ARGET
AMES

DVENTURE

THE VENUSIAN APOCALYPSE

THE SECOND SEAL OF REPULSION



MUTANT CHRONICLES

THE VENUSIAN APOCALYPSE



PART 1

THE SECOND SEAL OF REPULSION

MUTANT CHRONICLES™

HEARTBREAKER

TARGET GAMES



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Metal figures available from Heartbreaker™.

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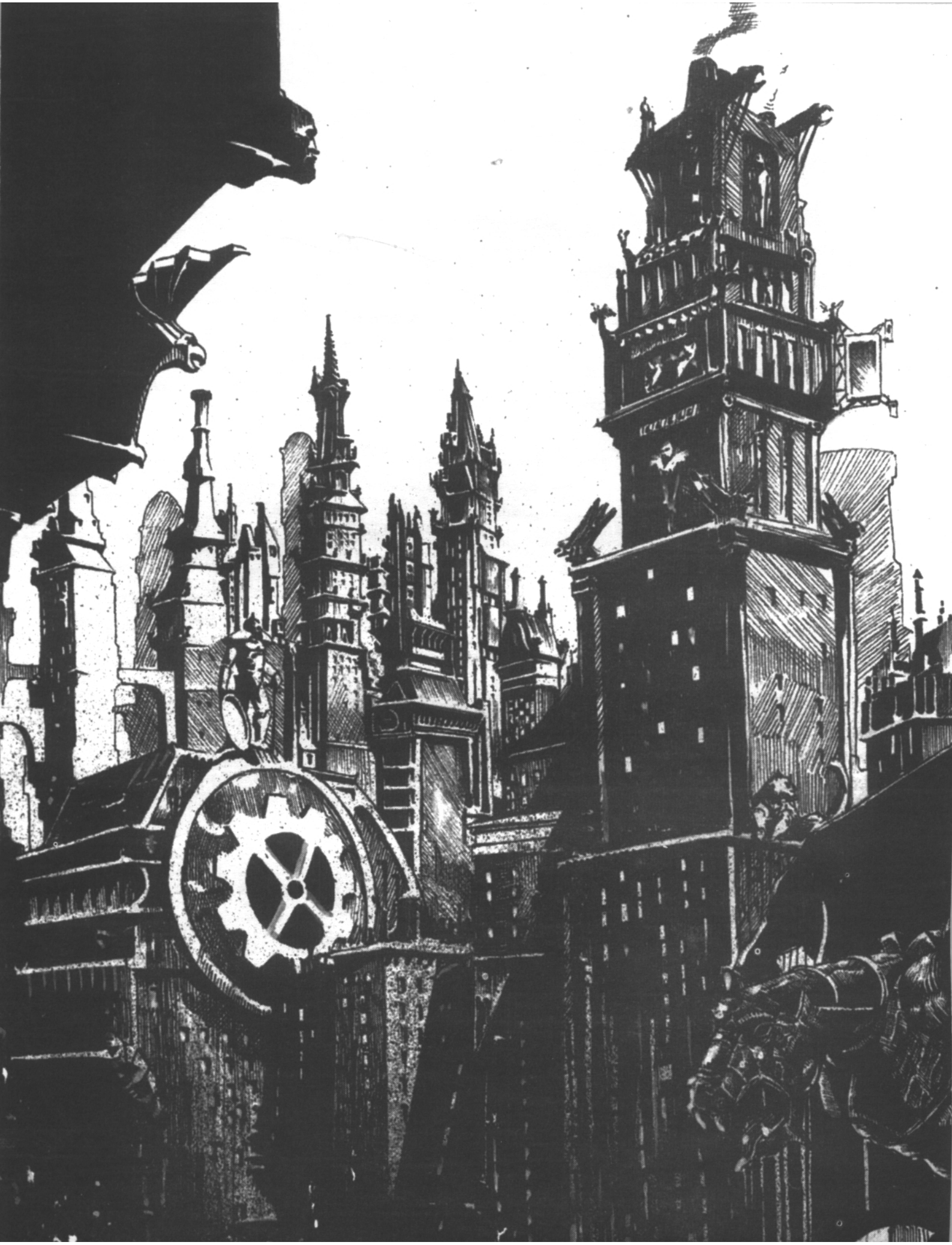
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Venusian Apocalypse! *The Second Seal of Repulsion* is the first in a trilogy of adventures set on Venus and dealing with events that could have catastrophic consequences for all of humanity. In this first installment, the players' characters are confronted with the most terrible of these incidents, the breaking of the Second Seal of Repulsion, that mystical barrier holding the heart and soul of the Great Darkness at bay. Naturally, our heroes have no idea what they are getting into as the saga begins; in fact, they should believe they are performing a routine reconnaissance mission. In the second part of this trilogy, *The Four Riders*, the PCs face the wrath of the Dark Legion as they race against time to prevent a deadly plague from being released upon Heimburg. The third and final part of *Venusian Apocalypse*, *Beyond the Pale*, brings the characters face to face with the most dangerous agent of the Great Darkness in a final, climactic battle which will determine the future of mankind.

REQUIREMENTS

The Second Seal of Repulsion is the first in a trilogy of adventures collectively titled *Venusian Apocalypse*. It is not necessary, however, to own the other two parts to enjoy this scenario: it is a stand-alone story that a Game Master can easily integrate into an existing campaign. The adventure is best suited to a group of five to seven moderately powerful characters, but it may be necessary to alter the number of foes encountered to tailor the odds to a specific group's abilities. There are no hard and fast requirements for character professions, but it will be very helpful if at least one player is a Capitolian or someone who has contacts within that corporation. Also, it is advisable that heretics not be permitted to take part in this adventure, but the decision to do so or not is ultimately the Game Master's. In the end, it will not matter much which characters the players have decided to bring; it will be the players' own greed and fear that may prove their characters' undoing.



CHAPTER 1: JUST ANOTHER RECON MISSION

WARNING: The text of this adventure is solely for the GM's use. If you are a player, you should stop reading immediately and hand this volume over to your highly revered Game Master!

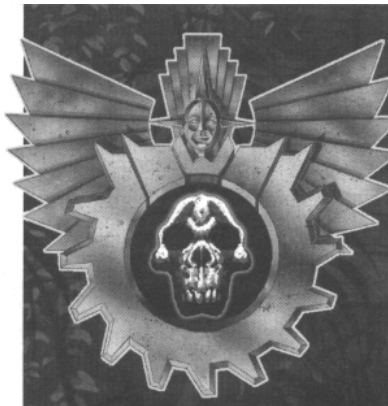
BACKGROUND

The story opens in the great Venusian city of Heimburg, but it is not imperative the players begin there; soon enough a lucrative job offer will draw them to this center of Bauhaus power. Capitol has been expanding operations on Venus for quite some time and has recently become very interested in developing several trackless jungle regions for industrial use. To this end, the corporation has been buying up vast tracts of unwanted wilderness at rock bottom prices. Their most recent acquisition, located in Venus' Ring of Fire, is an ancient jungle estate purchased from a Bauhaus noble family, House Renauld.

HOW TO GET THE CHARACTERS TO HEIMBURG

There are many Renauld family members vehemently opposed to Theresa Renauld's decision to sell the land, particularly members of the more conservative branches of the household. The thought of violating ancient family customs is abhorrent to these traditionalists; consequently, they have worked fervently to derail the sale to Capitol. Theresa, however, has proven too strong-willed to be denied for long. Three months ago she finalized the transaction and has already begun to reinvest the money. In the interim, Capitol has been making preparations for the development of its new procurement, the first step being to scout the parcel which was purchased sight unseen.

Although the Capitol Geographic Corps has countless maps and aerial photographs of the region, no survey team has set foot on the land for hundreds of years. Therefore, Capitol executives have decided it would be prudent to send a team into the jungle to get a first-hand look at the location from ground level. Leading the team will be Capitol Armed Forces Commander Randall Harding. Since Capitol's most recent intelligence shows there is little likelihood of any threat being found in the Renauld jungle, the executives in charge of the project have also decided it would be a pointless waste of resources to deploy a large military unit to perform simple reconnaissance in a low-threat zone. Therefore, the execs have authorized Harding to recruit a group of freelance operatives, including any specialists he deems necessary for the mission's completion. Although Harding resents being assigned the mission and feels it is a waste of his skills, he proceeds to recruit a small team beginning with the players' characters. It is up to the Game Master to determine exactly how the characters fit into the picture; if there are too few players, the Game Master may wish to fill out the team by including some or all of the non-player characters presented in the side bar.



COMMANDER RANDALL HARDING

Harding was born a Capitolian on Luna; his parents both worked for Capitol, his father as a petty bureaucrat and his mother as a pilot in the CAF. At an early age, Harding became disenchanted with the political games that dominated his father's existence as a government official, but the boy was always fascinated by his mother's duties as a Transport Command pilot. His belief that courage and honor are more worthy of praise than double-talk and manipulation quickly became the foundation for his values. Therefore, it came as no surprise to anyone when he enlisted in the Capitol Ground Forces just days after his eighteenth birthday.

Commander Harding has had a somewhat spotted career. He served two tours of duty with Stillwell's Butchers, the first with a line unit and the second with a veteran unit, before being selected for service with the Airborne Rangers. His hitch with the Rangers was limited to two turbulent years, however, because Harding's CO deemed him dangerously headstrong and disagreeable. Subsequently, the tough young man was transferred back to his former company. Harding has a reputation for being a cunning, brave officer, and his war record is impressive. All that



prevents him from advancing further up the ranks is his reluctance to obey orders with which he disagrees; this tendency has created numerous conflicts with his commanding officers. Despite this problem, Commander Harding has proven himself too valuable to be simply dismissed from service. His personality and position make him perfect for missions like the jungle survey because he can operate without deference to another officer.

GETTING READY

The players have a few days in Heimburg to prepare themselves for the mission. They may want to spend some time looking into the history of the land deal in which they are now involved. Most of the information in the introduction is a matter of public record, and a few days digging in the archives of the Heimburg Gazette will turn up little they did not know. Players researching the history of the land itself will find almost nothing; this is somewhat intriguing because there is even less documentation on the Renauld jungle than the areas around it. The property has never been developed or fully explored, and there are no written records of anyone having visited it.

A concerted effort to research the region requires the characters to visit the Renauld estate and make use of the family's archive. Theresa Renauld gives the players permission to look in the archive, but only under the supervision of the family archivist, Luke Renauld. Luke is an old man from the conservative wing of the family. He tightly controls which materials the team may use, and he watches them constantly while they work. If the characters do go to these great lengths to find information, they are rewarded with a grainy photograph taken from an airplane flying at tree-top level over the Renauld property. The photograph shows a small, exposed portion of a stone structure which is otherwise hidden beneath the dense jungle canopy. There is no way to determine the exact location of the ruin from the photo.

The characters are free to bring whatever equipment they wish. Harding supplies them with basic jungle survival gear, including backpacks, rations, water, flashlights, knives, insect repellent, first aid kits, and anti-venom. Each team member also receives a CAR-24 submachine gun and a Sherman Model 13 handgun if he does not already have weapons. The characters might request other pieces of equipment, and if Harding sees the value of providing such items, he will make them available. For example, if an individual skilled in demolitions requests some explosives, the commander gladly provides the materials. However, he will not issue a rocket launcher or machine gun to an inexperienced operator.



THE GLORY OF HEIMBURG

On the first morning of the mission, the team gathers at one of Heimburg's largest airports, Helmbach Field. The huge aviation complex is a confusing maze of terminals, hangars, and dirigible moorings. The constant roar of aircraft fills the air as the group make their way to the appointed meeting place. The Glory of Heimburg is 100 meters long, a tremendous gray tube with the Bauhaus cog painted on each side. It was originally built as part of a fleet of luxury liners, but the company operating the line went under and the Bauhaus military bought the luxury airships at bargain prices. Normally such vehicles are used by high ranking officers for entertaining or important business meetings; occasionally they are even used as mobile command posts. Bauhaus also rents the airships out to other corporations; this explains Harding's means of securing one of the vessels for the mission.

Harding greets the players, directs them to their quarters aboard the ship, and informs them there is to be a briefing in one hour. Each character has his own luxurious stateroom, and stewards are available to see to the team members' needs. However, should it become relevant, a crewman explains that Commander Harding has banned the consumption of alcohol except during meals.

The characters may use the hour prior to the briefing to explore the ship. There is a large dining room that could easily seat one hundred. There are several viewing lounges, a games parlor, two bars, and a gym and sauna. The characters should be quite impressed by the opulence in which they find themselves; this is certainly not what one would expect to find on a military mission.

THE BRIEFING

The airship is not scheduled to lift off until after the first briefing in the forward lounge. At the briefing the players discover why Harding has chosen to travel in such style. He introduces the players to Paul Renauld, son of Theresa Renauld. Paul is acting as a liaison between Capitol and the Renauld family and has decided to come along on the scouting mission to make sure all goes well. Paul is a handsome man in his late twenties. He is very amiable and easy going, and he shows nothing but enthusiasm for the mission. Accompanying Paul is his personal valet, Devon Sinclair. Harding again outlines his plan for the mission while Paul nods in approval. It soon becomes evident Harding does not like the man and is uncomfortable having him along.

As the briefing ends, the airship rises gracefully into the skies over Heimburg and begins its sixteen hour voyage to the drop zone in the Ring of Fire. While the players mill about in the forward observation lounge after the meeting, they enjoy a stunning view of the airfield. Paul happily invites everyone to dinner that evening; then, with some trepidation, he points out a large cargo taking off from a runway directly in front of the Glory of Heimburg. As the jet races toward the dirigible, it seems a collision is imminent. Suddenly, the characters feel the airship lurch violently to one side as the captain fires emergency maneuvering jets, barely avoiding the disastrous impact. Paul is quite shaken by the experience; he quietly excuses himself and retires to his quarters.

If the players care to do so, they can discover the identity of the cargo plane's owners. The jet bore neither logo nor decoration, but it did have a registration number painted on its tail. Any character who attempts to read it and passes an unmodified Perception roll can be given the number: R071964L. A little digging around reveals the plane was not scheduled to lift off when it did and is, in fact, owned by the Renauld Family. The pilot is fined for what he claims was a simple mistake.





TIPS FOR PLAYING HARDING

Harding has access to Capitol's vast intelligence network as well as his own contacts. If the characters have done anything of note, he will probably know about it. He approaches them individually for employment if they are on Venus, or he contacts them through agents if they are off-planet. This will be each character's first encounter with Harding, and it should be a memorable experience. The commander is very important to the Venusian Apocalypse trilogy, and the players' first impressions will likely set the tone for the rest of the adventure.

Commander Harding should come across as gruff and domineering, much like a stereotypical Marine Corps drill sergeant. He is very straight forward with the characters, telling them exactly what to expect from the mission and how much they will be paid. The Game Master should make an offer that is tempting to the players, perhaps something between 20,000 and 30,000 Cardinal's Crowns. Harding explains he has been looking into the characters' backgrounds; therefore, he knows quite a bit about their past exploits, good and bad. He emphasizes the value of establishing a good working relationship with Capitol, even if some of them currently work for other corporations, and he will hint that if this first job goes well, there may be more

A MEAL TO REMEMBER

The characters are left to themselves until dinner at eight. The stewards inform them that Mr. Renauld requests formal dress for the occasion. This will probably be difficult for characters who packed for a jungle expedition, so the stewards provide them with ill-fitting, formal attire. The team members are then escorted to the dining room. Harding is already there in his full-dress uniform, and he scowls at the group as they enter. He quickly reminds the characters they are only eleven hours away from the LZ (landing zone) and that if they get drunk, he will have their heads. He also quietly tells them to avoid offending Paul and that it would best if they just kept their mouths shut entirely.

Paul arrives dressed in the height of Bauhaus fashion, an Adimonte designer tuxedo. He suavely invites the players to be seated and enjoy the meal. As the group becomes settled, the wine steward approaches Paul and holds forth a bottle from the family's own vineyard. Paul examines the label and nods his approval. The steward deftly removes the cork and presents it to Paul, who takes it and puts it close to his nose. Suddenly, his expression changes and his countenance becomes a mask of agony. His eyes roll back into his head, he gasps once, and then he falls heavily to the floor, dead. Not more than a second later, the wine steward also falls gasping for breath to the floor. It should be clear at this point the wine is not good.

In truth, the wine is not wine at all but poison gas. The players must act quickly to save themselves before the powerful toxin spreads throughout the rest of the room. If the players do not react immediately, Harding commands them to leave the area as quickly as possible. All the rooms and corridors on the airship can be sealed off individually, so once everyone has escaped the deadly dining room, Harding orders the room sealed. He then orders the players to find out who is responsible for the crime.

