

o88 Soot

Science Fiction Mystery in the 1920s

o88 o88 8and
8and o88 8and
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
8and 88 88 88
88 88 88 88

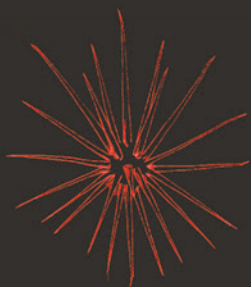
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88
88 88 88 88



9. 22

Clarence Redd





TELL STORIES YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD BEFORE

Humanity has reached the stars

*An alien plague without a cure
threatens civilisation*

Only a few tragic heroes can save mankind

Odd Soot is a roleplaying game of mystery and investigation set on an alternate Earth in the 1920s. Mankind has travelled into space and found alien civilisations. But a disease called The Soot spreads, driving those infected into madness. And they follow a twisted logic, wreaking havoc around them.

With Odd Soot you can tell stories you've never heard before.

You play deep, personal characters with impressive talents and tragic backgrounds. The setting is strangely familiar – combining alien worlds with 1920s tropes – full of mysteries and unsolved enigmas.

Odd Soot is a complete roleplaying game based on Mythras.

No other books are needed to play.

Mythras
GATEWAY



FrostByte Books



9 789198 239348 >



Download the Odd Soot
Introductory Scenario

Free Download:

<https://bit.ly/2DoRPu3>

or scan the QR code.



Written by Clarence Redd

Cover by Clarence Redd
Illustrations by Roman Gensky, pheidel
and Clarence Redd

Layout by Clarence Redd

Proofing by Charlotte Law

Based on Mythras Imperative by
Pete Nash and Lawrence Whitaker



*This product references the Mythras
Imperative rules, available from The Design Mechanism at
www.thedesignmechanism.com and all associated logos and
trademarks are copyrights of The Design Mechanism. Used with permission. The Design Mechanism
makes no representation or warranty as to the quality, viability, or suitability
for purpose of this product.*

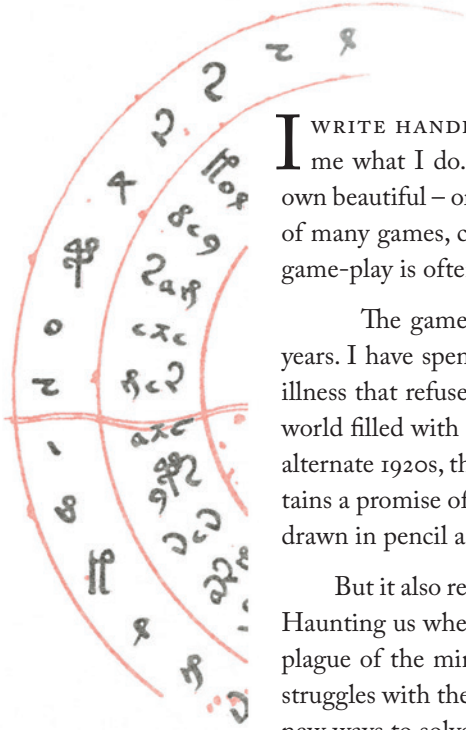
ISBN: 978-91-982393-4-8

© FrostByte Books 2018. All rights reserved

Contents

The Daydream :.....	6
Introduction :.....	8
Characters :.....	14
Circles :.....	40
The Soot :.....	48
Game System :.....	64
Extended Conflicts :.....	72
Combat :.....	82
Spot Rules:.....	104
Denizens:.....	108
Major Forces:.....	128
Mechanical Arts:.....	140
Magic:.....	160
Worlds:.....	170
Lifeforms:.....	200
Game Mastering:.....	216
Scenario:.....	224

The Daydream



I WRITE HANDBOOKS ON DAYDREAMING. That is my reply when someone asks me what I do. With a roleplaying game book as a manual, players trace their own beautiful – or terrible – daydreams on top of the rules. With the rather dry text of many games, countless lists and tables worthy of scientific works, the resulting game-play is often surprisingly rich. I like to think of it as guided daydreaming.

The game you hold in your hands has been an ongoing daydream for 10 years. I have spent a disproportionate amount of that time incapacitated from an illness that refuses to let go. My mind has often drifted, in sheer boredom, into a world filled with mysteries and long, dark shadows. There, I walk the streets of an alternate 1920s, the way it would look if humanity had travelled into space. It contains a promise of an infinite number of unexplored continents and alien lifeforms, drawn in pencil and ink by bewildered explorers.

But it also reveals the way that darkness seeps in unnoticed during happy days. Haunting us when we least expect it. This darkness takes the form of an incurable plague of the mind, always lurking on the outskirts of daily life. Every character struggles with the disease, in physical or mental form. To survive, they need to find new ways to solve problems. They must let go of their egos, grounding themselves on a deeper level.

Word by word, I have coaxed this daydream onto paper. Black ink has flowed from my fingers, like an odd soot leaving my body.

Clarence Redd, August 2018

In the Dream Library

Five circuits and 43.5 degrees.

Rafael Scheutz checked the measurements again. Only a slight adjustment was required. If his sources were accurate, the book should be on the shelf right in front of him, on the unbroken rows of volumes along the curved wall of the Dream Library. He made a quick estimate. He should be about 21 metres below ground. A few hundred years ago – it was hard to tell how fast the building was sinking – this floor levelled with the street outside.

He let the beam from the flashlight move over the unmarked book spines. Uncertain what the volume looked like, he pulled out a few at random. A worn leather volume comprising a thousand tightly written pages, two small books with braided covers and a thin booklet, half full of letters he could not place. He regarded the idea that all dreams ever dreamed were saved here as superstition. Yet, what the books contained, their origins or the number of volumes, he could not estimate.

