

MATRIX CUBED LOG BOOK



STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.®

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◆ INTRODUCTION

1990-2050

Remnants of the old-time Soviet hardliners launch the space weapons platform: Masterlink. U.S. strategists send the American ace Anthony "Buck" Rogers to destroy Masterlink. Buck is sent up in an experimental spaceplane outfitted with a new cryogenic system for high altitude ejection. Masterlink is destroyed, but Buck Rogers' plane is heavily damaged and his frozen body floats in space.

When Masterlink is destroyed, the Soviet extremists fire a salvo of ballistic missiles at the U.S. The resulting conflict enters history books as the "Last Gasp War." World governments look in horror at the insane danger of escalating arms races and maintaining nuclear arsenals. Governments around the globe disassemble their war machines and power shifts from the national governments to large international alliances, such as the Russo-American Mercantile (RAM), the Euro-Bloc faction, and the Indo-Asian Consortium.

2051-2100

The System States Alliance forms to represent the three big power blocs and fringe Earth nations to help ensure the survival of a depleted and polluted Earth.

Nuclear fusion propulsion technology allows mankind to move out into the solar system. The System States Alliance forms an organized effort to exploit the nearby planets. RAM, having the most clout, grabs rights to Mars, while Luna goes to the Euro-Bloc, and the Indo-Asians take Venus. Initial interest in the planets is for resources. True colonization is slow at first, as mankind both adapts to alien environments and adapts the environments to mankind.

2101-2400

Trips to the planets become commonplace, and terraforming technology has transformed the surfaces of Mars and Venus to become more habitable for humans. Genetic engineering skills develop new life forms, called gennies, that can be tailored to nearly any environment or function.

In 2275 RAM, groaning under an increasingly repressive Earth government, rebels. Ten years of war follow. Cut off from much needed extraterrestrial resources, Earth falls into barbarism and her major population centers are left in ruins. At the end of the war, RAM completely dominates the remains of old Earth.

In 2310 refugees from Earth, and others who are discontent under RAM domination, begin a crash program to colonize Mercury. Asteroids are moved into orbit around the planet, and moveable cities are built on the surface. Mercury develops an economy based on mining and solar power.

2401-2455

Mars and Venus, once forbidding alien wastes, have been terraformed and now support populations in the millions. Bases have been established on Mercury and Luna. Colonies float in the edges of the Jupiter gas clouds and cities have been carved out of asteroids.

RAM rules old Earth with cruel efficiency and an iron hand. Its brutal Terrine combat gennies roam the surface and enforce the planet's exploitation.

A daring band of rebels called the New Earth Organization (NEO) is formed to combat RAM domination.

2456

The figure of Buck Rogers has been elevated to nearly mythical status by media hype — he has become a symbol as the last martyr of old Earth's foolish political struggle. In a strange twist of fate Buck Rogers — the myth — is recovered alive from his frozen sleep!

With his tactical genius and fearless daring, Buck Rogers joins NEO in its battle against RAM.

NEO and Buck Rogers form a dangerous plan to subvert RAM control of the Earth. The cornerstone of RAM's dominance of the planet is "Gauntlet," an orbital weapons platform originally constructed by the old Systems States Alliance. Gauntlet had been designed to act as a watchdog against nuclear weapons. Under RAM administration, the station was upgraded to both watch the subservient Earth and completely control all traffic to and from the planet.

Buck steals a squadron of RAM's latest spacefighters, a squadron slated for Gauntlet's defensive force, and attacks the station. The surprise attack is a success. Simund Holzerhein, the head of RAM, decides that without Gauntlet, overt control of Earth is too expensive and orders RAM troops off of the planet. The mood on Earth and in NEO is a combination of excitement and dread. The victory seems easy... too easy.

2457

A team of fresh NEO recruits distinguished themselves in the "Doomsday Mission." They travelled the inner planets collecting evidence that RAM was creating the Doomsday Device, a giant laser capable of cauterizing the Earth and tipping the political balance of the solar system permanently towards RAM. This team tracked the device to a Mercurian mariposa and destroyed it, earning recognition from Buck Rogers himself.

2458 (Now)

Earth is under the control of NEO now, but the shadow of RAM is still present. Occasional attacks by RAM military are explained away as "acts of overanxious officers" and "unfortunate lapses of judgement." NEO scrambles to rebuild a shattered planet and build the forces required to fend off the RAM attack that it feels is inevitable.

◆ CHARACTERS AND TEAMS

To play *MATRIX CUBED*, you must make characters and band them together into a team. The team must have a variety of talents and skills to survive and succeed. The following sections describe making a character and assembling your team.

Character Ability Scores

Every character has seven randomly-generated ability scores that define the person. The scores describe the character's strength, intelligence, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, charisma, and technical knowhow. The base value for each ability is from 3 (low) to 18 (high). Each race has ability modifiers that are automatically factored in when the character is generated. For example, Martians receive a -1 modifier to strength, but they get a +1 bonus modifier to their dexterity. The following sections describe each ability.

Strength (STR) measures physical power and indicates a character's endurance, stamina, and muscle bulk. Strong characters can carry more weight in equipment without becoming encumbered, and they have combat bonuses when fighting with melee weapons (swords, mono knives, etc.).

Dexterity (DEX) measures hand-eye coordination and agility, as well as reaction speed and other reflexes. High dexterity gives characters bonuses to avoid being hit during combat, determines how fast they react, and also determines how well they can fire ranged weapons (laser rifles, bolt guns, etc.) or fly a rocket ship.

Constitution (CON) measures physical toughness and resistance to pain and hardship. High constitution increases the amount of damage a character can withstand before dying.

Intelligence (INT) measures reasoning ability, memory (to some extent), and general wit and cleverness. High intelligence is required for most careers — in the twenty-fifth century, stupidity kills.

Wisdom (WIS) measures common sense and ability to understand the ways of the world. This is the skill that aids Medics in making sound treatments, and keeps Rogues from fleecing the wrong victims. High wisdom gives bonuses to such skills as Tracking and Planetary Survival.

Charisma (CHA) measures persuasiveness and how well others react to a character. Leaders are marked by high charisma, and this ability is valuable when dealing with strangers. High charisma gives bonuses to such skills as Intimidation and Acting.

Tech (TCH) is short for Technical Knowhow, and is a special mix of intelligence and wisdom that measures affinity for machinery and equipment. High tech scores improve such valuable skills as Jury Rigging and First Aid.

The STR, CON, and DEX bonus tables start in the Appendix on page 51. Ability scores can affect skills; see "Skills and Abilities" on page 9 for more information.

Additional Character Attributes

Characters have three attributes that change during the game: Experience Points, Level, and Hit Points.

Experience Points (EXP) measure what a character has learned. Experience points are earned by winning battles, finding money, and completing parts of the adventure. Characters with enough experience points may advance in levels. The Level Advancement Tables begin in the Appendix on page 54.

Level measures a character's career advancement. Characters gain valuable skill points and combat proficiency when they advance in level. When characters have sufficient experience points to go up a level, they must go to the Training Center to receive the additional instruction for advancement.

Example: An eighth level Warrior with 250,000 EXP can train and become ninth level.

No matter how many experience points a character has, only one level can be gained per training session. A character with sufficient EXP to gain two or more levels can train, advance one level, and then lose all EXP in excess of one point less than is required to advance another level.

Example: An eighth level Rogue with 190,000 EXP (enough to advance to tenth level) would train, advance to ninth level, and be left with 159,999 EXP (160,000 would be tenth level). The character could then easily gain the one point needed to advance and then train again.

Characters start the adventure at eighth level.

Hit Points (HP) measure how much damage a character can withstand before becoming unconscious or dead. Characters gain between 1-6 and 1-10 HP per level depending on their career.

The Level Advancement Tables showing experience points requirements for all careers begin on page 54.

◆ CHARACTER RACES

Team members can be any of six races — four human types or two gennies. Terrans, Martians, Venusians, and Mercurians are all, in spite of some genetic engineering, considered humans. Martian Desert Runners and Tinkers are gennies that have been bred to include non-human characteristics with the basic human genotypes. Each race has unique modifiers to basic attributes, and some careers are limited to certain races. The following section describes each of the races.

Terrans are the last of the unengineered humans in the solar system. While the other civilized races have undergone genetic adaptation to suit new planets and environments, the human population on old Earth takes pride in their pure strain. Suffering under the yoke of RAM tyranny has taught the Terrans determination and patience.

Allowable Careers: All *Ability Modifiers:* CON +1, WIS +1

Martians have developed under RAM auspices the oldest and most advanced civilization in the solar system. The Martians themselves tend to be proud to the point of arrogance. Because of the lower Martian gravity and oxygen content, Martians are slightly weaker than Terrans, but about average for other civilized races.

Allowable Careers: All *Ability Modifiers:* STR -1, DEX +1, CON -1, WIS -1, CHA +1

Venusians are a divergent lot. Venus has three distinct cultures beneath its billowing atmosphere. The Aerostators float above the lands, and make their living primarily as tradesmen and herders. The ground-dwelling Aphroditians are farmers, miners, and shrewd traders. And the theocratic Ishtarians are the dominant culture on Venus. They control New Elysium, Venus' only major spaceport.

Allowable Careers: All *Ability Modifiers:* DEX -1, CON +1, WIS +1, CHA -1

Mercurians are a unique and rough mixture of cultures. Originally, Mercury was the site of large solar energy collection stations called Mariposas. The Mercurian Sun Kings are descended from the original Mariposa owners and are quite wealthy. The Sun Kings are renowned for decor that is both fabulously expensive and totally devoid of taste. The remaining three cultural groups on Mercury are descended from the refugees that fled to the planet to escape the turmoil in the rest of the solar system. The Miners inhabit large subterranean warrens shielded from the intense heat. The Musicians are the Mercurian merchant class. The Desert Dancers live on the planet's surface, continually following the shaded side of the planet.

Allowable Careers: All *Ability Modifiers:* STR -1, DEX +1, CON +1

Tinkers were originally bioengineered from small anthropoid species, such as lemurs and gibbons. They were engineered to work in small, cramped spaces. They are very clever with tools and technology.

Allowable Careers: Engineer, Medic *Ability Modifiers:* STR -2, DEX +3, CON -2, TECH +3

Desert Runners are one of the oldest of the bioengineered races, and are bred for the savage Martian surface. Their original purpose was to care for the large herds of animals that were seeded onto the planet during the late stages of terraforming. The Desert Runner engineering adds a mix of canine and feline attributes to the basic homo sapien stock. They can run long distances on all fours, and fight viciously with their retractable claws. Desert Runner's claws allow them to do an extra point of damage if they fight bare-handed.

Allowable Careers: Rocketjock, Warrior, Engineer *Ability Modifiers:* STR +2, DEX +2, CON +1, CHA -1

There are several tables summarizing racial attribute modifiers and allowable careers in the Appendix starting on page 51.

◆ CAREERS

There are five careers for characters to choose from in this game, and each career has a unique set of skills associated with it. Minimum attributes are required for each career choice. For example, Medic characters must have minimum scores of 12 in dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom. When creating characters, the career is selected first, then the computer generates ability scores to fit. Some careers are limited to select races. Each career has a set of Career Skills that the character learns while training for a given occupation.

The following sections describe each career.

Rocketjocks are only truly at home behind the controls of their spacecraft. They pride themselves in their ability to outfly anybody in the galaxy, and too often they're right.

Special Ability: Rocketjocks receive a 10% bonus to all piloting skills.

Ability Score Requirements: DEX 13, INT 11, CHA 12

Eligible Races: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian, Desert Runner

Career Skills:	• Drive Jetcar	• Pilot Fixed Wing
	• Drive Groundcar	• Pilot Rocket
	• Maneuver in Zero G	• Pilot Rotorwing
	• Notice	• Use Jet Pack

Warriors dedicate their lives to mastering the skills of combat. Even with the development of fantastic new weapon technologies, battles are still won and lost by men. Warriors train hard, and they study strategy and leadership in addition to combat skills.

Special Abilities: Because of their rigorous training, Warriors receive bonuses to the amount of damage they can withstand. Warriors can also attack twice per round with their fists where other characters can only attack once. Warriors do one to three points of damage with their bare fists, where other classes only do one to two. Every second level (8th, 10th, 12th . . .)

warriors also receive a specialization bonus to a weapon of their choice. Weapons specialization bonuses can only be a maximum of +3 per weapon.

