

BREAKERS





AN ELECTRONIC NOVEL™

BREAKERS™

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Broderbund®

AN ELECTRONIC NOVEL

BREAKERS

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

The book you're holding is not a computer manual. You don't have to read every word before you boot the disk. In fact, you may want to play for a while then browse these pages. Use the Reference Card packaged with your disk if you want to get going quickly.

This book is really a tour guide and survival manual in one. The idea is to give you some handy background information before you find yourself in the center of the action.

The chapters in *The Beginnings of BREAKERS* set the scene and introduce the characters before you meet them on your computer screen. You'll find out how to move around through the terrain of the adventure, and you'll get some ideas for dialogue with characters in *How to Talk to BREAKERS*.

Relax and have fun with the book, but as you read, be on the lookout. In *BREAKERS*, clues—like magazine pages behind a metaplast wall plate—can be anywhere.

T H E B E G I N N I N G S O F

BREAKERS

P A R T O N E



THE BORGIAN RIFTS



Starlight on naked rock: a phalanx of meteors charges through space—fan mail from some dead planet, hurtling across the universe like blazing pinballs to flame out, rock by rock, in gravitational fields along the way. After eons of tumbling through darkness, the last meteors veer toward two stars and the golden planet looping around them in an endless figure-eight.

Borg turns regally in its atmospheric envelope. High off the surface the air thins out, refraction stops, the light fades into a dome of ever-deepening cobalt, streaked with sudden fire as stellar debris arcs through.

Turquoise leaves twitched a mile below the surface in a deep, mist-bound rift. Seven pairs of golden eyes checked a clearing for danger before one of the group stepped into the open. The creature was slight, unclothed, with a large hairless head, a small round mouth and wide eyes that gave it an expression of solemn astonishment. Its skin had the same luminous golden sheen as its eyes. It carried a document in one hand.

After a moment the six others emerged from the jungle, and the seven golden beings stood looking straight up through a gap in the mist at the narrow band of dark Borgian sky.

One of them pointed. "The Creator!" The constellation they beheld was like a benign face, with one golden eye and one blue eye gazing down into the rift. Something like a drop of blood gleamed in its forehead—a red dwarf pulsing irregularly.

"Something is wrong," said one of the golden creatures. "A dark cloud hides the Creator's face—the evil mask of prophecy!" Indeed, the constellation seemed dim, and even the brightest stars were slightly obscured by the shadow, darker than space, creeping over them.

"When the Creator shall be masked," intoned one of the seven, and the others chanted, "then the world will die..."

"When the mask shall fall away," chanted the first, and the others responded, "then the world will live again..."

The first one said, "The darkness quickens—it is the time of renewal. When the blood star vanishes, the dark storm will scour the planet clean. All our people must be returned to Borg. And then we must perform the ritual of the elements, to recreate the Creator so that the Lau may live."

Another murmured, "All our training has brought us to this day."

In reverence and awe, the seven gazed upward at the stricken constellation. Suddenly they heard rough voices drifting up the path, then creaking leather, rattling chains and thudding boots.

"Breakers!" Terrified, the golden creatures fled into the jungle. Oaths broke out behind them, followed by blades flashing in the dim violet light. At the edge of the jungle, one of the golden creatures fell—two bone-handled knives in its back—and lay twitching as the Breakers, cursing and joking, surrounded it. Their leader had a face like a peeled carrot, scarred down one side. With a raspy chuckle, he yanked his knives out of the corpse and growled, "Like Mulcahy says—

they're no good dead, but it's better than letting 'em get away!" He wiped the blades on his filthy leather pants amid guttural laughter.

Nobody saw the luminous golden mantle that rose from the turquoise jungle and wafted up out of the rift, billowing into the sky until the bright spots in its midst, like pale eyes, winked out one by one.

P A R T T W O



HAPPY HOUR



Far above the planet, a shiny fleck hangs in the blue-black band of shallow space. It flickers intermittently in fixed geographical orbit over scars on the surface left by a large ore-mining operation. The industrial space colony's age is revealed by the obsolete spherical design, with antiquated solar power panels, reflectors and shields spread over its translucent dome: picture a round blown-glass sculpture hanging in a dark void—a dirty yellow glow inside—its outer surfaces, points and spires dusted with fairy light from distant fireballs.

Avagrant meteor smashes through one of the solar panels, blows a dish antenna to junk and bounces off the colony's hull. Then it wobbles on into eternity, leaving the hull plates ruptured and gaping behind.

The luminous golden mantle rolls up from the planet and drifts toward the colony, surrounding it and seeming to stare in through the dome with shining eyes as the colony shudders in the meteor's wake. The lights inside dim and flicker for several moments. Hovering outside the dome, the vaporous eyes peer into the colony's heart. A universal intelligence feels along the maze of corridors, through the residence modules, the shops and bays, across the rotting hydroponic vegetable beds and rusting transport pods to the administration module, and out again, sensing everything. Except for a skeleton mining crew, a handful of drifters and a large force of security mutants, the colony seems abandoned.

The mind feels its way to a barroom on one of the utility levels. Under garish colored lights, entities of every description are killing time, drinking, fighting, planning trouble. Ouch! The sordid violence in these entities' brainwaves is painful to the probing awareness. It recoils, and the dusty glow outside the colony hull seems to intensify briefly. Then, tentatively, the intelligence touches some of the more accessible minds in the barroom...

"Haw haw! The look on that thing's face when eight thousand volts whipped into its face! Haw!" The Cirdonian smacked the bartop, spilling drinks and shaking the floor. Since he was a Cirdonian, nobody complained. Buying a new drink was easier than buying a new head.

"Sounds pretty funny," said a huge boxlike entity next to the Cirdonian. He sounded dubious, or maybe just depressed.

"Haw haw! Face turned to jelly, lookin' surprised as livin' Karg—haw haw haw!" The Cirdonian, gasping with mirth, clacked his beak and glared up and down the bar. Everyone laughed along obediently.

Panface nodded to Betty the Bartender and gave up his place to another Breaker. Even the Cirdonian pulled back slightly as he left. Panface was known for his sweet, melancholy disposition, but he had also been known to drink too much of Betty's lava and convulsively tear three-inch meta-plast plates into confetti while in the throes of some unknown grief.

The big solemn guy rolled across the clamorous room, tilting his occipital bulge this way and that while his dark, sad eyes searched for a familiar face among the walking flotsam of a galaxy. A diabolically lousy musician began belaboring an electric lute. Somebody threw a cup of lava toward the stage, and it splattered all over the wall.

"Panface!" The massive frame trundled around, and something like a smile lit his aptly-named visage.

"Bobo," he grunted, extending a cloven ham. A tall blond Terran woman shook it heartily and slapped Panface on his shoulder. She glanced around furtively and, looking like a Chan-Lockheed MX99C hauling the oldest subzone barge in the system to a scrap orbit, tugged him into a corner. She brushed a mess of hair out of her eyes, but it fell back immediately.

"I found something out just now," she intimated out of the side of her mouth. "See that geek about to fall on his face over by the supply locker hatch? Been pourin' Betty's lava down his pipe to loosen him up. Know what he said?"

