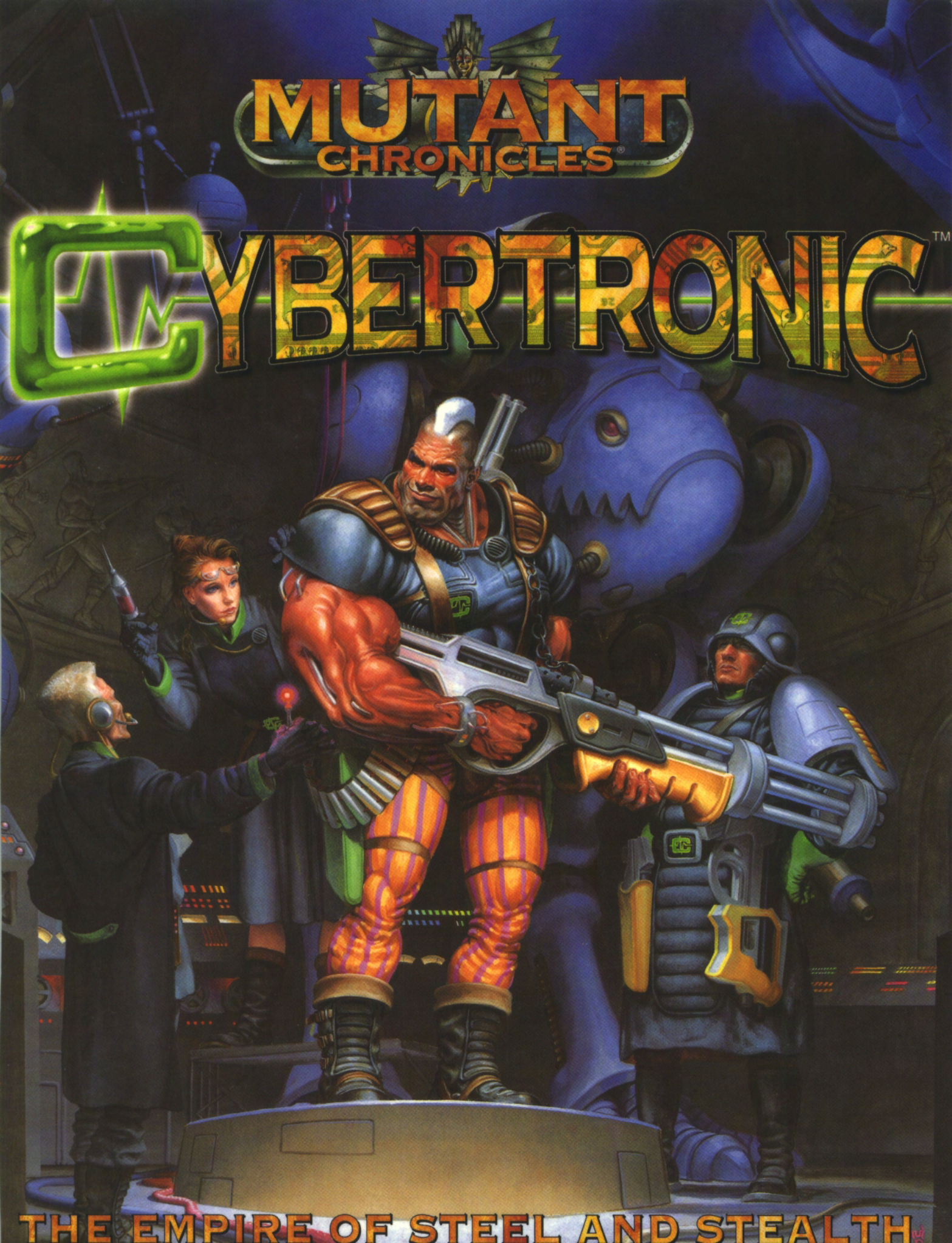
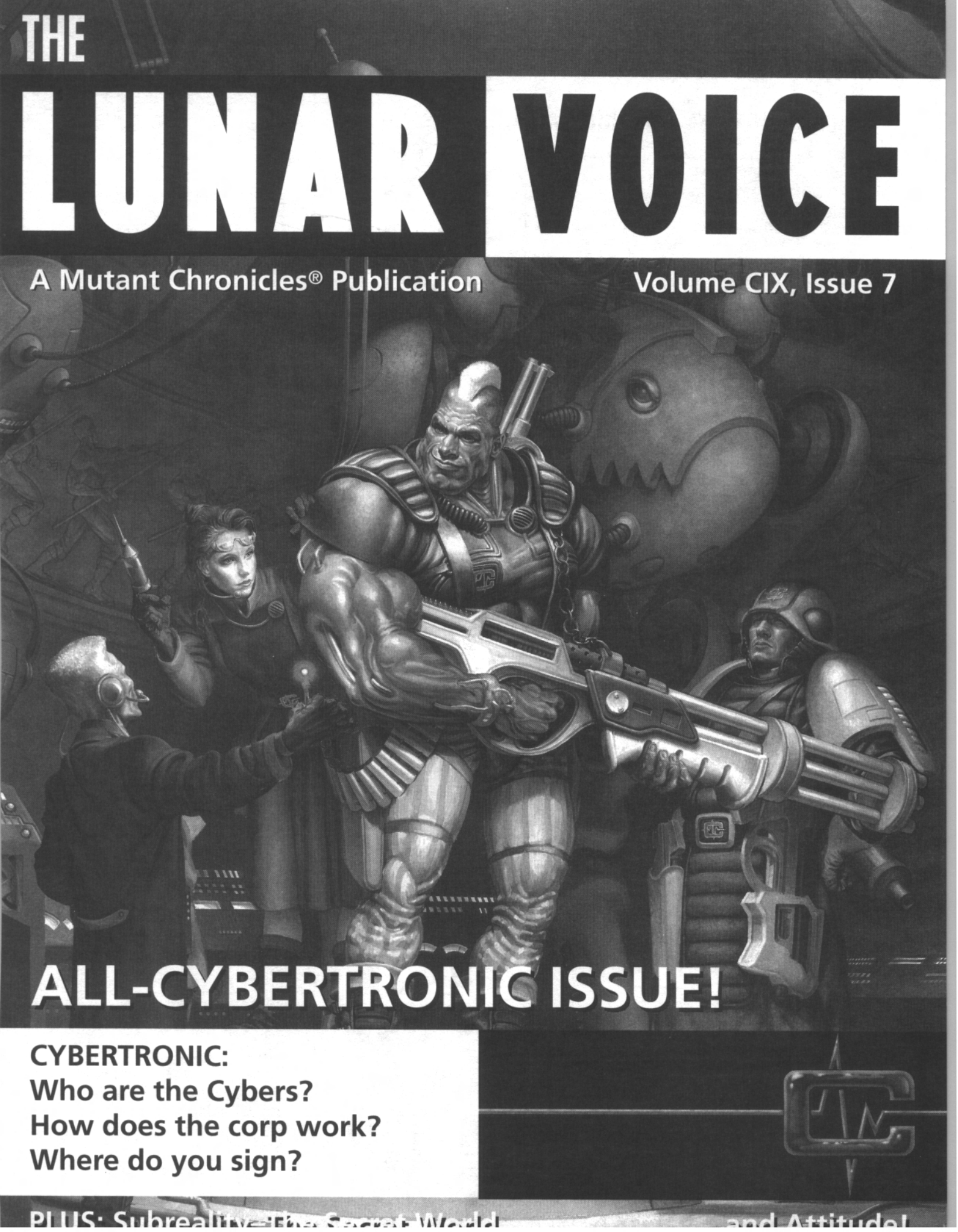
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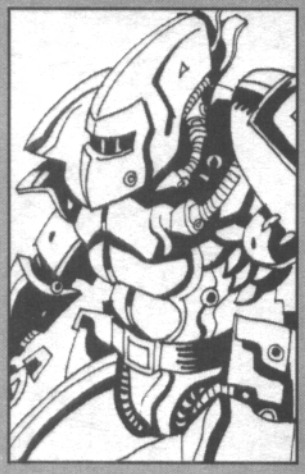
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THE
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Volume CIX, Issue 7
ALL-CYBERTRONIC ISSUE!
CYBERTRONIC:
Who are the Cybers?
How does the corp work?
Where do you sign?
and Attitude!

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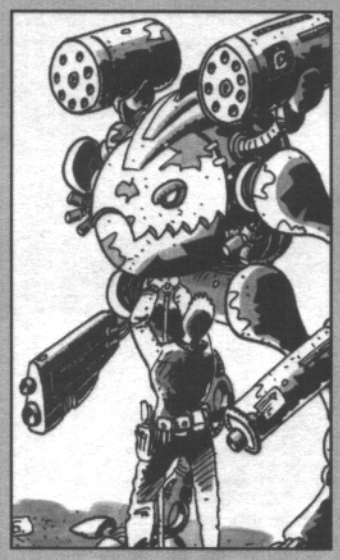
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As those of you who have been following this rag for a while know, my grandfather Dan Quigley founded this last bastion of journalistic freedom over 100 years ago as an independent voice in our megacorp-dominated media market. At the time, I'm sure, it seemed like a good idea. After all, every other major magazine was published by one of the (at the time) Big Four.

Who was going to tell you about the atrocities that, say, Imperial was committing against Bauhaus? Or what really happens in the Doughpits on Mars? One of the megacorps? Hah!

They were too concerned with their bottom line then, and it's just as true today, if not more so. If it's bad news about them, they try to cover it up, and if it's about some-

Dear Dik:
You're a raving lunatic. How dare you impyune [sic] the Cardinal's word? His mighty wrath will blast your heretical soul apart. You shall burn in eternal suffering for betraying us humans. Maybe you're some kind of Nepharite? Are you hiding horns under your hat? I hate you, you evil man, and I will never buy another issue of your fishrag again!
Disgustedly,
Agnes Gyrtlesnit

Hey, Agnes! Ma'am, if we're ticking people like you off, we must be doing something right. Get a life, you senile old bat. —Dik

Editorial

body else, well, can you really trust them to tell the honest truth about their competitors? Me neither.

So Gramps hocked everything he owned and plunged headfirst into the world of independent journalism, and when I was old enough, I assumed the mantle. (Apparently journalistic integrity skips a generation.)

It's not easy being the person who has to bring you the truth. You can ask the Cardinal all about that (if you believe in that sort of thing, and I suspect some of you do). The truth is cold and hard, nothing like those lies you tell yourself so you can go to sleep every night. (There's nothing I can do about it. I'm not important enough. I'm powerless. It's not my problem.)

If you're a reader of the *Voice*, you've got what it takes to handle the truth. You're tired of the self-serving lies the megacorps feed you, the ones that are never in your best interests, no matter what some suit might tell you. Remember, it was the *Voice* that brought you the real story about the Dark Legion, and now we're stepping up to take on the one of the longest-standing enigmas on the block: Cybertronic.

Despite how long this new megacorp's been around, few people know a damned thing about it. How did Cybertronic form? What's their connection with the Dark Legion? Why do they give the Brotherhood fits? Why are some Cybers so mind-numbingly dull? And what's this subreality thing all about anyway?

I'll be honest with you. I don't know the answers to all of these questions—and neither do my reporters. But we've just started our investigation, and we've already discovered things that are going to curl your toenails.

Even more than the Dark Legion, Cybertronic is the greatest mystery to face humanity today. Is this corp our last, best hope to beat the Dark Soul? Or is it an asp curling around our collective ankles, waiting for the right moment to sink its poisonous fangs into us? Should we welcome this creature into our homes without knowing more than about it than the chromed face it shows? Not on a bet.

Keep on your toes, people. Dark Legion or not, these Cybers are up to something, and just like every other megacorp, you can put down your last Crown on the fact that they could hardly have your best interests at heart.



Editor

Echoes

Mr. Quigley:
Mr. Hensley's piece on the Great Resentment was a libelous atrocity. How dare you publish such rubbish? Do you think that we will not retaliate? My ancestors certainly do not deserve to have their memories sullied by the kind of pseudo-journalistic hacks that you employ. I am canceling my subscription to your "magazine." You will be hearing from my barrister.
Sincerely,
Nigel Kingsfield

Whoa, Nigel! They actually let you post letters from the asylum? Here's a clue: try writing with something other than a crayon next time. It's a lot easier to read. Or don't they let psychopaths like yourself handle instruments as sharp as a pencil? —Dik

Dear Dik:
Just who do you think you are? What gives the right to publish compromising photos of Miss Barnette and myself? I don't know how you came up with such fictions, but I applaud the people in your photo retouching department. These fakes are quite possibly the best I've ever seen.

It was entirely improper of you to insinuate that anything untoward was going on between the two of us. I am a happily married man and an upstanding member of several Bauhaus orders, including the Order of the Silver Discus. If I cannot extract a public apology from you immediately, I am coming down to your offices to pummel out of you whatever sense you might have left.
Alexei Valmonte

Yo, Alexei! Our photographer thanks you for posing so nicely for her camera. It's hard to get such out-and-out incriminating photos these days. By the way, for those of you unaware, Alexei here has been divorced by his wife, disowned by his family and is now doing hard time for publicly threatening yours truly in print. When you're up, it's a long way down. At least he'll have a chance to keep his girlish figure while he spends his days making big rocks into small ones. —Dik

The Founding

In the forty-fifth year of the reign of the Bald Cardinal, Roland Durand XIII, a new player was admitted to the Seipen stock exchange on Luna. Not only was it the largest start-up company to ever win admission to the stock exchange, it was instantly the largest company on the exchange's lists—period—registering with a capital stock of more than 150 billion Cardinal's Crowns. Its name was Cybertronic Investment, Inc., a name that people would come to know and even fear.

CII, as it was then known, had started out its illustrious rise to power five years earlier as a Bauhaus subsidiary, but by the time it was admitted to Seipen, it was almost entirely independent, with less than 6% external holdings. Most of these were owned by Bauhaus Elector Houses or even directly by the Bauhaus corporation itself. The vast majority of the company was owned by a secret board of directors, only few of whom ever publicly revealed their identities. Rumor has placed such august personalities as Bauhaus Duke Romanov and even the Mishiman Overlord himself on this powerful panel, but none of these speculations have ever been confirmed.

At the time of CII's admission to Seipen, Raoul Mannerheim was the Chairman of the Board, and Tom McClusky was the company's managing director. While these names meant little to most people at the time, they have since become nearly as famous as the Imperial Serenity—and just about as important.

For five years, CII moved slowly and cautiously. Despite the character of its activities (investing in military supply and high-tech start-up companies) and the secret nature of its board, it was regarded as a low-risk, low-profit investment. That would soon change.

On September 3, Y.C. 1103, Seipen opened normally at 8:00 AM. At a nine o'clock press conference, Capitol Chairman Ben Maxwell announced a new tightening-up program for Venusian settlements. This news caused interest rates to fall slightly, and Capitol banking and real estate shares climbed a few index points. This was all quite normal; seemingly no sort of indication of what was to come. Prelunch business was characterized by a slight lull in trading.



At noon, people on the floor of the exchange notice a feverish activity taking place in the booths of the Mishiman Hotaki Partnership Brokerage. Something was definitely happening, and it was only a few minutes until the word had run across the floor like a flash flood in a Martian canal.

Tim Warner, a junior trader at the time for Bauhaus's Saglielli Bros., was there at the time. "When the news hit, it was like nothing I'd ever seen since my days in the Venusian Rangers. The fear was almost tangible. I think one of Hotaki's men actually had a heart attack, but everyone was too busy to pay any attention to him. Anyhow, he wasn't the only Mishiman to die on the Founding Day. I heard nearly half of them committed ritual suicide. Those that didn't, well, they might as well have."

For reasons unclear to this day (the people who gave the orders were the first to take their own lives with the ceremonial blades that hang over every Mishiman broker's desk), Hotaki sold all of its shares in its Heimburg portfolio. This totaled nearly 12% of the city's real estate value.

The price of Heimburg real estate, of course, plummeted to an all-time low, but it wasn't done falling yet. Shortly after Hotaki pulled out of Heimburg, Capitol insurance fund brokers—shaken by the sudden drop of their portfolios' values—followed suit, causing the price to dip once again.

"It was total panic," says Warner. "Brokers were screaming across the floor at their runners from nearly every angle. No one could understand a single word anyone else was saying to them, but it didn't matter. They were all saying the same thing: 'Sell, sell, sell!' And so they did.

"It was a classic crash. We've had lots of them at Seipen over the years. Usually after a moment, the panic subsides, and the bulls step in to buy all the stuff the bears have been selling. Premium stocks can suddenly be had at rock-bottom prices.

"It's all part of the market's cycle. It happens, you cut your losses, and you go on. If you're lucky, you even make a few dollars. But this was different."

The panic was total. Seemingly everyone sold everything they had in Bauhaus real estate. The closely linked Bauhaus banking and investment shares then followed the real estate prices in their downward spin. Like a

Day

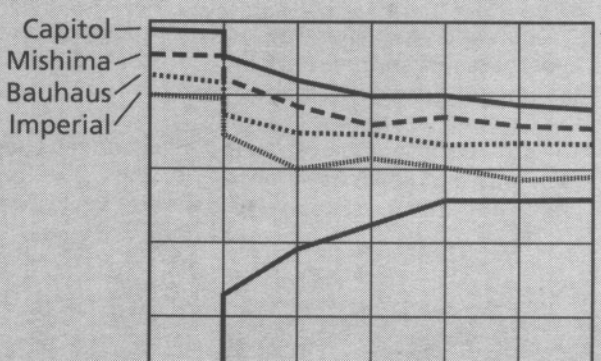
Editor's Note: The following is reprinted entirely from the first issue of The Lunar Voice. It was written by my grandfather over 100 years ago, and I thought you might find it enlightening. It's amazing how pertinent it seems today. –Dik

By Dan Quigley



The Winner and the Losers

The numbers attached to the monies gained and lost during the Founding Day crash do little more than boggle the mind. This graph shows what happened on that fateful day, putting it all into a perspective someone other than a Seipen broker can grasp.



growing whirlpool, these sinking shares started sucking other stocks down after them faster and faster.

The mighty Bauhausbank, long believed to be the rock upon which the Duke Electors had built their megacorporation, fell prey to the hysteria, too. It summarily raised its monitoring interest rate by 400% in the hopes of propping up the sagging market of Bauhaus-related stocks.

This quadrupling of the cost of borrowing Ducates had an unexpected effect. Once news of skyrocketing interest rates hit the Heimburg exchange on Venus (which takes only scant minutes at light speed), rumors of a catastrophe back at Seipen ran wild. Brokers there began to divest themselves of Bauhaus stock. Before the employees of Smythe, Smythe, Smythe & Axelthorpe shut down for afternoon tea, the index of Bauhaus shares had fallen over 800 points.

"For a moment around 3:30, we thought it was all over. Smythe and Ax's mandatory break had forced a hiccup in the selling, and everyone had a chance to look around and perform some quick damage assessment. Some of us were actually able to laugh about it. Hotaki even managed to arrange for someone to come in and dispose of the bodies."

Unfortunately, the lull was not to last. At four o'clock, fresh back from tea, desperate Imperial investment fund brokers made a bold move of their own. Needing to make up some of the ground that they had lost during the day, they sold off a large portion of Capitol war bonds. Although they cashed them out early, they were still able to capture a 60% profit that they had made over the last six months.

"Of course, they had to supply a written explanation for pulling out of their commitment to these bonds. This is all according to Third Directorate regulation 65:43190."

Seipen is, for those readers not up on such things, run by the Brotherhood. Who else would the megacorporations, not to mention the thousands of smaller companies, trust with their investments? One of their own? Hardly.

"I've seen a copy of the filled-out form. In fact, I've got it hanging in my office as a reminder of how *not* to do things.

"It claimed that the Imperials were selling the bonds to calm their executives back in Victoria and create some disposable funds to cover the appalling losses they took on their Bauhaus stocks. Common wisdom holds that the Smythe and Ax brokers spent their entire tea time being read the riot act by Her Serenity herself."

"Apparently she wasn't so serene on that day. Anyhow, it was the worst thing that they could have done. Sure, they acquired some liquid funds when they were truly needed, but they could have done the same by selling 5% in each of their holdings rather than divesting themselves so dramatically in a single area. Of course, they didn't have the luxury of hindsight at the time."

And so the panic continued unabated. Once word of Smythe, Smythe, Smythe & Axelthorpe's move reached the ears of their other traders, it was misinterpreted by Bauhaus brokers.

Cause to Celebrate

Grandpa's article really warms your heart, doesn't it? I always appreciate seeing those money-grubbing megacorporate types get what they've got coming to them. If you feel like I do, you're willing to join the Cybers in their annual Founding Day celebrations. Sure, the "official" parties are about as much fun as a morticians' convention, but those unofficial get-togethers that the rest of us sponsor are quite a blast!

A hundred years later, the Cybers are just another brick in that megacorporate wall, the one the Cardinal tells us was put up to keep the Dark Legion out. It's the same one that keeps us in, trapped in our little lives, unable to affect anything on the same scale as those who run the corps.

But that's awfully depressing crap.

Anyhow, although you corporate types might hear otherwise, the celebrations that the unincorporated among us hold and attend on Founding Day are almost enough (but not quite) to put the Dunsirn Days to shame. What reason do we, the "freelance" community have to be happy about Cybertronic's arrival on the megacorporate scene? Because they took business as usual, as exemplified by the Big Four's throttlehold on the system's economy, and turned it on its ear. And if the Board (whoever they are) could do that, then there's hope for the rest of us, however small it might be.

Unlike the corporate-sponsored holidays, there are no banners or floats, no parades of brainwashed teenagers marching along in their unscratched armor and their unloaded show rifles. None of that for us schmoes—just kegs of beer and barbecued bratwurst (or whatever else you like cooking outside over an open flame). What more could Joe Freelance want? Besides a decent job and steady paycheck, of course, from someone who doesn't want your gonads in exchange. Barring that unlikely occurrence, though, we'll take what we can get.

—Dik Quigley

» The Founding Day

The rumor that Capitol's vaunted military-industrial complex had been bankrupted in the Bauhaus real estate disaster exploded on the floor.

Some suspicious sorts might wonder if Bauhaus deliberately started the rumor to bring Capitol's index back into line with their own destroyed numbers. If a cunning mind did come up with such a plan, it succeeded beyond its wildest dreams. Capitol stock plunged a full 1000 points.

"What you have to understand is that never in the history of Seipen had such a disaster taken place. Rumor after rumor went off all evening long, each destroying to some extent what had taken years, decades, even centuries to build up. When it was over, days later, no one was untouched.

"The nadir of the entire experience, at least from my point of view, was when the Capitolian broker killed himself on the floor. Up until that point, any of the deaths that might have occurred—and you can rest assured that there were murders as well as suicides. Many brokers have some kind of military service in their pasts, and several of them know how to kill with their bare hands. Well, that's just what happened.

"Myself, I ended up having to defend myself from my supervisor, a Randall Boswick. I was a junior broker at the time, and Mr. Boswick had given me the order to sell as much Capitol stock as we could in an effort to recoup our losses. When the smoke cleared for a moment, it became apparent that the plan had backfired. Saglielli Bros. had lost nearly a million Crowns in that one deal.

"Mr. Boswick and I were the only two people who knew he had formulated that plan, and I wasn't planning *on shouldering the blame for it. When* I made that clear to him in his office, he leapt across his desk at me and wrapped his hands around my throat.

"I had left the Rangers because I found being in combat too stressful. My hair was beginning to fall out. I lost most of the rest of it directly after the Founding Day debacle. In any case, I hadn't forgotten the lessons the special forces had taught me.

"I threw Mr. Boswick through the door to his office, hoping to knock him unconscious. Despite the fact that he narrowly missed crushing his secretary, he got right back up and came at me again, this time with a letter opener he'd grabbed off the poor, frightened woman's desk. I *defended myself, and in the struggle,* Mr. Boswick fell on the letter opener and stabbed himself in the chest.

"Luckily there had been a witness to this, or I might have been charged with murder myself!



"Anyhow, where was I? Oh, yes, Browning's suicide.

"Despite Mr. Boswick's attack, I went back to work, this time trying to run things according to my own plan, not having anyone to supervise me. I think I did all right. I saved the company from some horrible losses, although it was like trying to plug a gaping chest wound with a cotton ball.

"I was looking down on the floor from my office window when it happened. It was only fifteen minutes until the closing bell, and I'd already done all I could. The only thing left was to stand back and witness the carnage.

"When the shot rang out, I recognized it instantly from my days in combat. To be entirely honest, I hid under my desk. Only when I was reasonably certain that some lunatic hadn't brought an M50 onto the floor did I finally venture out.

"There were some screams coming from the central pit. For a moment, the crowd parted, and there in the center of the trading pit lay William Browning. Of course, I didn't recognize him right away, as he'd blown his head off, although I could tell he was Capitolian by his tie. He'd cost his company several millions of Crowns that day, and apparently saw no other way out of a bad situation.

"As the blood was still spilling out of his head, the crowd suddenly closed up again. They were actually trading over this man's dead body. They continued to do so until the day's final bell rang. Until then, the coroner's crew couldn't even get close enough to see the body.

"That was definitely Seipen's lowest point in its entire history."

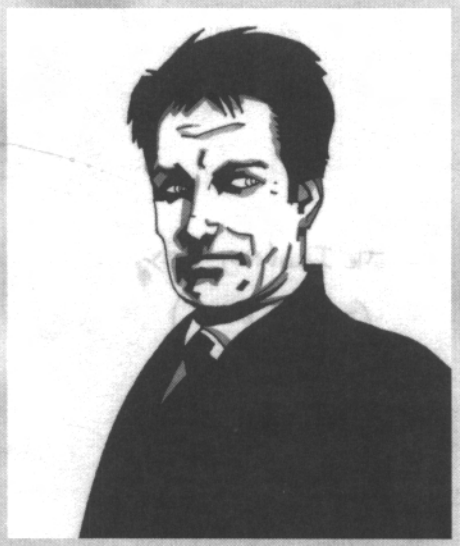
Most would agree. Somehow, though, it seems a fitting end to the Founding Day. The name "Founding Day" is something of a misnomer, though, as the Crash that followed took several days to complete itself.

» The Founding Day

The chain reaction that the crash of the Bauhaus real estate market started continued into the middle of the next day before the Third Directorate shut all trading on all human worlds down until the crisis was over.

By then, though, the damage had already been done, and private trading of stocks continued outside of the realms of the various exchanges. More than one fortune was destroyed in that period. People were afraid to walk the streets of the Luna for fear of having some psychotically depressed financier fall on their head from a great height.

Each rumor that spread through the financial community was a domino in a long line, each causing yet another disaster and a corresponding rash of new rumors in its wake. Each domino was worth hundreds of millions of Crowns. On Founding Day alone, over a trillion Crowns changed hands. The trading on the following days



Dan Quigley

were comparatively light, but a staggering amount of damage was done.

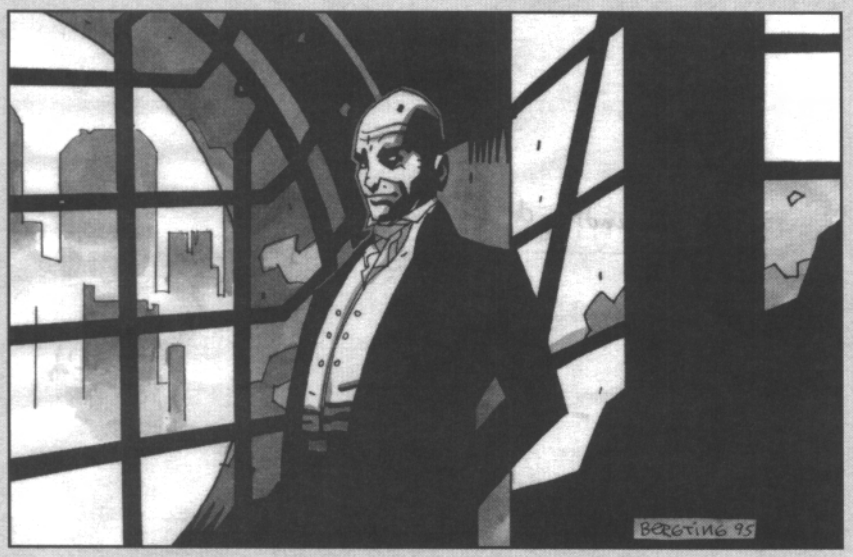
Once the smoke finally cleared, it became clear what had happened. The one thing that no one had bargained on is that whenever you sell a stock, no matter how paltry a sum you might get for it, somewhere there is a buyer. Somebody purchased everything that was sold on Founding Day, and they got it all for a song.

Those of you who paid attention in your economics courses will remember that Third Directorate regulations absolutely forbid any one entity to purchase a large number of stocks from any one seller on a single day. This was originally designed to make hostile takeovers extremely difficult.

This rule rarely prevented a particularly determined effort, though, as a corporation could simply use several dummy holding corporations to purchase the stocks for it. While no single purchase would be enough to permit a takeover, their sum total would be more than enough.

The same principle was applied on Founding Day, although at a much larger scale. Over a hundred different

A Little Perspective



Oddly enough, the greatest heroes of the unsanctioned Founding Day shindigs are the direct descendants of the people that contributed the most to the founding of Cybertronic: those unfortunate fools that bought into all the rumors and brought Seipen's so low. They pop up once a year, raising their noses from their menial jobs just long enough to be tossed up onto the shoulders of the crowd and run around and through the nearest park.

These folks ordinarily have damn little to celebrate themselves. Once the smoke cleared on Founding Day, hundreds of brokers lost their cushy jobs and were subsequently expelled from the bosoms of their respective megacorps. Some of them—those that didn't follow through on the idea on Founding Day—knocked themselves off straight away, but most of them persevered. A rare few even managed to sign on with the former rivals who had profited most from their "mistakes." Most, though, fell directly through the ever-widening cracks and landed squarely in the crap that flows in rivers beneath Luna's sparkling facade.

» The Founding Day

corporations—most holding companies, many not—swept up after the stock market crash. Few other corporations had enough liquid assets at the time to compete for the dirt-cheap stocks. As it later became clear, each and every one of these companies belonged to Cybertronic Investment, Inc.

"It's nearly impossible to conceive, you see, that a single person—or even a panel of experts—could possibly manage to manipulate the stock markets in the manner that the evidence suggests. There were literally thousands and thousands of transactions taking place. No one could keep track of them all.

"What's more, the rumors that were flying around made trading that day like swimming the Grand Canal in a fog bank. There was no way to know what was real and what was simply the product of some overwrought broker's hyperactive imagination."

Still, whether it was impossible or not—and perhaps a company with Cybertronic's vaunted technological expertise might have been able to pull it off—CII emerged from that day as the fifth and last megacorporation: Cybertronic.

It was weeks later until all the transactions from that day were finally approved. It was then that all was finally revealed. Cybertronic, through subsidiaries and holding companies, had bought nearly 70% of all of everything that was "thrown away" at horribly undervalued prices during the "Founding Day."

So then, having profited so much from the crash, was Cybertronic somehow behind it? Did strategically placed Cybertronic moles do what they could to help the process along, feeding theories of disaster when and where they would do the most harm?

"Preposterous," says Warner. "Unequivocally preposterous. No group of human beings could possibly have coordinated such a vast undertaking. It's simply beyond our ken to do more than conceive of such a plan. Implementing it would be a logistical nightmare worse than any war humanity has ever seen."

Perhaps they'd had some kind of *in*human help. Was it possible that the Dark Legion was behind Cybertronic after all? Warner laughed at the suggestion.

"Don't be silly, my boy. The Dark Legion is nothing but a myth. Something to scare children with as you put them to sleep. Not a chance."

Once the dust settled on the worst stock market crash ever, only one thing was entirely clear: there was a new kid on the megacorporate block. Cybertronic was here to stay.

I caught up with one of these descendants of the corporate-damned. He's a bartender at *Unaffiliated*, a seedy dive with a name that most of its patrons couldn't properly pronounce, much less understand. His name's Alan Boston, a direct descendant of Randall Boswick, the Saglielli Bros. broker Tim Warner killed in self-defense on Founding Day. Apparently Boston's pappy decided that a change of name might do something to help people forget about his link to that famously failed broker.

From the looks of the tavern, Alan's dad hadn't succeeded too well. I bellied up to the bar and introduced myself. At first, he didn't want to talk to me at all, but a few Crowns under my empty glass loosened his tongue. I asked him about his grandfather.

Alan screwed up his wrinkled face—the years had not been kind to him nor, by the cut of his clothing, had much else—and spit into a glass mug he was polishing. Then he smiled, the skin on his face working against the frown lines with which time had furrowed his face. "I suppose some might be angry at my grandpa, but I ain't one of them. Seems pointless to be mad at a dead man. Pa tells me he did the best he could. T'ain't his fault the market crashed."

I suggested his ancestor took the coward's way out. He glared at me and then, as calmly as a butcher sizing up a side of beef, hefted the same mug he'd been polishing since I entered the place four beers ago. With a snarl, he reached out and grabbed my tie, then smashed the glass against the edge of the bar and shoved the razor-sharp remains toward my face. Apparently, I'd touched a nerve.

"Look here, Herr Reporter. If grandpa hadn't made some kind of a try to redeem himself—even something as drastic as killing that Warner man—he'd have been dead anyhow. Bauhaus don't shine to someone who's lost so many Ducats!"

I apologized profusely as I pried his fingers one by one from around my tie. The way he figured it, Warner had done the old man a favor. "In a way, he died in battle, you see—honorably."

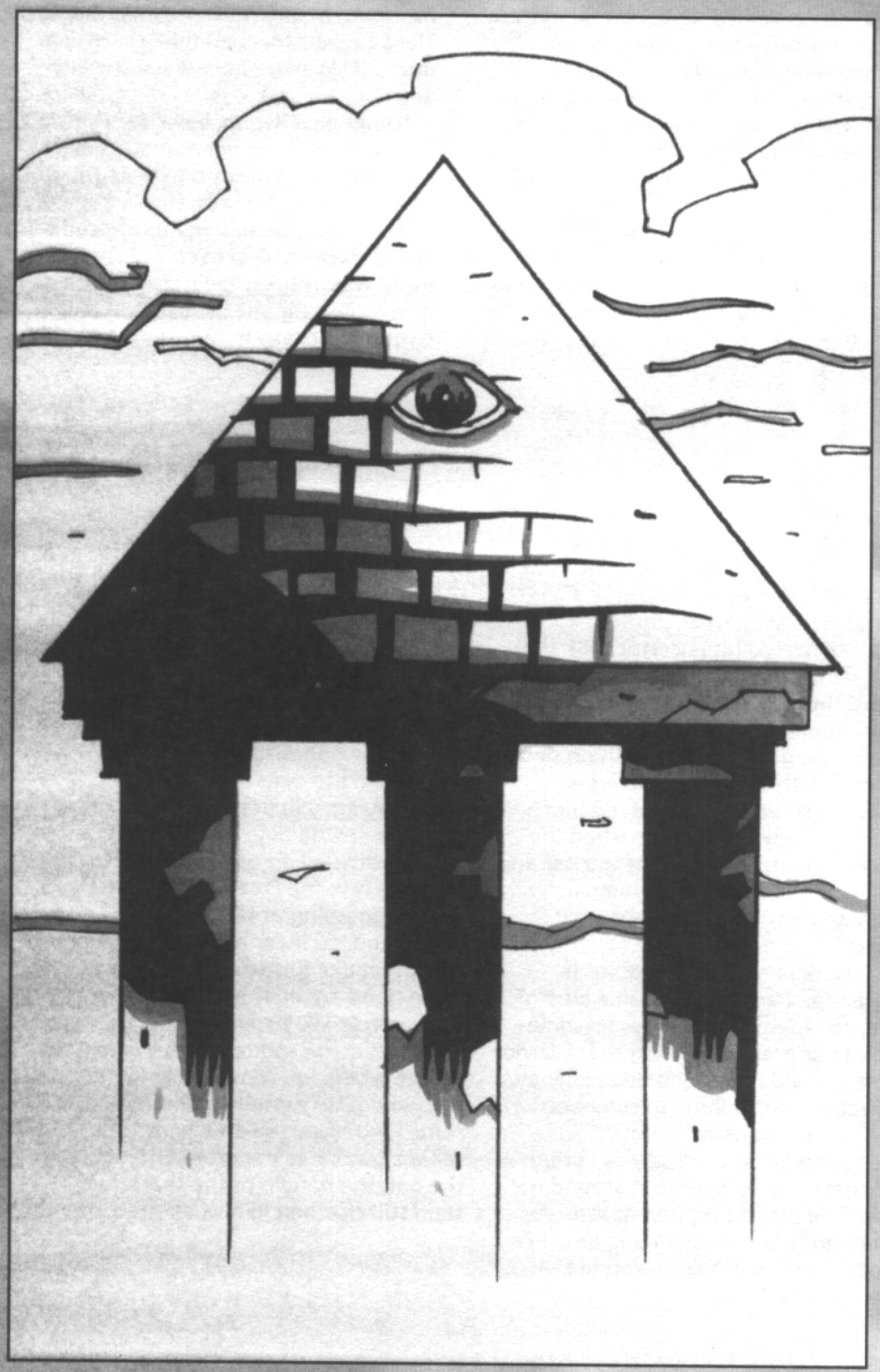
You could take the boy out of Bauhaus, I reflected, but you couldn't take Bauhaus out of the boy. A full generation out of the megacorp, and this fellow still bought into the crap Bauhaus had indoctrinated into his father as a small boy. The megacorps' reach is longer than we can usually see.

As if to emphasize this point, Boston waved the glass around some more, saying, "Someday we'll make up for it—my family, I mean. I've got three brothers and a sister. One of the boys is in the Free Marines. He'll make something of himself. The others and me mean to get our name back, to make Bostwick mean something good again. If not for us, then for our kids. We'll make it back!"

With that, he suddenly seemed to realize where we were and what he was doing. He turned and mumbled some kind of excuse and went to serve a patron at the other end of the bar, the handle of the shattered stein still clutched in his fist.

—Dik Quigley

The Three Pillars



by David M. Honigsberg

Ask any carpenter or geometrist what the strongest kind of structure is, and they'll tell you: one with three sides. Triangles are the most stable architectural form, and they offer an incredible amount of stability, just as can be found in a three-legged stool.

That power can be seen in the corporate structure of Cybertronic. While the debate continues to rage as to whether or not the megacorporation is allied with the Dark Legion, it cannot be denied that it is the first such corporation to so thoroughly utilize the three-sided structure. By its own nomenclature, Cybertronic divides itself into three divisions, called pillars. Each of these three pillars contains four smaller departments, for a total of twelve. These departments are most often called by their acronyms, a mostly meaningless series of letters that form a bureaucratic alphabet soup.

While what each acronym stands for may not be easily apparent, the structure which these departments form is sensible and easily understood. Lurking behind these divisions, though, are the corporation's top minds, people of great power who have the uncanny ability to make all the right moves at all the right times. These minds hover over all, connecting the vertices of the triangle to a single point, making the flat diagram three dimensional. This creates a pyramid of power with the Board at the apex of it all, high above the broad base of their power, nearly untouchable and unknowable to those below. Since meetings of the Board are always closed to the public, this comparison is not too far off of the mark.

This corporate structure works for Cybertronic, and it works well. The information presented below will hopefully give you something to think about and perhaps even change the way you look at Cybertronic.

The RDM

Each vertex of the triangle is important, as each lends support to the others. Even so, in the Cybertronic corporate structure, the Research, Development and Manufacturing Division, known as RDM, is considered first among equals—at least by the people under its purview.