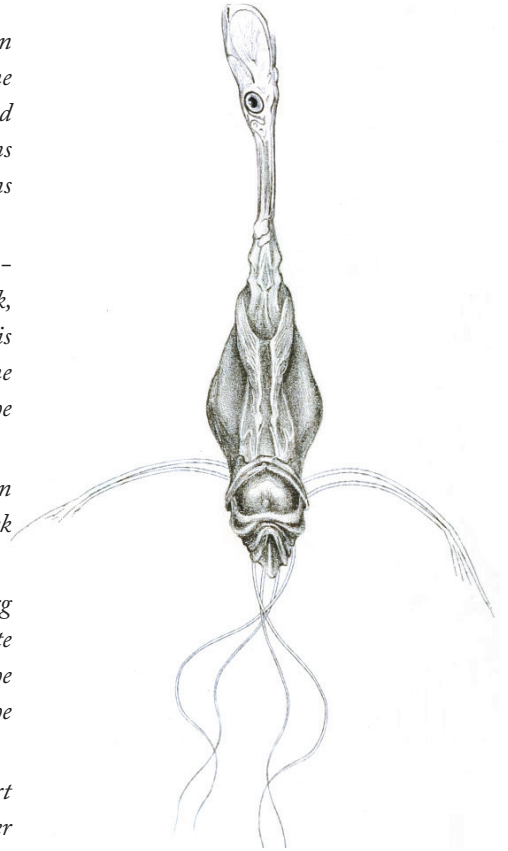
On the bottom shelf, tucked in between two folios, something gleamed in the flashlight beam. He pulled out a metal sheet, intricately ornamented along the sides. The book, a fons mercurialis in perfect condition, rested in his right hand, the cool metal against his fingers. He felt how an agonising fervour came upon him. Years of searching might come to an end. He slid his trembling fingers along the edge. Menaryan writing formed on the metal, inscribed in several circles that encompassed each other.

Rafael sank down onto his knees. He placed the flashlight and the Luminarian book on the floor in front of him, unbuttoning the cuff to pull up his left sleeve. The black blisters began halfway up his forearm. Finally he would get rid of The Soot.

He rotated the circles in the book with the fingers of his right hand. The Wittenberg Priest had, on his deathbed a year earlier, showed how the various characters should relate to each other for the magic spell to activate. When the last circle slotted into position, the air shifted around him – or did he just imagine it? Rafael recited the spell with all the power he could muster and stared at his forearm.

The black spots came to life and crept slowly over his skin. Rafael tore open his shirt and looked down at his upper body. The spots were moving, but they all seemed to slither towards a point just above the heart. The more they gathered, the darker the blackness became. The black spot shrank and penetrated deeper.

Deeper and deeper.



L'sesenaugh librarian from The Dream Library, Sisymbrium. Opposite: a dual-tone rubbing of a page from a Luminarian fons mercurialis book.

Introduction



Rafael Scheutz.

Originally a journalist, Rafael Scheutz travelled to many of the worlds in Comae Space, often on scientific missions funded by Glimminge University in Doggerland. He was reported lost during a mission on Sisymbrium in late 1921. Information has been scant regarding the circumstances.

'There's an odd soot growing slowly on my back. I'm desperately trying to keep it out of my mind, but I can't withstand much longer. The dark secrets it's whispering in my head is driving me to the brink of madness...'

Excerpt from the diary of Rafael Scheutz, June 1919

EORTHE, 1922. A UNIVERSE SEPARATED from our own only by a thin veil. The first humans crossed the voids between the stars 40 years ago and found it teeming with alien life.

The Soot spreads from planet-to-planet, sending humans and aliens alike into madness. The Philosophy Engine presents increasingly stranger predictions and the Skreeder Shamans detect signs of worrying times to come. Comae Space needs heroes more than ever.

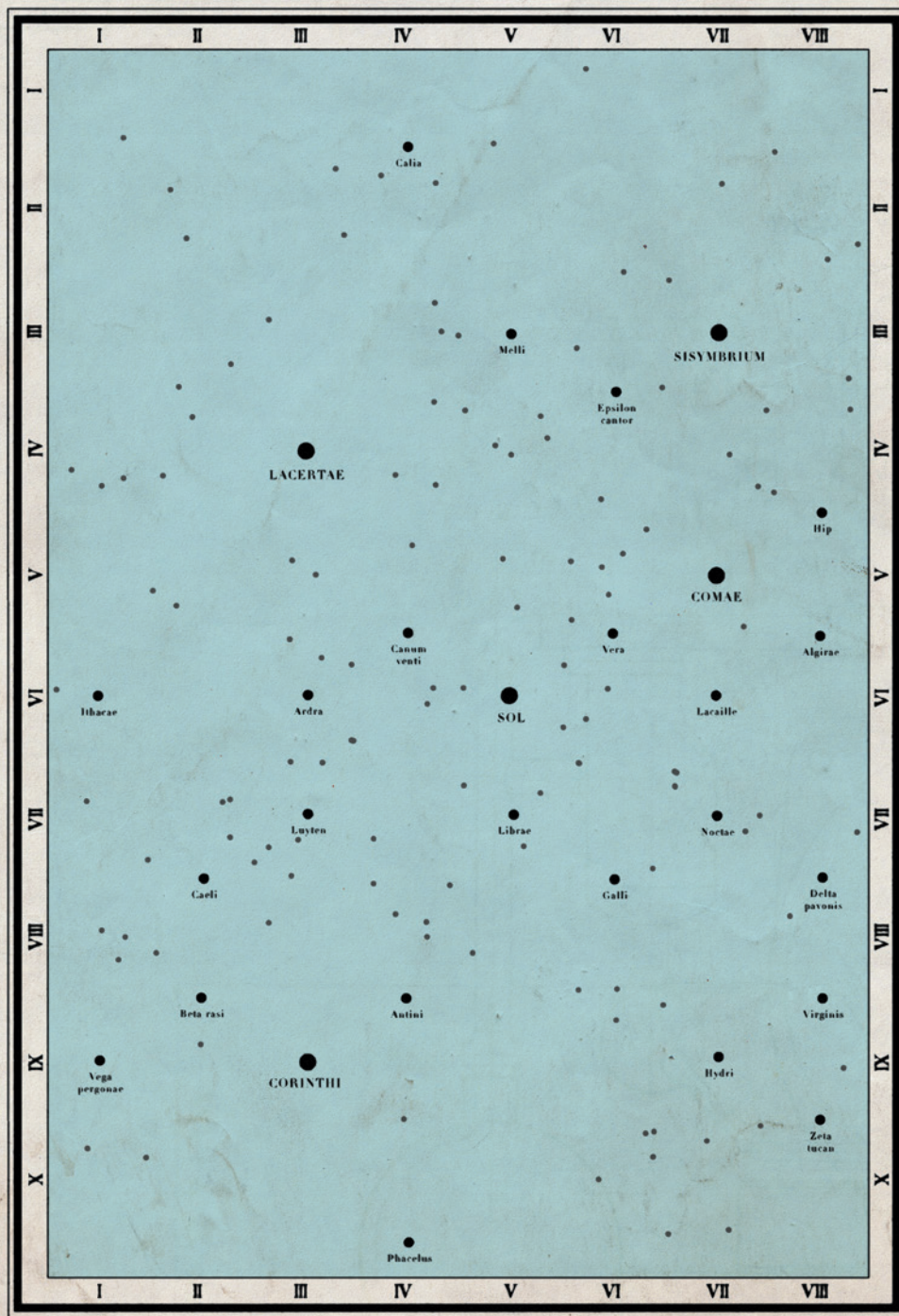
After 200 years the gruesome disease grows again. Only a few dare to see the truth. Will the insanities of the infected once more threaten to throw entire worlds into chaos? Are the desperate actions of a few ragged individuals enough to turn the tide?

