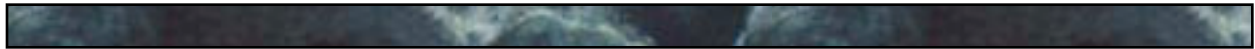


STORM KNIGHTS

DHARKUUL

THE XENOHORROR REALITY

JASYN JONES



DHARKUUL: THE XENOHORROR REALITY

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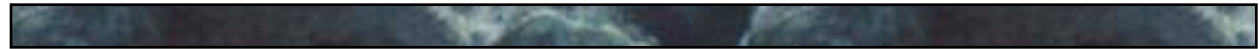
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These are original rules, intended for use with *TORG: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. The most recent version of these rules (and other TORG resources) can be found on the STORM KNIGHTS website:

<http://web.me.com/stormknights/>

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INTRODUCTION

What happened Between is irrelevant. There is only the world Before and the world After. The ages of Man matter not at all.

There was a time before man left the African veldt, before civilization rose in the river valleys of Asia, India, and Mesopotamia. There was a time long before mankind, in which unknown beings walked this Earth and they ruled and they reigned.

Ageless, the masters of existence were, and alien. Their minds were birthed in dimensions far removed from those we know, dimensions of strange physics and twisted causality. They had come to this world 65 million years ago, fleeing some dark and unknowable menace. Within a century, nearly all life on Earth had perished.


For millions of years they ruled, and the world was their plaything. They raised

mountains, opened up great canyons, and caused the oceans to swallow whole continents. They pulled the moon from some unknown arc of Unreality, and set it spinning in the sky. Where they walked, rationality fled.

The world as we know it is orderly; it proceeds according to rules that we can apprehend, understand, and utilize: we flip the switch, the light comes on. This world is rational, but there are worlds far beyond the one we know.

Rational space is but a small bubble of order, lodged in a universe of chaos and unreason. Beyond the bounds of rationality, in Unreality, the orderly progression of life as we know it breaks down. Cause no longer follows effect, and the natural laws of the universe cease to exist.

Irrational Space is the domain of beings known as the Eldritch Lords. The Lords are all-powerful, or so near to it as to make no



difference. They walk between the dimensional walls of Unreal Space at will, tearing through one level of existence after another. Yet they cannot venture is beyond the bounds of Unreality; the sphere of Rational space is closed to them.

Irrational Space is home to a great many races of intelligent beings. The vast majority- the servitor races- serve the Eldritch Lords as slaves or vassals. Most of the rest live in fear, hunted and harried by the Lords and their minions.

The Dharkol were one such minor race. They originated in a small and distant dimension, little more than a pocket, lost in the vastness of Unreality. The remoteness and obscurity of their home dimension allowed them to escape the notice of the Lords for a time, and their civilization grew in power and achievement.

Like all species that originate in those dark arcs of Irrationality, the Dharkols' minds and bodies were utterly inhuman- they simply cannot be described in rational terms. Their forms were made for Unnatural space, and unreality permeates their being. Their senses and bodies exist in 7 dimensions, and cannot be directly apprehended by those who exist in a 4-dimensional universe. Even glimpsing a portion of their being invites madness. When confronted by a Dharkol, the rational mind rebels.

Their bodies seemed ill made, the various portions not quite matching up with one another, and shimmering, jagged panes of unreality reflected through them. No limb appeared to be fastened securely- they shifted along these planes of force, moving into and out of conjunction with the rest of the body. Some even floated free for a moment, before reattaching themselves.

The Dharkol lived in a curiously indeterminate state, in which they might have 6 limbs one moment and none the next.

DHARKUUL PRECIS

A précis is a concise summary of the essential information about a reality, including Axioms and summaries of World Laws.

Catchphrase: "What ancient was, shall rise again."

Axioms: Magic 18, Social 20, Spirit 1, Tech 23

World Laws

The Law of Eldritch Unreality: This cosm is divided between Rationality and Unreality. Magic is the force of Unreality, and so works differently here than in other cosms.