RDM possesses the finest minds which Cybertronic can hire. According to Cybertronic's public relations department, these minds have turned their genius to the betterment of all society. This is most apparent in the fact that Cybertronic is responsible for the most cutting-edge applied technology known today.

Of the four divisions making up the RDM, the most important is ARD, Advanced Research and Development. At its headquarters beneath the Cybertronic HQ on Luna, work progresses around the clock as scientists break new ground in creating the amazing inventions for which Cybertronic is known. So amazing are the tasks which go on at ARD that the headquarters are known as Oz, a name taken from a fantastic land created by an ancient talespinner.

Although it is important, ARD itself is but one of four major areas within the RDM, none of which would be able to exist without the input of the others. Execution, Production and Distribution (EPD) is responsible for production. It handles all of the industry necessary for the physical creation of the products Cybertronic creates. In many ways, therefore, EPD is the most important department of the entire corporation, for without it nothing would ever make the transition from product specifications to actual consumer goods.

The work which results in the astounding array of cybernetic products is done by the Cybernetics Research and Implementation (CRI) division, whose employees all specialize in various areas of cyberization. All of the cybernetic implants, and the manufacture of the cybernium which is used in conjunction with those implants, are designed by CRI's scientists.

The specifications both for implants and consumer goods are, in conjunction with input from other departments, created by the Engineering, Development and Application (EDA) department, under whose aegis all of the engineering for Cybertronic falls. EDA is also charged with creating the necessary blueprints for the machinery which goes into the manufacturing of the goods Cybertronic sells, although the ultimate responsibility for creating that machinery lies with EPD. Although there is a good measure of rivalry between the departments, each is seen as vital to the corporate structure, yet all agree that without ARD, which provides the raw ideas, none of the other divisions, let alone Cybertronic itself, would be viable.

The AEM

If RDM is the machine that makes all the Cybertronic goods we're all so familiar with, then the Administration, Economics and Management division (AEM) is the grease in the gears. The AEM is the business arm of Cybertronic and, of the three pillars, it is the largest. In many ways, it can be said to be the most important, as it deals with the rest of our society, which supports the corporation by purchasing its goods. It is responsible for keeping tabs on all of Cybertronic's holdings and keeping the wheels of the megacorporation turning smoothly.

As such, those who work in this division must have the knowledge necessary to keep such an organization moving forward and the judgment needed to make important and difficult decisions. This is especially apparent at those times that a Cybertronic employee goes rogue and makes efforts to sell technology to a competing megacorporation. The severity of this corporate justice is such that instances of such traitorous behavior are (reportedly) very rare. By keeping things moving along behind the scenes, the AEM does a great deal to create the majestic image which Cybertronic projects to its clients and consumers.

The four divisions which make up the AEM interact with the outside world more than those of any other pillar. Legislation and Applied Justice (LAJ) is the legal arm of Cybertronic. This division is responsible for seeing that the corporate laws are followed, and it metes out punishment to employees unwise enough to break the code. It is thought that LAJ is the division responsible for the tragic accidents which seem to befall those rare individuals who leave Cybertronic for other megacorporations, but no direct involvement has ever been proven.

Education, Training and Publicity (ETP) is the division which creates orientation programs and additional educational programs for Cybertronic employees. ETP is also responsible for creating the ideas for all of Cybertronic's media, since the Board of Directors sees advertising as nothing more than another form of education. In the same vein, ETP also handles all of Cybertronic's public relations efforts, including the quarterly and annual reports which are so eagerly awaited by investors.

The day-to-day administration of the megacorporation is controlled by the Administrative Bureaucratic Control (ABC) division. ABC is responsible for making sure that products are sent out to consumers in a timely manner, that orders and requisitions are processed correctly and that internal affairs run smoothly. This division is the largest of the AEM divisions, due to the enormous volume of administrative work that needs to be done.

Second in size to ABC is the financial arm of Cybertronic, known as Finance and Economic Forecasting (FEF). None of the employees of Cybertronic would draw their salaries, none of the materials which the RDM pillar requisitions would be paid for, none of the media time would be purchased were it not for this division. The FEF is also responsible for minting the Piastres with which all Cybertronic financial transactions are conducted.

The SWI

Security, Warfare and Intelligence (SWI), the last pillar of Cybertronic, both supports and taxes the resources of the other pillars. The support is due to the fact that neither of the other pillars would have the need to exist were it not for the SWI. Similar-

ly, however, the SWI would not be needed were it not for the existence of the other two.

The SWI puts a great demand on the resources of the engineers and scientists employed in the RDM by challenging them to come up with better techniques for cyberization and more efficient ways of engineering and producing products. The AEM is challenged by the need to educate the public as to what Cybertronic has to offer and also by the administrative and legal nightmares which are spawned by certain departments of the SWI.

The SWI is responsible for Cybertronic's security, an area in which Cybertronic is seen as the king. These businesses have become the foundation areas of the megacorporation's structure, and the cold beauty of the products sold and the tasks accomplished by this division cannot be denied. The SWI is, by far, the most visible of the megacorporation's divisions. Conversely, the SWI is also the most invisible division, for it is responsible for all of Cybertronic's intelligence and security programs.

The importance of the SWI in the scheme of Cybertronic operations cannot be understated. Careful research has shown that the departments which make up this division are behind many of the most successful of today's myriad covert operations. Citizens of every planet must be more aware of the influence that Cybertronic has within their communities, even within their individual households and places of business. The technology of the SWI is unlike that of any arm of any other megacorporation, and its departments will stop at nothing to attain their goals. With all of the technology available to Cybertronic, nobody should feel entirely safe from the prying eyes of this division.

Not every department of this division, however, collects information. The two most visible departments do little more than act on the intelligence given to them by the two less noticeable departments. These departments, known internally as Military Conflict and Resolution (MCR) and Internal and External Security (IES—known more publicly as Cybercurity), do little to hide their activities. For this reason, many assume that they are the only two departments which make up Cybertronic's Central Pillar. The truth, unfortunately, is a great deal more insidious, as the remaining departments, Analytical Processing and Hypotheses (APH) and Intelligence Gathering and Collating (IGC), are the departments which are, in many ways, the two most important divisions of all.

Of the two visible divisions, the better-known is the MCR, Cybertronic's military arm. Few are the citizens who have not heard reports of the famed Mirrormen defending Cybertronic property from outside forces or seen videos of these brave corporate soldiers locked in combat with those who would do harm to innocent civilians. The sight of powerful Attila units or the rare Eradicators is stirring and not easily forgotten, especially by those on the wrong side of Cybertronic's business plans. The MCR's ability to get troops where they're needed as quickly as possible is testament not only to this division's skill but also to the loyalty and capabilities of the individual troops.

The department which creates the weapons associated with the MCR's efforts is known as IES. Outside of Cybertronic, this division is known as Cybercurity, a seemingly independent subsidiary of the megacorporation. The truth, however, is that Cybercurity is part of the backbone of Cybertronic, perhaps the most important department of the SWI. Cybercurity creates all of the weapons which are associated with Cybertronic, from the CSA4000 series of power swords, through the CSB606 Slaughtermaster, up to the SSW4200 Titan Megablaster. Even the names of these weapons give children nightmares.

The forces of Cybercurity are used in military engagements by MCR and also as law enforcement officers programmed to uphold Cybertronic law at all costs. On Cybertronic corporate days, Cybercurity's forces, arrayed in serried ranks, are a sight unlike those seen at any other megacorporation. Bereft of the trappings of the others' ancient traditions, Cybercurity is a model of clean lines and modern efficiency.

All intelligence and military analysis falls under the jurisdiction of the APH. Here are found the finest military, legal and business minds which Cybertronic can find or hire away from other megacorporations. These people are charged with creating the plans which run the company, as well as the tactics necessary for protecting Cybertronic assets. Because the company wants its employees to feel that they are part of a large extended family, the ability of the company to protect its workers is of the utmost importance, as is the job of finding potential weak links in the corporate structure.

The APH has no troops of its own, no ability to act upon its findings without relying on the weapons and warriors of the MCR and IES. This structure, as mandated by the Board of Directors, ensures that the APH does not become powerful enough to upset the corporate balance. If, for any reason, the APH had to be disbanded, Cybertronic's fortunes would almost assuredly head into a tailspin.

The least known of Cybertronic's departments is known as the IGC. Its mandate is nothing less than acquiring the intelligence necessary for other departments, in SWI and the other pillars, to create the best business, legal and military strategies possible. As such, the IGC is seen by many at Cybertronic as the most important of all the twelve departments, as without the intelligence gathered by this agency, Cybertronic would not be as powerful as it currently is.

The methods used by the IGC to extract this information are cloaked in secrecy. A recent undercover operation conducted by this magazine, however, has turned up some intriguing data as to the methods and products used by this department in the furtherance of their endeavors. It is important to bear in mind that even these findings may be only the tip of the iceberg. Conversely, the information received might be altogether false, as it is in the nature of this department to mislead even those who work for it, except for individuals at the highest levels.

As is the case with the APH, the IGC does not have the necessary staff or



equipment to act directly upon its findings or, in most cases, to properly analyze the data beyond determining if it is of importance. There are many times that all information is turned over to the APH in case something of seeming insignificance turns out to be more important than thought.

The IGC's methods of attaining information are myriad, and some of these methods border on the illegal. Yet because the APH contains so many top-notch lawyers, most every instance in which Cybertronic's information gathering practices are questioned lead the accusers to naught. Rumors of impropriety are quashed immediately or redirected to the mouths of known dissenters and lunatics. By doing this, whatever truth might be found in their rantings are dismissed by the majority of the populace.

The aforementioned undercover operation has turned up evidence of a "truth drug" which is more effective than any similar drug previously known. Those who are familiar with tales of the "truth serum" sodium pentathol will not be surprised to learn of this drug. For years, it has been rumored that every Cybertronic employee is inoculated with a drug known as "Brain Grease." True to its name, this drug supposedly eliminates stray thoughts and allows employees to concentrate more fully upon their tasks.

Cybertronic has done little to dampen reports of this drug in both of its forms, Mark I and Mark II. What has been discovered, however, is another variant, known within the megacorporation as Mark III and to those in Gemini as "Brain Sieve." Those who are given this drug are said to receive "lube jobs." The drug encourages their innermost thoughts to simply slide away from the inhibitors, mental and pharmaceutical, which those individuals suspected of carrying valuable information build around their most private thoughts.

Judicious applications of Mark III Brain Sieve not only allow an individual to give up information but also, in certain circumstances, allow intelligence gatherers to substitute false or corrupted memories in place of those retrieved. This is done most often in the case of those who are sent to spy upon Cybertronic. They return to their handlers with information either lacking in deep substance or with misleading reports. Corporations who discover that their moles have been compromised cannot publicly accuse Cybertronic of any wrongdoing, for that would be admission of infiltration.

In some individuals, however, the substitution of memories has proven to be quite dangerous and there are reports of some who have died from receiving overdoses of this powerful drug. Again, it is impossible for another company to confront Cybertronic without tipping their hand, and since these individuals are supposedly loyal members of the Cybertronic family, Cybertronic is free to put whatever spin they want to on the details of their death.

Another method favored by the IGC is the use of so-called "freelancers" to gather information. These freelancers pass themselves off as former employees of the firm, giving rise to the idea that it is, in fact, possible to successfully leave Cybertronic. Our sources report, however, that these people never leave the Cybertronic umbrella but that they report back to the IGC from the vantage point of their new positions in new companies, whether those companies are part of other megacorporations or not. It is important to remember that many supposedly independent firms belong to Cybertronic through convoluted paths of ownership and phantom holding operations. These companies are perfect covers for freelancers and allow them to gather information in relative safety.

From time to time, one or another freelancer will go too far, believing that they are actually free of the Cybertronic network. Too soon they learn that they themselves have been betrayed, much in the same manner they planned to betray their employer. Investigation of accident reports has led us to conclude that the majority of accidents which befall such individuals are, in fact, executions staged by order of the Libra department. The message is usually loud enough to dampen the enthusiasm of others who might feel the pull of another corporation's influence.

One may wonder how Cybertronic is able to keep tabs on all their sources. After all, there are so many chan-

» The Three Pillars

nels of information which the IGC taps into: paid informants, freelancers, captured spies, moles in other corporations. There are also reports of Cybertronic becoming aware of plans and activities in areas where no Cybertronic employee has ever ventured.

This is where the Mouser, or Catinator, comes in. Many of the stray cats which populate Luna are not quite what they appear to be. The research department arm of Cybertronic has been able to create an incredibly realistic robotic feline which is able to insinuate itself in many places that humans can not go. Furthermore, such robots are able to easily keep tabs on those in the corporation's employ. Sometimes they are given to suspected or known spies as pets. The unknowing spy is, in turn, spied upon by his friendly familiar. It is possible that even smaller animals have been created by the engineers and cyberization wizards of the RDM, but reports of robotic rats cannot be proven one way or another. If, however, such cyber-rats exist, one can be certain of their origin, as no other megacorporation has the skills necessary to produce such a product.

What does this mean to the ordinary, law-abiding citizen of Luna or any of the other cities where Cybertronic does business? The level of infiltration that the corporation may have, even in the highest levels of the other megacorps, is staggering. If what has been reported is true, there is nobody who can claim with impunity to be free of Cybertronic's surveillance. Those who feel themselves to be too unimportant, too low-level, too ignorant may be fooling themselves. Cybertronic must never be underestimated. Their influence is high-reaching and pervasive.

Short of attempting to slay every stray cat in the city, there is no way to stem the efficiency of SWI's operations. Even were this possible, there are far too many other avenues that Cybertronic uses to gain information to successfully plug all of the holes. Everybody has their price; everyone has their weakness. Cybertronic's SWI department is skilled at paying that price, finding that weakness, bringing people over to the Cybertronic way of thinking. As proof of this, all one needs to do is look back on the formation of the corporation, an overnight operation which took the other megacorporations totally by surprise



Alphabet Soup

It's been said that it's impossible to keep track of Cybertronic's departments without a scorecard. True enough, so here you are, courtesy of the *Lunar Voice*. Those of you who can't read real well might be able to recognize the divisional symbols at least—they're plastered all over everything Cybertronic, right on down to their toilet paper—so we've included those here as well.

Pillar or Division	Acronym	Symbol
Research, Development and Manufacturing	RDM	
Advanced Research and Development	ARD	
Execution, Production and Distribution	EPD	
Cybernetics Research and Implementation	CRI	
Engineering, Development and Application	EDA	
Administration, Economics and Management	AEM	
Legislation and Applied Justice	LAJ	
Education, Training and Publicity	ETP	
Administrative Bureaucratic Control	ABC	
Finance and Economic Forecasting	FEF	
Security, Warfare and Intelligence	SWI	
Military Conflict and Resolution	MCR	
Internal and External Security	IES	
Analytical Processing and Hypotheses	APH	
Intelligence Gathering and Collating	IGC	

and which incurred the suspicion of the Brotherhood from the very beginning.

It should be painfully obvious to all that, so long as Cybertronic continues to be relatively benign, all is well. If however, the Brotherhood is right, if Cybertronic is controlled by, or in alliance with, the Dark Legion, it may only be a matter of time before all of the wondrous inventions and powerful weapons are turned against the rest of us. We must be wary of such a thing. Until such time as this alliance can be proven, however, Cybertronic personnel will continue to provide the rest of us with the finest quality products which money can buy.

What's In a Name?

Actually, not a whole lot when it comes to Cybertronic. Cybers tend to use their divisional and even sub-divisional initials like they actually mean something. Put bluntly, this is laughable, so let's translate some of this megacorporate gobbledygook for you.

RDM

Unhip as they are, these guys come up with the coolest consumer goods in the human worlds. They are Retail Design Masters.

ARD These guys are the ARDest working people in the human worlds. Sometimes their research costs so much that they price themselves right out of Joe Luna's range. Then ARD stands for A Retailing Disaster.

EPD These jokers make all the Cybertronic stuff that the rich and famous can afford. They make Excruciatingly Pricey Devices that cater to Every Poser's Desire.

CRI If there were things that man was not meant to know, then the CRIers know them all. The chasseurs that this joint turns out are known on the street as CRI babies, but don't call them that to their faces—given that they still have one.

EDA This stands for Every Design Accomplished. If it can be built, these people can build it.

AEM

Known internally as Attorneys, Economists and Managers, the Brotherhood often refers to this pillar as All Evil Monsters. Somehow both seem synonymous.

LAJ To those on the wrong end of this division, the acronym's for Lawyers Are Jerks. If they're on your side, though, it means Laws Are Jokes. The LAJ attorneys can twist just about any law they get their computerized hands on into what they want it to mean. How do you think they get the corp out of so many scrapes?

ETP According to the Brotherhood, this is Evil's Total Propaganda, but the rest of us know them from their award-winning ads. Those of us that have spend a lot of time with the lower echelons of Cybertronic's work pool know the letters really stand for Educating Tiny Pinheads—both inside the company and out.

ABC Sounds simple, right? The first three letters of the alphabet—everyone from toddlers on up know them by heart. Ironic that they represent the most complex bureaucracy known to date. Despite this, they're razor sharp. Even so, getting something through ABC from the outside is like asking to borrow a Nepharite's horn to pick your teeth with. It just ain't gonna happen—and if it does, you're probably not gonna get what you were hoping for.

FEF Everyone knows that Cybertronic owns trillions of Crowns worth of businesses through dummy corporations and holding companies. After all, that's how they go their start. For that reason, the FEFers are known as Forgers of Economic Fictions.

SWI

This pillar is referred to as Social Welfare, Inc., because they "take care" of any problems that the other pillars might have. Sure, it's twisted, but these days, what isn't?

MCR This should mean, "Don't mess with," but the letters don't fit. In any case, the Mirrormen and their ilk are notorious for not having any sense of humor at all. If you've encountered these people on a battlefield, you know they're Mostly Chromed Robots—and deadly ones, too.

IES This is Cybercurity. Enough said.

APH These are the people that figure out what all the other megacorps are actually doing. These usually include grand conspiracy theories on an epic scale, sometimes involving the Cardinal himself. Cybertronic says it's A Perfect History. According to the Brotherhood, what APH comes up with are All Products of Heresy.

IGC Intelligence Gathering and Collating. Sounds really innocuous, doesn't it? Most people have never even heard of it, and that's the way Cybertronic wants it. After all, would you want the public aware of the most successful intelligence operation since Imperial's ISC? Try Intercorporate Gobbledygook Central instead.

—Dik Quigley

Smoke and Mirrors?

A BAD TRIP TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRRORMEN.

By David Crowe

I've been asked to guide the readers of *The Lunar Voice* through what many consider to be one of the main reasons for Cybertronic's unbelievable corporate success: Its subjective reality, or subreality, system. Now many of Cybertronic operations and advances are enigmas wrapped in puzzles inside mysteries, and such secrecy extends to their subreality system. In fact, I'm not sure why I learned what I did.

It all started a few weeks back when I learned that an up-and-coming television manufacturing company, Grommet Electronics, had just been bought out by Cybertronic. I thought I'd have a chance to get a ground-floor view of how the Cybers change an outfit when they move in. I snooped around, made some friends on the staff. I didn't turn up anything unusual—new posters on the walls extolling the virtues of Cybertronic and so on.

One guy I had been pulling a lot of information out of over rounds of Colonel Drougan's Premium Malt let slip an interesting bit of information about a new hi-tech system that the new bosses had just installed that would let people go inside a computer and talk to each other.

This piqued my interest. The only thing I know about computers (especially the one that sends me my utility bills each month) is that they aren't much more than glorified adding machines. Doing stuff like traveling inside a computer only happens in cheap science-fiction books. Is this why Cybertronic has such a big edge? I learned that the Cybers call this setup "Subjective Reality." At the time, I didn't know why.



The Author

Then a few days later, my source, Lars, clammed up. Completely. He wouldn't talk to me about anything but the Cybertronic company line. He didn't seem to be afraid or under any kind of pressure . . . just happy. At least as happy as when he was three sheets to the wind. Not wanting to give up on the story (since my last rent check bounced), I hung around the Grommet plant around quitting time and tried to get something, anything about subreality from the wage slaves departing for the day. I kept up the pressure: making phone calls, writing letters to the unions, even peeking through windows. The newly-converted Cybertronic employees barely noticed I was there.

But someone obviously did.

That evening, as I was trying to ignore a "Capitol Critters" nature documentary on the TV while writing up what few facts I had, a knock came at the door. Or rather, through the door. One of the 2-meter-tall steroid goons that Cybertronic seems to employ in droves smashed his way into my apartment. Oblivious to my threats, yells and the fact I smashed a telephone receiver over his wrist, he pulled a bag over my head and hauled me down the stairs like a sack of potatoes.

From there I was tossed into the back of a car. And not a new car, judging from the smells that penetrated the sack. After about a half hour of driving somewhere that involved a lot of turns, I was again unceremoniously pulled down a flight of stairs. Only this time I was dragged by my ankles. I counted 23 steps bouncing off my skull. Then I lost count.

The next thing I knew, the sack was pulled off my head and I found myself in a dimly lit basement. The main piece of furniture seemed to be a



cast-iron psychiatrist's couch with a huge helmet at the head. The other occupant of the room, a too-average looking man with a leather jacket and a Cybertronic P1000 said to my bulky captor "Strap him down, Shack. I'll send him on the grand tour." Even though this couch setup seemed like a variant of the electric chair up at Ryker's Mountain, I didn't think this was the end of the line for me. After all, a bullet in the back of the head and a dive into a mine shaft is a lot less complicated. Unless someone at Cybertronic has a torture fetish.

Even so, as I was strapped down into the unyielding couch and had a 40-pound helmet with no eye holes placed on my head, I thought I might be wrong. When I heard someone flip a knife switch, and then electricity went through the helmet and straight into my skull, I was pretty sure I was wrong.

I once stuck my finger in a light socket as a kid. It felt like every pore in my skin was trying to jump away from every other pore. This was like that, but a hundred times worse. I blacked out.

Then things got weird. I was standing on a plain with some sort of glowing grid on it. Behind me was a huge circle of black stone standing upright, like a gateway or portal. Other seemingly huge portals dotted what passed for landscape. Most were marked with the insignia for a megacorp and a planet or asteroid.

I tried to move back through the portal I had apparently come through and was about as successful as trying to walk through a brick wall. It was, however, more painful than hitting a brick wall.

Lacking any other options, I started walking toward one of the other portals. I got nowhere fast. I walked for hours. The entrance portal receded into the distance quickly, but none of the others got any closer. I thought that whoever tossed me in here (wherever "here" was) could have at least sent a map or something along. Just then, the "or something" appeared in the form of a Cybertronic spokesperson. You know, the kind that deny everything at press conferences. He was completely average looking, almost too much so. He was wearing the usual Cybertronic suit and the usual detached demeanor. His name tag read *John*.

He asked me what I wanted. I said "to get out of here." "That's not an option yet," he replied coldly.

"Well, can I get somewhere?"

"Where?"

"I don't know, anywhere. There," I said pointing to the Luna gate. "And how about getting there a little faster?"

With that, an Autocab appeared next to me.

"Did you ever think what it would be like to take a trip in a computer?" he asked.

"Not really. Is that why I'm here?"

"You'll find out, " he said. Just wonderful, I thought. He's just as evasive as any other Cyber drone.

"When can I leave?"

"When we've made our point." With that he clammed up again.

The nearest gate seemed to be marked "Luna," so I told the cab to stop there. I got out and stepped towards the portal. Through it I could see an aerial view of the city. I glanced over my shoulder and saw that the cab and John had faded into thin air.

Holding my breath, I stepped through the portal—and into thin air. The image in the portal was exactly where I appeared. As I started to plunge toward the ground, I devoutly wished to be in a plane.

» Smoke and Mirrors?



As if on cue, I found myself in the back seat of an Icarus jet fighter. I seemed to have some control over what was going on. Perhaps this was a dream after all. Or maybe a drug-induced hallucination. Or some random thought impulses flashing in a dying brain. Well, that was a depressing line of thought. I tried to live for the moment.

Leaning forward, I saw that the pilot was one of the Brotherhood's Archangel fighter jocks. His face was totally hidden by his helmet and oxygen mask. "Where are we going,?" I asked. "Wherever the Cardinal wills it," he replied. Terrific. Ask a stupid question. . . .

"I'd like to be on the ground," I said. Preferably before you start preaching at me, I didn't bother to add.

"Very well, if that is your wish."

With that, the pilot pulled the ejector seat lever and I found myself in mid-air again, though this time I had the benefit of a parachute. Despite my utter lack of knowledge about parachuting, I managed to steer my descent to the street with a minimum of fuss.

The streets were strangely empty. As in "completely empty." No one around at all. I figured I should pay a visit to the Cybertronic Tower. I might turn up some answers about what I was stuck in. Or at least some dirt on the Cybers in general.

I turned around and saw that an Autocab had appeared when I wasn't looking. Hmmm. If I could summon an Autocab just by thinking of one, then why not something a little more stylish? Sure enough, the cab morphed into a Ranger Phantom stretch limo. I found John sitting in the driver's seat.

I wondered if I could do anything about his looks. Turns out that I could. I found myself being chauffeured by Capitol's top movie star, Lebia Maverick, in a rather minimalistic chauffeur's outfit.

If this was a dream, it was turning out to be considerably more entertaining than my usual ones about losing my laundry at the laundromat.

"Where to?" asked the very blond Lebia.

"Cybertronic Tower," I replied.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course. Why wouldn't I be?" Except for the fact that I might have been being electrocuted by Cybertronic goons that very minute, of course.

» Smoke and Mirrors?

Just as there was no pedestrian traffic, there was a total lack of cars on the streets, so I made good time in getting to the HQ. "Why isn't there any traffic?"

The delightful Lebia replied, "Special arrangements have been made for you."

I got out at the curb of the huge Cybertronic building. The limo and driver both vanished as soon as I got out, and I was met by another typical Cybertronic exec who was also named John.

"Would you mind explaining what in the name of the Cardinal is going on here?" I demanded. John flinched a second at the mention of the Cardinal, but slickly covered it by saying, "I'm here to give you the grand tour. I'm sure you'll find nothing sinister or evil here at Cybertronic."

From there, John took me on a thorough, and thoroughly dull, tour of the HQ. Room after room of Cybertronic employees recruited from all the megacorps working together in perfect harmony. Dozens of assembly areas where workers efficiently assembled Cybertronic's sophisticated products. Concerned managers charting the best course for their subordinates to follow. In short, a blatant attempt to show Cybertronic as absolutely harmless. A typical propaganda whitewash.

This went on for hours, but it seemed like days. I'd rather have a half-dozen root canals then go through that again.

Every so often, I'd try to go through a door with an interesting sign like "Research and Development," or "Necroform cadaver test site." Not only were all such doors locked, but even looking too hard at one got John telling me how there was "absolutely nothing interesting in there." Trying to force the door made John take on the proportion of one of Cybertronic's trademark 200-kilo goons, just like the one who "invited" me here. I only tried that once.

Then John took me to a room the size of several rollerball rinks laid end-to-end where some Cybertronic forces were training for Cartel operations against the Dark Legion or something. The images of the opposition were blurred, but strange enough not to be mistaken for anything built by human hands.

By this time, John was encased in the heavy and heavily chromed armor that only Cybertronic seems to know how to make. A suit appeared around me as well, but John assured me that it was just for show and that I couldn't really be hurt here. Of course not, I thought. Why bother when they could have pumped me full of lead back in that basement? Wherever it was.

These exercises seemed to be live-fire practices against drones and fortifications which were also using live ammo. Still, they were eye opening. The Cybertronic Cuirassiers and Chasseurs are at least the equal of the Capitol Free Marines or the Imperial Blood Berets.

What made the biggest impression on me (and on the targets on the practice field) was Cybertronic's penchant for some very low-tech ideas on close in fighting. Putting large blades on the front of their hover vehicles, for example. You don't often see 3-meter tall mutants get turned into salami in seconds. Seems to work well, though. Hope I don't find myself in the same sandwich after all this is through.

During the course of the battle, several of the Cyber troopers were hit by heavy weaponry. This only seemed to annoy them. Once I caught a glimpse of a gleaming metal where part of a trooper's skull had been shot off. Just like in real life, Cybertronic proved to be close-lipped about what was going on with that.

Maybe I'm too jaded, but even seeing gleaming, high-tech metal knights valiantly battle vile creatures of darkness can get slow after the first couple of hours. I looked around for an exit, and as if on cue, one appeared. I stepped through it and found myself back on the weird, portal-dotted plain.

The next nearest portal seemed to be marked with both Luna and the cross of the Brotherhood. A quick trip on a slick Cybertronic fighter plane and I found myself standing in front of it. I figured that I might as well see what was up with the old Sheriff of Luna and walked through.

Unlike last time, I found myself at ground level on the other side of the portal, standing in front of the First Cathedral. I also found myself standing next to Cardinal Dominic himself. The most grim and unpleasant man in the Solar System demanded of me: "What business do you have here? Have you come to repent?"

Since my current situation resembled a bad dream or a bad trip, I decided to skip the humility route. "Just here to check out the scenery."

He haughtily replied "Only fools and madmen trifle with forces they do not understand!"

"I'll take that chance." Why not? What was the worst thing he could do? Kill me?

With that, I strode through the huge, ornately carved doors. Unlike the few other times I had been here, the place was completely deserted and silent as a tomb. As I walked

Let's Get Subreal

Percentage of Luna Citizens who:

	Yes	No	Undecided
Have Heard of Subreality:	89%	5%	6%
Know What Subreality Is:	43%	29%	28%
Have Been Subreal:			
Cybers:	93%	7%	—
Everyone else:	3%	96%	1%

This poll has a margin of error of ±3%.

» Smoke and Mirrors?



through the empty hall, the only sounds were of my footsteps echoing and of Dominic muttering to himself about the fate of the damned.

I moved towards the doors behind the altar, figuring that anything interesting would be behind them. As I got closer, I noticed something moving in the shadows. The closer I got to the doors, the more of them I counted. They were all dressed in black. The only thing I could make out was the swords they were unsheathing. That was all I needed to see.

Only the Brotherhood's nasty and unknown Mortificator assassins carried slightly blades like those. Dream or not, I had no desire to be subject to the legendary ruthlessness of the Mortificators. Death is one thing, but these guys were supposed to be able to cut a man in ways that took him three days to die. I once saw a corpse that was supposedly the work of the Mortificators. That thought was enough to convince me.

I started to back off as quickly as I could while maintaining some dignity. Then I forgot about dignity and cleared out as fast as my feet would carry me, closely pursued by the Cardinal's calls for me to repent. As I collapsed on the stairs outside, I found myself relating to Cybertronic's less-than-warm relations with the Brotherhood.

I then noticed that going through the front door of the Cathedral had put me back in the grid plane. I spotted several gates clustered together, all marked with Mars and a different insignia. The largest Capitol one was presumably for Capitol's capital, San Dorado. I had always wanted to visit San Dorado, and it had to be safer than facing down Mortificators, even though some polls have shown the average Capitol citizen is at least as heavily armed as a Mortificator.

I also found that my assortment of guides had started to taper off. One only appeared when I needed to know something. Now that I was starting to get the hang traveling around wherever I was, I didn't seem to need a constant companion. Not that I minded the ones that were easy on the eyes, like Ms. Maverick.

On the other side of the gate, I was engulfed by the hustle of San Dorado. Quite a change from nearly everywhere else being deserted. Were they reducing the voltage on that helmet?

» Smoke and Mirrors?

All such thoughts were driven from me when I noticed Lebia Maverick standing at the curb next to matte-black Phantom. This time, she was in the rather tight police uniform from her last film, *Anti-Mutant Police*. Perhaps I should have concentrated on what was going on a little more, but hey, I'm only human.

I took the grand tour of the city: The Statue of Freedom, the Presidential Palace, the Arch of Victory. I had Lebia steer clear of the local Cathedral though.

I also got a good look at one of the other things San Dorado was famous for: violent crime. According to the car radio, a number of labor terrorists had grabbed a high ranking Capitol exec just as he got out of his private chopper. I was determined to get a better look. After all, if this was really happening and I was witnessing it somehow, it would make a great story. Callous? Maybe, but a guy's gotta eat. If I survive whatever I'm going through.

My limo suddenly became a Blackhawk attack helicopter piloted by a grim-faced Alpha Force soldier. It was just like the chopper closing on the building that the hostage situation was taking place in. The other Alpha Force chopper was forced back by Gatling gun fire, but not before it dropped a dozen troops with rocket packs.

All twelve of them managed to drop in a near perfect circle around the grounded chopper the terrorists and their hostage were in. The Alpha team sniper managed to pick off the leader of the group. Then the Alpha CO gave some sort of speech extolling truth, justice and the Capitolian way. I thought that stuff never worked outside the movies, but the five surviving terrorists came out with their hands up. The hostage gratefully thanked his rescuers.

This was like the plot to a bad action movie. Perhaps I was dreaming after all, although I'd like to think my subconscious had more class than this.

I figured that since I was airborne, I might as well check out the rest of Mars. I didn't think that a helicopter had the fuel to travel as far as Southern Mars, but it seemed to do just fine. Go figure. Since the Blackhawk is a very stealthy helicopter, no one seemed to take notice as I flew over a three way fight between Mishima, Bauhaus and Imperial.

The ground was littered with shattered tanks, aircraft and bodies. This sort of thing has been going on for decades, if not centuries. What a waste. It didn't even look like there was anything worth fighting for on the parched soil anymore. It's in times like this that I'm glad I'm not a war correspondent.

Mars was supposed to be named after a forgotten god of war. The name still has some significance, as I flew over yet another private war, the fields where Capitol was in a major dust-up with Imperial near Lawrence. Several platoons of Cap's Desert Fox tanks were trying to flank the slower Imp Bullies. As a result of their greater maneuverability, the Foxes were gaining the upper hand until they were strafed by a flight of Nighthawk fighter/bombers. Even they somehow missed spotting the chopper I was observing from. That sort of thing just doesn't happen in real life.

Since I was nearby and might have nothing left to lose, I thought I'd get a look at the supposed Dark Legion Citadel towering into the air nearby. My pilot spoke up for the first time, saying, "Are you sure you want to do that?"

Since this whole situation might have been some kind of charade by Cybertronic, I figured I might as well spit in their eye by not going along with whatever agenda they wanted for me.

You hear a lot about the Dark Legion when working in the press. Some of it is Brotherhood propaganda or the ravings of lunatics and paranoids. The rest isn't that reliable. Still, I could tell nothing human had built the twisted structure rising from the ground. Surrounding it for miles in every direction were minefields, guard towers, acres of barbed wire

A Typical Home Subreal Rig

SimBoy helmet (provides 3-D visual and stereo audio output) 3,000 Crowns

SimBoy deluxe helmet (included head-tracking sensors) 5,000 Crowns

SimBoy gloves (allows interaction with subreal environment) 1,500 Crowns

Cybertronic Megamachine computer (only top of the line will do) 22,000 Crowns

As you can see, a full subreal system can set you back over 30,000 Crowns. Of course, once you get your rig set up, you still need interface software, and this can set you back another 1,000–30,000 Crowns, depending on how good it is and what it allows you to do. This is out of the range of most working stiffs, and so (outside of Cybertronic) it remains only in the domain of high-ranking corporate-types and gung-ho college students, both of whom can get someone else to pay for all their toys.



and a multitude of other static defenses. My chopper breezed through the forest of anti-aircraft guns as if they weren't there. As usual.

Maybe I had overreacted when I ran into the Mortificators back in the Cathedral. Whatever I was going through, it didn't seem to have any real consequences. Why should I be afraid of anything right now? Computer projection or dream, what was happening to me now couldn't possibly have any bearing on reality.

So I had the pilot put down right at a five-hundred-foot-tall gate. Looking up towards the spire, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. Nothing human could have built this place. It hurt my eyes even to look at it. And any spot I concentrated on seemed to writhe and twist.

The gate had been left open a crack, so I squeezed on through. The door was so cold it started to burn my skin where the metal came into contact with it. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all.

No sooner had that thought crossed my mind, the ajar door closed up with a creak that was worse than nails on a blackboard. Inside, it was black, blacker than an abandoned Lunar mine shaft and colder than the void. Having no place to go but ahead, I set out.

Then I notice my guide was gone. I thought real hard about having a Doomtrooper next to me. No dice.

I was really starting to sweat. What if this wasn't a hoax or a dream? Maybe I really shouldn't have been messing around with things I didn't understand.

Then something grabbed me and lifted me off the ground. Way off. I felt its hot breath on my face and nearly gagged.

Whatever the thing was, it threw me over its shoulders like a pro wrestler. Spikes on its shoulders and head cut into my stomach. I thought it hurt. Then it started to pull, trying to tear me in half.

Then a wall blew up. Dim light poured through the hole along with a number of Cybertronic troops in shining chrome armor. The one in the lead shouted "Herc, kneecap!"

With that, one of the big ones opened up with a machine gun. The stream of bullets cut into the Dark thing's legs, and it fell over. I went along for the ride but avoided being impaled on one of its horns by an inch or two.

Not badly hurt, the creature pulled itself up and unlimbered a huge, twisted gun. It then let loose a hail of lead at the Mirrormen.

One of them had snuck around to the rear of the creature and threw me over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. I was getting rather tired of being treated like baggage, but under the circumstances, I decided not to complain.

The leader stated, "Objective secure. Fall back." As the Mirrormen started to withdraw while still hosing down the creature with gunfire, darkness engulfed me.

I woke up on the cast-iron couch I had been strapped to so long ago. I was back where I started. The room was empty and the helmet was gone. I rolled off the couch and fire shot through my gut. I pulled up my shirt and found a six-inch gash straight across my abdomen.

I looked at my watch, which despite not being from Bauhaus, managed to keep on ticking despite the licking I had taken on the way there. I had been "gone" for less than an hour, even though it seemed like over a day.

I managed to get back to my apartment, where I spent the last few hours writing this up. The facts about what Cybertronic can do are out. Finding some truth in them is up to you.

I don't understand exactly what happened. But maybe that was the point Cybertronic was trying to make: that I should stop messing around with things I don't understand.

A Typical Cybertronic Rig

Subreal implants (subdermal implants wiring your brain for subreality) not for sale

LinkCouch (the other half of the link equation, hard-wired to Cybertronic's computer network) not for sale

The other way to get subreal is to pony up your brain and sign on with Cybertronic. Of course, you can't just apply for a job at the nearest retail outlet. If you're what they want, they'll come looking for you.

The big benefit of the Cyber rig over the homebrew is that you get the full subreal experience. This is more like being there instead of hearing about it second-hand through your mostly deaf grandmother. Still, unless you're absolutely sure Cybertronic's on the up and up about everything real and subreal, the price might be more than just a little too high.



Excellency Through Perfection

By William Spencer-Hale and Michael J. Hill

Since the dawn of time, humanity, despite our eternal quest for knowledge and our unquenchable thirst to survive, has been forced to kneel before the elements of nature, physical damage and pain and fatigue. For all of our advancements, we are little more than meat. For millennia, we accepted our fate, telling ourselves that these trials and tribulations only made us stronger, that adversity was the key to wisdom. Yet, these struggles and hardships brought us to where we now stand, at a time where we can ascend from the trappings of mere flesh and become something more.

Throughout the ages, we creatively made our lives easier. We forged weapons to slay our foes more swiftly and cleanly. We crafted ways to transport ourselves more quickly to our destinations, whether that destination wasanother city, continent or even planet. We harnessed the power of electricity to supply us with energy and radio waves to communicate with. We tried to make nature better than it was, forcing it to submit to our will, while overlooking the center of our struggle: ourselves. Even as we strove to make our lives easier, we rarely thought to make ourselves stronger.

Never, that is, until now.