Panface shook his head, intent on her long face, watching the expressions flit across like starlight on a moonscape.

"He said—get this, he said—" holding the hair out of her face so as to pin him with both ice-blue eyes, "and this is no goof, he looked me right in the face and said real clear, but don't worry, nobody else was listening, he—"

"What did he say?" rumbled Panface.

Bobo whispered, "Casey Jones."

"What about Jones?"

"He's here!"

Panface looked quickly around the bar, scrutinizing the motley crowd of losers and thieves from every dim hole in the Slug Nebula. "Where?"

"Not in the bar," hissed Bobo. "But here on Nimbus Colony. He's working out of the shuttle bay, dealing with Mulcahy and his Breakers on Borg. Mulcahy sells him slaves and hijacked goods, and Jones runs 'em out from here. He's even using UMC shuttles. The geek heard it from a buddy on the Essex when it stopped here, and it goes along with what that guy Delbert Riggs said."

"Hmm." Her immense companion thought it over. "I'd like

to meet Jones, just to see what kind of a guy could do the things they say he's done."

"Meet him? You want to do more than that. Panface, listen— Jones is our ticket. He can get us to Borg! Then we can find the subterranean violet sea with all the jewels—we can buy our own planet and retire!" She watched the broad face, saw something like a supernova behind the occipital bulge. The small eyes blazed for a moment.

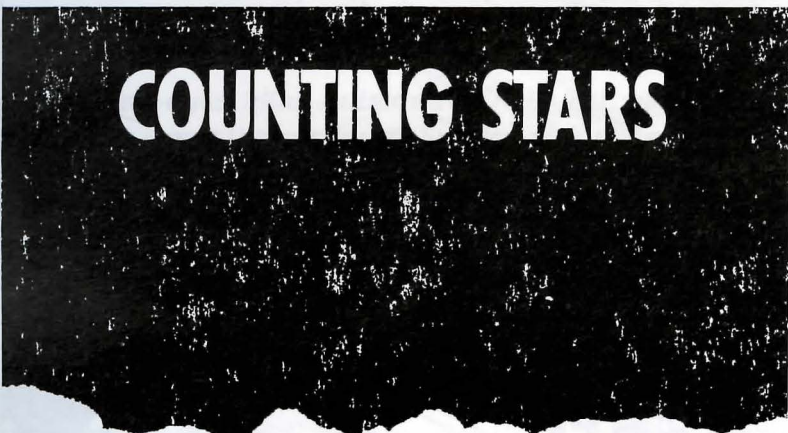
"I get it," he said slowly. "All we have to do is get to the shuttle bay and pass a little gold to Casey Jones. Only one problem, Bobo—we're broke."

"Not for long." Bobo slid an object to Panface. "Hide this. It's an extra VBX I got off that drunk ensign from the Essex. All we have to do is sell it off, then we can go to Borg."

"But who can we sell it to? All these derelicts in here are broke."

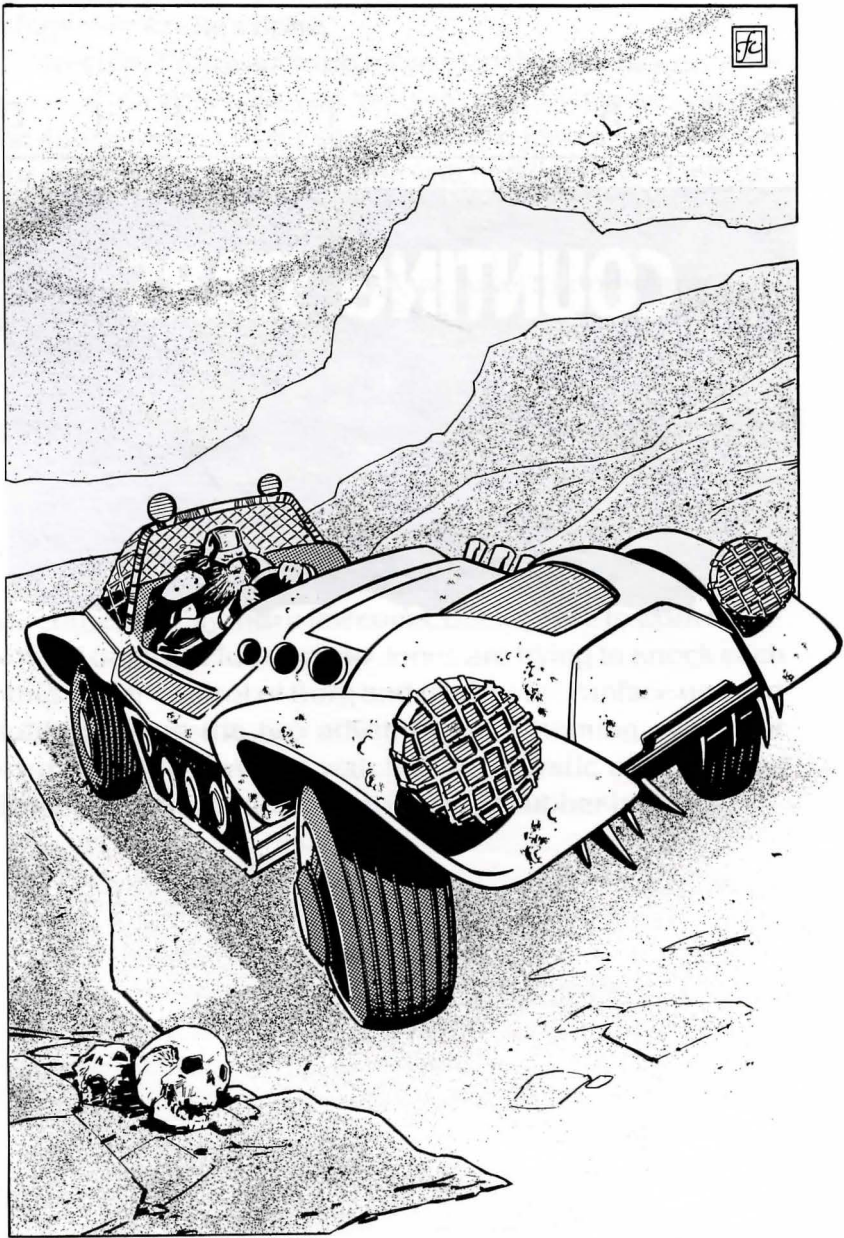
"Don't worry," laughed the blond adventurer. "Some sucker will come our way with a few coins. But we have to work fast— word is out that Mulcahy and Jones are trying to knock each other off for control of Borg and the booty." Panface nodded dubiously and the two adventurers, scheming over their future, drank lava and watched the mystic sage named Beeknavskemich do tricks with green rubber balls.

P A R T T H R E E



COUNTING STARS

JK



The great eyes blink outside the hull. The intelligence probes back into the corridors. Sudden viciousness makes it recoil briefly. What's this? A gang of uniformed mutants, hanging around their armored mobile in a utility corridor station. Apparently the Breakers are being strictly controlled. Other Gaks are patrolling the corridors, looking for trouble.

