

A Tale of Two vehicles: The Water Quest

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ASSUMED GAME WORLD: The Starship Warden, Deck 8, as presented in *Metamorphosis Alpha to Omega* (see p. 110-115).

BASE GAME ENGINE: *Gamma World second edition*.

Background:

For generations, the Tribe of Man has dwelt within the ruins of "Pilgrim City", the remains of the glorious civilization of the Ancients (the area in the southeast corner of the deck covered by the ruins of the apartment city). Life has been harsh; but through hunting, rooftop agriculture, and the flow of water, which still pervades the city's pipe system, Mankind has maintained its precarious existence. All this is threatened however, as the flow of water has ceased. Some weeks ago, the pipes dried up in the section of the city held by men (area A5; and also within the empty quarter just to this section's west), so that the men of Man must now travel into Badder territory or worse to retrieve the liquid of life. Attrition has followed in disaster's wake, and the anger and frustration is mounting. Already three tribesmen have succumbed to mutant predators on water runs, and the amount of water to be found within Manish territory is achingly small.

Some days ago, a reliable scout scouring the empty sector of the city spotted a glowing ball of light in an old plaza. On closer investigation, a vehicle of Ancient make could be seen within the glow, but the scout could not enter the light because of an odd "freezing effect" that took place whenever the scout tried. In any event, they were soon pursued by a huge mutant horror with two heads, and barely escaped with their life. Before having to flee however, the scout did make out that the vehicle had official markings- a sign of benevolence in forgotten times. Perhaps the vehicle is part of the answer to the tribe's misery? To find the answer, the Clan of Man has dispatched some of its bravest heroes, to wander the wasted city and investigate this mystery- enter the PCs.....

How to use this module:

As presented, this scenario can stand upon its own and present a Ship Master (for such is what a Game Master is called in *Metamorphosis Alpha*) with a simple set of two linked encounter sites, suitable for a few hour's play. In this case the "scout" can be any character the SM desires. However, the author created this adventure for his own campaign to be the culmination of the story he began for his PCs in "The Quest for Elvis" and "Beyond the Wall of the World". The thread of play flowed as follows:

The lack of water was what spurred the Tribal Elders to send the PCs to seek the advice of "The Great King". The "King", when consulted, played the ancient song "*Cold Kentucky Rain*" by Elvis, which the elders interpreted to mean was a divine command to find the ancient lands of Kentucky (see "The Quest for Elvis"). Ancient wisdom taught that Kentucky was an Ancient Kingdom in the SOUTHERN lands (which must now lay beyond the never-yet-penetrated "Wall of the World" to the south), so the party was sent through the "Haunts of the Warrens" to try and find a way through the Wall. This led to the rescue and befriending of the wanderer "SaraBeth" (see "Beyond the Wall of the World"). SaraBeth was the "scout" who rewarded the party with the knowledge that in their wanderings, she and her now-late

companions had seen an “Ancient Vehicle of Aid” in the ruins north and west of the World Hatch she was seeking (see the background story above).

When combined in this manner, the three modules together provide a satisfying larger quest, which can last up to nine hours of real time game play.

Vehicle 1:

The location of this encounter is in the “empty quarter” of the city, an area known for its toxic substances and radioactivity. It is just 1 km north of the “Haunts of the Warrens” (area A7) and 5 km from the territory claimed by the Tribe of Man (area A5). It is in fact just on the edge of the area hunted by the Arks (area A1), and the Ship Master should make the party feel ill at ease with distant howls drifting through the ruins and back alleyways of the dead Apartment City.

Following the instructions given to them, the party comes upon a glowing blue ball of light in the northwest corner of a city plaza. On further inspection, it can be seen that the ball of light surrounds an ancient vehicle of some type, with official markings on its sides (although through the bluish haze its difficult to make out just what these markings are). The vehicle is a convertible, and seems to have no wheels visible, but rather some sort of support struts; although it appears to have landed in an off-kilter fashion, and now stands lop-sided within the light. The wreck in question is a hover jeep, formerly (in pre-disaster days) in the service of the city’s Medical Response Division. The circuitry within the vehicle is shot, and without extreme work and repair parts (both of which are beyond the capacity of the tribe of Man to procure) it will never fly again. The ball of light is a pocket of frozen time, produced by a **Time-Freeze™** **Porta-Unit** in the back compartment (the game details of which can be found below in the “New Tech” section). This particular unit has been well used, having only the juice left for 2 more max uses. The pilot thought that the hydrogen battery was to blame for his jeep’s loss of power, and activated the time-freeze unit after he had disconnected the 50 kg battery under the hood and set off to find a recharging station. Unfortunately for him, he only got as far as the southeast side of the plaza (near the base of an ugly statue of a Portuguese opera singer) when some horrible mutant monstrosity disemboweled him (Kitty; see below). Parts of his corpse, still draped in the tatters of the cybernetic armor he was wearing at the time of the attack, still lay crumpled at the base of the effigy. The armor now has huge destructive holes ripped in it, making it useless, and his sword is broken in three places, but in an upper zippered pocket a yellowed scrap of paper can be found with the following lines written on it in the common tongue:

A mighty slave in tiny cave
Trapped within a darkened light
Caged in metal, freed by rubber
A triple boon, a magic sight.

This was a reminder note to the deceased concerning the code word to unlock the **wrist unit** he still wears which controls the Time-Freeze™ Porta-Unit within the jeep; that code word is “Jinni”. Only by use of this artifact can the party lower the time freeze field and get access to the jeep. The vehicle-sized battery has been exposed to the elements these many months, and is now ruined, but still lays near the mangled remains.

Within the back compartment of the jeep with the Time-Freeze™ Porta-Unit is a dead mutant humanoid- dead for many months now, but kept in a state of perfect preservation by the

time freeze field. The body wears chain mail armor and has a battle axe, and is still warm to the touch. A leather bag sits at the body's feet, laying on the Time-Freeze™ Porta-Unit, which contains a flint and steel, 6 torches, a weird antler of some sort and some jerkied meat. The cause of death was radiation, and the corpse and its armor (though not the axe, porta-unit or bag) is radioactive to an intensity of 8, which will affect anyone who comes close enough to touch any of the jeep's contents. Laying on the front seat is a **Medi-Kit** (see R. p. 37-38). This particular unit is still full. In the glove compartment of the passenger side are several paper scraps, and under these is a particularly small (no less powerful, but easy to conceal) **Mark V Blaster pistol**, with a Hydrogen Cell fully charged (it's a shame the driver chose to only take his spear and sword.....)

Welded into the front dashboard of the jeep is a **Computer Email transmitter**. Any attempt to remove the unit will require tools, a good day's work, and a complexity rating of "E" attempt. Failure indicates the destruction of the unit. This is an email/voice-mail sender/receiver, capable of communication with other similar units or AI units (if the correct e-addresses are known). Powered by a Hydrogen energy cell, each full battery powers the unit for 1 wk's use. This unit has 3 day's worth of power left before the unit must be replaced. When removed the unit is bulky, easily damaged, and weighs 12 kg. While the PCs are busy about the contents of the jeep, this unit will begin to flash and a robotic voice will declare in Ancient that there is an incoming email. A printout of the message will slide from a slot in the dash (again in Ancient) requesting aid from all available service vehicles for a Water and Electrics unit nearby responding to a "level 7 situation", with a map of the city showing the unit's location. No further information will be given; although a tech savvy individual can print off more copies. This map clearly shows the way to the unit 5 km away to the north, and PCs who follow its directions will be able to proceed to "Vehicle 2".

Ambush:

As the PCs begin to depart the jeep's ruins, they will notice a horrendous mutant stalking up on them across the plaza to the south. This is "**Kitty**", and she is quite hungry..... (For Kitty's stats and description, see the Critter Library section below.) Kitty is cunning and a predator, but she is unlikely to fight to the death. If the party puts up a good fight, Kitty will decide less painful prey must be about somewhere. Kitty WILL relentlessly track fleeing prey however, and has no aversion to water.....

Vehicle 2:

As the PCs follow the printout, they come upon a section of the city 7 km north of the crash-landed jeep (still within the empty quarter) where the streets have buckled downward, and are now flooded, along with the lower level of the surrounding "Bones of the Ancients". Much damage has been done to the structures, and it looks as though something has collapsed underground. This area also lays near the pack territory of the Arks, but here no sounds of the Wolfoid's presence can be heard (the canines don't like the water, and they have come to fear the horrors that have made their homes within it). The green oily water begins by simply lapping at their feet, but as they progress, it grows to a depth of 1m. Debris floats here and there, and the water has a rancid, polluted smell. This area of sunken devastation is 1/2 kilometer in diameter. As the party nears its center, they enter an area not only flooded and sunken, but filled with a rolling thick hazy fog created by the presence of the **Nitrodjinn** that dwells within. This fog makes normal vision difficult and infravision useless, and makes artificial light sources counter productive (see below, and also the description of Nitrodjinn). Should the mutant be killed, this