The Curse of Irrationality: Irrational events harm the Rational mind and can cause delusions or other ill effects.

The Shield of Sanity: Sanity offers protection from the Irrational World.

Action Cant: 2

Genre: The genre is a cross between Mythos-inspired horror and near-future post-apocalyptic science fiction.

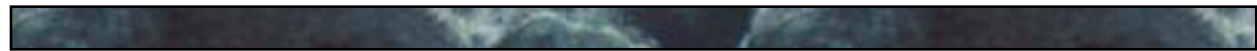
Setting: In the closing years of the 20th century, a small cult managed to breach the barriers between this world and Irrational Space. An alien race, fleeing a nameless horror, invaded Earth. Though defeated, their invasion weakened the walls between Rational and Irrational Space.

Now hideous and insane monstrosities from beyond the bounds of rationality have begun emerging in ever-greater numbers. The only defense against these incursions lies in deciphering and using the Xenotech artifacts left behind by the aliens, though those who delve too deeply risk their own sanity.

Archetypal Characters: Reformed Cultist, Augmented Marine, Cautious Xenopsychologist, Mythos Researcher, Eldritch Sorcerer, Escaped Mental Patient, Xenotechnician, XTIA Agency Operative, Xeniform Bughunter, Complacent Politician, Tabloid Journalist.

Mission Statement: We fight the secret wars against the nameless horrors from beyond rational existence.

Source Material: H.P. Lovecraft or August Derleth stories, "Aliens," "Species," "Virus," the "Delta Green" role-playing game.



Their bodies changed from flesh to metal and back and their height varied according to which peculiar spatial angle they were traveling through.

The natural form of a Dharkol is a 7-dimensional agglomeration of biological and mechanical features. In Rational space, the totality of a Dharkol's body cannot be seen, and different portions of it are revealed one after the other, giving the impression of a form that is constantly changing shape, size, and composition.

At one moment, a Dharkol may appear as a human-sized mass composed of innumerable many-fingered boneless limbs, bound with weird bits of enruned metal. Then the creature may suddenly grow, towering over onlookers, waving a hundred fur-covered tentacles and walking on spider legs. It may next shrink, becoming a shapeless mass of plasm the size of a small child.

There is no predicting or understanding the relationship of each momentary form to the totality of the Dharkol's existence. The very appearance of a Dharkol reflects its Irrational nature. This extends to their civilization and technology as well.

Their civilization was born in the pocket realm from which they derived: a small shard of placid space, lost in the immense tortured realms of Unreality. There, the Dharkol crawled forth from chaos and began to thrive.

For ageless eons, they mastered the forces of Unreality, and built a civilization around a bizarre and incomprehensible alien technology. This technology operated according to principles unknown to the minds of the sane. Its aesthetic followed curves and angles of Irrational Space, and its logic lay beyond mere causality. With it, the Dharkol mastered time and space, and could mold their world to suit their needs. There was very little that was not within their grasp.

The Dharkol civilization was very old when the Eldritch Lords first breached their home dimension. It was, one imagines, a mere accident, the tiniest wobble off their well-trod paths through Unreality's arcs and layers. The intruding Eldritch Lord did not even notice or recognize the destruction its immensity had wrought on the Dharkol. The devastation, though, was nearly total.

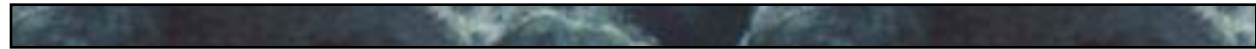
In the paths of their master, the servitor races of this wayward Eldritch Lord swarmed through the newly torn rift in existence. The Dharkol suddenly found themselves embroiled in a bitter war for survival.

The servitors were numberless, as numerous as the grains of sand on all the beaches of all the planets of a whole galaxy. Though they fought with tenacity and ingenuity, the Dharkol were simply overwhelmed.

Their world was torn asunder, their cities thrown down, their leaders slain. The smallest remnant of a remnant fled, traversing the planes of Unreality in a frenzied flight, searching for some kind of refuge. In their haste and panic, they pierced the barrier of sanity, and found themselves on the surface of a giant sphere, teeming with life and rationality.