The curious mind slides along corridors, around corners, through hatches, into dark places. The colony, an industrial support operation for mines down on the golden planet, seems nearly deserted. A few hundred workers are performing maintenance tasks, but the colony appears to be disintegrating.

Probing the administration module, the intelligence watches a tall young Terran stroll along a corridor, read a doorplate and jauntily enter an office. A far-world receptionist of indeterminate gender interrupts filing its nasal flanges to buzz another office, then directs the young Terran through a door.

An older, slightly-built Terran with shifty eyes stands to greet the youth with a nod and the ritual handclasp. Then the two sit down on opposite sides of a desk and begin talking.

The glowing spots outside the hull seem to blink; the intelligence focuses on the office. Ubiquitous Terrans, infesting the galaxy! Such messy little minds on the surface, but capable of such devious complexity. Reading one from the outside is like crossing a room full of Breakers in the dark, but the intelligence grimly reaches out, touches one of the minds and then the other...

Nate Grey had a funny feeling the moment he saw the guy. "Welcome to Nimbus Colony," he said cordially.

"Thank you," said the guy. He didn't seem like a bad guy, really. Nate Grey could have liked him in another situation, on a free planet maybe, or a mission to the swamps of some nacreous moon where they'd be on the same team perhaps, a colonization or something.

Grey tensed his eyes. "Don't mention it." What was the guy's game? What was he after? Look at those duds—gold fake noogahide, thumbs hooked in his asteroid belt, smiling. What's he up to?

"Nice office." They both looked around the office. It was a lousy office, the kind they give you when they don't care whether you quit or not. But not as bad as the kind they give you when they want you to quit. The UMC logo was everywhere. Except for that, Grey didn't mind it.

"Thanks," he said. "Miss yours?"

"Oh, I don't have an office," said the guy, flexing his asteroid belt. "I'm a little too mobile for that."

"Out there counting stars," nodded Grey. Counting stars. That's what they called it when you were young and on the move, out there in deep space, arcing through atmospheres too strange to breathe, maybe landing on some paradise where everything was perfect for life but no life existed, or landing in parasitic slop and barely escaping, rousting from colony to colony, adventure to adventure. And during the voyages you'd sit in the observation bay for years, counting stars. Grey used to do it himself, back in his salad days.

"You got it, Grey," the guy answered. "Out there counting stars."

"See any new ones you could name after yourself?"

The guy smiled, an honest smile. "Riggs? What kind of name is that for a star?"

“Heard worse.” What was he up to? A muckraking columnist from a publication like *Spiral Arm Today* doesn’t just show up on a wreck like the Nimbus Colony for fun. He had to be after a story.

Riggs tingled with a newsman’s hunch. He knew he was onto something. Nimbus was an absolute disaster—paralyzed, almost. There were more security mutants on board than miners. The ore had stopped coming up from the planet quite a while ago, but the United Mining Corporation was still reporting major yields. He knew that from the SpaceWave intercepts that Druella scanned for him. Grey had to be lying to everybody, including the press.

The mines would be close to shut down, Riggs calculated. All that expensive machinery would be just sitting down there on the golden sand, rusting, slowly turning turquoise in the thick Borgian atmosphere. Soon the scavengers would be orbiting like sharks: vast junker ships with green three-armed giants at the controls—Kargons, junkers to the galaxy. The salvage yards of Karg were famous throughout the Slug Nebula. There was hardly a working ship that didn’t have at least one part obtained from the Kargons. They had every kind of ship ever built anywhere, piles of them, a parts farm. Riggs had been there, but not just to see that. Karg was also the site of the Gak Academy. Riggs shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“I guess Riggs is as good a name for a star as Kangor.” Kangor was Karg’s main star. “By the way, who did that painting?”

Grey glanced at the painting. It was a lousy painting. Ostensibly a landscape of Borg—but the artist had obviously never seen Borg, only read about it.

The planet in this painting was covered with silica, decomposed from sandstone. The actual Borgian surface was pyrite and mica, flecks of the stuff in a layer several miles deep.

Miners had to put metaplast tubes through it just to reach the ore-bearing strata, which accounted for most of the expense of UMC's Borgian operation. Walking on that surface was like walking through dry soup, Grey remembered.

The artist depicted deep, rocky canyons, barren except for a few thick vines. In fact, the canyons were volcanic rifts, miles deep, choked with jungle and debris. The debris showed distinct strata, indicating sudden die-backs approximately 3,000 years apart. All the strata that had been studied, Grey knew, showed a marked decrease in higher plant forms after each die-back. Spectrochromatographic test results hinted at periodic cataclysms of unknown origin.

The artist must have read about the carnivorous vines. Sure, there were still vines in places, and Grey had scars to prove it. But they were dying out. Unfortunately for them, they tended to grow down cliffs and ravines, dangling in places where carnous life was scarce. Sometimes a poor Lau would wander by; then there would be flowers in that spot and the other Lau would avoid it. Those were the flowers, reflected Grey, that they used to manufacture their sacred narcotic. They called it Magic. Grey had experienced it, once...

The intelligence cringes; its luminosity writhes away from the colony hull. The elder Terran is thinking thoughts he has no right to think, recalling memories that are forbidden all but the Lau. But in the wide universe, indignation and anger are inconsequential. The great eyes widen. The mind again peers into the small office.

"I think a machine did that painting, to tell the truth," said Nathan Grey.

The other guy laughed, rubbing a ring on his left hand. Grey noticed the inlaid insignia, which could have held a printed circuit, or maybe a chip. What device did it operate? Abruptly, he asked, "When are you leaving us?"

The guy stopped laughing and shrugged. "I haven't made any plans," he said, meeting Grey's eyes. "I take it you've been reading my columns?"

"No, I haven't had time," said Grey blandly. "Have you written about Nimbus Colony already? I thought you roving correspondents filed on SpaceWave twice a day. I haven't noticed any transmissions to *Spiral Arm Today* on our log."

"I've been slipping them in," said the guy a bit too quickly. "Those little columns only take a half-second burst."

But Grey was suspicious now. He glanced at the ring. A shielded transmitter?

"Anyway," the guy continued, "Mr. Gibbons wants me to stay, see what UMC might be up to out here. As a matter of fact, I might want to get down to Borg. Would you mind arranging that?"

Grey almost snorted. "Impossible, of course. As you are aware, Borg is a Class IV planet."

"Why?"

"I'd have to be a Federation agent to know that," said Grey with a soft laugh that sounded like loose rock sliding downhill.

"Or a smuggler," said the guy, and Grey's mind registered a thought that sent the eavesdropping entity reeling...

The gaseous eyes drift outside the hull. The intelligence watches the young Terran stroll jauntily out of the office, but doesn't follow. The Nate Grey Terran interests it more. The cloud hovers outside the colony dome as the awareness watches Grey punch a button on his desk.

P A R T F O U R



BE HERE NOW

"Grgla! Hey—stop filing your face and get in here!"

Nate Grey had to avoid looking at his receptionist when it appeared in the doorway. Why couldn't he have had a Terran female for a secretary? Unfortunately, the UMC was an Equal Entity Employer...