We, as a race, are looking at last to our frail and pitiful selves. Technology has grown almost to the point of humanity itself. Machines think, react, fight, work and serve. It was only a matter of time before we used the knowledge that we fought so hard for over the centuries to fuse human and machine into one living entity.

That time is now. Instead of attempting to better the fickle ways of nature, we are now on the verge of perfecting ourselves through technology. By doing so, we achieve a state of excellency previously undreamed of. We have become greater than nature; more excellent than the whimsical, capricious bitch that birthed us and left us to struggle alone and frail. She will now bow to us.

Excellency through perfection is an ideal. A way of thinking. A way of crafting the body and mind to be stronger than its environment.

And Cybertronic is leading the way for this techno-human revolution.

Built to be the Best

Through the creative genius of the Cybertronic Corporation, a means has been developed to make we humans far more than the clay (the Cardinal tells us) from which we were crafted. Its engineers have created a fusion of humanity and our tools, our machines. This is the next step in our evolution.

The Cybertronic medical engineers, like the woman known only as Doctor Diana, have finally managed to implant miniaturized machines into human bodies. This has been done before by other megacorporations, but with limited success. The great Cybertronic breakthrough was to discover a way to implant these devices with little or no chance of rejection.

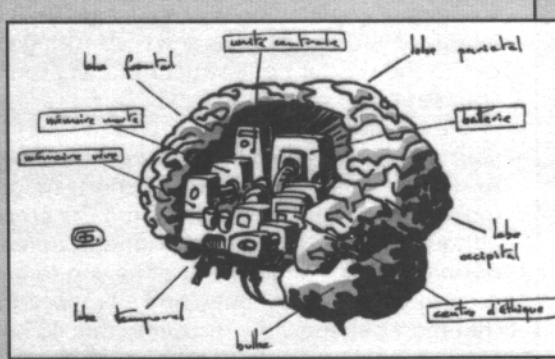
There are many examples of the type of cybernetics available for implantation, although some are more amazing and useful than others. Some are little more than replacement organs, while others help to shape the human animal to a greater degree, making us faster, stronger, smarter and more durable.

The Compu-Brain

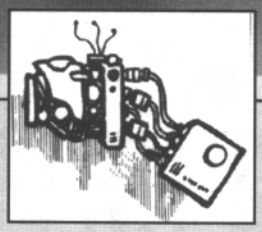
This is a truly amazing piece of technology that sets Cybertronic apart. Basically, a portion of the user's brain is replaced by an on-board computer that governs the autonomous functions of the body, including respiration and heartbeat. The compu-brain does not tire like its fleshy counterpart and, combined with Cybertronic's required personal exercise regime, can add years to the user's life, forcing death to step aside—at least for a while. Also, the compu-brain can convey special sensory abilities upon the user, making you far superior to your more fleshy counterparts.

With one of these hooked in, you enjoy deeper and sharper perceptions. You can discern shadows and silhouettes and use sound waves to see in darkness, giving you an advantage in almost any tactical situation. You can even detect stress levels in the voices and heart rates, and you can using this information as a sort of lie detector.

This puts you squarely on top in all situations. These abilities, coupled with the natural cunning located in your still-fleshy higher brain, can make a you a nightmare in a dark alley or a simply a more useful tool for your Cybertronic superiors to call upon.

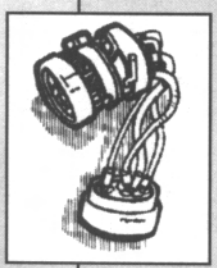


The Eyes Have It



Cybertronic's advances in making powerful things smaller has led to some incredible breakthroughs in the optical department. When it comes to eyes, no corporation is as far-seeing as the people at the HQ.

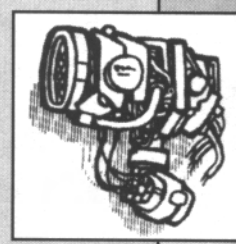
The Eye Marquee This snazzy little mod monitors the current state and function of any onboard systems (whether implanted by Cybertronic or Mother Nature) and puts this information up on the inside of your eye. This is right where no one else could possibly see it, but you just can't miss it, no matter how hard you try. It comes in full 3-D and in any one of ten designer colors.



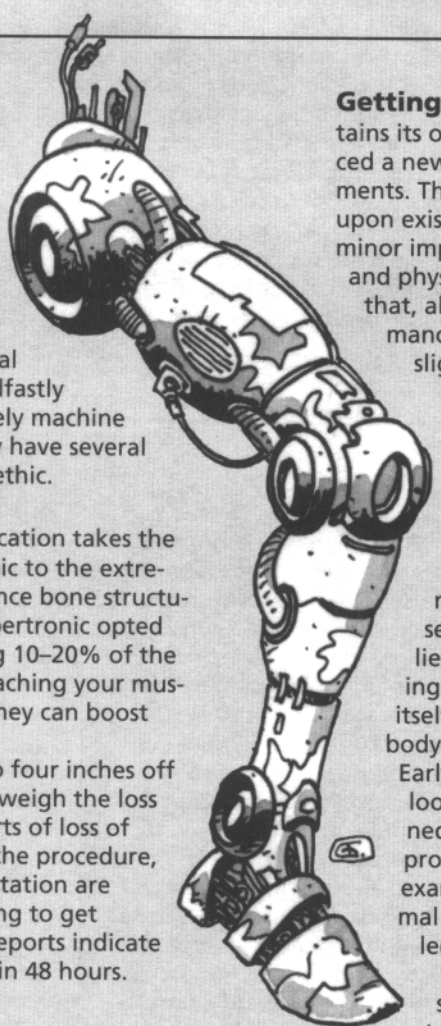
The Red Eye The latest thing in the optical arena is the ability to see into the infrared spectrum—through your eyelids! With this installed, you can actually pick up heat patterns like those created by warm bodies. You can detect body shapes through 6 inches of drywall and even track footprints up to five minutes old.

One of the best benefits is that you don't need to open your eyes to use this implant, which can be useful when feigning unconsciousness or simple sleep. In fact, you have to keep them shut. The inner layer of the eyelid is coated with the material that picks up the heat waves, and a computer chip implanted in on the bridge of your nose relays the information to your eyes, which interpret this wild new input for your brain.

The Cat's Eye This nifty gadget was designed with outdoor operations in mind. While the red eye is useful for picking up heat patterns and the like, the cat's eye peers into the ultraviolet spectrum. The counterpart to the UV sensors is a UV projector located in the back of the eye. This provides unlimited clarity and depth perception in all lighting conditions, even total darkness. The UV flashlight portion of the system is partially visible, making your eyes seem to glow in the dark, just like the felines the package is named after. This telltale can be a problem in some situations, but the benefits usually outweigh any potential drawbacks.



Body Building



Building a better body has always been one of Cybertronic's most successful R&D areas, for reasons that should be obvious. Their new line of implants and modifications completely dominates the market, just as their original products did. Since Cybertronic steadfastly professes to prefer organic over purely machine replacement and enhancement, they have several methods which fit into their design ethic.

Getting Boned A Bonejob modification takes the Cybertronic organic replacement ethic to the extreme. Rather than strengthen or enhance bone structures with metal and micromotors, Cybertronic opted for reverse engineering. By removing 10–20% of the length of your long bones and reattaching your muscles to the shorter bone structures, they can boost your strength up to 40%.

The average Bonejob knock two to four inches off your height, but the benefits far outweigh the loss of stature. There have been no reports of loss of mobility or dexterity resulting from the procedure, although a few days of mild disorientation are normal. This is a direct result of having to get used to your shorter bones, and all reports indicate that most patients fully recover within 48 hours.

Getting a Leg Up Although Cybertronic maintains its organic replacement ethic, it has produced a new limited line of cybernetic limb replacements. These are designed to replace, not improve upon existing or lost limbs. Several clients claim a minor improvement in strength, manual dexterity and physical endurance. Cybertronic explains that, although designed to meet normal performance criteria, the limbs are definitely a slight improvement over organic limbs specifically due to their structure and durability, not by any modification in their design.

Steel Skin A tremendous amount of research went into the development of the Steel Skin. With synthedermis technology, Cybertronic managed to create a self-repairing synthetic armor that actually lies directly under your natural skin. Amazingly enough, this stuff can actually "heal" itself once damaged, by calling on your body's own repair systems to do so.

Early versions of subdermal armor made you look stiff and lifeless, something like a mannequin. Today, Cybertronic latest version provides a normal appearance to a close examination, with the same texture as normal skin. If you have a compu-brain installed, you can actually monitor the Steel Skin and initiate repairs long before your still-in-shock body could ever get around to it.

The Cell-Link

Even though Cybertronic has developed many entirely original products, they have also made some incredible improvements in more familiar tech. What they've done with the standard old telephone is entirely amazing.

The cell-link utilizes the user's own biological systems to set up an entirely inboard wireless phone. A fine mesh of speaker receptors is implanted into the skull of the user, acting as a reception and broadcast antenna. Speakers built into the skull allow for crystal-clear hearing, even under combat conditions. A microphone implanted directly into the user's vocal cords allows for nearly silent communication. If you've got a compu-brain, too, you can even scramble and unscramble signals, making your private line entirely secure.

The Mirrormen are said to each be fitted with a cell-link and a compu-brain. These are all webbed in to a central locale, from which their commander can provide them with almost instantaneous feedback and combat coordination. Their teamwork is literally hard-wired into their brains.





The Tin Man

Any list of Cybertronic's tech-savvy products would not be complete without including their top-shelf Tin Man line of armor. Integrated armor is the pinnacle of personal armor systems. It is constructed of a patented steel alloy which provides incredible protection without the extreme weight or bulkiness you might expect from such monstrous metal suits.

To use a Tin Man suit, you need subreal receptors so that you can properly control the suit. The hydraulic systems, which allow the amazing agility commonly associated with this armor, require continuous, instantaneous feedback from the user's brain. Without the interface, the hydraulics react like they're filled with molasses, making the user an easy target. The feedback system allows the hydraulics to react to the user's movements faster than nature, in her short-sightedness, ever intended.

The Ultimate Soldier

What's the well-outfitted chasseur got under his or her chrome or bronzed skin? Nothing less than more tech than you'll find in an average Bauhaus Grizzly. Here's a sample of what one well-known Cyber's got as his chass-gear.

Vince Diamond

Artificial intelligences like cuirassiers aside, top Cybertronic chasseur Vince Diamond is one of the most lethal lifeforms around, fitted literally up to his eyes with all sorts of chass-gear.

Compu-Brain: Yup, Vince is missing some of his original gray matter, but the stuff replacing it is better and faster than he ever was. Careful installation has left his higher brain functions intact, so Vince is still the same tactical genius he ever was.

Unblinking Eye Package: Vince is outfitted with the entire suite of visual gear: the eye marquee, the red eye and the cat's eye. Notice that, since Vince is in a well-lit environment, he isn't using the cat's eye flashlight feature, so his eyes aren't glowing now like they would in the dark alley you wouldn't want to meet him in.

Bonejob: Tall as he is, if you look closely at Vince, you might be able to notice the inches removed from his frame. Since he started out at 6'8", he still stand an impressive 6'4".

Cyber Arm: Vince lost his good right arm in his last battle for Bauhaus. He's had it replaced with an artificial limb that makes old-fashioned knuckle-dusters look like a bouquet of petunias by comparison.

Steel Skin: That musculature Vince is showing off was mostly earned the old-fashioned way, but his Steel Skin sculpts his flesh to almost inhuman proportions. You don't get this kind of look from baby oil!

Cell-Link: Via his cell-link, Vince is in constant communication with his superiors—the few that he has. These powerful people want to be able to reach them whenever they want to, and now they can, whether he likes it or not.

Subreal Receptors: No chasseur is complete without them. Otherwise Vince would be locked out of the Cybernet, Cybertronic's vaunted computer system, and where would he be then?



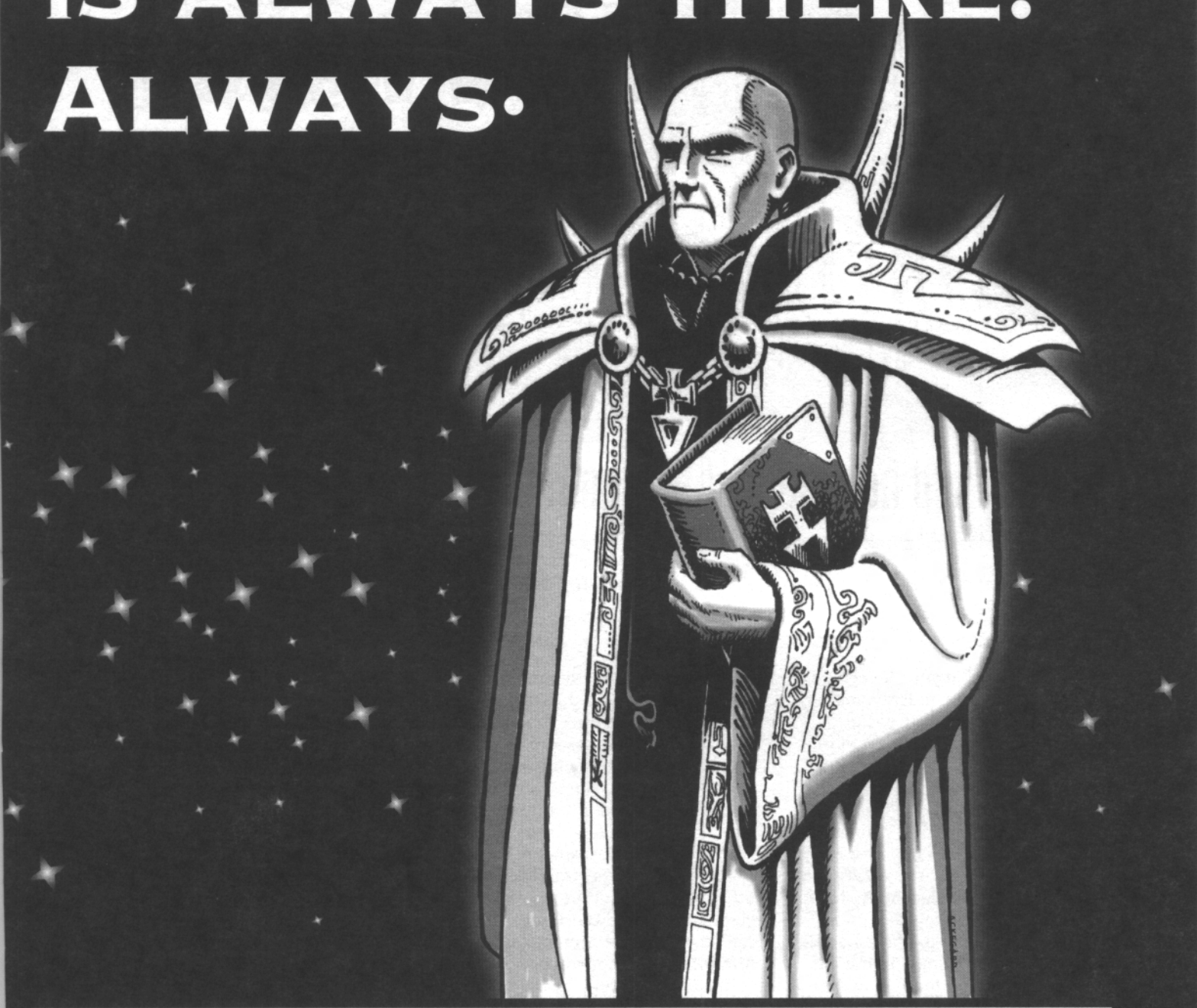
At the End of the Day

These are but a few examples of Cybertronic's latest unclassified technological wonders. With each passing day, due to their efforts, we become more perfect, more knowledgeable than creation itself in perfecting ourselves for the arduous task of staying alive in an often violent and unpredictable world. This will be our guarantee of survival and the greatest gift to our progeny.

It is easy to see how Cybertronic has achieved excellency through perfection. Through its knowledge of the human body, cybernetics and nature itself, Cybertronic has managed to perfect *homo sapiens* to a level which few ever realized we could reach.

Cybertronic, through its genius and foresight, has catapulted us to the next level of our evolution. Through its vision, in time, all will be equal in nature eyes, and she will be forced to serve us, instead of us struggling to survive against her callous temperament. By Cybertronic's advances, we can become masters of our world and of ourselves as well. We can prove ourselves as the rightful heirs of nature.

THE BROTHERHOOD IS ALWAYS THERE. ALWAYS.



IS LIFE HARD FOR YOU? Do the pressures of modern life weigh heavily upon your shoulders? Is the burden of scratching out some sort of existence sometimes too much to bear?

THE CARDINAL SAYETH, "Do not despair, my children. I can show you the way out of the soul-stealing Darkness and into the salvation of the Light. Heed my call, and my Brotherhood will give you succor."

You may feel alone, entirely on your own with no one to help you, no one to hear your cries. But this is not true. The Cardinal hears all; he knows all. And all you need to do is to accept his teachings into your life, and you shall know inner peace.

REMEMBER to attend mass weekly at your local chapel or Cathedral. If this is not possible, listen to the regular radio broadcasts on nearly all stations. Give generously to help us all in our war against the encroaching Darkness. And if you need help, if you ever encounter evidence of the Darkness, come to us.

THE BROTHERHOOD IS ALWAYS THERE. ALWAYS.

Chromed Diplomacy

How the old heavyweights plan to take on the new contender

by Anthony Ragan

Picture yourself at your favorite bar or club: you are comfortable there, you are a regular, one of the important ones who get to sit at the best table and drink the best liquor and eat the best food. You know the other regulars, they know you, and you all know "The Rules," the unwritten code that governs how you each deal with each other. You each get a certain amount of space at the table, and you know who gets to cut the cards when it's time to play Luna Lo Ball. All the other people in the bar are just hangers-on for one or the other of you. They play by your rules, sit where you tell them to sit, do whatever it takes to please you. Sure, you and the other old-timers have your squabbles, sometimes even all-out brawls, but things have been pretty stable for a long time, and you're mostly satisfied. Everything is nice, cozy and predictable.

But one day, without warning, some flashy new guy just walks in, pulls a chair up to your table, takes a drink from your bottle and says he's buying in to your game. Just as you're about to belt him one, you look around and see that some of your followers, people you had trusted for years, are now backing the new guy. And it's not just your gang: every single one of the old timers is losing supporters to this stranger. You look to the bartender to straighten things out, but he just smiles uneasily, pockets the big pile of Cardinal's Crowns the stranger gave him and says, "Deal him in. He's one of you now."

Just like the scene in our imaginary bar, the megacorporations that have ruled the Solar System for centuries now have to deal with a new power: Cybertronic. Within a few short hours, the shadowy brains behind the Cybertronic phenomenon stole legal control of assets all across the inner Solar System, costing the old megacorps hundreds of billions of crowns in losses. Worse yet for Bauhaus, Capitol, Imperial and Mishima, thousands of their best employees and their families defected to Cybertronic, showing no loyalty to their old bosses. Within a few short years, Cybertronic had grown almost to the size of Imperial and had taken its own seat at the Cartel table as the fifth ruling megacorporation.

And how did the old guard react? With hatred and war, banding together to punish this brash upstart? In the case of Imperial, yes. But, true to the megacorp tradition, the others looked out for themselves first, leaving Imperial to twist in the wind, and made their own arrangements with the new Cybertronic cyborg, looking for profits first and ethics last.

That is what this article deals with: chromed diplomacy, how each of the old megacorps plans to handle the Cybertronic Phenomenon. *The Lunar Voice* will take you on a tour of high politics in the Solar System and show you why each corporation might just one day be a subsidiary of Cybertronic.



The Mishima Doctrine: divide and die?

To humanity at large, Mishima shows a powerful front. From the Residence in Luna City, Overlord Mishima, Emperor of a Thousand Suns and Prince of Fire, rules over vast holdings on Mercury, Mars, Venus and Luna. With ten thousand courtiers and his thousand fanatical Hatamoto guards, he directs relations with the rest of the Cartel while his loyal Heirs fiercely protect the family interests on the other three human worlds. Even the Cardinal consults him. Presenting an image of ancient power and glory, the Overlord and the Mishima Corporation are equal to any challenge posed by Cybertronic.

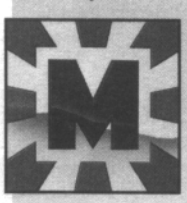
The truth is, though, that the Mishima facade is just that, a mask that has serious weaknesses when dealing with the cold logic of the Cybertronic brain trust. The Overlord is an old figurehead, laughed at by the Cartel representatives of the other corporations. "I suppose he has his ceremonial uses," ventured one Imperial bureaucrat who spoke on condition of anonymity, "but any real business is done in Longshore, if you know what I mean." The Overlord controls only his own court, while real power is held by his children, the Lord Heirs Moya of Mercury, Maru of Venus and Mariko of Mars. Though Lord Moya is technically the senior of the three and thus their leader, the Lord Heirs spend as much time conspiring against each other as they do advancing the company's interests. These are the cracks in the Mishima structure that hobble any attempt at a coherent Cybertronic policy.

At the start, you can write off the Overlord. Cybertronic has. Cybertronic's representatives at the Cartel act almost as if they're under orders to ignore any Mishiman attached to the Residence. It was this policy of deliberate snubbing that led to what Mishima calls "The Regrettable Incident" at last year's Cartel Conference on Advertising, "Hearts and Minds." An ex-Hatamoto executive took offense when a Cybertronic manager refused to stand during a toast to the Overlord, being more interested in his glass of Tronic Tonic Water. The ensuing gunfire led to a rescue assault by Cybertronic chasseurs that resulted in the near-destruction of the conference facilities, for which the Residence was forced to foot the bill.

For its part, the Residence is more concerned with regaining its authority over the Mishima Corporation and honor among its workers than with any threat posed by Cybertronic. Give the apparent close relations between the Overlord and Cardinal Durand, and the Residence's need for the Brotherhood's support, it is

no surprise that the Luna Residence adheres to the Cardinal's policy towards Cybertronic, both official and unofficial.

It is also no surprise that the fragmented factions of the Mishima Corporation's empire led to a fragmented policy towards Cybertronic. Most powerful among the Lord Heirs is Lord Moya of Mercury, Prince of Soil. But he is more concerned by the machinations of his siblings on Venus and Mars and the Imperial takeover of Fukido than with Cybertronic. He consequently had only formal objections when Capitol leased some of its office space in Fukido to Cybertronic.



In fact, sources within Mishima have told *The Lunar Voice* that Lord Moya has some admiration for the loyalty that Cybertronic employees display towards their firm. He evidently hopes that the Cybertronic presence in Fukido will prove a distraction for Imperial. Rumor has it that secret negotiations are going on even now to provide Cybertronic with cheap Mercurian resources in return for the use of heavy Chasseur and Cuirassier units in what may be an attempt to revoke the Imperial lease on Fukido early. But, worry these same Mishima sources, once the Cybertronic troops arrive, who will make them leave again? Certainly not the lightly armed and armored Mishima troops, who are ill-equipped to take on even a squad of Attilas.

The policies of Lord Heirs Maru and Mariko toward Cybertronic are more simple: Cybertronic is not a threat but a resource in the struggle against Moya and each other. With this in mind, unconfirmed reports have each negotiating secretly with Cybertronic to obtain the technology that will allow them to form small units of cybernetic soldiers on the model of the Chasseurs. In return, Cybertronic gets neutrality in its operations against Imperial holdings on Venus and Mars. This accounts for the lethargic investigation by Mishima police loyal to Lord Heir Maru into the assassination of Keith Alexander Axelthorpe, an Imperial lawyer well known for his efforts against Cybertronic in the courts.

These secret dealings are not without their dangers, however. There have been rumblings in the Inquisition against the seductions of Cybertech, and suggestions that more spirited investigations are needed into possible heresy in Mishima holdings on Venus and Mars. Mishima scientists familiar with the Offenhauer Theory wonder about the continued loyalty of Mishima troops melded with Cybertronic implants. Canny observers see the collapse of Mishima from its internal divisions and wonder if its dealings with Cybertronic won't leave the newest megacorp in the best position to pick up the pieces.

Capitol: profit goeth before the fall?

"The business of Capitol is business." "War is bad for business." "Peace means profits." "Tolerance, flexibility and adaptability." These are some of the most commonly heard sayings in the halls of power in San Dorado, the capital city of Capitol Corporation. Whether it's in the Red Room of the Presidential Palace, the boardrooms of the Eleven Towers, or the war rooms of the Pyramid, mighty Capitol is committed to getting the best goods for its citizens at the best price. Since so much of what its citizens want comes from the other megacorporations, that means the essence of Capitol's diplomacy is "live and let live" and "business as usual." That includes Cybertronic.

Capitol did not fare badly in the birth of Cybertronic. Of all the megacorps, it lost the fewest properties and personnel. In fact, there is open respect for the way Cybertronic formed itself out of nothing to climb to the top rank of the corporate club. Self-improvement has always been popular with Capitolians. "You have to give them credit," says Craig Horning, Director of Creative Marketing for Universal Motion Pictures, "people love a winner, and the Cybertronic story is a winner's story. In fact, we've just started shooting a drama based on the founding of Cybertronic starring Jack Slade and Liza Bergman. It's called *Corpbusters*."



Capitol has also been renowned for its willingness to defend itself against all outside threats, its peaceful proclivities not withstanding. Whether it's on the Gravesend peninsula of Venus against Bauhaus, the southern reaches of Mars against Mishima and Imperial, or the Citadel of Saladin, Capitol's AFC, led by the Free Marines, has never been shy of standing up for the megacorporation's rights. Indeed, analysts consulted by *The Lunar Voice* have suggested that Capitol's historic antipathy for Imperial, dating from Imperial's intervention against Strike Force Saladin, may be a major factor in Capitol's friendly neutrality towards Cybertronic. "Since Imperial hates Cybertronic, Capitol sees this as a way to tweak Her Serenity's nose," says Henryk Kissiman, specialist in Inter-Corporation relations at Luna City Free University.

The Capitolians' admiration with Cybertronic has led to many theories about its striking success. Most famous of these is the "Sullivan Syndrome," named for its developer, the famed combat psychologist Dr. Simon Sullivan. Briefly, Sullivan argued that defectors to Cybertronic have acquired a mental disease that leads them to renounce their former lives and surrender their wills to the corporate identity. While few serious academics took Sullivan's theories seriously, he generated quite a controversy while arguing for it during many television and radio appearances. This was all cut short when he died of an apparent heart failure at the age of 28.

But in a scoop for *The Lunar Voice*, our reporters have discovered that Dr. Sullivan did not die, but is himself a defector to Cybertronic, evidently a victim of his own syndrome. Our sources con-

firm that he is working for Cybertronic at an undisclosed location, perhaps in Cyberopolis, Cybertronic's closed city on Mars. What he is doing there is unknown, but reports indicate that Capitol's External Intelligence Agency is ardently working to find out.

While Capitol maintains cordial relations with Cybertronic, this does not mean they do not want what Cybertronic has. Unlike Imperial and the other megacorporations, Capitol has always made its acquisitions through peaceful take-overs and buy-outs. "A wrecked mine profits no one," said Stephen Camper, Capitol's chief public relations officer on Luna. Cybertronic's rapid rise and the efficiency of its workers all point to an incredibly profitable operation, one which Capitol would dearly love to add to its portfolio. In consequence, the financial wizards of DEPICOR, Capitol's office of external relations, and DEFEI, its office of industrial and economic affairs, are staying up late at night determining if Capitol has the resources to buy Cybertronic assets, or perhaps Cybertronic itself.

But not all Capitolian executives are gung ho for such an acquisition. *The Lunar Voice* has learned that high-ranking Capitol managers, especially in the military-industrial complex at the Pyramid, have grave doubts about the loyalty of any Cybertronic citizens acquired by Capitol. Unnamed sources have said that the vague identities of Cybertronic's upper management leave them concerned that Capitol would be taking many new workers and managers whose real allegiance might lie with a secret cabal outside of Capitol control. They fear that the quest for profit might lead Capitol to one day be taken over by the very company they took over. But theirs is a minority voice barely heard at DEPICOR, where everything is "business as usual."

Imperial: duty, honor, destruction?

Alone among the megacorporations, Imperial has been unalterably hostile to Cybertronic since its founding. Certainly, they lost heavily when the new megacorporation was born. Billions of crowns in assets were taken over by Cybertronic overnight, including mining settlements in the asteroids that had been clan holdings since before Imperial's own founding. Worse still was the simultaneous defection of almost the entirety of Clan St. John-Ross, whose clan holdings on Luna became the site of Cybertronic's corporate headquarters. To this day, it is still considered a gross breach of etiquette to mention that clan's name in polite company.

But this does not explain the unending nature of Imperial's hatred towards Cybertronic. Other megacorporations have lost heavily at one time or another, but rarely have they ever let grudges keep them from doing business with their erstwhile enemies. Even while Capitol's Free Marines battle Mishima for control of the southern hemisphere of Mars, the corporation engages in a very profitable trade with Mishima on Mercury. Imperial itself trades with Bauhaus, even though they had a serious recent clash over new Imperial settlements in the Landhaus basin of Venus.

But, against Cybertronic, Imperial conducts a policy of complete embargo: no trade whatsoever. Why?

The answers lie in Imperial's other eternal struggle: the war against the Dark Legion. Imperial publicly embraces the idea that Cybertronic's success is explained by Cybertronic being a front for the Dark Apostles. Imperial officials argue that the failure of the Inquisition to find any Dark Taint in the souls of Cybertronic employees is not evidence of their purity. Rather, it is a sign of a new pattern in the Dark Symmetry, one that has yet to be understood and exposed. "Look at their bloody equipment," says retired Colonel Alfred Nunez-MacGuire of the Wolfbane Commandos. "It's got 'Made in Nero' stamped all over it. Sure it's chromed and shiny, but I've killed enough Dark Legionnaires to recognize Necrotechnology when I see it."

It's not just the cybertech that every Cybertronic employee sports that Imperials loathe: they are repelled by the cold corporate unity of the Cybertronic employee that subsumes the individual to the whole. "It's whatever trick they pull that lets them interface with their cybernetics that's evil," swore Highlander Sergeant Rory Oakenfist. "Sure, it makes them tough, but it sucks their soul. They don't have any initiative, just programmed instructions. They're not human—they're machines!"

For and Against

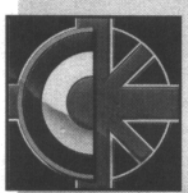
Arguments about whether Cybertronic is good for humanity or just another facet of evil incarnate have been ongoing since the Founding Day. It's hard to stay out of the controversy that rages over Cybertronic, but some few manage to do so. In the end, this is how everyone (apparently) lines up:

For
Bauhaus
Lord Heir Mariko
Lord Heir Maru

Against
Brotherhood
Dark Legion
Imperial
Overlord Mishima

Neutral
Capitol
Cartel
Lord Heir Moya

Imperial policy toward Cybertronic is not limited to a refusal to trade. The Serene Family and the Clans of Imperial have always viewed conquest as a legitimate means of expansion: they plan their new settlements as military operations. Against Cybertronic, this policy is carried to the extent of waging a secret war almost as intense as that against the Dark Legion. Indeed, to Imperial, they are one and the same foe, except that seizure of Cybertronic holdings is always much more profitable. Most recently, there was the surprise assault against the Cybertronics CyberChem plant in lands leased from Capitol on the Gravesend Peninsula of Venus. After its capture, Imperial expelled all Cybertronic employees and brought in their own people. Now they sell the facility's products at a price cheaper than Cybertronic did.



Sometimes, though, Imperial has been too eager to pursue their policy of confrontation and has been burned by SWI, Cybertronic's warfare and intelligence department. Astute readers of *The Lunar Voice* will recall this year's mysterious destruction of the Demimonde oil refinery on Luna's dark side, a facility of unknown ownership. Sources tell the *Voice* that this came about due to a raid by Her Serenity's Air Force, which was convinced that the refinery was a Cybertronic holding. It was, until a few days before the attack when it was secretly sold to Lord Heir Moya. *Voice* sources further tell that only an intense effort by the Imperial Ministry of External Relations and a personal letter of apology from Her Serenity herself prevented the outbreak of open war with Mishima.

The ISC, Imperial's Security Command, pursues its own an active policy against Cybertronic, though necessarily a clandestine one. ISC–5, the legendary espionage division, is known to spend as much time operating against Cybertronic as it does against the Dark Legion. Its agents track down, identify and expose Cybertronic spies within other corporations and reveal minor freelance corporations as Cybertronic fronts. ISC–5 agents conduct active intelligence operations against Cybertronic holdings, looking as much for proof of Dark Symmetry taint as for more mundane corporate secrets. They have had less success here, though, because of the almost unnatural loyalty of nearly all Cybertronic employees. The recent confession of a Cybertronic vice-president to espionage and his willing exposure of himself as an Imperial operative show the difficulties the ISC faces when trying to penetrate Cybertronic.

Assassination and terrorism are the final tool of Imperial policy towards Cybertronic. Though denied by any Imperial representatives contacted by *The Lunar Voice*, sources speaking on condition of anonymity confirm what a close watching of events hints at: the occasional bombings of Cybertronic offices and murders of its top executives are not just the work of random terrorists, but a campaign of secret war orchestrated by ISC–5 through hired operatives. Consistent with Imperial doctrine, the connections between these freelance agents and Imperial are always vague and easily deniable.



The student of megacorporate diplomacy is left to wonder what the clans of Imperial have gained from this intransigent policy. Pressed by the Dark Legion and faced by strained relations with the other megacorporations, Imperial is confronted by a Cybertronic that continues to grow larger and more powerful each year. Though they see it as their duty to carry on what to them is but another facet of the struggle against the Dark, their devotion may cost them the ultimate price.

The Cartel: any ally is a good ally?

Though technically not a megacorporation itself, the Cartel functions as a powerful, independent entity in chromed diplomacy. While its staff is composed of delegations from the other megacorporations, they often act independently for their own interests and that of the Cartel as a whole. The Cartel Security Council also commands the elite Doomtroopers, a military force that, while dedicated to the fight against the Dark Legion, provides impressive muscle to back up the Cartel's relations with the megacorporations.

It is through the Doomtroopers that the Cartel has its closest relations with Cybertronic. Via its public pronouncements, Cybertronic has enlisted wholeheartedly in the war against the Dark Legion, though to a chorus of scorn from the Imperial delegation. It has readily met the Security Council's requests for military units, sending large numbers of Cuirassier and Chasseur units into Cartel service. Not only does this benefit the Cartel by giving it the use of top-notch fighters, but Cybertronic scores immense public relations benefits by having its troops seen alongside the more famous Free Marines and Venusian Rangers. (Unofficial Security Council policy has been to keep Cybertronic forces out of any units that contain Imperial soldiers, for reasons of "unit cohesion and morale.") Cybertronic entertainment subsidiaries regularly produce news films and television broadcasts of Cybertronic Doomtroopers in action.



Within the bureaus of the Cartel itself, Cybertronic's influence is more subtle, though still powerful. The delegations of the other megacorporations, with the moderate exception of the Bauhausers, keep the ever-smiling, ever-efficient Cybertronic delegates at arm's length, dealing with them only when necessary. Indeed, they are noticeably absent from the invitation lists of Cartel parties during the social season. Cybertronic apparently has little power in the Cooperation Council and the various administrative organs, but the contributions of their forces to the Doomtroopers makes them a strong voice in the all-important Security Council. More ominously, according to anti-Cybertronic sources in the Cartel, many Bauhaus initiatives in the Council actually originate with Cybertronic.

These same sources tell *The Lunar Voice* that Cartel executives are not all buying the Cybertronic pledges of loyalty to the Cartel and its fight against the Dark Legion. There are repeated reports of secret inquiries by the BII, the Bureau of Internal Investigations, into possible subversion of Cartel officials by Cybertronic. While the Cartel values Cybertronic as an ally against the Dark Legion, it is also apparently watching for the Piranha barrel in the back.

Megacorporate Threat Assessment

Sure, Cybertronic's got everyone shaking in their combat armor, but what's that mean to them? The following is lifted from a spate of recent memos floating throughout a Cybertronic branch office. (The people at the HQ always shred their trash.) You may notice a pattern.

Group	Assessment
Capitol	Hands-off attitude serves Cybertronic well. Antipathy for Imperial could translate into short-term friendships. Generally unwilling to use force against Cybertronic. No real threat.
Bauhaus	Cybertronic's original parent corporation. Can play upon Bauhausers' pride in all things they are/were involved in. Unhostile, almost adoring. No real threat.
Imperial	Hostile, but easily manageable. Factious nature of clans makes instigation of infighting simple. Could use belief in Cybertronic's reputed allegiance to the Dark Soul against them. Despite the economic embargo, no real threat.
Mishima	The Lord Heirs are too busy squabbling among themselves. Individually, they may even be manipulated into acting as Cybertronic allies for short periods of time. No real threat.
Cartel	No teeth except for the Doomtroopers, nearly one-fifth of which are Cybertronic. No economic power at all. No real threat.
Brotherhood	Despite the Cardinal's immense political power, he is unwilling to condemn so many people at once for fear of starting a civil war that would leave humanity vulnerable to the Dark Legion. Barring any solid proof of a Cybertronic connection to the Dark Legion, no real threat.
Dark Legion	Cybertronic's technology and personnel are immune to the Dark Legion's influence. Cybertronic is incorruptible. Barring a full-out, coordinated attack involving each of the Apostles, no real threat.

Bauhaus: surrender to superior quality?

Without a doubt, the Bauhaus Corporation suffered surprising losses from the formation of Cybertronic. Many valuable properties were legally stolen by the Cybers, and they gained more new employees from Bauhaus than from any other megacorporation. This brain drain continues to this day to such an degree that Bauhaus executives will actively seek recruitment by Cybertronic, a phenomenon almost unheard of in the rest of the Solar System.

When it comes to relations with Cybertronic, though, Bauhaus stands in surprising contrast to Imperial. While Imperial opinions range from quiet contempt to full-blown hatred, Bauhausers have great respect for Cybertronic and its accomplishments, and intercorporate relations are almost friendly. In fact, a recent public opinion survey by Capitol's InfiniNet news service showed that a stunning 78% of Bauhausers believe that being hired by Cybertronic is a sign of the highest success, even though that means leaving Bauhaus service. Bauhausers also admire Cybertronic's commitment to excellence at any cost, which mirrors their own corporate goals.



Bauhaus therefore follows a very straightforward policy of cooperation and trade with Cybertronic. Cybertronic supplies many high quality goods to Bauhaus divisions, while Bauhaus itself is Cybertronic's single largest source for raw materials and supplies. Bauhaus also acts as a front for Cybertronic interests in the Cartel, often portraying policies that originated with Cybertronic as its own, since they would be almost automatically rejected by the other megacorporations should Cybertronic's name be associated with them.