Here they built monuments and cities, and grew in power and number, and came to control the world. They even wrenched the moon from Irrational Space, and among its torrid jungles built colonies. The creatures of the natural world died, in their millions, and the Dharkol bred replacements from their own Unnatural stock.

This world was their paradise, but it was already dying. Slowly, over the course of their 65 million year reign, the forces of Rational space eroded the small bubble of Unreality in which the Dharkol dwelled. The Moon's jungles dried up, its atmos-



phere boiled away, and the colonists died or fled to Earth. In time, the Dharkol found Rationality to be as large a threat as the servitor races.

Given time, and ample warning of the impending collapse of their bubble of Unreality, the Dharkol searched throughout Irrational Space for a sanctuary. Thereunto they fled, leaving behind mystic relics, sunken cities, and a smattering of cults that worshipped the Dharkol as gods.

Humanity, once the slaves of the Dharkol, came to inherit the Earth. In a scant 12 millennia, humans rose from wandering savagery to civilization. They forged weapons out of the nuclear fire, built cities as massive and impressive as those of their forgotten masters, and even set foot upon the now-lifeless moon (though they never discovered the ruins hidden beneath the surface). All of this they did, in a blink of an eternal eye.

It was at the peak of mankind's power, when his abilities were at their height, that his illusions of rationality and achievement were shattered. A small cult, searching in secret to uncover the forgotten lore of the Dharkol, worked a strange and terrible magic. In so doing they opened the portals of Irrationality, and the essence of Unreal space poured itself out across the globe. With it, came the Dharkol.

Humans, by their very nature, are meant to live within the bounds of Rationality. Unreality is alien and hostile. As a consequence, there is simply no common frame of reference that human and Dharkol minds share and communication between the two is impossible. As was coexistence. Warfare was immediate and inevitable. The War lasted nearly a decade.

It was in 1990, as the humans measure time, that the War began. No continent was spared, the rifts between Rationality and Irrationality opened everywhere.

Fighting was fierce and protracted, and the humans and Dharkol were very nearly evenly matched.

Whole cities were conquered and their populations enslaved. Many nations simply collapsed under the onslaught and international travel and relations became rare and difficult. In the end, humanity did not defeat the invaders. Rationality did.

The Dharkol fought fiercely, unleashing the full might of their Xenotech weapons. Unfortunately for them, the forces of Unreality unleashed by the cultists- upon which they and their Xenotech depended- were beat back by Rationality. In the end the invasion was defeated, mostly.

Portals between Irrational Space and the rational world still occur, and many freed slaves still worship their masters in their hearts and frequently join cults that honor them. These cults seek to permanently open the gates to Irrationality, ensuring Dharkol dominance of Earth.

Nor have the Eldritch Lords remained ignorant of the War. Though long unaware of the Earth's existence, their interest has been piqued. Their servitors, following their master's will, have begun making their way through the folds of Irrational Space, to the bastion of Rationality. They, too have their cults and cultists who serve their desires.

In the aftermath of the War, the nations of Earth have begun to rebuild. Old alliances were broken, and new ones are being formed. Frequent incursions from Irrational Space still occur, and most nations have specially trained troops, prepared to react to such emergencies. Xenotech research is a highly controversial endeavor, though few nations simply ignore the strange artifacts left behind by the Dharkol. In truth, the War continues, though on a much smaller scale.



AXIOMS AND WORLD LAWS

AXIOMS

Magic: 18

In the Dharkuul cosm, magic is the force of Unreality. It creates effects without proximate causes and proceeds according to its own laws (laws that are intrinsically opposed to those of the rational world). Using magic exposes one to the forces of Unreality, and further weakens the walls between Rational and Irrational Space. Spell magic is unknown and contradictory, despite the high Magic axiom (see the *Law of Eldritch Unreality*, below). Magical rituals are possible, and are the subject of intense research efforts.

