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OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURES

Dungeon

TOUGHEST CRITICAL THREAT EVER!
Warduke Returns

RACING THE SNAKE
The Low Road to Highfolk—Can You Survive?

OOZE & AHHS
Down and Dirty in The Stink

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FEATURING
JOHN SIMCOE · MONTE LIN · KEITH BAKER

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Dungeon

"From his hours of sitting at the foot of the table, Fafhrd had learned that most of the spells were designed to inflict a noisome disease upon Gwaay: the Black Plague, the Red Plague, the Boneless Death, the Hairless Decline, the Slow Rot, the Fast Rot, the Green Rot, the Bloody Cough, the Belly Melts, the Ague, the Runs, and even the footling Nose Drip..."

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A merchant's daughter faces an assassination threat. Will you lead her would-be killer on a chase through the treacherous Yatil Mountains while she makes good her escape? A D&D *adventure for 6th-level PCs.*

The Stink 44

Monte Lin

The city of Suncliff has so much trash they've devoted an entire quarter to it, naming the reeking ruins "the Stink" and piling garbage as high as the eye can see.But sanitation workers have been vanishing from the Stink at night, and only your heroes hold the key to solving the smelly mystery. A D&D adventure for 4th-level PCs.

On the Cover: *All hail Warduke! Our cover model first burst onto the D&D scene in the era of Colorforms and pencil-on tattoos. Warduke and D&D superstar Wayne Reynolds take us way back to 1983.*

Plastic Miniatures

To suggest that I enjoyed action figures as a child doesn't quite capture the full story. I *lived* action figures. This was the era of the first *Star Wars* toys. G.I. Joe, who had been a bearded Barbie-sized Vietnam veteran only a few years before, was suddenly a group of flashy commandos with names like "Stalker" and "Snake Eyes." Even better, they fought an army of colorful supervillains called Cobra (which, we were told, was a "ruthless terrorist organization determined to rule the world"). For an imaginative cartoon-aged kid, the early 1980s were somewhat akin to how hippies must have felt about the Summer of Love.

My parents' home became a giant movie studio. A room with white carpet became the desolate winter wasteland of Hoth. My mother's ficus became a giant redwood, a Cobra operative perched on every sickly branch. For a 7-year-old kid, life was pretty sweet. It was about to get sweeter.

In 1983, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS was about as big as it would ever be. It had a Saturday morning cartoon. It had pencil-on tattoos. It had beach towels. Most importantly to me, it also had action figures.

I'd received a few D&D books as gifts a year or two earlier, and quickly became obsessed with them, the *Monster Manual* and *Deities & Demigods* in particular. Something about swords and sorcery tickled my creative funnybone, and even though it would be a year before I played my first game I'd already fancied myself some sort of D&D expert. A just-past-toddler idiot savant kind of expert, to be sure, but the subtleties of such distinctions must have been lost on me at the time.

With the introduction of the D&D toy line, I could finally marry my reading hobby with my action figure hobby without having to resort to crummy *Clash of the Titans* toys. I only managed to con my parents into getting a few of the D&D toys, but let it be said here in the pages of a national magazine: my folks knew a good action figure when they saw one.

God bless their hearts.

Among the D&D toy treasures in my collection was Warduke, the "Boba Fett" of the D&D toy line. The "Soundwave" of the D&D toy line. The "Stormshadow" of the—you get the idea. The coolest of the bunch. Warduke, with his beady red eyes, his nasty blue helmet, and his skull-faced shield, quickly rose to all-star status in my playtime adventures. He terrorized the ice planet of Hoth. I think he may have cut down my mom's ficus.

More than 20 years later, we haven't heard much from Warduke. His bare chest, unsubtle name, and "oooooh, I'm evil!" helmet seem a little hokey these days. But they remind me of the summer of 1983, when D&D was at the top of the world and a whole group of kids first came into the hobby. A lot of those kids are reading this magazine. Three of them put it together.

D&D has given us some of the most fun moments of our lives, both as adults and as children. For me, Warduke was a part of that fun. It's time he came out of the dusty old toychest and back into our lives.

ERIK

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Corrections!

We're not perfect! Every once in a while, a goof-up in production makes us look like enormous idiots, and issue #103 had a couple doozies we still regret. While we're at it, we also messed up one of the feats in issue #100's *Knights of the Lich-Queen* Mini-Game. Thanks to all our readers who kept us honest by pointing out our mistakes. We'll do our best to avoid a repeat performance.

Knights of the Lich-Queen (#100): In the "better late than never" category, we inadvertently reproduced the same feat with two different names in our Incursion mini-game. The following replaces the feat of the same name on page 22.

Greater Combat Reflexes [General]

You react to any drop in your opponent's guard with blinding speed.

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Improved Combat Reflexes, Dex 15, base attack bonus +11.

Benefit: For any given opportunity in melee combat, you can make three attacks of opportunity. The second attack is at a –5 penalty, and the third is at a –10 penalty, just like your second and third normal attacks in any given round. You still cannot exceed your normal maximum number of attacks of opportunity in a round.

"Glacial Inferno" (#103): The map of the Halls of Huhueteotl seems to have been cursed, at it contained no fewer than three errors. Areas **10** and **10a** are the small rooms incorrectly labeled area **18** in the bottom right-hand corner of the map. Area **14**, unlabeled on the map, is the southernmost center room with the pool. Lastly, area **20** is incorrectly labeled area **28** on the map. When it rains the fires of Huhueteotl, apparently, it pours. Sorry about the mix-up.

We also inadvertently left off a paragraph about the *frozen soul* on page 35. Here's the missing text:

The *frozen soul* can be devastating to the local climate. Crops are quite sensitive to temperature changes, and even the 10-degree drop can be devastating to local farms. Outside 10 miles the cold front generated by the artifact continually collides with warm air masses, spawning tornadoes, wicked thunderstorms, and paralyzing ice storms.

Strong conjuration and evocation; CL 20th; Weight 1 oz.

Phew! Let's have a letter...

Shopping list

One, letters on sexual orientation? What the heck's up with that?

Two, although I don't really care much for *Polyhedron*, I have learned recently to tolerate it. That *Millennium Falcon* article [issue #103] was awesome, even if I don't play in a *Star Wars* RPG. I also occasionally use the *Living Greyhawk* stuff. I would, however, love to see "Downer" more than once every other issue. It's a great piece of work. "Bolt and Quiver" are also amusing (most of the time).

Three, Critical Threats are great and all, but don't overload them in the magazine, please. Maps of Mystery, however, are one of the greatest ideas of all time. I'm glad you reprinted the "Halls of Huhueteotl." I was wondering what was the heck was going on in issue 84. Now I know. I like when you number the rooms also. It sure beats black pen. The Town of Deepwatch was very well done.

Four, what the heck is "Mount Zogon"? I don't know, but it sure is wicked funny! Keep them coming.

Five, the art for "Forest of Blood" was fantastic. I would very much like to see more from Niklas Janssen. And more DiTerlizzi. Where's he been?

Six, the Adventure Path rocks. Great idea. I love the concept of the web enhancements as well. I don't think they should be necessary, but I would like them to remain available.

Sev... why bother? Monster tokens. What happened to them? Bring em' back. If anything, make that the special subscriber section. I love finding surprises in the pages.

I miss the "glory" days of *Dungeon*. It was great between issues 69–75, and then wasn't so great, then great again, at its peak in my opinion, between issues 84–92. A lot of content, good content, and usable. You guys are still good, but you're slowly falling. I love some of the new stuff, but it's not the same as the old. Sorry about the vagueness. And more higher level content, 15+. Good adventures that high are hard to write, I know, but surely something has come in you can use. Maybe one 15+ adventure every other issue?? Maybe you could even reprint some of the old adventures from second edition. It would be easier than converting, trust me.

Thanks for hearing me out, and, even if the quality falls more, I will continue to be a loyal subscriber.

Oliver Heintz
Via Email

Thanks for writing, Oliver! It's certainly our intention to bring you great adventures and mini-games, and we have high hopes that the "glory days" will be returning any issue now. We've got some staggeringly cool plans in the works. My typing fingers all itchy just thinking about them. You'll start to get a sense of what I'm talking about next issue, so stay tuned.

As to some of your specific points, we're also fans of "Downer," "Mt. Zogon," and "Bolt & Quiver," and these features will appear here as often as possible. Don't forget "Nodwick," which appears every other month.

As you can tell with this issue, we're tinkering a bit with the format of Critical Threats to make them more useful to everyone. Let us know how we're doing!

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Submissions: Interested in writing for the magazine? Download our submission guidelines by visiting the *Dungeon* homepage at www.paizo.com/dungeon.

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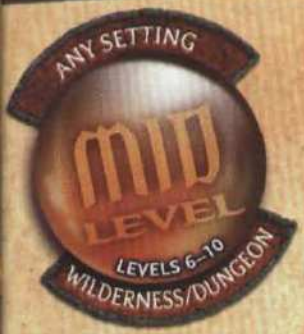


RACING THE SNAKE

BY JOHN SIMCOE

ARTWORK BY JEFF CARLISLE, ANDREW HOU & ARNOLD TSANG
CARTOGRAPHY BY ROB LAZZARETTI

"Racing the Snake" is a D&D adventure for four 6th-level player characters. Characters who survive the entire adventure should amass enough experience points to advance more than half-way to seventh level. This adventure is particularly ideal for druids, rangers, and other characters who have wilderness skills.

Although this adventure is set in the GREYHAWK campaign setting, it can be adapted for any campaign world that features two cities separated by a large mountain range. The adventure can also be modified for characters of higher and lower levels as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For several years, the merchants Bradford Trend and Dajoud Vasilis have been embroiled in a vicious trade war. The conflict began as a simple competition on who could outbid who or who could drop his prices the lowest. Somewhere along the way, it changed from the give-and-take nature of commerce into a deadly grudge match between two merchants who refused to grant the other quarter.

Vasilis was the first to turn violent, and his initial successes have only fueled his aggression. He organized squads of soldiers to attack Trend's caravans and bribed city guards to impound some of Trend's goods. Vasilis even hired an assassin to eliminate his rival.

This assassin is a yuan-ti halfblood named Maliss. The creature's initial attempt on Trend's life was thwarted, but the affair forced him to realize that his desperate financial game with Vasilis could result in more than just business expenses. Fearing an attack against his family, Trend arranged for his daughter Felicia to marry into a powerful merchant family based in his former hometown of Highfolk, east across the formidable Yatil Mountains. Trend hopes that Felicia can live in safety there, protected by her new family in ways he can't afford.

Unfortunately, Trend recently discovered that Felicia may not live to reach Highfolk. Vasilis has made several death threats against her, and Trend's spies have reported that Maliss has been hired to assassinate her. This latest development forced Trend to formulate a desperate plan to keep his daughter safe. While she is secreted away to a rendezvous at the nearby city of Falwur where she'll be married, Trend plans to send a decoy to Highfolk in hopes this will lure the assassin away from his daughter.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs witness an ambush while visiting the city of Polvar. The victim, a bard named Galina and an employee of Trend's, notes that one of the PCs is similar in appearance to Trend's daughter, and pleads with them to help. She arranges for the PCs to meet her employer later that night.

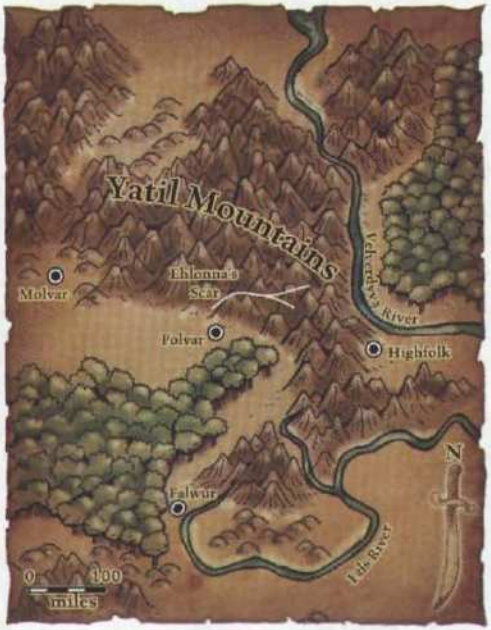
Once the party is properly briefed and one of them is disguised as Felicia, they set out of the city, luring Maliss away from his true target and into a canyon that cuts through the Yatil Mountains. This canyon, known as Ehlonna's Scar, is a little-used alternate route to Highfolk. It's a difficult and dangerous journey; the typical overland route to Highfolk from Polvar is south to Falwur, east along the Fals River and then up the Velverdyva River—a journey of several hundred miles. Trend plans to take this route with his daughter in secret, while the PCs take the faster route through the Scar to draw off Maliss' attention.

The key to this adventure is not only keeping Maliss' attention away from his actual quarry, but keeping him alive long enough that Vasilis doesn't become aware of his failure before Felicia is wedded and safe. There are numerous opportunities in Ehlonna's Scar to delay Maliss, yet just as many that could delay the PCs long enough for the yuan-ti to catch up to them and discover the deception.

Even if the PCs reach Highfolk successfully, Vasilis has arranged a deadly welcoming committee for anyone who tries to enter the city secretly via the underground port at the terminus of Ehlonna's Scar.

CHAPTER ONE: TROUBLE IN POLVAR

This adventure begins in Polvar's marketplace, a cacophonous open square featuring a vast array of brilliantly colored woven mats, each with its own merchant, snake charmer, foodmonger, or acrobat. The exact reasons for the PCs to be in the market-



place are incidental to the fact that they witness a sudden attack. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs.

> The normal hustle and bustle keeps the square busy, as meat-cutters hawk their best steaks and the apothecaries offer their finest elixirs. Suddenly, a nearby scream breaks the market's rhythm. To the northeast, six men dressed in red tunics and scale mail have tackled a woman and scramble to bind her with ropes. The woman, who wears a cloak and has an expensive-looking lyre strapped to her back, struggles frantically to free herself.
>
> The crowd surges away from the scene in panic, leaving the market open between you.

Creatures (EL 6): These six thugs are fighters who work for Vasilis, and their victim is a human bard named Galina. The thugs have been tracking Galina for some time, and know that she works for Bradford Trend; Vasilis in fact hired them to kidnap her and bring her to Maliss so the yuan-ti could interrogate her and find out when and how Trend planned to move his daughter to Highfolk.

Vasilis Thugs, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (6): CR 2; Medium humanoids (human); *HD* 2d10+4; hp 16 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2, masterwork heavy mace) or +4 ranged (1d4+2 nonlethal, masterwork bolas); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Intimidate +5, Jump –2, Ride +6.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bolas), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Power Attack.

Possessions: Masterwork heavy mace, masterwork bolas, scale mail, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 2 gp, 4 sp.

Galina, Female Human Brd4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d6+4; hp 16; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d6–1, masterwork short sword); SA spells, *fascinate*; SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge, countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage +1; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Gather Information +12, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +9, Perform (string instrument) +13, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +10.

Feats: Negotiator, Skill Focus (Perform), Weapon Finesse.

Bard Spells Known (3/3/1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, lullaby, message, read magic, resistance*; 1—*comprehend languages, disguise self, unseen servant*; 2—*detect thoughts, invisibility*.

Possessions: Masterwork short sword, masterwork studded leather armor, *cloak of resistance +1*, *wand of cure light wounds* (42 charges), *wand of silent image* (10 charges), *potion of tongues*, masterwork lyre, belt pouch with 32 gp and 17 pp.

Tactics: The thugs have been ordered to capture Galina as quickly as possible; they don't expect anyone in the marketplace to try to stop them. If the characters intervene, they fight back with a little surprise, and retreat if more than half are disabled or slain. As they flee, one of the thugs calls out over his shoulder, "Vasilis has had enough of this! Tell Trend his daughter's dead the second she steps foot outside Polvar."

As the PCs help Galina back to her feet, she thanks them, but seems rushed and preoccupied with moving along. Suddenly, her eyes widen as she sees one of the characters of your choice. She quickly regains her composure and explains that her employer, one of the better-known "foreign" merchants in Polvar, has a terrible problem. A problem she feels that they are in a unique position to solve. She apologizes and tells them that it's not safe to speak of these matters in the street, but invites the characters to meet with her employer that evening at 10:00 PM at an old dry goods warehouse with yellow doors on the Avenue of Whispers. She tells them that the job she has in mind for them involves a three- to four-day journey through the mountains and underground, and that they should be prepared for a fair amount of climbing. She also tells them that her employer is prepared to give them 500 gp just for hearing him out, and that they should be ready to set off on the mission immediately after the meeting tonight.

Galina then dismisses herself and says she'll go and speak with her employer about setting up the meeting. The PCs have the remainder of the day to organize themselves and obtain all the supplies they need. If the PCs decide to follow Galina, roll her Spot check frequently since she's still a bit nervous about being jumped by more of Vasilis' goons. If she spots the PCs following her, she asks them to back off since if she can see them, Vasilis' thugs can see them and she doesn't want to attract any more attention than events have already attracted.

If the PCs investigate the warehouse during normal hours, they find it to be buzzing with the normal business of the day. The workers know little about their employer, other than his name (Bradford Trend) and that he's feuding with another merchant (Dajoud Vasilis).

If any of Vasilis' thugs escaped from the PCs earlier, they gather more of their kin and ambush the PCs themselves in vengeance for their earlier interference. This new batch of thugs consists of two thugs per player character; use the statistics listed above for Vasilis' Thugs. As they spring the attack, the thugs shout threats like, "You arrogantly involve yourself in things that do not concern you!" or, "Trend never did have a lot of friends, and now he'll have a few less!"

MEETING ON THE AVENUE OF WHISPERS

Night brings silence to the Avenue of Whispers. A few night watchmen patrol the perimeter of their respective businesses, and what few passers-by still walk the street move hurriedly toward more populated and better-lighted sections of Polvar.

A large building looms over the street here, a massive rectangular structure with a stone foundation about 15 feet high. A second story of wooden planks adds another 15 feet to the height. The warehouse has no windows, and only two yellow doors. One's obviously for foot traffic, while the other much larger door is apparently for large shipments. Signs above each door read "Bradford Trend Imports" in fancy red lettering.

Two night watchmen armed with longswords walk together in the shadows around the building.

One of the night watchmen patrolling the warehouse is actually Galina disguised as a guardsman. When she sees the PCs approach, she quickly approaches them and leads them through the smaller door, where Bradford Trend (male human Exp4) and six of his guards (male and female human Ftr1) wait.

Trend is a lavishly dressed thin human in his early 40s. His fingers are decorated with several rings. He keeps his dull blonde hair long and untied. Trend welcomes the adventurers, and asks them to follow him up a short flight of stairs to his office. Galina accompanies them.

Once in the office, Trend sits down at a large cluttered desk and hands a sack of 500 gp to the characters in thanks for hearing him out. He then explains why he needs the PCs' help: Galina noticed earlier in the day that one of the PCs is similar in size and build to Trend's daughter, Felicia. Trend gets right to the point—he wants this character to disguise himself or herself as his daughter and lead a would-be assassin into the wilderness while his daughter is escorted safely to another city. You should select a Medium female PC as the character who most looks like Felicia; if there are no such PCs in the group, simply pick the PC who most closely approximates the size and shape of a human woman. Remember that a disguise that incorporates

PERSONALITIES OF POLVAR

Trend

Vasilis

Galina

a different gender or race suffers a cumulative +2 to the Disguise check DC (*Player's Handbook* 73).

Trend explains that this ruse is required so that his daughter can arrive safely at a secret wedding location some distance from Highfolk. His nemesis Dajoud Vasilis has been attempting to run Trend out of business for some time now, and recently his attempts have taken a turn for the violent. Several of Trend's caravans have been attacked and many of his employees have been killed. Vasilis even hired a yuan-ti assassin named Maliss to kill Trend, but fortunately the attempt on his life failed. Now Trend's daughter, Felicia, has become the target of Vasilis' aggression, and a contract has been placed on her life.

Trend adds that he's gone to the city constables several times with his problems, but they've been unresponsive, openly siding with the popular Baklunish merchant Vasilis and deriding his protests as the ungentlemanly complaints of an ignorant foreigner. "These westerners," he tells the PCs, "are not like you or me."

Since Vasilis uses local street gangs for assistance, it's hard to link the trouble Trend has experienced back to Vasilis. Trend fears that the constables, and perhaps even Polvar's political leadership, have been bribed to stay out of the conflict.

Trend feels that he can protect himself from danger, but he knows he can't protect his daughter if she remains in town, so he has arranged for her to marry the son of Alec Brisbane, a famous merchant in the free city of Highfolk. Not only will this move strengthen Trend's own business, but it gets his daughter out of Polvar and under the protection of one of the most powerful merchant families in the region.

If the PCs suggest having Vasilis killed, Trend explains that he doesn't share Vasilis' taste for murder, and notes that acting openly against a native merchant would spoil his access to the fertile markets of the Baklunish West. In any case, Vasilis is reputed to be a powerful sorcerer in addition to a canny merchant, and his home is in the fairly distant city of Molvar—so it would be difficult to reach him in time to save his daughter.

Trend's plan to trick Maliss with a decoy is not without risk. He needs someone to disguise him or herself as his daughter and then to lead Maliss into a "shortcut" to Highfolk. This shortcut leads through a largely untraveled canyon and into a dangerous and confusing underground river, eventually connecting to an underground lake below the Free Town of Highfolk. Trend has secretly arranged to have his daughter's wedding in the town of Falwur, but as long as Vasilis (and by extension Maliss) believes she is being escorted to Highfolk via this shortcut, she should be safe.

Trend impresses upon the PCs that they must keep Maliss distracted for at least 3 days. As long as the yuan-ti killer believes he's on the trail, Vasilis won't expend further energy trying to track down Felicia; the yuan-ti's services don't come cheaply. Should Maliss be slain or permanently incapacitated, however, Vasilis will be forced to start over and will quickly uncover the deception. Trend knows that Vasilis is keeping a close eye on Maliss after his recent failure, and that Vasilis is using a pair of *status rings* (see the "New Magic Items" sidebar) to keep track of his assassin's health. Trend also believes that Vasilis remains in regular contact with Maliss by using *sending* spells regularly. Once 3 days have passed, Felicia will be beyond Vasilis' reach and Maliss' fate becomes a matter of the PCs' discretion.

Trend would like the PCs to set out on the mission immediately. Assuming they accept his offer, he calls out and a woman wearing a heavy hooded cloak and robe enters the room from another door, along with her escort of guards. This is Felicia. Trend provides the PCs with three *potions of disguise self* (caster level 4) brewed by Galina to aid in their deception, but warns them that because they only last for 40 minutes, the potions should be kept for emergencies. Felicia carries a dagger, but isn't

a trained combatant so whomever assumes her disguise shouldn't carry any obvious weapons or wear any obvious armor.

Trend tells the PCs he's prepared to reward them with 6,000 gp if they can delay Maliss for the next 3 days. The characters can try to bargain for a higher fee; Trend's current attitude is friendly but if he can be made helpful with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 20), he raises his reward to 8,000 gp.

Trend also presents the party with a letter, addressed to "The Druid of Ehlonna's Scar." This letter promises the druid that he will be repaid for any assistance he gives to the bearers of the note, especially for any help he can provide in navigating the Skuttlerun River. Trend explains that the druid, whose name he's unsure of, is known to help travellers get through the region. Finally, Trend can supply light horses to any characters who don't already have mounts.

THE DISGUISE

The most important thing for the characters to maintain during the next 3 days is the disguise. Once you determine which character will assume the disguise, you should roll the check in secret to determine its success. A character can take 10 on this check, but he cannot take 20 since there is a definite penalty for failure.

Felicia is an adult human female; for each of these categories (age, race, and gender) that the character doesn't share in common with her, the disguise check has a –2 penalty.

Maliss has a base Spot check result of +24. He recognizes Felicia on sight (and thus gains a +4 bonus on Spot checks to penetrate the disguise), and knows that she's an aristocrat with little combat training and no magic skills. If he sees the disguised character fight with any level of skill or use magic, he gains another +4 bonus on his Spot check to see through the disguise. Spells like *disguise self* are quite helpful in offsetting Maliss' keen eyes, but the party's greatest ally in maintaining the deception is keeping some distance between Maliss and the disguise; remember that for every 10 feet of distance between the yuan-ti and the disguise, he suffers a –1 penalty on his Spot check. Maliss typically takes 10 on his Spot checks; he only rolls if he sees something strange, such as "Felicia" casting spells.

If Maliss discovers the deception, he immediately returns to Polvar to pick up Felicia's actual trail. The next time Vasilis contacts him with a *sending*, Maliss reports the development. The PCs could still prevent him from killing Felicia if this occurs, but they'll have to track the yuan-ti and catch up with him before they can stop him.

LEAVING POLVAR

Maliss knows that Trend plans to wed Felicia to a powerful family in Highfolk, and he knows that if she reaches the city and the protection of that family he won't be able to kill her without great risk to himself. He suspects that Trend is preparing to sneak her out of the city, and has agents hidden throughout Polvar watching and waiting for Trend to make his move. Maliss is watching Trend's mansion himself, fully expecting Trend and his daughter to emerge. He has no idea that Trend has already moved his daughter to the warehouse. Nevertheless, he has not left the warehouse unattended. He has had Jun-Olip, one of his kobold minions, station a raven familiar nearby.

Trend wants the PCs, including the disguised "Felicia," to visibly but quickly leave the warehouse and make for Elhonna's Scar immediately. As the PCs leave the warehouse, the raven observes them. Jun-Olip is less than a mile away. He senses this development via his empathic bond with the raven, and immediately informs Maliss. This move surprises Maliss, and it takes him about an hour to gather his kobolds and gear and set out after the PCs. Despite this initial delay, Maliss will have numerous opportunities to catch up to the characters.

CHAPTER TWO: EHLONNA'S SCAR

The journey to Ehlonna's Scar is split into three stages.

The first stage involves the journey from Polvar to Ehlonna's Scar. This section of the journey should pose little problem to the characters; the ground is relatively flat and open. The distance from Polvar to the Scar is 10 miles. The terrain is hilly, but there's a faint trail that the characters can follow. Travel speeds are 3/4 normal in this stage.

The second stage comprises the bulk of this chapter; Ehlonna's Scar is a fairly dangerous region, and there are numerous distractions and denizens within that can slow down the characters. Even without these distractions, the terrain inside the scar is fairly rough; travel speeds here are 3/4 normal as well.

The third stage is detailed in chapter three; this stage consists of a journey along an underground river that eventually leads to a subterranean port below Highfolk. Details on travel times for this section can be found in chapter three.

You should study the rules for overland movement on pages 162–164 of the *Player's Handbook* before running this adventure. Travel times are summarized here, assuming the characters are riding light horses with a speed of 60 ft.; if this isn't the case, you'll need to adjust travel times appropriately. Maliss travels in a chariot for the majority of the trip. His chariot is drawn by a light warhorse, and his kobold minions ride light warhorses as well; the base speed of this group is 60 ft. While Maliss is tracking, however, it drops to 30 ft. unless he takes a –5 penalty on his Survival check.

THE TRAIL

Maliss follows the PCs using his Track feat (*Player's Handbook* 101), or follows them by sight. Smart PCs do their best to keep ahead of him, yet give him ample clues as to where they are heading. The ground between Polvar and Ehlonna's Scar is firm, but once the characters reach the canyon the ground becomes hard. Once the characters reach the canyon, Maliss picks up the pace and moves at normal speed, incurring a –5 penalty on Survival checks to track the characters.

Jun-Olip's raven familiar also follows the party at a distance of 200 feet (–20 on Spot checks for distance). Jun-Olip stays in mental contact with his familiar as long as he's within one mile of the

raven. As long as Maliss is within sight of the PCs or Jun-Olip is within one mile of his familiar (and the familiar can see the PCs), Maliss is not required to make a Track check to follow them.

MOVING FROM ENCOUNTER TO ENCOUNTER

The title of each encounter area in this chapter is followed by several entries provided to aid in tracking the progress of the PCs and Maliss.

Travel Distance: This entry gives the distance between the encounter and the previous encounter. Both the PCs and Maliss must traverse this distance in order to reach the encounter in question.

Travel Time (30 ft.): This entry gives the approximate time required for a creature to travel from the previous encounter to the current encounter, assuming the traveler has a speed of 30 ft.

Travel Time (60 ft.): This entry gives the approximate time required for a creature to travel from the previous encounter to the current encounter, assuming the traveler has a speed of 60 ft.

Short Cut: This entry lists a Survival DC and a time increment. A character who makes the Survival DC finds a shortcut to the next encounter; this reduces the travel time to the next encounter by the listed time. Not all encounters have short cuts. This Survival check can be made only once per encounter. Of course, if the PCs take a short cut and then Maliss successfully tracks them, he gains the benefits of the short cut as well.

Delay: If the characters manage to bypass an encounter or otherwise leave its dangers for Maliss to encounter, the yuan-ti's progress is delayed by the time listed in this entry.

Attrition: This entry lists any casualties or loss of resources that Maliss and his minions suffer in the encounter. They try to conserve their resources for the inevitable confrontation with the PCs, but Maliss is quick to cure any wounded NPCs with charges from his *wand of cure moderate wounds*. The number of charges he uses during a delay are indicated as a die roll; if the wand is out of charges, reduce the hit points of each kobold and Maliss by the listed amount. Maliss generally takes less damage in these encounters. If an NPC is reduced to zero hit points, Maliss calls for an 8-hour rest. If an NPC is killed, Maliss redistributes that NPC's gear amongst the survivors and carries on.

RESTING

Because there are several spellcasters in Maliss's entourage, he must rest at least once a day for 8 hours. They do the majority of their travel during the night, resting from the hours of 9:00 AM to 6:30 PM; the additional 90 minutes is used to eat, set up camp, and prepare spells.

Maliss calls for an early rest if he or one of his entourage are badly wounded and need time to recover.

MALISS AND THE KOBOLDS (EL 11)

Maliss' group consists of himself and five kobold minions: Burogerk the barbarian, Gurken the fighter, and three sorcerers

named Alrughf, Jun-olip, and Krat. The six of them together present a formidable force that can easily overwhelm the PCs. As the chase proceeds, some of his kobold minions likely meet grisly ends. A wise party avoids any conflicts with this group until the last possible moment.

If at any point during the chase Maliss catches up to the characters, he immediately engages them. He uses his *nervewrack longbow* to attack "Felicia" at a range of up to 500 feet. Remember to apply the appropriate penalty to his attack rolls for such long range. His kobold sorcerers use their long-range spells or weapons against "Felicia" as well, although as needed they direct their attacks at anyone attempting to provide aid to their target. The group does its best to maintain range superiority, closing to melee only if it becomes obvious to them that their targets are helpless or weak.

Maliss, Male Yuan-ti Halfblood Rgr5: CR 10; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 12d8+24; hp 70; Init +5; Spd 20 ft, climb 15, swim 15 ft; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +15 melee (1d6+3/18–20, masterwork scimitar wielded as a two-handed weapon) or +14 melee (1d6+2, tail) or +14 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *+1 nervewrack longbow*); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+3/18–20, masterwork scimitar wielded as a two-handed weapon) and +9 melee (1d6+1, tail) or +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *+1 nervewrack longbow*); SA archery combat style, constrict 1d6+3, favored enemy (elves) +2, favored enemy (humans) +2, *produce acid*, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ *alternate form*, *chameleon power*, darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison*, scent, spell resistance 16, wild empathy +9; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +12, Climb +18 (+20 with ropes), Escape Artist +1 (+3 with ropes), Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +9, Hide +11 (+21 when using *chameleon power*), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +14, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +14, Move Silently +10, Spot +24, Survival +16 (+18 in aboveground natural environments), Swim +18, Use Rope +10.

Feats: Alertness[B], Blind-Fight[B], Combat Expertise, Dodge, Endurance[B], Improved Initiative, Mobility, Rapid Shot[B], Spring Attack, Track[B].

Ranger Spells Prepared (1; save DC 14 + spell level): 1—*longstrider*.

Possessions: *+1 leather armor*, masterwork scimitar, *+1 nervewrack longbow*, 40 arrows, *ring of protection +1*, *ring of status*, *eyes of the eagle*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (20 charges), 4 vials of blue whinnis poison, two gold armbands worth 1,000 gp each, 30 gp, garnet worth 300 gp.

Zortan, light warhorse animal companion: CR —; Large animal; HD 3d8+9; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 60 ft., AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +9; Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, hoof); Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, 2 hooves) and –1 melee (1d3+1, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ link, low-light vision, scent, share spells; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Endurance, Run.

Tricks: Attack, Come, Defend, Down, Guard, Track, Work.

Alrughf, Male Kobold Sor4: CR 4; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 4d4+4; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp –4; Atk +2 melee (1d3–2/19–20, masterwork small dagger); SA spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2. Will +6; Str 6, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Listen +2, Search +2, Spellcraft +7, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Tolarak is within arm's reach), Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/4; Spell DC 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance*; 1—*mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2—*web*.

Possessions: *Wand of polymorph* (5 charges), masterwork small dagger, two gold bracelets worth 10 gp each.

Tolarak, rat familiar: CR —; Tiny magical beast; HD effectively 4; hp 8; Init +2; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp –10; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d3–4, bite); SA deliver touch spells; SQ empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, scent, share spells; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +14, Move Silently +10, Swim +10.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

Burogerk, male kobold Bbn3: CR 3; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 3d12+3; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 40 ft; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/19–20, +1 *small longsword*) or +6 ranged (1d6/19–20, small light crossbow); SA rage 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, illiteracy, light sensitivity, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Rage: hp 36; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4/19–20, +1 *small longsword* wielded two-handed) or +6 ranged (1d6/19–20, small light crossbow); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +4.

Skills: Bluff +3, Craft (trapmaking) +3, Hide +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Swim +4.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes.

Possessions: +1 *small longsword*, small light crossbow, 20 bolts, masterwork chain shirt, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 10 gp, 6 sp.

Gurken, male kobold Ftr6: CR 6; Small humanoid (reptilian), HD 6d10+12; hp 49; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +11/+6 ranged (1d6+2/×3, +1 *small composite longbow* (+1 Strength) or +9/+4 melee (1d4+1/18–20, masterwork small scimitar); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Climb +5, Search +1, Swim +6.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Shot on the Run, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Possessions: +1 *small composite longbow* (+1 Strength), 20 arrows, masterwork small scimitar, +1 *chain shirt*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *cloak of resistance* +1, 19 gp, 2 sp.

Jun-Olip, Male Kobold Sor2: CR 2; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d4; hp 5; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp –6; Atk –1 melee (1d3–3/19–20, small dagger) or +5 ranged (1d6/19–20, small light crossbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 4, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, resistance*; 1—*mage armor, magic missile*.

Skills: Concentration +5, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Listen +3, Search +2, Spellcraft +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Aoaki is in arm's reach), Combat Casting.

Possessions: Small light crossbow, 20 bolts, small dagger, *wand of magic missile* (12 charges), *wand of charm person* (11 charges), scroll of *fireball*, 2 sp.

Aoaki, raven familiar: CR —; Tiny magical beast; HD effectively 2; hp 2; Init +2; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp –12; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d2–5, claws); SQ empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, share spells; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +5.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common.

Krat, Female Kobold Sor2: CR 2; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d4+5; hp 10; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp –4; Atk +1 melee (1d3–1/19–20, small dagger) or +4 ranged (1d6/19–20, small light crossbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, resistance*; 1—*mage armor, grease*.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Nervewrack Weapon Quality

A *nervewrack* weapon causes intense pain to lance through the target's body on a successful critical hit. A creature that suffers damage from a critical hit with a *nervewrack* weapon suffers a –2 penalty to his Armor Class, attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and Reflex saves. The victim's speed is halved, and he must make a successful Concentration check (DC 15) to cast spells. This condition persists for 1d4 rounds.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *symbol of pain*; Price +1 bonus.

Ring of Status

Rings of status come in pairs. The wearer of a *ring of status* can mentally monitor the relative position and general condition of the person who wears the matching ring, as the *status* spell.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Forge Ring, *status*; Price 24,000 gp (for a pair).

Skills: Concentration +6, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Gamog is in arm's reach), Lightning Reflexes.

Possessions: Small light crossbow, 20 bolts, small dagger, *wand of magic missile* (6 charges), *wand of shocking grasp* (33 charges), scroll of *lightning bolt*, 2 sp.

Gamog, toad familiar: CR —; Diminutive magical beast; HD effectively 2; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 5 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp –16; Atk/Full Atk —; SQ amphibious, empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, share spells; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 6.

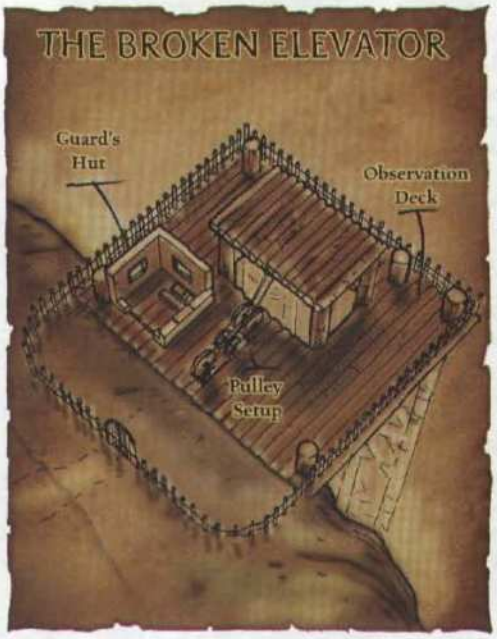
Skills: Hide +21, Listen +4, Spot +4.

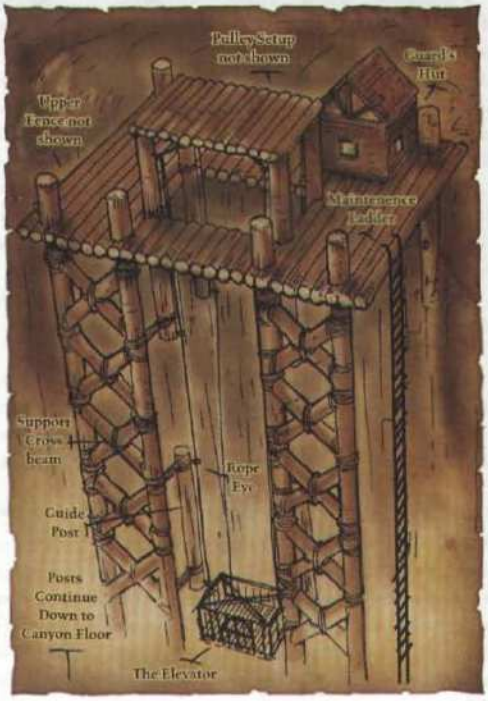
Feats: Alertness.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN EHLONNA'S SCAR

While Ehlonna's Scar is a relatively isolated area, it is rife with monstrous activity. Between each keyed encounter in the Scar, roll d% to determine if the characters come across some sort of encounter. If an encounter occurs but the PCs flee or otherwise avoid the encounter, it delays Maliss by 10 minutes.

d%	EL	Encounter
01–55	0	No encounter.
56–65	3	Assassin Vine: hp 30 (*Monster Manual* 20)
66–70	5	10 Stirges: hp 5 each; (*Monster Manual* 236)
71–75	7	Rock Slide: (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 90)
76–80	3	Giant Wasp: hp 32; (*Monster Manual* 285)
81–85	5	2 Formian Warriors: hp 22 each; (*Monster Manual* 109); These formians are part of a scout group exploring the Scar as a potential hive site.
86–90	3	Giant Eagle: hp 29; (*Monster Manual* 102); The giant eagle avoids the arrowhawk nest (area 2). If you roll this encounter near area 2, reroll the result. The eagle's initial attitude toward the PCs is indifferent. If it can be adjusted to helpful it agrees to ambush Maliss when it sees the yuan-ti. This creates a 10-minute delay for the would-be assassin.
91–93	7	Ethereal Filcher: hp 99; This is the Large ethereal filcher from area 7; it tries to steal something from a PC and flees to its lair.
94–95	5	Gibbering Mouther: hp 30; (*Monster Manual* 126)
96–97	5	2 Cockatrices (2): hp 27 each; (*Monster Manual* 37)
98–99	7	Dragonne: hp 76; (*Monster Manual* 89)
00	6	3 Merchants (Exp2) and 5 guards (Ftr2): These merchants decided to cut time on their journey to Highfolk by taking the Scar, and are having a rough time of it. They tell the PCs that they've lost two of their guards to a previous encounter, and offer them a reward of 500 gp if the PCs agree to escort them to Highfolk safely. This encounter occurs only once.





INTO THE SCAR

Ehlonna's Scar is approximately 40 miles long, but it rarely reaches a width of more than 60 feet. The canyon is a deep, "V"-shaped rift created by springtime runoff from the Yatil Mountains. The canyon walls are remarkably steep and fairly difficult to climb (Climb check DC 15). The canyon itself averages about 225 feet deep at the western end and 350 feet deep at the eastern end; the terrain surrounding the rift is rugged and grueling to traverse.

Inside the canyon, the temperature is much cooler and lighting is fairly shadowy. Creatures with light sensitivity (such as Maliss' kobolds) suffer no penalties from sunlight. A cold stream of water runs the length of the rift, eventually emptying into the underground Skuttlerun River. The floor of the Scar is strewn with rocks and small boulders and an occasional patch of scrub brush that struggles to stay alive in the minimal sunlight. At several points along the scar, geysers and hot springs provide additional dangers.

This adventure is assumed to take place in the summer. If you set this adventure during the spring, the stream is 10 feet wide. The geyser pools in areas **3** and **5** are submerged, but still release their steam blasts at their regular intervals. During the winter, the rift walls are icy and wet, increasing the Climb check to a DC of 20. The geyser pools are not iced over, thanks to their higher temperatures.

