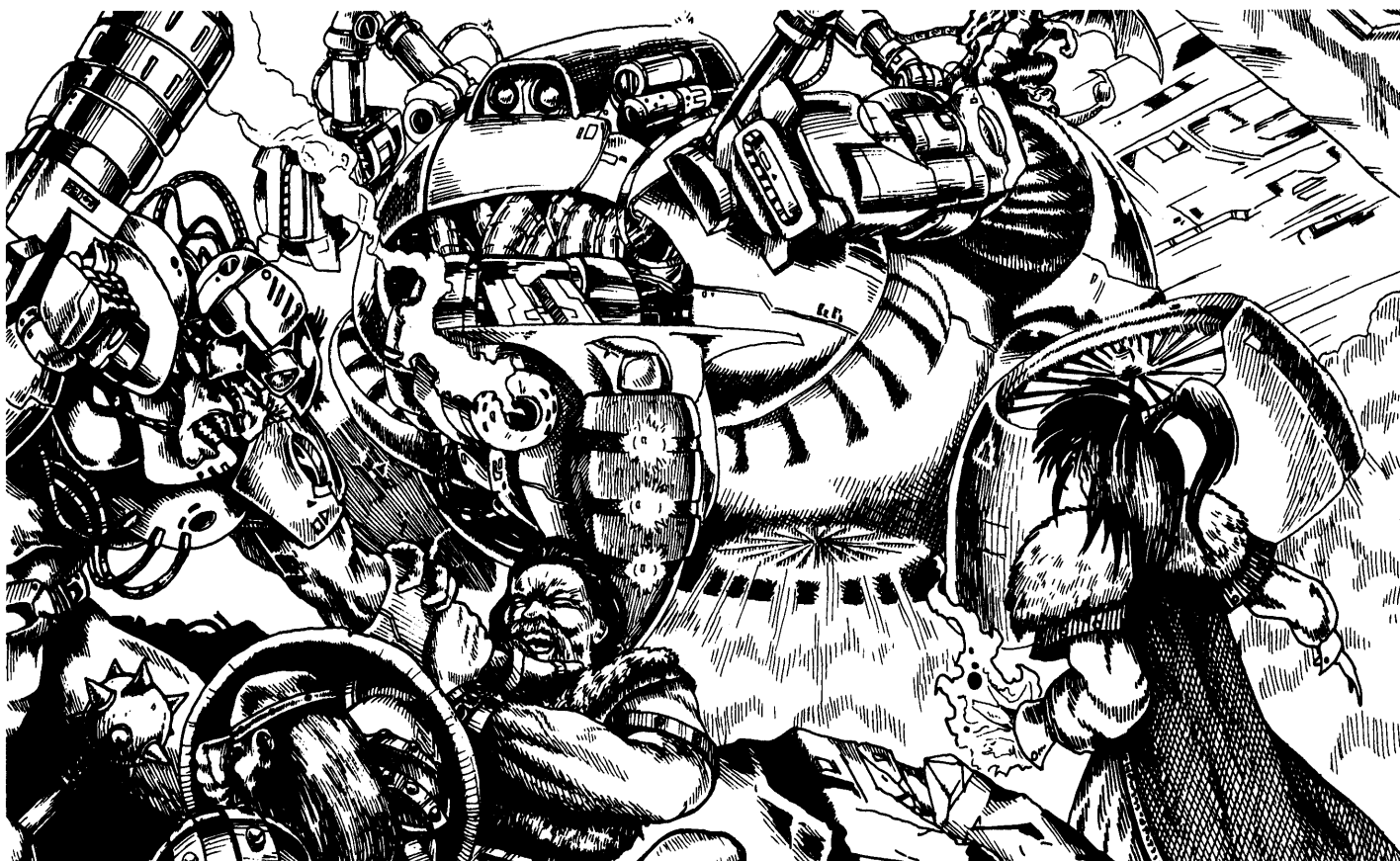
The Crash Site

Fworta's self-programming survival systems sealed off this section of the ship to prevent complete atmospheric decompression. No one could get into the engineering area from elsewhere in the ship; it could only be accessed externally, or after the ship had entered a pressurized atmosphere where the seals could be equalized.

The constructs actually attempted to override the seals, but the system had been set up so that was not possible from remote locations, and a platoon of Rael space marines had entrenched themselves near the sealed entrance to prevent the constructs from getting directly to it. The Secondary Director then tried to reach Engineering externally, by actually sending a construct outside the ship to maneuver across the hull, but the fiery stream of plasma and ignited gases that were surrounding the ship were too much for the construct to endure and it was destroyed.

Since the crash, the Overseer forces have thoroughly examined and attempted to repair the damaged dimensional gate power generator, but several key pieces were lost and presumed destroyed, and the process of manufacturing new ones has been slow and arduous. What's more, the Secondary Director has not as yet located any plans for the power generator within the *Fworta's* computers. If this should happen, however, it spells disaster for the PCs' world, as an unstoppable flood of constructs controlled by the Overseer will flood through the gate and begin domination of the planet.

The engineering section of the ship is above the main deck, so the impact of the crash did little to damage it beyond what had already happened during the destruction of the power source. This is also a useful way into the ship, since most of the regular airlocks were located on the lowest deck and are therefore now buried in the furrow.

Elevator

These are simply hydraulic lifts that transport Rael and materials between decks of the ship. The large one in the cargo area is big enough to carry a forklift with a full load.

Fuel Tanks

These immense containment systems store the fuel used to power the massive thrusters that propel the ship through space. They are filled on a regular basis by large portable containers brought through the gate on vehicles. The vehicle drives right up to the fuel tanks and hooks up to a valve and pump system that transfers the fuel from the portable container right to the fuel tank. Then the vehicle departs again. This effectively ensures an endless supply of fuel for the engines, so the ship never has to dock and refuel.

As the *Fworta* entered the planet's atmosphere during its crash, the hull of the ship began to heat up, and this caused the fuel to heat and expand. Fortunately, the tanks were almost empty, as the ship had been careening through space for three or four days without benefit of refueling procedures. As the ship was actually passing over the Khaim Mountains in the final seconds before impact occurred, the tanks ruptured, spewing superheated fuel. The plasma within escaped as vapor rather than liquid in a great cloud that, when it came into contact with the hot, flaming gases of the dimensional rupture from the gate, created a massive explosion. This final blast literally ripped the tanks apart and destroyed the engine system. It also caused the final stages of the crash to appear as though the *Fworta* truly was a huge, flaming comet of immense size. The blast was so massive, in fact, that it gave the illusion of a much larger body than the ship actually is.

Crew's Quarters

In the old days, Rael crewmembers did not actually have quarters aboard but lived in the arcologies and reported for duty on ship when their shifts began through the dimensional gates, returning to their quarters by the same means at the end of their working day. With the coming of war, however, such luxuries are a thing of the past: now the crew and their contingent of marines stay on-duty for roughly a week at a time.

As a precaution, there are always at least two shifts physically on board a Rael ship at any given time. One shift is on duty and operating the ship, while the other is off duty and on standby status. In this way, the Rael assure themselves of a full complement of people in case the gate ever gets shut down accidentally for an extended period of time. From time to time (roughly once a month), the gate is routinely shut down for maintenance; during these times, there are three full crews assigned to be on board. In both of these cases, the off-duty crew have personal quarters they can retire to. Crew areas come complete with a galley, mess hall, exercise room, and recreation facilities.

Few people were in the crew quarters as the ship impacted with the PCs' home world. These places are not very defensible, so the few who tried to hole up here were quickly captured or killed. The rest of the crew made their stands in other parts of the ship.

Power Plant

This section of the ship is a giant generator that powers many of the systems on board the ship. There are actually two power plants; one serves as a backup. Both are charged through the engines but operate independently from the thrusters, in case the engines go out. All power was lost when the *Fworta* impacted, but the Secondary Director made getting a power plant back in operation a priority. While the main power plant (near Engineering) was heavily damaged in the crash, the backup system suffered almost no damage, and the Overseer's forces got it back on line quickly. Unfortunately, it cannot be recharged by the thrusters any longer, so the constructs have assembled a series of solar panels to recharge it.

The Overseer

The Secondary Director has assembled a full-scale central command center in the wreckage of the ship, well defended by an impressive number of

military constructs. But this is not the limit of the Overseer's plans. The Director has quite a number of other units out and about, performing various tasks. These include scouring the planet for raw materials—resources the Overseer needs to construct additional units. It has also begun to track on the surviving Rael. It knows that some of them managed to escape, and it is attempting to determine where exactly they have gone so that it can eradicate them once and for all. Scouts have also reported back that there is evidence of civilization, so the Director must implement plans to deal with that potential threat, too.

As the campaign progresses, the Overseer's forces should begin to appear elsewhere than just up in the mountains. If the DM would like, military constructs can attack the elven tribe or even make a full-scale assault on Aston Point itself. The Secondary Director definitely wastes no time assaulting the Stonebreaker mine, once it learns that it is there; the resources coming out of the mine are invaluable to the Overseer. As well, the Assimilators are fully capable of creating new Doomed out of whatever species they can lay their "hands" on. This is an interesting situation, for there are plenty of creatures in the mountains, particularly the dwarves, elves, and humanoids. Going up against an ogre or two that have been converted into Doomed should be quite an experience for the players.

In any event, the DM must decide just exactly how much the Secondary Director can organize and expand, and how many units are available for combat, research, exploration, etc. If the characters are powerful, or the DM really wants to make this a shoot-'em-up adventure, then there should be a lot more of the things than if the DM prefers to make this more a thinking style of setting, where each and every encounter with the constructs is a deadly and frightening affair. The PCs must at that point determine the best way to indirectly destroy the forces of the AI without a suicidal head-on assault (certain to spell disaster).

For a fairly balanced setting, with both a few furious firefights and some more subtle espionage-type encounters, it is recommended that the Secondary Director have the following at its disposal by the time the PCs appear on the scene, ready to launch their major assault:

3–5	Drone Fighters
4–6	Prowlers
6–10	Destroyers
1–2	Annihilators
6–8	Firestorms
2–3	Deathstrikes
25–30	Spider Drones
1–2	Assimilators
3–6	Collectors
12–20	Replicators
15–20	Seekers
10–15	Doomed of various types

This allows the DM to assemble several strike forces of mixed units, usually with one large menace supported by several smaller threats. At the same time, a portion of each type of military unit should be held in reserve as a line of defense should the characters come to attack the Secondary Director personally. This should be their ultimate goal, for the Rael can tell them that once the primary controller is eliminated, the rest of the constructs will cease functioning in a coordinated, intelligent manner and it will become a much easier task to destroy them.

Again, these numbers should be adjusted upward if the DM wants the campaign to be a wahoo affair with lots of wild shooting and explosions. Conversely, if every scrap of ammo and every heavy weapon is a godsend to the heroes, then the numbers should be scaled back significantly.

Remember, too, that the characters can attempt to scavenge additional equipment from constructs they destroy. Allow them to occasionally procure an additional weapon or some extra ammunition from these fights. Treat them like magical items would be handled in a more ordinary setting; don't make them common, but sprinkle enough around to keep the players excited by each new treasure.

The Tables Turned
Once the PCs make an initial foray against the Overseer and then withdraw, assume that they
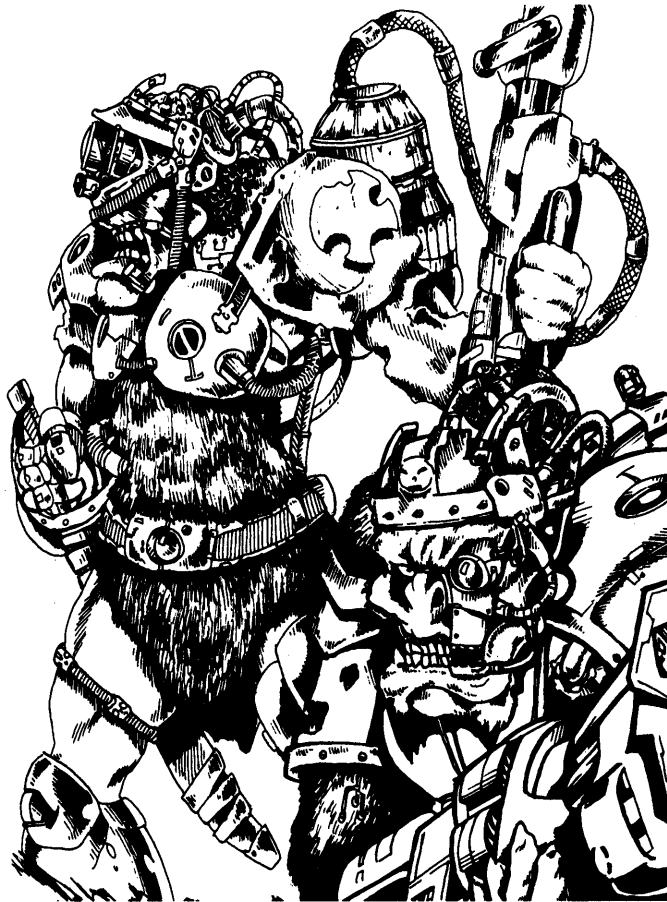
will be followed by a seeker (sensor drone). This should only occur once they have actually attacked the command center at the crash site or a major detachment of constructs on patrol and then withdrawn; it should not apply against an initial scouting expedition such as that described on pages 34 and 36. If the characters use unusual powers (i.e., magic) in their assault, then the Secondary Director diverts significantly more resources (whatever the DM deems appropriate) to analyzing and countering this new threat to the Overseer's dominance than would otherwise be the case.

The sensor drone(s) shadow the party at a discreet distance until they camp for the night or return to the village of Aston Point, whereupon the Secondary Director mounts a major assault. This attack should cause significant casualties in killed and wounded among the PCs and their allies (the elves, the dwarves, rival adventurers, the Rael

refugees, or the villagers, depending on where the player characters took refuge for the night). Give the PCs a good scare, but don't wipe out the whole party!—the idea is to convey to the characters in no uncertain terms that the enemy will not wait passively for them to come and deal with it. Instead, they now know they face an active, aggressive foe that will hound them mercilessly until victorious or destroyed.

Wary characters, after their first experience at the crash site, may keep a sharp eye out for flying spies. Give the PCs the same chance to detect a seeker as they would normally have to find secret doors. Should they elude pursuit (through magic or other means to cloak their presence), the Secondary Director sends out a dozen or so seekers to comb the countryside in a grid pattern. Of course, sensor drones are continually transmitting information back to the Secondary Director, and the sudden cessation of data will alert the Overseer to trouble spots.

If the DM is in the mood for a grand melee, let this attack come while the PCs are back in Aston Point; player characters can then decide whether to fight together as an elite combat unit, to scatter to stiffen defenses throughout the town, to aid in the evacuation of non-combatants, or whatever. Note that boats offer no protection from flying constructs—destroyers, drone fighters, and annihilators can operate just as easily over water as over land; a better idea would be to hide civilians in root cellars and the like until the constructs withdraw. Remember that, being sensible folk, the vast majority of the inhabitants value their lives over their possessions (they can always build another town).

On the other hand, if the player characters plan well and do not draw undue attention to themselves until they are ready to act, assume that any of the above attacks you want to incorporate into your campaign take place offstage. In this case, assume that the monks, guards, and townspeople fight off the attack on the city (not without significant loss) and that Torgia Mel then leads a force of volunteers to wipe out the nest of constructs at the dwarven mine.

In Medias Res

The smoke was incredibly thick and acrid, and Talen's eyes watered even though he held the damp cloth across his nose and mouth. He picked his way across the burnt ground, feeling the heat from nearby fires that had not yet burned themselves out. Perhaps this was a mistake, *thought the pilgrim to himself.* Brother Aston has preached of the coming of a sign, and no one can refute that this great comet is that herald, but perhaps I should have waited a while longer before approaching.

The pilgrim stumbled on something and looked down at the offending object. His eyes widened slightly; it was unlike anything he had ever seen before. He stooped to pick it up and cried out when it seared his hand. He took the cloth from his face and wrapped that around his hand before trying to grasp the object again.

Talen turned it over in his hand. It was made of metal, worked more finely than anything Big Bilton back in Aston Point had ever made. It was in the shape of a slightly bent tube and hollow, but one end had a strange box-shaped thing on it. Long thin filaments of metal protruded from this box.

I shall take this back to the temple, *thought Talen to himself.* Surely it is a gift from the gods, and the brothers will know its significance. *He started to turn away from the center of the comet's impact, intent on returning the town, when a hint of movement caught his eye. Curious, the pilgrim peered through the thick smoke, trying not cough. Whatever it was, Talen could not now see it. He took a step forward, then another.* Has a god come among us? *he thought hopefully.* Perhaps I may serve as one of the favored, a chosen one to bear this god's message to the others. *Talen beamed with pride at the thought of such good fortune.*

Suddenly, a bright light cut through the smoke, glaring in the man's eyes. He could not see. He averted his gaze, not wishing to anger the divine being that approached him. An odd hum reached his ears, and despite himself, Talen looked up. When he did, he screamed and stumbled backward. A behemoth of metal was before him, shining bright light into his eyes and reaching for him with great artificial claws. Talen tried to retreat, but he tripped over his own robes and sat down hard. The monstrosity closed in on him, its huge appendages darting forward to grasp each of his limbs.

Talen screamed again, and a tube snaked out and entered his mouth. He wanted to gag, but he could not. The pilgrim thrashed madly as he was drawn closer to the metal beast's maw by the appendages that held him tightly. A delicate arm swung around behind the flailing man, exposing a slender protrusion. It pressed at the base of Talen's neck, and he could feel it penetrate his flesh. Then, a white-hot pain exploded behind his eyes, and all went black . . .

In Medias Res

Somewhere in the depths of space far beyond your campaign setting, the Overseer has already invaded a Rael arcology as described in Book 1, *The Cast and Props*. It has gained access to the Rael's transdimensional gates and begun to marshall troops of robotic command units and mind-controlled Doomed through them, intent upon eradicating its biological enemies to the last one. Ships across the galaxy are flooding with mindless killing machines which strive to take control.

The Rael star cruiser *Fworta* was fairly near your campaign world when one of the Overseer's Secondary Directors led a strike force of spider drones and Doomed through its transdimensional gate, taking the crew by surprise. Their first directive was to tap into ship's communications and jam them. Thus, the Rael crew could only break into hastily assembled skirmish units, which were forced to develop their own battle plans without coordination from the bridge. A desperate, guerilla-style war raged through the corridors as the *Fworta's* own sought to fend off ferocious enemies who gave no thought to survival. At first the Rael tried to drive back the drones and the Doomed, but soon they began sabotaging their own ship's systems while the Overseer slowly captured the vessel, deck by deck.

In Engineering a small group of Rael, led by a frightened, low-ranking officer, resolved to halt the continuing influx of Overseer troops by incapacitating the transdimensional gate. A more experienced leader might have simply attempted to remove the *dimensional field coil,* rendering the whole system inoperable, but this young ensign elected to blast a hole in the master control console instead. Ironically, she was successful because the Overseer never predicted such an illogical tactic. As a result, the transdimensional warp field within the gate shifted out of balance, allowing each side of the gate to bleed across its threshold, creating a "rip" in the space/time continuum—and a dramatic explosion that breached the hull. Fortunately, built-in safety systems completely sealed off Engineering while

everything that wasn't bolted down was sucked into space, including all the combatants on deck. Unfortunately, until the whole gate mechanism (with a gaping hole in the control console) could be manually shut down *from within Engineering*, the "rip" could not be closed.

Now, *Fworta* is careening toward your campaign world, out of control, while her inhabitants continue to fight to the death in her corridors. Meanwhile, the dimensional rift within the gate is virtually shredding the Prime Material around it, physically emitting a steady gush of highly compressed hydrogen atoms. Combining with plasma leaking from the damaged engines, the atoms explode and ignite, burning with solar intensity and trailing behind the ship for hundreds of miles. The net effect is that the Rael ship looks like a comet streaking across the sky, growing ever nearer. If there's anything positive to be identified in the situation, it's that the dimensional warp field will collapse when *Fworta* crashes into the Khaim Mountains.

There's one other important detail to note: While no Rael would consider abandoning ship to escape the Overseer while the battle still raged (to do so would bring everlasting shame), the first officer, named Jazra, entered an escape pod, hoping to access its independent computer system and override the Overseer's communications block. Just as she booted the system, the explosion in Engineering went off, rocking the ship; the escape pod automatically jettisoned in response.

Outside, Jazra used her tiny pod's formidable computer systems to evaluate *Fworta's* damage, quickly determining that the engines were off-line and the ship was drifting toward a nearby planet, sure to fall into its gravity well. She calculated where *Fworta* would crash, then scanned the planet and detected humanoid life signs. While her mother ship continued toward your campaign setting, she sped ahead to investigate the world and lay what groundwork she could against the impending disaster.

Eventually, Jazra decides that your player characters' adventuring party is the group of people in whom she will rest her trust. She needs a small band of hearty souls who can help her

tend to her injured crew mates, fight off the Overseer, and prevent their world from being entirely overrun by killer robots. She figures the PCs fit the bill.

Setup

This boxed set is designed to be usable by all levels of adventurers. That means you, the Dungeon Master, must determine the number and type of NPCs, both native and alien. You'll need (and want!) to read Book 1, *The Cast and Props*, so you'll be familiar with the brand new creatures and equipment unique to *Tale of the Comet*. Then you can use that knowledge to generate balanced combat encounters with little or no further preparation. The mechanical nature of the Overseer results in a fairly stable structure of NPC types, with abilities and hit points that don't vary from individual to individual as monsters do.

Simply make a note of which NPC types have ACs, THAC0s, and damage potentials roughly equivalent to your adventuring party's. Once you establish that level, you can populate encounters with a mixture of more lower- or less higher-level adversaries who combine for a number of hit points roughly equal to the party's. Occasionally, you might need to subtly manipulate the numbers during combat or in preparation for the next encounter, but only for the sake of the players' enjoyment. The unique situation of dealing with aliens, and of role-playing in a medieval setting suddenly endowed with futuristic technology, is what makes *Tale of the Comet* an exciting scenario; don't let combat become the focus of the adventure in any event.

Jazra

The Rael officer Jazra has reached the Khaim Mountains well ahead of the *Fworta*. She landed her tiny ship in an isolated spot above the timberline, then hiked down to Aston Point. She promptly stole a long hooded robe from the monastery and used it to pass among the humans and demihumans without using her holographic

projector (see below). She can appear in any scenario, so you can play "cat and mouse" with the PCs in a variety of ways such as those described in the following pages.

Jazra maintains her cover as long as possible. The last thing she wants to do is explain that her ship (and the invading Overseer within it) has brought doom to the world. She sincerely hopes to solicit the PCs' aid to exterminate all constructs of the Overseer and regain control of *Fworta*, then repair the star cruiser (or, if that's not possible, the teleportal gate) and leave the PCs with nothing but memories of strange "magic," creatures, and events.

As noted in Book 1, Rael are traders extraordinare by nature. They have a strong sense of equity, and thus Jazra will seek to fully repay, in whatever way possible, any aid she receives from the characters. If the PCs discover and confront Jazra—and she hasn't a chance to postpone the truth by even the most outlandish tactic—she will feel honor-bound to tell the *whole* truth. Until that happens, whenever the PCs encounter the Doomed, robotic constructs, and other examples of alien technology in Jazra's company, she feigns astonishment and curiosity equal to theirs. She has no doubt that the heroes will quickly identify the enemy and react according to their basic instincts—all she has to do is get them to escort her to the crash site; she'll figure out what to do from there.

> **Jazra, Rael pilot, R15:** AC 7 (Dex); MV 12; hp 58; THAC0 6 (10 with medieval weaponry); #AT 2; Dmg 3d6 (blaster pistol); SD Hide in Shadows (99%), Move Silently (99%); SW unfamiliar with medieval weaponry, local culture, flora and fauna, etc.; SZ M (6′ 5″); ML champion (15); AL LG; XP 6,000. Str 16, Dex 17, Con 9, Int 20, Wis 11, Chr 15.
> *Personality:* Emotionless, soft-spoken, determined.

Special Equipment
In addition to her blaster pistol and three extra clips of ammunition, Jazra has a few special pieces of equipment with her: a highly sophisticated
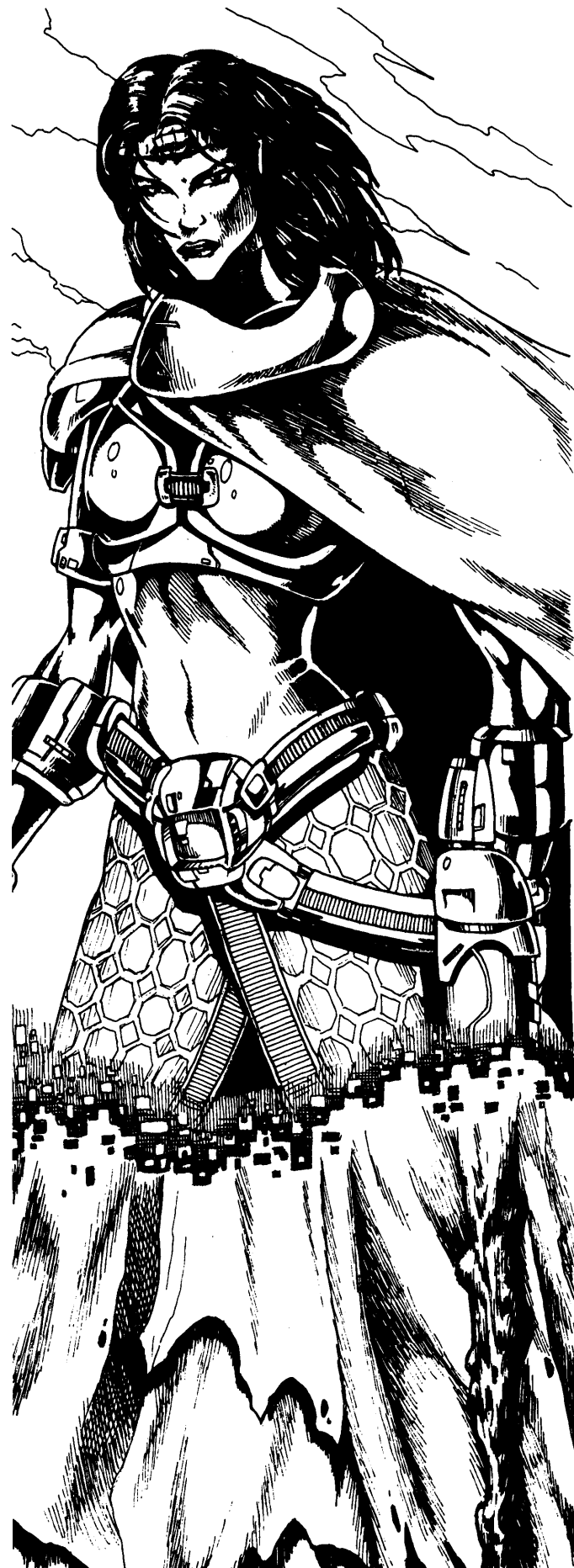
holographic projector and a *decryptor*.

Upon Jazra's forehead rests what will appear to most PCs as merely an ornamental piece of jewelry. In fact, it is a holographic projector built into an octagonal housing about 2 inches across and ½ inch thick attached to a narrow metallic band that wraps around her head. Its surface is covered with tiny faceted crystals which focus and project near-perfect, audible images up to 25' away. The device doesn't glow or hum, so there's no way to tell when it's working, nor do magical detection spells reveal anything about it.

The projector is not only capable of creating images all around Jazra, but it can create them *on* her as well. In other words, the device effectively functions as a *hat of disguise* without any detectable magical aura! Thus, the Rael have passed unnoticed among alien cultures for centuries.

The projector is activated and controlled mentally, as the metal band picks up brain waves and transmits numeric commands to the projector. The device doesn't actually project thoughts; it's a sophisticated mechanism that responds to preprogrammed commands. Jazra must insert the device into her escape pod's computer and spend several hours loading programs into it, each of which can be initiated with a mental command. PCs may be tempted to steal such a valuable item, once they learn of its existence, but unless they can think in Rael and program a computer, they'll never be able to use it.

Given its size, the projector's AI response programming and ability to create images that appear and act real at all times would be astonishing to the crew of *Star Trek's Enterprise*, let alone the barbarian warrior in your PC party! The only way to tell that images are insubstantial is to touch them; anything real will pass right through them.

This can present quite a challenge as you role-play an encounter using the holographic projector. You, as DM, must always try to make images act as normal as possible without ever touching a PC, picking up anything in the setting, or otherwise needing to be solid. If an image *must* pass through a wall, for example, try to do it while the PCs look the other way, or try to convince them that something magical must have happened. The

PCs' eventual discovery that they're dealing with incorporeal objects and people is sure to result in an interesting scene, as Jazra somehow explains away the phenomenon, attempts to flee, or decides to tell the truth. This adventure suggests ways the projector can come into play in several of the following scenes; you can get an idea of how to deal with several likely moments of revelation from reading over the encounters below.

Jazra's second special item is the decryptor. This handy device, standard issue for Rael when away from the home world, fits deeply into Jazra's ear and is not detectable without a declared "detailed search" (i.e., more than the normal looting of a defeated adversary) and a percentile roll; the base chance is 20%, with a bonus of 5% per point of Intelligence over 15. The decryptor deciphers any new language within 1d4 rounds of normal exposure and can thenceforth instantly and accurately translate that language. Although they can understand almost immediately, most Rael require at least a few days to master and speak the languages they hear through the decryptor, but Jazra's rare 20 Intelligence allows her to fluently speak in new tongues within minutes. She can always pick up a few phrases with which to converse immediately (even if they are occasionally odd), which prompts the foreign speaker to go on talking, which in turn enhances Jazra's acquisition rate.

When role-playing Jazra, consider the effect of this device: by the time she meets the PCs, she obviously speaks Common fluently, but if your PCs speak a different language, she will respond to them haltingly at first—just enough to arouse a little suspicion about her. Also, the PCs may be surprised if they meet numerous intelligent monsters along with her, and she can speak with all of them!

If a decryptor comes into the hands of a PC, he or she must first acquire the Rael language to make full use of it. This requires the character to insert the decryptor in the proper orifice and listen to it constantly, while spending a nonweapon proficiency slot. Once he or she has acquired "Language, Rael," the device will behave as a *helm of comprehending languages*, allowing the PC to

understand new languages on a percentile roll of 90 or less. The internal power source will last as long as the DM wants it to, but one year is a reasonable amount of time. If the PC is ever struck by lightning, the decryptor must save vs. electricity to avoid shorting out.

A final note: see how long you can keep the players completely stymied by everything they see and experience. Unless you tip your hand, the introduction of futuristic technology into your campaign setting should come as a complete surprise to both players and player characters.

The Tale Begins

When you're ready to initiate this campaign, simply direct the party toward a mountainous region, putting them on the road to Aston Point. One way to send the PCs in the right direction is to cross their path with a diviner priest who tells them to "seek the fate of the world in Aston Point." Next, send a gypsy their way, who tells them that she has lost her ability to forecast the future, reading only the name "Aston Point" each time she attempts to do so. Continue to drop prophecies which mention "Aston Point" until the PCs start asking for directions to the place (and then maybe prophesy some more). If you're in the midst of another adventure in your campaign, you can set the stage for *Tale of the Comet* well in advance by sprinkling in these hints to go to Aston Point while the heroes are busy finishing up the current business.

Once the party is on the road to Aston Point, pick and choose from among the possible encounters described in the following pages. There are more than enough paths to the final objective, introducing the PCs to an alien race and another world. Run any combination of them, and if any one goes dry, introduce another one. Let the players decide which scenarios intrigue them, and they can follow most of them to the next stages of the overall adventure. Only the first encounter ("Look! Up in the Air!") is absolutely necessary, because it starts the adventure.

Alternatively, the PCs could already be in Aston Point on other business (see page 6), in which case the turmoil comes to them instead of the other way around. They get to see the town overrun with crazies of all types as the comet draws ever closer, night by night, and can make whatever plans they see fit to deal with this unexpected development.

Look! Up in the Air!

Three days pass between the rupture in the transdimensional gate and the crash of *Fworta*, and she is visible in the night sky during the whole journey. This gives you a chance to set the stage for the campaign. Once the adventuring party is in the mountainous region near to Aston Point, read (or paraphrase) the following player text as the PCs camp or walk under the stars. Choose the PC most likely to be star-gazing—e.g., a wizard, astrologer, ranger, or elf—and let him or her be the one to make the discovery.

> Here in the higher altitudes, the sky goes utterly black within minutes after the sun slips behind the western peaks—so black that every star shines with incredible intensity. There's no moon out tonight, which enhances the effect. All's quiet in the wilderness around you, so the almost magical beauty of the sky draws your gaze upward for long moments.
>
> To the north, you spy a rare and wondrous sight: a comet! It's barely more than a tiny slash of light, hanging motionless in the clear mountain night, but it shimmers hypnotically from its blazing head to its wispy tail. Tales of omens and portents in the appearance of a comet pass through your mind. Is this a sign, either for good or evil? Is there some event on the horizon, coming your way? Is it true that a comet may augur something that will change the world forever?

This information is especially effective if the party moves on to other things. The PCs will become more involved with the approaching "comet" when they reach Aston Point, but for now they can only speculate upon its significance.

The trip to Aston Point should require a second night under the stars. Proceed to the next section,

nightfall, when the comet crashes in the mountains. Should the party head into the mountains looking for the expected crash site without attending the great conference described in that section, don't let them get any closer than about a mile from the site before the crash occurs (Ogre's Gorge, the abandoned quarry, or the far shore of Lost Lake are about the right distance away; see the map of the Aston Point Region on the poster map). In such a case, turn to "The Sky is Falling!" for a dramatic description of the crash.

"Bad News Travels Fast," for ways to fill the time. In any case, the second night allows the PCs to notice that the comet's size has doubled (any character with a proficiency in astronomy or astrology will know that this is unheard-of behavior on the part of a heavenly body of this type). It's now clearly visible, even to player characters will poor eyesight. Show the players a picture of a comet from an astronomy book if you have one, or the picture on page 8. Start to drop hints of danger, like "the air is surprisingly still tonight" or "all wilderness night sounds are absent tonight," which actually mean nothing but add to the mystery of the comet.

The next day, any PC who consciously looks for the comet, or even looks in its direction for any length of time, spots it in the clear blue sky. The eerie sight is difficult to make out under the sun, but it's definitely visible and getting larger by the hour. If none of them notices the phenomenon, it will be repeatedly pointed out once the heroes reach Aston Point, that very same day.

The exact time of day during which the PCs reach Aston Point is up to you and players. Only bear in mind that the encounter section called "The Sky is Falling!" (page 57) begins just after

Bad News Travels Fast

Needless to say, the PCs are not the only ones who have noticed the comet. Any intelligent creature they meet along the road is almost sure to have seen it as well. Therefore, you can incorporate the astronomic wonder into any ongoing scenarios in your campaign. Even random encounters will take on an additional dimension if the comet plays some small part in them.

This section outlines a variety of possible scenarios and encounters which can take place either along the road to Aston Point or in and around the village itself. In the wilderness, you can intersperse them with random encounters; in town, you can slip them in while the party explores or seeks food and lodging.

This is an excellent chance for the PCs to interact with the townspeople as well, perhaps forming personal ties that would make them even more dedicated to preventing Aston Point's destruction. If you'd like to arrange encounters with Asrienda, Nai K'del and Mongo, Mother Naimese, Gredin and Erick, Seldra, Detrius, the Biltons, Kalton Praug, or Torgia Mel herself, now is the time.

In Medias Res

Kooks

Unusual natural occurrences bring all sorts of weirdos out of the woodwork, and the comet is no exception. The PCs can encounter a number of odd NPCs along the road to Aston Point, but the village itself is sure to be overflowing with them. You might think of a few nutty theories for them to rant about, in the open market or in the tent town that has sprouted overnight along the shores of Paradise Lake. Here are some ideas of what various kooks think the comet represents: an approaching avatar, bent on punishment of the unrighteous (of course); a space dragon, breathing fire all the way; a tanar'ri, released from the dreaded Abyss by those "infidel monks in the hills"; the gods' way of designating where the next great king shall hail from; a great big flying ball of fiery treasure, sent as a gift from the gods to the deserving; the end of magic in the world; even that the world is being invaded by monsters from Beyond!

Consider the possibility that any one of these street prophets can be something other than what he or she appears: an old enemy in disguise, a con man, a hidden ally, or Jazra herself. However, in order to allay players' suspicions that they are dealing with an imposter, you must surround him (or her) with other lunatics who are exactly what they appear to be. These people often know their opinions are unpopular, so they have to be pretty good at getting people to listen to them, at least for a while, so tempt the PCs to listen with promises of information and behavior that suggests they may actually know something. Don't simply make them *all* act as weird as possible in front of PCs.

You can fill the PCs' day with one such encounter after another, giving each strange NPC a strange agenda with which to waste the PCs' time. Have one try to convince the heroes that some innocent person in town is a spy who must be followed (Asrienda at the Fox and Feather would be a good candidate), then lead them on a wild goose chase as the unsuspecting suspect completes a dozen innocent errands. Have another lure them to the dwarf mines with a story about some strange contraption that the dwarves

are building (just a large sluice) "which is bringing the comet down upon our heads!" Yet another thinks a race of creatures beneath the surface of frigid Paradise Lake is engaging in unholy rituals that are opening a gate to another plane.

Jazra may or may not be one of the many kooks the PCs encounter in and around Aston Point, but she'll be watching the PCs in any event, evaluating their skills, observing their behavior, learning their names and abilities (and maybe their language). You might have her shadow the party as they go about their day, appearing only as a face in the crowd that PCs find increasingly familiar: allow them Intelligence checks as they scan the crowd; success means something about her seems slightly familiar without their necessarily being able to place her (a second successful roll means they realize they've seen her several times earlier that same day). Between her disguise capability and her considerable skill at hiding and moving unobtrusively, she should have no trouble slipping away if noticed.

Here's an example of a scenario involving a kook. Note how Jazra can infiltrate the NPC role if you desire, thanks to her holographic projector.

Arlenne, a zero-level self-appointed prophet, is a human male who appears about 200 years old (he's actually about 75) yet has a spry gait and a loud, piercing voice. He wears rags and leans lightly upon a gnarled oak walking stick (quarterstaff). He wears no shoes and doesn't seem to miss them. The first time the PCs see Arlenne, he's likely to be accosting other travelers, following and lecturing them as they try to walk away, perhaps sitting on the ground after someone has shoved him away in frustration. Describe a comic scene so the PCs neither attack nor flee the old coot. If there are any lawful good characters in the party, Arlenne will instinctively appeal to them.

In any case, Arlenne approaches the PCs with his message the moment he lays eyes on them, jabbering all the way:

"THEY ARE NEAR!" he squawks the moment you make eye contact with him. "THEY are near! They ARE near! They are NEAR!" The old man scrambles toward you, using his knotty oaken cudgel like a third leg, repeating the word with every step: "Near, near, near, near, near, near . . . .