Ability Score Requirements: STR 10, DEX 8, CON 10, INT 8

Eligible Races: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian, Desert Runner

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Career Skills: | • Battle Tactics | • Move Silently |
| | • Demolitions | • Notice |
| | • Leadership | • Repair Weapon |
| | • Maneuver in Zero G | • Use Jet Pack |

Engineers hold the world together — without them the artifices of technical civilization would crumble. Engineers aren't as cocky or flashy as Rocketjocks, but they have a similar arrogant pride in their abilities. Engineers love machines and fine workmanship. They prefer the company of a cranky ship's power plant to the hubbub of a port bar.

Special Abilities: None

Ability Score Requirements: STR 10, CON 12, INT 8, TECH 13

Eligible Races: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian, Tinker, Desert Runner

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Career Skills: | • Jury Rig | • Repair Life Support |
| | • Maneuver in Zero G | • Repair Mechanical |
| | • Notice | • Repair Nuclear Engine |
| | • Repair Electrical | • Repair Rocket Hull |

Rogues live by wit, cunning, and oftentimes, the misfortune of others. Rogues have talents for fast talking and bypassing security systems. Because of the nature of their work, and their ability to make lasting enemies, Rogues who live to any noticeable age tend to have very fast reflexes.

Special Abilities: Rogues receive a 10% bonus to all Career Skills.

Ability Score Requirements: DEX 13, INT 8, WIS 9, CHA 13

Eligible Races: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Career Skills: | • Bypass Security | • Move Silently |
| | • Climb | • Notice |
| | • Fast Talk/Convince | • Open Lock |
| | • Hide in Shadows | • Pick Pocket |



The remains of Losangelorg.

Medics become very popular whenever a team sees any action. When the Warrior develops work-related injuries (usually laser holes), or the Engineer gets too close to an engine that blows up, the Medic puts them back together. The advancements of medical technology will never remove the need for the human touch in healing. Medics learn skills such as treating wounds, counteracting poisons, and operating shipboard Medical Centers.

Special Abilities: Medic Career Skills can ONLY be learned by Medics — all skills from the other careers can be learned by anyone (although without career bonuses).

Ability Score Requirements: DEX 12, INT 12, WIS 12

Eligible Races: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian, Tinker

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Career Skills: | • Diagnose | • Treat Light Wounds |
| | • Life Suspension Technician | • Treat Poisoning |
| | • Treat Critical Wounds | • Treat Serious Wounds |
| | • Treat Disease | • Treat Stun/Paralysis |

The summary of careers allowable to each race appears in the Appendix on page 51. The Career Skills Tables begin on page 56.

◆ SKILLS

Skills represent specific abilities of characters. For the Rocketjock, the ability to zig when he's supposed to zig, and zag when he's supposed to zag in a space battle is the skill called Pilot Rocket. There are two types of skills: Career Skills and General Skills. Career Skills are the types of things a character would learn while training for a job. General skills are extracurricular abilities that the character might find useful. Characters get points to allocate to skills. Because the player gets to choose where points go, each character develops uniquely.

Some commands in the game are only available to characters with the correct skills.

Example: The JURYRIG option only appears during space combat if a ship's system is damaged and the character has Jury Rig skill.

Assigning Points to Skills

Newly generated characters in MATRIX CUBED start at eighth level with skill points already allocated to suggested skills for their careers. You may change those skill distributions during the character creation process. Characters get 40 more points for each level gained during the game. No more than 15 points may be allocated to a career skill at one time. There is no limit to how many points can be allocated to a Career Skill overall — but only 80 points total can be allocated to any single General Skill.

With each new level gained characters can choose one additional General skill, and assign 20 more points to any of their General Skills. So, choose the mix of skills wisely for your team characters. Career Skill points can only be assigned to Career Skills and not General Skills and vice versa.

Skills and Abilities

Each skill primarily uses one ability, and so most are listed by their primary ability requirement. Pilot Rocket, for example, is a dexterity skill, while Repair Rocket Hull is a tech skill. The exception to this are the Medic skills, which are only available to characters with that special career training. In addition to career bonuses, characters get Ability Bonuses added to their skills. The Ability Bonus is simply the character's score for the appropriate ability.

Example: A character with 20 points allocated to Climb (a dexterity skill), and with a 18 dexterity, would have an effective skill of 38.

Skill Prerequisites

Some skills require minimum scores in other skills before points can be allocated to them.

Example: Jury Rig skill requires minimum scores of 10 in both Repair Mechanical and Repair Electrical.

Skill Checks

A Skill Check determines whether a character can perform some action that requires a certain skill. For example, Medics make Skill Checks against their Treat Light Wounds skill to see if they can restore hit points to injured characters after combat. A skill score represents a percentage chance for success on a Skill Check. If a character has a 75 Jury Rig skill, then he has a 75% chance of successfully jury rigging an average problem. The chance for success changes if the situation is more or less difficult.

Dexterity Skills

Acrobatics is the skill of balancing, juggling, avoiding falling objects and other unusual feats of dexterity.

Climb is the skill of scaling anything from mountains to elevator shafts without the use of ropes.

Drive Groundcar is the ability to use any type of small wheeled vehicle.

Drive Jetcar is the ability to use any type of small jet-propelled vehicle.

Hide in Shadows is the ability to use available cover (shadows and terrain) to avoid detection.

Maneuver in Zero-G is the skill used to move and work in a gravity-free environment. This is a critical skill whenever fighting in a Zero-G situation. Characters who fail a Maneuver in Zero-G Skill Check receive a large penalty to their movement and ability to hit targets.

Move Silently is the ability to travel quietly, even through brush or over rocks and gravel. This skill is used when attempting to backstab during combat.

Pick Pocket is used to take small items from unsuspecting victims.

Pilot Fixed Wing Craft is the ability to fly jet or propeller-powered aircraft.

Pilot Rocket is required to operate any rocket ship. This is the premiere skill of Rocketjocks.

Pilot Rotorwing Craft is the ability to fly helicopter-type aircraft.

Use Jet Pack is the skill to operate a personal jet pack. This skill can be used during combat if a character is outfitted with a jet pack.

Tech Skills

Bypass Security is the skill to trace and disable electronic alarm systems.

Commo Operation is adeptness with communications equipment, including repair and operation.

Demolitions is the skill to use, place, and defuse explosive devices.

First Aid is the ability to perform minimal emergency medical treatment. Characters with First Aid are handy during combat to augment Medics.

Jury Rig is the very valuable skill that allows you to patch together damaged equipment. This skill can be a real lifesaver during space combat. Prerequisites are Repair Mechanical (10) and Repair Electrical (10).

Open Lock is the skill of picking mechanical locks. Electronic locks are covered under the Bypass Security skill.

Repair Electrical is the skill to maintain and repair electrical systems. This skill is used to make field repairs to a ship after combat.

Repair Life Support is the skill to maintain and repair life support systems. This skill is used to make field repairs to ships after combat. Prerequisites are Repair Mechanical (25) and Repair Electrical (30).

Repair Mechanical is the skill to maintain and repair mechanical equipment. This skill is used to make field repairs to ships after combat.

Repair Nuclear Engine is the skill to maintain and repair the nuclear engines found on rocket ships. This skill is used to make field repairs to ships after combat. Prerequisite is Repair Mechanical (10).

Repair Rocket Hull is the skill required to patch up damaged rocket ship hulls. This skill is used to make field repairs to ships after combat. Prerequisite is Repair Mechanical (10).

Repair Weapon is the skill to restore damaged ship-board weapons to service. This skill is used to make field repairs to ships after combat.

Sensor Operation is familiarity with the operation of sensor equipment and evaluation of sensor data.

Medic Skills

Diagnose is the ability to determine the nature of an ailment or internal injury.

Life Suspension Tech is the skill to operate and diagnose potential malfunctions on life suspension equipment.

Treat Critical Wounds is the ability to deal with severe injuries. Prerequisite is Treat Serious Wounds (40).

Treat Disease is the ability to treat diagnosed diseases. Prerequisite is Diagnose (25).

Treat Light Wounds is the ability to give field aid to minor injuries. This is similar to the general First Aid skill, and is valuable during combat.

Treat Poisoning is the knowledge of how to counteract diagnosed poisons. Prerequisite is Diagnose (15).

Treat Serious Wounds falls between Treat Light and Treat Critical Wounds. This skill is only used after combat. Prerequisite is Treat Light Wounds (30).

Treat Stun/Paralysis is a battlefield skill to treat battle induced shock from sonic stunners.

Intelligence Skills

Astrogation is the ability to calculate courses, plot the movement of astronomical bodies, and to sight on stars. Astrogation is used to find specific locations while traveling in space. Prerequisites are Astronomy (20) and Mathematics (25).

Astronomy is a working knowledge of the planets, stars, and other astronomical bodies. Prerequisite Only.

Battle Tactics is the understanding of small-group combat tactics. If a character succeeds in a Battle Tactics skill roll at the start of an encounter, the whole team receives combat bonuses because they are better able to act as a unit.

Disguise is skill in the use of makeup and costume to assume a new appearance.

Library Search is the skill to ferret information out of computer library systems.

Mathematics is the capability to perform complex mathematical operations and calculations. Prerequisite Only.

Mimic is the ability to copy the vocal patterns and sounds of others.

Navigation is the skill to calculate courses and effectively steer a rocket ship on its trip. Prerequisites are Astronomy (15) and Mathematics (25).

Planetology is an understanding of the ecology, climate, geology, and hazards of planets.

Programming is the ability to program both planetside and shipboard computers. Prerequisite is Mathematics (10).

Charisma Skills

Act is the ability to memorize and perform lines and to take on characterizations.

Befriend Animal is the skill to relate to animals and create rapport.

Distract is the ability to successfully act as a diversion or to direct a victim's attention.

Etiquette is an understanding of the rules and conventions of a culture. This is especially useful when patronizing the better class establishments on Outposts.

Fast Talk/Convince is the skill to flim-flam and get others to agree or accept.

Intimidate is the ability to create an aura of menace and danger. Successful intimidation during combat causes enemies to be taken aback while they decide whether to fight or flee.

Leadership is the skill to give orders and see that they are carried out. Characters with Leadership skill can, if they make a difficult Skill Check, take control of NPCs during combat.

Sing is the ability to deliver a tune with a melodious and pleasing voice. This skill can come in handy in Outpost bars.

Wisdom Skills

Notice is the skill of careful, trained, observation. Many times a character with high Notice skill will see things that other team members miss.

Planetary Survival is a working knowledge of how to survive wilderness conditions on a variety of planets. Prerequisite is Planetology (10).

Shadowing is the ability to follow people in urban areas without being discovered.

Tracking is the skill to follow tracks and signs in a wilderness environment.

◆ ASSEMBLING A TEAM

Assembling a strong and multi-talented team is the key to success in *MATRIX CUBED*. A good variety of careers and skills is necessary for the team to deal with the perilous missions it will face.

Careers and Races Mix

Every team should have at least one Rocketjock, one Medic, and one Engineer. The remainder of the party can be a mix of careers. Take a look at the Racial Attribute Modifiers to select a good mix of races.

Skills Mix

Several skills are critical for the survival of the team. Medical and First Aid skills are used to patch up wounded team members. At least one character with Pilot Rocket skill is required to effectively control a rocket ship. Characters with Engineering skills like Jury Rig are very useful during space combat. Maneuver in Zero-G skill is used every time the team fights in a null-gravity environment. Battle Tactics skill is very useful during fire-fights.

Other useful skills are: Leadership, Intimidate, Navigation, Astrogation, Sensor Operation, Demolitions, Use Jet Pack, and Move Silently.

Non-Player Characters

Non-player characters (NPCs) are the people the team meets during the adventure. Sometimes NPCs are threats that the team must deal with quickly. Other times NPCs may offer valuable information or even join the team for awhile.

NPCs that join the team generally fight under computer control. If any member of the team has Leadership skill, and makes a successful Skill Check at the start of a combat, then you may control the NPC for that battle.

