

ADVENTURE: TARGET: ATLANTIS

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This adventure was heavily inspired by the novel *Atlantis Found* by Clive Cussler. If a player has already read this one, many other Cussler novels would adapt well to this game.

Spoiler Alert: Many, many things have changed from the novel to this adventure, but it might give away a few plot twists. Read – and play – at your own discretion.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

A wealthy and influential former member of the Terra Arcanum has acquired several extremely powerful artifacts, and now plans to use them to eradicate all civilization on the surface of the Earth and then rule the survivors like a god-king. In order to foil his plot and put an end to his ambition, the team must trace the clues throughout the American continent and beyond. But beware: this mastermind commands bizarre weapons and an army of killers!

Target: *Atlantis* is a surface world adventure that could be a stand-alone story or it could be a long lead up to getting your characters into the Hollow Earth. It would be best with adventurous types, investigators and specialists of the sort that might be recruited by Army Intelligence, so Archetypes like Academic, Explorer, and Soldier would be great. Having a two-fisted Sam Spade type detective or an ex-mafia trigger-man would add great flair. Motivations along the lines of Duty and Truth are ideal for the same reason, but it could also easily accommodate Revenge or many other less noble aspirations.

This story is designed for the characters (whether military specialists or civilian experts) to be recruited by the U.S. Army Intelligence. The GM may want to consider requiring or granting at least one level of Rank in that organization to provide conveniences such as transportation to the various locations in the story. Of course, it would be easy to adjust the story to replace Army Intelligence with just about any intelligence or law enforcement agency in any country. Alternatively, one or all of the player characters might be members of the Terra Arcanum who embark on this investigation in order to root out and eliminate the rogue operative.

CHAPTER 1: THE EBONY SKULL

Major James Eaton assembles the expedition team to investigate an unusual finding in Montana. It seems that a miner recently tunneled into a lost, man-made room that had been sealed on all sides for an unknown number of centuries. Eaton shows the group a very strange artifact retrieved from the site—a skull carved from ebony, with some strange markings on the back. This is special for two reasons: 1) Ebony is an extremely brittle material and it would require hundreds of years to carve such a thing without cracking it, yet it is believed to date back millennia to before the Roman Empire. 2) It has some strange markings on the back which no one can decipher. What was more, there was some kind of markings or language all over the inside of the chamber in which the skull was discovered, and thus the expedition is being sent in to photograph, create rubbings, and ultimately decipher these markings.

At the mine, the group meets up with the mine owner (who could be a good player

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character concept or an ideal red-shirt). He leads them deep into the mine, then up to the room, entering through a hole in the bottom. The group begins deciphering when—BOOM!—an explosion rumbles through the mine. Almost immediately, the room begins filling with water, and the miner explains that some illegal trespasser must have dynamited open a hole to an underground river and that they need to get out of there quickly before they are all trapped and drown.

GM Note: This would be a great place to put some kind of word puzzle that the group “translated,” something which would indicate which square in a grid would open up and reveal a full compliment of Blackbreath Root which would allow the expedition to swim out through thousands of feet of underwater tunnel. Unfortunately, I have no such puzzle up my sleeve, so unless someone else out there can devise or find one, then just say some swimming is necessary but not so much that it would drown the group.

The group emerges dripping and panting into the main access tunnel. They are now above the level of the underground river, but are not too close to the exit. There they encounter several well armed men who are only somewhat surprised to see the explorers emerge from the water. Strangely, these goons all look to be identical twins. They are heavy men with vaguely primate-like features and thick jaws, yet all have no hair on their heads, faces, or even eyebrows. While most of the goons cover the party with their guns, the leader steps forward and says “Well, you were supposed to drown. No matter—we will bury you along with the chamber you had no business finding.” Then he produces what looks like a twisted purple crystal. “Have you ever seen an artifact such as this? It will drill a thousand feet straight through the rock, depositing small slivers of itself all along the way. When I break the trigger stone, each of the slivers will explode with the force of a dozen sticks of dynamite. That kind of explosion happening all at once throughout

the heart of this mine will bring the whole thing down, and your corpses will be buried under a hundred thousand tons of rock.”

Then he places the crystal against a wall and it lights up red, melting its way in to the rock. All the goons look over at it while it burrows itself into the wall of the tunnel—this would be an excellent time to get a surprise turn on them. If the explorers miss their chance, they might try to get away back through the water, or they will have to overcome the executioner squad with less advantageous odds. As soon as the Burrowing Detonator is out of sight, the lead goon will give the order to “finish them off”

All of the Goons are armed with S&W .38 revolvers and stilettos. Their number is two, plus one Foreman (more or less, depending on the toughness of the expedition). Behind them are parked their motorcycles, which they plan to use to escape from the mine quickly but will not use as long as they think the expedition is still alive inside. None have any identification of any sort, and a careful inspection will reveal that they have no body hair anywhere and do not even have any fingerprints.

The moment the leader sees that things might not go his way, he draws from his jacket what appears to be a silver marble that is about two inches in diameter. Then he shouts “Fools! My life is a small price to pay to destroy the room—and you with it!” Then, on his next turn, he will attempt to destroy the stone. If he is successful in smashing it, the party will hear the explosions shaking all the walls. Fortunately, it hadn’t burrowed all the way so the destruction of the mine won’t be immediate, but it will destabilize the tunnel, dropping rocks for 4 dice non-lethal damage onto the heads of everyone inside until the tunnel is completely full or the party is smart enough to get out. True to his words, the lead goon would rather die than let the expedition escape alive. He and the other goons have cyanide pills and will not waste time using it to avoid being taken alive.