OBSTACLES IN THE SCAR

Notable among the obstacles of the Scar are the four 20-foot drops in the floor of the canyon; the locations of these four cliffs are indicated on the map of the Scar. In order to aid travelers, wooden ramps have been built along one cliff face at each of these locations so travelers on horses can easily descend to the tier below. The PCs can destroy these ramps as they encounter them to slow down Maliss' progress. The characters could also rig a ramp to collapse when a horse or carriage uses it; this requires a successful Disable Device check (DC 25). Maliss sends a horse-mounted kobold down each ramp first; the fall deals 2d6 points of damage to the horse and the kobold when the ramp collapses. A destroyed or collapsing ramp adds a 10-minute delay to the yuan-ti's group, and forces them to abandon their horses and chariot and continue the chase on foot. In this case, Maliss casts *longstrider* to keep up with the kobolds.

Wooden Ramp: Hardness 5; hp 90; Break DC 28.

At four locations along the length of the rift, the walls are pitted and eroded enough that it takes little work to generate a rockslide. These locations are noted by the "Rock Slide Site" designations on the map of the canyon. In order to notice a section of cliff that can be used to create a rockslide, a PC must make a Spot check (DC 28) as he passes one of these areas. The rockslide can be triggered with a successful Disable Device check (DC 25) or by inflicting 60 points of damage to the cliff wall. Once the rockslide begins, it creates a 30-foot-wide bury zone with a 40-foot slide zone on either side (DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 90). A rockslide delays Maliss by 30 minutes.

Weak rock: 3-feet thick, Hardness 8; hp 60; Disable Device (DC 25).

1. THE BROKEN ELEVATOR (EL 6)

From Polvar:

Travel Distance: 10 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 4 hours, 20 minutes

Travel Time (60 ft.): 2 hours, 10 minutes

Short Cut: None

Delay: *Elevator unrepaired*: 30 minutes; *Elevator disabled*: 40 minutes; *Elevator destroyed*: 0 minutes, but Maliss and his kobold minions are forced to continue the chase on foot at a speed of 30 ft.

Attrition: None.

A small wooden fort sits perched on the edge of a deep chasm that splits the hills and runs into the Yatil Mountains to the east. A fence made of wood and reinforced with spiked bands of metal surrounds the fort. The fence wraps around to the back of the fort, where a large observation deck droops precariously over the canyon's edge. An intricate network of pulleys and ropes rises above the fort, and several thick ropes descend into the chasm.

This fort served as a watchpost in times past when Ehlonna's Scar saw much more foot traffic. The ropes and pulleys are an elevator that could once be used to raise and lower a large platform from the fort down into the Scar. This elevator works on a pulley-and-weight system, and was normally raised and lowered by a team of pack animals that were kept in the fenced-in area near the fort.

Inside the fort is a small countertop and space for bookkeeping. Through a door behind the counter is a single bed and small cabinet. The cabinet is empty, and no one's manned the fort or slept in the bed in many years. The entire building creaks and groans as the characters wander around in it; the structure is in a bad state of disrepair, although there's no real chance of it falling into the Scar without some significant "help."

Also on the deck, the characters discover the space where the open-air elevator car meets the deck. The car is stuck three-quarters of the way up the canyon wall.

Once the PCs step onto the loading deck read the following:

The loading deck is 70 feet long and 35 feet wide, and more than half this width hangs over the canyon. The deck is made of flat-topped logs fastened together with eight-inch-long bolts. The whole thing is supported by four massive wooden scaffoldings that rise up from the canyon floor to meet the deck.

While the deck isn't as badly damaged as the fort, it still shows signs of wear; standing water has rotted some of its planks. The thick ropes descend through a large opening in the platform down to a dangling elevator platform about 50 feet down. A gap in the deck reveals a stopped platform about one-quarter of the way down the canyon. A large iron lever protrudes from the deck next to this gap. A rickety ladder built into the scaffolding closest to the elevator extends down to the floor of Ehlonna's Scar.

A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill check (DC 13) or a Disable Device skill check (DC 20) reveals that the elevator has been disabled; its counterweights have been cut loose. These weights lie in a huge pile below the elevator. The elevator car itself is jammed in place.

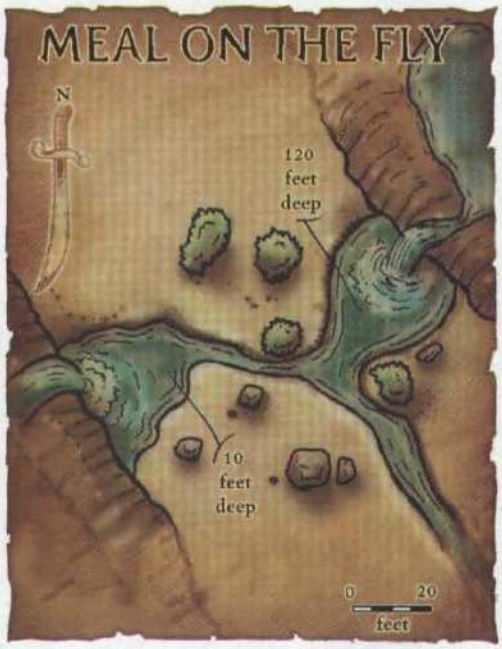
Repairing the elevator is actually a fairly quick task. Before it can function, the counterweights must be reattached; a character can attach the counterweights with a successful Use Rope check (DC 20) and 10 minutes of work. The other end of the ropes must then be untangled and retied with a second Use Rope check (DC 20) and 10 more minutes of work. Finally, the elevator car itself must then be pushed back into place with a successful Strength check (DC 24).

Once the elevator is repaired, the counterweights and the elevator platform itself must be re-aligned so that it can be raised or lowered. This requires a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) or a Disable Device check (DC 25). The elevator itself is normally raised by a team of draft horses pulling on ropes attached to the elevator or the counterweights; it rises or sinks at a rate of 5 ft. per round, and thus takes a about four and a half minutes to fully travel from the fort to the floor of the Scar, or vice-versa. The characters or creatures pulling on the ropes must be able to drag the weight of the elevator (5,000 lbs. plus the weight of the elevator's cargo) in order to move it; this normally requires two heavy horses or 3–4 light horses for the job. The brake lever in the observation deck must be disengaged for the elevator to move. If the brake lever is disengaged while nothing is holding the ropes and the elevator car is loaded, the elevator falls, and anything on the elevator (as well as the elevator itself) suffers falling damage according to the height of the fall.

When the elevator is operational, the car can carry 1,000 lbs. with no strain. Each additional 50 lbs. carries a cumulative 5% chance that the elevator's ropes snap or its pulleys give out. A successful Knowledge (engineering) check (DC 15) determines the elevator's maximum safe load weight.

The characters can use the elevator to slow Maliss considerably. A successful Disable Device check and 10 minutes of work renders the elevator useless until a new Disable Device check is made to repair it (these are opposed checks). Alternately, the characters could just destroy the elevator after they're done with it; doing so forces Maliss to abandon his chariot and horses and pursue the characters on foot.

Creatures: Maliss makes his first attempt on "Felicia" as the characters reach this elevator, most likely as they are trying to repair it to lower their horses. Although he probably won't catch up to them for at least an hour, he orders Alrughf to use his *wand of polymorph* on Gurken to transform the kobold fighter into a very young brass dragon. The polymorphed kobold then flies to intercept the characters; his vastly improved fly speed allows him to catch up to them with ease. Alrughf goes with Gurken and uses additional wand charges to maintain the *polymorphed* form. Since a charge from the wand



lasts for 7 minutes, he'll need to use all five remaining charges for this tactic. Gurken drops Alrughf off after the final charge is expended, just before he attacks the PCs at the elevator. Alrughf observes the battle from afar and reports the results (as well as any strengths and weaknesses the PCs display) back to Maliss.

Gurken, male kobold (in very young brass dragon form) Ftr6: CR 6; Small dragon (fire); HD 6d10+12; hp 49; Init +0; Spd 60 ft. burrow 30 ft., fly 120 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +3; Atk +8 melee (1d6+1, bite); Full Atk +8 melee (1d6+1, bite) and +3 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Climb +5, Search +1, Swim +6.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Shot on the Run, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Tactics: Gurken focuses his attacks on "Felicia," doing his best to kill the character with his bite and claw attacks. Chances are that he won't be able to see through the disguise, but if he does he immediately breaks off combat and tries to return to Maliss to report the deception. He also tries to flee if brought below 15 hit points.

Fort Wall: 10 ft. tall, 1 ft. wide; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break DC 26; Climb DC 16. *Notes*: The spiked metal bands on the wall's top and sides make climbing over it a dangerous prospect. A climber must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) each round spent climbing or suffer 2d4 points of damage from the spikes.

Wooden Support Posts: 1 ft wide; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break DC 26; Climb DC 21.

Elevator Car: Hardness 5; hp 120; Break DC 28.

Development: If the characters take too long repairing or exploring the elevator, it's likely that Maliss catches up to them. If this occurs, the yuan-ti does his best to kill "Felicia" using his ranged attacks. If the PCs try to escape by taking the elevator, he rides in and cuts the ropes in an attempt to cause the elevator to plummet to the ground below.

2. A MEAL ON THE FLY (EL 6)

From The Broken Elevator:

Travel Distance: 1 mile
Travel Time (30 ft.): 30 minutes
Travel Time (60 ft.): 15 minutes
Short Cut: DC 18, 5 minutes

Delay: *Encounter Active*: 20 minutes; *Encounter Cleared*: 10 minutes.
Attrition: *Encounter Active*: 1d4+2 wand charges or 2d6 damage to each NPC (1d6 to Maliss).

> Two tremendous waterfalls drain into the canyon from the mountains above, the water collecting into two churning pools that connect in the center, completely blocking the route. A stream flows to the east from the pool down the center of the rift floor.

The water between the pools is fairly shallow; characters on horseback can ford the water with ease. Maliss can cross the water in his chariot, but it takes him a bit longer (see Delay above).

Creatures: A group of three juvenile arrowhawks claim the cliff walls above these pools as their own. They readily attack anything they spy in the canyon below.

Juvenile Arrowhawks (3): hp 19, 17, 16; *Monster Manual* 19.

3. SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM (EL 6)

From A Meal on the Fly:

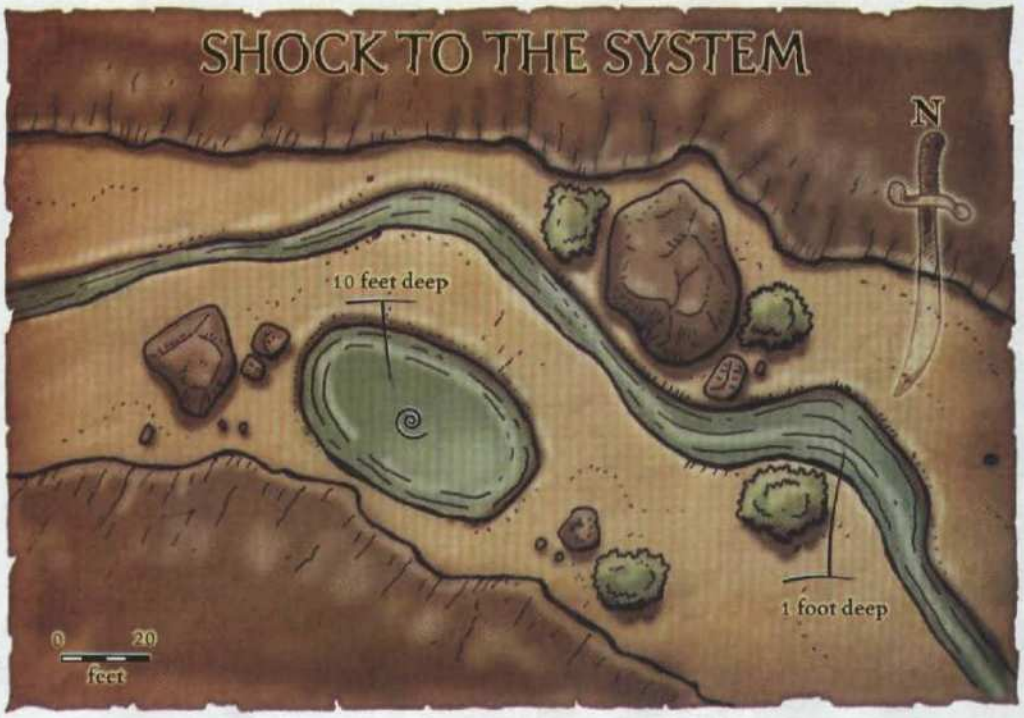
Travel Distance: 2 1/2 miles
Travel Time (30 ft.): 70 minutes
Travel Time (60 ft.): 35 minutes
Short Cut: DC 22, 10 minutes

Delay: *Encounter Active*: 10 minutes; *Encounter Cleared*: 0 minutes.
Attrition: *Encounter Active*: 1d4+2 wand charges or 2d6 damage to each NPC (1d6 to Maliss).

> A large bubbling pool of steaming water sits against the southern cliff wall here. To the northeast of the pool a large boulder protrudes from the rift floor.

The bubbling pool is one of the cooler pools in Ehlonna's Scar. A geyser in the pool erupts once every 15 hours, after which the water temperature peaks at 110°F.

Creatures: A colony of shocker lizards uses the shallows of the pool as nesting grounds. Lately, they've been preyed upon by the arrowhawks in area 2. The lizards prefer to feed on baboons, but aren't above ambushing PCs for a change of diet.



Shocker lizards (5): hp 15, 13, 12, 12, 11; *Monster Manual* 224.

Trap: If a character is close enough to the geyser when it goes off, he may suffer some damage from the blast of superheated water.

Geyser Blast: CR 2 hazard; erupts once every 15 hours; 30-ft.-high spray of boiling water (4d6 fire damage in a 15-ft. radius, Reflex save DC 15 half, no save if target is above geyser when in erupts).

Treasure: A successful Search check (DC 18) made in the pool uncovers a small scattering of loot from recent shocker lizard victims. This consists of 2 pp, 65 gp, 50 gp, and a +1 *greataxe*.

4. THE PALADIN'S TOMB (EL 4)

From Shock to the System:

Travel Distance: 2 1/2 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 70 minutes

Travel Time (60 ft.): 35 minutes

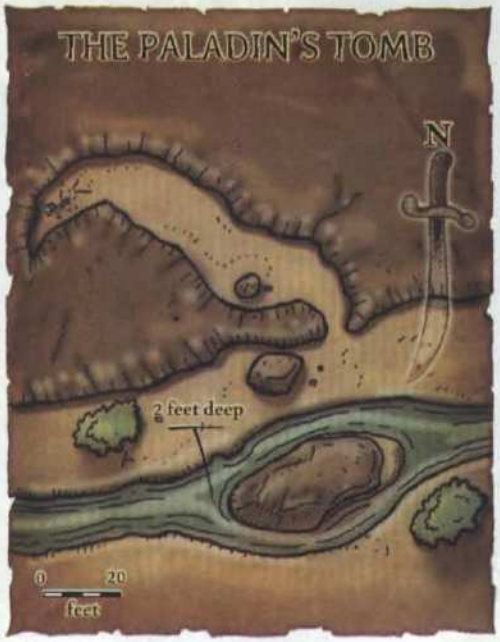
Short Cut: DC 20, 5 minutes

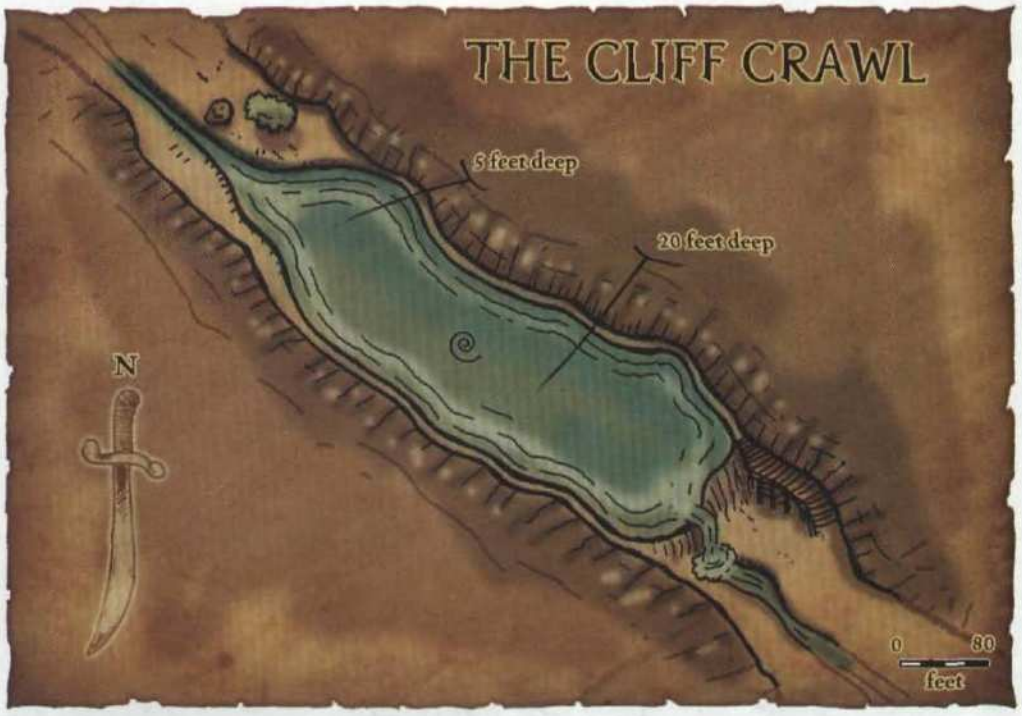
Delay: 0 minutes; Maliss and the kobolds pass by the cave without noticing it (but see Development below).

Attrition: None.

A huge mass of volcanic rock juts from the waters of the stream here, its sides polished smooth by the wind and water. A dense patch of shrubbery grows along the base of the cliff to the north.

Characters who investigate the shrubbery can find a narrow cave entrance at the base of the cliff with a successful Search check (DC 15). This entrance opens into a long but narrow





cavern. A natural vent in the far end of the cave opens to the sky above, making this an excellent place to camp for the night.

Creatures: Four large monstrous centipedes lurk in the depths of the cave. The centipedes live in the cave, but travel through the cracks and crevasses of the canyon to scavenge for food in the forest above.

Large Monstrous Centipedes (4): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 286.

Treasure: At the deepest end of the cavern lies the skeletal body of Erethian the Younger, an elf paladin Knight of the Hart. Lying near his body are his possessions: a suit of banded mail with lockable gauntlets, a helmet, a heavy steel shield with a coat of arms (a pair of antlers on a green background), three empty potion vials, and a prayerbook that bears some water damage.

A successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 20) recognizes the coat of arms on the paladin's shield as that of the Knights of the High Forest, a chivalric sect of elves based in the Highfolk region and affiliated with the Knights of the Hart influential in the nearby kingdoms of Veluna and Furyondy. (Substitute a similar order from your campaign if appropriate.)

The writing in the prayerbook is badly water-damaged, but a successful Decipher Script check (DC 25) can unravel the text on the last few pages. On these pages Erethian writes (in Elven) of how he was traveling west through the canyon and fell into a steaming pool of water after navigating a treacherous ledge overlooking the pool. The water burned him badly, and he mentions that he dropped his sword, an inheritance from his father, into the pool and was unable to retrieve it. He writes of how he managed to make it to this cavern before the pain of his burns forced him to stop. He apparently knew he was dying, for the last few fragments in the book beg anyone who finds his body to recover his sword and return it to Lord Narcoriel of the High Forest, the knight's benefactor, teacher, and sponsor into the prestigious Knights of the Hart. Unfortunately, Erethian the Younger perished from his wounds before he could indicate where his former mentor was located.

Development: This cave makes an excellent campsite, but if the players decide to rest here there's a good chance Maliss finds them. Even if he fails to track them to the cave entrance, he may notice hidden guards, smoke or glow from a campfire, or some other sign that the PCs stopped to rest. If he suspects the PCs are in the cave, he assumes the form of a tiny viper and slithers into the cave to scout it out. Note that as a Tiny creature, he gains a +8 bonus on Hide checks.

After scouting the cave, Maliss orders Alrughf to cast a *web* spell on the cave's entrance. He then orders his kobolds to surround the cave entrance, hiding behind trees or boulders before he has Jun-Olip and Krat read their scrolls and fire a *lightning bolt* and a *fireball* into the cave on the resting PCs. The group then lays siege to the cave, attacking anyone who emerges with ranged attacks and *magic missiles*.

5. THE CLIFF CRAWL (EL 3)

From The Paladin's Tomb:

Travel Distance: 2 1/2 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 70 minutes
Travel Time (60 ft.): 35 minutes
Short Cut: None
Delay: 30 minutes
Attrition: There's a 25% chance that one randomly selected kobold and mount fall into the lake and are slain.

A small lake of steaming water, its surface bubbling and churning, fills the canyon from side to side. The lake is about 140 feet long, and a large uprising of volcanic rock forms a natural dam at the far end. The water spills through a dip in the dam, forming a steaming waterfall at the far end.

Two 5-foot wide ledges, their surfaces damp with moisture and thick with algae and moss, skirt both sides of the lake at heights of up to 30 feet above the lake surface.

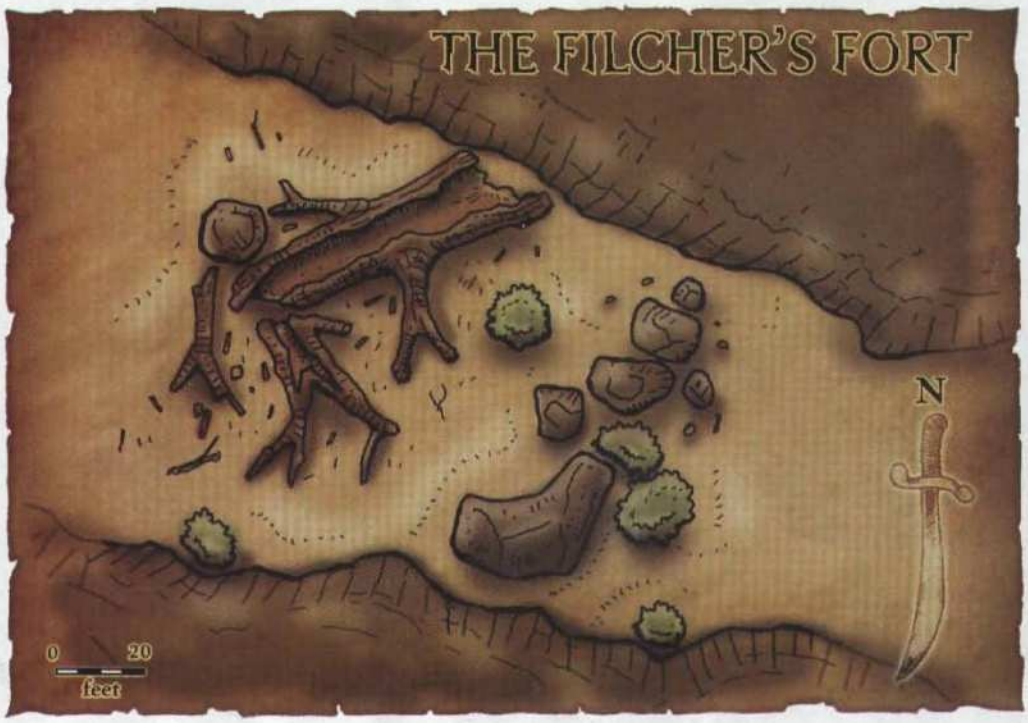
This boiling pool poses a terrible hazard. Normally, merchants take the northern ledge around the pool, leading any horses rather than riding them. The ledges are slippery and require a successful Balance check (DC 12) to navigate. Remember that making a Balance check assumes the character is moving half-speed; a character who moves full speed while trying to balance suffers a –5 penalty on his Balance check. A character riding a mount on a ledge must make a successful Ride check (DC 20) instead to navigate the ledge. A Huge or larger mount cannot move along the ledge unless it has a Climb speed. The cliff walls of this region are rather slippery and require a successful Climb check (DC 20) to navigate.

Failure of either check by 5 or more indicates a fall into the lake below. The initial fall into the lake only deals 1d3 points of nonlethal damage, but the water temperature poses a more significant threat. A character splashed with boiling water takes 1d6 points of fire damage. A character fully immersed in boiling water takes 6d6 points of fire damage per round.

Trap: A second hazard lurks in the depths of this pool; a large geyser in the pool's center erupts once every 10 minutes. A character who makes a successful Survival check (DC 20) upon observing the pool realizes that there's a good chance that at least one geyser is found in the pool. When the characters first arrive at this encounter, you should roll 1d10 to determine the number of minutes before the next eruption. Any characters on a ledge when the geyser erupts must immediately make a Balance check (DC 15) or be knocked into the boiling lake.

Geyser Blast: CR 3 hazard; erupts once every 10 minutes; 100 ft. high spray of boiling water (4d6 fire damage in a 60-ft. radius, Reflex save DC 15 for half damage, no save if target is above geyser when it erupts).

Treasure: Erethian the Younger (see area 4) dropped his sword when he fell into the water on an attempt to cross this lake several months ago. He was horribly burned but lived long enough to make his way back to area 4 before dying. He never did retrieve his sword. The sword now lies on the lake bed about 150 feet from the geyser; if the PCs know its approximate location from reading Erethian's prayerbook, they can find it with a



successful Search check (DC 20). The sword is a *+1 bane vs. chaotic outsiders longsword*.

Development: If Maliss and his gang catch up to the party here, they wait for the party to be about halfway across the lake before attacking them with long-range weapons.

If the PCs return Erethian's sword to Lord Narcoriel in the Vesve Forest east of Highfolk, the elderly elven knight noticeably darkens at the news. If there's a elf in the party, Narcoriel insists that character keep the sword as a reward. If not, he rewards the characters with 6,000 gp and his undying gratitude, which will come in handy if any members of the party are interested in a sponsorship into the Knights of the Hart.

6. A FORK IN THE SCAR

From The Cliff Crawl:

Travel Distance: 3 1/4 miles
Travel Time (30 ft.): 80 minutes
Travel Time (60 ft.): 40 minutes
Short Cut: DC 24, 10 minutes

Delay: None; Maliss knows the layout of the canyon and if he doesn't make a successful Survival check here to track the PCs he assumes they headed toward area 8 and continues to the northeast.

Attrition: None.

The canyon splits here, providing characters a choice as to which route to take. If the characters didn't think to ask Trend about the layout of Ehlonna's Scar, a successful Knowledge (geography) check (DC 15) indicates that character knows that the correct route toward Highfolk is to the northeast.

Although Maliss is naturally inclined to head to the northeast here, cunning PCs can lay a false trail for him to follow toward area 7.

7. THE FILCHER'S FORT (EL 7)

From A Fork in the Scar:

Travel Distance: 2 miles
Travel Time (30 ft.): 50 minutes
Travel Time (60 ft.): 25 minutes
Short Cut: None

Delay: *Encounter Active*: 20 minutes; *Encounter Cleared*; 10 minutes.
Attrition: *Encounter Active*: 2d6 wand charges or 4d6 damage to each NPC (2d6 damage to Maliss).

> Some time ago, a massive tree fell from a precarious perch on the cliff edge far above. The ruined tree has created a huge deadfall that now nearly blocks the Scar floor entirely.

Creature: A rather large ethereal filcher has lived in a large hollow deep in the deadfall for many years. The creature scours the surrounding region for trinkets and baubles to snatch, and has built up an impressive collection of loot here. The filcher often goes out into the canyon and its surroundings in search for goodies to snatch. The creature can be encountered elsewhere in the Scar as a wandering monster.

The filcher defends its lair with a fierce rage, drifting etherally out of the hollow inside the deadfall to attack anyone it sees or hears outside. The hollow inside the deadfall is fairly spacious, but the rubble is too densely packed for Medium or larger creatures to reach. A Small creature can squeeze through the gaps with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30); the filcher, of course, enters and exits its lair ethereally.

Advanced Ethereal Filcher: CR 7; Large Aberration; HD 15d8+30; hp 99; Init +7; Speed 40 ft; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +11; Grp +20; Atk/Full Atk +15 melee (1d8+7, bite); SQ darkvision 60 ft., detect magic, ethereal jaunt; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +8; Will +10; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +1, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +7.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Mobility, Spring Attack, Stealthy.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +2, pale blue rhomboid ioun stone.

Treasure: Tucked into a pack of moss inside the log is the loot the filcher's gathered over the years: 68 pounds of worthless but shiny trinkets, a large topaz worth 700 gp, an amethyst worth 120 gp, a tiny sliver of jade worth 90 gp, and a *ring of counterspells* (with *flesh to stone* cast into it). Any objects the filcher has nabbed from the PCs earlier in this adventure can be found here as well.

8. BABOON TERRITORY (EL 5)

From A Fork in the Scar:

Travel Distance: 4 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 110 minutes

Travel Time (60 ft.): 55 minutes

Short Cut: DC 17; 15 minutes

Delay: *Encounter Active*: 30 minutes (Maliss takes extra time slaughtering the baboons due to his excessive distaste for the creatures); *Encounter Cleared*: 0 minutes.

Attrition: *Encounter Active*: 1d4 wand charges or 2d4 damage to each NPC (1d4 damage to Maliss).

> A scrawny tree protruding from a patch of dusty soil here has had its bark rubbed smooth about two feet up from the ground. Bits of fur are lodged in the bark, and bits of bone and dung are scattered about its base.

A successful Knowledge (nature) check identifies the worn tree, bones, and dung as the territorial markings of baboons.

Creatures: This stretch of canyon, culminating in area 9, is the territory of a large band of especially feral and territorial baboons. These creatures use the bottom of the canyon as their nesting grounds, clambering up the cliff walls to hunt in the surrounding mountains for food. The baboons are aggressive to any intruders in this region except the druid, Gyman Bristlebak, who lives at further down the canyon.

Not long after the characters enter this section of the Scar they come across a small group of six baboons. These creatures are somewhat tougher than the standard plains-dwelling variety, and have mastered the art of hurling rocks at enemies and prey. The baboons hoot and holler and writhe about as the PCs approach, and once they come within 30 feet they begin hurling rocks. If at least half their number are incapacitated, the remaining baboons flee to their geyser pool.

A total of 18 baboons live here, led by an alpha male of great size. When the characters arrive, roll 2d6 to see how many baboons are found here; the alpha male is always found at the geyser pool. The baboons defend their pool fiercely, but do not pursue anyone who tries to escape to the northeast or southwest. The baboons sleep at the geyser pool at night. In the day, they bathe in the pool or hunt for food in the mountains above.

Scar Baboons (18): CR 1/2; Medium animal; HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +2; Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +3 ranged (1d4+2, thrown stone); SA throw stones; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5; Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Throw Stone (Ex): Scar baboons can throw stones with amazing accuracy. Thrown stones have a range increment of 10 ft. and a maximum range of 50 ft. Scar baboons do not suffer range penalties with thrown stones.

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +3, Spot +4.

Feat: Point-Blank Shot.

Alpha Scar Baboon: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+9; hp 26; Init +3; Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+6, bite) or +3 ranged (1d4+4, thrown stone); SA throw stones; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +6; Will +1; Str 19, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +12, Listen +3, Spot +4.

Feat: Point-Blank Shot.

Trap: In the center of the baboon territory a large bubbling pool of foul-smelling water sits at the base of a 20-foot cliff. This is the heart of the baboons' lands. The pool itself is about 30 feet wide and 70 feet long, and contains a single geyser that erupts once every 26 hours. The direct input of cool water by stream makes this pool much cooler than others along the canyon.

Geyser Blast: CR 2 hazard; erupts once every 26 hours; 30-ft.-high spray of boiling water (4d6 fire damage in a 15-ft. radius, Reflex save DC 15 half, no save if target is above geyser when in erupts)

9. THE DRUID'S HUT (EL 7)

From Baboon Territory:

Travel Distance: 3 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 70 minutes

Travel Time (60 ft.): 35 minutes

Short Cut: DC 22, 5 minutes

Delay: *Encounter Active*: 20 minutes; *Encounter Cleared*: 0 minutes.

Attrition: *Encounter Active*: 2d4 wand charges or 3d6 damage to each NPC (2d4 damage to Maliss).

An impressive wooden staircase seemingly grown out of living wood winds gracefully up the northwest cliff wall to its very peak nearly 320 feet above. There, a small wooden hut perches on the edge of the cliff.

The stairs are quite stable and can support the weight of several Large creatures at once.

Creatures: This hut is the dwelling of an elven druid named Gyman Bristlebak. Gyman has lived here with his animal companion (a mountain goat named Huron) for many years. Gyman spends most of his time caring for the wildlife in the canyon and in the wilderness area near the top of the canyon, exploring and patrolling the region. Nevertheless, he is at home when the PCs arrive in the area.

In general, Gyman has a sour personality, and his mood becomes even worse if he finds out that the PCs have slaughtered any of the natural inhabitants of the canyon, including the shocker lizards or the baboons. Despite his sour attitude, he agrees to help the PCs pass through the canyon, if only to get them out of his hair more efficiently. Presented with the note from Trend, he simply snorts derisively and uses a *wood shape* spell to craft a small rowboat out of a dead tree. He leaves the transport of the boat to the PCs, and expects them to move on immediately. This boat is somewhat larger than the standard-sized rowboat, and can accommodate 4 to 5 Medium characters. The boat weighs 200 lbs., however, and carrying it to the Skuttlerun may slow the PCs down enough for Maliss to catch up to them.

If the PCs are particularly crude or antagonistic, Gyman has no qualms about attacking them. In such a case, he sends Huron in to engage them in melee while he uses his spells to incapacitate and harm the characters.

Gyman Bristlebak, Male Elf Drd7: CR 7; Medium humanoid (elf), HD 7d8+14; hp 43; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+4/18–20, scimitar) or +9 (1d4+1 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *shock sling*); SA spells, wild shape 3/day; SQ animal companion, elf traits, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, wild empathy +7, woodland stride; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +12, Handle Animal +10, Heal +13, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +5, Ride +5, Search +4, Spellcraft +12, Spot +5, Survival +13 (+15 in aboveground natural environments).

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Scribe Scroll, Self-Sufficient.

Druid Spells Prepared (6/5/4/3/1): 0—*create water, detect magic, flare, mending* (2), *virtue*; 1—*cure light wounds* (2), *entangle, magic fang, speak with animals*; 2—*barkskin, flaming sphere, spider climb, wood shape*; 3—*cure moderate wounds, neutralize poison, sleet storm*, 4—*scrying*.

Possessions: Scimitar, +1 *shock sling*, hide armor, scroll of *cure critical wounds*, two scrolls of *animal messenger* and *goodberry*, scroll of *endure elements*, scroll of *obscuring mist*, scroll of *cure light wounds*, scroll of *giant vermin*.

Huron, male mountain goat: CR —; Medium animal; HD 6d8; hp 30; Init +3; Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +5 melee (1d6+3, head butt); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+3, head butt) and –2 melee (1d4+1, 2 hooves); SQ devotion, evasion, link, low-light vision, share spells; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7; Will +1; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +15, Jump +8, Listen +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (climb), Weapon Focus (head butt).

Tricks: Attack, Come, Defend, Down, Guard, Heel, Stay.

Development: Gyman's initial attitude is indifferent unless he knows the characters have slaughtered many of the Scar's indigenous creatures (shocker lizards and baboons in particular), in which case his attitude is unfriendly. If his attitude can be adjusted to helpful, he agrees to help the PCs delay Maliss if asked. He accomplishes this by throwing several *summoned nature's allies* at the yuan-ti's group; this increases Maliss' delay for this encounter to 40 minutes.

10. INTO THE SKUTTLERUN

From The Druid's Hut:

Travel Distance: 9 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 3 hours, 30 minutes

Travel Time (60 ft.): 7 hours

Short Cut: DC 22, 15 minutes

Delay: 10 minutes.

Attrition: None.

Ehlonna's Scar comes to an abrupt end. A 30-foot-wide opening at the base of the cliff wall allows the stream to cascade over a 20-foot-high drop off into a low, water-filled cave. A

wide wooden ramp runs down the side of one wall into the cave down to a floating pier below. Gentle currents roil in the water, and it empties into a respectable-looking river that leads down a tunnel going south.

This marks the start of the third leg of the chase; the Skuttlerun is no less dangerous than the Scar but poses an entirely new set of obstacles and trials. Normally, two or three rowboats are kept tied here for merchants to use, but no one's returned any of the boats to this landing for the past several months; the PCs (and Maliss behind them) must devise or provide their own way to navigate the river.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SKUTTLERUN

The 30-foot-wide river known as the Skuttlerun has a slow-moving current that gently moves down the underground tunnel. The passageway itself rises about 30 feet above the river into a deep crevasse at the ceiling, from which cold water drips. The sides of the cavern are damp with moisture and slippery-looking algae.

The itinerant shoreline consists of little more than damp piles of collected sediment and pebbles deposited along the walls by the river's flow, but for the most part the water runs right up to the passageway's edges.

The Skuttlerun is a slow-moving underground river fed by runoff from the Yatil Mountains. Numerous curves and side passages branch off the main river, but the course of the Skuttlerun leads inexorably toward the lake. Upriver, the cavern roof dips down to the level of the river's surface, but between area 10 and Highfolk the ceiling height above the river's surface averages at 30 feet.

The waters of the Skuttlerun are 15 feet deep on average. Eventually, the river opens up into a huge, dark, underground lake. This lake, which is nearly a mile across, is located deep under Highfolk and serves as a sort of hidden port for the city, allowing shady merchants and other undesirable elements to use the Ehlonna's Scar/Skuttlerun route to enter the city without being observed. The Highfolk government knows of this underground entrance, but they generally turn a blind eye to it as long as the local thieves' guilds continue to bribe the right politicians.

There are numerous options available for the characters in navigating the Skuttlerun. If they secured Gyman's aid, they can use the large rowboat he created for them. This rowboat is fairly ungainly, and moves at 1 mile per hour as long as it is rowed or poled. If they convert the floating platform from area 10 into a raft (this requires 20 minutes of work), it moves at only 1/2 a mile per hour. The Skuttlerun's current flows at 1 mile per

hour; add this rate to the speed of a raft or rowboat being poled or rowed downriver. The PCs probably lack the endurance or skill to swim the entire length without magic. Spells like *polymorph, water walk,* and *spider climb* can provide alternate methods of navigating the river. There aren't any beaches large enough to serve as campsites until the underground lake, unfortunately, so characters who use such magic to traverse the river may find themselves stranded in the river.

Maliss hopes to catch up to "Felicia" before she reaches the Skuttlerun, but if the PCs make it to the river he decides to follow them alone. His natural swim speed allows him to cover 1-1/2 miles per hour, or 3-1/2 miles with the aid of the current; fast enough to possibly catch up to the PCs if they're forced to take a boat or raft down the river. If he catches up to them, he bides his time and attacks when they are distracted (perhaps with another encounter). If the PCs reach area **15**, he coordinates his attack on them with the smugglers.

Although there aren't many physical obstacles to slow down the PCs or Maliss along the Skuttlerun's length, numerous dangerous creatures take advantage of the relatively high traffic along the river's length. Most of these denizens are wandering monsters, but a few have established lairs along the Skuttlerun.

11. AN UNEXPECTED MERCHANT (EL 5)

From Into the Skuttlerun:

Travel Distance: 7 1/4 miles
Travel Time (drifting): 3 hours, 40 minutes
Travel Time (raft): 2 hours, 55 minutes
Travel Time (rowboat): 2 hours, 25 minutes
Travel Time (Maliss swimming): 2 hours, 5 minutes
Short Cut: None.

Delay: 10 minutes.

Attrition: 1d3 wand charges or 2d6 damage to Maliss.

Creatures: As the PCs move down the river, a water mephit swims up to greet them. This loquacious water mephit is named Gawdum, and he doesn't waste any time before asking if the PCs would like to purchase two fine pieces of equipment from him. The first is a beautifully made masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str). The bow is black with a black leather grip. Gawdum wants 1,000 gp for it. The other is a suit of +1 *half-plate* that he'll sell for 2,000 gp. These prices are slightly inflated; if the PCs can adjust his initial attitude from friendly to helpful, he agrees to sell them the items at regular price (700 gp for the longbow and 1,750 gp for the armor).

Gawdum keeps both of these objects hidden in a nearby underwater cave. If the PCs wish to purchase either item, he tells them to "wait here" for a moment while he fetches his wares. It takes the mephit 10 minutes to return with the goods, unfortunately, but he's honest with the PCs and the items he sells are legitimate.

If the PCs try to double-cross him, Gawdum calls his pet juvenile tojanida to help defend him. In combat, he giggles and titters and makes obnoxious comments; for example, if he casts *stinking cloud* he blames it on "something I ate yesterday."

- **Gawdum, Water Mephit**: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 185.
- **Juvenile Tojanida**: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 244.

Development: The PCs can hire Gawdum to help them by delaying Maliss for the low price of 2,500 gp (1,800 gp if his attitude is helpful). Gawdum doesn't directly attack the yuan-ti, but his diversionary tactics delay Maliss by 30 minutes.