Digital Personalities

In the twenty-fifth century, computer technology has advanced to the point that fully aware, computer-based intelligences have evolved. These Digital Personalities (DPs) can be either purely computer-generated or based on a living, or once living, mind. The latter are created by "mapping" the brainwave patterns and memories of a living person to create a software "clone" of the mind. A suffix of .dos is added to the names of computer personalities for ease of identification.

◆ MONEY

Every planet in the solar system has its own currency system, but the Credit has been developed as the common unit of exchange. Bank accounts and interplanetary transactions, for example, are always handled in credits, on any planet. The most common form in which to carry money is negotiable "Credit Cards." Each card has a coded strip that "remembers" how much it is worth. Purchases can be debited from the card value until it is valueless. Unlike twentieth century credit cards, these cards cannot be replaced if lost or stolen — they can be used by anyone who gets hold of the card.

◆ COMBAT

Whether facing killer Terrine gennies or space pirates you will find yourself in combat often in the twenty-fifth century.

Initiative

Each round of combat is divided into 10 segments. The segment a character or opponent acts in depends on his initiative number. This is a randomly generated number for each character and opponent. This random number is generated at the beginning of each combat round and is modified by dexterity bonuses or penalties and random factors (such as surprise) to arrive at the initiative number.

Sometimes a character will act in segment 10 of one round and segment 1 of the next, appearing to act twice in a row. This is especially common if you use the WAIT command. When the WAIT command is given, that character's action is delayed until segment 10.

Combat Ability

Each character's ability in combat is defined by his THACØ, damage, and armor class.

Armor Class

A character's (or opponent's) difficulty to be hit is represented by his Armor Class (AC). The lower the armor class the harder it is to hit the target. Armor class is based on the armor a character is wearing and any dexterity bonus.

THACØ

THACØ represents ability to hit enemies in melee or with ranged fire. THACØ stands for To Hit Armor Class Ø. This is the number a character must 'roll' equal to or greater than to do damage on a target with an AC of Ø. The lower the THACØ the better the chance to hit the target.

Note: The generation of a random number is often referred to as a 'roll.' In determining if an attack is successful, the roll is a random number from 1 through 20.

An attack is successful if the random number is greater than or equal to the attacker's THACØ minus the target's AC. THACØ may be modified by range, terrain, and zero-G conditions, among other things.

Example: A Warrior with a THACØ of 15 attacking an opponent with an AC of 3 would need to roll: (THACØ 15) - (AC 3) = 12+

But to hit a opponent with an AC of -2 he would need to roll: (THACØ 15) - (AC -2) = 17+

THACØ decreases (requires a lower number to hit an opponent) as a character's level increases. Great strength can help THACØ if the character is attacking with a melee weapon (sword, knife, etc).

Damage

When a hit is scored, the attacker does damage. Damage is the range of Hit Point loss the attacker inflicts when he hits an opponent in combat. Damage depends on the attacker's weapon type and sometimes the attacker's strength (when using melee weapons).

Some opponents take only partial or no damage from certain weapon types. Robots, for example, are immune to dazzle or gas grenades, while Venusian acid frogs are unaffected by fire.

Saving Throws

Whenever characters or opponents are poisoned, subjected to extremes of heat or cold, or hit by certain types of weapons, the computer checks to see if they make their Saving Throw. A successful save means that the target had some innate immunity to the poison, or was not hit full-force by the weapon effect. Generally a successful save will mean that the target was unaffected or damage that would otherwise be taken is halved.

Leadership Skill Check

When NPCs join the team, they generally fight under computer control. If any member of the team has Leadership skill, and makes a successful Skill Check at the start of a battle, an NPC will be under manual control for that battle.

Battle Tactics Skill Check

The computer automatically makes a Battle Tactics Skill Check for all characters with the skill. If any character is successful, the entire team receives a +1 combat bonus because they are better able to act as a group.

Maneuver in Zero-G Skill Check

Whenever characters enter combat in null-gravity conditions, they must make a Maneuver in Zero-G Skill Check or become severely restricted. Characters that fail to make this roll receive a -2 combat penalty and their movement is reduced to three squares per round.

Combat Map

Combat takes place on a tactical map that is a detailed 3-D view of the terrain that the team was on when combat began. This map is overlaid with an invisible square grid. As you move characters, you will notice that everything moves on the grid from square to square. Moving diagonally often costs more movement points than moving horizontally or vertically.

Terrain

When the laserbeams and rockets start flying, being able to duck behind cover becomes a big concern. There are three basic types of terrain: clear, hindering, and blocking. Clear terrain is just that, open and free of obstacles. Hindering terrain offers some cover from enemy weapons fire by making targets more difficult to hit, and slows movement. When traveling overland, hindering terrain might be bushes or low rocks. In outposts or civilized areas, hindering terrain would be objects like tables or computer terminals. Blocking terrain would be walls or trees — objects that cannot be moved or fired through at all.

Temporary Obstacles

Several weapons have effects that hinder combat: chaff, aerosol, and gas. Chaff clouds cause missiles from rocket weapons to lose tracking as well as causing all types of explosive shields to detonate instantly when they hit the chaff. Aerosol clouds diffuse laserbeams. Gas clouds do not affect ranged combat, but anyone or thing that moves through a gas cloud without some kind of breathing apparatus must make a saving throw or become incapacitated.

Computer Control

The computer controls the actions of opponents, NPCs, and PCs set to computer control with the QUICK command. You may take control of PC characters during any combat round. See your Data Card for instructions on how to use QUICK on your specific computer system.

Range

Every ranged weapon has a short, medium, and long range. At short range the weapon fires with no penalties. At medium range there is a -2 penalty to hit, and at long range there is a -5 penalty.

Rate of Fire

Many weapons can be fired more than once per round. When firing a rapid fire weapon, such as a needle gun, all shots are aimed at one target unless the target is eliminated before all rounds are fired.

Example: A warrior firing a bolt gun at a wounded opponent drops his target with the first shot. The warrior can then shoot at another opponent. If the first shot had missed, or not finished the opponent off, the second shot would have been fired at the same target.

Grenades

When most weapons miss, the shots have gone wide and not done any perceivable damage. Grenades, on the other hand, can miss their intended target, roll into an adjacent square, and detonate there. Grenades can be thrown, or launched, into empty squares.

Rear Attacks and Backstabbing

If an opponent is attacked by two characters from one side, a third character can blind side him using a melee weapon and gain the advantage of a rear attack. Because the target is already distracted, he cannot defend against the second attack very well.

Backstabbing is similar to the regular rear attack, except that the first attacker and the character attempting to backstab must be directly opposite each other. Additionally the backstabber must make a Move Silently Skill Check. Damage from a backstab is greater than a rear attack. Rogues have bonuses to their Move Silent skill, and hence the ability to backstab.

Movement

The number of squares a character can move is affected by carried weight and strength. A character's movement range is displayed on the view screen and when moving during combat. Moving through hindering terrain (bushes, tables, etc.) slows a character to half normal movement, while sprinting allows a character to move at double the normal rate. Dodging characters move at normal rate but their bobbing and weaving makes them more difficult to shoot at. However, you may not attack while dodging.

Running Away

Characters may flee from the battlefield if they can move faster than all enemies. Characters may not move off the battlefield if they move slower than any enemies. Characters have a 50% chance to move off the battlefield if they can move as fast as the fastest enemy opponent.

Exception: If an opponent or character can reach the edge of the combat map without any of his opponents being able to see him, he may then flee successfully, even though he may be slower than his opponents.

A character that moves off the battlefield during combat returns to the team when the fight is over. If the whole team flees it will not receive any experience points for opponents killed before retreating.

After Combat

If one or more characters survive on the battlefield at the end of combat, the bodies of unconscious or dead team members stay with the team. If the entire team flees from combat, all unconscious and dead team members are permanently lost. If ALL the team members are slain, go back to your last Saved Game and try again from that point.

Medical Attention

After the battle is over any team Medics use their skills automatically to patch up the wounded. Medics will make checks against all appropriate skills for each wounded character.

◆ ROCKET SHIPS AND SPACE TRAVEL

The evolution of sophisticated rocket ships has opened the inner solar system to mankind. MATRIX CUBED spans the vast reaches of sunbaked Mercury to the tempests of Jupiter and beyond.

Rocket Ships

A far cry from their twentieth century ancestors, twenty-fifth century rocket ships are sleek, finned craft that navigate the solar system driven by powerful nuclear engines. Sensor and communications gear is used to navigate the ship, to send and receive messages, and to probe enemy ships during combat. Sophisticated computer-aided controls help steer rocket ships through the void of space, while the complex maze of plumbing, air tanks, and hydroponic vats of the life support system churn out breathable atmosphere for the crew.

Space Travel

Before embarking on a space flight, the team needs to fuel up the ship and purchase service stores for field repairs. If you run out of fuel in mid-flight, you never know who might come to pick you up. . . .

Navigation Skill Check

A successful Navigation Skill Check means that the pilot has charted an effective, fuel efficient course. If the pilot fails the Navigation Skill Check, the plotted course will consume extra fuel.

Astrogration Skill Check

An Astrogration Skill Check is required when attempting to pilot the ship to a specific small body in space, such as an asteroid outpost. If the pilot fails the check then the ship must swing around for another pass through the same area and try again.

Mercury

Closest to the sun and possibly the richest planet in the system, Mercury gathers sunlight via huge satellites known as Mariposas. The sunlight is then beamed to the rest of the solar system as microwaves. This provides Mercury with its great profits.

The wealthy of Mercury live on the Mariposas. Each satellite is uniquely designed, with its own baroque flavor and decor. Many of the rich enjoy dressing up in styles from ancient Earth. The Mariposas also have the largest number of holidays per year. Each one is an excuse for wild parties and parades.

Most of the profits are controlled by an elite group of ruling families, known as the Sun Kings. Presently, the Gavilan family and its allies hold firm control of the government. This faction is very pro-RAM and much commerce takes place between the two nations. Other Sun Kings have different views and political infighting is common.

Other groups on Mercury include the Musicians and the Dancers. Their names derive from the fact that most cities on Mercury bear the names of famous composers. The Musicians are the merchant class — well-to-do, but with little political influence. They are content as long as the economy is strong.

The Dancers are nomads on Mercury's surface. They travel in great rail cities searching and exploiting mineral deposits. They are poor and generally discriminated against. They are the backbone of the "Mercury for Mercurians" movement. The faction's goal is to isolate the planet from entangling alliances, such as the current ones with RAM. Since the Dancers are banned from the satellites which house the governing Sun Kings, they have little true power.

Venus

The planet is barely terraformed — normal humans can survive unprotected only on mountain tops and in the upper atmosphere. The Lowlands are filled with gennies and a genetically modified jungle.

An intelligent race of gennies, known as the Lowlanders, inhabits this acid jungle. Some people think that these gennies are primitive and warlike. However, experts dispute this, since Lowlanders produce the only known supply of Gravitol. Gravitol is required to survive for long periods of weightlessness and is critical to space travel.

The humans of Venus are allied with NEO against RAM. The Lowlanders are more neutral; they will sell to anybody. Because of the Lowlander's regular commerce and the undesirability of the jungle, it is relatively easy to slip a space craft onto the planet — as the many Gravitol smugglers attest.

Earth

The homeworld of unmodified humans has been RAM's dumping ground for decades. Recently, with help from Buck Rogers, NEO seized control of Earth from RAM. Now a cold war exists between the two factions. Occasional incidents occur, but RAM blames them on rogue commanders or NEO infighting. Earth's cities suffered badly in the open war, and no known power source is sufficient for the planet to be fully rebuilt.

Above Earth is a huge junk belt, formed from the detritus of innumerable space launches over the centuries. At the heart of the belt is the space station Salvation III, officially a scrap yard. Actually, this is the top secret base of NEO's military wing. As heroes to NEO, your characters are based at this station.

Luna

The lunar peoples are strict isolationists. It was only through RAM's missteps that Luna joined NEO in the last open conflict. Offworlders are rarely tolerated beyond the spaceport proper.



The Stormriders' Living Ship.

Mars

RAM's home world, which it shares with the Desert Runner gennies. RAM evaluates everything in terms of profit and loss — in fact the NEO victory for control of Earth was an effort by RAM to cut losses on an expensive business venture. Humans, being fairly common, are rated at a rather low economic value.

