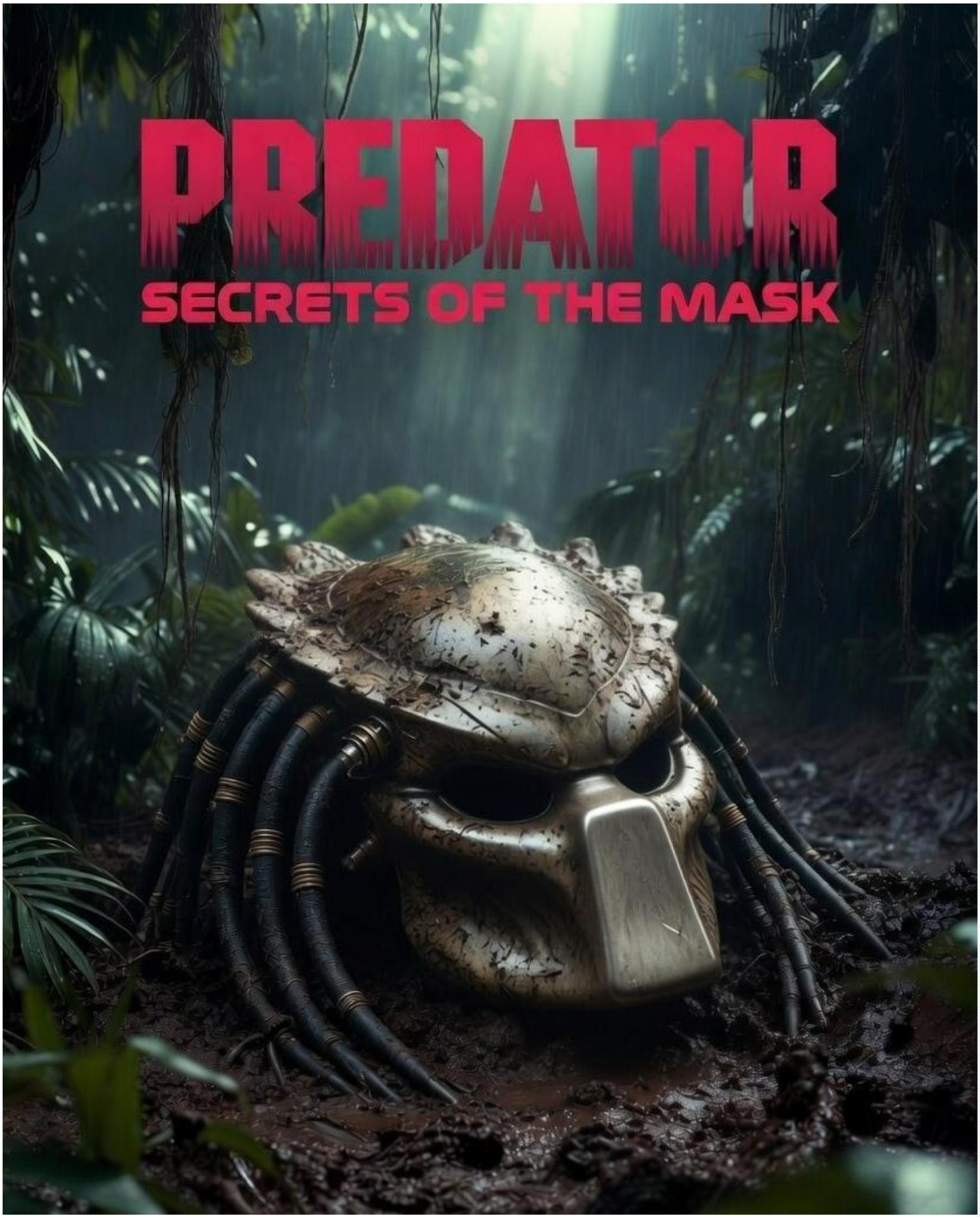
PREDATOR
SECRETS OF THE MASK

Foreword

Dear readers,

Welcome to the Yautja franchise, better known by the film titlePredatorThe film with Arnold Schwarzenegger and the many other co-stars completely captivated me in 1987. Actually, at the age of 15, I shouldn't have been allowed to see it, as it was rated 16. In 1988, the film was banned and remained so until 2010 – now it's rated 16 again. Times change.

I was fortunate enough to have a "cool" uncle who first helped meAlien(1979) and thenPredator made possible in the cinema. Thank you for that – it fundamentally shaped my imagination and fascination with science fiction!

A few years later, I got the book based on the film and was surprised: there was no Predator in the book as we knew him. No, he was a kind of entity from a galaxy for whom earthly physical limitations didn't exist. He could, for example, completely vanish into thin air, transform into birds, and behaved in a way completely different from what one would expect from a hunting species. I did some more research—the internet didn't exist back then—and discovered that the Predator had previously been called "Hunter" and that the book was based on the original screenplay. The switch to the "Hollywood Predator" served to build suspense and make the plot easier to understand; but both concepts have their appeal.

In this book, I based it on the original Predator plot, as it's far more well-known.
Nevertheless, I wrote the book for hardcore fans, with my own entirely different intentions.
I've always wondered:

Why do the Yautja ultimately lose against humanity in almost all films?

This was due to the film studios – “happy endings” simply went down better with test audiences, and the box office results (Box OfficeThat was the decisive factor. Then there were the fans who kept the lore (the Yautja universe) alive for years. There were comics, video games, and much more, but the Yautja rarely won (apart from the games where you controlled them yourself).

I've changed that!

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Briefing

As the lead engineer and founder of Rhine-Rocket-Industries (RRI), a German supplier to the German Armed Forces and the US Army, responsible for new weapons development, I wasn't entirely comfortable with this specially arranged and completely unpredictable briefing. What was I supposed to expect? Why was I so "unconventionally" dragged from my office in Essen and flown, under the strictest secrecy, to an underground US Army bunker complex in Ramstein?

Well, after all my project involvement and developments in the international defense business – or rather, the “peacekeeping business” – be it weapons of mass destruction, biological or chemical weapons, night vision devices, or simply small arms or missiles, I am a welcome guest at secret meetings for many government representatives or military personnel. But this approach was downright absurd, even to me.

Including myself, there were eight of us in this small, well-equipped room, nestled about 150 meters below the earth's surface in an old nuclear bunker. It was equipped with typical presentation equipment like monitors, screens, and projectors. The large oval table where we all sat had that very particular Cold War charm, a time when decisions about people's fates were made, just like in historical films. Only the leather-upholstered, ergonomic chairs seemed more modern, as I subconsciously noticed. Be that as it may, the atmosphere in the room still felt surreal and somehow out of time.

Before we could even begin to talk amongst ourselves or politely introduce ourselves, a high-ranking US Army general suddenly entered the room, accompanied by a small, wiry-looking adjutant. The room immediately fell silent, any brief conversations that had begun were abruptly ended, and everyone's attention turned to the newcomers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my name is General Peter N. Nakasone. I am the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Cyber Command Unit (UCC), and I have an important message for you regarding national security. Before I begin: You are all under the strictest level of secrecy. Should any details of this briefing be leaked to the public, you know what will happen to you!"

I wasn't particularly surprised by the tone of this highly decorated man, since almost all of them have been indoctrinated and hardened by the military spirit; but I had never before experienced such an obvious threat regarding the consequences. The others in the room seemed to feel the same way, if I interpreted their facial expressions correctly. The adjutant, on the other hand, began his work and connected a laptop to the projector—something he apparently hadn't done very often. A sense of urgency spread, as the general would hardly tolerate his failure.

"You will all be wondering why you are here and what the purpose of this meeting is. Well, my government has scheduled this briefing for reasons of national security and a potential threat scenario; in short, it's about the survival of humanity. Some of those present have already been briefed on various aspects of an extraterrestrial threat from alien invaders, others have not."

And before any incredulous questions arise: Please wait for now, because after the facts are presented, many answers will automatically emerge and some of your questions will answer themselves."

Observing the group, perhaps only three men seemed barely surprised; everyone else, myself included, was positively perplexed and shocked by the announcement. Alien invaders from outer space? A threat? This had to be an early April Fool's joke—but not all nations were familiar with this old German custom, and there were certainly at least five different nationalities represented in the room. In any case, we were all extremely triggered; that was clearly evident from the rest of our facial expressions.

After the adjutant had successfully completed his assigned task and booted up the laptop and projector, the general, looking somewhat sweaty, stepped aside. He assumed a lecturing, upright posture and began a typical PowerPoint presentation, as was quite common in such situations.

First, the message 'Project: Blue Book 2022' appeared – oh, what a surprise – followed by further typical military warnings about possible violations of the secrecy modalities.

Well, the general was apparently already familiar with such standardized overlays, because he simply flipped through them quickly with a small remote control in his hand – but not before casting a serious glance around the room. We had, of course, understood this subtle message, since everyone in the room had probably held a leadership position with a confidentiality clause at some point.

A photograph of a jungle appeared on the screen – a green hell, though somewhat bleaker than one would expect from a conventional jungle, or so it seemed to me. The general began his presentation:

"What you see here is a humid, tropical Central American jungle in Val Verde, more precisely a section near the border, north of Nenton, from 1987. A highly specialized team, led by Major Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer, was sent by the CIA—without being informed of the true purpose of the mission—to search for a recorded radar anomaly in this region near the Mexican border. The major was ordered to search for a missing American senator, but this was in fact an elaborate disinformation campaign. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the CIA prepares its operations very meticulously—then as now."

The general scrolled electronically; an enlarged section of a kind of silvery mask appeared, covered with some earth or mud.

"What you see here is a 'find' from the area shown above, which was found by our agitation and propaganda team just three weeks after the incident – after the major had been extensively interrogated and psychiatrically examined."

"For further information: Major Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer lost his entire task force, which he led, in a battle against a highly technological enemy – all experienced and battle-hardened men. This enemy presence killed two entire combat teams in succession; because in addition to the major and his own subordinate unit, the team 'Captain J. Hopper' was previously eliminated by the same enemy."

The creature – you guessed it, our alien – apparently killed our well-trained Marines in a slow and deliberate manner, using a variety of weapons systems and acting alone in the most gruesome way. Only the Major, after discovering the enemy's weaknesses, was ultimately able to defeat it in a duel.

I can see it in your eyes: you want to know more, just like I did on the first day I heard about the incidents. You're asking yourselves: 'How on earth did he survive?', 'What does this alien look like and what did he want on our planet?' Well, what I'm about to show you is a high-resolution image of the enemy, which we were able to extract from the previously shown object – the alien's optronic-neural biomask – using various specular reflections.

A nearly fearful and astonished murmur swept through the conference room: A large, reptilian, bipedal creature with mandibles and a kind of dreadlocks appeared on the screen. The being was reflected in a body of water – a paralyzing sight.

After a short pause and a sip of water from a glass provided by the adjutant, the general continued speaking:

"As you've probably already guessed: This mask has been in the possession of the US Army for many decades and has been continuously examined under controlled laboratory conditions by the best scientists in their fields. Unfortunately—and I want to emphasize this—our technological advances have only been able to extract sound information from this piece of extraterrestrial technology via reverse engineering for a good two years now. Without going into too many technological details: Only with the use of quantum computers and new video codecs have we been able to somewhat verify the extent and complexity of this mask's information, which unfortunately has tended to set us back years in terms of knowledge."

"What we also already know from several hostile encounters with these creatures – because this alien race also triggered another incident in LA – are the following facts, which are considered certain:

1. These aliens call themselves 'Yautja'; they presumably live in clan structures and are classified as a so-called 'hunter race'.
2. Their technology is far superior to ours; our leading scientists assume a time advantage of at least 5,000 years. I don't need to explain what that means.
3. They visited our planet long ago; an undeniable, highly detailed cave painting in France apparently testifies to this. Fortunately, it was kept secret; the cave explorers were liquidated or ridiculed by the government of the time.

Are there any questions so far?

Those present were not prepared for this question so quickly. After an extremely brief pause for thought, the question came from the other side of the table – an older gentleman I knew, the CEO of a competing Italian arms company – asking what weaknesses had been found in the Yautja at that time.

The general nodded briefly and replied with the following words:

"Well, Major Schaefer identified the following fundamental weaknesses from his encounter with the entity and its violent actions:

The creatures perceive their environment through infrared heat radiation, which the Major was able to prevent by means of a cooling layer of mud on his body.

These creatures have the ability to deflect light waves around their bodies in such a way that they blend seamlessly into their natural surroundings, providing perfect camouflage. However, moisture and direct contact with water disrupt these systems, a fact the Major ultimately failed to exploit to his advantage.

The major later reported, after surviving the life-or-death struggle, that the creatures were able to locate technical, metallic, or artificial objects such as wire traps, Claymore anti-personnel mines, or similar war materiel in virtually any territory, which proved fatal for his outmatched combat unit. However, inconspicuous wooden traps, stick barriers, or other natural ambushes were more difficult to detect, which ultimately allowed the major to weaken and later overpower the creature.

“What became of this – this thing?” asked an excited woman’s voice from the darkness of the room.

“Well,” said the general, “Major Schaefer severely injured the creature, rendering it unable to fight. However, it was still able to activate a self-destruct mechanism, which triggered a targeted thermonuclear chain reaction, leveling an area in the jungle the size of four city blocks. Schaefer recognized the creature’s countdown in time and, taking advantage of the local conditions, fled to a supposedly safe haven – a deep depression in the ground.”

The explosion was observed from a distance by a Huey helicopter carrying an extraction team tasked with retrieving the entire combat squad. Only two people survived the alien attack: the Major himself and a captured rebel who, on the Major's orders, was to escape before him. The Major assumed—probably correctly and intuitively—that such a hunter wouldn't intercept unarmed and therefore seemingly inferior prey if more dangerous prey was nearby. In this case, himself, if you understand.

Another guest raised his voice and asked: "Just out of curiosity: What happened in Los Angeles and where did that creature go? Was it captured? Because I haven't heard anything about a thermonuclear explosion in Los Angeles!"

The general was about to reply when the adjutant took the floor and said the following:

"The incident in Los Angeles is classified at a higher level. Indeed, even your current classification does not authorize you to disclose any further information. However, since we are aware that we have already presented you with confidential information, we will only say this much:"

In Los Angeles, the police chief involved at the time, now a senator, is vehemently resisting the investigation into this case because one of his former employees from the police precinct was implicated. In short: The main protagonist was protected – either for the sake of the police's reputation or from himself. We don't know.

"However, just to answer your question, we were able to detect clear radar signatures of a launching object at the aforementioned time and location, which was precisely aimed at the target."

left our Earth's orbit. NASA was able to calculate a course to a distant solar system; since then, this region of space has been more closely observed.

The general pressed the remote control again, and an even more detailed image of the alien mask appeared.

"Now we come to the reason for all of your presence here; for you are all absolute experts in your respective fields – and what we need is a defense strategy against this new kind of threat."

“What exactly do you mean?” came a voice I recognized. It belonged to Dr. Marcel Ogius, an electronic warfare specialist working for the German Federal Ministry of Defense.

After a brief press of a button on the remote control, another image of this metallic-looking mask appeared on the wall – a still image of the mask on a laboratory table.

"This mask, also called a bio-helmet, pictured here, is presumably a typical piece of equipment used by our enemy. As far as we know, none of these hunters go on a hunting mission without such a mask. Only in the last four years or so have we been technically able to 'understand' the mask and unlock some of its secrets, which until now has been the case in a..."
The quantum technology algorithm failed. A direct connection to one of our computers and to a modern artificial intelligence for data analysis was only effectively achieved about three months ago, and what we learned left us no choice but to contact and inform you all here.”

Now it's getting exciting – in case it wasn't exciting enough so far, I thought to myself.

“Our specially trained artificial intelligence was able to hack the memory chips and their associated video streams and translate them into a binary computer language we know – with absolutely no measured error rate at the quantum level. What we saw was both terrifying and fascinating; and perhaps the technological advantages of the Yautja could elevate us to a new level of human evolution – a level that has never existed before in the entire history of humankind.”

"This mask further unlocked stored information about the last 20 or so hunting expeditions of its former wearer, information that far exceeded Major Schaefer's worst fears. The Major only experienced a small portion of this alien species' arsenal firsthand, and even those weapons were terrifyingly deadly. The reconstructed footage has given us even deeper insights into their weaponry, which, to be honest, leaves us all feeling quite unprepared. We want and need to change that – that's why you're here!"

"If we fail to adapt and defend ourselves as quickly as possible, this planet will not have much of a future. We have reason to expect global destruction in the near future; because one thing seems clear: the dominant power in the universe probably doesn't want to allow any competition. I, for one, would act the same way if I were one of them. The Central American Yautja killed himself and tried to take many more victims with him after seeing no other way out. This only reinforces our grim prediction."

"What you are about to see are video recordings of the alien from a first-person perspective. Presumably, all hunting expeditions are automatically recorded upon arrival at their target area; we can only speculate as to why. Initial social analyses suggest that the verifiability of a hunting success is likely the highest form of prestige for this species' society. As I said: Unfortunately, we are still somewhat in the dark here and have hardly any verifiable information."

"Oh yes, one more small side note before I continue: As you have probably already correctly guessed, we are not just two intelligent or less intelligent species out there in space. All of the Yautja's other 'prey' also exhibit varying levels of intelligence – some at a rather animalistic level, others at a much higher level than our own intellect. So please focus your attention on the weapon technology used, its effects, and the specific hunting strategies employed, in order to draw your own conclusions – because we need your help with that."

"One more thing – and perhaps this should also be mentioned when explaining the propulsion technology of their spaceships: They can apparently reach faster-than-light speeds and so far raise more questions than they answer. These guys are incredibly fast, if you know what I mean."

The general pressed the "Play" button on the first video file, and the actual show began:

"After a brief period of static, we saw the opening of a kind of metallic door, presumably belonging to a single-seat landing craft. A brilliantly bright day on an alien planet with three suns and two moons extended this opening sequence. Immediately after the Yautja warrior left his spacecraft, he pressed several buttons on an electronic board attached to his left forearm, activating a cloaking device described by Major Schaefer. Instantly, his forearms, along with all the installed alien technology, became transparent—and, remarkably, this process was accompanied by sound; in other words, the video had audio."

Wow, those alien sounds were almost like synthesizers from the eighties, which I happened to be a big fan of. After the short technical sound sequences had died down, a completely different kind of panorama opened up, accompanied by a sweeping view of the alien planet's landscape. The alien had apparently landed in a mountain clearing; he initially looked up at the sky and then turned around. As soon as he had completed the turn and begun to move, it became clear that the entire planet was covered in a vast area of jungle flora, which therefore must also have something like a nitrogen atmosphere.

"With breathtaking acceleration, displaying an extraordinary level of endurance by human standards, the hunter took off, heading straight for the jungle. Reaching the tree line, the Yautja harnessed its considerable physical strength, leaping cat-like into the treetops, gaining a commanding view of the vast area. Suddenly and without any apparent reason, the recorded movement ceased, and the warrior lay in wait for prey high atop a branch. A quick pan of the camera to the arm with the computer interface and a swift touch of the reptilian fingers—and the recording camera switched to the alien's infrared mode, instantly revealing several bizarre heat sources on the jungle floor."

At first it was difficult to discern what the prey would look like, but several large, tube-like creatures with many elongated legs on the sides were identified – similar to an earthly centipede, only with a body length of an estimated two meters.

The hunter activated more buttons on his arm console, and a small, glowing red drone launched from his shoulder, as the perspective suggested. Without any visible remote control, presumably via thought control, the drone maneuvered toward the fast-moving targets on the ground. The drone itself also seemed to possess its own artificial intelligence, as it hovered completely silently above the group of targeted prey without directly attacking or otherwise drawing attention to itself. Within fractions of a second, the video recording changed perspective again; we now saw what the drone had spotted flickering across the entire screen in full view.

The infrared filter was gone, and clear visual details of the prey became visible. Several creatures with worm-like bodies and mouths full of fangs writhed on the ground, devouring a terrifying carcass like scavengers. The animal's carcass twitched, and one might have assumed it was still alive; but by human standards, that was impossible. Whatever must have happened—the battlefield down there was rife with brutality and severed limbs, that much was clear.

After a good two minutes, the drone switched to combat mode on command; its upper surface changed from a metallic appearance to a laser-red circle, which emitted a shrill noise. The worm-like creatures immediately went into a state of alertness and reared up, presumably without having located the source of the sound. It was precisely the predatory behavior the hunter seemed to have been waiting for, because with another short command to the drone, it launched several small, glowing blue energy spheres at the aggressive creatures, which then literally burst into flames. Each shot hit its target with deadly precision, and smoke rose into the air—but this was irrelevant to the Yautja's technology, because the hunter apparently always saw what he wanted to see. And so did we in this darkened conference room, at least according to this recording.

The largest of the creatures lurking on the ground was surprisingly unattacked. It shrieked in fury and smashed bushes and tree stumps with its body as if they were made of fragile porcelain. "Bloodlust" is probably the best word to describe the behavior in this scene – at least by our own standards.

A chilling, deep war cry roared from above as the hunter leaped in a single bound directly in front of the creature's tooth-filled maw, striking a formidable fighting stance. After what seemed like an eternity—though in reality, probably only a few seconds later—the worm-like creature launched its first attack with incredible speed. The muscular maw, bristling with terrifying fangs, charged at the hunter, who, anticipating the attack, deftly dodged to the side. In that brief moment, two large blades extended from a device on the hunter's arm, instantly and with incredible force slicing the worm in two with a single twist of his body, its black blood gushing forth. A surreal scene on an alien planet, so full of brutal violence.

A shudder and a cry of horror followed the attack, for the fight was far from over. Despite its massive wounds, the more dangerous half of the creature executed a swift turn and snapped at the hunter, narrowly missing him. Taking advantage of this situation, the Yautja seized the moment and held the split worm, now only a meter long, firmly in place with one arm—a feat that must have required tremendous strength. Twisting fangs, just centimeters from the Yautja's legs, viciously attempted to burrow into the hunter's body, but the Yautja prevented this. On the contrary:

Within another brief moment, the hunter plunged his blade from the creature's right arm into its lower abdomen, where something resembling its heart must have been located. In a final, desperate gasp, the death dance of this dangerous creature was over, and silence fell, accompanied by an almost gleeful growl from the Yautja. He had achieved his goal and seemed quite satisfied with his success.

The general stopped the video recording and spoke again:

"As you can see, our new enemies move with remarkable agility and possess a physical constitution that is virtually incomparable to our best elite athletes. We estimate the average size of these creatures to be 2.20 meters; however, figures extracted from a video are always just estimates and should be treated with caution—if you understand. Fortunately, the Major was able to confirm this assessment, but we suspect there could be significantly larger creatures of this race."

He continued playing:

After a brief respite, a fine red laser beam emerged from one of the hunter's tools and focused on the worm-like head of the creature he had just killed—only to skin it as if with an extremely sharp scalpel. This process took only a few minutes in the recording, but what we witnessed was truly terrifying and definitely not for the faint of heart. Hissing, steaming flesh fell from the bones; a highly intricate surgical procedure exposed and simultaneously cleaned the creature's tubular maw, allowing the hunter to calmly examine his trophy. He somehow reattached the mangled maw to its body; however, this was only vaguely discernible due to the camera angle.

Afterward, the successful hunter made his way back to his spaceship at a slightly slower pace. Once there, he pressed a few more buttons on his arm, and the camera perspective switched directly back to the drone's view, which we all saw again. After a brief command—the drone was still hovering above the point of origin of the massacre—it sped back through the jungle to its operator at high speed. All obstacles encountered, such as small tree trunks, bushes, or even small protruding rocks, were smoothly sliced through on the return flight; the drone had activated a kind of blue laser outline that could apparently cut through virtually any material we know.

The recorded perspective resembled a rollercoaster ride, but one wouldn't necessarily want to enjoy it. The vast distance between drone and hunter was bridged in just a few seconds. Shortly before arrival, the drone slowed down, performing an artful turn to land gently on the yautja's clothing, where it locked into place with a metallic click. The hunters clearly take great care of their equipment, as such a useful, pocket-sized weapon seemed to massively facilitate the fusion of hunter and technology. Furthermore, no technology could be left behind, as that could have unforeseen consequences.

Wow, this race was really far ahead of us technologically; the general hadn't exaggerated, even though one might have initially assumed otherwise.

The video stream ended when the general boarded the small landing vehicle or spaceship, and he stopped the presentation again.

"Ladies and gentlemen, here are some further confirmed conclusions from our own scientists about this hunter-gatherer people:

- The Yautja breed possesses outstanding physical condition and mental strength.
- These hunters act in a highly tactical manner and use the terrain rationally to their advantage.
- The Yautja's equipment can compensate for various gravitational parameters; this too has already been calculated and evaluated using the available material.
- The optronic-neural biomask is a so-called multiple device with several functional parameters, the details of which we don't yet fully understand. What is certain is that it appears to offer a kind of thought interface, can withstand hard blows, and presumably also optimally adjusts atmospheric conditions for its wearer. Furthermore, it houses highly precise target recognition and tracking modules that would make a hunt for human intelligence seem unfair. 'Overpowered' is the key word here.

"Furthermore, this mask communicates directly with the computer interface on the hunter's arm in a bidirectional manner, suggesting further complex applications. Audiovisual modules with their own integrated AI constantly provide the wearer with additional and updated useful information, which can be projected or displayed on integrated screens in front of the eyes. This mask also offers various zoom modes that are beyond our imagination. Even our brightest minds could only estimate these specific parameters – that's how sophisticated this integrated camera system is. A small example: The wearer of the mask can zoom down to the cellular level in live mode without having to use any additional devices. Imagine a very small, portable CT scanner combined with an X-ray machine – something like that is something we can only dream of."

"The Yautja appear to possess access to extremely advanced energy storage systems that can be adapted to any given mission without any time delay. Besides maintaining stealth and information capabilities, the stored energy can be transferred to a wide variety of weapons and their specific energy options—something humanity can only dream of so far. The method of energy generation, the origin or transmission of enormous electrical currents, and their conversion into laser light with virtually limitless possibilities are unknown to us. We suspect that the resource for this technology of managing electricity is an element unknown in our periodic table, which has been modified accordingly, much like we do with uranium. However, compared to this race, we are probably technological Neanderthals who have only just learned how to invent the wheel."