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Goon Minion

Follower 2

Archetype: Soldier Motivation: Faith
Style: 0 Health: 6

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 1
Strength: 3 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 3
Move: 5 Defense: 4
Perception: 3 Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	3	2	5	(2+)
Brawl	3	2	5	(2+)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Intimidation	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	3	2	5	(2+)

Talents

Robust (+2 Health rating)

Resources

None

Flaw

Fervent (+1 Style point whenever you disregard societal laws and conventions in conflict with your own beliefs)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
.38 Pistol	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Stiletto	1 L	0	7 L	(3+) L

Goon Foreman

Follower 3

Archetype: Soldier Motivation: Faith
Style: 0 Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 2
Strength: 4 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 4
Move: 6 Defense: 7
Perception: 4 Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletic	4	2	6	(3)
Brawl	4	2	6	(3)
Con	2	1	3	(1+)
Drive	2	2	4	(2)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Gunnery	2	2	4	(2)
Intimidation	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	4	2	6	(3)

Talents

Robust (+2 Health rating)

High Pain Tolerance (Character does not fall unconscious or take wound penalties until at -3 Health)

Resources

None

Flaw

Fervent (+1 Style point whenever you disregard societal laws and conventions in conflict with your own beliefs)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
.38 Pistol	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Stiletto	1 L	0	7 L	(3+) L

The Burrowing Detonator (Artifact 1)

This small device consists of two pieces: the burrowing detonator and the trigger stone. The burrowing detonator will dig itself through thousands of feet of rock (or other solid material—it cannot be used to leave a trail of explosives along an open battlefield), leaving explosive shards along the way. When the pearl is broken (defense 2, structure 1) all the shards explode with the force of dynamite (4 lethal area effect) at every point along its path. If the trigger pearl is heated to the point of boiling water (100 degrees c/212 degrees f) then the entire device is permanently deactivated.

This is a one-use item.

Artifact 1	Size	Def	Str	Notes
Burrowing Detonator	-2	2	1	Burrows 5 feet per turn

CHAPTER 2: CHASING LEADS

Army Intelligence will be very interested to hear the report of the goon thugs. They will assign a small detachment to excavate the room (assuming it was buried again in the partial collapse of the mine caused by the Burrowing Detonator). In the mean time, the army puts 'Top Men' on the case of deciphering the writing on the walls. If the player characters have the right combination of skills, they themselves may be named the 'Top Men'. In any case, the analysis will eventually reveal that the ceiling is a star map with a configuration constant with where the stars would have appeared seven thousand years B.C. (almost certainly, this indicates the approximate time the chamber was built. Also, there was another, smaller chart that anticipated a time which would indicate the summer solstice of 1936... less

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than one month away. Why ancient people would have predicted this time is a mystery. It does coincide with the arrival of a comet, but this comet has no apparent significance.

The trail seems to have run cold, but there is a lucky break. One of the players happens to notice a picture in a newspaper taken at a Chicago race track. In the background of the picture are three identical bald men standing with a fourth man in an expensive suit. The fourth man is facing away from the camera and identification is impossible, but he is holding... an ebony skull, identical to the one in the player's possession. What is more, the characters will immediately recognize the bald men as more twins to the ones that ambushed them in the mine.

Once they get to the Windy City, the heroes will find that the race track itself is a dead end, but asking around (Streetwise skill or other ability, plus roleplaying going into different bars, bribing shoe-shine boys, etc) will reveal that several local mobsters were shooting their mouths off about an ebony skull. Any inquiry into the men will quickly earn an invitation to meet Boss Cogito at his club. The club is one of those where guests sit at tables, are attended to by cigarette girls, and listen to a singer with a live orchestra. If your players are the type to bring trouble onto themselves, it happens that the lead singer really is the girlfriend of the very jealous mob boss. Boss Cogito is a mid-level capo in a major family, but he is very ambitious and greedy and has given the order that none of his men are to talk about the ebony skull until their boss gets something for it. The players can get the information in several ways:

* Nab some of the men and make chin music until they sing like canaries (i.e., hurt them until they talk). This is direct, but will make an enemy out of Boss Cogito.

* Bribe or cajole some of the men in a way that is effective enough to make them forget that they may end up in cement shoes if their boss finds out.

* Provide military equipment to Boss Cogito (the army would *never* knowingly allow this,

and anyone with an honorable Motivation like Duty or Justice should have serious reservations).

* Run a hit or rough up some local merchants on Cogito's behalf (see reservations above).

* Provide an unreasonable amount of money (he won't go less than \$10,000).

It also happens that Boss Fortissimo, one of Cogito's enemies within the family, has been making strong plays because he has managed to acquire a *Schwerer Panzer-spahwagen*, a German build military armored car (see stats below). Cogito and all the other bosses are rather nervous about when and how this car will be used, and he is certainly not above "leaking" this fact to outsiders who might be able to do something about it. Heroic characters would probably have very few qualms about taking such a rolling weapon away from a known criminal, and there might be some side stories to discover what kind of Nazi connections Boss Fortissimo must have. The car is hidden in an abandoned warehouse under heavy guard, but a little "shaking down" of Fortissimo's mobsters will reveal the location, and no self-respecting explorer will be deterred by the few Tommy-gun toting mobsters guarding it. It could also lead to a great chase scene if the explorers don't manage to take the mobsters by complete surprise.

Land Vehicle	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Mobster APC	2	8	12	50	-2	1	4

Armament: Browning M2 .50 MG

Once Boss Cogito is satisfied (or dealt with), he will clear his mobsters who know about the skull to spill what they know. It turns out that the two of them are "brothers," related only in that they grew up in the same orphanage. They say that the skull was still there three weeks ago when they went to donate some money; the orphanage caretaker, Auntie Mae, kept it and a bunch of other odd things in a glass display case.