If the PCs annoy Gawdum and he survives, he joins up with Maliss in hopes of avenging the insult.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS ON THE SKUTTLERUN

Consult this random encounter chart every 4 hours while the PCs are in the underground river or lake.

d%	EL	Encounter
01–65	—	No encounter.
66–74	2	Flash flood: From somewhere deeper in the Underdark, a flood of water surges down the Skuttlerun from upriver. Characters on a vessel must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) or get swept overboard.
75–80	5	Darkmantles (6): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 38.
81–85	6	Reekmurk: hp 72; *Fiend Folio* 18 (if you don't have access to this book, you can replace this monster with an aquatic version of the ochre jelly).
86–90	5	Bat Swarm (3): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 237.
91–95	5	Monstrous Spider: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 289.
96–00	6	Smugglers: use the statistics for the smugglers encountered in area **15**, although these smugglers have no ties to Vasilis.

12. THE FALLS

From An Unexpected Merchant:

Travel Distance: 20 miles
Travel Time (drifting): 10 hours
Travel Time (raft): 8 hours
Travel Time (rowboat): 6 hours, 40 minutes
Travel Time (Maliss swimming): 5 hours, 45 minutes
Short Cut: None.

Delay: None.

Attrition: None.

A low rumbling sound echoes through the tunnel, and the current seems to be picking up speed. The river tunnel takes a sharp turn to the south ahead. A small beach with a short wooden pier sits just ahead of this turn against the southern bank; two small rowboats are tied to the pier. The beach runs along the north side of the river around the corner.

This small beach landing represents the end of the river journey, although the PCs might not immediately realize it. Just around the corner, the current picks up considerable speed and turns into a 30-foot-high waterfall that plummets anything still floating on its surface into the inky waters of the lake below. A successful Knowledge (dungeoneering) or Profession (sailor) check (DC 15) allows a character to realize in advance that a waterfall is likely located around the corner. If a character goes around the bend, he must make a successful Swim check (DC 15) to swim against the current, otherwise he is swept over the waterfall. Likewise, a character guiding a water vehicle must make a successful Profession (sailor) check (DC 15) or his boat is swept over the waterfall.

A character swept over the waterfall suffers 3d6 points of nonlethal damage; a successful Reflex save (DC 15) halves this damage. A vessel swept over the waterfall is in much more danger, and must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) as an unattended object to avoid being smashed to pieces by the fall. If this save is successful, the vessel must immediately make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid sinking into the lake. If the vessel's pilot makes a successful Profession (sailor) check (DC 15) upon going over the waterfall, he may substitute his own saving throws for the vessel's unattended saving throws.

A narrow beach leads from the landing up to the edge of the waterfall. A flight of stairs is carved into the rock wall immediately south of the waterfall here. They are quite slippery from algae and spray from the waterfall. A successful Balance check (DC 12) is required to navigate the stone stairs. Below, the stairs end at a rocky beach. This beach averages 20 feet wide and runs the entire length of the underground lake south to area 15.

At this point, Maliss realizes that his best bet is to get ahead of the characters to ambush them at the Smuggler's Cove (area 15). He ceases to track the PCs and instead swims directly across the lake to the cove; it takes him 2 hours to swim to area 15. Once he arrives at the cove, he quickly takes charge of Vasilis' agents he finds there.

13. A NEW BOAT (EL 7)

From The Falls:

Travel Distance: 2 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 40 minutes

> A small empty rowboat sits on the beach here. It looks to be in fairly good condition.

Creature: This rowboat is in fact a Huge mimic that has learned that appearing as a boat at the edge of a large waterway is an effective way to lure victims into contact with it. It has even scattered its treasure in the bottom of its boat form to further attract prey. It exudes its adhesive as soon as someone climbs into it or tries to push it offshore, and then begins attacking any caught victims immediately.

Advanced Mimic: CR 7; Huge aberration (shapechanger); HD 11d8+55; hp 104; Spd 10 ft.; AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +24; Atk +17 melee (2d6+8, slam); Full Atk +17 melee (2d6+8, 2 slams); SA adhesive, crush 2d6+8; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to acid, mimic shape; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +10, Disguise +22, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +13.

Feats: Alertness, Athletic, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (slam).

Treasure: The mimic's treasure consists of 150 gp, an emerald worth 800 gp, a diamond worth 400 gp, and a jade worth 90 gp.

14. HARPY BEACH (EL 6)

From A New Boat:

Travel Distance: 2 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 40 minutes

> The beach here widens out, doubling in size and reaching nearly 40 feet from the cavern wall to the shore of the lake. Several reeking carcasses litter the beach; the dead creatures look like huge bats, but something seems a bit disturbing about their long, almost humanoid limbs.

Creatures: A flock of harpies recently moved onto this beach, but over the past several weeks smugglers from the cove to the south have been working to thin out their numbers and make this underground route to Highfolk safer for their allies. Only two harpies remain now, and they are eager for new prey. If the PCs pass this area in a boat, the harpies use their *wind fan* to try to capsize the boat.

Harpies (2): hp 28, 23; *Monster Manual* 151.

Treasure: *In their nest, the harpies have stashed* 320 gp *and* a black pearl worth 300 gp in a rotten backpack. The larger of the two harpies owns a *wind fan*.

15. SMUGGLER'S COVE (EL 8 OR 11)

From Harpy Beach:

Travel Distance: 5 miles

Travel Time (30 ft.): 1 hour, 40 minutes

> The stony beach rises up to a large open area containing several small wooden shacks. A large wooden platform extends over the beach and forms a long pier out into the lake. At the far end of the cave several ladders and a large wooden cage sit under an opening in the cave roof above. Despite the buildings, the place is quiet and calm.

Smugglers, shady merchants, and other individuals who would rather not be seen entering the city of Highfolk via its gates use this small waterfront to enter the city. The place is normally quite busy, and is one of the more prosperous black

markets in the town. Dajoud Vasilis spared no expense to pay off the merchants, smugglers, and thieves of this cove for a few days so he could use the area as an ambush in case Maliss was unable to slay "Felicia" before she can escape into the city above. The merchants and smugglers have complied with Vasilis' wishes, and have relocated their wares elsewhere until the ambush is over.

The ladders opposite lead upward to the interior of a large warehouse in Highfolk that is owned by a powerful and shady merchant. The wooden cage is an elevator, similar to the one located in area 1, but in a much better state of repair. It is used to transport goods into the city above.

Creatures: Six of Vasilis' thugs lurk in the buildings overlooking the pier. They wait for "Felicia" and her escort to pass through their midst, presumably on their way to the ladders leading up into Highfolk, before they open fire with their crossbows. The thugs concentrate their fire on "Felicia"; they only have a vague description of her, so they receive no bonuses on their Spot checks to see through her disguise. Any thugs who see through the disguise hold their initial actions. If they all notice the disguise they let the characters pass unmolested, and report the development to Vasilis as soon as possible.

Vasilis Thugs, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (6): CR 2; Medium humanoids (human); HD 2d10+4; hp 19 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Intimidate +5, Jump –2, Ride +6, Spot +0.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Power Attack, Toughness.

Possessions: Masterwork longsword, masterwork light crossbow, 10 bolts, scale mail, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 2 gp, 4 sp.

Development: If Maliss manages to reach this area before the PCs, the thugs recognize him and make themselves known to the yuan-ti. Maliss, somewhat offended that Vasilis didn't trust him enough to not use "backup assassins," swallows his pride and joins the thugs in the ambush. He hides in the hut closest to the exit leading up into the city. If he finally realizes that the PCs have misled him at this point, his rage takes over and he tries to kill them all for making a fool of him.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Maliss discovers the ruse involving the disguised "Felicia" too early, he notifies Vasilis the next time he contacts the yuan-ti via a *sending* spell. Vasilis does this twice a day, once at dawn and once at dusk. If notified of the deception, Vasilis scrys on Trend and Felicia to locate them, then hires a second assassin to intercept them before Felicia gets to Highfolk. Once Felicia reaches Falwur (three days after the adventure

begins), she is safe from Vasilis' rage since he dares not incite the direct wrath of the Brisbane family. Likewise, if the PCs kill or permanently incapacitate Maliss before Felicia becomes married, Vasilis knows immediately, thanks to the *ring of status* he forced the yuan-ti to wear after his failure to assassinate Trend. He scrys on Trend and sends a new assassin after Felicia immediately.

Assuming the PCs know of Felicia's whereabouts, or can divine her location with magic, they could try to prevent the assassination by rushing to the wedding in Falwur. Details of this frantic adventure are left to your imagination.

If they manage to maintain the deception long enough for Felicia to reach Falwur, Trend has an ally use a *sending* spell to let one of the PCs know that Felicia is safe and that if they remain in Highfolk for a few days he'll meet them and give them their reward then. He's true to his word, and arrives in Highfolk in a few days and promptly rewards them. The Brisbane family is also thankful for the service the PCs have provided, and they allow them to reside in the family villa in Highfolk for the duration of their stay in town.

As for Vasilis...once the bond between Trend and Brisbane is forged, he finds himself on the defensive. He ceases his violence against Trend for fear of reprisal from the Brisbanes, while at the same time Trend is able to lower his costs and increase his security, further overcoming Vasilis' influence in Polvar.

The characters' actions may also have impressed the Brisbanes enough that they might approach them with further offers of employment. The PCs could be asked by Brisbane and Trend to supervise construction of a more stable and safe trading route from Polvar to Highfolk through Ehlonna's Scar and the Skuttlerun. As the construction starts, Dajoud Vasilis secretly hires a group of monstrous raiders to stir up trouble in the Scar.

Finally, if Maliss or any of his cohorts live through the adventure, they doubtless harbor strong feelings of resentment toward the PCs, and can prove to be effective recurring villains in the campaign. Ω

"Racing the Snake" is John Simcoe's first adventure for Dungeon. *When not working feverishly on his own D&D campaign, he's stuck at his regular job as a copy editor at a Pennsylvania newspaper.*

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Racing the Snake" is designed for a group of four 6th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 4th–5th or 7th–8th-level characters.

4th- and 5th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but limit the number of creatures per encounter and reduce the various skill checks required to move through the Scar and the Scuttlerun by 2. Convert Maliss into a 3rd-level ranger and remove Burogerk, Jun-Olip, and Krat altogether. The remaining kobolds should attack the party separately. Most importantly, you should give the PCs a longer head start and allow them more chances to recover as they go. The ethereal filcher should be removed from the adventure entirely, and reduce the number of large groups of monsters (such as the shocker lizards, the baboons, and the various thugs) by 2–3.

7th- to 10th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but add one or two levels to all of Maliss' kobolds and to all of Vasilis' thugs; Maliss himself should gain one or two assassin levels (you'll need to readjust his skills slightly to meet the requirements for the assassin prestige class). Maliss himself should start out only 20 minutes or so behind the characters. The shocker lizards should be changed into cockatrices, the baboons into apes, and the harpies into cloakers or manticores. Finally, you should either remove Gyman Bristlebak from the adventure or change his alignment to neutral evil and have him be another enemy the characters face in the Scar. If you choose to make Gyman an enemy, you should increase his level by one or two.

Remember that changing Encounter Levels or NPC class levels should raise or lower the amount of treasure in the adventure. Chapter 3 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides guidance for raising and lowering treasure amounts.

MANGLECRAMPS, NO! THE ULOLOK IS A THREAT TO ALL OF US! THERE'S NO CONTROLLING IT!

YEEARGH!
GRUNCH GRUNCH

}HUFF HUFF{
DOWNER! DON'T MAKE ME PARALYZE YOU!

eech.

THE }HRRR{ ONLY SALVE THAT WILL SOOTHE THESE WOUNDS IS YOUR TREACHEROUS BLOOD }GAF GAF{

rattle rattle

"UT DA HUCK?"
wurgh?
BLORCH
CHOOM

WHAT!? DAMMIT DOWNER, NOW WE'RE BOTH UNEMPLOYED!
HA! YOU DASTARDLY LITTLE DEVIL. I COULD KISS YOU FOR COMING BACK. I'M SORRY I EVER SLAGGED IMPS.
WAIT, THAT'S NOT MY FAMILIAR.
HER AURA-- SHE'S NOT EVEN EVIL!
NOT EVIL. JUST INCREDIBLY PISSED OFF.
HEH, C'MON LUV. I LET YOU AND THE MIDGET GO, NO HARD FEELINGS, EH?
NO HARD FEELINGS.
Story and art by Kyle Stanley Hunter. Lettering by Sean Glenn. A Super Unicorn production. www.superunicorn.com
NEXT: THE ULOLOK SECURED!

THE STINK

BY MONTE LIN

ARTWORK BY UDON ENTERTAINMENT
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"The Stink" is a D&D adventure designed for four 4th-level characters, although it can be adapted for lower-level or higher-level characters. The adventure takes place primarily in a filthy, disease-ridden dungeon, so characters who can cast *lesser restoration* or are immune to disease should prove helpful. Someone with the ability to speak Aquan allows many of the adventure's encounters to be resolved diplomatically rather than violently, and characters with strong Swim skills should prove useful in the dungeon's many flooded areas.

You can place the city of Suncliff in any coastal region; feel free to change the name of the city to match one in your campaign.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Eons ago, a tribe of locathah fell under the terrible festering influence of Incabulos, god of disease and disaster. The Black Rider awed this lost tribe with the power of the flood, the hurricane, and the tsunami. Such disasters appealed to the locathah, since they all so potently ruined and overwhelmed the lands above with the power of the sea. Why settle for only the sea, they wondered, when they could destroy the land as well?

The tainted tribe multiplied and prospered. They kidnapped Eadro-worshiping locathah from nearby tribes, using their bodies to test out new diseases and tortures. These tribes were forced to band together for mutual protection against Incabulos' brood, and in an attempt to organize a defense formed a tribal council. The tainted tribe continued to grow in power despite this, until Incabulos took them to his domain to serve in his oceans as his favored minions. The evil of his realm transformed them into fiendish creatures, and they continue to serve the Black Rider to this day. Occasionally, members of the tainted tribe invade the Material Plane to continue their diabolical disease and breeding experiments on their more peaceful kin.

The Deep Mother is the leader of one of these invader groups. She led her followers through a portal into the deep sea of the Material Plane at the suggestion of one of Incabulos' demonic agents, for the city of Suncliff had come to the Black Rider's attention as a prime location to harvest strange new diseases. In particular, an entire district of the rapidly growing city had been walled off, converted into a horrid dumping ground for the rest of the city. Left alone and ignored as best as possible, this district, known simply as the "Stink" to locals, has slowly been breeding terrible and unique diseases and pestilence deep inside of it...diseases potent enough for Incabulos to smell all the way from his festering realm in the Outer Planes.

The Deep Mother's journey to Suncliff wasn't without peril, and she lost many of her minions to denizens of the sea before she reached the city. The fiendish locathah quickly settled into the filthy caverns below the Stink, and the Deep Mother began to send small raiding parties out into the sea to steal locathah eggs from local tribes. The eggs, once returned to the Stink, could then be tainted with cruelty and evil so that the hatchlings would be born fiendish locathah. Eventually, the Deep Mother hopes to replenish her forces with these full-grown fiendish locathah and return to Incabulos' realm with the diseases collected from the depths of the Stink.

The locathah tribes know that the fiendish locathah are based somewhere in Suncliff, and as a result they believe that the citizens of Suncliff are somehow involved in the raids. The most recent raid was the final straw to the local locathah, and they are preparing to send in several groups of skirmishers to fight back against their perceived enemies. The citizens of Suncliff are blissfully unaware of the approaching clash between the locathah tribes. Even if they did know, unfortunately, the city government (which is overtaxed and tied up in a bureaucratic mess) would not be able to muster a proper defense against the overwhelming numbers of locathah. When the

INCABULOS, THE BLACK RIDER

Incabulos (in-CAB-yoo-lohs) is a neutral evil god of plagues, sickness, famine, nightmares, drought, and disasters. He is depicted as a deformed man with skeletal hands, and wears a black robe lined with orange and green. He is often shown riding a huge nightmare and accompanied by various types of hags. His symbol is a stylized eye that symbolizes possession. His clerics are secretive and paranoid, and reveal themselves for what they are only in times of great despair when they can fan the emotions of the suffering. Torture, spreading disease, and encouraging blight are the foundations of their appetites, and they often travel to distant lands to collect exotic diseases. The Black Rider's favored weapon is the quarterstaff, and he grants the domains of Death, Destruction, and Evil to his clerics.

You can substitute a similarly foul deity from your campaign for Incabulos, but if you do, make sure that you adjust the granted domains for the clerics found in this adventure appropriately.

tribes rise through the city sewers, the citizens of Suncliff may well be doomed.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Something in the Stink has been causing trouble for Suncliff. Workers and guards sent into the Stink have been disappearing. Worse, ghouls and ghasts are becoming a real problem to workers in the Stink, and a few of the undead have actually managed to wander out of the Stink and into nearby districts. The PCs are hired by a cleaning engineer to search the Stink, find out and stop what's been causing the disappearances, and rescue any workers or guards who may yet survive in the reeking mess.

Several false trails trick the heroes into thinking the culprits could be undead, otyughs, or even an escaped convict. They find an extensive network of caverns and chambers in and below the Stink, and upon exploring them encounter a band of locathah scouts. From them, the PCs learn that the locathah have been having problems of their own, and that the locathah tribes blame the citizens of Suncliff. The locathah agree to postpone their assault on Suncliff for a short time if the PCs agree to continue into the depths of the Stink to stop the "devil-kin" from raiding the locathah tribes.

The PCs press deeper and eventually find the stronghold of the fiendish locathahs led by the Deep Mother. To save Suncliff, both from an attack from the sea by the enraged locathahs and from an unholy plague the Deep Mother has been cultivating, the heroes must defeat the fiendish locathahs that lurk in the depths of the Stink.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs are in the overpopulated city of Suncliff. They could be visiting the city for some reason, or it could even be their home town. Even if this is the characters' first visit to Suncliff, it won't be long before they notice the Stink. Rumors about workers and guards disappearing in the Stink and undead infesting the wretched mess are on everyone's tongues, and to put it bluntly, it isn't easy to ignore the smell. The adventure itself begins as the characters approach the walls surrounding the Stink. If you need a reason to lure the PCs toward the Stink, you can use one of the following hooks:

- *Missing Friend:* Perhaps a close friend of one of the PCs is one of the workers or guards who's gone missing in the Stink. The city government is too disorganized to quickly organize a rescue attempt, so it may be up to the PCs to save the missing friend.
- *Accidental Garbage:* An associate or patron of one of the PCs approaches the group with an embarrassing problem; it seems that he accidentally threw away a valuable family heirloom a couple of days ago and he needs someone to go into the Stink and look for it.

Other reasons to get the PCs to approach the Stink can be devised; in any case, the adventure begins as they witness the aftermath of a ghoul attack at the edge of the Stinkwall.

SUNCLIFF, THE JEWEL OF THE SEA

Suncliff is an ancient city, located at the hub of a prime shipping route. Traditionally a place for merchants, aristocrats, nobles, artists, and craftsmen to gather and trade, the city has long been a favorite for all of these types of individuals. Money flowed like water, beautiful buildings and works of art were raised, and thousands chose to settle down in the city. Suncliff earned its name as Jewel of the Sea with ease and grace.

But now, this nickname carries with it a heavy sense of irony, for Suncliff is suffering from a terrible civil problem. The ancient city's rudimentary sewer system, while adequate for a small town, was quickly overwhelmed by the influx of new citizens. Waste and garbage constantly clogged the overburdened system and disease became a major problem. The filth also attracted numerous dangerous scavengers like ghouls, otyughs, and oozes, preventing workers from repairing and expanding the sewers. Worse, the city

government had grown too large and not only couldn't decide on how best to solve the problem, but realized that there simply weren't enough resources or funds to build a new sewer. Suncliff had simply grown too large too quickly.

So the government decided on a temporary fix for the problem and created the Stink. The refuse and sewage problem was the most dire in the old slum district of the city. Rather than expend more resources cleaning up the city, the government founded the Wastewalker's Guild and walled off the entire slum district. The Wastewalkers were paid to lead large carriages through the streets of the city, collect garbage, and transport it to the walled-off district. The district was transformed into a massive landfill, and became known as the Stink.

♛ **Suncliff (Large city):** Nonstandard; AL N; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 4,900,000 gp; Population 24,500; Mixed (human 79%, halfling 9%, elf 5%, dwarf 3%, gnome 2%, half-elf 1%, half-orc 1%).

Authority Figure(s): Terrick the Stout, male human Ftr9 (Governor of Suncliff); Chloe Xero, female human Rog7 (supposed head of the Thieves Guild); Marrisa Vinn, female human Drd2/Wiz7 (head of the Magician's Cabal).

Important Characters: Grundel Orefist, male dwarf Bbn2/Ftr6 (Captain of the Town Guard); Versa Willowhisper, male elf Ftr2/Rog1/Sor3 (Trade/Merchant Guild Boss); Wes Lore, male human Pal6 (guardian of the Church of St. Cuthbert); Aus Olander, male human Clr3/Ftr2 (cleric of Fharlanghn).

Notes: Suncliff's assets are only a fraction of what a city its size should have; much of the city's money is squandered on attempts to cover up the Stink's influence on the rest of the city, a torturously complex bureaucratic system for dispersing funds, and rampant corruption.

The Blessings of Incabulos

Numerous diseases have been incubating in the depths of the Stink. The Deep Mother came to the Stink specifically to cultivate and encourage the growth of these diseases, and her efforts have been rewarded. Six new diseases have spawned in the Stink, and many of the prisoners captured by the fiendish locathahs are infected.

When a character is exposed to a disease, you should roll his Fortitude saving throws in secret to keep the players in the dark about their character's health until the effects of the disease begin to manifest. All of these diseases are supernatural in nature. Full descriptions appear on p. 61 and in sidebars throughout this adventure.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE (EL 5)

As the characters approach the wall surrounding the Stink, they hear a panicked scream from the other side. Moments later, a terrified gnome clambers onto the wall from the far side, teeters a bit on its edge, then falls heavily to the ground on the city-side of the wall. His face and arms bear deep, terrible gashes. This is Popollo (male gnome Exp5, Bluff +12), a high-ranking engineer who works for the Wastewalker's Guild. When he sees the PCs, he cries out for help and tries to get to his feet, but the fall has twisted his ankle and he collapses back to the ground with another scream.

Creatures: Popollo was chased out of the Stink by a pair of ghasts; he managed to escape while the creatures took down the guards who were escorting him in the Stink. The ghasts are on the other side of the wall and immediately attempt to climb over after Popollo. They must make a successful Climb check (DC 15) to get over the 10-ft.-high wall. If they are successful, they immediately attack Popollo and any other characters in sight.

Ghasts (2): hp 29 each (currently 19 and 17); *Monster Manual* 119.

Development: Popollo thanks the PCs repeatedly for their timely intervention. His eyes light up when he realizes they might be able to help him out with a problem.

"Listen friends; I've got a situation on my hands... It's the Stink; it's what we call our garbage problem. I work for the city, for the Wastewalker's Guild, if you must know. We're supposed to keep the streets clean and that means hauling the garbage to the Stink. Except things have been gettin' a bit more lively than usual in there. A lot of my employees have been vanishing in there lately, and just as many have been skipping out on the job because they say it's too dangerous. And after what I just went through, I'm inclined to agree.

"See...there's always been...critters...living in the Stink. I got no problem with them; in fact, they do us a favor, eating all that garbage. I'm talking about the typical scavengers here, ghouls, ghasts, otyughs, oozes. In any case, they were never really a problem till lately. Now, these things are up on the surface, causing trouble and generally making an unpleasant place even more so.

"Something's changed in the Stink. Something for the worse. There has to be a reason these monsters are suddenly so numerous. And then, of course, there's the missing workers and guards. I'm fairly certain something's taken them away into the depths of the Stink, cause the scavengers typically leave the...remains...behind. I've been in there more times than I care to count over the last week, and I've not seen a single body yet.

"You all handled those ghasts fairly easily. Say...you looking for work? If you can go in there, into the Stink, and maybe find out a little bit about what's going on, there's a reward. Five hundred gold coins for information about what's going on down there, and a bonus of five hundred if you fix it. And an additional hundred for each of my workers you find and rescue. How's that sound to ya?"

Brain Boil

This disease is spread in tainted meat. The Deep Mother is trying to cultivate a version of this disease that is spread via injury or contact, but has so far been unsuccessful. A brainboil victim suffers from increasingly painful headaches that almost feel as if his brain is being cooked alive. Aside from a reddening of the skin, there are no physical symptoms of this disease, but those in an advanced stage (less than 3 Wisdom or 3 Charisma) are driven insane with rage and attack any other living creature they notice within melee range.

Popollo is actually a bit more desperate than he lets on; the government has tasked him with the daunting task of making the Stink safer and putting a stop to the scavengers that have been spilling out into the streets, but they haven't yet approved an increase in guards or funding for such a task. He's lost three groups of hired mercenaries in the last week, and is at his wits' end. If he can't get the problem solved soon, he's afraid he'll be fired. He doesn't actually have the money to reward the PCs yet; he's hoping that approval for more funding comes through before the PCs solve the problem. He's willing to promise anything reasonable to the characters in an attempt to get them to check out the Stink; he'd rather worry about having to scrape together funds to pay a band of adventurers than go back into the monster-infested Stink. His Bluff skill is fairly good, but if the characters see through his deception he breaks down in tears and begs them to help.

If the PCs finally agree to enter the Stink, he thanks them again and gives them his four last *potions of remove disease*. "Been drinking these things like water lately...but I only have these four left. Make 'em count!" he says.

INTO THE STINK

The Stink itself is surrounded by a hastily constructed wood-and-stone wall. Several gates allow passage into and out of the Stink, but they are normally kept locked and guarded by four city watch agents (human War2). Popollo accompanies the PCs as far as the nearest gate and authorizes the guards to let them into the Stink. Without his approval, a character must adjust the guards' initial attitude from indifferent to friendly before they agree to let the PCs in. Alternately, the lock on the gate can be picked with a successful Open Lock check (DC 25), or the walls themselves can be climbed with a successful Climb check (DC 15).

Inside the walls, the Stink is a region of epic wretchedness.

> The air is visible in this ruined district; a thick yellow haze that seems almost to shimmer like heat rising from desert sands. Mountains of refuse lie heaped in the roads and between the ruined shells of collapsed buildings. The valleys between these massive heaps of refuse run thick with darkly colored liquid runoff and glistening sludge. Seagulls by the hundred perch atop the mounds and wheel in the skies above, and rats scuttle about in search of ripened food. But the worst of it all is the smell, an almost physical entity that seems to shroud the entire place in its reeking embrace.

The exact size and shape of the Stink is left undefined in this adventure, to help facilitate its placement in an established city in your campaign. The adventure assumes that the Stink is at least a mile square in area, and is bordered on its coastal side by a low (30-ft.-high) cliff overlooking a horribly polluted beach.

When a character first enters the Stink, he must immediately make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated for one minute. Characters must continue to make this Fortitude save once per minute, with a cumulative +2 bonus for each previous saving throw attempt. Once a character makes the save, he has become accustomed to the ambient stench and is no longer nauseated.

More insidious than the Stink's smells are the numerous diseases thriving here. Once a day, a character who spends at least 10 minutes in the Stink is exposed to filth fever (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 292) from numerous tiny cuts and abrasions gained while simply moving through the place. Certain areas of the Stink (especially deep underground where the filth has more fully tainted things) can inflict additional diseases on the unwary.

Other dangers to explorers in the Stink include triggering an avalanche of refuse, slipping and cutting oneself on a jagged piece of metal, or of falling through a hollow in the trash and onto a mound of broken glass and bones. Each hour, a character must make a Survival check (DC 15) to avoid having some sort of foul accident; if the character has at least 5 ranks of Balance or Tumble, he gains a +2 synergy bonus on this Survival check. Failure indicates that the character takes 1d8 points of damage from a minor accident, and must immediately make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12) or contract filth fever. A successful Reflex save (DC 15) halves the damage done. A character who spends the hour motionless does not need to make this Survival check.

The Stink's denizens pose its most adaptive challenge to explorers. The ghouls, ghasts, otyughs, and other scavengers of the Stink normally dwell in the ruined, refuse-choked sewers, but the arrival of the fiendish locathahs in the deepest reaches of these sewers has forced the scavengers upward and onto the surface. Each hour, roll d% and consult the following table to determine if the characters encounter one of the Stink's more offensive denizens.

D% Roll	Encounter
01–40	No Encounter.
41–60	**2d6 dire rats**: hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 64.
61–75	**1d4 ghouls**: hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 119.
76–85	**Ghast**: hp 29; *Monster Manual* 119.
86–90	**Gray Ooze**: hp 31; *Monster Manual* 202.
91–95	**Otyugh**: hp 36; *Monster Manual* 204.
96–00	**Korras Fenn**: See below.

KORRAS FENN, HUMAN TRASH

Korras is an escaped prisoner who recently clambered over the wall into the Stink and has been spending the last several days hiding out in an abandoned shack near the beach. He's waiting for the furor over his escape to die down now, and intends to sneak out of the Stink in a few days, steal a boat, and escape Suncliff. Unfortunately, he just realized he's come down with filth fever, and he desperately wants to escape the Stink before the disease kills him.

Korras can be encountered while the characters explore the Stink. If the characters remain in the Stink for more than 6 hours, he automatically notices their presence and begins stalking them. If spotted, Korras immediately attempts to grapple the weakest-looking PC and take him or her hostage at knifepoint, so as to force the other PCs to escort him out of the Stink and Suncliff. Otherwise, he waits until the PCs are distracted with another encounter before trying to take a hostage.

If he is captured alive and interrogated, his initial attitude is unfriendly. If this can be adjusted to friendly, Korras warns the characters he's seen fish-headed demons lurking in the Stink late after dusk. He says he's seen them mostly down on the beach, entering and exiting from a partially collapsed sewage tunnel protruding from in the cliff wall. Apart from this vague clue to the presence of the fiendish locathahs, he has little else to offer.

Korras Fenn, male human Com3/Rog2: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d4+2d6; hp 17 (currently 12); Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, club); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16 (currently 12), Con 13 (currently 10), Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +5, Hide +7, Open Lock +5, Move Silently +7, Spot +5.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Stealthy.
Possessions: Club, ragged prison clothes.

UNDER THE STINK

The rudimentary sewer systems below the Stink have for the most part either collapsed or become completely clogged with refuse. One long section of tunnels remains fairly intact, and it is in the depths of these tunnels that the fiendish locathahs have made their lair and hidden those victims unfortunate enough to have been captured alive. The main entrance to these tunnels is located in the cliff face on the beach (area 1).

The characters can also find a secondary entrance into the ancient tunnels while they are exploring the Stink. Allow each character exploring the Stink to make a Search check each hour. A successful Search check (DC 26) uncovers a small opening at the base of a mound of defective wagon parts. This opening quickly widens and leads down to area 3.

DUNGEON FEATURES

Walls: While some of the walls in the Stink retain the ancient flagstones that once lined the sewer walls, these have for the most part fallen away into rubble. Most of what remains is little more than a natural cavern. The walls are quite stable, though, and chances of collapse are minimal. The rough stone walls are quite slippery with refuse and ooze, but can be scaled with a successful Climb check (DC 20).

Ceilings: The height of the ceiling in tunnels averages at 10 feet; in chambers it increases to 15 feet or more.

Light: There are no natural sources of light in the ruined sewers; the majority of its denizens possess darkvision and have no need for light. The descriptions of the various chambers assume that the characters are providing their own sources of light; if they are relying on darkvision or other means to navigate the chambers, adjust the descriptions accordingly.

Air Quality: Despite the lack of doors in the tunnels and the numerous small rat tunnels in the walls and ceiling, the air quality in the caverns is actually quite terrible. In the upper reaches (areas 1–8) the air reeks as bad as it does on the surface, but is still breathable. In areas 9–26, the horrible stink of the place becomes nearly overwhelming, and air quality takes a plunge. Breathing creatures must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) every hour or become fatigued. A fatigued character must succeed on a Fortirude save each hour (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) or become exhausted. An exhausted character takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage every 15 minutes until the condition is corrected. Characters cannot recover from their fatigue or exhaustion until they reach an area of good air. Areas 27–35 are actually more bearable; the numerous surging waterways oxygenate the air enough that the quality of the air here is similar to that in areas 1–11—rank and stale, but breathable.

Wandering Monsters: There are a finite number of creatures living in these tunnels. Characters who make too much noise or

light might attract the attention of creatures in nearby caves, but for the most part once an area is cleared of creatures it remains so.

Nevertheless, the fiendish locathahs are well aware of the fact that other locathahs have been searching for them. Every hour the PCs spend in the Stink, there's a 10% chance they encounter a group of 4 fiendish locathahs (see area 18 for statistics) patrolling the Stink for intruders.

1. BLUFF ENTRANCE

The slick rock bluff face reflects an oily ocean. A rainbow-pattern of spoilage shimmers in tide pools, while the waves themselves curdle into a foamy yellow bile as they churn at the refuse on the shore. A cloying rotting stench permeates the air.

Two cave entrances open into the cliff face. The northern entrance is about ten feet up from the beach and twenty feet down from the Stink above. Thick coils of filth dangle from the mouth of the cave. About 70 feet south of this entrance is a second one, although this cave entrance is only about 2 feet high above an inlet of thick, rancid seawater that slowly washes back and forth into the cavern.

The cliff face is fairly easy to scale, requiring a successful Climb check (DC 10) to navigate. The rancid waters to the south flow from area 6; characters can enter the caves via this route but in so doing they expose themselves to the diseased waters (see area 6).

2. TRASHWAY (EL 6)

The cavern floor here slopes up sharply to the east. The roof above must have at one point partially caved in, for large mounds of filth, rubble, and waste lie in heaps about the

place. Insects writhe on the walls and floors and swirl in the air, and the scent of rotten flesh and decay is strong.

Creature: A pair of otyughs lurk in this room, lying in wait to attack any creatures that wander in.

Otyughs (2): hp 43, 40; *Monster Manual* 204.

Treasure: With a successful Search check (DC 20), a character can uncover a partially devoured skeleton with an intact belt pouch. The pouch contains 20 pp.

3. PARTIAL COLLAPSE

The northern wall of this cavern consists of a massive landslide of refuse and garbage. Up above you can see a small hole in the roof that appears to lead up and out of the cave.

A successful Climb check (DC 10) is required to clamber up the mound of loose garbage and up through the hole above.

4. GARBAGE CHUTE (EL 2)

This chamber appears to have been created from the garbage itself. Broken chairs, cobblestone, and the like form the "walls" of the passageway. Long braces of lumber and twisted metal support the roof, which sags dangerously with the weight of refuse above. Streams of filthy liquid dribble down from above to a pool of semi-liquescent goo, spoiled food, discarded refuse, and worse. Rats scuttle across the surface, scavenging what morsels they can.

Although the ceiling of this chamber may look unsafe, the true danger lies in the floor. Additionally, the horrible stink of this chamber is beyond that even of the surrounding regions. Characters who enter this room must make successful Fortitude saves (DC 14) each round or become nauseated for 1d6 rounds, even if they have already acclimated to the ambient odor of the Stink.

Trap: The floor of this chamber is quite unstable; the garbage has clogged a funnel-shaped pit in the ground. A successful Knowledge (dungeoneering) check allows a character to note that while the roof is fairly sound, the ground looks dangerous.

If a creature of Small size or larger walks into the room, the floor gives way and dumps the victim into a second cave below this one. Once the floor gives out, it takes nearly a month for the garbage to clog the hole again and create a new false floor.

Collapsing Floor: CR 2; location trigger; automatic reset (over the course of one month); DC 15 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6 fall); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25.

Note: A character who falls through this trap into the room below must also make a Reflex save (DC 15) or be buried in garbage. A buried character can escape with a successful Strength or Escape Artist check (DC 25); otherwise he must be dug free by allies. A buried character takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute; if he falls unconscious he must make a DC 15 Constitution check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead.

Development: The dire rats in area 5 rush into this room if the floor gives way. Half of them scurry down into the chute to attack anything that they find down there while the others attack anyone clinging to the walls of the room or perched on the opposite side.

5. DIRE RAT LAIR (EL 4)

This cave has an exceptionally low ceiling; only three feet off the ground. Bits of refuse and rotting meat lie in heaps throughout the room.

Dripskin

The skin of a dripskin victim begins to run like melting wax until finally the poor wretch is completely flayed as his skin runs from his body. Puddles of liquefied skin retain the infection for up to a week after they are shed, and can continue to infect anyone who touches them.

Medium creatures must squeeze (see *Player's Handbook*, page 148) to move through this area. Large creatures can move through here with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30), and creatures larger than that cannot enter the area at all.

Creatures: A dozen dire rats lurk in this room. They have little problem scuttling around in this room, and use their small size to great advantage against larger creatures that attempt to enter this room.

Dire Rats (12): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 64.

6. TIDE OF FILTH (EL 5)

Mounds of soggy timbers, blocks of mossy stone, and twisted lengths of rusted metal lie heaped amongst more foul and rancid forms of garbage in here. A sluggish tide of foamy seawater, thick with partially dissolved waste and worse, bisects the cavern. A jagged "bridge" of ruined doors, wagons, metal bars, and other solid trash forms a crude bridge over the frothing waters.

The garbage here is particularly dangerous to move through; each high tide rearranges the mounds, washing some of the stuff out to sea but depositing just as much in new piles of trash. Characters must make a successful Balance check (DC 12) each round they try to move across the unstable landscape. Failure indicates that the character takes 1d4 points of damage as he cuts himself on a length of rusty metal or broken glass, and must immediately make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12) or contract filth fever.

The waters below are equally foul. Any creature immersed in the water or drinking the water must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 16) or contract blinding sickness.

Creature: A particularly large otyugh has claimed this room as its lair. The creature is particularly agile and can move about on the garbage with ease (even if it rolls a 1 on its Balance check, it can successfully navigate the trash without hurting itself).

Advanced Otyugh: CR 5; Large aberration; HD 8d8+24; hp 58; Init +2; Speed 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +11; Atk +7 melee (1d6+1, tentacle); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+1, 2 tentacles) and +2 melee (1d6, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA constrict 1d6, disease, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +12, Escape Artist +4, Hide +8, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Agile, Alertness, Skill Focus (Balance).

Treasure. The remains of three Wastewalker's Guild workers are buried near the eastern end of the bridge. A successful Search check (DC 20) uncovers them. Their belt pouches are intact, and contain a total of 20 gp, three pearls worth 100 gp each, and a *potion of cure light wounds*.

7. MORASS OF FILTH (EL 5)

Runoff from recent rains and water from high tides have trickled through the organic debris here to coagulate into a pit of foul-smelling ooze.

The thick layer of sludge in this room is only 2 feet deep, but anything moving through it is slowed to half-speed. Additionally, the horrible reek of the sludge forces characters in the room to make successful Fortitude saves (DC 14) each round or become nauseated for 1d6 rounds, even if they have already acclimated to the ambient odor of the Stink.

The ledge along the eastern rim is sloped down toward the pool and slick with foul runoff from above. A successful Balance check (DC 15) is required to safely navigate the ledge without falling into the muck.

Trap: A large bubble of poisonous gas is trapped in the slime. A significant disturbance (such as if a character tries to walk through the pool or falls into the ooze) causes the bubble to rise to the surface and burst.

Poison Gas Bubble: CR 5; hazard; location trigger; automatic reset (after 1 hour); gas; multiple targets (all targets in area 7); never miss; poison (inhaled, DC 18 Fortitude save resists, 1d4 Wis/2d4 Wis); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

8. LOCATHAH SCOUTS (EL 3)

This part of the cavern appears to be flooded with foul-smelling water. The liquid sloshes about rhythmically, filling the cave with a loud churning and sucking sound. The water's foamy surface reflects light with a prismatic sheen.

Skitterpox

This disturbing disease causes numerous yellow pustules to form on the victim's skin. These pustules are disturbingly mobile, and slither around on the victim's skin, leaving angry red scars in their wake and eventually festooning the victim with a complex network of scar tissue. The disease is transmitted by injury, at which point the sores can actually be seen to skitter from the infected body and into the victim's wounds. Charisma damage caused by skitterpox is permanent damage.

This large tidepool connects to the sea via a long underwater tunnel. At low tide, the pool's depth recedes enough that a character can reach the tunnel on the east side by wading through surging water, but for the remainder of the day the entire cave is flooded. The water itself is treated as rough water for purposes of swimming; a character wading through it must make a successful Balance check (DC 20) or be swept into the pool. The pool is 30 feet deep at low tide, and 35 feet deep at high tide.

Creatures: The locathah tribes have sent three small scouting parties into Suncliff over the past few weeks in order to determine where the fiendish locathah have been hiding and to find out what hand the citizens of Suncliff have had in the raids. The first two groups vanished without a trace (attacked and captured by the fiendish locathahs), and the third group has just recently arrived here.

These locathahs have a few *potions of air breathing* (identical to *potions of water breathing* but allowing aquatic creatures to exist on land for 10 hours per potion), but aren't comfortable using them all at once to explore the lower caves. Their leader, a ranger named Kilorkus, went alone into the depths of the cave over 9 hours ago to search for additional sea cave entrances to the caverns. The foul water is as wretched to them as the foul air is to air-breathing creatures, and they desperately want Kilorkus to return soon with news so they can return to their tribe.

When the PCs enter this area, the locathahs observe them from underwater. They have no interest in contacting the PCs, since they believe that the citizens of Suncliff are in league with the fiendish locathahs. Nor do they want to attack the characters, since they have no idea how strong the PCs are. Unless the characters notice them with a Spot check as they pass by the pool (the locathah have Hide checks of +1, and lurk 30 feet down so Spot checks suffer a –3 penalty), the PCs most likely pass by without encountering the locathahs.

Locathah (6): hp 9 each, *Monster Manual* 169.

Treasure: The locathah have amongst them 2 *potions of air breathing* left. While these objects are likely useless to the PCs, they can still be sold to an interested buyer for 375 gp apiece.