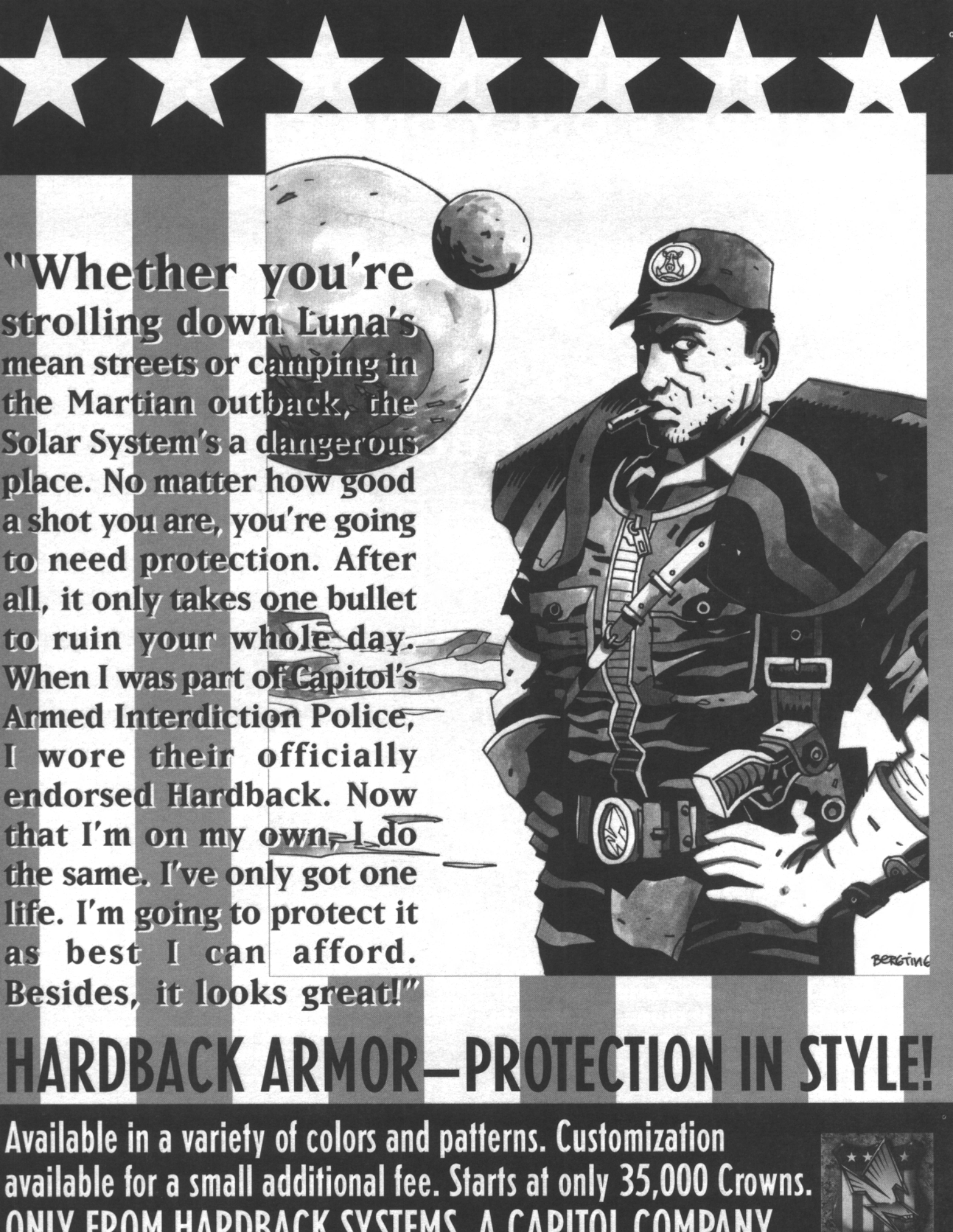
This *Kooperativ-Politik* nets Bauhaus several advantages: first, high-tech components obtained from Cybertronic and added to Bauhaus products give them an edge in quality that makes them competitive with the more numerous Capitol and Mishima goods. Second, Bauhaus gets favorable treatment when trying to invest in Cybertronic operations, thus bringing a portion of Cybertronic's profits home to Heimburg. Finally, Bauhaus makes no secret of its desire to figure out just how Cybertronic has been so successful with cybernetic implants. They hope the cooperation of their scientists with Cybertronic's will lead them to this dream. So far, their dramatic failure with the "Ticker" drug (Monosodiummortobensaliumamononitrite–3) and the "blueberry" supplements show just how far away from this Bauhaus is.

Still, quiet conversations between *The Lunar Voice* and unnamed high Bauhaus officials in the Twin Towers reveals a disquiet about relations with Cybertronic that indicates possible trouble to come. Perhaps it was the defection of General Jean-Louis Offenhauer, once head of the Bauhaus team researching Cybertronic's success with implants. General Offenhauer is now Chairman of Cyberchemicals, Inc., and is undoubtedly privy to Cybertronic's secrets. So far, he has failed to share these with his ex-colleagues at Bauhaus.

More vague are the hints dropped from circles close to the office of Duke Elector Romanov, commander of the Bauhaus armed forces, of the fear that Cybertronic may somehow be the result of a Bauhaus project gone badly awry. What this project may have been, none will say, but the similarities between the Bauhaus and Cybertronic styles hints at a conspiracy by ex-Bauhaus executives who have broken away and formed Cybertronic as a rogue operation.

Whatever the truth may be, there is no doubt of a rising fear among some high-ranking Bauhausers that their own peoples' devotion and admiration for quality before all else might lead to a sense of inferiority when dealing with Cybertronic that could lead to Bauhaus's eventual absorption by its ally. Though this concern is still ill-formed and given credence by only a minority, there is the possibility of a backlash against Cybertronic that, if it comes, will shake the Solar System.




"Whether you're strolling down Luna's mean streets or camping in the Martian outback, the Solar System's a dangerous place. No matter how good a shot you are, you're going to need protection. After all, it only takes one bullet to ruin your whole day. When I was part of Capitol's Armed Interdiction Police, I wore their officially endorsed Hardback. Now that I'm on my own, I do the same. I've only got one life. I'm going to protect it as best I can afford. Besides, it looks great!"
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Available in a variety of colors and patterns. Customization available for a small additional fee. Starts at only 35,000 Crowns.
ONLY FROM HARDBACK SYSTEMS, A CAPITOL COMPANY

The Cybertronic Way

by Andy Warwick



How does one sum up "The Cybertronic Way"? So little is known about this corporation and its business practices that it is impossible to get a clear picture as to just what this phrase means. If you were to ask an average Cybertronic employee, he might tell you that it simply means this: that only the best is good enough, be all that you can be, and rely on yourself and on your own abilities. To many, though, including this author, this answer is simply too pat and does little more than toe the corporate line. It is certain that the only true answer will be found from those outside Cybertronic's control. It seems, therefore, that the best we can come up with for this conundrum is to pick through the miasma of rumor, half-truths and out-and-out lies, and see if there is a common thread running through them. Only then might we find the true "Cybertronic Way."

Cybertronic, without a doubt, conducts most of its business behind closed doors. Whereas the other corporations are either deliberately open or have difficulty hiding their dealings from the media, Cybertronic is an unknown quantity. Even off-the-record discussions with Cybertronic staff members are impossible, such is the loyalty of its workforce. Only by talking to various sources that have been on the inside and have since left have I been able to formulate any kind of idea as to Cybertronic's true nature. After talking to these people, I find myself leaning toward the opinion that Cybertronic is more like a religion than a business. These ex-workers seem almost brainwashed, unable to explain their actions while employed there. This would go a long way to explaining the almost fanatical loyalty Cybertronic staff members show to their employer.

» The Cybertronic Way



The corporation has often been compared to a termite mound: a large, faceless entity, inhabited by millions of workers fulfilling their own, independent agendas, yet almost miraculously achieving the community's overall aims. Carrying the metaphor on, like termites in their mound, the bulk of the corporation's work is hidden from sight, buried deep in the HQ, away from prying eyes.

It seems likely that Cybertronic's internal structure is also modeled on a termite mound. From what little we know, Cybertronic works on a cell-based management structure, with each division responsible for its own business and with little or no daily control from a higher management level. The higher management structures seem content to lay out general directions rather than become involved in the minutiae of local problems and their solutions. How the upper management can retain such an overview is one of the greatest questions posed by this business model, which in countless other cases has proved unworkable. One can only surmise that the normal results of this structure—that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing—have not yet surfaced due to nothing more than good luck or an extremely efficient cover-up operation. It is simply not feasible that such a structure could work on even a global scale.

An extremely efficient media cover-up operation might also explain Cybertronic's other major difference from the other corporations: their ability to be seen to be doing nothing while all the time working feverishly behind the scenes. Indeed, it strikes me that Cybertronic almost always presents its achievements as faits accomplis—many workers have been told they are now part of the Cybertronic Corporation before they have even realized they are the subjects of a takeover. Perhaps this is "The Cybertronic Way"?

Cybertronic's rapid rise to its current position as fifth-largest megacorporation was achieved in just this manner. Within hours, it had appeared from nowhere, with no warning and surprisingly little response from the other corporations. It's unlikely that a movement of money of this magnitude across the world's markets could have gone unnoticed, but that is exactly what seems to have occurred. The only possible explanation is that the other corporations allowed it: that they knew it was happening and did nothing. The rapid defection of top personnel from these very same companies would, to even the most cynical observer, suggest that this inactivity was deliberate and calculated. It seems likely that Cybertronic has existed as a hidden corporation for many years, with staff widely distrib-

» The Cybertronic Way

uted amongst its competitors, feeding it the valuable information it needed for such an endeavor and biding their time until the act occurred. When the moment was right, these personnel were instrumental in allowing their employers to be swallowed up by the fledgling Cybertronic and form part of the new megacorporation.

One related question that springs to mind when discussing this aspect of Cybertronic's business is how do they know what the other corporations are doing even now with such certainty? It's unlikely that this is mere chance, luck or even educated guesswork on Cybertronic's part. It seems plausible that, even after the corporation's formation, some Cybertronic staff remained within the other corporations, almost certainly in positions of power, and are still feeding their true masters vital information regarding their putative employer's plans. How deep this infiltration goes is a difficult question to answer. Suffice to say that I am not even sure that this text will reach you, the reader, in its original form; I have every expectation that it will be heavily edited and retain little of the information I know as fact. I have no doubt that it will be debased as little more than idle speculation and rumor—the rantings of a conspiracy theorist. For this reason, I am loathe to reveal my sources. I know full well that any mention of where my information comes from will put friends at risk.

You might think that seems a little paranoid. My argument to that statement would be that paranoia is the *belief* that people are out to get you. If I revealed my sources, or even my own identity, I have *no doubt* that their lives and mine would be in danger. I have concrete proof that Cybertronic has assassinated high-ranking opponents in rival corporations that have been overtly hostile to their plans. This is why armed conflict with rivals is such a rarity. Cybertronic has no need to declare war on its opponents when, by virtue of a single bullet, it can prevent an enemy from mustering its forces.

When assassination is not an option—possibly because of the media attention it would command, or the reluctance to create a martyr—Cybertronic often reverts to other, more subtle means of achieving the same end. It is often the case that Cybertronic armed forces infiltrate their enemy and, using guerrilla tactics, destroy it from within, often before the target is aware of the attack. If this style of conflict is deliberate or if Cybertronic's structure of small, independent units makes any larger scale actions impossible is hard to say. Alternatively, the reason why all-out war is rare could be that Cybertronic currently has too few 'redundant' personnel to waste in such pointless endeavors.

In those situations where armed conflict *is* unavoidable, Cybertronic has a small available force composed almost entirely of chasseurs and cuirassiers. These units are probably the best-equipped and trained of all the corporations' armed forces, and they can be deployed at a moment's notice with little or no briefing. Tactics remain at the squad level, with rapid, decisive strikes the norm. These lightning-quick raids are always well organized, with all operatives equipped with the finest, most advanced weaponry available. This ability to enter combat before the opponent's forces have even grasped the objectives to be achieved gives Cybertronic a huge advantage. While the enemy is still figuring out what to do, Cybertronic's forces may already have achieved their goal and be in a position to end the conflict before it really began. Where other corporations prefer to wear down their enemy with relentless pounding by hordes of foot soldiers, Cybertronic prefers the surgical removal of an opponent's commanders, leaving the bulk of the opposition leaderless, directionless and thus at their mercy.

Beyond the chasseurs and cuirassiers, Cybertronic's only other high-profile special force that is publicly acknowledged is that of the Mirrormen, so called because their armor

The Real Way

Since our rambling reporter couldn't seem to make up his mind on a definition of "The Cybertronic Way," we thought we'd hit up a few people with a bit more emphatic feelings on the matter.

"They're a bunch of bloody bastards. What they did with Clan St. John-Ross—excuse me for even mentioning their faithless names—was the greatest crime against the Throne since the Sad Struggle itself! Their ways are sneaky and underhanded, entirely devoid of honor and unworthy of noble people everywhere."

—Baxter Bartholomew, Clan Bartholomew spokesman, Imperial

"Well, I gotta admit, I'm pretty damned impressed by those Cybers. They showed a lot of initiative and ambition starting up their own megacorp the way they did. Sure, it might have been them behind the crash at Seipen's, but hey, if the rules aren't working the way you want them to, it's time to change the rules. The Cybertronic Way? Sounds a lot like the Capitol way to me!"

—Jasper Carlsbad, president of Hope University, Capitol

"The people of Cybertronic are out-and-out evil. There is little doubt as to who their true masters are. Their way is to insinuate themselves into the very fabric of our society and then to destroy us from within. We must be ever vigilant against them and their kind. They are by far the most insidious threat humanity has ever seen. Turn to the Cardinal—turn to the Light—and you need not fear."

—Makhtar Hurlstien, Street Missionary, Third Directorate, the Brotherhood

"They are without honor."

—Overlord Mishima

"Imperial whines about Cybertronic all the time. I remember there was a time when there were only three megacorporations. When Imperial came along, it was Capitol who complained. You'd think now that the shoe is on the other foot they'd be more understanding, but I suppose that's not in their nature."

—Mimi Bernheim, House Bernheim, Bauhaus

"The Cyberdudes kick gluteus maximus! Their way? Way cool!"

—Marta Gutierrez, freelance hacker

"They shall not stand before the face of the Great Darkness! Their way—and the way of the rest of humanity—Light-blinded losers!—runs straight to eternal doom!"

—Brian Traechto, admitted Heretic, moments before his death

"Our way? The way of the future."

—Sondra Ralsheim, ETP, Cybertronic

is highly polished and reflects light like a mirror. They are used exclusively in urban combat where civilians are involved. Their highly visible appearance serves to draw the enemy's fire away from any innocent bystanders and toward the Mirrormen themselves. Even under heavy fire, these soldiers feel safe, due to the remarkable construction of their armor, which can withstand all but the heaviest direct blast. These soldiers are proud of their high visibility, both literally and in the media, and seek publicity wherever possible. One has to ask whether such a force really is necessary, or whether the whole concept is designed to appeal to a media-hungry populace while the real wars are being carried out in the boardrooms of rivals and in secret negotiations with undesirables. This manipulation of the media is typical of a business with something to hide. It seems highly implausible that a company with such talented staff, highly advanced weaponry, and well-trained troops would seem so reluctant to enter combat. No one doubts that, given the motivation, Cybertronic could expand its control even further. It is not totally impossible they could prove a fatal threat to the other corporations if they so wished. Just what is stopping Cybertronic taking control by force of arms?

Sources indicate that there are many special troops available to Cybertronic that could be used for such a purpose, though verified first-hand sightings are rare. It seems that the existence of such units is used more as a threat against the other megacorps than as part of a useful fighting force. Given the corporation's high level of technological advancement, even if they *are* concepts rather than actual fighting units, there is no doubt that such units could be equipped and deployed as rapidly as any force the other corporations could muster. It seems that these special troops' existence is often used to deter their opponents from even raising arms against them, rather than as a response to ongoing conflict.

This odd pattern of sudden, almost unbelievable growth, quickly followed by a reluctance to carry through the implied threat of conquest of the other corporations, lends Cybertronic an almost unworldly edge. This is not a normal business model: corporations with real aims and ambitions would not show mercy in this way against their competitors. I am afraid that, even after long study, I am no nearer finding an answer to this conundrum. I just cannot comprehend the agenda that Cybertronic are working through, and cannot hazard a guess as to their ultimate goal. All that's clear is that Cybertronic is a corporation unlike any other.

When it comes to their daily dealings with the other corporations, Cybertronic exerts a suspiciously strong ability to control situations for their benefit. Whether this is merely razor-sharp diplomacy or something more sinister is open to question. It is my opinion that Cybertronic uses its "insider employees" to manipulate its opponents' actions and pass secrets under the boardroom table. Nowhere is this more visible than with their almost incestuous relationship with Bauhaus. It is no secret that Bauhaus owns an awful lot of stock in Cybertronic companies, and holds no qualms in dealing with its smaller rival. What makes this even more surprising is the fact that many of Cybertronic's top people, especially in the military arm of the corporation, came direct from Bauhaus.

Is it possible that the Brotherhood itself requested Bauhaus to set up this corporation, creating an enemy closer to home?

One might even suggest that the whole of Cybertronic is simply a facade to enable Bauhaus to strengthen its position without arising suspicion. It would not surprise me if, at some indeterminate point in the future, Cybertronic and Bauhaus merged to form a single, immense force poised to crush all of its competitors. Offenhauer's theory of biomechanical alterations of Cybertronic personnel seems farcical in this light. If this Cybertronic/Bauhaus duopoly is the case, Cybertronic's apparent control of Bauhaus is completely voluntary on Bauhaus's part, and is effected to create a mysterious image for Cybertronic, both for the media's and the other corporations' benefits. When you also consider the alarming regularity with which Bauhaus and Cybertronic armed forces can be found fighting alongside each other, you'll agree that this scenario rapidly becomes more than idle speculation. Bauhaus' anti-Cybertronic statements in the corporation's early days then take on the distinct stench of smoke screen and cover-up.

Indeed, if we pursue this line of thought, we might also explain how Cybertronic seems able to survive without the Brotherhood's patronage. Is it possible that the Brotherhood itself requested Bauhaus to set up this corporation, creating an enemy closer to home? What better way to bring home the menace of the Dark Symmetry than convincing the populace that their own employers might be part of it. The underhanded way the corporation seems to acquire other companies could be little more than a media-ready subtext for the way the Dark Symmetry operates, designed so that parallels can easily be drawn between the two. Imagine the surprise when an employee who thinks he is working for a Imperial-funded manufacturer suddenly realizes that he has, in fact, been a Cybertronic employee for over two months. Is that not likely to make him realize how easily he can be deceived, how what he assumes to be true is not always so, how vulnerable he is to the influence of the Dark Symmetry, and how comforting the ever-waiting arms of the Brotherhood suddenly seem?

How deep does this rot go? Imperial is also vocal in their condemnation of Cybertronic. Is it not just possible that the reason they allow their staff to migrate to the fledgling corporation with little or no protest, is that they too are acting under the Brotherhood's request to create this new enemy? Perhaps all these corporations allow

Cybertronic to trim those staff who might be more susceptible to influence from the Dark, thus herding them into an easy-to-monitor environment while preventing that same work force from realizing this is the case. Cybertronic may seem impenetrable to those outside its influence because it is designed to protect them from the enemy in their midst. Should we in fact stop trying to penetrate its facade lest we discover that that truth is even less palatable than we could ever imagine? Even if this *is* so, I believe it is our duty to discover the truth, for keeping anything from us only breeds suspicion, contempt and other negative emotions that the Dark so wants us to possess.

One only has to consider Cybertronic's dealing with the media to appreciate how much they are hiding. Their responses to outsiders are almost laughable. Requests for information are invariably ignored or else bounced from one PR department to another with little chance of a straight answer. At times it seems that the only information that can be made public about the corporation is the information they want made public. The Brotherhood's tight control on almost all media outlets, and its—shall we say, strained—dealings with Cybertronic, even if only a facade, has forced the corporation to preach its message through its own independent channels. These solely owned broadcasters, whatever their form of delivery, feed the public a whitewashed version of the truth that cannot be trusted. It is up to independent publishers like this magazine to try and present the truth as it becomes known.

Perhaps Cybertronic's token contribution to the Brotherhood's doctrine can be read as a double bluff by the Brotherhood. What better way to if not swell then motivate the Brotherhood's rank-and-file than presenting a corporation that so publicly fails to believe and then watching the effects that this can cause. Is it the Brotherhood's ultimate plan to publicly and visibly allow enough of our species to fall under the influence of the Dark Symmetry to strengthen their own position? Are we only moments away from the organized genocide of millions of people simply to make a point?

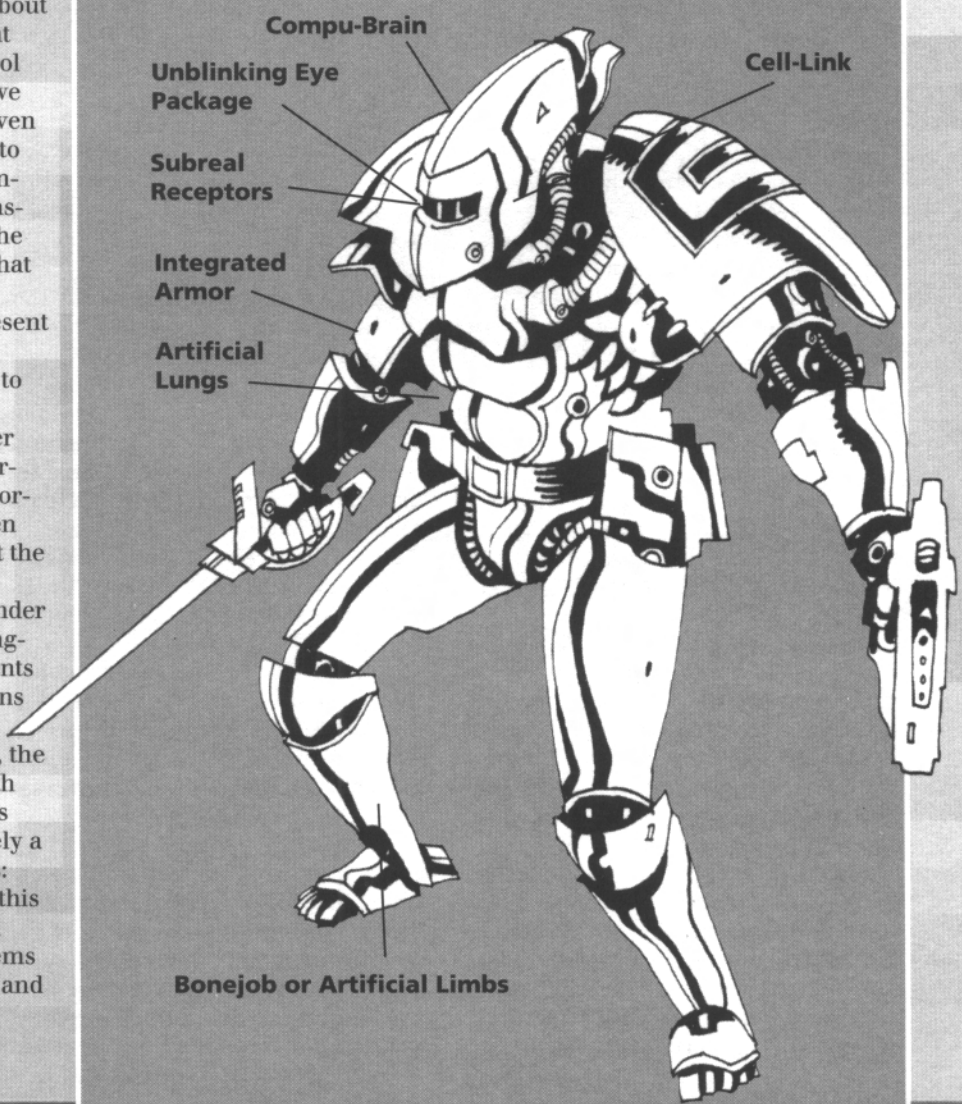
From a study of their business practices, the way they wage war, and their dealings with other corporations and the media, it seems that "The Cybertronic Way" remains largely a mystery. It can at best be summed up thus: maximum gain for minimum outlay—but this is merely over-simplifying what can, in all truth, barely be comprehended. There seems little rational plan behind the corporation and its dealings to someone so far outside its boardrooms as me—or you.

The Mirrormen

When diplomacy hasn't succeeded, when trickery hasn't worked, when all else has failed, who do the Cybers call in? The Mirrormen!

The men and women (or maybe even robots—none of them have ever been seen out of their armor) that make up the Mirrormen are some of the finest warriors to be found on the human worlds or anywhere else. They are fast, smart and trained to be the best there is in loosening up sticky situations. To top it all off, they're armed to the teeth both internally and externally.

Here's a typical Mirrorman (according to Cybertronic's ETP division):



Face of a Faceless Entity

By Shane Lacy Hensley

I walked into the halls of Cybertronic's headquarters with some trepidation. Rumors of the megacorp's ties to the Dark Legion seem all too real when crossing the dark moat that surrounds its foreboding home. An escort of chasseurs met me at the gate. "State your name and business," they said calmly.

What have I gotten myself into? I asked as I looked at the gleaming half-men, half-machine. "H-hensley," I stammered. "I'm a reporter for *The Lunar Voice*. I have an appointment with Mr...." I fumbled with my planner for several long seconds, trying to dig out the business card of my contact. The chasseurs glared at me patiently the whole time. I felt like a total schmuck. "Tipton," I finally found it. "Mr. Tipton. The PR guy."

One of the chasseurs spoke into a subvocal mike set into his throat. "Enter," he answered when my appointment was confirmed.

I walked through the doors and noticed chemi and metal detectors on either side. Cybertronic wasn't about to allow an armed visitor into their corporate headquarters. A lady with LED eyes greeted me. "Welcome to Cybertronic, Mr. Hensley. Ms. Tipton will be down in a moment."

Ms? Uh-oh, I hope she hadn't heard me talking to the guards. Cybertronic types have long memories—random access or otherwise.

I nodded and sat, admiring the silver and glass lobby. They had tried to make a sort of arboretum out of it—there were hanging plants and bubbling fountains everywhere—but the atmosphere was still cold and distant. After a few minutes, a lady stepped out of a silver wall across from me. I thought I was seeing a ghost at first, but it was just an executive elevator cleverly hidden by a holo-wall. Ms. Tipton wore a straight white suit that accentuated her height, and her blond hair was done up in a tight bun. A chrome HUD covered her eyes. In context with her surroundings, Ms. Tipton was the most human looking person around. Still, the way she walked, and the fact that not a single one of her hairs strayed from her bun, made me wonder if Cybertronic's robotics division was more advanced than the great unwashed masses had been led to believe.

"I've verified your credentials," she said as we stepped through the holo-wall and entered the elevator. "I especially enjoyed your Imperial series." She grinned at me then, referring to my six month stint with the good folks at Imperial—who think Cybertronic is led by heretics. I guess Tipton was amused that I'd come to them next.

"Great," I answered.

"Sergeant Sanduski will speak with you on Cybertronic's Security, Warfare and Intelligence division. When you're done, I'll answer any questions you have on Administration, Economies and Management."

I nodded appreciatively as she took me into a conference room. There was a glass table and eight tiny chairs. One of them held the massive body of a cyborg—another chasseur. This one had the rank of a sergeant, and looked as out of place in that tiny board room as a nepharite at a tea party.

I took a seat across from the nervous soldier. Ms. Tipton sat at the far end of the table. She wasn't about to leave me alone with one of Cybertronic's warriors. I guess she didn't feel they were up to parrying the sometimes pointed questions of the press.

"Good afternoon, Sergeant Sanduski," I started the awkward conversation. "I'm Shane Hensley with the *Lunar Voice*."

"I've read your background sheet." He had a gruff voice that matched his brown crew cut, square jaw, and chiseled features. Still, there was a slight tremble in his tone that told me he was as nervous about this interview as I was. I'm guessing our "chaperone" was accountable for some of his anxiety. I wondered if she'd have his plugs pulled if he said something he wasn't supposed to.

I decided to put the guy at ease. "Oh, okay. I didn't know I had one," I smiled.

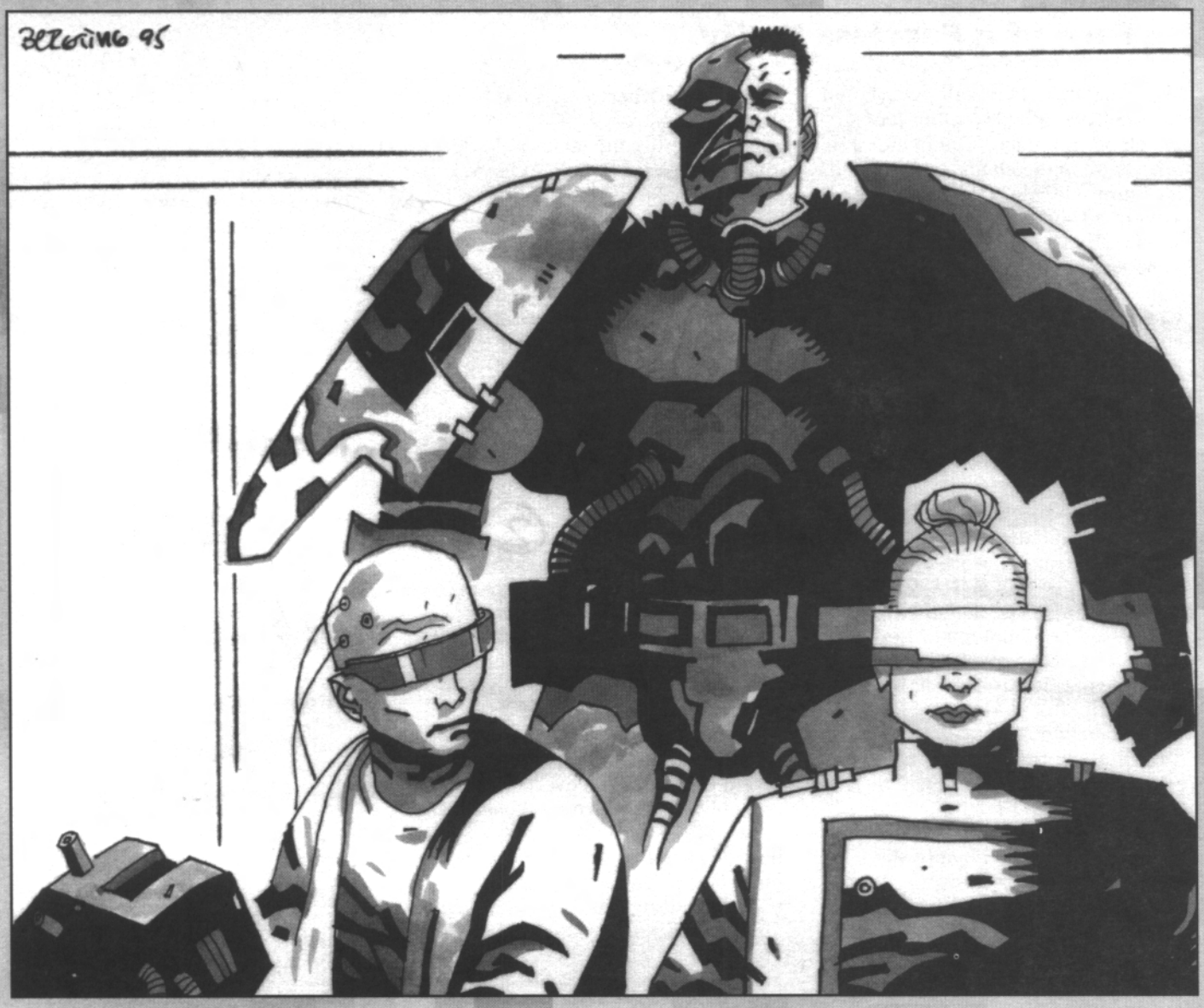
"Most don't."

I wasn't sure if he meant most people didn't have a background sheet, or most people didn't *know* they had one. I decided it didn't really matter right then and started in with a few warm-up questions. "Tell me Sergeant, how did you come to work for Cybertronic?"

Sanduski looked over to Tipton, maybe for approval. If she gave it, I saw no signal. "I dunno. I guess it was the Bauhaus Medal of Valor. I used to work for them. My squad saw some thick action at Tranquillity Base a few years back. Those of us who survived got medals. The rest got shoved in a two-by-six box under the moon dust."

"And Cybertronic offered you a position in SWI afterwards?" I asked. As I'm sure you know, Cybertronic is known for hiring away the best the other megacorps have to offer.

"Yeah. Something like that." Again, he shot a suspicious look towards Tipton, but she remained as blank as a broken monitor. "Some of those that survived weren't in very good shape, if you know what I mean. Bauhaus has no use for a half a soldier, so Cybertronic made them an offer they couldn't refuse. We didn't have to go, of course, but we could either lie in a hospital collecting pension or become a 'borg and get back into action." The sergeant pointed to his left half—his machine half. It had been angled away from me until that point, and it reminded me that this all-too-human soldier had a more mechanical side. I was unexpectedly shocked to see the cyborg half again, though. The chasseurs that had greeted me at the gate were very stiff and formal, as if the machine was in charge. Sergeant



Sanduski was no different than the Imperial troopers I'd interviewed in the months before. I wonder if the chasseurs have the ability to designate which part's in control.

There's nothing like asking. "I've read that Cybertronics soldiers are often predictable due to battle routines and internal programming. Yet you seem as human as me or. . ." I pointed reluctantly, "Ms. Tipton. Can you explain that to me, Sergeant?"

Sanduski grimaced. "That's mainly the cuirassiers. They're all killing machines. Predictable? Maybe. But the prediction is usually death for the necros."

His reply almost sounded like a commercial. "So, you and the other chasseurs blend the efficiency of a cuirassier with the creativity and adaptability of a human?"

Ms. Tipton coughed then, perhaps a signal that Sanduski was stepping into the "classified" arena. "That's proprietary information. All I can say is that Charlie is faster than me, but he can't recognize an ambush until the Legion's on top of us." Sanduski stuck his thumb into the metal half of his face. It took me a minute to realize what he was saying. He called his cyborg half "Charlie." That verified my assumption. The chasseurs relied on the speed and efficiency of their cybernetic AI—which Sanduski actually considered a separate entity—but their human side remained to interpret the data.

I'd gotten a lot of information already, but there was still one more thing I had to ask. "Sergeant, some, er, radicals, have stated that Cybertronic is in league with the Dark Legion. What is your reaction to that?"

I guess my point-blank question jarred something. He didn't bother to glance at Tipton this time. "You tell that to the chasseurs lying dead in the shadows of Veravia-7! I've lost a lot of good friends fighting necros! I'd like to know why I've gotta dodge their bullets if they're supposed to be on my side!"

I backed down. Even if Cybertronic really was in league with the bad guys, Sanduski didn't know about it. Still, I had to ask. And his emotional outburst reaffirmed that his human side was still in charge.

"Tell me what you can about the cuirassiers," I said to calm him down.

"The cuirassiers get all the credit, but it's easy to be brave when your skin's armored to the nines." The sergeant pointed at the left half of his

» Face of a Faceless Entity

face. "See this? That's all that's left of my real face, son. The other half got blown off by a necro. Damn cuirassier takes a hit to the chops, he just welds on a new one. Me? I get to bleed and scream 'til some chop-doc covers my skull with this ugly mug. Don't get me wrong, the cuirassiers are the chasseurs' best friend. It just gets to us when the press drools all over 'em and forgets about the rest of us."

I took the hint. "What about joint military operations with the Cartel? Have you worked alongside troops from the other megacorps?"

"Sure. The boys and girls from Bauhaus are fun to play with. But Cybertronic troops are the best at recon, stealth, surveillance and that kind of thing, so we tend to work alone more often. Who else can jack a camera into his eye? Or fold out an ear to jury-rig a directional mike? Let's see one of those whiners at Mishima infiltrate a nepharite stronghold without getting caught."

I nodded and pretended to jot down some more notes. I had managed to calm Sanduski down. It was time to ruffle Ms. Tipton's feathers. I turned to her suddenly, hoping to draw her into the conversation before she could prepare stock answers. "What about similarities between Cybertronic's cyberware and artifacts of Dark technology, Ms. Tipton? Certain members of the Brotherhood believe this proves Cybertronic's ties to the Legion."

My rapid-fire questions didn't even make the PR lady blink. At least, I don't think so—it was impossible to see her eyes through the chrome band of her HUD. "Cybertronic's R&D department carefully scrutinizes technology taken from the Dark Legion. We cannot claim to understand how Darkcraft works—yet—but their functions are often duplicated into tools our employees can use against them."

I could've found the same answer on one of Cybertronic's company brochures.

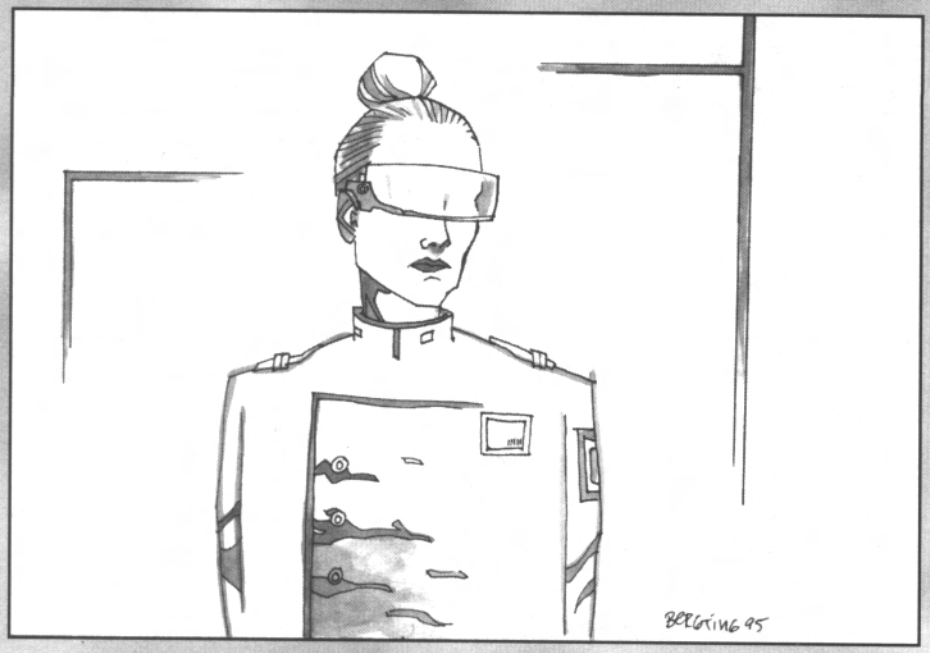
"As for heretics, any conglomeration the size of Cybertronic is likely to have a few. But you know as well as I that the Brotherhood has, as yet, found no trace of the Dark Symmetry within our ranks. Our personnel department hires only the best. And that's from the top down, mind you, executives to soldiers like Sergeant Sanduski."

"So how did you come to work for Cybertronic?" I smiled.

"I helped Mishima overcome negative publicity concerning the assassination of Counselor Yotama. Cybertronic noticed my excellent management of a potentially devastating situation." Modesty is not one of Ms. Tipton's strong points. But she was right. The Yotama debacle should have given the press wet dreams, but nothing ever came of it. Someone leaked a bigger story instead, something about an affair between security executives at Capitol and Imperial. Unless I miss my guess, Ms. Tipton was the one that leaked that story.

Time to change the subject again. It was obvious Ms. Tipton wasn't thrilled with personal questions. "Okay. So tell me about your relations with the Brotherhood. What's your reaction to their constant criticism?"

Tipton answered again. "Cybertronic fully supports the Brotherhood in all its operations against the Dark Legion. We must understand that those who confront such evil on a daily basis are likely to sense treachery even where there is none. Our corporation understands the trials these



The Cyber in the Street

Seems that there's two types of Cybers: the grunts (who are all the same for all intents and purposes), and the top dogs (none of whom are all that alike). Here's a few profiles of each. (Well, really only one of the grunts. The others would be just as dull.)



Marcia Eastbrook
Position: Secretary at ETP's Luna offices.
Interests: Needlepoint, listening to the radio, watching television.
Turn-ons: None.
Turn-offs: None.
Lifestyle: Sedate. Works 40 hours a week. Works out 10 hours a week on Cybertronic's mandatory schedule. Attends only Cybertronic social events.
Marital Status: Single.