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Once at the orphanage, the explorers will meet the loveable, caring, bumbling Auntie Mae, who has dedicated her life to helping the orphans of sailors. She will offer them simple but hearty food and explain that when she was a girl, her dear father died at sea, leaving her with the house that became the orphanage and a few oddities from his travels. One of these was the strange ebony skull with the bizarre markings on the back of it. But it happens that only a few days ago, a very nice man by the name of Edwin Morrissey came to view it. She claims to have no idea how he knew about it, but it was never her favorite piece (it kind of creeped her out) so she let him have it, and in return happily accepted his generous donation to the orphanage. What she can share with the investigators may be even more important: she has the log book from the voyage on which her father retrieved the skull. She says she wishes she had “skulls for all you dear sweet things if that’s what makes you happy,” but hopes that the log book will help them. In fact, it will: a short reading of its yellowed and brittle pages will quickly reveal that the skull was discovered in a cave on a small island outside of Greenland. Exact coordinates are carefully inscribed in neat handwriting beneath a picture of the ebony skull.

A note on Edwin Morrissey: This is the first time the characters hear the name of the main antagonist of this story. Describe him as a lot like the Texan on *The Simpsons* who owns everything and shoots his pistols and dances whenever he gets excited. Use the stats on page 196 of *Hollow Earth Expedition*, but increase his Wealth score to the maximum (or even beyond) for the purposes of this story. He has acquired several extremely powerful artifacts, used them to vastly increase his wealth, and is preparing to turn on the Terra Arcanum. If this doesn’t fit your story, simply make up another ultra-wealthy renegade Terra Arcanum member.

A note on Auntie Mae: She is also a Terra Arcanum agent, but one who is still loyal to

the organization, and one of the only ones who fully understands that Edwin Morrissey has gone rogue. She really does oversee the orphanage (keeping in touch with her former orphans to draw all sorts of critical information out of their various sectors of employment). Auntie Mae also orchestrated this meeting. She did have the skull, but Morrissey didn’t buy it; his agents stole it. She knew it was him, so she “reminded” a few of her former residents about the skull so that they would, without even understanding their role, talk about it and eventually draw investigators to her. Now she will put the investigators onto Morrissey’s path in order that they take care of him. The log book describing the location of the skulls discovery did not come from Mae’s actual father, but aside from that it is authentic, and it will lead the expedition exactly to where Auntie Mae wants them to go to find the next clue. Unless the characters are freakishly paranoid about sweet old ladies, there is no reason or need for them to ever know about Auntie Mae’s Terra Arcanum affiliation or her subtle manipulations.

CHAPTER 3: THE ISLAND TOMB

Now that they have Edwin Morrissey’s name, the characters will probably do a little investigation. They will easily be able to discover that Morrissey is a millionaire oil baron who generally keeps to himself. He has many houses and offices, so trying to locate him in person would be difficult, and any clandestine reconnaissance of his known property isn’t likely to reveal much. Army Intelligence or a similar group might be willing to arrange a face-to-face with Morrissey for characters with sufficient Rank resource, or the heroes might be able to arrange it for themselves if one or more members have the Status resource. The expedition can play dress-up in tuxedos and ball gowns and be seated next to Morrissey at some important social event, perhaps dinner at a swanky restaurant or in the opera—something public. He won’t give anything away beyond patronizing remarks and veiled threats (“Son, back where I come

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from, someone like you could get shot by someone like me for saying something like that”), but if the explorers succeed in making him mad, he will slip that “the second flood is coming on the solstice” and that “you’ll all be swept away while I sail to safety.” If they get that much out of him, he will storm off, leaving them to puzzle over his comments. Whatever his meaning, he named the same date as was indicated on the star chart of the sealed chamber in the mine. It is important to note that no one—including the characters—know what Morrissey is up to. Neither the Terra Arcanum nor Army Intelligence nor any other agency that is likely to be employing the characters would condone direct action against the man at this point.

The log book showing the source of the other ebony skull will prove to be the more fruitful lead. The characters could either sail to this island or fly there and land on the only short strip of flat land available. Once there, they will discover that this isolated bump on the ocean is little more than a desolate, frigid pile of white rocks made slippery by the tons of guano deposited by the sea birds that use this place as a stopover on their annual migratory path. The only thing that grows in this thin layer of fertilizer are a kind of pale cabbage that tastes like bitter eggplant.

It is not at all difficult to find the shallow cave in the northeastern portion, around a bend and just out of sight from the only viable aircraft runway or boat landing. The cave is strewn with thick brown vines and lined with carven stone shelves which once held the ebony skull and numerous wooden artifacts. On the ground of the cave is the desiccated corpse of a castaway who washed ashore here and froze to death perhaps twenty years ago. Investigation will determine that he had made a fire pit and burned the artifacts in the room and every thing else he could, but eventually his fuel ran out, and his life ran out with it. Any sailors in the group or anyone with superstitious or religious tendencies will

probably want to give him a proper burial or bring the remains back to the mainland.

There are two other features which would not be immediately evident to explorers: the vines and the false back wall of the cave. The brown vines are, in fact, a Stranglevine plant (see page 231 of *Hollow Earth Expedition* for stats). It has been dormant for several years and is a little slow due to the cold, so it will not immediately react to the presence of the explorers. After a few minutes, however, it will be roused by the sensation of live bodies and go to work, constricting and grinding anything in its grasp.