The other type of magic native to the cosm is Xenotech. Xenotech devices use the laws of Irrational Space, much like standard technology uses the natural laws of the Rational world. Xenotech devices can be designed and manufactured like other technological devices (or bred, as many are living creatures), but as they depend on Unreality, they are governed by

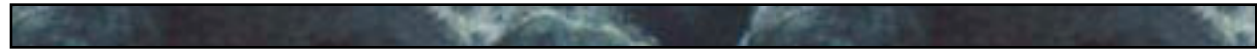
the Magic axiom. In addition, Xenotech exposes its researchers, designers, and users to the forces of Unreality.

Magical creatures do exist, but they are subject to the laws of Unreality. In form, they are usually twisted unnatural nightmares, whose origin lies in the Irrational worlds. “Normal” fantasy creatures (dragons, elves, etc.) do not exist here.

Magical creatures are not native to Rational Space, and only enter Rational Space when summoned or where the barriers between Rationality and Irrationality are weak. Such occurrences are becoming more common, and a large portion of Xenotech research is directed towards detecting and defeating the incursions of Unreal monsters. Such creatures are called Xenobiological Organisms, or Xenologicals (XL’s for short).

Social: 20

The Social axiom reflects the collapse



of international organizations and treaties in the wake of the Dharkol invasion. The United Nations has ceased to exist, along with ancillary organizations like the World Bank. Regional blocks have grown in importance, as means to encourage economic growth and enable rebuilding of the devastated areas. Espionage, aimed at acquiring Xenotech research, is common and brutal. Relations between the regional blocks are poor, and some are on the verge of open war. There have been efforts to reestablish the United Nations, but the regional blocks have proven loath to surrender their autonomy.

Spirit: 1

Religious concepts are possible, and churches common to near Earth worlds all exist, but faith is unrewarded and no miracles are possible. Attendance at church is

WORLD LAWS

The Law of Eldritch Unreality

In Dharkuul, magic is the force of Unreality, and is the essence of Irrational Space. Accordingly, magic works differently in this cosm than in other cosms.

Magical spells are orderly evocations of magical energies. Magic is irrational, and therefore cannot be formalized and studied through spells. All spells are contradictions, even those that have an Axiom rating of 18 or less. Rituals, being a result of the innate nature of magic, are not contradictory.

In the domains of Irrationality, the natural laws of physics are overridden. The basis of physical laws is magical. The living can take advantage of these altered natural laws by creating apparently technological devices, but these devices are in fact magical. They work according to the prin-

iple, and adherence to the doctrines of religions is casual, at best.

In addition, the Eldritch Lords of Unreality and the Dharkol are worshipped by a series of cults. Though neither can grant miracles, they can gift their worshippers with dark and disturbing magical rituals. Such rituals are performed in lieu of religious rites.

Tech: 23

Though Tech 23, the cosm's development of Technology has lagged behind that of Earth, not progressing far beyond the early 1990's. Quite a lot of advances we take for granted today- DVD's, the World Wide Web, etc.- are simply unknown. Due to the distrust between regional blocks, the Internet has split into mutually incompatible networks, and only the United States has a large-scale Internet.

principles of magic, and have no Technological axiom requirements. Instead, they have a Magic axiom requirement. Such devices are referred to as Xenotech.

Magical creatures are common in the cosm, though they are only native to Irrational Space. The unreality of magic affects them as well, limiting magical creatures to bizarre and mind-bending forms, forms that are almost totally unrelated to those of Rational Space.

The Curse of Irrationality

When beings of Rational Space encounter the creatures, tools, or effects of Irrational Space, their mental balance and sanity is threatened. There are truths of Unreality, truths that Rational minds are simply not meant to learn. Learning these truths changes the mind of the Rational

person. The more a Rational mind learns about Unreality, the more bent and bizarre their behavior becomes.

For example: "The moon is the domain of the Lady of Insanity. People go insane during the full moon." A character who learned this truth might refuse to go out at night during the full moon, so as to avoid the influence of Lunacy.

For example: "Shadows are gates to the realm of the Lord of Shadows." A character who learned this piece of Unreal Lore might avoid shadowed areas. They might also carry a light source with them all the time and might sleep with the lights on.

