

Codex



CHROME

Welcome to Codex, the Gauntlet's monthly RPG magazine!

For this edition of Codex, we're exploring futuristic themes. We start with **#chrome_rot.exe**, a campaign starter for The Sprawl, Hamish Cameron's excellent mission-based cyberpunk game.

Then we move to a collection of **science fantasy elements for Dungeon World** that includes items, moves, monsters, and places of power. Finally, we wrap up with **a miscellany focused on cosmetic cyberware**. Enjoy!



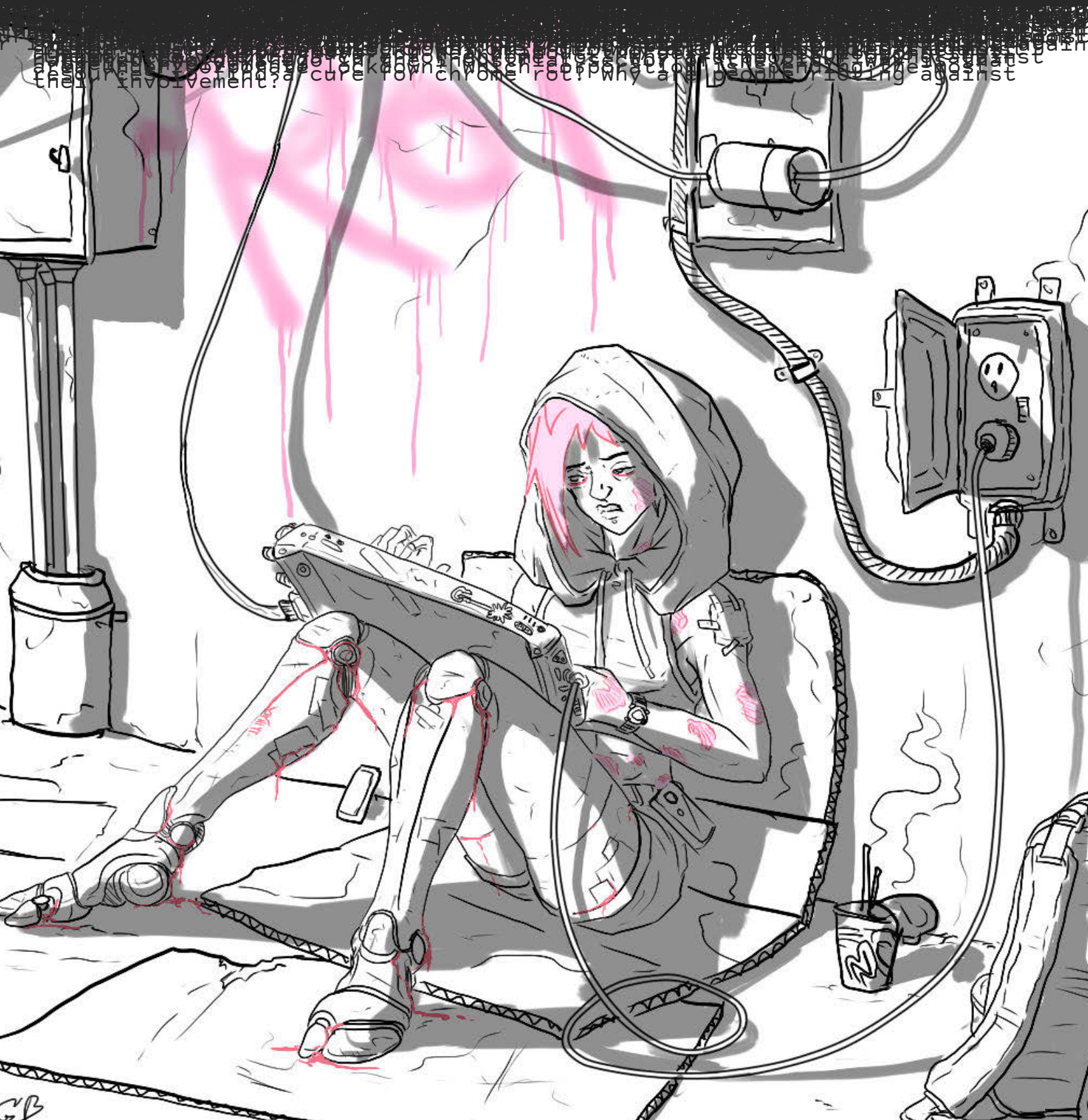
www.gauntlet-rpg.com



CHROME_ROT.EXE

/ A campaign starter for The Sprawl by Fred Bednarski*

*Illustrated by Gennifer Bone. */*



// If you've opened this file, it's already too late.