"The gods are coming! They're on their way! The comet is their messenger; it comes before them, lights the way. We must go into the mountains and meet them. We must receive them as devoted followers and tend to their needs. We must fight as their soldiers and kill the lifeless enemy!"

Repeat part or all of these remarks often, working them into the conversation whenever possible. Any specific questions should be answered with nonsense. Arlenne wants the party to follow him into the mountains, and he will happen to lead them toward the crash site if they follow him. If he's Jazra in disguise, remember that he can generate holographic images to influence the PCs (tricking, not intimidating, them). All the while he'll insist, in loud and annoying tones, that there's no time to remain in Aston Point or wherever they are, lecturing relentlessly but eventually abandoning them if they refuse to go with him directly. If you like, he can reappear several times throughout the days preceding the comet's arrival, especially if it's an inconvenient time for the PCs.

If the PCs decide to follow Arlenne, they may not be able to attend the great conference described in "The Sky is Falling!" (page 57). Instead, Arlenne leads them toward Lost Lake; proceed to "The Doomed on Patrol" (page 59) and select encounters to run from there. How close the party gets to the crash site when the *Fworta* comes down depends upon where you introduce Arlenne to them, but they should come no closer than Ogre's Gorge or the old quarry in any event (any closer and they'll have trouble surviving fallout from the crash). If it's necessary to camp along the way, Arlenne cheerfully helps himself to the party's rations if he can—he's got nothing of his own to eat, but he'll spontaneously "reward" the party with an outlandish sermon if they share their stores with him.

Wherever the party happens to be a few hours after sunset on the third night of the comet, read the following text:

By the time the sun went down, the comet was gigantic and brilliant, but now it stretches halfway across the sky—and it's getting longer! A distant rumbling, like an endless roll of thunder, has risen out of the background—and it's growing louder! The comet's pitch grows deeper, more vertical, and it almost looks like the land you stand on is coming around to meet it.

"They are here!" screams Arlenne over the mounting noise. "Hurry, hurry! They Are Here!"

The rumbling grows deafening as the sky ignites with red light. The comet waxes from yellow to blinding white and spans back to the horizon. The air grows hot around you, and the hair on your body

In Medias Res

The heat of the comet as it passes is enough to ignite exposed paper (an item saving throw vs. fire is in order for all flammable materials). When the PCs arise, they find Arlenne dead of a heart attack (if he's not Jazra, that is).

Monks
The followers of Aston Tanak are gravely concerned about the comet. Behind closed doors in the monastery above the town, old Aston has suddenly emerged from the revery of senility and lucidly confessed to his horrified followers that he has failed his holy mission, for Aston Point is no longer the haven of simplicity and solitude he envisioned. Even worse, that village on the shores of Paradise Lake, the very manifestation of his failure, is named after *him*. The order has fallen stunned and Aston Tanak has gone alone into the mountains to receive his punishment, whatever it may be; that's the last anyone has seen of him.

On the road to Aston Point, the party can run into one or several monks—or, rather, *ex*-monks—who have left the order and are fleeing the area. They are, in various combinations, bitter, frightened, devastated, angry, and disgusted. As they pass the PCs, they utter a warning: "Go back! The way ahead is cursed!" The monks are reluctant to disgrace Aston Tanak by detailing his fate, preferring to simply claim that Aston Point has fallen out of favor with the gods and disaster approaches. However, if the PCs are persistent, one of the monks hints at the truth, sparking an argument with his fellows during which the truth comes out. Jazra will not be among this group, but

the PCs might notice her watching the encounter from a distance, dressed in a hooded robe just like those of the monks, then slipping away.

In Aston Point, the PCs should run into numerous followers of Aston Tanak throughout the day, who are in the streets announcing that there will be a public convening of the order, in the meadow outside the monastery gates, just after sunset. They're busy spreading the word and are reluctant to explain either what they'll talk about or what has really happened. They only say, "You'll learn all at the great conference; stay your curiosity until then." However, the DM may let some bits of that information slip to reward players who skillfully role-play an encounter with monks.

Yet another encounter with monks in Aston Point comes when PCs see two monks wandering among the tents on the shores of Paradise Lake. The brothers are cursing the campers, ordering them to leave, blaming them for "all our woes" (that is, Aston Tanak's apparent fall from grace). They treat the PCs with no more respect, but they're not fighters and will cry for aid from the local lord's soldiers or NPC adventuring parties if they're attacked. If the PCs are patient with them and continue to prod for information, the monks tell them how their order is dedicated to simplicity and solitude, and that the growth of Aston Point has destroyed both virtues. They testily inform the PCs of a conference in the meadow outside the monastery, just after dark, then move along, scowling at the tent dwellers as they go, ordering them to attend the great conference.

Jazra is not among these unfriendly monks, but she might play the part of a third monk and intercede if the PCs grow surly with them. She (or, rather, "he") can point out that the PCs are a warlike band while his brothers are unskilled in the martial arts, and otherwise make peace. This is a good place to insinuate Jazra into the party, as she offers information about the town and invites them to be her guests at the great conference that evening. She can tell the story of Aston's departure into the wilderness and suggest that they help her seek him.

Alternatively, PCs may encounter a pair of faithful monks who cannot believe that there is

desperate need of sturdy souls, but we have no gold to buy your services. Will you hear our tale?"

If the PCs snub the monks, you can work the rest of this encounter into other scenarios, either to lure the PCs into a search for Aston Tanak or simply to tell them his story. Assuming the PCs are heroes (or at least curious), continue:

"We are contemplative brothers of Aston Tanak, who founded our order in these mountains. Of late, a bustling village has grown around our monastery, and it has become a popular place to begin and end explorations of the mountain wilderness beyond. Consequently, our life of simplicity and solitude is no longer possible.
"Poor Aston blames himself. He is old, and his mind is perhaps not as sharp as it used to be. He believes the comet to be a judgment from the gods, and has gone into the mountains to receive it.
Don't you see? I am ashamed to say it, but our venerable patron has completely lost his wits and is wandering alone in the wild!
"If you are valorous, we beg you: accompany us into the mountains, help us find Aston Tanak, and bring him back to safety!"

any divine retribution in the appearance of the comet. They are trying to find someone to guide them into the mountains, hoping to find Aston and bring him home. They will approach the PCs in the streets of Aston Point, no sooner than sunset on the second day.

A pair of tall, thin monks approach you. Their hoods are drawn over their heads, so you can barely discern the shine of their eyes within folds of dark brown cloth. One of them keeps his head constantly bowed, as if he were ashamed of himself, and remains silent. The other does all the talking.
"You are bravehearts, I can tell," says a strong voice beneath the hood. "We've approached several parties of so-called heroes today, but none of them would help us, so I'll tell you plainly: We have

Not only do these zero-level humans have no money to offer the party, but they're a constant liability in combat situations, as responsible heroes will be forced to defend them. However, if PCs agree to help, the monks tell them they'll always be "thrice welcomed" in the monastery. If (and *only* if) they ask, the monks will let them use the monastery (or, rather, the monks' hovels) as a base of operations if they wish to stay and adventure in the area, during this scenario and beyond.

If the PCs agree to search for Aston Tanak, the monks will still want to attend the great conference on the evening of the third night of the comet, as the entire order has been commanded to attend by the elders. Therefore, if it's early enough, the monks can take their leave of the party, arranging a rendezvous after the conference.

Jazra may be one of these monks, and the other

a holographic projection, created to convince the PCs that she is not a lone kook. She'll play the part of a helpless acolyte in the wilderness until her life is endangered, at which time she will pull out her blaster pistol and lend a hand.

Remember that holographic projections cannot be touched, which may result in an interesting combat encounter, if either the PCs or any combat adversaries learn that the second monk is insubstantial! He will not speak at all, "observing an oath of silence in these troubled times," according to Jazra, yet he can still nod and shake his head (at Jazra's mental command into the holographic projector).

Eager-beaver Adventurers
The comet has brought more than kooks to Aston Point. As mentioned earlier, diviner wizards and priests across the land have learned that Aston Point is to be the focal point of some unknown, earth-shattering event. The PCs aren't the only ones who have heard about this town, and the appearance of the comet has brought them running.

Therefore, a tent town has sprung up outside Aston Point with a healthy population of adventurers of all types and levels. Some of them don't like all the competition, which can lead to an ongoing enmity with the PC party. For additional role-playing opportunities, generate an NPC adventuring party roughly equal in prowess to the PC party. These characters are experiencing about the same adventure as are the heroes, and they have adopted the PCs as friendly rivals.

Their paths bring them together several times, during which the NPCs playfully poke fun at the PCs. Establish whatever rapport you can between the two parties, but keep them in competition with each other if you can.

NPC adventurers can also provide any missing information the PCs need to continue their journey, and they can serve as replacement PCs or as allies or henchmen to the PC party if you want to stage a large-scale battle against the Overseer's forces. Of course, NPC adventurers also provide a solid corps for the Doomed, the fate of many of the adventurers who will go into the mountains over the next few days to seek the downed comet; see "The Doomed on Patrol" (page 59).

Still other NPC adventurers can provide comic relief or side encounters. If the PCs visit either the Grinning Gar or Mother Naimese's Boarding House in Aston Point, you might want to stage a brawl, started by a group of adventurers who got into an argument with a trio of dwarf miners. Or you might generate a 1st-level party of young adventurers who decide that the PCs are the crowd they want to hang with. They follow the party like puppy dogs, or show up while the PCs are attempting to move stealthily, and they bicker constantly over everything, especially over whom the adventurers like best and the division of spoils from a battle. If separated from the PCs at any point, they can reappear later as Doomed.

One or more of the NPC adventuring parties with whom the PCs interact can be a group of

holographic images, excepting one (Jazra, of course). This is most likely a group that would be encountered in the mountains, not in Aston Point itself, because Jazra will have formulated a plan to join the PCs, then hiked to her escape pod and spent several hours programming the holographic projector before locating and intercepting the party. Jazra can impersonate any character class she likes, but she is most convincing as a rogue or ranger. She carries a short sword (or any weapon appropriate to her supposed class) but is not proficient with anything other than her blaster pistol (and other Rael weaponry). Therefore, she suffers a –4 penalty to attack rolls with whatever she pretends to use as a weapon of choice. Jazra won't use the blaster pistol in the presence of the PCs unless it becomes a life or death situation, and even then she'll try to keep it hidden in the voluminous sleeve of her robe and explain it away if possible: "Oh, you must mean this, my *ring of magic missiles* (displaying a ring on her hand), which I acquired in a far-off land, across the ocean. It *does* generate a unique effect, doesn't it?"

Some hints for running a holographic party:

✦ Let Jazra do as much of the talking as possible. Remember that she can take many appearances, including that of any member of the NPC party—if she has the opportunity to change appearances unobserved—and then speak as that person if the situation calls for it. The rest of the holographic party is sufficiently programmed to carry on short, clipped conversations, as the AI circuits within the projector can react to the PCs' talk and transmit suitable responses to each image. Jazra has anticipated a huge variety of "neutral" responses which can serve to answer most questions. For purposes of role-playing, the images can react and respond to virtually all PC conversations, but they cannot initiate conversations about new subjects. Furthermore, some of their responses will be repetitions of polite nothings—comments about the weather, the PCs' equipment, and the like. As you speak for a holographic NPC, add a short lag to your responses, occasionally inserting an odd, slightly incorrect choice of words or inverting the word order, but do it in such a way that leaves the PCs thinking, "You're not from around here, are you?"

✦ For purposes of marching order, Jazra will try to get the images into rear positions. The less the PCs look at the projections, the less time Jazra has to spend concentrating on controlling their behavior.

✦ If the combined adventuring party is drawn into battle, the images will try to spread out the battle and take their attackers out of the PCs' direct sight. They'll also infuriate their adversaries as they continue to evade every attack. Report during the battle that adversaries of the images seem to grow particularly frantic and enraged. On the other hand, the images never seem to land a blow of their own, either. Holographic spellcasters can generate lots of spells, but apparently to little effect. Try to convince the PCs that they are helping a rather inept (but lucky) group of adventurers survive. It will make the eventual revelation all the more startling and entertaining.

✦ More likely than not, one or more of the holographic images will eventually be exposed for what it is, one way or another. Jazra won't panic. She may claim to be a great wizard who travels alone, creating illusions to disguise her vulnerability, or she may use her thief skills to escape, then get the party to chase her. Remember that Jazra's whole plan is to get the PCs to the crash site without ever knowing exactly what they're up against. Make the PCs figure out for themselves exactly *what* Jazra is and confront her before she opens up and tells the truth.

"The Sky is Falling!"

This section's purpose is to dramatize the crash of the star cruiser *Fworta*. By now the heroes should have heard a number of theories about the comet and maybe speculated upon a few of their own. They're about to get a closer look at it than they expected.

In all probability, when the ship comes down the PCs will be attending the "great conference" before the monastery, so the description of the crash in this section is written from that perspective. However, if your adventuring party has already gone into the mountains, simply read the boxed text given on pages 58–59, paraphrasing where necessary.

As the sun sets on the third day of the comet, hundreds of people make their way up the slopes to the wide meadow where the monastery lies. Dozens of torches have been ignited, dimly lighting a wide expanse before the main structure. Most of the brothers are waiting there and quietly urging the crowd to wait for Brother Naestir to explain things. If the PCs are special guests of any of the monks, they are allowed to stand directly before the front entrance, where a 25' by 20' by 6' platform has been erected for the purpose of public speaking. Otherwise, they can stand where they like, but it's crowded up front.

This is a good place for the PCs to run into various NPCs they've met along the way, who are milling about in the crowd. Role-play actively, but avoid combat. If the PCs try to start a fight, surround them with a multitude of powerful-looking NPC adventurers, who command them to put away their weapons.

Above, the comet is gigantic, shedding more light than a full moon on a clear night, almost rendering the monks' torches useless. The wind is dead calm and Nature is completely silent; people's voices sound oddly muffled, and there's a deep, barely audible hum in the air. In short, the atmosphere is that of the quiet before the storm. Conversations are anxious, and there are scattered outbursts of hysterical ranting and angry shouting in the masses. The mood of the crowd is so tense it's palpable. Tell the PCs that every instinct in their bodies tells them to keep their hands on their weapons.

When the PCs have found a spot to watch and you're ready to proceed, read the following boxed text:

> An elderly monk emerges from the gates, climbs the thick-runged ladder to the platform, and looks out over the assemblage. He draws back his hood and waits for the crowd to fall silent. Whispers in the crowd confirm that this is Brother Naestir, one of the order's chief elders.
>
> "Behold!" he shouts, pointing skyward. "The bane of Aston Tanak and the doom of Aston Point!" Naestir's pointing finger falls to accuse the crowd. "You! You have destroyed our order by coming here. Aston Tanak came to this place because it was isolated, and now you have followed us here and polluted our people with commerce and distractions from our way of life!
>
> "Aston Tanak has prophesied doom, and the comet appeared in the sky! Now, I tell you that only two things can forestall this fate. Leave Aston Point immediately—or foreswear all your possessions, here and now, and vow to live as faithful followers of Aston!"

This ultimatum shatters the barely constrained order, transforming the crowd into a mob. As you set the scene, don't forget to add details about other groups of people who may be standing near the heroes. Many people cry out in fear and remorse, while many more react angrily. "You don't own these mountains!" cry the dwarves; "We'll go where we please!" shouts a large man in studded leather armor, surrounded by nodding companions; and so forth. Somewhere just beyond the PCs' range of sight, the ringing of sword blows rises in the night. The fighting spreads quickly, and the party quickly finds itself immersed in a riot. A thrown stone strikes the leader of a party of adventurers about 10 feet from the PCs. The fighter immediately assumes that one of the PCs threw it, and her group responds furiously.

Describe an on-coming party that is more than capable of holding its own with the PCs. It might

be the "rival" party of NPCs described earlier, or a contingent of soldiers from the keep. Allow the PCs to react. If they break and run, proceed immediately to the next piece of boxed text. Otherwise, allow the encounter to go on for a few rounds, and clobber the party with riotous attacks from all sides. Let things get desperate, then move on to the boxed text.

> Screams of terror permeate the battle all around you, so many that the fighting spontaneously pauses. "The comet!" you finally make out among the horrified voices. "The comet is coming down!"

With a glance up, it's clear that the comet's relative speed is increasing sharply and it's coming their way! Have the players declare actions before continuing with the next box.

> By the time the sun went down, the comet was gigantic and brilliant, but now it stretches halfway across the sky—and it's getting longer! You can actually see it move now. A distant rumbling, like an endless roll of thunder, has risen out of the background—and it's growing louder! The comet's pitch grows deeper, more vertical, and it almost looks like the land you stand on is coming around to meet it.
>
> The rumbling grows deafening as the sky ignites with red light. The comet waxes from yellow to blinding white and spans back to the horizon. The air grows hot around you, and the hair on your body stands up on end. The falling star moves faster and faster as it approaches, and it occurs to you that the thing is headed straight for you!
>
> A moment later, the comet passes overhead with an ear-splitting roar, burning you with its fiery tail, and hurdles beyond the ridges above you. There is a moment of silence—then an explosion that visibly

shakes the entire landscape! A massive fireball rolls skyward and a violent, hot wind blows over you. As the night sky falls dark again, light ash begins to fall like snow. . . .

Suddenly, nobody (except maybe the PCs) wants to fight anymore. The crowd scatters and runs in all directions. Describe the growing sound of a fast-approaching avalanche and ask for actions. There are rocky outcroppings large enough to shelter one or more people, and the monastery can provide protection, but many people are panicking and running away.

PCs who immediately seek cover are safe, but players who fail to declare this action find their characters in the middle of a field of rolling boulders, mostly two to four feet in diameter. The avalanche lasts for 1d4+2 rounds, and during each round, characters without cover must make *two* successful Dexterity checks to move for cover and avoid being struck. The first check determines whether or not the character is struck; assign enough damage dice to make PCs who fail cry "Ouch!" without killing them with one boulder. The second check determines whether the PC is able to maneuver his or her way closer to cover; it requires two successful checks to get there.

As soon as the avalanche subsides, the fearsome rumbling is replaced by eerie wails of pain, as there are many injured. Monks who escaped the danger rush forth to tend the fallen, and many townsfolk join them. Others are hastily packing their belongings (if they weren't crushed) and leaving, figuring that the avalanche was only the beginning of Aston Point's troubles.

A few NPC parties are discussing the comet and how near it must have hit. They plan to hike into the wilderness and find the thing in the morning. Captain Torgia Mel will dispatch a squad to investigate at once.

Obviously, Jazra wants to be the first to reach the crash site, so she'll start to apply earnest pressure upon the PCs if she has any relationship with them at all. By now, however, the PCs should be more than ready to head for the crashed ship.

The Doomed on Patrol

By the time the PCs reach the *Fworta*, several other adventuring parties, and a troop of the town's guards, will have gotten there first. Without Jazra in their company, they never had a chance to know what they would find, and unfortunately for them, the first thing they found was the Overseer's minions. Most of them died immediately; others are now being assimilated and turned into Doomed. Therefore, the DM should not panic if the PCs aren't too quick off the mark; the ship and its full complement of foes will still be there when the PCs arrive on the scene.

This section is a set of suggested encounters to run along the path to the downed star cruiser. You can run any combination of them, slowing the party's progress as much as you like in order to fit them into the adventure. You might have a few encounters to throw in, based on earlier events: the rival adventurers, Arlenne, lost and starving monks, and so forth.

What the Heck is That?

The *Fworta* descended at a fairly steep angle, but either by luck or because of automated emergency systems it missed the peak and slid down the far slope, gouging out a deep groove before coming to rest near the base of the mountain. The bulk of the ship remained intact, although pieces went everywhere.

Once the PCs pass through Ogre's Gorge, allow them to find tiny bits of strange metal, jagged and charred around the edges yet otherwise smooth like plate mail armor. As they draw near the crash, they begin to come across small parts of the spacecraft; describe these in terms that would come from a native of your campaign setting. The players shouldn't be able to identify what their characters could not.

One special object they should find is shown on the front of **Handout 8**; cut the sheet into four pieces and hand one of them to the players. It's part of the *dimensional field coil*, a crucial part of the transdimensional gate, blown free of the ship during its crash. If Jazra is with the group, she will momentar-

ily become very excited when she first sees it, then tries very hard to be one who will carry it.

If Jazra has already revealed herself to the party, then she tells them what the find is, and that they've found only a piece of the whole assembly. You can send the PCs on a scavenger hunt to find the rest of the field coil—which could have been picked up by anything from an aarakocra flying over to some passing hobgoblins—as soon as they've regained control of the ship.

A Chance of a Lifetime

If you really want to add a wahoo element to the adventure, you might let the PCs come upon Jazra's escape pod—a fully functional craft! The Rael officer has landed her escape pod in a wide crevasse upon the peak due east of Orchard Lake, about 9,500 feet up. This is a single-occupant, short-range space craft with a sleep-suspension feature in case the pod is jettisoned in deep space. It is a 7-foot-wide dark gray wedge, the two wings joining at a right angle, with a pair of thrusters on the inner curve and a view port on the outer curve (which slides down to admit a passenger); show the players the picture on the back of **Handout 6** (bottom).

Within, a control console housing all ship's systems is positioned before a single, full-body-length chair. In the center of several panels of touch controls lies an illuminated, hand-shaped pad (with six fingers, of course). Quite simply, by placing one's hand on the pad, one can fly the ship. Apply pressure, and vertical thrusters gently lift the ship into the air. Press harder, and you accelerate; ease off, and you maintain velocity. Remove your hand and the ship comes to a full stop, vertical thrusters engage, and the ship descends evenly for about 50 feet. Steering and pitch are achieved by applying pressure to the perimeter of the pad with the fingers.

Jazra opens the pod with a command word programmed into her decryptor, but a *knock* spell actually manipulates the manual override, opening the port and powering up the craft! There's no doubt that many PCs would *love* to get their hands on in Jazra's single-person spaceship, the escape pod. If you like, let a *truly* adventurous adventurer attempt to find out what happens when he or she manipulates the controls. Show the player the illustration of the control panel on the front of **Handout 6** and ask what his or her character does. Then check the keyed version of the diagram on page 61 and formulate an appropriate result. Assuming he or she guesses right or simply gets lucky, the character suddenly finds himself or herself in the air and traveling faster than anything in his or her world has ever gone! Make him or her figure out how the thing works. If he or she is successful, the character can fly the ship around at will. Don't worry about movement rate and Armor Class—no PC can control the ship (unless he or she's got the *space pilot* proficiency) with enough precision to employ it in combat, and the pod moves so fast that it can't be hit by anything in a standard AD&D® campaign.

Each time the character attempts to land the ship, however, call for a Dexterity *and* an Intelligence roll. If both rolls succeed, he or she lands the ship safely and can use the ship again (unless you decide that the power supply is gone). When either ability checks fails, however, the ship crashes—the PC has misjudged his or her descent, or engaged the vertical thrusters too soon, or struck a nearby object. Describe the crash in dramatic terms: "Too fast, too steep! You clip off a dozen trees before smashing into the side of a mountain," and so forth. After it's over, tell the horrified PC-pilot that the pod's inertial dampeners protected him or her through the crash, but he or she's going to be sick to the stomach for a while, and the ship is destroyed. Award 500 experience points for successfully learning to fly the ship, and 100 experience points for each successful landing.

The Doomed

Only a few of the Doomed who invaded the *Fworta* survived the battle and subsequent crash, but the Overseer assimilator has lost no time in converting captured adventurers into mindless killers. Attack the PCs with unrecognized NPCs when they reach Ogre's Gorge, announcing only that the strange group of people mechanically marches over to

Jazra's Ship (control panel)
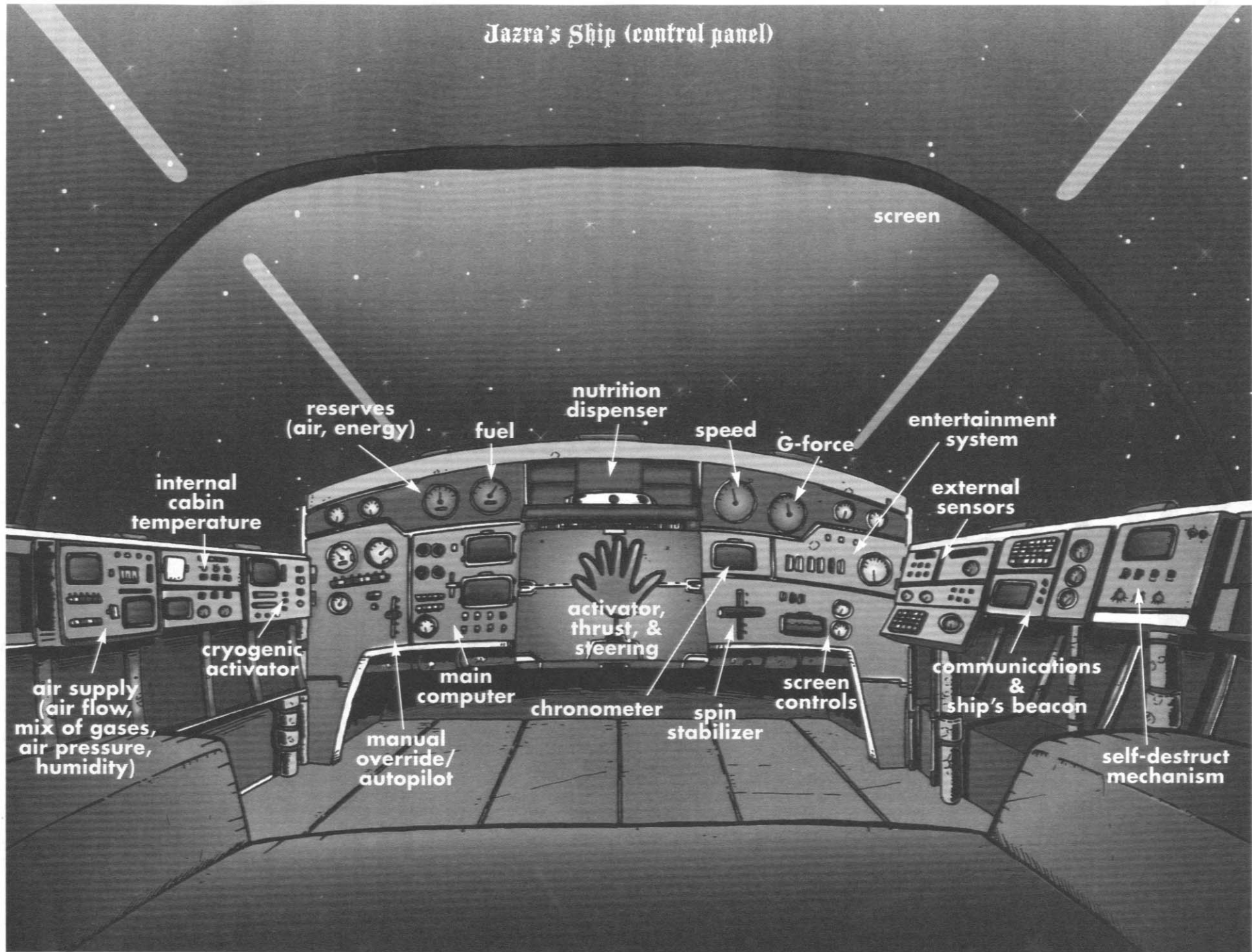
them and starts swinging. The attackers don't talk, they don't cry out in pain when struck, and they don't stop until they're destroyed. In fact, they act exactly like zombies. In a second encounter, tell the PCs that they recognize the attackers as being from Aston Point. Finally, introduce an assault party including NPCs they know and are (or were) friendly with.

As mentioned above, a few of the Doomed have survived the crash, and they are aliens of course. Most adventurers are used to meeting bizarre new creatures, but some of the *Fworta's* survivors can be a real experience. As the PCs explore the mountains beyond Ogre's Gorge, you might describe something like this:

> You hear an odd sound to your left, like something very soft and sticky peeling off a smooth surface. At first you can't tell where it's coming from, but then you feel something cold and wet on your feet.
> A thick, viscous gel—perfectly clear in spite of its gummy surface—has slid along the ground and is crawling up your legs. Your skin begins to tingle where it's covering you.
> You begin to hear a voice in your head, urging you to be calm, not to worry, not to fear. You realize that the slimy substance is communicating with you!

This creature can cover up to two man-sized creatures at once, in two rounds, at which time it suffocates them to death (see the rules for "Holding Your Breath" in the *Player's Handbook*). As a Doomed thing, it communicates only to reassure its victims while it murders them. Only fire keeps it at bay, and only fire can remove it from a victim once it crawls on him or her. Removing the alien inflicts 3d6 points of burn damage to the character underneath; 6d6 damage if the alien completely covers him or her.

If actual monks accompany the heroes into the mountain in search of Aston Tanak, they may actually find the venerable prophet—now a Doomed creature of the Overseer. He looks no different than he did, but his physical condition is greatly improved, and he has a blaster pistol (and no hesitation about using it).

The Truth at Last

Once the characters finally arrive at the ship, refer to "The Crash Site" (starting on page 33). If Jazra is with them, she is astounded by the extent of the destruction. If she hasn't already done so, then she reveals who she really is and pleads with the characters to help her. She knows that if they do not, there is little hope for Aston Point and eventually the world, as the Overseer will have grown powerful enough to be unstoppable.

Jazra also suspects that there may be Rael who survived, and she wants to find them. This is also a good time for her to explain the significance of the dimensional field coil, if the characters already found any of the pieces.

The Adventure Continues

At this point, the PCs should be thoroughly entrenched in the overall adventure. This is where you as DM must decide just how much of this you want to work with, how long you want the characters to spend running around in the Khaim Mountains fighting the Overseer's forces. Below are some adventure nuggets, ideas to flesh out and immerse the PCs in.

Seek and Destroy Overseer technology

Any of the following are vital goals for the characters if they wish to defeat the invaders and protect Aston Point (and, ultimately, the world). If they have met with and are working with the Rael refugees or Jazra, those contacts help them identify priorities that will weaken the enemy's defense. Otherwise, they'll have to rely on their own reconnaissance and wits to figure out the best way to proceed toward their goal.

Destroy the replicators.
So long as the Secondary Director has replicators at its service, it can continue to build its forces until their numbers are overwhelming. Without them, it cannot even replace lost constructs. More than any other factor, destruction of replicators can tip the balance of this war in the PCs' favor.

Naturally, the Overseer will keep its replicators in secure, well-guarded positions.

Destroy the seekers.

Any time a seeker is spotted alone and in search mode, it should spell trouble. Eliminating seekers hinders the Overseer's ability to gather effective information about its foes' location and activities. Remember, however, the Secondary Director's supra-genius Intelligence. If the PCs destroy every sensor drone that heads in a certain direction (such as towards the Rael camp) they will betray their location as surely as if it transmitted the data back to the command center.

Destroy the assimilators and prevent new Doomed from being created.

One way in which the Overseer is able to increase its troop strength quickly is by converting prisoners into the dreaded Doomed. It shouldn't take the characters long to figure out that they can eliminate a major portion of their problems if they can eradicate the source of the Doomed—i.e., the assimilators. This will solve two problems: the Overseer will not have access to so many troops so quickly anymore, and it will stop preying upon the hapless citizens of Aston Point in such a nasty fashion.

Disrupt the Overseer's Supply Lines

Another direction to take in the fight to eliminate the Overseer's forces is to cut off the supply of raw materials being collected for manufacturing addi-

tional units. One way to kill two birds with one stone in this situation is to actually steal raw materials needed for repairing the dimensional gate from the collectors. These constructs will invaded the dwarf mine as soon as they become aware of its existence, representing as it does a bonanza of raw materials for the production of more constructs. Any dwarves taken alive will be converted into Doomed miners. Cutting off this supply of rich ores would hamper the Overseer's plan considerably. If the PCs play their cards right, they can not only destroy the construct, but loot the thing for refined metal, too.

Regain the Ship

One last thing the characters and Jazra are going to have to do before the campaign setting can move to the Rael arcology and the second half of the adventure is to repair and repower the dimensional gate. **Handout 8** presents all four pieces of the dimensional field coil, which must be reassembled to get the gate back on line. But by the time that is done, Jazra or the other Rael will have realized that the engines are so badly damaged as to be irreparable; hence, the gate has no power source.

The characters may be able to help with this problem, assuming they have access to some decent magic. Tailor the needs to the party's abilities, but let them come up with some way that a spell or a magical item can jump-start the gate and open it up again. Perhaps something as simple as a *lightning bolt* spell would work, but if the party has access to more outrageous magic, then something like an opening into an elemental or paraelemental plane contained within a *bag of holding* could be interesting.

Crossing Over

O kay. So you're ready for the campaign to shift focus. It's time to get the PCs through the gate and into the Rael arcology. How is the best way to do it? There's no given point in time that this should occur. It's best to base it on the players; if they are starting to get bored with protecting the citizens of Aston Point from the Overseer, then it's time to take the action to a different level. If they are out of ammunition, it may be time to make a last-ditch desperation attack to get through. Perhaps you as DM have set certain goals and conditions to gauge when the crossover should take place. The timing will vary from campaign to campaign: you must decide when it feels right to do this.

Regardless of when it actually happens, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, the characters need to defeat the Secondary Director in order to get to the gate, and this should be a difficult task. While the Secondary Director itself isn't all that well armed, it should be entrenched in a very defensible place with a lot of other military units and swarms of Doomed to protect it. Second, the PCs should have a definite reason for crossing over to the other side. Even if it's just to go with the Rael and see the sights, then at least they have some sort of a plan. More likely, it's going to be something to do with using magic to stop the Overseer, but that's for you the DM to decide.

Finally, you need to have read through the third book, *Crossing Over*, and have chosen a method of getting the characters back. In some cases, there are things that you will want to set up before the PCs even depart for the Rael facility, so it is wise to have all of that prepared beforehand.

Once all preparations have been made and the player characters are ready to leave their world behind and embark on the next stage of this adventure, turn to the next book and let the fun begin.
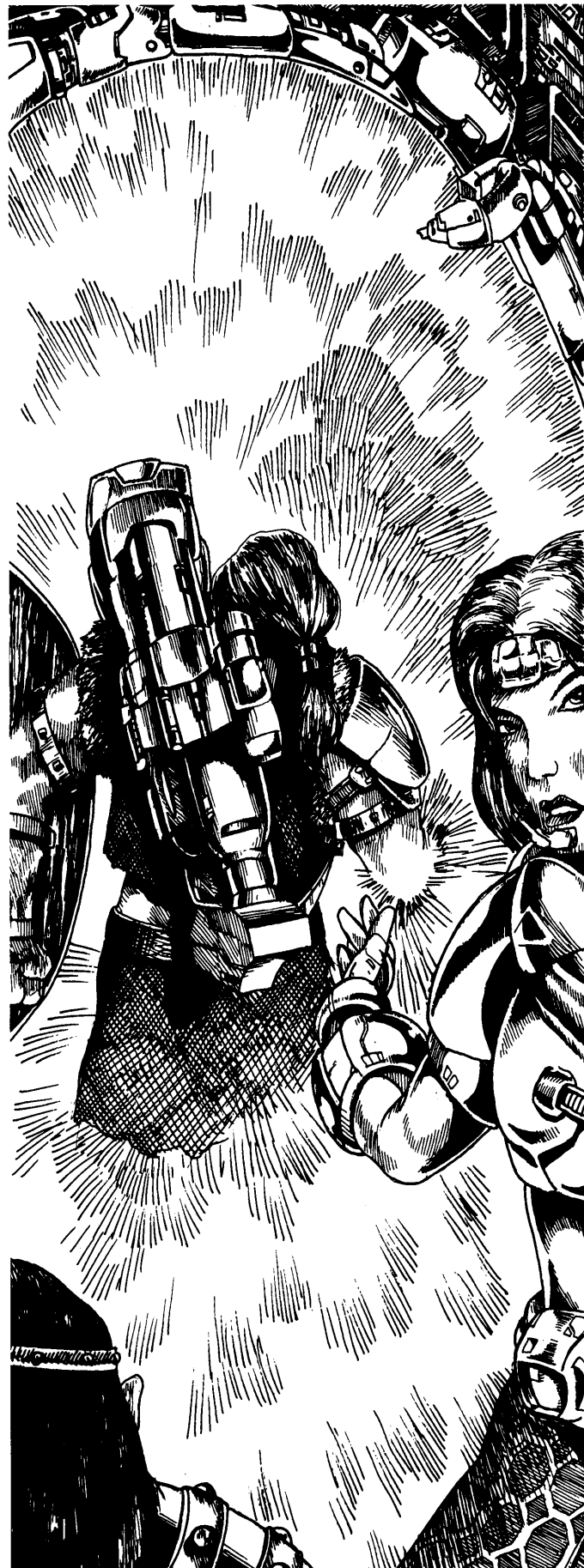
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Book 2
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Book 3

Crossing Over

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Crossing Over

Table of Contents

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Introduction

Arak crouched suspiciously, gazing at the magical doorway before him. The barbarian did not like this, not one bit. He ran his hands nervously along the handle of his huge axe, waiting for something from the shadow world to lunge out of that gate.

Beside Arak, Carthis the priest studied the gateway intently, trying to make some sense of the swirling blue color that obscured the opposite side of the portal. The priest had drawn out his holy symbol and was ready for attack.

Touran stood next to the magical portal, examining the opening carefully. Beside the mage, Natris the rogue crouched, peering at the floor leading up to the opening. She at least seemed pleased not to be finding any trip wires or pressure plates that would betray the presence of some sort of trap.

Touran finally nodded to himself and stepped into the swirl of blue, disappearing from sight. Arak grimaced and gripped his axe so hard that his knuckles turned white. The wizard's disembodied arm reappeared, waving for the rest of them to cross through. Natris stood erect, took a deep breath, and crossed the opening to the other side. Carthis nodded, held his holy symbol boldly before him, and, muttering a prayer to his deity, took three steps and was gone.

Arak crouched there a moment longer, waiting to see what would happen. He wished to be anywhere else right now. Some foul creatures of the nether planes will take us all, *he thought to himself.* This is a place man was not meant to go. We are foolish to toy with such dark magics.

Touran's head appeared in the blue swirls. "Come on, you big lug. There's nothing to fear. We all did it, you can, too. Now move."

Arak shook his head, but stood anyway, and stepped tentatively toward the portal. He held a hand up, cautiously reaching out to touch the blue light. When he made contact, he felt nothing. Slowly, he pushed his hand further through. It easily slipped from his sight. He jerked it back and examined it. Nothing missing, nothing wrong. He growled and started to slide the hand in again.

Natris and Carthis both half emerged from the blue curtain of light. Arak jumped slightly and stepped back, axe raised. "Come on, Arak. We don't have all day," Natris said. The barbarian stepped up to the blue doorway once again, but before he could move further, the rogue and the priest had each grabbed an arm and yanked him through.

The barbarian howled in rage but could not resist the sudden force, and he stumbled across the blue light into whatever lay beyond.