The survival of civilisation lies in the character's hands.

WELCOME

Odd Soot is a roleplaying game based on *Mythras Imperative* by The Design Mechanism. This book – together with dice, pen and paper – has everything you need to play. It will guide you through character creation, rules for conflicts and magic. Thereafter, it will describe the alternate universe of *Odd Soot*: detailing its history, alien life-forms, major forces, technologies and strange worlds.

MAP OF COMAE SPACE



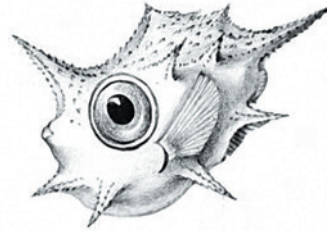
A Note on Roleplaying Games

Odd Soot assumes that the reader is familiar with the concept of how roleplaying games work, the differences between the players, the Game Master (or referee), the use of characters and the use of polyhedral dice. If this is your first roleplaying game, we recommend that you take a look at:

<http://www.rpgamer.com/savingthrow/primer.html>

It offers an excellent overview of the different participants in roleplaying games and how a typical roleplaying game session is structured.

The following pages will give you a good overview of the game. Then, the book dives straight into character creation. We recommend that you read the entire book before rolling up characters, to ensure that you capture the flavour of the game.



Odd Soot Themes

Odd Soot revolves around a few dominant themes:

- » *The mysteries of a disease called The Soot that need be solved to save civilisation from madness and ultimate destruction.*
- » *Player Characters come from troublesome backgrounds. As they get infected by The Soot, they will struggle with mental and physical shortcomings, hindering their work.*
- » *An unknown magic force permeates the universe and some can learn to manipulate it.*
- » *Advanced technology is rare and not well understood.*
- » *An alien species called the Luminarians withdrew 200 years ago but left some of their artefacts behind.*
- » *The backdrop of the game is a landscape of poorly understood areas of space near an alternate Earth – called Eorthe – in the 1920s.*

On the Web

Visit our website to find free downloads for Odd Soot:

www.frostbytebooks.com

There you can also learn more about M-SPACE.

For more information on Mythras, the game Odd Soot is based on, see The Design Mechanism's website:

www.thedesignmechanism.com

As stated previously, the players take on the roles of tragic heroes, desperately trying to stop The Soot. Life has not been kind to them. Yet, despite their weaknesses, they are determined to do something. No one else grasps the profound danger of civilisation's existence. Player Characters can be detectives, journalists or scholars. Or any other competent individual willing to sacrifice their meagre lives for a greater cause.

The mysteries of the setting focus on The Odd Soot (or The Soot, as it is often referred to). This is no ordinary disease; it is connected both to the supernatural, in the form of magic, and the destructive madness of those infected by it. Not only will the characters try to stop The Soot from spreading, they will also need to halt the corrupted schemes of those already infected.

A few shrewd investigators have detected a slight increase in the number of Soot-infected and – even more worrying – these madmen act with a renewed frenzy. They coordinate their foul experiments in a manner not previously seen. A streak of fear has exuded into the less fortunate parts of society but the authorities have not yet sensed the growing threat.

The backdrop of *Odd Soot* is a vast and relatively unexplored area of space called Comae Space, filled with strange worlds and life-forms. With Eorthe at the centre, these territories inspire much the same feelings in humankind as the uncharted Eorthe once did. The explorations of the 19th century have continued into space.

Since the difference engine was invented in the 1820s by human scientists, physics and astronomy have taken massive steps forward. Combined with faster-than-light devices inherited from the Luminarians – the high-tech alien species that fled to avoid The Soot – humanity has travelled to the stars. They have found a handful of intelligent alien species in the star systems closest to Eorthe. The equivalence of the great ocean steamers now cross the voids between the stars and the various species live in relative peace.

Scenarios in *Odd Soot* are joint investigations and adventures. The characters will delve into magical mysteries, explore unknown exoplanets and dismantle otherworldly machinery. All while the antagonists do everything they can to stop them. Whether the villains are madmen infected by The Soot, scheming aliens or powerful organisations, the fight for truth will often be lethal.

The ultimate conflict is within the character. In some roleplaying games, a character's mental health is challenged by ghastly monsters or gruesome scenes. In *Odd Soot*, characters are their own worst enemies. The way characters act slowly impacts their stability and only they can stop the descent to the bottom.

[illegible]

Excerpt from a Luminarian document found in the northwestern part of The Sinking City on Sisymbrium, not far from the The Dream Library. Ervin Brecht, 1016.

Characters

EVERY PLAYER IN ODD SOOT controls a character. A character is the player's alter-ego, and is usually very different, physically and mentally, to the player. *Odd Soot* characters can be everything from archeologists and explorers, to journalists and librarians! All depending on what type of scenarios you want to play.

The basic character is defined by a series of different elements that describe the character's capabilities. These elements are:

- » *Characteristics: such as Strength or Charisma*
- » *Attributes: things like Hit Points or Movement*
- » *Skills: expertise in fundamental abilities*

Most of these elements are described in terms of numbers, and some are dependent on or calculated by others. What each element means, and how they are determined, is described in the following sections.

Characters are usually recorded on a character sheet, which is a handy way of organizing all the information about the character. It is recommended that you first design your character using scratch paper, and then transfer the information to a character sheet once you have gone through each step of the process. Use a pencil and have an eraser handy; certain numbers such as skill values will change several times during the character creation process.