MURDER ON THE GLORY OF HEIMBURG

A dissident faction of House Renauld has murdered Paul in an attempt to disrupt the Capitol mission. It was their hope the poison would kill the entire mission team, but they overestimated the speed at which the poison would spread. They have a back up plan, however. A powerful time bomb has been planted on the airship, and it can easily be set for delayed detonation by any of the agents currently aboard the Glory of Heimburg. If the players do not find the saboteurs soon, things could get very nasty.

The course of the investigation is entirely up to the players. Harding is adamant that the mission must proceed, and he asserts Paul was not a key to the team's chances of success. He wants the characters to make certain the ship is secure and that nothing of this nature happens again. It will be several hours before it is safe to go back into the dining room, so the players must begin their investigation away from the scene of the murder.

There are 22 crew members aboard the Glory of Heimburg, minus the wine steward and anyone else who died in the gas attack. The players will want to question everyone involved in the preparation of dinner, particularly those involved with the evening's selection of wine. Questioning the kitchen staff reveals the wine was not from the ship's supply; it was brought aboard by Paul. The characters are free to examine the case which has eleven bottles remaining. The labels indicate each contains a 20 year old vintage from the Renauld estates, and any character who has the appropriate expertise recognizes this as an excellent wine. Unfortunately, none of these bottles have wine in them: each contains a lethal liquid which becomes gaseous upon contact with oxygen. A close examination of the bottles reveals no obvious signs of tampering, although it seems possible new corks have been placed in the bottles.

The next obvious subject of inquiry is Paul's valet, Devon Sinclair, who was not present at dinner. The players track him down in his quarters, and when they arrive, it becomes immediately apparent that Devon has been drinking heavily, despite his attempts to conceal his condition from the characters. When the players inform him that someone has murdered his employer, he becomes very distraught, almost panic-stricken. He does not ask the players how his master was killed because he already knows. Devon Sinclair is the one who brought the wine on board, and he freely admits this. He claims he took the bottles from the family cellars and that he knows nothing about the means or the motive of the assassination. This is, of course, a lie; he was given the poison by Paul's uncle,

Jean-Louis Renauld. Furthermore, Jean-Louis instructed Sinclair to be out of the room when the bottles were opened. In return for betraying Paul, Devon received a substantial payment and assurance that no harm would come to him.

The valet tries to hide the truth from the players, but if they interrogate him long and hard enough, he will succumb to their pressure and reveal all he knows. In his current drunken state, he is not capable of fabricating believable lies. He also feels a great deal of remorse about the whole experience, and unless the players put a suicide watch on him, Sinclair will kill himself. During the course of the interrogation, Devon reveals his suspicion that Jean-Louis probably had some sort of back up plan in case the wine failed to put an end to the mission.

It is entirely possible the players will not question the valet long enough to make him break down. He claims repeatedly to have no idea who was behind the murders and that he cannot imagine who would want to hurt poor Master Paul. Assuming Devin allays the characters' suspicions and they leave him alone long enough, he resumes drowning his conscience with alcohol and soon swallows several handfuls of sleeping pills. If this is not prevented, he eventually passes out, never to awaken. A search of Sinclair's quarters reveals little of interest except his bank book which indicates a substantial deposit was made to his account just three days prior to the mission.





of its kind made available in the future.

The commander outlines the basics of the operation as follows. The team will muster in Heimburg and make preparations for the operation. They will proceed to the target area aboard the airship Glory of Heimburg, a dirigible owned by Capitol. The airship will be their base of operations for the duration of the mission and will serve as a communications link to headquarters. The team will descend into the jungle and begin exploring the region on foot, looking especially for any squatters who have taken up residence. All such individuals are to be ejected and the area secured. The completion of the mission is expected to take no longer than one week, after which the team will have fulfilled its contract and will be paid.

The GM should do what he can to intrigue characters with the offer. Harding should have something to offer even the most reticent characters: money, adventure, or even new contacts. Players should also be assured by Harding's air of confidence and competence. When playing Harding, speak in short, clipped sentences and use plenty of military terms. Harding is the quintessential military man as far as the players know; only if they dig into his past will they discover he has a reputation for being a maverick.

SEARCHING THE SHIP

The players have already had one opportunity to explore the ship, but now they will undoubtedly wish to search it thoroughly for signs of the murderer and possible saboteurs. Captain Riedl grants them permission to search anywhere on the vessel with the exception of his cabin which he assures them is bereft of clues. In fact, the captain's stateroom is exactly the location the characters should investigate, but even the Riedl is unaware of this. Beneath his bunk is a secret compartment installed by Renauld family engineers. Hidden within is a powerful explosive device, powerful enough to vaporize the Glory of Heimburg and all aboard.

Positioned among the Glory's crew are three of Jean Louis's agents. They know the locations of other hidden compartments around the ship in which they have stowed weapons and flight packs. They plan to sneak into the captain's quarters and set the time bomb, wait until all but the night crew are asleep, exit the ship with their flight packs, and watch the bomb detonate once they are a safely distant. When the assassins see the players conducting a full-scale search of the ship, they become quite nervous and attempt to set the bomb's timer and escape as soon as possible. Their flight packs are concealed within the ship's cargo hold, and their weapons, MP-105 machine pistols, are hidden in their quarters.

One way the characters might discover the identities of the saboteurs is to check the employment records of the ship. Easier still, a character can simply ask Captain Riedl which members of the crew are new. The team should discover there are four recent additions to the crew of the Glory of Heimburg: Charles Byron, Samantha Price, Gerhardt Rhiems, and Josef Bonner. Of these, only Josef, a steward, is innocent of any crime. The other three are agents who work together in the kitchen. All three are convincing liars, and not one seems even remotely nervous when questioned by the characters. If anything, these individuals might come across as almost too calm considering their current predicament.

If the characters search an agent's room very thoroughly, they might find the hidden weapon. A successful test of Perception -3 is required to find the secret compartment. The GM should make these rolls for the players every time their characters search a room, even if there is nothing to find. This will keep the players from realizing when they are getting close to the truth. Samantha, the leader of the group, is responsible for setting the bomb to explode mere minutes after she and her partners escape. Although she is deadly, Samantha is not suicidal and will never set the timer for less than fifteen minutes. She has every intention of completing the mission and living to tell about it.

As soon as they have been questioned by the characters, Byron and Rhiems try to make their way to the cargo hold without attracting any attention, and Samantha proceeds to Captain Riedl's quarters to set the bomb's timer. They may have to wait until the players have finished searching the ship to do this. The cargo hold, an area about ten meters long, five meters wide, and two meters high, is below the aft observation lounge. The hold is nearly empty, except for some communication equipment, extra supplies Harding brought along, and several cases of dry goods for the kitchen. Likewise, any heavy weapons the characters brought along are probably stored here. The flight packs are hidden within a compartment built into the cases of dry goods. If the PCs search the cargo hold, they may attempt Perception rolls to find the flight packs, but only if they state they are specifically looking at the cases.



The flight packs are of Capitol design, but their serial numbers have been removed, making them untraceable. If questioned, the chef or head steward will tell the characters that the boxes of dried goods were loaded immediately prior to take off and that he does not know which distributor is responsible for them. If a character has some knowledge of forensics and takes fingerprints from the flight packs or the boxes, the prints discovered match up with those of the three saboteurs.

CAPTAIN RIEDL'S CABIN

The captain does not want his cabin searched for reasons of his own. He volunteers to search it himself if pressed, but he will not actually do so because he is certain no one else could have entered his stateroom in the first place. Riedl is actually a spy for Imperial who has been eavesdropping on the important Bauhaus military meetings which are sometimes held aboard the ship. His footlocker contains a set of miniature listening devices, a tape recorder, and recordings he has made of conversations between the players and Commander Harding. The conversations were recorded from various locations throughout the vessel, indicating the captain has much, if not all, of the ship under surveillance.

If the characters somehow convince the captain to let them search his room, or if they search it without his permission, they have a chance of discovering the bomb. The players must first state their intent to search for hidden compartments in the room; then one of them must succeed at a Perception test at -3. The device consists of eight sticks of common mining dynamite cunningly attached to a complicated timer. The explosives are enclosed in a large, antique humidor and concealed within a 60x60x20 cm secret compartment. Disarming the bomb requires three consecutive, successful Weapon Systems checks. A fumble indicates the device has exploded! Depending upon the amount of time remaining before detonation, the safest course might be to carefully remove the box and throw it off the airship into the jungle below. However, a particularly devious GM might tell the players there is not enough time remaining to do so; therefore, a PC must attempt to disable or disconnect the timer mechanism! Once the time bomb has been discovered, the Game Master should heighten the tension by constantly reminding the players how little time remains; he might even begin a countdown in a calm, matter-of-fact manner. Ultimately, the GM must make the players believe their characters are about to be blown to kingdom come.

If the PCs find the tapes and confront Captain Riedl with them, he calmly explains the recordings are a matter of state security and none of their concern. Harding becomes furious with the captain, and given the chance, the commander takes the spy equipment and tapes and destroys them. Despite this breach of trust, the commander insists the mission continue as planned.



HUNTING DOWN THE KILLERS

The characters probably find at least one clue leading to the three saboteurs. If they are clever, they may be able to catch the villains unaware, but this is unlikely. Since the gas attack was a failure, the agents are on their guard. As soon as they are all off duty, they arm themselves and try to make their way off the ship. There are only three exits from the dirigible: the main entrance in the middle of the port side, the cargo doors to the rear of the ship, and the emergency exits from the bridge and all the observation lounges. The cargo hold and main entrance are sealed with electronic locks which can only be operated from the bridge. Anyone can open an emergency exit, but an alarm will immediately sound throughout the vessel. The emergency exits are also quite small, so the saboteurs will have a hard time fitting their flight packs through them. Additionally, all windows on the ship are made of thick, bullet-proof glass which is essentially invulnerable to small arms fire.

The saboteurs first attempt to exit through the cargo hold since this is where their flight packs are stored. However, they do not realize they cannot open the doors from the hold, and when they attempt to do so, a warning klaxon sounds on the bridge. This provides the characters an opportunity to react to the bad guys before they can make their escape. The almost inevitable result of all this running around is a violent confrontation between the PCs and the agents, followed by a frantic attempt to prevent the destruction of The Glory of Heimburg and all aboard. With a little luck the team will capture at least one of the saboteurs and interrogate him.

HARDING



Height: 6'2"
Weight: 210 lbs.
Eyes: Blue
Hair: Black
Age: 32
Citizenry: Capitol
STR: 15
PHY: 18
COR: 16
INT: 13
MST: 14
PER: 15
MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 3
DB: +4
PB: + 4
Body Points: 32
Head: 3
Arm: 6
Stomach: 6
Leg: 7
Chest: 7
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 16, Firearms 17, Communication 10, Movement 16, Technical 12, Avoid 16, Perception 14
ATTACKS: As per weapon

DEVON SINCLAIR

Devon is a handsome, well-dressed man who comes across as the ideal of wit and charm. He thinks very little of Harding and his team and would much prefer to be somewhere else. He puts up a convincing facade of assured competence, but deep down he is really a nervous weakling. Partaking in the assassination plot is one of the most daring things he has ever done, and it both excites him and worries him terribly. He will be calm and collected up until the moment he breaks; then he will collapse totally.

STR:	8	Height: 5'8"	DB: +4	
INT:	14	Weight: 160 lbs.	PB: +4	
COR:	9	Hair: Brown	AVOID/PARRY: 6	
PHY:	8	Eyes: Blue	BODY POINTS: 20	
MST:	12	MOVEMENT: 3/175	HEAD: 3	LEG: 6
PER:	16	OB: 0	ARM: 5	CHEST: 6
Age:	29	ACT/CR: 3	STOMACH: 5	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 8, Firearms 10 Communication 16, Movement 10, Technical 12

CHARLES BYRON

Charles is a former Imperial Intelligence agent who retired from his duties several years ago. The fact that he retired without informing his superiors and took with him substantial quantities of Corporate funds and equipment has placed him near the top of many Imperial most wanted lists. He hooked up with Samantha Price a little over a year ago and has been working as a hired killer ever since. He is an innocuous, personable fellow, the kind of man you would never in a million years suspect of murder. Byron cultivates this image carefully; therefore, his demeanor is always polite and subdued.

STR:	15	Height: 5'11"	DB: +4	
INT:	14	Weight: 200 lbs.	PB: +4	
COR:	16	Hair: Black	AVOID/PARRY: 14	
PHY:	19	Eyes: Brown	BODY POINTS: 33	
MST:	14	MOVEMENT: 4/275	HEAD: 3	
PER:	10	OB: +1	ARM: 6	LEG: 7
Age:	36	ACT/CR: 3	STOMACH: 6	CHEST: 7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 17, Firearms 16, Communication 12, Movement 14, Technical 14
ATTACKS: Byron will probably be armed with an MP-105.

Once captured, the agents are in a tremendous hurry to make a deal. In return for their freedom, they gladly inform on those who hired them, reveal the location of the time bomb, and help the characters prevent it from detonating. At this point the PCs may do whatever they wish with their captives, but the saboteurs do not have much more to recount. They were hired by Jean-Louis Renauld to make sure the mission did not succeed. They believe, based upon their interaction with him, that Jean-Louis is a little less than sane. He assured them this was "the most important mission" they would ever undertake and that "the future of humanity" rested on their shoulders.

Should the characters inadvertently kill all the agents before interrogating any of them, there is still an opportunity to discover the bomb. One of the slain saboteurs is carrying a crumpled piece of paper in a jacket pocket; it is a telegram which was sent two days earlier by someone named Johann Schmidt. The message reads as follows:

"The package has been hidden right under his nose. Stop. Proceed with Plan A, but do not hesitate to use the device to eliminate loose ends. Stop. Payment will be delivered as per our agreement when the mission has been scrubbed. Stop. Bon Voyage. End."

If the characters try to contact Jean-Louis from the airship, they are unable to reach him. They may wish to report him to the authorities, but if they do not, the captain does it for them. He is still quite upset about nearly being blown up. In any event, the team is fast approaching its destination deep within the Venusian jungle.

GERHARDT PRICE

Gerhardt is a self-made man who has worked as a freelancer since he was 18. Over the years he has been involved in countless illegal activities, from forgery and extortion to murder and terrorism. He is a cold, calculating man whose main interests are money and fine wines. It was his idea to carry out the murder using the Renauld family's finest vintage. Besides, he has never been a big fan of sweet white wines.

STR:	16	Height: 6'1"	DB: +4	
INT:	14	Weight: 177 lbs.	PB: +4	
COR:	19	Hair: Blond	AVOID/PARRY: 15	
PHY:	13	Eyes: Brown	BODY POINTS: 27	
MST:	14	MOVEMENT: 3/225	HEAD: 3	LEG: 7
PER:	10	OB: +1	ARM: 6	CHEST: 7
Age:	28	ACT/CR: 3	STOMACH: 6	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 13, Firearms 18, Communication 12, Movement 17, Technical 14
ATTACKS: Gerhardt will probably be armed with an MP-105.

SAMANTHA PRICE

Samantha is the brains behind the saboteurs. Her father was a mercenary captain, and she grew up surrounded by soldiers and killing. She learned at an early age that she had a natural knack for tactics and strategy but also knew she did not want to live under the restrictive regimen of army life. She started her own business, doing dirty deeds that other people either would not or could not do. She is a quiet but eloquent woman and a decent actress. She is comfortable taking on different personas to do her job: if she is posing as a kitchen hand, she becomes the consummate kitchen hand, flawless in her performance. She has no compunctions about killing anyone who gets in her way, even her friends and associates.

STR: 14	INT: 18	Hair: Red		AVOID/PARRY: 15		
COR: 16	PHY: 15	Eyes: Green		BODY POINTS: 34		
MST: 19	PER: 17	MOVEMENT: 3/225		HEAD: 3	LEG: 7	
Age: 32	Height: 5'9"	OB: +1	ACT/CR: 4	ARM: 6	CHEST: 7	
Weight: 155 lbs.		DB: +4	PB: +5	STOMACH: 6		

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 16, Firearms 17, Communication 15, Movement 16, Technical 15, Perception 15. ATTACKS: Samantha will probably be armed with an MP-105.