fog will slowly, over the course of 2-3 hours, clear off. Parked in the water at the spot indicated on the map (and in the very middle of the fog banks, so as to be nearly invisible until the party walks right into it) is an over-sized, futuristic-looking 18 wheeler, marked with the tell-tale markings of the Water and Electrics department. The back of the truck can be entered by a slide door, and on one of its sides is another large slide door reached by a sturdy metal ramp, now extended into the water. Neither of the apertures is open however, and require official I.D. cards to operate from the outside (janitorial staff on up). From inside the trailer, the doors can be opened by the push of simple buttons, and a second ramp can be extended from the rear entrance or the side ramp retracted. Otherwise, to be opened the doors must be destroyed by powered weapons, each requiring 75 hp damage and being AC 8. The glass in the driver's cockpit is intact, although there are cracks running about the forward windshield. A humanoid Robot sits at the wheel; lights still flash across its body but it sits perfectly still, gripping the wheel. This is a **General Household Robot** programmed for Driver and Water and Electric service, but it currently is in a standby state (see below; Hp. 20, see R. p. 60). It will not respond to the PCs at this point in any way. The two side hatches into the cab are unlocked, and the party can gain entrance through either of these once they reach them.

Ambush 2:

Hiding in the scummy water near the truck is an **Ameebie** (Hd: 18; Hp: 55. Mor: 5; Ameebies are found in *Mutant Manual II* in issue 108 of *Dragon Magazine*). This being is not allied with the Nitrojinn which has claimed the repair unit as its own, but has found the fog fortuitous for its hunting purposes and will attack any flesh beings it doesn't know nosing around the truck. For its part, the Nitrodjinn doesn't consider the Ameebie a threat, and so is content to allow the microbe to hunt in its territory. Currently, the Ameebie is in its amorphous shape, and hidden under the surface of the water. Observant characters may notice small ripples in the water as the blob sloshes towards them, or those with truly superior hearing might detect a sloshing sound; otherwise it will attack with complete surprise when the party is least expecting it. It does have a low morale however, and should the encounter go against it it will flee back under water-although, if it feels it can, it will attempt to alert the truck's occupant by swimming under the belly of the truck and banging lowly on its under-chasse. Such an action has a 40% of alerting the NitrodJinn that something is coming (the Ameebie is intelligent, and will use the Nitrodjinn to kill its prey if it can't). If alerted the Nitrodjinn will be ready for the adventurers and will fight to the best of its advantage to keep sentient animal or human beings from messing with its home.

The Truck:

This maintenance truck was dispatched by the central deck 8 A.I. to deal with the crushed water lines when the collapse occurred some weeks ago. However, the reactor aboard the vehicle is faulty, and when it was activated to power the engineering robot within the trailer, it produced a **NitrodJinn**. This creature intuitively understood the technology of the truck, and quickly moved past the powering up robot and used the control panel in the trailer to place the robots on perpetual standby. This was the most it could do since the control of the units in this case is being directed from the deck's central computer, and it would have sent other units to deal with any detected complete deactivation. This order even affected the robot driving the rig, so that all robotic effort is now waiting for the order to recommence the repair effort. Since the takeover, the NitrodJinn has been doing whatever it is that such life-forms find meaningful (which would be unfathomable to men or mutated animals), and has no intentions of allowing sentients to reacquire the vehicle. It is locked to the area around the truck anyway due to its

dependence on the rig's nuclear pile, and so it will fight to the death (Hp: 50, Nitrojdjins are described in *Mutants, men(?), and machines* in issue 75 of *Dragon Magazine*).

The 18-wheeler, though exceedingly large, is of a somewhat standard layout for such vehicles, consisting of a boxed-in trailer and a cab unit (powered by a diesel engine which still has some gas and is currently off) which has two compartments, a driver's seat area and a large back area where a driver could if he needed sleep. This area is grimy and covered with old blankets, worm eaten pillows, and magazines of every description withering with age. A linked set of panels in the cab and trailer unit (connected by a "liquid plastic" extender tube when activated) allows for passage between the two if the rig is straight (as it currently is) and one knows how to work the mechanism (Tech level "A"). The plates are air tight, as are the entrance panels in the rear and side of the trailer. Within the trailer is a nuclear pile with a broadcast power transmitter to power a **Heavy Engineering Bot**, which takes up most of the trailer (see R. p. 59, Hp: 150). Due to the nuclear pile's defects, an intensity 4 radiation fills the inside of the trailer- not powerful enough to harm the Engineering Bot or the Nitrojdjinn, but who can say regarding the PCs? Also here is a small command center for controlling the robot manually (if the deck level computer allows it- which in this case it won't) or to turn on, off, and put in standby the repair unit's robots (tech level "C"). This unit consists of a built in control panel and attached leather seat. An Automatic Coffee Unit (tech level "A") is welded into the command center as well; this atomizes coffee from air molecules on command to the setting desired by the coffee seeker. This unit has lost its built in coffee mug however, so that coffee now summoned will spill all over. To remove the coffee unit requires tools, skills, and a tech roll of "B", but once removed it is lightweight and sturdy. Failure to make the roll results in a broken unit.

