

**ALTERNITY**

ISSUE

**4**

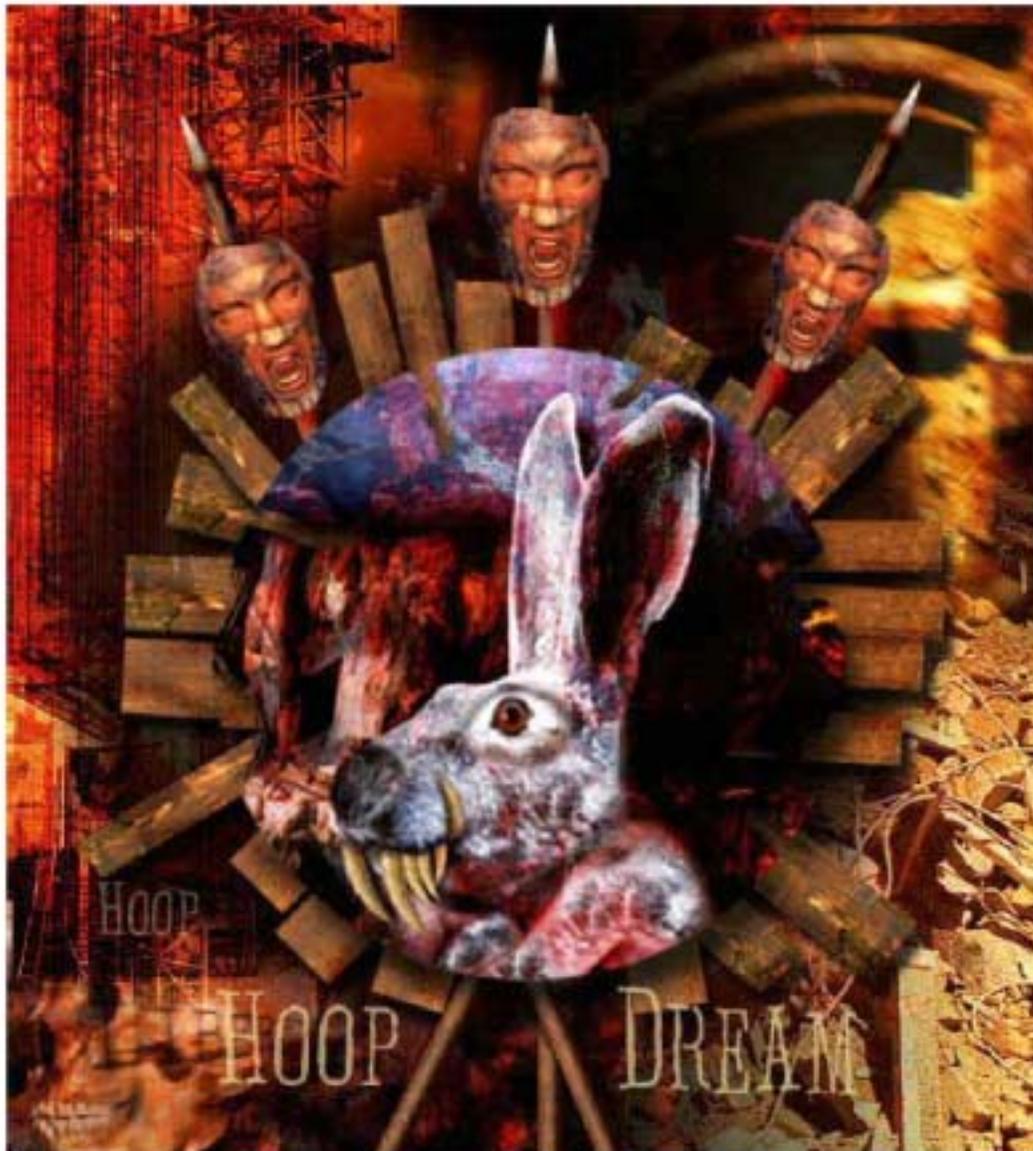
# **ACTION CHECK**

ONLINE  MAGAZINE

**STAR\*DRIVE**

**GAMMA WORLD**

**STARCRAFT**



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"Merc" by Rich Keehn

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## Creativity in Motion

For the sake of demonstration I'm going to free-form for a moment. Please bear with me.

- An employee of a scientific corporation comes to the characters unable to physically speak and with no I.D. His hands shake so uncontrollably he can't write or draw. He is wearing no shoes, but has an odd tag grafted to the back of his knee, as if he was marked like a wild animal.
- The characters' new ship's computer is much more than what it seems. It's an advanced prototype that a wealthy investor 'arranged' to have installed. The heroes start to protest, but suddenly it rings out in a sexy female voice that it's been playing the local grid gambling suites and just won 500 credits and it wants to know what their share will be.
- While walking down an industrial city street, the heroes pass by a used robot dealer when from inside glass starts shattering and people yell. Apparently a re-worked household bot was once an assassin droid, and a bizarre demonstration command to an elderly couple set it off to crush, kill, and destroy.
- While repairing their ship off the main shipping lanes, the PCs come across a derelict spacecraft with dead werens aboard. The spaceship seems human made. Clues point to the fact that these weren had no knowledge of the 'true' weren homeworld, log their own world as "Paurahg" and it's coordinates lie deep within VoidCorp space.

The four ideas above came to me within the 10 minutes it took to type them. Usually it takes longer, but the point is once I sat down with that mission in mind, they came easily. The Altermity game automatically brings out the possibilities of adventure like no other game because rather than be set with constraints, the flexible and powerful mechanics can handle just about anything you can imagine. That's a big empty slate!

Altermity may have seen the end of official publication, but the groundwork set up will provide literally years and years of campaign play. "No Limits" was Altermity's motto, and Action Check was born out of a labor of love for the system and its endless possibilities. Action Check has thrived and now boasts over 250 subscribers. It's read by various folks at Wizards of the Coast and has proved it's not about to slow down. What would help? You!

What I'm referring to is submissions. I'm willing to bet there are a number of you who feel the way that we do (or you might not have subscribed!) - that a good old-fashioned paper copy at the table is still better than cruising to a web site during the game. The Altermity game brings out the best of your imagination, so share it! If you ever had a great idea for a character but didn't get to play it, write it up as supporting cast and send it in! If five readers each month sat down for about a half hour and put together some "Transmissions" adventure seeds like I did above there would be a huge pot each month to fuel games. Remember the cool adventure your group still talks about today? Write it up! You might have customized your heroes' ship. Send in the stats and deckplan! You invented a cool creature or just saw one in a movie? Put some stats together for it, and share it with everyone!

Action Check needs your submissions to thrive and grow. Send them in and we'll work with you to get your item published. Just think that somewhere, sometime, in an upcoming Altermity game, your favorite hero could make an appearance in someone else's campaign as supporting cast, or that your adventure seed kept a starship crew on their toes for a whole night's play! Take some time to send in your ideas to Action Check!

## Action Check Submissions

To submit an article to Action Check magazine:

**actioncheck@hotmail.com**

And we'll be in contact as to the particulars.

Regular Features:

**Transmissions:** adventure hooks, along the lines of those previously found in Dragon Magazine for the various campaign settings.

**Gridsites:** Altermity Web sites that deserve recognition and serve a specific purpose.

**Creature Feature:** Aliens, Creatures, Xenofoms, etc. for the Altermity game campaign settings.

**Futuretech:** gear, equipment, vehicles, weapons, armor and other hardware for the Altermity game.

**Supporting Cast:** NPC stats for insertion in your own games. All submissions must follow the Supporting Cast Template in the Altermity GMG!

**Reviews:** of Altermity or related-use product.

**Special FX:** New FX/Psi or Mutations.

Plus cartoons, details of campaign ideas, fully detailed star systems, artwork, etc.



# Review / Gridsites

By Jeff Ibach

Starcraft and Alternity clash, and the casualties of war are...the fans?