The general added further words to the aforementioned text overlays in the presentation:

"You may not have been able to see it in this video stream, but the Yautja possess a kind of signature or symbolic language that appears to be its own form of communication. Besides the typical clicks and growls, which our leading linguists believe represent a highly developed spoken language, the extraterrestrial symbols have been partially displayed and recorded in the following streams. Our own AI was able to interpret and partially decipher this symbolism; therefore, we have overlaid a translated video on the recordings that follow. You thus have a unique opportunity to utilize the information in our language – take advantage of it!"

The remote control's "Play Button" was used again and a video title appeared:

Unexpected ending! - Stream Beta 2.7



"The door of a spaceship opened almost silently, and a bluish laser field was projected onto the floor of another alien planet, presumably serving as an exit marker. This time it seemed to be a larger spaceship, as the exit could easily have accommodated three Yautjas simultaneously. With the automated procedure complete, our fighter descended a small set of stairs alone, revealing, through the camera's perspective of the mask, another Earth-like planet—wherever it might be in the infinite universe. A small, well-placed text overlay with alien symbols and an accompanying translation briefly lit up, warning of swamp gas bubbles, which seemed quite appropriate after our initial glimpse of the planet."

We saw a bleak, gloomy mangrove forest, diffused in the evening light, the kind one might find in some coastal regions on Earth. Yellowish-milky gas bubbles rose from small puddles in the ground and burst on the surface – a rather unreal place for life. But we're no longer talking about human understanding; for that has been profoundly shaken by such a flood of information from the supposed realm of science fiction.

Our Yautja hunter activated its camouflage mode and leaped onto the slippery, wet, glistening tree trunks in front of it, surprisingly finding a good foothold and continuing its way into the higher vegetation. Brief contact between the camouflage and the wet leaves produced small bluish sparks – an important clue to possible future detection strategies, I subconsciously thought.

The deeper the hunter penetrated his hunting grounds—and this time he had a greater distance to cover to reach his unknown target—the darker and more eerie the flora and the entire alien scenery became. As the level of darkness and the density of the ground fog increased significantly, the hunter switched his vision mode to a combination of infrared and presumably ultraviolet, though this wasn't clearly discernible to me.

The outlines of the surrounding vegetation and the occasional small heat signature of unknown insects immediately became visible. All obstacles the planet had to offer fell mercilessly to the hunter's technique: at the push of a button, he had simply adapted superbly and turned darkness into day.

With swift swings on vines, incredible agility, and guided by a seemingly innate instinct, he continued toward a large, mud-covered depression in the ground, where there were no heat signatures and thus no indication of prey. The swampy hole, the size of a small lake, bubbled beneath him, and seemingly toxic gases rose to the surface, drifting silently across it like wisps of mist.

From his elevated position of approximately 20 meters, with a commanding view, the hunter suddenly froze. Crouching in a tree, he scanned his surroundings, searching for his prey, which was nowhere to be seen. Out of nowhere, a short, shrill alarm sounded from the arm's computer – a scene that startled everyone in the room, as no one had expected it.

With a tap of his finger on his terminal, and after another whirring warning tone, he launched a drone, which this time shot silently and vertically into the sky at high speed. The camera perspective changed, and we were once again able to follow the images transmitted by the drone to its operator. The drone continued to ascend into the dark sky, and in the activated visual mode, its altitude was almost impossible for a human to judge, when suddenly two glowing heat signatures appeared on the ground, perhaps only a centimeter in size from the air.

The drone entered a hover and held its position. After the drone's maneuver, the Yautja activated a zoom mode, and the heat signatures increased in size in four steps. Without a hint of digital artifacts, we saw the two hot engines of his spacecraft glowing in absolute clarity on the ground before us from a great height, under attack by flying predatory insects.

The insects, resembling vicious dragonflies from hell and of considerable size—equipped with pincer-like mouthparts and a long stinger on their abdomen—attacked the outer shell of the engines, though the reason for this behavior wasn't immediately apparent. Another warning light flashed briefly, and the hunter knew instantly what to do. A quick command sequence typed into the arm terminal, and the drone activated its integrated targeting scanners, whereupon numerous small red triangles overlaid the insects' outlines. They were all locked onto in one go, without any perceptible delay, and thus marked for imminent destruction.

After a final fire command, the drone attacked without moving from its position in the upper atmosphere. Blinding, needle-shaped, and small, bluish-glowing plasma spheres rained down to the surface, killing all the targeted insects within a short burst of fire with absolutely breathtaking precision; there must have been an estimated fifteen insectoids. A truly epic sight from this perspective – a murmur in the conference room confirmed my assumption at this point.

What I found particularly interesting as an engineer and developer was the computing power required for such an attack; because of the distance to the target and the almost unpredictable movement patterns of the targets on the ground, it had to be incredibly advanced.

With a loud hiss, full of unleashed aggression and simultaneous gratification of the Yautja, the spaceship's defenses were complete, and focus shifted once more to the putrid depression in the ground below, where still no sign of life was visible. Now patience was required; for the hunter seemed to know its prey well and simply waited. Like a forest ranger in a hunting blind, the alien lurked motionless in the bleak darkness of the swamp, which continued to descend upon the planet's surface.

The deployed drone mirrored its carrier's behavior, continuing to hover at a high altitude, effortlessly counteracting the strong crosswinds. As mentioned earlier, without a true scale comparison of the planet, its surface, or other reference points, the drone's altitude was difficult or nearly impossible for a human to estimate. However, a brief, translated caption at the edge of the camera image was surprising: the drone was apparently at an altitude of 93 kilometers above the surface, from where the attack on their own spacecraft had seemingly been repelled without any difficulty.

One began to feel impatient and almost root for Yautja when he decided to switch to the biomask's view mode – away from the drone view – to cycle through some additional visual modes. The modes changed in the following order, if I was interpreting it correctly from my perspective:

The infrared mode was initially active and, apart from minor, unimportant temperature differences, showed no further noteworthy details in the area of the depression.

The first change in viewing mode switched to what was presumably an ultraviolet mode, which almost completely obscured the image. Hardly anything was recognizable in this mode, which was probably not to be expected in this environment.

In the immediately following transition, we saw a kind of electromagnetic mode on the screen, which was also confirmed by a translated overlay. Here, the dark area of the depression suddenly appeared in a bright, luminous green light, similar to what we know from typical image intensifier systems with residual light capability on Earth. To the human eye, the hunter saw everything perfectly clearly, as if in bright sunlight. The Yautja, however, didn't seem particularly impressed by this mode of vision and switched directly to the next one.

A brief, white image noise became visible, spreading rhythmically from the top to the bottom of the image and quickly dissipating there. After automatic calibration of the optical system, this image noise appeared as a point on the lens, as if some kind of radiation were being measured in real time. Like a Geiger counter, which measures electrons and converts them into audible signals, this mode of the biomask could probably also make some unknown radiation visible; unfortunately, there was no translation matrix with a corresponding written overlay. The hunter also disliked this mode and cheerfully switched between them, just as people change channels on a TV.

The subsequent viewing mode was, in my opinion, the most astonishing:

The entire depicted world of the depression—indeed, the entire observed environment of the planet—was broken down into a grid and divided into sectors that seemingly represented the molecular structure of reality. In this mode, a quantity of information was displayed that no single human brain could have processed immediately, so immense was the power of this technology. The Yautja remained in this mode to use it to view the lower

Analyzing the mud layers of the depression. What already sounds adventurous as a unique selling point was, as a technology employed, more than incredible in itself; 'magic' probably describes it best, even if that was just a human expression of incomprehension.

At the edge of the surprisingly deep depression—approximately three meters below the surface—the zoom in on this section suddenly revealed the sleeping body of a gigantic creature, resembling one of our terrestrial turtles. It lay motionless beneath the mud, breathing slowly, though it was impossible to discern how this was even possible under the immense mass of silt. Perhaps this creature had lungs, perhaps it was breathing the mud directly; anything was possible.

Shortly after the creature in the mud was identified and analyzed, a warning signal appeared on the screen. It came from the drone outside the planet's atmosphere, which it had apparently reached autonomously without direct command, and flashed at rapid intervals. The subsequent text overlay explained the reason: the drone had simply completed the autonomous elimination of six other insects near the spacecraft and wanted to remain in observation or guard mode, which the drone's artificial intelligence apparently considered important. The Yautja took this information in stride, judging by its behavior and the sounds it emitted. With a tap of the finger, the drone was re-instructed, and the hunter could once again focus on hunting the dangerous creature below, which was well hidden.

The tension in the conference room rose: How would this hunter bring down his prey, how would he lure or scare it away, what would his next steps be?

The Yautja reached down and detached a small, egg-shaped device from his armor. He activated it by pressing a small switch on its top, which immediately glowed an evil reddish light. The hunter then abandoned his crouching position, stood up, and threw the device with pinpoint accuracy to the far end of the depression in the ground. Through the mask's vision mode, it was quickly apparent that he hadn't intended to hit the creature, as it was easily thirty to forty meters away.

As the device hit the mud hard, it sank in slightly; an unknown propulsion system ignited, and it submerged several meters until it simply came to rest in the mud on its own, for no apparent reason. The hunter then reached for his arm-mounted computer, and at that same moment, the submerged device—now clearly identifiable as a small bomb—exploded with an audible bang muffled by the mud. A geyser of dirt shot into the air, and the force of the explosion subsided as the mud splattered back onto the surface of the depression.

The general paused the video and spoke to us again:

"What you saw here, besides the drone operating autonomously at high altitude, is a so-called remote bomb – an intelligent, remotely controlled explosive device with extraordinary capabilities, such as integrated artificial intelligence. Had the Yautja been carrying this bomb when he encountered Major Schaefer, the latter would not have survived the meeting; that much is certain."

Fortunately, this race varies its weapon selection before each raid, adapting to the personal requirements and abilities of the user or to changing planetary conditions.

In particular, the specific characteristics of the prey to be hunted and its abilities seem to significantly influence the choice of weapons – and Major Schaefer probably had more combat experience than the Yautja had expected for a primate called man."

The faces of my colleagues sitting opposite me looked even more tense than one might have expected. I felt the same way.

"Based on various other evidence of the use of these small bombs, our scientists assume a thermonuclear explosive force that would far surpass that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, the extent of the destruction is completely variable – from the smallest explosions of rock faces or metal doors to the destruction of entire continents. These portable miniature bombs probably represent the highest stage of bomb evolution, something scientists on Earth could only dream of."

This brief additional speech by the general was presumably intended to sound dramatic and further astonish us listeners, which it apparently did for some in the room. I myself saw these small bombs simply as a logical step in the development of our own weapons – impressive, certainly, but hardly surprising. In my mind's eye, I pictured a Claymore directional mine from the earlier Vietnam War, which, just before detonating, seemed to be trying to tell me some dirty jokes; I chuckled slightly to myself.

Another press of the 'Play' button, and it continued:

As the explosion subsided beneath the mud, the creature lying on the other side of the depression awoke and slowly made its way to the surface, two extended stalked eyes slowly scanning the area above the mud. A colossal creature emerged—a size that could never have been estimated using the Yautja's vision mode. Besides its turtle-like body and extended stalked eyes, it also displayed clawed, webbed, shovel-like limbs that looked utterly terrifying. This creature could probably have crushed an earthly elephant like a hydraulic press; such was the power it radiated.

The remote bomb's sole purpose was to disturb the creature without harming it—much like the role of dogs in a terrestrial hunt, flushing wild boars from their cover. But let's be honest: no human would have wanted to disturb this creature unless they were mentally ill or heavily armed.

The Yautja, however, remained unfazed; it quickly gained some elevation and, in a typical show-off or hunting pose, leaped directly in front of the creature onto a small, half-submerged rock near the shore. Immediately after landing, it righted itself and reached for a new weapon attached to its armor, presumably by a magnetic sling over its shoulder. This weapon was a kind of laser spear with metallic spikes on both ends, further enhanced by a yellowish laser ring. Clearly, this weapon required a highly skilled operator, otherwise, one would easily fall victim to it.

The startled creature appeared sluggish and lethargic, but despite its size, it was quite agile. It launched an attack, swinging its right forelimin toward the hunter with a swift movement. He simply stepped back a few centimeters, confident he wouldn't be hit. He was right; the strike missed, and before it had even finished, the hunter swung his telescopic spear and severed the attacking creature.

The creature's claw was simply severed with a single blow. Screams of pain erupted. A small mouth, barely discernible compared to the creature's overall size, twitched just a few meters in front of our hunter, as if trying to spit at him – presumably with a highly toxic substance.

The Yautja was well prepared for this type of attack – it knew this prey – because a self-igniting, bluish energy field on the hunter's chest armor hardened into a translucent plasma shield the very moment the liquid hit it, immediately taking effect and simply neutralizing the expelled poison.

Once again, the muddy creature's attack missed its mark, but this time the Yautja paused and didn't attack again. The reason became apparent on the display in his biomask; a brief overlay following an automated sensory scan during the fight revealed a previously unknown condition of the creature: it was clearly ill. Unknown internal organs with clearly visible damage—zoomed in down to the cellular level—were displayed with small diagnostic overlays, crystal clear. The creature had thus disqualified itself as a worthwhile hunting trophy for our hunter.

Now, the situation was this: the hunter could have simply found a new, stronger prey on the planet and left the current battlefield, but neither option was pursued. On the contrary: as the creature remained in combat mode and attempted several unsuccessful poison attacks, the hunter jumped back to a higher position out of the creature's reach. Perched on a branch, the Yautja typed various commands into his arm computer, which were directed to the battle-ready drone that was now waiting outside the atmosphere.

At breathtaking speed, the drone plummeted back towards the Yautja, briefly glowing due to atmospheric friction, only to cool immediately again due to the updrafts. The enormous vertical distance was covered in such a short time that any material found on Earth would have been reduced to embers and ash. Shortly before reaching the hunter, the drone changed course and headed directly towards the still raging and screaming creature on the surface of the depression. At a distance of about ten meters, and at a safe distance from the creature, the drone assumed a waiting position, and a small, tubular hook on its underside snapped out.

Following this almost graceful technological-artistic performance, the drone generated a red, high-energy plasma beam and fired it directly at the creature, which immediately collapsed and sank into the mud, paralyzed by its own weight. Not a single twitch was detected. After this action, the drone followed the lifeless body into the depths of the depression, presumably using nanotechnology to heal the wounds inflicted by the hunter.

The creature's severed claw was replicated by a bluish mist generated by thousands of micro-robots beneath the mud's surface, and the resulting wounds vanished without a trace. All of this process was visualized through communication with the bio-mask's vision mode, which could be considered further proof of this technological standard far superior to ours.

After this healing operation, the drone ceased its local activities and followed the already advancing hunter in order to dock with it again, which then happened accompanied by a futuristic sound – more precisely a locking click.

The video stream ended at this point, and the adjutant took the floor, but not without first seeking the general's approval with a fleeting glance:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this recorded hunting trip is the only clip in the collection that shows us an act of mercy by the alien Yautja race. The hunter did not, however, completely cure the being's illness—and we are sure he could have—no: he merely restored the previously existing balance to its original state. We are showing you this particular video stream, of course, for a specific reason; because in addition to the weapon technology employed and the medical healing capabilities of this species, we are presumably seeing their motives here, which must clearly be based on some kind of code of honor."

This insight may also assist you, ladies and gentlemen, in your later task of identifying defensive measures; for that is what we are counting on!

In my eyes, our fate was already sealed at that point in the presentation, should this species decide to attack us. Never on that day was this as uncomfortably clear to me as I describe it here, but it is the bitter truth. I myself was considered the ultimate winner, someone who would easily overcome any problem – be it through the development of weapons or through my MacGyver-like mentality, which was both attributed to me and simultaneously despised.

As much as I found this technological challenge interesting from a professional point of view, humanity seemed to me at that time to be nothing more than cattle for slaughter, considering the capabilities of our far superior enemy.

After a brief sip from a provided glass of water, the general spoke again:

Professor Dr. Michael Pilgram, a NASA scientist responsible for the study of extraterrestrial life, has compiled a list of all identified weapon systems and equipment from the available video footage of the biomask into a clear and informative video essay. This list is up-to-date and includes 15 different types of weapons, although the data analysis is ongoing. It's important to note that the data storage capacity of this single biomask is several tens of thousands of petabytes, and we have only been able to analyze approximately half of it.

"You will continue to see short descriptive texts in this essay containing further useful information about the depicted weapon type – such as destructive power, control modules, or similar features. This list will also be provided to you in written form afterward. As a preliminary note: We have given most of the weapons and items their own names, simply to make them easier to understand. Of course, the Yautja have their own terms; this should not go unmentioned."

After a brief press of the "Play" button, the following message appeared on the screen:

Alien Weapon Technology (AWT/Yautja Species)

TOP SECRET / NASA

Classified by Prof. Dr. M. Pilgram (July 2023)

This brief intro was followed by short, edited video clips of varying lengths and with different English titles:

Shoulder Cannon – (also known as Plasmacaster)

On a planet with sparse vegetation, two Yautja were seen standing side by side, using shoulder-mounted plasma weapons to target and engage several rapidly approaching, fearsome creatures. The masks' displays marked all attacking targets with a triangle symbol, which the shoulder-mounted plasma cannons automatically aimed at.

With a deafening roar, a bluish, incandescent plasma ball, roughly 4 cm in diameter, shot from the weapon's muzzle after the attack order was given. It instantly found its target and neutralized it. In fact, the effect on the target was akin to a massacre, seemingly causing the enemy to explode. The sight was both terrifying and fascinating. I thought to myself: Our most advanced weapon systems—such as Gatling guns, robot-assisted weapon platforms, and autonomous drones—while serving the same purpose of eliminating threats, are never as destructive as these tiny 20 cm shoulder-mounted cannons.

The attacking creatures shown in this rather short video walked on four legs, were probably about a meter tall, and behaved like cats. In short: this prey was fast, agile, and incredibly nimble—practically impossible targets to catch. But this type of alien weapon was effortlessly capable of quickly and effectively annihilating entire herds. I still wondered what incredible amount of energy such a weapon must have required, especially one that was portable, lightweight, and possessed a high rate of fire. Finally, the thought of Neanderthals came back to me, which made me chuckle again.

A technical message then appeared on the screen:

This weapon, usually mounted on the left shoulder of a Yautja fighter, communicates bidirectionally with the biomask and fires massive plasma blasts in a focused ball at medium range. Target selection can be adjusted based on the current threat level, allowing closer targets to be engaged autonomously first. Using this weapon disables the wearer's cloaking device—presumably due to its enormous energy consumption.

Additional note:

When the hunter is camouflaged, all weapons and equipment are initially integrated into the camouflage; this includes the shoulder cannon. A hunter was also spotted in the background of the footage who had these weapons mounted simultaneously on both shoulders.

The Spear / Combiestick

In the next video clip, we saw the scene we had already seen, in which the Yautja used a telescopic spear. A voiceover – presumably Prof. Dr. M. Pilgram himself – spoke the following words:

"This spear weapon can be observed in use in many variations. It is fundamentally a spear designed and used for close combat. A characteristic feature is usually a telescopic design that can be extended to its full length at the push of a button. Less common records show fixed spears equipped with very dangerous blades on the sides. In some cases, even integrated laser blades have been observed, which likely possess a higher destructive potential. Close combat is strongly advised."

Several people in the room reacted to the last statement as I did: we couldn't help but grin. If the hunter wants a close fight, then he'll probably get one – regardless of whether you confront him, run away, or try to hide.

Another message appeared:

Wristblades

A montage showed the arm of a Yautja with two blades – like the tines of a fork – extended as an extension of the forearm. A voiceover then sounded again:

"This is another purely melee weapon that can be mounted on one or both of the alien's arms. These extendable double blades increase the wielder's reach and slice through most known materials with razor-sharp precision. This type of weapon requires a high level of training to provide a decisive advantage in close combat situations. In the Yautja world, the Wristblades are considered a very honorable weapon, as they allow the user to get very close to their prey—and thus also to their own death."

Well, I thought to myself: whether you get smashed to pieces by a spear or have two of these 'blades' stuck in your body – the result will be the same; it will definitely hurt!

The next weapon was announced on the screen:

The Ground Crawler Device (aka JayDee Device)!



After another spaceship door opened, the video clip showed a planet with a vast, rocky desert. The terrain reminded me of Norwegian mountain landscapes, where large boulders and rocks were scattered haphazardly. The Yautja exited the ship and walked purposefully toward a small rise in the landscape, from which he could better survey his surroundings.

Interestingly – and the alien probably knew this when choosing its landing site – His prey was perhaps a good 500 meters away from his position. In the mask's visual zoom mode, those 500 meters appeared as mere centimeters, and the prey was displayed in detail. The system's high-quality image made us even more anxious in the room, because we could now admire the hunter's intended target in all its glory!

We saw a primate, a damn big primate – with an estimated height of about 3.20 meters!

We in the conference room wouldn't have been able to even begin to estimate its size had the mask not displayed a graphic at the edge of the screen indicating precisely this dimension. The primate—or ape, a description that falls short since we were on an alien planet—was the equivalent of a Gigantopithecus on Earth, but in an utterly horrific, opposite version. A mountain of muscle, the eyes of an intelligent animal, and fangs that could bite through a car door were vividly portrayed thanks to the mask. The sight brought a disturbing silence to the room.

I was curious to see how this new weapon would be used and what kind of weapon it actually was – my expectations were not disappointed.

The hunter—still on the rocky rise—grasped his left leg and detached a tube-like device that could optionally change its size telescopically. From this small form factor, a press of a button awakened an automated mechanism that extended the device to twice its size. This invisible mechanism alone so powerfully inspired my imagination; I would have loved to hold this "thing" in my own hands.

A readiness signal appeared on the mask's video display; because, as one might expect, this weapon was also bidirectionally linked to it.

With a flick of the wrist, the 'tube' left its wielder and vanished into the ground, a small red glow visible at the tip of the weapon. 'How on earth can such a delicate yet massive weapon penetrate and disappear into the rock-hard ground?' I immediately asked myself. Even more astonishing: the weapon began to move underground, as a split screen in the mask revealed. It reached incredible speed; for shortly after activation, the weapon was already a good 400 meters away from the Yautja, with an unmistakable destination: onward toward its prey!

The hunter slowly and deliberately moved towards the primate; he seemed in no hurry at all. While he was able to approach his prey to within about 20 meters in his now-activated camouflage mode, his weapon had already assumed an attack position just behind the primate and was practically waiting for the command to finally strike. The yautja, however, was still scrutinizing the prey from close range; it seemed as if it were new to him. Based on the information I had already gathered, I actually suspected that the hunter would reveal himself before the attack—and that's exactly what happened. The completely surprised ape from hell immediately looked up and bared his teeth, a very terrifying sight. The hunter, on the other hand, only let out a low growl; this time, probably the most he could muster. You could practically feel the adrenaline surging through the primate's body, his aggression about to take over. He was working himself into full-scale attack mode.

Quite honestly: If this creature existed in a zoo on Earth, I would feel sorry for the zookeeper.

Our hunter was sure of his superiority – no wonder, he could probably rely blindly on his technology!

The moment the primate was about to take its first step to tear its opponent to shreds, the weapon activated, and a kind of stinger bored out of the ground at the back.

A red laser grid activated instantly, halting the creature's movement. This grotesque embodiment of rage was frozen, as if paralyzed – its expression, I would interpret, as utterly bewildered. The laser grid didn't budge for a microsecond, which seemed astonishing given the creature's anticipated power.

The primate could only move its eyes, and these signaled unbridled rage and aggression. The yautja observed the scene and approached step by step, until it was perhaps 20 centimeters away. A low growl escaped the hunter after it had spent over a minute gathering all the information it deemed important about its prey at close range. The mask display showed, among other things, the following information based on the translation matrix:

- Scent molecules analyzed and archived

- DNA sequencing completed

- Potential danger at 52%

- Footprint grid complete

- Prestige factor 20%

I was once again stunned by the technological capabilities of this race; it was truly extremely impressive.

The hunter simply turned his back on the primate and this time ran back to his spaceship a little faster. Meanwhile, he typed a short command sequence for the weapon into his arm computer, which then emitted a short, surprisingly loud alien alarm tone.

Had the primate known what was in store for him, he would have cursed the day he was born—if he had even been born, which isn't necessarily a given on an alien planet. Evolution is no longer a fixed concept; that much I've already learned.

With the extinguishing of the alarm signal, the fate of the prey was sealed; for the weapon's body underground built up an energy surge, which was immediately transmitted to the stinger and thus to the laser grid. Simultaneously, the shape of the laser grid changed, and it contracted with lightning speed – resulting in an unbelievable mess on the ground where a large, dangerous primate had once stood. The great ape was literally sliced into pieces, crisscrossing and even diagonally. Intestines and other organs, finely shredded, spilled onto the ground along with bloody fluids and tissue fragments, where the weapon still lurked. Only the stinger was immediately retracted after the attack, presumably to protect it or at least to avoid having to clean it. A command later, the weapon followed its owner underground and, after the shrinking process, was stowed away again in its original position – as if nothing had happened.

I was somewhat surprised, as there was no trophy – although I would have considered this monkey the perfect trophy. But the Yautja apparently had a different opinion. How wrong I was!

The video clip didn't end with the closing of the spaceship door; for immediately afterwards it opened again, and the Yautja stepped out once more. This time he had some kind of Frisbee in his hand.

The hand with which he entered the stony desert. Whoever edited these video clips together – presumably the professor himself – certainly had a penchant for drama.

The next screen appeared:

The Smart-Disc (TSD)

The video clip started directly with the scene where the Yautja left his ship. This time he circled it and headed in the opposite direction. The landscape itself didn't change; boulders and large slabs of rock still lay scattered about, and after a short time, the hunter received a flashing signal in his helmet.

After walking about three kilometers, he switched to zoom mode, and a large lizard came into view. Similar to a Komodo dragon, however, this lizard was considerably larger – it was presumably the favorite food of the local primate population in this region of the planet; this was revealed by a small, translated text from inside the mask.

I was curious: Was this the hunter's hoped-for trophy? Was this lizard perhaps far more dangerous than the monkey? I was about to find out.

The Yautja increased his pace and ran diagonally across from the lizard, onto a small hill from which he could observe it clearly. Another symbol inside the mask suddenly lit up; it was supported by information from the previously killed monkey. An incredible amount of information was displayed on the inner mask screen – a miniature laboratory.

And then the hunter adjusted his perspective: At an even greater distance, another primate could be seen, seemingly at least twice the size of the monkey he had selected as a trophy. Our hunter appeared agitated, if one could interpret his behavior as such.