The Desert Runners inhabit the fringe lands and are ignored or persecuted by RAM. Armed only with crossbows, they present little threat to RAM's objectives.

Most of Mars' commerce flows through the Pavonis Space Elevator, a satellite tied to the ground by a huge elevator. So much traffic passes through, that undercover NEO teams use the facility for resupply.

Asteroid Belt

The asteroids are sparsely populated by the most independent group of humans in the system: the asteroid miners. Many spend months at a time alone, prospecting rocks. The many island-sized asteroids make the belt an ideal place for hidden bases. Pirates of all sorts keep innumerable hideouts, ports, and research stations in the belt.

Jupiter

Jupiter rarely, if ever, has visitors from the inner solar system. The harsh atmosphere supports life . . . but an altered form of human life. Genetically modified humans, known as Stormriders, make their homes in spherical cities that float above the high-pressure atmosphere.

Researchers created the original Stormrider genotype on Amalthea, one of Jupiter's small inner moons. The Amaltheans expect 100,000 years of slavery in repayment for their genetic engineering.

◆ SPACE COMBAT

Space Combat Display

While the combatant ships circle and maneuver for shots, all the crew sees are display screens. Whenever a character attempts sensor probe of the enemy ship, the enemy ship image will be replaced with a summary screen of everything the sensor was able to detect.

Space Combat Skills

Several skills are extremely valuable, some even critical, in space combat. Piloting skill is important during space combat. The JURYRIG command uses the Jury Rig skill to make emergency repairs to the ship during combat. Sensor Operation skill is used for the SENSOR command to probe the enemy ship. The AID command requires either a First Aid or Treat Light Wounds skill. After the battle all of the repair skills (Repair Computer, Repair Nuclear Engine, etc.) are used automatically to make field repairs to the rocket ship.

Firing Ship's Weapons

Characters use their normal THACØ to determine whether attacks with ship's weapons are successful. Select the best characters to fire weapons, and have other characters stand duty loading weapons or jury rigging systems.

Disabling Rockets

Rocket ships lose speed as their hulls and engines are damaged. A rocket ship is dead in space when the engine, controls, or fuel reaches zero. When the rocket's hull reaches zero, it is breached and the ship explodes.

- If Hull is reduced to one-half, the ship is slowed by one movement point.
- If Engine is reduced to one-half, the ship is slowed by one movement point.
- If Engine is reduced to one-quarter, the ship is slowed by three movement points.
- Speed is always at least one until Control, Engine, or Fuel is reduced to zero.

Boarding

When a rocket has been disabled, you can move to range 0 or 1 and dock at the airlock with the BOARD command. After boarding, your team must fight their way onto the enemy ship and find a way to secure the ship. If either section has been destroyed during the battle, only the remaining section need be captured. If your ship has been disabled during the battle, the enemy may try to board and capture your ship.

Salvage

Once a ship has been boarded and secured, a salvage beacon is placed on the derelict so that it can be picked up by a NEO spacetug and taken to Salvation. The salvage value of the ship is determined by how much is left intact. The funds received for the ship are automati-

cally put into your team's NEO Salvage Account. Usable fuel from the enemy ship is automatically transferred into your tanks.

After the Battle

When the battle is finished, team Medics treat all wounded characters, and the Engineers perform any repairs that they are able. If there are any credits or items found on the enemy ship, a Booty Menu comes up just as in regular combat.

◆ GEAR

Bladed Weapons

Cutlass a broad bladed sword favored by space pirates. Length: 70 cm average

Knife any short bladed weapon. Length: 15 to 40 cm

Mono Knife is a knife made from a single piece of synthetic diamond. The edge is sharpened to a single molecule in width (monomolecular — hence the name). Length: 15 to 30 cm

Mono Sword is an entire sword made with the same material and construction as the shorter Mono Knife. Length: 70 to 80 cm

Polearm is a pole weapon similar to the ancient naginata of old Earth. These weapons are sometimes carried aboard pirate or warships for boarding. Length: 2.25 to 2.5 meters

Sword is a long bladed weapon. Most swords used in the twenty-fifth century are patterned after the rapier used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries on old Earth. Length: 70 to 90 cm

Ranged Weapons

Bolt Gun is a miniature magnetic cannon. Metal bolts are accelerated down the length of the gun barrel by magnetic fields. Rumors abound of a 'bolt rifle' with the same properties as a bolt gun but a higher rate of fire. Maximum Range: 16

Desert Runner Crossbow is a weapon evolved from the crossbows of old Earth. Desert Runner crossbows are designed to fire metal bolts and they are very simple and reliable. Maximum Range: 8

Heat Gun is a weapon that evolved from the flame throwers of twentieth century Earth. The gun has two tanks: one with compressed air, the other with highly combustible fuel. When the gun is discharged, a blast of super-heated plasma is released at high velocity. The fuel recharge for these weapons is fairly expensive, and they are dangerous to use in confined spaces. Maximum Range: 6

Laser Pistol uses a capacitor system to fire a small diameter beam of coherent light. Lasers are capable of burning through most materials, but can be countered by reflective or curved surfaces. Maximum Range: 32

Laser Rifle is a larger, more powerful version of the laser pistol. Maximum Range: 120

Microwave Gun fires a short-range beam of concentrated microwave radiation. Microwaves can penetrate any non-metallic substance, but are reflected by all metals (and hence most types of armor). Maximum Range: 16

Needle Gun works on the same principle as the bolt gun except that the ammunition is small needles. Maximum Range: 12

Rocket Pistol fires a stubby, self-propelled, explosive projectile. Rocket-type weapons are ideal for zero-G combat as they have no recoil. The projectiles incorporate a microscopic integrated guidance system, and they are actually able to veer up to 20 degrees from their original course. These so-called "smart bullets" can, however, be thwarted by chaff and Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) systems. Maximum Range: 16

Rocket Rifle is a larger version of the rocket pistol, firing a bigger, longer range projectile. Maximum Range: 80

Sonic Stunner emits a high-frequency sound that is tuned to the harmonic resonating pitch of most nervous systems. Targets of the weapon must make a saving throw or be rendered unconscious. Maximum Range: 4

Explosives

Aerosol Mist Grenade releases a vaporous cloud designed to diffuse laser fire. Mist lasts four rounds under normal gravity but dissipates in one round in zero-G.

Chaff Grenade releases a cloud of metallic flakes and small strips. Chaff offers protection from smart shells (from a rocket pistol or rifle), and "stupid" explosive projectiles (rockets, plasma, etc.) entering the cloud will explode instantly. Chaff lasts four rounds under normal gravity but dissipates in one round in zero-G.

Dazzle Grenade releases a blinding electrical discharge arc. Characters or opponents in the effected area who are not wearing protective goggles must make a saving throw or be blinded for two to seven rounds. Blinded characters receive severe penalties to both THAC \emptyset and armor class.

Explosive Grenade is little changed from its twentieth century counterpart. Explosive grenades are fitted with proximity detonators that fire when they reach their target. The sensitivity of the armed detonator makes these weapons susceptible to premature discharge when entering chaff clouds. Does 4 to 40 points of damage.

Gas Grenade is similar in effect to twentieth century tear gas; anyone entering the cloud without protective gear must make a saving throw or become incapacitated for two to seven rounds. Gas cloud lasts four rounds under normal gravity but dissipates in one round in zero-G.

Stun Grenade is similar to the explosive grenade, except that the charge is smaller and the casing is designed to vaporize harmlessly rather than fragment. Characters in the area of effect must make a saving throw or be stunned by the blast for two to seven rounds.

Efanite Grenade is rumored to be similar to the explosive grenade, and said to cause 14 to 50 points of damage.

Heavy Weapons

Grenade Launcher uses compressed air to extend the range of any type of grenade. Maximum Range 12

Plasma Launcher propels a canister of flammable jelly, tipped with an ignitor. Maximum Range 20

Rocket Launcher resembles twentieth century bazooka or light anti-tank weapon (LAW). Between cooling and reload time, the rocket launcher can only be fired every other round. Maximum Range: 40

Armor and Protective Gear

Armor, Battle is made of modular shells of high density plastic impregnated with beryllium. The armor is further reinforced by an exoskeleton that contains movement enhancers so that the wearer is able to move at a speed comparable to an unencumbered person. All battle armor is outfitted with contained atmosphere spacesuit capabilities.

Armor, Battle w/Fields is like the above suit except that an anti-smart shell electronic field is also generated to give added protection from rocket pistols and similar weapons.

Armor, Heavy Body is similar to battle armor except that the plates are somewhat lighter and there is no exoskeleton or movement enhancers. Armor is outfitted with contained atmosphere spacesuit capabilities.

Breathing Mask is a self-contained breathing apparatus. Breathing masks are effective against all types of gas.

Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) Package attaches to armor or smart suits to protect against smart bullet-type rounds such as rocket pistol rounds.

Protective Goggles are self-regulating shaded goggles. They can react very quickly to light flashes and so are extremely effective against dazzle grenades.

Smart Suit incorporates internal circuitry and microcomputers for climate control, defense, and communications. The smart suits purchased by team members include contained atmosphere spacesuit capabilities.

Space Suit is an inexpensive, pressurized suit that allows the wearer to work in full vacuum or rocket ships with zero life support. Space suits are also proof against all types of gas.

Miscellaneous Gear

Demolition Charges are blocks of plastic explosives with a short delay detonator. These can be used to blast stubborn doors.

Poison Antidote is a general purpose drug that can counteract most common types of poison.

Jet Pack uses a small turbine mounted in the small of the back to burn condensed fuel pellets and create about two minutes of sustained flight time. The unit is controlled by a hand-held control unit.

Rope is general purpose, high-test, polymer line. This is very handy for many purposes.

Gear Quality

The manufacturing capabilities of the planets vary and this is reflected in the weapons and armor produced. The following summarizes the effective bonuses for items:

Standard Weapons are +0 to hit

Standard Armor is -0 to AC

Martian Weapons are +1 to hit

Martian Armor is -1 to AC

Venusian Weapons are +2 to hit

Venusian Armor is -2 to AC

Mercurian Weapons are +3 to hit

Mercurian Armor is -3 to AC

Lunarian Weapons are +4 to hit

Lunarian Armor is -4 to AC

◆ ROBOTS, GENNIES, AND OTHER OPPONENTS



Acid Frog

These semi-intelligent creatures were introduced into the Venusian ecosystem to control the swamp insect population. In combat they spit acid, and their skin protects them from fire and gas attacks.



Carnifern

Common plants treated with an experimental Lunarian mutagen become dangerous carniferns. These giant ambulatory veginoids attack with crushing blows and cannot be gassed, intimidated or stunned.



Coyodorg

A naturally evolved cross between coyotes and wild dogs, these vicious hunters prowl Southern California in large packs.



Desert Runner Warrior

The Martian Desert Runners are proud and fearsome opponents. They are generally armed with the famed Desert Runner crossbows. They also have retractable claws for claw-to-hand fighting.



Experimental Combat Gennie (ECG)

A RAM military research Special Projects Team engineered this lethal series of combat gennies. ECGs have a multi-stage growth cycle and become deadlier with each metamorphosis



Human

From space pirates to assassins and enemy warriors, humans present the deadliest and most varied collection of foes a team can face. Human races include Mercurians, Venusians, Terrans, and Martians.



Hyper-Crab

The Hyper-series gennies are another product of RAM military bioengineering. Hyper-crabs are fairly fast, have a double claw attack and possess a tough armor exoskeleton.



Hyper-Snake

This Hyper-series gennie is blindingly fast and can avoid most smart-shell rounds. Its skin protects it against microwave guns. Eye membranes close to filter out the effects of dazzle grenades.



Jovian Dragon

Produced by the Stormriders as a genetic weapon, the jovian dragon is a fearsome opponent. Extremely fast for its size, the jovian dragon attacks with claws and teeth.



Lowlander

Engineered to survive on the Venusian surface, the Lowlander genotype crosses human and reptilian aspects. They have the most advanced and involved culture of all the gennie races. Gravitol, the space travel drug, is derived from Venusian plants and is a primary Lowlander export.