An empty character sheet is included at the end of the book and also as a free download from our website.

Alternate Character Creation

There is an alternate character creation process presented on page 36. It is slightly quicker and focuses on the character's background and relationships, with skills and attributes taking a back seat.

Character Creation Steps

1. Character Concept

Decide on the kind of character to play. Keep it simple for now. More will come.

2. Characteristics

Use 3d6 for STR, CON, DEX, POW and CHA. 2d6+6 for INT and SIZ. Allocate results to fit the concept.

Alternatively distribute 80 points amongst the characteristics. Minimum 3 (8 for INT and SIZ), maximum 18.

3. Calculate Attributes

Use the characteristics to determine Action Points, Damage Modifier, Experience Modifier, Healing Rate, Hit Points, Initiative, Luck Points, Movement.

4. Standard Skills

Calculate the base value of Standard Skills by adding together the appropriate characteristics.

5. Culture

Decide on a Cultural Background. Allocate 100 points amongst the listed Standard Skills, the chosen Professional Skills and the Combat Style (if any) for the chosen culture.

6. Career

Choose a Career from those available to the setting. Distribute 100 points amongst the career's listed Standard Skills and whatever Professional Skills were chosen.

7. Bonus Skill Points

Assign a final 150 points between any Standard skill or those Professional skills gained as part of Culture or Career.

8. Equipment

Determine Starting Equipment based on Culture and Career.

9. Circles

To define the character's social framework, two Circles are defined: one with a positive impact on the character's former life and one with a negative impact.

In some campaigns, the characters will also be infected by The Soot from the start.

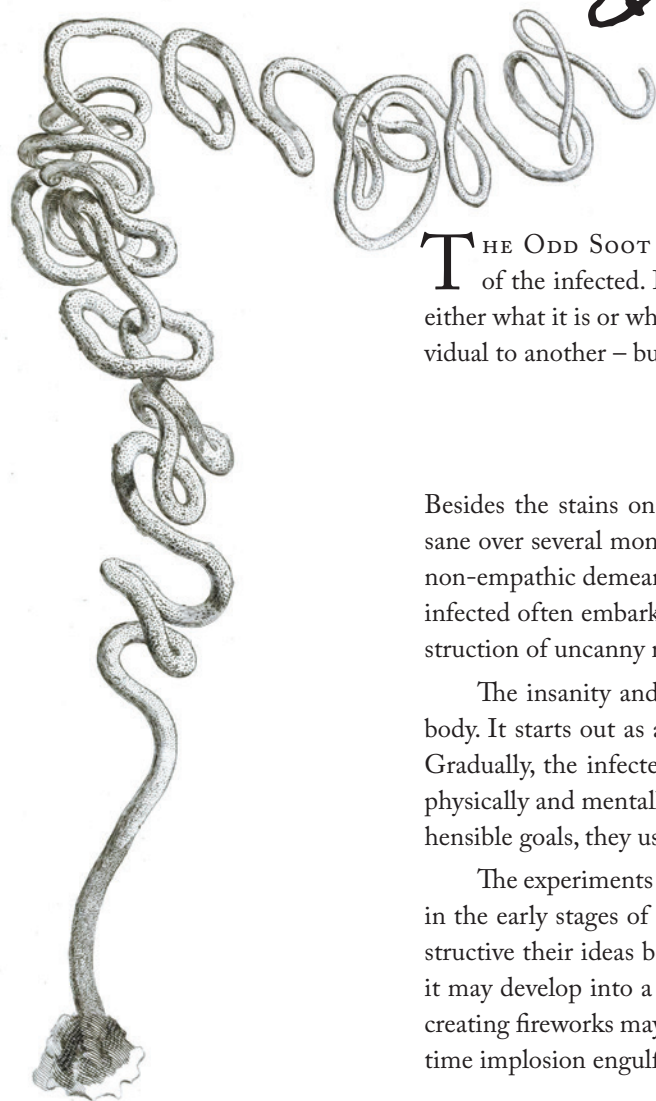


Rounding of Numbers and Results

On some occasions you will be required to divide numbers – typically the rating in a skill (such as for determining a critical success, which is $\frac{1}{10}$ th of the skill's value). Whenever a division result creates a fraction, always round up to the whole number. So, for instance, $\frac{1}{10}$ th of 64% is 6.4; this is rounded up to 7.

Above: Doggerland singer and actress Ria Sander in 1929.

The Soot



THE ODD SOOT IS A PARASITIC-LIKE disease affecting the body and mind of the infected. It is a disease unlike any other. So far, no one has explained either what it is or where it comes from. It does not seem to spread from one individual to another – but no one knows yet how it disperses.

Symptoms

Besides the stains on the skin, like a black mould, the infected grow slowly insane over several months. Insanity can take many forms. But over time a growing non-empathic demeanour and an obsession with magic and science take over. The infected often embark on strange scientific projects. They usually involve the construction of uncanny machines, mixing magic with mechanical devices.

The insanity and non-empathic trait grow as the infection spreads over the body. It starts out as a mild nuisance, with various mental and physical ailments. Gradually, the infected degenerates into downright wickedness. Hurting people, physically and mentally, becomes second nature to them. To reach their incomprehensible goals, they use and abuse others.

The experiments conducted by the infected often start out small and innocent in the early stages of the disease. The worse they get, the more elaborate and destructive their ideas become. If it starts with dissecting a frog, a few months later it may develop into a machine built to dissect a human alive. An early interest in creating fireworks may turn into the theft of an unfolding device, to create a space-time implosion engulfing an entire city.

The Soot In Play

In game terms, the disease is described by The Soot value and by one, or several, Peculiarities.

- » *The Soot value ranges from 0% to 100% and shows how ill the character is*
- » *Peculiarities are a mix of mental and physical problems in the initial stages of the disease. They range between 0% and 100%*

GETTING INFECTED

The Soot is everywhere and infects souls susceptible to it. One situation in particular opens a person's psyche to infection; the act of violence and killing. At that moment, a unique link is forged between the perpetrator and the victim. When the soul of the deceased leaves the body, that link is severed, leaving the killer's soul wide open to infection.