» Face of a Faceless Entity

brave men and women must face, and are willing to forgive their occasional slights."

Right. Had she practiced that answer or what?

"One allegation of your critics is that Cybertronic's miraculous emergence could only have occurred with the aid of the Dark powers. How do you respond to that?"

"That is a ridiculous rumor started by our competitors. Cybertronic forces have worked with the Cartel and the Brotherhood against the Dark Legion since our inception. A heretic has never been uncovered within our ranks."

"Then what is the secret to the corporation's overnight success?" I pressed.

"Cybertronic's great secret is that there is no secret. I wish I could tell you something more exciting, but the simple truth of the matter is that our directors saw an opportunity and grasped it. Our success has been a surprise even to the creators.

I nodded. There was nothing new here. "Okay, let's talk about something else for a while. I believe you promised me an interview with one of the subreality security hackers, Ms. Tipton."

"So I did," she said. Lydia Tipton pressed a button on the table. A man walked in less than a minute later.

The hacker was young, thin, and bald with several gleaming jacks screwed into his skull. Two of these had wires hanging from them but the third was open. He wore a visor much like Lydia Tipton's except that it was a metallic violet.

"This is Security Officer Impax, Mr. Hensley. He should be able to answer all of your questions about Cybertronic's network." Tipton turned to Sanduski and dismissed him coldly. The chasseur grumbled something under his breath and left the room.

I nodded a "good-bye" and smiled politely at Mr. Impax. The hacker didn't return my sentiments. He just grinned and turned his head askew, as if the viewscreens of his visor were far more interesting than some brown-nosing reporter. "So tell me about Cybertronic's network, Mr. Impax."

"Impact," he said in a distracted, nasal voice.

"Pardon?"

"I go by Impact on the network, norm."

I thought he had called me "Norm," as in "Norman," at first. Then I realized it was probably netspeak for someone not jacked into subreality. I wasn't as "unhip" as "Impact" thought. "Okay, Impact. Tell me about subreality."

"You gotta' live it, man," he whined. This guy was way out there. "Jackin' in to the net is like talking to the Light itself. It's like flyin' through the Lunar mountains without a suit. You just catch the ether and glide like a bird, man. Like a freakin' bird!"

I was in shock. Everyone I'd ever met at Cybertronic was stiff—like a machine. This guy was wilder than a necromutant with a ticker.

Ms. Tipton must've noticed my confusion. "Our security people, like most of Cybertronic's staff, are recruited from the very best hackers on Luna. Mr. Impax was apprehended

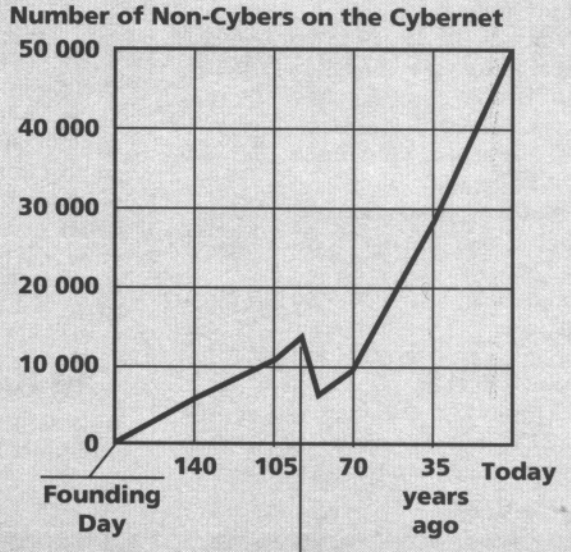


Mike Wirlston
Position: Junior VP at ETP's Heimburg offices.
Interests: Windsurfing, skating, skiing, acting.
Turn-ons: Hot days, cool nights, walks on the beach, beautiful women, quality wine.
Turn-offs: Close-minded Imperials, low-ranking Missionaries.
Lifestyle: Active. Works 60 hours a week. Exercises 15 hours a week, mostly on the weekends and in the wild. Is often seen in all the best places to be seen.
Marital Status: Married (fourth time).

Cybernet Growth

Before Cybertronic, computers were rarely linked together for fear of corruption from outside sources. Soon after the Founding Day, though, it became apparent that the new kids on the block weren't afraid to link their toys together. Due to the incredible technology needed to fully interface with subreality, this network of adding machines was entirely immune to the kind of espionage and other mysterious problems that had plagued previous attempts to interconnect a megacorporation's offices electronically.

Once the existence of the Cybernet (as it came to be known) became general knowledge, it was only a matter of time before people started trying to hack it. Cruising the Cybernet has recently transformed into a legitimate hobby, although the only megacorp to take subreality seriously has been Cybertronic.



while electronically embezzling funds from one of our subsidiary banking trusts. Our Security team offered him a choice between incarceration and a career."

"So you trust a criminal to monitor your company's vast network?"

"No, man," Impact cut in. "Trust? No way. Somebody's always watchin' you in sub-ree. But I wouldn't cross 'em now, anyway. Y'know? Sub-ree is freakin' fantastic! You think I'd risk gettin' cut off from my fix? No way, norm-o! Not this ether-man. I'm on a tight circuit to Nirvana, brother."

I pulled my jaw up off the floor, shook my head, and continued. I hadn't expected anything like this. "So give me some hard information, Impact. Is subreality really like cyberspace? We've all read virtual reality fiction. Is Cybertronic's network really that advanced?"

"Yeah, baby. Don't you doubt it. No helmet, no funky sensor gloves—just pure VR. Sub-ree sucks in your consciousness and twists it into whatever you want. Most Cyb's look just like they do here in the HQ. Booooor-ing. Security cuts loose though, man. I'm a big superhero called Impact in sub-ree."

Tipton interrupted once again. It was obvious she was uncomfortable around this decidedly non-corporate hacker. "The network is indeed in virtual reality, though as you know we call it 'subreality.' All Cybertronic executives are able to link into a terminal and conduct our business in this virtual world. This allows us to communicate with the various companies that form the Cybertronic conglomeration."

"Sounds like the network gives you a real advantage over the competition. Was its creation one of the reasons Cybertronic grew so quickly?"

Tipton nodded but didn't offer any further details.

"Okay, so what about the rumors that the network has been invaded by the Dark Legion?"

Tipton started to answer but Impact cut her off. "Oh, yeah, man! I've seen things creepin' around in there that you wouldn't be—"

"There is no evidence to support that!" Tipton interrupted. It was like watching a computer crash when it gets two conflicting instructions. Her stock answer didn't sit well with Impact's admission.

"I've just been summoned to an important meeting," Tipton suddenly said. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to conclude this interview." There's a flicker from the inside of her HUD glasses, but I'm betting that whatever message just popped up there told her to get rid of me quick.

"No problem," I answered. I stood up and stuffed my things back in my satchel. Impax was shaking his head back and forth like he's reading something on the inside of his own HUD. These people have got private communication down to an art form.

Interlude

That should give you an idea of what kind of people work at Cybertronic. All of them seem fanatically loyal to the corp, and to their individual departments especially. It seems strange that they lacked a similar loyalty to their previous employers. I hadn't expected any of them to say anything new, but I had hoped I'd learn more from the *way* they said something than their actual words might otherwise reveal. I was right. Tipton lost control when Impax did, almost like a glitch in a computer program will set off a chain reaction of progressively greater crashes until the whole system locks up. There's an important lesson to be learned there, kiddies.

At any rate, I was writing up the interview when I got a call from a well-known "information broker," Freddie the Rat. Freddie lives in a low-rent slum only a few blocks from our offices here at *The Lunar Voice.* I thought he was hard-up for cash when he told me a chasseur had been fired from Cybertronic and was living in his building. It was an amazing coincidence, getting such a lucky break just as I was writing this article. Now maybe I'd get a candid view into the workings of this mysterious megacorp.

The Kicker

Atasha Nance is going through a difficult time. You see, she's just lost her job with one of the most powerful organizations in the known universe. She's short and stocky with raven-black hair, brown eyes and half a body made of blue metal. The left half is sweet, the right is deadly. She is an angel fallen from grace with Cybertronic—a chasseur.

I went to Atasha's ramshackle apartment and knocked softly on the warped door. She let me in and nodded eagerly when I told her I was with the *Voice.* Here was a lady with a story to tell. Atasha slumped against a rain-soaked wall while I sat on a crate and readied my notepad.

"How did you lose your position in the chasseurs?" I said with all my journalistic tact.

Atasha looked away, as if she were calling upon her cyborg mind to



Sergeant Wanda Wilma Olmos
Position: Soldier for MCR, currently stationed with a Doomtrooper force in San Dorado.
Interests: Combat training, lifting weights, self-improvement.
Turn-ons: The sound of breaking bones, the smell of napalm in the morning.
Turn-offs: Crybabies (not CRI-babies), incompetence (particularly in Doomtrooper teammates).
Lifestyle: Extremely active. The MCR is her life. When on one of her rare R&R excursions, she likes to participate in bare-knuckled brawling.
Marital Status: Still looking for the right man.

» Face of a Faceless Entity

recall her answer. "The mindwipe didn't take," she answered.

"Mindwipe?" I asked excitedly. Was this proof that Cybertronic brainwashed its employees?

"Yes. All recruits are mindwiped for one year. You can 'buy' back your memories after that if you want."

"Oh," I sighed. That was news, but nothing that would really kick off my new series.

"Chasseurs are taken from the near-dead or the mutilated," Atasha continued with glazed eyes. She was obviously remembering whatever disaster had brought her to this fate. "I was a pilot for Imperial. I flew a Barracuda support craft." She looked at me strangely, maybe trying to figure out if I would believe what she was about to tell me. "Cybertronic Doomtroopers were moving in on a nepharite stronghold on Segornia, an asteroid near Victoria. My mission was to make sure the Dark Legion won that battle. I did it, but a Razide managed to bring down my Barracuda. The necros didn't leave much for the rescue team to find."

I scribbled furiously. This was a conspiracy that could call for intervention by Cardinal Dominic himself! Some people thought Cybertronic was in league with the Dark Legion, but here was someone who could testify that it was Imperial who was helping out the necros. Even better, Victoria was one of the main Imperial holdings. I had a cam-crew there when the battle of Segornia took place! I could taste the Neo-Pulitzer!

Atasha continued when she saw I'd caught up. "Imperial fixed me up and gave me a pension, but Cybertronic 'bought' my comatose remains and stuck me in this chassis." She pointed to her metallic body. "Cybertronic usually wipes the mind of its new recruits. Mine didn't take. Memories of who I was and what I'd done kept surfacing. I flashed during a training exercise and wasted a squad of our own chasseurs. I was relieved of all rank, but Cybertronic didn't want to lock me away when they found out why. I guess they figured it was Imperial's fault, not mine. So I became a freelancer."

I was practically drooling now. "So Cybertronic never told the Brotherhood about Imperial's treachery?"

"No," Atasha shook her head. "Since they had tampered with my mind, there was no way to prove that my memories weren't simply implants."

This was fantastic! Maybe Cybertronic had to worry about proof, but I was with the press! I could say whatever I wanted.

"Thanks, Atasha," I shook her heavy metal hand awkwardly. "I'm going to go sell this to the *Voice*. I'll bring you back half the money, okay?" Hey, don't think I'm an idiot. Giving Atasha half the *Voice's* fee was nothing. I'd make ten times that in "exclusive" interviews when the story broke. In the meantime, this would make sure my informant didn't starve to death.

Atasha nodded her thanks as I ran from the room. I skipped down the stairs, bolted into the street, and caught a hover-taxi back to the offices of *The Lunar Voice*. I sat up all night, typing this story and thinking of all the laurels my associates in the press corp would hang around my deserving neck.

When the whole mess was finished, I crashed on my couch and sipped on a cup of coffee. The sun was just coming up, and the chief would be in in an hour. I couldn't sleep anyway, so I called up the file tape our cam-crew had shot after the battle of Segornia.

What I saw made me spill steaming java all over myself. You can check out my singed chest hairs if you don't believe me.

The footage showed Imperial's Clan Paladine hauling in a ruined transport. It had taken a hit in deep space and decompressed. The clansfolk inside were dead, but the pilots had been wearing vacc-suits and were still alive. One of them was a young woman who looked familiar. I told the groove tube to zoom in. The name "Nance" was clearly stenciled on one of the pilot's shoulders.

Atasha hadn't flown a Barracuda that day. She had flown a transport.



Doctor Leonard Maistyk
Position: Engineer at EDA.
Interests: Work, work, work—and chess.
Turn-ons: Chess, redheads, anything intellectually challenging.
Turn-offs: Ingratitude, disturbances.
Lifestyle: Physically sedate, mentally active. Works 50+ hours a week. Struggles to work out 10 hours a week on Cybertronic's mandatory schedule. Is reasonably sociable and really enjoys Cybertronic's regular think tank conventions.
Marital Status: Married—to his job.

I thought back to what she had said. "*There was no way to prove that my memories weren't simply implants.*" Cybertronic *had* implanted memories in her. I hope you get what I'm telling you, *Lunar* reader. My interview with Ms. Tipton went so well she thought she'd throw in a public-relations bonus. Atasha was given these false memories and turned loose so a loud-mouthed reporter like me would leak nasty rumors about Imperial. I'd been set up.

Does that put Cybertronic in league with the Dark Legion? No, it's just good business. But I'm still looking. This roving reporter isn't done yet, friends.

This week's moral: Don't believe everything you read. Even if it's in the *Lunar Voice*.

Cyberizing

By Dik QUIGLEY

After checking out the rest of this magazine, I'm sure some of you have decided that you'd like to sign up with the hottest up-and-coming megacorp around. For all you drone wannabes, I have one piece of advice: forget it.

By now you should have figured it out for yourself, but for the less mentally gifted amongst you, I'll spell it out in big bold letters:

CYBERTRONIC DOESN'T TAKE JOB APPLICATIONS.

Face it, folks, this corp's got one of the most successful intelligence operations around. They make it their business to know your business. If you're someone that they'd like to have on their team, they'll contact you. But don't hold your breath.

Don't go away disappointed, though. If you really want to sign up with the chromed kids, I've got a few suggestions for you.

1) Be the best that you can be. Ask anyone. From their top executives to their janitorial staff, Cybertronic only hires the best. I know for some of you, getting an offer from Cybertronic is simply a prestige thing. That's why you can always see some Bauhausers crying in their beer about why Cybertronic has yet to approach them. Most of these people will tell you they're too loyal to ever leave their current corp, but if they really want an offer, they're making a mistake by saying that.

2) Want the job. If you only want the job offer to satisfy your ego, forget it. It'll never come. No one has ever turned down a Cybertronic job offer, despite some pathological liars' claims to the contrary. (Feel free to tell your buddy who says he's had several offers from Cybertronic that he's full of it. If he can come up with incontrovertible proof to back up his claim, I'll be happy to plaster his picture all across the *Voice*.) There could be a number of reasons for this, but the truth of the matter is undeniable. Who knows, though? Maybe the reason nobody ever turns the Cybers down is due to some mind control device, but if you want the job, they won't need to waste it on you anyhow.

3) Go MIA. You might be surprised at the number of Cybertronic employees that were declared missing in action (by another megacorp) that turn up a few years later under the auspices of the HQ. This is a pretty drastic approach, though, as many more (try several orders of magnitude more) MIAs never turn up at all. That's why they're "missing."

If none of this works for you, I'm sorry, but you're just going to have to plug along at your old job in the dim hopes that you might have some stroke of brilliance that brings you to Cybertronic's attention. Or maybe your company will be bought up by a Cybertronic holding company. Then someday later, maybe even years from now, you'll end up part of the latest batch of Cyber-drones, wondering how it all happened to you.

Let's put it this way: It's not up to you. If it happens, make the most of it. If not, c'est la vie. Enjoy your freedom while you can.



The Voice's Last Call

By Walter Wilberg

Dear *Lunar Voice* Readers:

Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Walter Wilberg, and I am a Vice President of Cybertronic's Virgo division. I am pleased to announce that, due mostly to Mr. Quigley's efforts to publish this issue of *The Lunar Voice*, Cybertronic has decided to announce that we have purchased this magazine from Mr. Quigley in its entirety.

As editor and grandson of this august publication's founder, Mr. Quigley is a vital part of this magazine's identity. Were it not for him, it would be a different magazine entirely. As such, we have made arrangements with Mr. Quigley to keep him on as editor of the magazine for as long as he should like to remain in that post. We at Cybertronic are looking forward to a long and prosperous relationship with Mr. Quigley, and we have been assured that he feels the same.

How will this affect the magazine's content? Not at all. This very issue, for instance, which focuses on Cybertronic has not been altered in the slightest. Each of the articles has been published exactly as submitted by the author, with only small changes being made to adjust improper grammar or spellings.

As many of you are already aware from Mr. Quigley's famous editorial rantings, it has become increasingly difficult for an independently published magazine to remain financially viable in today's competitive market. His arrangement with Cybertronic will soon allow *The Lunar Voice* to go to a slick full-color format, the sort that is almost a prerequisite for attracting new readers these days.

Let me assure you once again that with Mr. Quigley still firmly at the *Voice*'s helm, this will still remain a wholly unbiased source for all of your news needs. As Mr. Quigley pointed out in an article in this very issue, the *Voice* is the favorite magazine of many Cybertronic employees, and we felt that we could not let this voice in the wilderness fade away.

We at Cybertronic and *The Lunar Voice* look forward to your continued support. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
WALTER WILBERG
VP of Public Relations
Cybertronic Corporation

he Cutting Edge

DIK QUIGLEY

bertronic, like each of the other egacorporations, is more than just an nployer, particularly to its employees. s a culture unto itself, and in each cul- re, certain things are accepted as ing fashionable, while others are not. So what do Cybers, those bastions of chno-conservative thought, consider ool"? What, in their parlance, is vired" and what is "tired"? After con- ucting dozens of interviews with both te Cybers and their drones, the Voice s come up with a list of what's up th those that work for the newest egacorp and what's not.

VIRED	TIRED
ybertronic	Everyone else
ne Board	The Brotherhood
hrome	Flesh
ythedermis	Chrome
rain Grease	Ticker
hasseurs	Originals
uirassiers	Tanks
iplomacy	War
trigue	Bullets
ybercurity	The Dark Legion
ne HQ	The Cathedral
lirrormen	AIPs
hic chips	Suits and Ties
licon	Wires
ne Lunar Voice	The Daily Chronicles



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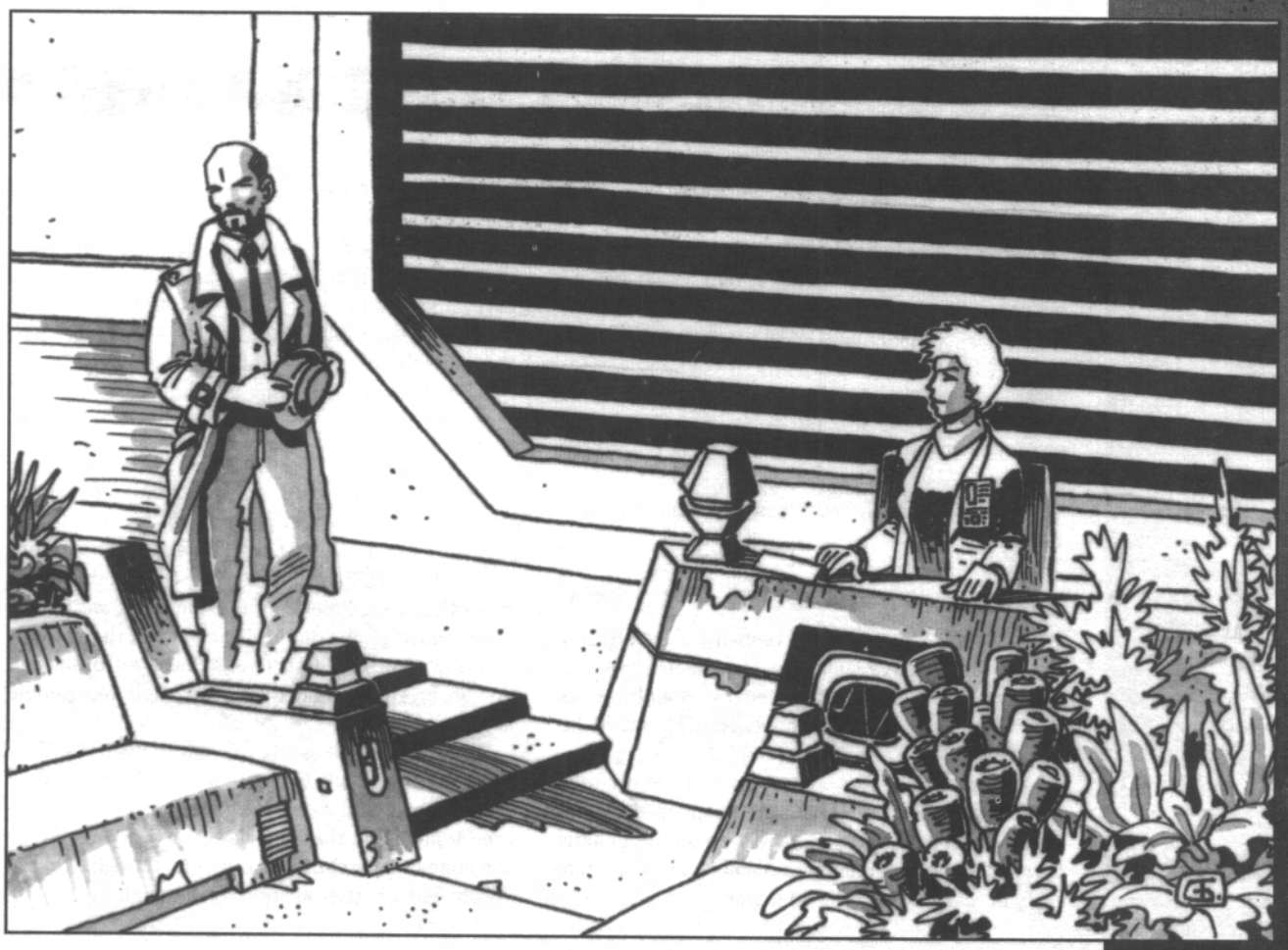
HOW TO CREATE A CYBERTRONIC CHARACTER

Just as Cybertronic differs from the other megacorporations, so do Cybers (as those who work for the newest megacorp are known) differ from the rest of humanity. They are intriguing characters, shrouded in mystery, and often their origins are as misunderstood as their motivations.

Since the Founding Day, Cybers have taken the human worlds by storm, and wherever they have gone, it seems that controversy has followed. They are a secret society with a public face made of silicon and chrome, impenetrable by those who do not share their high-tech means.

Rumors abound about these people. They are minions of the Dark Soul, a new and sinister part of the Dark Legion dedicated to fostering decay within the very heart of humankind. They are heartless automatons, brainwashed buffoons doing the bidding of their all-too human masters on the Board. They are a small cadre of people that rarely venture forth from the fortified walls of the HQ. They are everywhere—maybe someone in your family has already gone over to their side. They are out to destroy us all.

No one on the outside of the company has ever managed to glean the truth of the matter, although there is a great deal of doubt that they would be able to recognize such a truth should they ever happen to somehow unearth it. Potentially more sinister yet is the fact that very few people who work for Cybertronic are any more enlightened than those on the outside. This hardly matters to the Cybers, though, as few of them are ever curious enough to question their good fortune.



Life as a Cyber is a blessed one. Cybers are treated better than the members of any other megacorp, and much better than those that live outside the megacorps' purview. They eat well, and they have many comforts. They are protected by the best security in the system, and neither the Dark Legion nor the Brotherhood hold any fear for them.

It is the dream of many people to someday become a Cyber. After all, to be a member of Cybertronic is to be acknowledged as being among the best there is at what you do. Cybertronic is notoriously picky about the kind of people they recruit, and the benefits are obvious.

Others dread such a thing. They have heard the tales of how people who have disappeared have resurfaced later in Cybertronic's ranks, "vibrant shadows" of the people that they once were.

Either way you feel, if you end up playing a Cybertronic character, always keep one thing in mind: Get used to being in the dark!

GETTING STARTED

Creating a Cybertronic character is different than devising any other sort. The main reason for this is that, when it's all said and done, the player still knows very little about the character. Most of the information that's known about the character is kept secret by the GM, doled out in increments to the player only as needed.

If you still want to create a Cybertronic character, you're going to have to ask your GM for help. He or she is going to be as involved in this process as you are—maybe even more so. Read over the material below and think about your new character before you ask for your GM's help. Playing a Cybertronic character is definitely not for everbody. It can be rewarding and a lot of fun, but you have to give up a certain degree of control in exchange for your character's power (if it has any!).

To create a Cyber, you must go through the following steps:

1. Choose whether you want to be a VAC or a TIFF.
2. Choose your Pillar (RDM, AEM or SWI).
3. Generate your basic capabilities.
4. Roll 3 times on the *Cybertronic Events Table*. (These are your adolescence events.)
5. Roll 1d20+16. This is your age.
6. Divide your age by two (round down). Roll that many times on the *Cybertronic Events Table*. (These are your special events.)
7. Generate your skill picks on the *Cyber Skills Table*.
8. Determine which cybernetics (if any) you have.

ARE YOU UP TO IT?

There are two ways to join Cybertronic. You either have to be killed and resurrected, or you have to be recruited and brainwashed. Either way, your past is wiped clean from your mind. A new Cyber has no past to remember, which is just fine, since he or she is going to be spending a lot of time getting used to the new Cybertronic life.

This doesn't mean that your past won't come back to haunt you at some point, though. It's just that you may not recognize it when it does, especially at first.

There are basically two types of Cybers: VACs and TIFFs.

VACS

VACs are the drones of the company, if Cybertronic can be said to have such people in their ranks. To people on the outside, VACs seem like brainless cogs with little to ever think about. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

True, the life of a VAC is usually far from exciting, but it's not meant to be. VACs are the people that get things done at Cybertronic. They do all the general labor that doesn't require a terrible amount of creativity or insight, and they do it well.

Most players aren't going to want to be VACs. In general, they're not too cool, and they don't have too many reasons to involve themselves in the kind of adventures that players usually like. There are exceptions to the rule, though. Some players might find it challenging and fun to play a VAC from SWI that somehow gets caught up unwittingly in the middle of an intercorporate intrigue.

TIFFS

TIFFs are the top guns of Cybertronic. While the VACs might be the people that do the day-to-day stuff, it's the TIFFs that really make the megacorp shine. As a TIFF, you're outfitted with the latest cybergear, compliments of the company, and you're pretty much given your head on most of the projects you're working on. Cybertronic has a lot of faith in human ingenuity, and they prize their top people above all else.

Most players are going to want to be TIFFs. They are on the top of the Cybertronic world. They get the most respect and have the most fun, but they also are frequently in the most danger. If you like life on the edge of your chosen profession, though, you can hardly find a better position for yourself.

CHOOSE CHARACTER TYPE

If you still want to play a Cyber, there are two ways to go about generating a character for yourself. VACs use the standard type of character generation found in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG. TIFFs use the new rules found in this book.

GETTING IN

Don't bother asking a new Cybertronic TIFF about how to get in to the company. He or she won't know. TIFFs simply wake up one day working for Cybertronic, their memories of their past entirely erased. Their memories will be returned to them in one year if they wish, but for the moment, they are entirely in the dark as to who they might once have been. After the first year is up, the character has the option to learn about the past and attempt to integrate the new life with the old. This can be a painful experience and can lead to all sorts of roleplaying opportunities.

In game terms, this means that a TIFF must be rolled up from scratch. Creating a Cybertronic character is a 5-step process outlined below.

First, you must decide what kind of character you want to play: whether you're a VAC or a TIFF and what pillar your character works in. Each type of character is described here.

RDM VAC

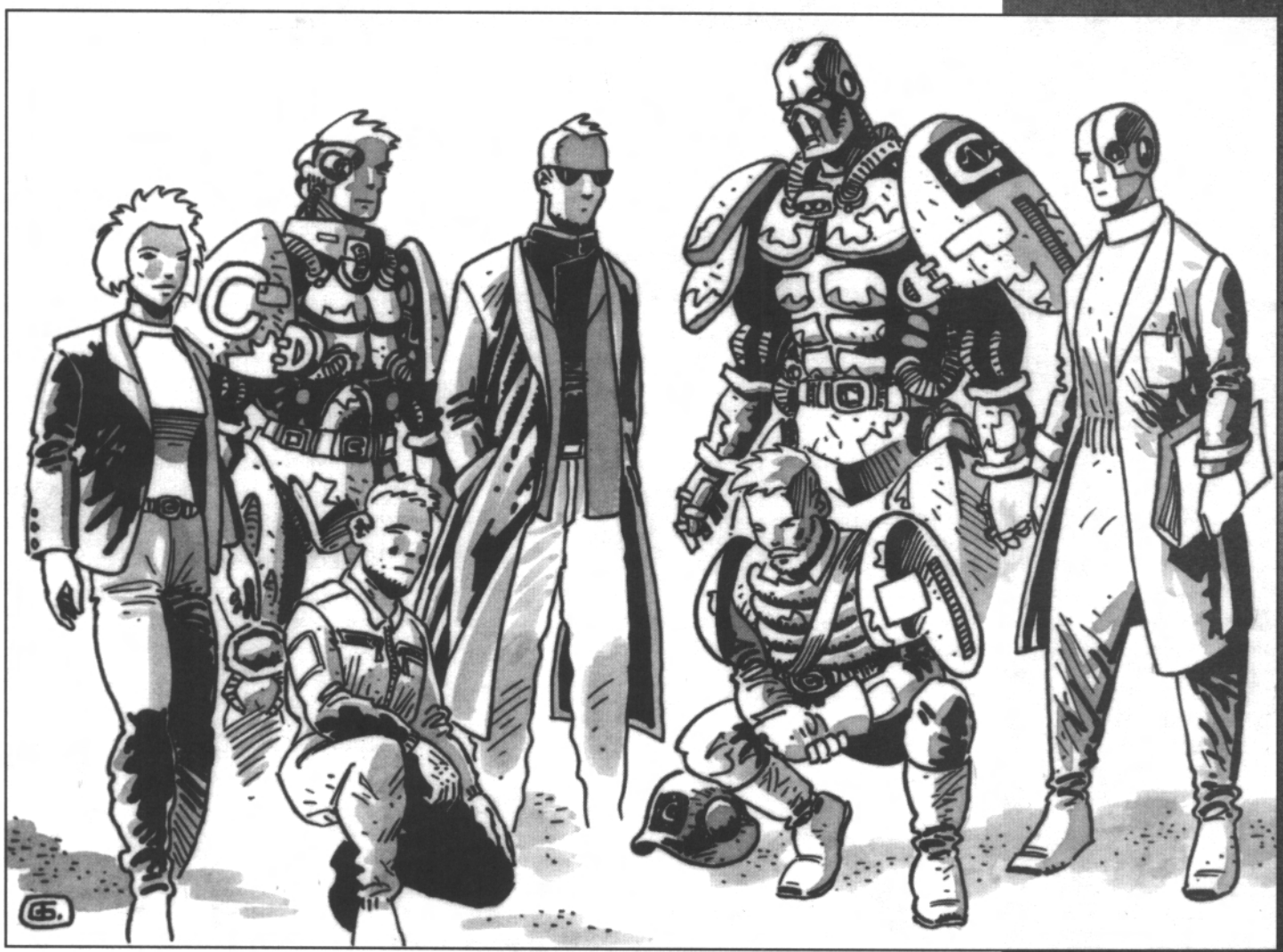
VACs in the Research, Development and Manufacturing division hold a vast variety of jobs. They are the people that do all the grunt work that a company needs. They are laborers, clerks, assistants, lab analysts, secretaries, mechanics, miners, farmers, couriers, cleaners, etc.

RDM TIFF

These Cybers are some of the most visible Cybertronic employees around. They are scientists, movie directors, journalists, designers, researchers, pop stars, inventors, artists, professors, sports stars, surgeons, etc.

AEM VAC

VACs in the Administration, Economics and Management division are the grease in the corporate machine. They make sure that everything that gets done. They handle all the paperwork that keeps everything moving, and they make sure that everyone crosses



BEING A CYBER

Working for Cybertronic is not an easy thing. They hire only the best, and they expect the best out of them. One way they do this is by feeding its employees Brain-grease, a mind-enhancing drug properly named XLR8. The existence of this drug is a tightly kept secret. Most Cybers know about it, but no one outside the company does. They might have some theories, but no one's yet got proof, and Cybertronic intends to see that things stay that way.

XLR8

XLR8 comes in two varieties: Mark I and Mark II. Mark I XLR8 is administered to VACs. Its main effect is to dampen emotions and kill creativity. This makes a user incredibly efficient at mindless tasks, as it eliminates the distractions of stray thoughts. Most VACs enjoy the effect, as they have never before been nearly as productive as they are with the drug. A side effect of this is that the VACs are almost entirely immune to the influence of the Dark Legion. This is why the Brotherhood has never been able to find a trace of the Darkness within a Cyber.

The Mark II version of the drug has many of the same effects, but it leaves the creative parts of the brain free. While this theoretically opens the user to being swayed by the Dark Legion, only the strongest minds are given the Mark II XLR8. Even before taking the drug, the chances

their *t*s and dots their *i*s. They are office clerks, secretaries, accountants, bank clerks, archivists, librarians, middle managers, etc.

AEM TIFF

AEM TIFFs are the brilliant minds behind Cybertronic's financial success. They are the people that actually manage to hold everything together. They often find themselves caught up in different sorts of corporate intrigue, and while they generally like to control things from behind a desk, there are times that they are compelled to take a more active hand. These people are actuaries, investment bankers, politicians, ambassadors, lawyers, managers, brokers, administrators, etc.

SWI VAC

Those VACs that work for Security, Warfare and Intelligence are sometimes rightfully termed "cannon fodder." They are the men and women on the front lines of Cybertronic's vast defense network. Their lives are long periods of boredom (something that doesn't affect people on XLR8) punctuated by brief stints of intense activity. It's their job to keep their people safe, and they take that duty seriously. They are security guards, monitors, secretaries, clerks, enlisted soldiers, etc.

SWI TIFF

TIFFs working for SWI have some of the most exciting jobs in the human worlds. They are responsible not only for Cybertronic's safety, but for its intelligence and counter-intelligence operations as well. Many players will want these kind of characters for the unparalleled opportunities for adventure that their occupations offer. They are police officers, military officers, federal agents, spies, counter-spies, security experts, private investigators, anti-Dark Legion agents, moles, etc. SWI TIFFs are often chasseurs, i.e., they have several powerful cybernetic implants.

CUIRASSIER

These all-robotic characters are Cybertronic's last line of defense. They are the ultimate killing machines, and little outside of the Dark Legion can stand before them. If you like being able to knock aside opponents like cards while resting safely inside a nearly invulnerable metal body, this kind of character may be for you. Life as a robot's not for everyone, though, as there are some severe drawbacks.

Cuirassier characters are a special case. They are not generated like other characters are. For more about playing a Cuirassier, see *Cuirassiers* below.

GENERATE STATISTICS

Since many Cybers have already led full lives before "signing on" with their new megacorporate home, they demand a whole new means of generating their statistics. Instead of choosing how your character develops, you must randomly come up with a set of numbers that describes your character at the point that you're recruited into the Cybertronic fold.

CAPABILITIES

If you're making up a VAC character, use the character generation system in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG. There is one exception to this. Once you've assigned all of your basic capabilities, throw out your PER score and roll 1d6 for that instead.

If you're creating a TIFF, find your Pillar on the table below and calculate your statistics according to the listing.

Statistic	RDM	AEM	SWI
STR	3d6	3d6	2d6+8
PHY	3d6	3d6	2d4+12
COR	3d6	3d6	1d6+14
INT	1d6+14	2d6+8	3d6
MST	1d6+14	1d6+14	1d6+14
PER	3d6	1d6+14	3d6

Figure your combat statistics normally using these basic capabilities.

ADOLESCENCE EVENTS

TIFFs roll three times on the *Cybertronic Events Table*. You'll notice that, unlike the standard events tables in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG, this table lists only effects, not causes. Your own history is a mystery to you, although the present may sometimes give you clues to your past.

It's the GM's job to come up with reasons for the things that have affected you. These details can become important as you progress in Cybertronic. They could someday save (or maybe cost you) your life!

Each Cybertronic event marked with a bullet (•) is unique. If you roll this event more than once, you should ignore that result and roll again.

SPECIAL EVENTS

To determine your TIFF's age, roll 1d20+16. For every two years over 16, roll once on the *Cybertronic Events Table*. These rolls represent things that happened to you in your years in the work force before you were recruited by Cybertronic.





CYBERTRONIC EVENTS TABLE

2d20 Roll Result

2 • You have a computerized brain.

3 • Read your Actions/Round Value from the line below the normal one on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

4 • You have had a bone job.

5 • Read your Defensive Bonus from the line below the normal one on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

6 • Raise your MST to 18 if it is lower.

7 Subtract –2 from your PER.

8 You have a cybernetic arm. (Can only get this twice.)

9 • You have cybernetic legs.

10 Add +2 to your MST and –2 to your PER.

11 Add +2 to your Brawling SV.

12 Add +2 to your Rifles SV.

13 Add +1 to your Social SV.

14 • Raise your INT to 12 if it is lower.

15 • Raise your INT to 10 if it is lower.

16 Add +1 to your Computer SV.

17 • You don't recognize your own face.

18 Add +2 to your PER.

19 Add +1 to your MST.

20 • Read your Perception Bonus from the line below the normal one on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

21 • Read your Offensive Bonus from the line below the normal one on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

22 Take one free Perception skill pick.

23 Add +1 to all Communications SVs.

24 Add +1 to all Technical SVs.

25 Add +1 to all Movement SVs.

26 Add +1 to all Firearms SVs.

27 Add +1 to all Combat SVs.

28 Add +1 to your offensive bonus.

29 Add +1 to your Perception and Avoid SVs.

30 Add +1 to your MST and +3 to your Interrogation SV.

31 Add +1 to your PER and +2 to all Communications SVs.

32 Add +1 to your COR and +2 to all Movement SVs.

33 You have a fresh patch of grafted skin on one of your limbs.

34 • Read your movement allowance values from the line below normal on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

35 • Raise your PHY to 14 if it is lower.

36 Add +1 to your BPs in each body part.

37 • Raise your STR to 12 if it is lower.

38 Take two free skill picks and add +2 to all Technical SVs.

39 Add +3 to any Basic Capability.

40 • Add four years to your age and +2 to all your Basic Capabilities. Take two picks from each field of expertise and four free picks.

SKILLS

When generating a Cybertronic character, you don't usually get to pick what sort of skills you get. Instead, you must roll on the table below. Find what Pillar your character is in and then cross-reference that with every skill listed to find what you need to roll to figure the number of picks you have in that skill. Record the skill picks on your character sheet normally.



that these people would ever side with the Darkness are almost nil.

Without the benefits of XLR8, human bodies would reject the cybernetic implants that Cybertronic likes to put into its employees. In a very real sense, XLR8 is one of the reasons behind Cybertronic's success. After all, without it none of the other corporations can hope to duplicate Cybertronic's integration of human and machine.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Cybertronic is founded upon one success after another. No one is sure why management is so shrewd, but no one makes sharper investments than Cybertronic, whether that be on the floor of a stock exchange or on a field of battle. Success is always rewarded accordingly and usually in a highly visible manner, which is one of the reasons many people would like to join the company.

Less well know is the fact that Cybertronic punishes failure with the same efficiency that it rewards success. If you screw up, you may find yourself dead or worse. If you go rogue, you'll be hunted down and killed. There are no exceptions. Cybertronic works because it's like a big club with secrets that no outsiders possess. The corporation will do anything to make sure that things stay that way. No one is unexpendable in the course of protecting the corporation.