Sample NPC's to fill out the Team



LOUIS ALFIERI

Freelance Mercenary

Louis was a grunt in the Capitol armed forces until he was discharged for drunk and disorderly conduct. He is an easy going, likable guy who doesn't take life too seriously. He is a typical man of action, favoring large caliber, high rate-of-fire weaponry. Louis is also a big fan of explosives and relishes nothing more in battle than the sound of an exploding grenade . His penchant for carnage is exceeded only by his love of beer. A heavy drinker, Louis often loses all sense of civility while on a drinking binge; nevertheless, he is a good man to have with you in a fight, be it on a battlefield or in a bar.

Age: 24
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 240 lbs.
Hair: Black
Eyes: Brown

STR: 18	INT: 12
COR: 15	PHY: 14
MST: 12	PER: 8

MOVEMENT: 3/225

OB: +1	ACT/CR: 3
DB: +4	PB: +4

AVOID/PARRY: 10
BODY POINTS: 26

HEAD: 3	ARM: 6
STOMACH: 6	LEG: 7

CHEST: 7
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 15 Firearms 16, Communications 9, Movement 13, Technical 12

CHAPTER 2: HEART OF THE BEAST

Sample NPC's to fill out the Team

ROBERT DEVORE

Adventurous Explorer



Robert trained in the finest Capitol universities and had a brilliant future in one of the corporation's most prestigious research and development labs. He surprised both friends and family, however, by putting aside his promising career in favor of joining a poorly funded expedition into the wilds of Mars. He has been trying to satisfy his thirst for adventure and new sights ever since. He has quite a reputation as a freelance explorer, willing to go anywhere at any time. He is a nice enough guy, but he tends to be very serious, especially when he is on the job.

Age: 35
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 170 lbs.
Hair: Blond
Eyes: Green

STR: 13	INT: 16
COR: 16	PHY: 13
MST: 18	PER: 16

MOVEMENT: 3/225

OB: +1	ACT/CR: 3
DB: +4	PB: +4

AVOID/PARRY: 6
BODY POINTS: 31

HEAD: 3	ARM: 6
STOMACH: 6	LEG: 7

CHEST: 7
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 10, Firearms 13, Communication 15, Movement 14, Technical 16

The players finally arrive at the mission site, hopefully with the Glory of Heimburg still in one piece. It is early morning on a hot, bright day in the jungles of the Ring of Fire. Harding gathers the team together for one final briefing before they plunge beneath the jungle canopy. Their mission is to search the area for any signs of habitation by squatters from rival corporations. Since this is officially Capitol territory, the team is authorized to use deadly force if necessary, but Harding would prefer to capture any trespassers if possible. The group could quite possibly be in the jungle for as long as a week or two, and during this time they will place a number of surveillance cameras at strategic locations. These will allow Capitol to maintain a watch on the territory long after the team has finished its mission.

The cameras are the latest design from Cybertronic and are quite small - 10x10x3 cm boxes with lenses at one end - and weigh only a few hundred grams. Their battery life is one year, and they are activated by motion sensors within the optics. Each member of the team carries 20 of the cameras along with a special epoxy used to affix them to the trees. Harding constantly carries a monitor used to view what any of the cameras are recording.

Because of the dense foliage, the survey party must travel on foot the entire journey, and Harding says he plans to cover about ten kilometers a day. The team will sleep on the ground because returning to the airship is a long, involved process. To rejoin the Glory of Heimburg in one week's time, a character will have to scale one of the higher trees and radio the airship; then the team will ascend by rope ladders. Harding does not intend to try this every evening and informs the players a few nights in the open jungle will be good for them.

The commander describes the various forms of Venusian jungle life the characters can expect to encounter and reviews the signs which indicate the presence of giant pitcher plants, trapper vine trees, and deadly black lotus flowers. He tells them the jungle can be a dangerous place, and the players should feel free to shoot anything they feel is even remotely threatening. Information about Venusian flora and fauna is

ANACONDA

STR: 25	DB: +4
INT: 8	PB: +3
COR: 15	AVOID/PARRY: 5
PHY: 25	BODY POINTS: 33
MST: 8	(Locations: 1-2=Head; 3-20=Body)
MOVEMENT: 4/275	HEAD: 5
OB: +3	BODY: 25
ACT/CR: 3	

ATTACKS: If the anaconda makes a successful close combat attack, on each succeeding round the victim takes a D6 constriction damage to the location originally struck. This damage continues every round for as long as the snake remains alive and wrapped around its prey. A character may break loose if he spends an entire round struggling to free himself and succeeds on a resistance roll of his STR vs. DL 25.

found in the Bauhaus sourcebook, and additional information is provided below.

When the time comes to begin the mission, Captain Riedl uses the Glory of Heimburg's maneuvering jets to anchor the craft in place just a few meters above the treetops. The cargo door is opened and the survey team is hit by a wave of heat and rank moisture, a strong contrast to the air-conditioned comfort of the dirigible. Rappelling lines are anchored to the ship's hull, and Harding is the first to grab a line and begin his descent while urging the players to follow him down.

The treetops stand approximately 25 meters above the jungle floor, and lowering oneself into the dense growth is a tricky business made especially difficult by the morass of intertwining branches and vines. The characters immediately begin to perspire profusely as a result of exertion, heat, and stifling humidity. Scores of insects attracted by salty sweat swarm about the team. A successful Coordination roll is required for each character to reach the bottom without entangling his rappelling line in the branches. If a character fails, he will have to cut his rope and climb trees the rest of the way down, requiring two further Coordination rolls. Failure to succeed at either of these later checks means the character has fallen: ten meters on the first failed roll or five meters on the second. A fumble of either roll indicates a fall from twenty-five meters!





THE RENAULD FAMILY

The Renaulds may not be the most powerful family on Venus, but they are certainly one of the most respected. Much of this respect stems from their impressive lineage which dates back to the foundation of the Bauhaus corporation. The Renaulds were among the first settlers on Venus and fought hard to make the world capable of supporting human life. Renauld family piety is also legendary, and they have long been tremendous supporters of the Brotherhood. In fact, a Renauld donation made it possible for construction to begin on the Second Cathedral. The family has never aspired to great power; they maintain themselves,

IN THE JUNGLE

Traveling through the jungle is an exhausting process. Harding leads the way and sets a fast pace, pausing only occasionally to set up one of the cameras. The heat and humidity are almost overwhelming, especially for those characters who might be overdressed. Anyone wearing heavy armor, even piecemeal, will find its weight oppressive. Therefore, the GM should have the characters test against PHY for heatstroke every 24 hours unless they are wearing climate-controlled jungle armor.

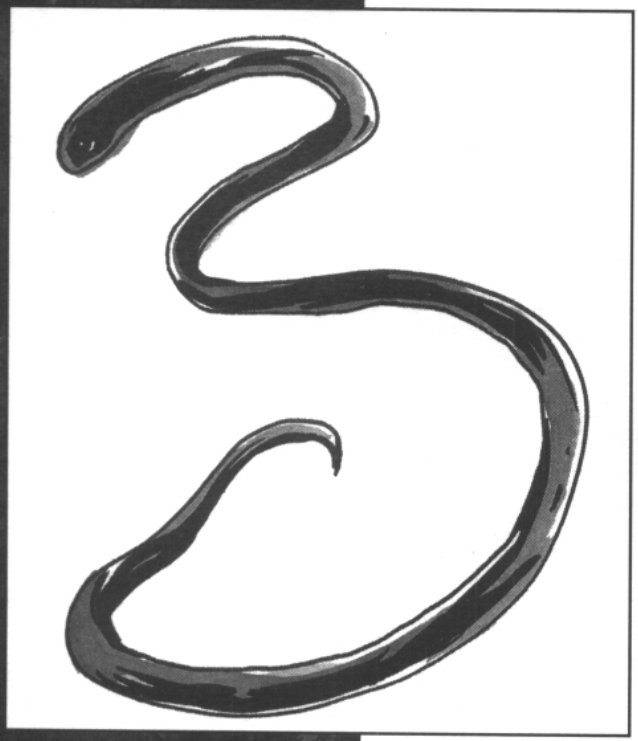
Before the check can be made, several factors must be taken into account: armor encumbrance, activity level, and survival ability. Have each player add his character's armor points in every location and divide the total by two(round up); this is the basic DL of the test. If the character has been doing a lot of running, heavy physical labor, or fighting for extended periods (two hours or more), double the basic DL. Because training helps one to avoid heatstroke, the player may add his character's Jungle Survival SV to his PHY when making the roll.

The disease has three levels. The first time the roll is failed, the character becomes dizzy and nauseous; all his skill and ability checks take a -4 penalty until he has had six hours of rest and plenty of fluids. If the PC in question ignores the warning symptoms and continues his activity, he must make another resistance roll after two more hours; if he fails this test, he becomes nearly comatose, hallucinates, and is completely incapable of taking any action. Even if he receives medical treatment, he has pushed himself too hard and must attempt another resistance roll three hours later. A character who fails this final test has died of heatstroke.

Stress to all the players just how uncomfortable they are. The insect repellent they are wearing seems to have little effect, their clothes are drenched in sweat, and their equipment feels twice as heavy as it should. There are no trails or paths through this part of the jungle, just trees, plants, and mud. Harding constantly refers to his compass to be certain the team remains on course. Even at the commander's backbreaking pace, the team moves forward slowly, and it is doubtful they will reach the daily, ten kilometer goal he has set for them.

There are many dangers inherent to this wilderness, and it is likely the players will encounter one or more of them during their trek. Many remarkable differences separate the Renauld property from other locations in the Ring of Fire; however, these are only apparent to someone who has studied Venusian zoology. Do not use the standard random encounter table for Venusian jungle as presented in the Bauhaus sourcebook. The animal population here is somewhat different: there are no Devilcats or Looter Monkeys in this territory - odd considering this is prime territory for them. Likewise, there are very few black lotus plants, and the few the players encounter are very young and not yet dangerous. If one of the players with an appropriate expertise examines an area where black loti are growing, he immediately arrives at the conclusion that someone or something has been removing the plants from their roots before they could mature.

The characters should not initially encounter any threatening plants or animals. Lull them into complacency before hitting



DEVILFISH

STR: 9
INT: 4
COR: 14
PHY: 7
MST: 4
MOVEMENT: 3/225

OB: none
ACT/CR: 3
DB: + 3
AVOID/PARRY: 4
BODY POINTS: Small Animal: 6
ATTACKS: Bite 1d4

SPECIAL ABILITIES: If a character makes incidental contact with a devilfish, or if the eel succeeds in a close combat attack, the player must make a D20 resistance roll of his character's Physique vs. DL 10. Failure indicates the victim has been knocked unconscious for a D10 rounds.

them with the bad stuff, and make them wonder why nothing has gone wrong. Just prior to setting up camp at the end of the first day, the team comes upon a strange sight: a giant pitcher plant has been uprooted and cut into pieces. A huge, gaping pit is nearly all that is left of the fearsome carnivore. Examination of the destroyed plant reveals it has been both torn to pieces, perhaps by claws, and hacked to bits by some sort of tool or weapon. The surveyors do not discover any live pitcher plants during the journey, but they do find a few other pits which once served as lairs for the deadly growths.

There are many more insects in this region than one would normally anticipate, even for deep jungle. Flies and mosquitoes are a constant bother, but more worrisome are the jungle bees drawn to the characters' sweat. These bees do not sting unless someone makes a sudden or aggravating move. Left alone they simply crawl around on the character's skin for a while and then fly away. If anyone attempts to swat a bee, he must make a Coordination roll. If the ability check is successful, the bee is dead, but if the roll is failed, the bee stings the player. This is no ordinary honey bee sting: the jungle bee carries a potent venom which temporarily blinds the victim in addition to causing excruciating pain. The first aid kits carried by the PCs each contain ten doses of a drug which cures the blindness, but it requires several minutes for the antidote to take effect. Without the anti-venom, a victim regains his sight in a few hours. In either case the character will continue to suffer from a splitting headache for the next few hours and receives a -1 penalty to all skill and ability checks during this time.

The jungle floor is dotted with ponds and pools and crisscrossed by rivers and streams; the team often finds itself faced with the difficulty of circumnavigating the former or fording the latter. These are the dwelling places of the huge Venusian anacondas, powerful constrictor snakes which dwell with equal facility in or out of the water. Although not as large as the dreaded Venusian python, these creatures can still grow to 20 feet or more in length, and they will gladly attack any human who strays too near. These creatures are surprisingly intelligent and lay in ambush for prey; they have even been known to fall from trees and wrap themselves around the necks of unsuspecting passersby.

Another danger found in the jungle waters of Venus is the devilfish. Not really fish at all, they are actually a species of electric eel. They grow up to ten feet in length and dwell on the bottom of standing bodies of water. If a player steps on one of these creatures, it immediately lashes out, delivering a potent electrical charge. Characters wading through water while failing to check for devilfish are likely to step on one. Roll a d20; if the number is 12 or less, the player has stepped on one of these nasty fellows and is immediately attacked.

Night brings forth new creatures to threaten the characters, and chief among these are the devilbats, huge winged beasts that descend upon their prey from the concealment of darkened skies. Devilbats hunt in packs for animals, large and small, to consume. They are quite agile and can easily maneuver through the thickly wooded terrain. Fortunately for humans, devilbats are easily frightened by bright lights and fire and can be driven off by anyone using these tools. However, the lone figure moving through the jungle at night must move carefully to avoid these dangerous predators.



instead, in a manner befitting a truly noble family - by producing fine wines and agricultural products.

Today the Renaulds have fallen on hard times; their fortunes have been declining for nearly fifty years. The new head of the family, Theresa Renauld, is trying desperately to recoup the lost family fortune. She has developed some very promising investment opportunities but has lacked sufficient funds to pursue them. As a last chance to revitalize her household, she decided to violate an ancient family tradition and sell an undeveloped portion of the Renauld ancestral lands. This includes the area of jungle just purchased by Capitol, land that has been in the family since it first settled on Venus.



DEVILBATS

STR: 40
INT: 4
COR: 11
PHY: 40
MST: 8
PER: -
MOVEMENT: 2/150 on ground, 10/800 airborne
OB: +5

ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 4
BODY POINTS:
HEAD: 7
WING: 11
BODY: 12
STOMACH: 11
LEG: 5
Attacks: Bite 1D10 + OB



THE HISTORY OF THE GUARDIANS

Many centuries ago the Homebuilders came to Venus and began carving an empire from the fearsome planet. Among the first explorers was House Renauld, a brave and adventuresome lot with great foresight. They saw tremendous potential in the raw materials available in the Venusian jungle, and with a whole planet to choose from, they settled deep in the Ring of Fire, Venus' equatorial belt of steaming jungles and savage volcanoes. Renauld family pioneers charted far and wide and laid claim to many promising sites. It was one of these groups of bold explorers who discovered the temple of the Second Seal of Repulsion.

The structure was incredibly old even back when the Renaulds first discovered it. They penetrated the dark depths of the temple and found therein an obsidian sarcophagus covered with enigmatic runes. Upon opening the sarcophagus, they discovered the Second Seal. Unfortunately, the brave Homebuilders had no idea of the significance of their find, for at this time the First Seal had neither been discovered nor broken. Fortunately, Martin Renauld, a sensitive youth who would one day become one of his house's most successful leaders, was numbered among the explorers. He sensed the malevolent presence that lay beneath the seal and stopped his companions from breaking it. Martin then gave clear orders that

THE FIRST NIGHT

The teams' first night on the ground, as stated earlier, should be relatively uneventful; yet it demonstrates good judgment on their part if they set a watch and light a fire. Although insects become an even greater nuisance as large moths and other bugs are drawn to the flames, the fire keeps away larger predators and provides a small measure of comfort to the characters. The jungle is alive with noise even at night, and it may be difficult for city-dwellers to sleep. Describe in detail how alien the setting seems to most of the characters and how uncomfortable it is. Of course, Harding scoffs at any who dare to complain in his presence, and he quickly reminds them they are being paid damn good money and that the situation could be far worse.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE TEMPLE

The next morning Harding gets the team going bright and early. A thick mist has descended upon the land, and visibility is reduced to scant meters. This slows the pace considerably as the commander carefully navigates the group through the jungle. It is possible the characters encounter a few dangerous plants and animals on the second morning of their trek; the GM should decide in advance whether or not he will spring something on them to shake up the players a bit. The Game Master must not be too harsh, though, because much worse awaits the team just around the corner.