The game models this by rolling 1d100 against Pow the first time a PC kills an intelligent life-form. If the roll is higher than Pow, nothing happens. The player simply repeats the procedure the next time he puts someone to death. If the roll is below Pow, however, The Soot has infected the character.

A newly infected PC starts with The Soot at the same value as Pow. For example, a PC with Pow 14 will start with The Soot at 14%. Following the infection, whenever the character kills someone they must roll below The Soot value to avoid getting a Peculiarity or raise The Soot value. The value will change over time, depending on the character's actions, and is likely to increase as more scenarios are played.

GAINING PECULIARITIES

As soon as the infection taints a character, they risk gaining Peculiarities when slaying someone. If the 1d100 roll is lower than The Soot, roll on the Peculiarity table.

The Peculiarity table determines what kind of problem The Soot causes in the character. Roll 1d100 – divide by 2 the first time (rounding up) – and note the resulting disadvantage on the character sheet. The starting value for all Peculiarities is 10%. The same procedure is repeated whenever the PC puts someone to death, with rolls between 50-100 raising a current Peculiarity.



Aeron Hummel served on the star liner Eutychos when a group of Solipsist passengers and crew members started a mutiny. When the mutineers were finally cornered in the sick bay, they asked for a parley.

It was a trap. The remaining Solipsists launched an all-out attack, trying to take the captain as hostage. In the final struggle, Aeron was knocked to the ground when his fingers found a dropped gun. One second later, his shaking hands fired a bullet into the chest of his opponent.

The player now rolls 1d100 against Pow. He rolls 12 – two points below his Pow of 14. Aeron Hummel is now infected by The Soot. His Soot value starts at 14, the same as his Pow.

The next time he kills, the player rolls below The Soot to see if it gets worse or if Aeron gains a Peculiarity.

Denizens

FOR 40 YEARS HUMANITY HAS LIVED side-by-side with four major alien species. Their looks, behaviour and thinking goes beyond anything human-kind ever encountered before. Their intelligence and technology are on a par with, or surpasses, humanity's. However, despite all of them have been space farers once, they have had almost no access to interstellar travel during the last 200 years. Ever since the Luminarians left Comae Space.

Finding a universe filled with intelligent life was shocking to most humans in the 1880s. Now, with half a century together, most of the novelty has worn off. Even if aliens are still not an everyday sight on Eorthe, all life-forms are represented on many of the Comae Space worlds. Several life-forms are present, often dominated by the species that originally inhabited or colonised the world. The legacy of the Luminarians has resulted in a peaceful co-existence. All four main species mix without definite borders, neither in space nor on the ground.

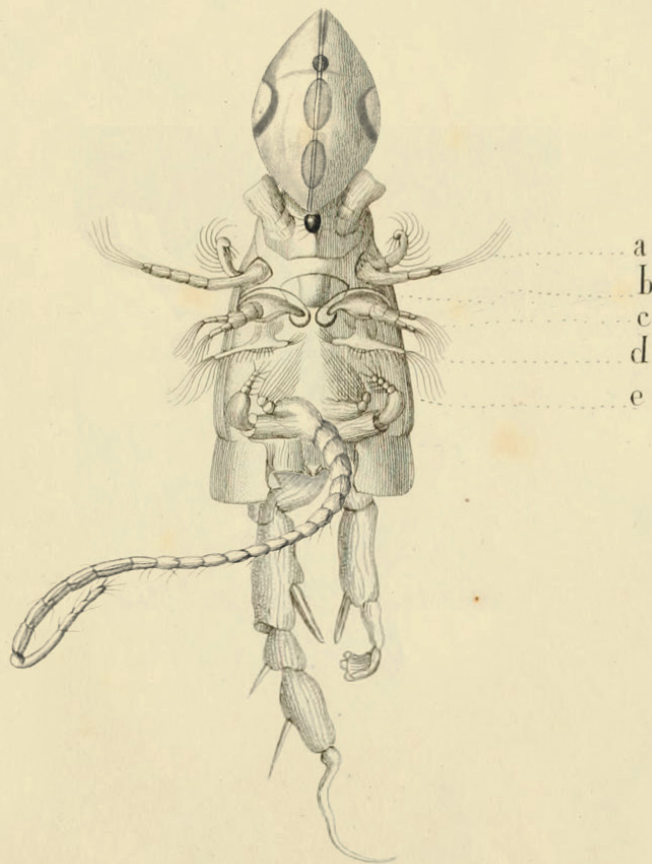
Relations are far from conflict free, however. Especially the Eldirerrr and a newly encountered fifth species, the Crisg'tu, cause trouble wherever they show up. Both are feared. While the Eldirerrr have become accepted members of the interstellar community, the Crisg'tu appear as veritable war mongers. So far, little is known about them.

Despite the differences between the species, one thing unites them; The Soot affects them all. It has the same disastrous effects. Biological differences do not matter. The madness and gruesome death of the infected strikes everyone. All are equals when faced with The Soot.



Karyn Oakley, *xeno-ethnologist*. 1921.

F. 3.



Aygaan

Giants of Magic

Aygaan

STR	2d6+20	(27)	HP 35
CON	2d6+20	(27)	PP 17
SIZ	2d6+30	(37)	
DEX	3d6	(11)	Move 10
INT	2d6+12	(19)	AP 4
POW	3d6+6	(17)	
CHA	2d6	(7)	

Weapons: Grapple 85%, Throw 70%, Crush 90%, Unarmed 75%

Skills: Craft (Any), Fishing, Gardening, Hunting, Insight, Knowledge (Any), Navigate, Perception, Science (Magic), Singing, Swim, Willpower

Origin: Comae

Strangeness: 30

Biome: Coastal areas

Communication: Speaks with deep voices through the blow-hole on the middle of the body

Tech Level: 2 (Medieval). Operates unknown number of Luminarian starships

Law Level: 8

Demeanour: Quiet, slow, friendly, wise

Professions: Gardener-Fisher-Hunter, Medical Doctor, Writer, Scholar, Seeker

Circles: Every village is a Circle

Passions: Justice, Help the weak & poor, Find knowledge, Explore, Find the source of all magic, Discover new magic, Ascetism, Slowness

The Aygaan were the first alien life-forms to be encountered by humans. These peaceful giants stand three metres tall, with massive, asymmetrical bodies. They use medieval technology and practice potent magic. Their elders, the rare Seekers, travel farther than any other species, long outside Comae Space.