C:\chrome_rot\impressions\the_streets.txt

- The vertical labyrinth of the Pikova commercial district; its cacophony of lights, sounds, and smells pouring out from various businesses, assaulting your senses.
- The gruff, breaking voice of yet another infected, begging on the street for money; his rotting cyberarm dragging down his left side exposing fleshy muscle and tendons fused with wire.
- The angular geometry of Kraner Capsule Tower, a low income apartment complex popular with SimSense junkies.
- A pink-haired woman with large metallic blemishes on her body, struggling to operate the cyberdeck she spliced into the low hanging, black, greasy wires in the back alley.
- The massive neon sign above SOiji, a hole-in-the-wall Korean food bar, crackling in the rain, washing everything and everyone on this crowded street in a soft pink light.
- The buzz of an impromptu bazaar where those who gave in to the "chrome panic" brought anything worth selling to raise money for cyberware removal surgery.
- A group of heavily armored security officers, accompanied by three aerial drones, patrolling the Cenapp Residential District Five. Their matte black armor and gleaming red helmet HUDs contrasting against the backdrop of stark white rectangular tenements.
- A group of "pure human" protesters marching down the street, chanting; their un-modded bodies exposed for all to see.
- The building of the local Wirehead Hackerspace, once bustling with young talent, now dark and quiet, only a few cyberdeck screens lighting up its interior.
- The fake smile of Darius Sotoya, the fixer who, as of recently, can get you second hand cyberware on the cheap, as long as you don't ask about his sources.
- The smell of decomposing soyfoods littering the street where a riot took place yesterday.
- Bright red lights from high above, piercing the darkness, as a convoy of corporate elites in their antigrav cars passes over the street.
- The sticky, sour air of the EndZone, a bar where you can get non-synthetic alcohol, or a professional willing to do your dirty work, if you have the Cred.

`C:\chrome_rot\impressions\matrix.txt`

- The dark purple grid of “the spot”, once a busy public hub, now a monument to the users who died of chrome rot; the static wireframes of their avatars stored in a cubic array.
- The radiant clothes and neon pink eyes of Flux Prime, a self-proclaimed “glitch walker” offering her services of safe passage through any corrupted sector.
- The disturbingly organic, chrome walls of the Church of Transfiguration; their preacher scripts flooding the space with promises of eternal life through cyberware.
- The cracks in the black monolithic firewall containing the glitched parts of the “Route 0x3D2D9” travel node, and the distorted metallic sounds of numerous programs struggling to patch it up.
- A plain looking avatar of a corporate wageslave arguing the benefits of remote cyberware shutdown with several members of the Techlust society.

`c:\chrome_rot\ice.exe`

`function rot_worm()`

{This black ICE attempts to trace the user by trapping them within the ever-changing landscape of the corrupted sector of the Matrix in which it dwells. Once it gets a trace, it infects its victim with chrome rot. If the victim is already infected, the worm does not acknowledge them.}

`function DEgLiTcher()`

{This blue ICE was created in response to corrupted sectors inside corporate networks. When a glitch is detected,DEgLiTcher sounds an alarm that signals users to disconnect from the sector.

After this is done, it deletes the glitching part of the system and rebuilds it from backup. Depending on the sub-system, this can take anywhere from a few seconds to several hours in which the connected services are offline. During the deletion process, this ICE will try to sever the connection of anyone still present. If someone would avoid it, they will be sent to the corporation’s Random Access Memory, where all deleted files end up.}

c:\chrome_rot\questions.txt

- Who do you know whose flesh got infected with chrome rot? What are their symptoms?
- What is the "pure human" movement doing about the recent outbreak among the "modded" citizens? Why do some of their members oppose that agenda?
- What rumors have you heard about the series of explosions that happened two days ago in the industrial sector of the city? Why is that area under corporate lockdown?
- Which corporation is spending the most resources to find a cure for chrome rot? Why are people rioting against their involvement?
- With the encrypted cyberspace spot recently corrupted, where in the Matrix do professionals like you meet to safely discuss their work? What glaring vulnerabilities does this node have?