As the party trudges on, the characters gradually become aware of a new animal call coming from far off in the jungle. It sounds similar to the howling of a wolf, but more shrill. The characters can discern one howl being answered by another, and as the day progresses, the calls draw nearer and occur more frequently. It is impossible, however, to pinpoint the exact location of their origin. Although the cries all share similar qualities, they vary significantly in melody, pitch, rhythm, and duration. It should soon dawn on the players that their characters are hearing some form of communication. By mid-afternoon the howling occurs as often as every five minutes or so, and Harding is obviously becoming agitated. The commander unslings his carbine and orders everyone to be ready for trouble. There is still no sign of the animals making all the noise, and if the group actively searches for them, they have no success. The cries fade away as the team approaches, and their source remains frustratingly undisclosed. Nevertheless, the howling continues with ever increasing volume; soon it becomes a constant, eerie wail with different voices joining in at different times all around them. At this point Harding is willing to listen to any suggestions the characters might have, but they quickly discover weapons' fire only serves to heighten the volume and intensity of the creatures' cries. This situation is beyond even Commander Harding's wealth of experience, and although his first inclination is to ignore whatever is making all the racket, he knows the Venusian jungle is far too dangerous to be taken lightly. He wants to press on, but if the characters

THE GUARDIANS

STR: 20
INT: 14
COR: 21
PHY: 20
MST: 14
PER: -
MOVEMENT: 4/275
OB: +2
ACT/CR: 4
DB: +5
PB: +4

AVOID/PARRY: 15
BODY POINTS: 34
HEAD: 3
ARM: 6
STOMACH: 6
LEG: 7
CHEST: 7
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 16, Movement 20 (no vehicles) Perception 17

ATTACKS: Thrown Spear 1D4; Thrown Stone 1D2; Spear/Claws: 1D4 + OB

want to stand their ground and see what happens, he will go along with their plan. Harding checks his monitor to determine if any of the cameras previously placed have picked up clues about the creatures causing the disturbance. To his profound annoyance, all but a few of the cameras appear to have been destroyed, and even those have not recorded whoever or whatever disabled them.

Soon the howling seems to reach a crescendo, and the team members must shout to be heard. There is movement in the forest above their heads as branches shake and vines sway. It almost looks as though the foliage around them has animated. Firing at the movement causes the caterwauling beasts to cry out even louder, and there is a slight chance the characters might score some hits in this manner. Rolls to hit are made at -9.

Suddenly, the mysterious creatures are visible, perched in the treetops on every side, but it is hard for the characters to immediately determine just what they are seeing. At first glance the beasts appear to be human, but further inspection reveals otherwise. Each stands about two meters tall if erect, but most are crouching on branches or hanging from vines. A short, thick pelt of matted fur, similar to the coat of a big cat, covers their entire bodies. The patterns of the fur vary widely from animal to animal, but they are all predominantly green and brown in color, apparently a natural camouflage. Their forearms end in five-fingered, fully articulated hands with opposable thumbs. These hands are larger than a man's and give the impression of being considerably stronger; in addition, each digit ends in a sharp claw. The creatures' heads resemble mens' but each is framed by a thick mane of green and brown mottled hair, and their facial features, despite human similarities, have a rather feline quality. When the beasts open their mouths to howl, two rows of sharp, catlike teeth become visible. Many of these catmen brandish primitive spears and javelins while others carry clubs or flint axes. A few are unarmed, and these are generally the larger, more dangerous looking individuals.



ATTACK OF THE GUARDIANS

Completely surrounding the team, the guardian beasts let out a tremendous unified cry, violently shake branches, brandish their weapons, and bare their teeth. There are at least 20 of the beastmen, perhaps more; all of them scream for blood. This is their challenge, and the players have a moment to react before they are attacked. Harding readies his weapon and waits for one of the primitives to make a move. Firing in the air only further enrages the creatures, spurring them more quickly to attack.

When the guardians do attack, they begin with a volley of thrown javelins, spears and stones which pelt the team from all sides. The weapons are not particularly effective, but the sheer volume of missiles delivered may well wound some of the characters. The characters are likely to respond with automatic weapons fire or even explosives, actions bound to take their toll on the guardians' numbers. However, after only one or two rounds of actual combat, the beasts disappear back into woods. As suddenly as the encounter began, the jungle is completely silent except for the buzzing of insects and the crackling of small fires ignited by any explosions the players detonated.

The guardians have made their formal challenge and have given up trying to fight the humans fairly. They now proceed to wage a guerrilla war against the team. As the players proceed through the jungle, the beastmen follow along in the trees above and constantly harass the team with thrown spears and rocks. The characters must be on constant guard if

the existence of the temple and its sarcophagus be kept from the outside world and that no one outside House Renauld should ever know of the site. The Homebuilders then departed, and Martin returned home. For a week he could not sleep because horrible nightmares came to him every time he closed his eyes. He knew he had to do something about the structure; he had to secure it in some way. He also knew he could never place guards over it because they would only draw unwanted attention. Likewise, he could not allow some other house to buy the land for fear they might break the seal.



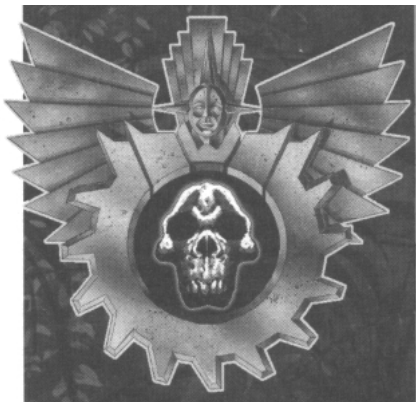
they wish to get a shot off at the elusive attackers. Before each attack, the players are allowed to make Perception rolls for their characters at -2. Those who succeed can roll initiative against their foes, and characters with higher initiative totals than the creatures' may engage in one round of fire combat before the primitives dart back into concealment.

Before long the howling begins again, coming from all directions. Guardians who are about to attack never howl, while those holding back howl even louder; this distracts their foes from locating the source of the next assault These attacks are almost constant, with no more than five minutes passing between each. Sometimes an attack consists of a lone Guardian hurling a stone at a team member's face, but other times large groups attack simultaneously and overwhelm the party from all directions.

The survey team will probably want to pursue the attackers, but this is easier said than done. Harding urges them on because he has become incensed by the bold aggression of the "savages" and is determined to track and kill every last one of them. Unless the players are amazingly adept at moving through the treetops, it is impossible to follow the guardians' trail; even rare and expensive thermal imaging devices are of limited value because the creatures have unusually low body temperatures. However, the team can at least move in the same general direction as the enemy. After only a few attacks, it becomes clear the assailants are retreating to the northeast.

The guardians want the humans to follow them into a trap. The catmen seem to be following a small stream, and pursuing the primitives gradually leads the party into a narrow valley. The water is less than a foot deep and is easy to wade through, much easier than cutting through the treacherous undergrowth. Eventually the team find themselves facing a 40 meter high waterfall which empties into a small pool, the source of the stream they have been following. The pool is about twenty meters in diameter and three meters deep at its center. There is a small clearing surrounding the water and extending about five meters from the shore. Unfortunately, this idyllic spot is home to numerous devilfish as well as an anaconda or two. The cliff face is covered with vines and ledges, and the team members are certain they can climb it without too much trouble. At the top of the waterfall, hidden from view, crouch several guardians with heavy rocks poised to throw down upon the humans. As the characters survey their surroundings, another group of guardians moves up behind them to launch an ambush. When the players finally step into the clearing, the beastmen launch an all-out attack: the guardians at the top of the cliff hurl their stones, and their comrades in the jungle rush forward a moment later to engage in hand to hand combat. This time, however, the primitives do not flee into the jungle - they fight to the death!

The number of opponents must be scaled to the capabilities of the characters; they should be able to overcome their foes if they do not make any foolish mistakes. This should be a fairly even match - the characters having the advantage in weaponry and the guardians having the advantage of superior numbers. Once the surveyors have defeated the beastmen by the pool, they will be free to pursue those high above. When the hidden guardians realize their comrades below have been killed, they cease throwing stones and make a run for it. Harding immediately orders the team to follow the fleeing savages. The characters must climb the cliff to do so, and this requires three successful Coordination rolls. Only a fumble indicates a character has fallen; in this case roll 2D20 to determine the number of meters.



Finally, the obsessed nobleman devised a plan.

Martin convinced his family to lay claim to all the territory surrounding the temple. He then gathered a handful of his family's most trusted soldiers, scientists, and builders and took them into the jungle to create the guardians. Martin constructed the four buildings around the temple as laboratories and embarked on a series of genetic experiments, crossing the genes of his best soldiers with those of the most fearsome jungle





predators. After years of breeding and experimentation, the guardians were born. Fearsome warriors, cunning hunters, and loyal slaves, they were bred to defend the temple from any who drew too near.

Martin felt certain his guardians would be enough to discourage anyone attempting to explore the region. He clearly recognized the dangers involved if others learned of the temple's existence, so he took one final step to ensure his secret would never be revealed - he called for the execution of every scientist, soldier, and explorer who had ever seen the location. Perhaps the years spent in the jungle had affected him in some way, making him cold and unfeeling. Certainly, the sensitive, caring man who had first discovered the seal would never have been capable of issuing such an order. Martin had become a different man, one who was cold, ruthless, and logical.

Martin Renauld soon took over the mantle of leadership in his family, and he held the temple territory in his own name, totally apart from the family's holdings. He concentrated House Renauld's resources on developing other regions of Venus, especially the more northerly climes so well-suited to the production of fine, sweet wines. When he died, Renauld willed the temple lands to his family with the condition that they never be developed under any circumstances.

HOME OF THE GUARDIANS

Atop the cliff the group finds another stream winding off into the jungle. A successful Tracking or Perception roll reveals clues - foot prints in the mud and recently overturned rocks in the stream bed - indicating the guardians have fled up this waterway. The howling has ceased except for the occasional lone cry the characters hear from somewhere up ahead. The overhanging branches above the shallow stream form an inviting tunnel through the jungle, a deceptively easy path for the team to follow.

For roughly two kilometers' march up the watercourse, the surveyors suffer no attacks from the guardians, and after a short time, there are no longer any cries to be heard. In fact, the whole jungle becomes disturbingly still. As they push on, the characters notice the trees here are even larger than those they have seen previously. The roof of the forest is now well over one hundred meters above them, and little direct light penetrates the canopy. Diffused light casts the party in unsettling green and makes visual perception beyond a few meters rather difficult.

Before long the characters come upon the home of the guardians. Here the trees are tremendous, easily the size of redwoods. There is little or no growth on the ground; it all appears to have been systematically cleared away. Beneath the trees squats a huge, stone temple complex consisting of five separate buildings. The temple buildings might easily be thousands of years old, yet they have been maintained in excellent condition. The central structure is a stepped pyramid with a cone of obsidian rising from its peak. The whole thing stands roughly fifty meters tall and has a front entrance blocked by a set of three meter high double doors. The doors are made from a metal alloy, perhaps carbon steel, and are decorated with intricate, raised images and hieroglyphs.

Flanking the central pyramid are four smaller buildings, two on either side. These are much simpler structures: rectangular stone buildings, roughly 40x20x3 meters, which look as though they were carved from single, gigantic pieces of stone. Each has an unblocked doorway cut into the center of each wall, and, like the temple doors, these buildings are covered with a variety of sketches, paintings, and hieroglyphs.

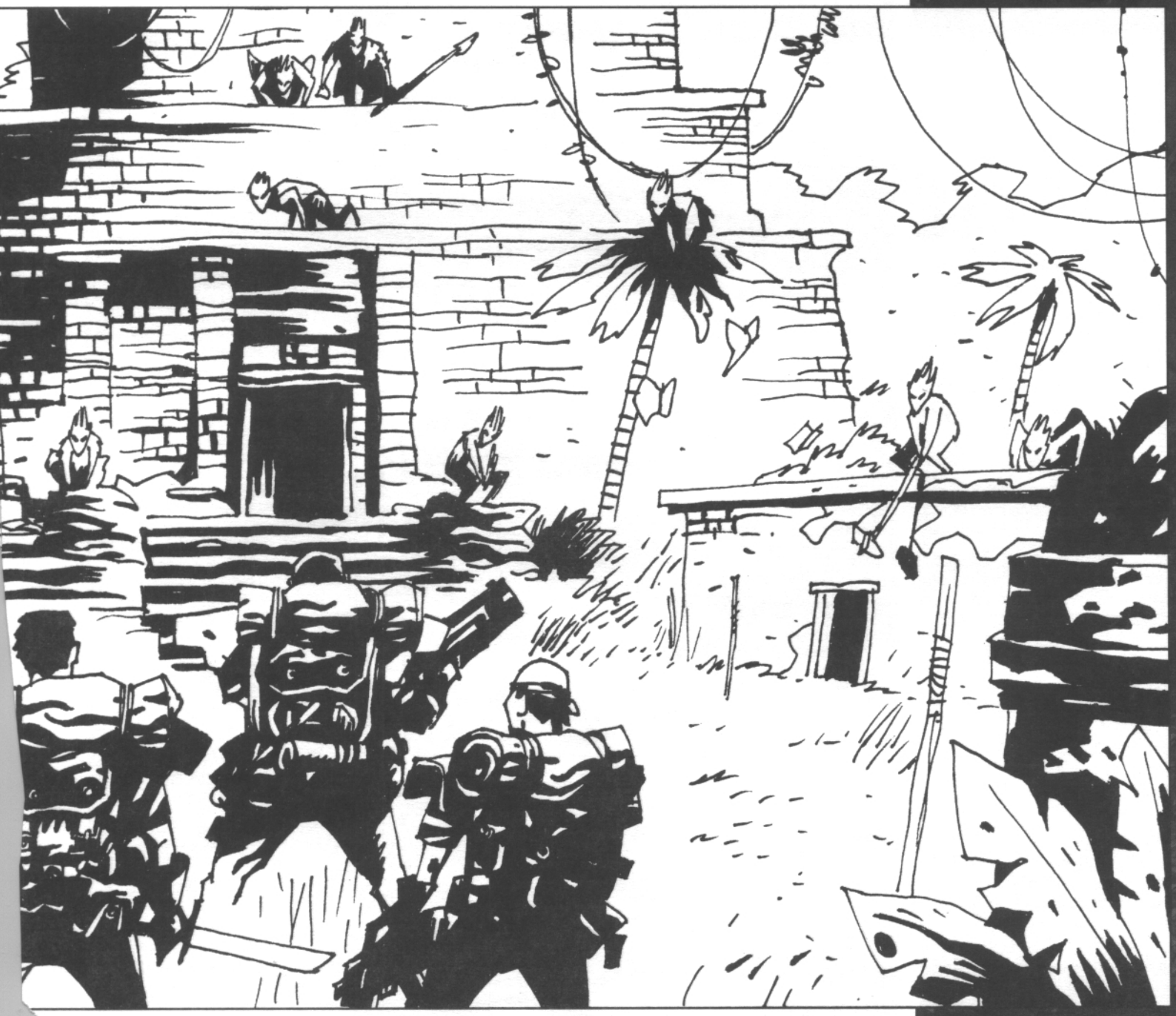
Perched on the steps of the temple or standing on the rooftops or in the doorways of the other buildings are the remaining guardians. They simply sit and watch the characters until someone makes a hostile move or approaches to within twenty meters of the temple doors. Then they erupt into a cacophony of hoots and howls and descend upon the party. This is their last stand, and they will not run under any circumstances. This time the primitives fight without weapons, using claws and fangs to rend the flesh of those who, by their mere presence, have desecrated their sacred ground.

Harding is at the point where his hatred for the guardians has passed beyond the bounds of reason. He fights like a man possessed, determined to destroy every last one



of the "damned freaks" as he calls them. The commander lobs grenades with reckless abandon and sprays a continuous hail of lead from his weapons. He urges the players to fight on against the enemy until they have been utterly exterminated. His berserker rage adds +5 to all of his combat related skills, and this rage is contagious. If the players show signs of giving in to Harding's terrifying blood lust, they also receive the bonus. While enraged, characters may not take actions requiring logic or thought: they simply continue to kill every beast in sight.

The berserker rage is a by-product of being in close proximity to the Second Seal of Repulsion. Even with the seal in place, there is a minute quantity of corrupting energy seeping into the area. Insane rage is the first step in Harding's fall from grace. When the battle is over, he has a wild fire in his eyes. He laughs a deep belly laugh filled with joy, and his body is covered from head to toe in blood, gore, and soot. Breathing heavily, he smiles broadly at the players and reveals blood-stained teeth. All characters who yield to the berserker rage behave in a similar fashion and later have only dim recollections of what transpires. Pure joy fills them, elation at the destruction they have wrought and the enemies they have slain.





FROM THE JOURNAL OF IVAN RENAULD

The journal itself is a leather-bound volume of 120 pages of vellum. It measures 15 by 8 centimeters and has sustained heavy water damage. There are no dates in the journal, and it is impossible to guess at when it was written, although it is entirely possible that it dates from the earliest days of Venusian colonization.