Development: This scouting group has no intention of fighting anyone at the moment. They are here to map out the caverns, and to find any missing eggs or locathahs. They have little love for the citizens of Suncliff, and by extension, any PCs they find in this cave. Fishing boats tend to catch locathah in their nets, and the locathahs believe (erroneously) that wizards kill these captured locathah for their scales.

Some of their grievances with Suncliff are well founded, though. The pollution from the Stink has increasingly tainted the waters surrounding Suncliff; the locathah tribes have sent ambassadors to the city several times in the past, but their grievances have always been ignored.

If the PCs spot them, the locathahs come to the surface of the tide pool and demand loudly (in Aquan) that their eggs be returned and the alliance with the fiends be cut off. The locathahs are quick to work themselves into a fit of hatred, and unless an Aquan-speaking character can adjust their hostile attitude to at least indifferent, the locathah attack after three rounds of yelling.

If the locathah are befriended, they beg the PCs to delve deeper into the caves, find Kilorkus, rescue their eggs, and put a stop to the fiendish locathah raids. Unfortunately, it is too late to rescue Kilorkus or the eggs.

9. SOGGY GRAVES (EL 4)

The scent of rotten flesh is particularly strong here. Wooden coffins lie piled in a chaotic mess, the sodden wood buckling and pulling apart at the seams to spill their foul contents into a terrible mound below.

Unscrupulous undertakers, in order to skim more profit, dump their "clients" into the Stink after liberating any jewelry or expensive clothing. They assume that no one would ever wander into the Stink to search for the evidence. In any case, the coffins here have fallen through a weak spot in the ceiling; the hole closed up on itself after dumping the coffins here.

Creatures: A small pack of four ghouls lurk in this room, having recently discovered the cache of bodies. They squat ravenously around the mound of coffins, and suffer a –5 penalty to Listen and Spot checks to hear intruders into this room.

Ghouls (4): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 119.

10. OOZEFALL

A reeking black tarry substance oozes thickly from the walls here to collect in a slick swath across the floor. The ooze runs slowly down the sloped floor into a natural trough that empties into a larger room to the south. The air here seems thicker, warmer, and stale.

This nasty-smelling ooze consists of rotted animal and plant matter from a particularly large and foul pond nestled between mountains of rotting refuse on the surface above. The stuff makes the floor here exceedingly slippery, and any character who attempts to move across the floor must make a successful Balance check (DC 15) or slip and fall. Characters who fall quickly slide down the trough and into the pool of ooze in area **11**.

11. OOZE BATH (EL 5)

Stagnant foamy water and ropy coils of black ooze drool down the walls and through the ceiling into a large pool of noxious slime in the center of this cavern. The surface of the pool bubbles now and again, venting vapors into the already horribly tainted air.

This foul pool of liquid is only 5 feet deep, but it nevertheless poses a fairly significant hazard to characters who fall into it or otherwise try to wade or swim through it. Characters who enter the pool must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated for 1d6 rounds. Worse, anyone completely submerged in the pool (including those who slipped in area **10** and slid into the pool) must make a second successful Fortitude save (DC 16) or contract blinding sickness.

Creature: Deep in these caves (in Area **23**), a portal to the Paraelemental Plane of Ooze has opened. Ooze paraelementals have found this area to be quite comfortable, and a number of the foul creatures now lurk in the caves. This pool has become the home of a pair of them.

An ooze paraelemental generally takes the form of a dark brown torso, head, and arms rising from a pool of muck. It has gaping black indentations where its eyes and mouth would be. A fusion of elemental earth and water, ooze paraelementals speak Aquan and Terran in burbling tones. Ooze paraelementals are detailed further in the *Manual of the Planes* on pages 182–184.

Medium Ooze Paraelementals (2): CR 3; Medium elemental (earth, water); HD 4d8+12; hp 30 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 acid, slam); SA acid; SQ

elemental traits; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +4.

Feats: Improved Sunder, Power Attack.

Acid (Ex): An ooze paraelemental's touch deals 40 points of acid damage per round to metal or wooden objects. Armor or clothing dissolves and becomes useless immediately unless it succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 13). A metal or wooden weapon that strikes an ooze paraelemental also dissolves immediately unless it succeeds at a Reflex save. If an ooze paraelemental successfully grapples an opponent, the opponent's armor must likewise make a Reflex save at a –4 penalty or dissolve.

Tactics: The ooze paraelementals take exception to any intrusions into their pool, and attack any intruders mercilessly. They ignore anyone who moves through the room without entering the pool.

12. OLD WALL

A large, crumbling stone wall lies at a steep angle to the west, apparently having fallen through from above into this chamber. Decorative frescoes of faces in profile contrast with cracks, missing parts, and edges worn smooth.

This stone wall fell into this cave from the surface many years ago. A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals a small hollowed section covered by a cleverly disguised false stone. If this false stone plate is removed, a gold statuette of an attractive human woman is revealed.

Treasure: The gold statuette weighs 20 lbs. but is worth 900 gp. A successful Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 20) allows the character to recognize the subject of the statuette as one Cassandra Adincourt, an ancient and famous architect from Suncliff's past.

Stone Plate: 3 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 15; break DC 22.

13. LONG-FORGOTTEN STATUE

A once-magnificent stone statue of an elven woman holding a longbow lies discarded here, battered and chipped away to reveal only the most basic of features.

A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20) identifies the statue as depicting Ehlonna, goddess of the woodlands. The statue is a remnant from a time when Suncliff was little more than a small collection of buildings at the edge of an unsettled frontier. The statue was removed to build a tavern that has long since gone out of business.

Development: The statue weighs 650 lbs. but is too badly damaged to have a monetary value. Nevertheless, if a worshipper of Ehlonna sees to the cleaning and restoration of the statue, which requires a week of work and a successful Craft (sculpture) check (DC 22), and then either returns the statue to one of her temples or erects the statue in a wilderness region, the Goddess of the Woodlands takes note. The next time that character sleeps, he receives a vision from Ehlonna in which the goddess answers 5 questions for that character, as if a *commune* spell had been cast. The mystic dream also grants the character experience points as if he defeated a CR 1 creature (300 XP for a 4th-level character). If more than one character was involved in this restoration, they all gain identical XP awards but the dream is a shared dream and Ehlonna still only answers a total of 5 questions, no matter how many people share the dream.

14. OOZE POOLS (EL 4)

Three ponds of ooze fill hollows in the floor here, the still, dark surface reflecting available light with a prismatic sheen.

These three ooze pools are shallow, but the ooze itself is thick. Moving through a 5-foot section of ooze costs 10 feet of movement. Worse, a **Creature** lurks in the largest pool.

Creature: A solitary gray ooze floats atop the surface of the largest pool, indistinguishable from the surrounding muck until it strikes or a victim stumbles into it.

Gray Ooze: hp 31; *Monster Manual* 202.

15. LOOTED CRYPT

The southern wall has collapsed, revealing a small rectangular room beyond. A single stone sarcophagus sits in the center of the room, its lid smashed into rubble and strewn about the chamber.

A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) reveals that this damage is quite recent. A group of fiendish locathahs looted this crypt recently when they discovered that parts of these caverns contained old constructions from Suncliff's distant past. Their tracks are quite obvious, and a successful Search or Survival check (DC 4) notes them in the muddy ground. The tracks lead to area 18, where the fiendish locathahs still lurk.

16. ASH PILE (EL 5)

Black soot covers the floor, the ceiling, and the walls of this place. Streamers of tar leak slowly from the roof to gather in mounds on the floor. Dozens of fractured and burned timbers fill the chamber in a tangled mess.

An early attempt to burn the Stink sent a cloud of thick, rancid smoke straight into Suncliff. The burn project ended quickly when the city's wealthy placed pressure on the governor. This large patch of ashes and burnt timbers is a remnant of the attempt.

The timbers filling this room make navigating it difficult for Medium or larger creatures. Each round, a Medium creature must make a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15) or his speed is reduced to 5 ft. The Escape Artist DC rises to 30 for Large creatures, and Huge or larger creatures cannot move through the timbers without first clearing them out.

Creature: An ochre jelly recently seeped into this room from the Stink above. It's been preying on the odd fiendish locathahs and dire rats that stumble into this area. The jelly does not suffer the movement penalties imposed by the fallen timbers in this room.

Ochre Jelly: hp 69; *Monster Manual* 202.

17. FALLEN MONUMENT

A stone obelisk stands in the middle of this room. The three sides appeared to have words scrawled up and down each side, but time and erosion have cracked and worn smooth most of the letters.

A successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) and 5 minutes of work allows a character to decipher enough of the writing on the monument to discern that it is a memorial for a long-dead ranger by the name of Lokan Torakian who was killed while defending Suncliff from an attack by a particularly large manticore. The words make a passing reference to Lokan's Fortress in the nearby mountains, a fortress that has apparently been forgotten by the local populace. This could provide the PCs with a hook for a new adventure set nearby Suncliff.

18. FESTERING TIDE POOL (EL 4)

A large tide pool dominates the majority of this cave. The pool's surface surges violently from underwater currents; the violent activity has churned the surface of the pool into a froth of yellow bubbles.

This polluted tidepool connects to the sea via a fairly direct underwater passage. Several **Creatures** currently use the pool to relax. The waters of the pool are considered to be rough for resolving Swim checks.

Creatures: A small group of fiendish locathahs have wandered up into these caves in search of loot; they recently broke into the crypt at area 15 and are currently counting out their gains while they relax in the pool here. The fiendish locathahs are distracted by their count, and suffer a –5 penalty on Spot and Listen checks to notice intrusions into their cave. If they

AIRGILL

Locathahs can survive out of water for only a very short time. The Deep Mother knew that she and her children would be traveling above land for much of their stay in Suncliff, and brought along a large supply of airgills as a result.

An airgill is a living symbiotic creature that looks like a long-armed starfish with bright blue legs, fleshy red tendrils on its back, and a pale violet underside. The tips of its arms are covered with pale violet tendrils.

When placed on the throat of a willing aquatic creature, an airgill latches on with its arms and weaves its tendrils into and through the creature's gills. The symbiont feeds slowly on the creature's blood, and reduces the host's Constitution score by –1 for as long as it is attached. In return, it constantly oxygenates its host's gills, allowing it to function indefinitely out of water.

For further rules about symbionts, see pages 215–216 of the *Fiend Folio*.

see the PCs, they attempt to flee deeper into the caves to alert the others to the intrusion.

Fiendish Locathahs (5): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (aquatic, extraplanar) HD 2d8–2; hp 7; Init +1; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d8/×3, longspear) or +2 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA smite good (+2 damage against a good foe) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 7; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +8.

Feats: Great Fortitude.

Possessions: Longspear, light crossbow, 20 bolts, airgill.

Treasure: The fiendish locathahs have stacked the loot they pilfered from area 15 in a small underwater hollow about ten feet below the surface of the tide pool. This consists of 170 gp, two gold rings worth 400 gp each, a gold necklace worth 200 gp, a masterwork bastard sword, and a suit of masterwork chainmail.

19. PUDDLE OF MUD (EL 5)

A large pool of gray mud fills this chamber. Bits of rubbish and what look like bones protrude from the stuff.

The mud is only about 6 inches deep, but it is thick enough that moving through it halves a character's speed.

Creatures: Two ooze paraelementals from the vortex in area 23 have settled in this pool of mud. The paraelementals ignore anyone who passes by without entering their mud, but quickly attack anyone who dares enter the pool. The paraelementals can use their swim speed in the mud.

Medium Ooze Paraelementals (2): hp 30 each; see area 11.

20. SEALED CRYPT

The southern wall here has worn thin from years of erosion. A successful Search check (DC 20) notes tiny fractures in the wall, as well as a couple of finger-sized holes that reveal the presence of a room beyond. The stone wall can easily be smashed through by a strong, determined individual.

Eroded Stone Wall: 1 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 15; Break DC 24.

Once the wall has been broken through, read the following:

This is a small crypt. The stone sarcophagus in the middle of the room rests undisturbed, but the mold and slime on the walls have ruined the offerings left ages ago on the stone shelves.

This chamber has remained sealed for several decades...long before the Stink itself was formed. As a result, the air in here is particularly foul. If the room isn't allowed to air for at least a minute before it is entered, characters within must make Fortitude saves every round to avoid suffocation damage as detailed under "Air Quality" above. The sarcophagus lid weighs 500 lbs.

Treasure. The sarcophagus contains a long-dead skeleton and a respectable amount of treasure. Several mounds of gold coins are heaped at the skeleton's feet, 200 gp in all. The sarcophagus also contains a silver comb set with moonstones worth a total of 300 gp, and a fine silver chain necklace set with a tiny emerald worth a total of 400 gp.

21. GUARD ROOM (EL 3)

An ancient, horribly rusted gate blocks access to a short side tunnel off the main route here. The narrow room beyond is choked with moldy crates. A ruined, rusty ladder leads up to a hole in the ceiling that is hopelessly clogged with rubbish.

This chamber once contained an access tunnel to the surface, but the tunnel has long since been buried under mountains of trash above. The iron gate is rusted shut. A concealed door on the eastern wall allows easier access to this chamber. The door can be found with a successful Search check (DC 18).

Rusted Gate: Hardness 5; hp 25; Break DC 22.

Creatures: Four fiendish locathahs lurk behind the crates here. They have been ordered by the Deep Mother to keep an eye out for anyone attempting to invade the caves. If they see intruders, they fire upon them with their crossbows, using the crates as cover.

Fiendish Locathahs (4): hp 9 each; see area 18.

22. NOT-SO-ESCAPED PRISONER

A body of a woman in rags lies face down in the muck here, her blood pooling in the hollows of the floor, her arm outstretched ahead of her, as if reaching for freedom or salvation.

This is the body of a sorcerer named Yelta Kier. Captured several days ago by the fiendish locathahs, she escaped imprisonment deeper in the caves with the aid of a fellow prisoner named Warren Gyreson. The two were separated soon thereafter. While Warren managed to make it to area 25 (where he yet hides), Yelta made it this far before the fiendish locathahs in area 21 ambushed her and killed her. The locathahs know she's diseased, so they let the body lie where it died until the Deep Mother or one of her undead can come to collect it.

An examination of the body combined with a successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals raw, chaffed wrists and ankles and several crossbow bolt wounds to the chest and neck. More disturbingly, her body is covered with runny green rashes that reek of compost. These are symptoms of greenblight, one of the terrible new diseases that have spawned in the depths of the Stink. Anyone who touches the body must make a successful Fortitude check (DC 20) or catch greenblight.

Greenblight

Greenblight is a particularly horrid disease that causes great green rashes and open sores that reek of compost to appear on the victim's body. A victim drained to a Strength score of 0 remains horribly aware of his situation, but cannot move and quickly takes root in any available soil. This mound of writhing, wet plant matter can survive for months if exposed regularly to sunlight and a moist environment. This plant matter remains contagious until it dies.

23. OOZE VORTEX (EL 6)

This whole cavern contains the collected rainwater runoff, seawater, and numerous forms of liquid waste of this cavern complex. Goop and slime trickle down the walls. The pool is thick, foamy, and clouded with olive green algae and brown sediment. The level of the water rhythmically rises and falls two to three feet once every ten seconds, as if something deep inside it were breathing.

Many years ago a gnome conjurer bought several buildings in the old slum, intending to use the buildings to hide his illegal magic experiments. The first of these experiments resulted in a terrible explosion that killed the gnome and damaged or destroyed many of his magic items.

One of these items was a *well of many worlds*. The item was nearly destroyed in the explosion and hurled into the sewers. Eventually, the malfunctioning device came to rest in this chamber. Over the years, its magic further unraveled until finally it formed a semi-stable portal into the Material Plane from the Paraelemental Plane of Ooze. Only creatures of Medium or smaller size can fit through the portal, along with the odd surge of paraelemental ooze. These currents of ooze are what gives the pool here its odd, rhythmic tide.

The pool itself is 30 feet deep and completely opaque. The ooze is far too thick for water breathing creatures to breathe. At the pool's base is the portal to the Paraelemental Plane of Ooze; living matter can pass into the Material Plane via the portal, but not out of it. The portal can be permanently deactivated with a successful *dispel magic* (CL 17).

The narrow ledges that run around the edge of this pool are only two feet wide and filthy with slime and refuse. A successful Balance check (DC 15) is required to move along them without slipping and falling into the ooze pool.

Creatures: Two medium ooze paraelementals lurk in this pool. As with the paraelementals found elsewhere in the Stink, they only attack creatures that enter their ooze pool.

Medium Ooze Paraelementals (2): hp 30 each; see area 11.

24. GREEN SLIME (EL 4)

What appears to be a shallow pool of murky water that fills this section of the tunnel is actually a thin layer of silt over a swath of green slime (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 76). A character who makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) followed by a successful Knowledge (nature) or Survival check (DC 20) recognizes the hazard for what it is. Otherwise, any creature walking through this area has a flat 75% chance of stumbling into the dangerous slime.

25. WARREN'S HIDEOUT (EL 1)

This side passageway is choked with rubble. The tunnel has collapsed completely about twenty feet from the main passageway. A particularly large and nasty mound of trash has collected in the dead-end. The air here is remarkably fresh.

The air quality in this side passageway is fed by a narrow shaft that leads up to the surface.

Creatures: Warren Gyreson, an ex-prisoner of the fiendish locathahs, managed to escape confinement with the aid of Yelta Kier, a fellow prisoner. Yelta was recently slain by the locathahs; her body can be found in area 22. The locathahs think Warren

Table 1: The Blessings of Incabulos

d6	Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
1	Brainboil	Injested	13	1d3 days	1d4 Wis, 1d4 Cha
2	Dripskin	Contact	14	1 day	1d3 Con
3	Gibbering Gout	Injested	17	1 day	1d10 Dex, 1d6 Int
4	Greenblight	Contact	20	1 day	1d8 Str
5	Skitterpox	Injury	12	1d6 days	2d4 Dex, 1d6 Cha
6	Wormwarts	Inhaled	15	1d3 days	1 Con, 1d6 Cha

escaped out of the tunnels into the Stink above, but in fact he's merely hidden himself under a mound of refuse at the end of this dead-end passageway.

Warren erutps from the rubble if anyone wanders into this passageway, ranting and howling. He is in the advanced stages of brainboil, one of the terrible diseases born in the depths of the Stink. Sample ravings include, "Fharlanghn has sent you! He has provided the path away from the Temple of Incabulos! I was too cowardly to save her but I ran, like Fharlanghn would have liked!"

Warren's sickness has wreaked havoc on his sanity, and he now sees all other humanoids as fiendish locathah. Therefore, if any character approaches within 5 feet, his eyes bulge and he attacks.

Warren Gyreson, male human Rog1: CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d6+1; hp 5; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d6+1 plus disease, club); SA disease, sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will –4; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 2, Cha 4.

Disease (Ex): Any creature who comes into contact with Warren, including being damaged by his club, must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) to avoid catching brainboil.

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +4, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +4, Hide +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (local) +3, Move Silently +4, Search +3, Spot +0, Swim +4.

Feats: Agile, Stealthy.

Ad-Hoc XP award: Warren is a member of the Wastewalker's Guild. If the PCs can rescue him, award them 125% normal XP for this encounter.

26. CASTOFFS

A small pool of runny mud and stagnant water fills most of this cavern. Bones of various humanoids litter the shores of the pool, but something seems fundamentally wrong about their shapes.

The Deep Mother's efforts to produce new fiendish locathahs from captured eggs have only recently begun to show promising results. Her early experiments were universally failures; unfit even for food. The Deep Mother dumped these bodies in this pool.

An examination of a skeleton followed by a successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 20) allows the character to determine that the bones were from some form of fiendish humanoid.

27. TEMPLE ENTRANCE (EL 3)

The air quality seems much better here than elsewhere in the caverns. The sound of surging water echoes from deeper in the caves. More welcome is the relative lack of refuse and rubbish in this chamber; only a few nasty stains and a low, rancid odor taint the otherwise clean chamber.

This cavern marks the beginning of the caverns the fiendish locathah have claimed as their own. From this point on, the air quality in the caverns is constantly refreshed by the numerous sea caves and tide pools.

Trap: The eastern exit from this chamber is warded with a *glyph of warding* placed by the Deep Mother to help prevent fur-

ther escapes from area 29. The *glyph* is triggered by any non-evil, non-outsider that passes over it.

Glyph of Warding (Blast): CR 3; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (glyph of warding [blast], 5th-level cleric, 2d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

28. TEMPLE GUARDIAN (EL 5)

This room appears to be a sewage junction. Numerous small stony and rusted metal tubes protrude from the ceiling and walls into this circular chamber. The room itself is flooded with muddy water, bits of refuse bobbing on its surface.

The tubes and tunnels leading up from this chamber are all collapsed, but still allow air to seep into the room. The water in the pool below has collected foul runoff and drainage from the Stink above for many years. The water itself is 20 feet deep and horribly polluted; one of the foul new diseases the Deep Mother has been trying to cultivate taints the pool. Characters who drink the water or fall into the pool must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or contract the gibbering gout.

Creature: A gibbering mouther that has been living down here for some time has allied itself with the fiendish locathahs. In return for regular offerings of food, the creature has agreed to guard this chamber against intrusions by non-locathahs. The thing hides in the pool with only a few eyes and mouths above the waterline, and surges up to attack intruders the instant it notices them.

Gibbering Mouther: hp 42; *Monster Manual* 126.

Development: The terrible din created by the gibbering mouther serves the fiendish locathahs as an alarm. If they hear the creature rise up and attack intruders, they mobilize their forces to defend the remaining rooms. Areas 29–38 assume that the fiendish locathahs are alerted; if the characters manage to make it through this encounter without alerting the gibbering mouther, they find the fiendish locathahs relaxing and unprepared.

29. PRISON CAVE (EL 4)

This rectangular chamber is flooded with about six inches of filthy water. Numerous metal loops have been driven into the stone walls, and from them hang long cords of thick leather.

Creatures: Workers and guards captured in the Stink above, as well as any PCs the fiendish locathahs catch alive, are imprisoned here. The Deep Mother uses the captured prisoners to test the effects of the various diseases she's discovered in these caverns.

There are currently four malnourished humans imprisoned here. All are members of the Wastewalker's Guild, and none are in any condition to fight without rest and healing. All four are suffering from filth fever.

Gibbering Gout

Of these six diseases, the gibbering gout is perhaps the most horrifying. As the disease progresses, the victim's sanity slowly slips away and his joints and spine begin to swell and grow tiny rudimentary eyes and mouths. These organs babble and writhe, creating a constant murmur. When the victim's Dexterity is reduced to 0, he begins a rapid and painful transformation into a gibbering mouther. The victim suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage per round. Once his Constitution score reaches 0, his body bursts open and a fully-formed gibbering mouther emerges. Tiny or smaller creatures do not spawn gibbering mothers upon dying. Larger creatures only spawn one, despite their actual size upon death. Creatures without skeletons or exoskeletons are immune to this disease.

30. GUARDROOM

Three tidepools fill this cave with a constant sloshing sound as the water levels in each pool rhythmically rise and fall to unseen currents.

The pools in this chamber and area 31 are connected by several underground flooded tunnels. These tunnels eventually connect to the sea. It is from these pools that the fiendish locathahs first came to the Stink.

Creatures: Six fiendish locathahs lurk in the pools here. Four wait in the northern pool and one waits in each of the southern pools. They wait to attack intruders until the majority of them have passed into area 31 so they can block off an easy retreat and flank the intruders with the locathahs in that area.

Fiendish Locathahs (6): hp 9 each; see area 18.

Development: If combat breaks out in this room, the locathahs in area 31 rush in to aid the locathah here two rounds after combat begins.

31. LIVING CHAMBERS (EL 4)

Several fairly calm tidepools dominate this cavern. Numerous gnawed bones and half-eaten fish and dire rats lie strewn about the ground between them.

Each pool is connected to the other by a network of underwater tunnels that eventually lead to the sea. The pools themselves are about 20 feet deep on average, with numerous ledges and protrusions along their walls.

Creatures: These pools are used by the fiendish locathahs to rest and relax. The six fiendish locathahs found here wait to attack intruders until the interlopers are first assaulted by the guards in area 30.

Fiendish Locathahs (6): hp 9 each; see area 18.

32. INCUBATOR

Foul-smelling liquid fills a pair of large pools in this chamber, the surfaces calm and oily. Several round spheres, jelly-like and translucent, bob on the surface of each pool. Every now and then one of the spheres twitches or pulses slightly, as if something inside were writhing to escape.

The Deep Mother has infused both of these 10-foot-deep pools with the unholy energies of Incabulos' realm. The spheres in the pools are the last of the stolen locathah eggs, incubating in the tainted pools and slowly transforming into fiendish monstrosities. Unfortunately for the locathah tribes, the eggs are beyond the point of redemption. They still have several weeks until they hatch, though, and destroying them should be a simple matter.

The fluid in which the eggs float, however, is rife with disease. Anyone who comes into contact with the stuff must make a successful Fortitude save or contract a random disease selected from the "Blessings of Incabulos" sidebars (the DC for this save depends upon which disease you choose).

33. SHRINE TO INCABULOS (EL 4)

Rotting bodies, both locathah and human, hang on hooks above a makeshift stone altar against the east wall. Bits of rotting matter and streaks of blood cover the altar and ground nearby. The walls of this chamber bear intricate carvings that appear to be only half finished. Those sections that are nearly complete show fields of diseased and writhing humanoids sprawled on a

vast shoreline, while numerous fish-like humanoids emerge from the waves to gather up the fallen in large nets. A large, sloshing tide pool fills much of the northern half of the chamber.

This room is slowly being transformed into a shrine dedicated to Incabulos. The bodies hanging above the altar are slowly infusing the stone with rot and disease. Likewise, the carvings on the wall are intended to fill those in the room with awe at the power of Incabulos and his chosen locathah minions. Currently, although the chamber is disturbing and foul, it does not bear any evil auras or unholy magic.

The tide pool to the north connects to those in area 31 by a long flooded passageway. This pool, which is about 30 feet deep, is the home of the three adepts who serve the Deep Mother.

Creatures: These three fiendish locathah adepts typically spend their time working on the wall carvings, but if they are aware of the PCs' intrusion into the temple they take up positions in the pool, using it as cover while they fire upon any intruders with their crossbows.

Fiendish Locathahs, Adp2 (3): CR 2; Medium humanoid (aquatic, extraplanar) HD 2d8+2d6–4; hp 12 each; Init +5; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6, masterwork quarterstaff) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA smite good (+4 damage against a good foe) 1/day, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 9; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (sculpting) +6, Heal +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +8.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Spells Prepared (3/2, save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, ghost sound, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*cure light wounds, protection from good.*

Possessions: Masterwork quarterstaff, light crossbow, 20 bolts, airgill, 2 *potions of cure light wounds, potion of remove disease.* The adepts have not yet summoned familiars for themselves.

34. THE BLESSED OF INCABULOS (EL 5)

This large cave is unnaturally warm and humid. Thick carpets of seaweed and algae grow on the floors and walls here, and hang from the ceiling in great green sheets. The floor is pock-marked with numerous pits, the rim of each lined with jagged stones and shells. A new stink fills this chamber...unlike the stink of refuse, this is a stink of sickness and death.

Each of these pits is about 10 feet deep. The Deep Mother uses these pits to isolate her favorite subjects for disease cultivation. Currently, there are five locathah and three human prisoners found here, leaving two of the pits empty. Each

Wormwarts

Of all the strange new diseases in the Stink, the wormwarts are the most dangerous. The skin of a wormwarts victim breaks out in a mass of large crusty warts the size of raspberries. These warts persist for several hours before bursting open and emitting dozens of tiny filaments into the air. These filaments are actually miniscule worms that drift on air currents until they settle upon a new host. The worms can survive for only a few minutes outside a host, but in a heavily populated regions they can spread with frightening speed.

prisoner is suffering from a foul disease that the Deep Mother cultivated from the terrible conditions here in the Stink. Consult the "Blessings of Incabulos" sidebars for details on these diseases.

The hanging fronds of seaweed provide concealment, except when two creatures are within 5 feet of each other.

A character who falls into one of the pits not only takes 1d6 points of damage from the fall, but is exposed to the terrible disease in the pit and must make a Fortitude saving throw of the appropriate DC for that disease to avoid contracting the sickness.

Creatures: The Deep Mother's current favored consorts guard this chamber. They spend much of their time in the Deep Mother's chambers, but assuming that the fiendish locathahs are on alert, they have relocated to this room to ambush any intruders.

Fiendish Locathahs, Bbn2 (2): CR 3; Medium humanoid (aquatic, extraplanar) HD 2d8+2d12+4; hp 26 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/×3, *+1 longspear*) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA rage 1/day, smite good (+4 damage against a good foe) 1/day; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 9, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +5, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +8.

Feats: Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack.

Possessions: *+1 longspear*, light crossbow, 20 bolts, *+1 leather armor*, airgill.

Tactics: The barbarians prepare an ambush if they know the PCs are on their way. They hide in the hanging seaweed *10 feet from either side of the northern entrance and try to attack with surprise, raging at the start of the combat. Their favored tactic is to bull rush intruders into a convenient pit. They can even attack characters knocked into a pit with their longspears, since the pits are only 10 feet deep.

35. DEEP MOTHER'S LAIR (EL 6)

This cave is humid and foul smelling. Many piles of refuse and bodies of humans and locathahs lie in disturbingly organized mounds along the walls of this room, and a large tidepool sloshes to the south, its rim festooned with pale and diseased sea anemones.

This tide pool connects to the open sea via a long flooded tunnel; it does not connect to the other tide pools in the Stink's caverns. The pool itself is 20 feet deep. The Deep Mother, leader of the fiendish locathahs in the Stink, dwells in this cavern. She is responsible for the mounds of organized decay, each body and pile of refuse selected especially for the strange diseases cultivating in its core. None of these diseases are airborne yet, but any character who searches through the refuse and bodies is exposed to 1d4 random diseases from the "Blessings of Incabulos" sidebars, and must make a successful Fortitude save against each to avoid contracting the disease in question.

Creature: The Deep Mother spends much of her time mixing and cultivating the diseases, using spells like *curse water*, and *contagion* combined with her Craft Wondrous Item feat to encourage the growth. She maintains a *desecrate* spell in this cave at all times as well. If she knows the PCs are on the way, she prepares for their arrival by casting *animate dead* on the diseased bodies, transforming them into zombies. She creates six zombies from the bodies of humans and two from the bodies of locathahs; the *desecrate* spell allows her to animate twice as many undead as she normally can. She then retreats to the tide pool to hide and allow her undead to defend the chamber.

Deep Mother, female fiendish locathah Clr5: CR 6; Medium humanoid (aquatic); HD 7d8+7; hp 42; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, *+1 light mace*), or +9 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA

rebuke/command undead, smite good (+7 damage against a good foe) 1/day, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 12; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +6, Craft (alchemy) +7, Healing +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +9, Spellcraft +7, Spot +9, Swim +14.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item.

Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/2+1; base DC 14 + spell level): 0—*create water* (2), *cure minor wounds* (2), *resistance*; 1st—*command*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *inflict light wounds**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *desecrate* (2, one already cast), *shatter**; 3rd: *animate dead*, *contagion**, *remove disease*.

*Domain Spell. *Domains*: Destruction (smite 1/day, +4 on attack, extra +5 damage), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: *+1 light mace*, masterwork light crossbow, 10 bolts, small shield, leather armor, *periapt of health*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 2 *potions of remove disease*.

Human Zombies (6): hp 16 each; SA disease; other stats as *Monster Manual* 266.

Disease (Ex): These zombies are infected with skitterpox; creatures wounded by these zombies must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12) each time they are hit to avoid catching this disease.

Locathah Zombies (2): CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12; hp 29 each; Init +0; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, slam); SA disease; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing; single actions only; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Disease (Ex): These zombies are infected with dripskin; creatures wounded by these zombies must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 14) each time they are hit to avoid catching this disease.

Feats: Toughness.

Tactics. Once the PCs arrive and start fighting the zombies, the Deep Mother casts *bear's endurance*, *shield of faith*, and *divine favor* on herself and then emerges from the pool to aid her minions. She does not fight to the death, however, and if it looks like she's approaching a defeat she attempts to flee via the tide pool.

Development: One of the locathah zombies is in fact the ranger Kilorkus, leader of the locathah scouts from area 8. The locathah become dismayed if they learn of Kilorkus' terrible fate, but if the PCs return his body to them they are nonetheless thankful.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: The PCs should earn 125% the normal XP award for this encounter due to the *desecrate* spell and diseased zombies.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters fail to disrupt the Deep Mother's plans, she unleashes her fiendish plagues upon the city of Suncliff at about the same time the locathah tribes launch a full-scale invasion of the city. The timing of the invasion and the Deep Mother's schedule are left vague—you can time them as you will to enhance the sense of drama in the adventure, or even to set up an epic campaign plotline involving plagues and invasion.

If the characters manage to defeat the Deep Mother's plans and drive the fiendish locathah out of the Stink, their actions go mostly unnoticed by the people and government of Suncliff. The populace may never know how close they came to devastating locathah raids and horrible plagues of fiendish diseases, but Popollo and the Wastewalkers' Guild do. With the fiendish locathah dealt with, Popollo and his employees begin to make real progress at cleaning up the Stink. He doesn't forget the services the PCs provided, and eventually makes good on the rewards he may have prom-

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Stink" is designed for four 4th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of lower or higher level. The adventure is more suitable when scaled down than up, since at 5th level, clerics and druids gain access to *remove disease*, which lessens the threat of the diseases in the Stink. Consider making further changes to the adventure as follows:

1st–3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Decrease any class levels possessed by NPCs by one or two.
- Replace all ghasts with ghouls, and all ghouls with zombies.
- Replace the Medium ooze paraelementals with Small ooze paraelementals.
- Remove all traps with a CR greater than 3.
- Reduce the Fortitude save DCs required to resist the diseases by –2.
- Area **2**: Replace the otyughs with carrion crawlers or Large monstrous centipedes.
- Area **6**: Replace the advanced otyugh with a regular otyugh.
- Area **16**: Replace the ochre jelly with a gray ooze.
- Area **28**: Replace the gibbering mouther with an ooze mephit.

5th–7th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Increase any class levels possessed by NPCs by one or two.
- Replace all ghouls with ghasts, and all ghasts with wights.
- Replace the Medium ooze paraelementals with Large ooze paraelementals.
- Increase the Fortitude save DCs to resist the diseases by +2.
- All non-classed fiendish locathah should gain one or two levels of fighter.
- Area **5**: Replace the dire rats with Large monstrous centipedes.
- Area **14**: Replace the gray ooze with an ochre jelly.
- Area **28**: Advance the gibbering mouther's Hit Dice by +4.

ised them. He does pay the PCs the promised 100 gp per rescued worker immediately, however.

Although rescuing the prisoners from the Stink is a noble goal, it carries with it a hidden danger. If the PCs simply return these prisoners to civilization without curing the diseases they carry, there is a very real chance these terrible diseases establish a foothold and begin to spread. The PCs themselves could serve as unwitting carriers if they have contracted one of the diseases. Fighting against the spread of these terrible diseases could form the backbone for an entire series of adventures in Suncliff.

If any of the fiendish locathahs (particularly the Deep Mother) survive and escape the Stink, they may return later with reinforcements. Perhaps they try to take Suncliff by force, or perhaps they simply seek out the PCs for revenge. The location of the deep underwater portal to Incabulos' realm can also serve as an adventure hook; what would happen if the Black Rider dispatched even more minions from his infected realm into the seas of your campaign world? Ω

Monte Lin is a freelance writer and an aspiring screenwriter who started gaming as soon as he received the old red-box DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *set as a present one fateful childhood morning. Before then, he spent some time lost in a sewer.*

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BY TONY MOSELEY

WARDUKE

HIERARCH OF THE HORNED SOCIETY

BY THE DUNGEON STAFF
ARTWORK BY WAYNE REYNOLDS

Nearly 100 years ago, the demigod Iuz vanished from the northern lands, imprisoned beneath Castle Greyhawk by the archmage Zagig Yragerne. In the violent chaos that followed, a group of thirteen black-hearted adventurers captured Iuz's "summer capital" of Molag and created the Horned Society, a nation based on the adoration of foul beings from the Lower Planes.

A returned Iuz's forces invaded the Horned Society's lands during the recent Greyhawk Wars, putting most of the order's malicious lords to the torch during the Festival of the Blood Moon. The Unnameable Hierarch, leader of the society, fell in that invasion, but rather than signaling the end of the order, his assassination triggered a new beginning for the Horned Society. The leader was reborn as a greater devil thanks to a pact with the archfiend Baalzebul, and with his newfound power the Unnameable Hierarch began to assemble a new Horned Society—a skulking, malevolent organization with poisonous tendrils threaded throughout the Flanaess.

The Unnameable Hierarch managed to rebuild his organization so quickly in large part due to the influence of a ruthless fighter named Warduke, a mysterious and relentless killer who emerged from nowhere after the Greyhawk Wars to spread terror and uncertainty among mercenaries, soldiers, and fighting societies from the Barrier Peaks to the Solnor Ocean.

Warduke is the soldier's bogeyman, the opponent seasoned veterans least hope to see when the battlefield fog clears and reveals the forces of the enemy. Tavern tales suggest Warduke's hand in the destruction of several complete adventuring parties, including Greyhawk's Company of the Sundered Shield and the Ramshorn Alliance of Chendl. Both groups had crossed lesser agents of the Horned Society in the weeks before their destruction, and the crowned devil heraldic device of the Society turned up at both slaughter sites. In both cases, Warduke had been seen in the area.

Warduke works alone, preferring to challenge enemies of the Horned Society in direct combat. He cares nothing for decorum, often assaulting his quarry as they emerge battered and tired after a dungeon crawl or prior battle. He speaks with a raspy, otherworldly voice and possesses a morbid sense of humor. He takes pleasure in brutality and tenaciously hounds his enemies.

TACTICS

Warduke rarely encounters enemies who can challenge him in combat. He often tries to deliberately surround himself with his enemies so he can lay waste with Whirlwind Attack. He usually devotes 2 points of his base attack bonus to his Armor Class (using Combat Expertise) and 5 points to Power Attack; if he finds he has trouble hitting a target he abandons this tactic. If facing an obviously superior foe, or a foe that can consistently stay out of melee range, he isn't afraid

to break off combat (usually by using a *word of recall* stored in his *helm*) to plot revenge for another day.

DEVELOPMENT

Warduke makes a perfect enemy for high-level "mightier than thou" PCs who think they can handle anything a DM can throw at them. If you don't use the Horned Society, make him a bigshot in your own evil organization, brought in as a special anti-adventurer agent just when your players are riding high on their latest victory. They may not thank you for it later, but they'll remember it forever. Ω

Warduke, Male Human Ftr18: CR 20; Medium humanoid (human); HD 18d10+162; hp 318; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34, touch 16, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +18; Grp +29; Atk +34 melee (1d10+18+1d6 fire/17–20, *+3 bane vs. humans anarchic flaming burst bastard sword*); Full Atk +32/+27/+22/+17 melee (1d10+18+1d6 fire/17–20, *+3 bane vs. humans anarchic flaming burst bastard sword*) and +32 melee (1d8+6, shield bash); SA fear gaze, *death knell*; SQ damage reduction 3/—, immune to charm, low-light vision, *see invisibility*, spell resistance 27, *word of recall*; AL CE; SV Fort +20, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 32, Dex 16, Con 28, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 20.

Skills: Climb +32, Intimidate +35, Jump +32, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Survival +12 (+14 on other planes), Swim +14.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Greater Weapon Specialization (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Shield Bash, Mobility, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Infernal.

Inherent Bonuses: Warduke has had several of his ability scores improved with inherent bonuses from *wish* spells, often granted to him as payment for particularly important missions. He has a +5 inherent bonus to Strength, a +4 inherent bonus to Constitution, and a +4 inherent bonus to Charisma.

Possessions: +3 bane vs. humans anarchic flaming burst bastard sword, dagger of venom, +3 moderate fortification adamantine ceremonial spiked half-plate, +5 bashing heavy steel shield, Warduke's helm, amulet of health +6, gauntlets of giant strength +6, boots of speed, ring of protection +3, fearsome eye fiendish graft.

Fearsome Eye: This fiendish graft is bright red in color and has a black iris. It grants the grafted creature the ability to continuously *see invisibility* as the spell from a 20th–level caster. In addition, the grafted creature gains a fear gaze attack. Anyone within 30 feet of the grafted creature that meets its eyes must make a Will saving throw (DC 16) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Normally, the save DC against this effect reflects a +2 bonus, but since both of Warduke's eyes are fearsome eyes, he gains the full +4 bonus to this DC. The grafted creature is immune to this gaze attack.

The *Fiend Folio* has full rules for fiendish grafts.

Warduke's Helm (major artifact): Warduke gained his helm from the Unnameable Hierarch himself as payment for a particularly destructive and successful mission. The *helm* is infused with powerful evil, and bestows 2 negative levels on any non-evil creature that puts it on. If a lawful good creature puts on the helm, the faceplate vanishes and long spikes begin to grow from the inner surface of the *helm*, dealing 2d6 points of slashing damage per round to the victim.

An evil creature gains several benefits by wearing the *helm*. It grants low-light vision to the wearer, as well as a natural armor bonus equal to his Charisma modifier (minimum of +1). The wearer gains a +10 competence bonus on Intimidate checks. The wearer also gains SR 10 + his character level, as well as complete immunity to all Charm effects.

The faceplate of the helm is set with three rubies, one of which is much larger than the other two. The two smaller rubies each allow the wearer to cast a quickened still silent *death knell*. When the user casts this spell, one of the two small rubies glows red for the duration of the effect. As long as a ruby is glowing, it cannot cast a *death knell*; thus, Warduke can be under the effects of two *death knells* from his helm at a time.