`c:\chrome_rot\custom_moves.exe`

`function corrupted_matrix_sectors(mind)`

{A previously unseen kind of cyberspace virus, dubbed the Rot Worm, is spreading among the public sectors of the Matrix. If you find yourself in one of the infected sectors, describe how you navigate the glitchy landscape then roll with Mind. If you have any cyberware connected to the Matrix at this time, roll with Synth instead. On a hit, you are able to traverse this sector. On a 10+ choose 3. On 7-9 choose 2.

- It does not take a long time.
- The connected hardware is not damaged.
- You learn something about the Rot Worm. Take +1 forward to Research on the topic.
- You don't encounter the Rot Worm.

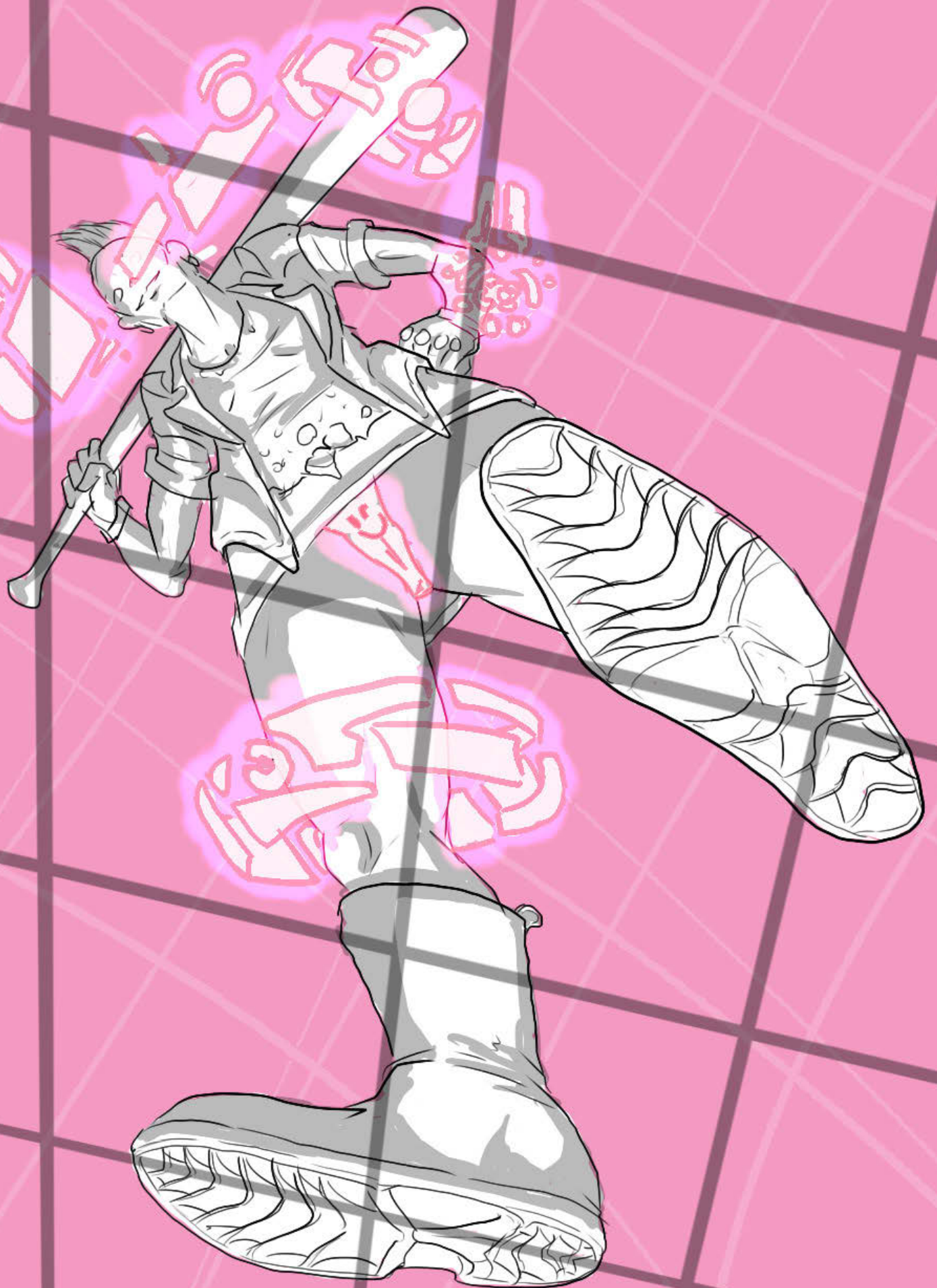
Copies of Rot Worm exist in every corrupted Matrix sector. If you encounter it while jacked-in, refer to the ICE section above. If the character is not jacked-in, the hardware they are using to interface with the Matrix gets infected with chrome rot; it receives +unreliable and +hardware decay.}