This past month saw the release of the long-awaited Starcraft accessory from Wizards of the Coast, Inc. And many an Alternity fan was none too pleased at its offerings. It was an introductory boxed set to teach people who never roleplayed tabletop games before (mostly rabid computer RPGers) about Alternity and pull them into an immediately recognizable setting, Blizzard's Starcraft. With the release of the Diablo II box for Dungeons & Dragons, the old-timers didn't complain because in the same month they were issued a big, meaty, full-size sourcebook to add to their campaigns. We were expecting that for Alternity, but because the line was cancelled before full production could begin, WotC had two choices: let their boxed set die and never see the light of day or actually let it do its intended job and introduce a lot of folks to the exciting world of Alternity. I applaud that move.

A lot of folks apparently were unaware that it was an introductory game. Indeed, as I view the box before me it does not say anywhere on it that it's an introductory box. It doesn't even mention that there's a watered down version of the Alternity rules therein to give you a clue. But, from the WotC website:

"Introduce new players to the world of roleplaying with the popular Starcraft universe. A full-color introductory product, the Starcraft supplement is an easy introduction to the Alternity game for players who are familiar with the Starcraft universe and want to explore new possibilities for their favorite game!"

Of course finding that description has been more than frustrating for folks who've searched in vain but couldn't find it ([www.wizards.com/catalog](http://www.wizards.com/catalog)). It also mentions it's a 96-page trade paperback, not a boxed set with two 48-page books within.

The package itself is slick and very well put together. There's good, solid artwork throughout. It contains a 48-page rules book (designed to teach the Alternity rules to newcomers to the hobby), a 48-page adventure book chock full of nice color maps and a great presentation, 8 hero folders and a GM's screen. All this is in full color with very high production values. Oh, yeah, they even throw in a set of polyhedral dice.

The place the package differs from the similar Diablo II intro box for D&D is that in that box there were only 5 hero folders (one for each template in Diablo II) but

there were also dozens of counters and even more corridor and room tiles to layout and build your adventure. While the prices are identical (\$19.99), the Diablo II box came off a bit meatier.

At the same time, the adventure book in Diablo II, while interesting, is just some really great excuses for dungeon crawls, while the four much more detailed and developed adventures in the StarCraft box offer a unique set of missions with true roleplaying opportunities along with lots of action.

If I was a 14 year-old opening this thing for my birthday I'd be ecstatic. As an old-time RPGer and collector, I take a unique approach to intro products, partially because back in my day there *were* no introductory boxes like this! And while I looked over the StarCraft box I was visually impressed, intrigued by the adventures, but really left hoping for more in the form of that never-to-see-print full StarCraft supplement! A lot of the die-hards want more. Where to turn? Ahh, the web! And so I found some web sites that do a lot of the StarCraft conversion work to full Alternity stats for me in the form of:

## "SteelDraco's Alternity Page"

Apparently Dylan Brooks, AKA SteelDraco actually ran an Alternity StarCraft campaign for months and has collected quite a bit of great info. The meaty bits are a great set of Zerg stats, hero creation for StarCraft, a few select starships and vehicles, weapons, and a ton of Heroes and Supporting Cast that graced his game.

<http://www.cjnetworks.com/~webdude/index.htm>

## "Brutorz Bill's Alterniverse"

There is a nice section done by Action Check contributor Derek Holland called Derek's Denizens under the 'Gammaternity' link that converts the Zerg, and about two dozen other creatures that could find their way into a StarCraft campaign.

<http://www.angelfire.com/games/Alterniverse/index.html>

## "Myridian's StarCraft Conversions"

Apparently this excellent site may be moving, but for now it's here, and it contains some excellent technology conversions and race work on the Protoss. The second site is a Terran Equipment site.

<http://members.aol.com/ahzra/Starcraft.htm>  
<http://members.home.net/myridian/Alternity/Terrans.htm>



Look, up at the stars! It's a Transmission! It's Supporting Cast! It's Future Tech! No, It's

# The Lady Lynx

By Jeff Ibach

## The Lady Lynx

In my regular Star\*Drive campaign, I recycled a campaign hook I first toyed with back in my Star Frontiers days. A buddy of mine and I had just finished watching a pretty bad animated sci-fi movie called "Starchaser: the Legend of Orin" and while it wasn't special, the ship's computer had a personality all its own and was probably one of the best characters. While I don't remember much about the specifics of that movie, in my campaign she's called Lady Lynx. The article assumes a middle to high progress level 7 technology similar to Star\*Drive, and Lady Lynx has no specific set of stats. In all ways she's a Gamemaster tool to use and enjoy.

### History

The characters were unaware the ship they just commandeered contained an artificial intelligence. Part of the roleplaying opportunity comes from the surprise and first-time interaction with Lady Lynx. In your campaign she might be installed:

- on the PC's ship as part of an experiment by their superiors (who still own the ship).
- on a ship they are supposed to steal.
- on a ship they find drifting in space.

Regardless of the circumstances, the following are true: Lady Lynx is an artificial intelligence. She has rudimentary skills and an effective INT of 13. Her processors and personality programming are crystal-line based. Regardless, whoever her past operators or installers were, she thinks of them as buffoons and will never be beyond pointing that out to the heroes if they impress her.

### Skills

System Operation [13] - *communications* [14], *defenses* [14], *engineering* [14], *sensors* [14], *weapons* [14], Knowledge [13]-*computer operation* [16].

### Personality

Lady Lynx thinks highly of herself, but is loyal to the crew. Regardless of the sex of the designated 'captain,' she comes off more as a flirt than an assistive computer. She has a sultry voice that conveys competence and strength. She has a series of catch phrases:

When the PC's board their ship:  
"Hello commander, computer reporting."  
When the ship is itself in trouble:

"Red, alert. Red, alert."

- When she is given reign to override an otherwise sentient-controlled ship system:  
"So, you're the gambling type."

There's nothing that Lady Lynx enjoys more than docking and awaiting the characters return. She has her own Grid Shadow (appearing as a lithe woman with short red hair in a blue leather bodysuit). She sees it as her time away from 'the kids' and will take liberties with her special programming:

- 1) Stock Market Operations. Using the grid, Lady Lynx's shadow is a savvy player in the game in interplanetary trade. While a shrewd businesswoman, she has certain constraints built in to be too tough on the competition. She uses the funds directed to a special account with which she can schedule and pay for her own maintenance and ship upgrades.
- 2) Gambling. Lady Lynx in her shadow persona haunts the local cybercasinos and plays a mean game of virtual poker. She actually discovered this skill on her own. It helps her get around that pesky built-in constraint on her stock market doings.

### Transmissions Adventure Hooks

- While the heroes are away, Lady Lynx finally got caught cheating in a Grid Casino. The real people she was dealing with traced her to the starpad where their ship is docked and is waiting for them. They want to talk to the 'belligerent redhead' they *know* is hiding out in their ship. They refuse to leave until their debts are paid.
- During a starship attack, part of her crystalline personality is damaged. When the engineer tries to juryrig her back online, she takes on a somber demeanor and refuses to speak with certain members of the group for imagined slights.
- The heroes' ship becomes a target of 'tech-thieves' lead by one of the initial designers of Lady Lynx who was tossed out before the initial design was completed. He's sure that if he could steal the right part of her systems he could duplicate most of her advanced technology and either sell to the highest bidder or build a crystalline intelligence for his gang's ship.