MEDIEVAL DWELLINGS

Comae, the home world of the Aygaan, is cool and rainy and any inhabitants need sturdy shelters. Oceans dominate Comae and they are dotted by thousands of small islands, green and craggy. Along the coastlines, the Aygaan build small villages. They consist of simple stone houses, huddled together, with roofs of reed-like straw. Houses are big and sparsely furnished. An open fire is placed along one of the outer walls, a feature well needed during week-long autumn storms. Low stone walls enclose well-kept gardens, adding a wide range of vegetables to the dinner tables.

In places a large stone fort looms on top of a hill, overlooking the village and harbour below. The whole scene could be taken for medieval. The Aygaan do lead simple lives but only because they enjoy it. They do not appreciate technology but if useful they adopt it.

ASCETISM

Ascetism, slowness and long thoughts are the core values of Aygaan society. Especially ascetism is rooted deep. You never see an Aygaan caring about money or material objects. They might appreciate well-made or beautiful things and sometimes form close ties to a few favourite belongings. However, owning things to signal status or for hoarding never occurs.

The slowness of the Aygaan is not a slowness of the mind. It is rather an unwillingness to be hasty. They think before they speak and it may take a while for them to answer. For the impatient, or when alien etiquette is called for, this can cause problems.

PEACE

The Aygaan are a peaceful species but if provoked they are fearsome to behold. They go into a furious rage, using their weight, strength and long reach to wreak havoc. Their single large tentacle can easily strangle, crush and throw most op-



Major Forces



Nell Monill, the most recent member of The Philosophy Engine Colloquium. Elected after some highly successful work with a number of Nuvveri Water Communes. She is also the first member to be (openly) infected by The Soot.

IN A SLICE OF THE UNIVERSE as big as Comae Space, a huge number of forces interact to create something bigger than the sum of their parts. Each force has its own agenda, stemming from the societies they emerged from. Six of them are presented here. Despite their differences, they have one thing in common – they influence all of Comae Space.

These are the major forces: The Soot, The Philosophy Engine, The Priests of Wittenberg, The Solipsists, The Skreeder Shamans and League of Nations.

In scenarios and campaigns, created by the Game Master or someone else, more circles can be invented but the forces described here are easy to use in bits and pieces. They are tailored to work not only on a global scale but also through individual members. These individuals have specific goals that either thwart or help the characters.

The Soot

The strongest disruptive force in Comae Space is the disease called The Soot. For almost 500 years it has plagued all species, driving the infected into madness and an early death.

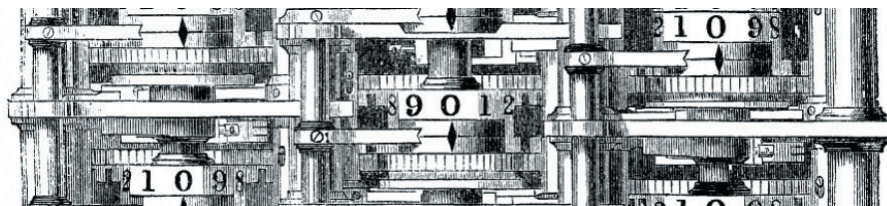
The biggest crises caused by the Soot was the exodus of the Luminarians 230 years ago. They had brought space travel, trade and technology to Comae Space. When they left, the remaining species fell into The Oblivion, a period of introspection. Communications broke down and technology reverted. Fortunately, with the Luminarians gone, The Soot also waned.

Today, humans have brought interstellar travel back again and a new age has begun. Light has returned. But the shadow of The Soot grows again.

THE SOOT TODAY

In 1922, The Soot is spreading again. It can infect anyone, anywhere. The infected embark on a subversive path, often ending in tragic deaths and traumatised communities. Most authorities, including medical personnel, do not recognise the severity of the disease, however. They realise the infected threaten society with their unpredictable behaviour. But they only see it as a regular disease. This stance explains why their attempts at finding a cure have failed. The solution requires a deeper insight but the PCs will quickly realise something abstruse is in the works. There is a strange logic and reasoning behind the infected's conduct. They all seem to strive for a common, unknown goal. They build strange contraptions of technology and magic, communicating by coded signals across space.

For detailed rules about The Soot and how it affects people, see the chapter called The Soot.



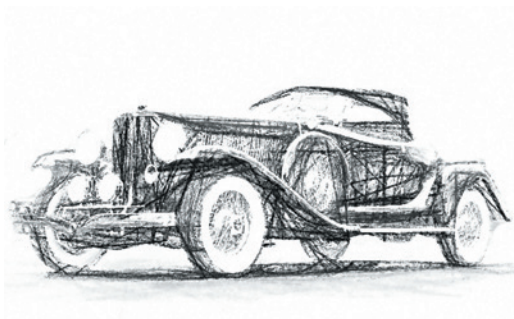
The Philosophy Engine

Difference engines are fairly common on Eorthe. Many large organisations use them for calculations. Also, a big bulk of university research depends on them to handle large amounts of data. One difference engine, often called The Engine, outshines all others; The Philosophy Engine in Glimminge. Its reasoning and predictive powers have been praised and feared all over Comae Space since its construction over 100 years ago.

IDEAS & METHODS

The Philosophy Engine's main work is sociological, philosophical, political and technical. The foundation running it, led by the Colloquium, uses it to answer humanity's eternal questions. Why are we here? Where are we going? Why does suffering exist? Is death the end? They want to create a unified theory explaining

Mechanical Arts



ERTHE IS A VERY CLOSE TWIN OF OUR OWN Earth in the 1920s and so is the technology. Everyday life appears similar in large parts, with some major inventions setting it apart from our own world. Both physics and astronomy has advanced quicker thanks to the help of difference engines and repurposed Luminarian technology. The unfolding devices has turned out to be the greatest leap so far. First found in Luminarian probes orbiting Mars and Venus, the technology eventually brought humankind to other stars. And into a new era.

Transportation

INTERSTELLAR

The species of Comae Space do not understand space travel very well. The technology comes from the Luminarians and with the joint knowledge of humans and the Eldirerrr it is barely kept functioning. As of 1922, no one grasps the underlying principles of the so-called unfolding devices, the engines of the starships.