Org Skorp

After the Ten Year War, mutating in the radioactive California deserts, the org skorp appeared. These giant arachnids are extremely aggressive. Their tails end in a poisonous stinger.



RAM Combat Gennie

RAM Combat Gennies are custom designed for military deployment in many environments.



RAM Guard Dog Gennie

These gennies have been engineered as guards and support for regular combat forces. They are based on the terran canine genotype, and have keen senses in addition to a paralyzing attack.



Ratwurst

Through a combination of interbreeding a mutation, common earth rats became these terrible pack hunters. Ratwursts often grow to man-size, and attack with razor sharp teeth.



Robot

Mechanical combat and security units come in all shapes, sizes, and degree of armament. Some ships are outfitted with security robots that can continue to defend against boarding parties even after the crew is dead. Assault and combat models tend to have more weaponry and armor than security robots, but they are all single-minded and lethal.



Sand Squid

This opportunistic Martian omnivore uses its speed and camouflage to attack unwary victims. This gennie was created to deal with insect and animal pests which resulted from the terraforming of Mars.



Stormrider

Developed to terraform Jupiter's moons, shark and ray genes are combined in their genotype to produce one of the largest gennies. Stormriders are capable of limited flight and live in Jupiter's outer atmosphere within floating cities.



Terrine

These combat gennies are one of the oldest genotypes. Bred to serve as RAM troops, they have a reputation for cruelty in battle.



Ursadder

A cross between snake and bear, these vicious predators roam the Venusian Lowlands. Their tough skin acts as armor in battle and they attack with strong claws.



Venusian Dinosaur

Created as a challenge for hunters, these beasts now thrive in the Venusian Lowlands. They are aggressive killers with a tough hide and a devastating bite.



Wasphopper

Engineered by Stormriders, these poisonous, giant insects breed rapidly. In combat they are quick and aggressive foes.

◆ LOG ENTRIES

Log Entry 1

Buck and Kane Converse

BUCK: Now that we are here, I expect you'll switch sides again, and offer to assist us.

KANE: Correct, my dear Rogers. And you must accept my company, because we are both in deep trouble. Only cooperation can get us out of here.

BUCK: I'm sure you'll help, but for how long?

KANE: Until assistance is no longer needed.

BUCK: Until you no longer need our assistance, you mean.

KANE: Precisely. I'm glad we understand each other so completely. Shall we go?

Log Entry 2

Cryptic Message

"Walk only on the prime, All the others are mined."

Log Entry 3

Death Before Dishonor

"As a general, I cannot submit to this blackmail. If you cannot find the incriminating papers before they are broadcast, I will be forced to resign and commit suicide. My ancestors have served Earth too well for me to sully their name.

"I last heard that a MacCallister on Juno was involved with these scoundrels. I can only suggest you contact him. I hope we shall meet again."

Log Entry 4

Mr. Tsai's Diary

June 1: Met the NEO cyborg again. Chilling fellow, but his plans for Earth sound very profitable. McKay and Koi seem willing to go along. Koi settled for inside information on the stock market, while McKay has demanded payments.

June 2: That cyborg has hidden talents. He charmed Dr. Coldor and convinced her to join the conspiracy. She's overlooked the massive number of deaths that will occur when the mutagen is released. She only sees the new order that will arise.

June 3: Dr. Coldor is splitting her time between the plant mutagen and a project code named Matrix. I have complained to the cyborg, but all I get are withering looks. I guess NEO is willing to delay the mutagen release.

Log Entry 5

Computer Lab Notes

Bug Nine Virus Outline

As designed, Bug Nine is an anti-digital-personality virus. Once released in a computer system, it tracks down the dominant DP. The Bug Nine program then destroys that DP by overwriting it with random data.

After it eliminates the DP, Bug Nine erases itself to avoid detection.

Both Dr. Malcolm and Commander Hanibl Sooth have approved, and work on the virus proceeds well.

Log Entry 6

MacCallister's Speech

"Yeah, the general got a raw deal. Out of the goodness of my heart — warmed by the 5,000 credits you just forked over — I'll put you in touch with Jedrel. He's a pirate who used to work for Talon. He went independent after Talon's base was overrun. Anyway, he got into financial trouble and had to take a fast shuttle job. The guys he ferried match the descriptions you gave me.

"Last I heard, Jedrel was spending his payoff on Aurora. I'd hurry, he knows lots of ways to spend money. Just don't mention my name. He's still sore about a poker game where I cleaned him out. I still don't know where that fifth ace came from."

Log Entry 7

Cyborg's Speech

"NEO's propaganda has served PURGE well. I recruited this scientist on your reputation. The pap of genetic mongrels living in harmony with the pure race fools so many people. They are blind to the inevitability of conflict. Either the pure strain will survive unsullied, or humanity will revert to packs of mindless animals!"

"Now PURGE has the mutagen needed to cleanse the Earth. Soon the Matrix Device will be ours — Dr. Coldor's part is complete. Then PURGE can cleanse the solar system and return man to the greatness that is his birthright!"

Log Entry 8

A Dive on Aurora

The stench nearly overwhelms you as you step past the door. The smoke is so thick that you can barely make out the single long table. An uncanny silence permeates the scene. Bodies are sprawled across the table and a few are curled up on the floor. The only sign of life is an occasional twitch or soft groan.

A huge belch shatters the silence. A man at the center of the table rises his shaggy head and shouts, "Bartender! I'm hungry! Get me a hexadillo haunch!" His face could be that of Jedrel, minus the stains and beard.

Log Entry 9

Dr. Romney's Papers

The papers are a great mass of diagrams, equations, and notes. Much of it is cryptic, though the thrust seems to be a device which can reshape an atom's subatomic matrix into another form, with energy as a by-product. One note in particular stands out:

'I finally worked out the final equation. It was gravity all the time! Now the very pollution can be used to purify the air of Earth. Toxic wastes can be used to rebuild the areas they destroyed.

'I fear whoever controls this technology will have the power to dictate the solar system's economy. I am tempted to destroy my notes, but I cannot, in all good conscience, do such a thing.'

Log Entry 10

Buck's Message

"I need you to check out certain rumors circulating here at Salvation. Dr. Romney of Mercury has designed a device, called Matrix, that can transform matter.

"The rumors have caused quite a stir. Everyone wants to get their hands on Romney for one reason or another. RAM wants the device to extend its power. The Mercurians see it as a threat to their energy monopoly. There also seems to be a growing extremist group on Earth that would use the device to control the solar system.

"If half the story is true, we could restore Earth to its old glory. We can't afford to ignore these rumors."

Log Entry 11

Jedrel's Speech

"I was an officer once, long ago. I remember the awesome responsibilities. That's why I left and became a pirate. No dress code. No saluting, no curfews! Anyway, this general already has a horrible enough life just being in the military. So I'll help you.

"We rendezvoused with a Mercurian cruiser, all gold and shiny. The scum transferred over and returned with the rest of my pay. At the airlock, I thought I saw a rich looking fellow with a stern look. Heard someone address him as Chamberlain. So I'd say look on Mercury. Someone governmental if I remember what Chamberlain means. Good luck. Just pay the bartender on the way out. That payment hasn't gone as far as I'd of liked."

Log Entry 12

Scot.dos Describes Venus

"The Lowlanders are digging mines near the village to the southeast. I don't know why, since Venus has no known mineral concentrations of any worth. Ship sensors indicate the tunnels are extensive.

"My data indicates that there is a scientist near the village. He or she is probably some sort of recluse and a human, but that is just a guess. . . .

"Hold on! I'm monitoring radio communication. I'll patch it through to you direct!"

The radio signal is routed to your helmet speaker. It is weak and only partially audible. ". . . calling Mariposa Sunspot. Patrol calling Mariposa . . . landed on surface. All . . . for PURGE forces and disrupt . . . earching for scientist . . . destroy target, understood. Out."

Scot.dos comes back in. "It seems that the Mercurians are here, too. We'd better get to that scientist before they do!"

Log Entry 13

Tsubulu's Plan

"I see your problem. You want Makali, and Makali wants freedom. There is a way for both to occur.

"We've discussed ways of dealing with Genetics Foundation. We considered releasing a plague upon them. Dr. Makali believed this would succeed.

"She created such a plague—the wasphopper, the poison locust. The plan was to introduce the wasphopper's grubs into the grow tanks at the Genetics Foundation. They would multiply and fill the halls with stinging death. The plan was not implemented because the Foundation tightened security; all Stormriders entering are closely searched.

"I have some wasphopper grubs with me. Perhaps you would not be so carefully searched. I have a shuttle to take you to Amalthea. Take the grubs and do the deed. Then Makali will go with you."

Log Entry 14

The Prisoner's Story

"Here in Mars Prison, you stick together and keep moving, see? Or else the dogs get you. Get in a good gang and you're safe, until you mess up and get cast out like me. RAM has it all figured out: they don't need guards! We spend our time staying ahead of the dogs, or fighting each other. There are Desert Runners, Lowlander workers, and even some Terrines who got too uppity. The robot surgeons keep us alive, most of the time, anyway.

"Hey, did you get out of the Envirocell? That's amazing! Nobody gets out of there. People think they're in the Martian Desert, instead of on a sandy treadmill. They panic, then spill their secrets. Pretty soon we see the dogs chewing their bones."

Log Entry 15

A Criminal Cornered

"Yeah! I got the papers from the general. His security was lax. He shouldn't leave stuff just floating around. You've come to the right place. We passed the papers on to the Chamberlain. He plans to use it for leverage in the negotiations between the Sun King and NEO. Showing that a high NEO general was involved in such a massacre will cause the pacifistic Sun King to reject NEO outright.

"The Chamberlain is preparing for the meeting now. The general hasn't capitulated to his demands, so he'll turn the papers over to the Sun King within the hour. You'll need a security pass to get into the government section. Security's been tight since you and the PURGE guys mixed it up."

Log Entry 16

Aboard The Ship

"The Stormriders controlled the ship with sonics. They created an intricate network tied into the ship's nervous system, using sonic waves to generate pulses within the synapses.

"Their equipment was damaged when the pirates hijacked the ship. Now the Stormriders are hiding in the ship's shadows. Amazingly, the pirates have not tried to wipe them out. It is proof of their desire to form a new order at Jupiter."

Log Entry 17

Matrix Mission Assigned

"Dr. Romney's journal describes a means by which one form of matter may be transmuted into another. In your absence, our scientists have been poring over his notes and have found his principles sound. The ancient alchemists' dream of turning lead into gold has now been realized.

"Or almost has. In meetings with Carlton Turabian and the rest of NEO command, we have decided to build Romney's machine—hereafter to be referred to as the 'Matrix Device.'

"There is a slight problem. Much of the technology involved has not been developed. We need faster computers, better fusion containers, more powerful gravity fields, and higher heat sources than have ever been conceived.

"Gather together the scientific team to make the necessary technological leaps. With the Matrix Device we will have the power to stand toe to toe with RAM."

Log Entry 18

A Meeting with the Chamberlain

"Please point the guns in another direction. Though it may be hard to believe, I am not dangerous in physical combat. You are no doubt here to discuss the general's distinguished papers. I know that you found circumstantial evidence linking me to PURGE. Therefore, I am willing to trade you the general's papers.

"You think of me as a criminal, yet I am merely a politician. In the solar system of today, one must do many reprehensible things so that order may be achieved. Look over those papers on your trip home. Then tell me truly, who is the greater criminal."

Log Entry 19

Buck Steps Forward

Buck sighs again as he looks down at the body of the general. "It was a shame to have to shoot him. Still, if I had waited you would be dead instead. Had I known the contents of those papers earlier, I could have stopped this. The general believed that this one mistake was too great for the public to know about. He would have compounded the problem with your deaths.

"We should not hate this man. His weakness is to be pitied. The events in the paper occurred so long ago that little good would be achieved by publishing them. Let us burn the papers and let it be known that the general died peacefully, in bed. Let him be remembered as a hero."

Log Entry 20

Letter to Patrol Leader

Lieutenant Vantangli,

Radio silence directive remains effective during operation. Attempts to locate gravitational specialist through data searches have succeeded — despite digital personality interference. Land sweeps to located target. Suspect is human and was sheltered by indigenous population.