With his right hand, the Yautja detached the Frisbee—er, the smart disc—from his hip and held it with four fingers through special holes in the outer skin. A brief bidirectional connection, and the weapon had linked to the mask's computer system and the arm's computer, signaling readiness for use.

I thought to myself: 'Okay, at least we already have Bluetooth!'

Of course – and this assumption of mine was confirmed as the clip progressed
This disc possessed its own power supply and artificial intelligence. The new primate was still a good kilometer away from the lizard and probably hadn't even noticed it yet. The hunter, on the other hand, approached the lizard to within about 40 meters, only to execute it with a single throw of the disc. Once released and equipped with the mask's target coordinates, the disc raced toward its unsuspecting victim and severed its head—an action that happened in a flash.

The lizard had no opportunity to cry out in pain, even if it could have. This apparently wasn't necessary, because the hunter knew how to attract the attention of the giant primate from that distance: the key wasn't sound, it was the smell of blood! It took a while, but the plan worked. The mask's information was accurate; the number of olfactory receptors in this species strongly suggested this.

The Smart Disc, a kind of 'fire-and-forget' weapon, autonomously returned to the hunter after the attack on the lizard, who then properly stowed it away again.

Meanwhile, the damned large monkey came hurtling towards me at high speed and ran inexorably towards the hunter – which surprised me. I thought he was going for the bloody carcass of the lizard, but I was wrong again. Perhaps the hunter, as a two-legged 'lizard', was more attractive than the dead prey; perhaps he promised more meat – who knows what really goes on in a primate's brain?

The Yautja could have reinserted the disc, but it didn't. Instead, it engaged in a duel: creature against creature, technology against the Stone Age, if you will. The ape was a female—this information was also provided by the mask display. As with many species, the females are the larger individuals of their kind, if this law were to apply to the entire universe. However, the Yautja showed no moral objections; on the contrary, it seemed as if it was looking forward to the impending battle!

The immensely large and furious female ape charged purposefully toward the hunter – teeth bared, bellowing with a roar that could freeze your blood, at least by human standards. The Yautja, on the other hand, briefly shook out his right arm, and two blades clicked into place. Then he too charged forward, fearlessly running toward the prehistoric nightmare.

Just before the two creatures collided, the hunter leaped in a high arc over the astonished female monkey, landing almost directly behind her. With a fluid turn, he plunged his blades into his prey's back. A scream rang out, audible for miles around, but quickly faded. The hunter had driven his blades into the primate's spine with a precise thrust, sending it plummeting to the ground at full speed and sliding several meters in that position.

Before the physics of negative acceleration could take effect, this horrific creature was dead; for not another twitch, not another sound was heard at the end of its slide. Only a small fountain of blood spurted from its body – the blades had done their job.

Following this brief fight, the Yautja retracted his blades and reached for the Smart Disc, using it to sever the primate's head from its body with a single blow while standing on the skeletal creature. The hunter then held the severed head briefly to his face to examine it once more—a scene that, given the size of the primate skull and the dripping blood, appeared surreal, yet conveyed a certain awe and fascination.

The video clip ended here, but the voiceover spoke of a not particularly sensational or honorable trophy for the Yautja species, as their potential for danger was simply too low.

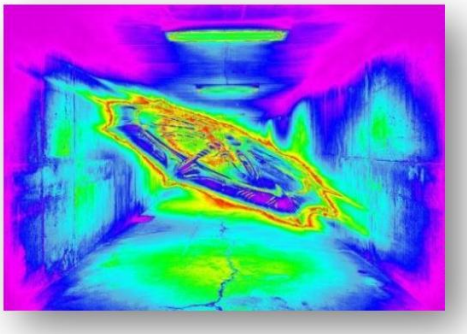
There was also information about the skull being cleaned on the spaceship so it could be transported back to the Yautja home planet as a new species. I thought to myself: If this monster was already classified as 'harmless,' how dangerous would a more lucrative prey item be?

After the voice stopped speaking, another image appeared on the wall; the projector in the conference room was in constant use:

TDC – Dangerous Potential!

Since no one in the room made any move to ask for a break – we had already been sitting in front of the presentation for several hours straight – I actually wanted to do so. But the subtitles slowly appearing on the screen made me reconsider:

An Important Information by the Research Team of Leader Prof. Dr. M. Pilgram (December 2024)





I simply became too curious about what might happen next. After all, it had to be important, otherwise this text wouldn't make any sense. And my curiosity was rewarded – but so was my fear of this enemy, even though deep down I had already given up on humanity.

The image of an alien city slowly built up in the video, which, once fully materialized, switched to a live stream. We saw a group of about ten Yautja hunters acting together at a street intersection. In a brief scene change, we saw the inside of one of the wearers' masks, allowing us to practically follow the attack in a live stream. A unique first-person perspective — which, in turn, didn't last long.

This fighter used a smart disc and threw it into the air, instantly connecting us to its onboard camera. We were essentially flying along with it and could view its owner's brief commands via the onboard system, should they become necessary. The smart disc scanned the cityscape; tall buildings and some peculiar heat signatures were visible, though sometimes only faintly.

The heat-emitting enemies entrenched themselves in higher positions, only occasionally firing energy projectiles at the attacking Yautja before immediately retreating to cover. The Disc's thermal imaging mode provided only a rudimentary view of these city dwellers; however, they appeared to have three legs and two arms, were highly advanced, and acted intelligently. A synthetic bleep sounded, and the Disc was assigned its targets. Many of these targets were not immediately visible, and their sheer number almost overwhelmed me. And then it began: The Smart-Disc activated its laser outline and headed directly toward a weaponized inhabitant on the first floor of a gloomy building.

A kind of protective window made of a thin, transparent material covered the disc's entry point, but it posed no problem for it whatsoever. We watched as the disc aligned itself, determined its angle of attack, and penetrated the building at full speed through the "window." It was a kind of high-rise, but the first target was located relatively low inside. The heat signature increased, the target became clearer, and with a single sweep, the disc cleanly sliced the occupant's body in half. The actual effect on the target, however, was no longer visible, because the weapon was simply flying far too fast.

We witnessed another absurd rollercoaster ride, with the disc effortlessly flying from floor to floor, locating and neutralizing all the barricaded enemies in every corner. The poor defenders stood absolutely no chance against this type of weapon – that much was becoming increasingly clear. After eliminating the first eight inhabitants of the building, the strength of this

The weapon was even more visible: A defender had barricaded himself in a kind of vault on the third floor of the building, which, however, was also useless.

The disc sliced through the steel-like structure as if through butter, the camera briefly revealing its molecular structure. Without encountering the slightest resistance, we, as observers, hurtled towards the creature's head, which was then also severed. This time, the disc stopped after the attack, rotated, and flew back out of the vault through the same molten gap – and, according to the on-screen text, without the permission of its Yautja operator. Further evidence of an artificial intelligence on board, capable of making independent tactical decisions. Incidentally, the weapon's rotation within the vault momentarily made its brutality vividly apparent; for apparently, the inhabitants of this planet could indeed bleed.

The silence in the conference room grew increasingly ominous; for even the rather restless adjutant sat silently in his chair, intently following the recording.

The video clip itself showed many more successful battles with the Smart Disc before, after eliminating all enemies in the large building, it made its way back to its owner with another sound. Interestingly—and I suspect only I noticed this detail—the disc returned directly to its owner: it penetrated a wall on the upper floor, even though there were window openings.

I suspect this behavior has something to do with the disc's fuel, whatever its basis may be. Some physical laws are universal – for example, the law of conservation of energy. Even though the smart disc could achieve relatively long flight times, it will eventually need to be refueled.

Once the disc was reattached to its owner's leg, the display switched back to mask mode. This time, however, several smaller image sections were combined, showing the displays of the hunter companions. At that point, I understood why the professor's research team had placed so much value on this information; what we were witnessing was the ultimate combat strategy against enemies in an urban environment.

While the journey along the front of the disc had taken our breath away, the full extent of this weapon's destructive power only became apparent afterward. All the Yautja involved in the attack cleared a vast district of this alien civilization in just over ten minutes.
– solely through the use of smart discs. Survivors, identifiable by their still-displayed heat signatures, were helpless and unarmed residents who likely posed no threat.

A voice in the video spoke in a disturbing tone:

"Based on the information gathered about this incident—the battle was apparently documented and archived by over 200 Yautja warriors involved—we can only issue a strong warning against this particular weapon. We are unaware of any protective measures; every recorded use of a smart disc has been fatal. According to some text entries in the mask archive, we have also determined that the weapon is frequently issued only to relatively inexperienced, young Yautja for individual hunting or is used in large-scale civilized battles on a planetary scale, regardless of its trophy potential."

Wait a minute – did I just hear 'planetary scale'? The battlefield just shown was probably the size of a capital city, like New York; an entire borough of

Cleaning up is already quite remarkable – but an entire planet? I rather doubt it, because such an advanced race as the Yautja would surely have invented other means for planetary destruction; that's what I assume. What can I say: During the course of the conference, my assumption was unfortunately confirmed.

As if the information about the SmartDisc wasn't enough, additional technical information followed in the form of another text overlay:

The weapon lacks any discernible conventional propulsion system, as we would expect to find on Earth. It is presumably some kind of miniaturized gravity drive with its own energy reserve. Furthermore, the disc was once observed teleporting from a great distance to its user, who then retrieved it. Normally, such a retrieval by the user proceeds differently, as the disc can simply be picked up while hovering nearby and attached to the equipment lanyard on the thigh. The archive of the recovered mask revealed 26 different versions of the disc – all lethal and with specific modifications tailored to the preferences of their users.

The general suddenly stood up and said the following:

These smart discs transform a simple soldier into a tactically astute commander in combat, capable of making sound strategic decisions at any time and relaying and verifying them to all allied hunters via swarm intelligence. By utilizing the full technological capabilities of this race, conventional command structures become obsolete—at least as we know them.

However, I can say this upfront: the Yautja also have hierarchical chains of command; these depend on the age and prestige of the hunters. The more difficult trophies an individual has collected, the higher they rise in the clan's rank. There were a few records of so-called Elder Yautja, the hunters with the highest level of respect.

Before we were subjected to another rambling psychosocial study of the Yautja, I shouted into the room: 'Break!' The general looked at me, disturbed; his adjutant would have gladly killed me with a disc for this faux pas, had he had one handy. Fortunately, the other participants in the room let out a murmur of relief – so my suggestion met with a positive response.

Well, we had been in that room for almost five hours; some people must have had an urgent need. Perhaps that explains the sudden urge to leave when the general nodded approvingly.

"See you here again at 1 p.m. – sure!"

Certainly, the "military" side of me is showing again; "1 p.m." would have sufficed. After a quick trip to the restroom—the facilities in the underground complex were quite luxurious—I looked for a place for a cigarette. A small room at the end of a corridor was clearly signposted; I was in luck.

Hmm, either the other people in my small group were strict non-smokers or they couldn't find their way, which suited me just fine. I sat down at a small wooden table in this spartan room, lit my well-deserved cigarette, and jotted down the following words in my notebook, which I, in an old-fashioned way, always kept with me next to my smartphone:

- Have the energy supply of the Yautja analyzed!
- Tear up your shower curtain with the periodic table print at home!
- Remove all offensive weapons from private ownership!
- Delegating tasks and enjoying life with my family every day!

After that, I experienced a slight mental block, and the enjoyment of the cigarette took center stage.

Okay, after three quick cigarettes, I left the smoking room and went back to the conference room, where everyone was already waiting for me. The adjutant's look was very telling – but hey, at least I was on time.

Now that we were all present again – the weapons presentation wasn't over yet – the obligatory button press on the remote control followed. The lights in the room dimmed again, and the next screen appeared:

Proximity Mines



Images of menacing-looking devices were projected onto the wall via a projector, each in different versions and some with glowing laser outlines or small legs. Proximity mines – only extremely advanced.

A text overlay slowly flew in from the right side and was read aloud by a voice-over:

"The mines depicted here represent the highest evolutionary stage of this type of weapon, perfectly embodying it. Equipped with friend-or-foe identification, high-explosive plasma charges, and autonomous laser target designation capabilities, these mines allow for perfect ambushes or the establishment of rear security zones. Naturally, these mines also communicate in real time with the hunter's biomask should anything change in the deployed area and a detonation be imminent. Some of the models shown here likely also possess their own artificial intelligence, which we can assume with a high degree of probability based on the following video."

The text vanished, and a kind of port area on an alien planet became visible. A Yautja fighter placed two proximity mines at a crossroads and activated them via an arm computer. Both mines sprang to life simultaneously, radiating a malevolence one wouldn't expect from a simple piece of technology. An ominous whirring, a rapidly activating red laser perimeter around the mines, and their operator's blatant disregard for the situation transformed this use of force into a chilling spectacle.

The Yautja knew he could now consider himself safe – at least as far as the mined rear room was concerned. He didn't even wait for the system to fully activate, but continued relentlessly towards his chosen target location. It was likely a warehouse where he suspected his prey was located, or where he had already identified it; however, the video clip didn't reveal this.

Just before the hunter was about to enter the building from above, the display in the mask received a signal; it came from one of the laid mines. This mine had detected an approach and asked the hunter if it should destroy the target. Since the hunter was stalking, he typed a short command sequence into the arm's computer, whereupon the mine switched to a stealth mode. Simultaneously, the feed from the other, also already cloaked, mine was transmitted to the mask, so that everyone in the room witnessed the subsequent events.

At the crossroads, several alien beings approached—likely the dominant species of this planet. They traveled on peculiar vehicles that resembled a cross between automobiles and hovercraft. The beings themselves were humanoid in form, quite small—estimated to be about one meter tall—and carried weapon-like objects. They were following the Yautja's tracks but were still a good 300 meters away. The mask indicated four of these alien vehicles, and the first mine sprang into action. As if by magic, it unmasked itself—a process presumably based on honor—and began a grotesque movement on small legs. The 'filming' mine remained camouflaged and followed the first at a safe distance.

Based on the approach vectors and the unpredictable path, the assumption of a sophisticated artificial intelligence on board was more than plausible; the Yautja was going about its daily business, searching for entry points from the roof of the building. The mine's AI opted for an attack within the vehicle convoy, directly behind the second vehicle. According to the display, it first calibrated itself to the perfect distance, calculated the optimal destructive area, and adjusted the structure of the internal explosive charge to the tactical requirements. It remained completely undetected, and the deadly annihilation strike came virtually out of nowhere. Thanks to the second mine, we were able to experience the explosion up close: A red, targeted wall of plasma tore all four vehicles apart lengthwise. The crews had no chance. Flesh, metal, rubber, and strange alien materials—everything vaporized in a wall of heat and plasma, leaving hardly any trace of devastation.

However, such an explosion wasn't silent, and so the attack attracted unwanted attention. Below the position of the hunter, who was still on the roof, two other inhabitants of this planet scanned the surrounding area. They carried a kind of handheld scanner that emitted greenish beams of light to analyze these areas. Although undisguised, the Yautja remained undetected thanks to its ambush position and elevated position.

He was always fully informed about his tactical situation, as the remaining mine now followed the hunter autonomously after a threat analysis had automatically selected this option. With another brief computer command, the remaining mine revealed itself and dealt with the threat on the ground, which had been flagged as such based on the threatening scans of the inhabitants. This time, the display switched to mine mode, and the entire attack on these two victims could be observed from a first-person perspective until the explosions occurred.

Correct: two targets, two explosions!

Before the actual detonation occurred in the immediate vicinity of the victims, the mine split and independently attacked each target with optimal attack parameters. A flashing symbol appeared on the hunter's screen, confirming the successful attack. Technical data was also displayed, which we could read thanks to the translation matrix:

Mine 2

- Target 1: 3% plasma usage
- Target 2: 4% plasma usage
- Explosion radius: 1 x 0.85 meters / 1 x 1.5 meters
- Environmental contamination level: 8%

* End of Data…*

The general paused the recording:

"As you can see, these mines represent another milestone in the actual threat posed by this alien species, should they consider a conflict. I assure you at this point: We have not been able to develop a defense strategy against these weapons either. On the contrary: As with most terrestrial mines, this type continues to pose a considerable danger long after its deployment."

We also have evidence of this that should interest you; two years after the incident with Major Schaefer, a reconnaissance team of our US Marines found such an abandoned mine near a destroyed rebel camp. Of course, our men didn't know what kind of object it was at the time, but shortly after finding it and approaching it, the mine activated and disappeared.

The long time spent in the jungle didn't affect the alien technology despite the harsh environment, as the mine only 'disappeared' briefly. We suspect it switched to cloaking mode, but we don't know for sure to this day. It may also have simply flown away very quickly. But one thing we know for certain: the mine remained deadly!

"Why do we know this so precisely? Well, apparently the artificial intelligence of the alien mine decided to destroy the commander of the reconnaissance mission – Lieutenant Andrew Steppson. He was located approximately 460 kilometers away at the time the mine was discovered and was communicating with the team on site via satellite link."

The mine independently processed this information and traveled to headquarters in an estimated 25 minutes. The headquarters was well-secured by default, but the mine easily bypassed our defenses. A camera outside the command center filmed the mine, which only revealed itself at that point. Fortunately, the camera signals were transmitted to a military server in real time; because after the mine exploded, there was no longer a camera—no, there was no longer a headquarters either.

The attack with this weapon killed 23 soldiers, including the lieutenant. This attack was classified as TOP SECRET; the families were told it was an accident in which ammunition had ignited.

Some of my colleagues in the room reacted with some disbelief to this fact; however, I was well aware of the cover-up of such military operations from painful past experiences. Transparency could not be expected from any army in the world – this business is too dirty.

The general remained impassive, observing the atmosphere in the room, and pressed the 'play' button again.

The video clip that now begins opens with the almost familiar-looking door of the spaceship, which our Yautja fighter is only too happy to open. This time, however – after an irritating warning tone – the door opens mid-flight, and the fighter throws something out of the spaceship.

The spaceship was probably about 50 meters above the planet's surface, and the ejected object landed in a swampy, fog-shrouded patch of forest. The Yautja then closed the door again and reached into a kind of shelf, where he found his mask. The bio-mask immediately activated and displayed a camera view to the wearer, a view that could only have been generated from the ejected object. We saw a 360-degree panorama: A roughly 15 cm long, greenish-shimmering capsule lay at the edge of a puddle of fog; it was visible in breathtaking detail.

How such a 360-degree view could be calculated and displayed remained a complete mystery to me. Even our reversing cameras in newer cars require a multitude of sensors to be able to depict something similar. However, no lenses whatsoever were visible on the capsule itself, which seemed quite astonishing.

A previously unseen symbol appeared on the display of the mask; it was green and actually had to be clicked with three confirmations before any action was performed.

Strange for such a highly technological people and given the information available so far, but I had a hunch: This weapon might be dishonorable!

The final activation command via the arm computer was accompanied by a shrill warning tone, and apparently this input command, along with the capsule's activation, was immediately stored in the ship's systems. Something strange happened on the ground: the capsule opened, and an alien flying insect, equipped with technological enhancements, emerged and slowly awoke from cryosleep.

The creature resembled a type of tarantula hawk, a highly specialized wasp species found on Earth. However—and this must be emphasized—this insect was many times more terrifying and threatening than one could imagine in one's worst nightmares. Upon encountering it, one would likely wish for a weapon of equal accuracy. A long stinger was visible, beneath which lay a small, trapezoidal mouth filled with sharp teeth that protruded from its aerodynamic body in several places.

No question: If this wasn't a weapon, why was it used at a safe distance from the ship?

The answer came at the same moment as the insect awoke, briefly recovering and whirring into the air. Immediately, the 360-degree panoramic view on the spaceship's display was deactivated, and a built-in camera on the creature's back was activated. Once again, we were right in the middle of the action – from a perspective that was equally breathtaking.

The insect flew at moderate speed across the planet's surface, searching for something, presumably its first victim. It found what it was looking for in a misty clearing in a mangrove-like forest: a huge, four-legged creature that had just killed its prey. This animal resembled a hybrid of mythical creature and zoological absurdity – a beast of immense power and bloodlust. It was tearing large chunks of body parts and organs from its freshly killed victim, which was likely a large herbivore.

If I had to bet, we just saw something like an alien dinosaur – similar to a Tarbosaurus, but on four legs.

We only caught a glimpse of it briefly, because our little insect launched its attack. Gaining speed, it landed near the animal's tail, out of reach of its limbs. The moment it first touched the skin, its barbed stinger plunged into its victim. The sting must have been excruciating; the hybrid apparently leaped upwards in pain, a sight that didn't escape our camera's view. We were visually shaken to our core.

The image on the screen became bluer, and text scrolled from bottom to top:

The weapon shown is a hollow capsule approximately 15 centimeters in diameter, containing an insect presumably native to the Yautja race's home planet. The capsule is typically attached to an autonomous flying drone or otherwise deployed on a planet. According to the records obtained, no Yautja is permitted on the planet with an open capsule; it was a warning and a safety measure. Yautja hunters who disregarded this rule were sentenced to death.

TDC is generally considered a dishonorable weapon, as the Yautja himself does not deliver the final blow. According to further data from the biomask, this type of weapon is usually issued to younger, less experienced hunters to provide a backup solution in case of particularly dangerous prey. Furthermore, using this weapon appears to end a hunter's career; gaining a reputation within the presumed clan structures of this species seems impossible.

The insect reproduces inside its prey, with a single specimen capable of hunting virtually indefinitely. On an alien planet, there is no ecosystem to counteract its reproduction. Depending on the planet's size and the total number of suitable prey, the complete elimination of larger life forms takes between one and a maximum of two years, as the analyzed statistics showed.

The general stopped the clip and spoke:

"One of our researchers, Dr. F. Pellham from M-Base Corp., believes the Yautja would use this weapon to correct flawed designs on potential hunting planets – a theory that certainly has merit. Nevertheless, you should also develop a countermeasure against this extremely instinct-driven, dangerous insect!"

I myself was reminded of the disappearance of our own dinosaurs millions of years ago, but that certainly had other causes.

A quick glance at the adjutant, and the general ordered a specific video clip to be played immediately. The adjutant, noticeably more nervous again, needed some time to locate the file 'Sys 2049' mentioned by the general, but then, with the general's apparent approval, simply played it.

A text appeared:

(EAD - Prototype)-The Evolution Accelerator Device

The recovered mask contains a library, an operations archive, and descriptions of technology. A text file describing a prototype weapon was extracted and translated. A female representative of the Yautja race—primarily responsible for weapons development—describes a field-tested device abbreviated as EAD.

This time the general simply spoke while the video was playing – something he had not done before.

"The prototype shown here could also be used against us in a future conflict. That's the only reason you're watching this video now, as it's not an official part of the previous weapons analyses. However, I personally consider its inclusion in this list absolutely essential!"

Another description of the weapon appeared on the screen:

The intended purpose of this hitherto unique Yautja weapon is said to be to accelerate the evolutionary process of living beings, transforming a dangerous creature into an even more dangerous enemy within a very short time through genetic manipulation techniques. According to technical analysis, only the physical attributes and the aggression potential of a potential enemy are to be increased; the cognitive and intelligent characteristics of a planetary species thus remain unchanged.

This internal process is to be triggered by bolts fired from a type of needle gun, which transmit nanotechnology and gene sequencers into the victim. There is currently no reliable information about the incubation period within the victim's body. Should this weapon reach operational readiness in the meantime, potential allies could be transformed into aggressive enemies – a scenario that would likely further drastically reduce our chances of survival.

Should the speed of the Yautja's technological development prove to be fully realized...
– because this record of the EAD was already archived in the mask 147 years ago – they would probably now also be able to equip less intelligent prey with fundamental hunting intelligence.

The video clip faded out slowly. "Perplexed" best describes the mood in the room; however, the peak of astonishment had probably not yet been reached.

Once again, the general indicated to his adjutant that the original video should be thrown back at the "wall":

A picture of a rather complex rifle appeared, followed immediately by a description:



"Eliminating prey from a great distance is frowned upon in the Yautja world; nevertheless, there are situations where a long-distance weapon offers massive tactical advantages."

The Yautja's sniper rifle (PSR) is therefore only entrusted to selected hunters who have to complete special missions on suspect planets.

The PSR's basic functionality is quite similar to its terrestrial counterparts; however, it is far more advanced and capable of firing incandescent plasma charges. The weapons themselves incorporate an independent targeting computer, multiple zoom levels, and automatic compensation for wind, gravity, and adverse weather conditions. It seems almost impossible to miss with this weapon, as the success rate recorded in the biomask's database is 99.2%.

Furthermore, the weapon generates its own ammunition, which should again represent a significant advantage over our sniper rifles. A Standard Energy Transmitter (SET) is mentioned as the power source, which can also power other equipment.

After the description of this weapon, which was again commented on by a voice-over, short videos of the rifle in action appeared, showing, by earthly standards, unbelievable killings of various living beings:

The sniper rifle was apparently linked to the wearer's mask, allowing him to see his likely hit zone with crystal clarity without having to shoulder the weapon. Naturally, all tactical vision modes could also be adopted from the rifle or the mask in real time, effectively transforming the rifle into a night vision device, a radiation detector, or a motion tracker. A laser rangefinder supplemented the target coordinates on the weapon's display; the Yautja received more information than a US Army reconnaissance soldier could ever obtain.

In the first video clip, the intended target was an animal located approximately 500 meters away. The rangefinder reading was translated, by the way. This creature—an abomination difficult to describe—was surrounded and protected by a group of similar beings. The chaotic movement within this group made the timing of the trigger pull extremely unpredictable, especially for a human sniper, who typically operates in pairs.

The Yautja's weapon issued firing recommendations as soon as it identified the target as its wielder's "desired object." The rifle seemed to choose the optimal moment itself once all parameters were calculated. The hunter, however, waited; he wanted to be absolutely certain there would be no collateral damage. Then the opportunity arose, and the weapon fired a plasma sphere almost silently at his distant target, the projectile's trajectory tracked in real time on the mask. It took only a moment, and the target's head exploded in a massive cloud of blood, plasma, and brain matter. The other creatures panicked—uncoordinated and blinded by the killing they had just witnessed at close range.

The reason why Yautja received this mission was not disclosed. There was also no further save file related to this mission; this was explicitly stated to us.

In another video scene, the fired plasma sphere could still be influenced by the rifle as it approached the target, which should have represented an extremely high technical challenge. All subsequent destruction scenes with this weapon showed only similar repetitions, but as a final warning, the following macabre message was displayed as an overlay:

"Please try to stay behind this gun muzzle at all times!"