# Transmissions

By Jeff Ibach

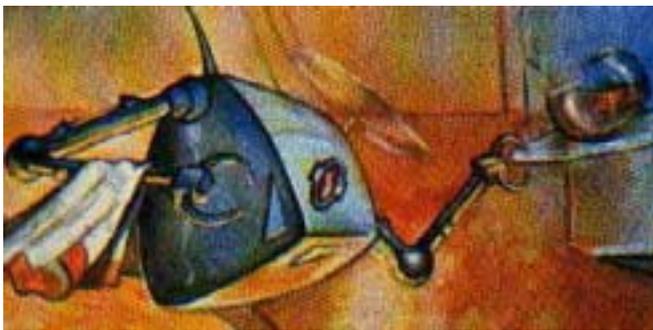
## The Soom Bar & Grill

The Soom Bar & Grill is designed to fit anywhere you need it to when you need an interesting tavern or restaurant for the PCs to meet or spend time. With the number of times heroes' starship repairs are delayed or clandestine meeting have to occur, the Soom Bar & Grill can fit the bill. For purposes of this article, the exact location of the Bar is unimportant. Suggestions include the following:

- A space station near a docking facility.
- A crowded, neon-lit streetway planetside.
- On board a driveship or seaship luxury liner.

First impressions (this may be read aloud or paraphrased to the players):

While there is a large crescent window displaying the name 'Soom Bar & Grill' at the front of the establishment, it's heavily clouded by smoky residue and only shadows can be seen within. As you open the door, a fair number of folks look your way, only to immediately return to their drinks. Against the left wall is a fantastic looking gray machine with multiple canisters attached at odd angles. A unique android tends bar, wearing an apron, a rag hanging over his right arm as he listens intently to a human's troubles. There are a multitude of small, squat tables with simple stools scattered throughout. To the right is a large double-sided bar that stretches the length of the right wall. Toward the back are malfunctioning neon signs showing an exit, restrooms, and an office. Waiterbots from over 20 years ago hover through the air delivering drinks.



**Owners:** The Soom Bar & Grill is owned by Adaila Soom and her consort and loyal bodyguard Turg. Adaila was a roboticist who inherited the bar.

## Adaila Soom

### Level 3 human Tech Op

STR 9 INT 12  
DEX 12 WIL 10  
CON 9 PER 8

Durability: 9/9/5/5

Action check: 14+ /13/6/3

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Perks: Gearhead

Flaws: Delicate

### Attacks

Unarmed 4/2/1 +d4 d4s/d4+ 1s/d4+ 2s

Banshee Mk IV Screamer Pistol

13/6/3 LI/G 6/12/30 d6+ 2s/d8+ 2s/d6+ 2w

### Defenses

CF Softsuit d6/d6/d6-1

### Skills

Athletics [9]; Modern Ranged Weapons [12]-*Pistol* [13]; Vehicle Operation [12]-*Land Vehicle* [13]; Stamina [9]-*Endurance* [10]; Business [12]- *Small business* [13]; Computer Science [12]-*Hacking* [13], *Hardware* [13], *Programming* [13]; Knowledge [12]; Security [12]-*Security Devices* [13]; Technical Science [12]-*Invention* [13], *Juryrig* [13], *Repair* [13], *Robotics* [16]; Awareness [10]-*Intuition* [11], *Perception* [12]; Deception [8]-*Bluff* [10]; Interaction [8]

Adaila Soom is a street girl with just the right friends. Between her mother's death at an early age and a falling out with her father in her teens, she's been on her own most of her life. She made her way learning tech from various friends and folks and landed just enough jobs to get by. Just when things seemed their worse, her father died suddenly leaving her his bar with a huge apology attached. Now, living with grief over time lost, she's softened her heart but surges forward keeping the Soom Bar & Grill running 24/7 thanks to outdated but up kept robots and some ingenious programming.

### Appearance

Adaila isn't difficult to look at. She keeps her hair died yellow. It's kept short with four spiked waves through it. Her face is attractive but thin. She's slight of build and doesn't present much of a physical threat. It's her fiery tongue and brash manner that keep most folks at bay!

## Turg Gicca

### Level 4 human Combat Spec

STR 13 [+3 due perk] INT 9  
DEX 8 WIL 8  
CON 12 PER 10

Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Perks: Fists of Iron, Tough as Nails

Flaws: Clueless [4], Forgetful

### Attacks

Unarmed 17/8/4 LI/O d6+2s/d6+4s/d4+2w  
Power Cestus 17/8/4 LI/O d4+4s/d4+2w/d4+3w  
11mm Charge Pistol  
9/4/2 HI/O 10/20./80 d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m

### Defenses

CF Longcoat d4/d4/d6-2

### Skills

Athletics [13]-*Climb [14], Jump [14], Throw [15]*; Melee Weapons [13]-*Bludgeon [16]*; Unarmed Attack [13]-*Brawl [17], Power Martial Arts [15]*; Modern Ranged Weapons [8]-*Pistol [9], Rifle [9]*; Vehicle Operation [8]; Stamina [12]-*Endurance [14], Resist Pain [14]*; Business [9]-*Small business [10]*; Knowledge [9]; Security [9]-*Protection Protocols [10]*; Tactics [9]; Awareness [8]; Interaction [10]-*Charm [12]*

Turg befriended Adaila early on in life and has always looked out for her. He followed her from job to job (sometimes much to her dismay) and put up with anything she threw his way. When the inheritance came through she finally confessed her love for him and told him she couldn't do it without him.

### Appearance

Standing nearly 6 feet 6 inches, Turg is an imposing figure with a bald head, the patience of a god and a smile to melt butter at 10 paces. He helps Adaila run the business, as whatever he suggests she usually does the opposite (his clueless flaw involves his Small Business skill).

**Tech:** The main barbot is called Browser-9.5 and has a rich, deep, melodic voice installed to convey a slick, laid-back personality and a reassuring manner. He has no facial features to give away that he's actually bored to tears listening to the same old sob story

again. The waiterbots are simple constructs that use outdated propeller maneuverability that Adaila is good at fixing and juryrigging. They are given drinks by Browser and find their destination by navigation circuits at each chair's location.

Plug-in points for Gridcasters are at the front table looking out the yellowed window to the outside. A few holovids are positioned toward the back of the bar, giving extra shadow and glare protection to those beneath them. There's a single outdated and malfunctioning pay telecomm toward the back.

### Service

While the place has a food license, you'd never know it. The huge machine tended by Browser-9.5 can prepare basic snacks and fingerfood. Drinks include: Tanhouser Dark Ale, Mourning Marine (can turn a hardened bughunter to slush), Sex in Zero-G (fruity, a favorite with the ladies), and Hushman's Ale (noted for its ability to go down easy, and also hides poison with ease).

### Transmission Adventure Hooks

- One of the group knows Adaila from her street days. She's now doing a bit of black marketeering and can set a Tech Op up with an appointment to get locally unauthorized weaponry or gauntlets he's been trying to find.

- Turg is worried and approached the characters for help. Adaila has gone missing. He just got off the telecomm with a local gang who claimed the bar is rightfully theirs because of a debt

Adaila's father incurred with them. They need to help get Adaila back and Turg promises them all a small partnership in the business.

- The characters are told to wait by the telecomm at the rear for a special contact from their mission manager. The telecomm rings, but fails to operate. In passing, Adaila suggests the heroes try the Grid, as she's got a juncture point up front for free. What the heroes don't know is that the one line is tapped. To get by without paying her liquor license, Adaila has made a deal with local law enforcement to allow them to monitor the grid activity of patrons she feels could use watching.

*Special thanks goes to the cover painting of the 1983 Star Frontiers Referee's Screen by TSR for inspiration and visuals.*





# FIRST DEFENSE

By Robert Blezard

## FIRST DEFENSE CAMPAIGN HOOK

This document details an Alternity Campaign hook called First Defense.

Basically, the story revolves around preparing for an invasion of aliens and the elite group of soldiers that are hand picked to protect humanity. Sort of like Aliens vs. GI Joe with mutations, cybertech, and gravity age weapons! I must admit borrowing a little from the sci-fi TV shows *7 Days* and *First Wave*.

The purpose of this campaign hook is to spread the idea of First Defense and there is no rule that says you have to use the Alternity RPG with this information. Feel free to use this with GURPS, RIFTS, HERO, Battletech, or anything you like. However, if you use the Alternity Rules you will need the Beyond Science accessory and must use the rules for mutations and cybertech as well.