The Stranglevine is actually growing through the stones of the false back wall of the cave. During the struggle, it will tear out a few of the bricks, revealing that there is a second chamber behind the outer one. The characters will have no trouble breaking the rest of the way through the wall to reveal an ornate burial chamber, complete with three mummified figures reposing on thrones. The jewelry and wrappings of these corpses does not belong to any culture, but may in fact show connections to several ancient peoples, including the Chinese, Egyptians, and Sumerians, without actually fitting in to any form. An Anthropology roll will reveal that this tomb was designed to honor the dead—probably kings or other highly honored citizens. More importantly, behind them is a map indicating a spot in the northern arctic. As to what it indicates, that remains for the players to find out.

Unfortunately, the players will have at least one interruption before they can head north to check out what the map is indicating. Edwin Morrissey, who is growing increasingly paranoid as his schemes approach fruition, has dispatched a team of goons to ambush anyone who happens across this island. If the expedition flew to the island, the goons will land their boat just long enough to disgorge a squad to destroy the airplane. The first the expedition will hear of it is the explosions and gunfire aimed at the airplane. The goons are armed

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with shotguns and goon foremen are armed with Thompson sub-machine guns. At the GM's option, they may also have grenades. They should outnumber the players, but half of them will concentrate their fire on the airplane instead of the characters. Once the goons are dispatched, the players may take off if the plane survives, or scavenge a radio from the wreckage if it isn't. Either Army Intelligence or the Coast Guard will dispatch a boat to rescue the stranded explorers, but it will take several hours. At the GM's option, they may have to fight another wave of goons during that time, or they might just have to shiver their way through the night before the rescue boat arrives.

Whether or not the expedition landed in an airplane, if they depart the area by boat the goons will be waiting in their own yacht to ambush them with a cry of "Mr. Morrissey sends his regards!" To make matters worse, this time they have something even worse than grenades: a 50 ton shark. They will speed their boat within range while two or three goons will stand on deck to shoot their hand weapons with the intention of sinking the other boat. Meanwhile, on the top deck sits the Coral Throne, which is used to control the Megalodon. One Goon Wrangler (see below) controls the shark from this chair. He is under strict orders to destroy the Throne before allowing it to fall in to enemy hands, so he sits with an un-pinned grenade. If he is killed or knocked unconscious, he will drop the grenade, and the grenade's explosion on the next round will likely destroy the Throne—and possibly the goon yacht along with it. As long as he remains alive, the Megalodon will attack the hero's boat with intention to sink it. The good news is that the giant shark must keep moving, so it cannot continuously attack the boat but must instead do "strafing runs." At the beginning of each round, roll three dice: if you score exactly one success—not zero, not two (three is right out)—then the shark is close to the surface and in position to attack the boat. This means the shark will attack just a little more often than once every three rounds. The shark is also close

enough to the surface to be fired upon that round, either before or after the attack. Aim for the dorsal fin. But the monster is too deep and out of sight on rounds when it is not attacking. If you are using continuous combat, the shark is a viable target five phases before and five phases after each of its attacks. Note that damaging the shark may allow it to break free from the control of the Coral Throne.

For the Goon Yacht, use the standard Yacht stats from Chapter 5 of *Hollow Earth Expedition*. Note that the sea here is deep and very cold, so if the yacht sinks it would not be easily retrieved. If the characters are in an Army Intelligence or Coast Guard boat, also use the stats for the yacht, but increase the defense by 2 and the structure rating by 4 to represent its armor. Also, such a boat would have a Browning machine gun turret in the front, the back, and on each side, all with sailors to man them (9 dice attack total). If the boat is sunk, the characters and crew might have to abandon ship and forcibly board the other ship. Good thing that the Megalodon would ignore life boats and player characters in favor of eating the crew, all of whom wear red shirts. If the Choral Throne is destroyed, the megalodon will return to the unspeakable depths whence it came, since humans are too paltry a prey to keep it interested for long.

The Coral Throne (Artifact 3)

This large, pink, green and red chair looks from a distance to have been secreted rather than crafted, but closer inspection reveals that it is carefully carved with the images of sharks swirling around it. It is heavy, yet extremely fragile and even minor damage will forever destroy its ability to function.

When this chair rests in the water or on a structure in contact with the water (such as a boat or a peer), a user resting upon it may summon a megalodon (p. 223), which will arrive in the area within 1-4 hours. The user may then control the giant shark so long as it stays within three hundred feet. Controlling the shark requires the user's full

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concentration. Simple commands such as “swim there” or “attack that” will be obeyed, but the megalodon, like all sharks, must continually move to flush water through its gills, and so it cannot follow any order which requires it to remain still for longer than a turn. Also, if the shark is in danger, its survival instinct may override the Throne’s control. Each time the Megalodon suffers damage, the user of the Throne must make an Animal Handling roll with a difficulty equal to the total number lethal and non-lethal wounds that the shark has suffered. Once the animal is free of the control it will flee the area if death seems immanent, or seek to destroy the throne if it can. Once it has broken control, it cannot be controlled again for one day.

Artifact 3	Size	Def	Str	Notes
Coral Throne	-2	2	1	Summons and controls the Megalodon

Goon Wrangler

Follower 3

Archetype: Soldier Motivation: Faith
Style: 0 Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 2
Strength: 4 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 4
Move: 6 Defense: 7
Perception: 4 Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletic	4	2	6	(3)
Brawl	4	2	6	(3)
Con	2	1	3	(1+)
Animal Handling	2	2	4	(2)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Gunnery	2	2	4	(2)
Intimidation	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	4	2	6	(3)

Talents

Robust (+2 Health rating)
High Pain Tolerance (Character does not fall unconscious or take wound penalties until at -3 Health)

Resources

None

Flaw

Fervent (+1 Style point whenever you disregard societal laws and conventions in conflict with your own beliefs)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
.38 Pistol	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Stiletto	1 L	0	7 L	(3+) L

PART 4: BREAKING THE ARK

Now that they have seen the burial chamber map, the expedition will need to make preparations for arctic exploration. However, don’t let them put too much effort into it, since Morrissey’s minions have already been there and left. When the heroes track down the coordinates indicated on the map in the island tomb, they will find an abandoned city of unimaginable antiquity sealed up just beneath the ice, but it is completely dead and empty, whatever residents who once lived here have long since deserted it, taking everything with them. Everything that is, except for one very powerful weapon, which Morrissey collected less than a week ago.