"Have you been saving those SpaceWave tabloids? I want to see current issues of *Spiral Arm Today*."

"Certainly, Mr. Grey," honked Grgla, flouncing out. The floor shook. In a few moments Grey had a stack of the cheesy publications on his desk. He flipped through the top one, started reading and groaned. The latest edition of the beam-published newspaper carried stories in many languages. One of several in Terran was a popular column called *Be Here Now*, by award-winning reporter-at-large J. Delbert Riggs.

Be Here Now

By J. Delbert Riggs

No Silver Lining on Nimbus
(part one)

DATELINE: UMC NIMBUS COLONY,
SLUG NEBULA

As you read these words, a bizarre drama is being played out in this forsaken corner of

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nowhere, on a sleazy industrial satellite and the mysterious desert planet it orbits. The cast of characters includes intergalactic dropouts, smugglers, murderers, at least one Federation agent, and an ancient civilization of mystical beings called the Lau.

Just to make the plot a little thicker, the star player—a powerful Lau shaman known by the name Garbo—may not even exist.

The scenario is convoluted, to say the least. And there's only one reporter who has managed to gain an overview of the whole sordid mess: Yours truly, J. Delbert Riggs. I'm here now.

Still reading? Good. Here's what I have so far: A band of space pirates—"Breakers" in Slug Nebula Standard Received (SNSR) has established a headquarters in deep volcanic rifts on this Class IV desert orb called Borg. For some time now, according to Federation sources, the Breakers on Borg have been using Nimbus Colony as a base for galaxy-wide smuggling operations.

This orbiting junkpile is allegedly owned and operated by the omni-present United Mining Corporation (UMC), which ostensibly uses it as an operational base for mineral recovery on Borg. (The astute reader will recall that UMC recently acquired exclusive mineral rights to Borg following a protracted legal power-play directed by UMC executive Nathan Grey. See my column, *Where the Heck is Borg?* in SAT #449681-B.)

I say ostensibly, because quite frankly it is rather hard to believe anybody owns this colony—or "klink" in SNSR—and harder to imagine it's actually being operated at all. Token work crews do shuttle down and back regularly, but no ore has been shipped out for months. According to the company's own geological projections, the latvium deposit they were working should have been exhausted by now.

So why does Nimbus Colony remain in fixed orbit? More to the point, why is the klink deserted except for a skeleton workforce, an oversize department of fierce mutant security cops—known as "Gaks" in SNSR—and of dropouts, drifters, adventurers and other deep-space detritus—"Breakers" in SNSR—confined in a wrecked bar on the utility level of a deserted residential module?

Why, indeed.

Having been assigned to quarters in that vermin module—and yes, it is quite deserted—I unavoidably made contact with these Breakers in my first few hours here. They are most certainly a motley

and dangerous bunch. But I can assure you that the Breakers are far better company than their adversaries, the Gaks.

At last, I can appreciate the recent rash of "Gak jokes" (How many Gaks does it take to catch a red ball, etc.)—although I now know I wasn't missing much. They are stupid, sadistic scumbags, and I've said as much to their visors. You can't ever see their faces—which is probably just as well.

(Tomorrow: Breakers—the Entities your Mother Warned You About)

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"Damn!" howled Nathan Grey. "That wulla-brain! Why now? Why him? Damn!" Angrily, he grabbed the next issue on the pile and continued reading.

Be Here Now

By J. Delbert Riggs

No Silver Lining on Nimbus
(part two)

DATELINE: UMC NIMBUS COLONY,
SLUG NEBULA

In the last column, I sketched the particulars of a bizarre drama now playing on the UMC colony, Nimbus. I'm here now.

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There is a species of spacefarer known as a Breaker. That's a loose synonym for adventurer, shuttlebum, pirate, outlaw, loser and any other kind of misfit one might care to avoid mentioning—or associating with.

For reasons or reasons unknown, virtually all the Breakers in the Slug Nebula are now on Borg. Most of them have been trapped on Nimbus Colony, but a fair number seem to be making it down to the planet, where they join up with a band of smugglers headquartered in Borg's deep volcanic rifts.

The Breakers on Borg are led by a former Federation agent, professional ballet dancer and convicted murderer named Vulkos Mulcahy. Little is known about Mulcahy except that he's fast, smart and treacherous. His sidekick is a wicked punk who currently goes by the name Don. Mulcahy's mistress is Minnie Makarova, the one-time pride of Sector X's Paris Colony and Mulcahy's ballet instructor until she fell under his spell. Minnie dropped out of sight after helping him extort virtually every cent in the Paris Colony Ballet's operating fund. (See my column, *Minnie Makarova, Bad Girl or Pawn?* in SAT #4449677-B.)

This unsavory trio, and a bunch of their closer friends, are now working out of the Borgian Rifts. They reportedly deal in some especially unsavory contraband: slaves and narcotics.

It seems that some of the Lau—a particularly gentle folk said to possess unique telekinetic powers—have been turning up in chains on other worlds. Pets of the rich? I'm told by my close personal friend Druella Comstock, the glamorous shuttle-set ingenue, that having your own Lau is the height of current top-drawer chic. Immoral? Certainly. Illegal? Of course. In fact, it stinks—but that's the rich for you (close personal friends excepted, Druella, and I mean that).

Mulcahy's contact on Nimbus Colony is a veteran bootlegger whose name is known to schoolkids in every system from here to Andromeda: the legendary, nearly mythical Casey Jones himself, another former Federation agent turned smuggler, killer and thief. But before we start inquiring into the basic nature of Federation agents, let's get to the crux of the matter.

Jones and Mulcahy are duking it out. It seems that the two master criminals—one controlling the source of contraband, the other its distribution—are now going for each other's throats in an all-out war over the proceeds of the nefarious trade.

Enter the mysterious Federation agent. Nobody, not even inside sources who have never before let me down—at any price—will reveal who this agent is, but all concur that he or she is the best they have. The agent is allegedly on Nimbus Colony even as I write this. In fact, it's quite likely that I spoke with the agent in the Breaker bar, but I would have no way of knowing. Keep in mind that Mulcahy and Jones were both Federation agents at one time. Incredibly, Nathan Grey was also a Fed before his early retirement to join UMC. Confused yet?

At any rate, the deal seems to be about to go down here on Nimbus Colony or, more probably, on Borg itself. And yours truly, intrepid correspondent that I am, has every intention of witnessing it.

Meanwhile, mysterious ore freighters continue to stop here regularly. They take on cargo—but it sure isn't ore. So far nobody here cares to recall (for a reporter's benefit, anyway) what the last one looked like or who was aboard.

Grey has agreed to give *SAT* an interview at some point, but never seems to be in his Administration Module office, or anywhere else, when this reporter shows up to talk.

That's okay for now. I have other leads to pursue. Sources in the Breaker bar have told me that Casey Jones works out of a concealed room near the shuttle bay on the lower level of this colony. As soon as I make a final attempt to see Grey, I'm going down to find Jones and interview him on the situation. I trust he'll keep his famous Colt .45 holstered out of respect for the press. That's it. I'm on my way.