The most basic concepts have been gleaned from Luminarian books – a small device unfolds some of the 11 curled-up dimensions on a subatomic level, forming an inter-dimensional field around the device. The ship slips into inter-dimensional space-time and, guided by the instruments onboard, reappears in normal space at another location when the unfolding device shuts down. Scientists know very little of this higher-dimension space-time. They have not determined how fast ships travel while there – or indeed if they move at all. Visually, it appears as a black void, lacking all features, and only Luminarian instruments work for navigation. Regular instruments, like radar and radio, have no use.

Travel Times

On the star map at the end of the book 1 hex equals two days of travel time. Recalculations must be made every hex, in practice spending 2-4 hours in normal space between jumps, with a regular difference engine. Maximum FTL capacity is 3 hexes. After that, the stress caused by the unfolding device on the ship requires a complete check-up of the ship (taking 1-3 days, preferably in orbit to refill supplies at the same time).

Unfolding devices are salvaged from abandoned Luminarian probes and ships and are always in short supply. Most ships constructed around the devices are therefore large star liners or bulk freighters, with occasional scientific or military vessels. The Aygaan and Eldirerrr still use Luminarian vessels, but sparingly.

Interstellar travel can best be compared to the big steam liners traversing the oceans of Eorthe. Travel time extends into days rather than hours. Life onboard the star liners combines social activities with light entertainment. The number of passengers varies from 400 and up to 1,500 for the largest and most luxurious ships.

Reasons for travel vary. Some go on exotic vacations to strange new worlds. Others want to visit emigrated relatives at least once in a lifetime (or see Eorthe one last time before they grow old). A steady torrent heads for the new colonies, hoping life will be kinder on another planet. Leaving everything behind, they use their last savings for a one-way ticket, not always sure what awaits them.

Bulk freighters are kept as simple as possible, with tiny areas for the crew. At least one rocket plane is kept onboard, to speed up loading times. A minimum of two crew members must be trained in space suit handling and a small spherical craft for hull repairs is also required.

As most ships are too big to land, small rocket planes shuttle goods and people into and out of space. Taking between 10-40 passengers (or 5-20 tons of goods), loading and unloading take about a day.

Artificial Gravity

The first generation of starships built by humans required the crews to be trained in zero G. As more Luminarian ships were found, plates embedded in the floors were found to create artificial gravity. After some experimenting, they could be reused in new ships. Today, very few ships gets built without them.

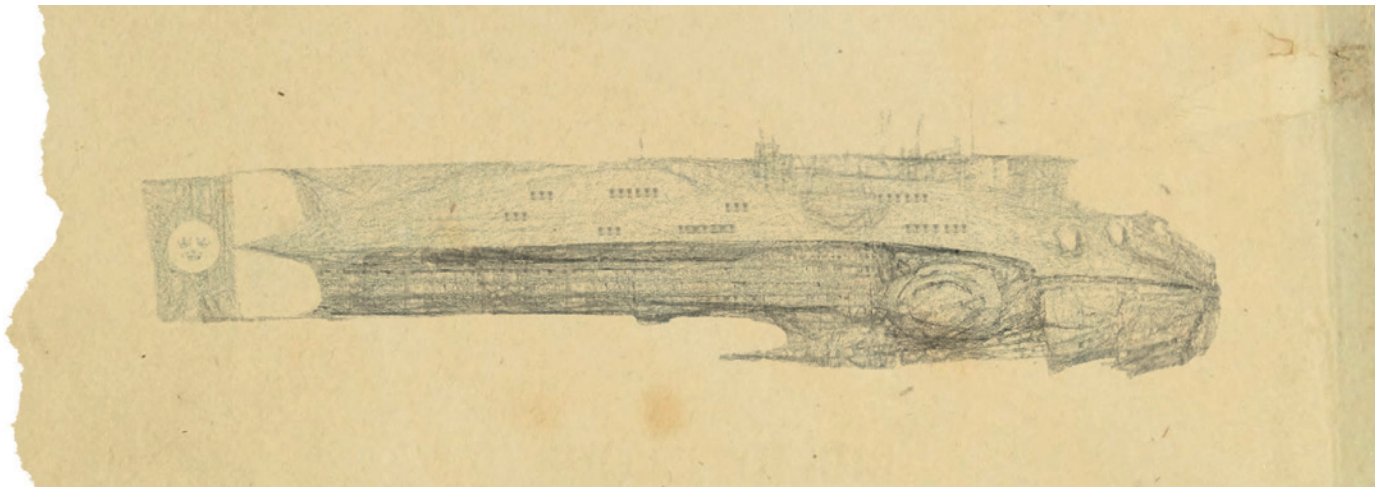
The Anthemis (below)

A trusty star liner travelling various routes in Comae Space. With up to 1,600 passengers and 300 crewmen, it is a popular choice for many travellers.

Cubicles are roughly divided as follows: $\frac{1}{10}$ of the cubicles are spacious First Class suites on the top decks, $\frac{1}{3}$ are in Second Class and the rest are in Third Class, simple bunks deep down in the ship, often eight bunks in each cubicle.

Meals are served in several dining halls, each with its own theme. For entertainment, the grand Théâtre Méchanique is highly regarded.

See stats for The Anthemis on pages 150-151.



Worlds

THE SIZE OF COMAE SPACE IS ROUGHLY 30 Lightyears in diameter. It contains many worlds of which only a few are inhabitable. There is an illustrative star map for players at the start of the book and a hex-based map for the Game Master at the end.

We have divided the worlds of Comae Space into four rough areas of influence, each dominated by one alien species (see map at the end of the book). This division is a simplification and the areas should not be viewed as nations or empires. They are too diversely populated by the various species and the political power is far too weak for that. Instead, see them as guidelines for which culture dominates and who the first colonist was.

Several planets in Comae Space have oxygen-nitrogen atmospheres like Eorthe's. Astrophysicists believe once plant life has occurred on a planet, the atmosphere will converge towards a stable oxygen-nitrogen mix. The exact levels of gases will vary but they eventually stabilise within limits tolerable to humans and other Comae Space aliens.

A majority of planets have inhospitable conditions for any life-forms, however. Just like our solar system, barren balls of rock, planets with corrosive atmospheres (like Venus and Mercury) and gas giants outnumber habitable worlds. On the star maps, systems without hospitable worlds are marked as unnamed dots. The GM can ignore them or use them as unexplored territory – perhaps holding undiscovered hospitable planets or moons.