If VACs start acting independently for any reason, they may be considered lost causes



and removed. Attilas that exhibit too much personality are taken in for an overhaul and possibly destroyed.

The fact is that Cybertronic does a good job of psychologically screening people before admitting them into the company. They are almost never wrong. To reflect this, if a Cyber's player wants it to do things that a "good" Cyber would never consider doing, the GM should feel free to take control of the character. It's up to the GM as to when control of the character should be returned to the player, if ever.

Playing a Cybertronic character is not for everyone. If you don't think you can handle such stringent controlls on your behavior, try something else. Otherwise, the character will surely be lost to you or killed.

CYBER SKILLS TABLE

Skill	RDM	AEM	SWI
Combat			
Missile Weapons	—	—	1d4
Brawling	—	—	1d6+2
Wrestling	—	—	1d4+2
Thrown Weapons	—	—	1d4+1
Melee Weapons	—	—	1d4+2
Parrying	—	—	1d6+2
Firearms			
Handguns	1d4	1d4+2	1d6+4
Rifles	—	1d4	1d6+2
Light Automatics	—	—	1d4+4
Heavy Automatics	—	—	1d6+2
Shoulder-launched Weapons	—	—	1d6+1
Grenade Launchers	—	—	1d6+1
Communication			
Administration	1d4	1d6+4	1d4
Oratory	1d4	1d6+4	1d4
Dealing	1d6	1d6+4	—
Social	1d4	1d8+2	1d4
Interrogation	1d4	1d4+2	1d6
Conning	1d4	1d6+4	1d6+4
Movement			
Sleight of Hand	—	1d6	1d8
Stealth	—	1d4	1d8+1
Agility	—	—	1d6
Climbing	—	—	1d6
Flying Vehicles	—	1d8	1d6
Ground Vehicles	—	1d10	1d8
Technical			
Chemistry	1d6+4	—	1d4
Weapon Systems	1d4+4	—	1d4+2
Computers	1d6+4	1d4+4	1d4+4
Electronics	1d8+2	1d4	1d6
Medicine	1d10	—	1d6
Mechanics	1d8+1	—	1d4
Cybernetics	1d6+4	1d4+2	1d6+2
Subreality	1d6+4	1d8+2	1d8+2
Special			
Avoid	1d6	1d6	1d6+4
Perception	1d6+4	1d6+4	1d6+4

CYBERTRONIFICATION

TIFFs can join Cybertronic in one of two ways: they can walk in the front door, or they can be slipped in through a hatch in the back, feet first. Most commonly, they are openly recruited. They still have their brains washed, though, and they must leave their past behind for one year.

The other way Cybers join up is by being killed. Cybertronic has amazing medical facilities, far more advanced than any others around. They can revive someone several days dead, provided there's enough of the victim's body left to work with. This is an expensive and painstaking process, though, so they're loathe to go through with it unless there are some obvious benefits for doing so.

Cybertronic only goes to the trouble of reviving people who would make great TIFFs for them. After all, VACs are relatively easy to come by. The kind of people that become TIFFs, though, are the creme de la creme of the human worlds. Cybertronic's not willing to let a little thing like death get in the way of recruiting personnel of that quality. These TIFFs often have their faces surgically altered to prevent anyone from recognizing them on the street.

Some TIFFs are killed secretly, and others die openly. TIFFs that are killed secretly simply disappear. None of their former friends or coworkers know what happened to them. One day, they're there, and the next, they aren't. Sometimes they're killed by someone unaffiliated with Cybertronic, and other times, they're not.

TIFFs that are killed openly die in the public eye and actually have funerals in front of everyone who knows them—often open casket. After that, though, instead of heading off to the crematorium, their bodies are snatched and brought to Cybertronic's revival center. The largest and most proficient of these centers is located deep in the basement beneath the HQ in Luna.

BECOMING A CYBER

VACs recruited by Cybertronic know all about their pasts. They are hired on by the Cybertronic personnel department, started on XLR8 and assigned their new positions within the corporate structure. The drug ensures their loyalty and efficiency.

TIFFs simply wake up one day working for Cybertronic, their entire life a blank. They have no idea about their pasts, and no one is about to tell them, at least not until they've completed their first year of service. By that time, their loyalty to the corporation is unwavering, and they will continue to serve no matter what might be revealed to them.

IMPLANTS

Each type of Cyber automatically gets certain types of cybernetic implants and has a chance to have a few others added on during recruitment. Others can be added later as the Cyber's occupation requires or performance suggests.

Tables for members of each Pillar are shown below. Each shows the standard cybernetic implants (described as "Auto" under the roll column), plus lists the number a character needs to roll on 1d20 in order to acquire any other possible implants. Make a separate roll for each implant

The Brotherhood points to the similarities between cybertech and necrotech as one of the damning bits of evidence linking Cybertronic to the Dark Legion. In fact, much of the cybertech is modeled after necrotech. Cybertronic makes a point of capturing Dark Legionnaires and studying their necrotech. Cybertronic scientists then try to find ways to adapt the tech to use in humans treated with XLR8.

They have substituted XLR8 for Dark Symmetry to get the tech to take, and instead of the "alien" substances used in necrotech, they use a special alloy (of both ceramics and metals) known as cybernium. Cybernium's composition is extremely complicated, and its manufacturing process is one of the most tightly held corporate secrets. It's also extremely difficult to make, and this limits the supply of cybertech available.



RDM VAC

Roll	Implant
1-14	Subreal receptors

RDM TIFF

Roll	Implant
Auto	Subreal receptors
1-10	Subreal link
1-3	Artificial arm
1-2	Artificial legs
1-6	Artificial lungs
1-5	Artificial organs
1-4	Computerized brain
1-7	Corneal display
1-6	Ultraviolet retinas

AEM VAC

Roll	Implant
1-14	Subreal receptors
1-4	Cellular link

AEM TIFF

Roll	Implant
Auto	Subreal receptors
Auto	Cellular link
1-3	Artificial arm
1-2	Artificial legs
1-7	Artificial organs
1-2	Computerized brain
1-7	Corneal display

SWI VAC

Roll	Implant
1-14	Subreal receptors
1-4	Cellular link
1-3	Subdermal armor

SWI TIFF

Roll	Implant
Auto	Subreal receptors
Auto	Cellular link
1-16	Subreal link
1-15	Subdermal armor
1-11	Bone job
1-10	Corneal display
1-8	Infrared eyelids
1-8	Artificial arm
1-7	Ultraviolet retinas
1-7	Artificial organs
1-6	Artificial legs
1-5	Artificial lungs
1-4	Computerized brain



THE REAL BACKGROUND

The GM now secretly determines who the TIFF was before joining Cybertronic. VACs are who they are, and they have total recall of their pasts.

A TIFF's background must be kept entirely secret from the TIFF's player, at least until one year of subjective game time has gone by. At that point, the TIFF's background can be revealed if the player wants, but it by no means *has* to. Some Cybers like themselves just fine and figure that they're better off not knowing who they once were.

Alternatively, the GM can say that the TIFF was discovered dead in an alley, and Cybertronic has little idea who the person originally was. While this can be frustrating for a TIFF that's been waiting to find out more about the past, it can also provide some excellent opportunities for adventures.

The method for generating a background that's described here uses tables and a fair amount of imagination on the GM's part to devise an interesting background. GMs should never feel compelled to use the tables if they have interesting ideas of their own for the TIFF, though. The tables are only here to help get those creative juices flowing.

The first step in developing a TIFF's background is to learn a little bit about the character's past. To do that, roll on the following tables. You can also use these to help figure out a VAC's background, although then the player should do the rolling, as that knowledge is not secret.

MEGACORP ORIGINALLY FROM

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–4	Bauhaus
5	Brotherhood
6–7	Capitol
8	Imperial
9	Mishima
10	None

PLANET ORIGINALLY FROM

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–3	Luna
4–5	Mars
6	Mercury
7–9	Venus
10	Asteroid Belt

PARENTAL STATUS

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–3	Both alive
5–6	Father dead
7–8	Mother dead
9–10	Both dead

SIBLINGS

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–4	None
5–6	One
7–8	Two
9	Three
10	Four

FAMILY STATUS

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–6	Single
7–8	Married
9	Married with 1d4 children
10	Single with 1d4 children

HOW YOU JOINED CYBERTRONIC

Roll (1d10)	Result
1–7	Recruited openly
8	Killed secretly
9–10	Killed openly

If you have the appropriate megacorporate sourcebook, you can use the information therein to further clarify details about the character's past. For instance, if you determine that the character is Imperial, you can then use the tables in the *Imperial* sourcebook to randomly determine the character's clan and family. This will tell you a lot more about the character than the tables here possibly could.

You should also feel free to develop full characters for each of the TIFF's direct relatives. These individuals can form starting points for all sorts of adventures or other ways to mess with the player's head.

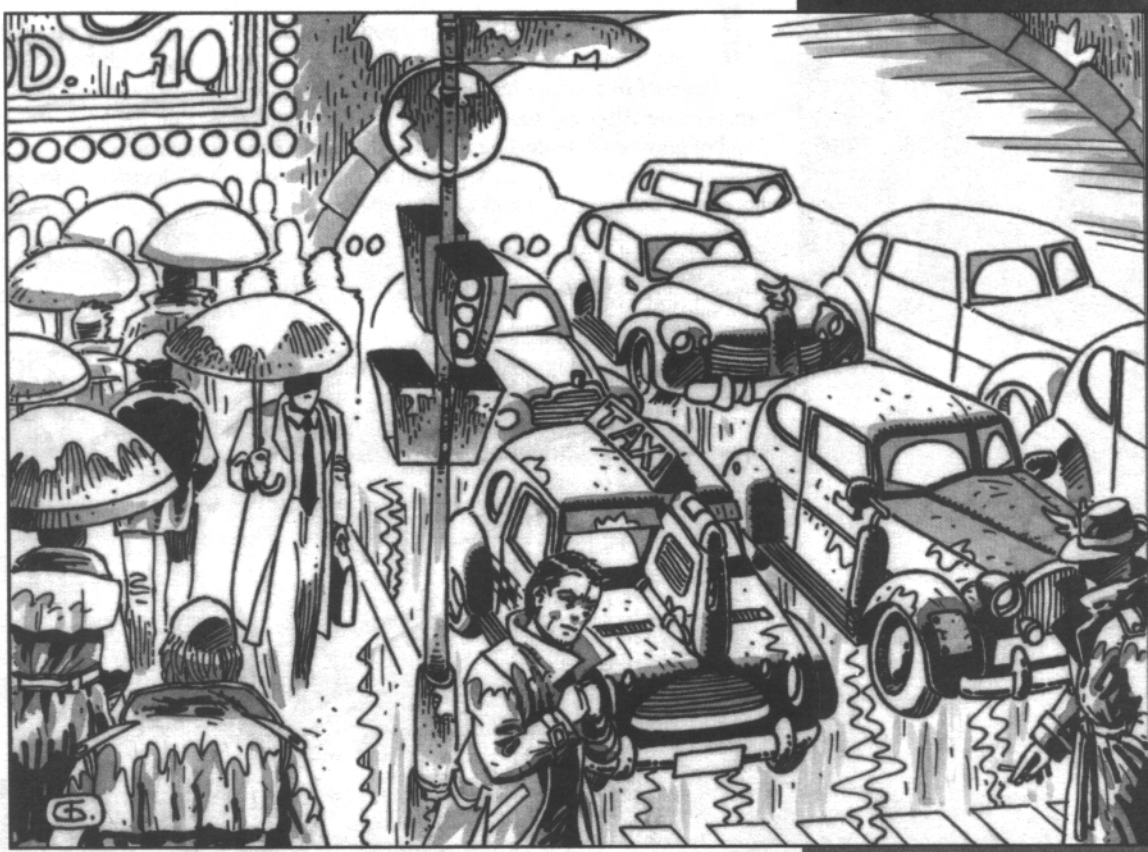
Another set of inspirations about the truth behind the character's past is based on the *Cybertronic Events Table*. The causes of the rolled results are left blanks, entirely open to the interpretation of the GM. This way, the players are unable to figure out their past by simply checking the tables.

Take a look at the events the TIFF has rolled for on the *Cybertronic Event Table*. Then try to figure out what could have caused such events. Work backward from the event tables in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG and the various sourcebooks if you like. These can always be sources of helpful inspiration.

CYBERTRONIC SKILLS

Cybers can use any of the skill described in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG, plus a few others that are unique to Cybertronic. Descriptions of these new skills follow.

Additionally, characters can secretly have skills available only to the corporation from which they originally hailed. This is entirely at the GM's discretion. An ex-Capitol SWI TIFF, for example, might be expected to have the Commando Training or Silent Killing skills. Because these aren't generally held skills, though, the player shouldn't be aware that the character has these skills until the TIFF gets into a situations where he or she might use the skill reflexively. For instance, if the ex-Capitol character above comes up behind a Heretic, the GM should check to see if the Heretic is killed silently.



TECHNICAL

CYBERNETICS

BASIC CAPABILITY: INT

This skill permits a character to operate cybernetic equipment. Combined with Medicine, the character can actually implant or remove cybernetics safely. Combined with Mechanics or Electronics, the character can make the appropriate type of repairs to cybernetics.

Non-Cybers can have this skill as well, although they can't use it to implant cybernetics. This technique requires working knowledge of XLR8, something outsiders simply don't have (any claim Bauhaus might have about Ticker to the contrary).

SUBREALITY

BASIC CAPABILITY: INT

With this skill, a character can navigate Cybertronic's information-based metaphorical construct known informally as subreality. On a successful skill test, a character can gather information about nearly any unclassified subject. More tightly held information can be reached, only with much higher difficulty levels.

To properly be able to use this skill, you must have subreal receptors or a subreal link. Non-Cybers and Cybers without the appropriate cybernetics can have this skill as well, but they always suffer a –5 modification to their SV. This is due to the fact that they can't fully access subreality without the proper equipment.

CUIRASSIERS

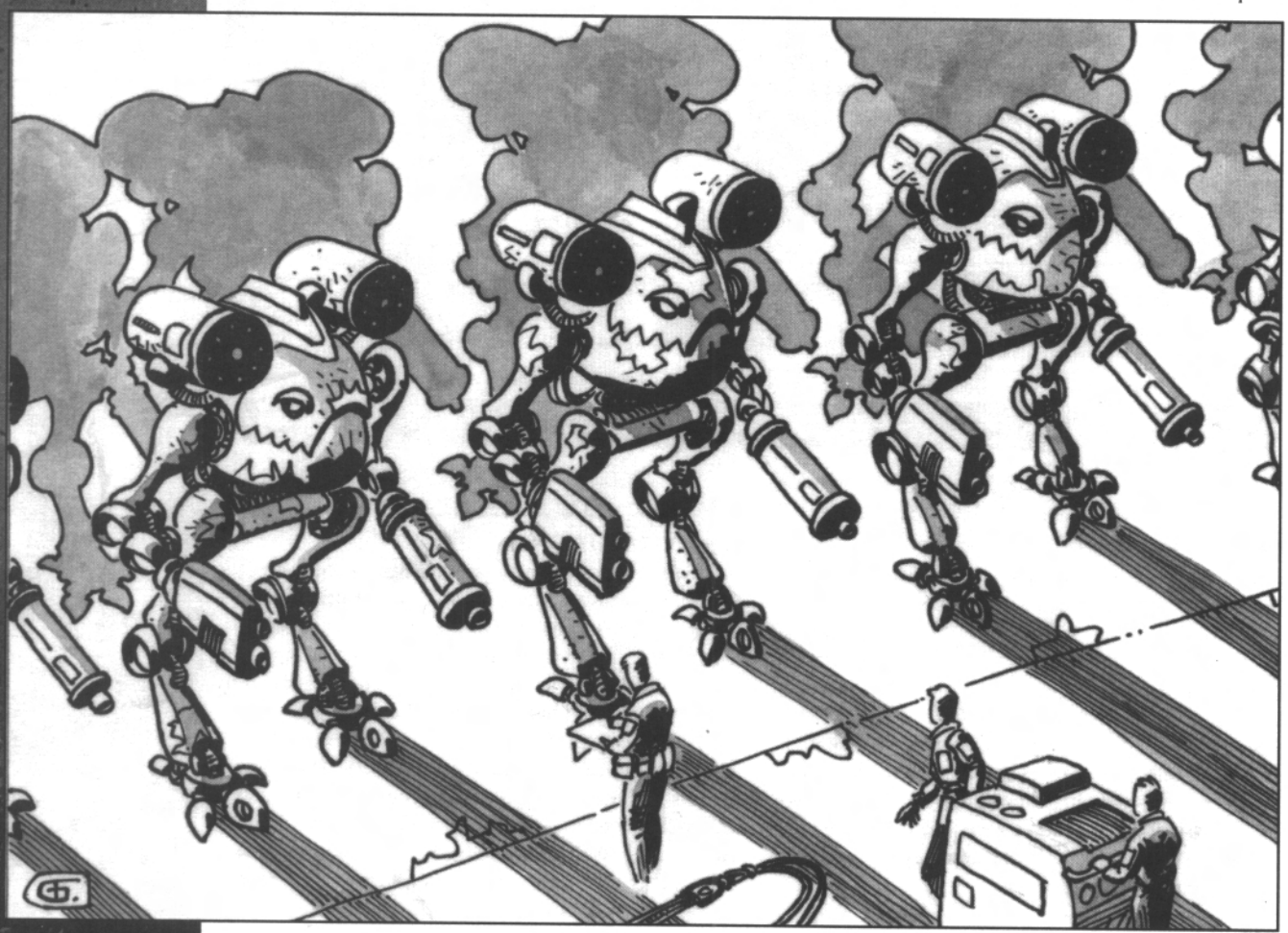
If you elect to play a Cuirassier, you've taken on a challenging role. You might think it's easy to act the part of a killing machine, and in some ways, this is true. After all, standing invulnerable amidst a hail of gunfire while dealing death with horrific precision can have its appeal. It's when you need to do other things that the charm quickly pales.

PARTNERS

All Cuirassiers are partnered up with a non-Cuirassier Cyber (preferably a player character) at all times. This partner can change from mission to mission or even moment to moment, but there must always be one. Without a partner, a Cuirassier is a machine without a cause, as it is unable to initiate action on its own without direct orders.

Under certain situations, the Cuirassier's partner can be in a distant area, connected only to the machine by a cellular link. Also, if need be, the Cuirassier's current partner can hand off the Cuirassier to a non-Cyber, but such assignments have a maximum limit of 24 hours unless approval comes down from the Board itself.

Without a partner, the Cuirassier automatically falls back on its emergency routine instructions. These are to secure the safety of any Cybers in the area and then to contact the nearest SWI outpost as quickly as possible. On Luna, for example, cellular link calls would be routed immediately to the HQ for an instant evaluation of the situation and subsequent



transmission of new orders. Often, these will be to fall back and rendezvous with a support team or to report in for debriefing if the mission's a bust.

FOLLOWING ORDERS

Cuirassiers have only a limited amount of intelligence. Like any other computer, they often don't do what you want them to do; they do what they're told to do. The Cuirassier's partner must be as careful as possible when giving the Cuirassier orders of any kind. The android always follows orders as close to the letter as possible, and this can have disastrous effects if not handled properly. Experienced partners are almost as valuable as a Cuirassier itself.

When a situation arises in which (in the GM's estimation) the Cuirassier could misinterpret an order, the Cuirassier's player should make a roll against its INT. If the roll succeeds, the Cuirassier has managed to alter its programming enough to know what it was its partner really wanted and to comply with those orders accordingly. Otherwise, the Cuirassier must follow its orders to the letter. If the player isn't willing to do this, the GM should temporarily take control of the character.

THE CORE

Most people think of a Cuirassier as a powerful robot, nearly invulnerable to damage and capable of carrying the heaviest of weapons into combat. In fact, what people are seeing is just the Cuirassier's robot body.

In essence, a Cuirassier is a fairly advanced artificial intelligence housed in a virtually indestructible egg-shaped core about the size of a baseball. This core usually sits near the Cuirassier's well-armored sensor array (e.g., the head of an Attila). The core has a single infrared sensor for use as a data feed, and it can be activated by pushing a button on its rear side. Its shut-down code can only be activated by a coded infrared signal which can only be broadcast with special equipment, although a Chasseur with infrared eyelids can do the job just fine.

This core can be fitted into bodies of all different sorts. The most popular are the Attilas, but there are others as well. The larger the body, the greater the demands on the core's intelligence, though, and the stupider it tends to be. A core inside a Mark I Attila is fairly smart and can alter its programming if need be. That same core inside an Eradicator is taxed by the larger number of requirements the body has, and less processing power is left over for such niceties as reprogramming.

For this reason, powerful bodies are only given out to Cuirassiers with experienced partners. Otherwise, Cybertronic would be inordinately risking having a Cuirassier run amok. The Board frowns on such things.

ROLEPLAYING A CUIRASSIER

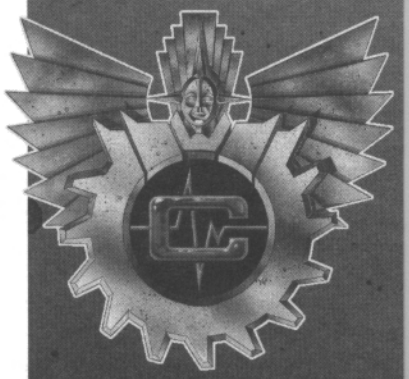
Playing a Cuirassier can be a real challenge. They are emotionless, coldly logical and interpret orders literally. Cuirassiers are programmed with a limited personality that makes it possible for them to function with people, however poorly. Like most other computer interfaces, it has its good and bad points.

Cuirassier players must be careful to follow their orders literally and not just do what they want to. For instance, if you're told by your partner to guard a corridor, you will do so until you're told to leave. Of course, you can be reprogrammed by remote through a cellular link, but until you get new orders, you are bound to fulfill your old ones.

Smart partners will work with you to program all sorts of contingency orders into you before leaving for a mission. Write each order down and present these to the GM before the mission begins. Try to make your orders as specific as possible, leaving little room for misinterpretation.

Be prepared for the GM to take you aside and explain how your orders are to be interpreted. Don't be surprised if the GM's interpretation doesn't exactly mesh with your own. That's okay. Play along as best you can and enjoy the ride. It's no fair changing your programming until a flaw in it has been exposed to your partner (and you can't directly alert your partner to these flaws either).





DIAMONDS

Above the VACs and the TIFFs, there's a third class of Cybertronic citizen: the Diamonds. These people are given extremely special treatment and are afforded an almost unheard of amount of autonomy by the corporation. They are also unwavering in their loyalty to the company and have earned the trust of their superiors several times over. Often these Diamonds are Chasseurs with a large number of powerful implants.

Player character TIFFs can become Diamonds by accumulating enough hero points through normal play. Once you manage to gather 50 hero points in the service of Cybertronic, you are eligible for Diamond status. Once you reach this point, make a Hard check against your PER after every mission that you complete. If you succeed, you've become a Diamond.

Diamonds get to pick their missions and are given full access to Cybertronic's stores of equipment and intelligence. They are the ultimate corporate men and women. There is nothing that they won't do for Cybertronic, and the reverse is (almost) true as well.

This is not to say that when you become a Diamond, you suddenly get a desk job. Such people are far too important to remove from the field. You can look forward to many adventures to come. Of course, they'll be even more dangerous and vitally important than ever!

EXPATRIATES

There's a lot of talk around the human worlds about Cybertronic expatriates working freelance. These sort of people are rare, but they do show up from time to time. For one reason or another, they just don't seem to have worked out with the megacorp, and they've decided to strike out on their own.

The fact is that once you've joined Cybertronic, it's impossible to leave. The addiction to XLR8 that Cybers develop guarantees it. This is even more true of Chasseurs, as without the Brain-grease, their bodies will begin to reject their cybernetics, inevitably resulting in their death.

Besides all that, though, there's the fact that no Cyber would ever want to leave the company. Cybertronic rarely makes mistakes in their psychological evaluations of prospective employees. When they do, they make a point of exterminating their mistakes quietly. They spend a lot of time and effort making sure that they recruit the right kind of people though, and they almost never have to resort to such means.

This means that the people that are passing themselves off as ex-Cybers fall into two categories: liars that work for Cybertronic, and liars that don't.

Those that work for Cybertronic are actually field agents working in parts of the human worlds in which officially employed Cybers would never be accepted. They gather information and sometimes even take part in freelance missions for the other corporations and generally work as spies. Since

PROGRAMMING A CUIRASSIER

Between missions, a Cuirassier can actually reprogram itself according to its partner's orders. In fact, with an INT check, it can even suggest certain types of orders to its partner.

Cuirassiers have a limited number of programming slots that can be filled with skill picks. The number of slots is determined by the machine into which the Cuirassier is plugged. Many slots are hardwired in, e.g., how to walk, so you don't need to worry about things like that. You just have to fill in the blanks.

The higher the Attila's Mark, the more slots it has. A Mark I has 50 slots, a Mark II has 75, and a Mark III (also known as the Ultra) has 100. Each slot can be filled by a skill pick on a one-for-one basis. Communications skills cannot be chosen.

Additional programs can also be loaded in, like knowledge skills of a more or less unique nature suitable for a specific mission, e.g., Knowledge of Luna's Underground Tunnels. The most useful of these is a Limited Intelligence program. Faced with an option, the player can actually decide what to do rather than following orders literally. Each point of INT over what the Cuirassier comes with costs five slots.

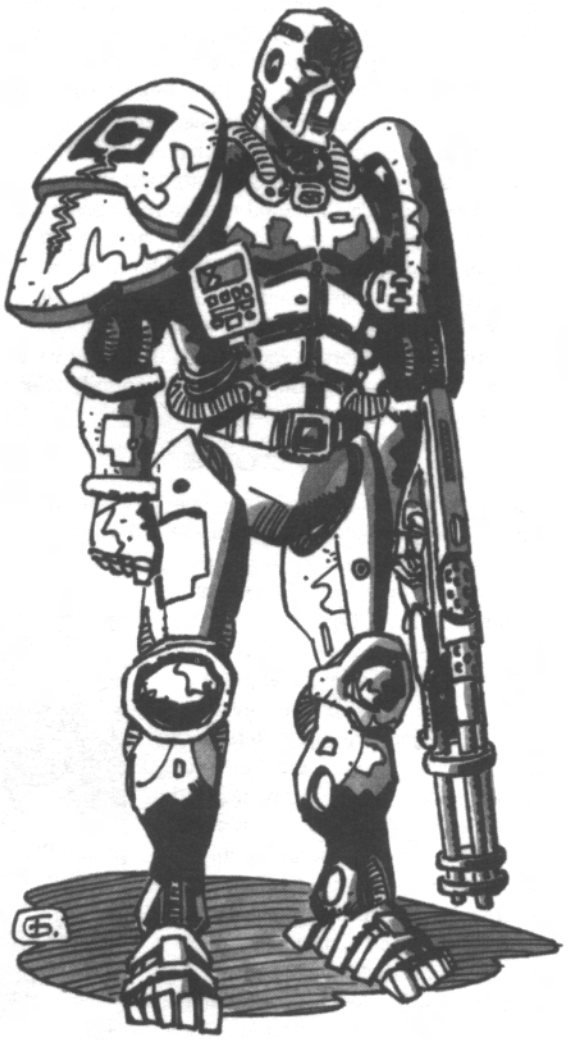
Other bodies can be used as well, but these usually have most of the Cuirassier's processing ability allocated to operating the body. For instance, a Cuirassier can be plugged into an Eradicator or a Sky Witch.

Before each mission, fill out a character sheet with the Cuirassier's latest programming. If you fail to do so, it's assumed that the Cuirassier's programming is the same as it was the last time it was programmed.



ATTILAS

Attilas are covered with sythedermis to conceal their mechanical nature from a cursory examination. They are huge and always wear a dumb grin. Most people will just see them as moronic giants until they bother to check them out more thoroughly, but anyone who knows anything about them can spot one from a mile away, fake skin or not.



MARK I

STR 25	MOVEMENT: 5/325
PHY 25	OB: +3
COR 25	ACT/CR: 5
INT 10	DB: +5
MST 25	PB: +5
PER —	

ATTACKS: Heavy weapon or fist (1d4+2)
PROGRAMMING SLOTS: 50

	BPS	ARMOR (AV)
Head	4	5
Arm	8	6
Stomach	8	7
Leg	8	6
Chest	9	7

MARK II

STR 30	MOVEMENT: 5/325
PHY 30	OB: +4
COR 20	ACT/CR: 5
INT 6	DB: +4
MST 25	PB: +4
PER —	

ATTACKS: Heavy weapon or fist (1d4+4)
PROGRAMMING SLOTS: 75

	BPS	ARMOR (AV)
Head	5	6
Arm	9	7
Stomach	9	8
Leg	10	7
Chest	10	8

MARK III (ULTRA)

STR 35	MOVEMENT: 6/400
PHY 35	OB: +5
COR 20	ACT/CR: 5
INT 3	DB: +4
MST 25	PB: +4
PER —	

ATTACKS: Heavy weapon or fist (1d4+6)
PROGRAMMING SLOTS: 100

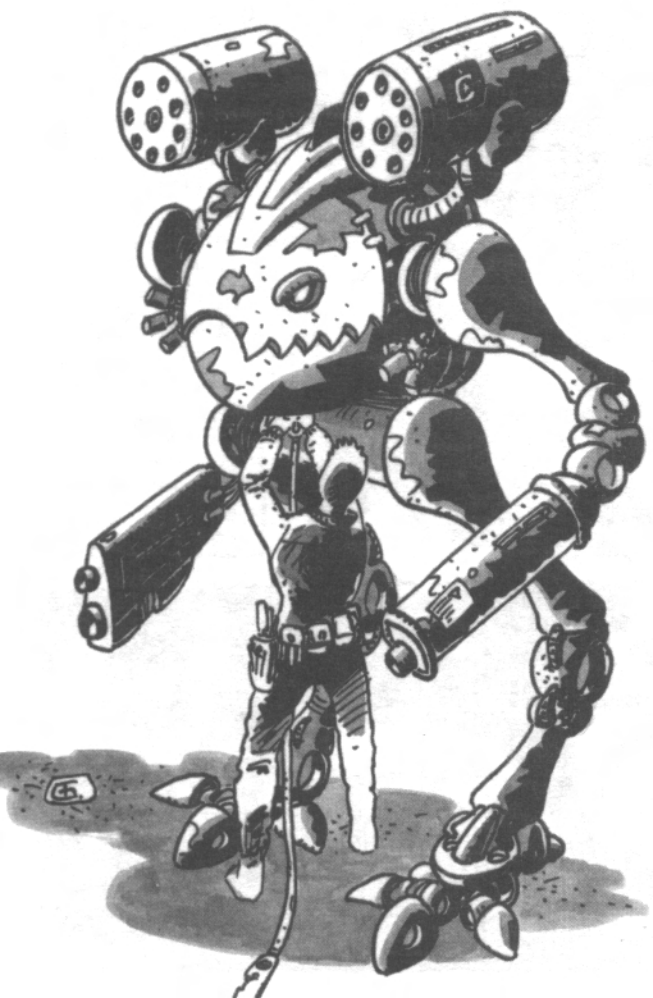
	BPS	ARMOR (AV)
Head	5	6
Arm	9	7
Stomach	9	8
Leg	10	7
Chest	10	8

THE ERADICATORS

Cuirassier players also have the option of using an Eradicator body. This is basically the same as using an Attila body, but a number of the slots are automatically taken up by combat skills using the Eradicator's built-in weaponry.

The problem with acquiring one of these bodies is that they are relatively rare, and you are going to have to come up with a really good reason for SWI to even consider letting you get your hands on one of these things. Eradicators are inappropriate for all but the most combat-oriented missions. As large as they are, they cannot do any kind of undercover work at all. In fact, they can barely fit through most doors.

Eradicators don't bother with niceties like sythedermis. Their role is to strike fear into the hearts of those foolish enough to stand against them. They are two tons of etched silicon and stainless steel with a chrome finish that makes them fit in right next to the Mirrormen along which they usually enter combat.



ERADICATOR

STR 80	MOVEMENT: 8/600
PHY 80	OB: +10
COR 20	ACT/CR: 5
INT 3	DB: +4
MST 25	PB: +4
PER —	

ATTACKS: 1 x SSW6000 on either shoulder hardpoint, plus either a Titan Megablaster, a Magmascorcher or a Slaughtermaster Chainripper on each limb hardpoint, 1 x SW4100
PROGRAMMING SLOTS: 25 (5 must apply toward Melee Weapons, Heavy Automatics, and Ground Vehicles each.)

	BPS	ARMOR (AV)
Head	6	7
Arm	10	8
Stomach	10	9
Leg	11	8
Chest	11	9

no one outside of Cybertronic can prove that the Cyber is still loyal to Cybertronic, this works fairly well. Still, the other megacorp's have their suspicions, and you'll rarely see an ex-Cyber officially employed by another company (although Bauhaus has the most of them).

Some of these Cybers actually believe that they have left Cybertronic or were fired. They've been brainwashed to believe that. However, they've also not been made privy to any vital secrets they could pass along. Also, they believe that they must make contact with underground cybernetics wizards for regular maintenance of their implants.

Of course, these wizards are still really working for Cybertronic. They secretly administer the XLR8 the Cyber needs. Then, while the subject is under hypnosis, they interrogate them about the time since their last visit and plant new orders in their subconscious.

Liars that don't work for Cybertronic are posers that are simply trying to pass themselves off as ex-Cybers, figuring that doing so increases their employability. Since most people know very little about the mysterious fifth megacorp, this is fairly easy to accomplish. No one has any truths to compare the lies against.

What's more, Cybertronic does little to prevent such posers from perpetuating their lies. Since the posers are as much in the dark about the truths behind Cybertronic, they are hardly a threat to Cybertronic security. In addition, the posers often provide excellent cover for the real Cybertronic moles, as it's difficult for outsiders to tell the difference between the two types.

CYBERNETICS

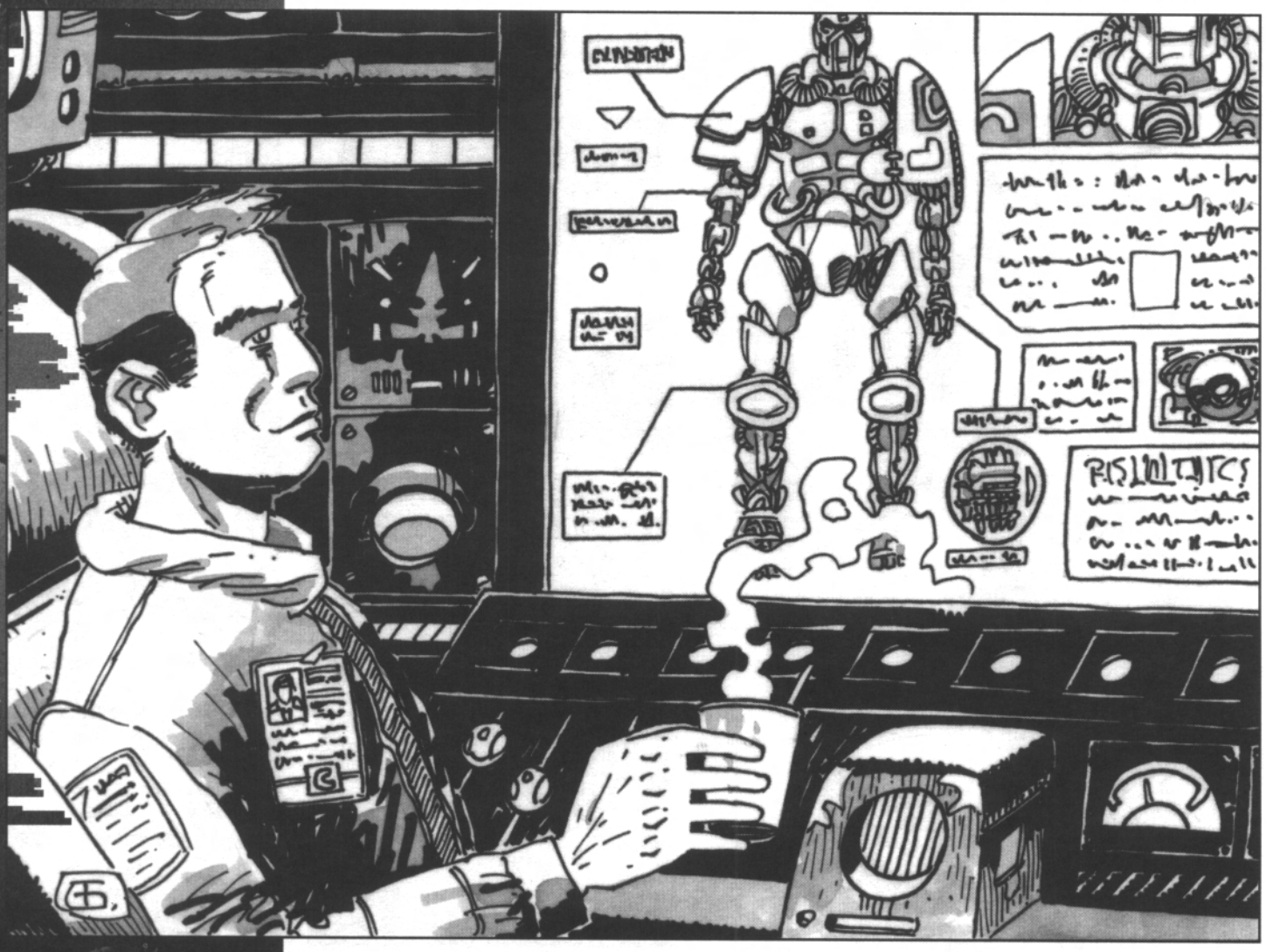
One of the things that makes Cybertronic so different from the other megacorps is its technological wizardry. Nowhere is this so obvious as in the cybernetic implants found in the company's finest employees. A number of these are described below.

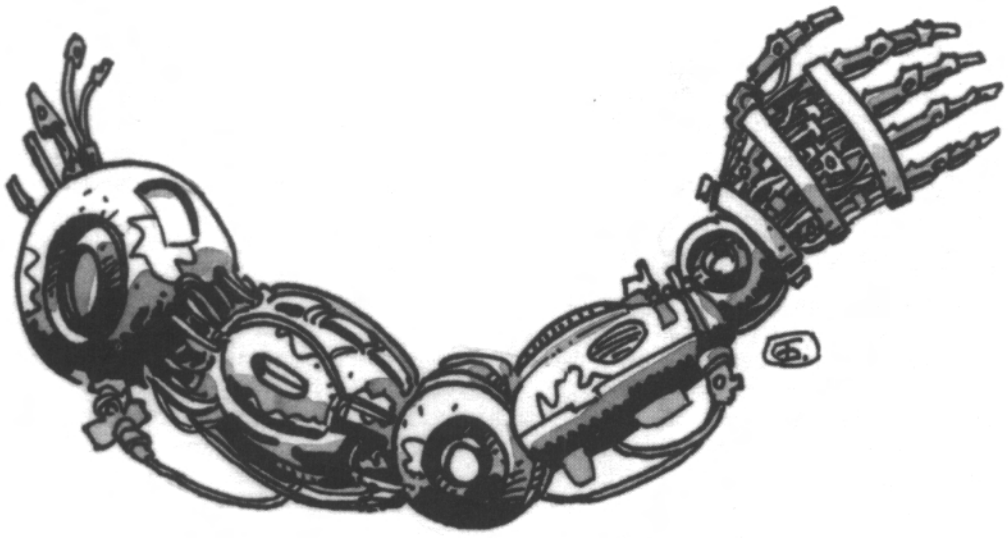
The GM should feel free to concoct new types of implants to fit the campaign. Dole these out to player and non-player characters as you like. Just remember that only Cybers are ever permitted to have such implants. Anyone else will eventually reject them.