For example: "The Abhorrent King can see through the eyes of spiders." This character could develop a phobia about spiders, and would do his best to avoid them or, failing that, kill them. He might also carry a can of bug spray with him at all times.

In the above examples, the given piece of lore is true, in Unreal space. It might also be true, in those parts of the Rational world where the boundaries between this world and the next are thin. The delusion arises because the afflicted individual cannot judge when they are in danger- they have to act on the delusion all the time, even if their actions are irrational.

Each time a person is exposed to Unreal technology (Xenotech) or creatures, casts a spell or ritual, or gains an add in *scholar* (Unreal Lore) or *science* (Xenotech), they have a chance to gain a point in their Unreality stat. This stat will tend to go up, the more the character encounters Irrational phenomenon.

Each time a person is exposed to Unreality, they make a *Mind* (willpower) check. Those with adds in *science* (Xenotech) or *scholar* (Unreal Lore) subtract their skill adds from this *Mind* (willpower) check (using whichever skill has more adds). The Difficulty Number for the *Mind* (willpower) check is based on how "unreal" the event is (see the chart below).

DN	SAMPLE EVENT(S)
3	Reading a description of Unreal events, or studying a book of Unreal Lore.
5	Seeing an inactive piece of Xenotech, successfully researching a ritual, entering an unstable portion of Rational space.
8	Seeing a spell or ritual cast, seeing a piece of Xenotech used.
10	Having a spell or ritual cast on you, being the target of a Xenotech device.
12	Seeing an XL, watching a dimensional tear manifest, using a Xenotech device.
13	Casting a spell or ritual, being attacked by an XL, seeing a large number of XL's, gaining an add in either <i>science</i> (Xenotech) or <i>scholar</i> (Unreal Lore).
15	Seeing an extremely powerful XL, sensing Irrational Space, being attacked by a large number of XL's.
18	Seeing an Eldritch Lord, being attacked by an extremely powerful XL, using a dimensional tear to teleport to another part of Rational space.
22	Passing into Irrational Space, being attacked by an Eldritch Lord.
25	Events of Unsurpassed Unreality- seeing the moon disappear, watching a lost city rise, seeing multiple dimensional tears open and disgorge hundreds of XL's, seeing two or more Eldritch Lords simultaneously.

These Difficulty numbers are modified by the character's Unreality score as follows:

SITUATION	DN MOD
Unreality score > 1/2 their <i>Spirit</i>	+1 DN
Unreality score > their <i>Spirit</i>	+3 DN

The Success Levels of the *Mind* (*willpower*) check are read on the following chart:

SUCCESS LEVEL	RESULT
Failure	The character's Unreality score increases by 5.
Minimal	The character's Unreality score increases by 3 and they gain a specific insight into Unreality.
Average	The character's Unreality score increases by 3.
Good	The character's Unreality score increases by 1 and they gain a specific insight into Unreality.
Superior	The character's Unreality score increases by 1.
Spectacular	No effects.

When a person gains a specific insight into Unreality, they have a chance to develop a delusion. The GM generates a Bonus Number, rolling again on 10's and 20's, and adds it to the character's Unreality score (minimum bonus of +1). This total is compared to the character's *Spirit* or *Mind*, whichever is higher. The Success Levels are read on the chart below.

SUCCESS LEVEL	RESULT
Failure	Nothing happens.
Minimal	The character gains a temporary minor delusion.

SUCCESS LEVEL	RESULT
Average	The character gains a temporary major delusion.
Good	The character gains a permanent minor delusion.
Superior	The character gains a permanent major delusion.
Spectacular	The character gains +3 points in their Unreality stat and a permanent major delusion.


A minor delusion is, in effect, a personality quirk. If observed in casual company, it may be a little weird, but most people won't pay much attention. A phobia about spiders, where the person can't stand to see them or attack them, is a minor delusion.

A major delusion is a severe behavioral problem. It causes problems for the character, problems that are obvious and constitute a significant barrier to the individual being able to function normally. A person who can't enter a darkened room, and who must always have a light on, is suffering from a major delusion.