`function infected()`

{Chrome rot is a disease that spreads from infected cyberware to flesh, eventually wasting away its victim. If you get infected with chrome rot add its Countdown Clock (see below) to your character starting at 15:00. Anytime you fail a roll in which cyberware was used, the MC can advance this clock. When you are using the Matrix, you can advance the Clock by one to create a glitch that will give you +1 forward inside the Matrix. These glitches can corrupt the sector you are currently in.}

`function the_street_docs_are_making_a_killing()`

{Panic about cyberware is making more and more people want to remove their cyberware. With their services in such high demand, the street docs are more than happy to charge extra for any work done, even as their standards are starting to lapse. So long as there is no cure for the chrome rot available to the public, take -1 ongoing to Go Under the Knife.}



`function among_the_street_rats()`

{Even though the Sprawl offers low-income housing, some choose (or more often are forced) to live in unincorporated spaces. The Dregs are such a place, a towering shanty-town of shipping containers in an abandoned industrial complex. To outsiders, it is just a den of lowlives. To people who live here, it is a home away from both prying corporate eyes and corporate values. In times of crisis, the Dregs are here to lend a hand. When you `seek help in the Dregs and promise to return the favor` choose one:

- Receive medical attention.
- Find an underground passage to any sector of the city.
- Hide from corporations for a few days.
- Find a person dying of chrome rot.}

`c:\chrome_rot\countdown_clocks.txt`

The chrome rot clock tracks how close the character's body is to rotting away and being replaced by a non-functional metal alloy. Removing all cyberware stops the disease from advancing.

```
1200 Everything's cool.
1500 You are infected; you have a pulsing sensation in the areas
      near your cyberware.
1800 You start showing further symptoms.
2100 You have visible metallic blemishes on your body.
2200 You are in constant pain, take -1 ongoing.
2300 All your cyberware becomes +unreliable and +damaging.
0000 Your body is wasting away. While you have cyberware attached,
      lower an Attribute by 1 each day.
```

`die();`

NINETEEN SCIENCE FANTASY ELEMENTS FOR DUNGEON WORLD

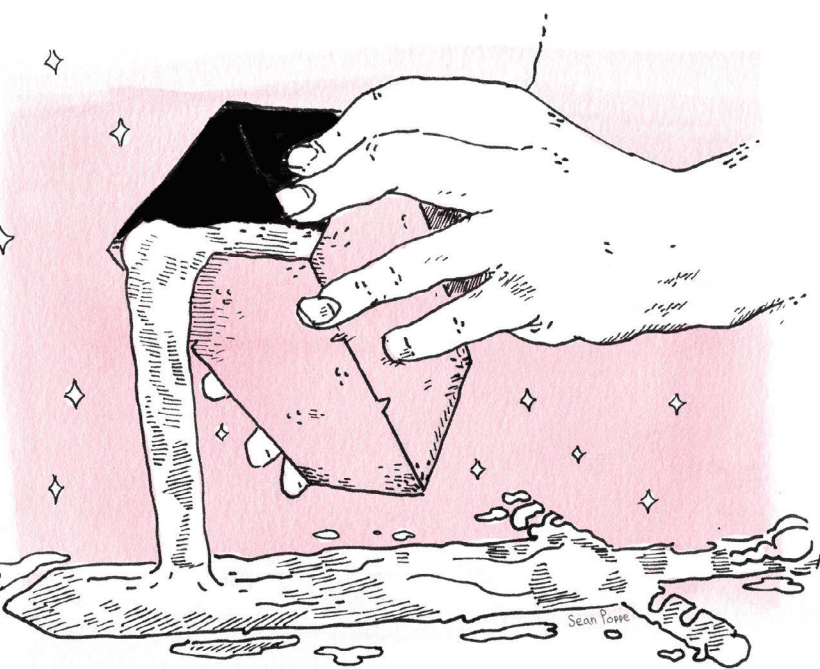
To be used with Adventures on Dungeon Planet,
Space Wurm vs. Moonicorn, or a tech-heavy Dungeon World setting.