Morrissey’s goons took few steps to cover their tracks. 2 successes on Investigation or 3 on Survival will reveal that they cut their way through the ice to get into the city, and then brought heavy machinery down to the lowest level, where they burrowed through a stone wall to extract something large and heavy, about the size of a Studebaker. Whatever was sealed in that vault, the walls around it are adorned with murals depicting scenes of destruction on an epic scale. Anthropology 2 will reveal that these are clearly warnings about the object formerly contained within, and a Linguistics roll of 4 or better will allow a character to decipher enough of the strange writing to understand that what was sealed in here was a weapon capable of destroying a city as a primary effect and possibly causing massive earthquakes as a secondary effect. The only way to stop it, according to the inscriptions, is to “burn the source stone until it is black.” No explanation is given as to what the source stone might be.

The goons did a good job of packing their litter out with them, but the investigators will find one very critical item that they left behind: a match book with the name, logo,

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and street number for the Albatross and Kettle, which is evidently a bar in South America. It shouldn't take long for the investigators to trace the address to a small town outside of Cumana, Venezuela. In this town, some polite inquiries—especially those accompanied by a free round of drinks to the local fishers and boatswains—will reveal that the area was, until very recently, frequented by many identical twin brothers, all of whom had no hair, not even eyebrows. It is unknown why they suddenly stopped coming, but the supposition is that they were employed at the Titan Shipping Yards, which are about a half-day's sail to the east. The Titan Shipping Yards are privately owned, high walled, located in the middle of the jungle, and closely guarded so that none of the locals know what is being built there but many will comment that it is strange that not a single ship from that yard has been seen in these waters. If the characters have any contacts back home who can investigate Titan Shipping Yards, they will uncover the fact that several ship designers were contracted to the company, all of whom had notarized strict silence agreements about their projects and all of whom—coincidentally—met with untimely “accidental” deaths in the last year. Characters or allies who are extremely adept at following paper trails may even discover that the Titan Shipping Yard are owned by (big surprise) Edwin Morrissey, by way of many shadow-companies and faux-proxies, of course.

If the characters are still working for Army Intelligence, they will be required to give a debriefing before moving on to investigate the shipping yards. The group is ordered to wait, and the day after the report, Major Eaton calls them all into his office, spreading aerial pictures of the largest boat the world has ever seen at that time.

“These were taken in the shipyard in Venezuela,” says Eaton. “This... behemoth... was built and is owned by your friend Edwin Morrissey. Our estimates are that it is one thousand feet long and has a displacement of around 80,000 pounds. The

United States has some aircraft carriers on the drawing board that are that big, but at this time you are looking at photos of the largest vessel ever to float. And he kept it secret during its construction. That makes us nervous. We would like to know what Morrissey has planned, but we would rather just have it... out of the way.”

The Major opens the top drawer on his desk and reveals a twisted crystal and a small, silver marble. The investigators have seen this before; it is identical to the one that the Goons used back at the mine in Montana.

“I see you are familiar with this device. Our divers retrieved it from the wreckage of the ship that attacked you off the coast of Greenland.”

GM Note: If they didn't sink the ship, then it could have come from another skirmish the army had with the Goons

“Ordinarily, we would prefer to study such a device as this, but we don't have that luxury at this time, it would seem. Our structural analysis of this titanic Ark that Morrissey has built for himself is that if we ran this burrowing detonator straight down its short axis—which happens to be the vertical axis for this boat—then we could sink it in a single blow. A small team might be able to infiltrate this floating monstrosity, make their way to the control room at the very top of the ship, insert the detonator into the floor, and then trigger it after they are safely off board again. Do you have any questions about the procedure?” Allow the characters to ask here before concluding. “It would be dangerous, of course, but our real trouble is we cannot get involved... officially. Political reasons. I am not allowed to order you to take this burrowing detonator and commit an attack on foreign territory. Instead, I am going to leave this detonator on my desk where someone who needs it might take it, and then I am going to turn my back and spend several minutes pondering how to give unofficial awards for

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unofficial actions. I expect you to be gone by the time I turn around.”

Hopefully, the players are smart enough to pick up on the hint, and will move in on Morrissey’s Ark. It won’t be too difficult for the expedition to slip over the walls, at which point they will see the immense floating city, surrounded by a constant nimbus of smaller ships and service vehicles. The whole area is populated by a rich, international population of Morrissey’s loyalists who are working round the clock to prepare the ship for its maiden voyage. Security personnel consist entirely of bald-headed goons in yellow uniforms. They are thickest around the walls, but also form a visible presence within the yards and on the boats. It would be pretty clear to anyone who didn’t bring at least three platoons of trained soldiers that shooting a path to the target wouldn’t be a good idea. Sneaking in the shadows is a much better idea; stealing some of the green dock-hand uniforms or purple maintenance uniforms or blue professional/specialist uniforms (people such as doctors, chief engineers, etc) is likely to be more advantageous still. There is so much hustle and bustle that a team should easily be able to get on board without much more than a single incident of fast-talking past a guard who has no reason to be suspicious.