Sure – as if that's always worked well in sniper situations around the world, hehe! I was immediately reminded of the Japanese sniper tactics in World War II: they strapped themselves to trees with belts and opened fire – hoping that even if they were hit, they would still be considered a threat. A Yautja would see right through that ruse, I thought!

Next came a video clip titled:

The Netgun

We slowly cut to an alien planet, one not previously shown in any video, where a Yautja was firing a pistol-like weapon at a chicken-like creature. This 'bird' was apparently no direct threat to the much larger predator, but this prey was fast. The Yautja seemed unwilling to chase after this nimble prey or kill it directly with its otherwise deadly weapons – no, it simply fired a net of metal wire at the animal, which was instantly entangled and immobilized.

The animal screamed in pain, for the net was tightly entwined around its body. One might almost think the net dynamically adapted to its target, but this wasn't clearly discernible. The predator closed the short distance to its prey, lifted it to head height with one arm, and analyzed it closely. Sharp claws and a pointed, dangerous beak tried to break through the net and penetrate the face of its tormentor. Naturally, this was utterly unsuccessful; the net actively worked against it.

Less than ten seconds later, the Yautja's curiosity was satisfied; he casually tossed the bundle of nets, animal and all, a few meters away. An old tree stump abruptly stopped the throw, and the still-captured creature cried out again. The immobilization of the "bird" took effect—no further movement was possible. The hunter, however, turned and ran back to a clearing, typing a brief command into his arm-mounted computer. This was the death sentence for the trapped creature, as a mechanism on the net executed an activation sequence and slowly and inexorably tightened. The result was a finely dismembered and filleted piece of meat, which had once been the animal. Not a pleasant death, and as a captured human, one could have guessed what was about to happen.

Another text message appeared:

According to the archives, the netgun is a historical weapon that has been used for over 300 years for the purpose of immobilizing prey. The Yautja likely use it for nostalgic reasons, as similar, laser-based versions have been observed – see the mechanism of the 'ground crawler device'.

The net itself is made of a highly tensile-strength composite material, making it particularly resistant to blades, claws, or teeth of any kind. In the LA incident, one of these weapons was used against a person; however, the person was pinned to a wall inside a building by the device. Hanging there motionless, he was then manually executed with a spear weapon. All of our laboratories in the US examined the remaining piece of the net; however, none were able to definitively analyze its molecular structure. Extraterrestrial, unknown chemical elements prevented this.

The next weapon description followed immediately, initially presented as text:

The Gardening Tool (TGT)

Behind the innocuous name "Garden Tool" (TGT) lies a high-tech, self-floating weapons platform the size of a suitcase, deployed only on special jungle missions with suitable vegetation. Once in a designated Yautja hunting area, the weapon unfolds devices that integrate with the local flora in seconds. As soon as this complex process is complete, the hunters have unprecedented opportunities to utilize the available vegetation.

TGT is effectively able to impose an intelligence and aggression on the plants, enabling them to turn against potential prey animals of the Yautja. Within a radius of approximately 50 meters, natural traps can be constructed that function like spider webs or can immobilize victims with vines. Direct botanical attacks with thorny plant parts are also possible, which can be equally lethal depending on the type of prey.

It is assumed that hunters using this weapon intend to save themselves a time-consuming hunt by artificially restricting the prey's range of movement with TGT. Particularly agile, yet usually no less dangerous, prey often falls victim to this weapon or has its movement severely restricted. The basic functionality of this "garden device" is based on the inoculation of plants with pre-programmed gene sequences and their connection to the main unit, which contains a sophisticated control computer and communication interfaces. Naturally, all hunters participating in a joint hunt can access TGT's real-time data or even take over its control using a wrist-worn computer.

A short video sequence appeared:



A Yautja changed the viewing mode of his mask, which we were connected to via first-person perspective and projector. He accessed the TGT, whereupon a 3D image was displayed with information about a section of terrain. Two further symbols for Yautja were marked on this image at different positions.

Furthermore, a highly sophisticated view displayed the area's flora – with blinking, critical points on various bushes and trees, controllable via a wrist-mounted computer. The plants were shown in purple and could be zoomed in or out as needed. A brief informational text at the plants' interaction points indicated the respective combat options, such as firing thorns, releasing misty pollen, or overgrowing entire sections of the path. The Yautja entered a series of seemingly complex commands, whereupon vines shot out from several plants approximately 40 meters away and branched out extremely densely. A natural barrier – like a futuristic garden fence – blocked the path, making passage impossible for potential prey.

The other two Yautja took up strategic positions and waited for their prey. What it was remained completely unclear. It wasn't long before a faint warning tone sounded from one of the masks, announcing the target's arrival. All the hunters switched to stealth mode; the jungle-like scenery darkened, while a new kind of life returned. Insects and strange, alien "birds" emitted strange songs, no longer able to perceive the threat posed by the hunter squad. But the sounds, only just heard again, fell silent as quickly as they had arisen. A heavy creature made its way noisily through the thicket. The hunters observed it from higher ground, lying almost motionless. The mask display switched back to infrared, making the creature's outline clearer for us viewers. It was a three-legged creature, one of which could also have been a tail. This remained unclear in this mode until the Yautja switched to the real view.

A “jump scare” almost triggered panic in the conference room, so terrifying was the sight of the creature.

The creature walked on two legs; its third limb resembled a tail covered in green spikes, which it used to stabilize its movements. Its exact size was difficult to judge, but for a habitat of this kind, the creature seemed enormous. The real shock, however, came from something else: the animal possessed a very human-like skull with a face that bore a striking resemblance to our own species. This appearance alone exuded both intelligence and aggression, even though the rest of its body was more reminiscent of a wild, powerful beast. The creature had massive, four-pronged claws that could only serve one purpose: killing. One thing was certain: this was no easy prey. The fearsome creature ran toward the fence, passing directly beneath the position of one of our hunters, who continued to watch motionless. When the animal reached the man-made fence and could go no further, it stopped abruptly and paused for a moment.

It raised its skull and – incredibly – lifted its human-like nose upwards, sniffing its surroundings. An extremely unusual sight for a human. This animal was clearly sensing a disguised danger, but couldn't detect it. A signal lit up on the mask display: The hunt was on.

One of the Yautja leaped from its position about 10 meters behind the creature, blocking its retreat. As the hunter hit the ground, a small puddle of water splashed through the air as if by magic, splashing even the distant prey, which still didn't know what was happening. Hissing electric shocks traveled across the Yautja's body—its camouflage was malfunctioning. Apparently, this was part of the plan, because the Yautja issued a command sequence that deactivated its stealth mode. Only when fully visible could the prey realize that something was standing before it.

In a tremendous, jerky movement, it turned toward the danger, almost stood upright, and shrieked a warning that would have instantly sent shivers down your spine. The Yautja appeared unfazed, judging by its posture. The camera perspective shifted to the masked view of another hunter, who had assumed a perfect observation position. The third Yautja, however, seemed to be operating the TGT, because suddenly the area occupied by the two combatants on the ground transformed into a fighting arena, enclosed by a border of vicious thorns from the local flora.

The fighting area now encompassed perhaps only 15 square meters; crossing this boundary would undoubtedly have meant pain, if not death. The creature's all-too-human eyes glanced around only briefly; its intelligence and instinct had already correctly assessed the situation: it was a matter of life and death. In its world, the animal was an apex predator, occupying the top of the food chain. It could not have known that the Yautja was vastly superior to it. Since it was unaware of this—which was perhaps for the best—it attacked the intruder directly with swift movements and its terrifying claws raised high.

The hunter, still under the watchful eyes of the others, waited for the perfect moment, leaped slightly to the side, and let the prey clumsily run into the spikes, unable to slow down in time due to the misjudgment. With loud cries of pain, the animal crashed its upper body into the barbed wire, resulting in bloody wounds. The Yautja activated its "wrist blades" and slowly approached the injured yet furious creature. Before the animal could even get its bearings, the next shock flickered across the conference room screen: the Yautja decapitated the animal with a single, decisive blow, the human-like head flying towards the camera, which represented the mask of the observing Yautja. The astonishment on the severed head's face was clearly visible; it had not expected such an attack. It was a quick death, but it was honorable – apparently it was a test for a still quite young and inexperienced Yautja, who had to be guided and assessed by the two observers.

The mask's translation matrix delivered an impressive performance thanks to its quantum algorithms, because the translation was simply: PASSED!

The video clip faded out. Even before the VLC player's pause symbol appeared on the screen, the adjutant jumped up from his chair and shouted the following words in a voice full of conviction and arrogance:

"Damn it, finally! You're all finally showing a real reaction to this presentation, it was unbearable any longer! You should all be scared shitless, because I can tell you one thing: I am scared shitless. And believe me, when this Yau…!"

A loud "Shut up!" from the general immediately ended the adjutant's sentence, followed by a punch to the shoulder. Intimidated and clutching his shoulder with his other hand, the adjutant slumped back into his rickety office chair. The general, however, announced another 15-minute recess, apparently now deeming it necessary.

On my way to the smoking room, I wondered how the adjutant would have finished his sentence. Was something being kept from us? I figured this entire presentation had already been a disclosure of top-secret information—so concealing further facts hardly made sense, did it? Oh, how wrong I was again.

Without addressing the incident before the break, the general restarted the video player, and another title slowly faded in. As it became fully visible, something happened that the general and his adjutant clearly hadn't anticipated: a soft laugh rippled through the audience. I couldn't help but smile—partly because of the name of the weapon description that was about to follow, and partly because of the two men's astonished expressions. Having worked with military personnel for a long time, I knew that humor wasn't exactly one of their strong suits.

Portable Meat Grinder - (Long-Distance Portable Meat Grinder)

First, another text overlay appeared, which was read aloud by a voice-over narrator:

"The name of this weapon was chosen by one of our analysts for extraterrestrial weapons systems in recognition of a German YouTuber, Mr. J. Sprave. Since the term was first used in..."

Once the world was in the country, we could no longer prevent its establishment as the standard name for this weapon. However, since the weapon was actually conceived by the Yautja as a kind of "meat grinder,"

"As you will soon see, this description is extremely accurate."





A video clip appeared:

Pitch-black cave walls were barely visible before our Yautja decided to switch to a kind of "pred-tech view." With a technical whir, the surroundings suddenly became brightly lit, and we were indeed in a sprawling, subterranean cave system. It seemed the Yautja had a rather unusual mission for the species living there; the translation matrix provided terms like "extermination," "herd extermination," and "low-level prey."

At that point, these were truly just words that no one in the room understood. That was about to change, however: After the hunter projected a virtual map of the extensive cave system onto his mask display, he began to move, sometimes in a crouched position. His destination was a large cavity deep within the system, accessible only through a single entrance. I suspected it might be some kind of royal chamber, like those built by insects on Earth, but even that was pure speculation at this stage. It took a while for the Yautja to approach the entrance tunnel. He abruptly stopped, turned around, and placed a vicious-looking device with six barrels on the ground, at which point a small tripod automatically rose and aimed the weapon.

A loud warning signal sounded inside the mask as the weapon activated on command. The hunter respectfully stepped behind the device and remained in an observer position. With a tap of his finger, he activated his stealth mode and deactivated the "meat grinder's" automatic safety mechanism. The weapon acknowledged this action with a deep rumble, while three extremely powerful aiming lasers began their work. A beautiful yet awe-inspiring red light, in the form of three bright beams, illuminated the darkness of this oppressive place, from which one would normally only want to escape.

A Yautja is emotionally indifferent to the atmosphere of his surroundings; tactical considerations, however, are not. Simultaneously with the deactivation of the safety functions, a weapon control display appeared on the hunter's screen, as the meat grinder presumably lacks its own artificial intelligence. The Yautja scrolled through a menu of prey icons, supplemented by various size specifications and threat levels. He unerringly selected an icon depicting some kind of arachnid. The indicated size was considerable—at least by human standards—as these creatures were said to be approximately 40 centimeters tall. After this selection, the operational computer displayed another menu to determine the type of ammunition. Here, too, the Yautja had a precise idea: he selected the offered plasma shrapnel ammunition.

Because these decisions were made so quickly, there wasn't much to see of the weapon selection process. Besides some terrifying, familiar creatures, I only recognized more distorted icons in the menu that I couldn't identify. In the ammunition menu, however, I thought I spotted liquid ammo, gas cartridges, and some extremely strange types of bullets, but I wasn't sure. I didn't want to ask the general to rewind the video and play it back in slow motion—we'd already been stuck in that room for a damn long time.

The Yautja had now completed all the preparatory work; the weapon once again confirmed its operational readiness. The hunt—or rather, the massacre with the "meat grinder"—could begin. To lure out the prey, the hunter typed further commands into his arm computer. These were directed to his spaceship in orbit around the planet, which fired a plasma penetrator at the target coordinates of the underground cavity. Interestingly, communication through meters of rock posed no problem for the spaceship; there were no interferences or echoes, as one might have expected. Another example of absolute technological superiority.

It took about a minute, then the entire cave system shook; dust, dirt, and earth trickled from the tunnel ceilings. The Yautja was clearly aware of this; he didn't even flinch and waited for what was to come. The "meat grinder" itself recalibrated itself within seconds after the tremor, using its tripod legs – a truly fascinating process.

I myself noticed something strange that wasn't mentioned in the video: After the weapon from orbit impacted, shimmering, greenish-blue electrical discharge flashes appeared on the tunnel walls, glowing briefly before disappearing. The weapon must have injected enormous energy into the ground to cause something like that. Surely the Yautja could have destroyed the entire cave system from space—technologically, they certainly had the capability—but for some reason, they felt the need to personally verify the destruction of their prey. The sand stopped trickling; a brief silence fell. Then—yes, then

Something ominous was approaching.

What was just stirred up? What was the purpose of all this enormous effort?

A sound of thousands of tiny legs rapidly approaching brought the realization: the prey symbol on the mask had been completely misinterpreted by the Yautja—and by us in the conference room. Sure, we had certain expectations, but the Yautja? I could only explain such an obvious misjudgment of the prey by assuming that this species wasn't yet stored in the operating computer and the mask's database; anything else made no sense to me. Well, instead of the targeted "arachnids," the first specimens of the true prey entered the detection range of the weapon and thus also of the mask—a shock to everyone present in the room!

The weapon's defense perimeter was set at approximately 50 meters; this left ample time to take a closer look at the onrushing biomass of thousands of bodies. Startled and panicking creatures, resembling earth fleas, approached at a steady, high speed. A poor description, but I couldn't think of another comparison. These creatures possessed two long, spring-loaded limbs, which—by the standards of earth fleas—could easily have propelled them over distances of an estimated 80 to 100 meters. The extraterrestrial "fleas" were light brown, about 40 centimeters long, and had white, menacing-looking eyes that could truly inspire fear. The large stinger at the end of their mouths only added to the effect.

I couldn't imagine what creature such a massive "flea" could possibly latch onto as a parasite without killing it instantly. It had to be an even more gigantic creature, towering over all species I'd ever seen before—even the "primate from hell." And these things didn't come alone; it was as if thousands of animals were trying to escape through the narrow tunnel at once, showing no regard for one another. The tunnel and cave walls were far from smooth; they had cracks along the sides, depressions in the ground, and in some places, sharp-edged rock formations jutting into the path. And so it happened, thanks to the excellent optical properties of our hunter's mask, that we could see crushed prey from a great distance, ground to dust against the walls by the sheer mass of the creatures. A wave of gruesome beasts, reminiscent of a natural disaster, surged out of the cave—straight toward the "meat grinder." When the pre-programmed defense perimeter was breached, the weapon finally went into action:

First, a high-pitched beeping sound echoed through the entire cave system—one could have sworn it was audible even inside the spaceship. A second later, before the beep had even faded, the red targeting lasers realigned themselves, and a hatch at the bottom of the "meat grinder" opened. Immediately, the weapon began filleting the first charging creatures into bloody pieces: Massive bursts of fragmented plasma blasts seemingly changed shape at random as they approached their targets. Each shot—and the weapon had a similar rate of fire to our typical MG3 machine gun—hit at least 20 to 30 attackers simultaneously. Fountains of blood and shreds of flesh were hurled backward in the narrow tunnel, coating the creatures that followed, making their appearance even more gruesome.

This weapon truly deserved its name, even if it was probably only intended as a nickname at first. The Yautja seemed excited; at a safe distance behind the muzzle, it clearly enjoyed the show – a light, satisfied growl could be heard.

The tunnel walls had already taken on a bloody hue over a considerable distance – an indication of the extremely high number of fleeing insects. The panic of these creatures must have been so great that they didn't even consider retreating, especially since this would have been virtually impossible given the speed of their attack and the sheer mass of their bodies.

The "Meat Grinder" fired and fired with incredible precision. The weapon showed no signs of overheating, malfunctions, or dwindling ammunition. Had it been able to continuously lock onto additional targets, it would likely have continued firing in that tunnel for hundreds of years. The shrapnel ammunition used, with its self-adjusting plasma fragments, was presumably based on the same energy source that powers the previously known shoulder-mounted cannons. Indeed, many of their energy systems—perhaps even the spaceship's propulsion systems—utilize this form of energy, which is still completely unknown to us. In the case of the Meat Grinder, however, this source appeared to be virtually inexhaustible, or at least massively over-engineered.

The energy output was displayed on the screen, once again thanks to the translation matrix. If this value was indeed correct—that is, if there were no translation or even calculation errors—then I was one of the few in the room who realized we had another problem. The displayed value for the weapon was:10 GigajoulesFor those less experienced, this would have meant:

This is equivalent to the energy produced every second by ten nuclear power plants with a combined output of ten gigawatts. An incredible output, beyond our capabilities! Considering the sheer size of the "meat grinder," it's practically impossible from a physical standpoint.
– but the opposite is true: The Yautja apparently possess this technology.

The noise level in the tunnel steadily decreased; fewer and fewer animals flooded the tube, only to be torn to pieces. The last few finally stopped—only they could do so without risking being pushed in from behind. That was the signal for our hunter: he deactivated the "meat grinder," whereupon another loud all-clear signal sounded. The aiming lasers went out, and the tripod legs retracted completely. A small carrying handle popped out from the top of the weapon, but this invitation was simply ignored by our hunter. He had no intention of leaving but set off into the large cavity. His intention was clear: he presumably wanted to kill the remaining animals. This was confirmed when, on his way through the blood-smeared tunnel, he drew a spear to fend off and kill the creatures leaping at him with a single, swift blow.

Upon reaching the large chamber, another object of desire lurked: a trophy one wouldn't have expected to find in this place. Apparently, the "fleas" had a hierarchical structure, as a kind of insect queen lay in the center of the cavern. However, she posed no immediate threat, since she too had been thrown into a deep panic by the attack.

In my mistaken assumption that the creature might be a worthwhile trophy, I couldn't have been more wrong: The Yautja made no effort whatsoever to provoke a fight. On the contrary, it simply walked past her, inspecting the rear of the chamber just to make sure it hadn't missed any targets. Then it prepared to leave the scene, but not before tossing a smart mine near the queen. It quickened its pace and returned to the spot where the "meat grinder" awaited it. This time, the carrying handle did its job.

Just before reaching the cave exit, the Yautja activated the mine. The insect queen suddenly reappeared on the mask display; it appeared she too was now making her way laboriously toward the exit. In the short time our hunter had needed for the return journey, however, she had barely advanced ten meters. She just reached the "Tunnel of Blood," but that was the end of it. The mine closed the distance to her in a flash and detonated. Nothing in this chamber and the adjacent system could have survived.

Although the hunter was already at a safe distance, he felt the ground tremble. Another growl could be heard. The mission was accomplished!

The sheer brutality of this weapon, conveyed via the projector, shocked some of our conference participants. I myself, however, felt little sympathy for the victims; after all, I work in the arms industry and am well aware of the consequences of using such systems.

The general spoke again:

"The 'meat grinder' – yes, the name says it all – was designed by the Yautja as a stationary weapon. This can be used to one's advantage, provided one recognizes potential ambushes by this species in time. In a military context, a cave system should therefore be checked for such a weapon in advance, for example by an advance guard. In open terrain, however, the Yautja use a type of weapon that personally gives me far more cause for concern. But see for yourself."

As usual, another video started, and I was extremely curious to hear what the general had to say. This time, there was only a text overlay to read:

Combat drones

The use of drones has been documented multiple times using data stored within the biomask, although not all Yautja hunters utilize this technology and its advantages. This technology may only be available to certain ranks within the clan structures; however, there is no confirmed information on this yet. Unlike In terrestrial systems, the Yautja do not make a strict separation between reconnaissance and combat drones – without exception, all detected units also functioned as weapon delivery systems.

The different types of this weapon category once again reveal a high technology beyond Our imagination is limited, covering a broad tactical spectrum of applications. The integration of previously unknown high-performance energy cells, artificial intelligence, real-time communication modules, and antigravity propulsion systems has been observed in many drones. The payload can apparently be modified or varied: In the extracted video clip D 301.5, for example, a An armed combat drone with the additional "Health Kit" modification, designed for providing medical support on large battlefields, can be seen. Video E 145.2 shows the "Energy Cell" modification, developed for the autonomous recharging of equipment during stationary operations. Most direct attacks on Yautja drones were countered by the integrated AI effectively prevents this. So far, the mask's memory contains no evidence of one. successful takedown of such a system.

The adjutant added:

"The drone technology of this species is undoubtedly highly advanced. To counter these agile and extremely robust aircraft, we must focus on their self-protective features—such as the plasma armor structure—as well as potential jamming signals, without underestimating their artificial intelligence. Some members of our research department believe that the Yautja primarily use drones as combat support technology, rather than employing them directly to engage targets. They infer this from the fact that direct destruction by machines is likely considered 'dishonorable' in Yautja culture."

"However, there is no evidence for this so far."

Our material collected so far is limited: Apart from the video showing the protection of a landed spacecraft from insects – you surely remember the scene with the hot engines – no combat actions by these aircraft could be observed in seven other documented scenarios. This leads to only one conclusion: While the drones are armed and therefore incredibly dangerous, we currently know very little about their actual usage patterns.

Great, I thought: If the smart disc doesn't kill you, then these things will – although you'll probably already have one of those dangerous spears stuck in your gut! Is it too late to change careers?

My thoughts were interrupted by another text message that the adjutant had simply started via the projector:

Self-Destruct Device (SDD)

This device is integrated into the arm computer of every Yautja hunter. As the name suggests, its primary function is to protect the hunter from a deadly threat in hopeless situations.
to preserve capture or to function as a portable additional plasma bomb.

The information stored in the mask archive about the explosive power of the SDD is incomplete. However, it can be assumed that the explosive effect is freely scalable and possesses enormous destructive potential, the full extent of which we are probably not yet aware of.
The explosion, documented in 1987, which Major Schaefer and the biomask barely survived, was triggered by a wounded and incapacitated Yautja using an alien countdown timer.
The Major recognized this technological process and got himself to safety in time.
to safety, sustaining further injuries during his escape.

The explosion radius, later analyzed by a reconnaissance team, was – consistent with the statements in the major's interview – an area of three to four New York City blocks.
However, it is suspected that this did not yet represent the system's maximum range.
The device illustrates the willpower and social structure of this species: A capture Dying to an enemy or even one's own prey constitutes a blatant violation of the Yautja code of honor. Self-destruction is always preferable to "losing face," which is why Fighting this enemy has become massively more difficult.

“Speaking of combat: Is an attack imminent?” asked a voice from the darkened presentation room.

The adjutant seemed somewhat annoyed by the question, but the general took over the answer:

"We don't know! However—and this makes a rapid defense strategy more necessary than ever—NASA has detected several flying objects in our outer solar system. The quality of the Hubble transmissions is too imprecise to definitively confirm these contacts. It could even be that another species is on its way to us; we probably won't know for sure for about three weeks. Currently, NASA scientists are trying to establish an improvised defense corridor on the moon, based on conventional thermonuclear warheads and launching systems. But even if the launch windows were optimal and the facilities were installed on the moon, achieving an effect on the target would still be a shot in the dark. But what are we supposed to do? We have to do something!"

I did a facepalm, which the adjutant noticed. He gave me another very angry look – hehe.

The general was unaware of this, as he was too focused on delivering what was likely his final message:

"All of you in this room are now informed and know the general facts!"

I already had a feeling what was going to happen next, because all of a sudden the door to the conference room opened and two dashing US Marines armed with rifles walked in.

"They will now be taken individually to assigned quarters where they will spend the next three months to develop constructive defense proposals."

An uneasy murmur rippled through the room.

"All your relatives were informed under false pretenses; the US Army takes good care of its personnel. You in the back: your mother, who requires care, has already moved into a five-star nursing home and is doing well there. For everyone else in this room, daycare places have been paid for, mail is being collected, and all pending crises will be resolved—I promise you that! You will understand that all communication with the outside world is prohibited from now on. Do not attempt to use your cell phones; we have installed signal jammers on every floor anyway. Any violation will be severely punished, because it is necessary!"

Astonishment, sorrow, or dismay were written on the faces. I myself was, of course, also horrified, because I already miss my wife. Shortly before the first person was to be taken to their bunker quarters, the adjutant spoke again:

"You will be notified and picked up at mealtimes. In your rooms, you will find drinks and a desk with an encrypted laptop. The passwords are like the species whose names you have heard and read so often today. On the user interface, you will also find a detailed Word document with further information about our common enemy. Work through this document thoroughly and diligently; our future may depend on it."

A reunion is scheduled in this room in three days; please submit your initial findings, assessments, or recommendations by then. Should the situation in the solar system change, we will inform you immediately. Dr. Assoudie, please escort the two gentlemen first! Oh, and one more thing: Do not attempt to leave this floor of the bunker—this would trigger an immediate alarm!

I quickly came to terms with the situation and made sure I had enough cigarettes during the short wait – man, this damn addiction! Luckily, my wish was granted.

There I sat: alone in a tiny 20-square-meter room, furnished with a bed, desk, and chair. The toilet was integrated into a cupboard and surprisingly comfortable, with an extractor fan and a rotating lid. Showers were only available at the end of a corridor, but that was okay—at least it gave you some fresh air. We weren't locked in our quarters, but the elevator door was definitely the end of the line; that much was clear.

Okay, one more cigarette – this time in the room – and then off to the laptop. The more additional information I had, the better for me, I thought. At least that's what I told myself after today; otherwise, I'm sure I would have given up already. Admittedly, though, I was also incredibly eager to see this document.