Green patrol reports PURGE activity in their sector. Continue reporting via closed communication.

Command, Mariposa Comet's Tail

Log Entry 21

The Alchemy Catalyst Explained

"The PURGE Matrix Device suffered from a serious design flaw. When they activated it, matter did not turn into energy. Rather, it transformed into an intermediate state. This quasi-energy interacts with matter causing random shifts in elemental composition. As a result, new elements emerge from the old. The material does not diminish. Hence it is a catalyst — causing the reaction, but not being consumed."

Log Entry 22

The Jonas Decker Remains

"The freighter was hit by some new weapon. The edges of the hole contain traces of argon. Further in, bulkheads were found composed entirely of carbon. Something ate through the ship, changing everything it met into random elements."

Log Entry 23

Leander Speaks

"Terran ssoldierss found our lab. . . . How, I do not know! They disssrupted an experiment concerning my new gravity field technology. Asz you can ssee, the resssults were devesstating."

You tell Leander of your mission. He looks surprised.

"The sscientisst you sseek iss myssself! No one iss my equal in the field of gravitational mechanics. I will help you, but firsst we musst ssave the otherss. The terranss are gathering them up even asz we sspeak. They no doubt sseek the ssecret of gravitol manufacturing. They musst be sstopped!"

Log Entry 24

Cafeteria Conversation

"I don't know, Del," says one, "I think Commander Sooth is the best choice for PURGE leadership under the new order. He is older, wiser, and a master strategist to boot. Why . . . I can't understand why he isn't in control now."

"Fool!" retorts the other. "Sooth isn't the leader for a good reason — Sid Refuge! How can Sooth possibly compare? True, he is in charge here while Lord Refuge tracks down those scientists, but how can we have a leader who won't fight in battle? Sooth is weak. I think he has gennie blood in him."

"Oh, I'm sure that's just a rumor. . . ."

Log Entry 25

The Catalyst Room

Huge magnetic coils are mounted on massive steel supports. Between them, suspended in midair, is a glowing, pulsating globe of — something. Your eyes cannot seem to focus on the object. Sometimes it appears solid, sometimes it is just a ball of light. Sparks play off it as air bleeds through the magnetic bottle. Multi-colored bits rain down to the ground below. The air is transmuted into more solid elements.

Log Entry 26

Scot.dos Arrives on Mars

"First you disappeared. Then Buck went looking for you, and he disappeared. I traced a report from RAM Main, asking what a "Colt .45 Automatic" was, to here. Your escape had begun, so I acted as backup. Now the prison computer is on full alert, and sealed off. I'm trying to get the doors open. . . . Wait, there's new activity in the system. . . ."

Log Entry 27

Misha's Warning

"Your sonic attack on the cyborg has triggered a resonance in all of the crystals in the hangar. They are lasing the sunlight. Within minutes the crystals will magnify the beam to planet smashing potential.

"Do any of you know higher mathematics? I have the dimensions of the hangar and the energy curve for the crystals. Dr. Taylor joked that he could use that information to aim a beam. We must be certain that the power that is building is discharged into empty space. Otherwise millions could be killed!"

Log Entry 28

The Pirate's Dream

"The pirates hijacked the ship from the Stormriders as it crossed into the asteroid belt. They hope to establish a colony on one of the outer planets' moons. They will use it as a trading center for the spacers and whatnot. They are not as ignoble as people believe.

"They simply had no choice but piracy in the face of RAM, the Sun Kings, and all the other power mongers.

"This new colony, though, will be the Luna of the outer planets and a haven to all the outcasts of the solar system."

Log Entry 29

Terrified Medic

"The lab iss under attack! Never could it be at a worsse time. Minerss are trapped in the lower sshaftss and we can spare no one to help.

"Lissten! We know now that we can trust you. The entrance to the labss iss at the northeast end of the miness. Go and ssee what caussess the alarm. The loss of the labss would lead to our ultimate downfall.

"I musst help the otherss." He turns and runs off down the west tunnel.

Log Entry 30

Computer Lab File

Station access:

- General PURGE data
- Bug Nine Virus Development
- Subliminal Media Development

Current access:

- Subliminal Media Sequence

Log Entry 31

The Catalyst Gun

"Yes. The PURGE Matrix Device produced quite a boon. Unluckily, the elements produced are transitory. We cannot produce an infinite amount of gold or uranium. It decays back to its original form within hours.

"Just as we despaired, Dr. Taylor proposed a way to project the quasi-energy with magnetic fields. With a little work, we found we could accurately aim and launch the force out to astronomical distances. Even the strongest ships cannot survive having their hulls converted to gas, or their crew to lead.

"From this tiny asteroid we control all of the system's spaceways. Anyone who wishes to travel from world to world must pay our fee, or be transmuted into a cloud of random elements. We are truly the rulers of the solar system!"

Log Entry 32

Misha Speaks

"I sealed the door to the hangar to keep you and the crystal man separate. There is actually a way to destroy him. In order to avoid being caught with these illegal crystals, our corvettes are equipped with sonic disintegrators. They aren't portable, but someone whose skillful with electronics could modify a stunner. There are a few stunners in the security office. Remember to avoid the cyborg until you have the weapon!"

Log Entry 33

Landon's Thanks

"Greetings Neo agents. I am again in your debt for the life of my sson. For this I will entrusst you withh a great ssecret.

"Asz you may know, we lowlanders manufacture the sspace travel drug, gravitol. You may not know itss organic origin. It iss derived from plantss that grow only in these inhospitable landss. We keep the formula of itss creation to ourselvess.

"Those assassins were after thiss knowledge! They no doubt were sseeking to weaken our one ssource of power.

"The foolss! Thiss farm was not for drugss, but for food! Those ssacks that they carry, the loot that they butchered for, iss nothing but a crop of lowland crystal potatoess!"

Log Entry 34

The End of the Catalyst

Your ship pulls away from the asteroid's docking bay as the prototype engines kick in. The high-G acceleration assures you that no one on the asteroid can tamper with your device until it reaches its destination. Buck looks past you, out the window. "They thought they had the ultimate weapon. Scientists never realize that the ultimate weapon has been around for millions of years." He taps his forehead. "Right here. It's human ingenuity. That team on the asteroid thought nothing could stop them. Now they've got a one way ticket to the sun. However fast the catalyst transforms the sun's material, it's nothing compared to the billions of tons of helium produced in the sun's heart. A perfect burial ground for that hideous weapon."

Log Entry 35

Killer Kane's Offer

I've heard of a Matrix Device, but that is not my interest at the moment. I require your assistance. I'll give you access to a key RAM military installation in return for your help. You may also have some personal monetary gains that NEO need not learn of.

The RAM battler, Deimos, is transporting high level Mercurian officials to Mars. I have, let us say, differing views from them.

My agents on the Deimos require a distraction while they attend to these unnecessary delegates. I would like you to place a strategic explosive. My agents will inform you of the proper location when you are on the Deimos.

The explosive is controlled remotely by my agents. Once it is in place, leave the immediate area to avoid injury. When they are ready to . . . settle matters with the delegates, they will detonate the explosive.

Log Entry 36

Letter to Sooth

Dear Commander,

Greetings! Allow me to update you on our plans. Our source continues to supply us with information on NEO's movements, but it is beginning to falter in quantity and detail. I fear that those gennie-loving fools are becoming suspicious.

Plan A has met with a setback. I will switch to plan B, and take the scientists through the procedure previously discussed.

I have sustained injury of massive proportions, but have come through it stronger. Cybernetic modifications have been made. Who says that a pure man can't compete with those genetic monstrosities?

Good luck in your current operations. Earth is for humans!

Best regards, S. R.

Log Entry 37

Lt. Jenner's Proposal

My superior, Chief McKay; the local senator, Koi; and the CEO of Tsai Weaponry, Mr. Tsai, are involved in a major operation. I know that it is illegal and probably has interplanetary dimensions. I have no superiors I can trust, so if I actively investigate I will be dismissed from the force. The only chance for justice is to break in on them together with incriminating evidence.

Rifle their computer records at the Data Bank and go through their offices and homes. When you have enough evidence, call them up and set up a meeting. Once they are together with your evidence, I will stage a raid. I'll let you collect Dr. Coldor and get you safely off Luna.

The only help I can offer is this forged badge. It can't be connected to me. If you get into trouble, call me. I will misdirect the hunt for you. Don't return here if you are in trouble, I will be forced to deny any connection between us.

Log Entry 38

Dr. Taylor's Speech

"I'm sorry our leaders are so preoccupied with ruling the universe. I know some of you have excellent science skills. I authorized you to help me in the lab. Please, no heroics, we are involved in basic research here. Any aid you provide will push forward the edges of knowledge. Yes, all knowledge can be perverted, but that is no reason not to seek it.

"This is my personal pride and joy. Our leaders can play with that silly catalyst gun, I have developed the ultimate rocket engine. It is based on a variant of the PURGE matrix research. These prototype engines produce enough power to launch this asteroid anywhere you could wish to go. Fuel problems go away. With a few years of tinkering, I should get the engines small enough to put on ships."

Log Entry 39

Mysterious Attack

Scot enhances the video, displaying it across the entire front viewport. A RAM cruiser fires wildly into the darkness of space. Suddenly a ship flashes forward, bouncing k-cannon shells from its hull. It rams and the pulls away, leaving the cruiser a wreck.

Something was strange about the attack. Scot plays it back again, freezing on the ram. The picture is enhanced again. Scot verbalizes his conclusions, "That is definitely a mouth with teeth at the head of that ship. When it pulled away, it had a mouthful of that cruiser. That projection on top looks amazingly like a dorsal fin. Someone has created a very large gennie; a cross between a whale, a shark and a Stormrider's living ship. Something else. I recalibrated the sensors to track that thing. Well, its headed our way. Prepare for combat!"

Log Entry 40

Stormrider Pilots

"The pirates captured our ship as soon as we entered the belt. We tried to fight, but were ill-prepared. These pirates, they're brutal, using stunners on the ship's nerve endings to make it go.

"We disconnected most of the piloting controls when we saw the cause was lost. The pirates, unable to understand their workings, destroyed much as well."

Log Entry 41

Oiler and Neo's Plans

One NEO agent was killed aboard the battler, probably by Mercurian delegates. We don't know what she revealed before dying, but they haven't gotten the information off the ship. NEO has been monitoring communications and we have heard nothing suspicious — yet.

The murdered agent was a link in the Matrix supply chain. She knew that the last vital shipment from Earth leaves soon after the Deimos arrives at Mars. These agents can intercept the supply. NEO must delay the Deimos. Once we dock, half the crew gets shore leave. We can't possibly track over 800 people on Mars.

We plan to sabotage the Deimos with explosives. We're setting them all over the ship, but extra hands are certainly welcome. The devices will detonate after a key number of explosives are in place, so don't linger once it's set.

Log Entry 42

The Survivor's Story

"We were on routine patrol in Martian orbit, opposite side of the sun. Picked up an unknown asteroid . . . had a strange composition. Sensors said organic . . . like coral. Then that thing . . . that shark emerged from a recess. It chewed up the other two ships of our patrol. Captain took off, but it caught us. Glad you could kill it. . . . Didn't know its sensory systems were so vulnerable."

He shudders and stops breathing.

Log Entry 43

Over The Intercom

"Code XA. All prison personnel to the Secure Room. RAM Main has been alerted. Code XA. Doors sealed in three minutes. RAM Main has authorized opening of the arms lockers. Code XA. RAM Main advises that if we cannot squash the riot, they will destroy the base."

Log Entry 44

Injured Ship

"The pirates, in their ignorance, damaged the ship's controls. They now must use sonic stunners to spur the ship on. We tried to repair the Stormrider's equipment, but it is beyond our abilities. Maybe the ship would be more responsive if you healed some of the damaged tissues."

Log Entry 45

Carver's Speech

"Good thing you came to me. That asteroid is protected by space sharks, best thing to come out of the Amalthean labs. So good in fact, that Dr. Taylor went independent. Sold out to some organization. They lifted him and his genetic materials from under the Amaltheans' noses. I was with him, but had a falling out. That assassin you aced was sent by the organization.