Illustrations by Sean Poppe.

ITEMS

Urn of Liquid Chrome 1 weight

This small, angular urn made from a smooth, unknown material is filled with dense liquid metal. This liquid can be poured out and shaped into any small object the character is capable of making. When the lid of the urn is closed, any liquid metal left outside will turn hard as steel. When the urn is left open near the object, the metal will turn back into liquid and flow inside the urn in a matter of seconds.



Mecha Armor Ultra Suit (MAUS) Type II Personal Protection Unit

The creators of the MAUS Type II have long since disappeared, leaving little knowledge of how to fashion or repair these machines. The gleaming chrome protects the wearer from harm, and thousands of tiny gemstone bearings power the suit and keep the perfectly interlocking joints from seizing-up.

When you burn 100 credits worth of gemstones in the combustion core affixed to the large back piece, the “eyes” of the unit will glow neon pink, and the chest compartment will open, allowing you to slide inside the armored core. **When you slide into the armored core and attempt to operate the control panel you find there,** your attacks gain the following tags so long as you are inside the unit: precise, messy, forceful. Then, roll +INT. *On a 10+, choose 3 from the list below. *On a 7-9, choose 2. *On a miss, choose 1, and the GM gets to make a move.

- The MAUS Type II doesn't breakdown after you exit the armored core.
- You can launch a single attack from the laser and servo mechanisms that does $b[2d10+4]$ damage.
- Damage you take while inside the armored core is reduced by half.

When you exit the unit, roll 1d6. On a 1, the unit is powered down and cannot be operated again unless you burn another 100 credits worth of gemstones.

Beast Scrambler

1 weight

This rectangular metal box has a grid of polished, black glass on top and a switch on one side. The rest is covered in geometric slits and writing in a script you don't understand. If you press the switch, the box will produce a low humming sound. When you leave it humming in the middle of camp, no animals will bother the party during rest. **When you hold the switch and point the device at a beast or group of beasts**, the device begins to shake, and the humming turns into a loud rumbling. Roll. *On a hit, the target beasts act erratically. *On a 12+, hold 5. *On a 10+, hold 3. *On a 7-9, hold 1. *On a miss, the scrambler affects you instead; take a debility of your choice other than Scarred. So long as you have hold to spend, the following are available to you:

- Spend 1 hold to deal 1d6 damage to a target beast.
- Spend 3 hold to make a target beast flee.
- Spend 5 hold to make a target beast die on the spot.

CUSTOM MOVES

Alien Artifacts

The universe is littered with the relics of alien civilisations long since turned to dust. The universe is also littered with space-yahoos whose first instinct is to pick up these unknown alien artifacts and poke them to see what they do.

When you examine an alien artifact, roll +INT.

*On a 10+, choose 3 from the list below. *On a 7-9, choose 2.

- You learn the artifact's purpose and how to use it.
- The artifact is still usable.
- No one is harmed.
- You may take +1 to your next roll to understand a similar artifact.
- You may ask the GM one question about the artifact's last owner.

Pink Dustlight

This small cloud of radiant pink specks is usually found in the depths of the wilderness, floating among trees and rocks of bizarrely perfect shape.

When your skin comes in contact with the pink dustlight, the cloud engulfs you and the light enters your body. Roll +CHA. *On a miss, your physical features become more symmetrical; increase your Charisma by any amount you wish, but lower your Constitution by an equal amount (minimum 1). *On a hit, as above, but the pink dustlight will stay inside your body for a time, under your command. You can release pink streaks of light which can manipulate objects at a distance. *On a 10+, as above, but you can choose to avoid the pink dustlight's attempt to make your appearance more symmetrical.

History's Greatest Villains

When an advanced alien lifeform forces you to fight a group of history's greatest villains, work with the GM to determine the identity of the villains and roll. *On a 10+, choose 3 from the list below. *On a 7-9, choose 1.