On board the Ark, getting around will be a little harder. The passages are better controlled, and characters are likely to be stopped and sharply questioned (“this isn’t your assigned sector, what are you doing here?”). Characters may have to dispose of several sets of goons along the way, and they should make an effort to do so silently and without much of a visible trace. It is a large, noisy ship, but gunshots or guards not at their posts will draw more guards, and if those get into a fire-fight or go missing, it will draw more guards still. As the evidence of intruders becomes known to the higher ups (such as bodies stuffed in broom closets), then the klaxons will sound, the tannoy will announce: “Intruder alert. Intruder alert. This is not a drill. We are

releasing the hounds. Go to lockdown procedures immediately. Repeat: Go to lockdown. This is not a drill.” If the expedition is extremely careful, this might not happen until they are on their way out, but when it does all crew will lock themselves into whatever rooms they currently occupy and the halls will be patrolled by teams of one Goon Wrangler (see chapter 3) and one trained “hound,” which is actually a velociraptor. If the intruders prove themselves to be particularly formidable, these teams will conglomerate to double or even triple their numbers. All security Goons (whether foremen, wranglers, or just plain minions) are armed with double barreled 12 gauge shotguns (attack: 7) and stilettos (attack 7). To the player’s advantage, this is a big ship, so dealing with Goons in a noisy way in one area won’t necessarily increase the pressure on another area as security forces search where the heroes were and where they might be rather than where they actually are.

All areas on the ship are richly furnished, and adorned iconography depicting Edwin Morrissey as a godlike figure. Along the way they will see stylized pictures of him parting the sea with his hands and drawing forth the Choral Throne, busts of him placed on pedestals alongside but higher than Plato and Aristotle, and life-sized or larger marble statues of his face on bodies with the physiques of Greek gods. If the expedition speaks to any of the workers on the ship, they all speak of Morrissey in reverent tones as a latter day Pharaoh who will save them from the upcoming “end of the world” and then remake the world to come in his image of perfection. None of his followers know more details than that. At this point, the expedition should realize that Morrissey is up to more than garden-variety villainy, and that he must have been at work for many years to build up this kind of cult following.

The expedition will need to cross through several areas to reach the control tower, with different challenges and levels of security. The characters can generally find

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their way by dead reckoning—they know they need to go in and up, and as long as they head in the right direction they will get there. If you need a map, use any map of a cruise ship but increase the scale for massive appearance. The shortest route to the goal lies through the following six areas, in the following sequence:

Service areas: These are things like kitchens, dispensaries, laundry rooms, larders, and all the other sorts of places that are required to sustain human activity. Characters will start to get the impression that this boat has everything anyone might need and could hold its entire population in good keeping for months between ports. Security here will be low as long as it looks like all the workers are going about their assigned tasks. The heroes have less to worry about from guards as they do from the supervisors of each area who will assign them duties or chew them out for being off task.

Crew Quarters: These consist of long, mostly empty hallways with regularly spaced doors leading to bunk rooms of various sizes. The explorers have no need to go in to any of the rooms to get to the goal, and rooms are generally locked. Guards have master keys but no urge to use them; they expect that crewmen prowling around here are probably just looking to commit petty theft. The guards will do their duty, but consider this kind of internal policing beneath them.

Arboretum: Emerging from the crew quarters, the expedition steps onto the deck and into a series of massive green-houses (referred to by the residents of the ship as the “arboretum”) which covers most of the top surface of this ship. Here, farmers in white uniforms go about their business raising crops of wheat, rice, apples, and many other foods, plus large quantities of chickens squawking under foot. Any character with farming experience may realize that with this many acres of land in full production; this ship may be able to sustain itself indefinitely. This area is the largest in terms of distance that the characters must cover, and any color uniforms other than the white of the farmers or the yellow of the security guards is likely

to attract notice. There are many farmers, but the terrain lends itself to sneaking, so a party could get by on Stealth by rolling at least 3 successes for each member.

Guard’s Mess: From the greenhouses, a guard is posted at all doors to the control complex. Few workers of any type are allowed in here, although they expect regular deliveries of food and require maintenance. Fast talking or fast fists will get them in to see dozens of goons lined up neatly at tables, praying beneath a giant stained glass window depicting a divinely resolute Edwin Morrissey who holds in his hands the Earth, tilted forward to show a gaping hole at its north pole. Before eating, the goons pray: “Thanks be to Morrissey, our father who gave us life. We are your hands and your swords, made by you to punish the sins of the wicked and to remake the world as it was meant to be.” Then they eat with boisterous reverie. The expedition can walk past all these goons without drawing notice, but down the halls, past the main chamber, two guards are on constant alert and have orders only to let ship’s officers past.

The Birthing Chambers: In contrast with the previous chambers, this one is large, nearly deserted, windowless, and deeply shadowed. It is essentially a huge chamber containing a hundred or more large, crystalline vats. The heroes will immediately see that these vats contain human bodies in various states of development, from the lump of several cells, all the way up to the fully grown man. All are completely hairless and appear to possess the identical simian features of the rest of the goons. This is obviously the goon production facility, which is perhaps the single most powerful artifact in Morrissey’s possession. The only people in here now are a few scientists who are busy with their work. Characters can slip through the shadows of this chamber on a Stealth roll with a single success.

Operations Rooms: Now the characters enter the complex of rooms where the officers of the ship are at work giving and relaying orders. They are busy, but security is tight, and workers do not go unsupervised for any reason. There are not

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many places to hide, so each character attempting to sneak must roll 5 successes. Unless they can secure one or more officer's uniforms, the characters may have to shoot their way through, but that's fine because the next room is Edwin Morrissey's personal Control Tower (see below).

If the heroes need to duck out of the main paths for a while, they may find themselves in any of the following areas while avoiding pursuit:

Engine Rooms: These exist in the bowels of the ship. Hundreds of engineers and laborers swarm around the massive diesel engines that drive the behemoth Ark. There are no security goons here unless they are called for, and visitors are not heeded in the slightest unless they cause trouble. Heroes who make an Engineering roll of 3 can see that the engines could be clogged and caused to rupture, which would destroy the ship. However, doing so would take at least half an hour of work and another hour to stew, and all the mechanics at work here could readily detect the sabotage.