(Tomorrow: Casey Jones—the Rat Behind the Legend)

"That dirty... Grgla!" The hideous receptionist slithered into the office with the flange-file in one limp claw. Grey shouted at it on his way out. "I'm away from my desk, in a meeting and with a client until further notice, got it?"

"Sure thing, sir," said Grgla, already making plans.

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ALL ABOUT BORG

"Dimitri" said "Yes" and the chapter of material on Borg again.

"Okay" he said, responded a party which "Leading right up" there was a no. As for Borg.

Teaching the young Terrence was along with him in a book.

explorer Captain Dimitri for the first time.

listed the chapter head to the world of Borg with the name of the Borg. Borg was the name of the Borg.

1 9 8 4

ALL ABOUT BORG

The vast intelligence probes the receptionist's mind, but Grgla has a powerful mental scrambler in place. Turning into the maze of corridors and pod chutes to locate Nathan Grey, the intelligence comes across Riggs in his residential module. Riggs is talking with someone called Druella. The intelligence is mystified— it can't locate another functioning mind in the module. Nonetheless, it tunes in:

"Druella," said Riggs, "I'd like to go over that material on Borg again."

"Okay, Delbert," responded a perky voice. "Coming right up." There was a melodious beep.

Touching the young Terran's mind, the intelligence read along with him in a book called *All About Borg*, by famed explorer Captain Brumus Dart, Ph.D. The table of contents listed the chapter headings typical of a scholarly work. Riggs turned to the one titled, *Garbo: Alter-Orb or Legend?* He began to read:

GARBO

Alter-Orb or Legend?

According to Lau belief, Borg has a shadowy, insubstantial twin that orbits on the same path (see Appendix Q: *Source Mythology, Borg and Garbo*). Our instruments have not been able to detect such an entity, but the Lau believe in it absolutely. They call this alter-orb Garbo, and have invested it with a persona which is manifested collectively by a body of seven Lau shaman. (Note: I was never able to meet a "Garbo" shaman, and wonder whether they, too, may not be a figment of the Lau mythology.)

Moreover, they believe that the mysterious alter-orb is the wellspring of Lau energy, and the source of all life on Borg. They say that a kind of balanced polarity exists between the unique forces emanated by each of Borg's twin suns, the blue and the gold. These forces are held in dynamic stasis by energy from the Garbo alter-orb. (Note: This is my interpretation of the various indistinct, incomplete, and often incomprehensible versions of the Garbo myth obtained from individual Lau. It should be treated as hearsay.)

Perhaps the most familiar facet of the Garbo myth is its apocalyptic emphasis. Like so many other deities, this Garbo creates through destruction. The Lau believe that every several thousand years, the orbital paths of the

ALL ABOUT BORG

heavenly bodies intersect. Although the resulting collision is not physical in nature, due to the insubstantial properties of the alter-orb, it nonetheless precipitates utter chaos and destroys all life on Borg, except for the Lau themselves and certain portions of their habitat deep in the Borgian rifts (see Chapter 4).

Survival is not guaranteed, however. In order for them to live through the catastrophic energy storm, the Lau believe that certain preparations must be made well in advance. These involve assembling a number of sacred objects—the so-called *elements*—which are employed in a ritual recreation of the universe in its proper image. The ritual is said to be performed in a sacred cavern deep in the rifts.

I have never seen the cavern or its alleged contents. But I have observed apparent transmogrifications of Lau individuals from corporeal form into water, fire and other states. (Note: As I was the sole non-Lau witness, and given that my profound astonishment precluded a precise recording of my observations, this may be taken as a subjective field report of empirically observed phenomena, although, I humbly assert, something more than mere anecdote.) These transformations were apparently made possible by drawing energy from certain stones. Could these have been the elements alluded to previously?

At the time of my visit with the Lau, they believed that the grand event, the collision of Borg and the alter-orb, Garbo, was imminent. As one of the more garrulous elders

informed me, "*The Creator wears a mask*" when the cataclysm is nigh. The old Lau was an habitual user of Magic, the psychotropic narcotic unique to Borg (see Appendix B), and may not have been entirely reliable in an objective sense.

"*The Creator wears a mask*" apparently refers to the chief constellation in the Borgian firmament, called the Creator (or, sometimes, Garbo). The image imposed on the stars of the Creator is that of an ancient sage, his white hair and beard blowing in the solar wind, with arms outstretched in offering. In his left hand is a golden star, in his right a blue star, and his forehead is marked by a red dwarf, equidistant from the two, which pulses blood-red, especially in the low sky where the constellation resides for most of the year.

It seems that during the latter part of 4999, the Creator's face had begun to be occluded by a sort of celestial shadow. Indeed, the constellation looked rather dim to me, and the forehead stone seemed to shine bloodier each morning, but I was unable to distinguish any kind of shadow. Of course, I wasn't given to the use of Magic, either.

My garrulous friend also informed me that his people were worried because the various disruptions and pressures brought on by the gold rush had made it difficult for them to maintain control over the elements. Some of them confessed to deep fear that the elements would not be assuaged in time to avert the end of the Lau race and of planet Borg.

ALL ABOUT BORG

When the Federation mandate of 4999 forced me to leave
ing, the Lau were in a state of deep trepidation, almost
shock.



Riggs said, "Thank you, Druella." Then the young Terran sat thoughtfully for a while listening to the broken hum of worn-out machinery in the colony's guts and pondering what he had read. Abruptly, he said, "Druella, would you open that panel for me?"

"Certainly, Delbert," the perky voice replied. Then Riggs stood and put on a heavy plastacot shirt, slipped his pass-card into the pocket, and left the little room in D Module.

P A R T S I X

THE FUGITIVE





Another meteor whacks the hull; a hollow boom shudders through the overgrown hydroponic beds, the domed administration module, the empty residential modules, and slowly fades. In its wake, structural stresses clang and groan in the pipes dripping rusted water and machine fluids.

One maintenance bay attracts the roving intelligence with signs of activity. The mind peers in at a lone, greasy Terran in overalls, working on a broken-down pump. He looks miserable. One of his fingers is bleeding, and there's blood on the rungs leading up to the hydroponic carrot beds on the agricultural level. The Terran stares at a gear assembly, trying to remember how he got it out of the pump. He keeps trying to tap it into a place that's not quite its size. A pale insect scuttles along a puddle of dirty oil and disappears under a locker.

Puzzled, the mind probes deeper into the colony. Where are the ones it seeks? Abruptly, it finds them—in the shuttle bay.

A bug-eyed shuttle had just come in from Borg. Amid guffaws and wisecracks from lounging Gaks, six small golden beings clambered down the ladder. One of them carried a document. A Terran wearing a slouch hat and a gray mask stood with his hands on his hips and regarded the group with amusement.

"I understand you carry some sort of ultimatum, eh? Destruction! Oh, my goodness. And you want to tell the Federation that your people are being abused by this Mulcahy and his Breakers? What—tortured, killed, kidnapped, sold into slavery?" He shook his head. "That's tough. I feel for you." Motioning to a pair of smirking Gaks, he said, "Tell you what. Follow these gents topside, and you can present your grievances to the head megalope, Mr. Nathan Grey."