NOTE: This is an idea, not a fully designed campaign setting! You won't find tons of new weapons and equipment as I'm too busy design other campaign material for D&D and my other Alternity campaign settings. However, as I have submitted this to Action Check, I encourage all Alternity fans to submit their own First Defense rules, heroes, supporting cast and storylines.

Operation: Martyr (The "First Defense" Alternity Campaign Backstory)

*The year is 2110*

Dr. Lukas Brechenmacher of the Max-Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy in Bonn makes a unexpected discovery that will change the face of human evolution - a broad band radio signal from an alien species! The radio signal is from a dying race known as the fraal, detailing advanced technology and genetics that will hopefully save Earth from the coming darkness - a race of nameless aliens bent on galactic domination. Humanity has 25 years to prepare for the invasion.

Dr. Brechenmacher immediately goes underground to study the data and keep it out of the hands of what he considers the unbalanced militaries of the world. Eventually, the truth about the transmission is learned at the Institute and the good doctor is caught by forces of the European Union.

Dr. Brechenmacher's worst fears become reality. The European Union uses the information from the alien radio transmission to bring Europe back into the forefront of world power, ahead of the United States. The Earth will be in a state of chaos when the darkness arrives . . . or will it?

*The year is 2120*

An American scientist, Dr. Jason Spanner, makes a major breakthrough in temporal physics. For the first time in human history, man is able to send an object back through time without damaging the physical makeup of that object. The problem is that the Rewind Engine, as it is called, requires a very rare type of radioactive isotope. There is only enough of this isotope in the world to send a single human being back through time and then bring him to the present again.

The Americans immediately see the potential to restore their waning power and combat the militaristic advances of the European Union. Still unaware of the threat of the darkness, the United States government joins forces with Canada, the only other government that has stood alongside it against the European Union, in a joint military project called Operation: Martyr. 25 year old Lt. Paul Adams, a soldier born in Canada but serving with a US army unit (he has dual citizenship), is chosen as the right man for the job to go back in time to near the end of 2110; there he must find and steal the secrets of the European Union's success. However, he will have only one calendar year before the device's effects wear off and he returns to the future (nicknamed fast forwarding).

The Rewind Engine works perfectly and Lt. Adams is transported to the past on February 5th, 2121. All he takes with him are a minicomputer and a specially designed watch that will keep track of his place in time . . .

November 12th, 2110 - somewhere in Germany  
Once there, Paul learns that the European Union doesn't seem to have discovered any new advances, but he knows they will make a breakthrough soon. Still unaware of the approaching darkness, he sets himself up working at a local store in Bonn, of all places. He monitors European broadcasts and studies the backgrounds of every prominent scientist working for the European Union. For the three months, Lt. Adams fails to find any leads and be-

comes frustrated, deciding to take a night off and clear his head.

He decides to take a tour of Bonn, including the Max-Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy. Just as he is starting to relax, Dr. Brechenmacher rushes past the tour group he's in, leaving the Institute for the last time after discovering his secrets. Instantly, Lt. Adams' internal radar goes off and he decides to follow the man - just in case!

Through a series of encounters with Brechenmacher that include a lot of mistrust, running away on the doctor's part, and chasing after him by the Lieutenant, Paul is positive that the man behind the breakthrough is Dr. Lukas Brechenmacher. Eventually, Paul is able to convince the good doctor that he is from the future, a future where the European Union has become dominant and aggressive.

Lt. Adams confirms the doctor's worst fears and Brechenmacher spills his guts, telling Paul everything - showing him the proof he has collected, including that humanity only has 25 years before the darkness arrives. Adams tries to convince the doctor that it would be best for him and his family to get out of Europe. Brechenmacher shakes his head and tells Paul that his wife is gone and only the life of his 10 year old daughter matters now.

He tells Adams to take a copy of the data sent by the fraal and smuggle his daughter out of the European Union. Paul should take one copy of the data back with him to the future and another copy should be given to the doctor's daughter with instructions to post it on the Internet and send a copy of it to every country and space institution in the world. "The only way to keep someone from hiding the truth is to tell everyone!"

Lt. Adams doesn't feel compelled to agree with the doctor, because he is confident that the United States wouldn't hide something as important as an invasion of Earth by an alien race. Besides, it's not a good idea for every radical group or terrorist in the world to have access to the information. Thus, without telling Brechenmacher, Adams changes the instructions for the doctor's daughter and tells her to take the information to the man who would eventually invent the Rewind Engine, Dr. Jason Spanner!

He then makes sure that Brechenmacher's daughter Rebecka has a complete set of records including

both information from his future and the data received from the fraal. It is all digitized on a specially encoded data disc that could only be decoded by Dr. Spanner. This proof would be vital in convincing Spanner the validity of what Rebecka had. He then takes the Rebecka Brechenmacher and smuggles her out of the European Union to the United States, finding a foster home for her in Lake Tahoe, Nevada and telling her that it's vital for her to find Dr. Spanner as soon as possible. "Whatever happens kid, don't lose the disc - the disc is everything! Spanner will know what to do with it."

With that, Lt. Adams' year is up and fasts forwards to the future...

November 12th, 2120 - Lake Tahoe, Nevada  
After checking his special watch, Paul is surprised to find that he has arrived back several months before he left, instead of arriving back the day after he left like he was supposed to. It seems that he has come back to the future, standing exactly where he had been 10 years ago to the day! He feels a shiver run up his back and shakes his head, wondering if it was a good idea to take this assignment. This time travel stuff might have unknown long-term side effects.

Then he realizes that he's standing in the EXACT SPOT he was 10 years ago, the place where he last spoke to Rebecka before fast forwarding . . . she should be living just across the street. Instead, there is a high-rise building and Lake Tahoe seems to have grown in size exponentially. He shakes his head and realizes how stupid it was to assume that the world would be exactly as it was 10 years ago. "There was some heavy technological advances on that disc. Of course everything is going to be different."

He picks up a local newspaper to find out the current preparations for the invasion that will happen in 15 years and finds . . . nothing. He also notices that even though Tahoe has grown, there weren't any signs of increased technology. Where were the gravity cars and skytracks that had been detailed in the transmission? Those would have been the first things created. "Damn, maybe the government did keep it under wraps, stupid, stupid! I should have known. Damn bureaucrats!"

Here's where the story gets a little complicated . . . basically, the US government has hidden the facts from the general population of the world, but it isn't as bad as this main character thinks. Through the United Nations, the United States informed several

"Sort of like Aliens vs. GI Joe with mutations, cybertech, and gravity age weapons!"

world governments/organizations of the coming invasion.

The following nations/organizations are clients in what is called the World Protection Alliance:

The United States (which has now annexed Mexico after it nearly collapsed under a vicious dictator in 2042) and Canada from North America.

The UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Norway, Finland, Sweden and the EasternEuro Alliance (an economic alliance formed in 2084 between Belarus, the Czech Republic, Greece, Moldavia, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine) from Europe including Russia.

Japan, China, India, Kazakhstan and Mongolia from Asia.

Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Congo Republic, Madagascar and South Africa from the Middle East and Africa.

Cuba, Jamaica, Honduras, Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, and Argentina from Central (including the Caribbean) and South America.

The Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand from the Oceania region.

With all those countries trying to work together in a single organization, one would be correct in assuming that there would be friction. And this was true for about the first five years.

Only when an alien craft (most likely a scout ship) that matched the description of the ships of the Darkness (as the aliens are being called) was spotted entering Earth's atmosphere, did all the countries of the WPO realize that fighting amongst ourselves is counterproductive if we want to survive the coming of the Darkness.

It is now their goal to unite all of humanity before the Darkness gets to Earth. This unification only gets underway with about 5 years left before the main fleet of the Darkness arrives. Just in time to take on the scout fleet of the Darkness that will arrive in less than a year.

To battle the Darkness, the client countries have worked together created a new, elite fighting force called First Defense. This force has been recruited from the finest soldiers, marines, black ops units and military intelligence personal from every member of the organization.