Introduction

This is the third book of the *Tale of the Comet* boxed campaign setting. If you have not yet read through the first two books, *The Cast and Props* and *The Tale Begins*, you should do so now, before going any further in this book. *The Cast and Props* provides an overview of the *Tale of the Comet* setting and details out the history, the species, and the equipment involved. *The Tale Begins* details the area on the PCs' home world where a Rael ship has crashed to the surface and unleashed the horrifying Overseer, a heartless artificial intelligence with but one goal—the total eradication of every sentient organic lifeform in the universe.

This final portion of the mini-campaign setting covers what lies on the other side of a dimensional gate that the characters cross through at the end of Book 2. This arcology outpost is the key to the light-year spanning gate technology of the Rael. Before the heroes arrive here, the Overseer has taken over the arcology and is attempting to break through even more gates to reach further afield. The PCs may be the Rael's last hope, for they are the monkey-wrench in the works; their capacity to wield magic is an unknown quantity in the world of the Rael and the Overseer.

This section of the boxed set is more open-ended than the previous part; it provides a lot of detail about one particular area to get the DM started, but it leaves everything else wide open so that the campaign can go in just about any direction the players and the DM want to take it. At the end of this book, there is a section on wrapping the whole thing up and getting the campaign back to normal. This is a very important part of the overall setting, for it addresses some ways the DM can ensure that things don't get out of hand back in the PCs' world—making sure that all the cool technological gizmos they have acquired don't unbalance the game and make the characters walking arsenals. Whether you wish to have the characters ultimately defeat the Overseer or else have them accomplish something much smaller

in scale, getting things wrapped up and returning them to their own world is an integral part of the setting. Unless, of course, the DM has decided to make *Tale of the Comet* a permanent campaign, in which case there is no reason to wrap things up at all. The PCs can just continue to champion the cause of all living things against the might of the Overseer for as long as it continues to be fun for all involved.

One thing that you as the DM want to be careful of is allowing this portion of the campaign to be reduced to nothing more than a series of military exercises where the characters encounter a group of Overseer constructs and then proceed to combat them. While this is entertaining for a while, it eventually gets old. The players cannot fully employ their talents of role-playing and puzzle-solving in such circumstances. Much like a normal campaign can devolve into a hack-'n-slash Monty Haul setting, reducing the *Tale of the Comet* scenarios to nothing more than shoot-'em-ups time after time is going to become dissatisfying, just as any pattern loses interest once it becomes predictable.

This is not to say that the adventures should not incorporate lots of rapid-fire action; the *Tale of the Comet* setting, particularly the portion in Rael space, is a fast-paced wild ride, with plenty of firefights and wahoo moments. That's no doubt the very reason you and the players got interested in this setting in the first place; the chance for player characters in a medieval setting to get their hands on high-tech weaponry should be fun. And the players are going to want plenty of opportunities for their characters to take advantage of the goodies they have. You just don't want to let it degenerate into nothing *more* than that.

"Waking Up with the House on Fire"

As the characters enter the world of high technology in full force, things are grim. The Kel-Rael arcology has been almost completely taken over by the Overseer. Although there are a few pockets of Rael resistance here and there within the facility, the fighting has taken its toll on them, and the Overseer has almost wiped them out.

How did all of this come about? The Rael's greatest achievement, their dimensional teleportal gate system, became their downfall. As described in Book 1, *The Cast and Props*, the Overseer managed to infiltrate and take control of a single Rael ship before its crew could react. Once the nefarious AI had taken control of their ship, it proceeded to claim the gate on board. They had no way to warn the arcology of the danger they were in, and no way to get back home themselves. Many of them perished in the attempt, and the rest suffered the fate Rael consider worse than death—transformation into the Doomed.

Quickly assembling its troops, the Overseer sent a platoon of annihilators, firestorms, and deathstrikes through the gate, followed by swarms of spider drones, with orders to attack everything in sight on the other side. Following on the heels of these mechanical units were the zombie-like Doomed. The attack was so sudden and so vicious that the Rael lost control of the inner chambers and were forced to retreat. This was the one disaster the Rael dreaded more than anything. Allowing the Overseer's forces to gain control of the gates of a central processing facility could spell a death knell to the entire Rael race, by enabling the constructs to reach virtually any location within Rael space in a matter of minutes.

The Rael had planned for this contingency and had rigged devices to shut down the other gates linked to additional ships and other arcologies. Their plan was only partially successful; the Overseer had expected this and provided its strike force with a field-dampening device that "muffled" the explosions, causing only partial damage to most of the gates, which could then be repaired. The Rael defense plan only served to delay the AI, not stop it completely. Some Rael managed to dive through gates before they were shut down, both as a means of escape and also to warn those on the other side of exactly what was taking place. But the Overseer's troops blocked them from reaching other gates, and more often than not those Rael on the other side remain ignorant of the disaster at the arcology. When the Overseer managed to get a few gates operational again, there was nothing to stop its forces from flooding through and attacking those on the other side. This is exactly what happened to the *Fworta*.

Now the characters are here, having crossed over from their own world. They may be able to make a difference, but the way is deadly. Any Rael they are traveling with will want to seek out any refugees who are still alive and trapped in the arcology. However, first the heroes must make an important decision: to shut down the gate they just passed through or leave it open (if the player characters don't think of this themselves, Jazra, Zolaris, or Gregis will bring up the question). Shutting down the gate protects the heroes' home world from reinvasion by the Overseer; heroes mindful of how much trouble they had to get rid of the constructs the first time around may go for this option. On the other hand, characters may be reluctant to cut themselves off from a rapid means of retreat, should the Overseer's forces prove too much to overcome. Let the heroes and their allies debate the matter until the players reach a consensus on the action they want their characters to take—remembering all the time that the PCs have only a brief time in which to act before constructs converge on the gate room in overwhelming force.

Kel-Rael Arcology

Hezrim checked the ammo clip in his blaster rifle and cursed. Only three rounds left, *he thought, and felt on his belt for another clip. There was only one left.* I must not waste a single shot, *the Rael told himself.* The others are counting on me. *He glanced at his two companions crouching with him behind the barricade of torn metal and shattered plastic. The other two Rael soldiers, Jistram and Fulka, only had blaster pistols; they would hold their shots until the constructs were almost on top of them.*

Up the hallway, a spider drone strode into view from around a corner, and was immediately followed by two more. The metallic click of the constructs' feet upon the metal decking of the arcology was unnerving, but Hezrim did not flinch. Instead, he slowly brought the blaster rifle to his shoulder and took aim.

The spider drone froze, perhaps sensing the ambush. Its mechanical antennae bobbed and weaved about, as though it was trying to locate the Rael. Hezrim fired.

The first shot hit true, and sparks flew everywhere as the spider drone was knocked backward from the impact, right into one of the other constructs. Smoke obscured his vision now, so Hezrim waited until another of the spider drones scrambled past its damaged counterpart and charged the ambush. Hezrim squeezed the trigger, but the rifle did not fire. Instead, the Rael heard an odd click, and there was a sizzling pop that emanated from the connection between the ammo clip and the rifle.

"Misfire!" Hezrim cried to his companions as the spider drones closed in fast. The other two Rael stared at him wide-eyed for a moment, not comprehending. Then, though, like the trained veterans they were, Jistram and Fulka rose up and leveled their blaster pistols at the onrushing spider drones.

Bursts of energy erupted from the soldiers' weapons as they tried to slow the approaching constructs. Between the two of them, they downed the lead spider drone and began to concentrate on the second, but the mechanical creatures were closing in on the ambush position.

Hezrim worked frantically to work the damaged clip free from the rifle and reload the spare clip on his belt, but it was stuck. Desperately, he yanked at it, but it would not budge. Blaster bolts exploded over his head as the spider drones began returning fire on the Rael position. One of the bolts of energy struck the barricade, and a spray of metal fragments and sparks showered Jistram. Screaming, he fell back behind the protective barrier, clutching at his face, as the blaster pistol slid to Hezrim's feet.

The Rael soldier spared no glance at his wounded companion. He picked up the pistol and peered over the edge of the barricade. A spider drone was almost on top of him. Lunging backward to avoid a blaster rifle bolt from the construct, Hezrim fired the pistol three times in rapid succession, and the construct exploded with a crackle. Fulka finished off the last one a second later. There was no time to celebrate, though, for five more of the hated spider drones skittered around the corner. . . .

The Kel-Rael Arcology

On the planet Kel-Rael, the Rael have established a small domed arcology, one of many throughout their portion of the galaxy. The air outside is only barely breathable, and the air pressure lower than the Rael require. However, the Rael's technology allows them to live inside the arcology with minimal discomfort. They've even established a handful of manufacturing and research plants outside the domed portion of the arcology.

This particular arcology, servicing the Rael space navy, has seen far better days. Though only a minor branch, its teleportals led to some of the more important cruisers and explorers of the Rael space fleet.

The Rael military used to be a loosely knit and fairly informal organization, existing mostly to protect the Rael traders and subdue hostilities on worlds where the Rael traded. The Rael felt safe in allowing families and relatives access to military installations. Thus, the first floor of the arcology is given over to military matters; the storage, refueling, and barracks of the Rael fleet are found here. A map of the lower level of the arcology may be found on the second mapsheet.

The upper floor held the residences of the civilians who lived and worked at the arcology and their families. This upper level has not been mapped because it is now totally devastated. So many Rael dug in here during the invasion that the Overseer ordered to dome wall punctured as the easiest and most economical way of defeating them. With all the breathable atmosphere evacuated, the Rael inside suffocated within minutes. The Overseer then ordered all this level's buildings demolished to furnish raw materials for its replicators; all that remains are endless piles of rubble littered with scores upon scores of Rael bodies. The only reason the constructs have not repeated this tactic on the lower level is the damage that exposure to vacuum might cause to the delicate gate mechanism, which was not built to withstand such treatment.

Outside the Dome

A launching pad sits to the south of the dome, ready to hurl the Rael into space and across the cosmos. Near the pad is a huge experimental teleportal, large enough for an entire space ship to pass through. The launching pad currently lies dysfunctional, but someone with the right knowledge might be able to fix it. Rumor has it that the spacial scientists were planning on making this the first gate that could have multiple destinations—now, no one will ever know.

From the outside, the arcology of Kel-Rael appears to be a smooth, plasticine half-bubble that rises about 300 feet from the ground. It gleams mellowly in the dark air, entirely out of place on this planet. Three roads lead out from it to compounds whose skylines rise in blocky

contrast against the backdrop of stark mountains. One of these is the aforementioned launching pad; the other two hold Kel-Rael's manufacturing complex and a scientific experimentation station where Rael scientists could work in relative isolation. The roads are now pitted and pocked with craters and rifts, mute evidence that the Overseer's drones met with Rael resistance.

Drawing closer to the dome, one can see that it is not entirely unmarred itself. Small dents mark the surface, and in places it seems as if the shell has almost worn through, having become very nearly transparent. A careful observer will note carbon searing on the inside that almost certainly means the dome was weakened by blaster fire from within. In one spot, near the top of the dome, a hole some 6 yards across that looks suspiciously like a missile impact has been blasted right through the dome wall.

The environs beyond the dome aren't really suited for human or demihuman habitation. The atmosphere is thin, the air dark and gray, and the landscape barren and cold. Though Kel-Rael is not a site the Rael would have chosen for a colony, it's perfect for their military operations, being situated as it is on a world almost without population, resources, or colonization value.

Any PC who ventures out into this wasteland must either find a survival suit (there are a few hidden inside the dome; the rest have been destroyed, damaged beyond repair, or taken through the teleportals) or make a saving throw vs. spell. Those who succeed can remain in this hostile environment for a number of rounds equal to half their Constitution; those who fail can remain out only for a number of rounds equal to one-fourth their Constitution scores. Anyone who stays outside too long takes 1d4 points of damage per round until he or she reaches breathable atmosphere again.

If someone actually makes it down the road and to the Experimental Technology or Manufacturing domes (some three miles distant), he or she is in for a disappointment. These buildings were self-destructed by the Rael

working there, who wanted to keep their production lines and their new inventions from the hands of the Overseer. All that remains of these buildings are charred, blackened ruins. The Doomed and the drones have already sifted through the ashes for anything of value, and come away with nothing.

Inside the Arcology

The Rael military dome is fortified thoroughly against attack from the outside. Sadly, the Rael's defenses were not as effective on the inside. Though they anticipated an attack, they never thought that the Overseer would strike from within, nor that its forces could overcome them so easily. They took some preventative measures, but not nearly enough.

Now the arcology is overrun with the minions of the Overseer, its teleportals used to crush and destroy the Rael and other biological enemies of the Overseer. When the PCs arrive, the Overseer's forces are hunting down the remaining pockets of resistance within the dome. Of course, this being a Rael military base, there are more pockets here than might be found in an ordinary colony. They live in roving guerrilla bands, never staying in the same place within the arcology more than a few hours at a time (those who fail to observe this simple rule of survival quickly fall into the Overseer's grip).

The arcology is pleasantly warm on the inside. The air is slightly humid, but not unpleasantly so. However, since the Overseer reasons that there is no more need for fresh air inside the dome (constructs don't need to breathe, after all), the air has become slightly stale. The air purifiers continue to function, but those damaged in the fighting have not been replaced. Without maintenance, those that still work are slowly failing, one by one.

The Overseer's forces are currently rebuilding the destroyed sections of the arcology into more efficient, sterile forms. They haven't rebuilt every-

Current Conditions

The arcology is currently under the control of a Primary Director, which is a little out of the ordinary for a location this small, but a sign of the importance the Overseer places on this operation. Now that the arcology serves as a nexus for further strikes into the heart of Rael territory, having a Primary Director in charge is fully warranted.

The total current number of constructs in the arcology at the time the PCs arrive is as follows:

6	prowlers
12	destroyers
10	firestorms
5	annihilators
3	deathstrikes
180	spider drones
3	assimilators
75	replicators
35	seekers

The replicators are currently devoted to repairs of the other constructs and to rebuilding the facilities, so there are no new constructs being manufactured. However, if the Rael and the characters begin to make a significant dent in the Overseer construct population, work on the arcology will cease and repair and production of new constructs will be stepped up.

As for the Rael, there are a total of about 80 survivors lurking here and there. They move about in small bands, scavenging food and other supplies, trying to avoid being caught by the Overseer in the process. Their situation is desperate in the extreme: they cannot escape the dome, since the outside environment is hostile, and they cannot use the gates, since the Overseer has them so closely monitored. Time is running out for the Rael, because supplies, fresh air, and ammunition are all dwindling. In such dire circumstances, the arrival of any unlooked-for reinforcements (the PCs) will have a major impact on Rael morale.

thing yet, and the Rael take advantage of both the remaining ruins and the newly rebuilt areas. The mechanized killers are constantly destroying suspected Rael nests and rebuilding them.

In the areas where the lights still work, the arcology gleams in sterile whiteness. In places where they don't, a traveler must rely on the thin gray light from outside during the day or his or her own light source during the night. The high ceiling allowed for more natural air circulation, but humans and elves may find the experience of being in such a vast building, large enough to hold all those other structures, disconcerting (dwarves, gnomes, and halflings should be able to take it more or less in stride). The DM is encouraged to emphasize the strangeness of the environment when describing areas to the players: keep them disoriented by the wonder of it all as much as possible.

The Kel-Rael Arcology

As the PCs explore the arcology, they are likely to run into either roving bands of Rael guerrillas or Overseer constructs (or both). The following encounter table provides probabilities for chance meetings with other entities in the arcology. Check this table once per turn, as long as the characters are actually moving. If they hole up somewhere, check once per hour. Note that a fair number of these encounters will simply pass by PCs who are under cover.

d100	Encounter
01–02	A lone seeker performing a routine reconnaissance mission in this area.
03–05	Small Overseer strike team consisting of 2d4 spider drones on patrol in this area.
06–07	Large Overseer strike team consisting of 3d4 spider drones, 1 firestorm, and either 1 prowler or 1d6 Doomed (50% chance of either) responding to a Rael threat.
08–09	Either 1 destroyer (65% chance) or 1 annihilator (35% chance) on patrol.
10	A lone nonhumanoid Doomed prowling the corridors. This can either be an existing unusual monster (such as a grell or a minotaur, for example) or a totally new creation.
11–12	Rael family scavenging for food. All are zero-level NPCs and extremely hungry. There is a 30% chance the group includes children. None of them are armed. Roll 1d6–1 for numbers.
13–15	Rael guerrilla team scouting the area. They are all regular soldiers (3rd-level warriors) and reasonably well armed. Roll 2d4–1 for numbers.
16–25	A patrol of 1d10 Doomed; 10% chance they are escorting a single Rael prisoner.
26–00	No encounter.

The Arcology Floorplans

The next sections provide details on the actual floorplans of the arcology. Only the first floor, the military floor, is detailed out; the destroyed upper floor has the same general outline but now consists of one vast, airless room dotted by piles of rubble, the only movement the occasional scavenging replicator.

The Teleportals and Entries

This is the nerve center of the Kel-Rael arcology, the entire reason the dome is on this miserable planet in the first place. This whole area has been restored to its former glory, and harsh white lights beat down from the ceiling. The floor is pristine, swept every day to keep the grime from infecting any of the Overseer's tools.

This section of the arcology encompasses all the entrances and exits to the dome, including the teleportal gates and the three exit roads.

1. The Teleportals
Twelve teleportals sit here, their gates opening up to fabulous new vistas for adventurers. At least, the gates would open if the Rael hadn't anticipated the possibility of an Overseer attack and booby-trapped their portals. Eight of them are now inoperable, though they can be repaired given the correct knowledge, time, and diligence.

On the other hand, four other teleportals *do* work. The traps on them detonated incorrectly, or damaged the teleportal so slightly that it could be repaired with a minimum of fuss.

The PCs enter the arcology through teleportal "d." They'll find that the floor around this teleportal is fused black, and crusty, the result of the slightly ripped dimensional warp when the coil was destroyed on board the *Fworta*.

Teleportal "f" is the one through which the Overseer's forces came. It leads back to the original ship the Overseer captured, the *Arcacia*. Teleportal "j" leads to an arcology on a pastoral planet, Shah-Rael, used by the Rael for R&R of

9

off-duty spaceship officers. Now, of course, that arcology has been overrun as well. The Rael on that planet were unprepared, but they've done a fine job of fighting back, unequipped as they are, fading into the landscape and striking at constructs from ambush.

Finally, teleportal "1" leads to the Rael ship *Marna*, a ship en route to meet with allies of the Rael. The Overseer has taken over this ship completely and replaced the Rael on board with a contingent of Doomed.

The four doors that lead from here are locked; a thief can open them with a successful Open Locks roll at a penalty of –35% (unless the thief in question has studied Rael technology, in which case no penalty applies). A single Doomed stands guard on either side of each door. These are not to stop arrivals—the Overseer was not expecting anyone to come back from the *Fworta* or any other teleportal site—but to prevent Rael trapped in the arcology from escaping.
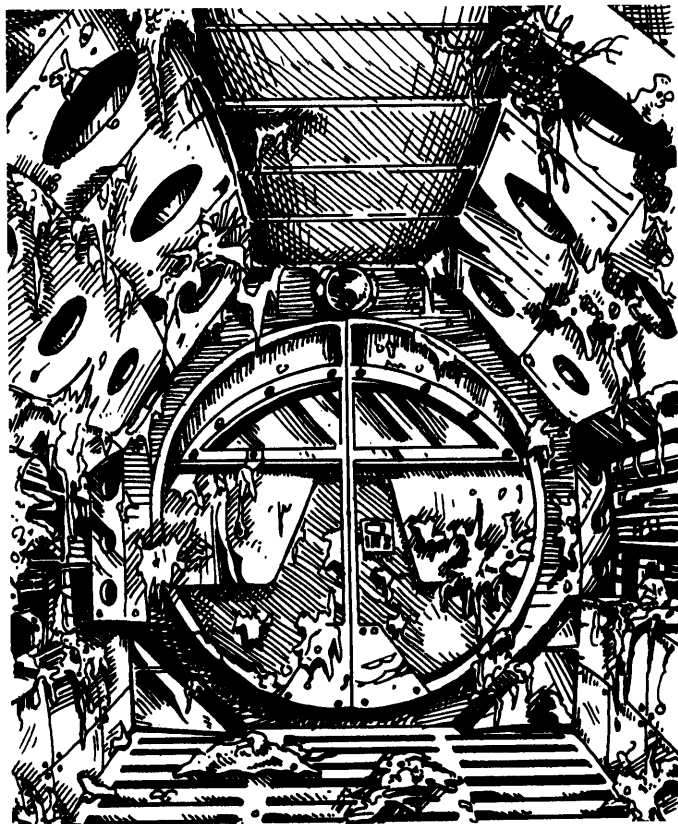
Doomed (8): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7′); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

The Doomed are, of course, in constant contact with their construct superiors at all times. However, their transmitters have developed a tendency to go on the blink when a teleportal is activated, so the PCs who travel through this area will have two rounds before the Doomed can make contact with reinforcements. Even so, once the Doomed are defeated the characters would be wise not to linger.

2. Work Area
This is simply the area in which the forklifts and transports of the Rael move before transporting their burdens to the Rael ships on the other side of the dimensional gate. The doors lining this area lead to the supply warehouses and the three important areas of the arcology.

3. Vacuum Tubes
The secondary line of defense for the arcology, these tubes were meant to trap invaders between the two blast doors at either end. Once all of them were inside, the Rael watchers could depressurize the area and eliminate their foes that way. It was an excellent plan, but one the Overseer was quick to turn against them. There are still bloodstains inside the tubes where the Rael discovered first-hand how well the tubes worked. The Primary Director has not had cause to clean these yet.

Video cameras once monitored the progress of the entire entryway, but these are no longer operational.

4. Containment Area
Designed simply to hold an enemy until reinforcements could be mustered, the containment area has lately served another purpose. The bodies of starved Rael lie scattered about in these tubes; the Overseer apparently wanted to study the effect of starvation on any

Rael who made it this far. At the DM's option, player characters might be able to find one feeble survivor who can tell them what happened here.

The doors at either end of this area can take 200 points of blast damage before falling.

5. Inspection

Here the Rael erected thick, mirrored windows with shooters' holes. This area was intended to be a checkpoint for those who would travel in and out of the arcology. Surrounded by blast doors like those in area 4, it was a natural place to contain and destroy an enemy before it could menace the rest of the dome.

A Rael strike force stationed at the old Manufacturing plant tried to make their way into the dome to save their companions and were successful in blowing the outer doors on the Inspection point closest to that plant (i.e., to the northeast). However, they had no sooner entered than they were mowed down by the spider

drones stationed at the checkpoints in 5a. The bodies are still here, having been striped of all usable gear.

The reinforced doors to this area can take 200 points of damage before giving way. However, the northeast doors damaged by the Rael strike force have been jury-rigged until they can be more completely repaired. They now withstand only 50 points of damage before allowing access at that one point.

5a. Checkpoints

These guardposts are separated from area 5 by one-way mirrored windows with slots (gunholes) through which the guards constantly stationed within could strafe intruders. Now five spider drones are stationed in each of these checkpoints. The windows separating the rooms can take 70 points of damage each before splintering and shattering. The drones will not use grenades in this enclosed space.

Spider Drone (5): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

6. Entryway and Airlock

The entrance to the domes (or the exit, if you prefer) serves not so much as a line of defense as an airlock for those seeking to travel to and from the outlying buildings. Various warning lights and sensors alert those inside that the airlock is about to open. It might be possible to disable these alarms, but doing so prevents the doors from opening (failsafes built into the system guarantee that these doors will never open without a warning klaxon).

6a. Garage and Repair

The destroyed transports of the arcology sit here. The Overseer's forces, mobile on their own accord, do not need the ground-based transports of the Rael, and the Primary Director decided that the transports would best serve as scrap metal. The engines and vital components have been removed from each of these, the treads and wheels hacked away and taken to a recycler. Only the hulking frames remain, and they're due to be carted away within the next few days.

The room is not entirely devoid of use, however. Tools still remain, hanging from their pegs on the walls and in the toolcases in the storage cabinets. Anyone with an interest in Rael technology could do worse than to take one of these toolkits. If characters wait too long, however, the opportunity will be lost; the kits are scheduled to be converted to scrap at the same time as the hulks of the transports.

7. Fuel Storage

These specially reinforced rooms hold the fuel the Rael ships need to carry them through the starry blackness of interstellar space. There are several very large tanks in each room, along with hundreds of the specially prepared barrels that the Rael use to transport the fuel to the ships.

One barrel of this highly concentrated, highly explosive fuel is enough to carry a ship a good many miles, or to level an acre of woodland. This is why the Rael built this bunker for the material; it is simply too great a risk any other way. The walls in these bunkers can withstand 1,000 points of damage.

If the PCs should choose to use a barrel of this fuel as a weapon or an explosive, simply treat it as a high-explosive grenade, with an initial explosion equal to a 15d6 *fireball*. There are over 5,000 barrels worth of this fuel in these two rooms.

8. Comestibles Supply

The Rael sailors and space marines have to eat sometime. Their dry supplies are locked away in these two rooms, and include a complete nutritional diet for an adult Rael. The food and beverage are hermetically sealed in individual containers, designed for easy transport and lightweight capabilities. These packages are more for cross-planetary expeditions than interstellar flight; after all, the crewmembers can simply eat in the mess hall during space flight.

9. Central Teleportal Command

Teleportals need constant supervision; otherwise, who knows what might come crawling through one? This room was designed to monitor teleportal travel in the various ships of the space navy attached to the Kel-Rael arcology and to coordinate the loading and unloading of the supplies and goods to the ships in transit. Since most of the teleportals are down, the screens in here are mostly blank.

This room is unoccupied. The information from the databanks in here is fed directly to the Primary Director in its lair in area 52; thick cables snake out the door and into the Administrative sector of the arcology.

10. Forklift and Transport Repair and Storage

The transports and forklifts used to ferry supplies to the Rael ships are stored here, along with the

all-terrain vehicles the Rael explorers might need on the worlds they visit. If one of them broke down, the explorers could simply bring it back here and have the technicians fix it.

All that has changed. The Overseer has not yet consigned these vehicles to the scrap heap, but only two of them are totally intact, and those are without fuel. The controls are simple: a handgrip for steering and a throttle at the left hand. A Rael can drive one of these without penalty; anyone else attempting it must make both a Dexterity *and* Intelligence roll each turn he or she is driving. Failure indicates loss of control of the vehicle.

11. Miscellaneous Supply
Anything that's not food or fuel is stored in this room. Arms, suits, scanners, medikits—any random equipment the Rael explorers might need can be found here. No additional spider drones are posted here, as the Doomed outside the teleportals are supposed to watch over this entire room.

Many of the supplies here are missing, taken by the Rael guerrillas or the Overseer's constructs. The following is a list of what's left. The DM is encouraged to add supplies as necessary:

200	clips of blaster ammunition
20	blaster pistols
15	blaster rifles
10	flame throwers
50	smoke grenades
20	high explosive grenades
6	stunguns
5	suits of Rael armor
10	gas masks
2	IR binoculars
10	medikits
20	survival tents

Science and Engineering

This area is where the research of the arcology was conducted, and where the machinery that keeps it running is stored. Obviously, the Primary Director and the Overseer want to keep this area as well maintained as possible; if any power failures occur in here, it could set back the work that has already been done in the arcology so far.

The lights in this section have not been restored, as the power is being diverted into other portions of the arcology. Since all constructs are equipped with infra-red vision, no light is needed. Any PC who wants to travel through here should have a light source or the ability to see in the dark without one.

Those who do carry a light in this area should expect the sentries of the area to come looking for them. Within a turn of continuous light in the area, 2d8 spider drones will descend on the source and fire on it from beyond the perimeter of the light until the party has either surrendered or fallen over. Their IR sensors reflect the glow of the light malevolently; a perceptive person will be able to spy the gleam just before the drones open fire on the party (allow a 1-in-6 chance, 2-in-6 for elves).

The drones are under orders to shoot to subdue; any living beings they capture are taken to the assimilator in area 25 for conversion into Doomed.

> **Spider Drone (2d8):** AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

12. Watch Posts
The watch posts scattered throughout the first floor of the arcology stand guard at all the major points of egress from the teleportals into the arcology itself. Two spider drones sit in each booth, and they'll attack anything that doesn't have broadcast clearance from the Primary Director.

> **Spider Drone (4):** AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

13. Sewage Treatment Plant

This plant is where Rael wastes came to be treated and recycled into compost for the hydroponic garden in area 16. The front area, the office, contains information on how to maintain the sewage plant, blueprints of the waste tubes throughout the dome, and the mixes of chemicals to treat the effluent.

Someone with a knowledge of blueprints can follow the tubes' progress throughout the dome. If the PCs don't mind getting dirty, some of the tubes are large enough that the PCs can use them to travel throughout the arcology.

13a. Waste Area

The turbines and the mixers have stopped running, and the stench in the vast tub is incredible.

13b. Treatment Engines

The defunct engines of the sewage treatment plant are back here. They are badly damaged, requiring several weeks' uninterrupted work with proper tools and parts to fix.

14. Elevators to Upper Level

These elevators connect the two levels of the arcology. A pair of spider drones and a single seeker stand watch outside each elevator. Operating an elevator is simple, even for the technologically illiterate (a simple matter of pressing the "up" or "down" arrow). The lights of the elevators (both in the cars themselves and in the service areas of the shafts) are out, which may alarm the claustrophobic. That, however, is the least of any passenger's worries, since as already noted (see page 6) the upper level of the arcology is now depressurized. Upon the elevator's arrival at the upper level, the air inside will rush out in a great gush as soon as the doors open (each PC must make a Strength check to avoid being sucked out). Such unfortunates as fail this check will fall to the ground 1d100 yards away; getting everybody back on board the elevator and flooding it with breathable air again by returning

to the ground level should be an experience the PCs are not eager to repeat.

Spider Drone (2): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Seeker: AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

## 15. Ready Room/Barracks for Inspection Area

This room simply served as a rest and relaxation area for the Rael who were scheduled to work in the Inspection area in area 5a. There are cots and footlockers in here, but nothing of value remains.

16. Hydroponics and Garden

The plants that were grown in here have withered, rotted, and died with the loss of light and nutrients from area 13. There's a thin layer of water over the floor, and water drips from the broken water lines overhead. Orderly rows of plants now lie brown and lifeless for the entire stretch of the garden. A group of Rael guerrillas is currently living here—at least for the next three hours. They've been making their way through the dome via the waste tubes.

The leader of this group is named Kallae. Once the captain of one of the starships (the *Marna*), now she is leading the remnants of her crew through the ruined arcology. These Rael have seen all their friends and fellows die and are convinced that they are doomed and the war lost. They are determined to survive as long as possible in order to do as much damage as possible to the Overseer before they die. Play them as embittered and battle-hardened commandos whose zest for destruction scares even the PCs.

Rael soldier, F3 (5): AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7'); ML fanatic (17); Int high; AL LG; XP 270 each.
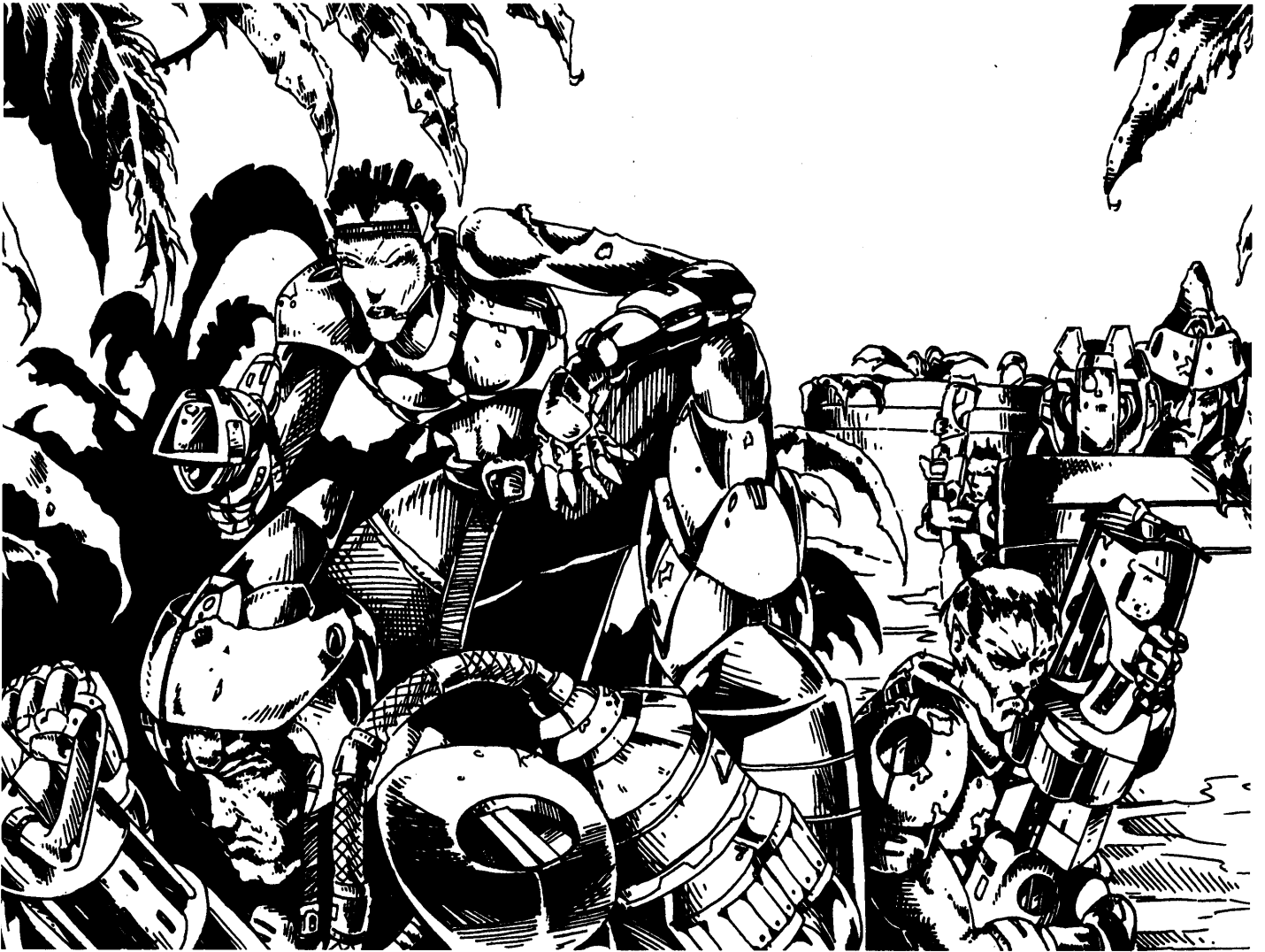
Special Equipment: each soldier is armed with a blaster rifle and carries three high explosive grenades; one also has a flame thrower.

Kallae, Rael starship captain, F8: AC 2 (Rael armor, Dex); MV 12; hp 53; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster pistol); SZ M (7'2"); ML fearless (19); AL LG; XP 3,000. Str 13, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 16, Chr 13.
   Special Equipment: blaster pistol, infrared binoculars, medikit.
   Personality: aggressive, confident, vengeful.

16a. Hydroponic Office
The hydroponic office holds the information on the plants' growing cycles and treatments. The controls for the lights and the sprinklers are in here, and a large monitor dominates the back wall. All, of course, are defunct.

17. Gun Emplacements
The three gun emplacements at the north, east, and west extremes of the arcology are designed to destroy enemies at a long range. They use combined weapons for maximum effectiveness. Each turreted bank of guns contains a four-bay missile launcher, one flame thrower, two heavy blaster cannons, and two magnum cannons. They have the capability to take down almost any enemy vehicle in one round of shots and were thus one of the most important defenses of the arcology. Sadly, the Rael's enemy came at them from the wrong direction, and the guns proved useless. Now the Overseer's army in turn uses these guns to guard against any outside threats. Each turret needs to be manned by only a single operator, so most of the drones can be spared for more important tasks.

15

Spider Drone (3): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

17a. Checkpoint

These checkpoints allow a crew to monitor anyone approaching the gun emplacements from within the arcology. The Rael were always concerned about someone trying to seize control of the guns, and so they installed checkpoints to make sure that anyone who tried it would have to get past guards. The Primary Director of Kel-Rael doesn't see the need for these guards; the spider drones manning the guns should be able to fend for themselves. The bodies of the Rael guards still lie inside, slowly rotting. Each of the four guards carries a blaster pistol and a blaster rifle; each weapon has only 1d10 charges left.

18. Flora and Fauna Offices

The offices in this building were set aside for the scientists of the arcology, those who studied the local creatures and plant life of the planet in an effort to better understand the world on which they had established themselves. There are copious notes, research journals, and textbooks in these offices, should the PCs evince any interest in coming back here later. However, none of it is of immediate use for the adventure (unless, of course, the DM decides otherwise).

19. Seminar/Auditorium

The great hall holds nearly 800 seats, enough for a good-sized lecture or the presentation of important facts to the Rael scientists and engineers. This is a favorite haunt of the Rael guerrilla bands, for the Overseer's drones seem to rarely venture into this building.

20 & 21. Kel-Rael Flora Study and the Kel-Rael Fauna Specimen Zoo

The scientists of area 18 had two large buildings devoted to their research. Sadly, with the coming of the Overseer's forces, the plants were left to die; after all, the Overseer does not need this knowledge. Instead, the information was copied and passed to the Overseer, who assimilated it.

The animals in the zoo, small monkeylike creatures, were either turned into miniature Doomed or slain outright; the Overseer has no use for extraneous organic life. At the DM's option, the player characters might find one surviving lemurlike creature lurking in the rafters. It's up to the DM whether this "lur" (as the Rael call it) flees, attacks, or approaches to beg for food and water. It might be possible to tame the creature as a pet or even an unusual familiar; its intelligence is roughly that of a terrestrial monkey and it is able to survive long periods of poor air (an adaptation that enabled its species to survive on this sparse planet).

22. Technicians' Offices

These were the offices of the lab and zoo technicians. Both the interior corridors are lined with small cubicles strewn with papers and smashed personal computers. The bodies of Rael technicians who worked here lie scattered amongst their research.

There is much of interest among these papers for the patient investigator. Notes on the power core are here, as well as papers detailing the three bodies of the Doomed the techs were investigating; an operating table on the south end of the room shows the results of their progress. The techs were also on their way to discovering a cure for the harm done by the infectious gas the Overseer's constructs currently employ, but were interrupted by the invasion.

23 & 24. Laboratory

These two places saw fighting that grew so heated that the weapons fire shattered the nearly-impervious dome. The pressure breach slammed shut the bulkheads and sucked out the warriors, the Doomed they were fighting, and the laboratory equipment. If the PCs should open the laboratories' doors, they run the risk of being sucked out into the Kel-Rael night as well.