"To get to the asteroid you need this neutral scent canister. Detonate it around your ship as you approach the asteroid. All ships constantly leak fluids and metal flakes into space. The sharks pick up on them and track down the ship. The neutral scent masks all that. To the shark you're just a bit of harmless and tasteless debris. Move fast, the stuff won't last long."

Log Entry 46

Dr. Coldor's Speech

"Now I'm glad I didn't tell that cybernetic monster about my new invention. I call this the hummer. These mutated plants recoil from its sounds. Unluckily, after a few uses it tends to short out. Only one other exists. It is in the first lab along the main corridor."

She turns to a computer terminal. "The mutagen turns common plants into these walking hulks. The cyborg released the mutagen in the first part of the labs, and is preparing to launch my ship — along with the new herbicide, the mutagen and my Matrix research. I am releasing the mutagen into that area so that his troops will have to fight them as well."

She turns back to you. "I am going to make my way through the air system to the ship. Take the main corridors, pick up the hummer and get to the ship before it launches. If we all try to take the air shafts, he will be long gone."

Log Entry 47

The Stormrider Natbakka

"My name is Natbakka. Thank you for rescuing me. I was an ambassador to the Amaltheans, but they seized me and sold me to RAM, telling them that I knew things about Stormrider genetics research. I do not! My studies have been in . . . ah, . . . power systems. I must return to Jupiter, but in the meantime I will help you any way I can."

Log Entry 48

Buck's Story

"Your ship returned to Salvation, empty. All our ships are programmed to return if the crew is hurt or missing. Anyway, we saw it had been rigged to simulate a radiation leak, and figured you were adrift in space somewhere. Or captured. I grabbed a ship and went looking, and found your escape pod. But it was filled with Terrines and knockout gas! Now here we are."

Log Entry 49

The Trap Laid

You watch as the sharks circle the remains of the freighter, Jonas Decker. First one shark noses it, then another. Soon, they line up for the kill. As the first clamps its jaws around the freighter, you detonate the toxin device. The black cloud expands rapidly in the vacuum. All of the sharks were too close and go into convulsions. After several minutes, the corpses are still. Buck pats you on the shoulder. 'Brilliant plan. Worked beautifully. I used to barbecue a great shark steak. Anyone hungry?'

Log Entry 50

Progress Report On Plant Mutagen

The mutagen is proving highly viable. Nearly all species show rapid growth and become ambulatory. We are still perfecting the herbicide. The current stuff is unstable, so we would be unable to deliver it to the NEO sites on Earth.

Without the herbicide, NEO will be unable to protect their bases, or become heroes by rescuing other settlements. That cyborg proves to me that NEO can be realistic, despite their idealistic propaganda. I have never met someone so willing to sacrifice people to achieve a goal. Sometimes he scares even me.

Log Entry 51

A Disturbing Message

"We need you to return to Salvation at your earliest available time. The Maelstrom Rider is one of the few ships we have access to that can be adapted for this mission.

"As you may know, dark matter makes up most of the mass of the universe, holding it together. It is nearly undetectable and has adverse effects on ship's engines. One of our scouts reports the appearance of a dark matter cloud along one of our clandestine shipping routes. This coincides with the disappearance of one of our freighters. It was commanded by Wilma Deering and carried a cure for the blood fever. This fever is decimating our outpost near Thule.

"We can adapt your engines to survive entry into the cloud. Rescue Wilma Deering and transport the cure to the base."

Log Entry 52

Descent into the Cloud

The blackness spreads before you, blotting out the stars. As the ship eases into the dark matter, a shudder races through the ship. The engine noise fades to near silence, but quickly reestablishes a normal hum.

Scot reports, "Long-range scanners are down. Active vision is useless beyond a hundred miles. If Wilma's in here, we'll need luck to stumble upon her."

Suddenly, a huge flash lights up a section of the cloud, which roils as if hit by a sudden breeze.

Scot continues, "It appears that Wilma has found a way to signal us. Head for that flash!"

Log Entry 53

On the Flying Platform

The mining platform is a flying wing, relying on the massive winds of Jupiter's lower atmosphere to stay aloft. To mine heavy gases, the platform lowers an aircar deeper into the atmosphere, which pumps gas up through a long tube. All Stormrider workers left the platform due to the war; the platform boss operates with robot teams.

Nikita appears unsure of why you're here. "No RAM ships can penetrate this low into the atmosphere, and I can always switch my robots to defense duty. Why don't you take a tour of the ship? Be careful of the winds on the rear shuttle decks! We have a safety net at the tail, but don't rely on that to save you. When you're done, report to Leander and Makali at the aircar hatch. They're preparing to lower the Matrix Device into Jupiter's atmosphere to ignite the Matrix Crucible."

Log Entry 54

The Captain Speaks

Reaching up to his chromed throat, the captain clicks on his voice box. A mechanical rasping echoes through the chamber. "Welcome to the Shadow Master. As you have no doubt realized, the dark matter cloud is controlled by this ship. Our initial tests have been very successful. Already we have captured two NEO vessels. We will sell you to RAM, once we have recaptured that sneaky Captain Deering. She activated our signalling device and brought you here.

"This ship is based on an octopus design. Dr. Taylor, an escapee from Amalthea, provided a method for us to extrude dark matter, rather than ink. Dr. Taylor is a very busy man. If you had any conception of how many advances he has provided our cabal, you would surrender the Earth to us now."

The captain seems to lose interest in you. He turns and clicks off the voice box.

Log Entry 55

Propaganda Brochure

Q. WHAT is the greatest THREAT to mankind?

A. GENETIC MONSTERS!

If you BELIEVE that GENETIC SCIENCE has been a boon to humanity, you ARE WRONG!

LOOK around, friend! Genetic MONSTERS have taken over! They were made to serve us . . . but instead HAVE BECOME OUR MASTERS! We of PURGE are DEDICATED to ridding the Earth of the EVIL of GENETIC RESEARCH! Join us as we FIGHT TO SAVE HUMANITY FOR THE HUMANS!

PURGE—Prevention of Unwanted Research and Genetic Engineering

Log Entry 56

Makali's Plan

"I've been considering flying up to the Living Ship. I know exactly where there's a hatch leading to the brain. If I could get to the brain for a few minutes, I could free the Ship from RAM control, and it might fly away. But there are probably guards in the brain that I cannot hope to fight.

"The RAM assassins used these heavy-duty jetpacks to reach us down here. The fuel tanks are nearly empty, but I combined all the leftover fuel into this one pack. There's enough to get one person to the Living Ship and back — I think. If someone will come with me, we can try to get rid of RAM once and for all."

Log Entry 57

Wilma Speaks Through the Air Shaft

"Your ship is held in the third tentacle, mine in the sixth. I'll give our chrome-plated captain something to worry about up in the cranium. You rescue the antidote from my ship. Then set up a delayed explosion. That ship will never fly again after its exposure to dark matter. We'll meet at your ship and launch. With any luck the explosion will destroy the octopus and dissipate the cloud. Wish me luck!"

Log Entry 58

The Hanger at Mariposa #301

You are nearly blinded by the scintillating lights coming from the huge room ahead. Chains are strung from floor to ceiling. Clustered along their link, like pearls on a strand, are beautiful translucent crystals. Under the intense Mercurian sun, the crystals diffract the light into a million different colors.

As your eyes adjust, you note tiny robots travelling along each chain. They pause at each crystal cluster and spray an ocher gas. The crystal dims for a moment, but then returns to brilliance . . . and shines a little stronger than before.

Log Entry 59

Message to Patrol Leader

Lieutenant Djahar,

Radio silence directive remains effective during operation. Attempts to locate gravitational specialist through data searches continues with negative success. Suspect digital personality interference. Begin land sweeps to locate target. Suspect specialist is human and sheltered by indigents.

Yellow patrol reports PURGE activity in their sector. Report further activity using closed communication.

Caution: Political situation delicate. Terminate target using covert elimination protocol.

Command, Mariposa Sunspot

Log Entry 60

The Crystal Cyborg Speaks

"We located Dr. Taylor's asteroid on a collision course with the sun. I rendezvoused and managed to extricate the doctor. The high-G acceleration caused me to lose my balance on the way out. My suit tore and I was exposed to the full radiation of the sun. Only my brain was protected in the suit's helmet.

"Dr. Taylor is genius. When he found that we were growing the energy crystals here at #301, he said that he could save my life. He did more than that! I am now immortal! Explosives bounce off my diamond hard skin. Lasers I can absorb and re-emit at a hundred times strength. You are doomed!"

Log Entry 61

Lab Director's Story

"That cyborg is like Rassputin . . . he refuses to die! We were cleaning up in your battle'ss aftermath, when ssuddenly he revived, apparently from the grave.

"He took me hosstage. Ssomehow, he managed to get uss out of the labss . . . then thingsg got worse.

"He drugged me with a truth sserum! I'm afraid that I've told him about our ressearch! He took my recordss. I think it only ssafe to asssume that PURGE knowss everything concerning our work in gravitational mechanics!"

Log Entry 62

Mario Quinn's Diatribe

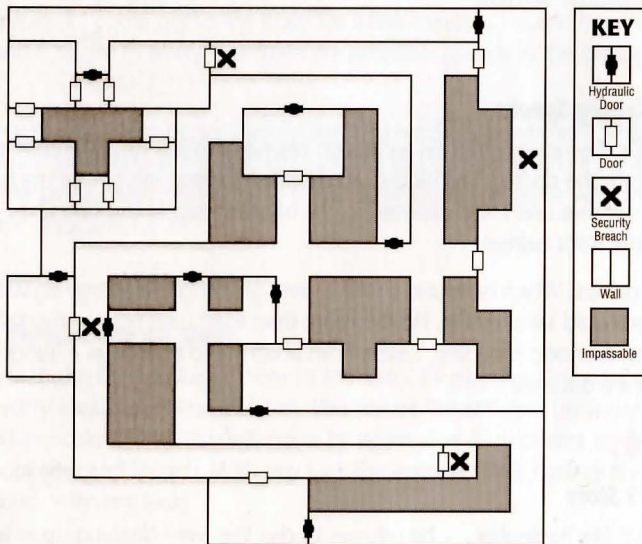
"Welcome, invaders. I am Mario Quinn, the CEO of Genetics Foundation. I wanted to thank you for bringing the wasphoppers to me. We've heard of them, of course, but I'm glad to get my hands on them. I'm sure we can profit from them.

"You are in league with the Stormriders. Your possession of the grubs is irrefutable evidence of your guilt.

"I admonish you for getting involved in the silly little plottings of those Stormriders! They are such simple creatures, incapable of the subtlety necessary to challenge us. I could release you, but RAM would frown on that. I'll just have to hold you until arrangements can be made for sending you on to Mars."

Log Entry 63

Security Computer Printout



Log Entry 64

A Death Aboard The Lucas

The figure floating in your stateroom is rigid, as if dead for some time. No sign of violence shows on the body. The only thing of note is the wide-eyed expression of terror.

The captain speaks from behind you. "This ship carries few passengers and I have met them all. This man was not one of them. I do not know how he got on board."

Log Entry 65

The Medical Officer's Journal

"Body of an unknown male human. No external signs of the cause of death. Unusual rigor of the face may indicate poison or heart attack. Removing shirt now. Something seems to be wrapped around the subject's torso. . . . Wait! It's moving! It's — AAAAHHH!!!"

A dull wet sound ends the tape.

Log Entry 66

Dr. Romney's Rescue

"I am ruined! My work has fallen into the hands of evil! PURGE knows everything . . . or so I fear. So much of the recent past has been a blur.

"They took me from Mercury. I know that much . . . but little beyond. I was in a ship and then a cell. They questioned me endlessly. I . . . I think they used truth serum.

"Now their leader—the so called 'Lord' Refuge—has gone off. He plans to build a Matrix Device and use it for his depraved new world order! We must stop him. He is mad, mad!"

Log Entry 67

Police Raid

The three conspirators promptly begin to protest as the police level their guns. Lt. Jenner waves the evidence before them and they fall silent. Lt. Jenner smiles as the conspirators are handcuffed and led away.

He turns to you. "Excellent work! I should be sending units into Tsai Weaponry, but I'll delay until you have a chance to get Dr. Coldor out. Then you will be escorted back to your ship and off Luna. If you were to stay longer, Koi or McKay could whip up public support. Lunarians do not approve of outworlders and their violence."