A temporary delusion usually lasts for about a month, then fades away naturally. A permanent delusion is just that- permanent. It can be treated, but never cured.

Psychology and Unreality

Properly applied, psychology can save those whose minds are fracturing under the burden of truths they were never meant to learn. Use of the *science* (*psychology*) skill can lower a character's Unreality score, and even cure a temporary delusion. Permanent delusions can be treated, but not cured. They can go into remission, but any increase in the character's Unreality stat will cause them to express again. In all cases, this counseling



takes time and is fairly difficult.

The base time is one week of therapy, during which the subject can do nothing else of significance. The Difficulty Number for the *psychology* skill check is the character's Unreality score, plus their adds in both *science (Xenotech)* **and** *scholar (unreal lore)*.

If the counseling is meant to reduce a character's Unreality score, a Good success lowers their Unreality score by 1 point, a Superior by 2, and a Spectacular by 3. If it is meant to treat a delusion, a Superior success will cure a temporary minor delusion (or cause a permanent one to go into remission) and a Spectacular success will cure a temporary major delusion (or cause a permanent one to go into remission).

The Shield of Sanity

The powers of Unreality dominate Irrational Space, but are weak in Rational Space. The minds of perfectly sane individuals- those with no points in Unreality- strengthen the restrictions of Rational Space. Each perfectly sane onlooker adds +1 to the Difficulty of casting a spell or ritual.

Accordingly, rituals and spells are only at full power when cast away from perfectly sane onlookers. Hence, rituals and spells are invoked in the wilds, in the presence of fellow cultists, or secret, hid-

THE ELDRITCH LORDS OF UNREALITY

There are immensely powerful beings that dwell in Irrational Space, far beyond the bounds of Rationality. These are the Lords of Unreality, and they are enemies to both humans and Dharkol. Many cults exist who worship and propitiate these beings. The following is just a small list:

Mi-t'koa: Lady of the Moon, the seas, and insanity.

Phachetol: Lord of the Deluge, of mountain peaks, storms, and earthquakes.

A'koshattep: Lord of Devastation and Disease.

Totzek: Lord of Shadows.

Eiztlaniis: The Abhorrent King, the Master of Spiders, the Eyeless One, the All-Seeing One, the Lord of Eyes.

There are more Lords than can be named. The gamemaster is encouraged to create new ones at will, or to alter the descriptions and portfolios of the old. Irrational Space is chaotic and ever-changing, and no human can learn all of its lore. Different books should contradict each other, and it should be impossible for there to be a truly self-consistent body of knowledge.

den places. Unreal phenomenon (such as Xenological manifestations) tend to occur in rural areas, among cultists, in abandoned buildings, in secret rooms, etc.

In addition, the presence of perfectly sane individuals decreases the probability that a dimensional tear will manifest.

Xenotech devices, because of their apparently technological nature, are not affected by perfectly sane onlookers- they always function normally.



THE COSM

Dharkuul is a near Earth cosm. Up until the Dharkol Invasion in 1990, the known history of this world and Earth's is nearly indistinguishable. The ten-year war that followed the Invasion devastated many cities and laid waste to the countryside. The struggle to rebuild has been a difficult and long process, and was only made possible by the materials gained through cosm raiding.

The Dharkol

65 million years ago, the Dharkol arrived on Earth, fleeing a great menace that had destroyed their civilization. Their arrival caused the death of most life on the

planet, from the waves of Unreal energy that flowed over the surface of the Earth.

Gradually, over time, the energies of Unreality faded. As they did, the Dharkol's Xenotech devices became weaker and weaker and eventually failed altogether. The Dharkol ruled this world (in their language, Dharkuul) until roughly 20,000 years BC, when the declining energies forced them to return to Irrational Space. They left behind abandoned ruins and Xenotech artifacts.

It was through records in these ruins that men learned of Unreal space and the Eldritch Lords. Bizarre cults sprang up around the worship of these dark beings, and these cults researched rituals to con-

tact their masters. It was such rituals that caused the dimensional tear to manifest in 1990, allowing the force of Unreality to flood through.