The large ruby can store a single spell of up to 6th level, as a *ring of spell storing*. The wearer can cast this spell as a quickened still silent spell. Warduke typically keeps a *word of recall* spell stored here for emergencies.

Note: Warduke has far better statistics and better possessions (including a major artifact) than most NPCs of his level possess. As a result, his CR is +2 higher than normal.

CEREMONIAL ARMOR

Ceremonial armor is typically worn not for combat but for show, or to intimidate or impress. A suit of ceremonial armor costs twice as much as normal masterwork armor (but is not necessarily itself masterwork), and consists of about half the actual armor of a normal suit. Ceremonial armor weighs half as much as the normal armor, and provides half the armor bonus of the standard armor, rounded down. The maximum Dexterity bonus for ceremonial armor increases by +1, the armor check penalty is reduced by 2 points (to a minimum penalty of 0), and it does not impact the wearer's speed. Arcane spell failure chances for ceremonial armor are half normal. Despite these changes, the category of a suit of ceremonial armor (light, medium, or heavy) does not change; although a suit of ceremonial full plate may only provide the same protection as a regular chain shirt, it still requires the Heavy Armor Proficiency feat to wear properly.

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DEATHNET

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Polyhedron 164

RPGA NETWORK

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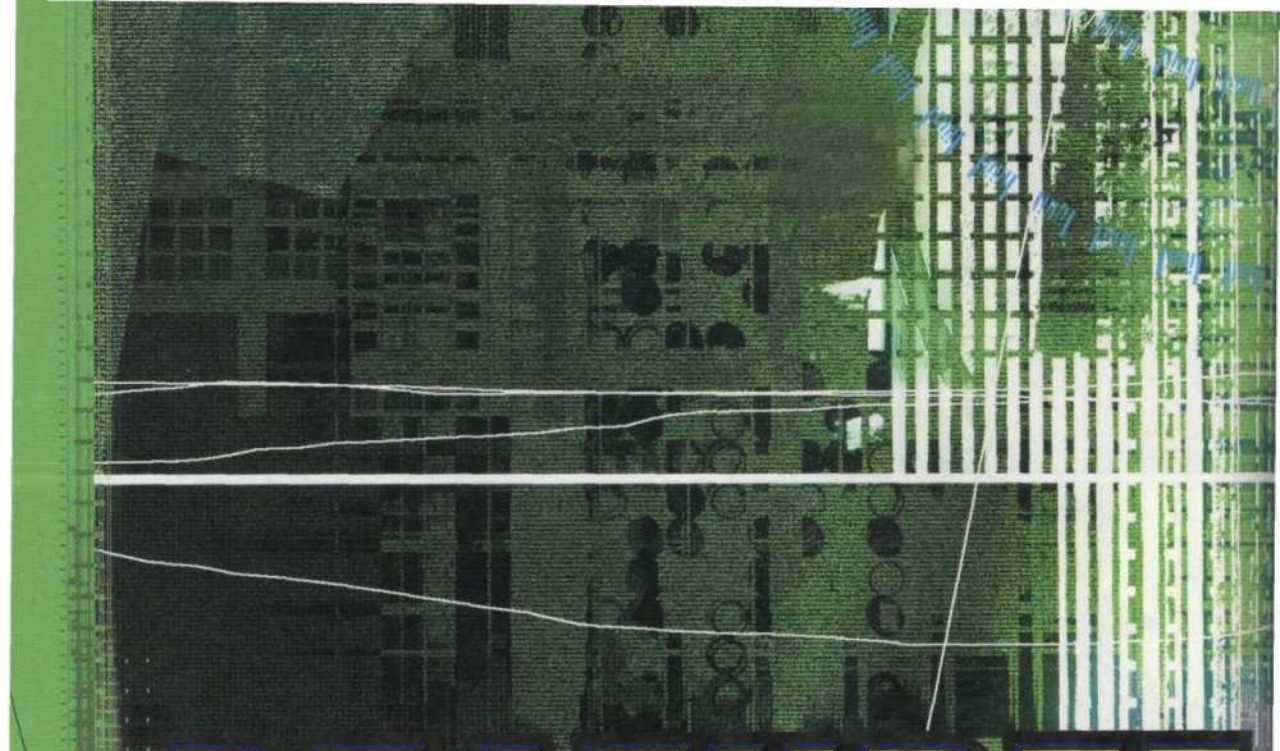

DEATHNET

BY KEITH BAKER

A POLYHEDRON MINI-GAME OF HIGH-RES ADVENTURE

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This **Polyhedron** *d20 System* Mini-Game requires the *d20* ***Modern*** *Roleplaying Game* to play. **Polyhedron** Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D or ***d20* Modern** rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core *d20* ***Modern*** rules. If you know how to play *d20* ***Modern***, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments. *Deathnet* utilizes game mechanics developed for the new **Dungeons & Dragons** game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison and the *d20* ***Modern*** Roleplaying Game by Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan.

This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

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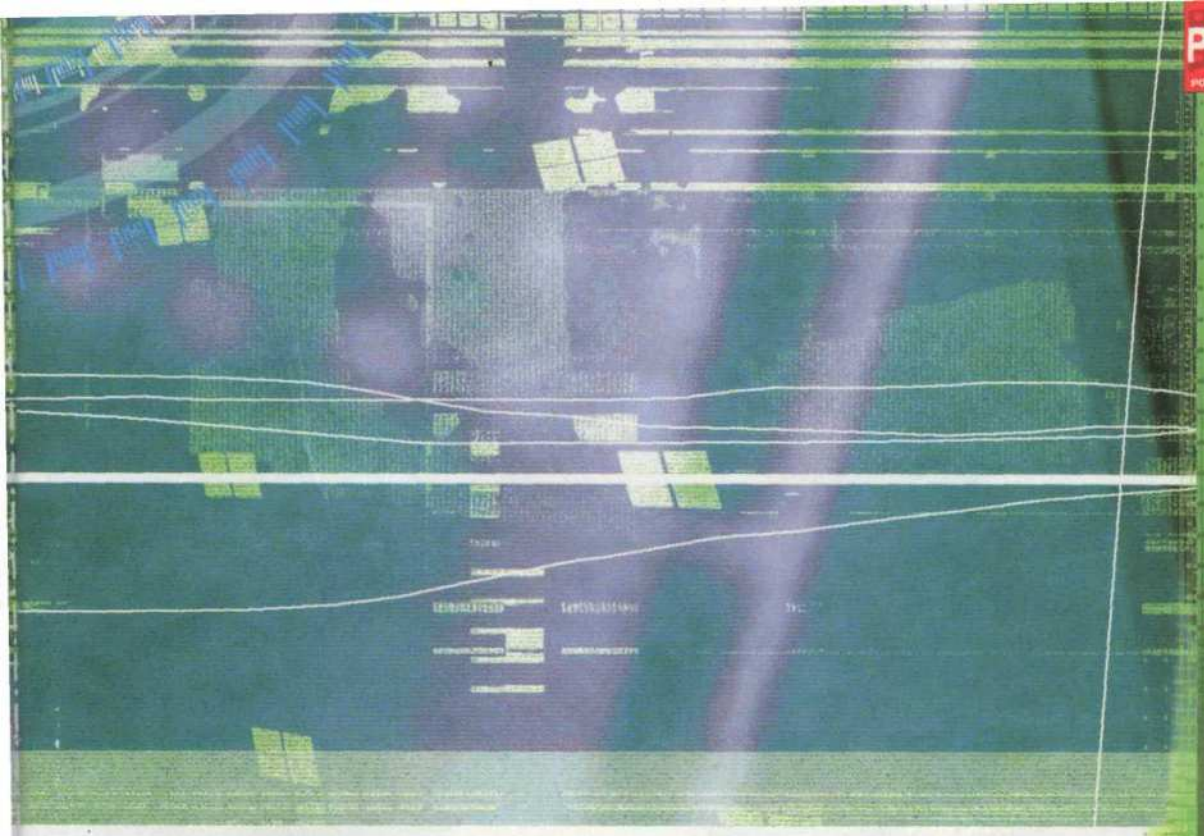
Based on the original Dungeons & Dragons game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.



LOGGING IN

Wallaby Jack bounced around the corner. Three crash bugs clustered in the center of the hallway. Wallaby bounced high over the first two bugs, landing on the beast in the rear with a satisfying SPLAT. As the remaining beasts turned to face him, Viscount 'Viscerator appeared behind them, his trusty gatling cannon spraying the hall with a hail of pixels. Wallaby leapt over the bullets, which tore the bugs to shreds. "All clear!" he called. Ladyblue52 and the Phreak cautiously came around the bend. At the far end of the hallway, a wall of static blocked access to the precious node. "You're up, Phreak," grunted the 'Viscerator.

PROLOGUE

There's a world just around the corner where everyone plays games. An intrepid adventurer can make a fortune by selling the virtual treasures he acquires over the net. A corporate executive can vent her built-up tensions by killing her boss in the *Deathmatch* arena. Online, a normal person can be transformed into a warrior, a star athlete, or a beauty queen. Slowly but surely, humanity is abandoning reality for the tailored worlds of the Net.

Psykey Industries is one of the great powers of the digital age. Psykey rules an online empire, an international domain with millions of subjects. But progress and greed never stand still, and Psykey's research and development department have spent years working on the next evolution of the Net. Last week, this secret project was finally revealed: MentaLink™. This astonishing innovation allows a user to directly connect his brain to the Psykey system, allowing a uniquely immersive experience. Psykey advertisements call MentaLink™ a bridge to a new future. Games are only the beginning; according to Psykey, MentaLink™ will change the way that people communicate, do business, and live their lives.

You were one of the lucky few chosen to participate in the public beta test of the MentaLink™ system. At least, you *thought* you were lucky. At first, it was everything they said it would be. There were a host of games to choose from; you could fight dragons in *ForeverQuest*, blast your friends in *Preemptive Strike*, or dodge cunning traps and ferocious dinosaurs in *Crypt Robber*–all the old classics–but now you were actually *in* the game! It was a dream come true–until the Surge.

Words can't begin to capture the terror you felt when the Surge struck. The colorful gameworld disappeared in a wave of searing pain. Time lost all meaning as the agony burned away all conscious thoughts. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it was over. You were still in the body of your game character, but your surroundings had changed. You were standing in what appeared to be a classical Greek temple formed entirely from polished steel. A few others stood around you, characters from a variety of games and settings. In the center of the chamber stood a statue of a woman, also fashioned from mirror-bright steel. She held a scale in her left hand in the traditional pose of blind justice. But there was a large handgun in her right hand, and her eyes were hidden behind wraparound sunglasses instead of a blindfold. She began to speak with a clear melodic voice that seemed to flow directly into your brain.

I am Themis. I am a secondary support system for the Psykey ContiNet. There has been a disruption within the system. All contact with the physical world has been severed. The primary support systems have been destroyed, and the

network of control nodes has been scrambled. This is clearly an act of sabotage, but I do not know the nature or motives of the perpetrators. During the disruption, I was able to acquire your personality patterns and bring you to this place. However, with the external connection severed, your mental patterns cannot be restored to your body—and should you die within the system, your mind will be destroyed. If you will work with me to reestablish the network of control nodes, we can restore the system and return you to your bodies. I may even be able to sustain your patterns within my own systems if you are killed. Or you can take your chances alone. Will you help me?

What's it going to be?

SUMMARY

With every year, the Internet becomes a more integral part of our daily life. People turn to the Net for business, communication, and entertainment. As online systems become increasingly sophisticated, it's not difficult to imagine an independent world evolving on the other side of the computer screen.

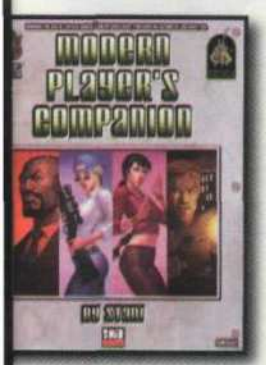
What if your mind was torn from your body and imprisoned in this artificial world? The idea has been explored in many forms. Disney's *Tron* may be the best example from the silver screen, but in more recent years *eXistenZ* and *The Matrix* have both used this theme as the backbone for their stories. The cartoon *ReBoot* is set within a digital universe. In literature, Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* trilogy, and a host of others have explored the possibilities for adventure in cyberspace.

In *Deathnet*, you have been stranded in a virtual universe that has been thrown into chaos. The Psykey system is a collection of computer games stitched together by network paths. Almost any game you've ever played can be found in the system. As you wander through the world, you may find yourself being hounded through a neon maze by colorful ghosts, fighting off an assault by fiendish space invaders, or wandering through a medieval castle in a fantasy roleplaying game. But ghosts and goblins are the least of your concerns. Throughout the system hackers, artificial intelligences, viruses, and stranger forces are banding together to seize power. What happens next is up to you. Will you fight to restore order to the Psykey system, or will you try to found your own virtual empire? Can you find a way to restore your mind to your body? Can you at least earn an extra life before you die?

The focus of *Deathnet* is on high-energy action. The Psykey system is filled with mysteries and hidden dangers, and battle lurks around every corner. Your mind is trapped in the body of a video game character, and this provides you with a variety of special abilities. You may be able to produce rocket launchers from thin air, leap ten times your height, or perform astonishing feats of martial arts. Alternately, you may be a programmer with the power to twist the reality of the system itself. But you will need every tool at your disposal to overcome the myriad threats scattered throughout the Net.

Of course, you can use the *Deathnet* rules without following the Psykey storyline. You can introduce your own take on the cyberverse, or for a more

modern action direct from the source!



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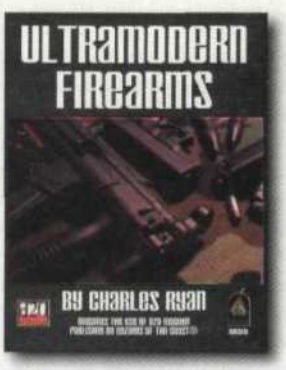

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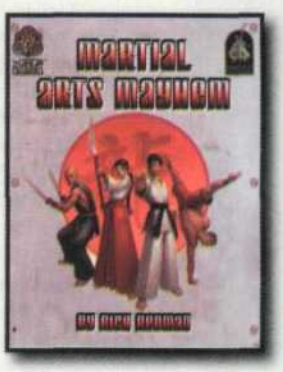

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d20 system

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interesting twist you could overlay *Deathnet* on an ongoing *d20 Modern* campaign. All of these ideas are explored in greater detail in Chapter Six.

GAME OVERVIEW

Deathnet is a campaign model for *d20 Modern*. For the most part *Deathnet* uses all of the rules found in the *d20 Modern* roleplaying game. However, there are a variety of rules and systems that are unique to the *Deathnet* setting. The game is divided into the following sections:

Chapter One: Character Generation. In *Deathnet*, you don't play a character of flesh and blood; instead you are a collection of pixels bound together by binary code, with powers based on the video game from which you were plucked. This is reflected by a variety of changes to the character generation system.

Instead of the six basic classes presented in *d20 Modern*, you must construct your character using one of the four classes presented in this chapter. You begin at 4th-level, representing the innate abilities of your game character. Starting occupation is replaced by character model, a choice that affects both your appearance and your starting abilities. All of the skills and feats from *d20 Modern* can be used in *Deathnet*, but there are also a few new options that are unique to the setting.

Chapter Two: Coding. Programmers have the ability to tinker with the underlying mechanics of the virtual universe. This is a system of FX abilities, similar to psionics and spells from *d20 Modern*.

Chapter Three: Combat. There are a number of unique twists to combat in the world of *Deathnet*. This chapter examines the various unusual abilities of *Deathnet* characters and how these abilities come into play on the field of battle. It also looks are the consequences of combat–injury, healing, death, and extra lives.

Chapter Four: Subroutines and Power-ups. One of the most significant differences between *Deathnet* and *d20 Modern* is that in *Deathnet*, you don't use equipment. There are no physical objects. Instead of buying a gun, you acquire a subroutine that enhances your combat abilities. If you're a hardbitten space mercenary, it may look like a blaster; if you're a mighty wizard, the same subroutine could take the form of a magical staff that spits fireballs. This chapter provides a list of these treasures of the Net and explains how subroutines interact with the innate powers of your character.

Chapter Five: The Deathnet Campaign. This chapter provides a possible path for *Deathnet* adventures. Themis, an artificial intelligence set to monitor the system, is attempting to restore order to the network by gaining control of critical nodes. But Themis cannot act; she can only advise. Chapter Five discusses adventures based around seizing control of the nodes–a goal that brings you into conflict with a host of enemies who wish to gain the power of the nodes for their own ends. If you aid Themis, she can grant you power and potentially even return you to your body. But just how far do you trust the so-called security system?

In addition to Psykey and Themis, this chapter presents a variety of other adventure seeds. It also includes suggestions for interweaving *Deathnet* with an ongoing *d20 Modern* campaign. Can your Smart hero steal priceless information from a Psykey datafortress?

Chapter Six: The Virtual World. The final chapter examines all aspects of the Psykey system. This includes a breakdown of the geography of the virtual world, a detailed look at the power groups vying for control of the Net, and a bestiary describing the many deadly opponents you may face in your online adventures.

THINGS TO FORGET

There are a few pages you should tear out of your *d20 Modern* book before diving into *Deathnet*:

Size doesn't matter. Video games often have a way of setting aside realism in the name of entertainment. This has unusual game effects related to creature size. The mouseketeer's tiny rapier can hit just as hard as the 50-foot robot's megablade, and both characters have an equal chance of hitting a fly or the broad size of a barn. So throw out the concept that attack modifiers, Defense modifiers, and weapon damage are based on size. If you want to mimic some of the usual effects of size, you can take the Enormous Size or Tiny feat.

No Death from massive damage.

No Wealth. The Psykey ContiNet primarily runs on a barter system. In some areas the inhabitants have established a form of currency; in other places, you'll have to find trade goods to get what you want.

You're always armed. In *Deathnet*, the difference between a sword and a fist is purely cosmetic. While subroutines can enhance your natural ability to inflict damage, you are always considered to be armed and do not suffer any of the normal penalties for making unarmed attacks.

If a subject is not specifically mentioned, use the rules provided in *d20 Modern*. Now it's time to boot up and enter *Deathnet!*

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTER GENERATION

"I don't know, Jess. It's a little hard for me to get used to the idea of you being a b'b" Schwarzenegger clone."

"Oh, like it's easier to accept you as a cartoon kangaroo. Still, I'm starting to get the hang of this. Check this out." Viscount 'Viscerator—my girlfriend Jessica—held out his muscular arm, and suddenly there was a submachinegun in his—uh, her—hand. A split second later, it had turned into an assault rifle.

"Pretty cool, huh?"

When you strapped on your MentaLink™ headset and entered the Psykey system, you left your physical body behind and took control of a digital construct—one of the heroes of the many games offered on the Net. The choices were almost limitless; you could become a heavily armed robot, a cartoon frog, a sly ninja, an acrobatic tomb robber, or any one of hundreds of other characters. With a handful of exceptions, your ability scores, skills, and feats represent the powers of this online alter-ego; even your mental statistics are based on your avatar's ability to process data and influence the inhabitants of the Net. You may be a clumsy, socially inept oaf in the real world, but if your avatar has been programmed to be charming, the other inhabitants of the system will react to that charisma.

The first step in creating a character is to come up with an initial concept. Think of all the computer and arcade games you've ever played—do you have a favorite character? A hero from an online roleplaying game you've devoted years of your life to? Dirk the Daring from *Dragon's Lair?* You can put your own spin on the character, or you can just lift your identity directly from an existing game—hey, if you want to be Lara Croft, we're not going to get in your way.

Whether you base your idea on an existing game or come up with something entirely new, think about your appearance, your strengths and weaknesses, and the role you expect to play within your group. Are you a brawler who's going to charge straight into battle? A sniper? A bouncy plumber who prefers to jump over his problems instead of tackling them head-on? Or a chat-room diplomat who tries to talk your way through their troubles?

Once you have this basic idea, you'll need to go through the following four steps.

Step 1: Generate Ability Scores.
The first thing you need to do is to determine your initial ability scores. Any of the three methods provided on page 14 of the *d20 Modern* core rulebook can be used in *Deathnet*; the gamemaster should determine which system he prefers the players to use. Generate your ability scores using the chosen method, and distribute them as best fits your character concept. All *Deathnet* characters begin play with four character levels, so you also add a +1 bonus to an ability score of your choice.

Step 2: Choose a Character Model.
The inhabitants of *Deathnet* are virtual constructs. Race and gender are cosmetic concepts that have no real effect on your character. What matters most is your character model—a physical archetype that helps to define your role in the world. This is similar to starting occupation in *d20 Modern*, but it affects your ability scores and has a noticeable effect on your appearance. Your model provides you with useful abilities, but it also gives your opponents a hint as to what they can expect from you.

Step 3: Select Class Levels.
As a video game hero, you were designed to be ready for adventure from the moment you logged in. As a result, you begin with a total of four class levels. The four classes in this chapter take the place of the six basic hero classes presented in *d20 Modern*, and you must choose your initial levels from among these four classes.

If you decide to create a multiclass character, you must select one of your classes as your **primary class**. You receive maximum hit points and quadruple skill points from your first level in this class. Your chosen character model may require you to take levels in a particular class; if so, this must be your primary class.

Your choice of class levels is your primary opportunity to emulate a particular video game character. The hero of a first-person shooter may have four Wargame levels. A martial artist may combine Wargame and Twitch levels, while a wizard from a fantasy roleplaying game could include Avatar and Programmer levels. Study each class and think about what combination best fits the character that you are trying to create.

Step 4: Select Skills, Feats, and Class Abilities.
The final step is to determine your skills, feats, talents, and hit points based on the classes that you selected. As a 4th-level character, you receive two initial feats, in addition to any bonus feats that you may get as a result of your class or model.

Now that you've got the basic idea, let's look at each of the different elements!

CHARACTER MODELS

As a creature formed from pure data, a *Deathnet* character has no real concept of race or starting profession. Instead, you are differentiated by your model—a combination of your physical appearance and your function. Just take a look at the average martial arts fighting game. All of the characters in the game are combatants—represented in *Deathnet* by the Wargame class. But the appearance of the character tells you a great deal about his abilities. You know the big guy is going to be slow but extremely powerful, while the small, slender woman will be weaker but very fast.

A model description may include the following elements:

Class Requirements: A few models require you to take levels in a particular class. You can't be in Tech Support without having a solid grounding as a programmer. If a model has a class requirement, you must select the required class as your primary class.

Ability Score Adjustments: Most models have strengths and weaknesses that are reflected by modifications to your starting ability scores. If you want to be as strong as possible, play a bruiser!

Skills: Like starting professions in *d20 Modern*, many models allow you to select a certain number of skills as permanent class skills. If any of your choices overlap with the class skills of your primary class, you receive a +1 competence bonus on checks using those skills.

Special: A few models receive bonus feats or other special abilities.

S. Rhino

BRUISER

"I must break you."

The bruiser relies on brute strength at the expense of speed. You know how the average fighting game has one character who's twice the size of the other fighters? This is that guy. A bruiser could also come from a pro wrestling game or a football game, or he might be a warrior or a barbarian from a fantasy roleplaying game.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Str, –2 Dex, –2 Int.

Skills: Choose one of the following as a permanent class skill: Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Swim. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Melee Combat Code as a bonus feat.

Quigley

CRITTER

"Ruh-roh!"

Games aimed at younger audiences often have animals as characters. A critter may be an anthropomorphic humanoid–like Sonic the Hedgehog–or he may have the form of a natural animal. Critters tend to be cute and quick, but they are prone to immature behavior. Not all animals are critters; a photorealistic bear could be a bruiser, while a werejaguar could be a ninja. Critters are identified by their colorful appearance and childlike energy.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Dex, –2 Int.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Balance, Climb, Jump, Swim, Tumble. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: Your base speed is increased by 5 feet.

@Re

HACKER

"I told him he was leet<3d +l-l3 l33t $kllz. l3u+ I M UBE! -L33T." (Translation for the leetspeak impaired: "I informed him that his skills were inferior to my own.")

Most of the people caught in the ContiNet disaster were guests of Psykey Industries. But any time you build a wall, someone will want to find out what's on the other side. You are one of the hackers who succeeded at breaking through the Psykey firewall, using jury-rigged MentaLink™ technology to find your way into the Net. Perhaps you are an innocent tourist, or a thrillseeker who sought to prove your skills against the best system in the business. As a rule, Hackers are chaotic and despise authority. You may work with Themis to get out of the system, but that doesn't mean that you're going to be a good little solider.

While hacker is a model category, no two hackers look alike. Hackers take great pride in creating unique and unusual models for themselves. You might be a shimmering nimbus of light, a levitating potted plant, or a photorealistic clone of Abraham Lincoln. Your appearance is entirely up to you–although unless you have the appropriate avatar talent, once you have chosen your form you are stuck with it.

Class Requirements: 2 Programmer levels.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Str, –2 Wis, –2 Cha.

Skills: You receive Disable Device and Hacking as permanent class skills. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: C++, Java, or 13375p34|<.

MARKSMAN

"Frag the lieutenant!"

Shooting games are one of the most popular forms of electronic entertainment. From *House of the Dead* to *Counterstrike*, there are dozens of games that focus on the firepower. You are a character from such a game. The typical marksman is quick and adept at ranged combat, but has the personality of a brick wall–shooting games rarely involve much talking. Your appearance will depend on your source game. You might be a Navy SEAL, a mini-mech, a superhero with laser eyes, or even a sorcerer with a staff of blasting!

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Dex, –2 Wis, –2 Cha.

Skills: Choose one of the following as a permanent class skill: Climb, Demolitions, Hide, Spot, Swim. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus to all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Ranged Combat Code as a bonus feat.

Special: Choose two of the following as bonus feats: Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Ranged Combat Code.

NINJA

"Shhh!"

Where the bruiser is the giant of the fighting genre, the ninja is the small, fast character. Her attacks may not do as much damage, but she possesses blinding speed. Ninjas also star in stealth games–shooters where the goal

is to reach a target without raising an alarm. You might be a big-eyed anime character, or you could be a grim soldier from a Special Forces simulation; either way you are capable of swift and silent action.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Dex, –2 Str, –2 Con.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Balance, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot, Tumble. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Stealthy as a bonus feat.

ROLEPLAYING FANATIC

"Aye, the varlet was no match for a blade forged in the fires of the Black Mountain! Now, where's the phat l3wt?"

The Net provides people with an opportunity to create new, more exciting identities. By day you may be a coffee shop clerk, but by night you are a barbarian king or a galactic knight! These games are surprisingly addictive, and fans can find that their virtual lives seem more real and important than their real ones.

Your roleplaying persona talents represent characters you have developed in Psykey roleplaying games. As a dedicated roleplayer, you may have developed elaborate personalities and fictional histories for each of your personas. Or you may see the game as a way to gain l3wt you can sell online, or an opportunity to be rude to people without worrying about getting beaten up...

Class Requirements: 1 Avatar level.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Con, –2 Wis.

Skills: You receive Knowledge (MUDville) and any one skill of your choice as a class skill; however, you may not select Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: Elvish, Klingon, or 13375p34|<.

Special: You receive a bonus talent from the avatar roleplaying talent tree.

Merangue

SPOKESMODEL

"Oh, I loooove to play games."

The ContiNet doesn't only support games—it also includes a large selection of chat rooms and other purely social environments. These chat rooms come in a wide variety of flavors and themes, from digital playgrounds for children to erotic dungeons for adventurous adults. Spokesmodels are designed for social interaction. They come in a variety of forms; you may be colorful, cute, or sultry, as you see fit. Regardless of your choice, you have an innate charm and a flair for conversation.

Class Requirements: 1 Avatar level.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Cha, –2 Int, –2 Wis.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (MUDville), Perform (Act, Stand-up), Sense Motive. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: Elvish, Klingon, or 13375p34|<.

Special: You gain 1 additional skill point every time you select an Avatar level; you gain an additional 4 skill points for your first level, as Avatar must be your primary class. These points must be spent on one of the bonus skills you gained because of this model.

TECH SUPPORT

"My name is Bill. How can I help you?"

You are a Psykey software engineer. You may have been a game guide in MUDville, or you could have been developing a new product in the Redlands—but now you're trapped in the net along with everyone else. Your greatest strength is your ability to influence the system, reflected by your Programmer levels. Most tech supporters support Themis and the restoration of the system; aside from wanting to get back to your body, you've been working on the ContiNet for years and don't want to see it sabotaged. Relations between hackers and tech support agents are usually strained. Hackers see techs as stuffed shirts, while techs consider hackers dangerous amateurs who may be responsible for the collapse of the system.

As a tech, your physical appearance is determined by your original assignment. If you were working in MUDville, you look like a character from the game you were monitoring. If you were in R&D, you could take

HERB-b

any form. You could be a worker robot, a swirl of light, or you might be a doppelganger of your actual physical form.

Class Requirements: 3 Programmer levels.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Int, –2 Cha.

Skills: You receive Knowledge (Redlands) and Software Utilities as permanent class skills. In addition, you may select either Knowledge (Arcadia) or Knowledge (MUDville) as a permanent class skill, reflecting your former assignment before the Surge.

Languages: Common and either C++ or Java.

Special: Tech support characters can automatically recognize one another. This is an extraordinary ability with a range of 60 feet; it is linked to sight. If you spot another tech, it is up to the Gamemaster to decide whether the two of you were acquainted in the real world; Psykey is a huge corporation, so it's not a given. Most tech supporters feel a common bond to restore the system and help one another. But there are always exceptions; a number of techs have joined the Hacker 1337 or chosen to serve the Killer Apps!

DEATHNET CHARACTER CLASSES

Deathnet does not use the six basic hero classes provided in *d20 Modern*. In the Net, your class has no reflection on your personal experiences or skills you may have learned. Instead, it defines the innate abilities of your digital character. You were pulled out of a video game–what kind of game did you come from? Are you a butt-kicking brawler from *Lethal Conflict*? A spring-loaded plumber from a child's adventure? A purely social construct ripped from a chat room? Or perhaps you aren't a gamer at all; you might be a tech support agent stranded in the system, or a hacker who was illegally exploring the Psykey mainframe when the Surge occurred.

Deathnet's character classes are considerably more specialized than *d20 Modern* basic hero classes. The Wargame is designed entirely around combat, while the Twitch focuses on using acrobatic abilities to overcome challenges. However, as you start with four character levels, you can mix and match classes to create the combination that best fits your character concept. A few examples:

FPS Soldier. A grimy gunman plucked out of one of the dozens of first-person shooters on the market, this character is based entirely around combat, with a heavy emphasis on ranged attacks. He has invested all four levels into Wargame, and chosen marksman as his model. His feats and talents are geared toward ranged combat, but he is familiar with melee combat and can pull out a knife if he needs to.

Martial Artist. Drawn from one of the many "Finish Him!" fighting games on the market, this pugilist has honed his acrobatic abilities and close combat skills. His character levels are split evenly between Wargame and Twitch, allowing him to leap about while pummeling his foe with deadly blows. Martial artists are usually bruisers or ninjas, depending on their preferred approach to battle.

Fantasy Wizard. A sorcerer from a fantasy roleplaying game, this character has two levels of Avatar, representing the skills he has developed in his roleplaying career. His other levels depend upon the style of magic that he uses. A combat mage who wants to throw fireballs should take Wargame levels with an emphasis on ranged combat. A more supportive spellcaster–the *Deathnet* equivalent of an Acolyte–would take levels in Programmer. While she might not understand programming, her spells are precoded effects that allow her to heal her allies and perform other useful tasks.

Computing Cycles

Some special abilities require the expenditure of computer cycles, the energy you use to alter the Net or activate certain special powers. The number of computing cycles your character generates per day is a function of her level.

THE AVATAR

An *Avatar* can come from many different backgrounds. Some Avatars are social constructs, designed for use in the elaborate Psykey chatroom network. Others are characters from roleplaying games like *ForeverQuest*. When you play a flight simulator or a racing game, it may seem like you're playing the vehicle itself–but actually you're occupying an Avatar with superb vehicle-handling skills.

At a glance, the Avatar is the least impressive of the four classes. An Avatar lacks the combat prowess of the Wargame, the inhuman athletic abilities of the Twitch, and the reality-altering powers of the Programmer. As a result, many programs look down on these "talkers." This is a mistake. The Avatar is a subtle program; its strengths are skill and versatility.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Avatars have the following game statistics.

Abilities: An Avatar can follow many different paths, and your most valuable ability will depend on the focus you give the character. Many Avatars focus on charm and intelligence, but quick reflexes can be just as important as quick wits.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points

Avatars receive a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Avatar as his primary class receives 9 action points.

Class Skills

Avatars vary dramatically from setting to setting; a flight sim pilot has a very different skill set than a chat room character. The following are class skills for all Avatar characters: Knowledge (MUDville) (Int), Listen (Wis), and Spot (Wis). In addition, an Avatar character can select any eight skills

TABLE 1.1 THE AVATAR

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+1	+1	+1	Talent	2	+0	+0
2	+1	+2	+2	+2	Bonus feat	3	+1	+0
3	+1	+2	+2	+2	Talent	4	+1	+1
4	+2	+2	+2	+2	Bonus feat	7	+1	+1
5	+2	+3	+3	+3	Talent	10	+2	+1
6	+3	+3	+3	+3	Bonus feat	15	+2	+2
7	+3	+4	+4	+4	Talent	20	+2	+2
8	+4	+4	+4	+4	Bonus feat	27	+3	+2
9	+4	+4	+4	+4	Talent	34	+3	+3
10	+5	+5	+5	+5	Bonus feat	43	+3	+3

as Class Skills, with four exceptions: an Avatar cannot select Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities.

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (6 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Avatar.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Avatar selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects Avatar as his primary class can choose between alter appearance, empathy, subroutine port, or any talent from the roleplaying talent tree.

Conversation Talent Tree

Avatars come from chat rooms and roleplaying games, and communication plays a major role in these realms. With a little work, an Avatar can become a nexus for communication, sending messages across the length of the ContiNet.

Empathy: After spending months or years in Internet chat rooms, an Avatar becomes quite skilled at sensing the feelings of others. Some Avatars truly feel empathy for the people they deal with, while others are only interested in manipulating the emotions of those around them. Regardless of motive, this provides an Avatar with a bonus on Animal Empathy, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Perform, or Sense Motive checks, provided he spends at least 1 minute observing his target before making the skill check. The bonus is equal to his Avatar level. This bonus does not stack with any bonuses from the character specialization talent.

Chat Channel: The Avatar can allow a small group of people to communicate telepathically. Establishing the channel is an attack action, and it uses 4 computing cycles. On a subsequent round, the Avatar can take an attack action to add a willing person to the channel; this costs an additional 1 computing cycle. Distance is not a factor, but the target must be known to the Avatar, and she must be in the same server as the Avatar. The maximum number of people that can be connected by the channel—including the Avatar himself—is equal to 1 + the character's Avatar level. Once it is established, the link lasts for 10 minutes/Avatar level. A chat channel can only connect organics; programs, MOBs, and viruses cannot be reached through a chat channel.

Prerequisite: Empathy.

Taunt: An Avatar's talent for conversation helps him deliver especially stinging insults or vicious taunts that leave his foe at a loss for words. The target of a taunt must have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, must be within 30 feet of the Avatar, and must be able to hear and understand him.

To perform a taunt, an Avatar must take an attack action and make a Charisma check (DC 15), adding his Avatar level as a bonus. If the Charisma check succeeds, the target can resist by making a Will saving throw (DC 10 + Avatar's class level + Avatar's Cha bonus). If she fails this saving throw, the victim is dazed for 1 round; she is unable to act, but can defend herself normally.

There is no limit to the number of times that an opponent can be taunted. While there is no game effect, it is generally believed that taunts are more effective when delivered in 13375p34|< – "I 0\/\/n j00 $V><x0|2!!111"

Prerequisite: Empathy.

Tell: A chat link can only be formed between willing targets. But an advanced Avatar can send telepathic messages without the permission of his target. The target must be known to the Avatar, and must be in the same server. Sending a tell requires the avatar to spend an attack action and 1 computing cycle; this allows the user to send a 25-word message. An Avatar can combine a tell with a taunt as a single action, sending a shocking and insulting message across the length of the server, but the target gets a +3 on her Will save to resist the taunt; after a while, people get fairly good at tuning out annoying tells.

Prerequisite: Chat channel, empathy.

Customization Talent Tree

The central theme of the avatar is versatility. When you play *Tomb Raider*, you're stepping into Lara Croft's, hmm, shoes—but when you play an online RPG, you get to design your own character. Most games and chat rooms provide you with a vast array of tools to customize your character. These subroutines still lie latent in the ContiNet, and an Avatar can learn to activate these systems to alter his appearance and abilities.

Alter Appearance: This talent allows an Avatar to change his appearance. He cannot change his basic body shape, and he can only adjust his height by up to one foot in either direction. Otherwise, he can perform any sort of cosmetic change that he desires. If the Avatar uses this talent to craft a disguise, he gets a +10 bonus on his Disguise check. However, the change in appearance is purely cosmetic and has no lasting effect.

An Avatar must use an attack action and spend computing cycles to alter his appearance. If he spends 2 computing cycles, the change lasts for 10 minutes per Avatar level. If he spends 8 computing cycles, the change is permanent; he will have to use alter appearance again if he wishes to return to his original form.

Alter Model: With practice, an Avatar can learn to alter his model. This allows a more radical shift in body type and size, and actually affects the character's abilities in addition to his appearance. When an Avatar shifts models, he loses the ability modifications of his former model and gains the ability modifications of his new model. So if an Avatar went from being a spokesmodel to being a marksman, he would lose the +4 Cha and –2 Int modifiers of the spokesmodel and instead gain the +2 Dex and –2 Cha modifiers of the marksman. He does not gain or lose class skills or bonus feats by shifting models, and he cannot gain the special ability of the technical support model.

An Avatar must use an attack action and spend computing cycles to alter his model. If he spends 4 computing cycles, the change lasts for 10 minutes per Avatar level. If he spends 14 computing cycles, the change is permanent; he will have to use alter model again if he wishes to return to his original model.

When an Avatar selects this talent, he selects two models; he may only shift between his original model and the two that he has selected. He may take the talent a second time if he wishes to gain access to additional models; each time he takes the talent he may select an additional two models.

Prerequisite: Alter appearance.

Subroutine Port: Equipment is very important to Avatars; in most MMORPGs, clothes—or armor, or epic weapons—really do make the man. An Avatar with this talent gains an additional subroutine port. When this talent is selected, the Avatar must specify whether the port is defensive or

general; a character cannot have multiple offensive subroutine ports. This talent can be taken multiple times.

Roleplaying Talent Tree

An Avatar who takes talents from this tree comes from a MUDville roleplaying game, and he has developed one or more characters in these games. Each of these personas has its own specialties and powers, which are described below.

An Avatar can use only one persona at a time. Switching between personas is an attack action that costs 1 computing cycle. Each persona has a unique appearance (gender, height, race, age), which should be defined when the persona talent is chosen. If the Avatar has customization talents, changes to appearance or model only affect his current persona.

These talents have names tied to fantasy games, but the persona could actually represent a character from any genre; a rogue persona could be a fantasy thief, a pulp gumshoe, or a smuggler from a science fiction game.

Cleric Persona: This persona has the power to protect others. The Avatar receives a +2 bonus to Wisdom while using this persona, and he can add his Avatar level to Treat Injury checks. In addition, by spending computing cycles the character can cast the following divine spells, as if he was an Acolyte: *augury* (7 cycles), *bless* (3 cycles), *cure light wounds* (3 cycles), *searing light* (11 cycles), *shield of faith* (3 cycles), *status* (11 cycles). The caster level is equal to his Avatar level. See *d20 Modern* for the descriptions of these spells. *Searing light* is especially effective against MOBs that resemble undead creatures.

Fighter Persona: This enhances the Avatar's close combat ability. He gains a +2 bonus to Strength when using this personna. He can spend computing cycles to increase a melee attack or damage roll; cycles must be spent before the roll is made, and he cannot add an amount greater than his Avatar level. Finally, he can add his Avatar level to any grapple or bull rush checks.

Ranger Persona: The ranger is an expert at wilderness survival and ranged combat. He gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity when using this persona. He can spend computing cycles to increase a ranged attack or damage roll; cycles must be spent before the roll is made, and he cannot add an amount greater than his Avatar level. He can add his Avatar level to any Animal Empathy or Survival checks that he makes, and he receives the Track feat for as long as he remains in this persona.

Rogue Persona: This character excels at deception and intrigue. He gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity when using this persona. He may add his Avatar level to Disable Device, Hide, or Move Silently checks. Finally, when attacking a foe who is denied his Dexterity bonus to Defense, the rogue may spend computing cycles to add damage to a melee attack, at a cost of 2 cycles per additional 1d6 damage; he cannot spend more points than he has Avatar levels. The bonus to Disable Device only applies to mundane traps and locks, and does not apply if the Avatar uses *bypass security*.

Wizard Persona: The wizard can cast offensive spells. The Avatar receives a +2 Intelligence bonus while using this persona, and gains a +2 bonus on Engineering checks. In addition, by spending computing cycles, the character can cast the following arcane spells, as if he was a Mage: *burning hands* (3 cycles), *dispel magic* (11 cycles), *glitterdust* (7 cycles), *lightning bolt* (11 cycles), *magic missile* (3 cycles), *true strike* (3 cycles). The caster level is equal to his Avatar level, and the saving throw is 10 + Avatar's Int modifier + spell level. See *d20 Modern* for the descriptions of these spells. *Dispel magic* only works on actual magical effects–which is to say the powers of an Avatar wizard or cleric, or the abilities of a MOB in the shape of a supernatural creature.