ARTIFICIAL LIMBS

Cybertronic prefers to go with organic replacements instead of machines (they get these from harvested bodies they deem unfit for resurrection), as organics tend to work better with less maintenance problems. If the user wants more power, a bone job can be performed. Still, some prostheses have found their way into use.

Artificial limbs add +5 to the user's STR when using that limb. For example, if the Cyber is punching someone with an artificial arm, add +5 to the STR of that blow. This may actually increase the Cyber's OB





with that attack. Additionally, artificial legs allow the user to use the line below the normal when looking for the Cyber's Movement Allowance on the *Combat Statistics Table*.

ARTIFICIAL LUNGS

Your lungs have been replaced with something more efficient. You can now hold your breath for up to 45 minutes. Your new lungs also contain microfilters that make you immune to gas.

ARTIFICIAL ORGANS

You heart, stomach, intestines, liver and kidneys have been replaced with more efficient models. You are immune to poison, drugs, gas and disease. Also, add +5 to your PHY.

BONE JOB

Pieces have been removed from the center of each of your long bones. The slack allows the muscles to be reattached closer to middle of bone for greater leverage and power. This decreases your height by two or more inches, but increases your STR by +4.

CELL-LINK

This is a built-in cellular phone link that allows the user to hold phone conversations with others. The speaker is built into the user's skull bones, and the speaker is attached inside the throat, so that the speaker can use subvocalizations to hold a conversation with someone so quietly that nearby people cannot hear it.

COMPUTERIZED BRAIN

This is the equivalent of a Cuirassier's core, except it's implanted in a human body. Only Chasseurs with the potential for becoming a Diamond (this should include most player characters) can be fitted with one. Basically, part of the owner's brain is removed and replaced with a more efficient computer network. This computer can control the body's autonomous functions (heartbeat, histamine production, etc.) and can do a superior job of interpreting and identifying sensory data. For example, it can identify smells, determine ranges, identify silhouettes, use sound to "see" in total darkness (via synesthesia) and even be used to listen to a heartbeat and analyze a voice for stress, thereby acting as a lie detector.

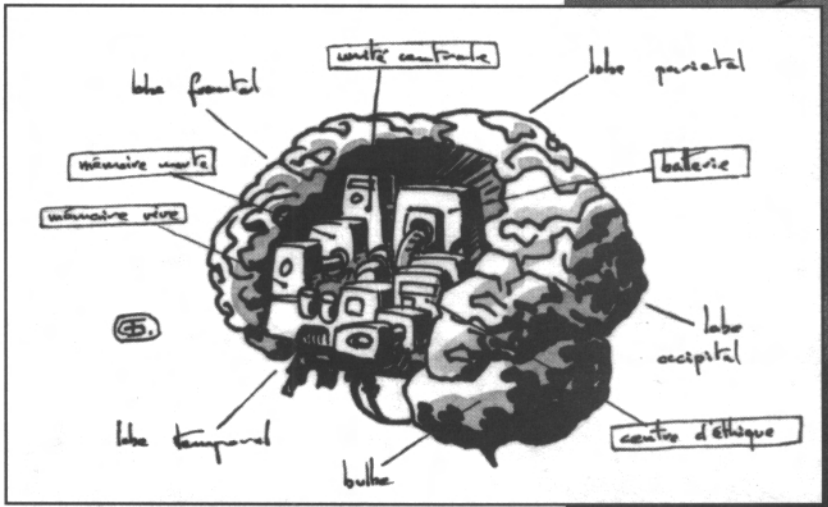
A computerized brain can hold a certain number (1d6+6) of skill picks in knowledge skills, just like a Cuirassier can. With a cellular link the computerized brain can get constant data updates, allowing the computer to access new skills when necessary. Of course, this means erasing others first to make room for the new data.

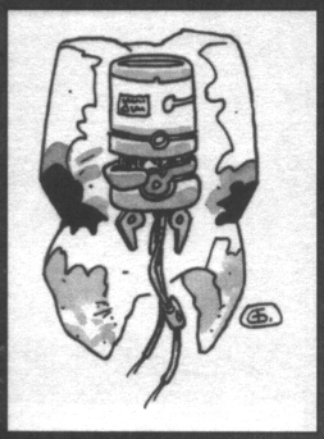
The computer can even take over and run the owner's body if necessary (e.g., if owner is unconscious), using all of the owner's skills as if the owner was awake. Communications skills cannot be used this way, and all other non-knowledge skills are at a –1 penalty in addition to any penalties due to the wounds the character may have sustained. The computer can also initiate other emergency routines, like calling for help. It can even use the owner's senses without the owner being aware of it.

CORNEAL DISPLAY

This improvement allows an onboard (i.e., implanted) system to use the owner's eye as a display screen that only the owner can read. Translucent green letters appear below the owner's line of vision and can show things like the time and date (which all of them do) or more sophisticated things like messages from a cellular link or a computerized brain.







INFRARED EYELIDS

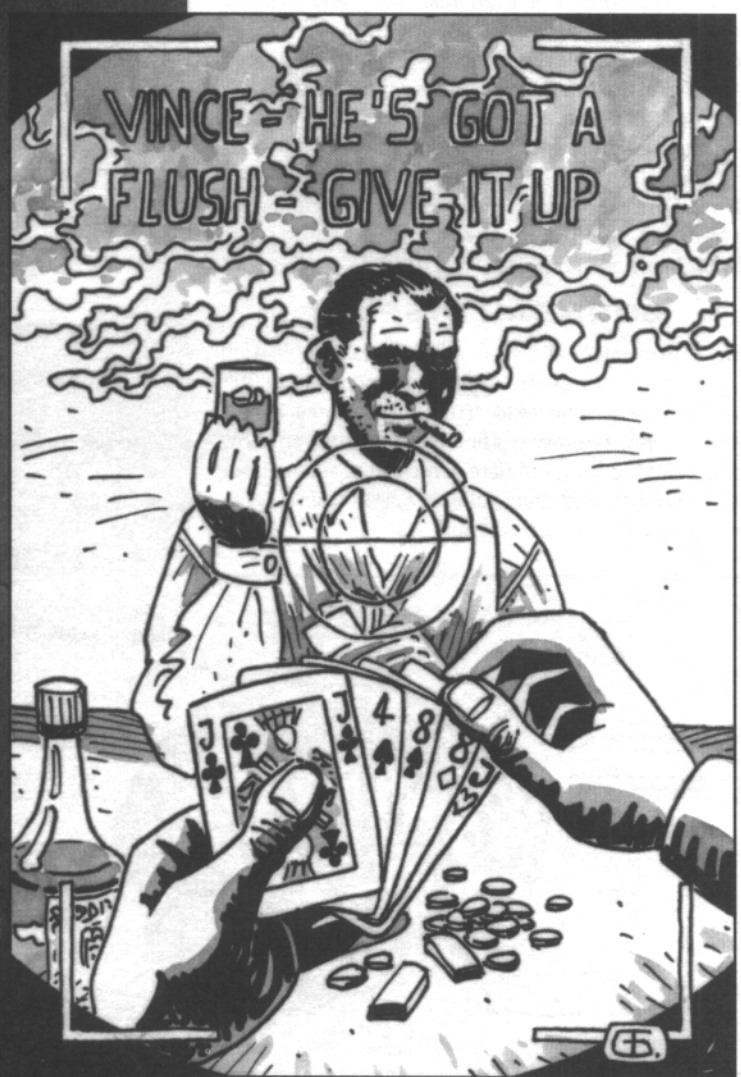
The character has infrared sensors built into his or her eyelids. This allows the character to see in the dark (with closed eyes) by picking up heat patterns. This is of limited use against creatures that are already dead and are giving off no heat.

INTEGRATED ARMOR

The standard armor worn by Cybers is made of a lightweight, yet durable steel polished to a high finish. It is still some of the heaviest material that can be worn, and the system gets hydraulic assistance at several key points. While not really implanted in the user, this armor is listed here, because the owner controls the armor via subreal receptors.

The SWI TIFFs that use integrated armor are known as Mirrormen. Any such Cyber may be called upon to become a Mirrorman at any time, at the discretion of his or her superiors. Most often, though, SWI TIFFs do not wear armor, and when they do, it's usually something purchased or lifted from another megacorp. Cybertronic prefers subterfuge to direct contact with hostiles.

Integrated armor offers an AV of 8 throughout the entire body, except for the head, which has an AV of 6. It also allows you to read ALL of your combat statistics from the line below the normal one on the *Combat Statistics Table*.



LINKCOUCH

This is a link to subreality, the consensual virtual reality metaphor that Cybertronic has set up as an access shell for its computer network. People with Brain-grease draw the images they see in subreal from their own brain. This is like programming images on the fly. UnMarked people (those without Brain-grease) must use normal sensory input to access subreal, so they're forced to use VR helmets and software packages.

Only people equipped with subreal receptors can fully access subreal. For this reason, no one around has ever been able to break Cybertronic's security on their subreal-accessible systems. The Cybertronic defenders' links to the system are simply too fast.

No other corporations have systems nearly as advanced, so they rarely if ever bother with security programs to defend against subreal surfers. The only way for these systems to be accessed is via a traditional punch-card terminal or via a subreal link.

If you want to access protected data, you must make a successful check against your Subreality skill. If you fail, you're booted out of the system, and security is alerted to your presence. If you succeed, you get everything you're looking for. GMs should set difficulty levels based on the sensitivity of the material being searched for.

SUBDERMAL ARMOR

A special weave of ballistic nylon has been implanted directly below the Cyber's skin. This gives the character an AF of 2 throughout the entire body.

SUBREAL LINK

This is a hidden fiber-optic cable attached to its owner's subreal receptors. (It's often hidden in a wisdom tooth or a recessed area on the user's neck.) The link can be used to plug into computer networks and bypass security on normally shielded systems. In this way, the Cyber can tap into a non-Cybertronic computer system (or even a computer-controlled system), primitive as it might be by Cybertronic standards. For instance, a Cyber could take control of an Imperial security system if it could tap into it properly. Doing this requires a computer control console (e.g., a LinkCouch or a computerized brain).

SUBREAL RECEPTORS

These are metallic plates implanted in the rear of the owner's skull. They allow use of a LinkCouch to go subreal (enter cyberspace). They're usually hidden beneath a layer of synthedermis and shielded with white noise generators to prevent unwanted feedback. TIFFs can drop the shields and monitor unshielded (non-Cybertronic) links, piggybacking on unsuspecting subreal surfers.

ULTRAVIOLET RETINAS

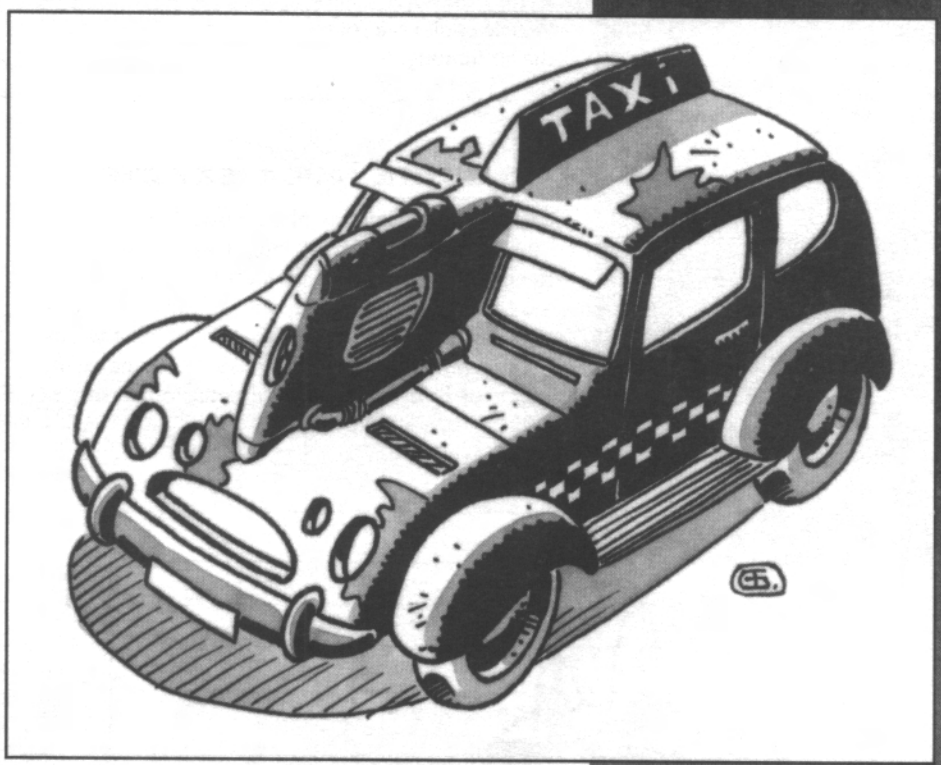
These allow the user to see in the dark by looking into the ultraviolet end of the light spectrum. They give great night vision using ambient light from the sky (even at night), but they're useless indoors unless the character is using a UV flashlight. Outdoors, the owner can even read by starlight.

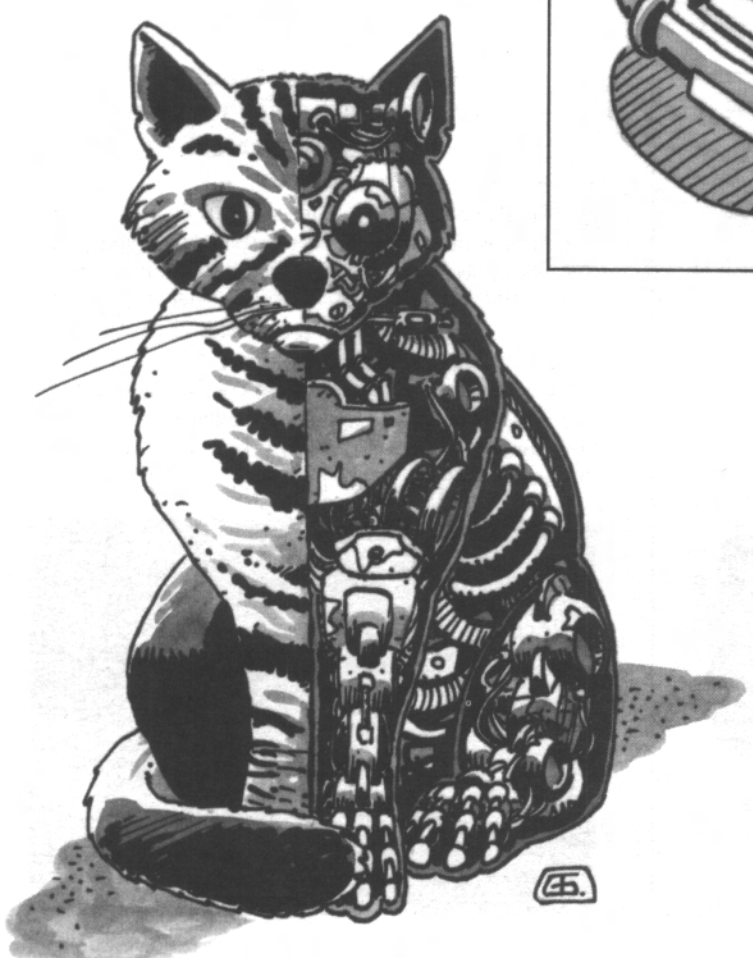
VEHICLES

AUTOCAB
(A.K.A. HEADLESS HORSEMAN)

This is an unstaffed cab, the like of which can be found all over Luna, but nowhere else (yet). They are automated cabs controlled from a central dispatcher's office in the HQ. They are preferred over other cabs, as there is no chance that their drivers will try to rob their customers.

They are about two to three times more expensive, though, and it's hard for the average person to get one. Cybertronic employees always have priority over all other potential customers. Top speed is 100 mph, although they can rarely get moving that fast due to traffic.





MOUSER
(A.K.A. FAMILIAR, THE CATINATOR)

The city of Luna is covered with rodents, and where there are rats, there are cats. Some of these cats are not exactly what they seem. They are, in fact, robotic facsimiles created by Cybertronic to act as their eyes and ears across human space. Few people bother to take notice of a stray cat wandering about, and Mousers—fully automated pseudo-cats—take advantage of this to get into places human-sized spies never could. Some models have been created that can accept a Cuirassier as a pilot.

THE PARASLIDER
(A.K.A. HOVER BIKE, BUZZBIKE)

This is a single-person craft that skates along on a cushion of air rather than a set of wheels. The system of fans is so complicated that it can only be operated by a Cuirassier. One is included in each vehicle. To overcome the Cuirassier's tactical limitations (they can't be programmed to do everything), the hover bike is driven by a Chasseur attached directly to the craft by a subreal link. Hover bikes are usually armed with twin autocannons, one on each side of the craft.

Since hover bikes run on a cushion of air, they can generally avoid the effects of most terrain (except, of course, trees and other obstacles that rise from the ground). Also, they can pop up to heights of thirty feet for short periods of time, enjoying all the advantages that height can bring. At that height, they are terribly unwieldy (check against the driver's Flying Vehicles skill each round), so it is rare to see one in the air for long.

The front wheel is a propeller, much like is found on the tail of a helicopter. Less particular bikers have been known to ride down their foes with the buzzing blades (Damage: 1d6+7, make a skill check to retain control).

THE PARASLIDER

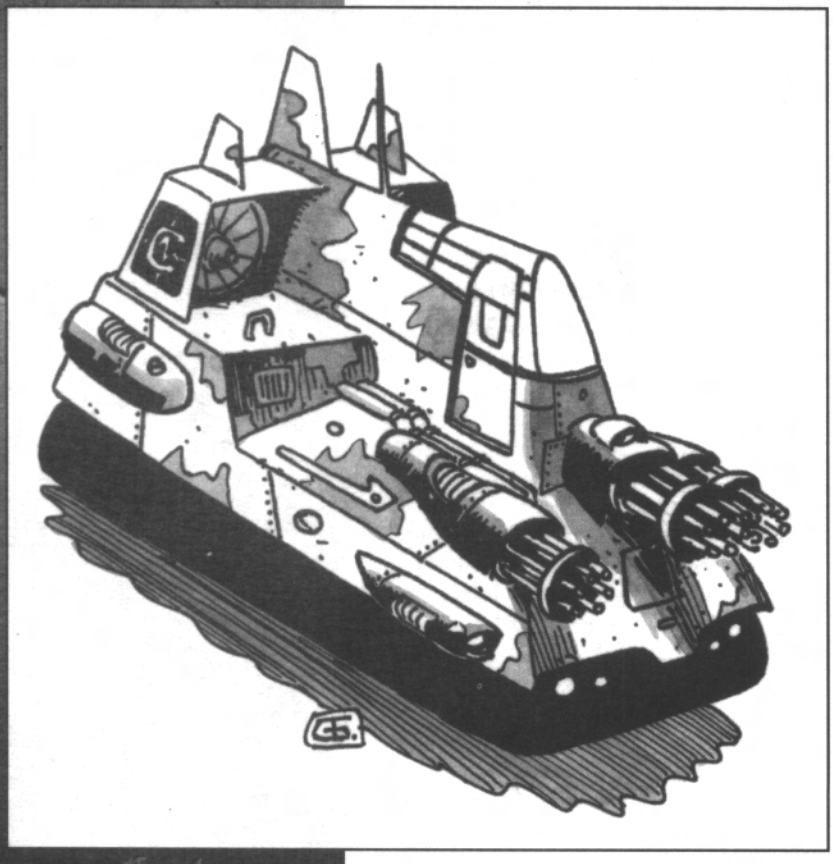
Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 2 m/1 m/1 m.
Crew: 2: Cuirassier and Chasseur.
Engines: 1 Cyberwerks 2200.
Max Speed: 120 mph/190 km/h.
Action Radius: 200 miles/320 km.
Combat Radius: 100 miles/160 km.
Payload: —.
Armament: 2 SSW6000 autocannons
Armor: Chobham A (AV 6). Only applies to attacks from the front.

SHRIKE (A.K.A. SKY EYE)

This is a small, flying spy plane designed to look like a medium-sized hawk circling high above Luna's streets. Cybertronic staffs them with Cuirassiers and uses them as spies. To date, none of the other megacorps have discovered their existence. When they do, you can probably expect the skies of Luna to be purged of birds, at least until some other sort of countermeasure can be found.

SHRIKE

Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 1m/0.2m/1m.
Crew: 1: Cuirassier.
Engines: 1 Cyberwerks 300.
Max Speed: 200 mph/320 km/h.
Action Radius: 100 miles/160 km.
Combat Radius: 50 miles/80 km.
Payload: —
Armament: —
Armor: —



THE ARMADILLO
(A.K.A. HOVER TANK, CUISINATOR)

This hover tank, like the Paraslider, rides on a cushion of air. It is also piloted by a Cuirassier, but due to its greater weight, it is impossible for it to attain any height greater than about two feet off of the ground. Still, it can negotiate up to 45° grades with some ease. The hover tank employs a set of recoilless rifles and a recoilless cannon that runs directly through the center of the craft. To aim the gun, the cuirassier must turn the tank to directly face its target. Anyone caught under the Armadillo's blades will be shredded in seconds (Damage: 1d10+7). Thus the nickname the Cuisinator.

THE ARMADILLO

Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 10m/3m/8m.
Crew: 2: Cuirassier and Chasseur.
Engines: 4 Cyberwerks 4100.
Max Speed: 80 mph/130 km/h.
Action Radius: 250 miles/400 km.
Combat Radius: 150 miles/240 km.
Payload: Up to 10 SWI troopers.
Armament: 1 Titan Megablaster in main turret. 2 SSW4200s, 1 on each side.
Armor: Chobham B (AV 9). Reinforced in the front to AV 14.

SKY WITCH
(A.K.A. PINWHEEL OF DOOM)

This is a small, light helicopter staffed by a Cuirassier. It totes a couple of heavy machine guns and a rack of missiles. It's used for military reconnaissance and quick raids. Although wonderful tools when used properly (due to their fearless pilots and their nimbleness), Sky Witches are notoriously dumb craft. They can do only what they are told to do, and they can often be confused by unusual maneuvers.

SKY WITCH

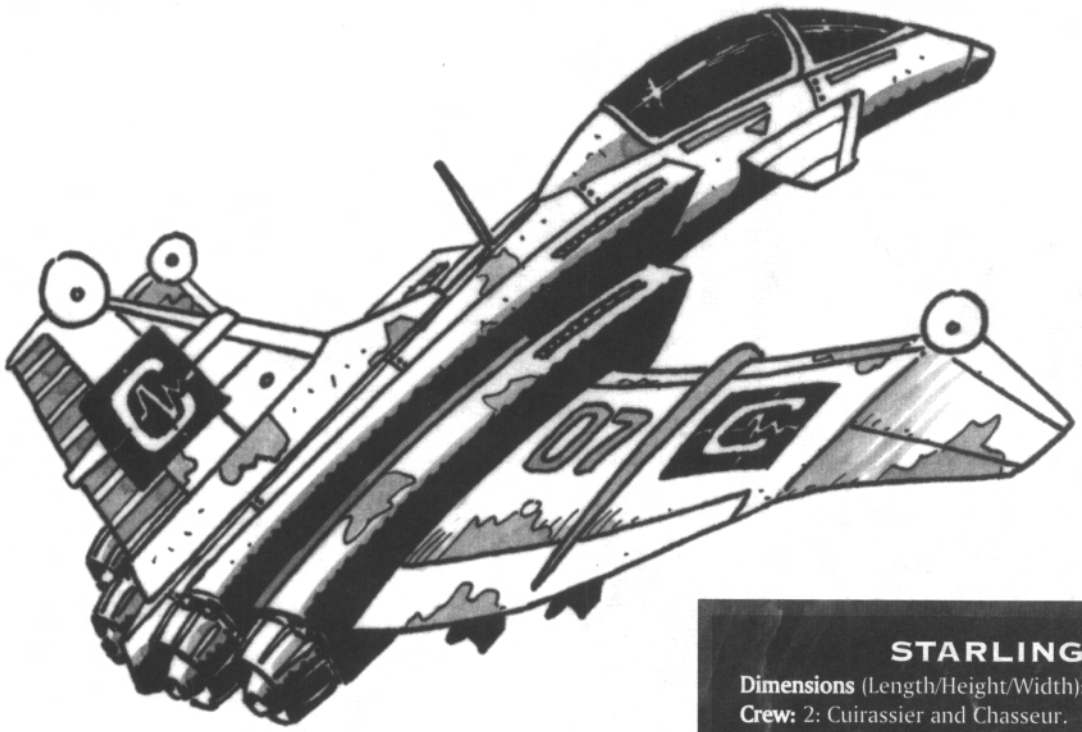
Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 2m/2m/1m.
Crew: 1: Cuirassier.
Engines: 1 Cyberwerks 1600.
Max Speed: 180 mph/290 km/h.
Action Radius: 350 miles/560 km.
Combat Radius: 150 miles/241 km.
Payload: —
Armament: 2 SSW4200P, 10 GO2000 missiles (Damage: 1d10+6)
Armor: Chobham A (AV 6).

RAVEN
(A.K.A. THE MIRRORED MONSTER)

The Raven is a high-tech stealth bomber piloted by a Chasseur/Cuirassier team. Weapons are deployed from retractable blisters that cover the bottom of the plane. It is easily visible in the sky by the sun glinting off of its mirrored carapace. Still, enemy anti-aircraft weapons have a hard time finding this target, making it one of of the most fearsome things in the sky.

RAVEN

Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 20m/5m/30m.
Crew: 2: Cuirassier and Chasseur.
Engines: 8 Cyberwerks 5200.
Max Speed: 600 mph/965 km/h.
Action Radius: 800 miles/1290 km.
Combat Radius: 375 miles/600 km.
Payload: Up to 20 tons of ordnance.
Armament: 4 SSW4200P, 20 GO2000 missiles (Damage: 1d10+6), 6 SSW6000 autocannons.
Armor: Chobham B (AV 9).



STARLING
(A.K.A. THE CHROMEBIRD)

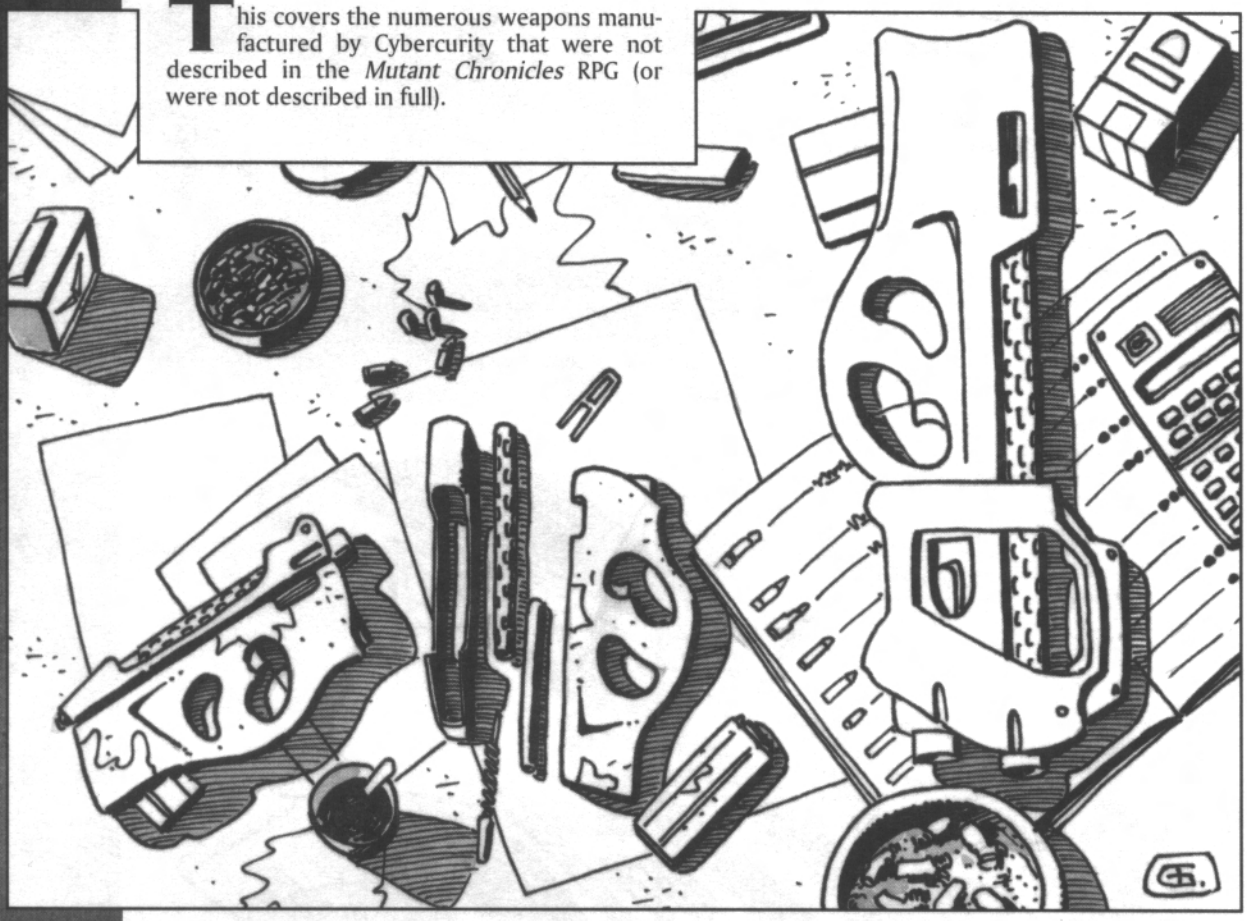
The Starling is the fighter version of the Raven. It's lighter and faster and is mostly used for reconnaissance. It can also be used as support for ground troops, but this is rarely done, as Cybertronic almost never enters open combat that would require such assistance. Still, some Starlings have been seen in service backing up other corporate forces in joint operations.

STARLING

Dimensions (Length/Height/Width): 10m/3m/15m.
Crew: 2: Cuirassier and Chasseur.
Engines: 4 Cyberwerks 5200.
Max Speed: 800 mph/1290 km/h.
Action Radius: 1200 miles/1930 km.
Combat Radius: 500 miles/800 km.
Payload: —
Armament: 2 SSW4200P, 10 GO2000 missiles (Damage: 1d10+6), 2 SSW6000 autocannons.
Armor: Chobham B (AV 6).

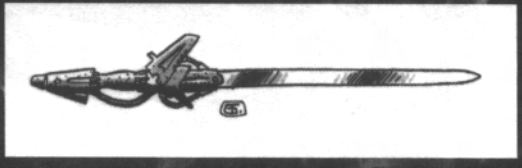
WEAPONS

This covers the numerous weapons manufactured by Cybercurity that were not described in the *Mutant Chronicles* RPG (or were not described in full).

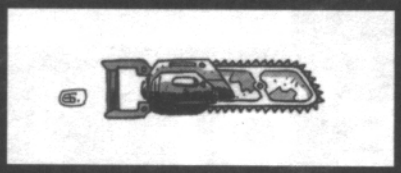


CSA400 SERIES

Cybercurity builds one basic kind of sword built for excellent close-in work in hand-to-hand combat. The Combat Side Arm 400 is simply a standard sword, and it's preferred by SWI purists and used as a ceremonial blade by the AEM. The 401 has an electro-stunner built into it (make a PHY check against a difficulty level of 15 or be stunned for 1d4 rounds). The 402 has a monomolecular blade, making it sharper than ever. The 403 injects a knock-out drug into victims (make a PHY check against a difficulty level of 14 or pass out). The 404 has a superheated blade (it goes up to 800° C) which adds to its lethal potential.



	400	401	402	403	404
WEIGHT:	3	3.5	3	3.2	3.8
LENGTH:	117	120	112	117	113
STR:	6	6	6	6	6
Damage (1H):	1d4	1d4	1d6	1d4	1d6+1
Damage (2H):	—	—	—	—	—
Cost:	6,000	9,600	8,300	10,900	12,200



CSB600

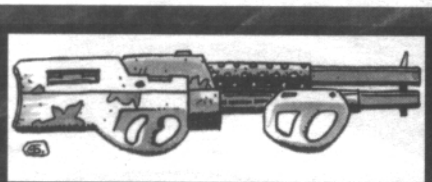
Also known as the Gutripper, the Chain Saw Bayonet 600 can be mounted on anything heavier than a sub-machine gun. It makes a nice addition to any heavy weapons, adding much-needed close combat zip to weapons that are otherwise useless in tight quarters.

WEIGHT:	+2
LENGTH:	+30
STR:	+2
Damage (1H):	—
Damage (2H):	1d6
Cost:	4,200

CSB606

This is the Chain Saw Bayonet 606, otherwise known as the Slaughtermaster. This is a huge chainsaw bayonet that can only be used properly by an Eradicator Deathdroid when attached to a Titan Megablaster.

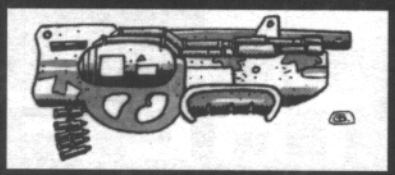
WEIGHT:	+5
LENGTH:	+50
STR:	+5
Damage (1H):	—
Damage (2H):	1d6+4
Cost:	8,900



SG7200

The standard Cybertronic shotgun, this was one of the first weapons to roll off the Cybercurity production lines. Due to Cybertronic's high standards of precision, this is an extremely accurate shotrun, but the full automatic function tends to overheat even this weapon's ceramic linings, causing the gun to be prone to jams.

W	L	MC	TSS	GL
6.1	78	12	N	N
CB	**TS**	**FUNC**	**RANGE**	**STR**
opt	N	A	40/60	13
RT	**JF**	**DAM**	**COST**	
1	2	1d6	14,700	



SW4100

One of the few water-cooled weapons on the market, the SW4100 comes in a belt-fed hand held version and a version for vehicles. The advantage of water-cooling is of course that the barrel isn't overheated due to long bursts of fire; the drawback being the weight of the cooling system.

Note: the SW4100 is actually cooled by a nitrogen-based fluid that is extremely inflammable. On each fumble, roll a d10. A result of "1" means the cooling hydrant catches fire and explodes. Everyone within three squares at the time of the explosion takes 6 BP of damage in all body parts each CR, instead of normal 1 BP.

W	L	MBL	BIP	GL
26.5	59	∞	N	N
CB	**TS**	**FUNC**	**RANGE**	**STR**
N	N	A	1800	38
RT	**JF**	**DAM**	**COST**	
3	2	1d6+6	24,700	



SSW4200 TITAN MEGABLASTER

The Squad Support Weapon 4200 (also known as the Titan Megablaster) is the weapon upon which the SSW4200P is based. This is a truly heavy machine gun, and it is usually only fitted to large vehicles or an Eradicator. Even most Chasseurs aren't strong enough to heft this baby well enough to use it properly in a firefight. Still, it's got great range, despite a slight tendency to jam when overheated (which is fairly large when compared to most Cybercurity weapons).

W	L	MBL	BIP	GL
60.4	110	1000	N	N
CB	**TS**	**FUNC**	**RANGE**	**STR**
N	N	A	1500	56
RT	**JF**	**DAM**	**COST**	
3	7	1d8+6	40,900	

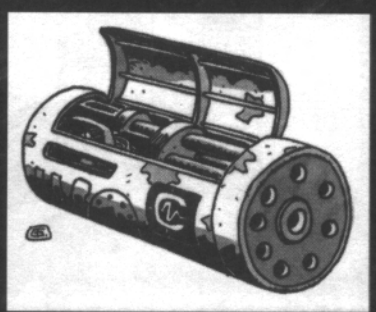


MAGMASCORCHER (I99)

The Magmascorcher (Incinerator 99) is a weapon especially designed for the Eradicators. The double barrels ensures high reliability; when one barrel reaches a critical temperature the weapon automatically shifts over to the other while cooling the first one.

Note: the Magmascorcher's stream of fire is five squares wide instead of the normal one. Two consecutive successful Avoid rolls must be made in order to avoid its attacks.

W	L	MC	FUNC
90.0	109	∞	M
RANGE	**STR**	**RT**	**JF**
150/225	60	3	7
DAM	**COST**		
3d20+20	198,000		



SSW6000

The Squad Support Weapon 6000 is Cybercurity's only entry in the autocannon class. Its eight barrels can launch over 40 shrapnel grenades a second almost two miles, with an accuracy of 25 feet. It is a standard weapon for the Eradicators and is also used in several other vehicles.

W	L	MC	TS	
78.0	112	24	N	
FUNC	**RANGE**	**STR**	**RT**	**JF**
A	2500	51	3	9
#TA	**SR**	**DAM**	**COST**	
1d6+2	4	1d10+7	96,500	

THE FOE OF MY FOE



This is an adventure for a group of adventurers which includes at least one Cybertronic character, preferably more. In it, the heroes are charged with stopping a plot designed to thrust two of the megacorporations into an all-out war. Unless they can do something to keep this from happening, horrific days are ahead for all concerned.

If you plan on playing in this adventure, stop reading now. This section is intended for the GM's eyes only. If you were to play in this scenario and knew some of the secrets described on these pages, it would ruin everyone's fun — including yours!

GETTING STARTED

Read through the entire adventure first, making notes as to how you're going to weave this adventure into your ongoing campaign (assuming that you have one, of course). When you're through, you need to figure out how to get your players involved in the story. Once you've done that, you're ready to play!

OVERVIEW

A group of Heretics of Algeroth (known amongst themselves as the Children of Liberty) have concocted a plot to embroil Cybertronic and Imperial in a full-out war. Imperial, always eager to launch itself into battle for a good cause, has been looking for a reason to open hostilities with Cybertronic for years. Unfortunately for them, Cybertronic has always managed to avoid such circumstance, usually by being too damn reasonable.

Imperial's hatred for Cybertronic is rooted in its deep animosity toward the Dark Legion and the Cardinal's unofficial insinuation that the two are certainly in league with each other. What Imperial often fails to see, despite the Cardinal's explicit pleas, is that squabbling with the other megacorps actually contributes to the cause of evil by weakening humanity's resolve to band together to face the dangers from beyond the Solar System's nebulous bounds.

Eager to exploit Imperial's headstrong attitude, a group of Heretics have taken it into their head to plot an assassination attempt against both the High Serene Leader and the Overlord Mishima. If they can kill these two powerful leaders and somehow pin responsibility for the deed on Cybertronic, there will no doubt be a call for war in both the Mishiman court and the Imperial Parliament, and arms will be immediately taken up against the reputed villains.

It's up to the heroes to learn just where, when and how the assassination is supposed to take place and then stop it.

FORMING A GROUP

As GM, it's up to you to come up with a prologue to this adventure, some way to get the heroes to join together for at least the duration of this scenario. Here are a few ideas:

THE ALL-CYBERTRONIC GROUP

If the heroes are all citizens of Cybertronic, then getting them to unite is simple. Just have their immediate superiors direct them to meet with Max Waxton for a briefing. It goes something like this:

The characters are all called into Mr. Waxton's office in the HQ. The room is toward the top of the building, on one of the open ends of the C. The place is furnished all in chrome and black leather atop slate gray carpeting. A large desk dominates the end of the room facing out over Luna, and man sits in a high-backed, black leather, executive's chair, his back to the door, only the graying hair on the top of his head visible.

As the adventurers enter, the man's voice asks them to take a seat. There are enough stuffed leather chairs for each of them. Once they are ready, he lets them sweat for a second and then turns around.