- You are joined by one of the great heroes or philanthropists from history.
- One of the villains is known to be cowardly and will break when pushed.
- One of the villains is known to have a weakness for people of your type.
- You have some sort of connection with one of the historical figures. Explain that connection to the GM and then take +1 forward the first time you deal with that figure.



MONSTERS

Visceral Breeder

Group, Small, Devious, Amorphous

Tail-lash (d4 damage 1 piercing) 9 HP 2 armor

Close

Special Qualities: Flight

A visceral breeder appears as a ball of smooth, pink-gray flesh the size of a large dog, with leathery wings and a long, whip-like tail. It will attempt to swoop down, lasso a victim, and then lift them into the air. It will then attempt to squirt its milky-white breeding fluid into the mouth of its prey. If it succeeds, the victim is impregnated, with a new breeder growing quickly inside the victim's intestines. After a two-week period, an adolescent breeder the size of a football will burst from the victim's stomach.

Instinct: To impregnate a victim

- Swoop and snatch with whip-like tail
- Squirt breeding fluid into victim's mouth

Mx12 Mono-goose

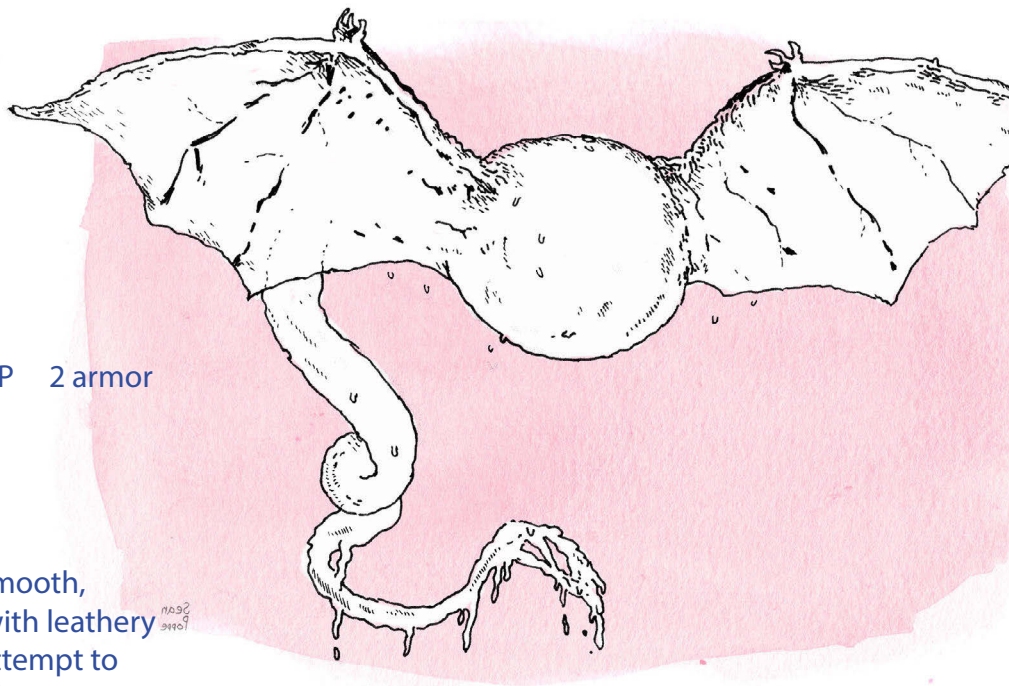
Group, Tiny, Organized, Construct

Shredding Mono-filament wire (b[2d8] damage 2 piercing) 6 HP 0 armor

Hand

Special Qualities: Follows simple instructions from authorized personnel

The Mx12 Mono-goose is the ultimate cybernetic guard dog! Each unit is small enough to be stored in a shoebox-sized recharging booth, and can patrol narrow shafts and crawl spaces. Built like a metallic weasel, the Mx12 is equipped with patches of mono-filament carbon wire that can score metal and separate flesh from bone with ease.



These devices are incredibly fast and can operate solo or as a team. Smart enough to distinguish intruders and follow simple orders.

Instinct: To tear into an intruder

- Shred flesh
- Shrieking alarm call
- Patrol

Security Drone #0093

Solitary, Stealthy, Intelligent, Amorphous

Dynamic Power Thrust (b[2d10+4] damage 3 piercing) 19 HP 4 armor

Close, Forceful, Near, Far

Special Qualities: "Engage self-repair nano-bots!"