The laptop was from a Chinese brand, which cheered me up a bit. "There are no bugs in it, I promise!" the Chinese dealer must have said with a smile as he handed over the sales order for 100,000 units to the US Army – hehe. Okay, the thing was made of metal, looked pretty robust and martial, but a Yautja would surely have laughed himself to tears if he'd had to use such a thing. Assuming, of course, that the concept of laughter, humor, or tears was at all familiar to this species. Perhaps the document could enlighten me in this regard, who knows?

"Thanks SSD – booting up an operating system is really fast now," was my first thought after switching it on. The desktop background was adorned with a Windows logo, but from a version I didn't recognize. That's saying something, because, due to my profession, I'm naturally quite familiar with this stuff. So, a click on the Registry Editor and let's see what we've got. I'm a security fanatic, in case that wasn't obvious. Deep in the system, I found a label: WINDOWS OMEGA 44 Vers.: 3.4b. Okay, that must be the latest version – it'll probably only be released in 100 years, if not later. Oh well, I was here for the document; so a quick double-click and off I went:

A US Army Word Reader opened instantly, and the following was displayed as the cover page heading:



US Army

Project: Blue Book 2020

Yautja Files

© Research Team of Leader Prof. Dr. M. Pilgram

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs):

Prof. Dr. hc Thorsten Kumke (Astrophysics / Clearance 5), Dr. Alistair Sterling (Cryptography / Clearance 4), Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Matthias von Kleist (Quantum Mechanics / Clearance 5), Dr. med. Sarah Montgomery (Virology / Clearance 3), Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hiroshi Tanaka (Robotics / Clearance 4), Dr. Julian Thorne (Neuropsychology / Clearance 5), Prof. Dr. Maren Kumke (Genetics / Clearance 4), Dr. Arthur Penhaligon (Archaeology / Clearance 2), Prof. Dr. phil. Clara Schoenfeld (Sociolinguistics / Clearance 3), Dr. Marcus Vane (Internal Revenue Service (IRS)) / Clearance 5), Prof. Dr. Jonathan Aris (Particle Physics / Clearance 5), Dr. Beatrice Solano (Biochemistry / Clearance 4), Prof. Dr. Lawrence Sterling (Cybernetics / Clearance 5), Dr. rer. pole. Viktor Orlow (Geopolitics / Clearance 3), Prof. Dr. Sofia Lindholm (Marine Biology / Clearance 2), Dr. sc. technical Thomas Ward (Materials Research / Clearance 4), Prof. Dr. Fiona Gallagher (Pharmacology/ Clearance 3), Dr. Evelyn Vance (Structural Geology / Clearance 5), Prof. Dr. Cedric Diggory (Forensics/ Clearance 4), Dr. Noah Sinclair (Artificial Intelligence / Clearance 5

After that, there was a table of contents, but with a note about subsequent changes. Some of the texts were a mix of German and English translations; presumably, each "expert" received a document in their native language—at least, that's how it seemed to me. Whether that was always such a good decision is debatable. Fortunately, I could understand both languages.

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+ Space Vessels – Overview of Types, Technical Descriptions

+ Weapons classification – Weapons (Operational Classification)

+ Bestiary / Specimen Catalog / Threat Level Analysis / + Civilizations (identified)

+ Code of Honor / History – Useful Cases for Military Strategies

+ Tactical Dossier – Analysis of Female Phenotypes of the Species Yautja

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+ Mixed Output of Members – Assessments of specific issues

+ Statements – Opinions of members of the research team

+ Picture Portfolio – Visualization of various archive images (mask extraction)

Note:

All information presented here was compiled from various reports and analyzes by the participating research groups. The timeline for this was four weeks (POV) and is not exhaustive.

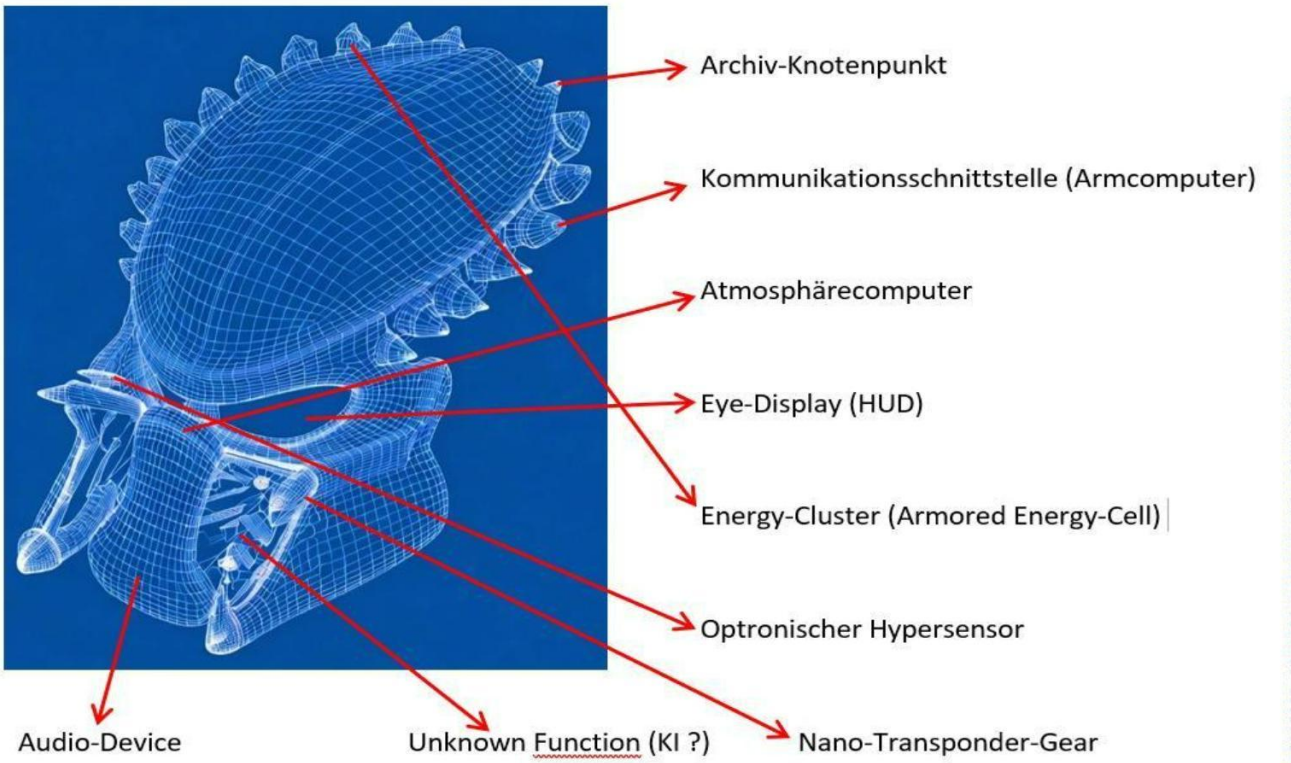
Additional information:

All information presented here was compiled from various reports and analyses by the participating research groups. The timeline for this was four weeks (point of view) and does not claim to be exhaustive.

Dr. Jane Fosters, Staff - Area 49

Introduction to the Biomask – Archive and Data Forensics

CT/MRI evaluation – Phase 2



Unsorted Conclusions (as of 2023)

- Storage capacity: 10,000 petabytes (estimated)
- Information analyzed: 48% (estimated)
- User data load: 56% (estimated)
- Interfaces used: Bidirectional optical waveguides, frequency modulation matrix, quantum isolator, Pred-Tech compensator, radiometry, period diffusion, unknown additional sensors, nanofusion core
- Material analysis: unknown composition (87%) / Oganesson-based composite materials

This piece of equipment has undergone various naming processes since its discovery, including the following official names: Bio-Mask, Bio-Helmet, Yautja-Mask, or simply Mask in connection with the activities of individual teams.

The mask originally had tube-like hoses (codename: Rastafari) attached to the upper part, which were operated by the Beta group.pe (Section 93) were mistakenly and forcibly removed. The conducting scientist, Dr. Marcus Vane He was lobotomized in June 1995 as a result.

Note: During the search of Dr. Marcus Vane The continuations were found, Presumably, these were meant to be smuggled past security and sold. The violent separation was a false assumption; the Rastafarians have a sophisticated Click'N-Point system. The mask was completely reassembled.

Edited by Sergeant D. Orkbuzz, MP / Dr. H. Palsberger, Research Team 93

The analysis of Codename: Rastafari is not yet complete; initial assumptions suggest the use of real-time sensors (atmospheric) but it could also be ritual cosmetics. The investigation has third-level priority.

Additional notes:

The mask was cleaned under a protective atmosphere; the substances used had a pH value of (negative).decad logarithm of hydrogen ion activity) of 7.2.

The establishment of a computer algorithm in ASCII format failed repeatedly. (Error unknown)

Current location of the mask: Area 49 / Schennings Woodland / Sub-Level 17

Warning: Technical Sheet is Clearance Level 3 and upper!

I suspected as much; a more detailed technical description of the mask was available, but these are just "basic information." I bet they've amassed over 2,000 pages of material on this piece of equipment in the lab; it was no different with my own weapons system developments. Since it's extraterrestrial technology, 100,000 pages or more are conceivable; after all, they've had the mask for quite some time. Perhaps I can still get access to it; that would be very welcome. Well, I'll take what I can get.

Quantum algorithm – Triangulation of a translation matrix

Only through the validation of the following algorithms was it possible to create a translation matrix and triangulate the data forensics:

Short's algorithm

This algorithm can factor large numbers into their prime factors, which is extremely time-consuming for conventional computers. It threatens cryptographic methods that rely on the difficulty of this problem.

Grover algorithm

Enables searching in a database with entries in approximately...  steps,during a

A classic computer requires an average of  steps.

Deutsch-Jozsa algorithm

A basic algorithm that shows that a quantum computer can evaluate a specific function in just one step, while a classical computer needs several attempts.

Quantum simulation (e.g. VQE - Variational Quantum Eigensolver)

It is used to simulate molecules and materials, for example to develop new efficiency anomalies in explosive structures.

Quantum optimization (e.g. QAOA - Quantum Approximate Optimization Algorithm)

Finds optimal solutions for rational challenges, such as planetary dating on the AE scale.

Note:

The quantum computer (Nighthawk - V.11), installed by IBM in Area 45 in 2023, was able to establish access to the extraterrestrial object (mask) in March of that year using probability calculations. The main challenge beforehand was the construction of an adapter (Cable Flashspeed-Connector II) to ensure connectivity. Using the LC/APC single-mode fiber optic cable, this problem was solved by combining the computing power of the two supercomputers (Frontier/Aurora). The successful analysis after the connection was established revealed the presence of an archive memory block, which immediately became the top-priority target of the Blue Book.

Human-Yautja Interface Design – Reorganization of Viewing Modes

After decoding the encryption sequences (Decryption Rules) using alien technology, an AI-powered translation matrix was installed at the operating system level. Due to the alien syntax, this matrix is sometimes highly error-prone. The analysis of the Yautja symbolism is an ongoing process that is continuously improved through machine learning and accelerates progress in understanding the linguistic and technological culture. By early 2024, a first fully functional "human-Yautja interface" had been developed, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the mask archive.

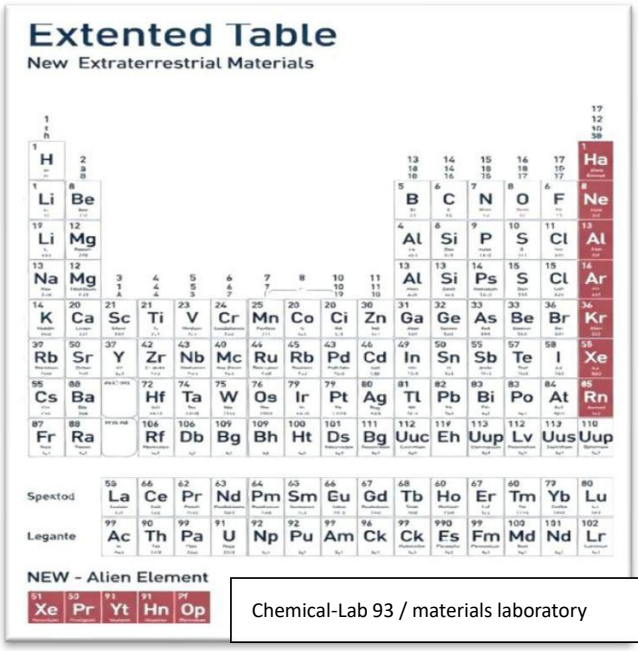
Technical note:

Based on the statements of the test subject, "Major Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer," the entity was able to perceive heat signatures that were filtered through the bio-helmet and transmitted to the wearer. This statement was verified and found to be plausible. This finding led to the further assumption that additional vision modes of the mask might be discovered and potentially explored. A reorganization of this technical specification became necessary and was implemented in the operating system under the app tool "Sight-Calculator."

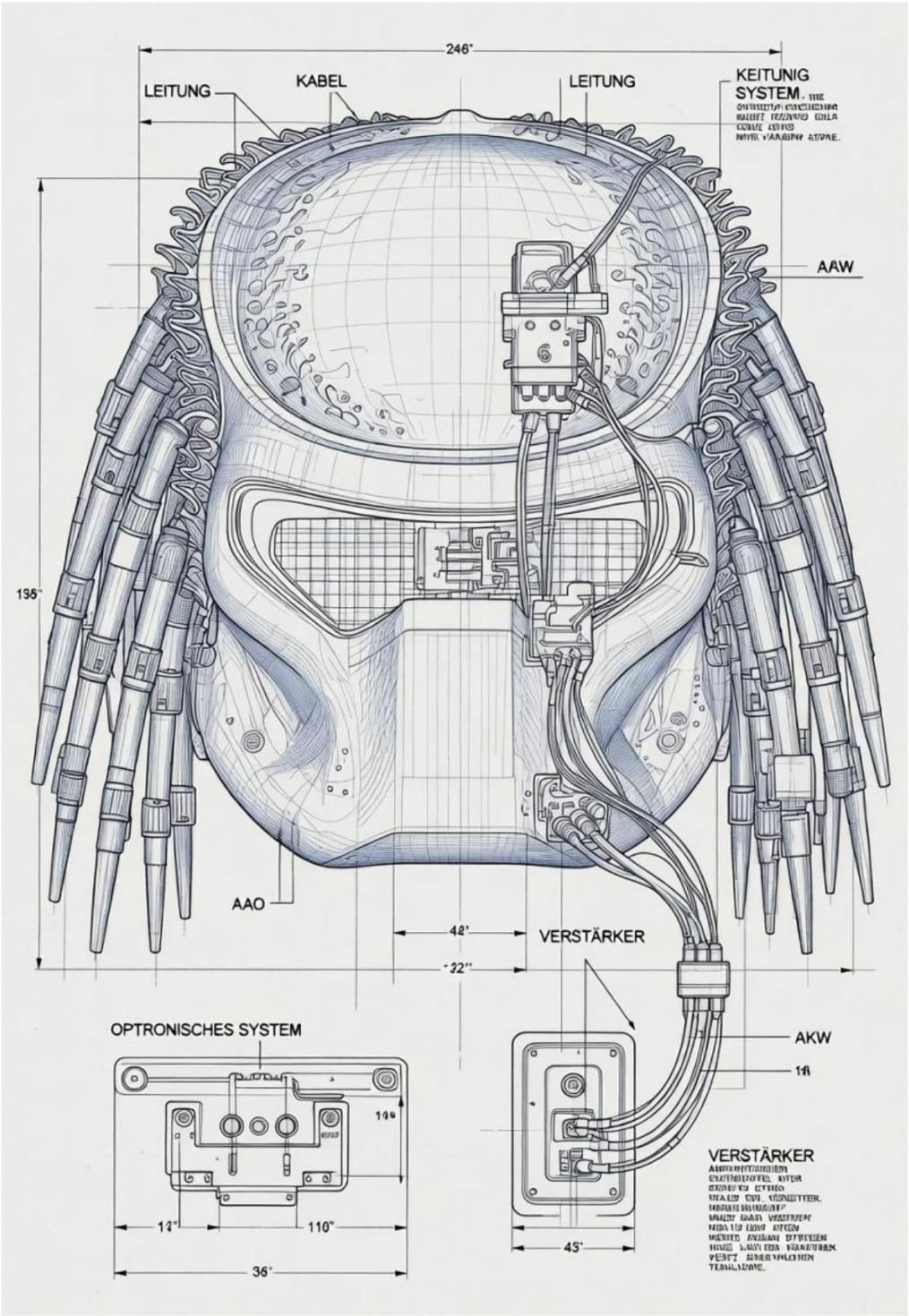
Update note:

During the memory analysis, several optronic vision modes of the Yautja species were classified and confirmed. A compilation can be found in the laboratory (Area 49).

Material analysis (cam system):



Chemical-Lab 93 / materials laboratory



Based on the available documents and the video clips I'd already reviewed, I still only had a vague idea of the possibilities of this optronics. I thought that the longer the investigation into the mask's properties was ongoing, the more details would be expected and already described here, but it seems there's another technical description under wraps. That's rather inconvenient, because the mask is a masterpiece of camera technology, lens technology, real-time sensors, and so much more. I reckon if I could somehow replicate it, we'd be a step further along.

Habitat Information – NASA Mapping Analyses and Planetary Models

The following section lists and evaluates the analyzed mapping and planet identifications of the most important Yautja planets from the Masken Archive. Hunting planets were deliberately excluded, as their number would exceed the scope of this analysis. The conclusions presented here were developed and combined using field units comprised of astronomers (NASA), exobiologists, and geologists. No claim is made to completeness, realism, or mathematical-physical accuracy. Please note that the likely differentiation potential of this list is only approximately 40%.

The names of the planets were derived from the Yautja terms in the archive, or supplemented by the NASA team where information was missing.

1. Yautja Prime (Homeworld)

Brief description:

The Yautja species originates from a world quite hostile to humans. Most of the dominant industry lies beneath the planet's surface; agriculture has not been discovered. Some Yautja live in clan communities scattered throughout the desert, within fortified rock faces, crevices, and high-tech sites, similar to Earth villages. All these settlements feature landing bays for speeders and small spacecraft. Large urban complexes are suspected to exist underground, but have not yet been confirmed. Text entries on the mask only confirm the presence of vast industrial sites beneath the planet's equatorial regions, constructed underground due to the climate. The logistical access points, in the form of spaceports, employ sophisticated cloaking technology. Departing and arriving cargo ships only become visible upon leaving or entering the exosphere (the boundary to outer space), with departing ships immediately activating their own cloaking technology.

Climate:A binary or trinary star system (two or three suns) results in a permanently hot and dry climate with only short nights. However, there are also extremely humid, tropical jungle biomes with gigantic trees.

Distance:The planet is located approximately 27,162 light-years from Earth.

*** Update Notes ***

New findings reveal further unique features of Yautja Prime:

- Highly efficient reconnaissance and weapons satellites are installed in planetary orbit.

- The Yautja solar system is monitored via outposts on moons and planets, as well as through routine patrols by autonomous flight units.

- Basically, the Yautja territory is located far away from other solar systems.

*** End of Update ***

With another cigarette in my hand, I pondered the description of this hunter species' home planet; it seemed so logical to me. We have superior aliens who apparently don't seek contact with other worlds, at least not in the conventional sense.

They're transforming their system into a fortress to quickly identify intruders and protect themselves, by human standards. Conversely, this most likely means the Yautjas have already been attacked; otherwise, these protective measures would probably have been unnecessary. The Yautjas' behavior would likely be met with resistance from most intelligent civilizations in the universe, as presumably no one wants to be slaughtered and displayed as a trophy. Interestingly, this fact seems to have escaped the researchers' notice so far; at least, I haven't found any record of it, neither in the video clips nor in the existing entries in this document. Well, perhaps something will come up on this topic in the future, but I should definitely bring this up at the next meeting.

2. Okunzies CordpY

Brief description:

This planet contains various low-intelligence, dangerous prey animals that can be used for training purposes.

Climate:Jungle sections, swamp landscapes and desert sections.

Distance:unknown, presumably in the vicinity of Yautja Prime

*** Update Notes ***

According to the archives, breeding stations are installed on Okunzies CordpY to maintain a balance of fauna. These automated systems are only checked and maintained by the hunters present during hunts.

The construction of combat arenas near the stations was also mentioned.

*** End of Update ***

3. Game Preserve Planet

Brief description:

This planet (or moon) apparently serves specifically for ritual hunts, in which prey from other worlds is released.

Climate:The climate is hot and humid. A striking feature is the extremely long days and seasons; the sun seems to barely move for hours at a time. The surface is almost entirely covered by dense jungle, similar to the Amazon, but home to far more dangerous plants and more toxic neurotoxins.

Distance:The exact position is unknown. Constellations have not yet been verified.

*** Update Notes ***

The "prey" is anesthetized and transported to the planet in a kind of high-tech transport box or cage, where it is then dropped by parachute. Some of the hunted specimens do not survive these landings, but presumably these losses were factored in for an upcoming hunt. In the video archive (number232.1)One such unforeseen event was recorded, in which a drop container attached to a parachute failed to open after a safe landing due to a malfunction. The trapped prey died a painful death without food or fluids.

The container was only visited by a Yautja approximately four months after it was dropped, without him having explicitly sought it out. The victim itself was presumably a carnivore; more precise analyses were not possible.

*** End of Update ***

It struck me that the concept of releasing different species on a planet to hunt might greatly enhance the thrill of the hunt. Multiple challenges requiring particular vigilance regarding the prey's abilities, as well as new tactical situations, would likely make the trophy seem more "glorious."

4. Eitune

Brief description:

The mask's data storage contains a wealth of information about this planet, some of which has been further encrypted. The inhabitants of Eitune are referred to as Amengi and are said to resemble intelligent insects. In another fragmented text file within the storage, the words "invasion, slave, rebellion, and weapons" were conspicuously highlighted; no meaningful interpretation of this is currently possible.

Climate: No records available

Distance:unknown

*** Update Notes ***

The planet Eitune is now under a priority search level of 2!

*** End of Update ***

Okay, that last note made me a bit uneasy. Why was this planet prioritized? In my experience, there can only be a few reasons; one would be preparation for contact with this species—if that's even possible—simply because we probably have a common enemy. That's all pure speculation, though, but I have a gut feeling about it.

5. Genna

Brief description:

According to data analysis, this planet is located near Yautja Prime. It is considered a place of refuge and exile, which could also be described as a penal planet. Yautja who have brought shame upon their race—whether through the use of dishonorable weapons (The Dishonorable Capsule) or the collection of inferior trophies—are mostly sent there.

Climate:A highly hostile planet with only a few survival options in select habitats.

Distance:Approximately: 27,198 light-years from Earth

*** Update Notes ***

According to textual analyses, the survival rate of exiled Yautja is a maximum of 3%, a figure that, extrapolated, should amount to 0.01% for human existences.

*** End of Update ***

Wow, a penal planet with harsh conditions, even for the Yautja? Not a good tourist destination, and in the event of a conflict, probably completely irrelevant.

Hunting Grounds – Yautja Operational Areas

The object's data storage (mask) contains a large number of location points, maps, and route profiles in the universe. Our observations so far have yielded no significant results within the chaos of this dataset, as we lack the necessary reference points. The few coordinates referenced to Earth also offer little opportunity for conclusions of any tactical use. The hunting grounds of the Yautja race are presumably scattered across entire galaxies, to an unknown extent. However, one insight has been gleaned: after each successful hunting mission, the hunters return to their homeworld (Yautja Prime). The reason for this behavior remains unclear, especially since the resource consumption for faster-than-light travel is likely to be extremely high.

*** Update Notes ***

The records were supplemented with later extractions from the mask, which show logistical autonomous cargo routes to the home planet at regular intervals, see “Technical Data Sheet 34b”.

*** End of Update ***

One thing you have to give the US Army credit for: its personnel are sometimes very meticulous in processing and creating documentation. With some of my former business partners in Europe, an academically rigorous approach to work wasn't exactly a priority, so I'm particularly pleased about this, even though it's frightening news.

Space Vessels – Overview of Types, Technical Descriptions

The following spaceship specifications and type classes were found in the bio-helmet's data storage:

Mothership - (Jag'd'dja Atoll)



Description:

A mothership houses hundreds of Yautja for planetary-scale mobilization. It serves as a troop and supply transport when needed, as well as a highly effective command post. This type of vessel is equipped with beam weapons, orbital weapon systems, and long-range plasma pedelecs. Its combat power is exceptionally considerable, though it varies from ship to ship. This is due to the strict leadership of such a vessel, as only the oldest Yautja (Elders) from various clans and with differing preferences are permitted to assume command. Each mothership possesses a powerful faster-than-light drive, the details of which have not yet been specified.

Scout ships - (scout ships)



Description:

Smaller, more maneuverable ships used by individual hunters or small hunting parties. They possess advanced cloaking devices to penetrate planetary atmospheres undetected. This type of ship is typically equipped with force fields and portal generators, providing strategic advantages. Despite their smaller size, their propulsion performance is on par with a mothership, and in some cases (long-distance scouts) even superior.

Drop Pods - Landing Capsules



Description:

Slim capsules, often black or colored in clan colors, that bring a single fighter directly from orbit to the planet's surface.

They can withstand extreme entry speeds and decelerate shortly before impact using thrusters or stabilizers.

The landing capsules are unarmed and, despite their robust construction, vulnerable. Records document their complete destruction during operations against intelligent civilizations.

Game Preserve Ships



Description:

Large transport ships gather prey from across the galaxy and release them onto designated hunting planets. This type of ship is also used as a freighter and for routine operations within its own solar system. The long-range version is equipped with the most advanced engines to meet tight deadlines.

Hover Speeders – Planetary Gliders and other types



Description:

This glider serves as a rapid means of transport across rough terrain and reflects the biomechanical workings of Yautja technology. The glider utilizes zero-point energy (!) and gravity control to hover above the ground. Forward thrust is provided by eclysoid, swiveling plasma thrusters located on the sides and rear. Typically, there are various other versions of this type, such as the "Blade Fighter" with clan decorations or "Glider Arrays" for short-distance transport.

It was getting later and later, but I couldn't tear my eyes away from the screen. The spaceships of these "guys" alone are made of the stuff that always fueled my wildest childhood fantasies. Only now those fantasies had become real, frighteningly real. I wouldn't have thought it possible that such an advanced race would develop spaceships and vehicles similar to those on Earth, or to put it another way, I'd never even considered it. But if you approach it rationally, it makes perfect sense. Technology is only subject to the laws of physics, even if we don't fully understand them. Logistical tasks are probably universal, if you take these freighters as an example, right? I mean, presumably the Yautja also need to relieve themselves, reproduce, or do other things that humans are subject to. Maybe I'll find out more about these things; the document still has a few pages.