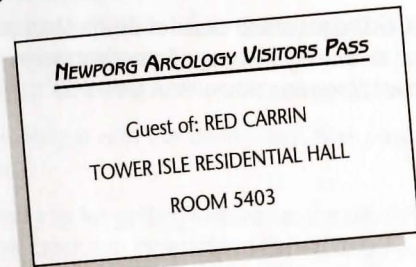
He then returns to clearing up the scene.

Log Entry 68

Into the Pit

"Let me explain. Telos believes in the purity of physical challenge. He built these tunnels with some of the billions of credits he gained through his endeavors. He populated it with young children 15 years ago. They were taught only one thing, to fight!

"Pass through these tunnels, survive, and Telos will meet you. Only then will your equipment be returned."

Log Entry 69***Newporg Passcard*****Log Entry 70*****The Theorist Explains***

"Thank you for the timely rescue. I had resisted the idea, but I see now that my work requires military support. Everything is moving too quickly. I have designed a device named Matrix, which could save the solar system from its own self-destructive ways.

"But like so much that is good, it could be used for great evil as well. At all costs, we must prevent this knowledge from falling into the wrong hands."

Log Entry 71***Dr. Colder's Computer File***

That cyborg is very ambitious. He sees a perfect new Earth following the completion of our projects. The plant mutagen will give the Earth a common enemy. With NEO's monopoly on the herbicide everyone will quit bickering and unite under NEO's banner. Then the unlimited power of the Matrix Device can be used to return Earth to the utopia it once was.

I am impressed with the array of scientific information brought to bear on the Matrix Device. I am somewhat sad that I have nearly completed my part.

Log Entry 72***Telos Speaks***

"Yes, I provided PURGE with the equipment for their Matrix Device. Their money is more forthcoming than NEO's. They also have a hard edge which I appreciate.

"Your success in my tunnels has earned my respect. I have fed the coordinates where I delivered the equipment to your computer. Do what you will. I do not care who creates the Matrix Device. I will adapt or die, in the natural way."

Log Entry 73***Note on the Door***

If you're looking for Red, I'm at
~~the Sparkhouse Cafe on the 85th floor.~~

Smoking Gun Slots on the 13th floor.

Log Entry 74***Makali Explains***

"You're here to convince me to return to the Matrix Project. Let me explain why I will not.

"Since the first Stormrider rose from the grow tanks of the Genetics Foundation, we have been slaves. The Foundation ruled us for generations . . . but no longer! Slowly we have built the strength to break their power. This school is key to our plans. The Foundation built it for vocational training, but we slowly converted it into a university!

"The Foundation recently learned of this. They plan to attack. The struggle for our freedom has begun and I must lend my hand!"

◆ APPENDIX

Racial Attribute Modifiers Table

	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA	TECH
Terran	0	0	+1	0	+1	0	0
Martian	-1	+1	-1	0	-1	+1	0
Venusian	0	-1	+1	0	+1	-1	0
Mercurian	-1	+1	+1	0	0	0	0
Tinker	-2	+3	-2	0	0	0	+3
Desert Runner	+2	+2	+1	0	0	-1	0

Allowable Careers by Race Table

	ROCKETJOCK	WARRIOR	ENGINEER	ROGUE	MEDIC
Terran	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Martian	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Venusian	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mercurian	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Tinker	no	no	yes	no	yes
Desert Runner	yes	yes	yes	no	no

Constitution Modifier Table

HIT POINT BONUS		HIT POINT BONUS	
1	-3	13	0
2	-2	14	0
3	-2	15	+1
4	-1	16	+2
5	-1	17	+2 (+3)*
6	-1	18	+2 (+4)*
7	0	19	+2 (+5)*
8	0	20	+2 (+5)*
9	0	21	+2 (+6)*
10	0	22	+2 (+6)*
11	0		
12	0		

* Values in parenthesis () for Warriors only.

Strength Modifier Table

	HIT BONUS	DAMAGE BONUS	WEIGHT*
1	-5	-4	1
2	-4	-3	2
3	-3	-2	5
4	-2	-1	10
5	-2	-1	15
6	-1	0	20
7	-1	0	25
8	0	0	30
9	0	0	35
10	0	0	40
11	0	0	45
12	0	0	50
13	0	0	55
14	0	0	60
15	0	0	65
16	0	+1	70
17	+1	+1	85
18	+2	+2	110
19	+3	+4	200
20	+3	+6	300
21	+4	+8	450
22	+4	+10	600

*This is the amount of weight a character can carry without becoming encumbered. Characters can carry up to double this amount before they are unable to move.

Dexterity Modifier Table

	REACTION BONUS	RANGED COMBAT BONUS	ARMOR CLASS BONUS
1	+6	-6	+5
2	+4	-4	+5
3	+3	-3	+4
4	+2	-2	+3
5	+1	-1	+2
6	0	0	+1
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	0
14	0	0	0
15	0	0	-1
16	-1	+1	-2
17	-2	+2	-3
18	-2	+2	-4
19	-3	+3	-4
20	-3	+3	-4
21	-4	+4	-5
22	-4	+4	-5

Rocketjock Level Advancement Table

EXPERIENCE LEVEL	EXP REQUIREMENT
8	70,000
9	110,000
10	160,000
11	220,000
12	440,000
and above . . .	previous EXP x2

Rogue Level Advancement Table

EXPERIENCE LEVEL	EXP REQUIREMENT
8	70,000
9	110,000
10	160,000
11	220,000
12	440,000
and above . . .	previous EXP x2

Warrior Level Advancement Table

EXPERIENCE LEVEL	EXP REQUIREMENT
8	125,000
9	250,000
10	500,000
11	750,000
12	1,000,000
and above . . .	previous EXP x2

Medic Level Advancement Table

EXPERIENCE LEVEL	EXP REQUIREMENT
8	96,000
9	192,000
10	384,000
11	768,000
12	1,536,000
and above . . .	previous EXP x2

Engineer Level Advancement Table

EXPERIENCE LEVEL	EXP REQUIREMENT
8	70,000
9	110,000
10	160,000
11	220,000
12	440,000
and above . . .	previous EXP x2

Armor Class

TYPE	AC
None	10
Spacesuit	6
Smart Suit	4
Heavy Body Armor	2
Battle Armor	0
Battle Armor with Fields	-2

Weapons Table

WEAPON	RANGES (S/M/L)	DAMAGE	ROF
Knife	—/—/—	1d3	2
Mono Knife	—/—/—	1d6	2
Cutlass	—/—/—	1d6	2
Sword	—/—/—	1d8	2
Polearm	—/—/—	1d10	2
Mono Sword	—/—/—	1d10	2
D.R. X-Bow	4/6/8	1d8	2
Needle Gun	6/9/12	1d3	6
Bolt Gun	8/12/16	1d4	4
Laser Pistol	16/24/32	1d8	3
Rocket Pistol	8/12/16	1d10	4
Microwave Gun	8/12/16	1d10	4
Laser Rifle	60/90/120	1d12	2
Heat Gun	3/4/6	2d6	2
Rocket Rifle	40/60/80	2d8	2
Sonic Stunner	2/3/4	save	2
Grenade	1/2/3	varies	1
Grenade Launcher	6/9/12	varies	1/2
Plasma Thrower	10/15/20	4d10	1/2
Rocket Launcher	20/30/40	5d10	1/2

Skills Table**DEXTERITY SKILLS:**

Acrobatics	Adventuring
Climb	Adventuring
Hide in Shadows	Adventuring
Maneuver in Zero-G	Adventuring and Combat
Move Silently	Adventuring
Pick Pocket	Adventuring
Pilot Rocket	Adventuring and Space Combat
Use Jet Pack	Adventuring and Combat

TECHNICAL SKILLS:

Bypass Security	Adventuring
Commo Operation	Adventuring
Demolitions	Adventuring
First Aid	Adventuring and Combat
Jury Rig	Adventuring and Space Combat
Open Lock	Adventuring
Repair Electrical	Adventuring and Space Combat
Repair Life Support	Adventuring and Space Combat
Repair Mechanical	Adventuring and Space Combat
Repair Nuclear Engine	Adventuring and Space Combat
Repair Rocket Hull	Adventuring and Space Combat
Repair Weapon	Adventuring and Space Combat
Sensor Operation	Adventuring

MEDIC SKILLS:

Diagnose	Adventuring
Treat Critical Wounds	After Combat and Space Combat
Treat Light Wounds	After Combat and Space Combat
Treat Poisoning	After Combat and Space Combat
Treat Serious Wounds	After Combat and Space Combat
Treat Stun/Paralysis	Adventuring and Combat

INTELLIGENCE SKILLS:

Astrogation	Adventuring
Astronomy	Prerequisite Only
Math	Prerequisite Only
Battle Tactics	Adventuring and Combat
Disguise	Adventuring
Library Search	Adventuring
Mimic	Adventuring
Navigation	Adventuring
Planetology	Adventuring
Programming	Adventuring

CHARISMA SKILLS:

Act	Adventuring
Befriend Animal	Adventuring
Distract	Adventuring
Etiquette	Adventuring
Fast Talk/Convince	Adventuring
Intimidate	Adventuring and Combat
Leadership	Adventuring and Combat
Sing	Adventuring

WISDOMS:

Notice	Adventuring
Planetary Survival	Adventuring
Shadowing	Adventuring
Tracking	Adventuring

◆ GLOSSARY

Ability Scores These numbers define the basic character. The seven attributes are: Strength (STR), Dexterity (DEX), Constitution (CON), Intelligence (INT), Wisdom (WIS), Charisma (CHR), and Tech (TCH).

Armor Class (AC) This rating determines how difficult it is to hit and damage a target. The lower the AC, the more difficult the target is to hit.

Career This is a character's occupation. The five career choices in *MATRIX CUBED* are: Rocketjock, Warrior, Engineer, Rogue, and Medic.

Character Each member of the adventuring team you control is a character. Characters are sometimes referred to as Player Characters or PCs.

Character Icon Is a picture that represents a character or NPC in combat.

Combat, melee This is close combat between adjacent opponents with such weapons as knives and swords.

Combat, ranged This is combat with distance weapons, such as pistols, rifles, or grenades.

Dice This refers to ranges of random numbers. A d6 for example, is a random number between one and six, a d10 is a number between one and ten. Multiple dice represent two or more random ranges added together. For example 2d10 would be a number between two and twenty ([1 to 10] + [1 to 10]).

Encounter This is the name for when the team meets opponents or other beings. A menu will be displayed to show all of your options for each encounter (sometimes your only option is to fight).

Experience Points (EXP) Are earned for every victory, as well as completing parts of the adventure. A character who earns enough EXP may advance in career level.

Hit points (HP) Are a measure of how difficult a character or NPC is to kill or incapacitate.

Initiative This is a semi-random value, based partially on DEX, that determines when a character or NPC can act in combat. Higher dexterity generally allows characters and NPCs to act earlier in a combat.

Level As characters gain EXP, they may train and increase in career level. Gaining level gives characters more skill points, better combat ability, and more HP.

Non-Player Character (NPC) This is any human or creature that an adventuring team meets. Some NPCs will attack immediately, some will talk first, while others will actually aid the party.

Player Character (PC) This term describes all members of your adventuring team.

Player Race This is any of the species that a PC can be. The player races are: Terran, Martian, Venusian, Mercurian, Tinker, Desert Runner.

Roll This is the term used for when the computer generates a random number. For example, the computer "rolls" a d20 to determine hit during combat.

Skill The ability to do something, or operate something. One useful skill is Maneuver in Zero-G, which is the ability to function in a gravity-free environment. The numerical value of a skill represents a percentage chance of success for a character.

Skill, Career These skills are key for a given career.

Skill, General These are useful skills not associated specifically with a character's career.

Skill Check This is a check against a character's skill number. A character with a skill of 75 has a 75% chance of success on a skill check for an action of average difficulty.

Team This is the group of PCs you assemble for the adventure. Team members can be added to or removed from the group during the adventure.

THACØ (To Hit Armor Class 0) This number is an indication of an attacker's combat ability. An attacker must roll his THACØ or greater to hit an opponent with armor class Ø.



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