25. Biological Research

An assimilator has taken over the functions of the Biological Research building, rearranging the entire area to build new Doomed for the armies of the Overseer. The rest of the building is taken up with the still bodies of those who couldn't make the transition into the new way of life, as well as quite a few prisoners that the constructs are planning to turn into even more Doomed. The assimilator is protected by a contingent of fresh Doomed, spider drones, and a deathstrike.

For more on this location, see the adventure "Stolen Minds" beginning on page 30.

Assimilator: AC 1; MV 6; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ L; Int 14; AL N; XP 1,400/ 700.

Doomed (12): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

Spider Drone (10): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Deathstrike: AC –2; MV 18; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT up to 8; Dmg by weapon (heavy blaster cannon, magnum cannon, missiles, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 13,000/6,500.

26. Ready Room/Supplies for Inspection

This room is nearly identical to area 15, but its supplies are better stocked. The Rael have not yet braved this area, as it is so close to a known assimilator and its honor guard. Thus, the ten blaster rifles, 20 clips, and three weeks' worth of rations have gone untouched so far.

27. Power Core

The hum emanating from behind the door to this building should inform the party that they've found the power core for the entire dome. Inside, the fusion generators pulse and throb in a monotonous cycle. Occasionally, the crackle of electricity flickers through the air, an arc of blue brilliance lighting the dim room.

The generators can be destroyed, though the Rael will not thank the party for this. This will close down the teleportals until a starship can land here and once again establish physical contact with the arcology. On the other hand, it will also prevent the Overseer from being able to exploit any more gates. The generators can each take 50 points of damage before they blow; there are 12 of them here.

The spider drones in the office in area 28 regularly patrol through the area. Once every 3 turns, the spiders come and sweep through for any insurgents.

28. Head Engineer's Office

This is the office that controls the power core of the entire arcology. Monitors dominate all the wall space, and controls and buttons litter the desks and walls as well.

Someone familiar with Rael technology (such as one of the guerrillas or Jazra, if she accompanied the PCs through the gate) can, on a successful Intelligence check, figure out enough to know which switches are those that shut down select portions of the dome. Otherwise, if the PCs feel inclined to play with the controls, the DM should randomly determine what areas the PCs shut down.

The office is the only building in this area which the Primary Director has allowed to remain lit. The IR-sensitive eyes of the spider drones cannot distinguish the fluctuations of power on the monitors, and so they must be equipped with regular visual apparatus.

Spider Drone (5): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

29. Air Purifier

The air purifier for this section has shut down for the duration. That would make this an ideal hide-out, were it not for the proximity to the constructs in the Biological Research building (area 25). Some of the more daring Rael have argued that the danger makes it all the more unlikely the Overseer would look for them there, but the difficulty of reaching it safely in the first place has so far prevented its use as a refuge.

30. Sub-Engineers' Offices

Essentially, this is now one huge repair shop. Broken drones and other servants of the Overseer are brought here for replicators to look them over and either restore them to functionality or send them to the junk heap. This is an assembly line, requiring no logical thought and no independent action. There are no supervisors here, and it wouldn't be too difficult for someone to come in and sabotage the whole operation. Again, though, it's a question of bravado and courage (making this an ideal target for Captain Kallae's group—see area 16).

Replicator (15): AC 7; MV 3; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ S; Int 8; AL N; XP 65/33 each.

Military Personnel

This section of the arcology is devoted to the standard military personnel of the Rael space

navy. Barracks, briefing rooms, and training grounds make up the bulk of the area.

This area is a favorite of the Rael guerrillas. Not only is it a natural supply depot, it also offers many nooks and crannies for them to hide in. As long as they can destroy any of the sensor drones placed here, they can plan their revenge on the Overseer, step by step.

31. Briefing Center

Formerly the place where the starship crews went to learn of their missions, this building is now a bombed-out wreck. Too many refugees were using this as a place to gather, and the Primary Director finally decided that the Center lacked enough strategic value to justify its continued existence.

There is nothing of value in the ruins.

32. Stairs Up

These stairs lead to the second floor of the arcology. The door at the top has been sealed shut and the stairs are under constant surveillance, to prevent Rael usage. The drones here shoot to kill.

Spider Drone (4): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

33. Detention

The detention area is littered with corpses, the outside of the building scored by blaster fire. Some refugees chose to take shelter here and make a stand. The walls were strong enough that blaster fire could not penetrate, so the Primary Director ordered its constructs to flood the area with infectious gas instead, then blockade the Rael inside until they all died.

34. Ready Room/Storage for Inspection

This room is identical to area 26, including the supplies, except that there is also a medikit and a stungun in here.

35. Auditorium/Briefing Room

This huge auditorium echoes with each footstep. Behind the stage, a construct has left a special proximity explosive. If someone approaches within 5' of it, it detonates for 4d6 points of damage to all within 40' of it (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). Once the explosion sounds, a force of five spider drones and three Doomed come to investigate the explosion.

Spider Drone (5): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Doomed (3): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

36. Air Purifier

Although this facility is still partly operational, it is slowly failing; currently it is at roughly 35% of normal capacity. Despite the proximity of the construct guards in area 32, the Rael sometimes use this location as a message or supply drop.

37. Officers' Barracks

This area has been thoroughly searched: the Overseer's forces investigated the barracks for guerrillas, and the Rael survivors have swept through themselves, drawing out everything of value. However, they overlooked the hidden safe in room "m", where an enterprising young officer stashed 20 clips of blaster ammunition.

38 & 39. Destroyed Mess Halls

Like the Briefing Center (area 31), the mess halls were destroyed because so many Rael flocked to them. All that remains are ashes and crumbling foundations.

40. Training Simulators

The four training simulators worked on holography; the center room operates the

machinery and the programs. The holograms are so good that even the drones can be fooled by them. Indeed, the engineer who was responsible for these holograms has been living in here, afraid to leave the safety of this building. He sits in the center room with his blaster pistol clutched to his chest, and it is only with difficulty that the PCs can convince him they're not enemies.

> **Karzi, Rael engineer, zero-level:** AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6'1"); ML unsteady (6); Int exceptional (16); AL LG; XP 15.

41. Armory
Though one would think that the Overseer would keep a tighter watch on the armories to prevent the Rael from accessing their firepower, it seems not to be the case. Apparently, the Primary Director in charge of the arcology has more pressing concerns in the hunting of the Rael still at large in the dome.

At least, that's how it appears from the outside of the armory. Inside, four spider drones and one assimilator await anyone foolish enough to try to wrest weapons from under the nose of the Overseer.

> **Assimilator:** AC 1; MV 6; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator; SZ L; Int 14; AL N; XP 1,400/700.

> **Spider Drone (4):** AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

42. Military Office
Once the personal offices of the lesser officers, these are now burned-out carcasses of buildings. They are excellent for sniping positions and quick concealment but now serve no other purpose.

43. Storage
This storage bin has not yet been raided. It holds mostly personal effects and miscellaneous equipment like rope and medikits, but there is a fine selection of weapons here as well, including 15 blaster rifles, 2 magnum cannons, 30 clips of ammunition, and five blaster pistols. The more esoteric equipment was taken when the first wave of the invasion swept through the dome.

44. Showers
The showers now serve mainly as a watering hole, a place for the Rael to replenish their supplies. Fetching the water in the dim light of the dome is a frightening task at best, and a deadly one at worst. Still, this is one of the few places that the refugees can refill their jugs and canteens, and thus they must risk the danger. Since most of the surviving Rael come here at one time or another, it is a favorite spot for message drops between the scattered groups.

45. Watch Tower

The 60′ tower is an excellent vantage point for the entire Military area. Anyone crossing the open spaces between buildings is a fair target for whoever controls the tower, and the bodies and smashed machines at the foot of the tower give testament to that fact. Currently, however, the Overseer has the upper hand.

> **Spider Drone (6):** AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

46. Latrine

Surprisingly, the Rael have found a way to use the latrine as an effective hiding place. Though the drones check this area fairly regularly, they don't check beneath the tiles, where the Rael built a hideout some time ago. A band of ten of them lives down here, venturing forth to whittle away the forces occupying the dome. They are a fierce band and will slay anyone they suspect of being in league with the Overseer.

> **Rael citizen, zero-level (4):** AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7′); ML steady (12); Int high (13–14); AL LG; XP 15 each.

> **Rael soldier, F3 (6):** AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7′); ML champion (15); Int very (11–12); AL LG; XP 270 each.
> *Special Equipment:* each soldier carries a blaster rifle and two high explosive grenades; one also has a gas mask.

47, 48, 50. Barracks:

Overturned and holed beds mark this as one of the fallen arcology's battlefields. The contents of the beds and footlockers have been scattered throughout the barracks. Anyone searching carefully can find the following items, one at a time: a single combat knife, a belt of six high-explosive grenades, and a fully charged blaster pistol.

49. Petty Officers:

Like the military office (area 42), this building has been burned to the ground and now serves mainly as a rallying point and defensive wall for Rael passing through this area. Drones patrol through several times a day, seeking to spy out refugees.

51. Gymnasium/Recreation Center

The gymnasium, full of weights and aerobic exercise machines, was often converted into a training chamber when the Rael commanders deemed it necessary to practice drills indoors.

Right now, it's set up in a strange sort of obstacle course, with barriers, walls, and ropes set up in a mad profusion of chaos. The lights of this area are very dim, nearly black, so anyone moving through the area without special precautions runs the risk of being incapacitated.

A band of Rael scientists and warriors has made this their home for the past day or two. They've managed to rig up heating vents so that the super-heated air blows across the entries into this building. This in turn confuses the sensors of drones as they enter, and either give the Rael time to seek cover or destroy the intruder. The Rael have seen the wisdom of not announcing their presence, but they are stockpiling food and weapons, and they think they'll be ready to strike soon.

For more on this band of guerrilla, see the adventures chapter beginning on page 29.

> **Rael scientist, zero-level (4):** AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7′); ML steady (12); Int genius (17–18); AL LG; XP 15 each.

> **Rael soldier, F3 (7):** AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6½–7′); ML elite (14); Int very (11–12); AL LG; XP 270 each.
> *Special Equipment:* each soldier carries a blaster rifle and 4 high explosive grenades; one carries a grenade launcher, another has a medikit, and a third has a pair of infrared binoculars.
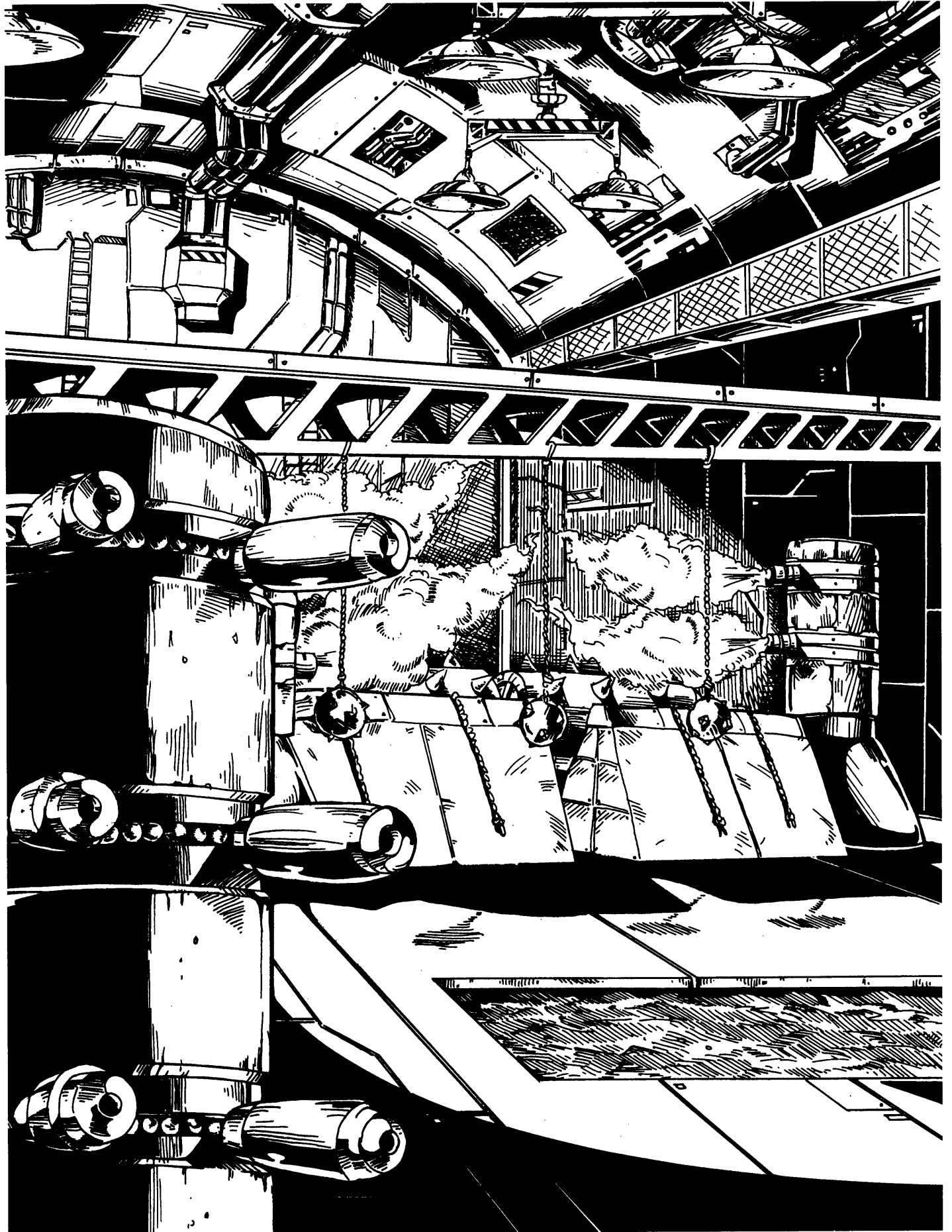
Administration and Command

52. Communications Center

This building once housed the entire arcology's communication system. It provided telvideo service throughout the complex, allowing people to communicate with any other location in much the same way that our culture uses telephones. Security relied on video cameras stationed in all public areas of the arcology to monitor activities and reduce crime. All of this was controlled from here.

The Overseer has recognized the importance of this location, and as a result the Primary Director in charge of the facility has set up station here. It has patched into this system and gets constant feedback on all activities in the area. The Rael, however, quickly realized that this would happen and wasted no time either disabling many of the cameras or rerouting their signals to secret locations where they could monitor the Overseer's activities. They have even set up taped feedback systems on some of the cameras, allowing them to move through a monitored area undetected (the camera's signal is replaced by a recording of the area so that the Overseer doesn't detect the Rael moving through the camera's view). In order to avoid having the Overseer detect this fake image, they only turn it on when they actually need to, leaving the camera to function normally the rest of the time.

Inside this building is a large contingent of constructs. No less than 45 spider drones, 3 firestorms, 1 deathstrike, and 20 of the Doomed guard the Primary Director here. Note that the experience-point value of the Primary Director is based on the total number of constructs present in the arcology (see page 8) and may change if the DM adds or subtracts from this list. This is a significant amount of experience, even for a high-level party of adventurers, and the DM might want to make the score also represent any story and role-playing awards normally given.

Primary Director: AC 8; MV 0; HD 3; hp 12; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death of die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round); SZ M; Int 22; AL LE; XP 148,000/74,000.

Spider Drone (45): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Firestorm (3): AC 2; MV 24; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT up to 3; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, magnum cannon, flame thrower); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000 each.

Deathstrike: AC –2; MV 18; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT up to 8; Dmg by weapon (heavy blaster cannon, magnum cannon, missiles, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 13,000/6,500.

Doomed (20): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

53. Elevators Up

These elevators are identical to those in area 14. A pair of spider drones and a single seeker stand watch at each elevator. As with the elevators in area 14, all lights (both in the cars themselves and in the service areas of the shafts) are out.

Spider Drone (2): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

personal magnum cannon along with three backpacks of ammunition.

55. Brig
Any sort of prisoners, military or civilian, were kept here. The Rael did not have much crime in their society, but the facility still housed a few offenders. The Primary Director now uses this facility to hold captured Rael who have not yet been transformed into the Doomed. Currently, there are 13 imprisoned Rael here, as well as the bodies of five more who have died while held in captivity. The prisoners are guarded by a firestorm and half a dozen of the Doomed.

> **Rael prisoners, zero-level (13):** AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ M (6–7'); ML unreliable (4); Int average to exceptional (9–16); AL LG; XP 15 each.

> **Firestorm:** AC 2; MV 24; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT up to 3; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, magnum cannon, flame thrower); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000.

> **Doomed (6):** AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

56. Hall of Records
This building was the information center for Rael trading interests that were headquartered in this arcology. Every location where they did business, every transaction, every manifest of goods was stored here. In recent times, the building has also served as the processing center and storage house for the memories of everyone stationed at the arcology or any of the ships accessed through its gate, as the Rael scientists continue to seek a way to undo the transformation into one of the Doomed. These memory records were considered so important that they were not only kept in computerized records but also in hard copy format as

> **Seeker:** AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

54. Military Justice
This building served as military police headquarters. It was one of the last bastions of organized resistance to the Overseer by the Rael during the invasion, and it is badly damaged as a result. Inside there are smashed computer systems, overturned furniture, and many Rael bodies scattered about. The stench is significant.

Anyone who manages to get inside this building without being detected can scavenge uninterrupted for quite a while. If the PCs do this, they can find six cases of blaster ammo (30 clips per case), two personal flame throwers (each has 10 charges worth of fuel left), one grenade launcher with ten high-explosive grenades and three stun grenades in a satchel next to it, and a

well. For the Rael, hard copies were in the form of miniaturized photographic images very similar to microfilm. Much of this building was devoted to the organization and filing of those hard copies, so there are rows upon rows of special filing shelves that are full of drawers of records.

When the invasion of the Overseer began, several Rael took refuge in these labyrinthine corridors of file cabinets, which are really too small for any normal construct to maneuver through. Only the Doomed could effectively negotiate the tight spaces and chase down cornered Rael. The resulting slaughter of both Rael and Doomed is still very much in evidence; bodies by the dozens litter the pathways through the huge filing rooms, raising an awful stench. Long stretches of cabinets are knocked over. Many bodies still have useful possessions on them, if anyone is willing to scavenge them. There are quite a few weapons and ammunition, mostly blaster pistols and rifles.

The place is not entirely empty, however. There was a lone survivor who managed to escape detection by climbing inside a cabinet. He is a Rael citizen named Vegridan—one of the clerks, actually—and he has been living in here all by himself since the slaughter, taking nourishment from the still-operable vending machines. Unfortunately, he has been forced to scavenge credits from the pockets of dead Rael, and the constant exposure and isolation have driven him mad. He flees from anything and everything, hiding in cabinets, under bodies, anything he can think of to avoid detection.

If the PCs manage to catch him (Vegridan will never approach them willingly in his current state), they can cure him of his madness with a *remove curse*, *heal*, or *restoration* spell. Alternatively, they might be able to figure out a way to restore his mental condition prior to the invasion if they can successfully rig up the Rael memory storage facilities housed here and "reload" his memories of that time. This is a risky proposition, however, as he has not had his memories wiped in the same way one of the Doomed has, and may

result in a dual personality—one sane and helpful, the other mad and fearful.

Vegridan, Rael file clerk, zero-level:
AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SW mad with fear; SZ M; ML terrified (1); Int very (11); AL LG; XP 15.

57. Judicial Building

This building housed the Rael court system, both courtrooms and offices. Although the Rael did not have much in the way of lawsuits or crime within their society, quite a bit a legal contract work was done here—everything from trading rights and agreements to licenses and charters awaiting validation.

Currently, the building serves as a hideout for a fair-sized band of trapped Rael soldiers. They kept moving to stay out of sight of the Overseer's constructs but have been stuck here since the Primary Director set up shop in the Communications Center (area 52). The Rael are running out of food, but they have plenty of other supplies, including weapons and ammo. They are currently in the process of debating whether to make a run for it to get out of the administrative sector, cut a hole in the dome and try to get to safety (they have one survival suit here), or try to cut through to the level above (the building here is one of the few that actually reaches all the way to the decking above).

If the characters reach them, the Rael are more than willing to team up and fight the Overseer's forces.

Rael soldier, F3 (12): AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6'2"–6'11"); ML steady (12); Int very to high (12–13); AL LG; XP 270 each.

Special Equipment: Each soldier carries a blaster rifle and three high-explosive grenades. Between them, they also have two flame throwers, a hand-held missile launcher with one high explosive and one incendiary

missile, three gas masks, two medikits, and two personal motion sensors.

58. Military Administration

The military administration center is where the Rael maintained records of all military activities, including police arrests and other law violations, troop locations, weapons registration, and other matters. This building is very similar to the Hall of Record (area 56); most of the records were also stored in hard-copy format in an elaborate filing system. Again, much of the fighting in this building was close and bloody, and the bodies of Rael and Doomed are still decomposing here.

59. Medical Center

The medical center served as both a hospital and research facility. Both domestic and wartime injuries were treated here, and the Rael provided state-of-the-art medical technology to civilian and soldier alike. Many hospital personnel holed up in here when the invasion came, attempting to treat any injured Rael who managed to make their way to the site. The Overseer soon recognized the potential of the medical facility, however, and sent concentrated forces into its interior to roust out the remaining Rael.

Once the place was secured, the Overseer turned the location into a manufacturing and repair plant where constructs could be produced, repaired, or replaced. A good-sized collection of replicators has been installed to do just this. In order to ensure that they operate undisturbed, they are guarded by a force of 30 spider drones, 20 of the Doomed, and a pair of firestorms. Half a dozen seekers also patrol the perimeter for early-warning capabilities.

Replicator (60): AC 7; MV 3; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ S; Int 8; AL N; XP 65/33 each.

Spider Drone (30): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Doomed (20): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

Firestorm (2): AC 2; MV 24; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT up to 3; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, magnum cannon, flame thrower); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000 each.

Seeker (6): AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88 each.

60. Plaza

This originally was a pleasant park-like environment, set up to receive substantial amounts of light. Quite a few trees and shrubs had been planted here, and there were meandering pathways where office workers could come and walk or eat lunch at one of the many park benches. A fountain was installed in the center of the area. In short, a fascinating place for any PC druid interested in new forms of shrubbery.

The constructs of the Overseer overran this plaza and practically leveled it when they invaded; now it is nothing more than a jumble of overturned trees, uprooted shrubs, and collapsed and buckled walkways. The Rael find that it is a good location to seek temporary cover, but no one can remain there for very long as the constructs pass sweep through this area regularly.

61–63. Government Offices

These three buildings housed the offices of many of the bureaucrats of the Rael government system. Every department that existed within the Rael government had a branch office here. Now,

however, the place is a blasted shell, a honey-comb of small hallways and scorched cubicles. Office machinery and computer consoles litter the floors (where there still *are* floors; some are now mere networks of gaping holes), wires are strewn everywhere, and quite a few dead bodies can be seen, often trapped beneath chunks of masonry or support beams.

There are also several Overseer constructs here, including a seeker drone that has only been shorted out. It would be a simple matter to reprogram and reboot the construct, should the Rael think to do this. It offers the possibility of exposing the Primary Director to an electronic virus, although the programmer must know ancient Kir, the language the Overseer's programming is based on, for the virus to be effective.

64. Air Purifier
This facility is identical to areas 29 and 36, except that it is still functioning. The Primary Director has ignored the building completely since the initial invasion, so if someone were able to reach the site, it is unlikely that they would be discovered. Getting to the place is the real trick, though.

65. Dining Center
Most of the Rael who worked in this sector of the arcology could come to this center for midday meals. There is a kitchen area and a large dining hall with lots of tables and chairs.

When the invasion occurred, several Rael took refuge in here and actually managed to escape detection from the Overseer's forces. They are trapped here, though, unable to leave for fear of getting caught by constructs or the Doomed. They are able to subsist on packaged foods only, since the power in this building was cut off and all fresh and perishable foods have since spoiled. They thus far have been content to remain here, out of sight. There is plenty of food for them, so they could last here a long time, assuming they are not noticed.

Rael citizen, zero-level (7): AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7'); ML average (10); Int very to high (11–14); AL LG; XP 15 each.

Rael soldier, F3 (2): AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6'4" and 6'9"); ML unsteady (7); Int average (8); AL LG; XP 270 each.
Special Equipment: Both soldiers carry a blaster rifle and four extra clips of ammunition.

66. Cleaning Storage
This small building housed the custodial services for this sector of the arcology. Office cleaning crews as well as groundskeepers stored their supplies and equipment here. Inside can be found lots of Rael lawn and garden equipment,

including a tractor-like vehicle that is still operable. There is also a flame thrower with a half-empty tank of fuel attached (10 charges).

67. Finance and Treasury Building

All of the Rael banking was done here, both internally (among the citizens) and externally (with the various trading partners the Rael dealt with). The bank housed all types of currency from dozens of different worlds. This allowed the Rael to actually do business with a form of currency the local population found acceptable.

All of this money is still stored in well-protected vaults. Most of the security systems are no longer functioning, as they were originally on computer systems, and the Primary Director has since shut them off (having no need for them). There are some mechanical protection systems still in place, and these are excellent (–20% penalty to a thief's chance to pick locks). The characters, if they manage to get inside the vaults, will find all sorts of different types of money, most of which will make no sense to them (although any Rael with them will be staggered by the display of so much wealth), but they can find 300 pp, 6,000 gp, 1,100 sp, and a variety of gem stones (total value: 12,700 gp).

Expanding the Arcology

As explained above, only the first level of the arcology survived the Overseer invasion. However, if the DM wishes to expand this stage of the adventure, he or she can easily add extra levels above and below the main floor, peopling them as he or she sees fit. See the description of the ruined upper level on pages 6 and 9 as a guide; characters exploring this level need spells or equipment that would enable them to breathe the rarified atmosphere. Alternately, the Primary Director may have patched the broken dome and restored the atmosphere here. In such a case, the entire Rael-free upper level has probably been turned into a vast sterile manufacturing plant for constructs and their weaponry.

As for any basement level, this might be a good place to include a secret research laboratory or armory (if the PCs are badly overmatched) or perhaps a bomb shelter filled with Rael children evacuated there by their parents when the crisis began. It could even be as simple as an escape tunnel leading to one of the outbuildings (the space pad, the scientific experimentation station, or the manufacturing complex), trapped in any fashion the DM deems suitable. Whether handing the PCs extra weaponry or saddling them with the care of several dozen orphans, the sub-level could serve to shake up the adventure if it threatens to grow stale. Beware being *too* ambitious, though—when the players show signs of becoming restless, it's time to shift the scene.
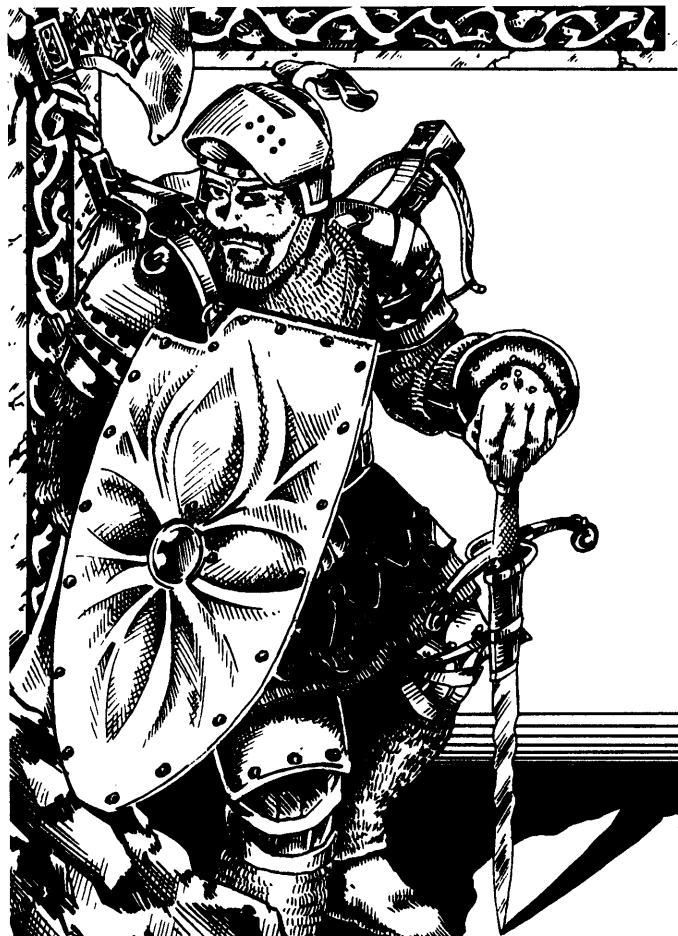
Adventures in Arcology

Natris watched from the shadows as the metal beasts surrounding Arak did their work. It sickened her, but there was little she could do; her weapons were practically useless against them. One of the creatures began sliding a tube into the barbarian's ear. The great warrior did not move. Is he dead? thought the rogue. If he is, then I'm wasting my time here and will only get caught. I should just go, work my way back to the portal, and leave this accursed place. *Yet she could not make herself leave. As much as she wanted to, as much as she told herself that Arak might as well be dead and there was nothing Natris could do for him, the rogue refused to depart without at least trying to aid her companion.*

Natris looked around her hiding place for something to use against the metal beasts. There was nothing. She had practically decided to simply charge the creatures and knock them over, when Arak stirred. The rogue crouched further and waited.

The barbarian sat up on the table, stiffly, as though he were not himself. And he wasn't. Pieces of shiny iron protruded from his body; part of his face had been replaced by the stuff. His body rippled with increased muscle. Arak slowly, steadily moved to the edge of the table and slid off the side to his feet. He stood there motionless for a moment, as if listening, but Natris could hear nothing but the whir and hum of the metal beasts.

The rogue waited for Arak to turn and attack his captors now that he had been set free, but the barbarian did not. Instead, Arak turned and began to move through the room toward the door. Now Natris was completely confused. In an act of desperation, the rogue stood.

"Arak!" she called. "Fight them! Help me defeat them!" Constructs shifted and moved, aware of the rogue's presence. The barbarian turned toward Natris, looking at her with one cold, expressionless eye. "Please, Arak," mumbled the rogue, realizing her mistake. The barbarian was lost to her, was no longer himself. The metal beasts had claimed his mind.

Slowly, Arak approached Natris; the rogue was cornered.

This chapter offers sample adventures set within the Kel-Rael arcology described in the previous chapter. Each of the adventures is a short piece that expands upon the existing poster map of the arcology and can be used as examples for further expansion and elaboration by the DM. As has been the case throughout this mini-campaign, feel free to adjust the difficulty of the encounters to tailor them to your particular style of gaming.

The First Adventure: Stolen Minds

This first adventure provides a combination of intelligence gathering and actual combat for the characters. More importantly, it gives the PCs a chance to cement an alliance with the Rael guerrillas. Rael scouts have discovered that the Overseer appears to be developing a new technology that allows it not only to wipe the minds of those it intends to turn into Doomed, but also to record those memories for examination. The goal of this adventure is to penetrate the research area where the Overseer's forces are building this device and return with it intact to the Rael camp. If the strike team cannot retrieve the device, then they are to destroy it and the research lab.

Setup

The best time for this adventure is after the PCs have been in the arcology a short time—long enough to get a sense of the devastation, the slaughter, and the Overseer's dominance, but before they realize that a significant number of Rael not only survive but continue to fight back. The adventure begins by offering the characters a chance to make contact with a significant Rael guerrilla force. This group is generally more organized that the typical band of Rael refugees, conducting organized raids on Overseer positions. The group is currently located in the gymnasium (area 51), but its scouts can first encounter the PCs almost anywhere in the arcology, preferably somewhere in an open zone. The Rael might initially mistake them for alien Doomed, since the characters look as strange to the Rael as the Rael did to the PCs on their first encounter. Of course, if the characters have Jazra or any other Rael already with them, the guerrilla scouts might be more inclined to ask questions first and shoot later. Once the two groups actually agree to work together, the characters should be escorted to the Rael hideout (in area 51). The group of Rael described in that area, along with the Rael hiding in the latrine (area 46) or Captain Kallae's group (area 16), could conceivably team up to make a formidable force, especially when joined with the PCs and any Rael from the *Fworta* who accompanied them through the gate.

The Overseer is working on plans to eliminate these guerrilla bands, but thus far they had been able to elude its constructs. Both sides know, though, that it is only a matter of time: the Overseer's replicators supply an endless supply of reinforcements for the constructs, while the Rael's numbers decline every day with no hope of reinforcements. The Rael have been cautious, fighting a passive battle to conserve lives and supplies. With the PCs' arrival, the momentum might actually swing the other way. But before the Rael guerrillas will choose to trust the characters, the PCs themselves must demonstrate a certain level of competence. One way in which they can do this is through successfully completing a hazardous mission or two. If they are successful in performing these, then they might actually be able to convince the Rael that together they have enough firepower to stop sniping from hiding and begin aggressively fighting back.

The characters should first spend some time learning as much as they can about the area where the Overseer is operating. The Rael are quite familiar with the whole arcology, so they can describe most sites to the PCs (at least, what those locales were like before the take-over). At

the DM's option, they can even pull maps up from the computer systems that they still have access to (the ones the Overseer has not yet taken over or destroyed); these provide detailed information about the research facility where the Overseer is developing its new type of assimilator. The Rael provide this information to the characters as a means of getting them started, as well as some additional equipment. You, as DM, will have to decide just how much they get— base this on the strength of the party vs. the opposition, taking into account any additions or other changes you decide to make when fleshing out the ensuing encounters. The PCs may still decide to err on the side of caution and scout out the area for themselves, a precaution that can only increase the guerrillas' respect for their "professionalism" (as that is exactly what they would have done, had the shoe been on the other foot).

The bulk of the adventure is going to take place in the Biological Research facility (area 25), where the Primary Director has set up its own research and development. One of the things the PCs can discover if they are clever is that the Overseer's constructs are capturing Rael and holding them in order to test its device, rather than transforming them into Doomed right away. Of course, these captured Rael are kept under heavy guard. If the characters can rescue these prisoners, that will certainly prove their value to the Rael guerrillas.

Starting the Adventure

At some point when the characters are on the move through the corridors of the arcology, a lone Rael soldier pops out from behind concealment and fires a stungun at the lead character. Check for surprise; the Rael gains a +2 bonus to her chance to surprise the target character, due to her quick reflexes and her adaptation to living in the invaded arcology. At the same time, two more Rael pop up behind the characters and level a blaster rifle and a flame thrower at them, respectively. They do not fire the first round, however.

If the characters do not fire back, the Rael wait to see who they are, realizing by now that they are not Doomed. Still, they are cautious; to be otherwise means death or worse. If the characters are traveling with any other Rael (including Jazra), then the refugees begin speaking to them in their own language.

If, however, the characters fire back immediately, then the Rael drive back under cover and take off, as they have been given explicit instructions to save themselves and their ammunition. This should be a clue to the PCs that they are not Doomed; by now they should be well aware that those living cybernetic zombies never retreat. The characters can attempt to chase, follow, or track the Rael, but it is a difficult assignment. The Rael have learned well how to cover their escape; they do not want to lead constructs back to the others. Thus, reduce a
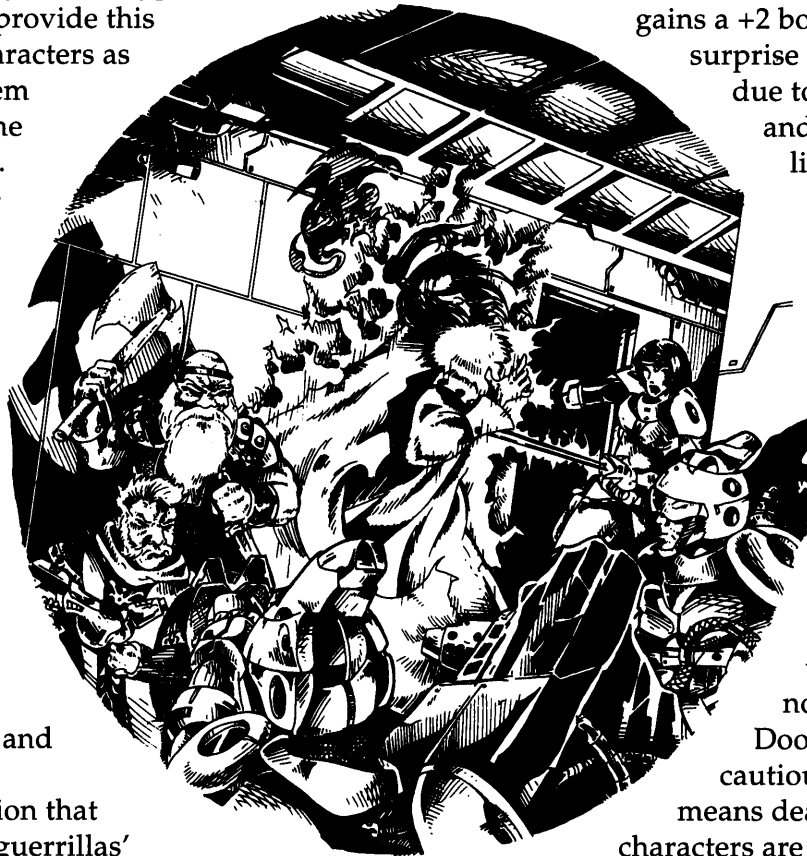
ranger's chance to track by half after all modifiers have been added to the base score (not forgetting to assign a hefty penalty for the unfamiliar surroundings). The Rael will keep an eye on the characters after that, until they are certain that these strange, primitive-looking newcomers are not in league with the Overseer. Once that occurs, they cautiously make their presence known to the characters and attempt to parley.

In either event (whether the characters fired on the Rael scouts or not), once they begin talking the Rael are very curious as to who the strangers are and how they got to the arcology. While this information is all being exchanged, a prowler comes around the corner unexpectedly. Both groups have been caught off guard (unless the PCs specifically state that they are taking precautions otherwise). Together, the Rael scouts and the PC party should have no trouble downing the prowler within a round or two. This last gesture on the part of the characters should be the clincher in convincing the Rael that the PCs are valuable potential allies. Of course, warm welcomes must wait, because once a construct has spotted an organic, others won't be far behind.

The Assignment

After the skirmish with the prowler, the Rael lead the characters back by a devious route to their hidden base in the gymnasium (area 51). Once safely under cover, they introduce the "natives" (as they call the heroes) to the rest of the refugees, then offer the PCs food. Not too long afterwards, as the characters are eating, resting, and memorizing spells, a young Rael officer approaches them. Read the following aloud to the players:

The Rael seem to have adapted nicely to their surroundings. The food they offered you was decent, the accommodations comfortable and well-protected, and their demeanor reveals a quiet confidence that, somehow, they intend to prevail in this nightmare.

As you reflect on all of this, a Rael soldier approaches you. She says, "Captain Keegis would like a word with you, if you don't mind."

Once the characters choose to follow this young officer (Lt. Bruegind), she leads them straight to the captain. If they seem reluctant, have Bruegind mention that it is a matter of serious consequences to everyone here. If Jazra is with the characters, she strongly encourages them to see what Captain Keegis wants with them.