The Gaks led the Lau to a wide lift. They rode one level up to a transfer bay, then filed through a hatch into a corridor. The intelligence began to worry. They were headed straight for the Gak station.

Without warning the Gaks in the station turned on the Lau, beating them and then tying them up and loading them on the Gakmobile. But one of the six escaped and fled down the corridor. Two steps ahead of the Gaks, the golden being ran into the Breaker bar. A single mutant followed and beat the little creature savagely, then strolled out contentedly, leaving the Lau unconscious on the blood-stained dance floor. All the time, the Breakers looked on respectfully. They knew better than to get in a Gak's way.

Hurt and reeling, the all-seeing mind pulls back. The great eyes blink outside the colony hull as the luminous, bubble-like cloud begins to dissipate.

Nearby, the golden planet, a solar system unto itself, majestically orbits its two suns in seeming tranquility. But the shining eyes, knowing where to look, spot the sinister shadow dogging Borg. The golden planet's curse! It seems closer than before, and has almost totally occluded the benign constellation known as Garbo—the Creator. The malevolent shadow has come on again to engulf and ravage the golden planet. Only a holy Lau, one of the seven Garbo shaman, can perform the ritual ceremony that will save Borg.

Within hours, it will be too late!

ADVENTURER'S DIARY

The universe in an Electronic Novel is constantly changing. Sometimes things happen too fast for the human mind. You may need some time to consider and some space to take notes, make maps, and otherwise plan your strategy. You may use these pages for that purpose.



"Surely you've heard tales of Casey Jones..."





A blinding flash rips through the colony dome...





Beady eyes flicker briefly in the shadows...





*You plummet into the blazing vent, flaming
like a meteorite...*



H O W T O T A L K T O

BREAKERS

You enter the world of BREAKERS by typing on your computer keyboard. You can type whenever text appears on the screen and you are ready to respond. Your decisions and your dialogue with characters will determine how the novel unfolds.

BREAKERS responds to a wide variety of commands. Some common ones are explained below, but you'll discover others as you begin play. In fact, Electronic Novels™ recognize a vocabulary of over 1200 words. Many synonyms of commands are possible. For example, "get" works as well as "take," and "rub" is a synonym for "touch." For ease of typing, some commands can be abbreviated. You can also type commands in either upper or lower case. When you are finished typing a command, press the RETURN key.

You can also take a greater part in the action by talking to characters and evaluating their responses. A note on how to use dialogue follows the discussion of commands.

The universe of BREAKERS is constantly transforming itself. Even if you do nothing, characters will patrol Nimbus Colony, monsters will prowl the Borgian seas, the cosmic weather will continue to change.

Occasionally, the text being displayed will be longer than your screen. Instead of "scrolling" information out of sight faster than you can read it, BREAKERS will pause and instruct you to **Press any key to continue**. When you press a key, the rest of the text will display on your screen.

COMMANDS

AGAIN Repeats your last command, just as though you had typed it again. After this command, you must still press RETURN.

BOOKMARK Retains your progress in the novel by making a copy of your current position on a formatted diskette. Later you can resume the novel from that point with the **RESUME NOVEL** command. See the Special Features section of the computer reference card packaged with your novel diskette for details.

CLOSE (object) Tries to close the object you specify.

DROP (object) Frees you of an object you're tired of carrying.

EXAMINE or **EX** (object) Checks the characteristics of an object—works like **LOOK**.

FOLLOW or **FOL** (person) Allows you to follow a character who is going his own way. But be careful; some characters don't like to be followed.

GET (object) Tries to pick up the object you specify. Produces the same effect as **TAKE**.

GIVE (object) **TO** (person) Giving objects to characters can be risky, innocuous, or crucial. You can also use this form: **GIVE** (person) (object).

HEALTH Checks your physical condition. Are you injured? Just stunned?

HIT (object or person) **WITH** (object) This and commands like it exercise your aggressive tendencies.

INVENTORY or **INV** Tells you which objects you've collected and are currently carrying.

LOOK (direction) Describes what lies in a particular direction from your position.

LOOK AT (object) Describes the features of an object—works like **EXAMINE**.

NORTH and others Allows you to move in the direction you specify. You can also abbreviate directions (**N, S, E, W**, etc.). **GO TO** (object) and **WALK** (direction) produce the same result.

OPEN (object) Tries to open the object you specify.

PAUSE NOVEL Halts the changing world of the novel as long as you wish. You can resume the action by pressing any key. To stop the novel in a faster way, see the Using Special Keys section of the computer reference card packaged with your diskette.

PLAY Lets you indulge yourself with songs and musical instruments.

PRINTER ON Creates a printed record of your progress through **BREAKERS**. See the reference card packaged with your novel diskette for further information.

PRINTER OFF Stops the printing of **BREAKERS** begun with the **PRINTER ON** command. See the computer reference card packaged with your diskette for details.

PROGRESS or **PR** Reports on achievements of importance in your electronic mission.

PUT (object) **IN** (object) Tries to merge objects. The results may be important or pointless.

QUIT NOVEL Ends your session of **BREAKERS** without saving your current position.

READ (object) Obtains written information, such as priceless clues, from the object you specify.

RESTART NOVEL Begins **BREAKERS** again from the start.

RESUME NOVEL Reopens the novel from the point at which you typed the **BOOKMARK** command. For specific instructions, see the reference card packaged with your diskette.

SHOW (object) **TO** (person) Displays an object to a character. You may receive an interesting reaction.

SING Ventilates your vocal chords.

TAKE or **T** (object) Allows you to collect objects which seem interesting or useful. You can take one thing or several at a time.

THROW (object) (direction) Lets you toss precious things accurately at a crucial moment in BREAKERS.

TIME FASTER Speeds up the changing world of the Electronic Novel.TM This command does not change the speed at which your commands are responded to by the novel. It increases the rate at which characters and elements of the novel's physical world enter the scene, pop up, or fly by. Typing this command repeatedly will speed up the universe a little each time. To slow down the changing world, type **TIME SLOWER**.

TIME SLOWER The opposite of **TIME FASTER**. Typing **TIME SLOWER** repeatedly will slow down the changing universe of the Electronic NovelTM by degrees.

BREAKERS will respond to many other commands; feel free to experiment. Some interesting examples might be:

get and examine the red ball

get the wire knife and the lava and drink it

look at everyone except the cirdonian

offer the medallion to nate grey

spray the bolt with the spray can

look at myself

give 15 pieces of gold to casey

When you use numbers in commands or dialogue, use the numeral form; don't spell the numbers out (**25** not **twenty-five**).

DIALOGUE

Electronic Novels™ allow you to talk to characters and creatures, real and imagined. You can ask them questions, order them to do your bidding, or tell them to do things with objects or to other characters. They will respond in their own unique ways. The FORM you use for this kind of dialogue is important. Here are two examples:

betty, "who's mulcahy?"

druella, "thanks for the information"

Notice that it is not necessary to capitalize or to use periods at the ends of sentences. When you are finished typing a line of dialogue, be sure to press RETURN.