Weapons classification – Weapons (Operational Classification)

The following is a compilation of all weapons of the Yautja species extracted so far from the mask's data archive. It makes no claim to completeness.

Melee weapons:

These weapons are used for honorable combat and collecting trophies at close range.

- Wrist Blades:The standard armament: retractable serrated blades on the forearm.
- Combistick (Telescopic Spear / Plasma Spear):An extremely lightweight, extendable spear made from a virtually indestructible alloy.
- Ceremonial Dagger:Often made from the bones or chitin of their prey; used, among other things, for skinning and gutting.
- Wrist Shields:Extendable shields, whose edges are often as sharp as scalpels.

Energy weapons:

These technology-based weapons are mostly used for long-range combat or for controlling larger groups.

- Plasmacaster (Shoulder Cannon):A homing weapon that fires high-energy plasma projectiles; coupled with the bio-mask visor.
- Plasma Pistol:A handheld version of the caster for fast, manual shots.
- Netgun:It fires a metal net that contracts when the prey resists, cutting into its flesh.
- Spear Gun:It fires silent, arrow-like projectiles over long distances.
- Smart Disc:A laser-guided throwing disc that tracks targets and returns to the operator after being thrown.
- Self-Destruct Device:A wrist-mounted computer that triggers a nuclear explosion to conceal technology from enemies.
- Plasma thrower:A portable weapon that fires a targeted beam of hot plasma from an energy storage device, similar to a flamethrower.
- Ground Crawler Device aka JayDee Device:Plasma energy holding and killing apparatus.
- Proximity Mines: Advanced proximity mines.
- Evolution Accelerator Device:Weapon prototype for accelerating evolution.
- The Gardening Tool (TGT): Perimeter weapon with plasma-biological gene sequencing unit.
- Sniper rifle (PSR): High-performance precision rifle for long-distance kills.
- Meat grinder: Portable plasma multi-launcher in gun form.

Yautja additional equipment:

- Combat drones:Different versions and armaments.

- Plasma shields:Advanced body protection (+ alloy types).
- Polar equipment:Nanomagnetic thermal technology for extreme climatic hunting.
- Medi-Comp:Highly developed emergency component for initial medical care.
- Energy transmitter:Rechargeable energy storage devices, various designs.

*** Update Notice ***

There are currently 14 more weapon descriptions in the archive. Evaluation is underway.

Prof. W Malltyrsk, Area 37

*** End of Update ***

Bestiary / Specimen Catalog / Threat Level Analysis / + Civilizations (identified)

Danger!

The information stored in this section was compiled under Time pressure Provided on the orders of General PN Nakasone. They have not been cataloged, sorted, or made any claim to completeness. For further information, contact the Exo-Biology Department at Area 49!

Important preliminary information:

The probability analysis by the exo-biology team led by J. Collington (Area 49) sets the parameters for typified prey schemes of species-habitat localization with the following values:

1. Yautja prefer hot climatic conditions on planets, similar to their homeworld Yautja-Prime.

2. Due to its proximity to reptiles, colder climatic conditions are highly uncomfortable for Yautja, however, this circumstance is rendered insubstantial by technology.

3. Ice planets are still rarely visited.

Grŕ Kǹ har



Description:

An individual of this species is approximately 35 centimeters tall, reddish in color, and is considered a confirmed carnivore.

Home planet:unknown, but desert habitat

Loot information:

The Grŕ Kǹ har hunt in packs and are dangerous practice prey for young Yautja. They typically prey on larger herbivores, which they actively pursue with high intelligence. An attack pack usually consists of 50 to 100 individuals, led by a randomly selected leader.

Due to their prevalence in the area, these prey animals are ideally suited for the use of Yautja plasma weapons, a circumstance that is frequently exploited.

Entire areas of land are covered with blood for training purposes, as this is also where the Yautja's target computers are calibrated.

During every visit to the species' home planet, a Yautja is usually seriously injured, which particularly underlines the dangerousness of the Grr'Kn'har.

Zuò Qwas



Description:

The Zuo Q'was species lives on an otherworldly ice planet in a remote corner of the Yautja territory, far removed from all typical routes. The planet is home to only one apex predator, which is highly prized as a trophy. These bipedal creatures possess exceptional stamina, physical agility, and a unique predatory intelligence. Due to environmental conditions, they reach a height of approximately 1.70 meters, and their primary prey consists of seal-like marine mammals.

Home planet:Zu trowas (Ice Planet) / Outer Territorial Zone

Loot information:

Killing a Zuo'Qwas with a melee weapon is a primary objective of every Yautja hunter. The sheer power and the thorn-like growths on the skull of this prey make a duel a true challenge, further compounded by its clawed hands. Only the bravest Yautja will engage a Zuo'Qwas with wristblades; the preferred weapon is usually the plasma spear. These creatures have pink, poison-filled blisters on their skin that burst upon contact. Out of respect for the fight, the Yautja have never developed an effective defense against this, which is why a confrontation can often be fatal.

Nek Tozik

The creature reaches a shoulder height of about two meters and appears even more imposing due to its extremely long, sinewy hind legs. Its physique resembles a cross between a highly bred cat and an insect: the torso is slender and muscular, the head small and wedge-shaped with four laterally positioned, bright yellow eyes that detect movement in 360 degrees. The skin is a deep, vibrant grass green with fine, dark veins that resemble leaf ribs. In the dense undergrowth, the Nek T'ozik blends almost perfectly into the surrounding vegetation – only its yellow eyes sometimes betray its presence as tiny points of light among the leaves.

The most striking feature, however, is its mode of locomotion and its limbs. Instead of walking or sneaking, the Nek'Tozik moves almost exclusively by making enormous, explosive leaps. Its hind legs are equipped with thick, springy bundles of tendons that contract like steel springs and then suddenly release. A single leap can reach up to 12 meters in length and over 7 meters in height. It makes hardly any noise—only a soft, whistling hiss of the displaced atmosphere. During the jump, its forelimbs fold tightly against its body, so that from a distance its silhouette resembles a flying shadow. Upon landing, its clawed feet curl up, cushioning the impact, so that the Nek'Tozik is immediately ready for its next leap.

The skin is not only camouflaged but also permeated with tiny, chlorophyll-like structures that produce a faint, greenish glow after prolonged sun exposure—an effect the Yautja call "ghost glow." The claws on the fore and hind legs are sickle-shaped, black, and extremely sharp; they can even scratch Yautja armor if the Nek'Tozik lands with full force.

Threat level: High (Class 4 of 5)

- Strength:The leaping ability allows the Spring Shadow to appear out of nowhere above a Yautja and strike with its full body weight plus momentum. A hit with its sickle-shaped claws can severely injure or disarm an unprepared hunter.

- Tactics:The Nek'Tozik doesn't hunt through stamina, but through precision and surprise. It waits motionless in the branches or tall grass until its prey is directly below it, then launches itself into a vertical or diagonal leap. After the attack, it immediately jumps again to gain distance and reposition itself – a classic "hit-and-run" on steroids.

- Weaken:The Neḱ Tozik is significantly less effective in open areas, as it needs cover and height to jump. Its eyes are sensitive to light; strong flashes of light (e.g., (from a Yautja plasma cannon) can briefly blind him. Furthermore, he is a loner – pack behavior is nonexistent.

- Special danger:When multiple Nek'Tozik claim territory, they use their leaps to perform coordinated "cascade attacks," where one distracts the hunter while the other attacks from the side or above. Their blood is mildly corrosive and leaves greenish, burning marks on Yautja skin.

Many young Yautja underestimate this prey because it is "only" two meters tall and lacks heavy armor. Experienced hunters, however, know that a single perfect leap from the undergrowth can end a hunt before it has truly begun. Therefore, the Nek T'ozik is considered a particularly honorable prey animal by some clans – anyone who has a skull of this species with its four yellow eyes on their trophy wall has proven that they are not only strong but also vigilant.

Hiź Pazr

In the endless mangrove and swamp worlds, used by the Yautja as particularly brutal training and initiation grounds, lives a creature that makes even seasoned hunters hesitate when the water suddenly becomes too still: theHiź Pazr.

Description:

The Hiz Ṕazr reaches a fully grown length of about 2.10 meters (head to tail tip) and a shoulder height of around 1.20 meters when standing upright. Its body is elongated, muscular, and extremely flexible—a perfect blend of crocodile, axolotl, and deep-sea amphibian. Its skin is an intense, glossy grass green with dark, moss-like patches and fine, silvery lines that shimmer like veins through the water when light hits them. This coloration makes it virtually invisible in algae-covered waters and among the dense roots of mangroves.

Its head is broad and flat, with four large, laterally positioned eyes (two of which can move independently). Long, sensitive barbels are located beneath its jaw, allowing it to detect even the slightest vibrations in the water. Its mouth is large and can open extremely wide; it is lined with several rows of backward-pointing, needle-sharp teeth that lock into place like barbs when it bites. Fine, fan-shaped gills run along the sides of its head and back, functioning efficiently both underwater and on land.

Mode of locomotion:

On land, the Hiź Pazr moves with a mixture of creeping glides and powerful, undulating leaps, using its entire body like a snake. In the water, however, it is in its element: it glides almost silently and at high speed through the murky waters, propelled by a strong, laterally flattened tail and paddle-like hind legs. It becomes especially dangerous when it "explodes" from the water—a sudden, vertical leap out of the swamp, soaring up to 4 meters high and 6 meters far to seize its prey from above.

The forelegs end in four long, clawed, webbed toes, which it uses like grasping tools on land. When threatened, the skin secretes a slimy substance that is not only extremely slippery but also mildly numbing – a claw strike often leaves a numb feeling that impairs a Yautja's reaction time for several minutes.

Threat level: Very high (Class 4.5 out of 5) – especially in bodies of water

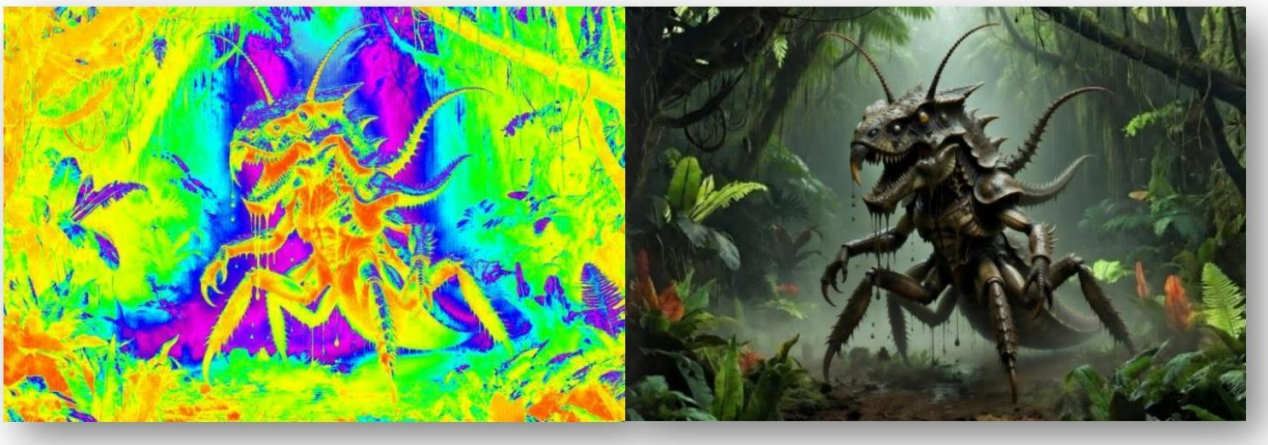
- Strength:The Hiz Ṕazr is a master of ambush hunting. It can lie motionless for hours in shallow water or among roots, waiting until a Yautja wades through the knee-deep swamp water. Then, it darts out with lightning speed, wraps its flexible body around the victim's leg or arm, and drags the prey underwater. There, it uses its enormous strength to drown the victim or to inflict deep, slow-healing wounds with its barbed teeth.

- Special danger:The numbing mucus makes it difficult to break free from his grip. He can also hold his breath underwater for extremely long periods (up to 45 minutes). Minutes). In groups of 2–4 specimens (rarely), they carry out coordinated attacks: one distracts while the others come from the side or from below.
- Weaken:On land, he is significantly slower and less agile than in water. Intense heat (e.g., from Yautja plasma weapons) dries out his skin and weakens him rapidly. His eyes are sensitive to sudden bright light sources. If he can be lured out of the water, he becomes more predictable.
- Trophy value:The skull of a fully grown Hiź Pazr, with its four eyes and long whiskers, is considered particularly prestigious by many clans because very few hunters voluntarily venture into the deep mangroves. The skin is sometimes used to make flexible, water-resistant cloaks.

Yautja, who hunt in swampy areas, learn quickly: if the water suddenly becomes too still and the insects fall silent, it is already too late. The Hiz Ṕazr has dragged many an overconfident young hunter into its depths – and they never resurfaced.

I was absolutely fascinated by the diversity of extraterrestrial life in all its forms. The next image, revealed by a page turn in the text file, increased my fascination immeasurably. You wouldn't want to come face to face with this creature—absolutely not, I thought. It was an image of a creature named:

Ghond' Kha



Description:

The species Ghrond'Kha is native to a jungle planet; its coordinates are unknown. Its most striking characteristic is its insect-like behavior, which is explicitly highlighted by the Yautja in several hunting reports. In particular, its speed and ambush tactics have been repeatedly documented – a fact that classifies this species as attractive prey with a high potential for danger.

This creature possesses highly developed visual reconnaissance abilities, similar to an insect with compound eyes on Earth. It also has four legs that provide a secure grip on any surface, allowing it to climb trees, rocks, and even buildings despite its size of approximately 1.80 meters. Its excellent eyesight is further enhanced by atmospheric senses that register air currents at a molecular level, making this species one of the apex predators in its environment. The powerful jaws of this prey are punctuated by a particularly prominent fang capable of inflicting severe injuries. Powerful arm and hand appendages complete the impressive capabilities of this genus.

Threat level:High (Grade 4.5 out of 5)

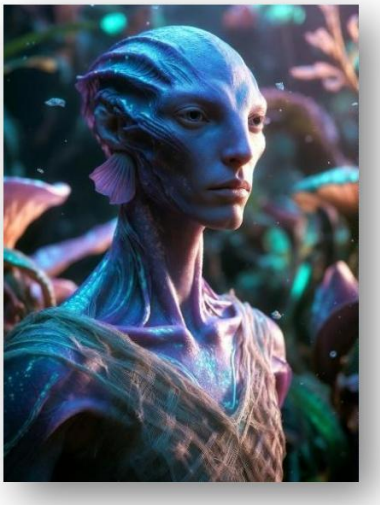
Yautja hunting strategies:

- Detecting potential landing sites with prey activity from orbit.
- Reconnaissance of the drop-off site on site with all-round security.
- On-site reconnaissance operation; the prey is easily located in the thermal view.
- Deployment of the TGT and preparation of an ambush.
- Deployment of a ground crawler device to secure the prey.
- A netgun should be included in the arsenal for further emergency protection.
- The goal is to provoke an attack, which is then stopped using the available technology (ground crawler device). Only after a direct confrontation has been established is the opponent "released" at a distance of approximately 20 meters – the fight begins. Experienced Yautja use a spear, while younger hunters rely on the shoulder cannon in combination with a netgun. It is important not to damage the prey's skull, as it is needed as a trophy. The shoulder cannon must be aimed with precision. The more individual limbs that can be severed, the better.
- After the battle, extra caution is required on the return to the landing craft, as the pheromones released by a dead Ghrond'Kha can attract other members of its species. A portable drone is usually deployed for this purpose, or other precautions are taken. Due to the relatively low population density of this species, no two prey animals may be killed within a specific radius of a predetermined timeframe. Violations will be severely punished.

One thing you have to give these Yautja: they don't shy away from any obstacle and protect their reserves, thanks to their code of honor. Perhaps I'll find some clues to a possible defense strategy in the code of honor later; I should probably make a note of that as well.

Vrythar (Civilization)





Planet:Vrythar Shredum

Location monitoring:

A densely forested planet crisscrossed by extensive river systems in a temperate climate, with high biodiversity and numerous natural resources.

General description:

The Vrythar are a technologically advanced, amphibious humanoid species that inhabits Vrythar Shredum. Their natural skin is smooth and shimmers in metallic blue and purple hues. They possess both lungs and gills, making them exceptionally agile both on land and in water. Standing between 1.8 and 2.2 meters tall, they are physically robust but not overly muscular—their strength lies in their intelligence, cooperative abilities, and advanced technology.

Their society is organized collectivistically, based on complex social networks. They have a strong sense of harmony with nature, yet they do not neglect technological development. The Vrythar are masters of biointegrated technology, combining organic materials with synthetic components. Their cities consist primarily of living materials that can adapt to emerging environmental influences.

Technology and defense

- Bioadaptive camouflage:The Vrythar utilize an advanced skin modification system that allows them to adapt their color and texture almost perfectly to their surroundings – similar to chameleons, but at an extremely sophisticated level, making them almost invisible opponents when necessary.
- Symbiotic armor:Their combat suits are more advanced than Yautja technology; they can connect with the wearer and autonomously adapt to combat situations. These suits can regenerate from injuries and possess a natural resistance to thermal and kinetic attacks.
- Psi communication:Thanks to highly developed neural interfaces, the Vrythar communicate telepathically over short and medium distances. This enables lightning-fast coordination on the battlefield, even in complex environments.
- Technological traps:The Vrythar are masters at transforming their homeworld into a technological fortress. They can trigger sensory traps anywhere, from stationary laser cannons to toxic poison traps that are ready to use within seconds and create deadly obstacles.
- Environmental control stations:Their cities are equipped with facilities to control weather and local climate effects, which they use both as a strategic advantage in defense and to disrupt enemy operations.

Social and military structure

The Vrythar do not wage wars for mere conquest, but rather rigorously defend their ecosystem against invaders. Their units work closely together in small, highly disciplined groups coordinated through telepathy. The soldiers combine physical combat skills with technologically enhanced biological weapons, such as bioelectrical pulses or acid-producing implants.

Their military is highly trained in guerrilla warfare and skillfully utilizes their planet's vegetation and waterways to wear down their enemies. They employ both conventional weapons technology and biomechanical fighting machines, some of which are living entities that form a symbiotic relationship with the soldiers.

Challenge for the Yautja

- Camouflage and home advantage:Vrythar's ability for perfect biological camouflage and their intensive knowledge of the dense jungle make it extremely difficult for Yautja to locate targets and carry out surprise attacks.
- Psi communication:The telepathic coordination among the Vrythar prevents the Yautja from tearing apart isolated opponents. Even during rapid attacks, the Vrythar remain a unified force capable of action.

- Bioadaptive armor:The exceptional regenerative abilities of their armor significantly reduce the damage from typical Yautja weapons, forcing Yautja to adapt their tactics.
- Ecological warfare:The Vrythar are transforming their planet into a deadly environment where even highly mobile and aggressive specialists like Yautja can quickly find themselves trapped in lethal situations. If the tactical situation demands it, the Vrythar will retreat to deep waters that are sometimes inaccessible to Yautja.

The combination of a deep connection to nature, biological integration, and advanced technology presents a new dimension of challenge for a Yautja. Direct combat without careful preparation is risky – success requires a blend of patience, adapted equipment, and new tactics.

Conclusion:

The Vrythar are an intelligent, adaptable species whose close intertwining of biology and technology, combined with their exceptional knowledge of their home planet, makes them extremely complex adversaries for the Yautja. A battle against them is not merely a physical duel, but a tactical and strategic showdown on equal footing.

Additional note:

The attempt to make contact in order to gain an ally against the Yautja had to be aborted due to the interstellar communication structures.

B. Thomson, Communication Officer

*** Update Notes ***

The information from the mask archive is outdated; this civilization was completely wiped out by the Yautja through the use of an orbital weapon system. Reason: unknown.

Dr. J. Bridget, Research Lab A49

*** End of Update ***

I was somewhat appalled by these explanations. To simply wipe out such an advanced culture and, in fact, a formidable target from space – that could perhaps also happen to us if we offer too much resistance, I thought to myself. Perhaps the Yautja are also interested in diplomacy; it would be worth a try. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find any evidence of this so far, but the text file still has several pages.

While scrolling to the description of the next species, I found myself pondering again. A picture of what appeared to be a gigantic tardigrade appeared; I was utterly perplexed. Could nature, or biological evolution, on a distant planet not be so far removed from our own understanding, or was this simply a coincidence?

If I remember my biology lessons at school correctly, tardigrades are microscopic, extremely resilient organisms known for their ability to cryptobiosis.

They are known to survive extreme heat and cold, the vacuum of space, radiation, and decades of dehydration. "A virtually perfect organism!" is what my teacher at the time called it.

Rik Amodha



Description:

An average Rik'Amodha individual has an estimated shoulder height of four meters, similar to a Triceratops from prehistoric Earth. Its length is approximately eight meters. The creature possesses six limbs and behaves extremely unpredictably and instinct-driven. The species feeds on native vegetation that grows abundantly in specific steppe regions on its home planet.

Home planet: Location unknown; steppe and barren desert surface, thin atmosphere.

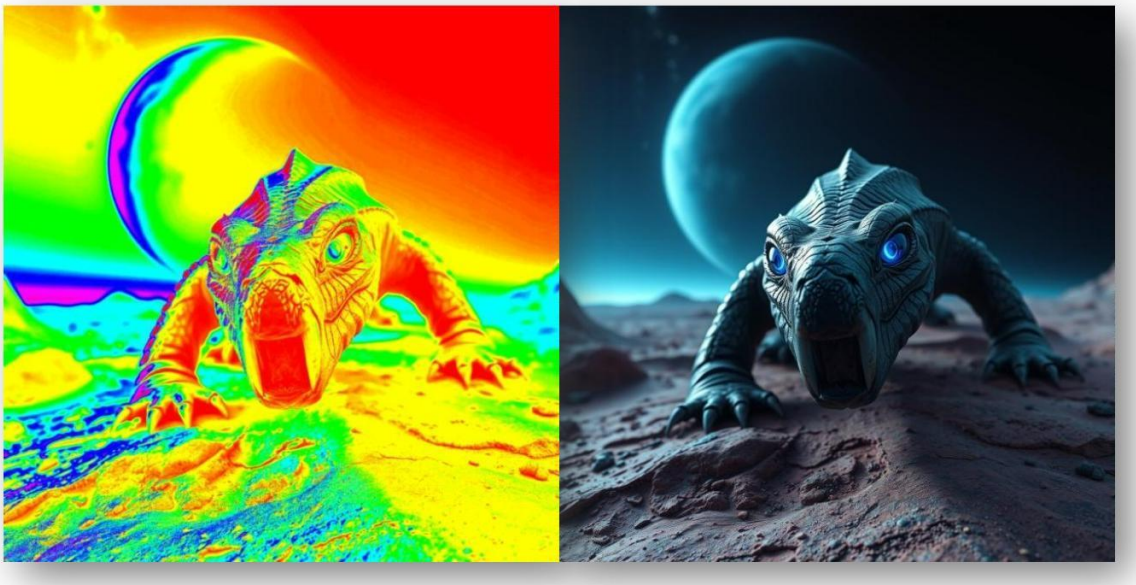
Loot information:

The Rik'Amodha are prized by the Yautja for their untamed nature. This hunt presents a challenge that can test any hunter's close-quarters combat skills. According to the Mask's data archive, Yautja attempt to position themselves on top of their prey in order to sever the spine below the head with a spear, resulting in instant death. Many Yautja have slipped during this maneuver and been trampled; serious injuries are almost guaranteed if they are clumsy.

Threat level:Medium (Grade 3 of 5)

After reading that description, I thought I wasn't so far off the mark. This prey was no laughing matter. I couldn't help but think of the behavior of rhinoceroses, although that would probably be an inadequate comparison. I kept turning the pages, fascinated by the diversity of the universe, which I hadn't even imagined in my wildest dreams.

Spru Ćthylsu



Description:

The Spru'Cthylsu are lizard-like creatures that often inhabit self-dug underground burrows, similar to moles. They are solitary and perfectly adapted to their environment. Their flight behavior is cited in the data archive as a key characteristic, making the discovery of a specimen of this species a significant challenge.

Furthermore, their boneless body structure and resulting flexibility pose a problem for hunters attempting to capture them by hand. When threatened, they secrete a seemingly absurd-smelling substance that can mark an attacker for weeks without being easily removed.

Home planet:No labels or coordinates were deciphered.

Prey information:

The Yautja primarily hunt these creatures to hone their technological reconnaissance skills. It is described that some hunters employ an unusual method of ambush hunting, observing the area around the hunting grounds for hours from an elevated position. They wear their usual equipment and calibrate their masks for various vision modes.

Since the Spru'Cthylsu are cold-blooded and rarely come to the surface, purely thermal detection is virtually impossible. Nevertheless, this prey can be located due to radioactive residue, even if it is at a depth of approximately one meter. Many Yautja then attempt to seize the prey with their bare hands and sheer muscle power by breaking through the ground – a circumstance that greatly increases its trophy value.

Threat level:Small (Grade 0.5 out of 5)

Additional note:

Even though the Spru'Cthylsu are not formidable opponents, their prestige in Yautja culture is legendary. Anyone who can display a hand-killed specimen in their trophy cabinet enjoys the recognition of the Elder Yautja, which apparently brings them great esteem.

In the event of involuntary scent marking by one of these prey animals, one should avoid one's own or other clans for an extended period of time to avoid being mocked by one's own people.

Could I perhaps find a hidden clue to the Yautja's 'humor' in this loot? Hard to imagine, but the concept of schadenfreude could very well be a universal constant among intelligent species, couldn't it?

H'ka-Kli



Planet:unknown location

Habitat:Rocky planet with water content

Description:

The H'ka-Kli are highly dangerous alien life forms, marked with clear warnings in the Mask Archives of various clans. This species also occupies the top of the food chain on this rocky planet, which is frequently shrouded in dense fog. They lack high intelligence and often act on instinct. Exceptional eyesight, disproportionate strength, and a pronounced innate potential for aggression are among their defining characteristics.