This chapter contains descriptions of three major worlds, starting with humanity's home, Eorthe.

The map of Comae Space on page 9 is based on the current understanding of Earth's galactic neighbourhood, including potential habitable star systems. It is viewed from the galactic north of the Milky Way and flattened to two dimensions for ease of use.

Eorthe ^(V,VI)

Eorthe is, in many ways, identical to our own Earth in the 1920s. Telephones are still something of a novelty, jazz is the music conquering the world and automobiles share the streets with horse-drawn carriages. However, some things do set it apart; aliens are often seen in cities, the geography is slightly different and colonisation has taken a new turn.

GEOGRAPHY

The geography of Eorthe does not differ much from Earth. The most important difference for the game is Doggerland. The area we call Dogger Bank, in the North Sea between Denmark and United Kingdom, is an island about half the size of Ireland. This is the nation called Doggerland. *Odd Soot* takes its starting point on this small island and many scenarios will begin there. For further details on this fair island, see page 174.

Sapmi

Nation borders in Europe are similar to our own with a few differences. Furthest north is the Sapmi nation, encompassing parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland. This is the land of the Skreeders, the indigenous nomadic people of Scandinavia. Ever since the colonising efforts by the other Nordic countries failed in the 17th century, Bothnia has enjoyed independence. With Jokkmokk as its capital and Kautokeino as a spiritual and scholarly centre, Bothnia is a sparsely populated country rich in resources. The long and dark winters with lots of snow make this a demanding area to thrive in.

The Great War That Never Was

On Eorthe, the war we call World War I (or the Great War, for those in the 1920s) fizzled and died before spreading. A small scrimmage occurred between Serbia, Austria-Hungary and Russia, but with almost unlimited land and resources on other planets most people found it hard to care much. Within a few weeks the war was over.

Despite the absence of a major armed conflict, several of the nations under Russian and German rule have gained independence. Again, the nationalistic urge for more land has been rendered rather pointless in an interstellar perspective. Finland, Poland and the Baltic nations have indirectly been set free by the new exoplanet colonies – spilling no blood.

Eorthe

Hex [5,6]

Planet Size: Medium

Gravity: 1G

Atmosphere: Nitrogen-Oxygene

Climate: Temperate. Average 13.6°C.

Population: Medium

Main Species: Human

Landing: Rocket ships are allowed to land in aerodromes and starports. Permission to land is obtained via radio.

Historical Events of the World

1920. Radio and newspapers dominate mass media. Women allowed to vote in Doggerland. Mahatma Gandhi begins his non-violent campaign against British rule in India. First movie with sound; colour introduced later during the decade. Babe Ruth plays for the New York Yankees. Prohibition started in the United States, making it illegal to manufacture and sell alcohol. Radar invented.

1921. Lenin tries to fend off an economic crisis in Russia by allowing a limited form of capitalism for farmers. Death penalty abolished in Doggerland. Mao forms the communist party in China. Hitler elected leader of the nazi party in Germany. 43 people die in starship accident while orbiting Sisymbrium.

1922. BBC broadcasts radio around the world. Ulysses by James Joyce is published in Paris. The tomb of Tutankhamon is discovered by the archeologist Howard Carter in Egypt. Louis Armstrong starts his career in jazz music in Chicago. Russia changes name to Soviet Union. First international hit by Doggerland singer (and later movie star) Ria Sander.

1923. TIME Magazine's first issue published. Earthquake in China kills 5,000 people. First municipal omnibus line in Doggerland. In the first six months of the year, 40 people die in car accidents in Sweden – the need for driver's licences is discussed. The Labour Party wins its first election in the UK. Entire community of 12 families on colony world Vera found dead, cause unknown.

1924. Charleston is the the new popular dance, along with foxtrot, waltz and tango. Lenin dies and is succeeded by Stalin. The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann is published. The Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute founded by Helene Deutsch, colleague of Sigmund Freud. The Surrealist Manifesto appeared. Olympic Games held in Paris.

1925. The Great Gatsby is published by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Gold Rush by Charlie Chaplin is in cinemas. Art Deco exhibition in Paris. Mafia boss Al Capone survives ambush. First double-decker buses used in London. British explorer Percy Fawcett sends a last telegram to his wife before he disappears in the Amazon. Leica 35mm film still camera is introduced and revolutionises photography by its small size.

.
. .
.

As Europe was spared from the economic aftershock of an all-out war, extreme nationalism has been kept in check. It exists as a political undercurrent but does not attract enough followers to come into power – Russia being the major exception. Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin govern their nation with the same fierce terror as they did here on our Earth.

Colonisation on Eorthe

The continents outside Europe have seen one major difference compared to our own Earth; colonisation by Europeans was not as widespread. When new planets suitable for humans were discovered in the 1880s, many settlers redirected their interests. Resources on Eorthe became less important. As a result, both North America and Africa was spared some effects of colonisation. Indigenous cultures have survived more intact, free to find their own ways to relate to the industrialised world.

HISTORY

The history of Eorthe differs in a few important ways. The main drivers are the difference engines used during the 19th century, following the successful invention by Charles Babbage in the 1820s. Space travel and the discovery of aliens are the most direct consequences.

With the new calculating powers of difference engines made available to scientists, new discoveries and inventions were made at a quicker pace. It has not affected everyday life very much yet, however. The general Tech Level of the 1920s remain intact with a few notable exceptions. Among the 'early' inventions are radar, space travel, underwater exploration, sturdier airships and radio.

Space Travel

Nowhere has the technological advancements been more plain than in astronomy and space travel. In 1832 the first probe was sent into space and in the 1840s manned missions were accomplished. The discovery of the Luminarian probes orbiting Mars and Venus in the 1850s pushed technology even further. However, it took 40 years to build a starship capable of interstellar travel. The Unfolding Devices powering the probes turned out to be the key. By building a starship around one, humanity controlled the massive power required to reach other stars.

Alien Life

With a starship capable of FTL travel, it did not take humanity long to meet alien life. The first species to be found was the Aygaan. It was shocking to find another





Download the Odd Soot
Introductory Scenario

Free Download:

<https://bit.ly/2DoRPu3>

or scan the QR code.