To relieve you of some typing, dialogue also has a shorter form. You may omit the comma following the name of the character you're addressing. The second quotation mark may be omitted also. Example:

Instead of

bobo, "give me the vbx"

you may type

bobo "give me the vbx

Some other examples of BREAKERS dialogue might be:

panface "where's delbert riggs?

betty "please give me a drink

beek "what does it all mean?

cirdonian "you're a punk

jones "what is west from here?

corpse "you don't look so hot

TIME AND SPACE

Many of the characters in BREAKERS move around of their own volition. When you talk to a character in your area, he will answer you in his own special way. If he happens to move to the next room, he won't brush you off; he will still answer. However, if the character moves far away from your position, he'll no longer be able to hear you. Examples:

(betty in your area)

betty "who are the gaks?"

**“Not so loud—you’re talking about the toughest cops in the galaxy;”
Betty cautions.**

(betty in the next room)

betty “who are you?”

“Don’t try to get personal with me;” the bartender snaps.

(betty far away)

betty “let me take you away from all this

Your words don’t reach that far.

Engaging characters in conversation allows you to enter the world of BREAKERS completely. But remember, when you talk to an Electronic Novel,TM anything can happen.

PERIOD

By typing several periods (...) and pressing RETURN, you can watch the universe unfold over several time intervals. This is an advanced strategic tactic you may find useful.

RETURN KEY

Press RETURN whenever you are finished typing a command. If you press RETURN without typing any command, the world of the novel will still continue to change all around you. When you press only RETURN, time will pass and the universe will turn, together with whatever else may be happening at the time: characters entering the vicinity, conversations beginning, etc. As in life, the universe of the Electronic NovelTM is constantly unfolding.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ROD

and Smith... into the
past... the great
... the way to
... with the
... the best of...
... the people...

JOT FORRA

... the...
... the...
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ST LORRYVA

... the...
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ROD SMITH

Rod Smith belongs to a family which is descending into the past rather than "advancing" into the future. His great-grandfather was a member of the original landing party in the Borgian Gold Rush of 4949. Part Cirdonian, but with the natural intuition of the Lau, Rod spends his spare time meditating on the sayings of the mystic sage Beekanavskemich.

JOE VIERRA

Joe is the Synapse programmer of WARRIORS OF ZYPAR, and is responsible for the Commodore versions of all Electronic Novels. During the publication party for BREAKERS, Joe inadvertently digitized and downloaded himself by modem onto a bulletin board in D Module.

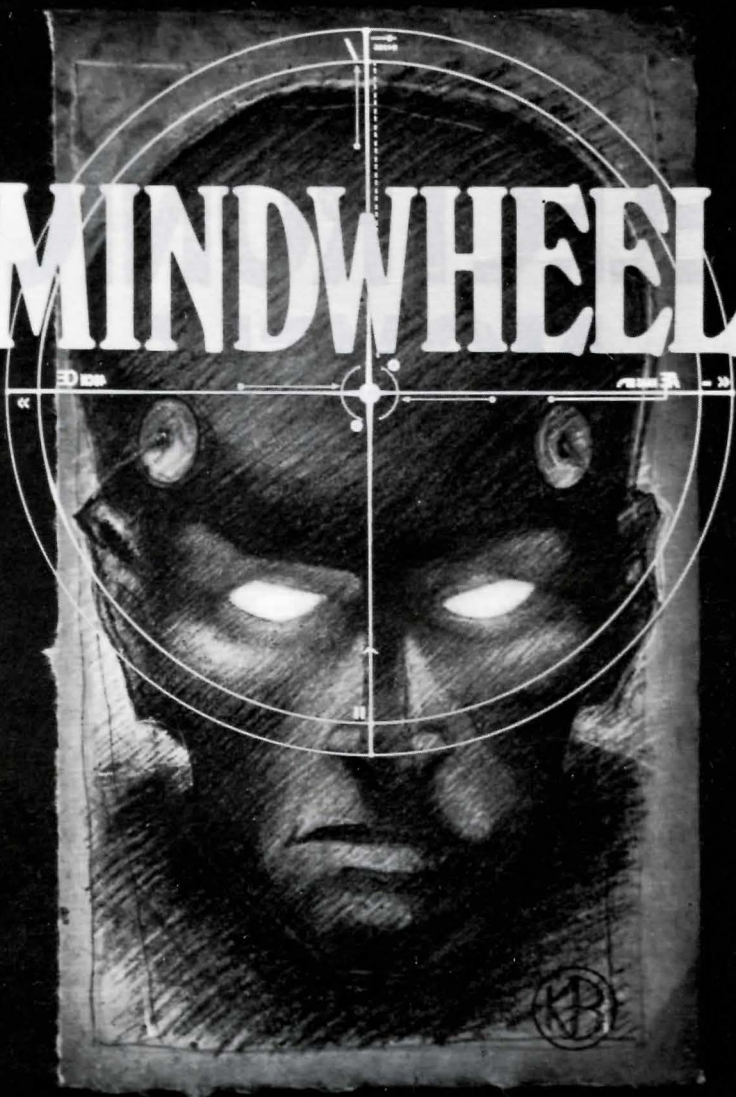
WILLIAM MATAGA

Known to Electronic Novel fans as "The Kroz," William is writing a new BTZ language parser to support character dialogue in Lapp and Urdu.