Security Drone #0093 is an octopoid robot with razor tentacles and a central AI node that pulsates in different colors when speaking or engaging one of its numerous security protocols.

Instinct: To protect a secured area from intruders.

- "Activate octo-laser array!"
- "Initialize electromagnetic ultra-pulse!"
- "Begin biometric identification protocol!"

PLACES OF POWER

The Spear

Bursting from the land is a giant mechanized spear that reaches so far up it has pierced the atmosphere of the world. It leans in an awkward arrangement of foreign architecture and is encased in a protective, revolving shield. When approached, the protection generates melodies and sounds of an alien origin. Whether in warning or a desperate attempt to communicate is, as yet, unknown.

The Traveling Wheel of the Crimson Eye

A colossal stone wheel that slowly rolls along the countryside, crushing everything that is firmly rooted, too slow, too dumb, or too unfortunate to move out of its path. In the center of the wheel is a gyroscopic room consisting entirely of thick rubied glass. The inside pulses with an infernal light.

The Undercog

As you walk, you feel the muffled rumbling of the Undercog—a massive machine, of unknown purpose, churning away just a few feet under the surface. At seemingly random times, but actually on some eternal, sadistic clock, the ground will open wide and one of the Undercog's machinized maws will swallow up anything and everything above. Whatever powers this geared hell, whatever alien things are found deep in its engineering, remain as of yet undiscovered.

Bones of the World Eater

On the dunes of the Desert of Violet Sands on Agnar Prime lies the skeleton of the World Eater, the largest worm to have ever lived. Now the dread beast rests eternal, but deep beneath the planet's surface, the tip of its gargantuan tail still lingers in the core, into which the magic of the great spell that took the creature's life has seeped. The bones act as a conduit for that power, and any who step into the great maw of the worm's skull can still feel the thrum of the planet's heart, brimming with arcane energy.

The Stone Sea

Surrounded by a ring of jagged mountains, the Stone Sea lays absolutely flat. Composed of a strange material resembling pale rose quartz, its mirror-polished surface extends for leagues. Every twenty-third day, at high noon, a pulse of pinkish energy (referred to by locals as the "tide") extends from the surface. Any material caught in this tide—from sand, leaves, or other detritus blown in from the rim, to animals or anyone foolish enough to be caught in it—vanishes without a trace. About a third of the way from the southern edge, a crater mars the otherwise perfect surface, shattering the surrounding area like a fist into glass. Just after the sun sets, something inside the crater casts an eerie green glow.

The Behemoth

Covered in vines and leaf debris, the behemoth sits silently in the jungle. Its treads, each wider than most roads, sink slowly into the mud as its massive array of gun hatches point patiently up at the sky, a promise of apocalyptic fury. No sound or heat escapes its impenetrable hull, but the atmosphere is thick with anticipation and dread. No one knows, or can even imagine, what foe this giant machine is waiting in ambush to strike.

The Roots

A windowless, circular room deep below a city. The walls are completely covered in what appear to be segmented, metal roots. The roots converge in the precise center of the room to form a pedestal. An empty, translucent egg the size of a hogshead sits atop the pedestal as if it had grown there.

The Stitch

In the high mountain pass known as the Cut, a mile-long section is barely wide enough for a wagon to pass. On the western edge of this section, a series of waist-high pillars alternate on either side of a narrow, lightless crack. The edges of the cleft are clearly unaligned—outcroppings from one side butt up against similar features on the other side, but the edges are sharp, and without visible erosion. Approaching the pillars, a palpable energy, nearly a vibration, can be felt emanating from them. Locals claim that this is where the Cut was stitched.

The Burning Dome

The flat grasslands of the Burning Plains have exactly one visible feature: a bulbous, translucent dome squatting long and low on the horizon. From the outside it is impossible to see into the dome, as the material it is made of is thick enough to distort any light passing through it beyond visual comprehension. On the inside, however, it is said one can see any place whose light reaches the dome. To find the entrance, simply survive the heat from the intense energy the dome coalesces around itself, as well as the conflagrations that occasionally sweep the plains, giving them their name. A trivial task.