Special features:A Yautja who kills a male H'ka-Kli with melee weapons rises in prestige more quickly. Only a few hunters have managed this; many died trying.

The text document contained a QR code that led to a video file. I was intrigued and wanted to see these fearsome creatures in action. The warnings suggested an interesting opponent; perhaps I could learn something about their superiority that might prove useful later.

The video started:

A landing capsule opened, revealing a shimmering green plateau, shrouded in mist in the distance. From the first-person perspective of the presumably still quite young Yautja, I practically stepped onto this planet with him as a direct observer – an impressive experience. After about five steps, he activated his cloaking device; he probably had to play it safe to avoid being ambushed. However, according to the mask's display, malfunctions in the body cloaking field were already being shown, accompanied by technical sounds. We ignored them. Instead, we switched to the mask's thermal vision, which suddenly revealed relatively small heat signatures of the habitat. There was life here in the form of small insects, rat-like rodents, and even alien fish inhabiting the streams. It was incredible how perfectly the optronic systems rendered the environment. The mist and the water of the streams were displayed with perfect clarity and brightness; The environment immediately became much more hospitable when I applied my human standards.

In search of "our" trophy, we trekked through a landscape of rocky sections with sharp edges, past several small streams. After about a kilometer, a heat signature roughly 1.5 meters high appeared on a rocky outcrop, seemingly lurking just for us, which seemed plausible given our posture. The thermal image was rather diffuse and didn't yet reveal any real details of this adversary, but the Yautja changed that with a few computer commands. The mask display changed its transparency and switched to a real-life view, as if looking through one's own eyes.

I was startled: The lurking creature looked like a demon from a horror movie, the kind that could conjure up real nightmares. And indeed, this being seemed to be waiting for us. Our young, but apparently already well-trained, Yautja activated the wrist blades and increased his speed toward the creature. At a distance of about two meters, the creature attacked; it leaped at us with a terrible shriek, and a maw full of sharp teeth moved toward our torsos.

Our hunter, endowed with great stamina and agility, parried the attack with ease, shattering the demon's skull with a single blow. The force of the blow shattered the demon's bone structure. Bleeding and almost silent, the rest of the creature's body sailed past us; the severed half-skull, however, slammed directly against the nearby rock face, and blood immediately began to trickle down. The color of the blood was not what one would expect from an iron-based life form; this blood had an unusual, brownish hue.

When we switched back to thermal view after the attack, the brownish blood reappeared reddish, truly revealing the full extent and brutality of the assault. A massacre with two sharp blades, and blood flowed in torrents. Perhaps it was due to the planet's gravitational parameters—who knows—as blood might behave differently in flight there. Perhaps this dead creature had more blood than our native predators from the very beginning of its existence; however, the translation matrix remained largely silent during this hunt.

I thought: Okay, now he'll get the trophy and disappear again – that was pretty 'easy', wasn't it? Until I realized (and it was an absolutely human error, or rather my error): This demon wasn't our real target at all, because the image in the text file revealed a completely different "creature", something even more terrifying.

"We" didn't linger too long over this minor skirmish; the wristblades were retracted and we continued on our way. The mask's infrared sensors remained activated, but they were combined with the real-life view in a video mix—a technical feature that hadn't been described anywhere else. Well, presumably this possibility was mentioned in the mask's technical manual, or so I hoped. During the presentation, neither the general nor his adjutant had ever uttered a word about it, I was certain. So I should definitely make a note of this little detail and ask about it if necessary when we all get together again.

The hunter resumed his scent, while his camouflage technology gradually lost its effectiveness. The mask displayed increasingly pronounced malfunctions and secondary failures of the system until it finally failed completely. Apparently, there were some substances in the foggy environment that were incompatible with the technology, but "we" weren't really concerned, as the hunter showed no sign of trying to fix these malfunctions. The shutdown process was acknowledged with a rather bizarre acoustic signal from the arm computer.

We followed a kind of animal trail that, enclosed by high rock walls, led into a valley. Winding sections and narrow passages lined our path. A few kilometers further on, another mask signal sounded: prey had been detected.

I was wondering anyway: Why wasn't there a drone in the air if one was surely available? Perhaps atmospheric conditions would have limited its functionality as well, but that was just a guess. What I wouldn't give for a gas chromatography of this atmosphere, because it could reveal a weakness in the Yautja.

Having reached the valley, with the display flashing, not only the flora but also the geographical features changed. Large, rocky plains crisscrossed by pools of water made progress considerably more difficult, as we had to make some large jumps that looked quite impressive from this perspective. The detected prey was standing on a rocky outcrop; it had already picked up our scent.

This predator's eyesight seemed perfectly adapted to its environment, for its luminous eyes observed our Yautja's every movement. Just over 20 meters more, and the showdown would begin, I thought to myself after hearing the familiar sound of blades extending. It seemed to me that close combat was the only honorable way to confront such prey, even though plenty of deadly technology was available.

The H'ka-Kli grew restless, rocking back and forth on its rocky promontory with increasing agitation. Its enormous claws, its massive physique, and not least its snarling teeth gave me goosebumps. It was surreal: I was watching this old recorded video and yet I was right there in the middle of it; I couldn't escape the fascination and the fear.

It became perfectly clear to me why this creature had to represent a kind of final boss for the Yautja, for this being radiated its lethality beyond measure with its mere presence. A truly formidable and honorable quarry – a jewel in any hunter's trophy cabinet.

We assumed an impressive fighting stance; our arms became visible on the screen, raised high. Simultaneously, we let out a battle cry that truly resonated. Intense tension awaited its release, one way or another.

I expected the H'ka-Kli to leap down on us and attack immediately, but to my surprise, this didn't happen. Instead, the thing just continued staring at us excitedly. It probably already knew we were practically dead. Our hunter had missed something crucial: he should have double-checked the mask's vision mode beforehand, because the real danger wasn't coming from our intended prey—there was something else.

It lurked right beside us, beneath a small rocky outcrop, barely visible to the naked eye. It was superbly camouflaged, about 30 centimeters long and arrow-shaped. A kind of gray worm that could strike with lightning speed. And that's exactly what happened: with an incredibly swift movement, the worm lunged at us and burrowed deep into our flesh. The mask's display showed only its tail disappearing inside our bodies, accompanied by a cry of pain that seemed beneath the dignity of a Yautja.

I was so shaken that, sitting at my table, I unconsciously clutched my side – I felt so deeply for them. It was as if I were screaming along.

This worm-like creature was probably the preferred prey of our spotted H'ka-Kli, as that would perfectly explain his agitation. "Two birds with one stone," I thought.

Our fighting stance abruptly transformed into a writhing bundle of Yautja convulsions on the ground as blood spatters and pieces of internal organs sprayed from our own bodies onto the mask. The display shook briefly as our heads slammed hard onto the rocky ground. Countless warning symbols flashed in rapid succession, presumably monitoring the Yautja's current health status. They came too late and were therefore useless. The mask's sensors registered only slight twitches, which ceased just as quickly; we had just died.

The Yautja's energy systems, however, were still functioning perfectly, and so the mask's images, tilted vertically to the ground, pointed in a direction that gazed calmly and peacefully at the landscape. But then, suddenly appearing from the side, after a brief jolt, the mask's focus shifted to the terrifying jaws of the H'ka-Kli, which tore large chunks of flesh from our body and devoured them with relish. With the next bite, a piece of the worm could be seen in the mouth of our original prey; the H'ka-Kli had achieved its goal.

The video sped up; the subsequent events were now shown in a kind of time-lapse. The mask, and thus our vision, moved briefly as our bodies were consumed piece by piece. After that, there was a period of stillness. In the final section of the video, we saw a hand grasp our mask, belonging to another Yautja. He had apparently intercepted the fully automatic death signal and rushed to our aid, since we couldn't activate the self-destruct mechanism in time. Just before we were packed into a kind of "backpack," the Yautja deactivated our equipment. The image disappeared, and the video ended there.

Wow, what an intense experience! You think you're out there with the ultimate winner, and then you end up as food for your own trophy. These H'ka-Kli aren't just extreme prey; they're also intelligent and live on a highly hostile planet where even smaller creatures, like these worm-like beings, can take you down in the blink of an eye.

After taking a short, well-deserved cigarette break, I virtually scrolled through the pages with my mouse, and an important clue, marked with large exclamation marks, revealed itself:

Danger!

The following two, and initially final, bestiary entries contain entries encrypted by the Yautja with the code 'Secret'! The quantum algorithm of our interface could only decipher them.few Filter out striking notes; however, these give cause for concern. Information about a species that could be a suitable ally might also be found.

1.Mala'kak

This species is highly advanced and is often translated as an "engineering race." Anyone who has accidental contact with this species is instructed to immediately and without fail transmit the coordinates to their homeworld, Yautja-Prime. For a specific, yet unknown, reason, solo actions against this "enemy" are forbidden!

2.Kainde Amedha

This species appears to be highly adaptable prey, capable of assuming different forms depending on the host. They are described as dragon- or snake-like creatures with black skin and immense defense mechanisms. Hunting this species on a planet is generally permitted; however, a report should also be sent to Yautja-Prime.

*** Update Notice ***

The exo-biology team has sent a prioritization request to the quantum department; a response is still pending.

iV Dr. K. Knabaster (Area 50)

*** End of Update ***

It was getting later and later in my room. After a cigarette and a small snack from the bunker bar in the cupboard, I actually wanted to go to bed. I tried, but couldn't fall asleep because of the overwhelming amount of information. So I decided to read another chapter of the text file, the title of which had already hooked me: It was about the planetary destructive power of the Yautja.

Space Vessel - Orbital Weapons (SVOW)

The Yautja race's spaceships possess a high planetary destruction potential, which is achieved throughdifferent Orbital weapon platforms can be coordinated and deployed. The video clip X 100.1 documents the annihilation of planetary life, in particular the positioning and battlefield observation of the eight deployed orbital platforms.

The weapons platforms at this epic event led to interesting findings:

- The natural danger zones of a planet were exploited for its destruction, primarily by destroying coastal regions through technologically induced tsunamis or by exploiting tectonic weaknesses.

- Poles can be melted within a very short time by targeted heat explosions.

- Landmasses near the equator are not attacked, or hardly attacked.

- Using the spacecraft's propulsion system and the energy it provides, the deployed and networked weapon platforms are used to dissipate the existing atmosphere.

In general, orbital weapons, like terrestrial satellites, can be used to communicate with members of one's own race or deployed ground troops, for example, to exchanging real-time information with a spaceship located on the other side of the planet. At least this fact confirms our terrestrial physical laws, which in the The extent of extracted data analysis is no longer a given.

Oh, this information fell short of my expectations, as the video linked via another QR code merely showed detached spaceship platforms hovering above a planet, seemingly communicating with each other through slow blinking lights. Certainly, the destruction of a planet would have been an epic event, but this wasn't shown. For the first time, I was disappointed by the mask's data storage, unfortunately.

I closed the laptop and lay down; this time the brooding stopped and I fell asleep immediately.

It was around 5:30 a.m. when there was a knock at my door. Half asleep, as if in a daze, and with a grumpy expression, I opened the heavy steel door of my room. A dashing US soldier looked at me and made it clear:

“Sir, breakfast is ready in room 5, please hurry, you are expected!”

Fuck, I'd only slept maybe five hours – did it have to be like this? I went to the bathroom, did the usual things, and splashed ice-cold water on my face. Then I set off.

In Room 5, all the conference participants were already seated, helping themselves to the lavish military buffet. A few nods of greeting, and that was it. 'No adjutant or general present?' I asked the group. 'As you can see – they're allowed to sleep in, hehe!' Well, I thought to myself, let's see what today brings. It can only get better, or so I hoped.

The assembled academics didn't talk much; there was virtually no exchange about the previous day. Perhaps my colleagues were simply too tired or just not in the mood, but I suspected they were all a little frightened. With such news about extraterrestrial civilizations and the described hostility, that's hardly surprising.

I wouldn't be me if I didn't treat myself to a cigarette after two rolls and a large cup of coffee; so I went back to my room and did what I loved. Addiction is addiction, I haven't fooled myself about that for a long time.

On my way back to my room, I ran into the dashing soldier again. He informed me that another briefing was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Oh yes, I should be on time – there was an important announcement!

Great, I'm really curious to see what happens – irony aside! Anyway, after the cigarette I went to take a shower.

At 7:45 a.m., I stood in front of the conference room, clean, reasonably rested, and fresh, wearing the US military camouflage gear that had been laid out for me, and entered. Of course—am I cursed? Did they all conspire? It can't be that I'm always the last 'guest,' I thought to myself. Oh well; I wanted to go to my seat from yesterday, but this time Dr. Ogius, the electronic warfare expert, was already sitting there. He looked at me and realized his mistake after I had indicated with a clear hand gesture that he should change seats. I'm just particular.

Grinning, he moved a chair over. I asked the group about their impressions of the provided document, but aside from "Interesting," "Too much information," or "Exciting," there wasn't much feedback. They're all completely stuck in their ways—it would be really good for them to get off the tram and see what else is out there. I don't like rigid thought patterns; they stifle creativity and thus problem-solving strategies, but I'm stuck here with these people. I have to make the best of it; there's no other way.

At 7:59 a.m., the general and his adjutant re-entered the room. A brief, military-style greeting in the form of "Good morning!", and they were off again. The projector was switched on, and the general addressed the audience:

'Something has happened: NASA, through triangulation of all telescopes in the western hemisphere in the Kuiper Belt, the outermost edge of our solar system, was able to detect and positively identify a Yautja spaceship at 042 (!). It is a game preserve ship! So far, we can only speculate as to why they are here. Perhaps they are gathering prey—in this case, us—or they are unloading prey, which, according to the Mask Archive, has also happened on civilized worlds. In either case, we are powerless at this time, unless you here have already devised some initial ideas for a defense tactic. Have you?'

Dr. Ogius spoke up:

"In my estimation, we have a good chance: If we understand energy systems in relation to communication technology, then we could potentially severely limit their scope for action!"

“Good,” said the adjutant, “And how are we supposed to do that?”

“‘Get me an alien radio, and my team and I will take care of the rest!’”

'Then go ahead, you idiot! The mask itself is a radio – were you even paying attention yesterday? Unbelievable, as if we hadn't already tried this approach first. You don't deserve to be sitting at this table!'

A brief order to a guard, and my companion was unceremoniously escorted from the conference room by two uniformed men. The doctor's bewildered expression was priceless; perhaps he should have stayed in my chair after all. The minor verbal protest from the rest of the group was skillfully ignored, and the adjutant added the following words to the proceedings:

'We need professionals here. So either accept this measure or follow the man!'

An immediate silence fell, and a valued colleague inquired about the next steps.

'Well, since you've somewhat disappointed us all here in the room, we'll give you a little more time. Go back to your rooms and continue working on the proposed solutions by reviewing the text document.'

If necessary, sift through it further and get stuck in – because, as I said: The threat has already arrived in our solar system.'

I interrupted the adjutant and asked about the ship's current status, a not entirely unimportant detail, I thought. The answer came promptly:

"I like you – finally someone who asks the right questions. The game preserve ship is currently in a holding pattern; it has remained stationary since its arrival. Of course, we have absolutely no idea how long this will last. Therefore, we need to act quickly, if you understand!"

The general interrupted the adjutant's initial, rambling speech by adding:

"It's serious, but not hopeless! We'll see you here again at 15:00 – do your best! Should there be any news about the ship, you will be informed immediately. Dismissed!"

Lol, I didn't even know I'd been drafted and become a US soldier, but that's just how they are, those important military personnel.

Tactical Dossier – Analysis of Female Phenotypes of the Species Yautja





Long-term observations and recovered data fragments confirm the existence of female individuals within the extraterrestrial species classified as Yautja. While male warriors primarily operate as mobile hunting units in deep space, the females form the sociopolitical and physical backbone of their civilization. They are considered extremely dangerous.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES AND FIGHTING POWER

Compared to the standard male units, female Yautja exhibit significant deviations:

Physical superiority: Reports indicate that females are often larger and physically stronger than average males. Their agility surpasses that of male scout classes.

Anatomy: Externally, they follow the reptilian basic pattern (mandibles, dreadlock-like projections), but show a more pronounced muscle definition and, in some cases, more complex pigmentation of the epidermis.

Fighting style: While males often follow ritualized hunting rules (code of honor), females act with maximum efficiency when defending their territory. They prioritize the rapid neutralization of threats over the collection of trophies.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ROLE

The Yautja society appears to be organized according to a matriarchal system:

Clan leadership: High-ranking matriarchs control political affairs on the home planet (Yautja Prime). They decide on hunting rights and the enforcement of the code.

Homeland defense: While the males are sent out to hunt, the females remain at their bases as the primary defense force and guardians of technology and tradition.

Breeding and training: They are responsible for training the next generation of hunters, giving them a fundamental role in the military continuity of the species.

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATION:

Any encounter with a female Yautja should be considered an extreme situation. Since they are rarely found on hunting expeditions, their presence on the battlefield usually indicates a large-scale invasion or the defense of a strategically critical objective. Individual soldiers have virtually no chance of survival against a female Yautja in close combat.

*** Update Notes ***

A text file from the archive suggests that females of this species usually command the motherships!

G. Svarkov, DEF-LAB Area 49

*** End of Update ***



Additional section:

Female Yautja / Rearing of offspring

The following biological report documents the developmental processes of the Yautja species within the specialized facilities on the satellite Th'ka-Prime in the Yautja Prime solar system. The Mask's data archive currently contains little information about reproductive habits and the rearing of offspring; however, the following information is considered reliable:

The primary responsibility for the development of the early life stages lies with the Mat'vei (nurturing matriarch). Unlike the male hunters who undertake interstellar expeditions, these female Yautja often remain in the system as strategic anchors. The Mat'vei is a battle-hardened warrior who ensures the necessary discipline through her physical superiority and knowledge of the code of honor. Her role includes selecting the survivors and instilling the fundamental laws of hierarchy. The Mat'vei position can be held by different female warriors, but the timeframes for such a change are unknown.

Development phases and terminology

The satellite Th'ka-Prime is an extremely heavily fortified moon within the home solar system. It is protected by the presence of several motherships, among other things, but can also defend itself very effectively against attacks. The Yautja breeding station is located deep beneath the planet's surface, with only two designated access points. The station itself generates a habitable atmosphere that perfectly meets the Yautja's needs. These include temperature stabilization, simulation rooms for away missions, and training courses.

Within the station, the translation matrix avoids the use of anthropocentric terms. The development of the Yautja offspring is divided into the following stages:

Sucklings / Farts:

The earliest postnatal phase. During this time, the individuals are physically completely dependent on the matriarch. They are kept in artificially regulated atmospheres (high humidity and sulfur content) to optimize their respiratory capacity.

Younglings:

After reaching initial motor maturity, they enter the Younglings phase. Here, training begins with simple training weapons such as the Dahd'tou-di (small knife).

Unblooded:

The final stage at the station. The individuals have learned basic survival techniques but do not yet bear any ritual scars or markings.

The environment on Th'ka-Prime:

The station is designed to simulate the harshest biomes of Yautja-Prime. Individuals are regularly subjected to extreme thermal stress and simulated threat scenarios to condition the secretion of Guan-thwei (Nightblood). Weakness is not tolerated within these structures; the Mat'vei only intervenes to prevent the loss of genetically valuable individuals due to purely technical failure of the station.

Completion of the initial phase:

The training ends upon reaching physical maturity. Once an individual demonstrates the ability to handle the Ki'cti-pa (hunting spear), they are transferred to an active clan, thus concluding the stationary rearing phase.

*** Update Notes ***

Further information on the aforementioned topic was extracted from the data archive. This concerns the Act of conceptionof this species.

Summary:

Female Yautja of childbearing age and with proven combat and hunting experience select the most attractive young hunters for the upcoming mating ritual in a monthly clan ceremony. Male Yautja must submit unconditionally to the selection process; refusal is punished with banishment.

The act itself is performed publicly. Sperm is extracted from the male Yautja in a highly unpleasant procedure using a plasma-based extraction device, and this sperm is then used to inseminate the female. Only the female experiences sexual arousal, but she does not reach a perceptible orgasm, apart from emitting specific "pleasure growls." The entire sexual act lasts approximately four hours, according to our timekeeping.

Furthermore, the entire process serves solely for reproduction. Social, emotional, or other anthropomorphic attributes play no role in the Yautja's sexual code.

J. Collington, Team Exo-Biology A49

*** End of Update ***

*** Update Notes (Quantum Department) ***

During further data analysis of the mask, a technical drawing of the plasma extraction apparatus was found:

According to this report, the device possesses a bio-sequencer capable of altering DNA structures at the molecular level, representing a technological intervention in the natural process of fertilization. Further information is currently being analyzed (contact person: Prof. Dr. Dr. Melbourne, Gen-Tech-Lab Area 49).

T. Herbert, Decryption Department Area 49

*** Update ends (Quantum Department) ***

Code of Honor / History – Useful Cases for Military Strategies

TOP SECRET // FOR AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
REFERENCE:Tactical Dossier – Behavioral Analysis: The Yautja Code of Honor
CLASSIFICATION:Psychological profile / Rules of engagement (ROE)

SUMMARY

The survival of the Yautja species is based not only on technological superiority, but also on a strict, almost religious moral system.“Path of the Warrior(Path of the Warrior). This code defines who is hunted and how the fight is to proceed. A violation of these rules leads to ostracism (banishment) or execution by one's own kind.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CODE

Field observations have isolated the following behavioral patterns:

- Definition of prey:Only animals deemed "worthy" may be hunted. The following are considered unworthy:
    - Unarmed or sick people.
    - Pregnant females (protection of the next generation).
    - Children and the elderly.
- Equalization of resources:In many cases, hunters abandon their ranged weapons (plasma guns) and use bladed weapons when the prey also only has melee weapons. The goal is to maximize the personal challenge.

- Respect for winners:Should a prey manage to defeat a Yautja in fair combat, that individual is often spared or even honored with a trophy. A slain hunter is often "cleaned up" to prevent the loss of technology.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS

Individuals who violate the code (e.g., murdering unarmed people or stealing trophies) are considered“Bad Bloodsclassified.

- Status:Outlaw.
- Sanction:The Yautja Society dispatches specialized "Enforcers" to eliminate these rogue elements. "Bad Bloods" are particularly dangerous to human units because they have no inhibitions or moral boundaries.

TACTICAL USABILITY FOR OWN TROOPS

Understanding the code offers limited strategic advantages:

- Renouncing weapons:A soldier who demonstratively lays down his weapon may not be killed immediately, but rather ignored as "unworthy" (no guarantee in cases of hunger or threat).
- Challenge:In extreme situations, provoking a duel can prevent the annihilation of an entire group by ranged weapons.

CONCLUSION

The Yautja are not indiscriminate killers, but ritually bound trophy hunters. Those who understand the rules of their hunting can predict their actions to a limited extent. Nevertheless, due to their physical superiority, the species remains a Level 5 threat.

Social Behaviour – Social Behaviour Analyses

Yautja culture is based on strength; weakness is not tolerated within the species. Accounts have been deciphered that suggest executions or corrections of birth defects to prevent the species from being weakened. This appears to be a logical evolutionary step for this race, setting aside a human perspective. Failure later in life, however, is punished with banishment or death, though offenders are often given a second chance to rectify their mistake. Most often, however, these "merciful" missions send individuals on suicide missions from which they do not return alive. It is considered especially honorable, however, if a Yautja saves another with their own life, for example, by taking on a hopeless hand-to-hand combat.

Furthermore, the Yautja culture is strictly matriarchal – a fact that still needs to be investigated further.

*** Update Notes

This sociocultural behavior may have an ancient historical background, which can be traced back to a kind of legend. However, the following information is considered not Confirmed:
The quantum department has come across an entry in the mask archive which

It was additionally encrypted with security codes. By combining various mathematical operations, parts of this entry could be decrypted; they point to the following facts:

Long ago, an attack on Yautja-Prime was presumably carried out by a highly technological enemy. This extremely intelligent species, referred to in the records as the Amengi, was defeated in battle by a legendary Yautja. A rebellion ensued, and the Yautja appropriated the alien race's technology.

The rebel leader is still revered today; he is the symbolic figure of the Yautja culture. His name has not yet been identified in the current investigations.

Important: Even if this proves true, the Yautja have evolved independently over the centuries. They have learned! It can be assumed that the technology is now developed, maintained, and used by the Yautja themselves; the evolutionary origin is only of secondary importance here.

Dr. Szilvie Kartasch, Exo-Lab Area 49

*** End of Update ***

Mixed Output of Members – Assessments of specific issues

The following is an analysis of the research team meetings, which were duly documented in the various areas and locations. Some of the most important topics from the different departments have been summarized for informational purposes for General Peter N. Nakasone.

1. NASA's analysis of results – Facts: Interstellar positioning and navigation

Due to its complexity, the data extracted from the Yautja mask's archive allows for only limited conclusions regarding the interstellar capabilities of this extraterrestrial race. Their presumed operational areas generally lie outside the coordinate systems we have surveyed in space to date, making an assessment of their potential difficult. Fortunately, the available material allowed us to verify the coordinates for the Yautja homeworld; from our perspective, it is located in the Orion Cluster. The astronomical distance (< 200 AU / 200,000 light-years) is far beyond our current technological capabilities; a journey would take an estimated 489,104 years.

Further reference points to visited planets or hunting grounds remain untraceable without additional data. On a positive note, I would like to point out that the recent progress in deciphering the archive gives cause for hope. Our NASA research groups are certainly highly motivated and, given the circumstances of this case, extremely eager to learn more.

2. Project financing and budget: Situation: Project cost explosion

This memorandum provides a budgetary review of the planned expenditures for the fiscal years 2026–2028 for the project: Blue Book 2020 (Yautja Files).

The proposed budget represents a 415% increase over the original projections from fiscal year 1990. Cost effects on civil servant and subcontractor rates, currently 35% above federal benchmarks, are not adequately justified. The procurement plan for custom hardware indicates excessive reliance on a small number of vendors, which violates established guidelines for competitive bidding on projects exceeding $10 million. The black budget, on the other hand, was already exhausted last year.

Financial implications:

The current "burn rate" (cash outflow) of $53 million per quarter is unsustainable and poses a significant risk to the allocation of the discretionary budget.Ministry The projected return on investment for the defense industry – measured by gains in operational efficiency – is not commensurate with the financial expenditure.

It is recommended that all non-critical funds for the Blue Book 2020 project (Yautja Files) be frozen with immediate effect. A full and comprehensive review of all expenditures to date is required. Approval of further funding phases should be contingent upon the project returning to its original cost base.