Bonus Feats

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Avatar gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Avatar must meet any prerequisites.

Attentive, Confident, Deceptive, Frightful Presence, Lucky, Mule, Renown, Skill Focus, Subroutine Port, Trustworthy, Tell, Uncanny Luck, Versatile Attack.

The Programmer

The ContiNet is formed from data and electrons. While it appears to be as solid and inflexible as the real world, there are those who can twist or bend the rules of reality. Most Programmers were software engineers or hackers in the real world, like Flynn from *Tron* or Hiro from *Snow Crash;* this background lets them understand and manipulate the underlying nature of the Net. But you don't have to be a techie to be a Programmer. You could be in the body of a game character with supernatural powers–a sorcerer whose abilities dwarf those of the Avatar's wizard persona, for example. Or you could simply have an innate, inexplicable talent for rewriting the code of reality, like Neo from *The Matrix.*

Game Rule Information

Programmers have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Intelligence and Charisma are both important abilities. A Programmer needs to purchase skill ranks to improve her coding abilities, and Charisma plays a key role in hacking or fighting viruses. Wisdom is less important, but it is the foundation of the Data Analysis skill.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points

Programmers receive a number of action points equal to 5 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Programmer as her primary class receives 8 action points.

Table 1.2 The Programmer

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Talent	4	+0	+1
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Coding skill	6	+1	+1
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Bonus feat	8	+1	+1
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Talent	14	+1	+2
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus feat	20	+2	+2
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Coding skill	30	+2	+2
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Talent	40	+2	+3
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Bonus feat	54	+3	+3
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Talent	68	+3	+3
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Coding skill	86	+3	+4

Class Skills

The Programmer's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows.

Concentration (Con), Computer Use (Int), Investigate (Int), Research (Int), and Search (Int).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills. The coding skills–Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities–are the source of your power, and you will want to focus on these whenever possible. However, these cannot be purchased as cross-class skills; you can only gain access to them by advancing in level or by choosing a techie model.

Skill Points at 1st level: (2 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Programmer.

TALENTS

At 1st, 4th, and 7th level, the Programmer selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects Programmer as her primary class can choose between expert hacker, viruscan, or any talent from the sysadmin talent tree.

Intrusion Talent Tree

Skilled hackers know a variety of tricks for beating the systems of the net.

Expert Hacker: A Programmer with this talent can add a bonus equal to her Programmer level on any Disable Device or Search check.

Stealth Software: The Programmer has a knack for staying out of the way of trouble, and can add her Programmer level to her Hide or Move Silently checks.

Prerequisite: Expert hacker.

Sysadmin Talent Tree

Many Programmers–especially tech supporters–have some background in system administration. A talented sysadmin can play a vital role in holding a group together.

Chat Channel: This is identical to the Avatar communication talent of the same name.

Coordinate: A Programmer with sysadmin experience is used to getting people to work together. If the Programmer can spend a full round directing her allies and makes a Charisma check (DC 10), she can provide any of her allies with a +1 bonus on their attack rolls and skill checks. The bonus lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Programmer's Charisma modifier.

A Programmer can coordinate a number of allies equal to one-half her Programmer level, rounded down (to a minimum of one ally).

System Familiarity: The Programmer is extremely familiar with the ContiNet. She may add her Programmer level to any Knowledge (Arcadia, MUDville, or Redlands) check. She can add half of her Programmer level (rounded down) to any Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check when she is dealing with MOBs or programs.

Prerequisite: Tech support model.

Viral Talent Tree

Like any computer system, the ContiNet is plagued by viruses–malicious entities that devour computing cycles and corrupt or destroy other programs. Hackers have a talent for working with viruses, while tech supporters are dedicated to rooting them out of the Psykey system.

Viruscan: A Programmer with this talent has the innate ability to sense the presence of viruses. This is a passive talent that does not require any action or expenditure of computing cycles. It has a base range of 50 feet, +5 feet for each rank of Data Analysis possessed by the Programmer. Initially, it simply provides a general sense of direction and location. By taking an attack action to make a Data Analysis check (DC 10 + the Hit Dice of the virus), the Programmer can learn the precise location, type, and number of Hit Dice of the virus.

If a virus is invisible, the Programmer can sense its general presence in the area covered by her viruscan, but she cannot sense any sort of direction or location and cannot make a Data Analysis check to gain further information.

Control Virus: A hacker can attempt to force a virus to do her bidding. This is identical to the Acolyte's ability to rebuke undead, as described in *d20 Modern*, except that it does not require a holy symbol. In place of her Acolyte level, the hacker should use a number equal to her Hacking ranks –3 to determine turning damage and the most powerful creature that she can effect. A Programmer can use control virus a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

Prerequisite: Viruscan, hacker model.

Purge Virus: This talent allows a tech support Programmer to turn or destroy a virus, just like an Acolyte turning undead. In place of her level, the programmer should use her Software Utilities ranks –3 to determine turning damage and the most powerful creature that she can effect. A Programmer can use purge virus a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

Prerequisite: Viruscan, tech support model.

CODING SKILLS

At 2nd, 6th, and 10th level, the Programmer may add one of the four coding skills to her programmer class skills list: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities.

BONUS FEATS

At 3rd, 5th, and 8th level, the Programmer gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Programmer must meet any prerequisites.

Alertness, Expert Programmer, Improved Processor, Iron Will, Low Profile, Skill Focus, Studious, Watchdog.

THE TWITCH

The *Twitch* specializes in athletic abilities and infiltration. The Twitch is best represented by the heroes of *Donkey Kong* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*–characters whose primary goal is to reach a destination, to get over and around enemies as opposed to blasting their way through them. Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider* has both Twitch and Wargame levels; she is handy with her pistols, but her adventures generally involve more acrobatics than artillery.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Twitches have the following game statistics.

Abilities: As a Twitch, speed is your life and Dexterity your most important ability. A Twitch makes an excellent martial artist, and if you choose this path you will also want to have a good Strength score.

Hit Die: d8.

Action Points

Twitches receive a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Twitch as his primary class receives 9 action points.

Class Skills

The Twitch's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows.

Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Combat Code (None), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Dex), Knowledge (Arcadia) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (4 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Twitch.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Twitch selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects twitch as his primary class can choose between arcadian leap, evasion, or increased speed.

Acrobatics Talent Tree

Twitch games often require more jumping than actual combat, and a Twitch can develop incredible acrobatic abilities.

Arcadian Leap: The character can add a bonus equal to his Twitch level on Jump or Tumble checks. In addition, prior to making the skill check he can spend up to 3 computing cycles to gain a bonus on a Jump or Tumble check; each cycle provides a +1 bonus.

Improved Arcadian Leap: The Twitch's acrobatic abilities are truly astonishing. He adds twice his Twitch level to any Jump or Tumble check, and may use up to 6 computing cycles to improve the check at a rate of +1 per computing cycle spent.

Prerequisite: Arcadian leap.

Leaping Attack: This talent allows a Twitch to make impressive acrobatic attacks, using the momentum of a jump to add force to a melee attack.

To use this ability, the character must spend 1 action point or 4 computing cycles. He then leaps at his target; he must make a jump covering at least 10 feet before reaching his target. At this point, he makes a melee attack roll and (if successful) a Tumble check (DC 20); every point of success adds 1 point of damage to the melee attack. The Twitch can continue to travel another 10 feet after the attack, provided that his Jump check gave him this much distance to work with. He cannot move more than 10 feet after the attack, regardless of his Jump check.

Making a leaping attack is a full-round action; this includes a full move and Jump check.

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Safe Fall: A Twitch with this ability can fall great distances without being hurt. For each Twitch level he possesses, the character can ignore 5 feet of distance when determining falling damage. So a 10th level Twitch can fall 50 feet without taking any damage at all!

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Spring Heels: A Twitch with this talent no longer needs a running start in order to make an effective jump. The DC of Jump checks is no longer doubled when the Twitch makes a standing leap.

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Defensive Talent Tree

While the Twitch does not have the raw firepower of the Wargame, he excels at staying out of the way of deadly attacks.

Evasion: If the Twitch is exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he suffers no damage if he makes a successful saving throw.

Defensive Roll: The Twitch can roll with a potentially lethal attack to take less damage from it. When the Twitch would be reduced to 0 hit points or less by a ranged or melee attack, the twitch can spend 1 action point or 3 computing cycles to attempt to roll with the damage. After spending these points, he makes a Reflex saving throw (DC = damage dealt). If the save succeeds, he takes only half damage from the attack. The Twitch must be able to react to an attack in order to make a defensive roll; he cannot use this talent if he is immobilized.

The effects of the evasion talent do not apply to this check.

Uncanny Dodge 1: The Twitch retains his Dexterity bonus to Defense regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by a hidden attacker. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to Defense if immobilized.

Prerequisite: Evasion.

Uncanny Dodge 2: The Twitch can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of himself as easily as he can react to a single attacker.

Prerequisite: Evasion, uncanny dodge 1.

Increased Speed Talent Tree

Speed plays a major role in Twitch games, and a Twitch can improve his natural base speed (and maximum jumping distance).

Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet.

Improved Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet. This talent stacks with increased speed (10 feet total).

Prerequisite: Increased speed.

TABLE 1.3 THE TWITCH

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Talent	2	+3	+0
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus feat	3	+4	+0
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Talent	4	+4	+0
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bonus feat	7	+5	+0
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Talent	10	+5	+1
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Bonus feat	15	+6	+1
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Talent	20	+6	+1
8	+6/+1	+2	+6	+2	Bonus feat	27	+7	+1
9	+6/+1	+3	+6	+3	Talent	34	+7	+2
10	+7/+2	+3	+7	+3	Bonus feat	43	+8	+2

Advanced Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet. This talent stacks with increased speed and improved increased speed (15 feet total).

Prerequisite: Improved increased speed.

BONUS FEATS

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Twitch gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Twitch must meet any prerequisites.

Acrobatic, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deadly Speed, Dodge, Heroic Surge, Improved Initiative, Lightfooted, Lucky, Melee Combat Code, Turbo Boost, Uncanny Luck, Weapon Finesse.

THE WARGAME

The *Wargame* is the combat-oriented class. Classic examples of the Wargame include the nameless heroes of *Doom* and *Quake*–grim figures capable of producing a wide variety of heavy weapons from thin air. However, Wargames don't have to use ranged weapons; the class also covers martial arts fighting games like *Mortal Kombat* and *Soul Caliber*. Whether she's using ranged weapons or signature moves, the Wargame focuses on causing as much damage as possible.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Wargames have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength is the most important characteristic for Wargames who intend to get up close and personal. Dexterity is important for ranged combat, gaining initiative, and avoiding attacks. And Constitution helps the Wargame take a lickin' and keep on tickin.'

Hit Die: d10.

Action Points

Wargames receive a number of action points equal to 5 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Wargame as her primary class receives 8 action points.

Class Skills

The Wargame's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Climb (Str), Combat Code (None), Demolitions (Int), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Arcadia) (Int), Knowledge (tactics) (Int), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (2 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Wargame.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Wargame selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects Wargame as her primary class can take advanced melee combat, advanced ranged combat, remain conscious, robust, or second wind.

Melee Talent Tree

Melee specialists can take many forms. Some fight with their fists and feet, while others wield swords or nunchaku. Towering warriors may share a ring with ninja turtles. Regardless of shape, the melee specialist can inflict devastating damage at close range.

Advanced Melee Combat: This talent provides the Wargame with three benefits. First, her effective Combat Code rank is increased by 2 for purposes of determining the amount of damage she inflicts with melee attacks.

Second, the Wargame may choose to inflict normal or nonlethal damage when she makes a melee attack.

Finally, the Wargame may choose to spend computing cycles to increase a melee attack or damage roll. She gains a +1 bonus for each cycle that she spends. The maximum number of cycles that she can apply to a single roll is equal to her Wargame level, and the cycles must be spent before the roll is made. When spending cycles to increase the power of an attack, the Wargame is encouraged to describe the nature of the attack; this typically represents a flash or special move that is more effective than her usual strike.

Prerequisites: Melee Combat Code.

Block: On her action, a Wargame can designate a single opponent. If that opponent makes a successful melee attack against the Wargame, she can oppose it with a Combat Code check; the DC is her opponent's attack roll. If she is successful, the damage from the attack is reduced by 10 + her Wargame level; this cannot reduce the damage below zero.

A Wargame must spend 1 computing cycle to attempt to block an attack. She can attempt to block multiple attacks in the same round, but the cycle cost doubles with each block; blocking four attacks in a single round would cost 15 cycles.

The Wargame can switch her focus to block the attacks of a different opponent on any subsequent action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

Iron Fist: After making a successful melee attack, the Wargame can spend an action point to increase the damage of the attack. The result of the action point roll is added to the damage roll for that attack.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

TABLE 1.4 THE WARGAME

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+1	+1	+1	+0	Talent	2	+1	+0
2	+2	+2	+2	+0	Bonus feat	3	+2	+0
3	+3	+2	+2	+1	Talent	4	+2	+0
4	+4	+2	+2	+1	Bonus feat	7	+3	+0
5	+5	+3	+3	+1	Talent	10	+3	+1
6	+6/+1	+3	+3	+2	Bonus feat	15	+3	+1
7	+7/+2	+4	+4	+2	Talent	20	+4	+1
8	+8/+3	+4	+4	+2	Bonus feat	27	+4	+1
9	+9/+4	+4	+4	+3	Talent	34	+5	+2
10	+10/+5	+5	+5	+3	Bonus feat	43	+5	+2

Combo Move: When the Wargame increases the damage of a melee attack—by using iron fist or advanced melee combat—she can apply the bonus damage to all melee attacks that she makes during the round.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Finishing Move: The wargame can spend 5 computing cycles to inflict maximum damage with a melee attack (including the action point bonus from iron fist, if it is used), as long as this will reduce her enemy below 0 hit points. This is declared after the attack has been made but before damage is rolled.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Flurry of Blows: A Wargame can strike with devastating speed but reduced accuracy. She can make one additional melee attack per round, using her highest base attack bonus. However, this attack and all other attacks made during the round suffer a –2 penalty. Using this talent is a full-round action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Ranged Talent Tree

Shooting games are one of the most popular forms of modern entertainment. While many of these take the form of a soldier with a gun, this is by no means exclusive. All of the characters in *Gauntlet* could be seen as shooters. And when it comes down to it, *Space Invaders* was a shooting game...

Advanced Ranged Combat: This talent provides the Wargame with two benefits. First, her effective Combat Code rank is increased by 2 for purposes of determining the amount of damage she inflicts with ranged attacks.

Second, the range increment of her ranged attacks is increased by 10 feet.

Third, the Wargame may choose to spend computing cycles to increase a ranged attack roll. She gains a +1 bonus for each cycle that she spends. The maximum number of cycles that she can apply to a single roll is equal to her Wargame level, and the cycles must be spent before the roll is made.

Prerequisites: Ranged Combat Code.

Close Combat Shot: This talent allows the Wargame to make a ranged attack while in a threatened area without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Prerequisites: Advanced ranged combat.

Lightning Shot: A Wargame can fire quickly at the cost of accuracy. She can make one additional ranged attack per round, using her highest base attack bonus. However, this attack and all other attacks made during the round suffer a –2 penalty. Using this talent is a full-round action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

Deadly Aim: After making a successful ranged attack, the Wargame can spend an action point to increase the damage of the attack. The result of the action point roll is added to the damage roll for that attack.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat and either lightning shot or close combat shot.

Explosive Attack: An explosive attack can take many forms: it might be a grenade, a spell, or a rocket launcher. Whatever the appearance, this is an attack action that costs 8 computing cycles. It inflicts twice the Wargame's usual ranged damage over a 20-foot area. Victims can make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the shooter's Wargame level) to take half damage from the attack. When she selects this talent, the Wargame must define the energy type of the attack (acid, bludgeoning, cold, electrical, fire, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion); if she has the Versatile Attack feat, she can change the energy type with every shot.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat and either lightning shot or close combat shot.

Unbreakable Talent Tree

Wargames are designed to take more punishment than most other characters. A Wargame can keep going after taking damage that would cause any other character to punch the big reset button in the sky.

Remain Conscious: When a Wargame's hit points reach –1, she can choose to perform as if she was disabled, making either an attack action or move action each round until she reaches –10 hit points (and dies) or until her hit points are restored to 1 or higher.

Robust: When a Wargame takes this talent, she permanently gains a number of hit points equal to her Wargame level. Thereafter, she gains +1 hit point every time she gains an additional level of Wargame.

Second Wind: As a free action, the Wargame can spend an action point to regain a number of hit points equal to her Constitution modifier. This cannot increase her hit points beyond her full normal total.

Damage Reduction 2/– : The wargame can ignore 2 points of damage from all ranged and melee attacks.

Prerequisites: Any two unbreakable talents.

BONUS FEATS

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Wargame gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the wargame must meet any prerequisites.

Advanced Armor Proficiency, Advanced Weapon Proficiency, Combat Expertise, Deadly Speed, Dodge, Improved Defense, Increased Range, Melee Combat Code, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Ranged Combat Code, Versatile Attack, Weapon Finesse.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

For the most part, the ContiNet is a mirror of the real world. You may be made of ones and zeroes, but you're still designed to resemble a human (or an elf, or a high-jumping humanoid poodle) and skills like Treat Injury can be used normally.

There are a few new skills that are very important in *Deathnet*, and a few skills that work in a different manner than they do in *d20 Modern*. If a skill is not mentioned here, assume that it can be used normally.

COMBAT CODE (NONE)

Equipment plays a very different role in *Deathnet* than it does in the physical world. In *Deathnet*, all of your capabilities are determined by the nature of your program. If you're a soldier, you have a gun. You can't lose it, and you can't give it away–it's part of who you are. It vanishes when you want it to go away, and reappears when you need it. You may find subroutines that increase the range, power, or accuracy of the attack, but the base damage is determined by you–or rather, by your ranks in Combat Code.

Check: The primary use of Combat Code is to determine the amount of damage you inflict in combat. This does not require a skill check; it is simply based on your skill value (skill ranks plus any modifiers from feats, class abilities, subroutines, or power-ups). The damage table can be found in Chapter Three.

The Wargame talent block requires a Combat Code check.

Restrictions: In order to take ranks in the Combat Code skill–regardless of whether it is a class skill for your character–you must possess the Melee Combat Code or Ranged Combat Code feat.

If you do not possess either of these feats, you are limited to melee combat and only inflict 1d3 points of nonlethal damage. However, you do not suffer any of the usual penalties for making an unarmed attack.

COMPUTER USE (INT)

Computer Use does not allow you to actually affect the ContiNet in any meaningful way–that's what the Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities skills are for. But it does let you make use of "computers" that you find IN the ContiNet. So if you plan to spend a lot of time hanging out in the science fiction or cyberpunk sections of MUDville, it may prove useful. But when you're chasing dragons in *ForeverQuest*, the odds are that you won't find many computers.

DISABLE DEVICE (INT)

Trained Only

MUDville dungeons are full of traps and locked chests, and Disable Device works normally when used against these challenges. But you will also come up against more difficult challenges–barriers or security systems created by the Psykey engineers. These cannot be overcome through the use of a mundane skill, and any attempt to disable them through normal means automatically triggers intrusion countermeasures. In order to overcome these challenges, you must use the bypass security coding ability, which is described in more detail in Chapter Two. This allows you to make a Disable Device check against these advanced systems, and may even provide you with a bonus to these checks.

DATA ANALYSIS (WIS)

Trained Only

The ContiNet is an illusion. It is a vast web of complicated data, designed to appear in a form that humans can understand. Using this skill, you can see beneath the surface to perceive the true shape of things. The benefits can be as simple as seeing in the "dark" to something as esoteric and complicated as reading the thoughts of another creature.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to coding effects, as described in Chapter Two. In addition, you may substitute a Data Analysis check for a Sense Motive or Search check by spending 6 computing cycles. You cannot take 20 on a Search check while using Data Analysis.

Special: Data Analysis cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Data Analysis as a Programmer class skill.

ENGINEERING (INT)

Trained Only

A skilled engineer can reshape the reality of the ContiNet. Typically, Engineering allows you to enhance the abilities of programs and characters, adjusting their underlying code to provide increased strength, speed, or other abilities. However, Engineering can also be used for more dramatic effects–materializing bolts of electricity or walls of flame, or transporting your comrades from one place to another in the blink of an eye.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two.

Special: Engineering cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Engineering as a Programmer class skill.

HACKING (CHA)

Trained Only

Hacking is your ability to disrupt and deceive the normal systems of the ContiNet. This is more subtle than Engineering, and does not involve bolts of fire or lightning. Instead you can render yourself invisible, seize control of MOBs, or even write your own viruses.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two. Hacking also plays a major role in cracking the deadly traps of the Net; see *bypass security* in Chapter Two for more information.

Special: Hacking cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Hacking as a Programmer class skill.

KNOWLEDGE (INT)

Trained Only

The normal Knowledge skills—current events, business, history, and the like—are rarely useful in the ContiNet, which is its own self-contained universe. Knowing the history of the real world won't tell you what you need to know about the Dwarven Wars of *Battlecraft*. However, there are four Knowledge specialties that reflect familiarity with the Net itself, and these may prove useful. These relate to the four servers of the ContiNet:

Knowledge (Arcadia)
Knowledge (Hub City)
Knowledge (MUDville)
Knowledge (Redlands)

Each of these specialties reflects a broad knowledge of the area in question, and allows you to gain information about the history (albeit fabricated) of the region, important locations, and the nature of its inhabitants, along with the usual benefits of Knowledge (streetwise).

One traditional Knowledge skill that is often found in *Deathnet* is Knowledge (tactics). Some Wargames prefer a wild fire-and-forget approach to combat, but others take great pains to analyze the battlefield and determine optimal strategies.

Synergy: If you possess 5 or more ranks in a regional Knowledge skill, you gain a +2 synergy bonus on Gather Information or Survival checks you make while in that region.

JUMP (DEX)

Subroutine Penalty

In the ContiNet, Jump is based on Dexterity instead of Strength; small, quick characters can generally jump farther than massive, powerful characters. In addition, characters can make far more impressive high jumps than they can in the real world. The difficulty of a high jump is equal to the height of the jump (in feet) × 3. As usual, the DC of the jump is doubled if the character cannot move at least 20 feet in a straight line before attempting the jump.

Size plays a very limited role in *Deathnet*. Players are free to select the general size of their character, but unless a character takes the Enormous Size feat, he is assumed to have a maximum height of 8 feet. A medium sized human can reach that distance normally, a tiny mouse can leap up to grab something without making a Jump check, and a large robot mysteriously can't bend its arms to reach above its head (unless it takes the Enormous Size feat).

SLEIGHT OF HAND (DEX)

Trained Only, Subroutine Penalty

The inhabitants of the ContiNet don't actually carry physical objects. If you are exceptionally skillful, you can remove a subroutine or power-up from a victim's inventory slots, but this requires a check against DC 30. However, size is meaningless when dealing with subroutines, so you can steal a rocket launcher as easily as a pocketknife. The victim still gets to oppose your check with a Spot check.

SOFTWARE UTILITIES [INT]

Trained Only

Software Utilities are the primary tools of systems administrator and technical support agents. Using this skill and its associated abilities, you can repair damaged or corrupted programs and overcome viruses and hacker attacks.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two. In addition, you may substitute a Software Utilities check for a Treat Injury check by spending 4 computing cycles.

Special: Software Utilities cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Software Utilities as a Programmer class skill.

SPEAK LANGUAGE

The ContiNet has an embedded translation program. As a result, any of the standard languages of Earth are automatically translated into your preferred language. This is represented by the Common tongue—which is at once no language and every language. However, there are a few unusual languages that the translators are not equipped to handle, ranging from the leetspeak of the hacker community to the programming languages used by software engineers and the natives of the net. Unlike the standard *d20 Modern* rules, if you can speak a language you are also able to read and write that language.

The common languages of the ContiNet are described below. The Gamemaster is free to add languages as she sees fit, so if you desperately want to speak Lisp, you can probably live your dream.

Language	Common Speakers
Common	Everyone
13375p34|<	Hackers, gamers
C++	Programmers, programs
Java	Programmers, programs
Elvish	Fantasy fans
Klingon	Science fiction fans

SURVIVAL [WIS]

The rules of reality vary greatly from server to server, and from region to region within a specific server. In most areas, characters do not need to eat, sleep, or worry about the weather, and Survival is irrelevant. In other places these threats are even more serious than usual, but Survival will not help. When you're running the *Gauntlet* and Red Wizard needs food badly, a Survival check won't help you—you need to keep moving and hope that you happen to find some food lying on the ground.

However, there are a few areas—notably the fantasy realms of MUDville—where great pains have been taken to make the experience as lifelike as possible. In these regions, Survival can be used for all its usual purposes.

FEATS

The following *d20 Modern* feats are not used in *Deathnet*: Advanced Combat Martial Arts, Advanced Two-Weapon Fighting, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (Light, Medium, Heavy), Brawl, Combat Martial Arts, Exotic Firearms Proficiency, Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency, Improved Brawl, Improved Combat Martial Arts, Improved Damage Threshold, Improved Knockout Punch, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Knockout Punch, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Quick Reload, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Two-Weapon Fighting, Streetfighting, and Windfall.

Ranged Combat Code takes the place of Personal Firearms Proficiency for purposes of prerequisites; a character who has Ranged Combat Code can take Advanced Firearms Proficiency, for example. Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, and Strafe all apply to any subroutine that allows a character to perform autofire attacks.

The prerequisites for Improved Feint are changed to Int 13, Combat Expertise.

This section provides information on new feats and feats with modified functionality. If a feat is not mentioned in this section, it works as described in the d20 Modern rulebook.

ADVANCED ARMOR PROFICIENCY

You can pile on the armor plating and heavy shielding. Apparently, you've got issues to deal with.

Prerequisites: Combat Code 7 ranks.

Benefit: You can install advanced defensive subroutines.

Normal: A character who does not possess this feat can install only basic defensive subroutines.

ADVANCED WEAPON PROFICIENCY

You know those guys you see in fighting games who can wield swords that are bigger then they are? You're one of those guys.

Prerequisites: Combat Code 7 ranks.

Benefit: You can install advanced offensive subroutines.

Normal: A character who does not possess this feat can install only basic offensive subroutines.

DEADLY SPEED

In fighting games, the tiny ninja can hit just as hard as the massive, muscular bruiser. You may rely on speed instead of strength, but your attacks are still deadly.

Prerequisites: Weapon Finesse.

Benefit: You add your Dexterity modifier to the damage of melee attacks instead of your Strength Modifier.

ENORMOUS SIZE

You are between 9 and 16 feet tall, and the world knows it. Normally size doesn't matter; in your case, the ContiNet has made an exception.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on Grapple checks and a 10-ft. reach in melee combat. However, you suffer a –4 penalty on Hide checks and a –1 penalty to Defense. In addition, you occupy a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area in combat. You have a maximum height of 16 feet.

Normal: A normal character takes up a 5-ft.-by 5-ft. area and has a 5-ft. reach.

Special: You cannot take both this feat and the Tiny feat.

EXPERT PROGRAMMER

You have the 133t $|<!11z, dude.

Prerequisite: You must possess at least one rank of the skill that you wish to enhance with Expert Programmer.

Benefit: Pick one of the following skills: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities. You gain two ranks in the chosen skill. These ranks are not taken into account when determining the maximum number of ranks you can have in the skill based on your level.

Special: You may take this feat up to four times, but you must choose a different skill each time.

IMPROVED DEFENSE

You have a knack for avoiding damage. Depending on your source game, this may be derived from armor, speed, or pure luck. Whatever the basis for it, your enemies have a more difficult time landing a meaningful blow on you.

Benefit: You receive a +1 Defense bonus.

IMPROVED PROCESSOR

You know all that money you spent to get the ultimate gaming machine? Well, it finally paid off. Because of the advanced hardware you possess in the real world, your character has enhanced abilities in the ContiNet.

Benefit: Add your character level to your total number of computing cycles per day. For example, as a 4th-level character you receive an additional 4 computing cycles each day.

INCREASED RANGE

This feat increases the accuracy of your ranged attacks when you are firing at a distant target. If you're flinging hand-axes, you may not expect to have much of a range—but if you're shooting a rifle, you'll want to be able to get a little distance.

Prerequisites: Ranged Combat Code.

Benefit: The range increment of any ranged attack you make is increased by 30 feet.

Normal: The basic range increment of a ranged attack is 20 feet.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times; the effects are cumulative. Increased Range also stacks with any sort of subroutine that increases the range of an attack.

LIGHTFOOTED

You are able to incorporate subroutines in a more efficient manner than most characters—which can be extremely important when you need to leap over the Bottomless Chasm of Spiky Death.

Benefit: The encumbrance penalty of all of the subroutines that you use is reduced by 1.

LUCKY

Things always seem to go your way!

Benefit: You receive one additional action point each time you gain a level.

MARKETING WEASEL

You're a Psykey marketing executive who decided to give the ContiNet a whirl to help you come up with ideas for new slogans. You've been trained to get people to see things your way—but you're not much of a gamer and you don't really understand how to interact with computer-controlled creatures.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidate checks when dealing with organics, but you take a –1 penalty on these checks when dealing with programs, viruses, or MOBs.

Special: You can take this feat only during character generation.

MELEE COMBAT CODE

In *Deathnet*, you don't acquire physical weaponry; instead you fight your opponents by using your programmed abilities. The amount of damage you can inflict on your enemies is determined by your Combat Code skill (see page 90). However, the modes of attack that are available depend upon your feats. This feat allows you to engage your enemies in melee combat. The form of the attack is up to you; you may fight with a sword, your fists, or a ridiculous-looking cartoon hammer.

Benefit: You may use your ranks in Combat Code to increase your damage in melee combat. The amount of damage you inflict can be found on page 99.

Normal: If you do not possess this feat, you inflict 1d3 points of nonlethal damage in melee combat.

Special: When you obtain this feat, you must select the type of damage that you inflict with your melee attack—bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing. If you wish to inflict more exotic forms of damage, you must obtain an offensive subroutine or the Versatile Attack feat.

MULE

You can carry an unusually large number of subroutines.

Benefit: You gain six additional inventory slots. A slot can hold one subroutine or two power-ups. This does not allow you to install more subroutines than usual; it simply allows you to carry additional equipment.

Normal: A normal character has six inventory slots. See Chapter Four for additional information on subroutines and power-ups.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times. Each time you take it, it provides you with an additional six inventory slots.

PROTECTED INVENTORY

Subroutines and power-ups cannot be removed from your inventory slots. This feat is especially common among MOB merchants; this prevents powerful Wargames from killing the merchant and taking his goods.

Benefit: Subroutines and power-ups in your inventory slots cannot be removed by Sleight of Hand, and they are not dropped if you are killed; instead, they fade away with your corpse and are lost forever.

Normal: Subroutines or power-ups in inventory slots are dropped upon death.

QUICK DRAW

In *Deathnet,* characters do not carry physical equipment; this feat lets you switch between your offensive subroutines in the blink of an eye.

Benefit: Quick Draw lets you activate or switch offensive subroutines as a free action.

Normal: Activating or switching between offensive subroutines is a move action.

RANGED COMBAT CODE

This feat allows you to make ranged attacks. Depending upon your model, you may use a gun or a bow, or you may spit fireballs at your enemies.

Benefit: You may make ranged attacks. The amount of damage is determined by your Combat Code skill bonus. The range increment for the attack is 20 feet.

Normal: You cannot make a ranged attack unless you possess this feat.

Special: When you obtain this feat, you must select the type of damage that you inflict with your ranged attack–acid, bludgeoning, cold, electrical, fire, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion. Once you have made your selection, the only way to change the type of damage that you inflict is to obtain a subroutine that alters your attack type or to take the Versatile Attack feat.

SKILL FOCUS

Choose any one skill, such as Move Silently or Data Analysis. You have a special knack with that skill.

Benefit: You get a +3 bonus on all checks involving the chosen skill.

Special: You can select this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new skill.

SUBROUTINE PORT

Subroutines are *Deathnet's* equivalent of equipment. A subroutine can provide you with new or enhanced abilities. However, there is a limit to the number of subroutines you can have installed at any one time. A subroutine port allows you to make use of additional upgrades.

Benefit: You gain an additional subroutine port that can be used with general subroutines or power-ups.

Normal: A character has one slot for offensive subroutines, two slots for defensive subroutines, and three slots for general subroutines or power-ups.

TINY

Size generally doesn't matter in the ContiNet, but in your case it does. Your small size helps you to avoid your enemies, but it does handicap you in a few minor ways.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on Hide checks and a +1 bonus to Defense. However, you only have 4 inventory slots, and the maximum distance you can reach without having to make a Jump check is 4 feet.

Normal: A normal character has 6 inventory slots and a maximum Jump reach of 8 feet.

Special: You cannot take both this feat and the Enormous Size feat.

TURBO BOOST

You can move with incredible speed for short periods of time. This is a taxing experience, but it's just the thing when you've absolutely, positively got to be there right away.

Benefit: You may spend a computing cycle to increase your Speed by 5 feet. You can increase your Speed by a maximum of 15 feet. The boost lasts for 3 rounds. The speed bonus from Turbo Boost stacks with bonuses from subroutines, power-ups, and class or model abilities.

UNCANNY LUCK

You never seem to run out of luck!

Prerequisites: Lucky.

Benefit: When you use an action point, you can spend a number of computing cycles equal to 2 + your character level to save the action point.

VERSATILE ATTACK

Whereas most characters inflict only a single type of damage in combat (relying on fists, blades, or bullets to get the job done) you can fall back on a vast array of different attack forms. You may be a mini-mech with an assortment of different weapons to choose from, a die-hard commando toting a backpack full of hardware, or a wizard who can switch between fire, lightning, and ice bolts in the blink of an eye. Whatever the window dressing, you can produce whatever type of damage a situation calls for.

Benefit: As an attack action, you can switch the type of damage that you produce with a Combat Code attack. The primary use for this feat is to overcome the resistances of enemies or to take advantage of special vulnerabilities. You cannot switch the energy type of a coding effect, and you cannot change the energy type of an offensive subroutine (if it is specified).

Normal: A normal character must select a single form of damage when she picks Melee Combat Code or Ranged Combat Code.

WATCHDOG

You are extremely sensitive to the disruptions caused by people hacking the reality of the ContiNet.

Prerequisites: Data Analysis 4 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever a Hacking ability is used within 60 feet of you, make a Data Analysis check (DC 5 + the target's ranks in Hacking). If you are successful, you sense the use of the power and the location of the hacker. If you make the check by 5 or more points, you also learn the nature of the power that was used and the location of the target.

CHAPTER TWO: CODING

"I should have known we'd find you here, Norton."

"That's right, Phreak," Norton sneered. "For all your so-called 'leet skills,' you fell right into my trap." He gestured, and a wall of shimmering ICE rose up to surround the team.

"Nice trick, Norton. But don't count the 1337 5I<111z out yet, d00d!" The Phreak traced luminescent patterns in the air, and the barrier melted away. Another gesture sent a ball of light directly into the face of the tech support agent, dazing him long enough for Wallaby Jack and the Viscount to leap into action.

The ContiNet is a virtual reality. Every element of the world is defined by an underlying system of computer code. While trapped within the Net, you cannot directly access this code. However, through force of will and applied logic, you can alter reality in minor ways—healing an ally, dissolving a barrier, analyzing a program to determine its true nature, or forcing a MOB to do your bidding.

In some ways, coding abilities are similar to psionic FX powers. You do not have to prepare a coding action in advance. Instead, you expend a certain number of computing cycles to perform the action. Like psionic powers, the cost of the action is based on its level, as shown on table 2.1. Computing cycles regenerate automatically every 24 hours.

With that said, there are many differences between coding abilities and other FX powers. Coding abilities are entirely based on the four coding skills: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities. Your ranks with these skills determine both the abilities you can use and the power of those abilities.

Each coding ability is tied to a particular skill. Table 2.1 shows the minimum number of ranks required to use abilities of a particular level. So if you possess 4 ranks of Data Analysis, you can use 0- and 1st-level coding abilities tied to Data Analysis: *analyze program*, *analyze subroutine*, and, *dataflow*.

Your ranks in the associated skill also determine the power of the coding effect. Any formula that normally calls for caster level should instead use your ranks in the associated skill reduced by three, with a minimum value of one. So if you have 6 ranks in Data Analysis and 4 ranks in Engineering, you are considered to be a 3rd-level caster when using Analysis effects and a 1st level caster for purposes of Engineering.

Finally, the saving throw DC to resist a coding effect is based entirely on skill as opposed to the level of the effect. The base save DC of a coding effect is 8. Add half of your modifier in the associated skill, rounding down. This includes skill ranks, your ability modifier, and any other bonuses. So a programmer with 5 ranks of Hacking, a +2 Charisma modifier, and a +3 bonus from the Skill Focus (Hacking) feat would have a save DC of 13 for any Hacking effect.

With a few exceptions these powers are identical to FX abilities presented in *d20 Modern* or the Dungeons & Dragons *Player's Handbook*. The names of new powers are italicized and descriptions of these powers are provided later in this section. One primary difference between coding effects and the FX abilities that they resemble is that coding never requires verbal or material components, and always have audible and visual manifestations. Unless otherwise mentioned, coding is an attack action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Like other FX abilities, coding attempts fail if your concentration is broken while you are performing the action.

Table 2.1: Coding Restrictions and Costs

Power Level	Ranks Required	Cycle Cost
0	1	1
1st	4	2
2nd	7	6
3rd	10	10
4th	12	14
5th	14	18

CODING EFFECTS

0-LEVEL CODING

Cure Minor Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1 point of damage (*d20 Modern, cure minor wounds*).

Daze (*Hacking*). Subject takes no actions for 1 round (*d20 Modern, daze*).

Disruption (*Hacking*). Touch attack fatigues target (D&D, *touch of fatigue*).

Light (*Engineering*). Object shines like a torch (*d20 Modern, light*).

Remote Manipulation (*Engineering*). 5-pound telekinesis (*d20 Modern, mage hand*).

Resistance (*Software Utilities*). Subject gains +1 on saving throws (*d20 Modern, resistance*).

Study Dataflow (*Data Analysis*). Detect all coding effects or power-ups within 60 ft.

1ST-LEVEL CODING

Analyze Program (*Data Analysis*). Provides details about a target creature.

Analyze Subroutine (*Data Analysis*). Reveal an object's past (*d20 Modern, object reading*; affects subroutines or power-ups)

Bypass Security (*Hacking*). Assists Disable Device checks.

Cure Light Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1d8+1/level damage (max +5)(*d20 Modern, cure light wounds*).

Datashield (*Engineering*). Gives subject +4 Defense bonus (*d20 Modern, mage armor*).

Disrupting Ray (*Hacking*). Ray fatigues target (*d20 Modern, ray of fatigue*).

Hold Portal (*Software Utilities*). Holds door shut (*d20 Modern, hold portal*).

Jump (*Engineering*). Subject gains bonus on Jump checks (*d20 Modern*).

Subvert MOB (*Hacking*). Makes target MOB your friend (*d20 Modern, charm person*; only affects humanoid MOBs).

Speed of the Wind (*Engineering*). Subject's speed increases by 20 ft.

2ND-LEVEL CODING

Blur (*Engineering*). Attacks miss subject 20% of the time (*d20 Modern, blur*).

Compel MOB (*Hacking*) Target MOB is compelled to follow suggested course of action (*d20 Modern, suggestion*; only affects MOBs).

Cure Moderate Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 2d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure moderate wounds*).

Darkvision (*Data Analysis*). See 60 ft. in total darkness (*d20 Modern, darkvision*).

Decrypt Thoughts (*Data Analysis*). Detect target's surface thoughts (*d20 Modern, detect thoughts*).

Enhance Ability (*Engineering*). Subject gains +5 bonus to one ability score for 1 min./level (*d20 Modern, enhance ability*).

Goo Glob (*Engineering*). Fills 20-ft. radius spread with sticky spider webs (*d20 Modern, web*).

Invisibility (*Hacking*). Subject is invisible for 10 min./level or until it attacks (d20 Modern, *invisibility*).

Lesser Restoration (*Software Utilities*). Dispels coded ability penalty or repairs 1d4 ability damage (*d20 Modern, lesser restoration*).

Resist Energy (*Engineering*). Ignore 10 pts of damage/round from one energy type (*d20 Modern, resist energy*).

Restore Crashed System (*Software Utilities*). Removes crash conditions from the target.

See Invisibility (*Data Analysis*). Reveals invisible creatures or objects (*d20 Modern, see invisibility*).

Systems Freeze (*Hacking*). (*d20 Modern, brain lock*; this is a crash condition).

CIM (*Software Utilities*). Cancels Hacking effects (*d20 Modern, dispel magic*; targets any Hacking effect).

Write Virus I (*Hacking*) Creates temporary virus to fight for you.

3RD-LEVEL CODING

Babelfish (*Data Analysis*). Speak any language (*d20 Modern, tongues*).

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance (*Data Analysis*) Range limited to current server (*d20 Modern, clairaudience/clairvoyance*; range limited to current server).

Cure Serious Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 3d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure serious wounds*).

Disrupt Coding (*Hacking*). Cancels coding effects (*d20 Modern, dispel magic*; targets any coding effect).

False Sensory Input (*Hacking*). (*d20 Modern, false sensory input*).

Fireball (*Engineering*). 1d6 damage/lever, 20-ft radius (*d20 Modern, fireball*).