3*12 Pieces of Cosmetic Cyberware



Neon synth hair pulses with light every time the bass drops.



Subdermal scars let you show off your 'battle wounds,' can be edited to look 'faded and old' or 'fresh and throbbing'.



Muskbags keep you smelling sweet or savory, never sour.



Retractable leg and elbow pads for the inner city skater on-the-go, or the service worker who spends long hours on his knees.



Disco-Skin! This sub-dermal plating is specialized for becoming a walking, talking, pop-culture medium!



Belly Buster XL. Get that svelt midsection you've always wanted! Now comes in 6, 8, and 12 pack models!



OctoJunk. Genitals are replaced with a cluster of highly-sensitive, prehensile tendrils, surrounding a self-lubricating orifice. Tendrils can vibrate, soften, or harden at will.



TinderXP: RLVR FPS. Enjoy other people's hookups. Voyeur much?



Tattoos that play music when traced by a finger.



Nose chains that are actually ornate cables for jacking-in.



A RosePellet a day keeps the stink away - because your shit should smell like roses.



Gest8. Just for the experience. Available in multi-gender formats.



Subcutaneous bio-luminescent spheres form and reform in various patterns and colours.



Cybernetic cat ears that turn toward sounds at mental command.



Fold-down thumb lighter; optional pressure pad to light at the flick of a finger.



Realistic plastic face that can split open to reveal the muscle, bone, and teeth, all safely protected by transparent bioplas.



Shineskin. Protect yourself from those harmful UV rays, and look fabulous doing it!



Fiberoptic hair that glows soft and white.



Polarized, auto-darkening eyes, for protection against bright sunlight and even brighter neon.



Silver colored teeth and lips, all shiny and chrome, because obviously we had to include something like that.



Modified genitals. They light up, they pulse, they hum, they vibrate, and if you pay enough, they do all the above.



DoubleMe! This neural graft transmits the five senses to whoever is paired with you via BlueMesh. They feel what you feel, and you feel what they do! Double the pleasure, double the fun!



Semi-prehensile facial tendrils. Glow spots cost extra.



Bionic fingers with an extra finger-bone each. You know what they say about guys with big hands!



Holographic shoulder dragon.



Pop-up forearm glitter guns.



DreamBrite! Dream pow wow in wifihifi! Realtime dream network shareware! Nasal probe five pack.



AnyStyle™ hair. Cybernetic implants with nano 3D printers allow you to grow hair of any length in seconds! Comes with 7 default styles, with new looks available as premium DLC.



Bioluminescent proteins make your veins neon yellow.



Bebemon Stable! Subdermal forearm sheath houses and provides nutrients for up to 30 Bebemon! Track your Bebemon's health and EvoStats on your device of choice with the Bebemon Trainer App! Recommended age: 3+ (Bebemon not included).



Take small pets with you anywhere with the BosomBuddy system! Let your friends watch as your little pals traverse a habitrail built directly into your body!



Armtender brand cyberarms: hands dispense drinks via the fingers, liqueurs are mixed in the forearms, tubes connect to alcohol bottles in a belt.



Breezeylocks, hair that always dances as if in the wind.



E-ink tattoos that shift color to reflect your mood.



Holographic overlays change how you look based on outside perceptions of yourself.



Catsploitation. Sometimes you just want to give your meatsack the night off, right? Subject a feline to some minor invasive brain surgery and you're all set!

CREDITS

Cover page

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#chrome_rot.exe

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Nineteen Science Fantasy Elements for Dungeon World

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Urn of Liquid Chrome item by Fred Bednarski

Beast Scrambler by Fred Bednarski

Pink Dustlight by Fred Bednarski

Alien Artifacts custom move by Mark Tygart

History's Villains custom move by Daniel Fowler

MX12 Mono-goose monster by Daniel Fowler

Security Drone #093 monster by Jason Cordova

Visceral Breeder monster by Jason Cordova

The Spear by Fraser Simons

The Traveling Wheel of the Crimson Eye by Jim Jones

The Undercog by Phillip Wessels

Bones of the World Eater by Scott Selvidge

The Stone Sea by Lester Ward

The Behemoth by Daniel Fowler

The Roots by River Williamson

The Stitch by Scott Heyden

The Burning Dome by Derek Grimm

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Miscellany: Three dozen cosmetic cybernetics

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