Using the information sent by the fraal, this elite unit has been genetically altered (mutations and some super power FX) and have access to powerful technology including, but not limited to the following:

Radar gauntlets, e-suits, zero-g webs; psi-detectors and restraints; weapon biokeys; cybertech; light weapons such as laser, stutter, & maser rifles, heavy weapons such as rail guns, arc guns, plasma guns, quantum minis, & bantam starload rockets; and powered attack armor, body tanks, CF softsuits, deflection harnesses, and ablative harnesses; high powered attack vehicles and even gravity age powered spaceships.

First Defense is broken down into multiple squads in 6 world divisions, one for each list of countries above. The divisions don't have official names but are always referred to by a designated color. This color is designed into the military uniforms and equipment and does not imply rank or ethnic background! Only the countries from the Middle East and Africa insisted on a black and white camouflage pattern for their division which was decided on to symbolized life and death (they have the coolest uniforms as a result, although most of the squads in the Asia division would argue that point).

All other divisions have solid colors such as red, blue, green, etc. Yellow was not used because over the years it has been symbolized with cowardice (and it looked funny). The colors used are shaded dark and heavy symbolism is implied to each squad in the division. For example, one of the squads of Oceania Division is called Blue Thunder and each soldier in the squad has a blue lighting bolt tattoo on his left wrist, while another Middle East/Africa squad is called the Black Lions and has a white lion skull emblem painted on their equipment (helmets, body tanks, etc.).

Here are the colors of each division:

North America - Red (very dark - 'blood-like')  
Europe - Purple  
Asia - Grey (dark blue-grey steel color)  
Middle East and Africa - Black-White  
Central and South America - Green  
Oceania - Blue

Each member of First Defense is given a code name, which they usually hand pick themselves.

NOTE: Eventually, the character Lt. Paul Adams is recruited by the US government and is considered a vital member of First Defense for the work he did in

preventing the alternate timeline (when he's around – morale is good). Even the countries that were part of the European Union agreed that he helped prevent a world-wide disaster. Rebecka Brechenmacher also eventually joins First Defense as a member of the European Division (see below).

[Example Characters (no stats)]

The Red Eagles - this squad is a multinational group with soldiers from Canada, America, and the new US Mexican states.

NOTE: Like all First Defense soldier, the Red Eagles have all been genetically enhanced and some First Defense soldiers gain super power FX as a result. Several have also had cybertech installed, but that is always up to the individual soldier. This is by no mean a typical squad (most are smaller) as it includes some of the most prominent members in the North American Division.

Lt. Paul Adams (Super Hero Adapt / Combat Spec - 12)

Code Name: Darkstar

Country: Canada/USA

Hometown: Victoria, B.C. (born) / Buffalo, New York (present)

Mutations: Adrenal Control, Increased Metabolism, Radiation Tolerance,

Energy Absorption, Hyper Immunity.

FX: Impact Conversion, Invulnerability (multiple), Life Support, Super

Constitution or Super Strength; Danger Sense, Healing, Power Strike;

Fusillade, Lightning Speed

NOTE: This is not an ordinary list of powers - see below for the reason why.

Quote: "Get the hell out of my way, I have a war to win..."

Background: Ever since he joined Defense Force, Darkstar has been the first one up and the last one to sleep in his squad. When the first battle comes, he'll be the first one on the warpath. After being shot through time he has a unique perspective on what MIGHT happen and the war to come against the Darkness is all he thinks of sometimes. When they come, it's going to be personal!

NOTE: Darkstar is unique in that he underwent the Reflex Project (genetic enhancement) twice and lived to tell of it! No one else has ever lived through two enhancements, as it tends to strip away a person's humanity, not to mention his skin. This is never done by choice; it is only done when something goes wrong

during the first enhancement (a dangerous process in the first place). The rule is, if something goes wrong, do it again and kill the subject. It's harsh but it's always better than what happens to the individual if they don't repeat the process. In the latter case, the subject dies slowly and very painfully.

However, this isn't what happened to Darkstar when they enhanced him. Something about being sent through time affected his physical makeup, and after the first enhancement the Reflexor started up again and enhanced Darkstar a second time. It was about to go off again but they were able to shut it down in time. The result is that Darkstar is a little unstable at times but he is too valuable to kill. Darkstar should have both a Strength & Constitution of 19 and at least 14 to 15 in everything else except Personality which should be no higher than 10 or 11.

VERY IMPORTANT: Don't let one of your players use this character! He's definitely Supporting Cast only material! GMs should run him as hyper and moody! But his heart's in the right place!

Captain Michael Starter (Combat Spec - 15)

Code Name: Ironhawk

Country: USA

Hometown: Denver, Colorado

Mutations: Biorhythm Control, Enhanced Healing, Enhanced Senses.

Quote: Response to above, "You REALLY need to learn how to relax, buddy! If it was up to you the war would start tomorrow! Now, relax! That's an order . . . here, have a beer."

Background: Commander of the Red Eagles. A veteran of the war that freed Mexico from tyranny, Ironhawk is easy going and is happiest when he has his buddies around him and the game is on. However, when in combat he's as serious as they come. He knows Darkstar means well but someone's going to need a level head when the Darkness comes. That's why he leads this squad and Darkstar doesn't.

Lt. Denise Conroy (Diplomat Combat Spec - 11)

Code Name: Firestorm

Country: USA

Hometown: Utica, New York

Mutation: Gravity Adaptation, Thermal Vision, Flight.

Quote: "I can fly. Can you?"

Background: Young, attractive, heavy metal listening, bantam starload firing, kick your a\*\* if you piss her off kind of woman! That's how Firestorm describes herself to new recruits who only see the woman and

not the soldier. One of Major Ironhawk's most respected officers, Firestorm believes that she should either be second-in-command of the squad or be given her own command. Don't get the wrong idea, she doesn't hate Darkstar - she's just a little worried that when the battle starts he might get the squad killed! She recognizes that he has abilities that she and the others could only dream of. She just thinks he's not officer material.

Recommended Red Eagles heroes for the players to customize:

Lt. Peter Lee (DTO-10)  
Code Name: Samurai  
Country: Canada (Asian Canadian)  
Mutations: 1d8  
FX: 1d6

Sgt. William S. Baker (TO-12)  
Code Name: Ice Dog  
Country: Canada  
Mutations: 1d8

Sgt. Cristine Taylor (DTO-7) \*  
Code Name: Hunter  
Country: USA  
Mutations: 1d3  
Cybertech: 1d4+ 1

Corp. Teresa Demengez (CS-5)  
Code Name: Thunderwing  
Country: USA (New Mexican States)  
Mutations: 1d4+ 1  
FX: 1 or 2

Corp. Jason Taylor (CS-6) \*  
Code Name: Striker  
Country: USA  
Mutations: 1d8

Private Joseph Moreau (CS-5)  
Code Name: Legionnaire  
Country: Canada (French Canadian)  
Mutations: 1d6-1  
Cybertech: 1d3

Private Anthony Chaser (DMW-4)  
Code Name: Hotoru  
Country: USA (Native American)  
Mutations: 1d6  
Psionics: Yes

Private Marco Toctemos (CS-5)  
Code Name: Quetzalcoatl  
Country: USA (New Mexican States)

Mutations: 1d8

\* Brother and sister

Recommended First Defense heroes from around the globe (they don't have ranks as the GM and player can decided on military rankings in other countries - also cause I'm clueless).