Kennels: There are rows of large cages containing the velociraptors. They will not attack goons and will heel to the Goon Wranglers if ordered, but if loosed they will attack anyone else.

The Brig: Not far past the kennels is the brig, which is a series of simple barred cells. There are currently no occupants. Security is nonexistent unless they have prisoners.

Officer or Guard Quarters: Similar to the crew quarters, but with more guards who are on higher alert. This is the place to find officer's uniforms, but officers are much better known and therefore harder to impersonate than the nearly anonymous crew members. Yellow security uniforms can be acquired from the guard's quarters, but heroes would have to go a long way to pass for one of the goon twins.

Hangar: If the group is way off track, they might end up in the hanger, which is at the far stern of the boat. This contains several biplanes and sea-planes that can be winched up to the flight deck. Security here is fairly high, but this could be an excellent means of escape for any group that has a pilot.

Auxiliary Boats: All along the rails of the boat and in several launch bays at multiple levels along side are lifeboats, yachts, power boats, and fishing boats which can be deployed and retracted from the mother ship. Most are kept within sight of at least one guard, but any one could serve as an adequate getaway vehicle.

Whatever route the expedition uses, they will know when they are in the right place. The top of the control tower is Mr. Morrissey's personal room, complete with plush bed, luxurious bathing facilities, and a large desk. Should the expedition need to shut themselves in, there is also a blast door that would keep pursuers out for dozens of minutes. Light streams in through 360 degree window ports which allows a person to look down on the entire ship, and might also provide a means of escape if the expedition finds themselves needing to climb down the outside of the superstructure. When the players arrive, they can see that at the prow of the ship something large is being loaded into a long-range sea plane, and that the plane is then launched into flight by steam-catapult. This was, in fact, the artifact Morrissey retrieved from the frozen arctic city, but more on that in the next chapter.

Upon entering the room, the heroes will immediately notice that upon Morrissey's desk is the second ebony skull. Beneath it is a set of papers which contain notes, maps, and other important looking details all contained in a folder marked PROJECT: DOOMSDAY. If the players have the time to read this now, give them the information from the start of the next chapter. Otherwise, they can place the Burrowing Detonator in the middle of the floor and worry about getting out alive.

There are several ways to get out, and it should go a great deal faster than getting in. The heroes can go back through the halls or climb down the outside of the superstructure. They might steal a plane or a boat (planes wouldn't be pursued effectively, but a boat would have to deal

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with one or more gunships, which are power boats with machine guns mounted on the fronts. Of course, blowing up the Ark will serve as a more than adequate distraction, and the detonator will successfully break the ship in half and send it to the bottom of the sea, and no one aboard can stop it. Once the heroes escape into the Venezuelan jungle that surrounds the shipyards, they are home free.

CHAPTER 5: DOOMSDAY

Now that the heroes have Morrissey's notes, they can read the full extent of his plot. The artifact that he extracted from the frozen city is a burrowing detonator but on a gigantic scale: The Mega-Detonator. It is big enough to tunnel for thousands of miles and cause earthquakes that could tumble cities that aren't even above its path. But Morrissey has set his eyes on destroying more than cities. Also within this file are careful measurements of the Ross Ice Shelf in Antarctica, a huge glacial plateau that is bigger than Alaska. If it were to break off and be set adrift, it would melt, disrupt the ocean currents, cause massive tidal waves the world over, raise the sea level hundreds of feet, and cause a pole shift. The effects would be catastrophic beyond description, and every nation on earth would be washed away. Morrissey plans to break off the ice shelf by using the Mega-Detonator to drill along the ice shelf's link to the continent, burrowing 14,000 miles before going off. Additionally, the removal of the ice shelf, according to Morrissey's research, would also open up a new hole to an "inner world" that would be untouched by the cataclysm. Characters unfamiliar with the Hollow Earth might not know what to make of this, but they can tell that the mastermind believes that he would be safe in there, waiting it out on his Ark for a few years until the surface-world survivors had regrouped enough to make his return worth while. Then he would reclaim the surface and subjugate all the people to his rule.

As for the skulls, the players will note that the new skull has circles and slashes similar

to the first skull. When the lines are added together, they form a map indicating a spot on the Ross Ice Shelf. This spot indicates the presence of an opening to the Hollow Earth, long sealed over by hundreds if not thousands of feet of glacial ice. It also happens to be the location of Morrissey's doomsday operation base.

GM Note: If the players missed the clues to find Morrissey's arctic doomsday operation - or any other critical clues leading up to this point - Annie Mae from the orphanage could step in to get the players back on track.

Ordinarily, she would try to arrange a system of hints that would allow the characters to think they uncovered the truth of it on their own, but when she learns of Morrissey's plots through her own means she may decide she doesn't have time to mess around. In that case, she would approach the players directly, let them know that she is a member of a secret society, and spell out what Morrissey is doing and where to go to stop him. She would swear them to secrecy, of course, and may actually offer them membership in the Terra Arcanum, but she would still need to "disappear" from the orphanage forever after coming out of her cover in such a way.

Needless to say, Edwin Morrissey's vision is the scheme of a madman, but it is already under way, and when Army Intelligence learns about it they will not waste any time sending the team up to McMurdo Station in the vicinity of the Ross Ice Shelf while they try to convince the President of the urgency of the situation. Upon landing, the explorers are immediately assaulted by the cold, and even with the best gear they realize that a person cannot survive outside of shelter here for more than a short time. Then, a few miles away, they hear what sounds like a war suddenly erupting. At that moment, their radio crackles to life. To their surprise, it is the Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the President of the United States. "We owe you a great debt of gratitude," he announces in his radio-perfect voice. "I must now once

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more appeal to your courage and your sense of duty, for your nation—indeed, all the nations of the world—require your services again, and I regret that we are in a position to offer you only a little aid.”