THE FIRST DAY

We have arrived on Venus, and what a glory it is to behold. After the horrors of Earth and the sterile bleakness of Luna, it is a wonder to be surrounded by such teeming life.

We stayed on in Heimburg for several days, and it was an amazing time. Everyone was full of energy and excitement about the future. I must have stayed out until the wee hours of the morning every night.

I have been remiss in my promise to my aunt to keep a journal of my life on our new homeworld. Now, though, I have some time on my hands, since we left the newly born city this morning and are now headed into the deepest jungles of the Virgin Planet.

We are flying along in a tremendous cargo craft, large enough to hold the entirety of my parent's estate back on Luna. The hold is full of survey equipment, scientific mechanisms, and all sorts of other exciting things. There are even a few flyers in here, and Uncle has promised me

EXPLORING THE OUTER BUILDINGS

After the battle, the PCs have a chance to rest and explore the area. The forest remains deathly still long after the battle, as if even the animals know the significance of what has occurred. Harding orders the team to search the area, set up cameras, and then report back to him. He begins to set up camp for the evening and radios the team's location to the Glory of Heimburg.



THE GREAT HALL

Three of the buildings served as the living quarters for the guardian tribe; these are little more than hollow shells. The majority of the fourth building is taken up by a great hall which was home to the beastmen's chieftain. All the rooms reek of animal fur, sweat, and death, and the stench is almost overpowering. Each of the rooms has a large fire pit in which the meat of slain animals was prepared; the remains of last night's dinner can be found in one of them. Primitive straw mats haphazardly cover the floors, and primitive tools and the bones of past meals are scattered everywhere. Beneath all the refuse, the characters discover stone floors which, like the walls and ceiling, are perfectly smooth and formed from a single sheet of rock.

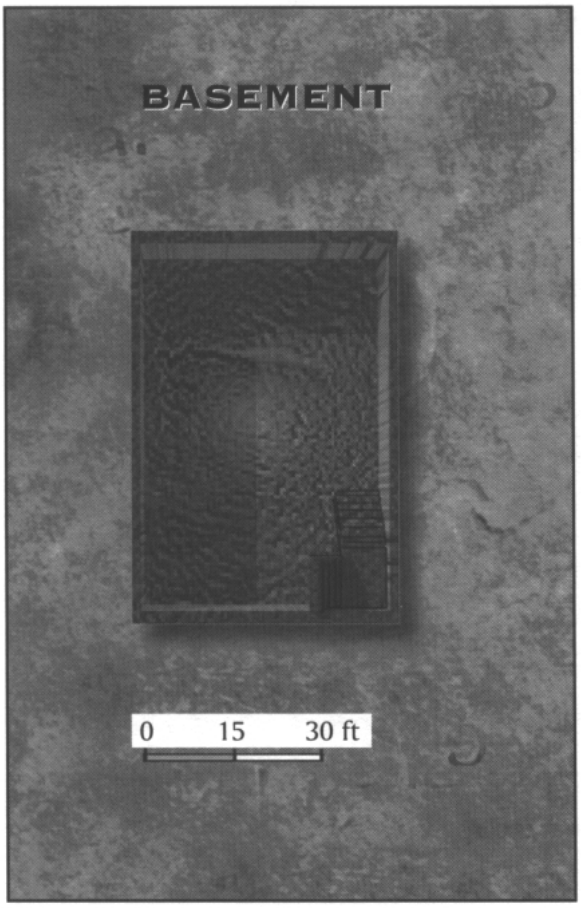
A doorway leads from the great hall of the chief, but it appears the guardians never used it. Complex arrangements of carved bones surround a coat of arms painted on the door. The coat of arms is very similar to that of House Renauld, but there are slight differences. The family made a change to their arms over two centuries ago, so this must be an illustration predating that change. The door is sealed shut with wax, but with a little pushing and kicking, the explorers are able to get it open and can enter the office beyond.

OFFICE

This space appears to have been an office of some sort, but it has not seen use in centuries. A thick layer of dust covers everything, and several varieties of insects have built nests in the corners of the room. All that remains is the plastic furniture: four chairs, four desks, and five empty filing cabinets. A door, unsealed, leads to the laboratory.

LABORATORY

This large room is crowded with rusted and decayed scientific equipment. Along one wall is a series of control panels and computer terminals, all of ancient design and totally unfamiliar to the characters. In the center of the room are three large, metal cylinders - three meters high and 150 cm in circumference. Each cylinder has a door on one side which is rusted shut. Only by breaking the cylinders open can entrance be gained. Inside are numerous corroded wire leads and several 10 cm pipes feeding into an area beneath the building. This is where the Renauld scientists created the first guardians. Any player whose character has expertise in science or biology may attempt a skill check; if successful, he learns the lab was used for genetic research, a scientific field long lost to mankind. Two other doors lead from the lab, one to a bathroom and one to a storage area.



BATHROOM

This is an old bathroom with all the fixtures still intact; none of them function, however.

STORAGE

This room is completely empty except for a stairway leading down into the basement

BASEMENT

The basement contains a broken power generator, a large water tank, and several other tanks which once contained the fluids and chemicals used to create the guardians. Three of these are marked "flammable" or "explosive" and still contain their original contents.

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that I will be allowed to fly one once we reach our destination!

We are going to scout out a new tract of land that has been granted to the family. It is said to be rich in all kinds of wonderful things: gold, rare plants and animals and I don't know what else. I hear that there are pythons there, and I'm eager to see one of these creatures for myself.

Uncle just told me that we will be arriving soon. They are going to use fire bombs to clear a large area of the Jungle so the cargo plane can land. Even though it is VTOL, it still needs a lot of room. I'm looking forward to watching the detonation. I wonder how they will keep the fire from spreading.

LATER

Well, now I know. They didn't keep the fire from spreading, and it ended up torching the entire jungle for miles around until it was stopped at the banks of a wide river. Even in this humid, wet jungle, the incendiary bombs created such a raging inferno that nothing could stop it. The engineers say they planned this, but I think they're lying. Uncle seems quite upset.

Anyway, the landing area was soon clear, and so now we've touched down. I'm not allowed to leave the plane yet though. They're still making sure everything is safe for me down there.

I can look out the window and see them setting up camp: prefabricated homes, labs and even greenhouses for storing samples. It's all won-



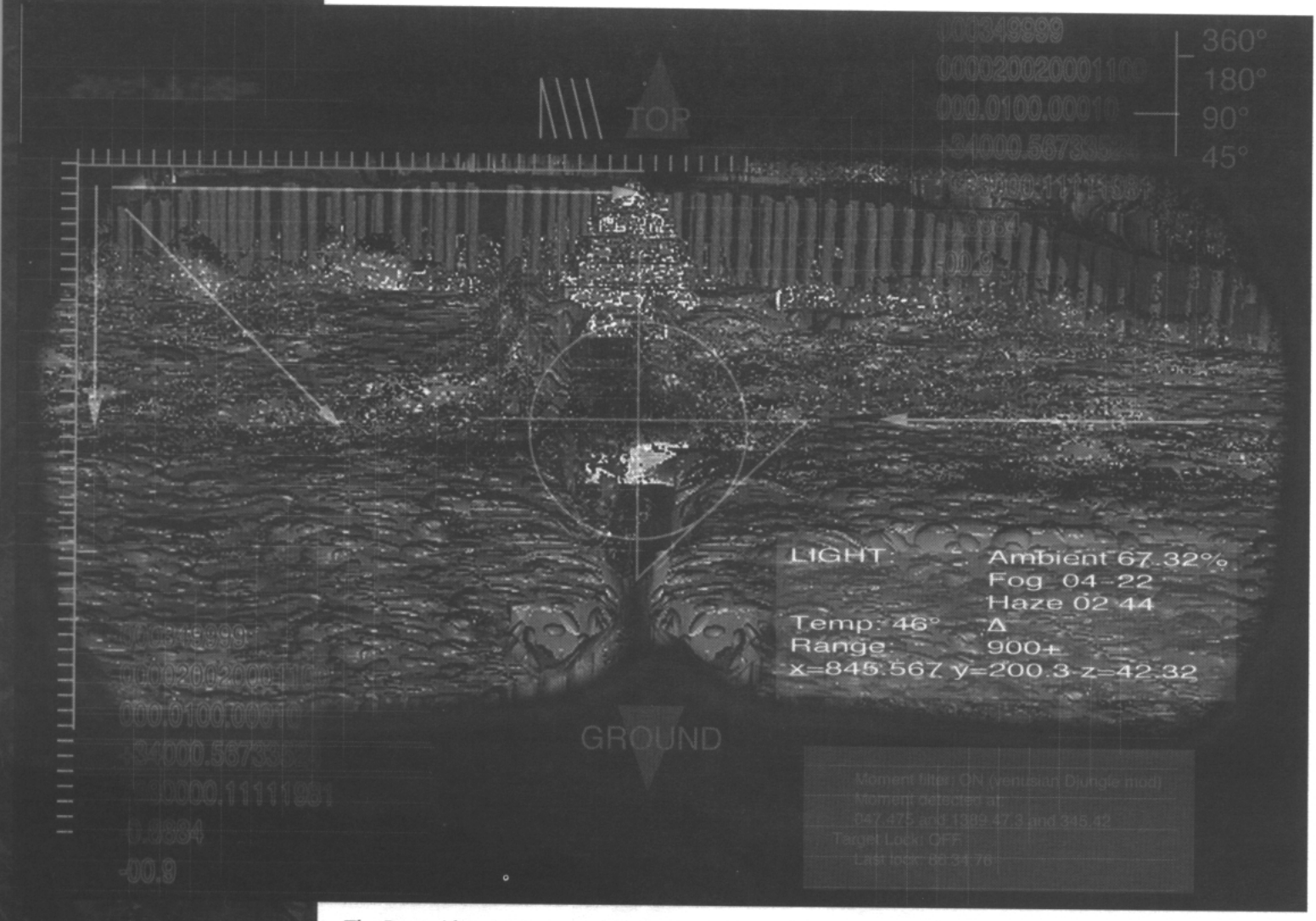
derfully clever, and it only takes a few minutes to set up a whole building. Uncle assures me that my quarters will be so fine that I won't even miss home. I told him that I didn't mind roughing it a bit, and that I was looking forward to getting out into the jungle proper.

EXPLORING THE TEMPLE

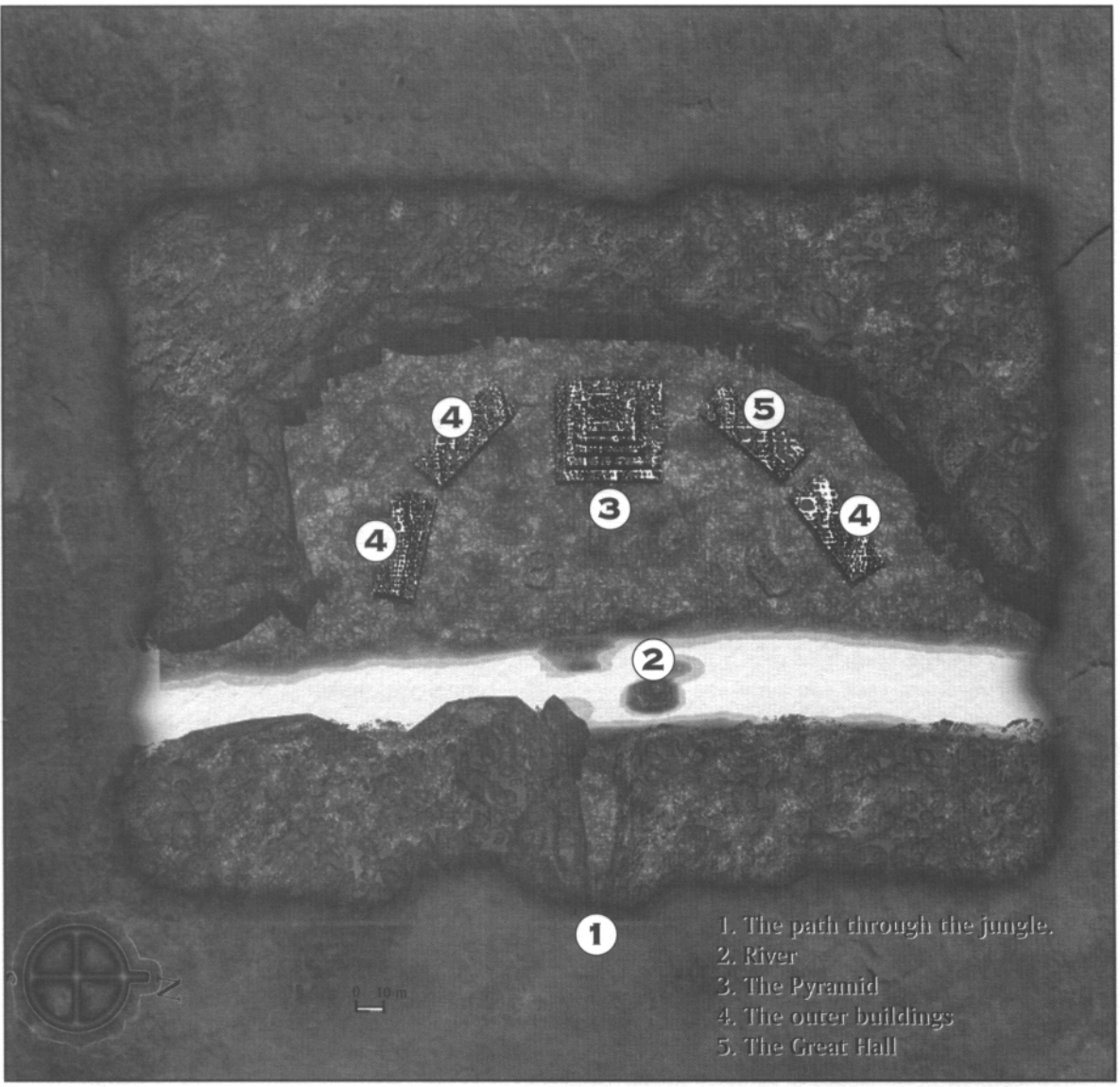
The temple has five steps or levels; each is eight meters high and looks like it is constructed of a solid, square block of gray marble. The lowest level measures forty meters to a side, and each ascending level is five meters smaller; therefore, the fifth level measures 20 meters to a side. The sides of the temple are meticulously clean: no signs of decay can be found, and no mold or moss is growing on the structure. Atop the final level rests an obsidian cone, which is just over ten meters high. This monolithic spike appears to emit a light mist or gas of some sort. If the players scale to the top of the temple, they discover the cone is incredibly cold to the touch, and the mist is condensation forming in the air.

The walls of the temple have several unusual qualities. Although they appear to be marble, they are actually much harder, nearly as hard as diamond. It is very difficult to make any mark or scratch on them without powerful explosives or an industrial cutting laser. If anyone attempts to deface the temple's surface with paint or ink, he learns that neither adheres to the stone and can be wiped away without difficulty. In fact, even a light rain cleans the entire building of any debris or stain. Furthermore, the adhesive used to attach the cameras to trees and other surfaces does not stick to the stone.

The three meter tall, metallic double doors are equally strange. Both lack handles and latches, and paintings of jungle animals, strange man-beasts, and god-like figures cover them in an unorganized mess, not unlike the cave paintings at Lascaux. The guardians have been painting these here for centuries, honoring the god they believe dwells within the temple. The hinges of the



The Pyramid, as seen through the PC's night goggles.



doors are on the inside and have been long frozen by corrosion. Additionally, there is a seal of wax placed over the edges of both doors; imprinted in the wax are the holy symbols of the guardians, the crest of House Renauld. The metal appears to be some type of high grade carbon steel. It is black and very cold to the touch, despite the warm temperature outside.

The doors were not an original feature of the temple which initially had no means of entering the inner chamber. When the Renaulds discovered the site, they used powerful explosives to blast a hole in the building. Later, Martin had the door frames modified and installed the doors to reseal the temple. Although he used the highest quality materials available, centuries of jungle corrosion has weakened the hinges, and it is now possible for the players to blast through the doors and gain entrance to the inner sanctum.

Harding wants the doors opened. He has calmed down considerably since the last battle with the guardians, and now he wants to make sure there are no more of the things hiding inside. Blasting the entrance open requires explosives be placed by the doors and detonated. A mere hand grenade is not enough, although a box of grenades might do the trick if a successful Demotions skill roll is made. Alternatively, the players can use the volatile gas canisters in the basement of the laboratory. These can be detonated with a grenade or a pistol shot. Onlookers would be advised to stand well away from the explosion.