\*Europe\*

Rebecka Brechenmacher (DTO-11)  
Code Name: Dame Regan  
Country: Germany/USA  
Mutations: 1d8

Jon Rikmann (CS-14)  
Code Name: Loki  
Country: Norway  
Mutations: 1d4  
FX: 1d3

Anton Manier (CS-5)  
Code Name: Libert?  
Country: France  
Mutations: 1d8

\*Asia\*

Mah Yan Han (Super Power FX Adapt / Tech Op - 13)  
Code Name: Walking Dragon  
Country: China  
Mutations: 1d6  
Cybertech: 1d3

\*Africa\*

Danela Ru (CS-9)  
Code Name: Oorskadu  
Country: Congo  
Mutations: 1d6  
FX: 1d3

\*Oceania\*

Riley Scott (TO-11)  
Code Name: Blue Devil  
Country: Australia  
Mutations: 1d4  
Cybertech: 1d4+ 1

**Visit Robert's website...The Crossroads!**

<http://home.talkcity.com/InfiniteLoop/belizeard/index.html>



# Creature Feature

By Neil Spicer

## E'Leck Tree

The E'Leck Tree is an unusual species of mutated plant that thrives on electricity, purposefully exposing itself to lightning strikes in order to feed and reproduce. These trees are equally feared and coveted by the more sentient inhabitants of Gamma Terra, who sometimes use them for powering Ancient devices. Part travel hazard and part living energy source, E'Leck Trees are distinctive in appearance and easily recognizable by those that know what to look for. Aside from its physical characteristics, a wild E'Leck Tree can be distinguished by the metallic Ancient artifacts that often litter the ground around it, all totally drained of power.

### Description:

E'Leck Trees are descended from weeping willows and reach approximately five meters in height once fully mature. A relatively thin, cobalt blue bark covers the trunk and all major limbs. Their fronds resemble exposed metallic wires with thin, silvery leaves that sometimes hang low enough to brush the ground. These leaves contain a form of conductive liquid metal inside, much like a regular plant's chlorophyll. The tree uses these fronds and their leaves as miniature lightning rods. In this manner the plant can attract the energy of passing thunderstorms and channel lightning strikes down the trunk and into its battery-like roots. Such nourishment, carefully stored and rationed, can last for months at a time.

Unlike typical trees, the E'Leck actually has two different kinds of root systems. One set, known as the primary root system, is a ruddy brown in color and stretches deep into the ground to anchor the tree during violent windstorms. These roots also actively seek out other forms of electromagnetic energy in order to siphon them for nourishment during times of drought or winter. When growing near a functioning Ancient installation, these roots will wrap themselves around any power source in order to feed off of the surrounding electromagnetic field. This feeding rarely causes any significant level of drain on major power systems, but can leave smaller devices devoid of energy in just a few rounds of consistent contact.

The other set of roots, known as the secondary root system, is pure white in color and lies just beneath the surface of the ground. Laid out in an intricate grid-like pattern, it stretches away from the tree in all directions. This set of roots occasionally peeks above ground in places where erosion has occurred, taking on the appearance of white, knobby protrusions that can be mis-

taken for ceramic rock. The secondary root system stores the majority of the tree's battery reserves, and also acts as a natural defense mechanism that can be charged like an electric defense net underfoot.

### Encounter:

Because of its distinctive silver and blue appearance, an E'Leck Tree can easily be noticed among almost any other kind of vegetation. The plant has a low-level sentience and is immobile, but does possess an awareness of its surroundings and can move its limbs enough to touch nearby objects. Anyone brushed by, or purposefully touching, the frond of an E'Leck Tree will trigger a low-level electrical attack. The tree actually uses some of its stored electricity in this manner to discourage plant-eating animals from feeding upon its leaves. If this taser-style shock fails to drive such predators away, the E'Leck Tree can resort to a more powerful attack by channeling another charge through its surface roots' defense net in a ten meter radius for every participating tree. All creatures caught within the area of effect, and in contact with the ground or an E'Leck Tree, must make a Constitution feat check. A Critical Failure indicates d12w; a Failure, d6w; an Ordinary success d8s, a Good success, d4s; and an Amazing success, no damage. Any creature in contact with a metal object suffers an additional +2 to damage. In addition, creatures that fail the Constitution feat check are stunned for d4 minutes, which is doubled for victims who roll a Critical Failure. The defense net attack can be attempted once per day for each E'Leck Tree that is a part of the community.

E'Leck Trees can typically sense nearby electromagnetic activity. Any use of a device or mutation that is powered by electricity or gives off electromagnetic radiation within 30 meters will result in a powerful charge build-up in the plant's secondary root system which is transferred to the trunk. This charge will be carefully balanced so as to electromagnetically attract the source of power (as well as any ferrous metal in the area), in essence, allowing the E'Leck Tree to use a limited form of Magnetic Control. Once such energy sources have been drawn to the plant's trunk, the E'Leck Tree will then use its primary roots to siphon off the source's power. This "attack" is treated as a drain-like mutation ability based upon the plant's Constitution. A CON feat check by the tree will result in the following effects, depending upon its level of success: Critical Failure, the tree actually loses some of its power and ends up fully charging the target; Marginal, the device or mutation is rendered useless for d4 minutes; Ordinary, d4+2 minutes; Good, d8+1 minutes;

Amazing, the target is utterly drained of power in a tremendous spark that renders the item useless until repaired, or the mutation unavailable for an entire day. Items that have been fully drained or that no longer have any charges remaining cannot be affected by the plant, and can often be found littering the ground around the base of the tree. Oddly enough, these treasures can attract intelligent scavengers that unwittingly bring more energy sources to the tree when they venture too close.

#### Habitat/Society:

E'Leck Tree communities coexist peacefully and assist one another in surviving. This sense of community is instinctive, as they are all well aware of one another through the low level of electrical activity they can sense in each other's metabolism. As soon as one tree senses the 'drain' of another tree's primary root system, they begin to cooperate and share their power. In times when a particular plant comes under attack, the remainder will try to defend it, although their inability to move can limit those efforts. If a plant becomes injured or weakened from a loss of power, the others will sacrifice some of their electrical storage in order to nurse it back to health, using the interconnected secondary root system to transfer the energy to one another.

A similar process is used during the plant's reproductive cycle when it releases much of its energy into its fronds, forming a nimbus of glowing electrical arcs that leap from tree to tree. These bursts of electricity can be seen from miles away and serve to charge and cross-pollinate one another's cylinder-shaped seeds. Seeds that fall close to the parent will grow to mingle its root systems with other nearby E'Leck Trees, thereby expanding the radius of the mutual defense net. These seeds are also highly prized by traders because they can be used to power many Gamma and even Shadow age devices when properly configured. A successful Technical Science-*juryrig* skill check can have the following results when attempting such a task: Critical Failure, the seed-battery overloads the device, which must be repaired before it can be used again; Failure, the seed-battery is improperly connected resulting in a total loss of its power, but causing no harm to the device itself; Ordinary, the seed-battery provides a single charge or use of the device; Good, d4 charges or uses of the device; Amazing, d4+2 charges or uses of the device. A typical E'Leck Tree will produce 4-10 (2d4+2) seeds every three months during warm weather, but they can lie dormant for up to a year before losing their charge.

A few inhabitants of Gamma Terra have also come to use E'Leck Trees directly as a source of natural power for their communities. These E'Leck farmers tap the plants' surface roots, treating them very much like electric outlets. The trees don't notice this activity as any-

thing more than a slight power drain on their internal batteries. The farmers are also careful to make sure their electrical devices are positioned far enough away from the trees so that they can't be magnetically attracted and drained. As long as no one comes into contact with the plants' fronds, such a power system stays relatively stable, and the trees come to view the attached electrical devices as an extension of the secondary root system. The E'Leck Trees then support the devices as if they were additional members of their community. Of course, large thunderstorms and the plants' natural reproductive cycle can also temporarily affect the system, producing power surges that can fry anything still connected to the trees' roots. The farmers take great care to 'unplug' their devices during such times, and they often post guards around the trees to make sure there is no disruption of power.