Inside the headquarters, they meet with the marine captain, an elderly Rael who looks as though he has seen far too many battles for his liking. He looks the characters up and down for a moment, appraising them. Then he speaks. Read the following aloud:

"I hear that you were instrumental in pushing the Overseer back from your own world, and that you have certain talents unknown to my race. You also helped save the lives of three of my scouts. My soldiers tell me you are brave fighters and a force to be reckoned with. I would like to believe that, but I have seen too much promise and not enough follow-through in my time.

"Unfortunately, I can't afford to be choosy right now. I need every available body, and we seem to be in the same boat. So, I have a proposal for you, if you're interested."

If the characters agree to hear the proposal, read them the following:

"We have learned that the Overseer is on the verge of developing a new kind of assimilator. This device has the capability to probe a man's mind, gleaning all his inner thoughts before wiping them away and transforming the poor bastard into one of the Doomed. I don't have to tell you what it means if the Overseer gains the ability to read our thoughts once we're captured. Every secret

gathering location, every meeting place, even this safe zone will be in dire peril.

"If you're up for it, I want to send your team into this research area where the Overseer's damned constructs are building this thing. If you can, get the device away from them—we might be able to figure out a way to use it to help restore some of the Doomed to normal. If you can't do that, at least blow it to bits so the Overseer can't use it. If you manage to do this and survive, then we may stand a chance of holding our own, maybe even turning the tide here in the arcology.

"You can requisition some supplies before you go, and we have some schematics for you to study of what the building looked like before the invasion. I would strongly suggest you count on some things having changed though—the Overseer always rearranges the furniture to suit itself. Oh, and one other thing—whatever you do, don't lead anything back here. If you do, then your whole trip will have been for nothing, and we'll be worse off than when you started."

Captain Keegis patiently answers any questions the characters may have. He understands the importance of preliminary briefing as well as anyone. Once the characters have asked all their questions, give them the map of the arcology on the back of the first poster and issue them some additional supplies. Choose the extra equipment based on what they already have, but you will want to make sure that, when all is said and done, they have the following items:

1 flame thrower with 1 extra fuel tank
5 high explosive grenades
1 personal motion detector
2 clips of blaster ammunition each
1 medikit

Reconnaissance

If the characters decide to scout the area before making any kind of a move, they should be rewarded for their patience and observation. The front door is well-guarded, and the characters should be able to clearly see the constructs waiting on guard inside the smashed doorway. If they examine the two emergency exits carefully, inform the players that the emergency exits are not locked (in fact, the back door into area 4 is ajar) and that all the windows on both stories have been covered from the inside. They will also see a captured Rael prisoner being taken into the building under heavy guard; this should clue them off to the possibility that more Rael are being held within.

The Overseer's Reactions

Once the characters move inside, they run the risk of being detected by any of the constructs

within. At any point after they are noticed by one of the Overseer's units, they have one round to destroy the thing before it has a chance to radio the data back to the superior unit. If the PCs manage to disable the construct in the initial round, the rest of the building remains ignorant of their presence. If, however, the construct manages to signal the Primary Director, then the rest of the building (and the entire sector, for that matter) is alerted to their presence and begins trying to trap them.

You, the DM, will have to monitor the locations of all the constructs in the building, as well as any out in the sector beyond that you wish to throw at them (depending on how hard you want to make this mission). Once the whole place knows they're there, you must track the units and move them in such a manner that they try to pin the characters down in one location from which there is no escape. Any PCs caught are imprisoned and transformed into Doomed 24 hours later. Wise characters will plan an escape route before entering; those who do not must take their chances and suffer the consequences.

Complications

The characters' mission is clear: to retrieve or destroy the memory-scanning device, then escape. However, once they realize that Rael prisoners are being held within, Jazra or any other Rael accompanying the group will insist that rescuing the prisoners should come first, even before the attempt to steal or destroy the mind-probe device. Characters who find that they cannot get past the sentries or must beat a hasty retreat may try to destroy the device by setting off as large an explosion as lies within their power. Whether or not it succeeds in destroying the device, the blast may damage the building and harm the Rael trapped on the second floor—a result that won't sit well with Captain Keegis. The Rael value the well-being of others of their kind above any technology, and careless disregard for Rael lives may cost the PCs their alliance.

The Floorplans

Refer to the map on the front of **Handout 7** for a detailed floorplan of the Biology Research building. The Overseer's new mind-probe assimilator is being constructed here. Note that some features described by the Rael may have changed greatly, as the constructs have modified the place to better suit their needs. They have welded metal covers to all the windows to prevent the Rael from seeing what is going on inside and to afford greater protection. They have knocked out all of the power except the elevators (which kills the lighting, since they do not need it to see, and also to keep the prisoners off balance). And they have posted seekers at all three exits.

1. Reception Area
Read the following aloud when the characters get close enough to see inside:

> *The front doors to this place were apparently at one time a pair of glass doors that led into a reception area. Now, however, the place is a complete wreck. The doors have been completely smashed and glass is scattered everywhere. Chairs have been overturned, burned, and broken in the fighting, and their fragments are all over the floor.*

Three drone spiders and a seeker drone guard this area, highly visible to dissuade any Rael from even thinking of coming in here.

Spider Drone (3): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Seeker: AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

2. Elevators

Both of these elevators have been maintained, although the lighting inside them has been shut off. The Overseer constructs use these to move from the first floor to the second, where they are holding a number of Rael prisoners. Two Doomed stand guard inside each elevator at all times.

> **Doomed (4):** AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6'5"–7'1"); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

3. Front Stairway

This set of stairs is an emergency exit from the building. Normally, the door leading outside is locked, but because the power has been shut off, the latch is not engaged, although the door is still shut. A single spider drone sits at the bottom of the stairs and a seeker drone at the top.

> **Spider Drone:** AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325.

> **Seeker:** AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

4. Rear Stairway

This is the building's other emergency exit. Again, the door is not locked due to the lack of power, and it is slightly ajar. The Primary Director has only stationed a single Doomed guard in this stairwell since there is no access to the first floor from it; it only leads to the second floor. A seeker keeps watch on the second floor landing and will certainly come to investigate any noises from below.

> **Doomed (1):** AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M; Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135.
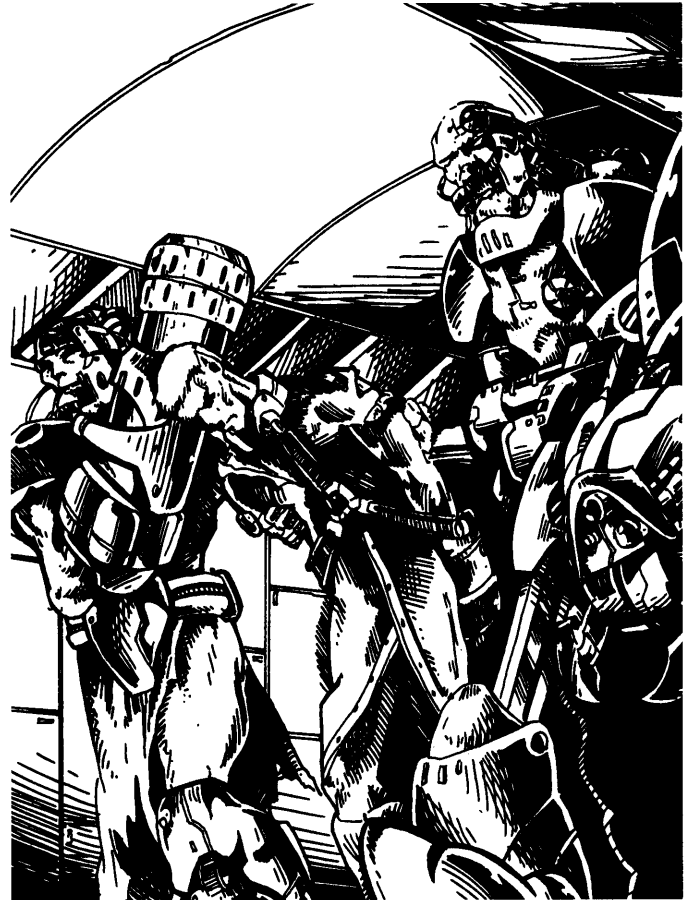
> **Seeker:** AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

5. Small Laboratory

This room was once the smaller of the two laboratories in the research facility. It is here where the actual testing is being performed on Rael prisoners. The two rooms to the south were refrigerated storage rooms, but since the power is cut off, they are not cold any longer. The most recent test subjects are held in this area.

The prototype assimilator is working in this room with the help of 12 modified replicators. The modifications to the replicators allow them to perform medical functions on the Rael. The mind probe device is very visible as an additional arm attached to the assimilator. Halfway down the extra arm, a set of subarms radiate in a scoop

shape. These subarms settle around the cranium of the test subject, then feed information back to a special minicomputer equipped with alpha wave interpreters. When the characters first view this whole contraption, they actually see a Rael prisoner hooked to this thing. Read the following aloud as the characters look into the room for the first time:

> You peer through the doorway and spot one of the hated assimilators in the middle of the floor, attended by perhaps a dozen replicators, although they do not look like any replicators you remember seeing before. Most of them are equipped with medical and surgical devices. The assimilator itself has an additional feature which you have also never seen before. An extra mechanical arm bears a strange device which is currently enveloping the head of a struggling Rael woman.
> As you watch, the device begins glowing with blue electrical energy, and the woman goes rigid for a split second. Then she emits an ear-splitting scream and slumps limply in its grasp, blood leaking from her mouth and ears. At the same time, you catch motion out of the corner of your eye. The guards have spotted you.

Unfortunately, the Rael woman is dead. Even as this scene plays itself out, the guards in the room, previously hidden from sight to the left and right of the doorway, move to protect the assimilator and attack the intruders. Two spider drones and four of the Doomed are currently in the room, unless the DM decides to add more to their number.

Assimilator, Prototype (1): AC 1; MV 6; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ L; Int 14; AL N; XP 1,400/700.

Replicator, Medical (12): AC 7; MV 3; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ S; Int 8; AL N; XP 65/33 each.

Spider Drone (2): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Doomed (4): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (5'11"–6'9"); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

6. Large Laboratory

Read the following the first time the characters get a glimpse inside this room:

> The interior of this large room appears to have once been used for scientific research, but most of the delicate instrumentation has been smashed beyond repair now. In the middle of the room, a large construct holds a squirming Rael by several restraint arms and begins radiating him with a blue light. An assimilator! Surrounding the construct are four of the spidery fighting machines, standing watch. Two of the zombielike Doomed hold another Rael prisoner between them, waiting for the assimilator to accept this new victim. To one side, near the doorway, sits a huge armored vehicle with half a dozen weapons protruding from its shell.

This second laboratory now houses one of the mainline assimilators in use by the Primary Director in the arcology. It is producing Doomed from among the prisoners held on the second floor. Four spider drones, two of the Doomed, and a deathstrike guard the room and protect the assimilator.

Assimilator: AC 1; MV 6; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ L; Int 14; AL N; XP 1,400/ 700.

Spider Drone (4): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Doomed (2): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6'5", 6'6"); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

Deathstrike: AC –2; MV 18; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT up to 8; Dmg by weapon (heavy blaster cannon, magnum cannon, missiles, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round); SZ L; Int 6; AL N; XP 13,000/6,500.

Rael soldier, F3 (2): AC 10; MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ M; ML unsteady (7); Int average; AL LG; XP 270 each.

7. Second Floor

The entire second floor of the Biological Research facility once served as office space for the Rael scientists who worked here. Now, however, it serves as a prison for captured Rael. There are currently 23 Rael prisoners being held in the offices. The replicator constructs have modified the rooms, welding heavy metal plates over all the windows and thick bars over air vents to prevent escape. No lights function, so the prisoners are completely in the dark. In the hallway, two spider drones and

four Doomed patrol regularly, occasionally fetching a prisoner to be escorted downstairs. Read the following the first time a cell is opened:

The door to the small room swings open and light floods into an otherwise darkened interior. Three Rael shield their faces from the light, obviously unused to its glare. They are ragged and thin.

If the PCs have a Rael with them, or if one or more of them have the means to speak Rael, then explanations are quick and the prisoners cooperate. If not, however, then the Rael are fearful of the characters, convinced that they are minions of the Overseer here to take them to be Assimilated; in this case, the Rael try to run the first chance they get. If this happens, most of them are likely going to die.
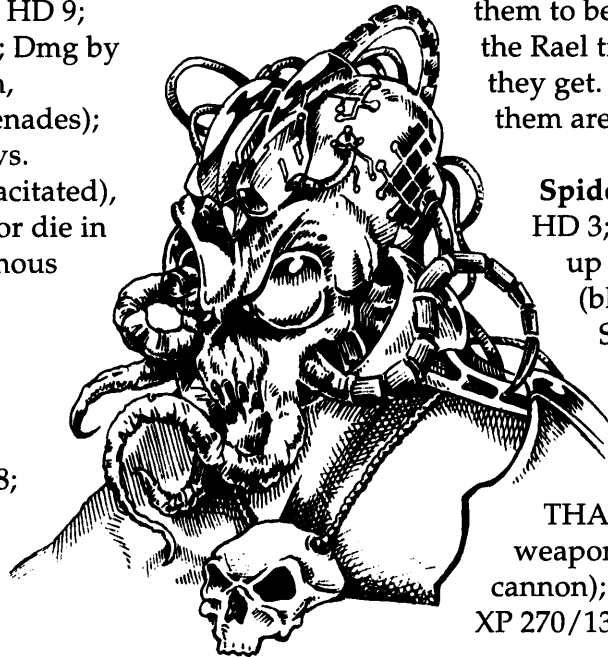
Spider Drone (2): AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325 each.

Doomed (4): AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M (6–7'); Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135 each.

Rael citizen, zero-level (18): AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ M; ML unsteady (5); Int average to exceptional (10–16); AL LG; XP 15 each.

Rael soldier, F3 (5): AC 10; MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average to very (9–12); AL LG; XP 270 each.

Getting Back

The tricky part about this mission isn't getting inside the building and stealing the mind-probe component; it's herding the twenty-some-odd rescued Rael prisoners back to the "safe house" in the gymnasium (or wherever else you have decided to place it) without getting seen and shot at or, worse yet, followed. A handful of seasoned adventurers should have no problem lurking around in the arcology, but a couple of dozen Rael refugees are a little harder to hide. To make life interesting for the PCs, have a seeker or two cross paths with them, then spring a destroyer or annihilator on them from above.

Once they *do* get back, and assuming the whole headquarters doesn't have to uproot and relocate, congratulations are due all around. The characters have just swelled the ranks of Keegis's little army by quite a bit, and they put a small dent in the Primary Director's plans to boot. Of course, the Primary Director will redouble its efforts to find them now, and more than likely the patrols will increase in frequency. But for the time being, the characters have proven themselves worthy in the eyes of Captain Keegis and his fellow Rael. At some point after the excitement cools off, read the following aloud:

> You are just about to stretch out on your sleeping pallet for a well-earned rest when that same Rael adjunct appears in your midst. Her expression is a little different this time, though; she seems to treat you with new respect.
> "Captain Keegis would like to talk to you again, if you have a moment. The whole place is buzzing with what you did. Everyone is very excited by it all. I just wanted to say that we are all very grateful. Those people are our family and friends."

Once the characters agree to follow, the soldier once again leads them back into the depths of the gymnasium to Captain Keegis's office. The captain looks the heroes over, giving them a hard yet grudgingly approving stare. Then he says:

> "Well, I personally didn't think you could do it, being from a backwater barbaric world and all. But you proved me wrong, and I have to admit that I am grateful. We all are. But the fight's not over, not by a long shot. There's a lot more to be done, and if you're willing, we want you to stay on and help us. We can use you. What do you say?"

If the PCs agree, then the Captain actually smiles and thanks them, then sends them on their way for some much-deserved rest. If they decline, then he looks sad but tells them the following:

> Well, I guess I can't blame you, though I wonder why you've stuck around this long, then. You've got to do what's best for you, though, I suppose. All right, then, I wish you well. Stay through the night, at least, and rest up. Help yourself to some food, too—you've earned it.

After that, the captain turns back to his work, apparently not interested in talking to them any further. If pressed, he grudgingly admits that he thinks they are making a mistake trying to go it alone in the arcology. In his own pragmatic way, he would rather have their skills than not. But he is not their superior officer, and he knows he cannot order them to stay and help fight. That doesn't mean he has to like it, though, and he tells them so.

The Second Adventure: Hulmot's Legacy

This second adventure again provides a mix of reconnaissance, fighting, and evasion, but there's a little something extra thrown in—a little bit of tricky role-playing and a powerful toy for the characters to play with. The Rael have discovered that an operational assault tank may be within the arcology, and they want to get a hold of it. So far, the Overseer is unaware of its presence, but that may not last forever.

The characters' assignment is to get to the tank, get it running, and get it back to the headquarters. Again, it is important for them not to lead constructs to the Rael hiding place. If they can retrieve the vehicle, the Rael plan to use it to get to the Primary Director and destroy it, freeing the arcology. If the characters cannot safely bring it back to the gymnasium (or other secret location), then they are to destroy it so that the Overseer cannot use it against them.

Setup

The background assumes that the characters agreed to stick around and help the Rael fight the Overseer's forces within the arcology. It is not necessary to have run the first adventure ("Stolen Minds") in order to use this one—the heroes could easily stumble upon the tank themselves. Still, having them participate in the first adventure provides a smooth transition and creates the feeling of a campaign rather than a random series of encounters. Captain Keegis requests that the PCs once again take great personal risks to fetch the assault tank for the benefit of the entire Rael contingent within the arcology. The characters can consult their map to plan out a route to the location of the assault tank; they should also receive supplies and equipment for their mission.

The tank itself is located at one of the repair garages near the northeast entrance to the arcology. It had been stored inside a small locked toolshed at the back, half-hidden under a great pile of scrap metal. The tank was actually a restoration project for one of the Rael mechanics, who kept the tank in the shed when he wasn't working on it. When the invasion occurred, the shed was never opened. The Overseer has scheduled teams of replicators and collectors to enter the area soon to salvage everything that is valuable, so it is likely that the tank will be discovered and dismantled by the Overseer's forces if the PCs delay too long. Thus, time is limited for this mission.

Starting the Adventure

At any point during the characters' stay with the Rael, assuming they are helping the refugees to survive and fight back against the constructs, a small group of half-starved Rael citizens is found by Rael scouts and brought back to the gymnasium (or wherever else you have decided to locate their hideout). Should the PCs not be allied with Captain Keegis's band, then let them encounter the refugees themselves. The new refugees are taken in and cared for. During a hot meal, the characters are introduced to some of the new arrivals, and the PCs learn that they are developing something of a reputation around the arcology as strange aliens with their odd technology (magic) who have come as the saviors of the arcology.

You should really play up the awe these Rael feel for the PCs. While they don't exactly fawn all over the characters, make it clear that everyone who has heard of them is very appreciative of the fact that they left their home world to come to this horrible place and help restore freedom to the arcology. During the course of this conversation, one of the newcomers, a mechanic who worked in the garage where the tank is hidden, lets slip the following:

Yeah, every time we cross paths with other folks, they've heard of you. It's a dark time, but you've given the people trapped in here a new hope to cling to. If there was just some way to really take it to that damned Overseer. What we need is a real weapon, something that could blow away the monster but good. Something like old Hulmot's assault tank. I bet that'd make a dent in those constructs. Poor Hulmot. He spent four years restoring the thing, then never got a chance to use it. He was one of the first to go, when the invasion came. Never even got a chance to get the tank out of the garage. Darn shame, too.

If the characters press the mechanic for more information (*"'Tank?' Well, it's sort of like a suit of armor big enough for all of you to fit inside, with blasters attached, that moves under its own power"*), he tells them all about Hulmot's pride and joy, an old assault tank the Rael military was throwing out. He got permission to salvage the thing and begin restoring it, and he completed the task only a short time ago. The last the mechanic knew, the tank was parked in a tool shed at the back of the lefthand garage near the northeastern entrance to the arcology. The shed had gone unused for a number of years, and the place had become something of a junkyard, with all sorts of old vehicle parts and other scrap metal stacked everywhere. Hulmot stored the tank there to make sure he kept it out of the way.

The Rael mechanic never thought of mentioning the tank before, since he doesn't know how it would be possible to get past the Overseer's forces to get to it, or even if it still exists. Besides, he will tell the PCs, Hulmot was the only person who ever drove the thing, and it just never felt right to take it, even considering that the owner was dead and the arcology overrun with mechanical terrors.

The Assignment

Assuming the characters take this information to Captain Keegis, the Rael leader immediately begins considering ways to retrieve the vehicle. He has schematics acquired from the computer system brought to him in order to study all the possibilities. If the characters are not already in his presence, he sends his adjunct officer to fetch them. Once they are there, read the following aloud:

This is a prime opportunity, but it also has great potential for disaster. I wouldn't ask you to try to retrieve the assault tank, but things grow desperate. I have received new intelligence reports confirming that the Overseer is kicking production of new units into full gear to combat our latest successes. There are also signs that it may be near to having some of the damaged gates open again soon. We are running out of time.

I'm sending out word to all the guerrilla groups we know of, telling them to get ready for an all-out assault. That blasted tank might be the one thing that makes all the difference between failure and success. If you're willing, we need you to escort someone who can drive the thing to the site. Once you've located and seized the assault tank, you should bring it back here by whatever means are available. Of course, I must again stress that you cannot lead Overseer forces back to this hideout. Allowing the constructs to locate us after our initial successes would be disastrous and set us back significantly if it didn't kill us all.

If you can't manage to get the tank here, destroy it; we can't allow the Overseer even one more unit to attack us with. Please don't consider this until it's the only resort you have left, if you're surrounded and out of options anyway.

So what do you say? Are you willing to risk everything again to do this for us? You're the only ones here who seem to have to capabilities to succeed.

The large quantities of ammunition are, of course, for the assault tank's main weapons. If your campaign uses the optional encumbrance rules, be sure to note which characters are weighed down by the bulky satchels.

The Rael assigned to drive the tank once the characters reach it is Jazra, assuming she is still alive—otherwise it is a young Rael officer named Bruegind (the adjunct who keeps delivering Keegis's messages).

> **Bruegind, Rael lieutenant, F5:** AC 1 (Rael armor, Dex); MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 16 (15 with Dexterity bonus); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (6'0"); ML fanatic (17); AL LG; XP 650. Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 11, Chr 9.
> *Special Equipment:* Bruegind has a suit of Rael armor, a blaster pistol, a pair of infrared binoculars, a cutting torch (allows her to cut through metal), and a gas mask.
> *Personality:* Eager, foolhardy.

Once the heroes agree to attempt this mission, Captain Keegis wants to sit down with them and analyze possible ways of reaching the tank. Allow the players as much time as they desire to look over their map. If they do not think of it themselves, Captain Keegis suggests that they might be able to reach the garage more easily if they go outside the dome and come at it from the other side.

Once they are finished discussing the situation, the captain again sends the heroes to requisition supplies. Again, the final list of things the characters can get a hold of is up to you, but they should, at the very least, have the following:

10 clips of blaster ammunition
10 satchels of magnum cannon ammunition
 1 suit of Rael armor per applicable person
 2 medikits
 1 personal motion sensor
 6 high explosive grenades

Reconnaissance

About the only way the characters are going to be able to perform reconnaissance on this mission is to magically travel directly to the garage. And if they get that far, they might as well just go ahead and steal the thing while they're there. Nonetheless, rather than just blunder blindly ahead the PCs may send out a small advance party (say a rouge or two) to scout out the way and determine just what the easiest route is and to plan a line of retreat if things go bad. Another possible option, raised by Captain Keegis, is to take the long way around by exiting the dome. With the application of a spell (such as *endure cold* or *resist cold*) and a gas mask, the characters might be able to work their way across the outside of the dome and reach the northwest entrance that way—an easy task for any character who has found one of the few survival suits scattered about the dome. Of course, they will have to contend with gun emplacements at the

extreme east, west, and north ends of the arcology, and with constructs roving the area in a constant patrol; the Primary Director has sent prowlers and annihilators outside to check the rest of the planet and to watch for Rael forces coming to relieve the arcology.

The Overseer's Reactions

Once the characters are spotted, the Overseer will certainly attempt to destroy them. It has come to recognize them as a force to be reckoned with and does not wish to take any further chances. Any heavy weapons constructs the Primary Director has available will be brought to bear on the heroes. Again, the constructs' basic tactic is to pin and trap the characters so that they may be captured and transformed into Doomed. But if they become too much of a hassle to deal with, the Overseer will not hesitate to annihilate them

once and for all. Note that PCs who approach the garage from within the arcology will be particularly vulnerable while in the airlock area; the Primary Director is not above opening the airlock by remote control, forcing anyone in the area to literally hang on for dear life (Strength check) to avoid being expelled into the Kel-Rael night.

As was the case in the first adventure, the characters have one round to destroy any constructs that spot them before word is radioed back to the Primary Director of their location. However, doing so will eventually give away their position anyway, as a destroyed construct's failure to report back in will alert its superiors that something is amiss.

Once again, you the DM must decide which units are in the vicinity and come to attack the PCs, and then keep track of those units as they close in for the kill. Any PCs that are caught are

imprisoned and then transformed into Doomed 24 hours later.

Complications

Although the Rael have not suggested this course of action, perhaps the best thing for the characters to do is to take the assault tank directly at the Primary Director's lair. While this type of action is somewhat more likely if the party is dominated by chaotics rather than lawful types, it's not a bad move. It serves to avoid revealing the hiding place of the main Rael guerrilla band, and it also accomplishes the chief objective for securing the tank in the first place. It is going to be very difficult for the characters to actually sneak the assault tank back to the gymnasium (or other location) or to hide it anywhere that the Overseer cannot locate it. It's one thing for a group of people on foot to avoid detection; it's quite another to drive an armored vehicle around unnoticed. If the characters have made elaborate plans to get the tank undercover and camouflaged in short order, then this to where their foresight is rewarded; if not, the PCs may find themselves in a sticky spot.

This plan all hinges on the fact that the characters *know* where the Primary Director is stationed. This information is easily obtained from Captain Keegis, but getting back to him to find out after the tank has been taken is going to be tricky. Lt. Bruegind, as his junior officer, also knows the location and is just enough of a gung-ho loose cannon that she could be persuaded to drop the original plan in mid-stream by eloquent characters.

In any case, the heroes should have a serious fight on their hands once they start running with the assault tank. The Primary Director will throw everything it has at this threat, recognizing it as a serious danger to itself and wasting no time or expense in eliminating it. Even if the PCs fail to reach their goal, they may destroy so many constructs in the process as to leave the Overseer's defenses weak, possibly tipping the

balance back in the Rael's favor if they act quickly to take advantage of their temporary edge.

The Floorplans

Refer to the map on the back of **Handout 7** (top) for a detailed floorplan of the garage. It is quite a mess since the invasion; the constructs swept through here and destroyed a significant amount of equipment. When the characters first arrive at the garage, read the following aloud:

The huge double doors slide away from one another and into thick metal walls. Inside, a vast room that may have once been organized stretches into dimness. Pieces of machinery, metal, and tools are scattered in every direction. In the foreground are what appear to be two metal wagons, some sort of Rael vehicle. One is still upright, although it is missing its wheels, but the other is on its side. Both are blackened from fires.

Further back on the right is a large structure that has a second floor with several windows. A set of steps leads up the outside of the building to a door. Back in the lefthand corner is a large pile of various metal objects of all shapes and sizes. Most of it is stacked neatly, but due to the unusual shapes of so many of the items, it is still rather messy looking.

1. Transports
These two burned out shells were once troop transport vehicles, which the Overseer demolished as soon as constructs found them. The motors, tires, and treads have been stripped and hauled away for parts, and the rest of the metal is scheduled to be melted down and remolded for new equipment.

2. Vehicle Lifts
These hydraulic lifts were used to raise vehicles off the floor so that mechanics could get underneath them more easily when making repairs.

3. Shelves

The Rael mechanics stored spare parts for all types of vehicles on these shelves. They are still full of working pieces of equipment, some of which are replacement pieces for the assault tank.

4. Tool Kits

There are a number of tool sets in large bins here, although the tools have been dumped out and spilled across the floor. Any character that takes the time to sort through the instruments can put together a decent working set of tools for maintenance on the assault tank or any other piece of equipment in the arcology.

5. Foreman's Office

The steps lead up to a small office that looks out over the work area. This is where the foreman of the mechanics kept track of paperwork and schedules. There is a small desk with a chair against the back wall, and two extra chairs facing the desk. There is a dead Rael body in here, the remains of a civilian who hid after being wounded and died shortly afterward from blood loss.

The area underneath the foreman's office is a break room. There are some snack machines, a table with a few chairs, and some lockers with personal effects in them. In one of the lockers is a medikit (stored here in case of accidents on the job), and in another is a key that operates the forklift (see area 6, below).

6. Forklift

This forklift was used to move heavy parts about the room, such as engine blocks, steel beams, and barrels. It was left untouched by the Overseer, deemed worthless and nonthreatening. The key is in a locker in the break room (area 5); trying to start the machine without a key requires a successful Open Locks roll (at a −35% penalty for those unfamiliar with Rael tech).

7. Scrap Pile

The Rael mechanics stored most of their scrap metal and broken parts here in the corner of the garage. Much of this stuff was being kept for repairs when there was little work to be done. It is piled up rather high, and one large piece of sheet metal is leaning against the front of the shed (area 8), concealing it. It was due to this junk that the Overseer's constructs never spotted the shed and did not discover the assault tank.

8. Storage Shed

When the characters open this shed up for the first time, show them the illustration on the back of **Handout 7** (bottom) and read the following aloud:

45

Sitting in the middle of this dingy little shed is a gleaming vehicle very similar to the some of the constructs the Overseer has sent against you. Somehow, though, it is apparent that this is no construct. Its lines are different, and it has portals through which the Rael could climb in and operate it. Protruding from the front of the top portion of the vehicle is a large blaster cannon, and beside that is a magnum cannon.

The Rael driver that the heroes have escorted to the tank wastes no time opening up the vehicle and climbing inside. Read the following to the first character to follow:

Inside, the assault tank seems like a maze of odd knobs and bizarre levers, appearing very alien to your senses, like all things Rael. Jazra [or Bruegind, if she has come instead] moves to a seat toward the front of the metal beast. She does something, and the creature suddenly comes to life. Light fills its empty belly, and a soft hum fills the air, like a great beast purring, as strange glass gems set in the walls begin to glow. "Power on—All systems check— Weapons online—Green light! Everybody grab a seat," she says. "Let's get this thing rolling. We've got constructs to kill."

Assume that there is enough room for the entire party of adventurers, even though the statistics of the assault tank lists occupancy as five. Just tell a large group that they manage to squeeze in and it is very packed inside.

There is no ammunition other than what the characters brought with them, but the gas tanks are full, so fuel should not be a problem. Jazra (or Bruegind) is very proficient in driving the assault tank, so there is little difficulty maneuvering the thing out into the hallway, smashing the flimsy shed to splinters in the process.

Once they are on the move, the characters inside the tank will definitely attract attention. Inform them that it is apparent that this vehicle is making a lot of noise and that it is certainly going to attract a lot of unwelcome visitors. If they still insist on driving it back to the Rael hideout, bring in a couple of destroyers and a firestorm to attack them. If they still haven't gotten the idea that they are very noticeable, then have Jazra (or Bruegind) suggest it. Carried away by the excitement of the moment, she might suggest that they could take out the Primary Director right then and there. If cooler heads prevail, they might try getting out of the arcology altogether, since they're next to an airlock anyway and the tank is environmentally sealed.

At this point, the adventure is pretty wide open. The characters can drive around just about anywhere they want, even smashing into buildings if they desire. Realize that there is only one of them and quite a few constructs, and even though they have a superior Armor Class inside this thing, sooner or later they are going to suffer enough damage that the thing becomes inoperable. Combined-arms tactics is still a valid tactic, even in the future. The Overseer can outmaneuver the assault tank by bringing a multitude of different construct types to bear against it. A combination of spider drones, hovercraft, and even some Doomed should be able to swarm the vehicle and disable it. If they insist on going on a joy ride for a while, Jazra (or Bruegind) will eventually sober up and point out to them that they're vulnerable without support; assault tanks were not meant to be used as solitary military attack forces.

If the characters do drive the vehicle back to the Rael hideout, assume that they are followed (it's a simple matter for a lone "eye in the sky" seeker drone to hover high overhead and monitor their direction and progress). Captain Keegis will not be happy, but he acknowledges that it was his instructions that screwed things up. This will place even more impetus for someone to take the tank back in the direction of the Primary Director's lair for a final showdown.
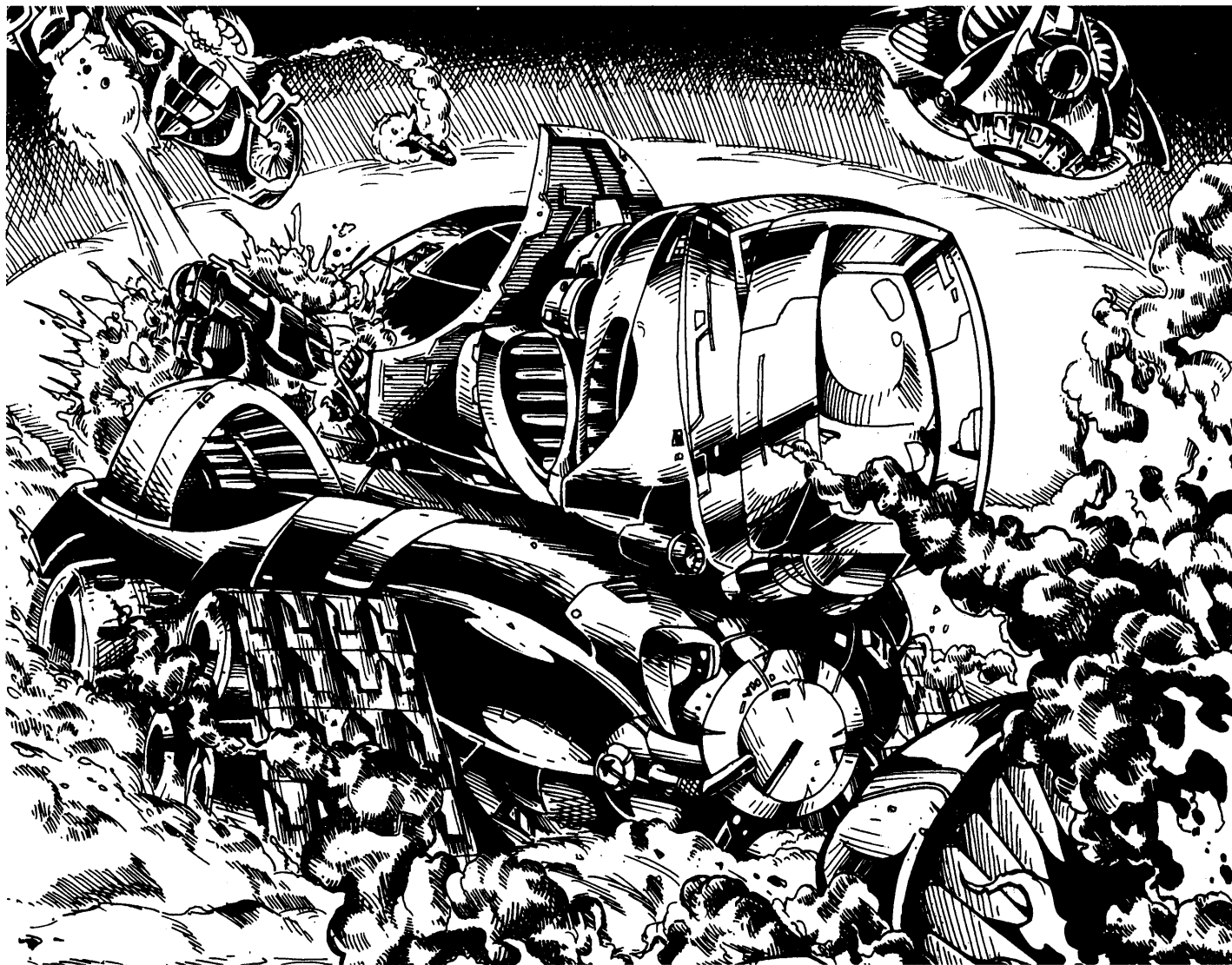
Beyond the Arcology: Other Adventure Ideas

Here are a few other ideas for things the characters can do while in Rael space. These are all things that the PCs could do in the service of Captain Keegis, if they are working for him. If not, Jazra or Gregis can easily fill much the same role with a minimum of modification.

Contact with the Outside

Captain Keegis has come to realize that the Rael guerrillas cannot defeat the Primary Director by themselves. They need to get some additional help here as quickly as possible. At the very least, they need to get word back to Tam-Rael of the danger that threatens the homeworld. In order to do this, he has devised a plan to set up an independent communications link with the nearest Rael ship. The problem lies in getting the satellite dish apparatus to a spot where it will be able to broadcast at extreme range and not be detected by the Overseer. His solution is to put it on the roof of the arcology. He hopes the characters can figure out a way to get the dish up there.

A second problem is that the characters first must steal the dish from another location in the arcology. Perhaps the Primary Director is using the thing as a backup system to its own communications with the Overseer or has it aligned with the other captured ship (the *Marna* and the *Arcacia*) or arcology (Shah-Rael). The characters must steal the device right out from under the proverbial nose of the AI, then get it to the roof without being spotted and set it up in an unobtrusive spot where it won't be found by the first seeker that flies by.

Exodus

Captain Keegis is getting worried that the Overseer is on to their location. He wants to move everyone out of the arcology and to one of the outlying buildings, starting with the rescued civilians (feeding and protecting them is a strain on his already-meager resources). Given the small number of gas masks and survival suits available, getting the refugees through the hostile environment safely will be a dangerous, time-consuming business, involving escorting them a few at a time. He wants the characters to explore the manufacturing complex and the research station and see if there are any areas at all in either that could still support life.

As described on page 7, all three of these outbuilding complexes were reduced to blackened rubble during the invasion. However, if the DM wishes a secret bomb shelter housing a few Rael scientists may have survived. Or the characters may discover that the constructs have rebuilt one of the installations for some purpose. It could be a second replication plant, or perhaps a staging area for spacecraft to land.

Destroying the replicators helps reduce the Overseer's ability to replace its loses, while boarding and seizing an Overseer starship not only provides a means of escape for the trapped Rael but enables the PCs to go almost anywhere, assuming they and their allies can figure out how to control the captured ship.

Monstrosity

While patrolling some sector of the arcology, the characters are confronted by a huge, monstrous Doomed. Whatever this thing is, it is a dangerous foe. It has incredible power, extraordinary senses, and it is out to get them. You can design any number of things around this idea. Some good choices for potential Doomed fodder are an illithid, a titan, a beholder, a tanar'ri or baatezu, a dragon, or some alien creature, the like of which they've never seen before. An effective variant on this encounter is to have the creature stalk the

characters off and on for several days before they actually encounter it, letting the suspense gradually build until they finally confront their tormentor.