The explosion rips the doors from their hinges and releases a blast of freezing cold air from within the temple. The rush of air immediately extinguishes any flames created by the explosives and sends a chill through the players. Inside all is dark.



DAY TWO

I spent my first night in the jungle in the Base Camp, and it was like I never left home. Today, though, I took my first short hike into the Jungle.

I just wasn't prepared for how damned hot it is here. I was almost instantly drenched in sweat, and if it wasn't for the GENSYN insect repellent we're all wearing, I'm sure I'd have been eaten alive by the insects by now. Some of those bugs are as big as my hand! Or bigger!

The jungle is really quite beautiful. I've never seen anything like it. The trees are as big as buildings, and even the Great Cathedral on Luna seems small in comparison to this vast jungle.

Is that sacrilegious? I'm not sure. I don't think so. Certainly the Jungle—big as it is—was no match for our fire bombs, and I know we couldn't even begin to harm the Cathedral. Not that we'd want to of course.

I'm only allowed to venture a few miles from camp and only under heavy escort. Everyone here carries guns, mostly because they fear the huge cats and other beasts that lurk out there in the jungle.

They even gave me a gun. Of course I know how to use it, but I was proud that Uncle trusted me enough to let me carry an honest-to-goodness pistol. I spent most of the morning on target practice, and now I think I'm pretty handy with it. I even shot a moth from thirty feet.

That probably sounds more impressive than it is, since



the moth had a six-foot wing span. The thing looked just like a giant leaf, and when it moved I was so scared I shot at it. The guards laughed at me but said it was a pretty good shot all the same.

CHAPTER 3: SAVIORS AND SINNERS

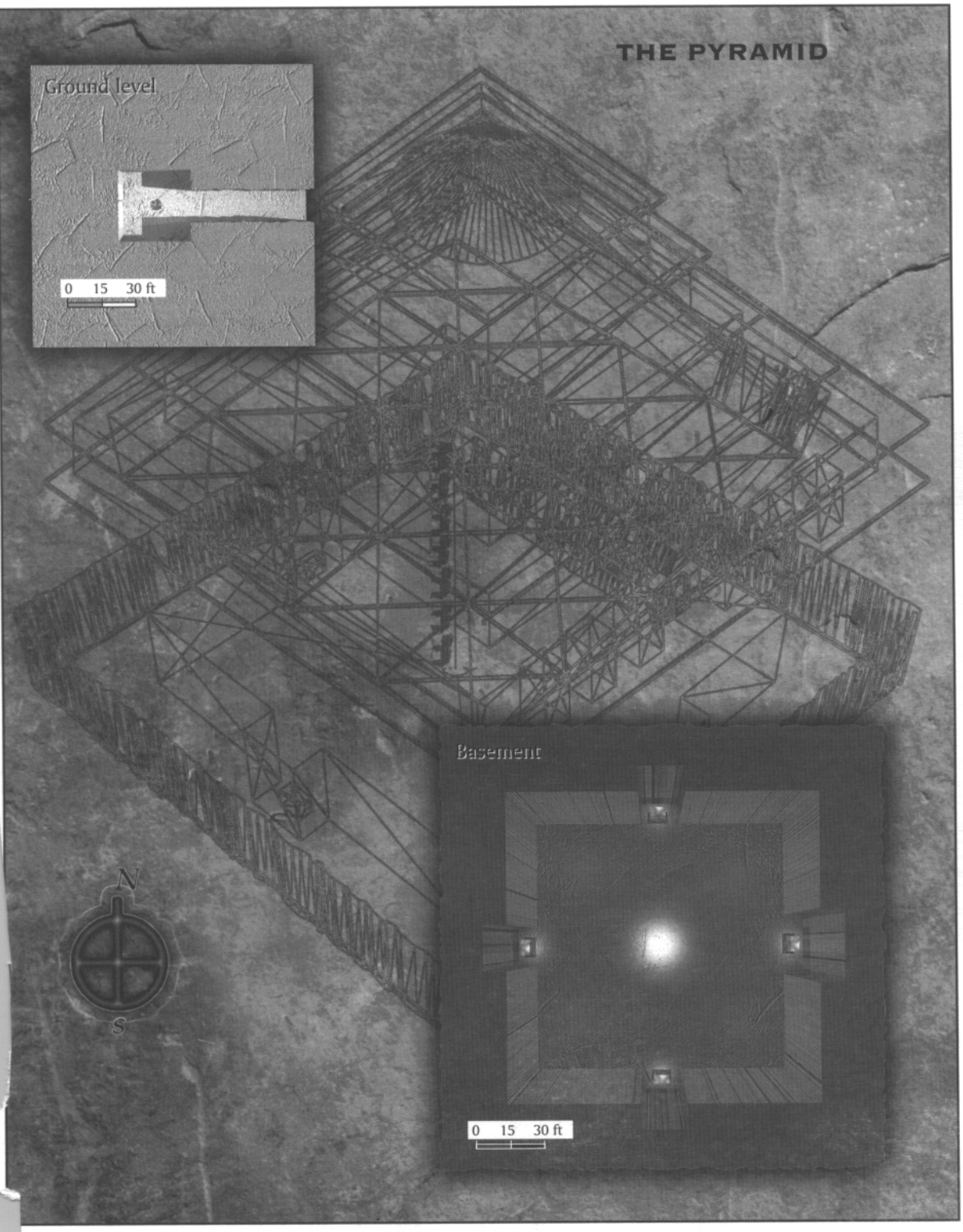
ENTERING THE PYRAMID

After the doors have been blasted from their hinges, the way is open to enter the tunnel carved so long ago by Renauld engineers. In the wake of the blast, freezing cold air seeps from the hole. It would almost be refreshing were it not for the stench of death it carries with it. The characters can only see a few meters down the tunnel without the aid of another light source; however, the team members should still have flashlights in their packs, so this is not much of a problem. It can be risky, however, to fire a submachine gun with one hand.

Not far down the tunnel, the team discovers the remains of the scientists and soldiers who helped create the beastmen. Twenty bodies are laid out against the walls, and each still has his hands and feet bound. A bullet hole at the back of each skull and a much larger exit wound at the front indicate the cause of death. Many are still carrying identification revealing they were employees of House Renauld. The secured temple and close proximity to the Second Seal have preserved the bodies splendidly throughout the centuries, yet all have a gaunt, desiccated look to them.

The tunnel was hewn with explosives and lasers from the walls of the temple. It is very rough to the touch and extremely cold. It continues straight ahead for about 15 meters where it ends in a 10x10 meter room. In the center of the room's floor is a circular opening which marks the top of a spiral ramp leading further beneath the pyramid. Cold air wafts up through the opening, making the room even more frigid than the tunnel. It is now uncomfortably cold for the team who are still dressed for travel in the steamy jungle. The ceiling of this chamber is 40 meters high and is capped by the base of the obsidian cone atop the pyramid.





DAY THREE

Well, things are settling down here now. Most of the survey teams are off in the jungle, and I'm pretty much left to hanging around the camp. Uncle is still here running things, and he sometimes takes some time out to explain to me what is going on. Still, I'm getting bored. I want to go exploring too, but Uncle says I'm too young. I wonder why he brought me along then.

Everything is going smoothly, just as we planned. The geological survey crew found some promising mineral deposits just a few miles north of here. If they are as good as they say they are, then this mission has already paid for itself.

I've taken to starting a collection of insects. Uncle had one of the scientists show me how to mount the things so they would look nice. I took a bunch of their sample cases and a net. I now have quite a collection of moths and butterflies, although nothing like the one I shot.



DAY FOUR

Things are still quiet around here, although I had quite a fright today. I was out with one of the scientists collecting insect samples from the surrounding jungle. He was trying to catch this strange bug that looked sort of like a praying mantis, but with ten legs. The thing was about six inches long and bright red. I thought it rather beautiful until it bit Prof. Hendricks.

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

The spiral ramp has a fairly steep grade and is slick with the condensation formed by the clash of humid jungle air and the chilly atmosphere of the pyramid. The moisture quickly turns to ice, making the spiral descent even more precarious. Characters running or performing any sort of acrobatic maneuver on the ramp must succeed at a Coordination check to avoid falling.

The spiral tunnel is two meters wide and only 180 cm high. It plunges over 30 meters in just four 360 degree rotations. The bottom of the spiral ends at a hole in the floor. Shining their flashlights down into the darkness, the surveyors see a black stone floor some five meters below. They can reach it by affixing a rope and climbing down, or they may jump. The surfaces of the spiral tunnel are identical to those throughout the rest of the temple - diamond hard and resistant to adhesives. All the same, Harding wants to find out what is below and orders the team to proceed through the opening.

The hole opens into a cavernous room, the walls of which are beyond the range of the flashlights. The room measures forty meters to a side, and in the middle of each wall is a large alcove containing a sarcophagus. The sarcophagi in the north, west, and south alcoves are identical; each is carved from a single piece of purple marble. These tombs measure about 250 cm in length by 75 cm in width and are 90 cm high; each rests flush with the wall of its alcove. Distinctive, highly detailed bas reliefs decorate the exposed side of each sarcophagus, and each of these pieces of art is further divided into four separate panels. The images are carved in low relief and are very austere, even mournful.



THE NORTHERN TOMB

In the first panel a man stands in powered armor and wields a large hammer with a head designed to look like a lion's. He fights without a helmet, revealing a grave, bearded countenance. Although he looks strong, he also seems to be past his prime; he is more an patriarchal figure than a champion at the height of his prowess. This warrior is locked in mortal combat with hordes of evil looking creatures of all sorts, some of which resemble nepharites or razides. All these foes seem to be falling back before his mighty onslaught.

The second panel depicts the same man again, this time dressed in the robes of a king. He stares blankly out from the panel with an expression of aloof disdain. Surrounding him are numerous female figures in various stages of undress. They seem to be offering themselves to the man, but he ignores their proffered charms. In the background can be seen a young man with neither hair nor clothes; he watches the women and man with interest.

The third panel portrays the man in conflict with a bizarre, octopus-like creature. Each of the beast's ten tentacles end in a dog's head, some of which are biting the man on his arms and legs. The man is again dressed in his powered armor, but this time it seems his foe is getting the better of him. A look of fear transfixes his wizened face.

The final panel shows the man in the bottom center of the relief. Slightly above and off to either side of him stand two women in powered armor; one holds a spear and the other a sword. At the top center of the panel stands a powerful-looking bald man engulfed in flames. His nakedness reveals a powerful and chiseled physique. The old man and the two women face him, weapons bared.

THE WESTERN TOMB

The first panel depicts a woman wearing powered armor and wielding a long spear. She has a young, almost angelic face, and her expression is one of calm control. Her long hair flows out behind her as she swims through stormy seas. Around her are a myriad of demonic sea creatures attempting to flee before her avenging weapon. The creatures are somewhat reminiscent of the Dark Legion's minions.

The second panel shows the same woman; this time she is wearing a long, flowing gown. She stands beside an ornate throne, and all around her a variety of men and women kneel in supplication. At her feet is a crown upon which she is poised to step. She stares off into space, her expression serene and aloof. Behind this scene stands the bald man watching events unfold.

The third panel has the woman dangling from a thin thread suspended over jagged rocks and a pit of fire. She clings to the thread for dear life as her spear plummets to the ground far below. A look of absolute terror twists her radiant face.

The last panel is much like the fourth found in the northern tomb, but this time the woman with the spear stands at bottom center. The old man is now located to the left, and another woman stands off to the right. Centered above the trio is the naked man who is, once again, clothed only by fire.

THE SOUTHERN TOMB

The first panel depicts a different woman with hair cropped into a short pageboy. Her powered armor is similar to the suits displayed on the other tombs, but this warrior's has a flight pack built into it. She is cutting through swarms of flying, demonic figures with the massive sword she clutches in her left hand. All the creatures, be they dragon-like serpents or devilish imps, flee in terror before her mighty blade.

The second panel depicts this female warrior again, but this time she is dressed in simple trousers and a tunic. She is surrounded on all sides by mounds of treasure - coins, jewelry, and gems. Coins also rain down from the sky as she stands with her arms open, letting the coins fall through her fingers. Her face bears an expression of utter disdain. In the background stands the bald figure from the other tomb reliefs.

The third panel portrays the woman in a room with spike-covered walls. She crouches at the center of the chamber in a nearly fetal position. Her face betrays her absolute fear, and her sword falls from her hand as she cowers before impending doom.

The final panel is much like the others, although this time the woman with short hair is stands at the center, sword in hand and clad in powered armor. The old man stands to her right and the other female warrior stands to her left. This panel also shows flames consuming the bald figure.



All he said was ouch, then all of a sudden he fell over and started convulsing on the ground! He was shaking all over and coughing up blood before I could scream. I ran back to camp and got Uncle and Doctor Prouse.

When we got back, Prof. Hendricks was in a coma but still alive. The Doctor says he'll live and is trying all kinds of drugs on him to bring him out of his coma. I'm not so excited about catching insects any more.

I stayed the rest of the day in the command tent, listening to the reports coming in from all the different survey teams. I thought it would be kind of boring, but it actually turned out to be really a lot of fun. They were all so excited about each new discovery that it got us excited back at the Base Camp.

They were finding all sorts of interesting animal and plant life out there in the wild jungles. Luckily, no one besides Professor Hendricks has been seriously hurt. I wish I could be out there with them, even after the incident with the bug this morning.

At dinner tonight, I pestered Uncle even more about going out into the field. Uncle got a little annoyed, I think. He threatened to send me back to the Vineyards to spend my vacation with Uncle Claude and Aunt Vela! I stopped pestering him after that.



DAY FIVE

Today is another day, and everyone seems to be doing something fun but me. No one has time to escort me into the jungle now that Prof. Hendricks got bit. He's still in a coma, and the doctor says it's getting worse. I don't think I was supposed to know that though. I overheard him and Uncle talking about it.

The teams are pretty far out now, and there is practically no one left here at the camp. They've covered lots and lots of territory in their explorations and have found all kinds of wonderful things. Uncle and everyone else is very excited, saying that we are going to all make a lot of money from this land and how generous it was of the Electors to grant it to us.

I don't think it's that great though. Just a lot of jungle.

THE EASTERN TOMB

The final sarcophagus rests in the eastern alcove and is the source of the room's freezing temperature. This alcove is larger and deeper than the other three, nearly ten meters wide and four meters deep. Within the niche is a tremendous, obsidian sarcophagus measuring well over five meters in length. Unlike the other sarcophagi, this one has its lid sealed with wax, and it bears a strange symbol not unlike a backwards K. Bas reliefs cover this tomb as well; however, the style is a bit different from those found on the smaller tombs. The other reliefs are reminiscent of medieval gothic carvings, but the reliefs on the obsidian sarcophagus are almost Baroque; they are nearly three dimensional and filled with life-like vitality.

The first panel shows a powerfully built man seated on a throne cut from a giant gemstone. He wears the full regalia of a king, including the ornate crown on his bald head. His subjects surround him, scores of tiny men and women bearing stricken and hopeless expressions. He points the scepter held in his right hand toward the sky as he lashes out at his subjects with the sword held in his left.

The second scene also depicts the bald figure; this time he wears powered armor and leads an army of smaller, similarly dressed individuals, but these lesser beings wear helmets. They carry spears and swords into battle against an opposing army of heavily armored warriors. The weapons of the opposition seem to break wherever they connect with the bald man.

The third scene reveals the bald man leading his army through the streets of a city as they pillage, burn, rape and slay. The town has a surprisingly modern appearance, including glass storefronts and self-propelled vehicles. Nonetheless, the marauding army wields swords, spears, and axes.

The fourth panel shows the bald man flying through the air, supported by a host of winged skeletons. Far below him is a miniature landscape over which the man sprinkles handfuls of tiny skulls that fall behind him in his wake.

The final panel has the bald man standing in the middle of a great fire. Surrounding him are a man with a hammer, a woman with a sword, and a woman with a spear. The bald man's head is split open, and from it pours a torrent of snakes, dragons, spiders, and strange, demonic creatures.

There is nothing else of interest in this room but the freezing cold. There is no dust anywhere, nor are there any insects, molds, or fungi - the chamber is almost sterile. The walls, floor, and ceiling are all made of the same stone as the rest of the pyramid. Harding orders that the room be thoroughly photographed and explored before anyone begins to open any of the tombs.