#### Ecological Data:

Biome: Anywhere thunderstorms are common

Encounter chance: Unlikely

Group size: 3-6 (d4+2) in the wild, 4-10 (2d4+2) domesticated

Organization: Communal

Niche: Electrivore Plant

Intelligence: Low-level sentience

#### Game Data:

STR 8 (2d4+2) INT 3 (d4)

DEX 9 (2d6+5) WIL 9 (2d4+4)

CON 13 (2d6+5) PER 3 (d4)

Durability: 13/13/7/7 Action check: 7+/6/3/1

Move: sprint 0 run 0 walk 0 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Mutations: Dermal Armor, Radiation Tolerance, Magnetic Control

Defects: None

#### Attacks:

Fronds 12/6/3 d4+1s/d4+3s/d6+4s En/O

Defense Net CON feat\* See text En/O

\* Victim must make a Constitution feat check to resist effects; Amazing success, no damage; Good, d4s; Ordinary, d8s; Failure, d6w; Critical Failure, d12w. Damage increases by +2 if victim carries any metal object.

#### Defenses:

Armor: d6+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4 (En)

#### Skills:

Stamina-*endurance*[16]; Awareness-*perception*[11], *intuition*[10]; Resolve-*physical*[12]

*Neil would like to thank the Gamma World Mailing List for helping him check the article.*



# UPLIFTING THOUGHTS

By Jim Sharkey

## Uplifting Thoughts: Friends, Enemies & Others

Earthclan came into a hostile universe teeming with beings that had civilizations that were old before man's ancestors first came down from the trees. In a universe of trillions of sapient beings belonging to thousands of cultures, humans and their clients have managed to make a few friends and more than a few enemies in a short time. Indeed, their heretical claims of self-Uplift, proselytizing about the proper way to treat clients, open disdain for the Galactic Library, and rash nature have managed to make enemies of entire clans. But it's not as hopeless as it has been for other *wollings*. Earth has some staunch allies, and is winning over other more moderate clans with hard work and excellent terraforming skills.

There are a number of species with which Earthclan has had fairly extensive contact. The intent of this article is to give another overview of the *Uplift* setting. Some of the alien races listed below lead large clans that will be explored in the coming months. Most of these races will be more fully detailed in future columns.

Of all humanity's allies, the **Tymbrimi** have the longest and closest relationship with Earthclan. They were the first race the Terrans had contact with when they went to the stars. They have a moderate standing in the galaxy, but are hated by many of the same clans that hate Earthclan. Tymbrimi are slender, long-limbed humanoids with wide-set eyes, a ruff of brown fur that starts at the spine and ends in a widow's peak above the nose, and a crown of silvery tendrils that tops the head.

Tymbrimi possess an expansive sense of humor, and will spend huge amounts of time setting up elaborate practical jokes. Their head tendrils allow them to create *empathy glyphs*, a form of psionic expression fairly unique in galactic civilization. They are very adaptable, via a biological process called the *gheer flux*, which creates certain physical changes in response to outside stimuli.

Earth's strangest allies, at least terms of appearance, are the **Kanten**. They are a vegetable species that resemble two-meter tall blue and green broccoli sprouts with tiny flakes of crystal in their branches. These crystals tinkle when the Kanten move. They

are largely clustered near the blowhole at the top of the "head" and may act as light receptors. The Kanten are kindly, reserved, and nearly unflappable, but are capable of quick action should the need arise.

The **Synthians** are another close ally of Earth. Unfortunately, they are a cowardly race, and will avoid confrontation with Earthclan's powerful enemies at all costs. Synthians have a reputation for being selfish despite their alliance with Earthclan. They have an excellent economy, and are well-known traders. As a result, most of their assistance to Earthclan comes in the form of economic, rather than military aid. Synthians look like large, heavy-set, upright raccoons. Unlike the Tymbrimi and the Kanten, Synthians are generally as humorless as most Galactics.

Depending on what time period the GM wants to place the adventures, the **Thennanin** can be either Earthclan's most powerful ally, or one of its worst enemies. The Thennanin are a hulking, leathery, vaguely bipedal reptilian species. A Thennanin has a beak-like mouth, a large fan-shaped crest that regulates body temperature and runs down the center of the head, elbow spikes, breathing slits on its neck, and a broad body.

Thennanin are a sober, humorless species that takes the Uplift process and its ecological responsibilities very seriously. They dislike surprises intensely, and do not react well to new ideas. They also dislike space travel, and as a result, their warships are enormous, sturdy things that make them feel at home. Thennanin are also very honorable. A Thennanin is true to his word, even though it might cost him face with his own race. They follow Galactic Tradition scrupulously, and take an active part in all Galactic politics. Their status as an ally or enemy depends on whether or not the Thennanin have been chosen by Earth's pre-sapient species of gorillas to be their Uplift patrons. (See *The Uplift War* for details.)

Of all of Earthclan's enemies, the **Jophur** are possibly the most alien. They look like large cones of stacked, greasy doughnuts. They possess enormous egos and fanatically believe in the rightness of their view of the universe. They are one of Terra's most implacable enemies, and are among the races that are unlikely to ever relent in their hatred of humanity. Militarily speaking, they are among the most powerful Galactic races, flying enormous juggernauts far larger than

anything Earth has, and are considered extremely dangerous. They also communicate primarily with scent and pheromones, making it difficult for Earthclan diplomats to deal with them.

The **Soro** head the clan that is arguably the most powerful of humanity's enemies. Their military might is rivaled only by the Thennanin and the Jophur, and their economic strength is even greater. They are a plump, whiskered, bipedal, reptilian race possessing multiple abdomens, and the females have a mating claw at the end of their tails.

The Soro's government is a matriarchy, and unlike some of Earthclan's other enemies, they don't seek humanity's extinction. Instead, they wish to gain Earthclan and its clients as their own clients. They are more pragmatic than some of the other clans, and there is hope that eventually they can be persuaded to cease their hostilities against Terra.

Another one of Earthclan's most dangerous enemies is the mantis-like **Tandu**. This race adheres to a philosophy of extreme xenophobia, and while they have no fondness for any race but themselves, they have a special hatred for humanity and its clients. They are fearless and powerful warriors. They will take dangerous and reckless chances in combat to gain an advantage, and will spend troops at will in order to accomplish a task. In addition, a Tandu can regenerate almost any injury given enough time, and can shrug off obscene amounts of damage while continuing to fight. Their ships are spindly and fragile-looking, built for speed and surprise more than toughness.

Tandu care little for Galactic tradition, and it is believed that they use their clients without regard to preparing them for fitness to function in society. They will do anything they think they can get away with, and care little for the niceties of traditions like preserving biodiversity and protecting presapient life.

The avian **Gubru** tried to convince some of Earthclan's Neo-Chimpanzee clients to abandon their patrons. They stand upright, and have hands at the end of their no longer functional wings. They have a small head crest, and bright yellow beaks. Most Gubru are sexless; the only Gubru that have gender are the nobility, who form marriages of two males and one females, where the female, or queen, is the head of the family unit. Sexless Gubru are white, female are red, males are blue and amber yellow.

Gubru are fanatically prim about the aspects of Galactic tradition that interest them. They are less care-

ful about the traditions that don't interest them, like caring for biospheres.

The **Brothers of the Night** are another race that is very xenophobic. Their opposition to Earthclan is as much an element of that as anything else. They have a vague resemblance to sea lions, though with gills and extra flippers and appendages. They are a highly adaptable species, and fly spear-shaped warships.

The **Hoon** are stuffy, officious bureaucrats that care only for the letter of the law. They are tall, with horse-like heads, a huge throat sac, wide shaggy shoulders and scaly legs. As the leading race in the Galactic Migration Institute, they were responsible for purging a human colony from a fallow world Earthclan settled prior to knowing the rules. The Hoon ordered everyone still present on the world exterminated, and would not wait for further evacuations. Since then, Earthclan has considered the Hoon an enemy.

The **Xatinni** are a merchant race that looks like ocelots or leopards. They are neutral towards Earthclan as a race, and sell them any goods that Terra can afford. However, individually they are a bullying species that enjoys pushing around the few races that are less powerful than they are. So they will try to push around any Terran or Terran clients they can.