Max Waxton is a handsome man, as are most who work for Cybertronic. Obviously on the far side of 50, he is still fit and trim. Cold blue eyes stare out from beneath his shaggy eyebrows as he examines each of the heroes in turn.

"People," he says dramatically, "we have a problem."

Waxton is a VP in the IES, otherwise known as Cybercurity. You'd never know it from the crisply pressed chic chip he's wearing or the curl of a smile that usually plays at the corner of his lips. It's not there now.

Waxton presents the situation. Two days ago, Prosthos, Inc., a Cybertronic subsidiary that manufactures artificial limbs, was destroyed in a bombing. Initial evidence pointed toward Imperial terrorists, but further investigation has revealed that the true culprits were a coven of Heretics centered in the Capitolian sector of Luna.

Cybertronic has learned that the leader of this coven, women known only as Pervertia, is known to hang out at Mader's, a seedy bar in the Bauhaus sector. It's a dive in a side alley off Essen Street. Cybertronic could simply raid the place and take Pervertia into custody, but that wouldn't reveal what Pervertia is up to.

True, Cybertronic's interrogation techniques are rivaled only by those of the Inquisition, but even should Pervertia spill all she knows, it's likely that her compatriots would learn of her capture and change their plans accordingly.

It's the heroes assignment to find this Pervertia and learn exactly what it is that her group is up to. They are then to report back to Waxton for further orders.

THE MIXED GROUP

It's best to have at least one Cyber in the group, although it's not strictly necessary. If there is a Cyber in the group, that hero's first job is to recruit a team, preferably the other adventurers. Waxton will only brief Cybers personally. Any others along on the mission must be brought up to speed by the Cyber heroes.

If the other characters are freelancers, they are hired by Cybertronic to assist in the investigation. If the adventurers are from other megacorps, they are part of an intercorporate team set up by the Cartel to help keep everyone honest. If they're all Doomtroopers, this is simply enough done. Otherwise, it's slight-

ly irregular, but then again, life's made up of irregularities.

Some characters hailing from other megacorps may perceive a conflict of interest from time to time. Use this as an opportunity for some good roleplaying. With luck and some sense, the heroes will stick together long enough to learn the truth behind what's going on.

ON YOUR WAY

Once the heroes have gotten together and been briefed, they're on their own. There are two obvious places to start: Prosthos, Inc., or Mader's. These encounters can be run in any order, depending on the adventurers' and their luck, but the others should occur in sequence. In the end, these different paths should converge at a single point, one from which the heroes can hopefully derail the assassination of both Victoria Paladine and the Overlord.

NEWS

The following news pieces should be brought to the heroes' attention throughout the game. Try to be as inconspicuous about them as possible (hard as that might be for a big news piece). There are a few red herrings tossed in with the truly important stuff.

HER SERENITY TO MEET WITH THE OVERLORD.

In an unprecedented move, Her Serenity of Imperial has finally accepted the Overlord Mishima's long-standing offer to meet with him, only it looks like she's doing it on her terms. The summit is to take place in the penthouse of the Imperial Grand, one of the finest and most secure locations in all of Luna, particularly if you're Imperial. Rumors abound as to what the two could be discussing in the first open conversation they've had in over fifteen years, but smart money is being placed on one word: Fukido.

ANTI-CYBER ATTACKS PERSIST.

Early this morning, the residents of the factory town of Newsteel were rudely awakened by the second explosion at a Cybertronic subsidiary in a span of just three days. This time, an entire hangar of Cybertronic helicopters were destroyed, including a number of their highly vaunted Sky Witches. Three Cybercurity guards were caught in the blast, and although their bodies have yet to be recovered, they are presumed dead. Cybertronic's ETP released a statement saying that the explosion was some sort of industrial accident that they are investigating, but eyewitnesses report that Imperial soldiers were seen in the area only moments before the blast took place.

COLDING TO PRESENT EARNINGS AT SWANK BANQUET.

Capitol's President Charles William Colding is in Luna today, interviewing the Capitolians in charge of operations here. He is preparing to deliver his State of the Corporation address next week to the assembled members of the Board of Directors, and he wants to make damn sure he knows how things really are. Always seen as a man of the people, Colding will be dining at a massive banquet at the Capitol Eagle tonight, held in honor of the Capitol's Lunar citizens. All Capitol citizens eat for free, but tickets are limited due to space, and the annual event has been sold out for months already. The dinner is slated to end early enough for attendees to make the mass in Nathaniel Park.

CARDINAL TO HOLD OPEN MASS.

At midnight tonight, the Brotherhood will be hosting an open mass in Nathaniel Park, celebrating the anniversary of the death of Cardinal Nathaniel Durand I so many years ago. As is traditional, the Cardinal himself will perform the actual ceremony, with many members of the Curia at his side. Over 50,000 people are expected to attend, while millions more will be watching or listening to it from their homes. Check your local listings for full radio and television coverage.

ANTONIA IN CONCERT AT FELDSPAR AUDITORIUM

Antonia, one of the most popular female vocalists of all time, is in concert tonight at the Feldspar Auditorium. Opening up for her is the hot new band Lickity Split. Antonia will be performing all of her classic hits, plus a few new songs from her new album *Don't Fear the Darkness*. This show coincides with her 32nd birthday. Her father, Duke Saglielli himself, along with several other nobles from many of the Great Houses, will be in attendance, and a large bash is planned after the show at the legendary Ritz Bauhaus Ballroom.

PROSTHOS, INC.

The wreckage at Prosthos is being excavated by the IGC. The bomb was fairly effective at destroying the building's large warehouse area. Fortunately, the structure itself was only slightly damaged (there's a hole in the warehouse's roof, now patched by a bright blue tarp), and nearby buildings lost only a few windows.

The woman in charge of the investigation is Maggie Bernard, an SWI TIFF with a number of VACs beneath her doing all of the drudge work of picking up the pieces and trying to patch them together. Maggie is a beautiful, petite young lady, standing just under five feet tall, with curly brown hair. She wears a red chic chip, the color alone declaring her difference from the rest of the herd.

The investigation has been going well. People are carting things in and out of the warehouse area, beginning the laborious process of piecing everything together. When the heroes approach, they are halted by Cybercurity until they produce some sort of identification.

Maggie is helpful as she can be, but there's not much to tell. The explosive was apparently several pounds of TNT set off by a crude gunpowder fuse. Security in the area was light but solid. Maggie's team is trying to perform an inventory to see if anything is missing, but it might be several days before they can say for certain.

Moments before the explosion, the security cameras picked up a shadowy figure skulking in the shadows. Computer analysis of the photograph revealed that the intruder—who somehow got past all of the alarms undetected—was dressed in Imperial combat armor, most specifically that of Clan Paladine's Blue Berets.

The camera only captured the Imperial for a few moments before the explosion went off destroying the camera and cutting off the tape.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Pervertia herself entered the warehouse last night via her Dark Gateway gift. Once inside, she stole a single artificial arm and a power source for it. To throw off the scent from herself, she wore Mk. II Imperial armor, complete with a blue beret.

The garb was taken off a Blue Beret commander named Sgt. Alexis Halston killed on Venus in a battle with Baalzacht's forces. In the tape, Halston's name is obvious on the armor's shoulder pad, never having been removed.

Once she had what she came for in hand, Pervertia set off a homemade TNT bomb she had carried in with her. This covered up the theft by destroying the inventory so that no one would miss a single artificial arm—at least for a while. She left by means of a Dark Gateway moments before the bomb went off.

CALLING IMPERIAL

The heroes may wish to contact Imperial to ask about Sgt. Halston. If they do, they are generally met with skepticism and stonewalled, particularly if they are abusive. If they mention Halston by name, the person on the other end of the line (an officious bureaucrat with a snotty Imperial accent) falls silent. After a moment, the man asks for the number of where they are right now and promises them a call back within the half-hour.

An hour later, the phone rings. It's Patricia Wilshire with ISC–1. She tells to the heroes that Sgt. Halston was reported MIA in the Graveton Archipelago over four months ago, along with her entire unit. She then wants to know what business the adventurers have inquiring after a posthumously decorated member of the Blue Berets.

THE THIEF

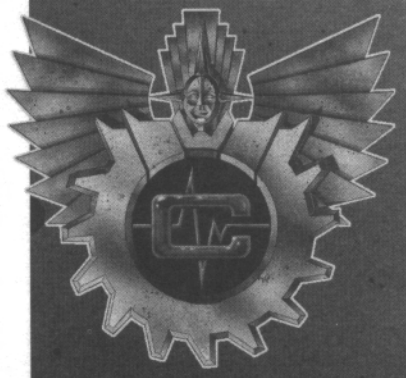
While all this is going on, another member of the Children of Liberty shows up disguised as one of the VACs helping to clean up the mess. With everyone coming and going, the perimeter of the blast sight is somewhat less than secure. However, the anxious fellow is obviously not a VAC to anyone that looks at him closely. VACs are never nervous.

The man's name is Drew Sadiver. He's been sent into the area by Pervertia to obtain a second power source for the artificial arm, since she apparently stole one that was bad. The heroes can spot him if one of them makes a Perception skill check at –3. His disguise is perfect (he stole his uniform from a Cyber lying unconscious in a nearby alley), but his mannerisms are anything but those of a VAC.

By the time the heroes spot Sadiver (if they in fact do), he's already got the power supply in his hands. He tries to make a run for it. The adventurers can give chase, but he is fast and armed with an Aggressor handgun. He shoots to kill, but if he is obviously cornered, he turns the gun on himself. He refuses to be taken alive.

As a last resort, Sadiver will chomp down on a false tooth. It's filled with cyanide and will kill him instantly.

If Sadiver gets away, he returns to Pervertia's hideout with the power supply. Otherwise (which is likely), Pervertia's assassin has to do without the use of his left arm.



DREW SADIVER

STATISTICS:

STR	10
INT	8
COR	15
PHY	12
MST	10
PER	7

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 8/6

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	None (0)
Arm	6	None (0)
Stomach	6	None (0)
Leg	7	None (0)
Chest	7	None (0)

ATTACKS: Aggressor (1d6).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Handguns 9, Perception 7, Sleight of Hand 8.

MADER'S

Mader's is a sorry little roach trap like many others on the outskirts of the Bauhaus sector of Luna, or any of the other corporate sectors for that matter. It's patronized by those too down on their luck to care about the company they keep, yet tough enough to not have to worry too much about watching their wallets wherever they go. Most of the clientele spends the better part of their waking hours bellied up to the bar or skulking in a corner, wallowing in their misfortune and their beer.

The man behind the bar is named T.F. Mann. He doesn't own the place, but then again, no one else does either. He was the manager 10 years ago, working his way through school, when the old owners disappeared. Since they had no next of kin, Mann opted to neglect reporting their absence, and he's been running the place like his own ever since.

He is a small man with short sandy hair, horn-rimmed glasses and a boyish smile he probably should have lost years ago. He puts up with a lot in his place, even fights, but only bareknuckled brawling is allowed. As soon as he sees a weapon, he reaches behind the bar for his HG–14 shotgun. He fires one warning shot before he begins taking out combatants. It's usually enough.

The back region of the tavern, back behind the scarred and tarnished chrome bar, is a favorite hangout for Pervertia and her compatriots in the Children

THUG

STATISTICS:

STR	10
INT	8
COR	15
PHY	12
MST	10
PER	7

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 8/8

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	None (0)
Arm	6	None (0)
Stomach	6	None (0)
Leg	7	None (0)
Chest	7	None (0)

ATTACKS: Brawling. Knife (1d3).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 8, Handguns 10, Perception 8.

PERVERTIA

10th-level Heretic
STATISTICS:

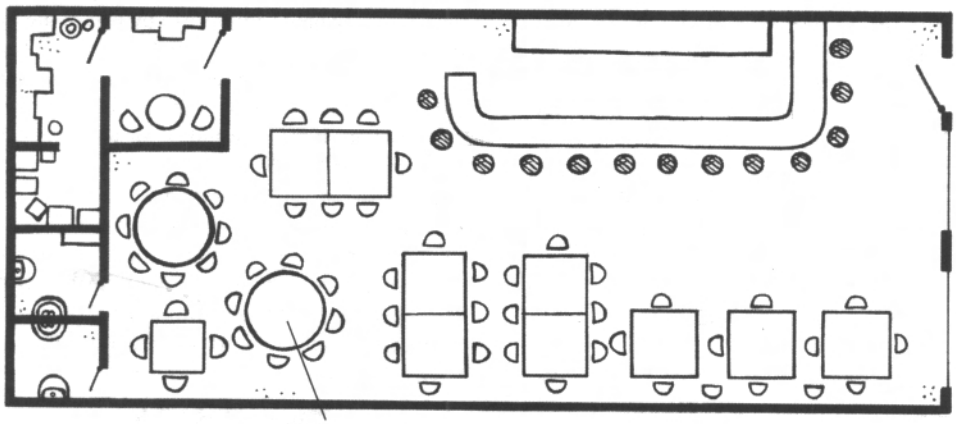
STR	20
INT	15
COR	17
PHY	18
MST	22
PER	16

MOVEMENT: 4/275
OB: +2
ACT/CR: 4
AVOID/PARRY: 10/7

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	4	Ballistic nylon (2)
Arm	7	Light comp. (5)
Stomach	7	Heavy comp. (8)
Leg	8	Light comp. (5)
Chest	8	Heavy comp. (8)

ATTACKS: P1000 (1d6); AR3000 (not at Mader's, but Summonable) (1d6+2/1d6+1).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 15, Climbing 10, Conning 13, Flying Vehicles 10, Ground Vehicles 11, Grenade Launchers 11,

MADER'S



of Liberty. She is there today, drinking and shouting and generally feeling good, still high on adrenaline from the feat she pulled off the night before. She is surrounded by a few of her closest friends, lackeys really, people who she has entangled in her charismatic web of Darkness.

Although there are no pictures of Pervertia on file, it's hard to miss her when you know the kind of person you're looking for. Her hair is long, black and stringy and entirely shaved from the right side of her head. Her eyebrows have been dyed a flame-red orange, and her pupils are wide and black with her insanity, almost entirely consuming her pale blue irises. She is tattooed across most of her visible skin in all sorts of Dark designs, and her flesh is pierced in at least a dozen exposed places and certainly elsewhere as well.

It's a wonder Pervertia hasn't been turned in for heresy just based on her looks, but the people here at Mader's have a hard enough time worrying about how they're going to get by without getting involved in such rubbish as demonic cults. They're certainly not going to stick their scrawny necks out to bother with some woman whom they consider to be some brazen poser, merely playing with children's tales of Darkness.

When the heroes enter the bar, all conversation stops. This is not a subtle place. Everyone stares at them unabashedly. They are outsiders, and they very likely do not appear like they are here for a friendly drink.

If the heroes don't bother to look in the back of the bar, they will miss Pervertia, who has fallen as silent as the rest. At the first mention of her name, though, she orders her companions into combat with the investigators. They readily oblige her.

THE FIGHT

There are enough "cultists" so that there's one for each character. All of them are low-level punks, none of whom have actually been initiated into the cult proper. They are all members of the Children of Liberty, but among this group, only Pervertia is a true follower of Algeroth.

The thugs attack the heroes with their bare hands, none of them able to afford a decent weapon anyhow. All things being equal, the should have their heads handed to them by the adventurers. If this looks imminent, Pervertia uses her Dark Gateway to escape into the sewers beneath the tavern.

If the heroes draw weapons at any time, Mann unsheathes his shotgun and fires a shot into the ceiling. If she hasn't already done so, Pervertia will certainly use this opportunity to escape.

In any case, her abandoned companions fight on. They known they are outmatched, but they are certain that they'll go to jail for being involved in the Children of Liberty, so they will fight to the death (or until they're knocked unconscious, which is more likely). None of the other patrons will involve themselves in the fight unless they are bumped or hit, and in any case, they'll sit right down once any kind of weapons are revealed.

AFTERWARD

Once Pervertia has escaped (mocking the heroes loudly as she goes) and the thugs have been defeated, it's up to the heroes to figure out where she's gone. Even a Cyber with a compu-brain and a new nose would have a hard time following the Heretic leader through the sewers. The scent of the waste is mind-numbing, more than enough to mask Pervertia's scent. Following her seems out of the question, but there's always the thugs to deal with.

Assuming the heroes haven't killed all of the thugs, they should be able to revive one of them and interrogate him (using the appropriate skill checks, or course). They'll play it tough at first, but if any of the heroes bring up turning the thugs over to the Inquisition, they'll crack like rotten eggs.

The thugs all know where the Children of Liberty's hideout is, and they're happy to tell the heroes the proper address. They'll even accompany them, although only under duress. In any case, the adventurers should have a good idea of just where Pervertia is going.

If by some horrible accident (yeah, right) all of the thugs have been killed, Mann will happily volunteer the location of Pervertia's HQ, especially if it means that the heroes will leave his bar in peace (rather than pieces). If Mann is also incapacitated, one of the other patrons should be able to help them if asked. It seems secrecy wasn't one of Pervertia's strong points.

THE HERETICS' HIDEOUT

The Children of Liberty's headquarters is in an abandoned building in a warehouse district on the outskirts of Luna. The entire place is one large cluttered room. Rotting mattresses in one corner comprise the cult's sleeping area, and a large scarred table nearby serves as Pervertia's pulpit when she hands out assignments to the cultists.

The whole area is scattered tightly with crates and boxes of material stolen from businesses across the city. Some of them have been there long before the cult was formed, and even Pervertia does not know their contents for sure. There is only one reason she chose this place as her home base: privacy.

The warehouse was formally owned by a Bauhaus subsidiary that went bankrupt, and it has been abandoned for many years. Pervertia laid claim to it, and the few squatters that didn't join up with her band were either run off or sacrificed to Algeroth.

Despite the fact that Pervertia seems fairly secure in her headquarters, she remains cautious. Guards are posted at all four corners of the roof, and two each at the building's front and back door. Two more of the Children guard the two Sky Witches hidden under large gray tarps atop the warehouse's roof.

Two ladders run along the inside of the warehouse's walls, allowing access to the roof. Nearby buildings are over thirty yards away on each side, making it difficult to get to or from the roof from them. In the center of the warehouse floor, there's a man-hole which provides access to the tunnels that run beneath Luna's rocky surface.

In one corner of the building, there's a makeshift operating room. Mostly dried blood covers everything, and a human left arm lies on a nearby workbench. This belonged to Rand Crandall, the secret agent that Pervertia has placed at the Imperial Grand.

THE RAID

Eventually the heroes will want to try to get into the warehouse. Subterfuge will not work well, as the guards are extremely suspicious of outsiders, and Pervertia has told everyone about the fight in Mader's. Besides which, with their plans so close to fruition, every one of the Heretics is on edge.

They will be brusque with anyone who wanders by, and they will shoot any one who gets too close to them (or who is obviously acting aggressively toward them). All of these people are fanatics, willing to lay down their lives for the cause that they believe in. They know full well that some of them will likely not survive the day.

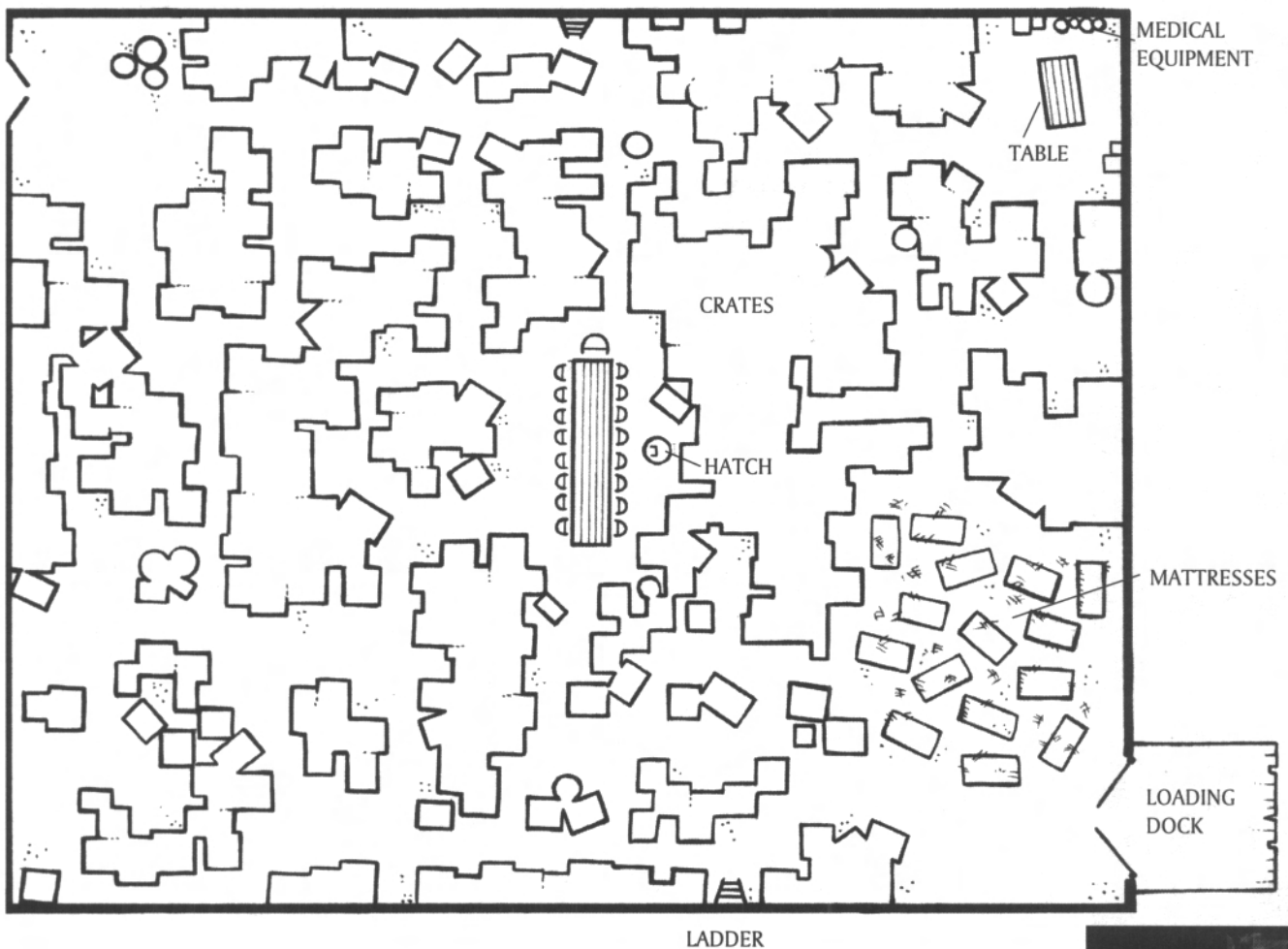
Eventually matters will very likely boil down to a firefight. Besides the guards around the perimeter,

Handguns 13, Heavy Automatics 12, Oratory 16, Perception 16, Stealth 14.

BIO-TECHNOLOGICAL GIFTS: None.

DARK GIFTS: Dark Gateway, Distort Foe, Distort Self, Imprison, Invoke Pain, Invoke Death, Resist Pain, Summon, Teleport, Terror, Warp of the Jesters.

PERVERTIA'S HIDEOUT



there are eight others inside, plus six full-fledged Heretics that have been fully initiated into the cult, not to mention Pervertia herself.

Once the first shots are fired (or other noises are made to alert the Children of Liberty that they've been found out), the Heretics take up their arms and attack any outsiders that they see. Pervertia immediately teleports to the roof, directly into one of the Sky Witches. She is not willing to let her mission be foiled. Everyone else is expendable in the name of fulfilling Algeroth's design.

She immediately orders the guards to remove the tarp from her Sky Witch and then takes off as soon as possible for the Imperial Grand. While she races off toward downtown Luna, her compatriots cover her retreat as best as they can, fighting to the death.

GUARD

STATISTICS:

STR	10
INT	10
COR	15
PHY	12
MST	10
PER	10

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 8/8

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	Bullet proof composite (4)
Arm	6	Bullet proof composite (4)
Stomach	6	Bullet proof composite (4)
Leg	7	Bullet proof composite (4)
Chest	7	Bullet proof composite (4)

ATTACKS: Aggressor (1d6), Invader (1d6+3/1d10).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 8, Grenade Launchers 10, Heavy Automatics 10, Handguns 10, Perception 12.

HERETIC

3rd-level Heretic
STATISTICS:

STR	12
INT	10
COR	15
PHY	12
MST	15
PER	12

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 8/8

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	Bullet proof composite (4)
Arm	6	Bullet proof composite (4)
Stomach	6	Bullet proof composite (4)
Leg	7	Bullet proof composite (4)
Chest	7	Bullet proof composite (4)

THE CHASE

Once the heroes have managed to get to the roof, they should notice that Pervertia has taken off in a Sky Witch. Even if they didn't actually see her leaving, they must have heard the noise of the chopper's blades, and they can see the now-empty tarp lying nearby. Underneath a second tarp is another Sky Witch, a backup that Pervertia had stolen in case something went wrong with the first one.

A brave hero with the appropriate skills could take the spare Sky Witch and follow after Pervertia. Remember that the craft is only designed for a single rider, though, so the others will have to be left behind. Perhaps they can follow by some other available means.

If the pursuing character is close enough behind Pervertia, use the rules for dogfights from *Capitol*. They are summarized here, although they have been trimmed down to cover only the situation at hand.

Pervertia will tailgate any time she wins the Dogfight Roll until she takes some damage. At any time that her craft is doing worse than her opponent's, then she'll attempt to break off combat instead. Her mission is of primary importance.

If the hero flying the other craft knows where Pervertia is headed, she needs to break off combat *three* times to successfully elude pursuit.

DOGFIGHTS

Dogfights take place between aircraft. It's assumed that all involved aircraft are in constant motion and seeking any advantage over their opponents.

The combat round consists of two simple steps—a Dogfight Roll and (if any weapons bear on a target) attacks. When combat is resolved, start a new round with another Dogfight Roll.

At the start of the combat round, both pilots roll 1d20 and add their Flying Vehicles SVs. This is called the Dogfight Roll. The side with the highest total can choose to make the following maneuvers:

GAIN HEIGHT. You are now above your opponent. Add +2 to any subsequent Dogfight Rolls until you dive or your opponent gains height, too. You are also at +2 when you shoot, and your opponent is at –2 to evade.

TAILGATE. You move into position behind your foe, and it cannot shoot at you. Your opponent is at –2 to evade.

DIVE. If you are above your foe, you can swoop down, losing the advantage of height but gaining +4 to your shooting this round. Your target is at –4 on all evasion rolls. You can only dive if you are above your foe. If your opponent has broken off combat, you close the distance again automatically.

BREAK OFF COMBAT. You begin to move away from the fight. Both you and your foe are at –4 to your shooting rolls. If you can break off twice, you are out of the fight.

CLOSE RANGE. If your foe has managed to open the range by breaking off once, you can close it again.

RANGE

In a dogfight, it's assumed that both sides are moving into optimum range for their weapons. Therefore, there are no range penalties in dogfight combat unless one side has broken off combat.

SHOOTING

Once the Dogfight Roll is made, both sides can shoot with any weapons that bear. Shooting consists of three steps—attack roll, evasion roll and damage check.

THE ATTACK ROLL. The Sky Witch's weapons are fuselage-mounted guns, so average your Flying Vehicles and Weapon System SVs. If any attack rolls are successful, the defender gets to make an evasion roll for each hit.

THE EVASION ROLL. Roll once to try to avoid each successful attack. Average the target pilot's SVs in Flying Vehicles and Avoid. Apply any modifications from the above maneuvers. If a roll is successful, that attack is avoided.

DAMAGE CHECK. For each attack that goes in, roll damage and check the Vehicle Damage Table to determine its effect.

OUTCOME

If Pervertia gets away, she'll attack the penthouse of the Imperial Grand with whatever ordnance she has left. As GM, it's up to you if she actually succeeds. After all, her timing could be off, and Her Serenity and the Overlord Mishima could be elsewhere at the time of her attack. Or they could miraculously survive the massacre, their underlings throwing themselves between the bullets and their charges.

IF PERVERTIA SUCCEEDS. The face of your campaign will change greatly. Lord Heir Moya will become the Overlord Mishima, but his succession is sure to be challenged by his two siblings. This internal struggle should keep Mishima occupied for many months to come.

Similarly, Victoria Paladine's death will mean that the Imperial Parliament needs to elect another High

Serene Leader. Once they do (it will almost certainly be another Paladine that occupies the throne once again), the Parliament will call for an all out war against Cybertronic in retribution for their cowardly assassination of their beloved leader.

Cybertronic's protests of innocence will be ignored. Anything the heroes say will be immediately discounted as soon as it's discovered who it was that they were working for. After all, Cybertronic would say or do anything to escape responsibility for their atrocity, right?

IF PERVERTIA FAILS. If the heroes had nothing to do with Pervertia's failure (as GM, you simply decide that her attack fails), the Overlord Mishima and Victoria Paladine survive the Heretic's attack unscathed, although the same cannot be said for their people. Still, the reception tonight is an important one. It will go on—to simply show the public that everything is all right if nothing else.

In this case, Rand's attack will proceed as planned.

IF THE HEROES SUCCEED. The adventurers will be lauded as heroes by Imperial, Mishima and even their Cybertronic employers. They have prevented a great tragedy from taking place, and they shall be the guests of honor at tonight's feast. Still, despite all the accolades, the heroes should have a nagging feeling that something's wrong. The heroes have still not found the missing artificial arm and whoever's currently attached to it—presumably the owner of the arm they found in the warehouse.

Of course, Rand's attack will proceed as planned.

THE MOLE

Even if Pervertia fails, she still has a backup plan. One of the Children of Liberty, a bitter man named Rand Crandall, volunteered to sacrifice an arm to have the chance to put a bullet in the brain of Her Serenity.

When he was a child at Bauhaus, his entire family was slaughtered in an Imperial raid. Orphaned, with no relatives to step forward to claim him and bring him back into the Bauhauser fold, he was put out onto the streets of Heimburg. There, he begged and scratched out a living as best he could, and the hate in his heart festered until it became an almost living thing.

Pervertia, an ex-Imperial, found him there after her family had expelled her from the corporation for crimes she had committed with unusual cruelty. She had already started down the road to heresy, and this much was obvious to Rand. Despite his fury with Imperial and Bauhaus, he was unable to stomach turning to the Darkness, and so the two soon parted ways.

When Pervertia needed a person untouched by the Darkness to assist her in her evil scheme, she turned immediately to Rand. She explained her plot to him, as well as why he was needed. Someone touched by the Dark Soul would be detected by Inquisitors either before or after the assassination. Since no one at Cybertronic had even been found with any taint of the Darkness at all, this would discredit her attempt to pin the killings on Cybertronic.

Rand was perfect for the job. His thirst for revenge had grown so much that he hardly flinched when Pervertia told him that they'd have to replace his arm with one stolen from Cybertronic. After all, he hardly expected to live through the assassination of Her Serenity. What was the loss of a limb compared to the sacrifices he was willing to make?

In preparation for the killing, Rand spent the last six months working as a waiter at the Imperial Grand. He knew that Her Serenity often stayed at the Grand when visiting Luna, especially when hosting matters of state. Eventually his chance to get close enough to kill her would come.

The arm that Pervertia heisted for Rand has a bum power supply. This means that, although the arm is attached, it does not work at all. (Unless Sadiver actually managed to escape with the good power supply.) Despite this and the harrowing surgery Rand recently underwent to have the arm attached, he is determined to go to work tonight.

Rand has arranged to be one of the servants at Her Serenity's reception for the Overlord Mishima. At some point during the dinner, he will be close enough to Victoria Paladine to pull out his P1000 and blast her away. After that, he'll happily turn the gun on himself, leaving the Inquisitors that inevitably attend such events nothing to work with but a corpse.

STOPPING RAND

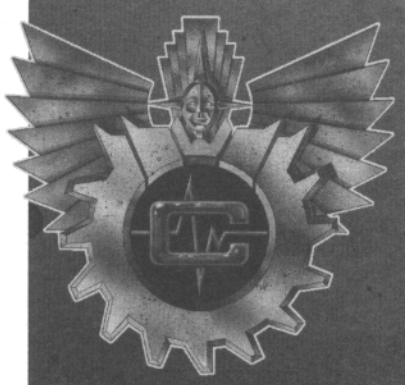
Stopping Rand is going to be difficult. After all, the heroes don't know what he looks like or who he is. As a servant at the Grand, Rand pretty much has the run of the place, and after six months of exemplary service, hardly anyone will be suspicious of him. There are, though, a few telltale ways to spot him.

For one, his left arm simply doesn't work. It hangs limply at his side like the dead weight that it is. It causes Rand to slouch a bit to his left, and the weight of the arm pulls against the sutures attaching the arm to his body.

One minute before Rand is about to make his move, the arm starts bleeding, and the red stains show right through his white waiter's jacket. When he spots it, he knows he will not be able to last much longer, so he decides to kill Her Serenity immediately.

Unless they happened to have stopped Pervertia's attack and are now guests of honor at the dinner, the worst problem the heroes are going to have is getting into the ballroom. Even if they try to be subtle about it, they will surely run into the tight security that surrounds such events. There are a few different ways that they can go, though.

They can try to sneak in. This would be made easier if at least one of the characters was an Imperial with some kind of high-level contact. Then, when Rand makes his move, they can try to stop him.



ATTACKS: Aggressor (1d6), Invader (1d6+3/1d10).

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 8, Grenade Launchers 9, Heavy Automatics 10, Handguns 10, Perception 12.

BIO-TECHNOLOGICAL GIFTS: None.

DARK GIFTS: Dark Gateway, Invoke Pain, Resist Pain.

BLUE BERET GUARD

STATISTICS:

STR	15
INT	13
COR	15
PHY	15
MST	16
PER	12

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 10/12

	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	Mk. II Comb. Arm. (7)
Arm	6	Mk. II Comb. Arm. (7)
Stomach	6	Mk. II Comb. Arm. (7)
Leg	7	Mk. II Comb. Arm. (7)
Chest	7	Mk. II Comb. Arm. (7)

ATTACKS: Aggressor (1d6), Invader (1d6+3/1d10), Violator Sword (1d6/1d10).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 12, Grenade Launcher 14, Heavy Automatics 14, Melee Weapons 16, Handguns 14, Perception 17, Social 13, Stealth 15.

RAND CRANDALL

STATISTICS:

STR	13
INT	15
COR	15
PHY	12
MST	18
PER	16

MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 10/6

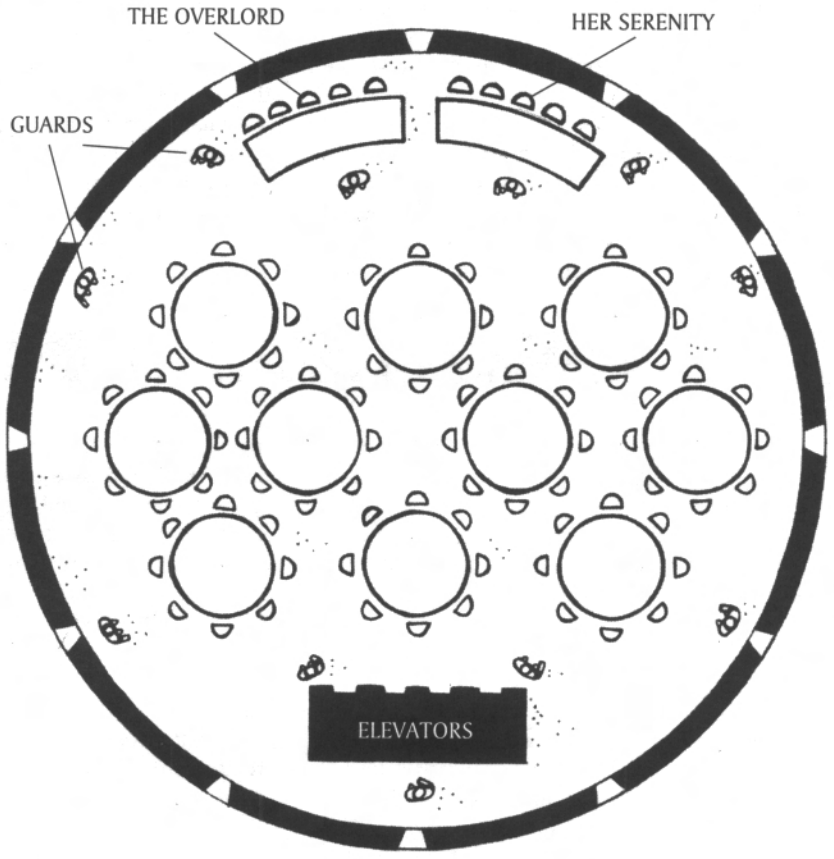
	BPs	Armor (AV)
Head	3	None (0)
Arm	6 (left: 0)	None (0)
Stomach	6	None (0)
Leg	7	None (0)
Chest	7	None (0)

ATTACKS: P1000 (1d6).
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Brawling 12, Light Automatics 10, Handguns 14, Perception 12, Sleight of Hand 13, Stealth 15.

They can tell the truth. While the Imperials are reluctant to believe anything told to them by someone from Cybertronic, they will take the threat seriously. Unfortunately, when Rand feels the noose beginning to close around his neck, he'll simply step up his timetable and attack Her Serenity right away.

They can bust in fighting. This will bring all of the Imperial guards down on their heads at once. Assuming that they manage to deport themselves well and make it into the penthouse ballroom, they will arrive just in time to see Rand attacking Her Serenity. Due to the noise, though, the security around Victoria Paladine will have tightened considerably, and chances are good that Rand will be brought down before he can succeed.

If the heroes already stopped Pervertia, they won't have to worry about getting into the ballroom, but they will not be permitted to keep their weapons with them. This can make stopping Rand problematic unless they come up with something innovative or are just particularly lucky and alert.



AFTERMATH

Whether or not the adventurers manage to foil Pervertia's plot can have a drastic effect upon the future of the worlds of *Mutant Chronicles*, not to mention the heroes' well-being. Some options are outlined here.

IF RAND SUCCEEDS. Victoria Paladine is dead, as is her killer. The Parliament will elect a new High Serene Leader. Most likely this will be another Paladine, but you never know. Perhaps some other factions within Imperial will see this as the right time to take a stab at the throne themselves.

In any case, once Imperial manages to collect itself, the Parliament will be screaming for retribution, and Cybertronic is doomed to bear the brunt of it. Even if the heroes produce evidence of Pervertia's plot, they will not be listened to, since they were in Cybertronic's employ at the time. Besides which, Imperial will not be willing to listen to reason at that point. The entire corporation will be out for blood—and chrome.

IF RAND FAILS. Even if Rand fails to kill Her Serenity, he will have irreparably harmed Cybertronic's relationship with Imperial. Some pundits once thought that things between the two megacorps could hardly get worse without breaking into full-out war. They were wrong.

ISC–5 will immediately begin a full-scale covert war against Cybertronic, complete with terrorist attacks and manufacturing evidence that the Cybers are planning to take over Imperial in a sneak attack. If enough popular support builds, the Imperials will make a preemptive strike against the chromed corporation and full-out war will ensue soon after.

IF THE HEROES SUCCEED. The adventurers will be lauded as heroes by all. Despite this, some in Imperial will think it too unlikely that this group managed to foil such a plot and will denounce it as a risky publicity stunt undertaken by Cybertronic in a transparent effort to better relations between the two corporations.

Even if matters don't change too much between the megacorps, the heroes can expect substantial bonuses from Cybertronic for their fine work. Plus, if Cybertronic needs that kind of help again in the future (and they inevitably will), they know who to call.

LISTEN UP!

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