OPENING OLD TOMBS

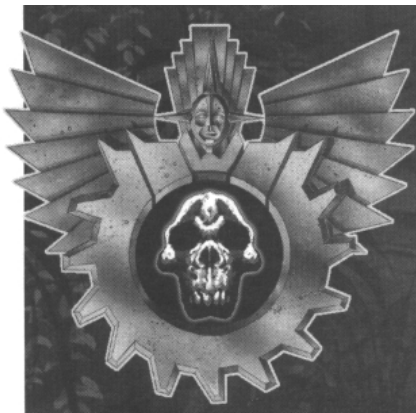
Harding insists upon being the one to open the sarcophagi, and he demands that all of them be opened. He leaves it to the players to decide which should be first; it really does not matter to him. The smaller sarcophagi require the characters to apply a combined strength of 20 or more to remove their lids. These smaller tombs are cold to the touch, but no more so than the other stones in the room. The large tomb is much colder, so much so that it is like trying to handle a block of dry ice. Opening the obsidian sarcophagus calls for a combined strength of 40 at the very least. Even then each character involved will have to succeed at a Strength roll. Of course, before this can be undertaken, the wax seal should be removed.

The northern tomb contains human remains mummified within a white shroud. Across the torso rests a large hammer constructed from a single piece of jade. The head has been carved into the likeness of a lion's head. The hammer weighs about ten kilograms and requires Strength 16 or better to use effectively. The weapon is warm to the touch, a welcome relief in the frigid tomb. Near the feet of the mummy is a brown clay tablet covered with the same ancient runes that adorn the outside of the sarcophagi. The tablet is shaped like the yin half, normally black, of a yin-yang symbol. Removing the shroud reveals the remains of a horribly charred male corpse.

The western tomb also contains the remains of a body; this one is wrapped in a red shroud. Beside the mummy is a long spear made from a glass-like material. This weapon is also warm to the touch, and although it looks fragile, it is actually unbreakable. The spear is very light, weighing no more than 500 grams. Tapping on the spear produces a clear chiming sound similar to that produced by fine crystal. Next to the spear is a stick of red sealing wax and a clay seal of about ten cm in diameter that is attached to a wooden handle. The wax is quite soft and melts easily. The corpse beneath the shroud is that of a horribly burned woman.

The southern tomb is the final resting place of the last of the three heroes. Within are the remains of a woman wrapped in a green shroud. Beside her is a sword forged from a single piece of a metal resembling platinum. The sword is positively hot to the touch and requires the wielder to wear heavy, protective gloves. This sarcophagus also contains a clay tablet, the counterpart for the piece found in the northern tomb. If the green wrapping is removed, the characters learn that this body is also badly burned.

The weapons have no special properties or magical abilities; however, all would fetch astronomical prices at auction.



LATER

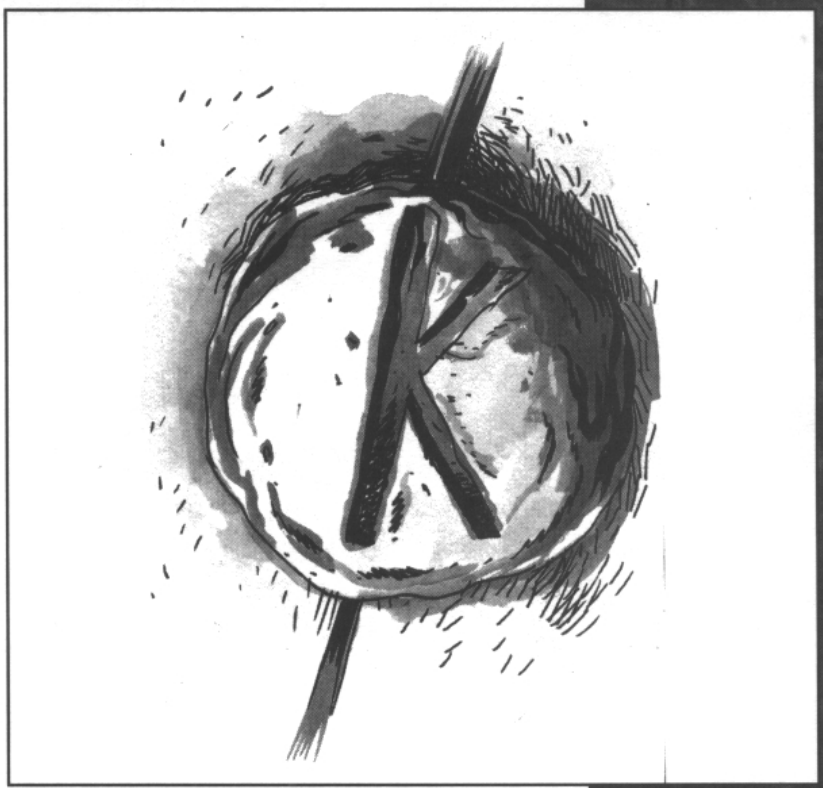
Dinner tonight was interrupted by a report from one of the teams. They said that after they had set up camp for the night they sent up a weather balloon with a camera attached to it, just to see what the surroundings looked like from above.

I guess the camera isn't very good though, since they aren't sure of what they've found. They say they can see what looks to be some kind of building hidden out there in the jungle! I find that hard to believe, but Uncle told them to investigate.

THE SEAL

Once the team manages to get the final sarcophagus open, they are in for a big surprise. The tomb is empty except for a circular metal door in the floor of the coffin. The door is a convex disc about a meter in diameter and split down the middle. Each half of the door has a set of hinges, but neither has handles. A clay seal, ten cm in diameter, covers the middle of the door, sealing it shut. The seal is a duplicate of the seal formed by the two clay tablets found in the other tombs. A thin veneer of red wax covers the entire seal and holds it fast against the metal hatch.

Looking down at the seal and the hatch, Harding decides he wants to know exactly what is going on here. Encouraged by the artifacts recovered from the other sarcophagi, he hopes to find something else down below. Without further deliberation, he climbs into the coffin and begins to pry at the seal with his knife. It does not take





much to break the ward, and it immediately crumbles to dust when removed from the doorway.

At that moment, the doors begin to swing slowly open of their own accord, but Harding impatiently reaches forward and pries them all the way apart. There is a tremendous blast of unbelievably icy air, colder even than the tomb itself, and it knocks Harding off the tomb to the floor where he falls unconscious. Nothing more occurs for the moment. Beyond the doorway there is only chilling darkness - no sound, no movement, and no odor. When he finally comes to his senses moments later, Harding climbs back into the sarcophagus and shines his flashlight through the portal. Slowly, hesitantly, he reaches into the darkness, but there is nothing. Beyond the doors is a void which absorbs all light, sound, and sensation. Soon the characters notice their flashlights are growing dimmer. Sounds become muffled, as if their ears were stuffed with cotton. Their skins begins to tingle and grow numb, and their senses of smell and taste are completely deadened.

DAY SIX

There is a building out there! I couldn't believe it when Uncle showed me the pictures, but there is definitely a building out there. You can make out its top though the trees. It looks to be some sort of spire made from stone, like a big spike rising from the jungle. We should know more later today.

LATER

They've found the building, whatever it is! They say we have to see it to believe it. Uncle is going to take the last flyer out to their position tomorrow morning.

I've begged and pleaded with him to let me come along, and he actually said he'd think about it. I think he doesn't trust me when he can't look after me himself, so he's just going to have to take me along!



They may well decide this is the time to get out of here. They are correct, but they cannot do it fast enough. They have broken the Second Seal of Repulsion, placed here eons ago by the ancients to protect the universe from evil. The characters have only one thing for which they can be thankful: the consequences of opening this seal are not quite as horrific as they were for opening the First Seal of Repulsion. At least the immediate consequences are not as deadly.

The First Seal held back the Dark Apostles, the devoted servants of the Dark Soul. While the First Seal was in place, it was impossible for the Dark Soul to manifest physically in the realm humanity. Opening that seal released the Dark Lord into our universe, and his Dark Legions poured forth to do battle with the creatures of light. The battle has raged for many years now, but it has been fought on battlefields with guns and bombs. As long as the souls of men are nourished by the Light, the battle will continue.

As the First Seal held back the Dark Soul's strong right hand, the Apostles, the Second Seal kept the corrupting heart of the Great Darkness in check. Previously, the Dark Legion has relied on the Corrupters to travel about the solar system and create heretics. They were only able to win over those who doubted and sought the darkness within themselves. With the heart of the Great Darkness unbound, the Dark Soul is free to move through the press of humanity as a corporeal entity, thus creating scores or even hundreds of heretics in the time a corrupter might need to convert just one. Even the most pious will find it almost impossible to resist the temptations of the Dark Heart. The battle for the hearts and minds of humanity now begins in earnest. As long as the seal remains broken, only the truly pure of heart will be able to resist temptation.

The players' characters are the first to encounter the newly released Darkness, and just as it happened to the heroes entombed here, each PC will face the best the Dark Tempter has to offer. First, each will face his greatest temptation, and if he succumbs, his soul will be lost to Darkness. If the Darkness fails this first attempt, the character will be confronted with his greatest fear. At this moment of weakness, the Dark Soul offers salvation if the character will only give in to its embrace.

Even as the team members race to make good their escape, the Darkness will fall upon them. Each character stops moving immediately as he begins the battle for possession of his soul. The entire process takes place within the characters' minds, but they will believe wholeheartedly that they are being transferred to different places and times. In addition, all the sensations created by the Dark Soul seem incredibly real, including agonizing pain.

TEMPTATIONS GREAT AND SMALL

The Game Master must carefully orchestrate this part of the adventure; it is important to keep all the players interested while the GM plays out each temptation or trial by fear. One way to do this is to switch back and forth in the middle of scenes, cutting from player to player just as things get dramatic. Alternatively, the Game Master can take each player aside privately. This serves to heighten tension and apprehension within the group because none of the players will know what fate the other characters are suffering until his own conference with the GM arrives. The former method works better with larger groups, while the latter is more suitable for smaller teams.

Each Game Master knows his gaming group better than we possibly could; therefore, this scene should be tailored to fit the specific players and their characters. Provided below are several examples of temptations used with our own players, but Game Masters are encouraged to modify, adapt, or ignore these as they see fit. Again, each temptation should be tailored to the personality of each character. It is especially important that the temptation that the PC faces goes against his conscience. The idea is that he "sells his soul" in return for a favor/gift that is normally beyond his reach—his deepest and most hidden desire. It should also be obvious that the Tempter is a creature of the Dark, so that there's no doubt that the normal "goodie-goodie" character would normally reject the offer.

VENGEANCE

The PC finds himself transported to a moment in his past when a great wrong was done to him. He stands by and watches the event unfold again, powerless to do anything to stop it. Next to him stands a man in full battle dress. He offers the character a chance to take revenge on the one who wronged him. He says that if the character will agree to help him, he will do whatever he can to make sure the character's foe pays for the evil deed.



DAY EIGHT

I didn't get a chance to write in my journal yesterday, what with all the excitement of traveling and so forth. The flyer trip was really neat. We flew in low over the tree tops, sometimes only a few hundred feet from the ground, but that was nothing compared to the pyramid itself!

I couldn't believe my eyes when we landed and I saw the thing. It's a big stone pyramid, kind of like a ziggurat, I guess. It's made of solid stone and has a pointy black cone on top of it. It looks brand new!

We have no idea who built it or when, but it can't be very old. The stone is perfectly smooth to the touch and shows no signs of weathering at all. It's cool and kind of slick, and dirt just seem to slide right off it. When no one was looking, I tried to scratch it with my knife, but nothing happened.

The queerest part is the black stone cone on top. Uncle won't let me climb up there but the men say its freezing cold to the touch! From here it looks hot, since it seems to be giving off steam all the time, but the men say that's just condensation because its so cold.

There's no door or anything, and no one can seem to figure out what it's for. Uncle seems very concerned about it. He's not happy at all. He's worried that some other House has tried to lay claim to this land or something. That's what I guess anyway; I'm not sure.

He wants to get inside the



thing really bad, and he's called for some of the mining lasers and explosives to be brought up from the base camp. He says if the thing won't open up, he'll blast his way in.

We camped here last night, and it looks like we'll be here for a while. They've tried all sorts of things, but nothing seems to even chip the stone. The explosives and lasers will be here tomorrow. Then maybe we'll get a chance to see what the insides of this thing really look like!

NEW ABILITIES

The Dark Tempter offers the character the ability to do something he has always wanted to do but never could. This could be anything from using the Art to flying without assistance. Maybe it is simply the ability to make friends easily or the intelligence to make important scientific discoveries. The PC finds himself transported to a training area suited to the skill or ability he wishes to learn. The Tempter is disguised as a teacher who offers the character the desired ability if he will simply agree to help this instructor at a later time.

POWER

The player character finds himself in a position of great power, possibly the leader of his corporation or even Cardinal of the Brotherhood. Alternatively, he might be leading an army of the Dark Legion, taking whatever he wants by force. Regardless of the form of power the character desires, the Dark Soul offers it to him in exchange for cooperation. The Tempter appears in a form befitting the offer, even that of the Cardinal himself.

WEALTH

The Tempter transports the character to a beautiful villa in the countryside. Opulence surrounds him, and servants are available to fulfill his every command. The PC is the wealthiest person on the planet; his financial security and that of his family are assured for eternity. The Great Darkness appears as a financial advisor who promises the character that all this wealth can be his if he will agree to lend the advisor assistance sometime in the future.

LOVE

Images of the character's perfect love fill his mind, and suddenly she is there before him. They stand together in a romantic setting and make promises of eternal love. The Dark Tempter steps forward in the guise of the character's closest friend. He offers the character fulfillment of his dreams in return for a favor.

FAME

The Tempter offers the character the brand of fame he most desires. Perhaps the character longs to be hailed as a great war hero, or maybe he desires the applause and adoration bestowed upon a famous performer. He has a montage of visions in which he is beloved by millions throughout the solar system. In every scene the Tempter is there in the guise of a personal assistant. He promises that all of it can easily become reality in exchange for a little commitment.

RESISTING TEMPTATION

The players should feel at least mildly tempted by the offers to improve their characters' lives or rescue them from harm. They have no idea who or what is behind these offers; likewise, they have no idea The Dark Soul is lying through its teeth. It has no intention of fulfilling the mortals' wishes, and the moment a character agrees to an offer, his soul is lost and he becomes a vessel filled with corruption. Wary players should see this for what it is and might try to refuse the Tempter. It does not willingly take no for an answer, and it offers whatever assurances and platitudes the player requires. The Dark Heart can weave a grandiose web of deception and cares nothing about the method of the deceit as long as the player agrees to "cooperate" or "help".

Resisting the temptation is a difficult process: three successful Mental Strength rolls are required to finally convince the Dark Soul that the character is not going to give in to temptation. The player attempts the rolls after each offer by the Tempter. Failure does not mean the character gives in; to do so should always be the player's decision. Instead, failure indicates some part of the character is actually tempted to accept the offer and wants to hear more. A fumble result on any of the rolls means the character is precariously close to falling into the Tempter's trap. Inform the player that the offer sounds really exciting, almost irresistible, to his character. The character has begun to think things like, "It does not seem like any wrong could come of it; this nice gentlemen just wants a small favor in return for all that money." A perfect roll indicates the character sees through the deception completely and resists the Dark Soul in one monumental test of wills.

Resisting temptation may seem a little easy because the players simply have to say "no" over and over again. This is partly true, but this scene relies heavily upon the players' role-playing skills and their ability to put themselves in their characters' shoes. Maybe there is nothing that could ever tempt their characters; in that case, there is little the Dark Soul can do. It is more likely, however,

the players will see this for what it is, a trap, and they will resist it no matter what is offered. Try hard to tempt them, but it's perfectly fine if they do not give in; after all, they are the heroes of the story. Most people show far less restraint when faced by offers of immediate and total gratification. Subsequently, if the Dark Tempter is left to wander through the worlds of humanity, mankind is in for some serious trouble. Besides, the Dark Soul is not yet finished with these champions of the Light.

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

Temptation is just one of many weapons used by the Dark Soul. Coupled with the Dark Tempter is the Heart of Fear, that part of the Darkness that inspires terror and despair in all who come into contact with it. Having resisted the temptations, the characters have only a few moments to savor their victory. Suddenly, they find themselves enveloped in cloying darkness; a deafening roar of rage and despair assaults their ears. A voice booms, "If you will not help me, there is nothing I can do to save you!" That said, each character finds himself confronted with his greatest fear.

Again, it is impossible for us to determine what every character's greatest fear might be, so we offer several examples of what the Dark Soul might throw at them. Remember, these events are happening only within the minds of the team members; therefore, what may seem to take minutes, hours, or even years can occur in the space of a few seconds. The Dark Soul works quickly, for there are many souls still awaiting corruption. It is recommended that these short sequences be played out one on one, thereby preventing the other players from realizing that the previous offers of aid were only a deception. The scenes should be played normally, allowing the players to have their characters take any actions they wish. These are not simply visions imposed by the Dark Soul, but truly interactive experiences. The players are wholly in control of their characters once the scene is set.