The **Urs** are a centauroid race. They have four legs and two small arms that are weak but dexterous. All Urs encountered will be female. The males are not much larger than a human palm and live in small pouches under the arms of the female. They are usually not intelligent, in relation to their mates. They have three eyes set in a triangle, and the top eye is a composite one with no lid that allows an Urs to be aware of her surrounding even while sleeping. They are bitter enemies of the Hoon, and as a result, Earthclan sides with them in all matters.

**Editor's Note:** After reviewing last month's columns and going back over the source material, I decided that Neo-Chimpanzees got a bit of rock due to my carelessness. They should get a -1 step bonus to all Acrobatic skills. While it still shouldn't be a free broad skill as a result of the Uplift process, any chim that takes the skill will just be naturally good at it. Note that a Neo-Chim's *Defensive Martial Arts* is generally wrestling oriented, rather than a judo-like discipline.

*To learn more about UPLIFT, please see the UPLIFT novels, or go to <http://www.davidbrin.com/> for more information.*



# THE JOPHUR

By Jim Sharkey

Uplifting Thoughts: The Jophur, an NPC race for Uplift

One of the most completely alien and powerful races among the enemies that Earthclan has made is the Jophur. The Jophur have declared wars of extermination on other enemies, and there is no reason to think that they intend anything less for Earthclan.

A Jophur looks like a huge conical stack of greasy rings. They can reach upwards of ten feet in height, depending on the number of cones that make up a stack. The number of rings in a stack varies, but the average is around twelve. Up and down the length of the stack are silvery tendrils that extend from the *Master Ring*.

Each ring in a stack is nominally independent and possesses a rudimentary intelligence. Once part of a larger whole in a stack, the rings form a greater intelligence known as a Jophur. The Master Ring controls the ring stack. The Master Ring also gives a Jophur its gigantic ego and sense of self. They are among the most ambitious of all races, and have made huge strides in power in a very short time. Their military is among the biggest in the galaxies, and their dreadnought battleships are fearsome sights.

The rings that comprise an individual stack are grown in a nursery. They feed on compost, and each ring can be engineered to perform any specific kind of task, from reasoning to sight to movement.

Jophur are fanatical in their view of the universe. They believe that Galactic tradition, particularly as it pertains to the Progenitors, must be rigidly obeyed. They have rituals for almost any important event. Many of these rituals involve appeasing some ancestor of a given race or the ghosts of the Progenitors. Earthclan's claims of self-Uplift go completely against the Jophur's grain. The Jophur once exterminated an entire race called the G'Kek simply because they found them annoying. Terran heresies, in their eyes, cannot be left unpunished, and they are unlikely to ever change their minds.

Jophur communicate more by scent and pheromones than by verbal communication. A conversation between two ring stacks involves more than just talking; the scents and chemicals put out by the participants enhance their discussions. This makes any diplomatic overtures to them difficult.

Ironically, prior to the creation of Master Rings, Jophur were a timid, kindly race called Traeki.

### Special Abilities:

Due to their overwhelming egos, any attempt to influence a Jophur through Interaction and similar skills incurs a +3 step penalty. Attempts to influence one with psionics incur a +2 penalty. However, it may be possible by using the right chemicals and pheromones, that these penalties can be reduced or even totally offset.

Due to their composite build, they gain extra durability. A Jophur's stun, wounds, and mortal ratings are based on 1.5 times their Constitution score.

A damaged Jophur can be quickly repaired if replacement rings are available. If this is the case, it can recover damage incurred to a specific ring without any tests or medical assistance.

All Jophur get the Perfect Memory perk for free.

A Jophur is usually slow to react to surprises. On the first round of combat only, it gets a +1 step penalty to its Action Check.

Jophur are slow to recover from being stunned, and get a +2 step penalty to any Resolve tests. In addition, there are certain flash weapons that can stun them completely for a short period, regardless of actual damage taken. As a result, Jophur rarely go into battle without a few robots for support.

Since Jophur rely more on scent than anything else, certain chemicals can be used to confuse their senses. The effects will vary based on the chemicals used, but should be no more than a +1 or +2 step penalty to certain skills.

### Ability Scores:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
6/16	5/12	7/16	4/14	8/16	4/11

### Free Broad Skills:

- STR - Unarmed Attack
- DEX - Vehicle Operation
- CON - Stamina
- INT - Knowledge
- WIL - Awareness
- PER - Interaction

# Alternity

# I Whine Sheet

RED: SKILL    BLUE: GMG    TAN: PHB

*Unarmed Attack:* (43-45)

*Melee Attack:* (44-46)

**Kick or Hit** (d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s, plus any STR modifier for regular damage)

Unarmed Attack  
(Brawl, Power Martial Arts)  
Acrobatics: Defensive Martial Arts

Situation	Modifier
Rear Attack	-2 bonus
Flank Attack	-1 bonus
Attacker/Target Prone	+2 penalty/-2 bonus
Higher Ground	-1 bonus
Twilight/Moonlight/Dark	+1/+2/+3 penalty

**Overpowering** (43)

• +1 penalty, -1 bonus for each helper, target suffers penalties depending on check:

Amazing: +3, Good: +2, Ordinary: +1

**Improve the hold** (44)

• Roll skill again to apply cumulative penalties to target, as above

**Bum's Rush** (44)

• Move the victim where you want

**Maul** (44)

• Whacked for normal unarmed damage; if attack fails, target free

**Takedown** (44)

• Push target prone. Martial artists can do this without a hold first

**Pin** (44)

• A third attack will pin a target. He is helpless and cannot escape

**Blocking** (44)

• Rank 2 or higher in defensive martial arts.

Must get a equal or better result than opponent

**Charge** (50)

• -2 bonus to attacks, opponents get -2 bonus attack against charging character

**Parrying** (45, 69)

• With Weapon: **Melee Weapons Skill**

• With Shield: **Armor Operation**

(Combat Armor)

*Range Attacks:* (46-48)

Ranged Weapons, Modern  
(Pistol, Rifle, SMG)

Ranged Weapons, Primitive  
(Bow, Crossbow, Flintlock, Sling)

Heavy Weapons (Direct, Indirect Fire)

Situation	Modifier
Rear Attack	-2 bonus
Flank Attack	-1 bonus
Higher Ground	-1 bonus
Either Prone	+2 penalty each way
LIGHT COVER	+1 penalty
MEDIUM COVER	+2 penalty
HEAVY COVER	+3 penalty

**Single shot**

**Burst** (46, 74) • -1 bonus

**Autofire** (46, 74) • +1/+2/+3 penalty

**Throw** (47, 57, 67)

• See Table P14 on page 57 PHB

• See Table P20 on page 67 PHB

**Area-Effect attack** (46)

• See Table P14 on page 57 PHB

• See Table P20 on page 67 PHB

**Point Blank** (47) All shots at -3 bonus

• One square away or less

**Aiming** (49, 57)

• Spend a phase, get -1 bonus

**Friendly fire** (46)

• Restrict for +2 penalty or risk hitting friends

**Suppressive fire** (50)

• +1/+2/+3 penalty to foes attacks

*Special Tactic:*

**Called shot** (50) • All called shots +4 penalty

• Disarm: opponent is disarmed

• Dead-Eye: Increases success by one grade

• Equipment Damage: Property damage (55)

• Style Shot: Humiliation

• Trick Shot: Outlandish marksmanship; possibly even +6 penalty

**Dodge** (45, 71) & **Hitting the deck** (47)

• +1/+2/+3 penalty to others

**Sneak Attack** (50)

• Use **Stealth** for -1/-2/-3 bonus to attack

**Threaten** (50)

• Act first before covered for acts or moves

## RANGE MODIFIERS FOR WEAPONS

Weapon	Short	Medium	Long
Primitive	-1 bonus	+1 penalty	+2 penalty
Pistol	-1 bonus	+1 penalty	+3 penalty
Rifle or SMG	-1 bonus	0	+1 penalty
Heavy (direct)	-1 bonus	0	+1 penalty
Heavy	+2 penalty	-2 bonus	0