Wrapping Up:

If the Nitrojdjinn is successfully dealt with, the PCs can use the control panel to take the robots off standby. If they do this, the deck's computer moves them into action, and the Heavy Engineering Bot will have the water situation fixed within a day's time (which should be an amazing thing to behold!). This is the goal of the mission, and a kind SM should gently steer the party in this direction. The truck will then take the robot back on board and leave the city, heading back to Factory 2: The Nonlethal Robotic Unit Forge (area F2). Should the PCs choose to follow or ride the truck, this could result in another adventure for the party. Should the PCs be so dumb as to try and break or overpower the robots (other than putting them in standby), or otherwise seize the rig, the deck level computer will dispatch **3 Security Robots** to deal with the problem, who will arrive within an hour's time. There are tracking micro-chips in both the trailer and the cab, so that the deck's central A.I. always knows where the unit is..... (if needed, see R. p. 60 Hp; 30 each). If the PCs enable the robot to complete its task, the water begins to flow again back within the ruins claimed by the Tribe of Man. Once the PCs return, they will be greeted as saviors and heroes, bought round-after-round of fermented root brew, and most likely will have to dodge several unwanted offers of marriage.....

CRITTER LIBRARY:

Ameebies (Shapeless Ones) (From "*Mutant Manual II*" in Dragon Magazine 108, by Dan Snuffin)

NUMBER: 1

MORALE: 1d8

HIT DICE: 8d6 + CN

ARMOR: 8 (see below)

SIZE: Variable (see below)

LAND SPEED: 2/150/3 (as blob), 8/600/12 (as humanoid)

MS: 1d6 + 2

IN: 1d10 + 8

DX: 2d10

CH: 1d6

CN: 2d10

PS: 2d10 + 5

ATTACKS: Suffocation (see below)

ORIGINAL STOCK: Artificially produced microbe (?)

MUTATIONS: Diminished senses (D; no senses of hearing, taste, or smell), new sense (universal-direction vision), physical reflection (variant, vs. cold and blunt weapons), shape-change (limited), regeneration, vision defect (D; severe), and two unique mutations (poison immunity and telepathic immunity)

HABITAT: Subarctic to temperate forests

DIET: Any organic matter

DESCRIPTION: Ameebies may be descended from giant microbes produced in genetic-engineering laboratories during the Shadow Years, though little else is known of their origins. An ameebie has two forms. The first is that of an amorphous blob, roughly 2-3 m in diameter. The blob is omnivorous and attacks living prey by attempting to stretch out, envelope, and smother the victim. A successful "to hit" roll means the ameebie has extended a pseudopod and successfully covered the victim's face. (Being rather intelligent, the ameebie knows where to aim.) The victim takes 2d6 damage per Action Turn thereafter until either it or the ameebie is slain. Blunt weapons (clubs, maces, etc.) do no damage to the ameebie in this form, as it can reshape itself to absorb the blow's impact.

The ameebie's second form is that of a humanoid being, devoid of facial features, hair, and so forth. This form is about 1.5m tall, and takes 2 Action Turns without interruption to assume. In this form, the ameebie cannot digest prey, as it is using all of its energy to maintain the humanoid shape. It is not known if ameebies can assume other forms.

Ameebies cannot be affected by cold. They automatically form a hard, rubbery surface when subjected to cold temperatures, and actually gain 1 armor class level for every 10 hit points of cold damage they absorb (even from mutant cold-generating powers). The lowest armor class they can attain is AC 3.

Ameebies are quite intelligent and may join adventuring parties out of curiosity. They see by using thousands of minute eyespots over their bodies. Though severely myopic (missing all objects further than 10 m away), they cannot be surprised within their limited visual range.