A N E W L I B R A R Y

**ELECTRONIC
NOVELS**

MINDWHEEL



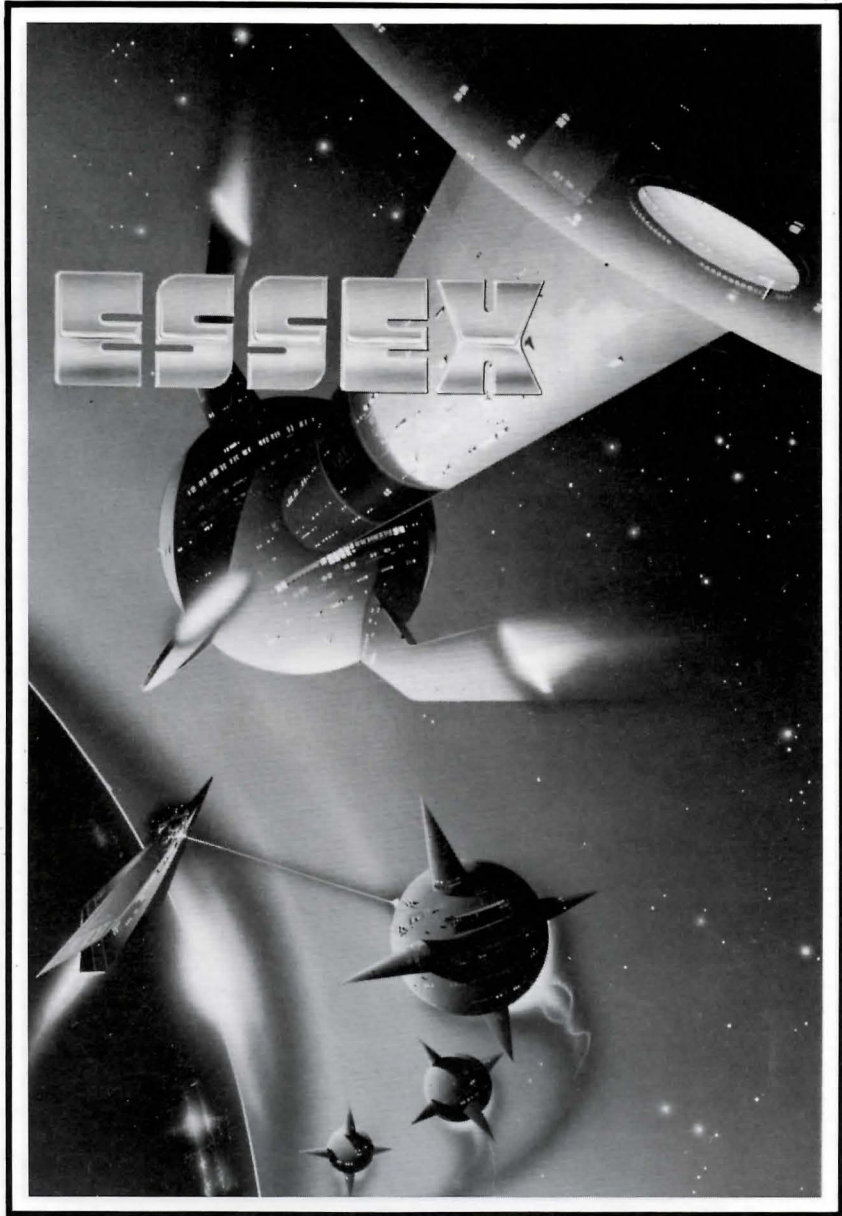


MINDWHEEL

Time-travel into kaleidoscopic minds of four deceased geniuses. Encounter the Cave Master, inspired father of the primary visions. Retrieve the Wheel of Wisdom, civilization's one key to salvation.

*Excerpt from Mindwheel by Robert Pinsky, author
Steve Hales and William Mataga, programmers*

You're on an immense stage. In front of you, a crowd roars like thunder. Someone has thrown a rose and a Baby Ruth candy bar on stage. High overhead, a huge video screen displays, over and over, the film of Bobby Clemon's assassination...While the crowd screams for more, one of the singers beckons for you to come offstage by the door northward behind you...



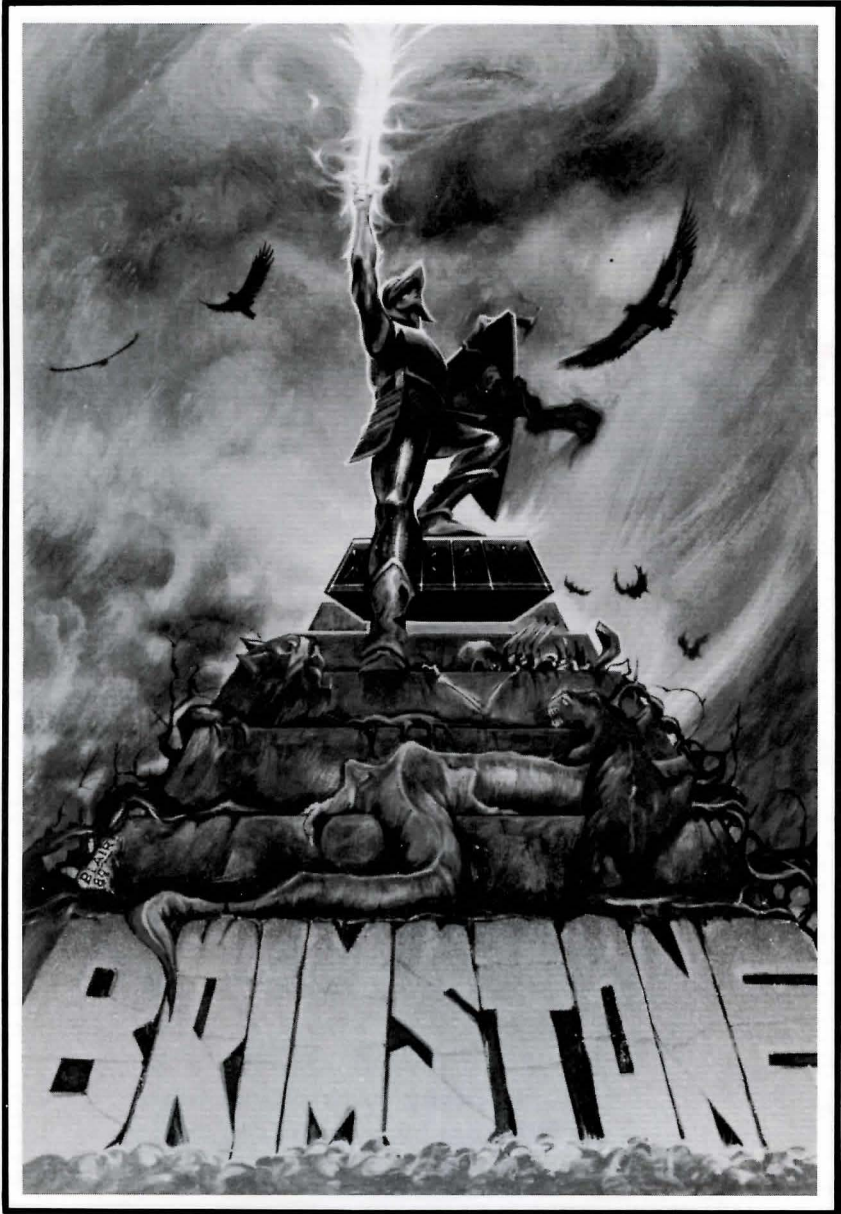
ESSEX

Intergalactic search and rescue aboard the colossal Starship Essex. Lead a mission to save Professor Klein, a million-to-one-shot. Combat insidious Vollchons in deep space. At stake – the survival of the cosmos!

*Excerpt from Essex by Bill Darrah, author
Bill Darrah and William Mataga, programmers*

The man calls to you as best he can and croaks, "Listen, a Vollchon attacked me. These papers must get to Captain Dee before it's too late. The situation is desperate. They'll kill Professor Klein, or anybody who gets in the way..."

As you take the papers, you notice that they are closed with the seal of Commodore Norton and addressed to Captain Dee of the Essex, for his eyes only...



BRIMSTONE

Plunge into the underworld of Ulro with Sir Gawain, Knight of the Round Table. Pursue Under-demon Fum through the labyrinth of white apes, the treacherous Slough of Despond, and the Maze of the Furies. Confront The Green Knight, awesome figure of Destiny.

*Excerpt from Brimstone by James Paul, author
David Bunch, William Mataga, and Bill Darrah, programmers*

Gawain set his foot on the stair to descend, and felt it disappear beneath him...A frenzy of black-winged creatures caught the knight as he fell and thrust him through a doorway...Behind the door stood a grotesque creature, part monkey, part bat, part demon...fire in his eyes like a cat's, his shoulders brawny and gray with soot...

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