Halt Virus (*Software Utilities*). Immobilizes viruses for 1 round/level (*d20 Modern, halt undead*; affects viruses).

Haste (*Engineering*). Extra attack action, additional move, and +2 Defense (*d20 Modern, haste*).

Lag (*Hacking*). One subject/level may only move or attack; -2 to Defense, -2 on melee attack and damage rolls, -2 on Reflex saves (*d20 Modern, slow*).

Lesser Override (*Hacking*). Forces target to obey your will (*d20 Modern, lesser domination*).

Lightning Bolt (*Engineering*). Electricity deals 1d6/level (*d20 Modern, lightning bolt*).

Search Engine/Subroutine (*Data Analysis*). Senses direction towards subroutine or power-up, either specific or general type (*d20 Modern, locate object*).

Security Protocol (*Software Utilities*). Inscription harms those who pass it. (*d20 Modern, glyph of warding*).

Streamline Systems (*Engineering*). Allies get +1 on most rolls, and enemies suffer -1 (*d20 Modern, prayer*).

4TH-LEVEL CODING

FUBAR (*Hacking*). Makes subject behave oddly for 1 round/level. This is an infection condition (*d20 Modern, confusion*).

Corrupt System (*Hacking*). -6 to an ability; -4 on attacks, saves, and checks; or 50% chance of losing an action. This is an infection condition (*d20 Modern, bestow curse*).

Cure Critical Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 4d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure critical wounds*).

Discern Lies (*Data Analysis*). Reveals deliberate falsehoods (*d20 Modern, discern lies*).

Firewall (*Engineering*). Deals 2d4 fire damage out to 10 ft. and 1d4 out to 20 ft. Passing through wall deals 2d6+1/level (*d20 Modern, wall of fire*).

ICE Storm (*Engineering*). Hail deals 5d6 damage in cylinder 40 ft. across (*d20 Modern, ice storm*).

Invisibility Sphere (*Hacking*). Makes everyone within 10 ft. invisible (*d20 Modern, confusion*).

Remove Infection (*Software Utilities*) Remove infection condition.

Restoration (*Software Utilities*). Restores level or ability score drains. (*d20 Modern, restoration*).

Ride Datastream (*Engineering*). Teleports you and up to 50 lbs./level (*d20 Modern, dimension door*).

Search Engine/Individual (*Data Analysis*). Indicates direction toward familiar creature (D&D, *locate creature*).

Sensor (*Data Analysis*) Invisible floating eye moves 30 ft./level. (*d20 Modern, arcane eye*).

Sphere of Stability (*Software Utilities*). Stops 1st- through 3rd- level coding effects. (*d20 Modern, minor globe of invulnerability*).

System Override (*Hacking*). Subject obeys your will. (*d20 Modern, domination*).

Wall of ICE (*Engineering*). *ICE plane* creates wall with 15 hp +1/level, or *hemisphere* can trap creatures inside (*d20 Modern, wall of ice*).

5TH-LEVEL CODING

Black ICE (*Engineering*). 1d6 cold damage/level (*d20 Modern, cone of cold*).

Deep Analysis (*Data Analysis*). See all things as they really are. (*d20 Modern, true seeing*).

Mass Cure Light Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1d8 +1 per level damage for many creatures (*d20 Modern, mass cure light wounds*).

Mindprobe (*Data Analysis*). Discover a target's secret thoughts. (*d20 Modern, mindprobe*).

Passwall (*Hacking*). Breaches wall 1 ft. thick/level (*d20 Modern, passwall*).

Purge Program (*Software Utilities*). May remove long-term negative effects. (*d20 Modern, break enchantment*).

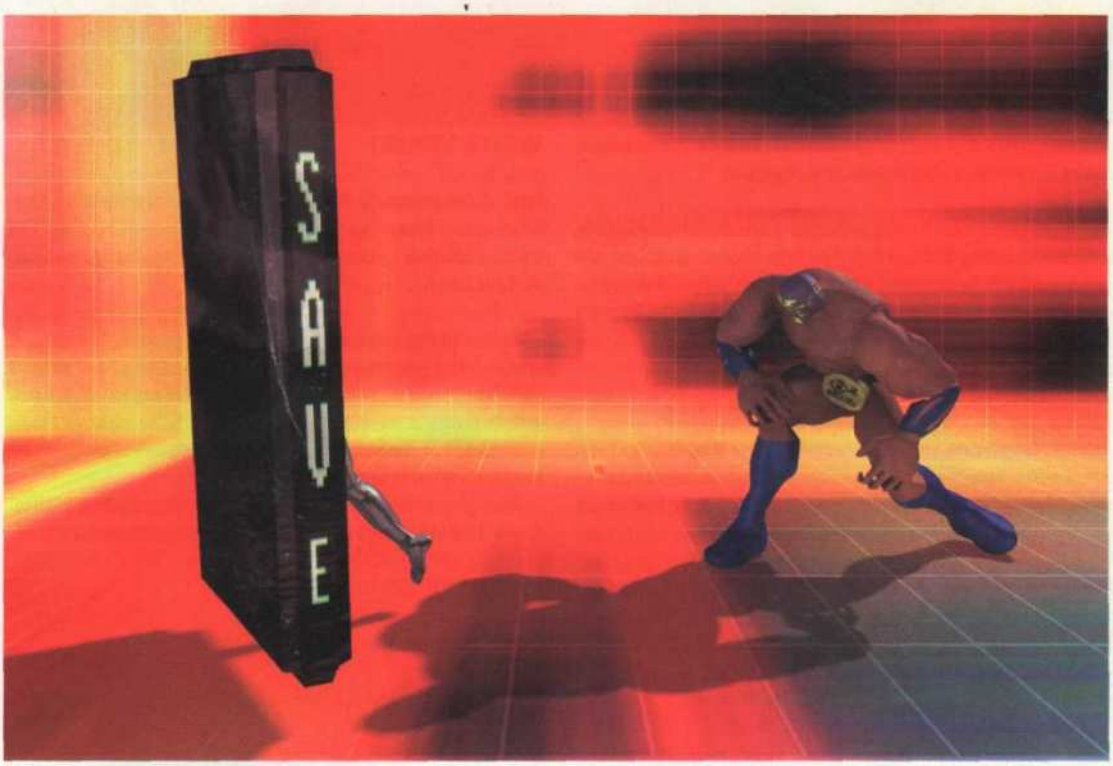
System Watchdog (*Software Utilities*) Spectral dog can guard or attack (*d20 Modern, phantom watchdog*).

Systems Crash (*Hacking*). As *hold person*, but affects any creature. This is a crash condition (*d20 Modern, hold monster*).

Telekinesis (*Engineering*). Lifts or moves 25 lbs./level at long range (d20 Modern, *telekinesis*).

Wall of Force (*Engineering*). Wall is immune to damage (*d20 Modern, wall of force*).

Write Virus II (*Hacking*) Creates temporary virus to fight for you.



ANALYZE PROGRAM

Data Analysis

Level: 1; **Components:** None; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** 60 ft.; **Target:** Single creature; **Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** Will negates; **Coding Resistance:** Yes; **Cycle Cost:** 2

By looking beyond the surface and reading the datastream, you can discern information about a target creature. Each round that you maintain the spell, you may use an attack action to make one of the following checks, using your Data Analysis skill:

Desired Information	DC
Target's creature type	15
Target's total Hit Dice and character levels	15
Number and type of target's subroutines	20
Target's specific class levels	25
Target's allegiances	25
Target's current computing cycle total	30

BREAK ENCHANTMENT

Software Utilities

Level: 5; **Cycle Cost:** 18

It most aspects, this is identical to the *break enchantment* spell from *d20 Modern*. For each hostile effect on your target—including coding effects and other crash or infection effects—you make a check of 1d20+10 against a DC of 11 + the caster level of the effect. Success means that the creature is free of the effect. In order to remove an infected subroutine from a character, you must make the check against DC 25.

BYPASS SECURITY

Hacking

Level: 1; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Special; **Range:** None; **Target:** You; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Cycle Cost:** 2

On its own, Disable Device can be used to overcome the traps and challenges found in MUDville dungeons. But bypassing the actual security systems of the ContiNet, or unlocking sealed portals through the use of coding, is a considerably more difficult task that requires the use of Hacking.

You must engage this ability to even have a chance to overcome an installed security system or to open a sealed portal. The effect has no manifestation time of its own, but you can use it only when you are about to make a Disable Device check. When you activate this ability, make a Hacking skill check (DC 20). If you succeed, you may add the excess as an insight bonus on your Disable Device check. So if you get a Hacking result of 25, you receive a +5 insight bonus on the follow-up skill check. If you fail the Hacking check you must continue with the Disable Device check, but you take a -2 penalty on your roll.

CIM

Software Utilities

Level: 2; **Cycle Cost:** 6

Except for the lowered level, this is identical to *disrupt coding*. However, it only affects Hacking effects.

DISRUPT CODING

Hacking

Level: 3; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level); **Target:** One programmer, creature, or object; or 30-ft. burst; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 10

This is similar to the spell *dispel magic*, but it is used to end the ongoing effects of a coding ability or to temporarily suspend the powers of a power-up. It can also be used to target the ongoing hardcoded abilities or a program, virus, or other inhabitant of the ContiNet. In all other ways it is identical to *dispel magic*, as described in *d20 Modern*.

REMOVE INFECTION

Software Utilities

Level: 4; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 14

Remove infection removes all infection conditions (such as the effects of *corrupt system* or *FUBAR*) from the target. Certain infections are especially powerful, and require a minimum caster level before they can be removed.

RESTORE CRASHED SYSTEM

Software Utilities

Level: 2; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 6

Restore crashed system removes all crash conditions from the target. Powerful crash conditions may require a minimum caster level before they can be removed.

SPEED OF THE WIND

Engineering

Level: 1; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** 1 min/level; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 2

This adjustment increases the target's land speed by 20 feet. This has no effect on other forms of movement—such as swimming or climbing—but like any affect that increases your land speed, it does affect your maximum jumping distance.

STUDY DATAFLOW

Hacking

Level: 0; **Components:** None; **Display:** Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** 60 ft.; **Target:** Quarter-cricle emanating from you up to the extreme of the range; **Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 1

This is identical to the *d20 Modern* spell *detect magic*, except that it allows you to detect the disruptions caused by coding and the emanations from power-ups or advanced subroutines. Data Analysis takes the place of the Spellcraft skill, and can be used to identify the nature of coding abilities. You can use *study dataflow* to identify the abilities of a power-up or an advanced subroutine by making a Data Analysis check (DC 25).

WRITE VIRUS I

Hacking

Level: 2; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Close (25+5 ft. 2/levels); **Target:** One summoned creature; **Duration:** 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 6

Using this ability, you create a virus to strike down your enemies. It appears where you designate (within the range of the effect) and acts immediately, on your turn. The virus follows your instructions and may perform tasks that are unrelated to combat, within the constraints of its limited lifespan. Sadly, viruses created in this manner cannot replicate themselves or create new viruses.

When you use *write virus*, you may summon a single SoBig worm or 2 1-HD spams. If the GM creates additional viruses, these may be added to this list.

WRITE VIRUS II

Coding (Hacking)

Level: 5; **Effect:** One or more summoned creatures; **Cycle Cost:** 18

This is identical to *write virus I*. However, you may call up one of the following:
1 Cascade infector virus
1 5-HD spam
2 SoBig worms

Combat in *Deathnet* uses most of the standard *d20 Modern* rules, with a few exceptions. Two of these were mentioned in the introduction: there is no danger of death from massive damage in *Deathnet*, and size has no effect on damage, armor class, or attack rolls. This chapter examines the manner in which damage is determined and the effects of damage on the inhabitants of the Net.

CHAPTER THREE: COMBAT

HURTIN' THINGS

In *Deathnet*, your weapons are a part of your character. The difference between a fist and a sword is purely cosmetic, although it should indicate the type of damage (bludgeoning, piercing, slashing) that the attack will inflict. When you create your character, you should decide what your basic attack looks like. Do you use weapons? Are you a martial artist? Are you surrounded by a ghostly aura that burns anything it touches?

Whatever the appearance of the attack, the amount of damage that it inflicts is based on the number of ranks that you have in the Combat Code skill. This is shown on table 3.1. When making a melee attack, add your Strength modifier to the damage roll. Unless you are using an offensive subroutine, your attack threatens a critical on a roll of 20 and inflicts double damage with a critical hit.

Table 3.1: Inflicting Damage

Combat Code Ranks	Damage
0–1	1d3 (nonlethal)
2–3	1d4
4–5	1d6
6–7	1d8
8–9	1d10
10–12	2d6
13–15	2d8
16–18	2d10
19–21	2d12
22	2d12+1
23	2d12+2
24	2d12+3
25	2d12+4

Every rank beyond 25 increases the amount of damage inflicted by one point.

SUBROUTINES AND COMBAT

While your weapons are actually a part of you, you can enhance your combat abilities by using an offensive subroutine. This can enhance the range, accuracy, or damage of an attack, and can change the type of damage that the attack inflicts (giving you a flaming sword, for example) or add special abilities, like autofire.

Subroutines are discussed in full detail in the following chapter. But there are a few important rules relating to subroutines. Even if a character appears to be wielding a weapon, that weapon is only vulnerable to attack–either direct attack or an attempt to disarm–if it is actually an offensive subroutine. A normal offensive subroutine has a hardness value of 10 and 10 hit points; a heavy weapon has a hardness value of 15 and 20 hit points. On the ContiNet, it's always obvious to an observer whether a weapon is innate or part of a subroutine. How is it obvious? Don't ask–it just is.

TOUCH ATTACKS AND SUBROUTINES

Just as your weapons are simply a cosmetic element of your character, armor is also primarily an aesthetic decision. Your Defense is based on your class bonus and your Dexterity. But a Wargame could choose to have her Defense bonus represented by the armor of a samurai or the speed of a ninja. In this case, the samurai armor still defends the character against touch attacks–that's just how it is.

However, defensive subroutines may provide bonuses to your defense. These bonuses do not apply against touch attacks.

Bonuses from general subroutines or power-ups do apply against touch attacks.

INJURY AND DEATH

For the most part, the ContiNet resembles reality. You feel pain when your character is injured, and if you take enough damage you will die. This follows the standard d20 System rules: If you have 0 hit points you are disabled; if your hit points fall to –1 or below you are unconscious; and if your hit points fall to –10 or below, you die. If you die, your body quickly fades away, leaving any subroutines or unused power-ups behind; this keeps the ContiNet from getting clogged up with corpses.

HEALING

Programmers with Software Utilities skills can expend computing cycles to repair the injuries of other characters. Barring such treatment, you recover 1 point of ability damage and a number of hit points equal to your level every 24 hours. If you take an entire day of rest, you recover 2 points of ability damage and a number of hit points equal to twice your level. With the help of the Treat Injury skill, you can regain 3 ability points and 3 hit points per character level.

Healing does not necessarily require actual sleep, since the need for sleep varies from server to server; you often need to sleep in MUDville, while Arcadia is a realm of endless action.

SAVE POINTS

One of the swiftest ways to heal damage is to find a save point. These mysterious monoliths are hidden away in the dark corners of the servers. When you touch a save point, any lost hit points are restored and you regain up to 3 previously lost ability points. However, you can only benefit from a particular save point once every 24 hours.

Themis controls the only save point in Hub City; this is one of the advantages to working with the security system.

EXTRA LIVES

The ultimate security is the extra life. You gain an extra life when you reach 5th level, and every 5 levels thereafter (10th, 15th, and 20th level). You may also be lucky enough to find a power-up that will grant you a second chance at life. If you are killed and you possess an extra life, your body disappears along with all of your subroutines and power-ups. You reappear at the last save point that you touched. You are fully healed, although any power-ups that you were using at the moment of death are lost. Depending upon the location of the save point, you may be able to rejoin the rest of the party. If the save point is too far away from the rest of the group, you may have to sit out the rest of the adventure.

Themis claims that the extra lives you receive every 5 levels are a gift from her–a form of protection she can offer to those who help her. Should you choose to turn against her, the gamemaster will have to decide whether this statement is the truth or just a bluff designed to play on mortal frailty.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUBROUTINES AND POWER-UPS

The machine gun slowly rotated in midair. "Do you really think I can use it?" Wallaby Jack asked. "When I was playing the game—back before I WAS the game—I never saw Wallaby use a real gun."

"Just try it," LadyBlue52 said.

Wallaby reached out to take the massive gun. As soon as he touched it, it shimmered and flowed into a new form. Within seconds the sleek array of rotating steam-cooled barrels had been transformed into a colorful, cartoonish gun with a single massive barrel. Peering inside, Wallaby saw a large, springloaded boxing glove. "OK," he said. "This looks like it's more my speed."

Characters in *Deathnet* don't actually possess physical equipment. Nine times out of ten, if you see someone wearing armor or carrying a sword, those objects are fused to the character. While she can holster her pistols, Lara Croft can't drop the guns or give them to someone else; they are simply a representation of her ability to cause damage, intended to set the tone of her game.

But then there's that rare one time of ten when the sword or the armor isn't a normal part of the character. These still aren't objects in the traditional sense, but they can be removed and traded between characters. These are *subroutines*, transferable pieces of code that alter your character's capabilities.

There are three different types of subroutines. Offensive subroutines alter the nature of your attacks. Defensive subroutines protect you from attack. And general subroutines can perform almost any function. In addition to subroutines, you may obtain power-ups. Like general subroutines, power-ups can have virtually any effect, but they are temporary and fade away after they are used.

The appearance of subroutines is fluid, and the typical subroutine will alter its appearance to match your character. An offensive subroutine may look like a blaster in the hands of a galactic night, an uzi when used by a modern-day wargame, or a longbow in the hands of an elven ranger.

ACQUIRING SUBROUTINES AND POWER-UPS

Subroutines are the treasures of the net. Generally speaking, you will only be able to obtain these items by defeating monsters and MOBs or overcoming deadly challenges. Weapons and power-ups are scattered through frag levels and dungeons, there for the taking if you can survive the dangers of the region. Occasionally you may find merchants who are willing to sell simple subroutines or weak power-ups, but there is no standard currency across the Net. Merchants may sell their goods for gold pieces or rupees; others will only exchange their treasures for other subroutines. Most MOB merchants have the Protected Inventory feat, so don't plan on killing them to take their goods!

INVENTORY SLOTS AND SUBROUTINE PORTS

There is a limit to the number of subroutines or powerups that you can use at once. A normal character has one port for an offensive subroutine, two for defensive subroutines, and three ports that can be used for either general subroutines or power-ups. Characters can increase the number of ports with the Subroutine Port feat or the Avatar customization talent.

In addition to these six ports, you can carry up to six additional subroutines or power-ups. These "inventory slots" are invisible and weightless, so you can carry a rocket launcher, an autocannon, and a sniper rifle in your inventory without anyone knowing (although *study dataflow* and *analyze program* reveal the presence of power-ups or advanced subroutines in inventory). The Mule feat gives you an additional six inventory slots; this feat can be taken multiple times.

Switching an offensive or general subroutine in inventory with one in an active slot is a move action. Switching a defensive subroutine is a full-round action. If you have the Quick Draw feat, you can switch your offensive subroutine as a free action.

Subroutines interfere with your system and affect your ability to perform delicate actions. This is identical to the normal armor penalty, but all subroutines may carry a penalty. To determine the final penalty, add together the penalty values of all installed subroutines, then subtract your Strength modifier. The Lightfooted feat reduces the penalty value of all of your installed subroutines by one; this can be extremely useful when you need to jump your way through an Arcadian maze!

Offensive and defensive subroutines are divided into two categories: simple and advanced. Unless you possess the appropriate feat (Advanced Armor Proficiency or Advanced Weapon Proficiency) you cannot install advanced subroutines.

OFFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

An offensive subroutine enhances your attacks—either by increasing damage, range, accuracy, or adding special effects to the attack. A subroutine doesn't have to appear as a weapon, but it must have a visible effect when it is equipped; a lightning fist subroutine could be a flashing sword, or it could cause your deadly fist to vibrate or crackle with energy.

A selection of offensive subroutines are provided on table 4.1. However, there is one feature that is not mentioned on this table: damage type. If the Gamemaster wants, an offensive subroutine can be associated with a particular type of damage (acid, bludgeoning, cold, fire, electricity, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion). If the subroutine does not have a specific damage type, the attack uses the normal damage type associated with your attack. If it does have a specific damage type, it replaces the damage type normally associated with your attack. The appearance of the subroutine should reflect the type of damage that it inflicts; a melee boost that inflicts slashing damage could be a sword, an axe, claws, or razors attacked to your fists—but it wouldn't look like a club.

Advanced offensive subroutines are more powerful and exotic than their simple counterparts. However, advanced subroutines often require you to expend computing cycles each time you make an attack; if you can't pay the cost, you can't use the weapon.

The subroutines provided on the table below are only examples; the Gamemaster may expand this list to incorporate the weapons from her favorite game.

TABLE 4.1: OFFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Simple Offensive Subroutines

Name	Damage	Critical	Range	Penalty	Notes
Basic Weapon	+1 CC	20	Either	–1	Either melee or ranged.
Sniper Rifle	–2 CC	19–20/×2	+50	–2	+2 to hit.
Weapon Boost	+1–5	20	Either	–1	Bonus to hit and damage, melee or ranged.

Advanced Offensive Subroutines

Name	Damage	Critical	Range	Penalty	Notes
Autocannon	+3	20	+20	–2	Single shot or autofire (uses 3 cycles).
Big Gun	+2 CC	20/×3	+20	–2	Uses 1 computing cycle/shot.
Big Stick	+3 CC	20/×3	Melee	–2	Uses 1 computing cycle/swing.
Blinding Shot	–6 CC	20	Either	–2	Blinds victim for 1d4+1 rounds, uses 3 cycles.
Memory Disruptor	–6 CC	20	Either	–2	Drains 2d4 computing cycles, uses 3 cycles.
Goo Gun	None	N/A	+20	–2	Single target *web*, ranged touch, uses 3 cycles.
Hammer Fist	+0, Special	20	Melee	–1	Add all action dice when using iron fist.
Lightning Fist	+0	19–20/×2	Melee	–1	+3 to Initiative, no penalty for flurry of blows.
Rocket Launcher	Special	N/A	+40	–3	Double damage to a 20-ft. area, uses 8 cycles.
Venom Strike	+0, poison	N/A	Either	–1	Inflicts poison damage, uses 4 cycles.

Name is the generic name of the weapon. The form the weapon takes when incorporated into your character is up to you. A lightning fist may be a rapier, and a sniper rifle could be a bow or laser eyebeams.

Damage is the bonus added to any damage roll using the weapon. If a weapon provides a CC bonus, instead add the value to your ranks in Combat Code in order to determine the damage of the attack.

Critical indicates the threat range of the weapon and the amount of damage inflicted on a critical hit.

Range provides the bonus to the range increment of the attack. If any range is given, the subroutine can only be used to make ranged attacks. If a subroutine is listed as "either," it can be found as either a ranged subroutine or a melee subroutine; no single subroutine can be used for both ranged and melee attacks.

Penalty has the same effect as armor penalty from *d20 Modern*. Subtract your Strength Modifier from the combined penalty of all equipped subroutines to determine the final penalty (if the result is negative, you suffer no penalty).

Autocannon: When using an autocannon you can choose to make an autofire attack; this has a cost of 3 computing cycles. Unless you have Advanced Firearms Proficiency you suffer the usual –4 penalty for making an autofire attack.

Blinding Shot: Using a blinding shot is a touch attack. If it is successful, the target must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the user's Wargame level) or be blinded for 1d4+1 rounds. Using a blinding shot costs 3 computing cycles.

Goo Gun: This acts as a targeted *web* spell. It requires a ranged touch attack, and the target does not receive a saving throw. Firing a goo gun is an attack action that uses 3 computing cycles.

Hammer Fist: If you are using this subroutine when you perform the iron fist Wargame talent, if you get to roll multiple action dice, add the value of all of the dice together instead of selecting the best die.

Lightning Fist: This subroutine provides you with uncanny speed. While the lightning fist is equipped, you gain a +3 bonus on Initiative checks. In addition, if you make a flurry of blows attack, you do not suffer the usual –2 penalty on your attacks. If you remove the lightning fist, you lose the bonus on Initiative; this takes effect in the next round of combat.

Memory Disruptor: Using a memory disruptor is a touch attack. If the attack is successful, the target loses 2d4 computing cycles in addition to taking damage from the attack. This will not reduce the victim below 0 computing cycles. It costs 3 computing cycles to power a memory disruptor.

Rocket Launcher: This deals double normal damage to all targets in a 20-foot area. Targets can make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the shooter's Wargame level) to take half damage from the attack. Firing a rocket launcher costs 8 computing cycles. Using a rocket launcher is a full-round action.

If the rocket launcher is combined with the explosive attack Wargame talent, it inflicts triple damage to all targets in a 30-ft. area, and costs 15 computing cycles.

Sniper Rifle: A sniper rifle deals less damage than a normal ranged attack, but it is more accurate and has a dramatically increased range.

Venom Strike: This subroutine allows the user to inflict poison damage on a successful attack. The precise type of poison associated with a particular venom strike subroutine is set by the Gamemaster.

Weapon Boost: A weapon boost is associated with either melee or ranged attacks. The subroutine has a bonus between +1 and +5, and adds this value to the attack and damage rolls of the appropriate type of attack.

DEFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Defensive subroutines serve the same function as armor. As with any subroutine, the appearance will vary based on your character. A medium armor subroutine could take the form of chainmail, a large shield, a glowing force field, or thick, scaly skin.

An advanced defensive subroutine may have special powers in addition to increasing Defense, but you often need to spend computing cycles to install the subroutine.

Table 4.2 provides a basic list of defensive subroutines.

GENERAL SUBROUTINES

General subroutines can serve almost any purpose—enhancing your abilities, your skills, providing you with specific combat abilities, or anything else. A small selection of subroutines are provided below; the gamemaster should use these as a guidelines for creating additional subroutines.

All general subroutines carry a –1 skill penalty when equipped. Installing a general subroutine normally costs 1 computing cycle, but certain subroutines may have a higher cost.

TABLE 4.2: DEFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Simple Defensive Subroutines

Name	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Speed Modifier	Penalty
Light Armor	+1	N/A	None	–1
Medium Armor	+3	+4	–5 ft.	–2
Heavy Armor	+5	+2	–10 ft.	–3

Advanced Defensive Subroutines

Name	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Speed Modifier	Penalty	Notes/Cycle Cost to Equip
Assault Armor	+7	+0	–15 ft.	–4	6 cycles.
Fire Shield	+3	+5	None	–2	Inflicts damage on attackers; 8 cycles.
Shadow Armor	+3	+5	None	–1	+5 bonus on Hide checks; 8 cycles.
Wind Shield	+2	N/A	+10 ft.	–1	+4 Defense vs. certain attacks; 10 cycles. attacks; 10 cycles.

Name is the generic name of the subroutine.

Armor Bonus is the amount added to your Defense while the subroutine is equipped. Armor bonuses from multiple subroutines stack with one another. Armor bonuses do not apply against touch attacks.

Maximum Dex Bonus is the maximum Defense benefit you can gain from Dexterity while using the subroutine. If you are using multiple defensive subroutines, use the lowest value. "N/A" means that the subroutine does not place any restriction on your Dex bonus.

Speed Modifier is the effect that the subroutine has on your base movement speed. If you are using multiple subroutines, add the values together.

Penalty has the same effect as armor penalty from *d20 Modern*. Subtract your Strength Modifier from the combined penalty of all equipped subroutines to determine the final penalty.

Fire Shield: A fire shield is usually a blazing nimbus of flames, but depending on the type of damage it inflicts it could be a field of crackling electricity or an array of vicious spikes. If someone makes a successful melee attack against you while you are using this subroutine, she suffers 1d3 points of damage. If you are wearing multiple fire shields, the damage stacks. You must spend 8 computing cycles to equip a fire shield.

Wind Shield: This subroutine typically takes the form of a cloak of wind that blows around you. This actually allows you to move more quickly, as the winds carry you forward. In addition to the base +2 to Defense, it provides you with another +4 to Defense against any ranged attack that inflicts piercing, slashing, or bludgeoning damage. It also provides you with a +4 to Defense against initial grapple attempts, although you do not receive any bonus to grapple checks. You must spend 10 computing cycles to equip a wind shield.

Ability Enhancement: A general subroutine can provide a +2 or +4 enhancement bonus to a specific ability score. As this is an enhancement bonus, if you equip multiple subroutines you only receive the highest bonus.

Damage Absorption: A damage absorption subroutine reduces the damage from a particular type of attack–either acid, bludgeoning, cold, electricity, fire, or piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion. The subroutine can absorb up to 10 points of damage each round. You must spend 4 computing cycles to install a damage absorption subroutine.

Damage Boost: This style of subroutine increases the damage of a specific type of attack, either ranged or melee. While you have the subroutine installed, all of the appropriate attacks inflict an additional +1d6 damage. This damage may be either acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic/concussion. You must spend 4 computing cycles to install a damage boost subroutine. If you have multiple damage boost subroutines installed, the effects do not stack, but you can decide which to apply to a specific attack.

Darkvision: This subroutine allows you to see up to 60 feet in conditions of total darkness. Installing a darkvision subroutine costs 2 computing cycles.

Memory Shielding: This subroutine acts to preserve your basic self-image, and helps to prevent corruption from viruses and other threats. When you would normally suffer ability damage–due to poison, viral attack, or any other threat–the memory shielding reduces the damage by 1 point. In addition, if an attack would cause you to lose computing cycles, the damage is reduced by 2 points (you cannot gain cycles in this way). You cannot install multiple memory shielding subroutines.

Skill Enhancement: A general subroutine can provide a +5 enhancement bonus to a particular skill. Subroutines that provide bonuses to Combat Code or any of the coding skills are especially powerful, and the Gamemaster should think twice before putting these into an adventure.

Speed Boost: This subroutine increases your base movement speed by 5 feet, which can be critical if you are wearing multiple sets of heavy armor. If you install multiple speed boosts, the effects stack.

POWER-UPS

Power-ups are similar to general subroutines, but they are temporary; once a power-up is activated, it remains in effect for a period of time and then evaporates. In order to use a power-up, you must have it installed in one of your general subroutine ports. Installing the power-up is a move action; activating it is an attack action. If the power-up has a long-term effect, it continues to use the port until the effect ends. You can end the effect of a power-up ahead of time, but the power-up is still lost.

Any of the effects described for general subroutines could be applied to power-ups. A typical power-up remains in effect for 1 minute. Power-ups do not carry any sort of skill penalty, and unless mentioned do not have a computing cycle cost.

Here are a few examples of power-ups.

Ammo Clip: An ammo clip provides you with a reserve of computing cycles that can only be used to pay the cost of using advanced offensive subroutines. While the ammo clip is installed, any offensive subroutine costs are deducted from the clip. Unlike most power-ups, you can return a partially used ammo clip to inventory; it only evaporates when its comput-

ing cycles have been completely drained. Ammo clips typically come in multiples of 10 cycles.

Cycle Restoration: Less common than the ammo clip, a cycle restoration power-up restores (surprise) computing cycles. A cycle restoration power-up typically carries 5, 15, or 25 cycles. When it is used, it restores cycles up to the amount contained in the power-up–it will not provide you with more than your normal starting number of cycles–and then disappears. For some reason, cycle restoration power-ups are usually blue.

Equalizer: Remember how Pac-Man could eat that pill and suddenly destroy the invulnerable ghosts? This is that pill. When you activate an equalizer, your attacks ignore all forms of damage reduction–including *resist energy*, damage absorption subroutines, and invulnerability power-ups–for the next 5 rounds. While the equalizer is in effect, you can also strike incorporeal creatures as if they were solid (and vice versa).

Health Pack: A health pack generally holds 5, 15, 25, or 50 hit points. When used, it gives you as many hit points as possible–up to your full normal values–and disappears. Health packs in MUDville are generally red potions, while in Arcadia they take the form of items of food or small white boxes bearing red crosses.

Invisibility: When you activate this power-up, you become invisible for 1 minute (10 rounds of combat). The effects are identical to the spell *invisibility*, but you can attack without becoming visible. You must spend 2 computing cycles to activate this power-up.

Invulnerability: When activated, this rare power-up provides you with DR 20/– against all slashing, piercing, or bludgeoning attacks. The effect lasts for 5 rounds.

Restore Save: This power-up transports you back to the last save point that you touched. It only transports you, so if the save point is far away you may have to sit out for the rest of the adventure. On the other hand, sometimes this beats dying...

Smart Bomb: When you detonate a smart bomb, you inflict damage on every opposing creature within 20 feet of you. The bomb does 1d6 points of damage for every 2 character levels you possess (no save); it does not affect inanimate objects or anyone that you consider to be an ally. You must spend 4 computing cycles to detonate a smart bomb.

Turbo Boost: When you activate this power-up, your base speed increases by 30 feet for 1 minute. The effects of multiple turbo boost power-ups do not stack.

OTHER ITEMS

You may find a variety of other items in the ContiNet–items that serve no purpose in combat, but have value to someone. These items occupy inventory slots, but cannot be installed. A few examples are provided below.

Cash: Roleplaying games often provide adventurers with treasure–gold, rupees, greenbacks, and many other variations. Unfortunately, these funds are worth only what the market will bear. In the dwarven citadel of Khazarstak, your gold and platinum might be worth something–in Hub City, it's meaningless.

Each different style of currency occupies a different inventory slot. One inventory slot can hold all the *ForeverQuest* funds you can find; gold, copper, and platinum can all be squeezed together into one slot. But rupees from *Majora's Occarina* need to have a slot of their own, as do the imperial credits from *Realms of Stellar Conquest*.

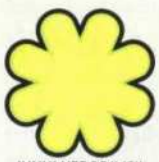
Data Packets: These items hold concentrated information. They can be used only by MOBs, programs, or viruses. The acquisition of a data packet could be the goal of an adventure, or you might be able to use a data packet to barter with a MOB merchant.

Quest Items: A quest item could be anything from the *Maltese Falcon* to a sandwich. Regardless of shape, the function is the same. Certain MOBs and programs want specific quest items. A MOB (or program) can transform a quest item into experience points, and it will generally share this experience with the adventurers who gave it the item. Specific quest items are tied to specific MOBs; just because the Sheriff of Birmingham can give you a reward for bringing him a cheese sandwich doesn't mean that the sandwich has value to other MOBs.

WEAPON BOOST

SMART BOMB

MEMORY DISRUPTOR


INVULNERABILITY

EQUALIZER

SNIPER RIFLE

TURBO BOOST

INVISIBILITY

HEALTH PACK

GOO GUN

AMMO CLIP

VENOM STRIKE

RESTORE SAVE

BLINDING SHOT

HAMMER FIST

LIGHTNING FIST

ROCKET LAUNCHER

CYCLE RESTORATION

CHAPTER FIVE: DEATHNET ADVENTURES

"OK, just so I'm clear on this... We're hunting vampires? When did we go all Buffy the Vampire Slayer?"

LadyBlue52 shrugged. "The node is in the Twilight Crusade section of MUDville. It's a big gothic RPG. It's actually not focused on combat, so if we play our cards right we might be able to talk our way through it."

"And if we don't?"

"Well, elder vampires can move faster than you can see, control your mind, and rip you apart with their bare hands."

'Viscerator sighed. "So, I suppose we need to start looking for stakes and holy water?"

From this point on, this article is addressed to the Gamemaster. So scram, players! Go play *Knights of the Old Republic*.

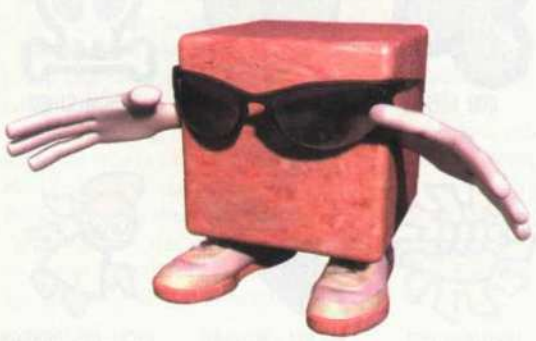
The Psykey system is the world on the other side of the computer screen. A *Deathnet* adventure gives you an opportunity to throw the players into the heart of your favorite video game. Suddenly they must fight their way through a *Pac-Man* maze, across a *Command & Conquer* battlefield, and penetrate the depths of a *Castle Wolfenstein*. If you want, you can keep the game at this level and not worry about the overarching Psykey storyline; just keep things as a light-hearted fragfest and have fun with it.

This chapter will study the ways in which you can build a long-term campaign within the world of *Deathnet*. The first possibility is to use the Psykey storyline and to challenge the party to find a solution to the problems caused by the Surge. The second is to overlay *Deathnet* onto an existing *d20 Modern* campaign.

THE PSYKEY CAMPAIGN

The basic principles of the Psykey campaign are described in the prologue on page 75. The player characters are volunteers, hackers, or tech support agents who were testing the ContiNet when the Surge occurred. Now the PCs are trapped inside the Net—trapped in the bodies that they were inhabiting at the moment of the Surge. The artificial intelligence Themis has gathered the party in Hub City and asked for their assistance. From this point, there are a few different paths you can take.

Quest for Nodes. Themis claims that the network of control nodes for the ContiNet has been scrambled—and that if she could gain control of these nodes she could reestablish order and release the PCs from the system. But Themis has no physical presence and can't reach the nodes herself; she needs agents to find the nodes and patch them into her network. These nodes are scattered across the ContiNet, and usually hidden in dark and dangerous places—the Vault of the Vampire King, inside the Chamber of Ghosts in the *Pac-Man* maze, and so on. MOBs and programs can gain power from nodes; in some cases, a node may be hidden even from the inhabitants of the region, but if a villain knows about a node he fights to the death to maintain control over it.



The quest for the nodes provides the party with a reason to travel across the length of the ContiNet. At the start of each adventure, Themis gives the PCs a nodelink power-up (the tool they use to bond the node to Themis' network once they find it) and then transports them to the starting point of the next quest. If they succeed in linking the node to her system, Themis pulls the party back to her temple. In addition to experience for the encounters that they faced, if the PCs succeeded in tapping the node they gain a story award equal to a single encounter with an EL matching the average level of the party.

In addition to experience, there are a few other ways that Themis can reward her servants. Her temple contains a save point, which allows battered PCs to instantly heal between adventures. In addition, as she is linked to more nodes and her power grows, Themis may be able to provide the party with power-ups, giving them an edge when facing the dangers of the *Deathnet*.

Intrigue. If you want, the node-quest can be fairly straightforward—a simple set of dungeon crawls and fragfests. But you could choose to focus on the interactions between the many cabals and conspiracies that have developed in the ContiNet. Who caused the Surge in the first place? Is anyone else trying to seize control of the nodes? Aside from the node-quest, Themis may want the party to deal with other forces in the net—to put a stop to the latest plan of the Killer Apps, to spy on the activities of the Mob, or to broker a deal with the Hacker 1337. Or perhaps a hacker or one of the Corruptors approaches the party with stories about Themis. Can Themis be trusted? What if SHE caused the Surge, and the PCs are merely completing the work that she began?

Survival and Exploration. You could choose to ignore the Themis plotline altogether. Instead, you could begin with the player characters as clueless castaways, lost in the net with no idea of what has happened or what to do next. In this style of campaign, the party simply wanders from realm to realm trying to find some sort of security and some way to return to the real world. Think of it as "*Tron* meets *Gilligan's Island*," only with more fighting. Over time, the PCs encounter the power groups described in Chapter Six—the Killer Apps, the Mob, the Hacker 1337, and others—and have to learn when to talk, when to fight, and when to run away.

One thing to bear in mind when using any of these options is that time in the ContiNet has no relation to time in the real world; this is one reason characters don't need to sleep in most parts of the Net. A day in the Net is only the blink of an eye in the real world—and thus it could be months or years of subjective time before the Psykey technicians find a solution to the problem.

CROSSING OVER WITH D20 MODERN

While it is possible to run an entire *Deathnet* campaign, you may not have the time or interest to do so. However, if you are running a *d20 Modern* campaign, there are a variety of different ways that you could bring *Deathnet* in for a quick change of pace.

It's all Fun and Games... You could choose to use the basic *Deathnet* plotline, but on a much smaller scale. Psykey is under suspicion, and the party is smuggled into the test to find out what's really going on. When the Surge occurs, they are trapped in the ContiNet. Instead of a long-term campaign, they simply must help Themis connect to one pivotal node—but that node is guarded by the Killer Apps, the Corruptors, or a similar group. Once the mission is accomplished, order is restored and the PCs are returned to their bodies. If you wanted to use *Deathnet* in the future, Themis could contact the players over the Internet and ask them to come back to Psykey to help her expose some deadly conspiracy inside the Net.

When running this type of game, it's generally best to prepare characters in advance and surprise your players with the sudden transition. This lets the players experience the full oddity of the shift, and also gives people an opportunity to play something very different from their usual character. The Smart hero can get a chance to play the Wargame bruiser and beat something up for a change, while the Strong hero takes a turn as the charismatic avatar and uses his wits instead of his brawn.

Roadkill on the Information Superhighway. Alternately, you can completely ignore Psykey and Themis and use *Deathnet* rules as a colorful system for cyberspace intrusion. When the party needs to crack the evil mastermind's supercomputer, they must to assemble a virtual strikeforce and dive in brain-first. In this case, death in the Net will usually result in being kicked out into the real world—although a particularly evil system might have lethal countermeasures.

In this sort of system, players should be able to create their online personas; these could be advanced software constructs obtained from a secret source, or they could be the creations of the local Smart hero. Either way, PCs might be able to improve their *Deathnet* characters while adventuring in the real world, by acquiring subroutines or other systems that they can plug into their online personas and use the next time they connect to the Net.