Ameebies are deaf, but have normal senses of touch. They eat any organic matter, being immune to poisons. Some ameebies have learned to communicate with other beings using very rudimentary sign language. They also regenerate any physical damage they take.

Nothing is known about how ameebies reproduce, though it is guessed that they use budding or fission. Ameebies cannot be contacted by using telepathic powers of any sort. For some reason, they seem to avoid their own kind, and are only encountered singly.

“Kitty”

Number: Unique Mutant, 2 headed spine-covered Mountain Lion

Morale: 9

Hit Dice: 17

Hit Points: 50

Armor: 7

Land Speed: 12/1800/36

MS: 10

DX: 15

INT: 6

PS: 17

Attacks: 2 Bites 1d8

2 Claws 1d6

With a successful pounce and pin, 2 bites/4 claws against the same target

Mutations: New Body Parts- New head, Spines (brushing against Kitty results in 2d6 damage), Physical Reflection- Electro magnetic, Radar, Mental Paralysis, Regeneration, Skin Structure Change- Dry & Flaky (D), Diminished Sense- Deaf beyond 3 meters (D)

Description: For all of Kitty’s horrific mutations, she is still just a cunning predator (albeit with two heads to search, hear, smell, and bite with). Just recently Kitty has had to fight her way out against a General Household Robot which mistook Kitty for the long lost family cat (it tried to take her home and bathe her), so she is sore, hungry, and in a nasty disposition.....

NITRODJINN (Taken from “*Mutants, Men(?) and Machines*” in Dragon Magazine 75, by Roger Moore)

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVE: 6

HIT DICE: 17

% IN LAIR: 100%

ATTACKS: See below

ORIGINAL STOCK: Unknown

MUTATIONS: Absorption, illusion generation, life leech, weather manipulation

The nocturnal creature of desolate areas known as the Nitrodjinn is a rare and strange being. Each creature is invariably associated with an atomic energy source such as a reactor or large battery, from which it appears to draw its life force. Each being manipulates the local weather conditions to produce a thick fog for a 100-meter radius around the atomic power source.

Unless opponents can see in the ultra-violet spectrum, the Nitrodjinn is completely invisible to the casual observer while within the fog. In ultraviolet light or when seen without the surrounding fog, this being appears to have a vaguely humanoid torso with four arms and a featureless head. The lower half of the body is a long serpentine form stretching along the ground all the way back to the power source. The Nitrodjinn may move a maximum of 150 meters from the atomic source, and no more: if forced beyond this point, it will die immediately.

Nitrodjinns may use their life leech ability within a 30-meter radius of the creature's head. They may also use illusion generation, making shapes of men and monsters appear and disappear in the fog, misleading adventurers until they stumble into a hidden trap or pitfall. Nitrodjinns have a mental strength of 18.

They may also attack physically, four attacks per round, and each strike from a hand will drain one point of dexterity from the opponent for 2-12 hours. If an opponent has his or her dexterity reduced to zero in this manner (multiple hits are cumulative), death occurs. The absorption abilities of the Nitrodjinn apply to any form of cold or gaseous attacks, and the creatures are immune to all poisons.

Nitrodjinn fog reduces normal visibility to one meter, makes infravision useless, but does not affect ultravision. Any strong light source within the fog will create a "white-out" effect, and makes all opponents without ultravision take a -4 to hit penalty from the partial blindness resulting from it. Nitrodjinns seem to be very highly intelligent and know how to best utilize their powers for defensive and offensive purposes.

The Nitrodjinn's torso is roughly man-sized, and the snake-like lower body is about 1/4 meter in diameter. As these beings are partially composed of energy, they are only semi-material and hence have such a low armor class. If the power source of a Nitrodjinn is destroyed, the creature will be destroyed as well.

NEW TECH:

Time-Freeze™ Porta-Unit: This blue Metallic cylinder weighs 100 kilograms and has a rubber grip handle built into its top. Two plastic tabs support it on its bottom and allow it to rest secure on a flat surface. It is controlled by a wrist unit with many buttons and a small display screen, which a man could wear as a wrist watch. When activated, this unit produces a stasis field of frozen time (for effects, see A. 13, "Chatham Center"). Using the wrist controls, this field can be made as small as 2 m around the unit, up to a maximum of 20m. The power is an internal Fusion battery of unique design; thus far a replacement technique or replacement batteries have yet to be discovered by any of the known civilized races. Each battery has enough energy to support 30 small uses (up to a day's use), 20 medium uses (over a day, but up to a month) or 10 long uses (over a month). The wrist unit and base unit together have a complexity rating of "D".