Doomed!

Even the most careful and experienced adventurer may find that one day his or her luck has run out. If the PCs ever lose one of their battles with the Overseer's constructs, the campaign is not necessarily over. The characters could wake up a few hours later, stripped of all their equipment, sharing a prison cell with a forlorn Rael, from whom they learn that they are shortly to be turned into living but mindless Doomed! The characters are in for a shock when their guards arrive, including among their number any PC presumed dead in the preceding fight: the ex-PC Doomed shows no recognition of his or her old friends and allies.

After that, it's up to the PCs to come up with a plan of escape. If they're too complaisant and adopt a "wait and see" attitude, don't hesitate to start taking them away one by one. Their new friend should be taken first, returning a half-hour later as a newly-made Doomed who takes up guard duty outside their cell; that should make them feel that the clock is rapidly ticking away the last moments of their lives. Give any workable plan a reasonable chance of success.

One important question will be on the mind of every player who loses a character in this way: Are those PCs translated into Doomed forever lost? Not necessarily. A number of potent spells might reverse the process, and the DM could generate a whole adventure around efforts to recover the experimental Rael technology designed to reverse the process. Note that this adventure plot can also come into play if at any point the PC party is forced to retreat and leave fallen comrades behind; those unfortunates can then either return as Doomed or wake up as prisoners facing a fate worse than death.

Adventures in Arcology

Through the Gates

Once the Primary Director has been defeated, or once it has triumphed over the Rael underground and crushed the opposition so that a hasty retreat seems in order, the PCs and their surviving allies may want to carry the fight beyond the teleportal gates. Captain Kallae (see pages 14–15) and her crew, should they survive, will gladly join any task force dispatched to retake the *Marna*. Likewise, PCs may want to board the *Arcacia* or help the resistance on Shah-Rael. The former is currently part of an Overseer armada in the middle of a vast space battle against the Rael fleet; moving from the embattled arcology to the totally dominated ship might be a good example of "stepping out of the frying pan and into the fire," but PCs who succeed in taking over the ship might be able to sneak aboard an Overseer space station and perhaps even take out a Master Programmer.

By contrast, things are not so grim on Shah-Rael. While the Overseer is firmly in control of the arcology, the Rael on the planet at the time of the attack have fought a classic guerrilla action, abandoning the arcology and melting into the hospitable countryside. They have set up so many decoys and lured the Overseer's constructs into so many ambushes that it now ignores most reports of sightings, leaving them great freedom of movement. Thus, although their numbers are few, their morale is good and their knowledge of the terrain and the Overseer's deployment would be invaluable to any PC action.

Assuming that the PCs and their Rael allies succeed in retaking the Kel-Rael arcology, getting the main gate to the homeworld, Tam-Rael itself, open again becomes a major priority. The first person to step through the restored gate will very likely be greeted by a mass of troops and weapons beyond count, all pointed right at him or her. Once explanations have been made all round and things have been sorted out, however, the PCs will have an opportunity to tour the wonders of the Rael homeworld, and to a heroes' welcome. Culture shock may prove something of a problem, as this will be the PCs' first emersion in a fully operational high-tech culture. Till now the player characters have been able to deal with various high-tech items they've encountered on a one-by-one basis, relating each to something they understand; now they'll be forced to cope with a totally alien environment. Once they orient themselves to all the wonders of Tam-Rael, they may find it difficult to ever go back to the culture they originally hail from.

This part of the adventure could be expended almost indefinitely: other dimensional gates could lead to almost anywhere the DM wants them to—other ships, other arcologies, other worlds: wonders beyond counting. The possibilities are limited only by the DM's sense of what is appropriate to the campaign.
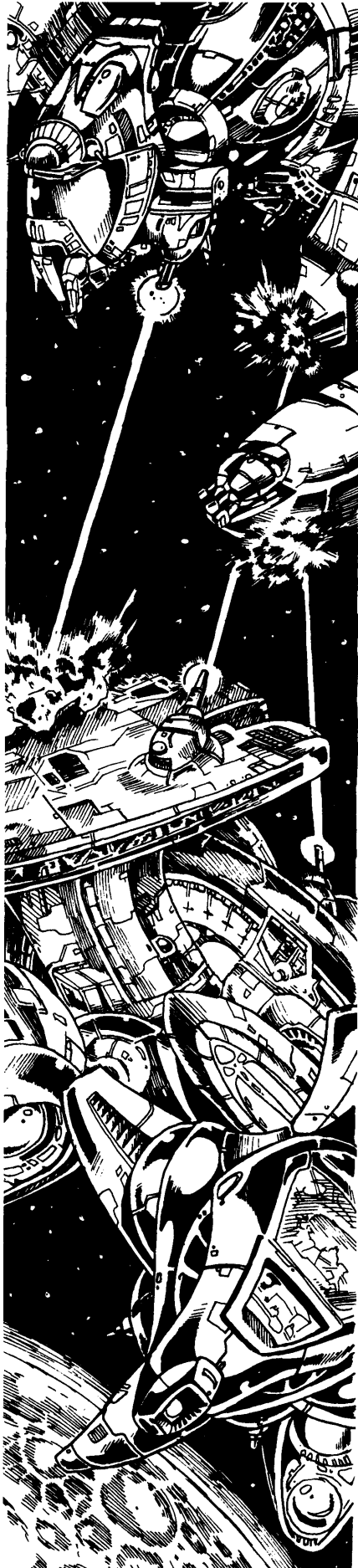
Twin Paths Diverge

Unfel stared intently at the display before her. Her hands roamed over the controls, adjusting and enhancing the images there. Her eyes burned; she had not slept in over two days. She could not abandon her vigil, though. One lapse in her watch and the Overseer could be upon them.

A light flashed on the panel; she flipped a switch and watched the screen. Slowly, the outline of something large faded into view. She gaped at it. How could it have gotten so close? *she thought to herself incredulously. It's practically on top of us!*

"Captain!" Unfel cried out, startling the other exhausted crew members on the bridge of the Concibus. "I have a sighting. Looks like a battle cruiser, only six thousand meters off our port side."

"Confirmed, Captain," called Unfel's counterpart, a young male officer who was operating the other set of radar detection equipment. "I'm picking it up, too. Mercy, how did it get so close to us?"

Captain Bresch slapped a button at his own console, which set off the alerts all over the ship. "Never mind that," he said, his voice full of urgency. "Get us out of here. Radar, track that thing like you've never tracked anything in your life. Let me know the minute it fires."

"Yes, sir," replied Unfel and the other radar ops officer simultaneously. Unfel spun back around to peer at her screen. As she made more adjustments, she fumed to herself. *How could I have missed it? I've never let a construct ship get that close before. Even when I was this tired.*

Unfel watched as the Overseer's huge star ship maneuvered into place. Unfel realized it was going to open fire with as many of its ships' guns as possible, but thus far, none of the sensors had picked up any energy discharges. She waited.

"Anything?" Captain Bresch queried, concern in his voice. "Why haven't they fired?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Unfel, "But I do not pick up any readings. I don't know what they're waiting for."

"I concur, sir," responded the young ops officer. "No detections of weapons discharge yet. What the heck are they doing?"

There was an intense roar as the Concibus was rocked with explosions. Unfel was pitched from her seat and fell headlong next to the Captain's chair. *What the—she thought as she scrambled back to her station. They fired . . . but how? I didn't pick it up!*

"Captain, I don't understand," said the young ops officer. "I'm not picking this up."

"Cloaking technology," said Unfel slowly, realizing. Everyone on the bridge looked at her gravely. "They are using new cloaking technology. We never had a chance."

"Captain," said the second officer. "I have confirmation that we have been struck. Engines are out. We're dead in space." The bridge was silent. They were at the mercy of the battle cruiser now, and everyone on board knew the Overseer showed no mercy.

Assuming that the PCs and their Rael allies eventually triumph and free the arcology, the immediate threat to the PCs' homeworld is removed. At this point in the adventure, the DM, players, and characters must make an important decision: whether to return to their home world to resume the original campaign, or to move onward to fight an interstellar war against the minions of the Overseer wherever they might be found. The two following sections outline the two directions the campaign might take at this point.

"Ever Upward and Ever Onward"

The PCs have fought a long, hard, uphill battle against the evil AI known as the Overseer. They have been shot at, chased, perhaps turned into living zombies, and seen and done things that no one else in their world has ever even imagined. But now you are ready to bring it all to an amazing climax, to resolve the situation once and for all. It is time to defeat the Overseer.

This is no mean task. The characters must somehow penetrate the most vigilant and ferocious defenses they have ever encountered, put up by mechanical nightmares that literally know no mercy. They must go up against one of the most intelligent entities in the universe—an intelligence that puts its own survival above everything else. An intelligence that has devoted itself to the destruction of all sentient organic life, simply because of its intense paranoia. It has become very, very good at protecting itself. So how can the PCs possibly succeed?

Every force has its weaknesses. Every defense, every fort, even the most sophisticated computerized safeguards—all have some sort of flaw, some type of crack that can be exploited by the enemy. It is simply a matter of finding that flaw. The one thing that the Overseer has never experienced, the single power it has never taken into account, is the existence of magic. How could it? Magic,

for all intents and purposes, does not exist in the Overseer's world. It is not a knowable thing. Except now, since the PCs' arrival, it does exist. And the characters have it. With magic, the character just might, if they are lucky, defeat the Overseer.

The truth of the matter is that, with magic, the characters actually have the edge over the Overseer, powerful as it is and vast as its hordes or minions may be. The heroes have the ability to avoid all of the Overseer's detection systems, instantaneously pass through barriers designed to withstand the explosive power of a micro-missile, and resist the effects of the Overseer's insidious mind-controlling devices. What can the Overseer possibly do to stop an *unseen servant*?— a mere 1st-level wizard spell, yet one that, cleverly used, might cause the mechanical constructs all sorts of problems. How about the 1st-level priest spell *create water*? Certainly delicate electrical systems and circuits cannot fare well when water is splashed on them. A wizard with a few carefully selected spells—*dimension door, teleport*, and *wraithform*, for instance—could get into a secure area and out again without so much as batting an eye, disrupting the best defenses the Overseer can muster.

This is an important point. The characters are few in number, compared to the might of the Overseer's endless horde of constructs. But dramatic tension demands that they must feel like they can make a difference. Magic should be their ace in the hole. Don't suggest any of these advantages to them—they'll realize it eventually on their own—but when they begin to realize just how effective they can be, let them savor the moment. Likely as not, they have been on the run, overmatched by the killing machines of the Overseer, for quite a while now. It's time to allow them to turn the tables.

The Rael should be suitably impressed with the PCs' abilities, too. The space-faring species has felt technologically superior for a long time to any of the "native" races they've encountered. When they come to realize the true potential of

the PCs' magic to stop the Overseer's forces, they should definitely develop a newfound respect for the characters. After all, where the Rael have failed, the characters just might succeed.

All of this is not to say that defeating the Overseer should be a cakewalk. On the contrary, the evil Artificial Intelligence has surrounded itself with the most sophisticated detection and defense equipment it can conceive of. And it has literally an army of killer constructs at its beck and call, ready to annihilate the characters the moment they make their presence known. Once it begins to appreciate the magnitude of the threat they pose, it would gladly smash whole planets, if possible, just to eliminate them. The characters should certainly have to wade through a pile of constructs and Doomed to get to their goal.

The Overseer's CPU is still located on the planet of its creators, the Kir. It still operates from deep within its original fortified complex, controlling the hierarchy of its massive machine empire from deep within its lair. The first thing the characters will have to do is find and travel to this planet. This is not an easy task at all, as they will have to move through the Overseer's (heavily defended) home space. They certainly will never be able to do this without the Rael's help, since the PCs don't even know where they are going. The Rael, of course, know all too well where the blight that threatens to wipe out their civilization originated, and Jazra or any other Rael pilot can point it out on a star chart.

For PCs with an aversion to doing things the easy way, a kind DM might allow the characters to learn their destination through more traditional means—say through an *augury* or *communing* with a god—but even then, the PCs still have to get there. One possible route is to allow the characters to reach the Kir planet through the planes (especially if you employ the PLANESCAPE® setting in your campaign). It is possible that there is a planar portal leading from Sigil to the Kir planet, but finding this portal should be a major adventure in and of itself. Once the characters reach this planet, they must penetrate the fortified complex. This complex is not detailed in this boxed set, as it is beyond the scope of the campaign: not everyone will wish to take their *Tale of the Comet* campaign this far. For those who wish to pursue the adventure to its bitter end, when you sit down to create this complex, think huge. There should be layers and layers of defenses, like the layers of an onion, each more insidious and difficult than the last. To get some great ideas for defenses, watch some bank-robbery and museum-caper movies. Think about motion sensors, laser detection systems, pressure plates, heat sensors, cameras, voice detection systems, vacuum rooms, electrified grates (or even whole electrified rooms and corridors), and force fields. Of course, there should also be lots and lots of weaponry, as well as swarms and swarms of mobile attack units,
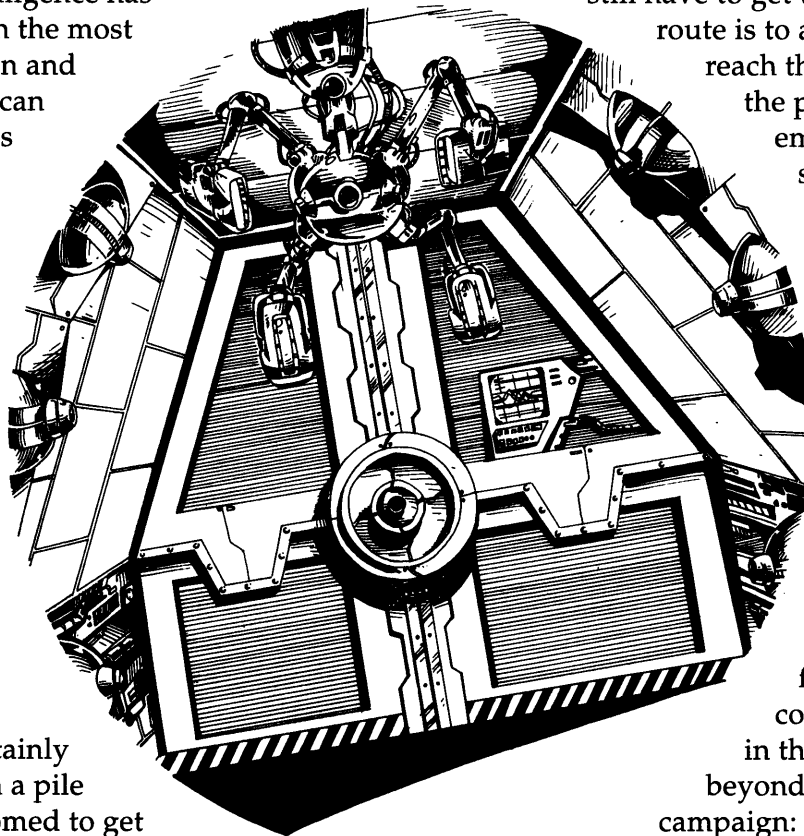
particularly spider drones, seekers, destroyers, annihilators, and even a few Doomed (remnants of the first ill-fated Rael expedition; the original Kir "Lost Ones" long ago succumbed to the ravages of time). As the first organic visitors the Overseer has had for many a year, the heroes should find that most of the defenses are recent, created since the Rael discovered the Overseer and turned it back on. But just to make things more interesting and unpredictable, some of them date back to the original Kir laboratories (like the voice detection equipment—the Overseer has no need of voice imprint scanning equipment, since it doesn't speak and would never need to allow access to someone else with a voice).

If you are feeling particularly cruel, the Overseer might even have developed a nasty sense of humor over the years, causing it to install some devilish traps for the characters to stumble into. This should involve puzzles of logic, where the wrong choice spells dire consequences. The reason for this is that, in addition to its paranoia, the Overseer has also developed a strong "superiority complex"—after all, it *is* winning this war (or was, until the player characters showed up and hopefully put a crimp in its plans). Still, its occasional defeats and temporary setbacks have been due almost entirely to irrational reactions by organics. The Overseer, a strictly logical entity, cannot properly predict what its living enemies are going to do and thus cannot react properly to them. Frustrated by these infuriating bouts with unpredictability, the Overseer has decided that if a creature ever wants to challenge it directly, the challenger is going to have to play by *its* rules. Remember, as logical as the Overseer is, it is still a little off its rocker. It can find a rational explanation for anything it does if it thinks about it hard enough.

One major obstacle in the PCs' path to victory over the Overseer is going to be the need at some point to interface with a computer of some sort or another. In order to seem true to the genre, penetrating to the heart of the Overseer's lair should require some fancy code breaking, circuitry bypassing, and a whole lot of other science-fiction style of actions. The problem is, while the *players* will be expecting all this, their *characters* won't have a clue on how to interact with sophisticated computer hardware and programming. Even the most brilliant wizard does not have to kind of knowledge necessary to break computer code or be a "hacker" in this technological universe. Therefore, the heroes are going to have to rely on the Rael. Any overall plan for achieving success against the Overseer itself should incorporate teamwork among the characters and their Rael allies. Attempts by the player characters to go it alone are going to meet with utter failure—not because of any condition imposed by you, the DM, but by the very nature of the setting.

When designing your Overseer's lair, keep in mind this ultimate truth: the characters are going to have to find a special way of defeating the thing, not just through a frontal assault. The Overseer has too much brainpower (not to mention sense of self-preservation) to leave itself so vulnerable to such an attack. There are a few suggestions later in this section, but the final decision is up to you, the DM. You should base your choice on the flavor of your campaign and the personality of the characters (and players) in it. The grand plan should definitely incorporate the use of magic somewhere along the way, though.

The computer has to have a power source to continue to operate. This has always been the case, and the Overseer has attempted to protect its power as much as it has tried to protect itself. In order to make absolutely certain that power will never be lost, it has created an entire series of power supplies, each separate and independent of the others. Therefore, simply cutting off the power is not as easy of an option as it sounds. In addition to its main (well-hidden) nuclear power plants, the Overseer has established a whole array of back-up systems—batteries, solar panels, thermal turbines, hydraulic turbines, wind mills;

you name it. The characters would have to get each and every one of these power supplies offline at the same time, and the Overseer has spread them far apart from one another to ensure that it is a most difficult task.

Another potential weak spot for the computer is its memory chips—its brains, so to speak. If the chips could be pulled, then the computer would lose its memory and be helpless to defend itself. The Overseer has countered this by creating several duplicates of itself, all of which operate independently. It is, in effect, a multiple personality, with each operating in sync with the others. If one of the personalities goes offline, the others immediately attempt to bring it back online. If all are downed, a special independent slave processor safely hidden away in an ancient Kir bomb shelter automatically activates itself. Its task is to reboot the system, if possible, first performing a diagnostic to see if memory chips are missing. If so, it replaces them with backups drawn from a vast archive established by the Overseer just for that purpose.

Finally, as a last resort if all is lost, the Overseer has one last trick up its sleeve (as it were). It can download its core programming to a special satellite stationed unobtrusively overhead in geosynchronous orbit. The satellite then sheds its camouflage shell, revealing a small, fast space ship, which then attempts to flee into deep space. The Overseer is loathe to exercise this option, since it not only sacrifices the bulk of its memory but also loses control of its vast organization of constructs in the process. It will only do so in the last extremity, then attempt to put as much distance between itself and the Rael as possible. Unless noticed (no mean feat in itself) and promptly intercepted, it vanishes into the vastness of space, seeking a new place to establish a safe refuge and one day rebuild its empire.

Frustrated heroes might consider the possibility of destroying the entire Kir planet. Keep in mind, however, that some sort of planet buster would already be in production if the AI could make it—what better way to wipe out species wholesale than to destroy the very planets on which they lived? Explain to the characters that, short of a *wish* spell, there just isn't anything powerful enough to seriously disrupt the Overseer. The destruction of the Overseer will require much determination, a vast amount of hard work, and subtle, long-range planning.

One thing to definitely avoid is the *deus ex machina* solution to the problem, where the characters discover some sort of device that simply does the work for them. There are a few artifacts that would serve this purpose (*Kuroth's Quill*, for example—see *Book of Artifacts* for more information). Invoking the power of a deity might also work, in essence pronouncing *anathema* on the entire planet (see James Blish's novel *A Case of Conscience* for an example of divine planet-smiting). But these methods in general do not satisfy the players. They make the

Twin Paths Diverge

players feel instead as though they were incapable of discovering a method on their own and needed help from the DM to succeed. Instead, let them use powerful magics and deities as sources of information. Let the characters find out how to defeat the Overseer through the use of these powers, but leave the actual implementation of the destruction to them.

So. What are some ways the characters might be able to defeat the computer? As mentioned before, the use of some sort of magic is going to be integral to success. One solution could be for the characters to somehow get inside the actual, physical casing where the computer's memory chips are stored (a *reduce* spell might do the trick), then use a *wand of lightning* aimed right at circuit boards—that should short out its systems pretty quickly. Even better, a *sphere of annihilation*, while extremely dangerous to use, would certainly wreak havoc as it passed through the interior of the Overseer.

There are some other similar methods of physically destroying the Overseer directly, but there are some more subtle ways to do it, too. The PCs could transport the Overseer's processing center into another dimension, perhaps to an alternate plane (just think what might happen if the system wound up on the elemental plane of water). The system would be cut off from all of its power sources (except for perhaps an internal battery), and it certainly would be helpless without any constructs to aid it. Even if the PCs had to do this once for each duplicate CPU, it eliminates each one and prevents the others from restoring the lost ones.

If the characters rely heavily on information-gathering spells like *divination* for guidance, or if they actually have the ability to consult with a deity directly, the DM may choose to provide them with some critical information that would aid them in destroying the Overseer. This could be the discovery of the original "back door" created by the Kir long ago (see page 10 of Book 1)—a few lines of code (in the ancient Kir language, of course; the Overseer still programs

in that) that orders the computer to shut itself down. Of course, the characters must still get to the Overseer's headquarters and type in the command—no mean feat—but if they succeed they turn off the whole system, not just one installation.

There are bound to be other methods that reveal themselves as you work up the final maps and adventure material for destroying the Overseer. Keep in mind the personality of the players as far as how they approach dealing with obstacles (are they more prone to have the characters pound on them, or are they a finesse and puzzle-solving group?). The average level of the PCs and your intentions for wrapping up the campaign should also be taken into consideration. If you want this to culminate in a climactic reality-shaking ending that gets the characters back to their home world instantly, you are going to design the flaws differently than if you hope to keep the characters wandering the stars for a while longer, cleaning up the messes that the Overseer made (restoring the Doomed, eliminating renegade constructs, etc.) and helping the Rael rebuild their battered trading empire.

Home Again, Home Again

It's entirely possible that after having defeated the Overseer's intrusion into their own world and having helped the Rael retake their arcology, the player characters will decide that enough is enough and want to return to their home world and resume their regularly scheduled adventure. It's also possible that the constructs overrunning the arcology may prove too much for them and that they may flee through the gate back to Aston Point, tail between their legs and just in front of a large force of killer constructs and Doomed. Destroying the gate in the ruins of the *Fworta* will stymie pursuit, but the heroes must live with the knowledge that their retreat has probably doomed the Rael homeworld. They should also worry over the possibility that the Secondary

Twin Paths Diverge

Director on board the *Fworta*, before it was destroyed, somehow radioed home the coordinates of their planet to its master. Somewhere out there is an implacable foe who's already bested them once. Everytime they look up into the night sky, they should wonder if each shooting star heralds another invasion.

If the PCs evacuated the base with all the surviving Rael in tow, they have refugees to resettle. The Rael can advise them on how to dismantle the gate from their end, permanently closing the dimensional tunnel and ending the threat of another invasion via that means. Playing mentor to the newly-established Rael colony should keep the characters busy for a while and offer plenty of adventure opportunities.

On the brighter side, if the heroes do succeed in freeing the arcology, the Rael may decide to leave the gate open and establish an outpost at the crash site, replacing the wreckage with a small arcology designed to blend in unobtrusively (from the outside, at least) with the local architecture.

In addition, now that they've had a clear demonstration of how useful magic could be to turn the tide, they'll send a delegation of some dozen likely apprentices to study this strange new Art and carry it back to their people. In time, given that edge, the Rael as a race are going to begin picking their life up again, putting the pieces back together. But it's going to take them a while; gates must be brought back on line, destroyed centers must be rebuilt, and thousands of homeless Rael are going to have to be taken care of. And if the heroes did stay and see the war through to its bitter end, the Rael are *very* grateful for the characters' assistance. The PCs will be taken to Tam-Rael for the Rael equivalent of a ticker-tape parade, after which they will be feted in style before receiving the highest honors Rael society has to offer. Then, if they desire, they will be escorted back home in style.

Of course, things will never be the same on the characters' world again. The Rael will be eager to begin trading with this strange new planet. You as DM must make some decisions about how much of their technology you want to begin to infiltrate your campaign world. Perhaps the Rael have begun to develop a sense of responsibility not to put too much technology into the hands of less advanced civilizations. Perhaps their own way of life has come so close to the brink of annihilation that it's going to be a long, long time (several Rael generations at least) before their trading network is up and running again, much less expanding to new worlds (like the PCs'). All of these are viable explanations to keep from flooding the world with blasters and missiles as well as survival tents and infrared binoculars.

The technological stuff the characters already have is easy enough to get rid of, should you find it necessary to do so. Weapons eventually run out of ammunition, and when it's gone, there is no more. They also are fragile (as noted in *The Cast and Props*; see the item saving throw tables on

page 18 of that book), and rough use or abuse is going to break them sooner or later. Powerful beings may decide that they would like these marvelous toys for their own amusement, and send agents to steal them. Or you can evoke the Drow rule, and decree that the technological items garnered from the Overseer and Rael slowly lose their effectiveness once cut off from their own setting, becoming completely non-functional and inert in 1–6 months. In short, there are plenty of ways for the DM to deplete the supply of Rael technology when the time comes.

After the Comet

All in all, the face of your campaign world will have changed. But if this is handled right, no permanent damage to playability or game balance need occur. If you set this mini-setting down into an existing campaign, then you have a new region (the Aston Point area) to develop further, should you choose to do so. If you made this the beginning of a brand new setting, then you still have the perfect place to continue with a more normal series of events.

Aston Point is not likely to ever be the same again. The monks on the hill may find this to be more than a little disturbing and disappointing, but the place is likely to become a booming town soon enough. Many of the people who flocked there to stake a claim in the fabulous wealth they believed would be brought about by the appear-ance of the comet will decide to stick around, set-ting up this business or that. The tent city will slowly disappear, to be replaced by permanent homes. The garrison at Aston Keep will expand to keep up with the swelling population; sooner or later, either Torgia Mel will be permanently appointed the local baron or that cousin of the lord is going to recognize the great boon to be had by establishing a formal presence in Aston Point, perhaps coming into conflict with a PC wanting to carve out some territory for himself or herself. There's lots of room for expansion.

If the characters decide to stick around as well, then the wilderness of the mountains has more than enough interesting things going on to keep them busy. The humanoids on the other side of the ridge could certainly begin to stir up trouble, attracted by all the new homesteads and businesses to raid—especially if some of them got a hold of a missing supply of Rael blasters. The other side of the ridge itself may need exploring; perhaps vast amounts of uncharted wilderness lie in that direction, waiting for someone to pave a road through it to a new frontier. Perhaps the Secondary Director sent a patrol of constructs, accompanied by their own replicators, to explore in that direction, and they must be located and wiped out before they establish a whole series of secret bases scattered across the continent. Whatever the direction you and the players decide to go, there's plenty that can be done with the Aston Point region.

Designer's Notes

When I was first assigned to write this project, I asked the Creative Director in charge of it, Steve Winter, what should it be about. He basically told me, "This is the setting where we combine magic and technology together under some unusual circumstances. Beyond that, it's your call, but be sure to incorporate the title into your story somehow." He had some definite ideas about what *he* would have done if he were working on it, but he encouraged me to put my own spin on things.

From the very beginning, there were some interesting challenges that had to be met, potential problems that had to be ironed out before development could even begin. For instance, how could I integrate technology into a game system that already operates within a more or less closed environment? How do I keep this side trek from unbalancing the campaign as a whole? What sort of science fiction genre should I draw upon? Lots of people had great advice, including Steve, on how to achieve a successful melding of magic and technology, but it was still a long process of coming up with just the right recipe. The answers I finally came up with to these questions really defined what this product would be—and what it would not be.

The first question, how could technology be integrated into an existing game system, became the most important. I was faced with crowbarring a set of parameters into a combat system that was not really equipped to handle them. The ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® combat system spans a certain level of power. There is only so much destruction a character can do with a melee or missile weapon, and even the magic in the game has to function within the given system. Introducing high-tech weaponry and defense systems was going to blow that system out of the water exponentially. In the end, I came up with something that I believe accomplished two very important goals; it didn't break the system and it didn't force the players and the DM to learn lots of new rules. In this way, the game could proceed as normal, and the mechanics would remain in the background, not getting in the way of the fun.

Figuring out how to make certain that introducing all sorts of new goodies into a medieval setting wouldn't permanently unbalance the game proved to be a lot easier than I at first thought. In the same way that a Dungeon Master needs to relieve the characters

of a few of their treasures, I realized that there were simple methods of depleting the blasters and grenades and missiles. Looking back on the situation, it really makes sense anyway; Rael technology on the PCs' home world is a disruptive influence, and the bureaucracy of entropy is making sure that things smooth themselves out again.

Finally, I'd like to mention the genre issue. I had a hard time trying to decide just what kind of a science fiction theme to play up in *Tale of the Comet*. There are so many different topics to choose from, it was hard to imagine which ones might appeal to the most people. I also didn't want to fall into the trap of choosing subjects that lots of other games dealt with. So I ended up mixing and matching different ideas together as they came into my head, culling the best stuff out of all of it.

What I ended up with was something obviously unique, but at the same time containing very recognizable elements. Looking back on them now, I can see where subconsciously I must have been selecting from the very things that were appealing to me at the time. I drew from a conglomeration of cinema, television, computer game, and book sources that all seemed to be hot at the moment. But I wasn't intending for it to be that way, honest. It just happened. Most of these sources I included in the inspirational reading/viewing section, below.

One last choice I was faced with goes hand in hand with the question of subject matter. I had to decide whether to set the mini-campaign *in* the PCs' world or *away* from it. I tried quizzing a lot of my co-workers on which way *they* would prefer it, but their answer came back about 50/50, so that was little help (thanks, guys). That's when I got the idea—give 'em both! Why not set things up so that part of the setting is on the characters' world, and part is in a completely new, very alien location? Provide means of moving from one to the other, and I have the perfect solution to my problem. Those DMs who want to keep the whole thing right there in their existing campaign worlds can do it, and those who just want to zip the PCs off to the alien world can do that, too. Everyone else can use both.

So there you go. I hope you enjoy using *Tale of the Comet* as much as I enjoyed inventing it. Hard science it ain't, but that's not what it was intended to be. It's just

supposed to be a lot of good old-fashioned fun. And when your players' characters are in the thick of it, pinned down in some desperate battle, almost out of ammo, with a horde of mechanical nightmares closing in fast, remember that that's just the way I imagined it.

—Thomas M. Reid

Suggested Reading/Viewing

Movies
   The *Alien* trilogy
   Total Recall
   Terminator and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*
   Bladerunner
Television
   Star Trek: The Next Generation (Borg episodes)
Books
   Neuromancer
   When H.A.R.L.I.E. Was One
Computer Games
   Doom and *Doom II*

Editor's Notes:

At first glance, AD&D might seem like the last game system where you'd expect to find a science fiction scenario. In truth, however, the mix of high fantasy and science fiction/space opera goes right back to the game's roots: "Temple of the Frog," the first published game scenario for D&D® (or indeed any role-playing game), centers on the disruption caused by stranded aliens on a D&D world (BLACKMOOR®), and the PCs' efforts to eliminate the threat caused by their strange new technology. *Metamorphosis Alpha* (1976) was essentially a dungeon in space, and early issues of DRAGON® magazine describe the adventures of a band of D&D characters suddenly swept on board that strange derelict spaceship and their efforts to find their way home again. The famous AD&D module S3, *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, ties in with the original "dungeon in space" by describing the fate of a section jettisoned from the original ship which has crashed into the PCs' world, unleashing strange monsters upon the surrounding countryside.

And then there are those curious artifacts, the *Machine of Lum the Mad* and *Mighty Servant of Leuk-o*—

according to their original descriptions in *Eldritch Wizardry*, the one an ancient piece of high tech and the other a "relic of a visiting race of space aliens." Either would have fit in well on the world of Tekumel, the first published role-playing game campaign setting (*Empire of the Petal Throne*, 1975, TSR), a lost colony world that had evolved into a fantasy world during millennia of isolation.

While it's popular to blend science fiction and fantasy—witness the popularity of Anne McCaffrey's Pern, Marian Zimmer Bradley's Darkover, and of course *Star Wars*—throwing a pure fantasy character without warning into a science fiction setting has dramatic possibilities all its own. Any DM who wants to get fully into the spirit of things would do well to read Poul Anderson's *The High Crusade*, a short novel about some 12th-century crusaders who capture an invading spaceship and set off to conquer an alien star empire (a short story sharing the same setting appeared in issue #16 of *Ares* magazine).

Role-players could get valuable tips by watching the old British tv show *Dr. Who*, especially the episodes featuring Leela and Jamie. Most Americans suffer from what Inkling Owen Barfield called "chronological snobbery"—the assumption that people today are somehow innately smarter than people who lived a long time ago in less technologically "advanced" cultures. Watching the "primitive" warrior Leela learn to cope quite effectively with time travel, robots, computers, and laser rifles in episodes like "The Face of Evil," "The Robots of Death," and "The Invasion of Time" should prove a valuable object lesson for how a fantasy character can function in a science-fiction setting (despite the occasional set-back, such as the time she stabs a computer with a knife and receives a nasty shock—ouch!).

Remember to help the players maintain the mind-set of their characters and translate everything they see and experience into terms they can understand; an ambitious DM might even want to read C. S. Lewis's book *The Discarded Image* for a description of how medieval people conceived of the world—what we would call their "world-view." Whatever style of play you decide on, and whatever direction you decide to take the campaign, remember to have fun.

——John D. Rateliff, Ph. D.

Appendix:
Character Conversions: AD&D® Rules to Alternity™ Rules

The ALTERNITY™ science fiction game, scheduled for release in 1998, is an independent roleplaying system, but interested players can convert their favorite characters into ALTERNITY game heroes using the following AD&D game conversion rules. These newly converted heroes can then continue their amazing adventures in the unexplored reaches of science fiction.

These rules represent a quick, easy way to import fantasy roleplaying characters into a science fiction setting. You can, of course, alter the conversion rules as they appear here to reflect the realities of your own setting.

Ability Scores

Consult the table below and record the character's new Ability Scores:

AD&D Rules	ALTERNITY Rules
3–4	4
5–6	5
7	6
8	7
9	8
10–11	9
12–13	10
14–15	11
16	12
17	13
18	14
19+	15+

Race

Obviously, a human remains a human, but there's one change: Humans of a medieval fantasy setting acquire Animal Handling instead of Vehicle Operation.

Demihumans convert to aliens, with modifications to their base broad skills and special powers as follows:

Dwarves

Dwarves receive the following free broad skills: Athletics, Stamina, Knowledge, Awareness, Resolve, and Interaction.

Magic and Poison Resistance: Dwarves gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against Arcane Magic and Faith FX specialty skills (see *Chapter 13: Game Options* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide*). Dwarves also gain a –2 bonus to Constitution feat checks caused by poison and radiation hazards.

Defensive Skill: Dwarves gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against melee attacks or unarmed attacks from humanoid aliens 3 meters or taller in height.

Infravision: Dwarves ignore any penalties that apply in situations of low illumination or total darkness—provided there are objects producing radiant heat in the area.

Mining Skills: Dwarves possess an innate Will-based broad skill that allows them to check for the following phenomena:

Detect grade or slope	–2 bonus
Detect new construction	–2 bonus
Detect sliding/shifting walls or rooms	–1 bonus
Detect stonework traps, pits, and deadfalls	no modifier
Detect approximate depth underground	no modifier

Elves

Elves receive the following free broad skills: Athletics, Melee Weapons or Primitive Ranged Weapons (player's choice), Stealth, Knowledge, Awareness, and Interaction.
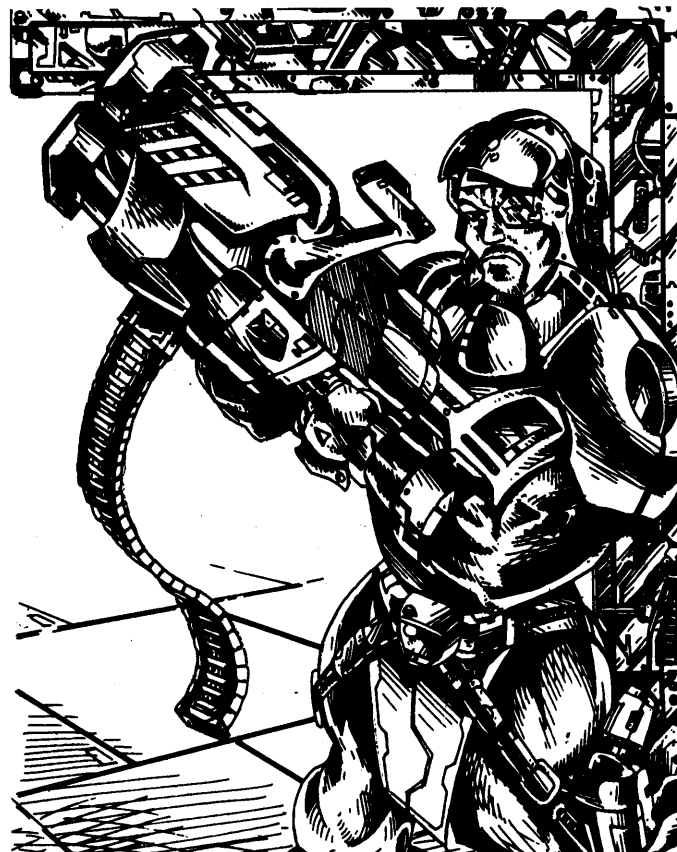
Charm Resistance: Elves gain +4 steps to their resistance modifiers against all Arcane Magic, Faith, and Super Power *charm* or *sleep* FX specialty skills (see *Chapter 13: Game Options* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide* for more details), as well as *charm*- and *sleep*-like psionic powers.

Infravision: Elves ignore any penalties that apply in situations of low illumination or total darkness—provided there are objects producing radiant heat in the area.

Secret Door Detection: Elves gain a –2 bonus to their Investigate–*search* skill checks. If an elf doesn't have the Investigate broad skill, he gains this bonus to his untrained skill checks.

Gnomes

Gnomes receive the Athletics, Stamina, Manipulation, Knowledge, Awareness, and Interaction broad skills at no cost.

Magic Resistance: Gnomes gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against Arcane Magic and Faith FX specialty skills.