The Dharkol, given a chance to return to the seat of their power, invaded Earth. The war lasted ten years, and ended in an apparent Dharkol defeat.

In actuality, the Dharkol only appeared to be defeated (the description in the Introduction is what people believe. They are wrong.) The Dharkol vanished behind the scenes, using their Xenotech to hide among humans. They manipulate people through mind-control technology and work towards a day when they can escape Dharkuul entirely. Much of the cosm raiding of this reality is driven by their search

for a refuge from the Eldritch Lords.

Aftermath

In the aftermath of the War, the world split into rival geographical blocks. Each block has its own Xenotech research initiatives. Relations between the blocks vary, from the relative friendliness of North America and Europe to the near Cold War between China and the Indian-led South-east Asian block.

Xenological incursions happen with disturbing frequency, especially in those areas that were the site of the Dharkol invasion. Most countries have organized special forces units dedicated to hunting and killing xenologicals.

XENOTECH

Xenotech devices are apparently technological, but function through magic. They can be controlled by anyone who has adds in *science* (*Xenotech*), but frequently require different skills to use. For example, Xenotech energy weapons use the *energy weapons* skill to attack.

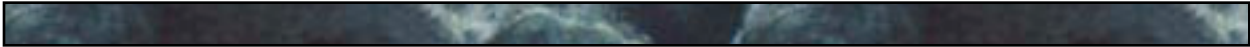
The physical form of Xenotech is apparently random and bizarre. There is no link between form and function, and the look of a device gives no clues as to what

it does. Xenotech is usually composed of gemstones, living flesh, and weirdly curved pieces of metal with runes inscribed thereon.

In function, assume that Xenotech can duplicate nearly any spell of Axiom 18 or lower, or any Technological device of Tech 26 and lower. Example effects include increasing attributes, armor, weapons, healing, and so forth.

Each device has a Difficulty Number,

SUCCESS LEVEL	RESULT
Failure	The character's Unreality score increases by 1 point.
Minimal	The character gains an insight into one function of the device. Their Unreality score increases by 2.
Average	The character gains an insight into one function of the device. Their Unreality score increases by 1.
Good	The character gains an insight into one function of the device. They also gain an insight into the device's background, giving them a specific insight into Unreality, appropriate for the device's background. This triggers an Unreality check (see above).
Superior	The character gains full knowledge of the device. They also gain an insight into the device's background, giving them a specific insight into Unreality, appropriate for the device's background. This triggers an Unreality check (see above).
Spectacular	The character gains full knowledge of the device. Their Unreality score increases by 1.



which represents the difficulty of understanding the principles involved in using it. To learn the secrets of the device, a would-be user must make a *science (Xenotech)* check against this Difficulty Number. *Scholar (unreal lore)* can be used instead, at a -3 penalty. The Success Levels of this check produce various results, see the chart previous page, bottom.

Here's a sample Xenotech device.

Gazebeam

Xenotech DN: 20

Effect Value: 20

Range (S/M/L): 3-30/ 60/ 180

This Xenotech device consists of a red faceted gem, set into an octagonal silver plate. Various runes are inscribed onto both sides of the plate. Eight long jointed metal arms extend from the plate, one from the middle of each face. The arms are tipped with a sharp recurved blade.

To equip the gazebeam, the user places the plate in the center of their chest, over the breastbone. The arms extend around the user, and the blades sink into the user's back, anchoring the device. Each time the device is mounted, it raises the user's Unreality score by 1.

Once the device is mounted, the user gains the ability to generate beams of intense energy from his eyes. These beams can be aimed (with the *energy weapons* skill) and do damage equal to the Effect Value of the device.

Background: This device is used by agents of the Abhorrent King, the lord of Spiders and Sight. The gem in the center is called the "Eye of the King." The energy beams this tool generates cannot harm any agent of the King.

Appropriate Insights: Any insight into the history of the King, rituals of his cult, or the true nature of spiders.