From there he will explain that he had only one ship of Marines in the area, and that he ordered them in to Morrissey’s Antarctic base. They report that Morrissey has already launched the Mega-Detonator, and that Army Intelligence informs him that the only way to stop the detonator is to find the Trigger Stone, which is ordinarily silver, and heat it up to the point where it is black. Doing so will completely disable the detonator. However, the Marines are outnumbered and outgunned and cannot get to the Trigger Stone, and no other ship in the United States fleet will be able to arrive in time to lend any assistance. No other military ship, that is—but there is a cargo barge that was on its way to the area already, and it should be pulling in to sight soon. He urges the expedition to make use of what is on board, find and disable the trigger stone, and prevent the disaster.

By the time the President signs off, the cargo barge is already in sight, chugging towards the heroes. It contains an enormous wheeled vehicle (see stats below), evidently a prototype which Admiral Byrd hopes soon to take to the North Pole. It is called the Arctic Cruiser, and it will serve to traverse the deadly landscape and bring the heroes in to aid the efforts of the U.S. Marines.

Land Vehicle	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Arctic Cruiser	4	6	16	25	-2	2	10

Assuming the heroes pile in and take the cruiser, they have a relatively easy time of it. The thing works well in every way except one: the engine temperature climbs dramatically, and anyone with any knowledge of engineering can tell that it won’t be able to operate long at these temperatures. After half a mile, the crew encounters a hole in the ground which evidently collapsed just recently. They can

see that it is a long, wide tube apparently bored through the ice. If they are smart, they will realize that this is the path of the Mega-Detonator. The Mega-Detonator is already a hundred miles away, but the team can follow the tunnel back to the sound of the shooting. Otherwise, they can continue on to go through the front door, where the marines are being held in place by a large number of Goons armed with Tommy guns and grenades. The bad guys also have two arctic vehicles of their own (use the stats for the APC, but halve the speed).

If the characters go in through the front, they will have to shoot their way (with the help of the Marines) through the thickest of the enemy concentration. If they come through the back, they will not have to face any APC’s and only need to drive over one or two clutches of very surprised goons who are each unlikely to get off more than a single shot. Every time the Arctic Cruiser takes a hit, it flames up and the engine temperature climbs higher. For every three points of damage, its handling drops by one point. After it has taken eight points, smoky fire billows out of the engines, completely obscuring all visibility through the front window. If this happens, then the expedition will have to navigate with one person leaning out the side or from the roof and shouting directions back to the person at the wheel.

Whichever route the heroes take, they will eventually end up in what has been modeled to look like a throne room. Dominating the room is a huge ice-sculpture of a staggeringly muscular Edwin Morrissey posing like Atlas to bear a massive orb on his muscular back. The orb is, of course, the silver Trigger Stone. If the Arctic Cruiser is on fire, simply parking its blazing grill right up next to the stone will be enough to heat it to the point of deactivation. Otherwise, characters are going to have to figure out how to bring some heat into the sub-zero environment. If they are really and truly stumped, one of the Marine sergeants will recommend siphoning gasoline out of the

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Arctic Cruiser (or one of the other vehicles) and dousing the Trigger Stone with that.

The only thing left is to take care of Edwin Morrissey himself. It so happens that the Marines have him and his last few goons pinned down in a back room. Seeing that all is lost, he will surrender himself to the heroes, throwing himself on their mercy. The Marines won't object to the heroes carrying out some frontier justice if that is their decision. Otherwise, they will take the mastermind prisoner. Morrissey, who seems ridiculously puny and flabby compared to all his iconography, mutters arrogantly "Go ahead: arrest me. The courts don't have authority over me, and as soon as you look away, I'll disappear."

Morrissey will, in fact, disappear from prison, but not by his own doing. The Terra Arcanum will be eager to get their hands on him. If any characters are members of the Terra Arcanum or prospective members, the Terra Arcanum may ask that they deliver Morrissey to them so that justice can be carried out. They will place him on trial in their own court and be sentenced. Ultimately, he will find himself awakening in a strange, tropical land with the bright noon-day sun directly over head and the horizon curving strangely, with something huge and hungry crashing towards him while he possesses only his finest business suit and a derringer with a single bullet.

EPILOGUE: THE END...?

Upon successful completion of this story, one option is that the heroes are summoned to the White House for personal commendation by the President. Unfortunately, the details of this near-cataclysm can never be revealed to the public, but the heroes would each receive a large financial reward as well as at least one point of Rank with Army Intelligence (for civilians, this would mean higher level access and special favors). Thereafter, these characters would likely be among the first specialists called in for any case having to do with that strange "hole to the inner

world" Morrissey's notes indicated. Additionally, at the GM's discretion, the Terra Arcanum might offer membership to some or all of the expedition, in which case all who accept would gain one point of Rank within that organization as well.

The other option upon successful completion is that the fighting within the arctic base causes the ice to de-stabilize. No sooner is the trigger crystal deactivated than the whole structure crumbles and plummets in an avalanche down into a pocket deep, deep in the ice. The characters are disoriented in the fall, but when they recover awareness they (and perhaps some Marines, some goons, and maybe even Morrissey or the Arctic Cruiser if they can get it out) can begin the long climb back out of the hole. Only when they emerge, they are surprised to find themselves not in the arctic, but in a jungle with the bright noon sun directly over their heads...

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