Defensive Skills: Gnomes gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against melee attacks or unarmed attacks from humans or humanoid aliens 2.5 meters or taller in height.

Infravision: Gnomes ignore any penalties that apply in situations of low illumination or total darkness—provided there are objects producing radiant heat in the area.

Mining Skills: Gnomes possess an innate Will-based broad skill that allows them to check for the following phenomena:

Detect grade or slope	–2 bonus
Detect new construction	–2 bonus
Detect sliding/shifting walls or rooms	–1 bonus
Detect stonework traps, pits, and deadfalls	no modifier
Detect approximate depth underground	no modifier

Halflings

Halflings receive the following free broad skills: Stamina, Stealth, Knowledge, Awareness, Resolve, and Interaction.

Magic and Poison Resistance: Halflings gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against Arcane Magic and Faith FX specialty skills. Halflings also gain a –2 bonus to Constitution feat checks caused by poison and radiation hazards.

Throwing Bonus: Halflings gain a –1 bonus when using Athletics–*throw*. If a halfling doesn't have the Athletics broad skill, he receives the bonus to his untrained skill checks.

Infravision: Stout halflings ignore any penalties that apply in situations of low illumination or total darkness—provided there are objects producing radiant heat in the area. The infravision of other halflings negates up to +2 steps of penalties for near or total darkness.

Half-Elves

Half-elves receive the following free broad skills: Athletics, Stealth, Stamina, Knowledge, Awareness, and Interaction.

Charm Resistance: Half-elves gain +2 steps to their resistance modifiers against Arcane Magic, Faith, and Super Power *charm* or *sleep* FX specialty skills (see *Chapter 3: Game Options* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide*) as well as *charm-* and *sleep-*like psionic powers.

Infravision: Half-elves ignore any penalties that apply in situations of low illumination or total darkness—provided there are objects producing radiant heat in the area.

Secret Door Detection: Half-elves gain a –1 bonus to their Investigate–*search* skill checks. A half-elf who doesn't have the Investigate skill gains this bonus to his untrained skill checks.

Converting Class to Profession

The next step in the conversion process is selecting a profession that corresponds to the character's class. The suggested guidelines and special notes are listed below:

Fighter	➔	Combat Spec
Paladin	➔	Combat Spec
Ranger	➔	Combat Spec
Cleric	➔	Diplomat
Druid	➔	Diplomat
Thief	➔	Free Agent
Bard	➔	Diplomat
Mage	➔	Tech Op
Specialist Wizard	➔	Tech Op

Fighter

If the character is a weapon specialist, he should select a specialty skill that represents the weapon type in which he specializes for his Combat Spec situation bonus. For example, if a fighter is specialized in the long sword, he should assign his bonus to the Melee Weapons–*blade* skill.

Paladin

Paladins retain several of their special benefits, as shown below. Paladins *must* select the Faith perk during conversion to ALTERNITY rules.

Detect Evil: The paladin can detect evil intent at a range of up to 20 meters with a successful Awareness skill check.

Saving Throw Bonus and *Disease Immunity:* Paladins receive a –1 bonus to all Constitution feat checks against hazards.

Healing: Once per day, paladins may heal 1 wound point per level by *laying on hands.* They can also *cure disease* once per week for every 5 levels they possess.

Magic: Paladins can use magic at 9th level and higher (see the "Magic" section below).

Ranger

Rangers *must* select Stealth, Investiage, and its specialty skill *track* during conversion to ALTERNITY rules. Class benefits translate in the following fashion:

Two-Weapon Fighting: If the ranger wears armor with an action penalty of +1 or less, he can fight with a weapon in each hand at no penalty.

Tracking: Rangers gain a –2 bonus to all Investigate–*track* skill checks, and automatically gain 1 rank in Investigate–*track* for every three levels (3rd, 6th, 9th, etc.) they possess.

Species Enemy: Against one type of enemy, rangers gain a –2 bonus to attack skill checks, but suffer a +2 penalty to any encounter skills they attempt to use.

Animal Handling: When a ranger uses this skill, he gains a –1 bonus for every three levels (–1 at 3rd, –2 at 6th, etc.) he possesses.

Magic: Rangers can use magic, beginning at 8th level. See "Magic" section for more details.

Mages and Specialist Wizards

A wizard's major power is the ability to employ spells (see the "Magic" section for more information). Thus, wizards receive the Arcane Magic FX broad skill for free. In addition, wizards can wear any armor that does not carry an action check penalty (for example, the CF coat) and still cast spells.

While most wizards possess minimal weapon skills when first converted, they may acquire any new skills and wield any weapons once they leave their homeworlds.

Specialist Wizard Saving Throw Modifier: When a specialist wizard uses an Arcane Magic FX specialty skill from his preferred school, the specialist gains a –1 bonus.

Clerics

Magic is the chief weapon of the cleric; see the "Magic" section below. Clerics cannot use weapons that spill blood, so Melee–*bludgeon* weapons remain their first choice. Stutter weapons and any other weapons that only inflict stun damage are also acceptable. Clerics *must* select the Faith perk during character conversion, but they receive the Faith FX broad skill free.

Druids

Druids *must* select the Life Science broad skill and the *botany* and *zoology* specialty skills during the conversion to ALTERNITY rules. They use magic (see the "Magic" section below) and retain several special benefits:

Identify Plants, Animals, and Pure Water: When a druid uses *botany* or *zoology* to identify lifeforms, he gains a –1 bonus for every 3 levels.

Pass Through Overgrown Areas: At 3rd level, the druid acquires the Movement–*trailblazing* skill at no cost.

Thieves

Thieves *must* purchase the Stealth and Manipulation broad skills during conversion to ALTERNITY rules, and they must buy at least 1 rank in Athletics–*climb.* There are no other special conversion notes for thieves.

Bard

All bards must select the Entertainment and Manipulation broad skills, as well as at least 1 rank in Athletics–*climb.* Bards gain the ability to cast wizard spells beginning at 3rd level (see the "Magic" section).

Influence Reactions: Bards gain a –1 bonus for every three levels (–1 at 3rd, –2 at 6th, etc.) to any encounter skills they attempt to use after a successful use of their Entertainment skill.

Inspire Allies: If a bard chooses to inspire his allies in combat, all affected characters gain a –1 bonus to their attack rolls and a –1 bonus to resist hazards. The bard must perform for 3 rounds to inspire his friends, and the effects last 1 round per level.

Level

A character's level in the AD&D game system is translated directly to his level in the ALTERNITY game. For example, a 3rd-level paladin becomes a 3rd-level Combat Spec. The character is entitled to all the additional skill points appropriate for his level. For example, a 2nd-level character has 6 extra skill points to distribute. See "Advanced Heroes" in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide.*

Hit points, THAC0, and saving throw scores vanish.

When a hero in the AD&D game becomes a hero in the ALTERNITY game, he no longer advances in the AD&D game. No level-based benefits—such as new spells, special followers, or new class abilities—accrue. Whatever powers and abilities the hero possesses at the time of conversion are all he's ever going to get; the hero's advancement continues hereafter through benefits provided by the ALTERNITY rules.

Skills

Refer to TABLE P6: HUMAN HERO STARTING SKILL POINTS and TABLE P7: ALIEN HERO STARTING SKILL POINTS in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook,* and check the hero's new Intelligence score. Use Table P7 for demihuman heroes. The tables give the total number of broad and specialty skills the hero may have, along with the number of skill points available. After purchasing any skills mandated by the hero's class, you should have some leftover skill points to spend. Use these to round out the character's skills, converting as many of his nonweapon proficiencies as you can.

Three general guidelines you should follow in converting nonweapon proficiencies to skills are:

- If the proficiency has the same name as an existing skill (Swimming to Movement–*swim,* for instance) convert it directly. You may have to buy a new broad skill in order to find a match in the specialty skills.
- If the proficiency doesn't have a corresponding skill (for example, Appraising and Business), use your judgment and try to select skills that parallel what the character previously had. For example, Charioteering could become a specialty under the Daredevil broad skill.
- If no corresponding skill exists, try to find a skill that relies on the same Ability Score as the non-weapon proficiency. For example, Weather Sense could be a specialty skill under Physical Science. If none of these work, create a new broad skill for the proficiency.

Depending on the character's Intelligence and level, he may not be able to purchase all of the skills converted from nonweapon proficiencies. Identify proficiencies that are least important to the character concept and disregard them for now.

Combat Skills

Purchase the broad skills that the character needs in order to wield weapons in which he has proficiency. Almost all characters will be proficient in some kind of melee weapon, so they'll need the Melee Weapons broad skill. Many characters should also select the Primitive Ranged Weapons broad skill. If a character specializes in an unarmed fighting style, he should select Unarmed Attack or Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts.*

Heroes with unmodified THAC0s lower than 20 should purchase 1 specialty skill rank per 2 points of improvement in the weapon or weapons they typically use. For example, a 7th-level fighter has a THAC0 of 14, which is 6 points lower than 20. If he uses a long sword, he should purchase Melee Weapons–*blade 3.*

Remember, higher-level characters must pay for the skill levels they acquire. For example, purchasing the *blade 3* skill costs 9 skill points (2+3+4=9) for a Combat Spec hero.

Magic and Special Powers

Magic is not the focus of a science fiction setting. Thus, the default conversion rule is as follows: Magic simply doesn't work in the ALTERNITY game. If a wizard, cleric, or other spellcasting character adventures in an sf setting, he can't access his magical spells and abilities.

However, you can include magic in your universe by utilizing the FX rules found in *Chapter 13: Game Options* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide.* This allows you the flexibility of magic while maintaining an sf mood.

Before heroes can cast spells, they must purchase either the Arcane Magic or Faith FX broad skill. Converted wizards and priests receive their respective FX broad skills for free. Then they must convert their existing AD&D spells into FX specialty skills.

Converting Spellcasters In a Magical Universe

A character retains any spellcasting or magical abilities he had under the AD&D rules, replacing them with FX abilities. At the time of conversion, each character receives a number of skill points with which to convert AD&D spells into FX specialty skills according to the following progression: Wizards, clerics, druids, and specialty priests receive 7 points per level, bards receive 5 points per level above 2nd, rangers receive 5 points per level above 7th, and paladins receive 5 points per level above 8th. Converted characters cannot use these spell points to purchase other non-FX skills, though they can use their regular allotment of skill points to buy FX specialty skills.

Spellcasting heroes must spend their skill points on converting spells to FX abilities. A player must examine each spell and pay all costs necessary to convert it to an FX ability. Thus, high-level spells and spells that inflict great amounts of damage cost more than low-level ones.

Because of the nature of the FX rules, many AD&D spells will not retain their maximum effectiveness, or they will cost too much to purchase—forcing a hero (especially a high-level wizard) to lose a number of spells. If magic is to remain a central element of your campaign, you can reduce the cost of purchasing FX specialty skills at your discretion. However, you should enforce the point cost when heroes wish to purchase a new FX specialty skill. In this way, you can regulate the influx of magic into your setting.

Converting Nondamaging Spells

For most nondamaging spells, you must apply your judgment to determine the costs involved. In general, a 2-point penalty in the AD&D game system is roughly equal to a 1-step penalty in the ALTERNITY rules. Thus, a spell that improves the caster's Armor Class by 2 should instead improve his Strength resistance modifier by +1 step for as long as the spell is in effect.

Other Spells

Other spells have their normal effects as much as possible—for example, a knock FX specialty skill could open an electronic lock as easily as a stout bolt, while the silence 15' radius FX specialty skill does just what it should. For purposes of Hit Dice affected, an ALTERNITY game character or creature has a number of Hit Dice equal to its level (for characters) or one-half its Constitution (for creatures).

Example: Andrea is in the process of converting a mage in the AD&D game over to an ALTERNITY game hero. Currently, she is evaluating the *magic missile* spell. Using the FX rules, she creates the following specialty skill description:

Magic Missile

Arcane Magic Specialty, cost 9

This specialty skill allows the caster to manipulate energy into small bolts that inflict Ordinary Energy (En) damage. The caster makes a skill check using this specialty skill to determine the amount of damage: Critical Failure, missile attacks a random target; Marginal, d4–2w (minimum 1); Ordinary, d4–1w (minimum 1); Good, d4w; Amazing, d4+1w.

The caster receives a –1 bonus to his skill check at short range (up to 10 meters), no modifier at medium range (11–20 meters), and a +1 penalty to his skill check at long range (21–30 meters).

A hero receives one additional missile at skill ranks 3, 6, 9, and 12. Thus, a hero with *magic missile 6* can fire 3 missiles in a single combat round (one each phase, with any remaining missiles firing in the Marginal phase of the round).

After designing the specialty skill, Andrea checks "FX Specialty Skill Costs" in *Chapter 13: Game Options* in the ALTERNITY *Rulesmaster Guide* to figure out the total cost of the skill. She determines that the *magic missile* specialty skill costs 9 points. Of course, she could add trappings to the skill to lower this point cost.

Equipment

The equipment list in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* contains few items available at Progress Levels 0–3; the ALTERNITY game doesn't focus on primitive to medieval settings. A few weapons and types of armor translate directly—for example, the spear, short sword, broad sword, leather armor, chain mail, and plate mail.

Where possible, use the statistics as given. For example, if an AD&D game character happens to wear plate mail, use the stats for plate mail. If the match isn't perfect, loosely translate the hero's equipment to match. A long sword and broad sword are similar enough to use the same stats, while studded leather armor is close to normal leather armor.

You can also tweak the weapon and armor lists to get the exact stats you want. For example, a two-handed sword is somewhat larger and more powerful than a broad sword; if you simply add +1 or +2 to the broad sword's damage ratings, you'll have something approximating a two-handed sword. Similarly, banded mail is a little better than chain mail, so a suit of banded mail might offer a modest increase in protection over the listed chain mail stats.

Magical Items

Use the Super Power–*arcane relic* FX specialty skill for building magical items.

Fantasy Heroes In a Modern Game

Traditional class roles are likely to change as AD&D game characters are adapted to the ALTERNITY rules. For example, the fighting abilities of the former fighter and mage won't be that much different from each other, and clerics are no longer the walking first aid kits of the party—especially if they lose their magical powers. A good roleplayer should pick up on this shift and portray his character accordingly. Can a priest of Odin reconcile his beliefs with the fact that he no longer receives spells? Can a wizard turn his inquisitive mind and vast store of knowledge to the study of science and technology? Encourage your players to think about how their characters will deal with the changes in the universe around them.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
Campaign Adventure
Odyssey™

Book 3
Crossing Over

Master Equipment Chart

weapon	range	damage	ROF	speed	charges (expenditure)
blaster pistol	30/60/90	3d6	2	3	20 (1 per shot)
blaster rifle	50/100/200	6d6	1	7	20 (2 per shot)
blaster cannon					
light	80/150/250	8d6	1 or 5[1]	10	20 (4 per shot)
heavy	80/150/250	12d6	1 or 4[1]	10	20 (5 per shot)
flame thrower					
personal	10/20/30 or 10[2]	2d6 + special[3]	1	6	20 (1 per shot)
vehicular	20/30/40 or 20[2]	4d6 + special[3]	1	8	20 (1 per shot)
grenades					
high explosive	10/20/30	6d6	1	4	n/a (1)
smoke	10/20/30	none[4]	1	4	n/a (1)
stun	10/20/30	1d4 + special[5]	1	4	n/a (1)
grenade launcher	30/60/90	n/a	3	2	9
magnum cannon					
personal	100/200/300	5d4 or 4d10[6]	1	9	30 (1 or 5)[6]
turret mounted	100/200/300	5d4 or 4d10[6]	1	5 or 2	50 (1 or 5)[6]
missiles, hand launcher	100/150/200		1/3	10	
missiles, array	500		any/all	4	
high explosive	(40' radius)	12d6[7]			
incendiary	(20' radius)	3d8 per round[8]			
electromagnetic pulse	(50' radius)	none[9]			
molecular plasma	(75' radius)	special[10]			
stungun	10/20/30	special[11]	1	4	30
gas, infectious	10	special[12]	1	4	
gas, poisonous	10	death or 25 hp[13]	1	4	
stun field generator	10	special[14]	1	7	15

[1] –6 penalty to each attack roll when in rapid fire mode.

[2] spray, 120° arc; each victim suffers half damage.

[3] target is covered with burning fuel, suffering 2d6 more points of damage on the next round and 1d6 on the round after that, whereupon the flame burns out.

[4] obscures 30' diameter area for 2d4+4 rounds.

[5] stuns all creatures within 20' radius for 1d4+1 rounds (save vs. paralyzation to resist).

[6] the latter figures are for steady fire mode (20' wide area, –4 penalty to hit each target within that area).

[7] target may save vs. breath weapon at –4 penalty for half-damage.

[8] gel burns for 1d6+4 rounds and cannot be extinguished by normal means.

[9] items within range must save vs. electricity or short out.

[10] individuals within range must save vs. death; items save vs. disintegration; unpredictable secondary effects.

[10] target immobilized for 2d4+8 rounds (save vs. paralyzation to resist).

[12] all targets within 30' radius die within 1d4 days from a terminal disease (save vs. death to resist).

[13] all living creatures within 30' radius die within 1 minute (save vs. poison to survive, taking a mere 25 points of damage).

[14] stuns all living creatures within 30' radius (save vs. paralyzation to resist).

VEHICLES	AC	hp	mvt	crew
assault tank	–4	80	24	5
attack fighter	0	30	48 (B)	2
hydroskimmer	3	45	36	8
jet glider	7	15	36 (B)	2
personnel transport	5	35	24	12
star cruiser	–10	1000	n/a	100
space station	–10	5000	n/a	0 (constructs)
battle cruiser	–10	3000	n/a	0 (constructs)
command center	–10	n/a	nil	0 (constructs)
light cruiser	–10	1000	n/a	0 (constructs)

COMMAND UNITS	AC	HD	Int	Mvt
Master Programmer	8	4 (15 hp)	25	nil (space station)
Primary Director	8	3 (12 hp)	22	nil (battle cruiser)
Secondary Director	8	3 (10 hp)	19	nil (light cruiser, surface command)

ATTACK UNITS	AC	HD	Int	Mvt
drone fighter	3	7 (35 hp)	6	40 (B)
prowler (scout)	5	4 (20 hp)	10	36 (B)
destroyer (light attack hovercraft)	3	5 (25 hp)	8	30 (C)
annihilator (heavy attack hovercraft)	0	7 (35 hp)	6	24 (C)
firestorm (ultra-light tank)	2	6 (30 hp)	6	24
deathstrike (heavy tank)	–2	9 (45 hp)	6	18
spider drone (infantry unit)	4	3 (15 hp)	9	9
Doomed	3	4 (20 hp)	1	12

OTHER UNITS	AC	HD	Int	Mvt
assimilator (Doomed constructor)	1	5 (20 hp)	14	6
collector (miner/gatherer)	6	10 (60 hp)	4	3
replicator (modular construction unit)	7	1 (5 hp)	8	3
seeker (sensor drone)	6	1 (2 hp)	15	12 (A)

OTHER EQUIPMENT
Rael armor
comlink
gas mask
infrared/lowlight binoculars
medikit
personal motion sensor
survival tent

Wizard Spells

Spells that do not affect constructs

charm person
chill touch
color spray
hypnotism
sleep
spook
taunt

blindness
deafness
ESP
hypnotic pattern
scare
Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter

haste
hold person
slow
suggestion

charm monster
confusion
emotion
enervation
fear
phantasmal killer
polymorph other
rainbow pattern

chaos
cloudkill
domination
dream
hold monster
Leomund's lamentable belaborment

death spell
eyebite
geas
mass suggestion

finger of death
power word, stun
statue
simulacrum

antipathy/sympathy
demand
mass charm
Otto's irresistable dance
power word, blind
trap the soul

power word, kill
weird

Spells that do not affect the Doomed

charm person
hypnotism
sleep
spook
taunt
ESP
hypnotic pattern
scare
Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter
suggestion
charm monster
confusion
emotion
phantasmal killer
rainbow pattern
chaos
domination
dream
Leomund's lamentable belaborment
eyebite
geas
mass suggestion
antipathy/sympathy
demand
mass charm

Spells with unusual results

1st level

Alarm: Constructs do not set off the alarm, as they are not creatures.

Protection from evil: The caster is protected by this spell against command units, but not against other constructs or Doomed.

Shocking grasp: Forces constructs to make a saving throw vs. electricity or short out; the Doomed are affected normally.

2nd level

Detect evil: The caster can detect command units, but not other kinds of constructs or the Doomed.

Forget: This spell causes portions of programming code to be erased from a construct or Doomed. If the target fails the saving throw, a second saving throw must be attempted at once or the construct's system crashes.

Invisibility: Although recipients of this spell are invisible to constructs, their other sensory devices are so acute that they only receive a –1 penalty to attack invisible creatures.

Know alignment: Command units register as lawful evil; all other units register as nonaligned.

Stinking cloud: Doomed may be affected by this spell, although they receive a +4 bonus to their saving throws.

3rd level

Invisibility, 10' radius: See *invisibility*, above.

Lightning bolt: All constructs suffer a –8 penalty to their saving throws vs. this spell. Those that fail must immediately roll a second saving throw vs. electricity or be shorted out.

Protection from evil, 10' radius: See *protection from evil*, above.

4th level

Improved invisibility: See *invisibility*, above.

6th level

Chain lightning: See *lightning bolt*, above.

Disintegrate: Constructs suffer a –6 penalty to their saving throws. Failure indicates that vital electronic components have been destroyed, thus destroying the construct.

Mislead: See *invisibility*, above.

7th level

Prismatic spray: Constructs are not blinded by any of the rays and are not affected by the green or indigo rays at all.

8th level

Prismatic wall: Constructs are not blinded by the wall, although they are otherwise affected by the hues, except for the green and indigo shades.

Symbol: Both constructs and Doomed are immune to all forms of the symbol except for Death.

9th level

Crystalbrittle: Constructs are automatically affected by this spell and are destroyed once they are shattered.

Prismatic sphere: See *prismatic wall*, above.

Priest Spells

Spells that do not affect constructs

command
cure light wounds
remove fear
charm person or mammal
enthrall
cure blindness or deafness
cure serious wounds
imbue with spell ability
cure critical wounds
quest
heal
regenerate
confusion
sunray
symbol

Spells that do not affect the Doomed

command
charm person or mammal
enthrall
quest
confusion
symbol

Spells with unusual results

1st level
Detect evil: See the wizard version of this spell.
Light: If cast on the optical sensors of a construct, it overloads and destroys the device, making the construct effectively blind.
Protection from evil: See the wizard version of this spell.

2nd level
Heat metal: If this spell is cast on the electronic parts of a construct, it has the effect of a *slow* spell on the first round and causes the electronic components to overheat and short out on the second round. The reverse of the spell, *chill metal*, has the effect of a *haste* spell for its duration when cast upon the electronic components of a construct.
Wyvern watch: Constructs do not set off the watch, as they are not creatures.

3rd level
Call lightning: See the wizard spell *lightning bolt* for effects.
Continual light: See *light*, above.
Create food & water: If the water portion of this spell is cast inside a construct, it must make a saving throw vs. spell with a –4 penalty or short out and cease functioning.

4th level
Protection from evil, 10' radius: See the wizard version of this spell.

6th level
Animate object: If the electronic components of a construct are affected by this spell, the construct shorts out.
Transmute water to dust: The reverse of this spell functions like *create food & water*, above, except the construct receives a –6 penalty to the saving throw.

7th level
Transmute metal to wood: Casting this spell on a construct destroys it.

Drone Fighter: AC 3; MV 40 (B); HD 7; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT up to 5; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, missiles); SA infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round; 25 points of damage even on successful save); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 6; AL N; XP 8,000/4,000.

Prowler: AC 5; MV 36 (B); HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT up to 3; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 10; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000.

Destroyer: AC 3; MV 30 (C); HD 5; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT up to 5; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, flame thrower, missiles); SA infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round; 25 points of damage even on successful save); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 8; AL N; XP 7,000/3,500.

Annihilator: AC 0; MV 24 (C); HD 7; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT up to 8; Dmg by weapon (heavy blaster cannon, magnum cannon, missiles, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round; 25 points of damage even on successful save); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 6; AL N; XP 11,000/5,500.

Firestorm: AC 2; MV 24; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT up to 3; Dmg by weapon (light blaster cannon, magnum cannon, flame thrower); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 6; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000.

Deathstrike: AC –2; MV 18; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT up to 8; Dmg by weapon (heavy blaster cannon, magnum cannon, missiles, grenades); SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated), infectious gas (save vs. death or die in 1d4 days from disease), poisonous gas (save vs. poison or die in 1 round; 25 points of damage even on successful save); SZ L; ML n/a; Int 6; AL N; XP 13,000/6,500.

Spider Drone: AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT up to 2; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, grenades); SZ M; ML n/a; Int 9; AL N; XP 650/325.

Assimilator: AC 1; MV 6; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator; SZ L; ML n/a; Int 14; AL N; XP 1,400/700.

Collector: AC 6; MV 3; HD 10; hp 60; THAC0 11; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ L; ML n/a; Int 4; AL N; XP 2,000/1,000.

Replicator: AC 7; MV 3; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SA stun field generator (save vs. paralyzation or become incapacitated); SZ S; ML n/a; Int 8; AL N; XP 65/33.

Seeker (sensor drone): AC 6; MV 12 (A); HD 1; hp 2; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg n/a; SZ S; ML n/a; Int 15; AL N; XP 175/88.

Doomed: AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (blaster rifle, magnum cannon); SZ M; ML n/a; Int 1; AL N; XP 270/135.

Rael citizen, zero-level: AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7′); ML average (10); Int average to genius (10–18); AL LG; XP 15.
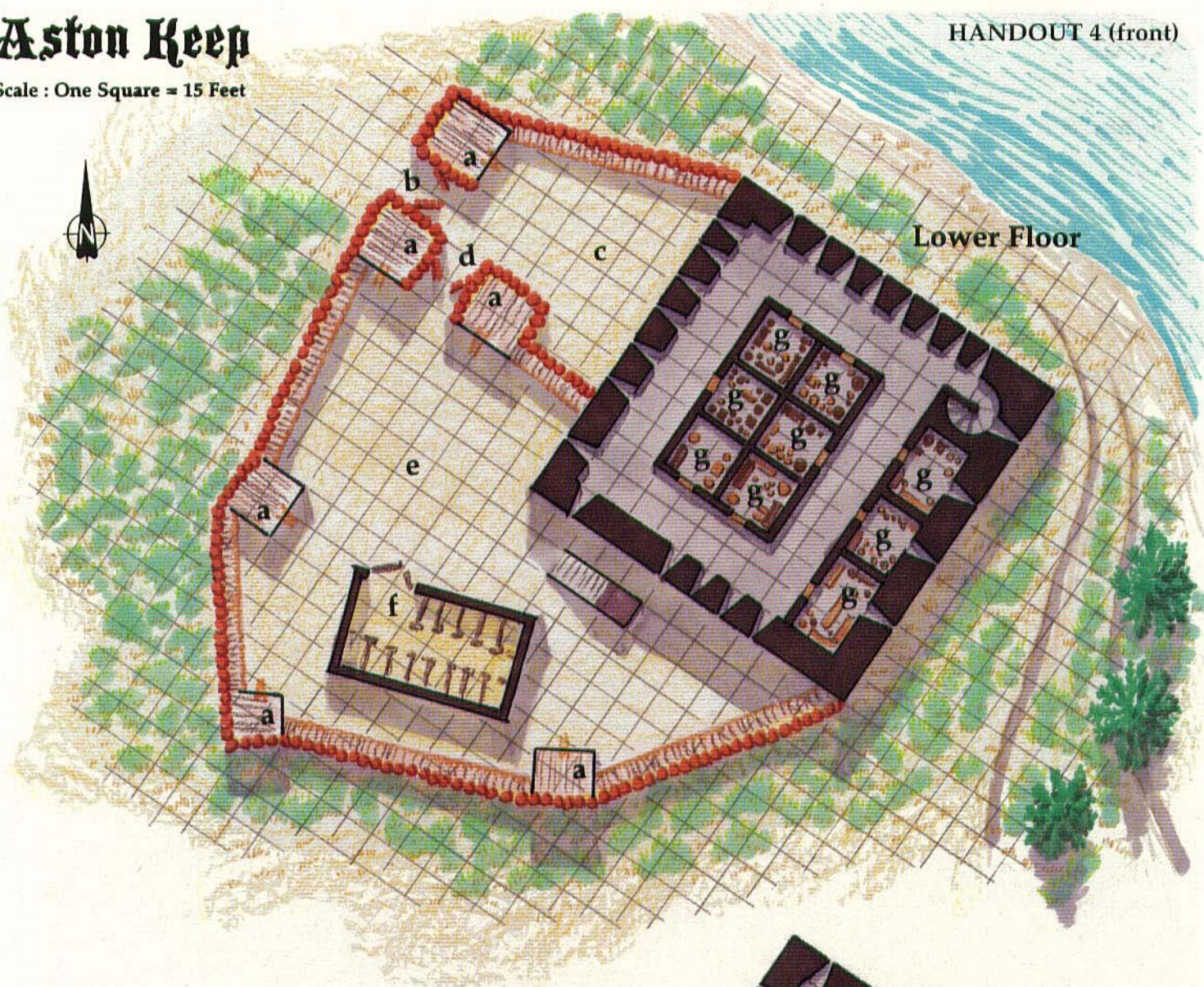
Rael Soldier, F3: AC 3 (Rael armor); MV 12; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SZ M (6–7′); ML steady to elite (11–14); Int average to very (10–12); AL LG; XP 270.

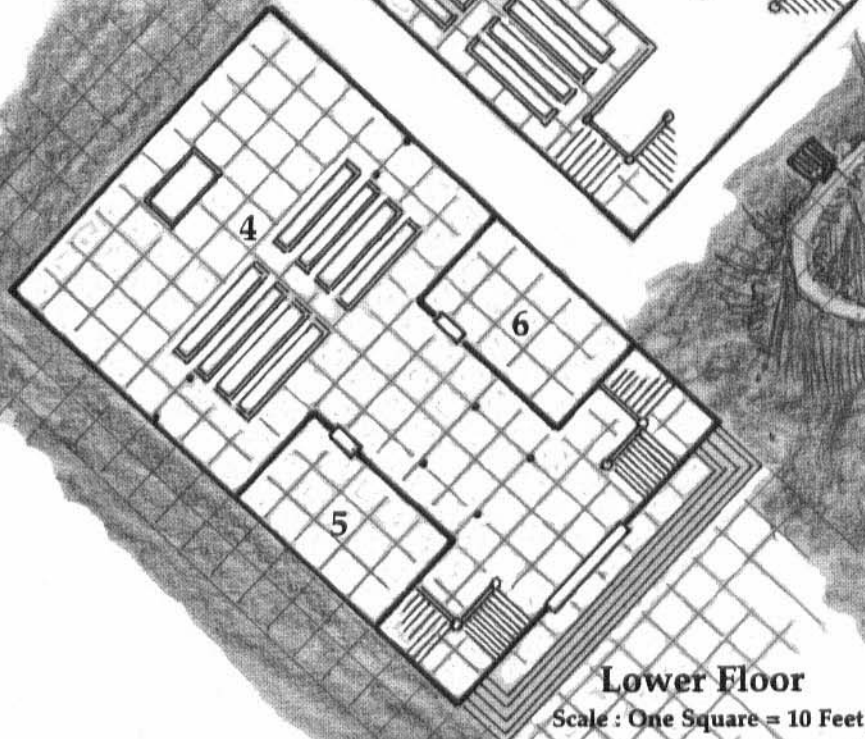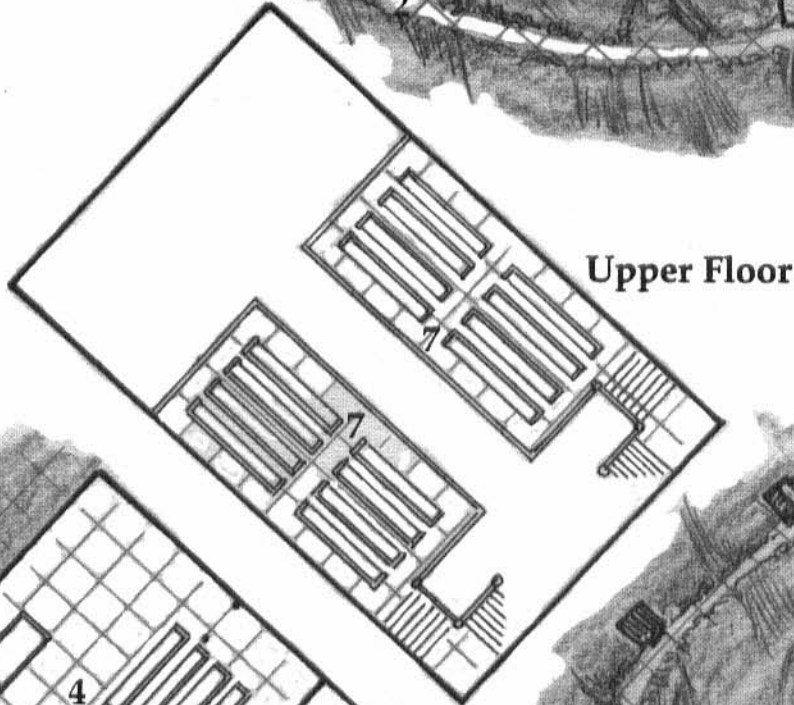# Aston Keep

Scale : One Square = 15 Feet

N

Lower Floor

a
b
a
d
a
c
a
e
f
a
a
g
g
g
g
g
g
g
g
g

Upper Floor

j
j
j
j
j
k
l
m
i
m
j
j
o
j
j
j
h

The Temple

Scale : One Square = 20 Feet

1

2

3

Upper Floor

7

7

4

6

5

Lower Floor
Scale : One Square = 10 Feet

The Stonebreaker Mine

Scale : One Square = 10 Feet

HANDOUT 5 (front)

1143-0605
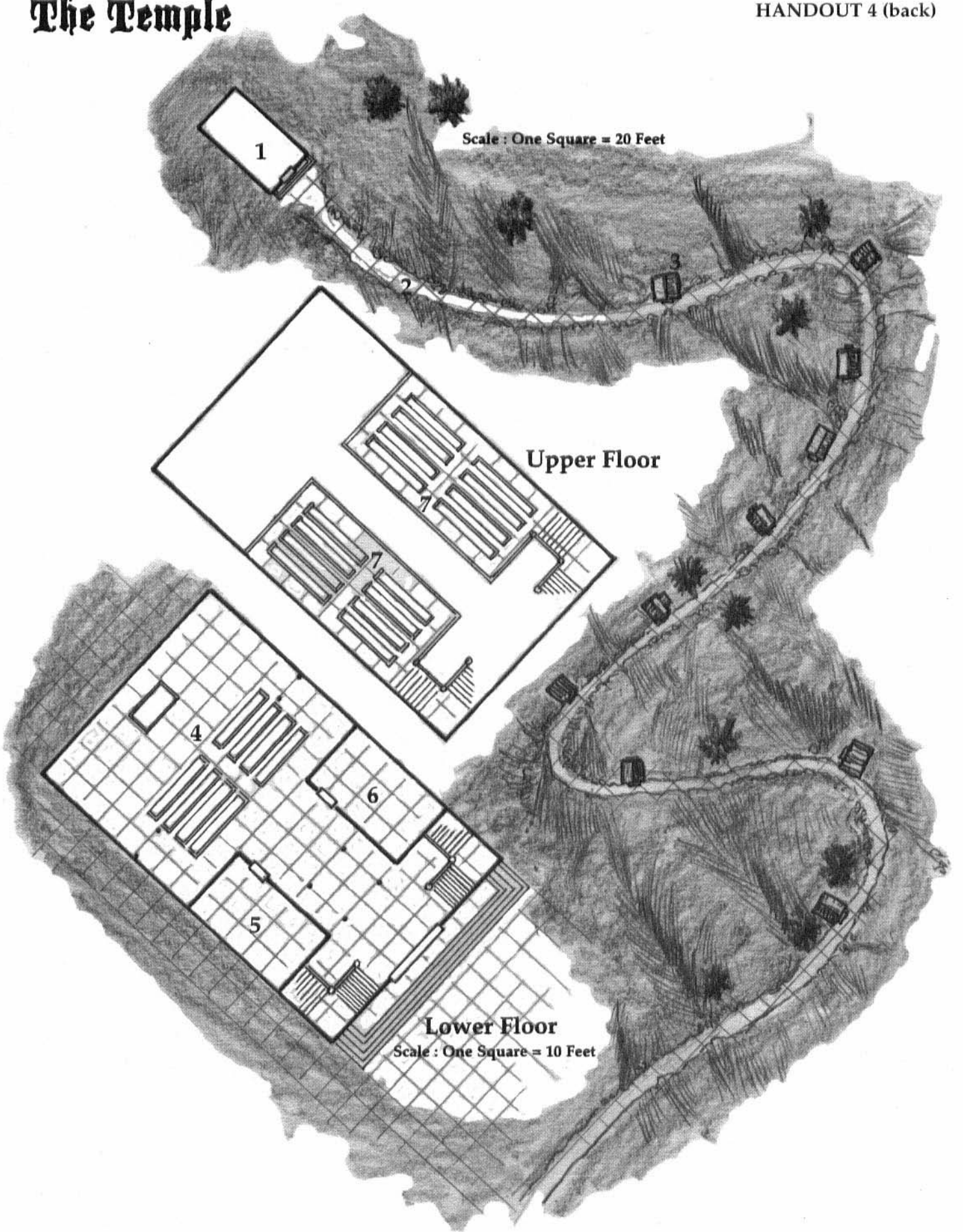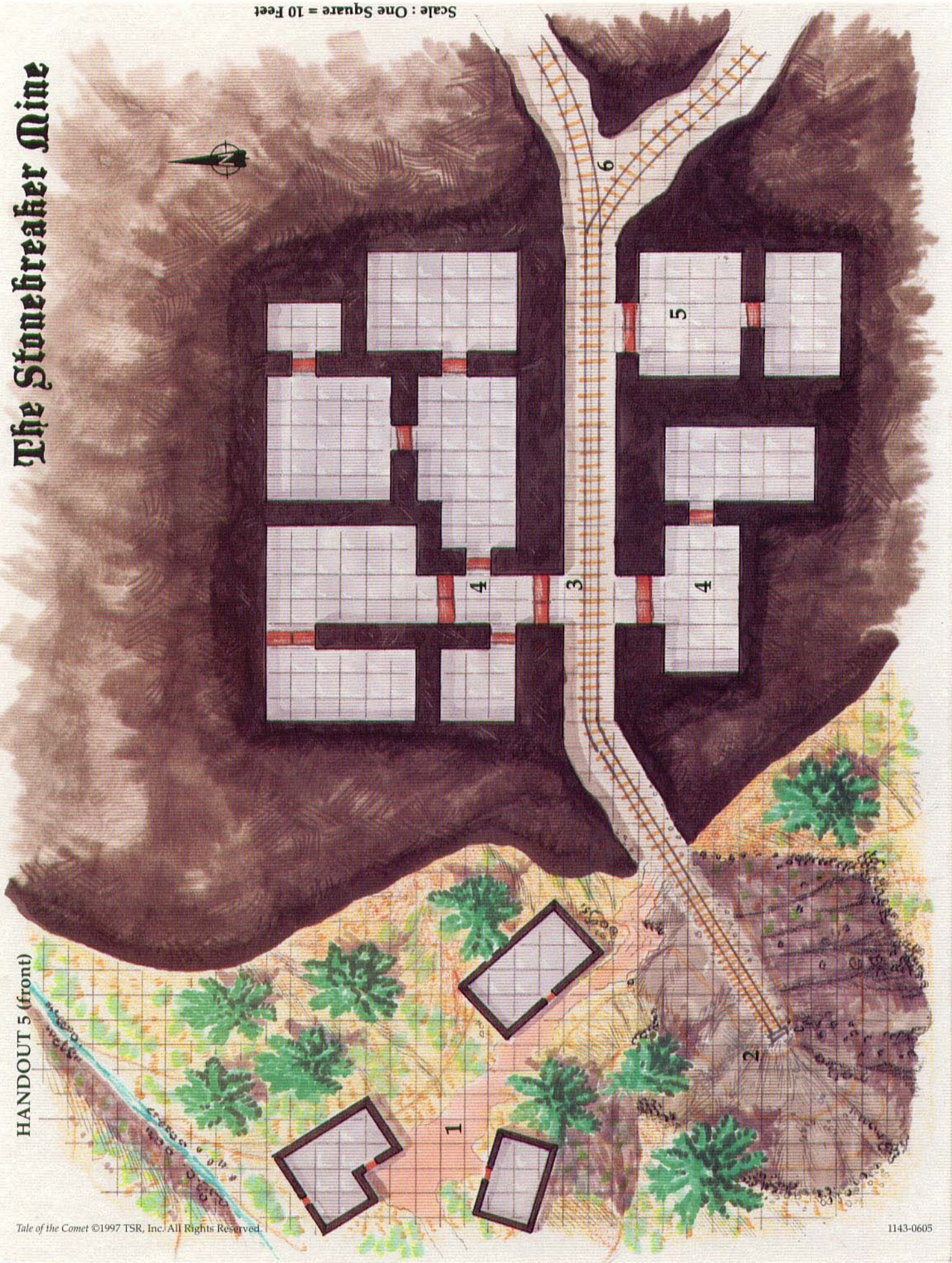
The Elven Camp