NEW SKILLS

Two new skills are available in the Dharkuul cosm. Both are native to this reality, but no other. They can be learned with starting skill adds or in play, as usual.

Scholar (Unreal Lore)

Use: Unskilled use penalized.

Sample specializations: None

Reality: Dharkuul

This skill represents a person's study in the unwholesome and mind-bending lore of Unreal Space. *Scholar (unreal lore)* allows those skilled in it to research magical rituals, to understand the behavior of xenologicals, and to know the rites and chief characteristics of Eldritch Cults.

Science (Xenotech)

Use: Cannot be used unskilled.

Sample specializations: None

Reality: Dharkuul

This is the skill used to understand, fix, and build Xenotech.


Other pieces of Xenotech include:

G'ldun parasites: These parasitic organisms look like chitin-armored trilobites. They can form a symbiotic bond with a living being and are quite valuable. The parasites, when properly layered onto a person, provide Tou +7/Max 21 points of armor. They also increase the *Strength*, *Dexterity*, and *Toughness* of the user by 1 point apiece.

See-all: This is a two-foot long centipede that is placed at the base of the user's skull and along his spine. It sinks through the flesh and fuses with the spinal cord. This device increases the user's ability to sense things (it boosts *Perception* by 1 point).

Strongarm: This is a thin, but long maggot-like symbiote that is surgically implanted in a host's arm (just one). It increases their *Strength* by 2 points.

Attempts to use multiple strongarms



have proven disastrous. The two creatures mate, using chemicals borne in the bloodstream, and the young burst out, devouring the host. Treat this as a physical attack, Effect Value 25 plus a rolled Bonus Num-

ber.

This explosion and attack constitutes an Unreal event (see the Curse of Irrationality, above) with a base *Mind (willpower)* Difficulty Number of 15.

ALTERNATE SETTINGS

The assumptions behind the setting can be altered. Here a few variations, along with suggestions to implement the variant setting. Most of them involve changes to the Tech or Social axioms or the Action Cant. The World Laws remain the same.

The Eternal War: The first Dharkol invasion occurred sometime before 1000 B.C. Since then, the humans and the Dharkol have fought an endless War. This war has destroyed much of the planet. Zones of Unreality are common, as are dimensional tears and XL incursions. The Dharkol have the upper hand, but they have suffered much from the war as well.

This setting is significantly darker, and the Action Cant should be a 1. The Tech is higher (26) though Social is lower (12).

Rats in the Ruins: The Dharkol won the 1990 war, and humans are rats in the ruins. XL incursions are frequent and usually involve numerous XL's. Technology is disappearing, being replaced by Xenotech.

This setting again has an Action Cant of 1 and a Social of 12. The Tech remains at 23, though it is dropping as technology breaks down and materiel is consumed.

Colonization: The Dharkol didn't "win" but neither did humanity lose. The surface of the Earth is divided between sections controlled by the Dharkol (roughly a third) and sections controlled by humanity (the rest). Now both fight each other and

eldritch monsters. No changes are necessary to use this option.

Conspiracy Theory: The invasion wasn't open, but rather covert, and competing factions vie to control Xenotech, including cults and the Dharkol. No changes are necessary to use this option.

It Came From Other-Space!: This option keeps most of the above flavor, but brings it back to the pulpish roots of the Mythos. The invasion happens during the mid-20's, and the "present" is 1937. There's a race around the globe to find the ancient Dharkol ruins and Dharkol Xenotech from the invasion. Nazis and communists wage a secret war for Xenotech.

In this setting, change the Action Cant to 3 and the Tech to 21.

Future War: This setting is the future of the Colonization setting. Both Dharkol and Humans have discovered interstellar drives, and have raced to establish colonies among the stars. Some planets are human, others Dharkol, and others are warzones between the two races. The stars are distant and cold, and the cultists of the Eldritch Lords can be found everywhere.

The Tech of this setting is 26. Though it has FTL space drives, they are in fact Xenological constructs (ensuring that the ship's engineer is less than completely sane) and are governed by the Magic axiom, not the Tech axiom.

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