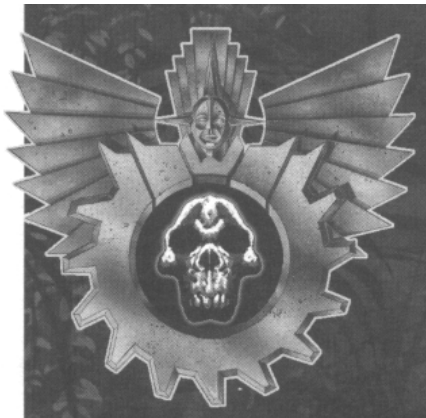
It should be implied, but not completely obvious, that the "helper" that offers the PC his help is a creature of the Dark. At each occassion, he should also demand a small favor from the PC; it might be a promise of a future (evil) favor, a renunciation of a friend or relative, handing over a very dear object (such as a Cardinal's Cross), or something similar. The idea is that the PC surrenders his normal ideals just to save his own skin. Be sure to prepare these episodes before you start the gaming session.

ADRIFT

The character remembers escaping the pyramid and boarding the airship. The vessel soon ran into trouble and plunged into an endless ocean. The character, the only survivor, finds himself adrift in a rubber raft, and there is no land in sight. Thirst and hunger gnaw at him, but the raft contains no provisions. His sun-baked skin is cracked and bleeding; every movement is agony. On the horizon is an approaching storm, waterspouts dancing beneath roiling thunderheads. The foul weather strikes suddenly, bringing huge waves and torrential rain which swamp the tiny boat. Unless the character succeeds with a Coordination roll, he is thrown overboard as he desperately clutches at the shattered remains of his log raft. Five meter waves buffet the man and force him far beneath the surface. A successful Strength test allows him to swim to the surface without inhaling lungs full of water. The battle to survive the storm goes on endlessly, and the character always just barely manages to survive. Finally, when our hero's will is nearly broken, a boat comes into view and pulls up alongside the character. The Dark Soul, in the guise of a sailor, reaches out from his vessel and shouts, "Will you let me help you up?" If the player accepts the offer, he is lost. Rejecting the aid means the character drowns, experiencing all the horrors of a watery death. As blackness overcomes him, he wakes to find himself back in the chamber beneath the pyramid.

SECRETS REVEALED

This fear is best used against a character who has a dark secret to hide from the world. He finds himself comfortably at home with memories of having successfully escaped from the jungle pyramid; however, a knock at the door soon rouses him from his respite. A stranger waits on the doorstep to reveal knowledge of the character's secret and threatens to reveal it to the world. The stranger hates the character and just wanted to see the expression on his face when told the secret will soon be exposed. Attacking the man does little good because the character is unarmed; furthermore, the mysterious messenger manages to escape if pursued. The team member is left alone to imagine the consequences of the promised disclosure. Describe in great detail for the



DAY NINE

It's just after tea time right now, and they've been going at it all day. The noise is driving me crazy, but Uncle is too busy to pay attention to me and has ordered me to stay out of the way and not wander off. I spent most of the morning watching them break into the pyramid, but eventually that got boring, so I came back here.

The explosives and the laser seem to be working, but it's taking an awful lot of them. The engineers and miners are absolutely amazed at how tough the pyramid is. They say they could have stripped a whole mountain bare with the amount of laser power and shaped charges they've used.

They are slowly but surely cutting a passage into the thing, which is looking like it was made out of a solid piece of stone. The noise of the explosions and the laser is becoming deafening. I'm sure I'll never hear the same again.



DAY TEN

They finally gave up for the day around sunset last night. They made it almost a quarter of the way into the thing before they quit. Uncle said that they we're going to keep going until they got out the other side.

Today they started again, and by lunch time they had broken through! There was a great cheer from everyone, and I came running to see what all the excitement was about.

They had found a small chamber in the center of the pyramid that had a hole in the floor leading down under the pyramid. They had lamps strung up along the tunnel they had created, and everyone was crowded around the hole. The hole had a spiral ramp of some sort, and there was a cold, musty smell creeping up from down below.

Uncle noticed me and forced me to leave. Then he and four other men went down into the tunnel, armed with hunting rifles. We all waited a long time, wondering what was going on. Then we heard some screaming and gun shots. A bunch of the men started to get lights and guns and head into the hole, but then my Uncle and another man came running up the ramp telling everyone to run.

Well of course we all ran, not even knowing what it was we were running from. Uncle said that his own men had tried to kill him, that there was something evil down in that hole. He wouldn't explain further.

He posted a guard and ordered that no one be allowed to go down there



player all the horrible implications. Before long, the Dark Soul arrives at the door, but he appears as an elderly man with a kind, friendly face. He claims to have heard the character is in a bit of a jam. He gladly offers to help get rid of the stranger before the secret can be revealed, but he has to know if the character will allow him to "help out". If the Dark Soul's offer is accepted, all is lost. If the character declines the stranger's offer, he will experience all the consequences of having the secret revealed to the world. Once the GM has thoroughly and vividly described this, the team member suddenly finds himself back in the burial chamber.

A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

This fear is appropriate if the subject has family or loved ones who are very dear to him. The character has complete memories of leaving the pyramid and returning to Heimburg aboard the airship, and the scene begins as he arrives home. He enters the front door expecting a warm welcome; instead, he discovers the eviscerated corpses of several family members. The walls, floor, and ceiling are splattered with gore, and on one wall is a message written in blood: "We have the rest of your family. One dies each day until we get what we want." Beneath the gruesome message is a piece of paper stuck to the wall with a wad of gum. The sheet is covered with hastily scribbled directions to an abandoned warehouse deep in one of the city's worst neighborhoods. It instructs the characters to come immediately and alone. If this team member attempts to contact any or all of the others, he cannot locate them, however strange this may seem. If he calls the authorities, they are more than willing to help out, but this is of little use. When the character finally arrives at the warehouse, he finds another loved one hanging from the rafters. On the floor beneath the corpse is a message scrawled in blood: "I grew tired of waiting." At this point, a reporter, the Dark Soul in disguise, steps forward and claims to have information about the killer. He tells the character, "If you will allow me to help, all this madness can be stopped now." Again, if the victim agrees, his soul is lost; if he rejects the offer, he imagines living to see the rest of his family killed in hideous ways. Eventually, he will regain consciousness beneath the temple.

BATTLE ROYALE

The character believes he is the only member to escape from the temple and is now racing to make it back to the Glory of Heimburg. The guardians are back, but this time they are horribly mutated by the Dark Symmetry. Instead of spears and bows, they carry the weaponry of the Dark Legion. The character is having a nasty time fighting his way through their ranks. Things look bad, and there is no help in sight. The Game Master should play out portions of the fight, but this must be done as quickly as is feasible. Before too long, his PC's imminent

demise should become evident to the player. Just as all hope is lost, a stranger dressed in the armor of the character's corporation (or other appropriate source of assistance) steps forward and offers to help. "If you allow me to help," he says, "we can defeat these savages together." If the player accepts the offer, his soul is lost to the Great Darkness. If he rejects the stranger's aid, he is torn to pieces by the malformed humanoids. After all the horror and agony, the victim finds himself back in the burial chamber.

A SINNER IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY CARDINAL

This scene is particularly suited to a pious team member. The individual has memories of escaping from the jungle and making his way back to Heimburg. There he is taken into custody by members of the Brotherhood who charge him with incredibly heinous sins against the Light. No matter what protestations or claims the character makes, the Inquisitors refuse to say more, and preparations for the heretic's final cleansing begin immediately. The character is taken into the great Cathedral of Heimburg, the nave of which is jammed with thousands of devout worshippers who angrily shout and jeer at the victim. The Elite Guardsmen shove the character forward until he kneels before the Cardinal. Durand sneers scornfully at the character as he intones an impressive list of sins and crimes for which the captive is to be punished. When the pontiff has finished, he asks if there are any present who would be willing to speak on behalf of the accused. In response to the seemingly ridiculous question, a stranger dressed in the robes of an Inquisitor steps boldly forward. He approaches the character and whispers to him, "If you will accept my assistance, I will have you cleared of all charges." As stated previously, acceptance of the Dark Soul's offer spells the victim's doom. Rejection of the proffered assistance forces the character to face the terror of sentencing and summary decapitation. At the exact moment the headsman's blade severs the team member's spine, he finds himself back in the pyramid.

A COG IN THE WHEEL

This situation is a little more surreal than many of the others, but it is suitable for those characters who have neither close ties nor obvious phobias. The team member recalls escaping from the tomb and running up the spiral ramp. Suddenly, a trapdoor opened in the ramp, and he fell through the floor and down a long metal chute. The scenario of terror now begins as the PC finds himself on a moving conveyor belt in what appears to be a gigantic factory. The victim sees machines and other conveyor belts stretching off in all directions as far as the eye can see, and he quickly realizes he is being hustled toward the maw of a huge mulcher. Only by jumping to another belt can the character find safety, if only temporarily. Everywhere there are new mechanical dangers to be faced: robotic arms wielding welding torches, cauldrons of molten steel, shredders, slicers, dicers, liquifiers, and so on. The machines themselves are extremely hot, and it is impossible to touch them without being badly burned. The player must make a long series of Coordination rolls if his character is to avoid the dangers. Just when the situation is most grim, the PC hears a deep voice call out above the din, "I can shut down the equipment if you will allow me to help you. Will you accept my aid?" If the character says "yes", the Great Darkness takes his soul for all eternity. If the hero declines, a horrible death at the hands of the automated factory awaits him. After all the screaming and rending, the team member regains consciousness in the pyramid.

WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE WHO SUCCUMB TO THE DARK HEART

Anyone who has fallen prey to the Dark Heart's deceit is now a heretic, a pawn of the Dark Symmetry. Treat the victim exactly as if he has undergone the processes of conversion and initiation with a corrupter. However, rather than requiring weeks or months to complete this fall from grace, the character is immediately transformed into a minion of evil and, subsequently, receives two Dark Gifts of any type. If the character was already a lackey of the Dark Soul, he gains an additional Gift without being required to complete a quest. The PC is now in telepathic contact with the Dark Soul at all times and receives instructions, visions, and dreams from his lord and master, all of which are impossible to resist. A member of the Brotherhood automatically recognizes such a character on sight, so powerful is the Darkness within the heretic.



again. Then he put me on a flyer and sent me back to base camp with orders that I was to be sent home immediately. I didn't even have time to protest.

Now I'm here on the transport plane, winging its way back to the city. I don't even know what happened or what I did wrong! It's not fair!

EPILOGUE

Uncle stayed in the Jungle for a long time after that, almost 10 years. He came to visit on occasion, but very rarely, and never for the last three years. I never saw anyone else from the mission.

My father said that Uncle had fired them all, but I don't think this is the case. I'm friends with the daughter of one of the scientists, and she says her father never came home from the jungle.

Uncle never talks of what happened out there, and no one else in the family will talk about it either. No one goes to the jungle anymore, and no one is allowed to even speak of the pyramid.

I still have nightmares of Uncle and his panicked look when he came running out of that hole. Some day I'd like to go back, but I'm not even sure how to get there. The place has been erased from all the family records and maps. It is our greatest secret—the thing about which no one talks. But why?



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BAS RELIEFS

Who or what made the Seals of Repulsion remains a mystery to this day, but these tombs may shed some light on the ancient men and women responsible for holding the darkness at bay. The reliefs are allegorical in nature and do not represent events from the past as they actually happened. The man and two women buried within may well have been responsible for creating the Second Seal, but it is impossible to know for certain who they really were. Certainly, Brotherhood scholars will debate the question for centuries to come, assuming they can hold back the Great Darkness that long. The greatest worth the characters can extract from the tombs is the foreshadowing of events to come. Each hero's tomb depicts someone facing a great temptation followed by a hopeless situation, and these are just what the players have to look forward to in the near future.

CLOSING THE SEAL

If the players opened the other tombs, they have the pieces necessary to make a new seal over the doorway. All they need to do is force the hatch closed - easily done with a combined strength of 20 or more - place the two halves of the seal upon it, melt the wax, and spread it over the entire ward. Of course, any heretics holding portions of the seal immediately attempt to destroy them. Although Harding has yielded to the Dark Soul, he is unconscious and can do nothing. The PCs will have to fight among themselves over recreating the seal. The two clay tablets are easily broken, and although a seal could be formed from broken pieces, it would not hold back the evil. If the characters resort to attacking one another, the combat serves as the climactic end of the adventure: friends and comrades pitted against one another in a struggle to determine the fate of all humanity. If there are any remaining NPCs with the team, besides Harding, it could be interesting to have them become heretics who attack the PC's in an effort to prevent replacement of the seal. It is important, however, that Harding survive if you wish to run the rest of the adventures in the trilogy.

Should the team manage to recreate the seal, they still have problems. The brief period the Dark Heart was abroad allowed it to relay the location of the Second Seal to other followers of the Dark Symmetry. Even as the players decide their next course of action, the legions of the Dark Apostles are mobilizing to reopen the portal. If the doorway to the Dark Soul is not sealed, the Dark Heart will be free to spread corruption across Venus and the rest of the Solar System. Heretics will become as common as cockroaches, and soon the Brotherhood and the Cartel's Doomtroopers will have far more on their hands than they can possibly handle.

LEAVING THE JUNGLE

The characters, assuming any are left, must carry Harding out of the temple; but as soon as he is exposed to fresh air, he regains consciousness. If the players decide to leave him behind, he gradually wakes up on his own and follows the team. Harding has submitted to the power of the Dark Soul, and in return he has received a very special and very powerful gift. In honor of being the one to break the ward, the Dark Heart has hidden the Darkness deep within Harding, so deep it cannot be seen, even by the Cardinal himself. Harding has become the Dark Symmetry's deep cover agent, something impossible to create prior to the breaking of the Second Seal. This was a tremendous investiture of power on the part of the Dark Soul, and this explains why the characters may have found it possible to resist his temptations.

Harding contacts the Glory of Heimburg and requests pick up. The airship soon floats gracefully into view, and crewmen lower ropes and harnesses to allow the players to board. The commander immediately calls a team meeting to discuss what has taken place. He agrees something serious has just occurred, but he emphasizes that none of them can really be sure what the ramifications might be. Remember, unless the players were corrupted, they do not know they have opened the Second Seal of Repulsion, nor do they know who was responsible for their visions. Harding makes his report to the Capitol execs, but he omits the whole business of the temptations. He merely suggests the Brotherhood should be alerted. True to form, the Brotherhood's attention has already been focused upon the site because their seers sensed great evil at the moment the Second Seal was destroyed. Cardinal Durand's hand-picked teams are already enroute to the temple.

The adventure is now over for the players. Their characters are handsomely paid for their services to Capitol, and Harding releases them without any debriefing. He tells them he would prefer to forget about the whole experience and plans to leave the situation in the hands of the big boys. The PCs are now free to do as they wish, but in a few months, Harding will call upon them once again for assistance. This new offer and the forthcoming battle between the Brotherhood and the Dark Legions is fully detailed in *The Four Riders*, the second part of the *Venusian Apocalypse* trilogy.



THE VENUSIAN APOCALYPSE



The Venusian Apocalypse

Venus: the jewel in the crown for Bauhaus, site of their greatest cities and most productive factories. Home to two Cathedrals, and millions of staunch Brotherhood supporters, Venus is a bastion for the Brotherhood on the face of the evil of the Dark Legion. Yet mighty Venus also stands as one of the largest and least explored of the colonized planets and hidden within its deep jungles are secrets that could undo all mankind. When the greatest of all evils escapes its bonds to wreak havoc there can be only one result: the final destruction of Venus and maybe the whole system. Unless of course someone can stop it first.

The Second Seal Of Repulsion

The saga of the Venusian Apocalypse begins. What started as a simple recon mission soon turns into a race against time to stop terrorists from blowing the players and their team out of the sky. Surviving the journey only means they are ready for more dangers ahead. Hiking through the Venusian jungle is always a risky undertaking. But the players find something even stranger, a never before seen threat that turns out to have ties to one of Bauhaus' oldest and most respected families. Even as the mystery of the jungle grows deeper, the team finds something unimaginable. An evil predating the Homebuilders lies hidden within the Venusian jungle and unknowingly, the team may just release it upon the world.



HEARTBREAKER

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ISBN 91-7898-436-X

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