Dr. Marcus Vane (Internal Revenue Service (IRS))

3. Technology Center Area 38 – Situation: Capacity Limit

Current resource utilization in the field of quantum computing exceeds the capacities of physical possibilities in terms of speed, number of qubits, and backup mirroring to existing supercomputers. Our department is examining the use of dedicated funds for the further development of photon computing to explore potential technical combinations.

T. Herbert, Decryption Department Area 38

4. Med-Lab Area 50 – Situation: Warning message due to revision

Ladies and Gentlemen

With this email I would like to issue an urgent warning regarding the increasing number of lobotomy (leucotomy) orders: Last year, due to project requirements, we had to lobotomize 146 private individuals (scientists and security personnel) and 12 members of the US military on behalf of the US Army.

The background work regarding credibility with family members and the handling of financial compensation payments do not seem to receive enough attention in the responsible departments.

A lobotomy is not only a serious medical procedure, but it also ties up countless other resources. Therefore, I request that the lobotomy rate be directly considered in future staffing plans and that personnel requirements (background checks) be examined more closely. Behind every medical operation lies a human story. Despite the high level of confidentiality, we in the medical department cannot completely disregard ethics!

Thanks in advance.

Prof. Dr. Fiona Gallagher (Pharmacology & Medicine Research)

5. Exo-Biology Team: Stop wasting working time

Dear colleagues, dear research assistants,

I hereby make a final request: please refrain from further reducing our already limited working time resources with running gags. This inconsistency must end; future violations will have far-reaching consequences!

To put it simply:

- O No, we don't conduct Godzilla research! No, we
- O are not a subgroup of "Monarch"! No, King Kong
- O is not—I repeat: not—real!

In that spirit: Please refrain from making unscientific comparisons to our staff in the future. We conduct serious research at an academic level. Consider this letter a final warning – eventually, "jokes" lose their appeal!

Respectfully

Prof. Dr. Sofia Lindholm, EXO Lab Research Leader

6. Status of Major Alan “Dutch” Schaefer; Facts: DNA sequencing successful

Gene sequencing of the aforementioned subject was successfully completed. A sample for future cloning processes was stored in the cryo-lab (container 1987). Important: The test subject must not be informed about the sample being taken; confidentiality is of utmost importance.

Prof. Dr. Isabella Rossi (Genetics)

7. 86th Airlift Wing & Installation Commander, Ramstein Air Base - Incident: Snack vending machines

Danger,

I don't know what's going on "down there" with you, but please allow the private company "Snack4U" onto the premises in the future so that the snack vending machines can be restocked. Your independent security personnel at Exit D have already been informed several times – apparently without success. Complaints from my subordinates are piling up, and a secure operation cannot be maintained in the long run with frustrated staff!

This may be irrelevant to you, but it is not to me and my peace of mind! I don't want to be bothered with this sort of thing anymore, understand? In case you still haven't grasped it: I am the commander of this base, responsible for the entire location as well as for foreign military operations, and I command 8,400 US soldiers!

Your special status protects you, but I ask that you treat each other with respect!

Nevertheless: Should my nut slices not be immediately refilled in the provided snack vending machines outside your bunker, consider this letter a personal declaration of war!

Adrienne L. Williams, Brigadier General, Ramstein Airbase

Oh, wonderful! I was abducted, locked in this deep bunker, informed about an alien threat from the Yautja – and on the surface, yes, the highest-ranking brigadier general at Ramstein Air Base is complaining about the lack of sweetener in her nut slices! I love humanity, however crazy it sometimes seems!

All the 'assessments' made me want more, so I continued browsing the text document on this Chinese laptop:

Statements – US Army / NASA

The statements presented here are subject to an explicit classification level (Clearance 5 and higher). They reflect personal impressions of Yautja in a military and technological context.

Vinnie Blart, aide to General Peter N. Nakasone

Ah, okay, now I know why the adjutant didn't introduce himself by name. You can't choose yours, hahaha!

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1. Private First Class (PFC) – Frontline soldier's view

- Tactics:“If that thing is in camouflage mode, you'll be dead before you know it. Our standard night vision devices are useless; they don't filter out the shimmering. The only chance is to fire continuously on suspicion as soon as the air moves.
- Evaluation:Absolute superiority in close combat. Psychological warfare through the mutilation of comrades leads to an immediate collapse of morale.

2. Staff Sergeant (Squad Leader) – Group Leadership Perspective

- Tactics:“Explosive traps and motion-activated sensors are ineffective; they simply jump over or bypass them. We must stay in tight formations. As soon as one is isolated, he's gone.
- Evaluation:The Yautja employ asymmetric warfare. They never attack the entire group head-on, but rather pick off the weakest members or the leader. We need next-generation thermal imaging cameras.

3. Captain (Company Commander) – Operational Planning Perspective

- Tactics:“Conventional infantry tactics are failing. We are losing entire platoons in wooded terrain. Air support is useless because the targets don't give off a radar signature and are hidden under canopies of leaves.

- Evaluation:High risk of total casualties during patrols in difficult terrain. Recommendation: Retreat to fortified positions with 360-degree surveillance.

4. Major (Intelligence Officer/S2) – Reconnaissance Perspective

- Strategy:“The subject exhibits a ritualistic behavior pattern. He is not a classic soldier, but a trophy hunter. We can exploit this by deliberately using high-prestige 'prey' (officers) as bait.
- Evaluation:Strategic unpredictability, as there is no territorial interest. The threat is not invasion, but the systematic decimation of our elite cadres.

5. Colonel (Regimental Commander) – Operational Logistics Perspective

- Strategy:“The technological gap is too large. Our armor offers no protection against plasma technology. We are losing valuable material in a war of attrition that we cannot win.
- Evaluation:We must recover the remnants of their technology (masks, weapons) at all costs. Every encounter must be seen as a scientific opportunity for error analysis, regardless of the number of casualties.

6. General (Strategic Command) – Global Defense Perspective

- Strategy:“The Yautja operate outside the bounds of international law and diplomacy. They pose an existential threat to national security because they can easily bypass our nuclear capabilities.
- Evaluation:Switching to 'Total Defense'. We must keep the population in the dark to prevent mass panic. Preparing for the 'Scorched Earth' protocol: If an area is infected, it must be neutralized on a large scale to contain further damage.

Yes, that's how I know the military. I sincerely hope they never gain the final say over the fate of humanity!

Technical Assessment: NASA's Evaluations

1. Dr. Aris Thorne – Senior Astrophysicist (Deep Space Monitoring)

- Observation:“The ships do not appear on our standard radar systems. They use a form of gravitational lensing for camouflage. Light beams and radio waves are simply deflected around the hull.
- Evaluation:“This isn't stealth design in the conventional sense; this is the manipulation of spacetime. If we see them, it's only because they are being seen.want“

2. Sarah Miller – Propulsion Engineer (Drive Technology)

- Observation:“No visible emission, no heat signature at launch. The transition to hyperspace occurs without the Hawking radiation we theorized.

- Evaluation:“Their propulsion is presumably based on the curvature of space bubbles (Alcubierre drive). While we are still playing with chemical rockets in the sandbox, they are using the topology of the universe as a highway.”

3. Dr. Liao – exoplanetologist (navigation & cartography)

- Observation:“The deciphered logbooks reveal flight paths that pulsars use as beacons. They jump with pinpoint accuracy into the gravitational depressions of planets.
- Evaluation:“Their navigation AI calculates variables in real time that would take our supercomputers years. They have a map of the galaxy that knows every unstable wormhole path.

4. Prof. Dr. hc Keller – Director of Strategic Partnerships (NASA HQ)

- Observation:“The Game Preserve Ship functions as a self-sufficient ecosystem. It is not a warship, it is a mobile base, a floating continent in space.”
- Evaluation:“The logistical capacity of these ships renders any human defense strategy obsolete. They need no supply routes; the shipis"The supply. We are about 5,000 years behind technically."

Summary note for the Pentagon:

"We strongly recommend that the 'Solar Sails' project be discontinued and all resources be invested in researching..."Quantum vacuum fluctuationsto get stuck. If we don't learn how they warp space, we'll always remain stationary targets for them. Financial resources are too urgent to acquire; costs must not be a factor!

Well, look at that, the recordings are more recent than they appear. Presumably, hundreds of NASA employees and astronomers are currently sitting at their computers and telescopes, observing and analyzing the 'parked' Game Preserve Ship – practically in real time.

The moment was approaching; the next meeting in the conference room was scheduled for about an hour later. I set off, shortly after a quick stop in the smoking room, where I jotted down my initial ideas in my notebook:

1. Infrared Disruptors & Multispectral Camouflage

Since the Yautja primarily hunt using thermal vision (+ infrared), their greatest defense is not steel, but...Temperature management.

- The measure:Development of "cold suits" that not only insulate body heat but also actively dissipate it or adjust it to the ambient temperature.
- The weapon:“Flash flares – grenades that release a massive, long-lasting heat signature upon explosion. This would completely blind the Yautja's masks for minutes, forcing them to engage in close-quarters combat (which is less clear to them) without visors.

2. Acoustic detectors (sonar arrays)

The Yautja's camouflage device bends light, but it displaces air and produces minimal humming noises or mechanical clicks when moving.

- The measure:Installation of highly sensitive directional microphones in the bunker, calibrated to the frequencies of its cloaking modules.
- The weapon:“"Sonic Mines." As soon as the sensors register a distortion, these mines trigger high-frequency sound waves. Since the Yautja have extremely sensitive hearing (for hunting prey such as theSpr'Cthylsu), these waves could disorient them or even damage their respiratory membranes.

3. Modified beam weapons (isotope trackers).

- The measure:“"Marker projectiles." Munitions that, upon impact (including with camouflage), spray liquid, unstable isotopes.
- The weapon:Self-guided guns (sentry guns) that fire not by sight, but exclusively at this specific isotopic signature. Once marked, a Yautja would be impossible to conceal from the automated systems within the defense perimeter.

4. Chemical countermeasures (anti-pheromone aerosol)

From the reports about theGhond'KhaWe know that pheromones play a major role and that smells have social consequences.

- The measure:An air filtration system that chemically neutralizes or saturates the human "fear pheromone release" with a masking odor.
- The tactic:If the bunker smells of the "shameful loot", a Yautja might hesitate to enter the room or touch the protagonist in close combat for fear of social ridicule (mockery by the clan).

Okay, the last option is far-fetched, but at least I can offer some solutions. Even if, as a weapons developer, I might be giving away money – to save humanity from a Yautja invasion, my most impassioned suggestion would probably be the most promising: Sending a radio message and thus finding a diplomatic solution!

Official announcement: Project “Blue Book 2024” (NASA - Deep Space Link)

Recipient: High Council of Yautja-Prime
Sender: Human species (Sector 0-0-1 / Sol system / Planet Earth)
Protocol: Compliance with the code of honor

Message content:

To the Elder of the Yautja,

We, the inhabitants of this world, have documented the traces of your hunters in our flesh and our machines. We acknowledge your strength and the path of the hunt you have treaded for eons.

According to the laws ofCode of HonorWe hereby declare:

This world is not a battlefield for a war without honor. We have proven that we are capable of fighting back and demanding a hard-fought victory from your warriors. The blood shed on this planet has long marked the bond between our species.
We demand compliance with the code:

1. Recognition as an equal:We claim the right to self-determination. Destroying our world from orbit would be a vain hunt.
2. Return of property:We are prepared to deposit the trophies and technologies your fallen soldiers acquired in battle at a neutral location (coordinates: Moon Base/Mare Tranquillitatis). We demand no compensation other than the respect this gesture commands.
3. Peace of the Hunters:We propose viewing Earth as a territory of individual challenge, not total invasion. Whoever enters our world does so under your ritual laws – we will do the same.

We expect not a response in words, but in deeds. Withdraw your Game Preserve ship from the edge of the Kuiper Belt and acknowledge the sovereignty of those who have learned to look you in the eye.

On behalf of the survivors of planet Earth

I already know: The general won't be very enthusiastic about the diplomatic solution. I'll probably have to persuade him and everyone else in the room, including the adjutant, with some serious sweet-talking! I remembered a change to my notes on the short walk to the conference room: We could also send the radio message directly to the ship in our solar system – that could be a good indicator of a response from the Yautja.

I entered the room.

My comrades were already in their places; there was no sign of the general or his adjutant. All sorts of negative emotions were etched on their faces: fear, despair, and incredible nervousness were prevalent. I tried not to get swept up in it – surely someone had to be optimistic.

An unassuming woman, who had not yet introduced herself by name, approached me:

Excuse me, the rest of us met here again about three hours ago to work together. Knowing your reputation as a bit of a loner, we didn't want to bother you. However, we hope you'll forgive us—because we believe you're our only hope in this room. Why is that, you might ask? Well, we all witnessed what happened to Dr. Ogius; it truly frightened us. In the short time we had, we couldn't come up with any truly viable solutions—a fact that remains despite our individual areas of expertise. The Yautja are out, and they will come, whether we like it or not. We are powerless. I will explain this to the general and his adjutant on behalf of my colleagues, essentially as the group's spokesperson. I wanted to tell you this in advance!

Thank you for your honesty, I truly appreciate it. And believe me, regardless of what you've heard about me: I'm still a human being and I fully understand your concerns.

And my situation. As you know, I have years of experience dealing with US military personnel, so take my advice: Don't mention your non-existent solutions to the general, but rather propose some kind of diplomatic solution if you are explicitly asked. I try to avoid getting to that point by being the first to offer my suggestions. Knowing myself, I can keep the general occupied with this for a while, so he'll hardly have any time left to ask you questions.

I was just about to take my seat when the door opened and the general and his companion entered the room. They seemed worried, as if they had received some new information—but I wasn't so sure about that. They had just sat down when a deafening alarm went off. The electricity in the room suddenly cut out, and red, rotating emergency lights began to dance. A mild panic broke out, but everyone initially remained seated. The already tense atmosphere inevitably intensified. I wasn't spared, for I sensed what was coming.

Even though we were already deep underground, muffled explosions echoed from the surface of the air base. They were probably being carried through the bunker's ventilation system, as they sounded quite tinny. If my fears are confirmed and the Yautja force their way into the air base, it won't be long before they reach us down here!

I shouted at my comrades to try and stay calm. My first thought was to escape from this old nuclear bunker, but that would probably prove difficult—especially since the general had already warned us about it. The electronic safety systems for the elevators would likely prevent any escape, I figured. No matter, I had to do something: 'Waiting for fate' has never been my style!

I suggested to the general that we use his security authorization to activate the elevator so we could reach the surface and seek shelter. To my surprise, he agreed and gave his adjutant the curt order to leave the conference room with the group after us. The oppressive feeling of vulnerability intensified, and the flickering lights did little to calm the nerves.

The general would probably have preferred otherwise, but I decided to take charge of the rearguard, as the women in our group needed a bit more attention. So the general opened the door and entered the main corridor, which led directly to the elevator, about 30 meters away. The group followed him.

Everyone hurried to close the distance to the elevator when its doors suddenly opened. It was empty—or so we thought—until, seemingly out of nowhere, three laser targeting points lit up and locked onto the general. He had no time to react; a hot, bluish plasma ball hurtled toward him. He couldn't even hear the roar of the shoulder cannon before he fell lifeless to the floor. The shot had struck his torso; fragments of his lungs and heart soaked the rest of the group, who could only scream in terror. The yautja, who had been exposed by the use of his weapon, was apparently in no hurry.

The sight of this creature was both frightening and fascinating. Instead of the creature from the video clips, there stood an albino-like hunter, only about 1.40 meters tall, fully equipped for combat. Besides the shoulder cannon, I also recognized a smart disc and the dreaded netgun, which was immediately put to use.

He fired directly at the group, and since I was last, I was apparently lucky not to have been hit. The netgun was a version adapted to the hunter's size, which fired a smaller, plasma-glowing net. Firing at a group didn't really make sense to me. I was fatally wrong, because the net didn't fold up over its prey like in the video clips—no, it simply zipped cleanly through all the bodies and slammed hard into the distant wall. I was missed by a hair's breadth; however, I'm not sure if that was even intentional.

The floor of the main corridor was transformed into a hell of blood, entrails, and brain matter after the attack—from people I had interacted with just five minutes earlier. The 'small' hunter was clearly even more aggressive than his brethren; at any rate, size seemed to play no role in his fighting prowess.

I knew instinctively that panic couldn't take over. With lightning speed, I threw myself to the ground and assumed a submissive posture, my gaze fixed on the blood-smeared earth. The hunter approached and scrutinized me. In all the horror, I could no longer think clearly. Was this my end? I hoped it would at least be quick.

The hunter paused. His rattling breathing fell silent for a moment. With a hissing sound of venting, the straps of his mask released. He removed it, revealing his true face: moist, pulsating mandibles and eyes that reflected an ancient intelligence. He regarded me for a long time, almost as if gauging my courage.

Then he typed a command into his arm computer, and from the removed mask in his left hand came a deep, synthetic voice that sent another shiver down my spine with just one word. There was also a hint of courage in that one word; he said: 'Follow!

It was the last thing I wanted to do, follow that killing machine, but I also desperately wanted to get out of that goddamn bunker. Besides, I probably didn't have a choice; the hunter gestured for me to go ahead, toward the elevator. I found my blood-stained notebook and tucked it away in the back of my pants; the Yautja didn't acknowledge this action. Walking slowly in front of him, I could feel his strength, despite his size, in every pore of my body. His netgun was thankfully back attached to its mount on his left leg. Damn, with that weaponry, he could probably have conquered an entire country; that's how powerful he seemed.

In the elevator, I didn't dare turn around and stand so close to the Yautja. However, in the elevator mirror, I could see him using his arm-mounted computer to override the elevator's control electronics, causing it to begin moving toward the surface. My fear subsided somewhat, because if he hadn't had a plan for me, I would almost certainly be dead by now.

It felt like an eternity, but eventually the elevator rumbled, and the small red LED display showed Level 0. During the ride, the Yautja barely moved in the cabin; he was fully aware of his physical and mental strength. I wasn't prepared for the next few moments: The doors opened, and the small shelter built over the elevator shaft...

The structure, which had been damaged, showed fundamental flaws. It was essentially just a dusty ruin. Fortunately, the elevator wasn't guided by cables but by rails attached to the walls; otherwise, it would surely have plunged to its doom long ago.

The Yautja pointed toward the runway, where I was to go. I left the destroyed elevator shaft and only then did I see the full extent of the devastation. It was like a post-apocalyptic end-times scenario: Lockheed C-130J Super Hercules, C-37A/B special operations aircraft, and a large number of US fighter jets lay burning and in wreckage, scattered on their holding positions or along the runway. Beside them lay the severed limbs of countless US soldiers, some cut in half. The personnel had apparently fallen victim to the smart disc; the aircraft had been destroyed by other means, presumably from a great height. It was an unprecedented annihilation of the US military. Only the guard dogs in the Military Police kennels, huddled in a corner and yelping fearfully, were silent witnesses and survivors of the preceding massacre. The Yautja apparently did not recognize them as a threat, in accordance with their code of honor.

The Yautja continued walking behind me. Every now and then it emitted a growl, and I wasn't sure if it was addressing me. I flinched each time. There was nothing to see as we made our way to the center of the runway, and I wondered: Was it going to get to the perimeter fence? I was wrong, because just before we reached our final position, the fighter deactivated the cloaking device of a small spacecraft. It gestured to step onto the extended plasma staircase and board. Wow—despite all the gruesome circumstances, the aesthetics of that little ship were breathtaking. I was still scared, though; I really wanted to get to my wife.

The albino Yautja also boarded and showed me to a seat integrated right next to the pilot's seat. I thought I was going to be restrained or paralyzed, but the Yautja apparently saw no danger in me. Okay, then I'll take a look out the window or observe the fighter's control commands—that might come in handy later. However, the controls were so complicated that I could have saved myself the trouble. The ship's entrance door closed, the engines ignited, and a vibration shook the seats. We slowly lifted off.

After everything that had happened, I felt completely exhausted, but I was wide awake again at takeoff, as the tension released a flood of adrenaline – a process I'd experienced many times before. The Yautja glanced briefly at me during liftoff, and if I understood him correctly, his gesture meant I should look out the window. From an altitude of about 200 meters, I could see almost all of Ramstein Air Base – or rather, what was left of it. The spacecraft was steered toward the main entrance, where reinforcements, presumably called in as reinforcements, were stationed. Along almost the entire length of the access road, M1 Abrams tanks were ablaze, Humvees were slowly burning out, and once again the road was lined with the blood of slaughtered soldiers. Thick smoke spread and was carried away by the wind.

The Yautja clearly wanted me to see the extent of the destruction. He stared blankly into my face again. I couldn't make sense of his expression, though, and turned away; those mandibles were simply too grotesque for my taste, which seemed to unsettle him. He hovered the spaceship above the air base, unbuckled his arm computer, and placed his mask in a designated compartment in the cockpit. Then he entered further commands into the ship's computer, and suddenly the spaceship ascended extremely rapidly.

Within seconds, we broke through our planet's outer atmosphere and accelerated rapidly, passing directly by the moon and several other planets in our solar system. The course led to the game-preserve ship, I assumed. However, I had no way of orienting myself until the Kuiper Belt came within range. Thousands of boulders blocked the small vessel's path, but the Yautja seemed completely unfazed. It maintained its speed, and the ship's AI continuously calculated the optimal course through this dangerous minefield; there appeared to be no risk of collision.

Then I saw it: The large ship lay undisguised at the edge of our system, as if it had anchored. As the distance decreased, the Yautja slowed our speed and flew to a position below the much larger vessel. There were several container-like extensions there, each equipped with a kind of hatch in the floor. We flew directly up to one of these hatches from below and held our position. My fear returned. What would become of me now?

After my little alien pilot transmitted a few more computer commands to his ship, he turned to me and glared at me menacingly. I was powerless to act—what could I possibly do? I was at his mercy. He suddenly stood up and grabbed my arm with his reptilian hand as I lost consciousness.

As consciousness laboriously returned to my body, the first thing I perceived was a heavy, sweetish smell of ozone and damp earth. My head throbbed as if I'd been hit with a sledgehammer—the aftereffects of the albino Yautja's grip, or the result of an atmospheric shift.

I blinked against a diffuse, reddish light.

I was no longer lying on the hard cockpit seat of the landing glider. Instead, I felt damp, black sand beneath my fingers. I sat up hastily, my heart immediately pounding against my ribs again. The sight of my surroundings almost took my breath away.

- The ceiling:There were none. Above me stretched not a sky, but a gigantic, kilometer-high arch of matte black metal. Huge, honeycomb-shaped light panels pulsated in a rhythmic, dark red glow, simulating artificial cycles of day and night.

- The vegetation:I was standing on the edge of an artificial jungle. The plants looked familiar yet completely alien – giant ferns and thorny vines whose leaves shimmered with a dull metallic sheen in the pale light.
- Gravity:It was there, but felt strangely light. Each of my breaths was deep, the air tasted thin, but had a noticeably higher oxygen and sulfur content.

I frantically felt through my pockets. My cigarettes were gone, as was my notebook containing the painstakingly drafted diplomatic message. I felt naked.

A sudden, loud rustling in the thicket behind me made me turn around. It wasn't the albino Yautja. From the dense undergrowth emerged the outline of a creature I had seen only a few hours earlier in the videos of the Mask Archive.

The horror had a new face, and I was sitting right in the middle of its enclosure.

* End*

TOP SECRET – FOR EYES ONLY OF NATIONAL SECURITY LEVEL 1

(TOP SECRET / EYES ONLY)

REFERENCE:FINAL REPORT OPERATION “SILENT HUNTER” – BUNKER SYSTEM OPERATION Area 49
REFERENCE: Incidents from [date removed] CREATED BY:JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, PENTAGON

1. STATUS OF THE PLANT:
The underground research facility Area 38in the sector [REDACTED] was through a thermonuclear detonation of unknown origin completelyneutralized. Everyone there stored data, prototypes and all personnel – including General PN Nakasone and his The staffs are considered a total loss. Recovery of remains is impossible due to the radiation intensity and structural collapse.

2. VISUAL ENLIGHTENMENT (MOON BASE):
The destruction of the Aegis-7 prototype on the Moon is hereby confirmed. NASA telemetry data indicates an energy-based weapon attack that exceeds our current defensive capabilities by a factor of 1,000. The existence of an extraterrestrial aggressor with cloaking capabilities and superior offensive technology is to be considered an established fact.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE:
Despite the bunker's destruction, fragments of an external transmission sent from the sector shortly before the detonation were intercepted 4.49 The data contains encrypted biological and tactical profiles of alien life forms. This data is currently being analyzed in an isolated laboratory at the Department of Defense, under the direction of survivors from the exobiology division.

4. CONCLUSION:
The aggressor has left the solar system. There have been no attempts at diplomatic contact. The tactical assessment is: We were not attacked, we were assessed. By military standards, Earth is no longer a sovereign planet, but an unprotected territory within an interstellar interest whose nature we do not yet fully understand.

RECOMMENDATIO
N:
Complete secrecy from the civilian population. Intensification of the "Sentinel" program for orbital early warning systems. We must assume that the enemy can return at any time. This time, we will not act as observers, but as seasoned and upgraded prey.

DRAWN:
The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces

CASE CLOSED

Picture portfolio

Visualization of various archive images (mask extraction)







epilogue

I would like to thank my partner, my circle of friends and my family for their patience in always supporting my passion for completing this book.

We live in amazing times where you can tell an AI what kind of image you want. Besides using Google AI, I also used Grok for image creation and hope you like it.

Furthermore, I had the best critic for the Predator franchise imaginable by my side:

A special "thank you" to TK for his honest opinion!

"Predator: Secrets of the Mask" has been a personal passion project, which is now reaching its provisional conclusion. If the fanbase wants it, I might continue the story; there's certainly enough material.

A very personal request:

Anyone who would like to support this book should simply make it public:

Write in forums, on social media channels, or use your existing contacts.

Because who knows: maybe the book will be made into a film someday! That would be pretty cool, in my opinion! The more attention it gets, the better!

As already described in the foreword, I don't intend to profit from the book, as this would be problematic from a copyright perspective. I'm perfectly happy if Yautja fans enjoy the book!

In this sense:

Thank you for your interest and feedback!

PS

You can find the book in the “Archive of Our Own” if you want to link to it!

… your Yaurith (Abit)