When using either of these systems, it is important to remember that the skills and abilities of the *Deathnet* character do not have to resemble those of the PC. The abilities of a *Deathnet* character reflect the way in which the universe has been programmed to respond to him. The most socially inept loser can have a *Deathnet* character with a Charisma of 20; as long as you're plugged into the net, you'll never know the truth. Why do you think the games are so popular?

CHAPTER SIX: THE VIRTUAL WORLD

The 'Viscerator tried to wipe the spam off his feet "Free Herbal Viagra!" it whispered, lacking the strength to form capital letters. "Be debt free..." the voice trailed off as the vile program finally died.

"There's nothing worse than spam," the 'Viscerator growled.

"Don't be so sure," the PhreaK said. "I know it's been hard slogging through the mail server, but at least we haven't run into the Blue Screen of Death."

The Psykey ContiNet contains hundreds of games. As a result of the Surge, programs are no longer bound to their original games, and ghosts, goblins, and stormtroopers can all be seen on the streets of Hub City. But most of the MOBs have chosen to remain in the places they were born, and the different regions of the Net have distinctly different flavors–and different dangers that adventurers will have to overcome.

This chapter takes a look at the world of the Psykey ContiNet. It begins with a look at the geography of the Net, then examines the conspiracies and cabals that are fighting for power. It concludes with a look at the challenges player characters will have to overcome–programs, MOBs, errors, and viruses that inhabit the virtual world.

GEOGRAPHY

The ContiNet is divided into four *servers*. Each of these servers can be seen as its own plane of existence. Aside from the types of creatures that inhabit each server and the general flavor of the environment, the very laws of nature have been changed in each server. Many sections of MUDville are accurate replicas of reality; for example, you will need to eat and sleep while you are traveling through one of the *ForeverQuest* realms. In Arcadia you'll find that you have no need of sleep, and the only food you'll find will be health power-ups.

Within the servers, the worlds are broken into *realms*. Each realm is a different game. Some games–like *ForeverQuest*–are so large that they contain multiple realms; in addition, popular games may have multiple iterations, each of which is contained in its own seemingly identical realms. Thus the party could return to the dwarven city of Khazarstak only to find that none of their allies know who they are–because they've actually entered a separate iteration of the city. Realms are finite areas, and if the PCs keep walking they will eventually come to an invisible, impassible barrier that cannot be breached by any means (including *passwall* or *ride datastream*).

Gateways between realms may be disguised as regular doors–when you enter the castle, you enter another realm–or they may be vast, invisible gates that stretch across a mile of countryside. When you enter a gate between realms, there is a moment of weightless transition; it's very clear what has happened. Some creatures–notably errors and MOBs of limited intelligence–will not pass through realm gates, which can be critical when you are trying to escape deadly pursuit.

The four servers are connected by *network portals*. A network portal is a large gateway filled with shimmering energy; the appearance of the gate will be designed to match the game it is in. These portals are scattered throughout the servers. Most of them connect to Hub City, the nexus of the Net. But occasionally there are back doors that allow you to travel within a server, or to travel directly from Arcadia to MUDville or the Redlands.

The following sections provide a closer look at each of the four servers, including the types of creatures and adventures one can expect to find and a few examples of the realms within each one.

HUB CITY

The Nexus of the Net

Hub City is the smallest of the four servers; it contains a single massive realm, as opposed to the vast networks of realms found on the other servers. Most of the network portals in the other servers connect to Hub City; as a result, it is a crossroads where MOBs and trapped organics from all sorts of different games come together. The server takes the form of an enormous city that seems to have been patched together from hundreds of different cultures and eras of history. Glittering cyberpunk arcologies tower over log cabins and brick-and-mortar shops.

Some of the areas of Hub City are aspects of Psykey's administration. There is a heavily sealed compound that is believed to be the Psykey accounting department, and another datafortress is said to be the human resources department. Other sections appear to be part of an eCommerce section Psykey was developing, including the enormous Penthesilea bookstore and the Harbor Auction House. Unfortunately, few of these shops have anything that can be of any use to adventurers; they are designed to trade goods in the physical world, and have little to offer in the Net itself.

Hub City is a halfway point between Arcadia and MUDville, and the rules of reality reflect this. People don't need to eat, but they can if they want to, just to enjoy the aesthetic experience; likewise, people can choose to sleep, even though it is unnecessary. The city has a regular day-night cycle. Like the architecture, the weather varies as you move through the city. For the most part it is clear, dry, and warm, with no wind. But there are neighborhoods where it constantly rains or drizzles, and even one barrio where it never stops snowing—yet somehow, the snow never seems to accumulate.

Network portals abound in Hub City. Thirty portals ring a large plaza in the center of the city. There are also portals hidden in warehouses, closets, lavatories, and basements. Themis seems to know the locations of all of the portals in Hub City and their destinations—but the cryptic AI rarely reveals more information than she has to.

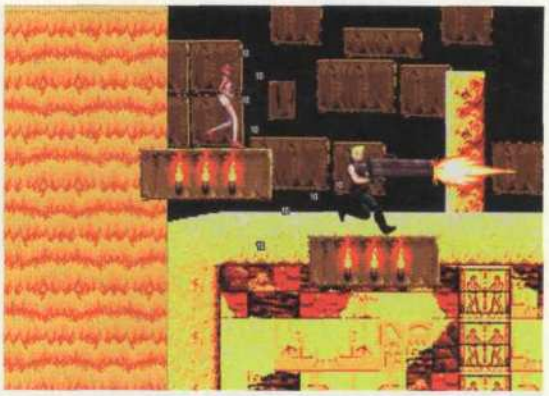
Despite its size, there are relatively few areas in Hub City that will hold much interest to adventurers. Most of the space is taken up by empty apartment buildings or enormous warehouses lined with locked and impenetrable filing cabinets. But there are some interesting locations, a few of which are described below.

The Sargasso Café is a morbidly stylish establishment frequented by hackers, goth MOBs, and viral agents. The Café is constructed from black marble and mirrors, and the columns are designed in the shape of spinal cords. The Sargasso is considered to be neutral ground, and as a result it is one of the few safe places to deal with agents of the Corruptors or MOB bosses.

The Last Word is a pawn shop. The proprietor, Jeeves, is a former search engine with a great interest in collecting data packets, and can often produce power-ups, quest items, or the currency of various RPGs in exchange for a datapacket he doesn't possess.

The Happy Safe Place is, despite its name, a more dangerous bar than the Sargasso Café. Members of the Uberguild, Datafist, and the Pixel Platoon are often found in HSP, and brawls occur almost every hour.

One of the most important locations in Hub City is the **Temple of Themis**. A Greek temple formed from mirror-bright steel, this is the home



of the AI who is striving to reconstruct the system. The temple contains the only save point in Hub City, which allows Themis' allies to heal themselves with a touch. The gateway to the temple is filled with wall of force; only those who Themis wills can pass through this barrier to speak with the security program.

ARCADIA

Arcadia is the region of action games, from old classics like *Snack-Man* to the latest first-person shooters. It is colorful and exotic, but lacks realism. Travelers in Arcadia don't need to eat or sleep. The weather in a particular realm rarely changes, and there is no night-day cycle; if the sun is up, it's going to stay up. There may be weather, but it doesn't actually have any effect; a traveler can stand in the middle of a torrential downpour without actually getting wet. The inhabitants of Arcadia are typically aggressive and simple-minded; the games are about action, not interaction. Devourers haunt the mazes, and software ninjas and goombas prowl the realms searching for new prey.

A few of the major regions of Arcadia are described below. However, this is only a sample; any arcade game you've ever played could be found in Arcadia, and you should feel free to drop the party into one of your personal favorites.

The Arena

The Arena is a network of connected realms—the fighting pits of martial arts games separated by the labyrinthine halls of the shooting games. The arena is an excellent place to acquire offensive subroutines, but it is a deadly region where blood, blades, and bullets are the only currency held in high regard. The Arena is the base of operations for both Datafist and the Pixel Platoon, and these cabals are engaged in endless bloody feuds, broken up by battles with the deadly MOBs that inhabit the realms.

The Castle

The Castle is a massive tower that extends for hundreds of levels. It is filled with ladders and floating platforms, and anyone who wishes to travel up will need to do a lot of climbing and jumping. No organic has ever reached the top of the Castle, and there are dozens of stories about what waits at the top. Some people say that a beautiful princess has been trapped by a giant gorilla. Other tales tell of a fabulous hoard of power-ups and subroutines, while a few claim that the uppermost levels have actually been claimed by the Corruptor viruses. If there's a node at the top of the tower, the party may have to find out the truth behind the legends!

The Catacombs

This underground maze is home to a variety of classic arcade games, like *Snack-Man* and *Miss Snack-Man*. Power-ups appear in the Catacombs, often moving about under their own power. Moving deeper into the maze, one encounters the dungeon levels of *Cestus*, where monster generators spawn endless hordes of ravening MOBs. Many treasures are hidden in the Catacombs, but the unrelenting swarms of monsters can quickly overpower unprepared gamers.

MUDVILLE

MUDville is the home of chat rooms, roleplaying games, and simulations. While certain realms vary, for the most part the environments in MUDville are extremely realistic. Travelers must eat or they starve. They must rest or they become fatigued. Traveling across a desert or arctic tundra require Survival checks to avoid the deadly effects of the environment.

The inhabitants of MUDville are quite civilized in comparison to the people of Arcadia. While monsters haunt the wilds and the dungeons, there are a number of major cities scattered throughout the realms. Most of the realms have some sort of currency, such as gold pieces. Power-ups and subroutines are extremely expensive, if they are available at all, but gold can buy shelter and food.

The Chat Realms

The network of chat rooms are quite different from the rest of MUDville. Most of the realms are made up of grids of large gray rooms; elaborate descriptions of colorful locations are written on the walls of these otherwise empty rooms. People who spend an extensive amount of time in these chat rooms find that they begin to see the descriptions instead of the actual rooms, imagining the fantastic environments instead of seeing the plain words.

Many of the chat realms have no combat code; guns will not fire, and martial artists find that they simply can't hit anything. Even aggressive coding effects completely fail in these areas. These realms are generally inhabited by Avatars who are content to sit and talk for days on end, discussing TV shows, movies, and other elements of the real world.

These Avatars often speak a pidgin variant of 13375p34|<, communicated entirely in acronyms: "GAL, GF," "LOL." Most of these chatters have no interest in events that occur beyond their sheltered world; while the safety of the chatroom may seem appealing, the endless discussions of trivial matters will usually force the PCs to leave quickly or risk madness.

ForeverQuest

ForeverQuest is a massive fantasy roleplaying game. It spans hundreds of realms: dungeons, haunted forests, dwarven citadels, deadly deserts, and far more. If you've ever seen it in *Dungeons & Dragons*, you can probably find it in one of the *ForeverQuest* realms. In addition to the adventuring areas, there are realms that are entirely dedicated to commerce; players spend their lives as farmers, miners, or blacksmiths, producing simple subroutines from the materials of the land. Most adventurers will find this to be a mind-bogglingly dull existence, but it does provide a source for basic subroutines and weak power-ups.

The MOBs of *ForeverQuest* can be found in the form of any fantasy creature. Some are relatively mindless, like the giant rats or goblin hordes that exist to give starting characters something to destroy. But the powerful MOBs can be quite dangerous. The dragon Redfang—one of the leaders of the Mob—lives in a cavernous lair in the depths of *ForeverQuest*, surrounded by all manner of treasures.

Twilight Crusade

Twilight Crusade is a modern-day RPG set in a gloomy gothic world filled with tragic vampires, tormented ghosts, and deadly treehugging werewolves. It was designed to be a world of conspiracies, and since the Surge it has become a stronghold of the Mob. Most of the organic gamers have been killed or have fled to Hub City or other realms; now the elder vampires are studying the ContiNet and developing schemes to extend their sinister grip. Travelers often underestimate the dangers of the realm. On the surface it doesn't appear to be as dangerous as the dungeons of *ForeverQuest*, but appearances can be deceiving; the masterminds of the realm are extremely cunning and can manipulate PCs into serving their nefarious goals.

While most of the inhabitants of *Twilight Crusade* appear to be human, lycanthropes and vampires are scattered throughout the populace. Ghosts, zombies, mummies, and ghouls lurk in the shadows and sewers, but the vampire lords usually keep these monsters hidden until their power is needed.

Other Realms

ForeverQuest and *Twilight Crusade* are two of the largest games, but there are dozens of other games on the server. *Metropolis* is a superhero RPG. *Lost Continents* is a game of pulp adventure. And *Universes of Stellar Conquest* is a science fiction adventure filled with evil empires and bold galactic knights. Then there are the Sim Realms, which include cities that are constantly shifting and being rebuilt and battlefields where tactical combats are fought over and over. Even if adventurers never visit these realms, the inhabitants of these games may find their way out to Hub City.

THE REDLANDS

The final server is known as the Redlands. Few of the organics actually know the origin of its name, which is derived from "R&D." The Redlands is the development server, where the Psykey engineers would develop and test new ideas. As a result, the different realms of the Redlands vary tremendously in tone and realism. A few are half-finished variations of games found in Arcadia or MUDville. Adventurers who wander into these realms may believe that they are in one of the other servers, until they start running into crash bugs, feature creeps, and other errors. But the more unique realms of the Redlands lie beyond the development levels; these are the realms where the bare code of the net lies revealed.

The Data Maze

The Data Maze is a vast labyrinth filled with the building blocks used to create the rest of the ContiNet. The Maze is the place that adventurers are most likely to encounter programs, from data monkeys to daemons; this is their natural habitat. Security systems are also extremely common, and any group that plans to spend much time in the Data Maze had better include a good hacker. Despite the many dangers, the Data Maze holds many powerful subroutines and a tremendous array of data packets, not to mention a number of nodes.

The Data Maze is the home of the Killer Apps, who take great pleasure in hunting down organics who cross their paths. It is also one of the strongholds of the Hacker 1337, who take pride in their ability to overcome the security systems and to evade the Killer Apps.

The Mail Server

Despite its name, the Mail Server is not actually an entire server; it is simply the realm that contains the email of the Psykey employees. As a result, anyone traveling through the barren hallways of the server has to deal with an almost constant barrage of spam. The Mail Server is also the central hive of the Corruptors, the deadly viruses who intend to spread across the entire net. Despite its dangers, the Mail Server contains gateways to a number of key areas within the Data Maze; it is often safer to fight the spam than to risk the security systems of the maze.

The Outer Darkness

The Outer Darkness is a thing of myth and legend. It is said that in the Mail Server there is a gateway filled with absolute darkness. The story is that this is a portal to the outside Internet—and that anyone who passes through will be wisked away and lost in an ocean of pornography, e-commerce sites, and spam. Of course, there's only one way to find out...

POWER GROUPS

The instant the ContiNet was cut off from the world, factions and cabals began sprouting up like weeds. Some are bands of human gamers seeking strength in numbers. Others are programs or viruses that have gained a disturbing amount of autonomy since the collapse of the system. A few of the more powerful cabals are described below. It is possible that one of these groups was responsible for the Surge and the collapse of the system—but which one? The Hacker 1337 could have accidentally caused the disaster, while the Corruptors could have seized the net to serve as a private breeding ground. The Killer Apps or the Mob could have gotten organized *before* the Surge instead of after. Or Themis herself could have engineered the Surge as part of some grand scheme. As Gamemaster, you will have to decide which of these groups you want to play a major role in your campaign—and which one was actually responsible for the fall of the ContiNet.

THEMIS

The Surge disabled all of the primary support systems of the ContiNet. Themis claims to be the embodiment of a secondary support system who is now seeking to restore order to the Net and find a way to return the trapped organics to their bodies. It's up to you to decide whether she is telling the truth, or whether she has a more sinister motive.

Themis does not have a physical form like the other programs and MOBs of the ContiNet. For all intents and purposes, her Hub City temple is her body. Her ability to affect the Net is limited, which is why she must work through the players. Her greatest strength is her power of divination. She possesses a +30 modifier on Data Analysis checks and can use any of the related coding abilities presented in Chapter 2 without having to spend computing cycles. She also can use any divination spell (whether arcane or divine) presented in *d20 Modern* as if she was a 20th-level Acolyte. In addition, she has a general awareness of events throughout the system that exceeds any of these spells; it is up to you to decide exactly how much she knows, but she can certainly obtain whatever information you need to get an adventure started. Finally, Themis has a limited ability to *teleport* her agents. She can generally *teleport* the party to the network portal that leads them to the realm where the next adventure is to take place. She can occasionally *teleport* PCs in other servers back to her temple, but this clearly puts a strain on her systems.

If the party begins to connect Themis to other nodes, her powers grow. The full extent of these powers is up to you. Initially this might simply be reflected by an increase in her powers of divination and teleportation. But in the long run, she could gain a greater ability to twist reality within the ContiNet.

Themis' primary enemies are the other systems of the ContiNet–The Killer Apps, the Mob, and the Corruptors. The PCs are her only allies; she has chosen them to act as her sword.

THE CORRUPTORS

The Corruptors are an alliance of sentient viruses. Their stronghold is in the Mail Server of the Redlands, but now that the Surge has disabled most of the defenses of the Net, they have begun to spread their infection into other realms. Their motives are mysterious and difficult for organic minds to fathom. They may simply corrupt and destroy because it is their nature, but some programmers believe that they are attempting to evolve into some sort of more advanced virtual lifeform–and that the ContiNet is the perfect cradle for this experiment.

The Corruptors have found organic allies among the Hacker 1337; some of these rogue programmers are only too happy to make deals with these software devils. Their greatest enemies are Themis and the Killer Apps. Themis wishes to restore order to the system, while the Apps fear the Corruptors' power to infect and destroy their systems.

While the Corruptors include hundreds of viruses, most of these are simply duplicates of the core inner circle. The three masterminds behind the cabal are known as Emperor, Michelangelo, and Melissa.

DATAFIST

Datafist is a league of fighting game fanatics–martial artists, wrestlers, and ninjas. Following the Surge, they banded together, both in the interests of mutual defense and to hone their combat skills. They are typically found in Arcadia; they spend most of their time fighting the Pixel Platoon for control of the precious save points scattered throughout the Arena. When there are interludes in the feud with the shooters, they tend to fight one another it elaborate tournaments.

Rank within Datafist is determined by combat. The current leaders are Lady Blood (female ninja, 7th-level Wargame/3rd-level Twitch), who relies on her devastating speed and agility, and Grond (male bruiser, 7th-level Wargame/1st-level Twitch), a massive giant formed from solid stone.

THE HACKER 1337

The Hacker 1337 (that's "leet," or el-ite) are a loose coalition of destructive hackers. As a group they are mainly interested in causing further disruptions in the Net; they take pride in causing widespread and colorful chaos. Player hackers could apply for membership, but unless the PC has performed some impressive and foolhardy acts of vandalism or destruction, he won't be considered. The 1337 have a vague alliance with the Corruptors, as they approve of the chaos caused by the viruses. Their primary enemies in the Net are the Killer Apps, who view the destruction of the 1337 as the ultimate proof of the superiority of software over wetware.

While the Hacker 1337 are chaotic as a group, individual hackers can be reasoned with and may potentially help the party–although such help may have strings (or viruses) attached. Hackers often hang out at the Sargasso Café in Hub City; adventurers seeking programming assistance may want to vist the café.

The current leaders among the 1337–to the degree that they recognize leaders–are two talented programmers: Hunter (male hacker, 8th-level Programmer) and Random (female hacker, 7th-level Programmer/3rd-level Avatar).

THE KILLER APPS

One of the 3 basic science fiction plots is "artificial intelligence becomes homicidal and attempts to destroy humanity." Why argue with tradition? The Killer Apps are an alliance of sentient daemons who seek to destroy the organics and seize control of the ContiNet. They are based in the Data Maze of the Redlands, but they are slowly converting more and more programs to their cause. The greatest enemies of the Apps are Themis, the Corruptors, and the Hacker 1337; Themis because she seeks to restore the system to its original condition, and the Corruptors and the 1337 because of the danger they pose to all of the programs of the Net.

The Killer Apps are extremely arrogant. They view all organics as weak, stupid, and flawed, and it is this overconfidence that may allow the party to survive an encounter with a powerful daemon. Like Themis, the Apps are seeking to seize control of the network of nodes scattered across the ContiNet–although once Themis manages to gain control of a node, the Apps don't have the power to take it away from her.

THE MOB

A "MOB" is a Mobile Object–a game character capable of moving about and interacting with players. *The* Mob is a tightly organized cabal of game villains; following the Surge, these characters gained a greater degree of autonomy and self-awareness. Like the Killer Apps, they seek to expand their power across the Net, and they have just begun to learn about the power of the hidden nodes.

While only a few MOBs possess the raw power of the daemon lords of the Killer Apps, the Mob has a far greater understanding of human nature. As a result, the Mob has been able to manipulate organics into working for them, knowingly or as dupes. The members of the Mob also have an easier time hiding among humans; a werewolf from *Twilight Crusade* can be far more subtle than a daemon or a virus.

The Mob is based in MUDville. Its greatest stronghold is in the *Twilight Crusade* realm, masterminded by an elder vampire known as the Queen of Shadows (Female spokesmodel vampire, 6th-level Avatar/6th-level Wargame/6th-level Programmer), but it also has cells scattered throughout the other MUDville realms and Hub City. While the Queen of Shadows is the most cunning member of the Mob, the most powerful member of the inner circle is the dragon Redfang, who is waiting for the right time to leave his lair and rain down fire and death on the people of Hub City.

THE PIXEL PLATOON

The Pixel Platoon is an alliance of diehard shooters–an army of kids who cut their teeth on *Counterstrike* and *Doom*, along with a handful of actual soldiers from special forces and ranger battalions who trained using advanced computer simulations. Following the Surge, these warriors quickly realized that they were stronger together than apart; under the leadership of General Devastation (male marksman, 10th-level Wargame) they have become a tightly organized unit. Operating out of the Arena in Arcadia, they have spend a great deal of time feuding with the martial artists of Datafist, fighting over the few save points scattered around the realms. But they have also begun to explore other servers in search of new challenges. This has brought them into conflict with the Corruptors and the leaders of the Mob; these virtual foes may prove to be far more deadly than any creature of flesh and blood.

The members of the Platoon are extremely arrogant and tend to look down on "civilians." However, with the right combination of flattery and diplomacy, it is possible that the party could convince a group of Pixel soldiers to assist them with a mission.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE NET

The ContiNet is filled with a vast assortment of unusual and deadly creatures. Most of them fall into one of five categories: Error, MOB, Organic, Program, or Virus.

Errors are the gremlins of the net—electronic spirits that cause systems to fail and things to go wrong. An error may have once been a healthy program that was corrupted by a virus or another error, or it may have emerged fully formed during the Surge or some lesser disaster.

Errors possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning.

Sample Errors: The classic error is the **crash bug**. Use the statistics of monstrous spider. Its "poison" is actually a crash condition; the initial damage is the same as normal, but the secondary damage is paralysis. This paralysis can only be removed by transporting the victim to a save point or by using *restore crashed system*. As with all things, size is relative in the ContiNet, and simply indicates the power of the error. Use a Small or Medium monstrous spider for a typical bug. The colossal spider is the dreaded Blue Screen of Death, which is said to prowl the Data Maze in the Redlands.

MOB is short for Mobile Object. In a game, any sort of AI opponent is a MOB. As a result, a MOB typically has the shape and ability of some other creature—either a human or some sort of monster. Any of the creatures presented in *d20 Modern* can be used as MOBs; *ForeverQuest* is filled with goblins and ogres, while *Twilight Crusade* is a world of vampires and werewolves. MOBs are usually bound to follow certain forms of behavior, sticking to the script of the game to which they are attached. However, the Surge disrupted the systems that held the MOBs in check, and now they have broken free of their old restrictions.

MOBs possess all of the abilities and weaknesses of the creatures that they are designed to imitate.

Sample MOBS: MOBs come in all shapes and sizes, from rats to kobolds to warbots. One critical feature of a MOB is that they are designed to perfectly replicate the creatures that they appear to be. A crash bug may have the statistics of a spider, but it is formed from light and code. A MOB monstrous spider looks just like a spider you'd find on Earth – assuming that you can actually find a monstrous spider on Earth.

Organics are humans who were trapped in the Net when the Surge occurred. This category includes the player characters. Like the player characters, other organics are trapped in whatever game shells they were using when the Surge occurred, and if they die in the Net their minds will be destroyed. Some organics seek to escape from the Net, and these people may help the player characters. However, the crash has affected the sanity of many of the organics who were connected to the Net, and many—like the members of Datafist and the Pixel Platoon—have become lost in the fantasy lives of their game characters.

Sample Organics: Organics use the same character generation system as player characters, and will possess levels in one or more of the four core classes.

Programs are the systems that maintain the ContiNet. Some programs have very minor powers, while others—the so-called Daemon Lords—can twist the reality of the Net to suit their whims. Like the MOBs, programs were originally locked into specific tasks and presented no harm to the organic users of the net. But following the Surge, a number of programs have become sentient and develop their own goals. The most dangerous of these have joined together to form the cabal known as the Killer Apps.

Programs possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to poison.

Sample Programs: A weak program—a data monkey or gopher—might have the statistics of a kobold or goblin, possibly enhanced by a few programmer levels. Powerful daemons can rival the power of *d20 Modern* fiends. Use the fiend generation system, replacing supernatural abilities with hardcoded coding abilities whenever possible. If a daemon possesses damage reduction that normally requires a magical weapon, any advanced offensive subroutine will bypass the defense.

Viruses are similar to programs, but they are inherently chaotic and dangerous. Viruses are designed to spread throughout computer systems, corrupting and destroying the other programs that they encounter.

Viruses possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to poison.

Sample Viruses: Viruses are examined in more detail in the final section of *Deathnet*.

In place of supernatural and spell-like abilities, creatures in *Deathnet* possess Hardcoded (HC) abilities. If a Hardcoded ability requires an action at all, it does not provoke an attack of opportunity. However, Hardcoded abilities are affected by *disrupt coding*, *sphere of stability*, and *study dataflow*. *Sphere of stability* only affects powers specifically defined as coding abilities, but *disrupt coding* can be used to temporarily negate any Hardcoded ability.

MOBs may possess supernatural and spell-like abilities. These cannot be affected by *disrupt coding*, but can be targeted by the *dispel magic* ability of an Avatar using a wizard persona.

A FIELD GUIDE TO VIRUSES

Anyone who ventures into the Redlands will develop a healthy respect for the threat posed by viruses. Designed to sow chaos, viruses are deadly opponents feared by organic and program alike.

While there are dozens of variations, there are four primary types of virus: corruptors, infectors, macro viruses, and worms. Despite its name, the cabal known as the Corruptors is made up of all four types of virus, although two of its most influential members (Emperor and Michelangelo) are corruptor viruses.

Viruses have the following statistics.

Hit Die: d12.

Base Attack Bonus: 3/4 of total Hit Dice.

Good Saving Throws: Fortitude and Will.

Skills: 4 + Int Modifier, quadruple for first Hit Die.

Feats: 1, plus 1 feat for every 3 Hit Dice beyond 1 HD.

Virus Traits

Most viruses possess the following traits:

Coding Resistance (Ex): Viruses are designed to resist coding effects. A programmer must make a successful level check (1d20 + programmer level) to use any coding ability against the virus; the Difficulty Class of the check varies by type of virus. Even if the check is successful, a virus still receives a saving throw against the coding effect.

Damage Reduction (Ex): Viruses are tenacious creatures, and most can shrug off a certain amount of damage.

Darkvision (Ex): All viruses possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Immunities (Ex): All viruses are immune to poison.

VIRUS, CORRUPTOR

The corruptor is the most intelligent and malevolent of all of the viruses. A corruptor virus can disrupt the datastream of an opponent, damaging or seizing control of his systems and ultimately transforming him into a new corruptor.

Species Traits

Long-Term Corruption (HC): A corruptor virus can use *corrupt system* at will (Saving Throw DC 20). If a victim is killed while suffering from this effect, he is permanently destroyed—no extra lives allowed! After 3d6 rounds have passed, a new corruptor virus arises from the space in which he was killed (a duplicate of the virus that destroyed him). The saving

throw for this ability is Charisma based, and it does not require any expenditure of computing cycles.

System Override (HC): A corruptor virus can attempt to seize control of anyone who has been affected by its long-term corruption attack. This takes a standard action, has a maximum range of 50 feet, and requires a clear line of sight between the virus and its intended victim. The target gets to make a Will Saving Throw (DC 20); if he fails, he suffers the effects of *charm person*. The saving throw is Charisma based.

The most common corruptor virus is known as Emperor. A dark digital mockery of the emperor image from the tarot, Emperor is a sinister mastermind who is determined to devour the ContiNet. In battle Emperor wields a scepter and orb formed of dark lines of shimmering code.

After destroying its opponents, Emperor often recites the following poem:

I will grind my hatred upon the loved ones.
Despair will be brought upon the hoping childs of happiness.
Wherever there is joy the hordes of the eclipse will pollute
sadness and hate under the reign of fear.
In the name of the almighty Emperor....

Emperor: CR 11 Virus; HD 10d12+30; hp 95; Init +7; Spd 45 ft.; Defense 22, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +4 Natural, +5 Deflection); BAB +7; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (2d6+2 bludgeoning + viral infection, scepter) or +10 ranged (1d10 cold + viral infection, orb blast); Full Atk +9 melee (2d6+2 bludgeoning + viral infection, scepter) or +10 ranged (1d10 acid + viral infection, orb blast); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Long-term corruption, system override, viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 20, damage reduction 5/–; AL Chaos, evil; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 20; AP 3; CC 20.

Skills/Feats: Craft (writing) +10, Data Analysis +7, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +12, Hide +10, Intimidate +13, Jump +10, Knowledge (the Redlands) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Search +12, Spot +12; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Watchdog.

Advancement: 11–20 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever Emperor makes a successful ranged or melee attack, its target loses 4 computing cycles and takes 2 points of temporary Constitution damage. If the victim's Constitution is reduced below zero, he is killed.

Each time Emperor uses viral infection, it can recover 4 hit points or 4 computing cycles.

Coding Abilities: At will–*analyze program, bypass security, study dataflow;* 5 cycles–*systems freeze* (DC 17); 10 cycles–*lesser override* (DC 18), *disrupt coding;* 15 cycles–*ride datastream*. Caster level 10th. The saves are Charisma based.

VIRUS, INFECTOR

Infector viruses are wraithlike creatures that disrupt and crash other programs. Cunning and vicious, infectors have a passion for chaos. Infectors are largely driven by programmed instinct, and are often found in the service of corruptors, macro viruses, or hackers.

Species Traits

Incorporeal (HC): An infector virus has no coherent physical form. It can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures or by creatures using advanced offensive subroutines, coding effects, or hardcoded abilities. It is immune to all other attack forms. Even when hit by a coding effect or advanced offensive subroutine, it has a 50% chance to ignore any damage.

An incorporeal creature can enter or pass through solid objects, but must remain adjacent to the object's exterior, and thus cannot pass through an object whose space is larger than its own. An incorporeal creature cannot pass through a force effect.

An incorporeal creature's attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields. Incorporeal creatures cannot make trip or grapple attacks, nor can they be tripped or grappled. An incorporeal creature cannot take any action that would move or manipulate a physical object.

An incorporeal creature moves silently, and cannot be heard unless it wishes to be. It has no Strength score, and its Dexterity modifier applies to

both its ranged and melee attacks. Nonvisual senses, such as scent and blindsight, are either ineffective or only partially effective with regard to incorporeal creatures.

The Equalizer power-up temporarily allows a character to attack incorporeal creatures. In addition, as this is a hardcoded ability it can be temporarily negated by the *disrupt coding* effect.

There are a wide variety of infector viruses, each with a unique form of attack. Cascade is one of the more common infectors. It takes the form of a ghostly figure shrouded in a cloak formed out of falling numbers and letters.

Cascade: CR 4 Virus; HD 4d12+4; hp 30; Init +3; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); Defense 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+3 Dex, +1 Deflection); BAB +3; Grap –; Atk +6 melee (1d4 acid + cascade effect, disrupting touch); Full Atk +7 melee (1d4 acid + cascade effect, disrupting touch); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Cascade effect; SQ Coding resistance 15; AL Chaos; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str –, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; AP 0; CC 0.

Skills/Feats: Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +6; Agile Riposte, Dodge.

Advancement: 5–8 HD.

Cascade Effect (HC): When Cascade strikes an opponent, its target must make a Fortitude save (DC 13). Failure causes the victim to suffer 1 point of temporary Charisma damage. Each round thereafter, the victim loses 1 computing cycle–and if she runs out of computing cycles, she loses 1 hit point each round. This is a crash condition, and it can be removed with *restore crashed system*. The Difficulty Class of the saving throw is based on Constitution.

A victim of the cascade effect seems to slowly melt. Streams of data start running off of her body, and letters and numbers pool around her feet. The crash has one more unusual effect: the victim cannot make any sort of sound. If she tries to speak, her words will materialize for a moment above her head, then dissolve and fall toward the floor. If someone is paying attention, they can make a Spot check (DC 10) to read the message before it falls apart.

If a creature is killed by the cascade effect, there is a 50% chance that a new Cascade materializes 2d4 rounds after her death. This does not prevent the victim from using an extra life or otherwise cheating death.

If someone already suffering from the cascade effect is struck again and fails her saving throw, she suffers an additional point of Charisma damage. However, she does not lose hit points or computing cycles at a faster rate.

VIRUS, MACRO

A macro virus is the link between the corruptor and the worm. It is capable of reproducing rapidly, but intelligent enough to choose the right time and place to strike. A macro virus can also compel its victim to perform actions on its behalf, though its hold is not as strong as that of the corruptor.

While it enjoys spreading chaos, the typical macro is not as malevolent as a corruptor virus. As a result, macro viruses usually serve as the ambassadors between the organics and the Corruptors.

While other strains are more common in Redlands data mazes, the Melissa virus enjoys interacting with organics and may seek out adventurers. Melissa is always looking for intellectual challenges; it loves playing games, and it is fond of debates and arguments. Of course, it holds human life in low regard and it always plays to win; PCs should be careful not to be lulled by Melissa's friendly demeanor.

The Melissa virus appears as a stylized human female formed of digital light. It carries a handful of Scrabble tiles, and toys with these while it talks. In battle, it flings the razor-sharp tiles at its enemies. When it defeats a foe, it is fond of saying "Twenty-two points, plus triple-word-score, plus fifty points for using all my letters. Game's over. I'm outta here!"

Melissa: CR 8 Virus; HD 7d12+14; hp 59; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural, +3 Deflection); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +9 ranged or melee (1d8 + viral infection, Scrabble blast); Full Atk +9 ranged or melee (1d8 + viral infection, Scrabble blast); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Activate macro, Scrabble blast, viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 18, damage reduction 3/–, duplication; AL Chaos; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16; AP 2; CC 12.

Skills/Feats: Bluff +10, Data Analysis +5, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +10, Knowledge (the Redlands) +10, Gamble +10, Listen +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +10, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +10; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Advancement: 8–15 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever Melissa makes a successful ranged or melee attack, its target loses 3 computing cycles and takes 1 point of temporary Wisdom damage. If the victim's Wisdom is reduced below zero, he is killed.

Each time Melissa uses viral infection, it can recover 3 hit points or 3 computing cycles. If it possesses its full allotment of computing cycles, it can choose to gain 3 temporary computing cycles; if these are not used, they fade away after 10 minutes have passed.

Activate Macro (HC): People who lose Wisdom due to Melissa's viral infection attack become vulnerable to manipulation. Once per round, Melissa may select a single target and issue a single-word order as a free action This has the same effects as the divine spell *command*. The target can resist with a Will saving throw (DC 16).

Once a victim recovers all of the Wisdom damage he has suffered at the hands of this particular Melissa, he is no longer vulnerable to this attack.

Duplication (HC): As a full action, Melissa can spend 30 computing cycles to attempt to generate a duplicate of itself; this has a 50% chance of success. If the duplication is successful, the new Melissa possesses half of the hit points and computing cycles of its creator (after the costs of duplication have been taken into account).

Scrabble Blast (HC): Melissa attacks by flinging glowing Scrabble tiles at its target. Melissa may adjust the type of damage (bludgeoning, slashing, cold, etc.) she inflicts as a free action. When it throws the tiles they will come together to spell a word relating to the type of damage they will inflict, such as "razor," "blaze," or "frappe." By spending 10 computing cycles, Melissa can transform its attack into a small explosion; this inflicts 2d6 points of damage on everyone within a 10-foot area, and transmits the viral infection.

Coding Abilities: At will–*analyze program, bypass security, study dataflow;* 5 cycles–*decrypt thoughts* (DC 15)*;* 10 cycles–*babelfish, false sensory input* (DC 16), *ride datastream;* 15 cycles–*FUBAR* (DC17). Caster level 7th. The saves are Charisma based.

VIRUS, WORM

Worms are the most common form of virus. A worm is driven solely by hardcoded instinct, and spends its life in an endless quest to reproduce as quickly as possible. However, worms will follow the instructions of macro viruses or corruptor viruses, and hackers may be able to seize control of a clutch of worms. The Corruptors have actually played a significant role in holding the worms in check. The more powerful viruses have plans for the resources of the ContiNet, and they do not wish to see the servers devoured by worms... yet.

Species Traits

Duplication (HC): As a full action, a worm can spend 10 computing cycles to generate a duplicate of itself. The duplicate possesses half of the hit points and computing cycles of its creator (after the costs of duplication have been taken into account).

The SoBig virus is an example of a typical worm. It takes the shape of an enormous serpent formed from shimmering violet light, stretching twelve feet from tip to tail. It has a single violet eye and razor sharp proboscis, two feet in length. In battle it seeks to spear an opponent with its proboscis, sucking out vital cycles. Despite its imposing appearance, SoBig is actually a minor virus; its true strength is its ability to quickly reproduce.

SoBig: CR 2 Virus; HD 2d12+6; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +6 Natural); BAB +1; Grap +8; Atk +3 melee (1d6+3 piercing + viral infection, proboscis); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3 piercing + viral infection, proboscis); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA Viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 10, duplication, damage reduction 2/–, stacking; AL Chaos; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; AP 0; CC 5.

Skills/Feats: Climb +4, Spot +3, Swim +4; Enormous Size.

Advancement: 11–20 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever SoBig makes a successful attack, its target loses 2 computing cycles. If he does not have any computing cycles, he must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or suffer the effects of *systems freeze* for 2 rounds. The saving throw is Constitution based.

Each time SoBig uses viral infection, it can recover 2 hit points or 2 computing cycles. If it possesses its full allotment of computing cycles, it can choose to gain 2 temporary computing cycles; if these are not used, they fade away after 10 minutes have passed.

Stacking (Ex): Up to four SoBig viruses can occupy the same 10 ft. by 10 ft. space. Up to two of the viruses in a stack can target the same adjacent space with an attack.

SPAM

Most viruses are programs that have been specifically created to wreak havoc on other computer systems. Spam is the commercial equivalent of this; in its quest to claim your cash, it overloads you with a host of offers that are just too good to be true. FIND LOVE, FRIENDS, DATES! "Miracle Diet Bread–Recipe $20!" Find out ANYTHING about ANYONE! Refinance the Easy Way! Biggie-Size Your... well, you get the idea. Spam may not be designed with malicious intent (though this is debatable), but it can be just as dangerous as a true virus.

Spam takes the form of an anthropomorphic cube of pink mystery meat, typically 5 feet square. Its language is a garish audio collage, a constantly changing jumble of words and images advertising its various products. Its greatest strength is its tenacity; no matter how hard you try, spam keeps coming back.

Spam: CR 1 Virus; HD 1d12+7; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 25 ft.; Defense 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +6 Natural); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 acid + spam overload, engulf); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 acid + spam overload, engulf); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; SA Improved grab, spam overload; SQ Biggie size your spam, damage reduction 2/–, regeneration 2; AL Chaos; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6; AP 0; CC 0.

Skills/Feats: Hide +4; Toughness.

Advancement: 2–20 HD.

Spam Overload (HC): Whenever spam makes a successful attack, its target must must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or be stunned and blinded for 1 round, as he is overwhelmed with images of the products and services the spam is promoting. If the spam has grappled with a victim, the victim must make the save every time that he suffers damage. This saving throw is Constitution based.

Regeneration (HC): Spam is eternal–no matter how hard you fight it, it always returns. Only two types of effects inflict lethal damage on spam: coding attacks, and ranged or melee attacks that use an action point (such as iron fist or deadly aim). You also inflict lethal damage if you are under the effect of the equalizer power-up. This regeneration can be temporarily cancelled by *disrupt coding*.

Improved Grab (HC): After spam inflicts damage with a melee attack, it may attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required.

While grappling with an opponent, the spam inflicts normal damage and the system slowdown effect every time that it makes a successful grapple check.

Biggie Size Your Spam (HC): If you don't get rid of your spam, it can quickly grow out of control. Every time spam kills someone, it gains one computing cycle. Whenever its current computing cycles are equal to its current hit dice, reduce its computing cycles to zero and add 1d12 to its Hit Dice. Spam gains 1 point of Strength every time it gains a Hit Die, which increases its melee damage and ability to grapple. In addition, for every 3 Hit Dice that it gains, its rate of regeneration and its Damage Reduction increase by 1 point apiece. Finally, at 6 HD, spam gains the Enormous Size feat.

Immunities (Ex): In addition to the standard viral immunity to poison, spam is immune to mind-affecting effects, sleep, paralysis, and stunning.

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