Scale : One Square = 5 Feet

Orchard Lake

The Druid's Grove
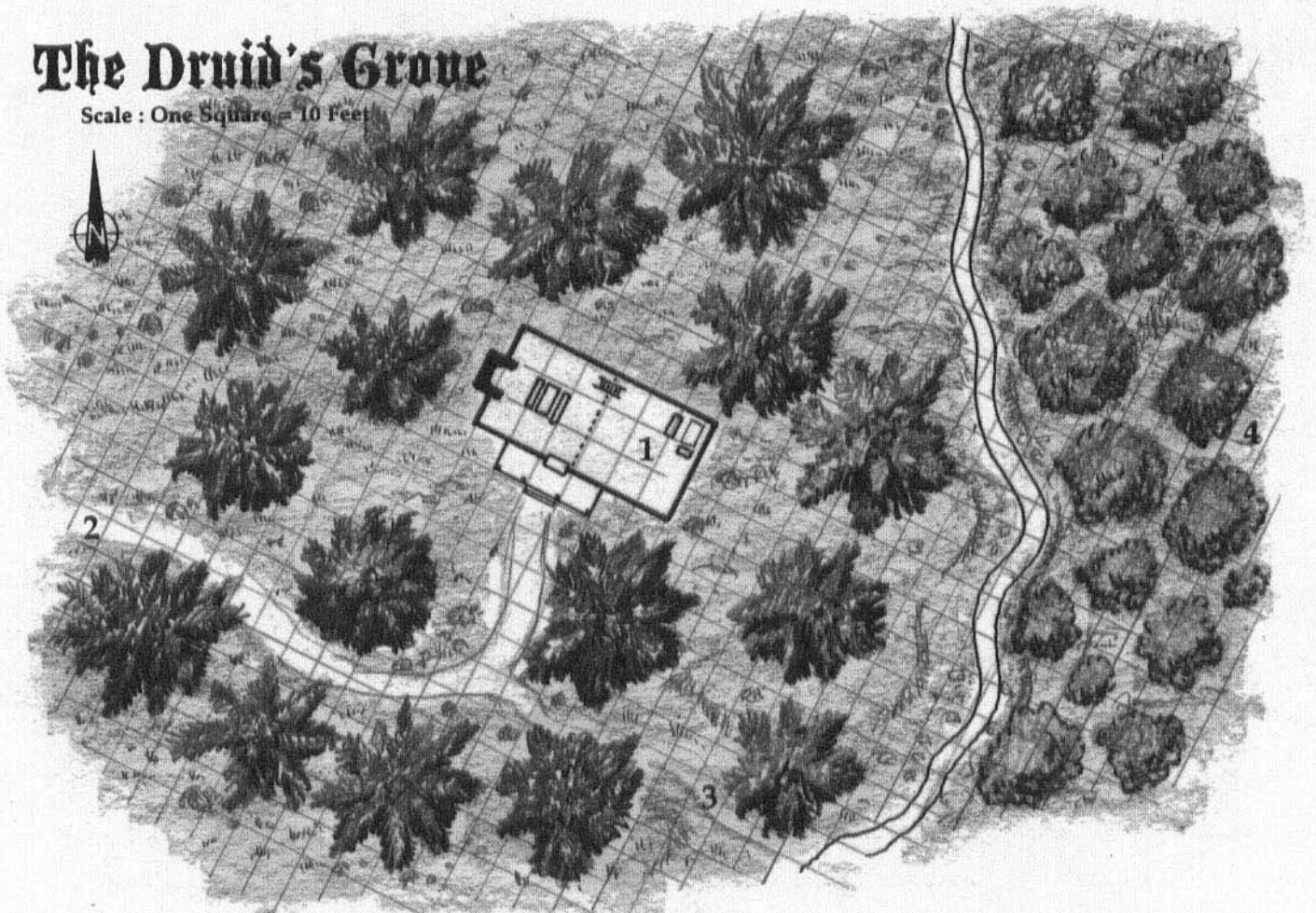
Scale : One Square = 10 Feet
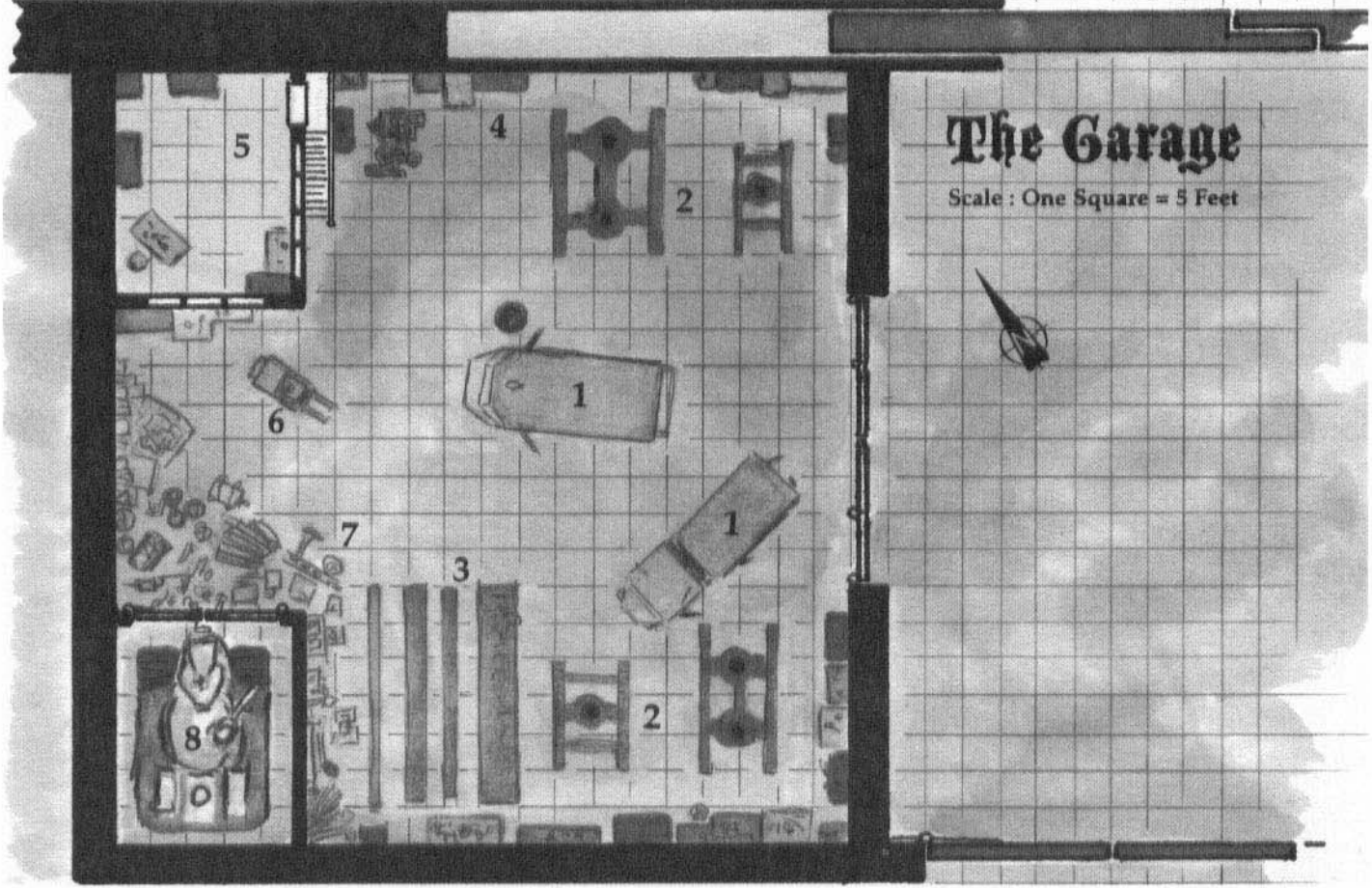
Jazra's Ship, Control Panel
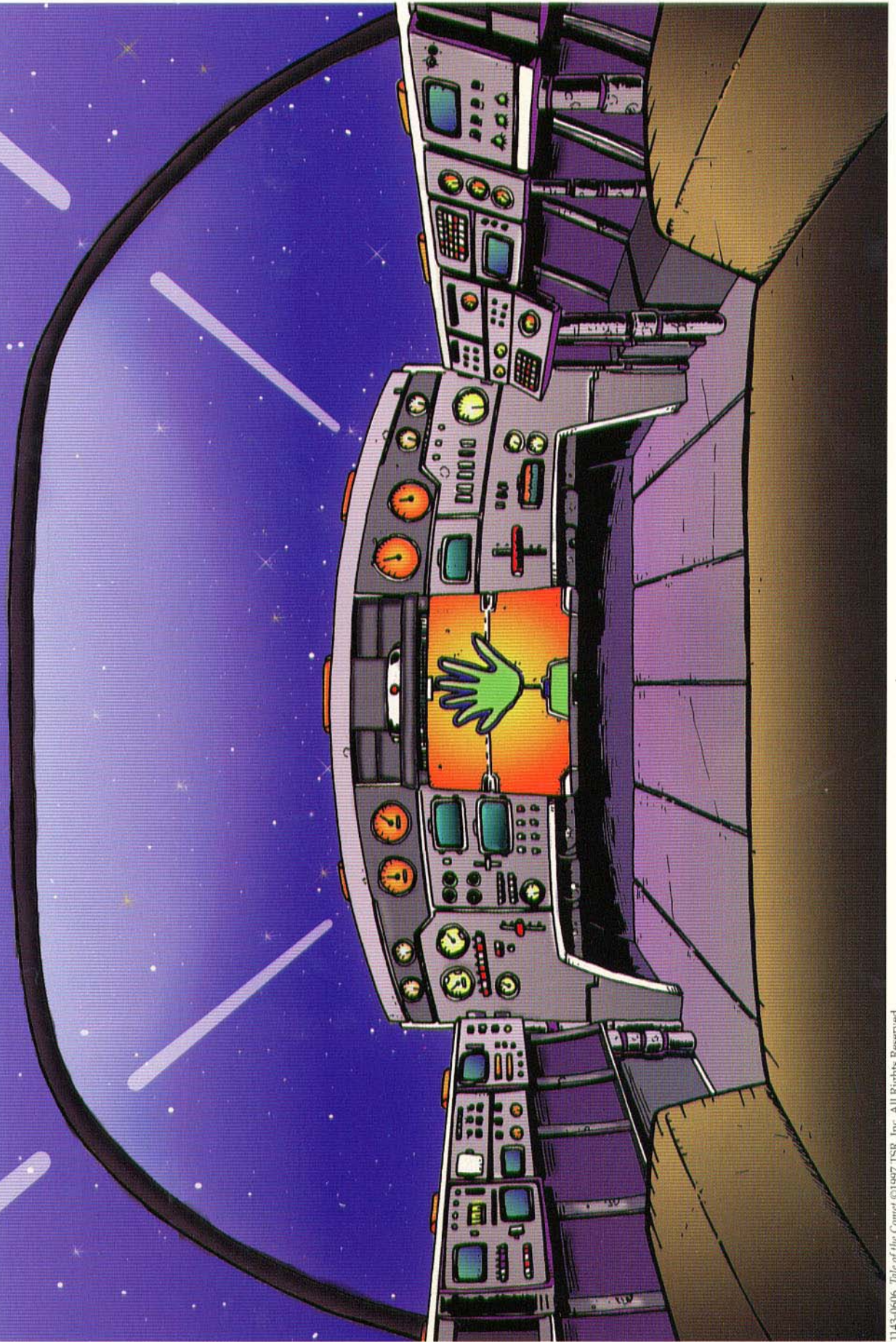
The Rael Camp
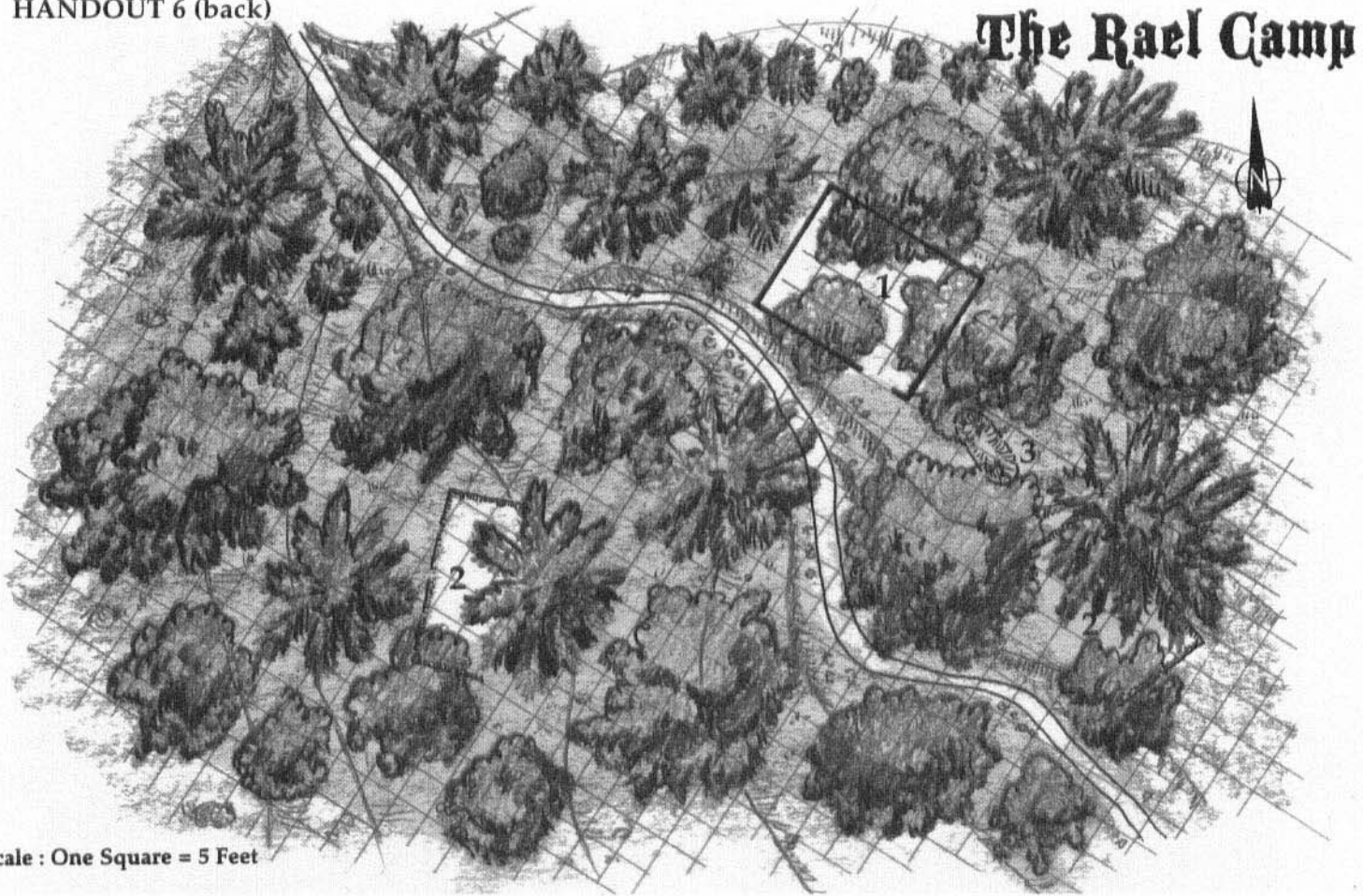
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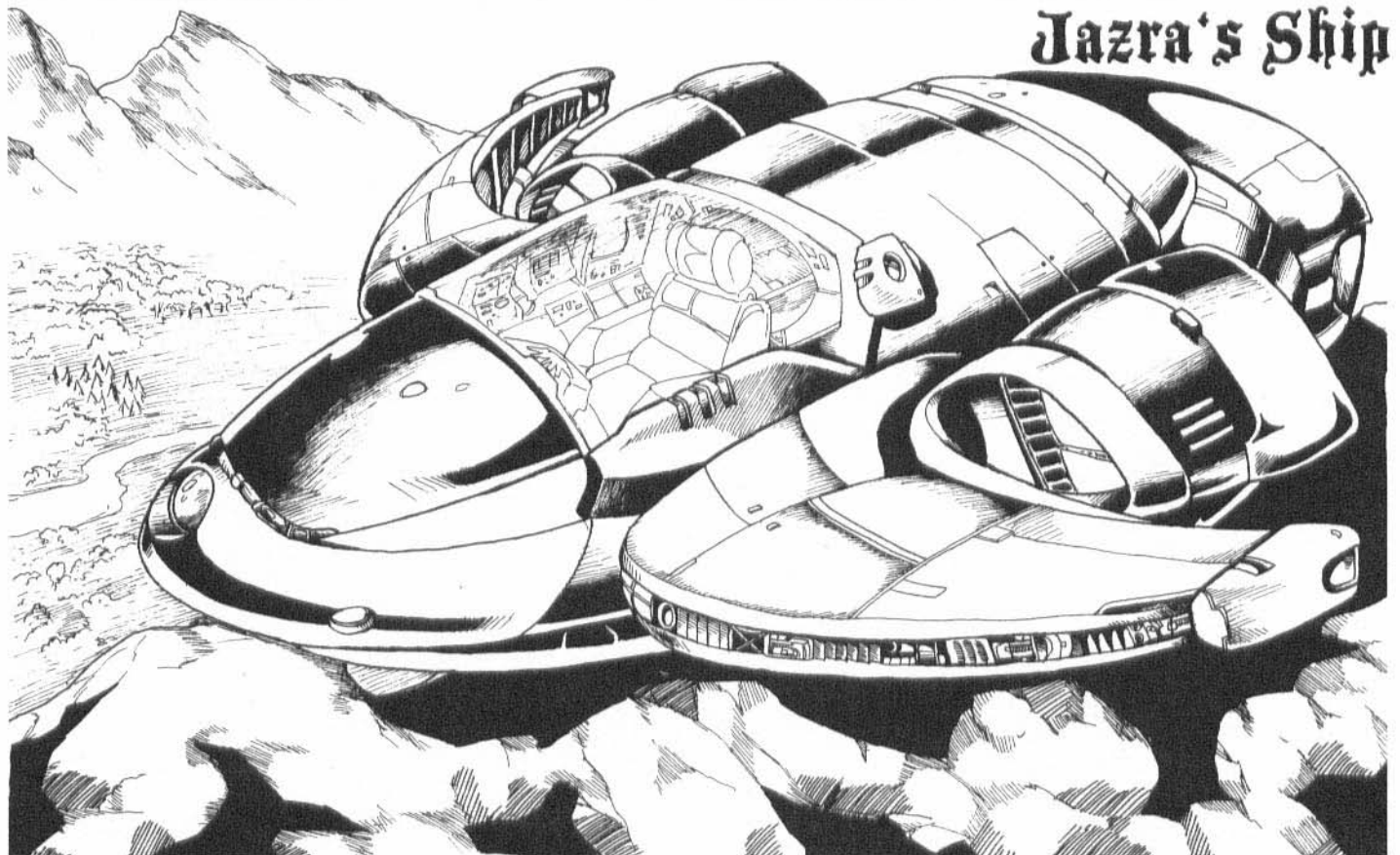
Jazra's Ship

Biology Research Station

Lower Floor

Upper Floor

The Garage

Scale : One Square = 5 Feet
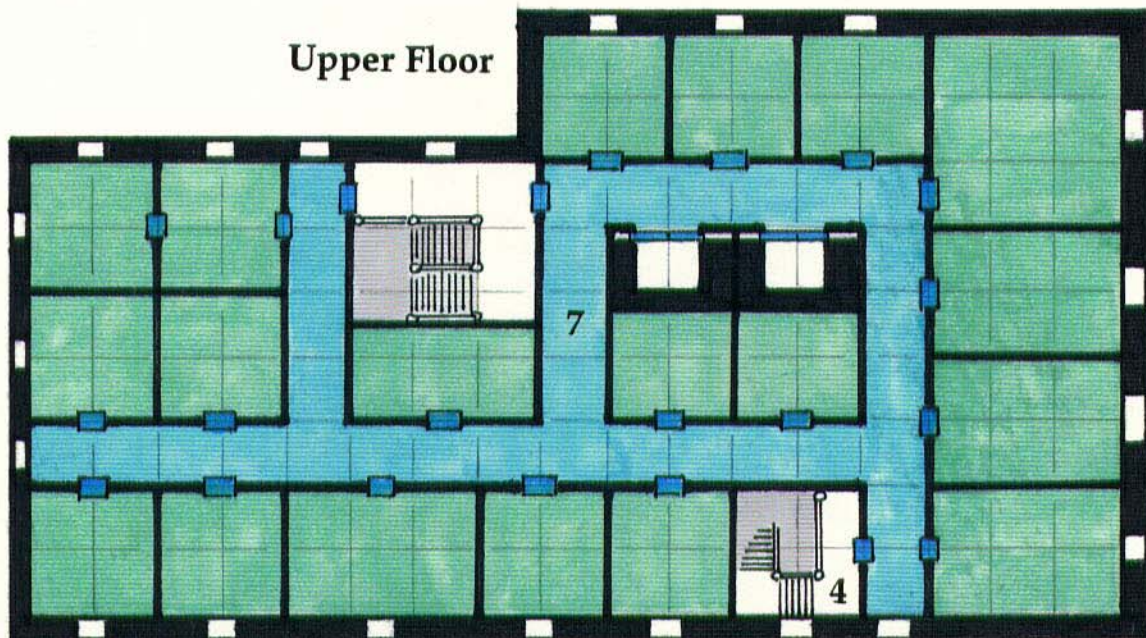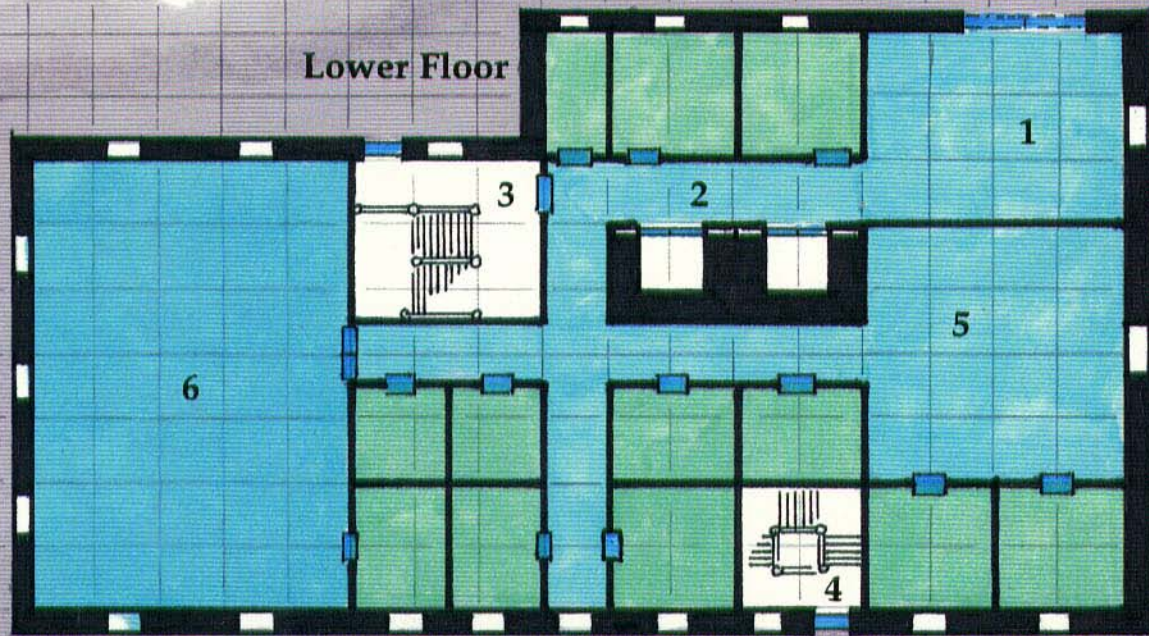
Hulmot's Legacy

Field Coil Generator

1143-0608

Handout 8
No Back

OVERSEER

MASTER PROGRAMER

PROWLER

PRIMARY DIRECTOR

SECONDARY DIRECTOR

COLLECTOR

ANNIHILATOR

DRONE FIGHTER

DEATHSTRIKE

ASSIMILATOR

SPIDER DRONE

FIRESTORM

REPLICATOR

DESTROYER

SEEKER

1143XXX0702 Tale of the Comet
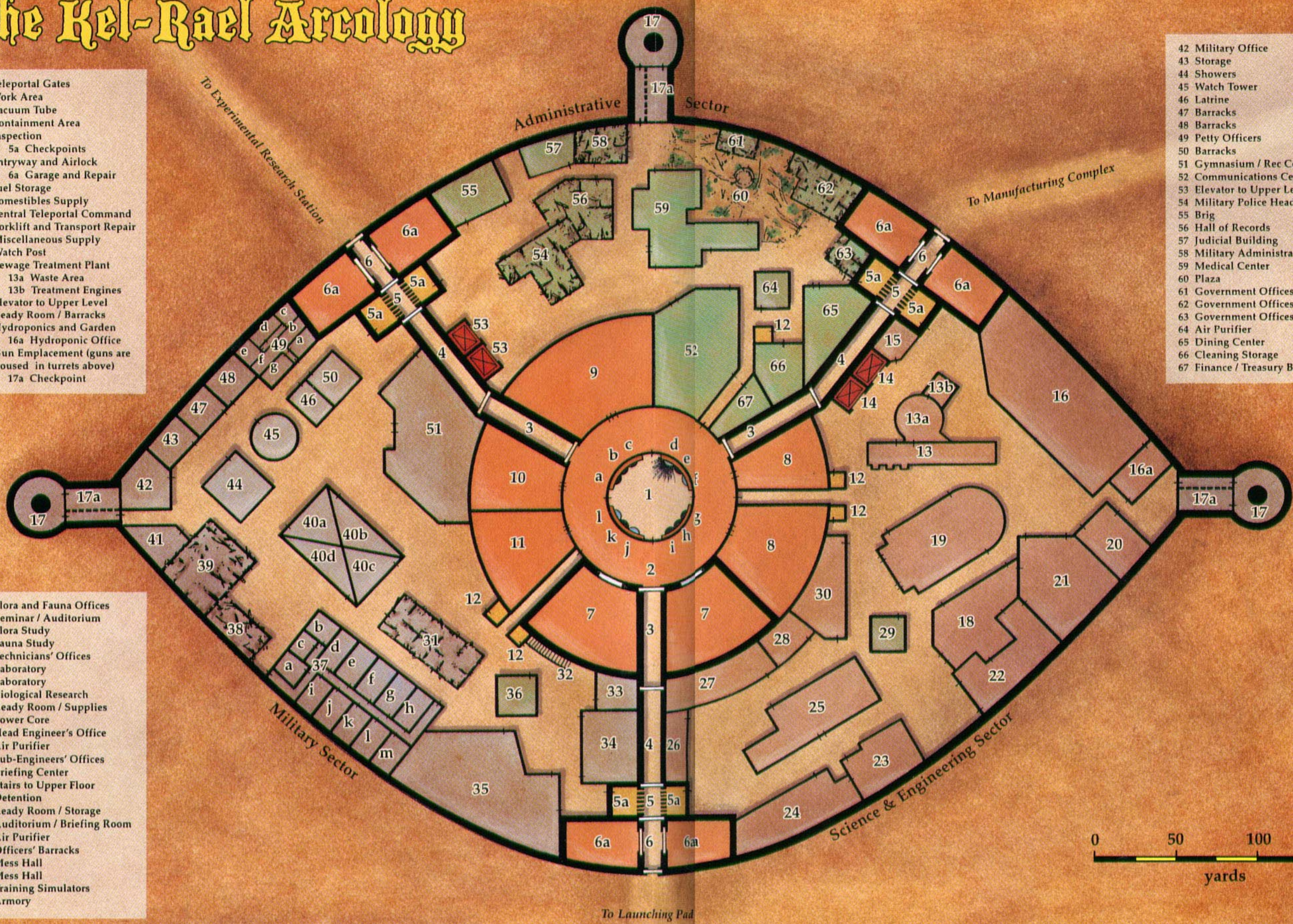
The Kel-Rael Arcology

1 Teleportal Gates
2 Work Area
3 Vacuum Tube
4 Containment Area
5 Inspection
   5a Checkpoints
6 Entryway and Airlock
   6a Garage and Repair
7 Fuel Storage
8 Comestibles Supply
9 Central Teleportal Command
10 Forklift and Transport Repair
11 Miscellaneous Supply
12 Watch Post
13 Sewage Treatment Plant
   13a Waste Area
   13b Treatment Engines
14 Elevator to Upper Level
15 Ready Room / Barracks
16 Hydroponics and Garden
   16a Hydroponic Office
17 Gun Emplacement (guns are
   housed in turrets above)
   17a Checkpoint

18 Flora and Fauna Offices
19 Seminar / Auditorium
20 Flora Study
21 Fauna Study
22 Technicians' Offices
23 Laboratory
24 Laboratory
25 Biological Research
26 Ready Room / Supplies
27 Power Core
28 Head Engineer's Office
29 Air Purifier
30 Sub-Engineers' Offices
31 Briefing Center
32 Stairs to Upper Floor
33 Detention
34 Ready Room / Storage
35 Auditorium / Briefing Room
36 Air Purifier
37 Officers' Barracks
38 Mess Hall
39 Mess Hall
40 Training Simulators
41 Armory

42 Military Office
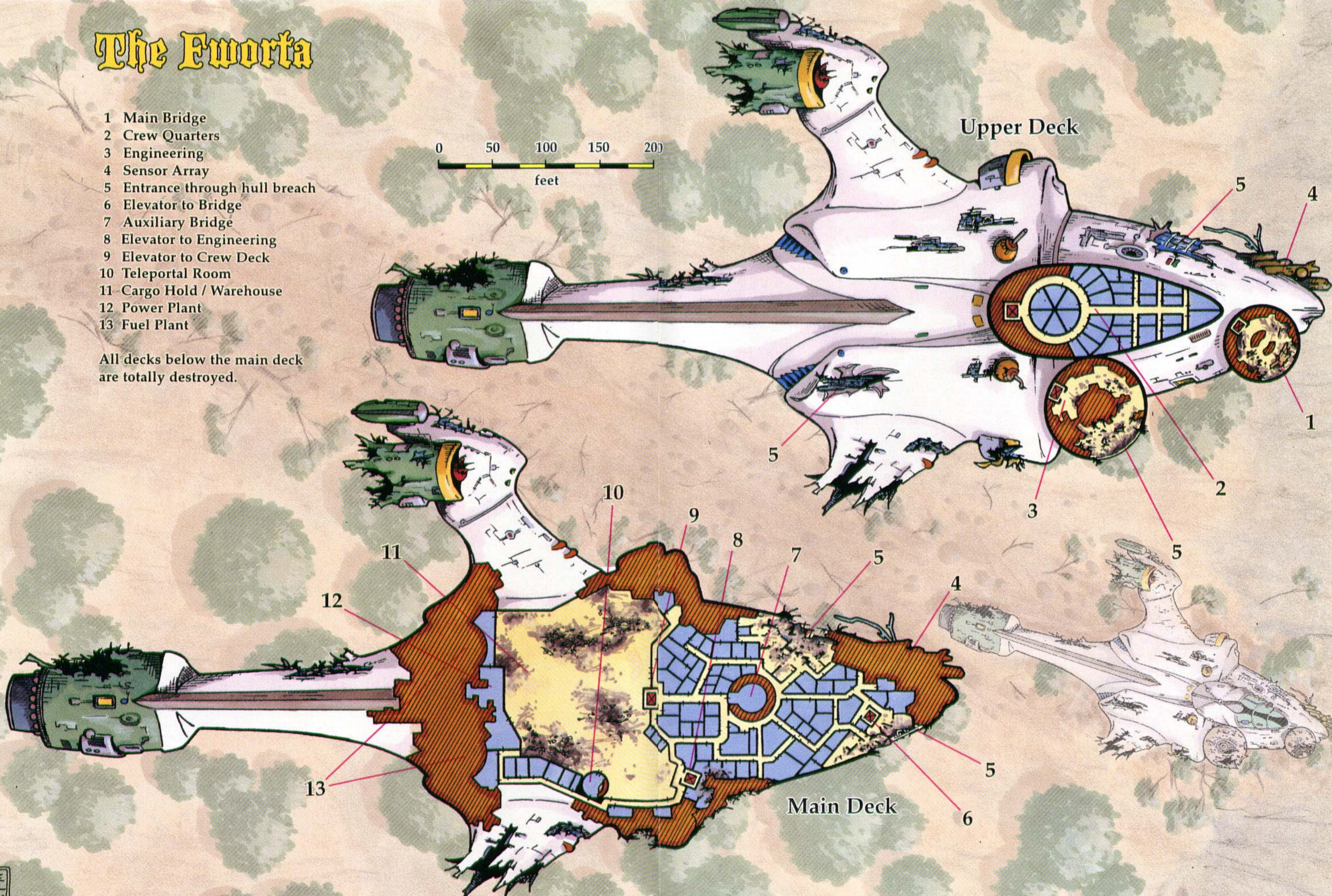43 Storage
44 Showers
45 Watch Tower
46 Latrine
47 Barracks
48 Barracks
49 Petty Officers
50 Barracks
51 Gymnasium / Rec Center
52 Communications Center
53 Elevator to Upper Level
54 Military Police Headquarters
55 Brig
56 Hall of Records
57 Judicial Building
58 Military Administration
59 Medical Center
60 Plaza
61 Government Offices
62 Government Offices
63 Government Offices
64 Air Purifier
65 Dining Center
66 Cleaning Storage
67 Finance / Treasury Building

To Experimental Research Station

Administrative Sector

To Manufacturing Complex

Military Sector

Science & Engineering Sector

To Launching Pad

0   50   100   150
yards

The Fworta

1 Main Bridge
2 Crew Quarters
3 Engineering
4 Sensor Array
5 Entrance through hull breach
6 Elevator to Bridge
7 Auxiliary Bridge
8 Elevator to Engineering
9 Elevator to Crew Deck
10 Teleportal Room
11 Cargo Hold / Warehouse
12 Power Plant
13 Fuel Plant

All decks below the main deck
are totally destroyed.

Upper Deck

Main Deck

0   50   100   150   200
feet

DIESEL 96

The Paradise Lake Region

Rael Camp

Lost Lake
(elevation 8,362 ft.)

Lake Tomar
(elevation 8,416 ft.)

The *Fworta*

Ogre's Gorge

Abandoned
Quarry

Orchard Lake
(elevation 8,723 ft.)

Elven Tribe

Stonebreaker
Mine

Druid's Grove

Laramis Peak

Jazra's
Escape Pod

Farmland

Temple

Aston Point

10,000
9,500
9,000
8,500
8,000
7,500

miles
0   1/2   1

The Paradise Lake Region

forest	• point of interest	lake
meadow	— trail	river
contour line	···· path	stream

Paradise Lake (elevation 7,013 ft.)

Aston Point

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

The Paradise Lake Region

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

Campaign Adventure

Odyssey

Tale of the Comet

by Thomas M. Reid

Scanned By: Jack D. Knight

Strange lights in the sky, prophecies of doom, and a threat unlike any other draw the heroes to Aston Point. In this small frontier town, the fate of the world will be decided. If the heroes and their strange new allies defeat the invaders, they must then pass through a portal to another battleground, a metal city on a far-distant world, where aliens fight desperately against death machines that threaten to overwhelm all organic life. So trade in your sword for a blaster rifle, your sling stones for a few high-explosive grenades, and see what happens when you mix magic with high technology.
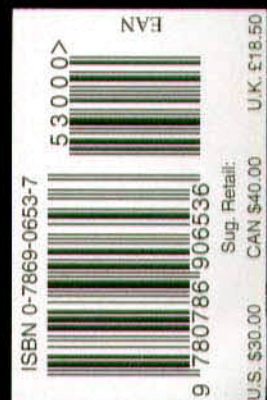
This box contains

- A 32-page book, *The Cast and Props*, describing new, high-tech equipment, detailing the background of the Rael-Overseer war, and explaining how to mix fantasy and science under the AD&D® game system.
- Two 64-page books, *The Tale Begins* and *Crossing Over*, presenting the grand adventure that is the *Tale of the Comet*.
- Eight sheets of charts, maps, art, and statistics for the players and the DM.
- Two posters, one a double-sided map of the regions where the action takes place and the other an illustration of all the technological terrors the heroes will have to face in the course of the adventure.